

**White Dot**  
By Wassily Kandinsky  
(1866-1944)  
Oil on canvas 1923

**ABOUT THE ARTIST:**

The Abstract Expressionist Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow, December 4, 1866 and died in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France 1944. His parents were musicians and Kandinsky learned to play the cello and piano while growing up in Odessa. Deeply influencing his art theory later in life music is the predominant artistic influence evident in his upbringing although he learned to paint when he was young. It really was not until Kandinsky studied Law and Economics at the University of Moscow and was impacted so deeply by an exhibit of Monet's *Haystacks at Giverny* he refused a professorship in law to study painting. Moving to Munich, Germany, the epicenter of experimental art in all of Europe since 1890, he began his painting career at the age of 30 in 1896. Kandinsky then forged the way of "pure" abstract painting in the Munich art world.

Discarding by 1910 any realistic interpretation to his works Kandinsky's aim was to infuse the work of art with form, color and spiritual meaning by doing so eliminating all resemblance to the physical world and if any remained it was highly abstracted or unintentional. He felt that deep fundamental feelings should be conveyed through the work of art. In 1911 he formed a new Expressionist Group called Blue Rider (Die Blaue Reiter) named after one of his paintings. This collective group of artists did not share a universal style but in fact held the belief that "the artist should use the language of color and form to create works that speak directly from the heart of the creator to the souls of the viewers." Kandinsky was the leading theorist formulating ideas in their publications and for his own book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* written in 1911 published in 1912.

Kandinsky drew inspiration from outside conventional Western art looking to the past, other cultures, Russian icons and Folk Art, primitive and naïve art. Like his fellow Blue Rider, Paul Klee, Kandinsky saw strong parallels between expressionism in the visual arts and music. He theorized that specific symbolic and psychological effects resulted from every kind of shape, color and pattern of line and how the artist could arrange and create with them artwork as a musical composer uses tone and harmony. An accomplished musician, Kandinsky's background as a cellist and pianist is evoked in some of his works' titles, Compositions, Etudes and Improvisations. His Compositions contain shapes in carefully ordered arrangements while his Improvisations are less restricted and spontaneous.

World War I forced Kandinsky to leave Germany and return to Russia in 1914. While there he dedicated his time to artistic teaching focusing on form and color study. He also helped organize the Institute of Artistic Culture in Moscow. Evolving from the Abstract Expressionist style from his Munich period to more a geometric and structured method, his artwork reflected his exposure to the Russian Suprematist-Constructivist artists. His turning toward geometric forms also could be influenced by industry and technology.

He returned to Germany in 1921 and was an incredibly influential faculty member at the Bauhaus school of modern design. Kandinsky continued working on point and line study in the geometric-based Constructivist style. He wrote a second book on art theory *Point and Line to Plane* in 1926. While teaching and painting during this time he focused on geometrical elements in particular “circle, half-circle, the angle, straight lines and curves” as well as “overlapping, flat planes and clearly delineated forms.” Kandinsky continued at the Bauhaus until 1933 when it was closed by the German government. He then moved to France becoming a French citizen in 1939 and remained there until his death in 1944.

### **ABOUT THE PAINTING:**

The White Dot was painted in 1923 while Kandinsky was a professor at the Bauhaus. He combined various shades of white which are thought to imply possibilities in life and bold curving shapes of black which portray the antithesis, death. Interspersed are varying shades of red, blue and yellow.

The circle was the perfect shape to Kandinsky and he felt it was “the synthesis of the greatest oppositions”. He believed it led to the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension and was seen throughout many of his works of art during this period. The black circle with the white dot draws the viewer’s eye to the upper right of the canvas with an intensity that is broken by the “squiggled” black line that bisects the canvas on the diagonal. The triangles as well as other shapes appear throughout the piece broken by diagonal black lines. Not only do layered planes of color give this two-dimensional painting depth but tonal variations of color on a given shape lends a three dimensional feel as well.

Kandinsky’s connection to music is felt as the riot of colors and various shapes can be compared to the arrangement of musical notes. The combination of angles and curved lines as well as bold color and shaded forms imbue the painting with energy and one could expect to hear a symphony resonating off the canvas.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- This painting is called the White Dot. Why do you think Kandinsky called it that?
- How does this painting make you feel? Happy? Calm? Excited? Angry?
- There is a theory that Kandinsky became aware of abstract art when he saw an abstract painting upside down and was so inspired by it he realized it was one of his own. Do you feel differently about this painting if it were on it's side or upside down?
- Circles play an important role in many of Kandinsky's works. How many circles can you find here?
- Kandinsky felt that "color and musical harmony are linked". Do you sense anything about this painting that makes you think of music?
- "Kandinsky used color in a highly theoretical way associating tone with timbre (the sound's character), hue with pitch, and saturation with the volume of sound. He even claimed that when he saw color he heard music." What type of music do you hear when you view this painting?
- As mentioned previously Kandinsky named some of his artwork after musical pieces- Compositions or Improvisations. His Compositions contain shapes in carefully ordered arrangements while his Improvisations are less restricted and spontaneous. If White Dot had that title what would it be?
- Kandinsky methodically thought out his compositions. At first glance this work of art looks like many shapes put together but if you look at it carefully he layered the shapes over multiple planes (a flat or level surface.) How many layers do you see?

The Artist is a 2011 French comedy-drama film in the style of a black-and-white silent film or part-talkie. Written, directed, and co-edited by Michel Hazanavicius, and produced by Thomas Langmann, the film stars Jean Dujardin and Bérénice Bejo. The story takes place in Hollywood, between 1927 and 1932, and focuses on the relationship between a rising young actress and an older silent film star as silent cinema falls out of fashion and is replaced by the "talkies". #art #my art #sillydrifloon #artist #silly drifloon #artist on tumblr #inktober 2020 #inktober #inktober 52 #inktober 52 train #inktober 2020 train #infinity train.Â The art could be something very personal to them, and some rando going â€˜cursed, lolâ€™ could be really insulting. Among your close friends, who you know are in on the joke, go wild! If the artist outright says â€˜I drew a very cursed thing todayâ€™, sure you can call it cursed if thatâ€™s what the artist intended. Otherwise, donâ€™t be rude o\_o.