**The Sea as Symbol**

Edvard Munch once famously said “Nature is formed in the image of one’s mood.” Rather than literally recreating natural surroundings, he represented them in ways that communicated moods or emotions. Because of his deep personal connection, the sea in particular became a frequent symbol in his works.

The shore was the site for many of Munch’s human dramas. The distinctive curving coastline of Åsgårdstrand, his longtime home, was the setting for images that explored budding and dying romances, melancholic contemplation, and even violence and death. For him, the border where land changes into water symbolized the moments where life and reality can change direction.

Munch also equated the rhythmic movements of the sea with universal energies. In his works the curving lines of the waves radiate forces that can be welcoming, energizing, or threatening. As well, Munch was intrigued by the ways in which water can surround and enclose objects. Symbolically he often interwove water and women’s hair suggesting a tie between the feminine and elemental nature, and using tendrils and strands to bind lovers together.



Munch pauses while painting on the beach at

Warnemünde, 1907 (detail). Copyright Munch

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