Expressionism

In Germany, there were two main branches of Expressionism. The first was called Die Brucke (The Bridge) which was started in Dresden in 1905 and finished by the outbreak of World War One in 1914. The main artists associated with this group are Kirchner, Nolde, Heckel and Schmidt-Rottluff. The second group, known as Die Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) began in Mucnich in 1909. The main artists were Kandsinky, Marc and Macke.

Both groups shared an interest in intense colour and emotional strength. They mixed Munch’s social pessismism with the colour of Van Gogh and the Fauves and the Primitivism of Gauguin and African art. Both groups reacted against the moral stuffiness and the repressive politics of the late Hapsburg dynasty.

The subject matter of the first group, Die Brucke, was dominated by the exploration of social class, sexuality and identity. Whilst the artists of the Blaue Reiter looked to animals and folk tales. Both groups preferred the Gothic to the Classical and used mystical directness, pointed shapes and jolts of colour to shake the onlooker rather than appealing to his sense of cultural continuity.