Hello, I'd like to welcome you to this episode of Exploring Art History with Ian. My name is Ian McConnell and today's lesson is about Expressionism, Fauvism, The Bridge and The Blue Rider. As you're watching the video, feel free to pause, move forward, or rewind as often as you feel is necessary. And as soon as you're ready we can begin.

Today's objectives are listed below. By the end of the lesson you should be able to identify and define today's key terms, describe some similarities and differences between two Expressionist groups, The Bridge and The Blue Rider, and identify examples of Expressionist art work.

Key terms, as always, are listed in yellow. First key term is Expressionism, an art movement that is characterized by exaggerated and distorted forms and colors used by artists as a technique to increase an emotional reaction from the viewer. Fauvism, a 20th century experimental art movement derived from the French word fauve, meaning "wild beast" distinguished by the use of bold colors and spontaneous brush strokes.

The Bridge, a 20th century German Expressionistic art movement consisting of a group of artists whose work is characterized by distinctively bold color landscapes and portraits. The Blue Rider, an informal group of early 20th century artists associated with Vasily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, whose work was recognized for using abstracted forms and colors. And synesthesia, the experience of one sense as another. For example, visually sensing sound.

The big idea for today, that Expressionism was an artistic movement that explored the expression of human emotion and the artist's unique point of view. And we'll be looking at artwork from between 1905 and 1913 today.

We'll be traveling to Paris, France, where the Fauvists revealed their new works of art at the Autumn Salon of 1905, Dresden, Germany, home of The Bridge, the Expressionist group, and Munich, Germany, home of The Blue Rider, another Expressionist group.

So Henri Matisse-- or Henry Matisse English-- his work was unique for many reasons, but his experimentation with forms of painting is largely unequaled. His visual style is broad, which has as much to do with his provincial upbringing as it does with his academic training. In time his experimentations led him to develop a style negatively dubbed as fauvist, or wild, by critics due to its unorthodox painterly approach to color application, depictions of space, and appearance of brush strokes.

Now like the Impressionists, Fauvists embraced their title. Matisse's work within this genre of painting is incredibly influential, and is largely credited with the development of the Expressionist style that spread throughout Europe in the early 20th century. Now this has contributed to Matisse's widely held reputation among historians as one of
the most important, if not the most important, French painters of the 20th century.

Now this painting of his wife, *Woman With a Hat*, along with several others of a similar style, was presented at the Autumn Salon of 1905 in Paris, and was genuinely abhorred by critics of the time. However, it marks an important stylistic change in his work. Matisse's work was emphasizing the use of color and brushstroke, much like the Impressionists and post-Impressionists that preceded him. It was using them to evoke an expression of human emotion and his own unique point of view. Now this departs from the Impressionist artists' use of color and brushstroke to depict observable effects of light. In other words, Impressionists were externally influenced while Expressionists were internally influenced.

Now the second painting by Matisse is also of his wife, and was also displayed, if I remember correctly, at the same Autumn Salon of 1905. It's another example of his use of color to define features and evoke a feeling. And this becomes a central theme in a lot of Expressionist artwork that follows, particularly with The Blue Rider group from Munich, Germany. Now there's a flatness to the work that recalls the work of Cezanne and Gauguin. A green stripe down the middle of her face breaks the form into two sides. One side is cooler and the other side is warmer.

Rather than play with the color value, as one would in a realistic portrait, Matisse substitutes the colors outright. He doesn't use a naturalistic palette because this isn't an interpretation of what he sees, but rather his interpretation of the emotion being projected.

Now in Germany, two Expressionists groups formed within about five years of each other and share the common goal of expression in art, but emphasized different areas. Now The Bridge, formed in Dresden, Germany in 1905, thanks in a large part to Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and The Blue Rider group formed in or around 1911, and was anchored by co-founders Vasily Kandinsky, a Russian immigrant, and Franz Marc of Germany.

Now this painting by Kirchner titled *Street, Dresden* is an example of the type of subject matter The Bridge artists were concerning themselves with. The name The Bridge refers to the fact that these artists saw their work as a bridge between the past and the future. Members of The Bridge lived more Bohemian lifestyle in what they felt was a sharp contrast to the bourgeoisie. They were interested in Primitivism like Oceanic art and German folk art, and often traveling to remote areas of Germany on retreats.

Now they revived the wood cut, but emphasized the rough broad lines of this medium instead of trying to hide them. On this example, Kirchner uses color and form to explore themes of anxiety and tension, particularly with what he felt was the alienating experience of modern life in the city. The technique is effective, as the overall sense from the painting isn't particularly positive. Although the image is full of people, there's two intimacy or interaction between figures.
Now compare this with another painting of the city, this one by Renoir. Now it's not of the same city, but the effect is like night and day. Renoir's painting that you see here evokes joy and companionship while Kirchner's evokes isolation. Now both examples depict people existing in close proximity to each other, yet Kirchner's painting is comparatively, but intentionally, more vapid.

Franz Marc, along with Vasily Kandinsky, was a co-founder of the group that came to be known as The Blue Rider. Now like Kandinsky, Marc was a spiritual person. His paintings of the early 20th century were predominantly of animals which he felt were spiritually closer to nature. However, as the feeling of impending war loomed over many people in Europe, Marc included, his work began to take on a less optimistic feel, but not necessarily about the reality of war.

He's a deeply religious person. Marc spoke about how he began to see the less glamorous aspect of humanity present in animals as well, and how animals were subject to an apocalyptic cleansing just like humans. Now this is an important shift because animals had once represented all that was pure in nature for Marc. This shift is evident in his visual style as well as the sharp geometric shards, which are inspired by Cubism, separate and isolate the animals represented within the picture. Replacing the more tranquil and communal imagery from previous years, like we see here. Now the Fate of Animals is an example of this shift and likely Marc's most famous painting.

Now if you've been following, you may have heard me mention before my love of Kandinsky's painting. There's a positivity and optimism in it that I always found appealing. Kandinsky is widely considered one of the first artists to explore pure abstraction in his paintings. He was a spiritual person. He sought to express the internal rather than respond to the external and felt his work could inspire those that sought towards achieving a greater spiritual awareness.

His work also explored the possibilities of depicting a visual expression of music. He's largely believed to have the condition known as synesthesia in which there is some cross-talk between the senses in the brain. For example, some people with synesthesia may experience a certain taste upon reviewing shapes, thus specific shapes would literally taste different. Kandinsky's particular condition may have been communication, or cross-communication, between his visual and auditory centers, being able to visualize color.

Now this may very well explain his affinity for Expressionism as well as his naming scheme for his paintings, which follow that of classical music, using such titles as Composition and Improvisation. His painting Improvisation 28 was considered by Kandinsky himself to be his first purely abstract work of art.

So that brings us to the end of this lesson. Let's take a look at our objectives again to see if we met them. Now that you've seen the lesson, are you able to identify and define today's key terms? Can you describe some similarities and differences between two Expressionist groups, The Bridge and The Blue Rider? And can you
identify examples of Expressionist artwork?

And once again the big idea for today, Expressionism was an artistic movement that explored the expression of human emotion and the artist's unique point of view.

That's it. Thank you very much for joining me today. I'll see you next time.