

"ONE OF THE BEST" WCH. **Edvard Munch** ← VANP

Munch is considered one of Norway's greatest artists. His most intense works made him a leading figure of the symbolist movement and provided a powerful source of inspiration for the expressionists.

On December 12, 1863, Edvard Munch was born in Løren, a rural district in southern Norway. His father had been an army doctor, but was in the process of becoming a general physician. The family moved to Kristiania (renamed Oslo in 1925), where Dr. Munch served the poorest parts of the city. His presence there took a heavy toll on his own family: his wife died of tuberculosis in 1868 and, a few years later, his daughter Sophie perished from the same disease.

These successive tragedies unhinged the doctor, who turned to religion with obsessive zeal and became prone to violent outbursts, which affected the young Munch. He was carried off by a doctor to the mental asylum of his youth, where he remained for several years. The doctor's death there and dark scenes he kept watching from his window since he only had to follow the street through the



△ **THE SICK CHILD, 1907**
Munch returned repeatedly to the subject of his sister's illness and death from tuberculosis. This is his fourth version of the painting, inspired by those events.

...roy court in Munch's childhood. He had a good command of the Norwegian language and took charge of the household and, as an amateur painter himself, encouraged the children to draw. Munch's talent soon became apparent, though he was dismissed as a mediocre painter and a technical prodigy. He had to struggle to leave school, but succeeded barely a year after the time he discovered he had decided to become an artist.

Art studies
Munch began his official training at the State School of Art and Design in 1881. He learned far more from the informal lessons he received from his father, who was one of the most important painters of the time, than from the popular workbooks and manuals because he challenged accepted values, including controversy. He formed his uncompromising brand of naturalism, and this soon influenced Munch's work. He joined the avant-garde circle, especially a group known as the "Kristiania Bohème." This shocked Norwegian society by denouncing bourgeois attitudes and advocating sexual freedom. In spite of the controversy, Munch's talent was fully apparent. In 1885, he received a travel grant—the first of several—which enabled him to pay a visit to Paris.

Parisian influences
Munch's exposure to the latest artistic developments had an immediate impact on his style. He embarked on his first major canvas, *The Sick Child*, borrowing the theme from Krieger, but treating it in an entirely different manner. Munch abandoned the latter's naturalistic depiction in favor of bold, simplified

MUNCH'S EASEL
In 1888, Munch bought a summer cottage in Åsgårdstrand, Norway, and it was here that he painted many of his most famous late works. The cottage is now a museum that houses the artist's personal effects, such as his vest, palette, and easel.



△ **THE PORTAL WITH CHIMNEYS, 1895**
Like most of his work, Munch's gaze at the viewer's his head framed by a column of smoke against a window of the sky. It's a bold, minimalist style.

"Art demands the total involvement of the artist, otherwise it is nothing but decoration."

EDVARD MUNCH, CITED IN MUNCH AND THE WORKERS (EXHIBITION CATALOGUE), 1987







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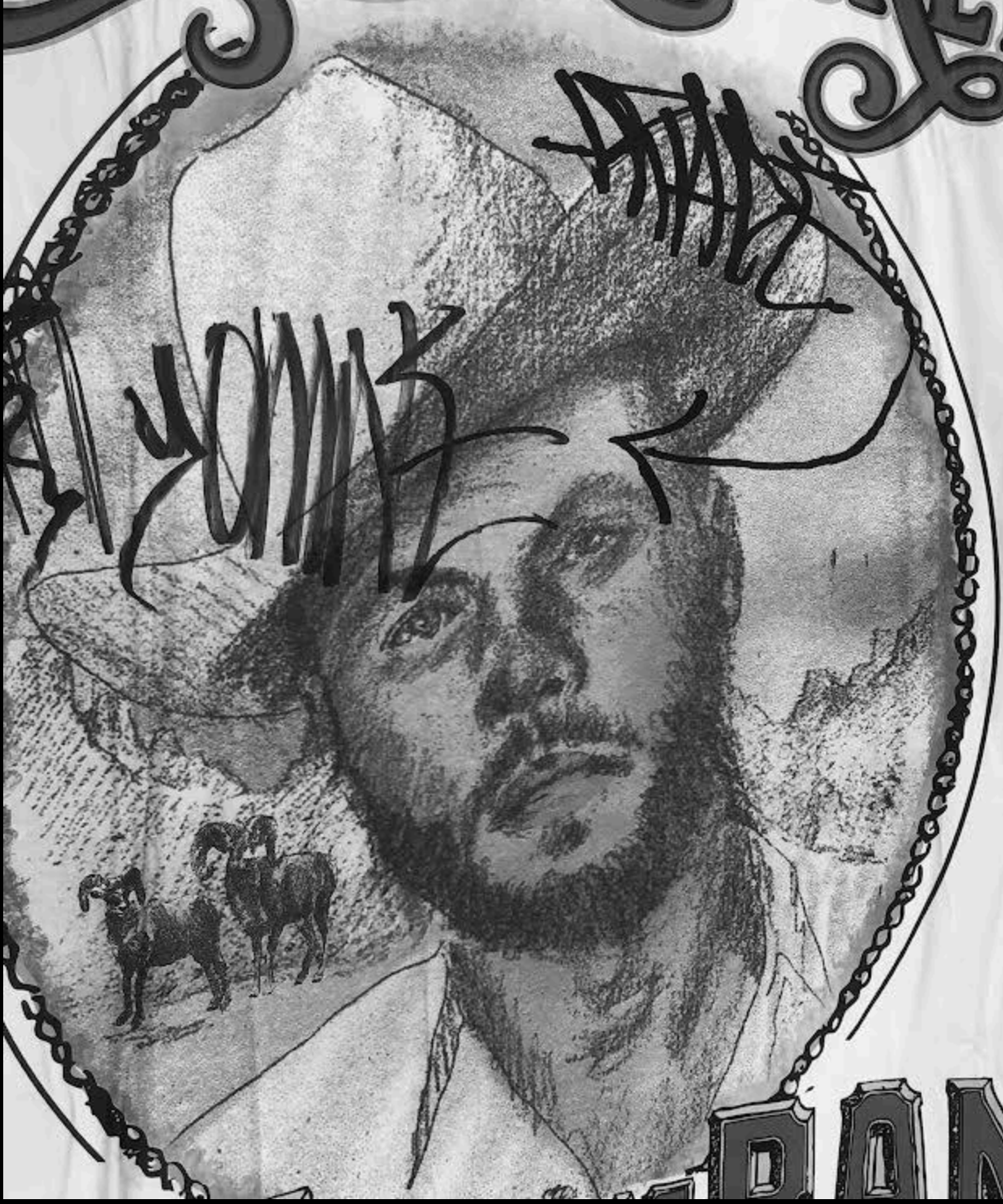








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