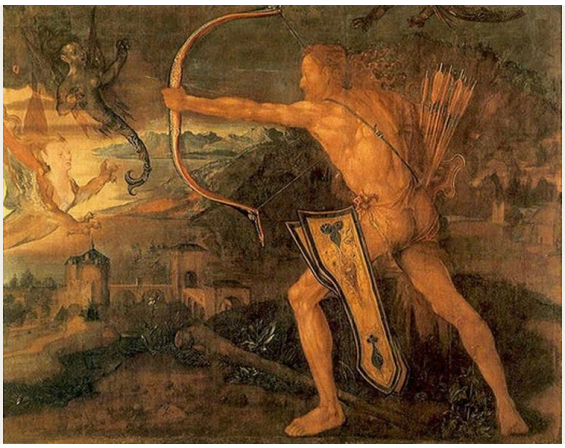
NUREMBERG, GERMANY

Germanisches Nationalmuseum: Masterpieces

Twenty paintings from Nuremberg's museum of German art and cultural history



The Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg is a museum of cultural history as well as an art collection. Its paintings belong to a much larger account of life in German-speaking Europe, and they share the galleries with furniture, sculpture, applied arts and historical documents. In that company it is easier to see what a portrait or a religious picture was first made to do.

The twenty paintings chosen here run from Konrad Witz's Annunciation to Max Oppenheimer's Rosé Quartet. Dürer appears three times, with a Hercules, a portrait of Michael Wolgemut and one of the emperor Maximilian I. Cranach and Baldung appear twice each. Alongside the religious subjects and portraits, among them Luther in his Augustinian habit, there is a view of Nuremberg's own main market, a fool with a needle, a company of actors waiting offstage and an older girl carrying a younger child on her back. Towards the end of the range, Macke and Jawlensky loosen colour from natural appearance.

The selection was made independently of the museum. Dates and attributions follow the linked records, including their qualifications.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/germanisches-nationalmuseum

The selection · 20

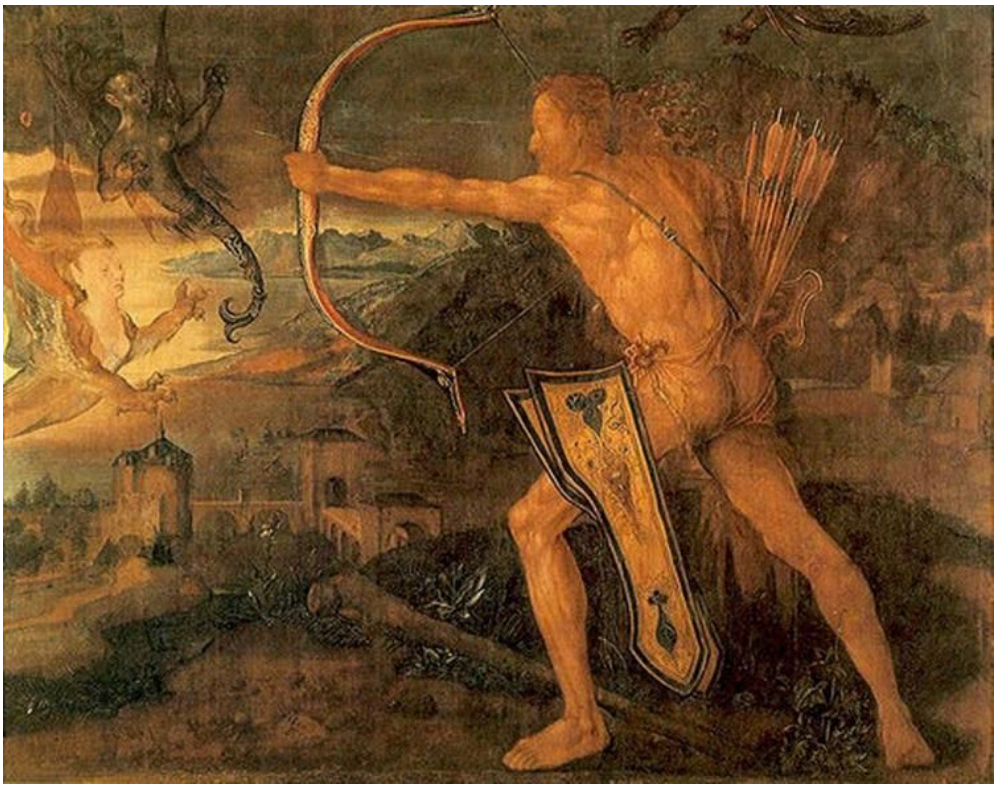
1. Hercules Fighting the Stymphalian Birds
   Albrecht Dürer · 1500
2. Johannes Reuss
   Lucas Cranach the Elder · 1503
3. Annunciation
   Konrad Witz · 1440
4. Battle of the Amazons
   Anselm Feuerbach · 1870–1873
5. Behind the Scenes
   Eduard von Grützner · 1870
6. Michael Wolgemut
   Albrecht Dürer · 1516
7. Nuremberg's Main Market from the South
   Lorenz Strauch · 1594
8. Martin Luther as an Augustinian Monk
   Lucas Cranach the Elder · 1523
9. Fool with a Needle and Ass's Ears
   Andreas Herneisen · c. 1590
10. Cornelia Adriana Munter and Her Daughter
    Johann Friedrich August Tischbein · 1798
11. Emperor Maximilian I
    Albrecht Dürer · 1519
12. Tegernsee Landscape
    August Macke · 1910
13. The Rosé Quartet
    Max Oppenheimer · 1924
14. Two Girls
    Max Pechstein · 1909
15. Head in Black and Green
    Alexej von Jawlensky · 1913
16. Ideal Landscape with the Temple of Juno at Agrigento
    Jacob Philipp Hackert · 1794
17. Judith with the Head of Holofernes
    Hans Baldung · 1525
18. Madonna and Child with Parrots
    Hans Baldung · 1533
19. Nativity of Christ
    Wilhelm Stetter · 1525
20. The Elder Sister
    Fritz von Uhde · 1883

01 / 20

Hercules Fighting the Stymphalian Birds

Albrecht Dürer

1500 · Tüchlein painting on plain-weave linen · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Hercules kills the Symphalic Bird. WikiArt; Albrecht Dürer. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Public domain

Hercules has turned much of his back to us as he twists to draw the bow, so the effort has to be read in his shoulders, back and arms. The face hardly comes into it. The muscles pull against one another, and the outstretched arms set the line of the shot. The Stymphalian birds are there because the legend calls for them, but Dürer seems far more absorbed in how a body holds such a strain. The Wolgemut portrait is on wood, but this is a Tüchlein, a painting on cloth, in this case plain-weave linen.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 5379

02 / 20

Johannes Reuss

Lucas Cranach the Elder

1503 · Oil on panel · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Lucas Cranach the Elder. Johannes Reuss. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/lucas-cranach-the-elder/johannes-reuss-1503 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Reuss holds an open book, which brings his hands into the portrait on almost equal terms with his face. A red cap and red robe carry the colour from head to body, and trees frame his face against the landscape behind. Cranach's later Luther, elsewhere in this selection, has a book too, but there it goes with a monastic habit and marks a religious identity. Here it keeps company with a red robe and open country.

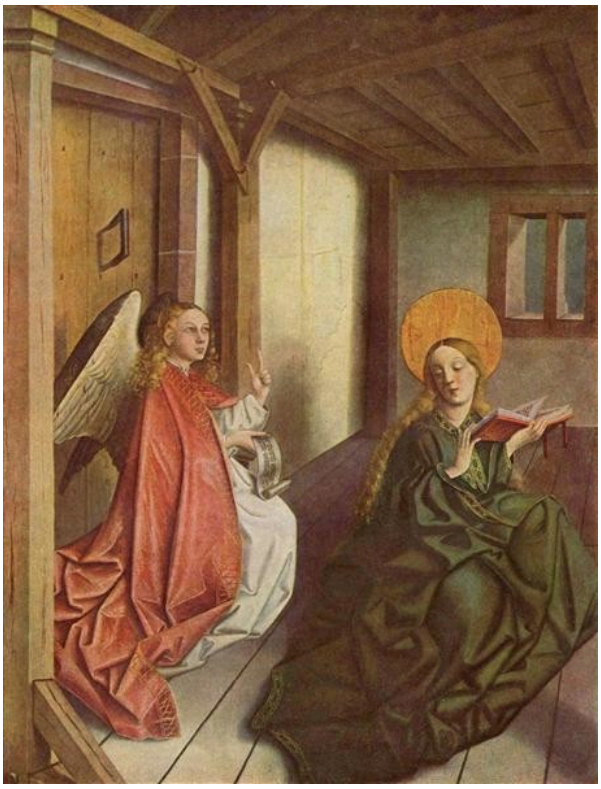
Object source · Open artwork

03 / 20

Annunciation

Konrad Witz

1440 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Konrad Witz. Annunciation. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The earliest picture here sets the Annunciation in a timber room with a low ceiling, and nothing is done to make the room grander for the occasion. Walls and heavy folds of cloth press in on the angel and Mary, who are left with barely enough space between them.

Object source · Open artwork

04 / 20

Battle of the Amazons

Anselm Feuerbach

1870–1873 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Anselm Feuerbach. Battle of the Amazons. Image credit: Anselm Feuerbach. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

There is no decisive blow here and no single group to follow. Feuerbach spreads the battle across a broad horizontal format as many separate fights, linked by repeated limbs and opposing movements. A rearing horse lifts one part of the struggle above the press of bodies. Elsewhere the eye passes from one fight to the next without finding anywhere to rest. You could call the result sustained energy. The charge of diffuseness is harder to dismiss, because apart from that horse the picture offers nothing for the eye to gather round.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm2054

05 / 20

Behind the Scenes

Eduard von Grützner

1870 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Eduard von Grützner. Behind the Scenes. Image credit: Eduard von Grützner. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Offstage, the actors are still in costume, dressed for parts they are not playing at the moment. Grützner breaks the company into small groups, some standing and some seated, and the waiting seems to interest him as much as the theatre itself.

Object source · Open artwork

06 / 20

Michael Wolgemut

Albrecht Dürer

1516 · Limewood (Tilia species) · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen (als Dauerleihgabe im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg). Albrecht Dürer, Bildnis Michael Wolgemut, 1516. https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/de/artwork/M0xyZ1VLpl CC BY-SA 4.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC BY-SA 4.0

A dark cap and a plain background leave almost nothing to compete with the face of Michael Wolgemut, shown here as an old man. On this limewood panel Dürer follows the uneven contours around the eyes, cheeks and mouth closely, and he declines to smooth old age into a general emblem of wisdom. Whatever respect the portrait pays its sitter lies in that attention.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 700

07 / 20

Nuremberg's Main Market from the South

Lorenz Strauch

1594 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Lorenz Strauch. View of the main market in Nuremberg from the south. Image credit: Lorenz Strauch; Source credit: Photo from a reproduction. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · CC BY-SA 4.0

Nuremberg's main market, seen from the south, is the subject closest to home in this selection. Buildings enclose the square, and stalls and small figures break it into separate pockets of activity. Keeping the people small lets Strauch fit a great many occupations across its breadth, while a church façade anchors the view without overwhelming the market around it.

Object source · Open artwork

08 / 20

Martin Luther as an Augustinian Monk

Lucas Cranach the Elder

1523 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Lucas Cranach the Elder. Portrait of Martin Luther as an Augustinian Monk. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Habit and book declare a religious role before the face has quite registered. One hand is raised near his chest and the other stays with the book. These are familiar signs of piety and learning, and Cranach accepts them and works inside them. What he adds is an individual face.

Object source · Open artwork

09 / 20

Fool with a Needle and Ass's Ears

Andreas Herneisen

c. 1590 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Andreas Herneisen. Depiction of a Fool with Needle and Ass's Ears. Image credit: Sailko; Required attribution: I, Sailko. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · CC BY-SA 3.0

A needle is about as small as a prop can be, but the tight framing enlarges the gesture as the fool lifts it near his grinning face. The ass's ears rising from his cap tell us what kind of figure he is before we have worked out what he is doing. Herneisen keeps the performer very close, and costume and action together make the foolishness a deliberate performance.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1548

10 / 20

Cornelia Adriana Munter and Her Daughter

Johann Friedrich August Tischbein

1798 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Johann Friedrich August Tischbein. Double portrait of Cornelia Adriana Munter (1770-1828) and her daughter Eleonore Louise Hedwig von Bose (1797-1831). Image credit: Daderot. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Cornelia Adriana Munter draws her daughter against her own body, and Tischbein builds the double portrait on that closeness and on the difference in their sizes. Pale faces and pale clothing stand out from the dim setting and above the mother's green dress, which makes it easy to see exactly where the two figures touch.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1337

11 / 20

Emperor Maximilian I

Albrecht Dürer

1519 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Albrecht Dürer. Emperor Maximilian I. Image credit: Albrecht Dürer. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Dürer gives Wolgemut nothing but a dark cap and a plain ground, but here the emperor's face has company: an inscription, heraldic devices and rich clothing, all kept in plain view. Together they turn the likeness into a statement of imperial authority. These signs announce Maximilian's rank, and his features are not asked to carry it.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm169

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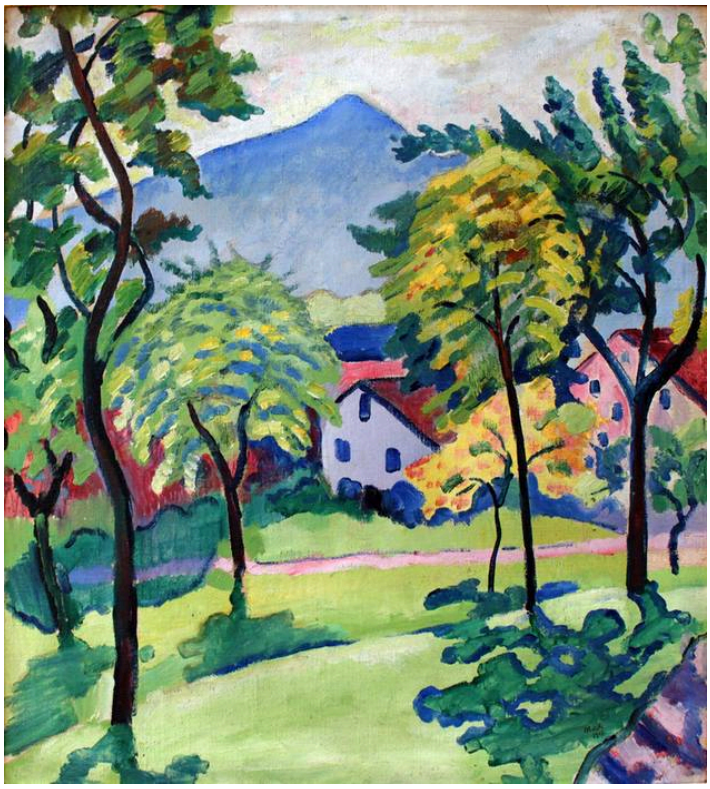
Tegernsee Landscape

August Macke

1910 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



August Macke. Tegernsee Landscape. Image credit: August Macke. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The place is still easy to read, with trees, buildings and mountains fitting together around an open slope. What has loosened is the colour. Macke lays it on in bright patches that do not always follow natural light and shade, and accents of blue and yellow jump between separate objects, so that things belong together by colour as much as by where they stand in the view.

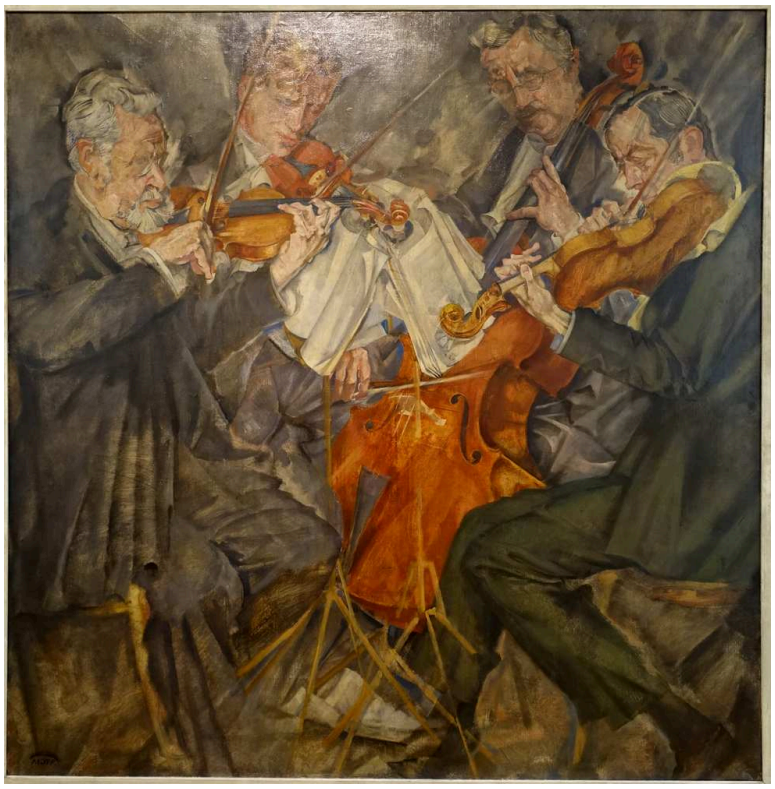
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm2034

13 / 20

The Rosé Quartet

Max Oppenheimer

1924 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Max Oppenheimer. Rose Quartet. Image credit: Max Oppenheimer. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

A quartet needs four players doing different things at the same moment. Oppenheimer overlaps arms, bows and instruments so closely that the musicians' movements merge into a single web of lines, bound together by repeated contours. Yet each player keeps a separate body, instrument and task, which are the differences an ensemble depends on.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm2035

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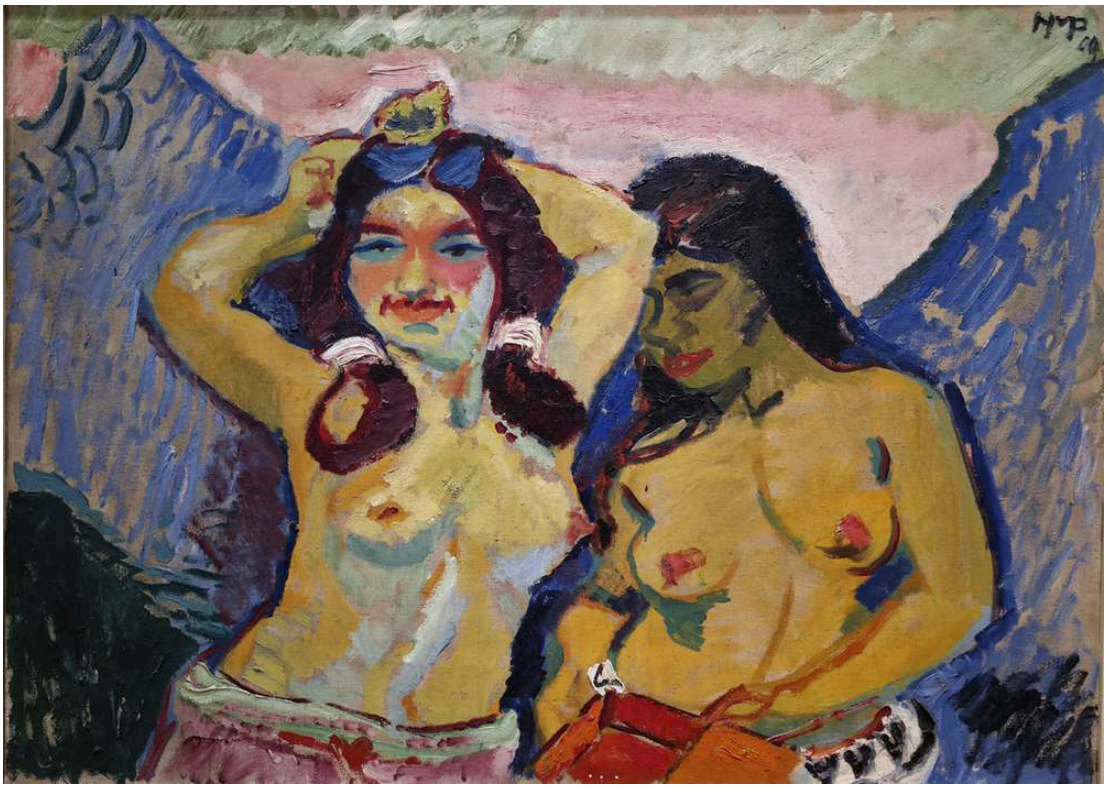
Two Girls

Max Pechstein

1909 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Max Pechstein. Two Girls. Image credit: Max Pechstein; Source credit: Ölgemälde. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The two girls sit close together, and only one of them raises her arms. That single difference stops them from becoming a matched pair and gives the picture its movement. Pechstein holds the bodies against their surroundings with broad outlines and flat, emphatic colour, and posture counts for far more than anatomical detail.

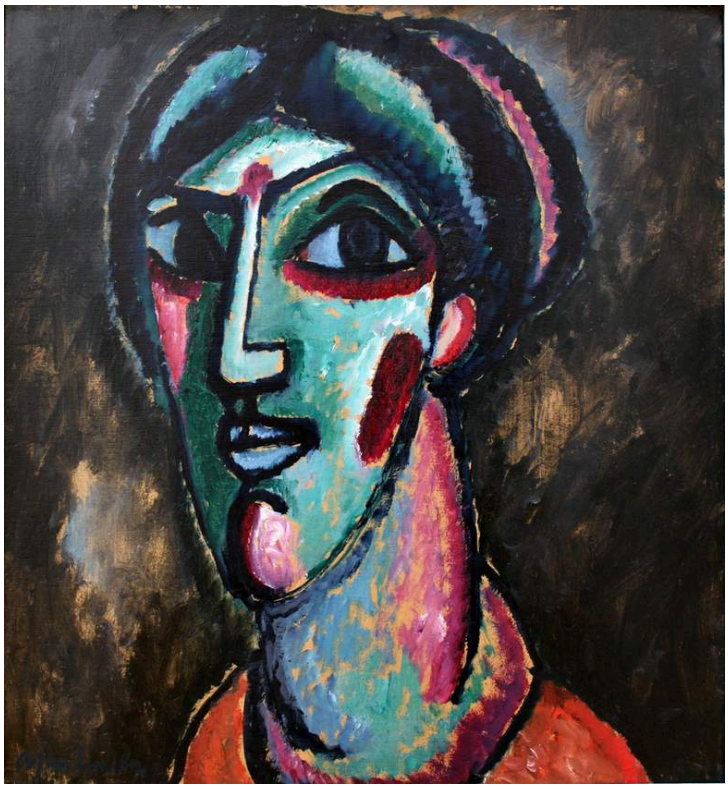
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1680

15 / 20

Head in Black and Green

Alexej von Jawlensky

1913 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Alexej von Jawlensky. Head in Black and Green. Image credit: Alexej von Jawlensky. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The title calls this a head, not a portrait, and identifies it by colour, though it names only black and green. Blue and pink are there too. None of these describes ordinary skin, yet the face stays legible, held together by its enlarged eyes, long nose and proportions. Jawlensky seems to be testing how much of a face the placing and scale of its features can carry once natural colouring has been set aside.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1671

16 / 20

Ideal Landscape with the Temple of Juno at Agrigento

Jacob Philipp Hackert

1794 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Jacob Philipp Hackert. Ideal Landscape with Juno Temple of Agrigento. Image credit: Jacob Philipp Hackert. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The title pulls two ways. It names a particular ruin, the Temple of Juno at Agrigento, and then calls the landscape “ideal”, which means the view need not be an unedited record from a single spot. Ruins, water, trees and small figures are gathered into an ordered prospect, and Hackert ties the temple to the surrounding terrain through a sequence of arranged passages leading back into the distance. Strauch's market takes its title from the place it was seen from. Here the viewpoint may itself be part of the composition.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm2040

17 / 20

Judith with the Head of Holofernes

Hans Baldung

1525 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Hans Baldung Grien. Judith with the Head of Holophernes. Image credit: Hans Baldung Grien. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Judith stands upright and sharply outlined beside the sword and the severed head of Holofernes, and she looks composed. Baldung shows what the violence has produced, but nothing in her pose recalls the act itself. That gap makes the picture hard to settle on. Her calm sits awkwardly with the head beside her, and Baldung does nothing to reconcile the two.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1093

18 / 20

Madonna and Child with Parrots

Hans Baldung

1533 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Hans Baldung Grien. Madonna with Child and Parrots. Image credit: Hans Baldung Grien. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

After Baldung's Judith, who barely moves, this is a restless picture. The child twists, so mother and child never settle into a stable, symmetrical devotional image, and dark drapery sets off their pale bodies. The parrots near the figures add further points of activity. Whatever they may signify, in the composition they work first as interruptions.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1170

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Nativity of Christ

Wilhelm Stetter

1525 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Wilhelm Stetter. Nativity of Christ. Image credit: Wilhelm Stetter; Source credit: Objektkatalog der Sammlungen des Germanischen Nationalmuseums. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Witz squeezes his Annunciation into one cramped room. Stetter opens the Nativity out. His buildings divide the picture into connected spaces, with room for distant figures as well as for the group around the newborn child, and architectural passages lead the eye away from the main event and back again. The birth holds the centre, but it is not the only thing happening.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1210

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The Elder Sister

Fritz von Uhde

1883 · Germanisches Nationalmuseum



Fritz von Uhde. The Elder Sister. Image credit: Fritz von Uhde. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

She is given a role rather than a name, and the picture shows what the role involves: the girl carries the smaller child on her back. Uhde makes this practical task the substance of their relationship. Side light picks out both faces and the worn clothing in a modest room.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Gm1788

Threads across the selection

Some pictures answer one another beyond the pairings made in the entries. Tischbein's mother, Baldung's Mary and Uhde's elder sister are all shown with a child, and each picture makes something different of it: closeness in a double portrait, restlessness in a devotional image, a chore in a modest household. Performance links another group, from Herneisen's fool playing up at close range to Grützner's actors waiting in the wings and Oppenheimer's musicians in the middle of playing.

Further reading

The Practice and Science of Drawing

Harold Speed · Read free · English

Harold Speed's general manual of drawing has chapters on contour, tone and the arrangement of figures, and its practical terms work just as well for paintings. They help in comparing Dürer's close description of Wolgemut's face with Jawlensky's simplified head, and in untangling the overlapping arms and bows of Oppenheimer's quartet. It is a manual, not a commentary on these pictures.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12

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