

The painting 'The Scream' by Edvard Munch, depicting a figure in a blue dress on a bridge railing, looking out at a turbulent sea under a dramatic, colorful sky. The sky is filled with horizontal bands of red, orange, and yellow, while the water below is dark and swirling. In the background, a small boat is visible on the water, and a cityscape is visible on the horizon.

THE SCREAM
EDVARD MUNCH

MoMA

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ANN TEMKIN

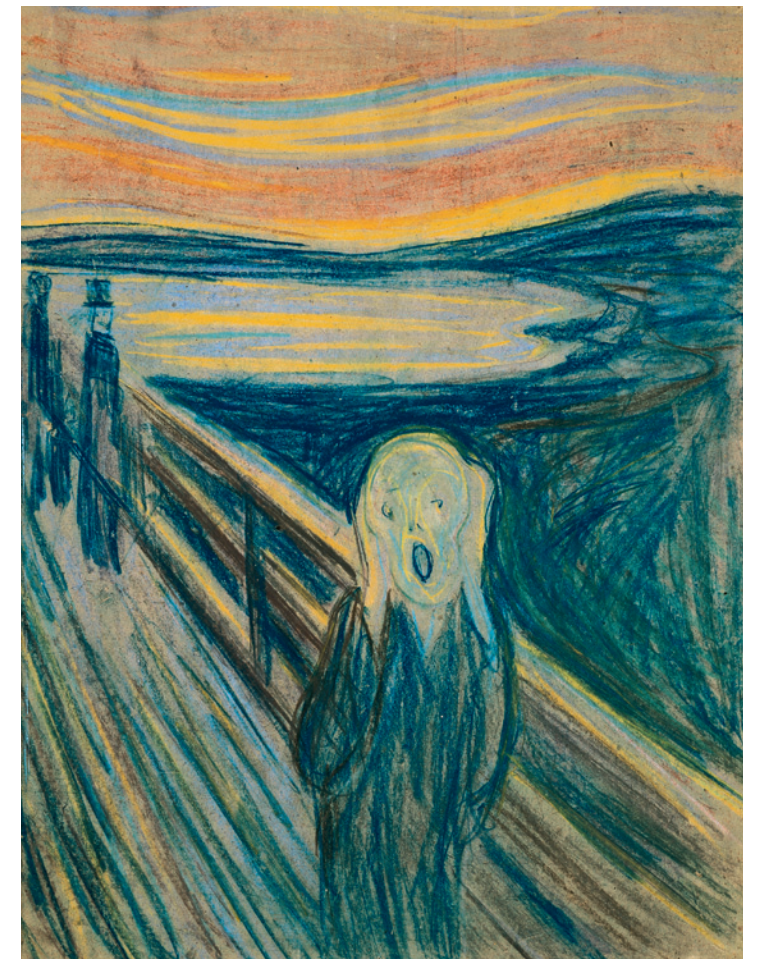
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK



Let's plainly state what may seem self-evident: *The Scream* now on view at The Museum of Modern Art is a unique work of art (fig. 1). It exists in contradistinction to the seemingly infinite number of images, produced during the course of more than a century, that replicate, modify, and caricature it. Edvard Munch drew this image with pastels on a sheet of paper mounted on cardboard. It measures 32 by 23 1/4 inches. He made it in 1895, signing and dating it on the lower left. The artist housed the drawing in a gilded frame bearing a plaque with a text hand-lettered in red paint, signed "E. M." The resulting object is resolutely autonomous, employing both image and text to convey the full force of Munch's nightmarish vision.

That being said, this *Scream* takes its place within a tightly knit family of related paintings, drawings, and prints made by Munch. Multiplicity is part of its DNA, for Munch continually revisited virtually all his motifs; returning to them was an integral part of his practice. Thus, long before the legions of imitations appeared, *The Scream* was both singular and multiple. This pastel drawing relates most obviously to the best-known version of *The Scream*, now in the National Museum in Oslo, Norway (fig. 2). Munch created that work in 1893, just before he turned thirty years old. From the moment this painting on cardboard was first exhibited in December 1893, *The Scream* became a sensationalized focal point for both the admirers and detractors of this controversial artist.

1. EDVARD MUNCH
The Scream. 1895.
Pastel on paper on
cardboard, 32 × 23 1/4"
(79 × 59 cm). Private
collection



The painting in the National Museum itself depends on a prior composition: a pastel drawing of 1893, now in the Munch Museum in Oslo (fig. 3). This pastel appears to be the sketch in which Munch mapped out the essentials of the composition. In 1895, the same year that Munch made the pastel drawing on view at MoMA, he made a lithograph of *The Scream* (fig. 4). The work was among his earliest ventures in that medium. Over time he made about thirty *Scream* lithographs, all with black ink, most on either white or tan paper. A few were printed on colored paper or were enhanced with watercolor. Meanwhile, Munch had retained for himself the 1893 painted version of *The Scream*. When he sold it some time after the turn of the century, he painted another one to take its place in his collection (fig. 5).

2 (opposite).
EDVARD MUNCH
The Scream. 1893.
 Tempera, oil, pastel, and
 crayon on cardboard,
 35^{13/16} × 29^{15/16}" (91 ×
 73.5 cm). The National
 Museum of Art,
 Architecture, and
 Design, Oslo

3 (above).
EDVARD MUNCH
The Scream. 1893.
 Pastel on cardboard,
 29^{1/8} × 22" (74 × 56 cm).
 Munch Museum, Oslo



4 (above).

EDVARD MUNCH
The Scream. 1895.

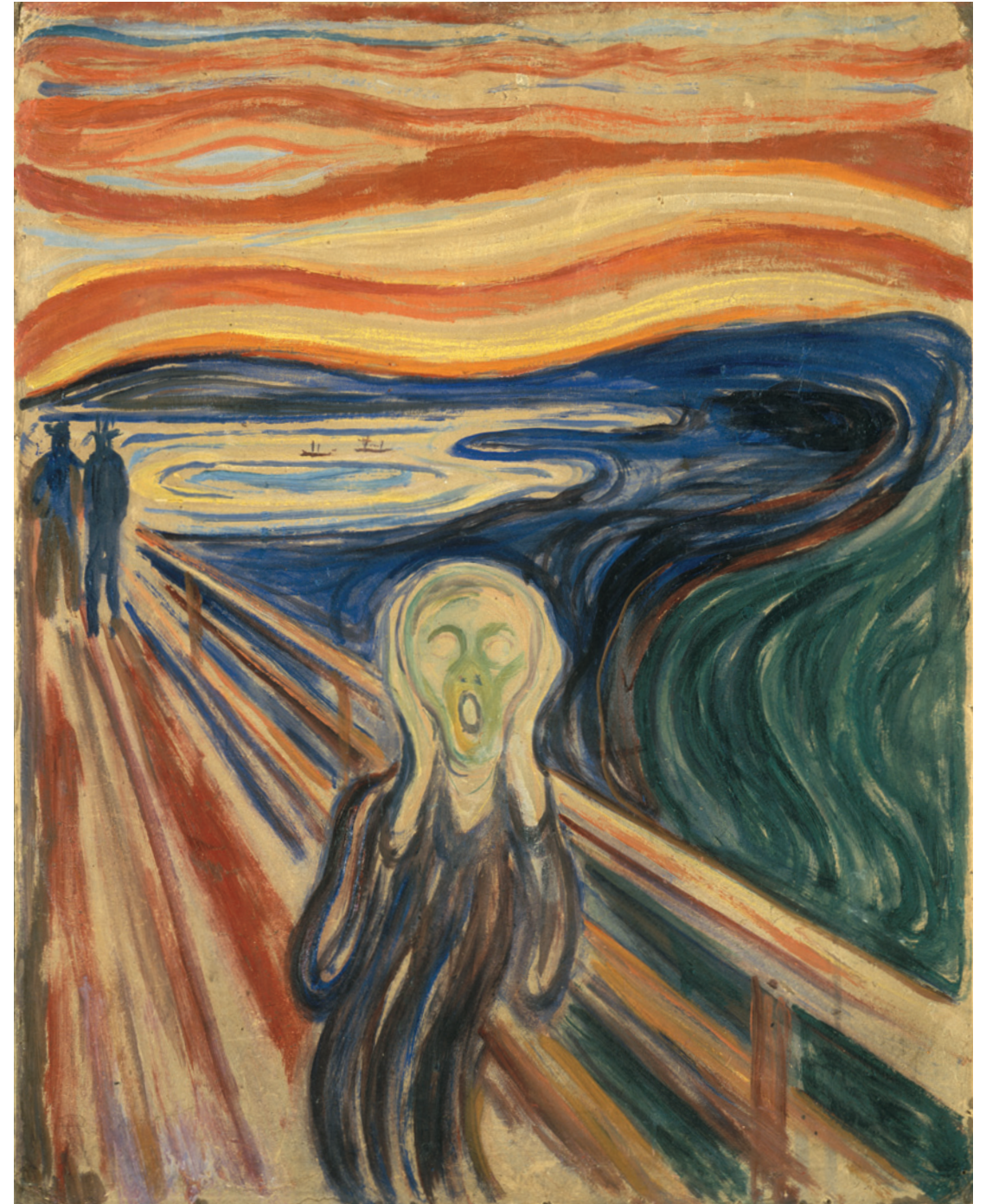
Lithograph, composition:
 13 15/16 × 10" (35.4 × 25.4 cm);
 sheet: 20 11/16 × 15 7/8"
 (52.5 × 40.3 cm). The
 Museum of Modern Art,
 New York. Matthew T.
 Mellon Fund

5 (opposite).

EDVARD MUNCH
The Scream. 1910? Tempera
 and oil on cardboard,
 32 7/8 × 26" (83.5 × 66 cm).
 Munch Museum, Oslo

It is likely that Munch created the work on display at MoMA at the express request of its first owner, Arthur von Franquet, a businessman in the German city of Braunschweig. He was an early collector of Munch's work and also owned a lithograph of *The Scream*. It was not uncommon for Munch to make another version of a picture in order to accommodate a desirous collector; such opportunities fit well with his process of working with themes and variations. The 1895 pastel *Scream* and all its relatives constitute a formidable group of objects. Even so, they do not define a closed or comprehensive set. The motif had been brewing in Munch's mind, and on pages and canvases, for at least a year prior to 1893.

Before widening the circle of works that surround this *Scream*, however, let's turn briefly to Munch's biography. The



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