

Power Point Assignment #2

Kandinsky's Path to Abstraction

Background:

Several themes are constant in almost any discussion of Kandinsky's career: the role of symbolism, music, and color. Symbolism is complicated by the fact that not only was Kandinsky definitely interested in the symbolist movement (along with some of the alternative spiritual systems which had a tie to symbolism, such as theosophy and anthroposophy) but he also believed in the role of ambiguous "clues" to meaning, making him a symbolist in both the traditional use of that word and the more historical and ideological use of that word. His interest in music relates to the symbolists' interest in music (and his own) and his interest in color relates to symbolism, anthroposophy, nature, and his own theories about painting.

Your challenge:

Kandinsky wrote the following passage in his 1912 book:

"Generally speaking, color directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another, purposefully producing vibrations in the soul."

Although the passage only mentions color directly, it synthesizes Kandinsky's interest in symbolism and music along with the role of color. Choose at least 4 paintings from throughout Kandinsky's career (pre-1912, the 1910s, the Bauhaus portion – primarily the 1920s – and after the Bauhaus). How do these paintings relate to the quotation and encompass Kandinsky's larger set of beliefs about art? Is there any point in his career when the above quotation seems inadequate or misleading, and if so, why? (Use an example to make your argument.) Would it be fair to say that color is the key to Kandinsky? Why or why not?

You can use more than 4 paintings in your presentation, but the 4 primary paintings in your answer should each have a paragraph analysis devoted to them. Recommended: you might want to refer to the passages from Kandinsky included in the textbook along with material on the website. Use citations for any material which is not your own interpretation and analysis. Not recommended: referring to other web sites.

Tomorrow's class should be helpful in formulating your ideas. On Wednesday we will use some class time for you to meet with your groups and discuss your individual projects. Even if you prefer to work alone, you should use the group for feedback. Projects will be due on Thursday – email the finished project to me before class starts.