
Art Masterpiece: *Color Study: Squares with Concentric Circles*, by Wassily Kandinsky

Keywords: Color: Hue, Value, Intensity, Primary, Secondary, Warm, Cool and Neutral, Abstract

Grade(s): 4th – 6th

Activity: Concentric circles color composition



About 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, but eventually became a lawyer.
- That all changed in 1896 when Kandinsky 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 he quit his job, and at 30 years old, traveled to Munich Germany to study art again.
- Kandinsky is known as one of the first pioneers of abstract painting. (*Abstract* paintings focus on geometric shapes, color and line instead of representing natural or recognizable shapes as their subject.)
- 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!

- After that, 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.
- “I applied streaks and blobs of colors onto the canvas with a palette knife and I made them sing with all the intensity I could... ” -Kandinsky
- Kandinsky 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.
- 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.

Let’s study Color! A color wheel poster, with individual color wheels for students, can be borrowed from the IRC (Instructional Resource Center.)

Artists must understand the power and use of color. The brightness, darkness or pairing of different colors create different visual effects and/or moods in a piece of art. Artists attending art school will take intense coursework studying the complexity of color. Today’s art project will help you grow in your knowledge of color.

Color is an element of art with three properties:

1. Hue, or the name of the color. Red is a hue, yellow is a hue, blue is a hue, etc.
2. Intensity, is how strong or bold the color is. Is it a bright red or a pale red? This is the intensity.
3. Value is the lightness or darkness of a color.

What are the primary colors? Red, yellow and blue. All other colors can be made from mixing these three colors.

What are secondary colors? If you mix two primary colors together, they make a secondary color. For example, Yellow + Red = Orange, Blue + Yellow = Green, Red + Blue = Violet. Orange, green, and violet are secondary colors.

What are complementary colors? Colors that are directly opposite each other on the color wheel. (Show these on the color wheel.) Red and green, blue and orange, violet and yellow are complementary colors.

What are neutral colors? Not associated with a color - browns, blacks, grays, and whites- They can be used to change the value of a color. Example: red + white = pink, (a “light” red)

Warm colors are red, orange, and yellow. Artists use these colors to attract the eye and create a mood of energy and excitement.

Cool colors are blue, green, and violet. Artists use these colors to create a mood of peace and calm. -

Possible Questions:

1. Can you find the square that has all warm colors?
2. A square that has a neutral color?
3. A square where the red has less intensity?
4. How does this painting make you feel?
5. What colors do you see?
6. What shapes do you see?
7. Are the shapes “perfect”?
8. Do you think that this painting easy or difficult for the artist to paint?
9. Why do you think this painting called “Color Study of Squares with Concentric Circles?”
10. If you were creating this painting what would you do differently?

Activity: Concentric Circles color composition

This project will have the student make their own version of concentric circles. Concentric - having a common center. In this case, all circles are formed around one.

Supplies Needed:

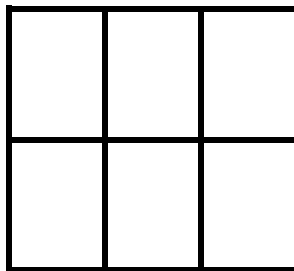
- Watercolor paper (9” X 12”), one per student

- Watercolors, one set per student
- Brushes, one per student (NOT the one that comes with the watercolors)
- Cups for water, two or three students can share one cup
- Pencils (Students should have one)
- Rulers, one per student
- A roll of paper towels
- Optional: newspapers for covering desks

Process:

Be sure to go over instructions before passing out any art supplies. Tell the students we are making their own version of concentric circles.

1. Cover desks with newspaper, if you choose to. Hand out papers.
2. Have students place their paper in landscape position (horizontal.)
3. Remind students to sign their name on the back.
4. Instruct the students to fold their paper in half lengthwise. Then have the students fold their papers in thirds vertically. They should end up with two rows of three squares. Have the students unfold their paper and use the folded lines as guidelines for their concentric circles.



5. Here are the “rules” for each section. You may want to write this one the whiteboard.

- 1 section must have a neutral color circle.
- 1 section must have complimentary color circle
- 1 section must have a warm color circle
- 1 section must have a cool color circle
- The two remaining sections can be colors of their choice

6. Pass out the painting supplies. Tell students to begin each circle in the center of the section they are painting. Paint the center circle first, and then paint each successive ring around that circle.
7. Remind students that more water on their brushes will make the paint more transparent and lighter. Less water will make the paint more intense and darker.
8. When students run out of room to paint another full circle (i.e. only the corners of the section they are working on will still be unpainted) have them chose an appropriate color to paint the background. For example, if they are painting a warm color circle, their four corner background should be red or orange or yellow.
9. When student artwork is dry, hang to display.

Example:



Chandler Unified School District, **Art Masterpiece Program**, Chandler, Arizona, USA

Parent Note:

"I applied streaks and blobs of colors onto the canvas with a palette knife and I made them sing with all the intensity I could..." – Wassily Kandinsky

Today in Art Masterpiece, your student learned about color theory: warm, cool, complimentary, neutral, primary, and secondary. They then created their own concentric circles color study in the style of Kandinsky.



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