

Talking Points: Wassily Kandinsky

How might listening to music affect the lines an artist produces?

Wassily Kandinsky, born in Russia in 1866, is widely regarded as a pioneer of abstraction in Western art. He is believed to have had synesthesia, a neurological phenomenon that enabled him to make connections between colour and sound, which influenced his approach to painting.

Explore his paintings using the sources below, then discuss the questions provided.

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Kandinsky and Responding to Music

“Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the harmonies, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.” – Wassily Kandinsky

Take a close look at these paintings, talking about them as a class, and using the questions to help deepen looking.



Wassily Kandinsky, Improvisation No. 30 (Cannons), 1913

Questions to Ask Children

Describe what you see.

What do you think could be happening in this abstract painting?

What kind of music do you think that Kandinsky was listening to when he painted this?

What do you think the blue dashes represent?

How does the painting make you feel?

Watch this animation that brings elements of Kandinsky's paintings to life.

Questions to Ask Children

How do you feel watching the animation?

What colour would you associate with the music played by a saxophone? A drum?

If you could animate one of the paintings above or below, how would you bring it to life? What would you make it do?



Untitled (1916) by Wassily Kandinsky. Original from The Art Institute of Chicago.

Questions to Ask Children

How do you think Kandinsky was feeling when he painted this painting?

What genre of music do you think that Kandinsky might have been listening to while he was painting this?

Play a Kandinsky Painting in class with this [interactive Google Arts and Culture Activity](#).

Watch this video on how to paint like Kandinsky whilst putting your own experience at the centre of the painting.

Questions to Ask Children

Choose a colour and a shape to describe how you're feeling right now.

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Pathway: Music and art



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