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August Macke was a prominent figure in the Der Blaue Reiter group, a collective of painters from the German Expressionism movement. He lived during a very inventive period in German art, seeing the emergence of the major German expressionism groups as well as the advent of the succeeding avant-garde groups that were emerging throughout Europe. August Macke's artworks include the aspects of the avant-garde that piqued his attention. He, like his colleagues Otto Soltau and Franz Marc, was a youthful German painter who perished in the First World War.An introduction to August Macke's Paintings and LifeAugust Macke created an immediately recognized expressionism style, defined by vivid, bright colors and bold draughtsmanship, inspired by modern painters in Germany and France. In a career that lasted less than ten years, he succeeded to generate a diverse body of work in a variety of mediums and genres. His calm, almost poetic creations include several instances of portrait art, landscape painting, and genre painting.Macke's harmonizing imagery creates a powerful feeling of serenity and harmony in his paintings, and his angst-free artwork has been described as "soft expressionism." He was a significant pioneer of contemporary art in Germany and among the most inventive artists of the early 20th century.Nationality:GermanBirthdate:3 January 1887Birthplace:Meschede, GermanyDate of Death:26 September 1914Associated Movements:German Expressionism, Avant-GardeAugust Macke's Artworks and BiographyAugust Macke was a founding member of the avant-garde group Der Blaue Reiter, and a key member of the German Expressionism movement. This group was based in Munich and added innovative artistic contributions to the German art world. His career was cut short by his untimely death when he died on the 26th of September in 1914 during the early days of the first World War. Self-portrait (1906) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThe Early Life of August MackeAugust Macke was born on the 3rd of January in 1887, in the town of Meschede in Westphalia. He was the child of amateur artist and building contractor August Friedrich Macke, and Maria Florentine, who was a native of the Sauerland farming region. The family moved to Cologne soon after August's birth, where he attended the Kreuzgymnasium and became friends with Hans Thuar, who also became a painter. He was uninterested in academics and preferred to devote his time to sketching and drawing.When August Macke was 13, his family relocated to Bonn, where he attended the Realgymnasium and became friends with Walter Gerhardt and his sister, Elisabeth, who would eventually become his bride many years later. August Macke and his wife Elisabeth, 1908; Unknown author; Unknown author, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThe boy's earliest creative influences were his father's sketches, the Japanese prints acquired by his classmate Thuar's father, and the paintings of Arnold Böcklin, which he encountered on a trip in 1900 to Basel. He attended the Dusseldorf Art Academy from 1904 to 1906 but regarded the education in technique to be archaic.Fortunately, he found more freedom in the evening night lessons, where the night lessons were considerably more engaging and artistic in nature. He also designed costumes and sets for the city theatre. He also traveled to Belgium, Holland, and Italy beginning in 1906, thanks to Bernhard Koehler, Elisabeth's uncle, and a well-known art collector.The Training of August MackeAugust Macke spent most of his life after that in Bonn, with the exception of a few stints at Lake Thun in Switzerland and other journeys to Tunisia, Italy, and the Netherlands. These journeys resulted in August Macke's first excursion to Paris in 1908.Here, Koehler exposed him to many of the town's hyper-modern artworks, including brilliantly colored Fauvism, more ascetic Cubism, and pieces by Robert Delaunay and Paul Cezanne.He went to a multitude of exhibitions and workshops and met a lot of painters in person. During this period, he spent several months in Berlin studying under renowned painter Lovis Corinth. He wedded his girlfriend Elisabeth in 1909. An example of his artwork from this period is The Artist's Wife in Blue Hat (1909). Portrait of the artist's wife with a blue hat (1909) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons Der Blaue Reiter groupAugust Macke met Wassily Kandinsky in 1910 through his connection with Franz Marc, and for a while, they shared Der Blaue Reiter's non-objective style and metaphysical and metaphoric concerns. It was led by Russian emigrant Wassily Kandinsky, and its other participants included Paul Klee, Franz Marc, and Alexei von Jawlensky.Many other artists took part in Blaue Reiter shows, notably fauvists Maurice de Vlaminck and Andre Derain, Cubists Braque and Picasso, Russian artists Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova, and Gabriele Munter, but it was the five main members that epitomized the group's essence. Some of August Macke's paintings from this period include his landscape artworks Staudacher's House at the Tegernsee (1910) and Tegernsee Landscape (1910). Staudacher's House at the Tegernsee (1910) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThough the manner of painting varies from one painter to the next within Der Blaue Reiter, some commonality can be found. Der Blaue Reiter's expressionist work was conceived as a coloristic counterparty to the Cubist Avant-Garde's monochromatic formal studies in Paris.Wassily Kandinsky and Picasso were limiting their palettes to browns and greys, and they concentrated on form. Der Blaue Reiter painters were emphasizing color and speculating its symbolic implications.Moreover, individuals of Der Blaue Reiter were closely associated with Cubism experimentation in France. Futurism in Russia and Italy, and a slew of other European offshoot organizations. While all of these contemporary art aesthetic elements became combined in their paintings, they were always inscribed inside the painters' intensive study of expressive color. Cover of Der Blaue Reiter almanac. (c. 1912), cover art designed by Wassily Kandinsky; Wassily Kandinsky, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsMacke contributed funding to one of the most significant achievements in contemporary art, the publishing of the Blue Rider Almanac (1911), for which he also authored an essay. Furthermore, he helped fund the First German Autumn Salon, the greatest European avant-garde artistic show ever produced in Germany during that period, at the Sturm Gallery in Berlin.Macke's encounter with Robert Delaunay in 1912 in Paris would prove to be a watershed moment for him.From that moment forward, Macke's painting was affected by Delaunay's style of chromatic Cubism, which Apollinaire named Orphism. Macke's Large Bright Shop Window (1912) is a personal version of Delaunay's Windows (1912) coupled with the continuity of imagery inherent in Italian Futurism. LEFT: Large Bright Shop Window (1912) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons | RIGHT: Windows (1912) by Robert Delaunay; Robert Delaunay, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThe Der Blaue Reiter group's second and last exhibition took place in March 1912. It featured graphic pieces by Munich painters as well as a diverse group of modernists such as Nolde, Kasimir Malevich, Jean Arp, and others. It was apparent from this that there was no cohesive group driving these efforts, and there was no attempt to develop one.The necessity for these local coalitions had already been supplanted by a European movement, which was now visible everywhere.The fresh energy that propelled expressionism in painting primarily came from the work of Wassily Kandinsky, who was central to this book. Macke established his unique style of painting, as indicated by the various sketches and oil paintings, the cadence of shapes become the essence of a picture, a result also attained by Delaunay in France.The Expressionist Style of August Macke's PaintingsAlthough a significant contributor to the movement known as German Expressionism, Macke was not particularly engaged in Kandinsky's philosophical constructs; his letters, particularly, reveal that he had limited tolerance for Kandinsky's abstract painting. Instead, he established a personal painting style that, although influenced by Cubism, was both representational and vividly colorful.He believed philosophical musings to be a pointless exercise.He utilized the limited time he had to fulfill his voracious curiosity about life. As a consequence, his primary topics were ordinary, daily scenes: neither the heightened velocity of 20th-century metropolitan life nor the tranquility of rural landscapes piqued his interest. Examples of this can be seen in Promenade (1913) and People by a Blue Lake (1913). Promenade (1913) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsHe portrayed contemporary, well-dressed individuals in peaceful, pleasant man-made settings: gardens, thoroughfares, botanical gardens, riverbanks, or shop displays, as well as ballerina and circus settings. August Macke's artworks, in comparison to other expressionist works, are neither rushed nor tense; instead, they generally portray tranquil discussions, or people sitting quietly, or observing wildlife, or strolling, or even window-shopping.It's no surprise that he was attracted to Cologne's zoological parks, where he depicted children frolicking and tourists wandering amid birds, flamingos, emus, and deer. People by a Blue Lake (1913) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThese paintings appear to depict a sort of urban paradise within the metropolis, where people may reconnect with the wilderness. Macke's color palette is more characteristic of Der Blaue Reiter's art, ranging from vividly vibrant (but never strident) to gently evocative. He was able to create an
appealing, exotic aspect by his use of color, even in the most mundane scenarios he picked. As a result, he frames his characters with vibrant greenery, turquoise or violet sky, and areas of vivid yellow, implying powerful sunshine. His jacket was enormous feathered caps, making the city an suburban life appear rich and glamorous.The Artistic Development of August MackeThe work of Robert Delaunay inspired him to create a number of Orphism-style artworks with intersecting shapes and colors, including Colored Composition (1912), Colored Form I (1913), and Colored Form II (1913). Colored Form II (1913) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsDelaunay's impact spread to Macke's figurative works, in which the Frenchman's "orphic" colors may be seen at times, although Macke's color pigments are generally brighter and fuller. Macke took part in two notable fine art shows in 1913: the First German Fall Salon in Berlin and the Rhinish Expressionists Exhibition in Bonn. Macke's second child was born the following year, and the family relocated to a gorgeous lakeside property in Switzerland.Macke's Trip to TunisiaIn the spring of 1914, he ventured further afield in quest of more exotic and colorful material. He traveled to Tunisia with Klee and a Swiss friend, the artist Louis Moilliet. The powerful light and colorful environs of North Africa captivated all three, and they passed every day in the scorching heat drawing the palms, mountains, camels, and whitewashed towns they encountered. Macke was particularly drawn to the locals: drawing and painting Arab businessmen selling their products in the alleys and souks, busy waterfront life, and men lounging in cafés such as View into a Lane (1914).He drew hundreds of sketches in less than a fortnight, which he eventually transformed into some of his finest oil paintings. View into a Lane (1914) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThe exotic environment of Tunisia, where Macke journeyed in April 1914 with Moilliet and Klee, was crucial in the development of his last luminst style, during which he painted a sequence of paintings now regarded masterpieces.August Macke's work may be classified as both Fauvism and Expressionism (in its original German form, which flourished in the two decades between 1905 and 1925).The paintings are primarily concerned with communicating sentiments and emotions rather than recreating objective truth, and they frequently distort color and shape. However, the brilliant watercolor pictures he created on this trip are possibly his best artistic effort. Donkey Rider (1914) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThe First World War broke out a few months later. Macke joined the army in early August, only to then be murdered in combat a few weeks later, at the age of 27. All who loved him lamented his death, particularly his dear friend Franz Marc, who would meet the same end only two years later.August Macke's PaintingsAll through his sadly brief career, August Macke created a signature painting aesthetic – a combination of Fauvism, Impressionism, Cubism, and Orphism – whose sense of harmony, colors, and peaceful imagery served as a counterpoint to the more geometric art and fervent effect of the Die Brücke group in Berlin and Dresden.August Macke's artworks may be seen in several of Europe's top museums and art galleries, and also regional galleries around Germany. His most renowned landscape artworks include:Garden View (1911)St Mary's Church in the Snow (1911) The Church of St. Mary in Bonn in Snow (1911) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsAmong August Macke's most famous portraits are:Artist's Wife with Hat (1909)Nude with Coral Necklace (1910) Female nude with coral necklace (1910) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsMacke's most famous genre paintings include:Zoological Garden I (1912)Freiburg Cathedral, Switzerland (1914)Hat-Shop (1914) Zoological Garden I (1912) by August Macke; August Macke, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsMacke also created a number of woodcarvings and pieces of ceramics, as well as prints (mostly woodcuts and linocuts), for example:The Farewell (1913)Three Nudes (1913)Patterns for embroideries, carpets, wall-hangings, and tapestries. Three Nudes Against Blue Background (1913) by August Macke; August Macke, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia CommonsFurther ReadingAugust Macke's Artwork career was very short. Yet, there is much to learn about his life beyond what we have shared in this article. If you are interested in learning more about this amazing German painter, then we recommend that you try these books:August Macke and Switzerland (2013) by Klara Drebenker-August Macke (1887–1914) is widely considered a pivotal figure in the Blaue Reiter movement. The youthful Expressionist's period at Rosengarten House on Lake Thun in Switzerland from October 1913 to June 1914 is central to this book. Macke established his unique style of painting, as indicated by the various sketches and oil paintings featured in this collection.We learn here, as with Cézanne's Mont Sainte-Victoire, to see the area surrounding Lake Thun as a modernist topos. August Macke and Switzerland, the first book to throw light on Macke's passion for the nation, provides a comprehensive overview of how geography and nature may inspire not only an artist's subject matter but also his manner. Readers are also given insights into the journey to Tunisia that Macke, Klee, and Louis Moilliet arranged during their stay in Switzerland in April of 1914. August Macke and SwitzerlandLooking at August Macke's time in Switzerland from 1913 to 1914The first publication to shed light on Macke's affinity for SwitzerlandA revealing overview of how a place can inform an artist's style View on AmazonAugust Macke (Mega Square) Kindle Edition by Walter CohenAugust Macke was a pioneer of German Expressionism, a style that arose in the early 1900s with the intention of eschewing physical reality in favor of its emotional equivalent, with a special emphasis on depicting gloomy emotions of sorrow and despair. Macke was a hue and shape master, creating eye-catching paintings that elicit a strong empathetic reaction in the observer. He was perfectly at home depicting Tunisia's sun-drenched alleyways, the overcast sky above Bonn Cathedral, and the faceless masses of a busy railway station. Walter Cohen analyzes the brief life of a painter whose seemingly infinite talent was sadly cut short by his early demise in this riveting essay. August Macke (Mega Square)Examining the brief life of German Expressionist artist August MackeA compelling text of an artist whose career was cut shortSuperb artistic reproductions of Macke's finest artworks View on Amazon And that wraps up our look into the art and life of August Macke. August Macke was a major member of the Der Blaue Reiter group, a group of painters associated with the German Expressionist movement. He lived during a tremendously imaginative age in German art, witnessing the rise of the major German expressionism groups as well as the subsequent avant-garde groups that were forming across Europe. August Macke's artworks incorporated elements of the avant-garde that captivated his interest. He was a young German painter who died in the First World War, like his friends Otto Soltau and Franz Marc. Frequently Asked QuestionsWhat Style Were August Macke's Paintings? He developed a distinctive painting technique that, while influenced by Cubism, was both figurative and vibrantly colored. He thought philosophical meditations were a waste of time. He made the most of the short time he had to satisfy his ravenous curiosity about life. As a result, his preferred subjects were commonplace, everyday scenes: neither the heightened tempo of twentieth-century urban life nor the peacefulness of rural settings attracted his interest. He represented modern, well-dressed people in serene, attractive man-made surroundings such as parks, thoroughfares, botanical gardens, riverbanks, or store displays, as well as ballet and circus scenes. In distinction to other expressionist paintings, August Macke's artworks are neither hasty nor tense; instead, they often depict serene dialogues, or people sitting quietly, or viewing animals, or strolling, or even window-shopping.What Was the Der Blaue Reiter Group?Der Blaue Reiter's expressionist work was created in part as a coloristic counterbalance to Paris's Cubist Avant-monochromatic Gardé's formal investigations. While Braque and Picasso focused on the form by restricting their palettes to browns and greys, Der Blaue Reiter artists focused on color and speculated on its metaphoric connotations. Furthermore, Der Blaue Reiter members were closely involved with Cubism experimentation, Russian Futurism, and a plethora of other European spinoff organizations. While all of these current art aesthetic components were used in their works, they were always embedded inside the painters' intense study of expressive color.How Did August Macke Die?Macke enlisted in the army in early August, only to be killed in action a few weeks later, at the age of 27. Macke's tenure was cut prematurely by his death at the frontline in Champagne, France, on the 26th of September, 1914, in the second month of the First World War. Farewell, his final artwork reflects the gloomy tone that prevailed following the onset of war. This was also the year in which he completed the iconic picture Türkisches Café in München (1914). All who loved him mourned his passing, especially his great friend Franz Marc, who died only two years later.Is August Macke's Style Regarded as German Expressionism?August Macke was a well-known German Expressionist artist. German expressionism was a German art style in the early twentieth century that strayed from the artist's inner sentiments or ideas over imitating reality, and was
distinguished by simple forms, brilliant colors, and expressive gestures or brushstrokes. It was distinguished by a concentration on emotion and ideas as sources of inspiration. The movement's foundation stood in sharp contrast to previous movements that emphasized more authentic portrayals of truth and nature. Isabella studied at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English Literature & Language and Psychology. Throughout her undergraduate years, she took Art History as an additional subject and absolutely loved it. Building on from her art history knowledge that began in high school, art has always been a particular area of fascination for her. From learning about artworks previously unknown to her, or sharpening her existing understanding of specific works, the ability to continue learning within this interesting sphere excites her greatly.Her focal points of interest in art history encompass profiling specific artists and art movements, as it is these areas where she is able to really dig deep into the rich narrative of the art world. Additionally, she particularly enjoys exploring the different artistic styles of the 20th century, as well as the important impact that female artists have had on the development of art history.Learn more about Isabella Meyer and the Art in Context Team. Self Portrait (January 3, 1887 – September 26, 1914) August Macke (January 3, 1887 – September 26, 1914) was one of the leading members of the German Expressionist group Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider). He lived during a particularly innovative time for German art which saw the development of the main German Expressionist movements, as well as the arrival of the successive avant-garde movements which were forming in Europe. Like a true artist of his time, Macke knew how to integrate into his painting the elements of the avant-garde which most interested him. August Macke was only 27 years old when he died in Champagne, France, on September 26, 1914. He was one of the many who fell fighting for their country during World War I. Despite his short artistic career of eight years, he produced over 600 paintings and 9000 drawings. Today, he is known as the father of German Expressionism. Are you ready to delve into his short but colorful world of August Macke? Macke's Early Years August Macke, Self-Portrait with a Hat, 1909, Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany. August Macke was born in Germany on January 3, 1887. His artistic gene began emerging when he was little. At the time, Macke's father was painting landscapes as a hobby and collecting ancient art. Macke's fascination with painting was not accidental – his first watercolors date back to as early as 1902. August Macke with his wife Elisabeth and son Walther in 1911. Wikimedia Commons (public domain). In 1903, when he was living in Bonn with his parents and two other siblings, he met Elisabeth Gerhardt, the daughter of a prominent businessman. They got married in 1909. By Macke's death in 1914, Elisabeth would sit for over 200 portraits, helping Macke hone his skills as a painter. August Macke, Portrait of the artist's wife with a hat, 1909. WikiArt (public domain). In 1904, Macke enrolled at the Royal Academy of Art in Düsseldorf, Germany. However, two years later, the 19-year-old became more and more frustrated with having to copy the existing works of the old masters rather than exploring contemporary artistic ideas. He left the academy and started working as a stage and costume designer at a local theatre while taking evening art classes at the Düsseldorf School of Applied Arts. Macke and the Impressionists August Macke, Sunny Garden, 1908, Wallraf Richartzs Museum, Cologne, Germany. In 1907, Macke embarked on his first trip to Paris. There he discovered the works of the Impressionist painters. Their subtle painting technique and domestic subject choice had a profound impact on his art. His 1908 painting Sunny Garden is a perfect example of Impressionist inspiration over Macke's works. On a later trip to Paris, Macke was influenced by the works of Henri Matisse. Impressed by Matisse's use of color, Macke began to use brighter colors, a flattened perspective, and broader, looser brushstrokes. August Macke, Still Life Hyacinths, Carpet, 1911, private collection, WikiArt (public domain). Between 1906 and 1910, Macke made regular visits to Paris, Germany, and Italy, meeting with other artists, exchanging ideas, and absorbing different artistic styles across Europe. This period of traveling highlighted Macke's genuine technical skills. He was only 22. He used his experiences to shape his own distinct personal painting style. August Macke, St. Mary's with Houses and Chimney (Bonn), 1911, Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany. That same year, he met the young Expressionist painter Franz Marc in Munich, Germany, and the two began to work closely, developing a more abstract and colorful style. Details become less important for Macke and Marc. They valued the emotional response provoked by the painting by using brighter and contrasting colors. They would later form an art group called Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider). Der Blaue Reiter Der Blaue Reiter was a group formed by Expressionist artists based in Germany that contributed immensely to the development of abstract art. The Blue Rider artists organized group shows between 1911 and 1914 to showcase their works. August Macke, Promenade, 1913, Lenbachhaus Museum, Munich, Germany. The group organized a show titled First Exhibition by the Editors of Der Blaue Reiter, held in Munich between December 1911 to January 1912. 43 works by 14 artists were on display, including August Macke. Although the paintings varied in style, the exhibition generally reflected an interest in free experimentation and expression. August Macke, Huldalen, 1913, Lenbachhaus Museum, Munich, Germany. The first exhibition received a mixed critical and public reception, but other artists were drawn to the group's expressive freedom. The second show of Der Blaue Reiter, held in February 1912, included 315 works by over 30 artists. In 1914, with the outbreak of World War I and the deaths of Marc and Macke, two of the most prominent members of the organization, Der Blaue Reiter dispersed. August Macke and the Use of Color August Macke, Two Girls, 1913, Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany. In 1912, Macke met the French painter Robert Delaunay, who worked in a colorful Cubist-influenced style. Interestingly, Macke introduced a Cubist analysis of color in some of his paintings. However, the two generally remained faithful to the Impressionist subject matter, particularly domestic scenes from everyday life. August Macke, Big Zoo, Trier, 1913, Museum Ostwall, Dortmund, Germany. In April 1914, he traveled with the Swiss painter Paul Klee to Tunisia, where Macke produced a large number of works. The emphasis on color in these paintings demonstrates the effect that Delaunay's Cubism had upon him. World War I and August Macke's Legacy I would consider myself incredibly lucky if I was to return from this war. I think about all the beautiful things that I have witnessed and that I have you to thank for. August Macke's letter to his wife Elisabeth, August 1914. Macke's career ended abruptly due to his premature death in the second month of World War I at the front in Champagne, France on September 26, 1914. August Macke, Türkisches Café, 1914, Lenbachhaus Museum, Munich, Germany. In a powerful and moving memorial, Macke's close friend and colleague Franz Marc wrote: We painters know that without his harmonies, whole octaves of colour will disappear from German art, and the sounds of the colours remaining will become duller and sharper. He gave a brighter and purer sound to colour than any of us; he gave it the clarity and brightness of his whole being. With his death one of the most promising and daring lines of development of our German art has been abruptly severed; none of us are capable of carrying it forward. Eulogy to Macke, Franz Marc, 1914. Two years later, Marc too was killed on the battlefield. Despite his life being cut tragically short during World War One, August Macke had a profound impact on multiple major artistic movements of the 20th century. After early experiments with Impressionist and Fauvist techniques, Macke went on to work closely with German painter and printmaker, Franz Marc to develop a more abstract, colorful and emotive style. Macke was one of the leading members of the Expressionist group, Der Blaue Reiter and exhibited with Wassily Kandinsky and Marc in the group's first, historic exhibition in 1911. Becoming disillusioned with Kandinsky's work, however, Macke soon set out on a quest to develop a unique visual language that incorporated elements from styles as diverse as Cubism, Orphism, and Futurism. The work of the newly formed Der Blaue Reiter group of artists, which also included his friends Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, like the Die Brücke group, the Der Blaue Reiter artists were a key group within German Expressionism. However, the latter was more concerned with evoking the spiritual, mystical and emotional realms through art, and thus more fully embraced abstraction in their work. As arts writer Paul D. Wilke explains, "details were less important here than the emotional response provoked by the painting." Macke produced The Storm while involved with the Der Blaue Reiter group. The painting is typical of the group's style in its use of evocative, contrasting colors. The abstracted landscape and extreme weather bear the influence of Marc, and the curious forms found within the paintings, as well as in the 'storm' above, are suggestive of human or animal features, such as horses (which also featured prominently in Marc's paintings). One year after he created this painting, Macke's essay "Masks" was published in the Der Blaue Reiter Almanac. In it, he put into words the group's philosophy of finding
the spiritual in art, lending further context to his paintings from this period, and perhaps to The Storm in particular. He wrote: "To create forms means: to live. [...] Forms are powerful expressions of powerful life. Differences in expression come from the material, word, color, sound, stone, wood, metal. One need not understand each form. [...] The thunder expresses itself, as does the flower; each force manifests itself as a form. And so does the human being." We could thus potentially understand The Storm not so much as a representation of an actual meteorological event, but rather a metaphorical storm of the artist's own creative impulse. At the same time, and in this, and other works produced by Macke while involved with the Der Blaue Reiter group, art historian Johannes Langner also notes that the artist included the "schematic plastic form" of Wassily Kandinsky, as well as a sense of energy characteristic of Fauvism. Indeed, throughout his career, Macke sought to explore the spiritual, mystical and emotional realms of the human condition, the result was a body of work unprecedented in the history of art. Macke's uniquely expressive style – created by incorporating elements and techniques from Impressionism (specifically evoking the spiritual and emotional realms through art), Fauvism (use of vivid, saturated color and broad brushstrokes) and German Expressionism (abstract backgrounds, flat colored shapes, heavy black lines and thick brushstrokes) – resists classification in any one style or group. Macke's work is therefore a key example of an artist successful in the complex task of creating an original, contemporary style to meet expressive ends by synthesizing specific elements from parallel artistic movements.Expressive color and energetic line were a means by which Macke sought to make sense of the human condition in the face of the rapid social and technological changes convulsing Europe in the early-20th century, and which ultimately led to the First World War. Macke's work was therefore particularly influential on Surrealist artists who sought political freedom and freedom of expression following the horrors of the First World War (in which Macke himself was killed).Macke was first and foremost a colorist, equally adept in both oil paint and watercolor. While he did not produce a developed theory of color (unlike his fellow Der Blaue Reiter painter, Wassily Kandinsky), he nevertheless used color to express and communicate universal aspects of human consciousness - love, hate, fear, joy, etc. The artist's job, he wrote, is to explore and express the human soul - our inner life - via representation of form and use of (non-naturalistic) color. Macke lived by and practiced this philosophy throughout his short but immensely impactful life.Progression of Art1908In this painting, a girl in a dark dress - believed to be Elisabeth Gerhardt, the woman Macke would marry in 1909 - kneels on the grass in a garden with pathways, flowering bushes, and trees. The dappled sunlight falls around her, contrasting with the brighter area behind her. At the right edge of the image is a tall white wall enclosing the garden, upon which Macke explored the color effects that the sunlight would have upon such a surface. After spending just two years in an academic arts training setting, Macke put his studies at the Düsseldorf Academy, where he had studied, to explore the more avant-garde artistic movements developing around Europe. He began traveling around the continent in 1905 to see modern developments in art for himself. The most inspiring of these early experiences were his first two trips to Paris, in 1907 and 1908, where he encountered the work of the Impressionists in the works like Sunny Garden, which was painted in his hometown of Bonn, Germany, he soon began emulating their style. Here, Macke tried his hand at the stippling technique he had no doubt viewed in the works like Alfred Sisley and Claude Monet, creating the mottled light effect of the bright sun filtering through the leaves of the trees. Overall, the work competently embraces the warm, intimate, and serene atmosphere common to French Impressionist works of the period. Oil on canvas - Private collection 1911On his third trip to Paris, in 1909, Macke discovered a bold new group of French artists, the Fauves, which included Henri Matisse and André Derain. He was fascinated by their use of vivid, saturated, less-naturalistic colors, flat figures, broad brushstrokes, and their evident movement toward further abstraction (compared to the Impressionists). In Three Girls in a Barque, he employed all these techniques in his depiction of three nude female figures lounging on a boat with a semi-nude male oarsman appearing to steer the boat gracefully through tumultuous waters. At the same time, however, Macke incorporated elements of another burgeoning modern, German art movement, Expressionism, which was being practiced by his close friend Franz Marc and his colleague Wassily Kandinsky. The expressionist elements of this painting can be found in the abstract background and borders, comprised of flat colored shapes and thick sweeping black lines, as if creating an entirely expressionist, dream-like landscape for his fauve (wild) figures to navigate through. Macke asserted that "the intersection of two styles will create a third, new style." Here, and throughout his brief yet productive career, he evidently sought to do this, taking avant-garde movements and styles that were still in their infancy, and blending them together, ultimately creating unique and original languages that influenced his fellow avant-garde artists that were still further removed from the staid academic artistic traditions he had so strongly resented as a student. Oil on canvas 1911In 1911, Macke formed the Der Blaue Reiter group of artists, which also included his friends Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky. Like the Die Brücke group, the Der Blaue Reiter artists were a key group within German Expressionism. However, the latter was more concerned with evoking the spiritual, mystical and emotional realms through art, and thus more fully embraced abstraction in their work. As arts writer Paul D. Wilke explains, "details were less important here than the emotional response provoked by the painting." Macke produced The Storm while involved with the Der Blaue Reiter group. The painting is typical of the group's style in its use of evocative, contrasting colors. The abstracted landscape and extreme weather bear the influence of Marc, and the curious forms found within the paintings, as well as in the 'storm' above, are suggestive of human or animal features, such as horses (which also featured prominently in Marc's paintings). One year after he created this painting, Macke's essay "Masks" was published in the Der Blaue Reiter Almanac. 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