



Kandinsky's Colors

Project by: Sandi Arthur

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Project Description

Students will create concentric circles, inspired by Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky's work. His special relationship with symbolic color, synesthesia and color theory convey mood and emotion using oil pastels.

Learning Objectives

- Students will have an introduction to color theory
- Students will learn historical context of abstract artist Wassily Kandinsky & Synesthesia
- Students will use various color combinations and make their own creative expression of mood through color choices.

Materials

1 (one) piece plain white paper 8.5" x 11" 80lb. (or near)
Oil Pastels - Sakura Cray-Pas Expressionist Oil Pastel Set
Tortillions (Blending stump)- Medium size
Paper towel
Small fine sandpaper to clean tortillon (optional)

Wassily Kandinsky & Synesthesia



Our project today is all about color! It is inspired by Russian Artist Wassily (pronounced Vassily) Kandinsky (1866-1944). He is considered a pioneer in the abstract art movement.

Do you think about color? Artist Wassily Kandinsky did! He had a rare ability called Synesthesia. He could not only just see color, but even hear it! When he listened to music, he could see the colors that the different instruments made in his mind. He studied color, played with color, and was entranced by color.

Synesthesia is thought to be rare. It is estimated that about one out of every 2000 people have synesthesia. Famous synesthetes include Billie Eilish, Pharrel Williams, Dev Hines and Billy Joel.

Most of us can't hear color, but I bet without thinking about it, color might affect your mood - the way you feel. Look at the clothes you are wearing... if you woke up and you hadn't slept well, your tummy hurt and you had had a fight with your best friend... do you think it might affect the clothes you choose that day?

On a day like that, I don't think I could bear to wear something bright and cheery like yellow or red. Maybe I'd choose something like black or gray or dark blue...?

Colors are associated with various moods and feelings. We talk about "feeling blue" when we're sad or "seeing red" when we are angry. Colors also can have a "temperature" being "warm" like the sun or fire or "cool," like green grass, or cool blue water.

Colors are relational and even seem to "talk" to each other! When you use a color alone, it might look one way, but when you put another color next to it, it changes! Did anyone ever tell you that your colors "clash?" That means that they don't look very good together. Colors change based on what they are next to. Groups of colors are called color palettes. Artists often choose a group of colors called a color palette to make their painting. Color palettes help convey the mood the artist is looking for.

About the Artwork

The inspiration for our project is a painting, *Color Study, Squares with Concentric Circles*. This painting has a funny back story. Even though this is one of Kandinsky's most well known works, he didn't intend it to be at all when he created it. He created it, just like the name says, to "study color." He used watercolor, gouache paints and even crayon to make concentric circles. His goal was to have a reference to look at when he made a painting... kind of like having a dictionary handy when you write a paper. This "scratch paper" really turned heads and is part of art history.

Vocabulary

Color Wheel - circle of colored segments used to show color relationships & works as a guide to mixing colors.

Color Palette - a group of colors used together. For example, in a painting, a rug or a room.

Hue - another word for color, like red, blue or green.

Warm Colors - red, orange and yellow - think fire, or volcanoes. (Sometimes greens or blues with a lot of yellow mixed in might feel warm.)

Cool Colors - Blue, Green, Purple (think cool water and grass).

Complementary Colors - Colors opposite from one another on the color wheel.

Primary Colors - red, yellow and blue. Primary colors can't be made by mixing.

Secondary Colors - Created by mixing two primary colors; orange, purple, and green.

Muted Colors - Colors that are not bright, also sometimes called "neutral", "dirty" or "muddy" colors.

Mood - a temporary state of mind or feeling.

Synesthesia - a rare condition in which two or more of the senses are linked. For example, synesthetes might always see the letter "A" as red, or the number "7" as green. Or they might taste sounds etc.

Abstract Art - Art that is not realistic, often with no recognizable forms.

Overview

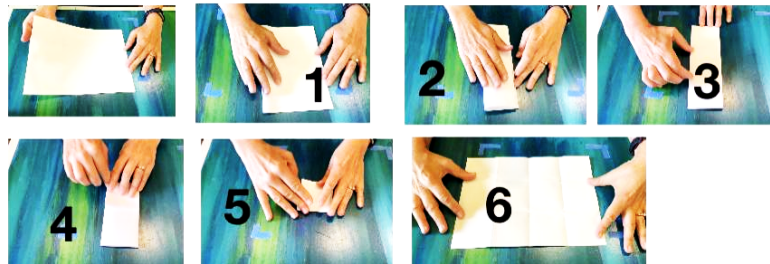
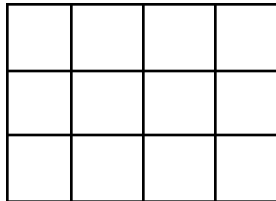
Our goal will be to try out different color combinations and make a color study. The Kandinsky painting, *Squares With Concentric Circles*, was produced more as a color study than a finished artwork, yet, 100 years later, it is still one of Kandinsky's most well-known works. You can find it on t-shirts, socks and posters.

Kandinsky's *Colors* takes a deeper look at color relationships - how they convey mood, act as a quick word-free decoder and how colors relate to one another. We use artist Wassily Kandinsky's *Squares with Concentric Circles* and his special relationship with color, as a jumping off point. Kids can try out different color relationships in this easy, interesting exercise.



Procedure

1. Take a piece of 8.5" x 11" paper. Fold to create 12 "squares." (See images 1-6.) Fold in half horizontally & then half again. Fold into three equal parts vertically. Open up the paper and use the fold lines as squares.



2. Using the slideshow, talk about *Squares with Concentric circles* as a color study or reference painting.
3. Introduce Kandinsky and synesthesia.
4. Select 2-3 colors that they think feel "happy." Fill in any square using them to make concentric circles. There is not a "right" answer here. Tell students it is fine to overlap colors. It's an excellent way to practice color mixing. Why not leave some white paper showing - or add black as well. Rings can be thick or thin. Colors may be repeated.
5. * On the last "ring" it's smart to make it a square. This will fill in the corners along the folded lines.



6. Use your blending tortillon to blend your colors & create a more painterly effect. Start with your lightest color and go over all instances of that color with your tortillon. Important to wipe your tortillon on a paper towel before switching to the next color. Continue until you have blended your whole square.
7. Reminder: blending is to smooth colors. If colors do not blend easily, they may need to be colored over a little darker.



8. Check your oil pastels often. See if the tip is clean. If not, wipe off the tip with a paper towel.
9. Fill in more squares by choosing colors that express your emotions, for example “sad” or “lonely” and “anger.” Blend. Experiment and express yourself. You are not tied to *Squares with Concentric Circles*, this was how Kandinsky did it, but if we feel compelled to make a sun to show warm colors or peace signs to show calm, peaceful colors - that’s fine!
10. In a new square, start with your favorite color and build a color combination that you think will look good with it.
11. Choose two complementary colors - those that are across from each other on the color wheel - and make a square that starts with those two. Remember, if you mix complementary colors, you will get a brown. (For example, red and green are complementary colors. Green is a combination of primary colors yellow and blue, red is a primary color. So in mixing green with red, you’ve actually mixed all three primary colors... and made brown!)
12. Try monochromatic colors... all shades of green or blue, for example.
13. You could do a square with warm colors and one with cool colors. Talk about color and use many of the squares to reinforce a concept.
14. Make sure to leave some squares that kids can experiment with color combinations on their own, without our input. Ask them to explore & create some squares to explore & try out different color combinations.

For more of a challenge

- Use a variety of prompts to discuss color concepts and use the squares to try them out.
- You might want to start by folding back one set of 3 to make a 3 x 3 square paper as a start, then fold out the flap if the child runs out of squares and is still gung-ho.
- Have students make a list of words for feelings to make symbolic color squares

For more help

Consider some of the following word prompts as inspiration.

happy	silly	calm	wild
friendly	energetic	embarrassed	confident
sad	lonely	closed off	content

Reflection

Q: What colors do you relate to particular emotions?

Q: Did you try mixing new color combinations or did you have unexpected outcomes?

Q: Are you able to guess other students' emotions they are describing through the colors they selected?



More about Wassily Kandinsky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7d6zscZF5I&t=14s> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xDnxkzQtdI&t=54s>

More about Color!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2LLXnUdUlc&feature=youtu.be

For younger kids: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yu44JRTIxSQ&list=PLd_zy-Jx_QxehO91esCQI-M3ScebpOrLZ

MORE ABOUT SYNESTHESIA - TED TALK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvPd3wH21z8&t=335s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkRbeboYqI&t=30s>

AAYF Artist Bio

Sandi Arthur believes passionately in the value of art education and has been involved with nearly every aspect of the Adventures in Art program in Torrance and with Hands on Art in Redondo Beach. She also runs an art program called Reaching Out that brings art to children in underserved schools. Sandi has always loved to create, whether it is quilting, photography, tie dye, painting or some other endeavor. Starting in 2006, when her kids began elementary school, she found a wonderful outlet through AIA and HOA and held nearly every position possible from Helper through to Program Chair, Merchandise Design, Supply Chair and has conducted New Docent Training for both programs for several years now. She created projects for kids to do online during the Covid shutdown, but this year is her first doing workshops in person.

Art At Your Fingertips is a Palos Verdes Art Center school-based outreach program that brings visual arts education to elementary school classrooms from transitional kindergarten through fifth grade.

Established in 1976, this program reaches 6,000 students annually on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Run completely by parent volunteers, AAYF's paramount objective is to make every child feel comfortable using art as a means of expression. We thank PTA, PTO, and Booster Club for their support.
pvartcenter.org





Kandinsky's Colors



Learn more about Wassily Kandinsky and how he aimed to express feelings through shapes and colors with these resources from the Palos Verdes Library District

Browse in the Adult Nonfiction section under the call number 759.7 Kandinsky for titles like:

Kandinsky : A Retrospective

759.7 KANDINSKY

Survey of over 100 works spanning Kandinsky's full career, from his formative period in Munich to his final years in Paris.

For books in the adult nonfiction section on color technique or color mixing:

All About Techniques in Color

752 ALL

Presents a thorough review of color theory, with instruction on how to mix primary colors to produce virtually every color and every gradation in the visible spectrum.

Color Mixing Bible

752 SIDAWAY

Provides a basic color palette for each art medium, demonstrating an array of two-, three-, and four-color mixes, as well as offering full explanations of various paints and pigments.

And more books to browse in the Young Readers section:

Circles

J 516.152 ADLER

Circles are everywhere - students can learn the fundamental properties of circles.

Pastels

J 741.235 BOLTE

Step-by-step guides show how to create a variety of projects using pastels.

One + One = Blue

J FICTION AUCH Mary

Seventh-grader Basil's rank as class loser may be in jeopardy after meeting a bossy new girl who, like Basil, has synesthesia.

The Noisy Paint Box: the colors and sounds of Kandinsky's abstract art

KANDINSKY, W. ROSENSTOCK

Tells the story of Wassily Kandinsky, major artistic innovator, painting theorist, and one of the first painters of abstract art - throughout his life, Kandinsky experienced colors as sounds and sounds as colors. Index includes four paintings and sources.

Find more about Wassily Kandinsky online at:

Wassily Kandinsky - 610 artworks, biography, books, quotes, articles, photos, museums & more.
<https://www.wassilykandinsky.net/>

