

Gabriele Münter (1877–1962)

Berlin-born Gabriele Münter began to draw as a child, but did not get much encouragement from her parents. Even her country seemed against her becoming an artist. Women in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century were still not allowed to enroll in official art academies, which trained men. Münter took private lessons and attended an art school for girls. She also spent time traveling in Europe and the United States.

An artistic turning point came for Münter when she began studying at the progressive Phalanx School in Munich. She met other artists, including the famous Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky, and learned about all the newest ideas in painting. She and Kandinsky were impressed by each other's art. For almost twelve years, they were companions, traveling and working together.

Other influences on Münter's developing style came from the French painters called "the Fauves." She saw their works on a visit to Paris. These artists painted traditional landscapes, still-lives, and nudes, but they used bright, vibrant colors that expressed their emotions rather than reality. This expressive handling of color appealed to Münter. Back in Germany, she joined a group of artists called the Blue Rider. This group of artists also experimented with expressive color, as well as bold designs and heavy outlines (contour lines).

She settled in Switzerland during World War I, where painting proved difficult because she moved around so much. She did draw a great deal during that period and finally resumed painting in the 1920s when she had returned to Germany. Though the Nazi government frowned upon modern styles of painting like hers, Münter continued to work in the colorful, expressive style she had helped pioneer. Throughout her life she continued to be inspired by the beautiful countryside of southern Germany where she lived. She also painted portraits, still lifes, and interior scenes.

Selected Bibliography

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