FRAMING THE VIEWER:
EDVARD MUNCH'S HYBRID GENRES

Timea Andrea Lelik
Leiden University, The Netherlands

From the beginning of his career, landscape was an integral part of Edvard Munch's compositions depicting figures. Munch's paintings show a complex entanglement between the subjects painted and their surrounding environment, which is a characteristic perceivable in his most iconic composition The Scream. Evading the conventional aesthetics of classical painting categories, these compositions undermine formal structures of conventional portraiture or landscape painting as they juxtapose elements of both types, thus creating a hybrid genre of the two. Taking as case studies paintings from the turn of the twentieth century, this paper will analyse the manner in which these canvases depart from conventional art historical genres to create new formulas for understanding human subjectivity.

INTRODUCTION

Edvard Munch's works resist clear categorization in terms of traditional genres of art. His canvases are idiosyncratic interpretations of existing categories that demonstrate Munch's ingenious ability to manipulate pictorial traditions and the perception of onlookers alike. In this article I analyse compositions that have not previously been categorized as portraits, but because of the attention given to a central subject in the composition, could be read as such. These paintings undermine formal structures of conventional portraiture, as they juxtapose elements of portraiture and other genres, thus creating what I refer to as a 'hybrid genre'. I therefore argue that these paintings depart from conventional art historical genres by introducing compositional and executional devices such as the mixture of landscape and portraiture in order to create

unexpected and direct connections between painting and onlooker.

I further argue that Munch's fascination with transient subjects such as emotions (melancholy, anxiety, jealousy, etc.) transform the works into present experiences, as they do not ponder past or future stories of certain subjects, but rather focus on the depiction and experience of an ongoing moment. Their dedication to the rendering of current emotions is what anchors the works in the present. The devices employed in inducing this ongoing feeling — such as the introduction of landscape in the genre of portraiture — are part of the mechanism that I call the 'framing of the viewer', which transforms these canvases into lived experiences for the onlookers.

Since the portrait is an essential tool in creating this lived experience, I structure my analysis around works that can largely be referred to as portraits, even though Munch's portraits cannot be categorized as one homogeneous group of works. I categorize the chosen canvases as portraits based on commonly accepted assertions about the genre in Western art history. Jean M. Borgatti explains that traditionally the genre of portraiture emphasizes individuality, with face and body dominating the picture plane:

> Western art features representation, and the portrait canon stresses physiognomic likeness — incorporating the idea that personality may be communicated through idiosyncratic facial features and expression. Thus we accept nameless but representational images as portraits, whether or not we have the documentation to provide us with a specific identity.[1]

The conventional canon of portraiture stresses that as long as the primary depicted character shows traits that could be related to his or her 'personality' or inner self, the representation becomes a portrait. It therefore becomes of secondary importance whether the existence of this subject is factual. As long as the composition shows a character with recognizable physiognomic traits,

1 Jean M. Borgatti, "Constructed Identities: Portraiture in World Art," in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, eds Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), 306.

we are looking at a portrait. Shearer West explains in the introduction to his elaborate study on portraiture that:

> Portraiture can be distinguished from other art categories such as history, landscape, and still life by its relationship with likeness. All portraits show a distorted, ideal, or partial view of the sitter, but portraiture as a genre is historically tied to the idea of mimesis, or likeness.[2]

Therefore, even if the main subject of the composition is depicted in an unconventional manner — compositionally or in terms of depiction — as long as this subject bears likeness to an individual, the representation becomes a portrait.

Since Munch made portraits for several purposes, at times it becomes problematic to distinguish these from other genres. For that reason, essays discussing portraits in Munch's oeuvre largely revolve around the large standing portraits that more or less comply with conventional requirements of the genre. One of the most elaborate (and recent) articles discussing portraiture in Munch's oeuvre is Øystein Ustvedt's essay "Edvard Munch's Portraits: Artistic Platform and Source of Renewal" (2013), which focuses on Munch's full-length portraits. In this article, Ustvedt explains that Munch's portraits have been excluded from thorough studies since many of these were made as commissions, which implies compromise in their execution. Nevertheless, Arne Eggum argues that Munch in fact created many such works on his own initiative and ended up keeping them in his own collection.[3] These portraits usually depict a single character on a neutral background, typically without any pictorial distractions. Ustvedt explains that conventional portraits, which were mostly commissioned or made out of friendship, can be seen throughout the artist's oeuvre.[4] Commissioned works were part of the artist's main source of income, while portrait-making validated friendships and consolidated relationships of many kinds. Even though his article focuses on the conventional aspects of these portraits, Ustvedt does comment on the unconventional manner in

2 Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12.

3 Arne Eggum, *Edvard Munch: Portretter* (Oslo: Munch-museet/Labyrinth Press, 1994), 10–11.

4 Øystein Ustvedt, "Edvard Munch's Portraits: Artistic Platform and Source of Renewal," in *Edvard Munch*, eds Mai Britt Guleng and Jon-Ove Steihaug (Milan: Skira, 2013), 232–33.

which these characters are depicted. Unusual standing poses combined with hastily executed parts of the canvas, pasted on a nearly undifferentiated background, have led to Munch's much debated success.[5] Ustvedt clarifies that soon after Munch's breakthrough as an artist in Germany, many more commissioned portraits followed, especially from the newly formed social class of art patrons, collectors, prominent social figures, writers, philosophers, and businessmen. While even his commissioned works were created in a rather unconventional manner, his originality in portraiture is most apparent in his juxtaposition of different compositional devices which lead to their evasion of strict genre categorization.

In this article, however, I do not focus on these full-length portraits but rather analyse compositions that revolve around a central subject bearing a physiognomic likeness to an individual, yet without representing his or her inner self. The subjects I discuss are not conventional sitters, that is, clearly identifiable people who modelled for the artist. I argue that in Munch's oeuvre the genre of portraiture gains a new dimension that transgresses the notion of the subject as being dependent on mimetic likeness. In the canvases that I identify as hybrid portraits, Munch takes as a starting point compositions with unknown subjects. Nevertheless, their individuality is not contingent on identity recognition, but is being constructed anew every time viewers engage with the compositions. For this reason, I refer to the depicted characters as *subjects* rather than *sitters*.

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF LANDSCAPE AND PORTRAITURE

One of the devices used by Munch to reinterpret the traditional genre of portraiture is the conversion of landscape from an auxiliary element to a vital part of the composition. As remarked by Poul Erik Tojner, the surrounding environment plays a crucial role in understanding the function of the subjects of his early canvases:

5 Ibid., 234.

Irrespective of the distance there seems to be between the melancholic introspection of the earlier pictures and the seemingly transfigured and more action oriented life of the later ones, the basic thread that runs through Munch's work is the inscrutable relationship that exists between man and the world that surrounds him. In this chemical blend the particles can no longer be separated.[6]

Fig. 1
Edvard Munch
Inger on the Beach, 1889
126 x 121cm, Oil on canvas
Kunstmuseum, Bergen

In the late 1880s Munch began experimenting with the place of the subject in its surrounding background. *While Summer Night: Inger on the Beach* (1889) (Fig. 1) follows conventional rules of portraiture with a centrally depicted subject recognizable as the artist's sister Inger, it is a work that anticipates the importance that landscape will attain in Munch's oeuvre. In *Summer Night* one can already note a subtle absorption of the subject into her surrounding

6 Poul Erik Tojner, *Munch: In His Own Words* (Munich: Prestel, 2003), 19.

landscape. At first glance, the subject of the painting is a solitary character on a shore looking at a distant point outside the picture plane. Nevertheless, maintaining a soft colour palette of grey and blue hues, neither subject nor landscape make a particularly strong visual impact on the viewer. Subject and background form a homogeneous unveiling of anthropomorphic forms. Not only does Inger's hat replicate the colour of the rocky landscape, but her dress also emulates the shape and texture of the stones on which she rests. Her pensive facial expression is complemented by the gloomy mood invoked by the landscape, transforming the subject and the surrounding landscape into one entity.

Melancholy (1892) (Fig. 2) is a similar work that prefigures a type of hybridization of genres that begins in the mid to late 1890s in Munch's oeuvre. While the head of the main character seems to take the shape of the stones next to him, transforming this subject into a harmonious continuation of the pebbly landscape, this work could also be read as a portrait. Although highly stylized, the facial features are recognizable as an individual character. Furthermore, his melancholic state could offer indications about his personality and general

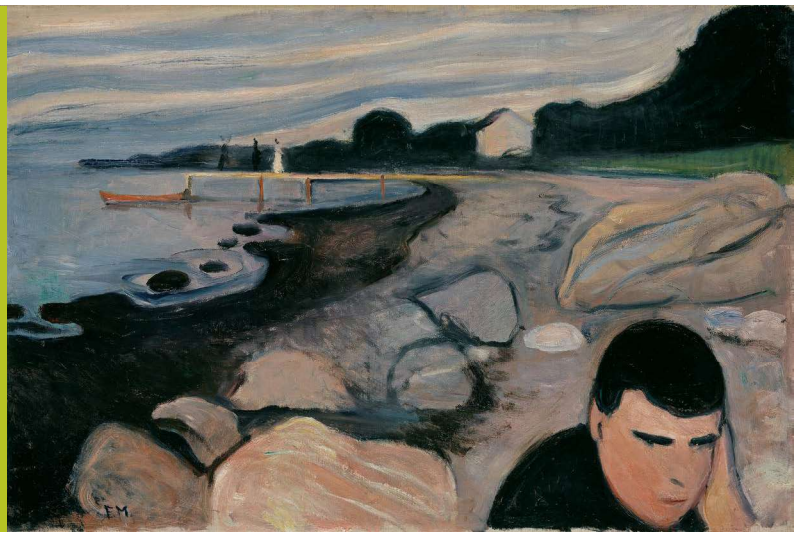

Fig. 2
Edvard Munch
Melancholy, 1892
64 x 96cm, Oil on canvas
National Gallery, Oslo

mood. Upon a closer inspection of this painting (and of the several variations of this particular image) one can see in the distance on a bridge the vague silhouettes of two figures, one dressed in white and one in black, vaguely resembling a man and a woman. The deep melancholy expressed by the central subject seems to be caused by the encounter of the figures in the far distance, which potentially transforms *Melancholy* into a sentimental genre painting. However, the predominance of the landscape in the pictorial surface, combined with the focal point that emphasizes the face of the main character, make compositions such as *Melancholy* evade strict genre categorization.

While the blurring and melting together of the subject and landscape in these compositions is achieved through subtle transformations, in works such as the iconic *The Scream* (1893) (Fig. 3) these elements become one entity in a confrontational manner. Formally, the lines underlining the entire composition continue and complement each other; in this sense, there is no distinction in terms of how the subject or the landscape are executed. Thematically, the work depicts a scream and a state of anxiety invoked and complemented by the use of blood-red and orange hues in the background. This fusion of subject and background could be read as an attempt to create a unified landscape of interior and exterior, meaning that the landscape is not so much about depicting an existing scene as about an 'interiority' where all compositional elements, including the surrounding landscape, metamorphose into the physical appearance of a present moment or state of mind. Rather than an external depiction of a character, the composition is a glimpse into the character's psyche. As Christoph Asendorf explains:

> All the techniques Munch experimented with up until 1910 were employed in an effort to achieve direct representation of something that is almost impossible to represent — Munch's strips, halos, and lines of force all are means used to visualize, in particular, the dynamics of an intrapsychic pay of forces in a world drama charged with energy.[7]

7 Christoph Asendorf, "Power, Instinct, Will — Munch's Energetic World Theater in the Context of *Fin de Siecle*," in *Edvard Munch. Theme and Variation*, ed. Klaus Albrecht Schröder (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2003), 89.

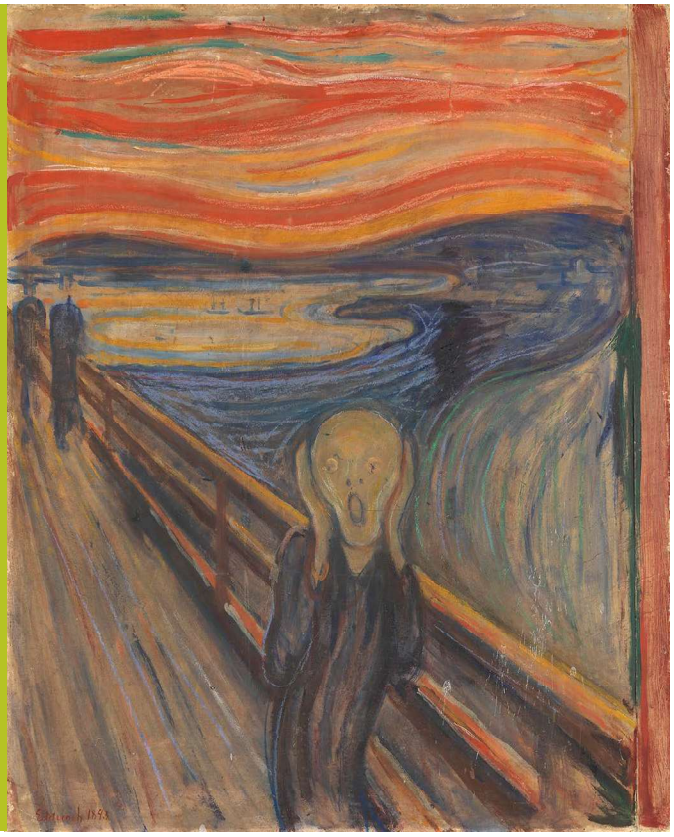

Fig. 3
Edvard Munch
The Scream, 1893
91 x 73.5cm, Oil, tempera and pastel on cardboard
National Gallery, Oslo

Munch's subjects never seem to be clearly involved in any concrete action and do not speak of the events that have happened or are to follow; rather, they suggest an ongoing present moment. The subject in *The Scream* is engaged in an act of screaming, despite the fact that there is no clear reason to do so. Reconstructing the same Ekeberg hill setting as in *The Scream, Anxiety* (1894) (Fig. 4) shows several subjects confrontationally marching towards the viewer. The faces of these characters are simple outlines. Except for the three frontal characters, all other figures are lost in the background. The expressionless faces in the foreground appear to be staring hypnotically and directly at the viewer, while engaging in a continuous march towards an undetermined des-

tination. It is unknown where these figures come from or are going; the focus is on their current engagement with the ongoing activity. As Tojner explains:

> Munch has the skill of a poster painter without actually being one. [...] He stamps out his subjects, and even though they may be executed with the most slovenly of brushes, they are still astonishingly accurately balanced,

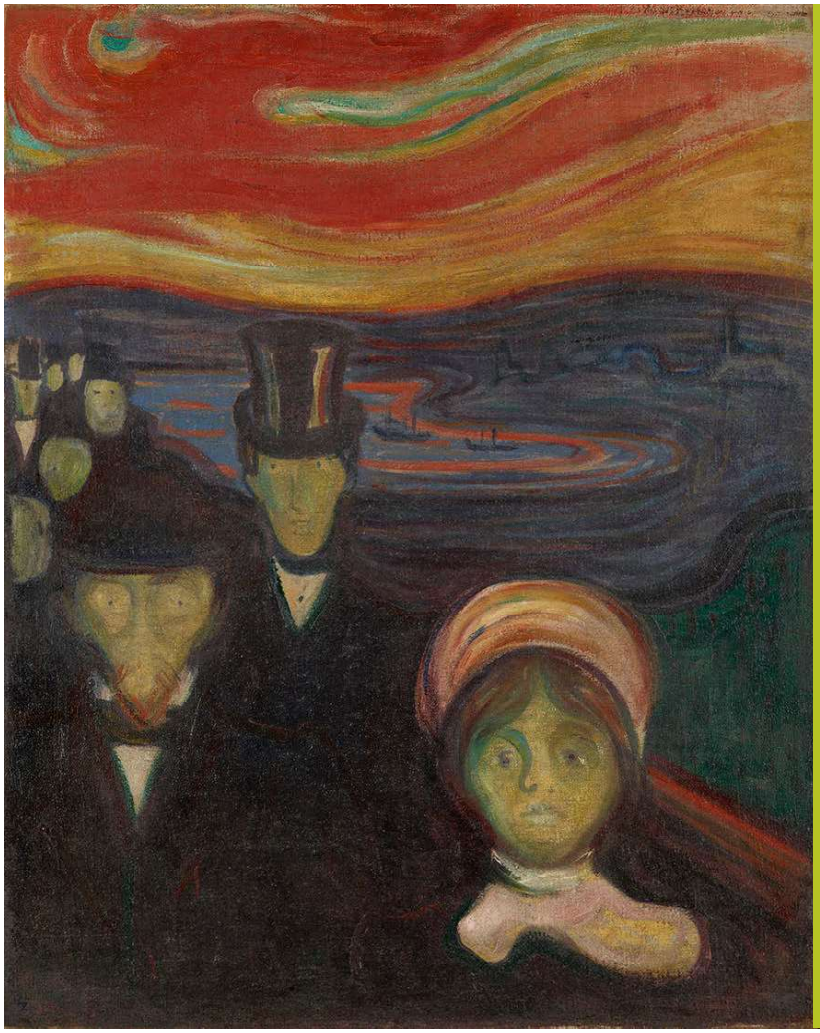

Fig. 4
Edvard Munch
Anxiety, 1894
94 x 74cm, Oil on canvas
Munch Museum, Oslo

> and seem almost able to talk. He seems to have captured his subjects at the decisive moment in a long conversation — they are painted at exactly the right moment, capturing a kind of taciturn eloquence.[8]

This ongoing present moment that characterizes many of his compositions since the early 1890s is therefore central to the understanding of these hybrid portraits: in order to represent the un-representable, Munch must subvert the conventional roles of different genres. By unifying portrait and landscape, and at times also adding elements of other narrative genres, he propels the viewer to engage in a different, more direct reading of the canvas.

8 Tojner, *Munch: In His Own Words*, 22.

Fig. 5
Edvard Munch
Red Virginia Creeper, 1898-1900
119.5 x 121cm, Oil on canvas
Munch Museum, Oslo

Fig. 6
Edvard Munch
Street in Åsgårdstrand, 1901
88.5 x 114cm, Oil on canvas
Kunstmuseum, Basel

THE HYBRID GENRE

While *The Scream* and other compositions which rework the same theme achieve a hybrid effect in a rather visceral manner, *Red Virginia Creeper* (1898–1900) (Fig. 5) and *Street in Åsgårdstrand* (1901) (Fig. 6) make use of these devices in a more discrete way. Although these works have not been previously categorized as portraits, I refer to them as such for the attention they bestow on the preeminent character of the painting. Both compositions depict a 'main' character showing individual facial traits that allude to an inner self. Most importantly, both subjects are the trigger points of the compositions. I read these works as portraits also because of the 'curated' and attentive manner in which the central characters are portrayed. While the subjects are depicted

Fig. 7
Edvard Munch
Self-Portrait on a Trunk in the Studio, 82 Lutzowstrasse, Berlin, 1902
7.9 x 8cm
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper
Munch Museum, Oslo

in every day circumstances, the focus is not to document everyday activities.

As these works employ similar compositional elements to Munch's photographic and painted self-portraits from around the same period, it is necessary to first discuss the role of self-portraits in Munch's oeuvre. In 1902 Munch purchased his first small No. 2 Bulls-Eye Kodak camera. Clement Cheroux explains that it was from the 1880s onward that cameras became easier to use due to the development of gelatin silver bromide, and consequently many artists of this generation took up photography.[9] Bonnard, Vuillard, Vallotton, and Khnopff were among the painters who also became amateur photographers. However, what differentiated Munch noticeably from them was the number of images

9 Clement Cheroux, "Write your Life! Photography and Autobiography," in *Edvard Munch, The Modern Eye*, eds Angela Lampe and Clement Cheroux (London: Tate Publishing, 2012), 57.

he took: Munch had taken in total only 226 shots of 183 different subjects, out of which almost two thirds were self-portraits.[10]

In a recent study discussing Munch's painted self-portraits, Jon-Ove Steihaug explains that the artist's self-portraits are principally made in a self-performative manner; Munch used these portraits to stage a specific representation of himself, and consequently contributed to the general image the public would have of him.[11] Focusing mostly on his painted self-portraits, Steihaug explains that the artist intentionally depicted himself in situations and contexts with innate psychological drama. Actively staging the contexts in which he wished

10 Ibid., 58.

11 Steihaug, "Edvard Munch's Performative Self-Portraits," 13.

Fig. 8
Edvard Munch
Self-Portrait in the Garden at Åsgårdstrand, 1903
8.7 x 8.4cm
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper
Munch Museum, Oslo

to be seen, he painted himself in Dr Jacobson's rehabilitation clinic, sick in bed in his private quarters, and naked in what seem to be the flames of hell.

Steihaug's theory is also applicable to many of the artist's camera shots. In one of the first images he took with his analogue camera, Munch presented himself in a theatrical manner. *Self-Portrait on a Trunk in the Studio, 82 Lutzow-strasse, Berlin* (1902) (Fig. 7) shows the artist in his Berlin studio surrounded by elements of his occupation (i.e. his palette, his well-known work *Evening on Karl Johan Street*). He is caught in a contemplative moment, which seems to be staged considering the fact that he orchestrated the picture himself. More interesting from a compositional perspective (since the image in the studio might still pass for a documentary shot) is his *Self-Portrait in the Garden at Åsgårdstrand* (1903) (Fig. 8), in which the artist is portrayed walking in the garden among randomly positioned artworks. Behind Munch we can see *Girls on a Bridge*, and on the right edge of the photo the outlines of another work. Even though the artist is positioned at the centre of the composition, this image is not a conventional photographic portrait, nor a documentary shot of the surrounding elements. Choosing to be depicted while walking through the garden indicates that his compositions are directed in such a way so as to reflect his role and ambition as an artist.

Tojner explains that the key to understanding the aesthetics of Munch's paintings is analysing the enclosure found in all his works and the outgoing movement that flows from this aspect: "In all his pictures, there is movement outwards, a movement which inevitably involves the viewers".[12] He goes on to explain that:

> It is not difficult to recognize this aspect of confrontation in Munch's pictures, because as you look at the picture, it catches sight of you. You are hit by it, you become the object of its approach — you are the one to release the picture from its internal tension. In a way, the viewer takes

12 Tojner, *Munch: In His Own Words,* 22.

> over the position which has previously been held by the painter. The viewer completes the relay.[13]

To elaborate further, Tojner draws a parallel between Munch and Monet, contrasting the contemplative aesthetics of Impressionism with the confrontational aspects of Post-Impressionism and Expressionism:

> Impressionism draws the sensitive person into the endless depth of the picture, as a sponge absorbs water. [...] However, this is not particularly relevant to Munch's work. Looking at his work, one does not travel anymore; one is immediately fixated in front of the painting. There is nothing before and nothing after that has any real significance when you look at Munch's work. That sudden moment of discovery, and the extreme confidence with which the painting is executed, are hallmarks of his work.[14]

The immediacy created by the continuous moment captured in Munch's works fully engages the viewer, leading to a similar type of staging as that created in his self-portraits. In this case, however, the action is better described as 'framing the viewer' than 'staging for the viewer', as Munch does not create a dramatic image of an existing subject, but rather orchestrates a dramatic set-up through which the viewer interacts with the main character. That is, instead of creating a dramatic understanding of the subject, he sets up a dramatic encounter with the subject of the painting. Attracting the viewer by using traditional genres, he subtly subverts these with interchangeable props which eventually confront the viewer and leave him with no escape from confrontation with the artwork.

The characteristics of confrontational aesthetics are made visible by depicting both the subject and the landscape. Munch, according to Tojner, "plans the space with a characteristic sloping forward. The pictures dip, they are like a chute sending the depicted subject straight into the arms of the viewer".[15] The

13 Ibid., 22.

14 Ibid., 22.

15 Ibid., 24.

Fig. 9
Edvard Munch
Rue Lafayette, 1891
92 x 73cm, Oil on canvas
The National Museum of Art,
Architecture, Design, Norway

subject is not painted in a landscape; rather the landscape is constructed in such a way that enhances the position of the subject that Munch saw fit for trapping the viewer's attention.

Munch had been developing this compositional strategy for several years before reaching the subtlety of construction present in works like *Red Virginia Creeper* and *Street in Åsgårdstrand*. His first experiments with diagonals are seen in *Rue Lafayette* (1891) (Fig. 9), which is inspired by the work of the impressionists. Here, the solitary character leaning over the balcony to gaze at the busy city life is pushed to the back of the composition. In later years,

Munch made several sketches showing a lonely man leaning over a fence. Even though this subject does not face the viewer directly, he is pushed forward to a point where he dominates the composition. The strong diagonal representation of the rail which crosses the composition from background to foreground gives the sensation that the viewer would immediately bash into this figure, creating a moment of interaction between the two.

THE GAZE

Red Virginia Creeper and *Street in Åsgårdstrand* further manipulate the viewer into engaging with the paintings' subjects. While *The Scream* brings on a direct point of interaction, the aforementioned compositions 'frame' (set-up) the viewer to become part of this interaction. In *Red Virginia Creeper* the plant covering the house in the background seems to be in a slow and continuous moment of melting down from the house to the curved road before it. The road, rather than a straightforward diagonal, takes the shape of an undulating and curling flow of lines that organically lead to the subject at the bottom of the composition. In traditional portraiture, the sitter conventionally occupies a central role, making him or her easily graspable by the gaze of the onlooker. In this painting the subject is intentionally positioned at the bottom of the composition, safe from the first glimpse of the viewer, in the point of the canvas closest to the onlooker. Munch stages a natural flow for the viewer's gaze; the house covered in the red Virginia creeper first grabs his attention. The viewer can only see the head of the character with his frenetic stare, who has made his way from the red house to the end of the road. As there are no clues in the image about what might have caused the character to leave or where he might be going, the encounter freezes the viewer and makes him or her part of the scene, even if only for a moment. Trying to read the work, the gaze organically wanders from the top to the bottom of the canvas, before the onlooker realizes that he or she has been framed to take part in this eerie moment of direct confrontation.

In this composition, another crucial element that fully engages the viewer is the subject's staring gaze. It is a common trait of Munch's works that main subjects stare directly at the viewer, with their gaze becoming a completely inextinguishable point of contact between the picture and the viewer.[16] Munch needs a focal point to release the painting, and he does so through the gaze, making this another direct bridge that reaches out to the viewer.[17] It is, therefore, crucially important for Munch to rely on the genre of portraiture to create direct interaction between canvas and onlooker, as the gaze of the main character is what locks the viewers' immediate attention.

Similar compositional elements are also at play in *Street in Åsgårdstrand* (1901). The background represents a dense, almost abstract landscape, with a descending undulating road that broadens in an almost exaggerated manner right in front of the onlooker. The viewer's gaze meets the direct stare of a female subject who is cropped at the lower part of the canvas. Her blue hat marks the centre of the composition as well as the focal point of the painting, making the transition from background to foreground. This prop has taken the shape of the rocky formations behind the subject, creating again a unity between figure and landscape. The reading direction of the composition is again organically conducted from the background to the main character, yet the landscape setting is tamer, and fully focused on guiding the gaze of the onlooker. What is different from *Red Virginia Creeper* is the introduction of another group of subjects along the curling road that leads to the main character, and eventually to the viewer. On his way to meet the figure's obtrusive gaze, the onlooker acknowledges the undetermined and ongoing activity taking place amidst the group of women in the background. It is a rather unusual scene, as there is again no indication to the reason of this seemingly spontaneous gathering. Neither is there any hint that suggests whether this lonely female subject had been an active participant in this group and had left, or if she had been sent away. The fact that she is now placed between the group and the viewer directly engages the onlooker in what becomes a relationship

16 Tojner, *Munch: In His Own Words*, 24.

17 Ibid., 26.

triangle. In this way, the viewer is framed to take part in this ongoing exchange, including him or her in the composition.

Street in Åsgårdstrand (1902) (Fig. 10) has a very similar background as *Street in Åsgårdstrand* (1901) (Fig. 6), yet the fence curving along the road indicates that this canvas might be depicting a different road from the one in the previous work. Similar compositional devices are employed in both works to frame the viewer into direct interaction with the young girl placed in the right front of the painting. A road that broadens and completely takes over the lower left part of the canvas foregrounds the resting bodies of three boys observing the girl cropped in the right side of painting. She is depicted in such a way that the viewer can only see her upper body, her dress, and lower arms being washed into the surrounding landscape. In a similar manner of execution, the little boys' bodies, clothes, and the road are almost indistinguishable from one

another; figures and landscape almost become one. As the reading direction of the composition is organically constructed from background to the central character, the composition propels the girl right into the arms of the onlooker. Before meeting the confronting gaze of the girl, the viewer has already been framed to directly interact with this subject.

CONCLUSION

As the viewer's interaction happens through an encounter with the main subject in several of Munch's compositions, the genre of portraiture is a necessary device in creating these works. Portraiture, besides being a mode of representation, entails a specific subject. Portraits therefore have the capacity to become functional subjects; in Munch's case, they become subjects that are functioning in the present moment. Through the portrayed characters, Munch's compositions engage with viewers. Nevertheless, traditional assertions of the genre are undermined by the introduction of other compositional devices, such as landscape, that prove to be an integral part of the work. The portrait is not used to represent the inner reality of the main character. Instead, the representation of the human subject in the surrounding landscape is a necessary tool in creating the desired interaction between canvas and onlooker.

While making use of traditional genres, Munch continuously searched for new painterly solutions to transgress conventional understandings of the pictorial genres he employed. Already in the late 1880s Munch experimented with the place of the figure in its surrounding landscape, resulting in compositions that created a hybrid genre between portraiture and landscape. These compositions succeeded in eliminating a clear linear and narrative story, which led to the representation of an ongoing moment. Just as in his famous *The Scream*, it is unimportant what happened before or will happen after the moment of the depicted scene; all the attention is focused on the present instant, where all compositional elements are subordinated to the current moment. Con-

frontational aesthetics combined with self-staging techniques are key devices used in Munch's hybrid genre. Through these compositional devices, Munch orchestrated the way in which the viewer comes into contact with the subject of his works to create an inescapable confrontation. The landscape in Munch's portraits thus becomes an attentively constructed device meant to frame the viewer for direct engagement with the compositions. As argued by Nils Ohlsen:

> Munch is a diligent director, who in a masterly way utilizes his fine-tuned repertoire on all levels to achieve an equally precisely calculated effect on the viewer. The picture solutions vary greatly in their details, but they have the viewer's meticulously defined role in common. The viewer is inevitably drawn into the picture's force field.[18]

By directly engaging the viewer in his paintings, Munch evades pre-conceived readings of his works. He successfully subverts conventional understandings of traditional art historical genres, creating hybrid compositions which surpass passive contemplations and favour a direct engagement with the viewer.

18 Nils Ohlsen, "Edvard Munch's Visual Rhetoric — Seen Through Selected Interiors," in *Edvard Munch*, eds Mai Britt Guleng and Jon-Ove Steihaug (Milan: Skira, 2013), 26.

Timea Andrea Lelik is an art historian based at Leiden University, where she is currently preparing a PhD dissertation on the topic of the painted portrait in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, focusing on the work of Edvard Munch, Francis Bacon, and Marlene Dumas. She specializes in modern and contemporary visual art, with a keen focus on portraiture. As an independent curator she has prepared several international exhibitions in the Netherlands and abroad. She is a member of the AICA (International Association of Art Critics).