

Expressionism with Kandinsky's Circles



Grade: 1st

Medium: Painting

Learning Objective: Students will create concentric circles with contrasting colors. They will choose colors to express personal relationships between color and mood.

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Elements of Art / Principles of Design

Complementary Colors: contrasting colors; colors that are opposite on the color wheel, such as yellow/violet, blue/orange, and red/green.

Contrast: a principle of design; a technique that shows differences in the elements of visual arts in an artwork, such as smooth/rough textures, light/dark colors, or thick/thin lines.

Pattern: a principle of design; the repetition of the elements of visual arts in an organized way; pattern and rhythm are both created through repetition; see rhythm for examples of regular, alternating, random, and progressive rhythmic patterns.

Shape: an element of visual arts; a two-dimensional (flat) area enclosed by a line: **Geometric:** shapes and/or forms that are based on mathematical principles, such as a square/cube, circle/sphere, triangle/cone, or pyramid. **Organic:** shapes and/or forms that are irregular, often curving or rounded, and more informal than geometric shapes.

Symmetry : symmetrical/formal balance. having balance; exact appearance on opposite sides of a dividing line or plane.

Value: an element of visual arts; the lightness and darkness of a line, shape, or form; a measure of relative lightness and darkness.

Vocabulary

Abstract: 1. a style of art that includes various types of avant-garde art of the 20th century; 2. images that have been altered from their realistic/natural appearance; images that have been simplified to reveal only basic contours/forms; 3. an artwork that is based upon a recognizable object that has been simplified to show some purer underlying form (sometimes, any references to recognizable objects are removed).

Expressionism: a style of painting of the 20th century, expressionism uses simplified designs and brilliant colors to express a definite or strong mood or feeling.

Concentric Circles: circles with a common center (con=with, centric= same center).

Warm Colors: a group of colors on the color wheel that are associated with warmth, such as red, yellow, and orange. In an artwork, warm colors appear to advance toward the viewer. Warm colors can evoke feelings of warmth like sun, fire, heat.

Cool Colors: a group of colors on the color wheel that includes blues, greens, and violets; in an artwork, cool colors appear to be farther away from the viewer. Cool colors bring to mind cool things, places, and feelings.

Contrast: a principle of design; a technique that shows differences in the elements of visual arts in an artwork, such as smooth/rough textures, light/dark colors, or thick/thin lines.

Materials & Supplies

- Pencil (for writing name)
- 4x4" Cardstock (6 per student)
- 9x12" Paper (to mount finished art)
- Tempera Paint (4 warm colors in a palette and 4 cool colors in another palette)
- One ¼" Paintbrush per Paint Color
- Water (for washing paintbrushes)
- Paper Towels (for blotting paintbrushes dry)
- Paper Placemats or Table Covering
- Book: *The Noisy Paintbox* by Barb Rosenstock and Mary Granpre

Context (History and/or Artists)

This project is inspired by the expressionist artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and his painting, *Squares with Concentric Circles*. Kandinsky earned a law degree and practiced law but later, at age 30, decided to become an artist and art teacher. He was born in Moscow, Russia but also lived in Germany and France. Kandinsky listened to music while painting. Kandinsky had a condition called synesthesia which gave him the ability to "hear colors" and "see sound."

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

Other famous expressionist and abstract expressionist artists: Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Mark Rothko (1903-1970), Edvard Munch (1863-1944), Paul Klee (1879-1940), Lee Krasner (1908-1984), Helen Frankenthaler (1928- 2011), Romare Bearden (1911-1988).

Advanced Preparation

Dispense tempera paint onto palettes for each student with the 8 colors listed in the supplies.

Pre-cut cardstock paper (6 per student). Each student will paint 6 squares to be mounted on the 9x12" sheet with an inch at the bottom for the students' names.

Mounting the 4x4" squares on the 9x12" paper can be done by the docent and helpers after the lesson is completed, to allow time for the paint to dry. However, if students are going to mount their own squares, it is helpful to mark the 9x12" paper with lines in advance to guide placement.

Gather pencils, paintbrushes, water in cups, paper towels and placemats to give students.

Tips & Tricks

- Because Kandinsky played music while creating art, you may want to play music while students work on their paintings.
- Remind students that the circles they create do not need to look perfectly round and it's fine if the colors blend as they touch.

Discussion Points

Expressionism is about expressing the artist's emotions with strong colors and distorted reality. In addition to showing examples of Kandinsky's work, read *The Noisy Paintbox* by Barb Rosenstock and Mary Grandpre. Discuss the story and the way Kandinsky could hear colors. How colors evoke feelings. How music can make a mood.

- Ask students to give some examples of feelings.
- What feelings do you associate with which colors?
- Review warm colors and cool colors with students.
- Explain the vocabulary word "contrast" and point out how and why to use complementary colors next to each other.
- Discuss the definition of concentric circles to help students understand how to make their Kandinsky-inspired paintings. First graders may appreciate relating the concentric circles to something else they can visualize like a doughnut hole with a small, medium and large circular doughnut surrounding the middle one.

Instructions for Lesson

1. Students write their name on the back of the 9x12" paper and the back of each 4x4" square.
2. Place 9x12" paper right side up on placemat in a landscape orientation.
3. Lay out the 4x4" squares on a tray side by side.
4. Students should start by painting a dot in the middle of each 4x4" square with varied colors per square. Encourage students to use a different color in the center of each square.
5. Remind students to think about the emotions they would like to represent as they are picking colors.
6. Next, paint a circle around each dot. Choose a complementary color. For example: if the dot is a cool blue color choose a warm orange color to go around it. Paint a ring around the center of each of the six 4x4" papers.
7. Paint a second ring around each circle using whatever color, they would like. Then paint the complementary color around that one (3rd ring, 4th circle). For example: if the first ring is cool purple the second ring should be warm yellow.
8. Paint the last circle following the same rule of complementary colors.
9. Each 4x4" square should have a center dot and three rings.
10. Paint the background of each of the 4x4" squares to cover the edges. Again, choose complementary colors to the last ring painted.
11. Once 4x4" squares have dried, mount them on the background 9x12" paper.

Reflection Point (Assessment of Learning Objectives)

Students can point out and name the complementary colors used

- Students can point out which circles are concentric
- Students can recall the artist's name and a fact about the artist.
- Students can say "when I feel ____ (emotion) I think of ____ (color). (no wrong answers)

Examples:



Example of display with paintings from multiple students.

References and Attributions

<http://www.cfsd.net/en/parents-students/academics/course-descriptions/elementary-art/glossary-art-terms-k-5/>

http://www.incredibleart.org/files/elem_vocab.html

<http://arthistoryresources.net/ARTHLinks.html>

<http://arthistory.about.com/>

wassilykandinsky.net

Photos of student work are from 2016 lesson at Creekside Elementary School, ISD.



Resource Image: Wassily Kandinsky, Squares with Concentric Circles, 1913, Oil on Canvas.

Notes for Educators

21st Century Thinking Skills

Observing, making connections, visualizing, sequencing, predicting, comparing & contrasting, problem solving, cause and effect, decision making, evaluating.

Thinking Habits

Thinking flexibly, persisting, creating, innovating, taking responsible risks, reflecting.

WA State 2017 Learning Standards

(VA:Cr1.1.1) a. Engage collaboratively in exploration and imaginative play with materials.

(VA:Cr2.1.1) a. Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design.

(VA:Cr2.2.1) a. Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for using materials, tools, and equipment while making art.

(VA:Cr3.1.1) a. Use art vocabulary to describe choices while creating art.

(VA:Cn10.1.1) a. Identify times, places, and reasons by which students make art outside of school.