

Art Masterpiece: 3rd Grade, Lesson 5 (April)

Wassily Kandinsky (1866 – 1944)

Color Study: Squares with Concentric Rings (1913)

Pronounced: Va-SEE-lee Kan-din-skee

Art Style: Abstract

Art Terms: Color Theory: Neutral, Warm, Cool

Activity: Concentric Circles

Medium: Watercolor



Meet the Artist

- Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow, Russia in 1866. As a boy, he was a good student and took drawing lessons. He loved to draw. He learned to play the piano and cello before studying law. He eventually became a lawyer.
- That all changed in 1896 when he visited a Claude Monet art exhibition. Monet was an Impressionistic artist who used a large amount of color in his work. Kandinsky was so taken by the art-and the power of the color that he quit his job, and at 30 years old, traveled to Munich Germany to study art again.
- Once in Germany, he met Franz Marc and became one of the earliest pioneers of what is known as abstract art. He discovered the power of abstract art by observing a painting one day He noticed “its extraordinary beauty and glowing inner radiance”, only to realize it was one of his paintings that had been turned upside-down!
- Kandinsky believed that true artists could express their inner feelings through lines, shapes and especially color. He felt all colors and forms had meaning and carefully planned each painting to express the feelings he wanted to communicate. He did not feel the need to put recognizable objects in his work. In fact, he liked to title his works with words like Composition or Improvisation so viewers would not read too much into the meaning of the titles.
- According to him, “Color is a power that directly influences the soul...Color is the keyboard...The artist is the hand that plays.”
- Kandinsky retired in Paris and died in 1944 at the age of 78. He is often called the father of abstract art and is famous for his simple compositions and use of color and shapes.

About the Artwork

This bold, colorful picture was painted by Kandinsky to explore the effect of placing different colors side by side. He wanted to find out which colors stand out and which ones blend together, and how to balance different colors to create a bright, attractive pattern.

Concentric: Objects that share the same center, axis or origin with one inside the other. Circles, tubes, cylindrical shafts, disks, and spheres may be concentric to one another. One of the most familiar examples of concentric circles is a “target” or a “bullseye”.

Art Style

Abstract

- Artists feel that paintings do not have to show only things that are recognizable. In their paintings they do not try to show people, animals or places exactly as they appeared in the real world. They mainly use color and shape in their paintings to show emotions.

Art Terms

Color Theory

Use the color wheel and write the color information written below on the board.

- Color: An element of art with three properties:
 1. Hue - The color name. (Red, Yellow, Blue, etc.)
 2. Intensity - The pure color strength. (bright Red or diluted Red)
 3. Value - The lightness or darkness of a color. (Pink is a light value of Red and Navy is a dark value of Blue)
- Primary colors: Red, Yellow, Blue. All other colors can be made from mixing these three colors.
- Secondary colors: Equal amounts of two primary colors.
 - Yellow + Red = Orange
 - Blue + Yellow = Green
 - Red + Blue = Purple
- Complimentary colors: Colors directly opposite each other on the color wheel. (show color wheel)
 - Red and Green
 - Blue and Orange
 - Violet and Yellow

Neutral Colors

- Not associated with a color - Browns, Blacks, Grays, Whites.
- They can be used to change value of a color: i.e. Red + White = Pink

Warm Colors

- Red, Orange, Yellow
- Artists use warm colors to demonstrate happiness and attract the eye. Red is the hottest.

Cool Colors

- Blue, Green, Violet
- Artists use cool colors to show moodiness and sadness.

Questions about *Color Study: Squares with Concentric Rings*

- What do you see in this painting? (circles and squares)
- Are these shapes “perfect”?
- What does a circle represent to you? (Kandinsky believed that the circle is the most peaceful shape and represents the human spirit.) A square?
- Looking at the print can you find the square that has all warm colors? Cool colors? Neutral colors? A square where the red has less intensity?

Activity

Concentric Circles – Watercolors

Supplies

Watercolor paper (sectioned off into 6 squares) – 9” x 12”

Watercolors

Paintbrushes

Bowls or cups for water

Pencils

Paper towels (located by the sink)

Directions

1. Have students write their name and room # on the back of the paper.
2. Tell the students they are going to use the watercolors to create their own concentric circles inside each of these squares, similar to Kandinsky’s painting.
3. Have students choose one of the squares to begin with. They will paint a large circle to the edges of the square and continue to paint smaller and smaller colored circles according to the procedure below (show samples located in project bin). Expect the paint to run, which makes for a beautiful end result.

Write these directions on the board:

- 1 square must use all warm colors.
- 1 square must have all cool colors
- 1 square must have all neutral colors
- 1 square must have a warm and cool color mix
- The last 2 are their choice

4. Remind students that more water on their brushes will make the paint more transparent and lighter - the less water will make the paint more intense and darker.
5. When the students are done have them title their artwork. Write the title on a label sticker and place it on the back of their work.