

Exploring the Abstract World of Wassily Kandinsky

Learning objective: To understand the life, artistic style, and contributions of Wassily Kandinsky to abstract art, exploring his use of colour, shape, and synaesthesia.

Read each flashcard carefully. Zara the Zebra has prepared these to help you master the key concepts of abstract expressionism. Use these to test your knowledge of Kandinsky's techniques and theories.

Who was Wassily Kandinsky?

A Russian painter and art theorist who is credited with creating some of the first purely abstract works of art in the early 20th century.

What is 'Abstract Art'?

Art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of visual reality, instead using shapes, colours, forms, and gestural marks to achieve its effect.

What is 'Synaesthesia' in the context of Kandinsky's work?

A neurological condition where senses overlap; Kandinsky experienced this, often 'hearing' colours and 'seeing' music, which influenced his paintings.

Why did Kandinsky choose to move away from painting realistic objects?

He believed that art should express inner spiritual feelings rather than just imitating the physical world, which he felt restricted the artist's emotional expression.

Explain the significance of geometric shapes in Kandinsky's compositions.

He used circles, triangles, and squares to create a visual language, believing the circle was the most peaceful and perfect shape.

How did music influence Kandinsky's art?

He titled many of his works 'Compositions' or 'Improvisations', mirroring musical terminology to show how he viewed his paintings as visual symphonies.

What is a 'Non-representational' painting?

A work of art that does not depict recognizable subjects from the real world, focusing entirely on the elements of design.

Compare and contrast: How does Kandinsky's style differ from a traditional landscape painting?

Landscape art aims to record a scene realistically, whereas Kandinsky's work prioritises colour and form to evoke an emotional or spiritual response in the viewer.

Justify why Kandinsky is often called a 'pioneer' of modern art.

He was a pioneer because he broke the established rules of art that had existed for centuries, proving that art could exist without a narrative or subject matter.

What might happen if a viewer looks at a Kandinsky painting while listening to different types of music?

Because of Kandinsky's theory of synaesthesia, the viewer might perceive the colours and shapes differently depending on the rhythm, tempo, and mood of the music chosen.