



Making Shapes Dance



Wassily Kandinsky (born Russia 1886-died in France, 1944; worked in Russia, Germany and France)

Line-Dot, 1927

Oil on pressed pulp board

SBMA

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ira Gershwin (1956.5.4)

Grade/Level: K-2

Subjects: Language Arts, Visual Arts, the Elements of Art

Time required: One to two class periods

Lesson Overview:

- Students learn to observe, describe and analyze the elements of art: in art, in nature
- Students learn the difference between warm and cool colors: how they influence mood and expression
- Students create an original work of art using line, shape, color.
- Students write a letter to the artist

Discussion Questions:

What do you see? (Use words to describe.)

Lines, shapes, colors, patterns on a yellow background.

How many different kinds of LINES can you find?

Straight, zig-zag, wavy, thick, thin, horizontal, vertical, diagonal—other? (8+?)

How many different COLORS can you find?

Yellow, blue, red, green, brown, black. . .

Color combinations? (e.g. yellow-green)

How many different shapes?

Triangles, circles, half-circles, rectangles

Do any of these shapes remind you of things you have seen?

1. In nature? (Mountains, lightening, rocks, waves, leaves—they will no doubt see more than us adults!)

2. Made by people? Sailboat, telephone poles.

How about Patterns? What are patterns?

Parallel groups of lines. Waves, checkerboards, stripes.

Space: Is there space in this painting? What color is the space? (Yellow) Have you ever seen yellow air?

Why do you think Kandinsky made the space yellow?

Is yellow a warm or cool color?

Analysis and Conclusions

Adding up all the details, what words would you use to describe the impression this picture makes on you?

Mood: Happy? Sad?

Energy: still or moving?

Use your hands and arms to describe the kind of movement you see in this picture.

Sound? If this painting were a piece of music, what would it sound like? Quiet? Noisy?

What would the rhythm be: Slow and smooth? Jumpy? Jazzy?

Why do you think the artist chose to use these simple shapes and forms, instead of trying to make things look real, like a photograph?

Would it surprise you to learn that this artist hoped to invent a new universal language of art using shapes, patterns, lines, colors and forms that everyone in the world would recognize?

Do you think art can be like a language? Can shapes and forms be like words?

Writing Activities

- Use your imagination to make up a story about what is going on in this picture.
- Write a letter to Mr. Kandinsky telling him one thing about his painting that you like.

If you can't think of anything thing that you like, tell him something interesting that his painting made you think of.

Art Activity: Lines, Shapes and Colors Squared

Materials: Watercolor paper or copy paper cut into quarters, black construction paper for mounting, construction paper in warm & cool colors for collage shapes, oil pastels or crayons, watercolors, glue, and scissors.

N.B. Warm colors are red, yellow and/or orange. Cool colors are blue, green and/or purple.

Instructions: Give each student four quarter sheets of paper. On the first sheet ask them to draw different types of lines (straight, zig-zag, wavy, thick, thin, vertical, diagonal, etc.) using oil pastels or crayons. On the second sheet have them draw geometric and organic shapes using oil pastels or crayons. On the third sheet students will cut, tear and collage **warm** colored shapes onto the paper. On the fourth sheet they will do the same with cool colored shapes. Optional: students can add additional shapes & lines with crayon or oil pastels; watercolor washes can also be applied to the finished collage. Once the work has dried, the individual squares can be glued on black construction paper for display.

Very Simple Art Activities

Create a story-picture using your own language of symbols and colors.

Make your own Line-Dot painting using cool colors (greens, blues, purples) instead of warm colors (yellows, reds, oranges).

Visual Arts Standards

Kindergarten

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.3 Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color and shape/form.

2.0 Creative Expression

2.1 Use lines, shapes/forms, and colors to make patterns.

2.3 Make a simple collage with cut or torn paper shapes/forms.

2.5 Use lines in drawings and paintings to express feelings.

2.6 Use geometric shapes/forms (circles, triangles, square) in a work of art.

3.0 Aesthetic Valuing

4.2 Describe what they see (including both literal and expressive content) in selected works of art.

Grade One

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.3 Identify the elements of art in objects in nature, in the environment, and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape, and texture.

2.0 Creative Expression

2.4 Plan and use variations in line, shape, color, and texture to communicate ideas or feelings in artworks.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

5.1 Clap out rhythmic patterns found in lyrics of music and then use symbols to create visual representations of the patterns.

Grade Two

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.1 Perceive and describe repetition and balance in nature, the environment, and works of art.

Perceive and discuss differences in mood created by warm and cool colors.

1.2 Identify the elements of art in objects in nature, the environment, and works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape, texture, and space.

2.0 Creative Expression

2.4 Create a painting or drawing, using warm or cool colors expressively.

Language Arts Standards

Grade Two

2.0 Writing Applications

2.2 Write a friendly letter complete with date, salutation, body, closing, and signature.

Background Information for Teachers

Wassily Kandinsky is often credited with being the very first abstract artist. Born into a wealthy Moscow family, he was educated in Law and Economics, which he also taught, before turning to art as his calling. He went to Munich around 1900 to study art, and there he was also introduced to Theosophy, a utopian religious movement which sought to enhance the relationship between nature and spirit, enabling people to achieve direct, intuitive wisdom and spirituality. Theosophy inspired Kandinsky to invent an art that rejected realism in favor of abstraction in order to inspire universal spiritual experiences in the viewer. Kandinsky defined emotion as “vibrations”, energies that pass from and to the human soul. He hoped his art would communicate these universal vibrations.

Kandinsky’s first book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, was written in 1912; his second, “*Point and Line to Plane*” in 1926, when he was a professor at the Bauhaus, and part of a larger movement of idealistic modernist artists and architects. *Line-Dot* was painted in 1927; it expresses many of Kandinsky’s ideas about geometrical forms having musical rhythms and expressing universal harmonies. He often used musical terms to describe his intentions. He was friends with the modern Russian composers Scriabin and Stravinsky, and like them tried to achieve balance and order through contrapuntal, contradictory rhythms.

Just four years after it was made, this painting came into the art collection of the American composer George Gershwin. Gershwin said: “The new music and the new art are similar in rhythm.” Modern works like this one were a direct inspiration for Gershwin’s music.