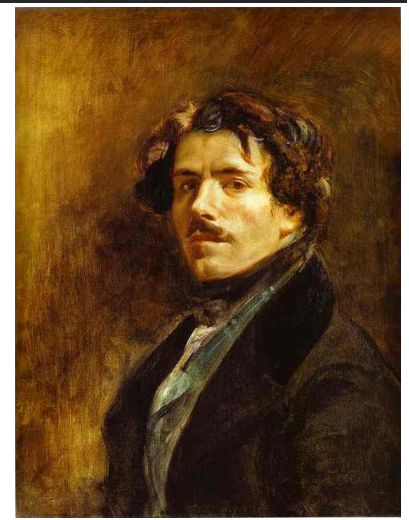


Eugène Delacroix



Horse Frightened by Lightning, 1824–1829
watercolor, white heightening, gum Arabic
watercolor on paper, 94 x 126 in.
Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary



Self-Portrait, c.1837
oil on canvas
The Louvre, Paris

The Artist

Eugène Delacroix

Born in Saint-Maurice-en-Chalencon, France 1798; died in Paris, France 1863

Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix was a French Romantic artist regarded from the outset of his career as the leader of the French Romantic School. Born in France in 1798, Delacroix was orphaned at the age of 16. In 1816 he began his formal art training, learning the neoclassical style of Jacques-Louis David. Delacroix's first major painting, *The Barque of Dante*, was accepted into the Paris Salon in 1822, earning him national fame. He turned away from the neoclassical style, and became one of the best-known Romantic painters, favoring imaginative scenes from literature and historical events. Highly acclaimed works include *Death of Sardanapalus* and *Liberty Leading the People*, a painting inspired by France's uprising against King Charles X in 1830. In 1832, Delacroix spent 6 months in North Africa, and created many paintings inspired by Arabic culture and the sun-drenched landscape. Delacroix continued to be very popular in his lifetime, exhibiting many works in the Paris salon, and receiving commissions to decorate important Parisian buildings. Delacroix died on August 13, 1863.

Art Movement

Romanticism

The Romantic Movement was inspired in part by the ideas of Rousseau, who declared that "Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains!" Romanticism emerged from the desire for freedom – political freedom, freedom of thought, of feeling, of action, of worship, of speech, and of taste. Romantics believed that the path to freedom was through imagination rather than reason and functioned through feeling rather than through thinking. The movement was partly a reaction against the rigidity of Enlightenment thought. Delacroix was known as the Romantic Colorist because of his potent and imaginative use of color. His expressive brushstrokes and interest in capturing how light affects color inspired the Impressionist movement of the 19th century.



Liberty Leading the People, 1831
Louvre, Paris, France

Historical Context

Delacroix's work was influenced by the political climate of France in the early 1800s. The Romantic Movement was also a political movement, with people calling for an expansion of civil liberties and

more power given to the common man. Napoleon had reigned for a volatile decade, and France experienced a period of great unrest. Workers called for better conditions – the Industrial Revolution had recently swept through Europe. Parisians rebelled against King Charles X in 1830, installing King Louis Philippe, who reigned until 1848, when another revolution created the first French Republic. The spirit of revolution was captured by Delacroix in his painting, *Liberty Leading the People*, which depicts Liberty holding the tricolored flag, leading the 1830 revolutionaries. The artist did not fight in the revolution, but felt that he contributed with this painting. The European continent as a whole was undergoing political change at this time. Delacroix was also influenced by the Greece's struggle for independence from the Turks, as show in his *Massacre at Chios*, painted in 1824.

The Artwork

Horse Frightened by Lightning

In this piece, Delacroix uses the movement of the rearing horse and the color of its white coat to express electric excitement, reflected in the jagged flash of lightening. The artist uses the contrast of the horse and the blue-black clouds and landscape to focus the viewer's eye on the frantic horse. Romantically and emotionally, everything here seems larger than life: the storm is darker, the horse whiter. The artist was attempting to show the strength of nature with the crackling atmosphere and exhilarating scene.

Discussion Suggestions

Talk about the subject:

- *What do you think this painting should be called? Why?*

Talk about mood:

- *How does this painting make you feel?*
- *What sounds do you think you might here if you were there?*

Talk about color:

- *What do you see first in this painting? Why do you think your eyes went there first?*
- *Why do you think the artist chose to use a strong contrast in colors?*

Activity Idea

Expressive Painting:

- Delacroix, along with other Romantic painters, wanted their work to capture emotion and imagination.
- Students will listen to music while painting how the music makes them feel. This activity includes instructions for either a group mural, or individual paintings.
- Explain to students that like the Romantic painters, they are going to create a painting expressing emotion.
- Play music for the students, ask them how it makes them feel, or what it makes them think about. Encourage them to swing their arms in time to the music or pretend to conduct an orchestra.
- Pass out paint, brushes, and paper, spreading newspaper under the work surface. If students are making a mural, situate the students evenly around the large paper.
- Play music for the children, and allow them to paint freely to the music. Suggest that they paint how they feel, and not be concerned with making recognizable objects.

Materials Needed:

- Music of your choice (instrumental might work best, such as “The Return of Peer Gynt” by Edvard Grieg, found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldG_EDfpoCw)
- Sheets of drawing paper-or- a large sheet of paper for mural
- Tempera paint
- Brushes