

Artful Activities for Early Learners



MoMA

These activities for children ages four and up can be done with teachers, parents, and caregivers at home or in a classroom.

Learn

Listening to music changed the way Vasily Kandinsky made art; instead of showing people and places, he started making paintings that focused on lines, shapes, and colors. In paintings like this one, Kandinsky used colors and lines to show different sounds he heard while listening to music.

Look closely

- Use your finger to trace lines in the artwork that catch your eye.
- Can you find an example of a line that looks like it might show a soft or quiet sound?
- How about a mark that might show a loud or strong sound?
- Try to find a mark that seems like it is growing steadily louder, to a crescendo!
- Look for marks that are repeated.

Draw or paint to music

Materials: music, preferably without words; paper; pencil; and either crayons, markers, colored pencils, watercolors, or paint. (If you are painting, cover your work surface with paper, and have a cup for water and a sponge or paper towel to blot your brush.)

1. Warm up! Using a pencil on paper, draw a mark that might show a loud sound. Now draw a line that seems quiet. Make a mark that seems to get louder.
2. Find music that you'd like to make art to and just listen for 20 seconds. Think about what kinds of lines, colors, and shapes come to mind.
3. Listen to the whole piece of music from the beginning. On a fresh sheet of paper, make marks inspired by what you hear. Change colors whenever it feels right.
4. Choose a different type of music and make another drawing or painting as you listen.
5. Place your artworks side-by-side. How are the marks similar and different? How do they express the different sounds you heard?

Explore more

Norman Lewis was also influenced by music—and by Kandinsky. Check out his painting *Phantasy II* (<https://mo.ma/3iTcTJF>) to see how jazz music inspired his art.



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Image: Vasily Kandinsky. *Study for Painting with White Form (Entwurf zu Bild mit weisser Form)*. 1913. Watercolor, opaque watercolor and ink on paper. Katherine S. Dreier Bequest. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris