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Edvard Munch Prints Explore Spiritualist Color Theories at the National Gallery of Art, September 3, 2017, through January 28, 2018



Edvard Munch  
*Girl's Head Against the Shore*, 1899  
color woodcut  
framed: 78.11 x 67.63 x 3.49 cm (30 3/4 x 26 5/8 x 1 3/8 in.)  
Epstein Family Collection

Washington, DC—In the second half of the 19th century, advances in physics, electromagnetic radiation theory, and the optical sciences provoked new thought about the physical as well as the spiritual worlds. Aspects of that thought are revealed in **Edvard Munch: Color in Context**, an exhibition of 21 prints that considers the choice, combinations, and meaning of color in light of spiritualist principles. Informed by popular manuals that explained the science of color and by theosophical writings on the visual and physical power of color, Edvard Munch (1863–1944) created works that are not just strikingly personal but also are charged with specific associations. **Edvard Munch** will be on view in the West Building from September 3, 2017, through January 28, 2018.

The majority of the prints in the exhibition come from the Epstein Family Collection, the largest and finest gathering of the artist's graphic work outside of his native Norway. Their holdings are being steadily donated to the Gallery.

"We are indebted to the Epstein family for their extraordinary commitment to the Gallery and to the understanding of Edvard Munch's art," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "It is an honor to dedicate this exhibition to the memory of Lionel Epstein, who passed away earlier this year."

The Gallery has presented seven exhibitions on Munch: [Woodcuts, Lithographs, and Etchings from Paul Gauguin and Edvard Munch](#) (1947); [Prints by Edvard Munch from the Rosenwald Collection](#) (1972); ["The Sick Girl" by Edvard Munch](#) (1975); [Edvard Munch: Symbols and Images](#) (1978); [Edvard Munch: Master Prints from the Epstein Family Collection](#) (1990); [Edvard Munch: Master Prints](#) (2010); and [Edvard Munch: A 150th Anniversary Tribute](#) (2013).

### Exhibition Organization and Support

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

### Exhibition Highlights

Early in his life, Munch was exposed to spiritualism and aural concepts that became popular on an international scale at the end of the 19th century. His childhood vicar was the well-known spiritualist Reverend E. F. B. Horn. Additionally, as a young artist in Oslo, Norway, Munch would meet his friends directly across the street from traveling medium A. Stojohann's "Scientific Public Library." Given such exposure, Munch would have been open to the notion of spiritual power, four-dimensional planes, and invisible forces. It is known that he believed he could see energies radiating from specific colors.

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Many of Munch's contemporaries, including Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), Maurice Denis (1870–1943), and Odilon Redon (1840–1916), were well aware of these new philosophies, and their work bears some general relation to them. In Munch's use of color, which intensified psychological and expressive meaning, the correlation with theosophical theories and ideas is specific.

### Curators and Related Activities

The exhibition is curated by Jonathan Bober, Andrew W. Mellon Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings, and Mollie Berger, curatorial assistant in the department of prints and drawings, National Gallery of Art.

### Lecture

*Edvard Munch: Spiritualism, Science, and Color*

September 10, 2:00

East Building Auditorium

Valerie Hullstein, independent scholar, and Elizabeth Prelinger, Keyser Family Professor of Art History and Modern Art, Georgetown University, in conversation with Mollie Berger, curatorial assistant in the department of prints and drawings, National Gallery of Art

### Concert

New York Opera Society

September 24, 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

World premiere staged reading of *Letters from Ruth* by Gisle Kverndokk

### Press Contact:

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### General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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## PRESS KIT

### Exhibition Press Release

[Exhibition Checklist](#) (PDF 103kb)

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## CURATOR BIOGRAPHY

[Jonathan Bober](#)

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