**Interpreting Music and Color**

**Essential Question** How do artists visually represent music?

**Grade** 1st

**Time** 30–60 minutes

**Art Concepts** Warm colors, cool colors, rhythm, geometric shapes, abstract art

**Materials** Watercolor paper, watercolor paint, brushes, water cups, colored construction paper, glue, scissors

**Artwork in Focus** [Melodious*,* 1924 by Wassily Kandinsky](https://collections.lacma.org/node/2109857)

**Talking about Art** In this lesson, we’re going to spend some time looking at a watercolor drawing by Wassily Kandinsky called *Melodious* (made in 1924). Does the artwork look like anything to you, real or imagined? Kandinsky was an **abstract** artist, which means that most of his art doesn’t look like anything in the real world and, in his case, is instead made up of **geometric shapes**, lines, and color. What kinds of shapes, lines, and colors do you see?

Kandinsky was strongly influenced by music. When he heard music, he would actually see different colors. He also listened to music while painting, and compared painting to creating music, saying that the colors were like musical notes. Music and color went hand in hand for him, and because of this, his paintings are full of movement and **rhythm**, which is the pattern or beat of a song. What music can you imagine listening to while looking at *Melodious*?

What do you feel when you listen to your favorite song? Are you happy? Excited? Calm? Sad? Music can express emotions and so can colors. **Warm colors**, such as orange or yellow, usually represent happiness and excitement. **Cool colors**, like blue or green, usually represent calmness or sadness.

**Making Art**

1. Listen to your favorite song all the way through.
2. Use either warm or cool colors to paint the whole paper with watercolors (this will be your background).
3. As your background dries, listen to the song again. Cut out shapes and thick lines using colored construction paper that express how you feel while listening to the music and the shapes it reminds you of.
4. Once your paper has dried, arrange all the cut shapes on the paper and glue them down.

**Reflection** How do the colors that Kandinsky chose compare to yours? What colors did you choose to represent your mood? Are they warm, cool, or both?

Were you able to get inspired by music like Kandinsky did? How is music being represented in your own artwork? How would your artwork change if you had listened to a different song?

**Curriculum Connections** California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts

1.VA:Re7.1: Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences of one’s self and others.

1.VA:Re9: Classify artwork based on different reasons for preferences using learned art vocabulary.

California Arts Standards for Public Schools Music

1.MU:Cr2 a.: With limited guidance, demonstrate and discuss personal reasons for selecting musical ideas that represent expressive intent. 1.MU:Re7.1: With limited guidance, identify and demonstrate how personal interests and experiences influence musical selection for specific purposes.

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