

Masterpiece: *Color Study: Squares with Concentric Rings*, 1913 by Wassily Kandinsky

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

Keywords: Color (Primary, Secondary, Warm, Cool and Neutral), Abstract

Grade: 4th Grade

Month: January

Activity: Color Study- Pastel & Watercolor Concentric Circles

Tools: Color wheel, Print



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. (**Abstract** paintings focus on geometric shapes, color and line instead of representing natural or recognizable shapes as their subject, real people or things.) 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. 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.
- 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.
- He had a neurological disorder called synaesthesia, which for Kandinsky meant that he could hear colors as well as see them. According to him, "Color is a power that directly influences the soul...Color is the keyboard...The artist is the hand that plays."

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About the Work:

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.

Possible Questions:

- What do you see in this painting?
- What do you think his synaesthesia concerning colors did for him as an artist? Do you think it helped him? How do you think different colors sound like?
- What shapes do you see the most? What could a circle represent to you? A square?
- Looking at the print-Can you find the square that has all warm colors? A square that has a neutral color? A square where the red has less intensity?

Discuss color concepts:

Be sure to write the color information on the board. Also a color wheel is helpful for this discussion.

- **Color**-An element of art with three properties:
 1. **hue**, the color name, e.g., red, yellow, blue, etc.
 2. **intensity**, the pure color strength e.g., bright red or diluted red; and
 3. **value**, 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**? Equal amounts of two primary colors. They make orange, green and purple.
 - Yellow + Red = Orange
 - Blue + Yellow = Green
 - Red + Blue = Purple.
- What are **complementary colors**? Colors directly opposite each other on the color wheel. Show color wheel.
 - red and green
 - blue and orange
 - violet and yellow
- What are **neutral** colors? Not associated with a color - browns, blacks, grays and whites. They can be used to change value of a color.
 - Example: Red + white = pink
- How do colors make you feel?
 - **Warm colors** are: red, orange, yellow-artist use warm colors to attract the eye. Red is the hottest.
 - **Cool colors** are: blue, green and violet
- Looking at colors can physically raise or lower your body temperature.

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Activity: Color Study: Watercolor Concentric Circles

Materials Needed: One sheet (11 x 15) watercolor paper (1 per child), black construction paper (12x18), watercolor set, oil pastels, paint brushes, pencils, erasers, rulers, cups for water

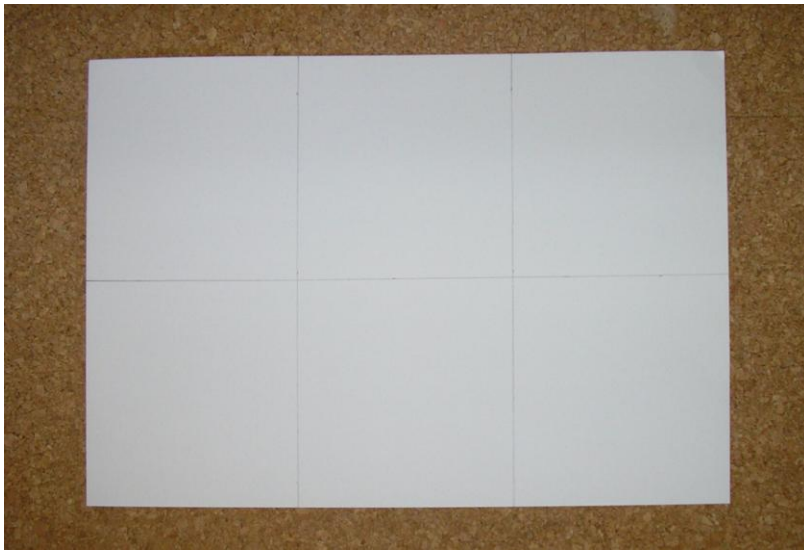
Process:

1. Tell the students we are making our own version of concentric circles. Have them place their paper in landscape position. Using a ruler, lightly draw a horizontal pencil line to halve the paper. Then have them make 2 vertical lines creating 6 equal sized boxes. (This project can take a long time to complete because of the color planning. It is not recommended to create more than 6 boxes.) See examples on next page.
2. They will use oil pastels and watercolors to create their own concentric circles by using these directions:
 - a. 1 square must have a neutral color.
 - b. 3 squares must have complimentary colors in them
 - c. 1 square must have all warm colors
 - d. 1 square must have all cool colorsEncourage students to use scratch paper for their plan (see step 3 picture).
3. Using oil pastels, draw some rings inside each square. Leave gaps between the rings.
4. Paint over the squares with watercolor paint, using a different color for each square.
5. Mount on black construction paper.
6. Put name and room number on file label and affix to back. If they would like have them name their work.
7. If desired they may sign their masterpiece.

These will be displayed at the Art Walk.

*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. Once the paint dries they can 'glaze' it, by going over it again, this will make the colors more vibrant.

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Step 1



Step 3



Step 4