

Exploring the Abstract World of Wassily Kandinsky

Learning objective: To understand the artistic style of Wassily Kandinsky, identifying key concepts like abstract art, synaesthesia, and the use of geometric shapes to convey emotion.

Use these flashcards to test your knowledge of Wassily Kandinsky's life and artistic techniques. Work with a partner to discuss how his work links to music and feelings.

Who was Wassily Kandinsky?

Wassily Kandinsky was a famous Russian painter who is widely credited as one of the pioneers of abstract art in the early 20th century.

What is 'Abstract Art'?

Abstract art is a style of art that does not try to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality, but instead uses shapes, colours, and forms to achieve its effect.

What is 'Synaesthesia' in relation to Kandinsky?

Synaesthesia is a condition where senses overlap. Kandinsky experienced this, meaning he could 'hear' colours as music and 'see' sounds as shapes and colours while he painted.

Which geometric shapes did Kandinsky frequently use in his compositions?

He often used circles, triangles, and squares to create a sense of rhythm and balance on his canvases.

How did Kandinsky use colour to express emotion?

He believed that different colours could trigger specific emotions; for example, he thought yellow was sharp and aggressive, while blue was calm and deep.

What is a 'Composition' in art?

A composition is the arrangement or placement of visual elements, such as shapes and colours, within a work of art to create a balanced whole.

How did music influence Kandinsky's work?

Kandinsky wanted his paintings to be like musical symphonies, using visual 'rhythms' and 'harmonies' to move the viewer emotionally without needing to paint realistic objects.

Explain why Kandinsky moved away from painting realistic landscapes.

He felt that painting realistic objects limited the artist's ability to express pure emotion and spiritual ideas, which he believed could be done better through abstract forms.

Compare and contrast: How does a realistic portrait differ from one of Kandinsky's abstract compositions?

A realistic portrait focuses on capturing the likeness of a person, whereas an abstract composition focuses on the arrangement of colours and shapes to evoke a feeling rather than a physical appearance.

Justify your answer: Is it possible for a painting to have no subject matter and still be considered art?

Yes, because art can be an expression of internal feelings, moods, or musical experiences rather than just a mirror of the physical world.

What might happen if you painted a picture based on the sounds of a busy playground?

(Creative response) You might use jagged, bright yellow lines for the sound of laughter and large, overlapping blue circles for the steady, rhythmic sound of feet running.

If you were to design an abstract piece representing 'joy', which shapes and colours would you choose and why?

(Creative response) Answers will vary, pupils should justify their choices, such as using bright yellows and oranges for warmth and soft, rounded circles for a feeling of happiness.