

FAQs

Explain the 2 factions of the Werkbund.

Soon after the Werkbund was founded, it divided into two factions.

One, championed by Muthesius, advocated the greatest possible use of mechanical mass production and standardized design. The other faction, headed by van de Velde, maintained the value of individual artistic expression.

The Werkbund adopted Muthesius' ideas in 1914.

What is expressionism? What does it deal with?

Expressionism was a modernist movement, initially in poetry and painting, originating in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. Its typical trait is to present the world solely from a subjective perspective, distorting it radically for emotional effect in order to evoke moods or ideas.

Expressionist artists sought to express meaning or emotional experience rather than physical reality.

Expressionism was developed as an avant-garde style before the WW1. It remained popular during the Weimar Republic, particularly in Berlin.

The style extended to a wide range of the arts, including expressionist architecture, painting, literature, theatre, dance, film and music. While the word expressionist was used in the modern sense as early as 1850, its origin is sometimes traced to paintings exhibited in 1901 in Paris by an obscure artist Julien Auguste Hervé, which he called Expressionismes. An Expressionist wishes, above all, to express himself.

An Expressionist rejects immediate perception and builds on more complex psychic structures.

Impressions and mental images that pass through peoples soul as through a filter which rids them of all substantial accretions to produce their clear essence. Mainly German and centered in Munich, who sought to convey deep emotional content using significant amounts of abstraction but without losing figural subject matter.

What are the characteristics of expressionist architecture?

The style was characterized by an early modernist adoption of novel materials, formal innovation, and very unusual massing, sometimes inspired by natural biomorphic forms, sometimes by the new technical possibilities offered by the mass production of brick, steel and especially glass.

Many expressionist architects fought in World War I and their experiences, combined with the political turmoil and social upheaval that followed the German Revolution of 1919, resulted in a utopian outlook and a romantic socialist agenda.

Expressionism is not a clearly defined term and may have more than one definition. It can often overlap other kinds of content and formal choices. Nevertheless, there is a certain quality about it that usually allows us to recognize it.

Expressionist forms are often sculptural, sometimes irrational, usually personal and idiosyncratic. But they are also often distorted. This may not always be easy to distinguish. A wildly sculptural form may not always be the evidence of expressionism. Expressionistic form can also convey spirituality as well as psychology and it is important to evaluate a potentially expressionist form carefully before pronouncing a verdict. Some people would argue that the work of Santiago Calatrava is expressionistic. Some of his works are arguably expressionistic in form and feeling.

What is the difference between an expressive building and an expressionist building?

The notion of identifying “expressive” qualities in a building is not necessarily the same as identifying “expressionistic” qualities.

A building may convey some intentional meaning through its form (“expressive”); or the stamp of the personality, individuality, identity, or even the pathology of the architect (“expressionistic”). This may not always be easy to distinguish. A wildly sculptural form may not always be the evidence of expressionism.

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What is the connection between Sigmund Freud and expressionist architecture?

Sigmund Freud was an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst. Sigmund Freud, was a very influential man in the realm of psychology. Much of his early work involved studying patients with hysterical symptoms, and trying to conclude how these hysterical symptoms and cognition's manifested themselves. Hysteria would be a theme (along with other mental illnesses) depicted in early horror films to arouse fear of mental illness. Just like Surrealism would soon examine the dark side of the human mind, the German Expressionists reflected the influence of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud.

Just like how expressionism addresses the deeper parts of the human mind and provokes the subconscious levels of man, Sigmund Freud took it to a scientific level.

