

# Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian

**William Bouguereau,  
Breton Brother and  
Sister, 1871**





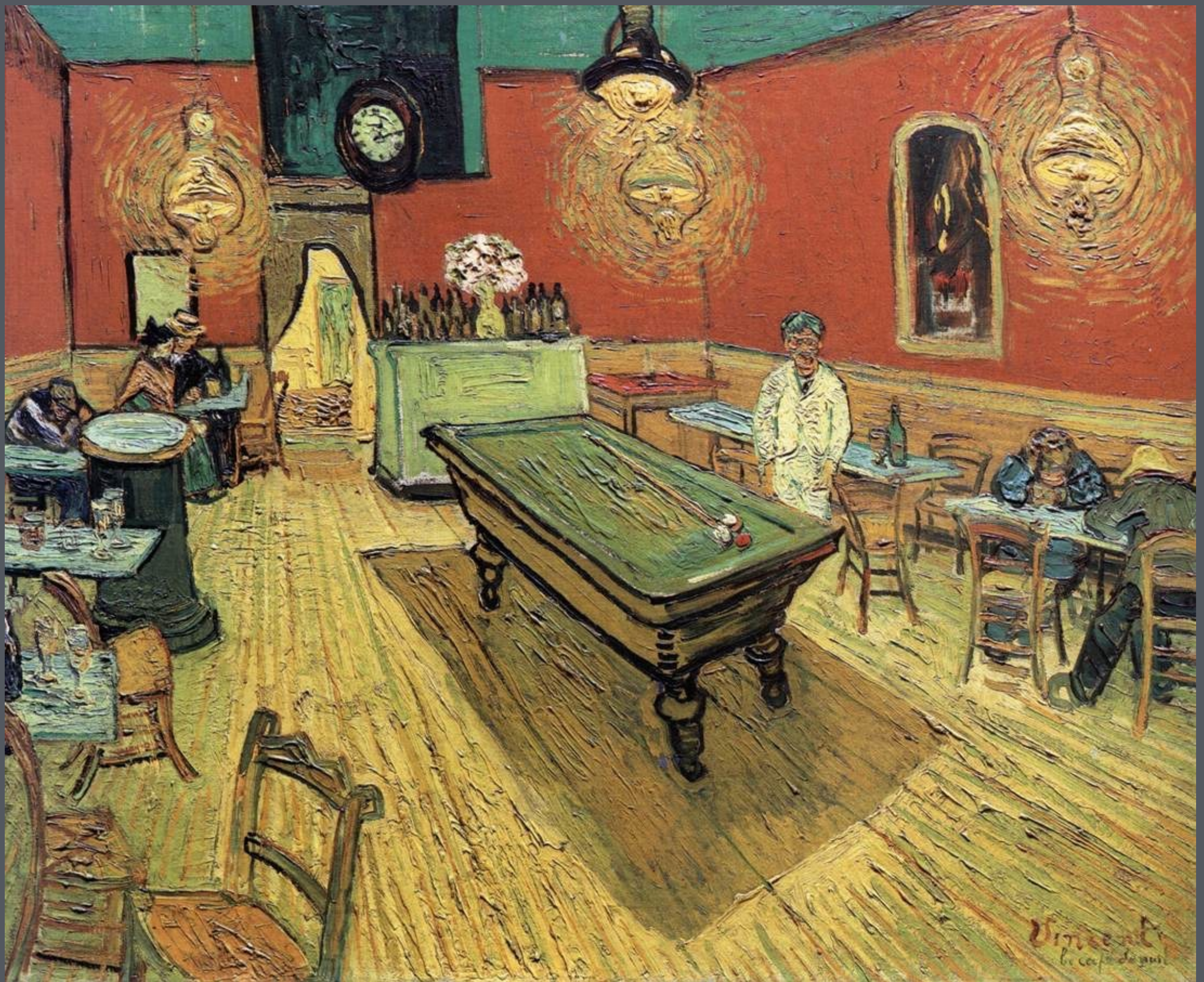


**Monet, Haystacks (Effects of Sun and Snow), 1891**

**visible application of paint**

**color of objects created by application of different colors - see next slide**





**Van Gogh, Night Café, 1888**  
**vertiginous, distorting, wobbly, queasy, unease, harsh**





Vincent Van Gogh, Sower, 1888





**L: William Claesz Heda,, Still Life with Ham, 1631-34**

**R: Cézanne, Still Life with Vessels, Basket, and Fruit, 1888-90**

**"I want to make of Impressionism an art as solid as that of the museums." -  
Cézanne**

**Old Masters = solid**





**Cézanne, Still Life with Vessels, Basket, and Fruit, 1888-90**

**"I want to make of Impressionism an art as solid as that of the museums." -**

**Cézanne**

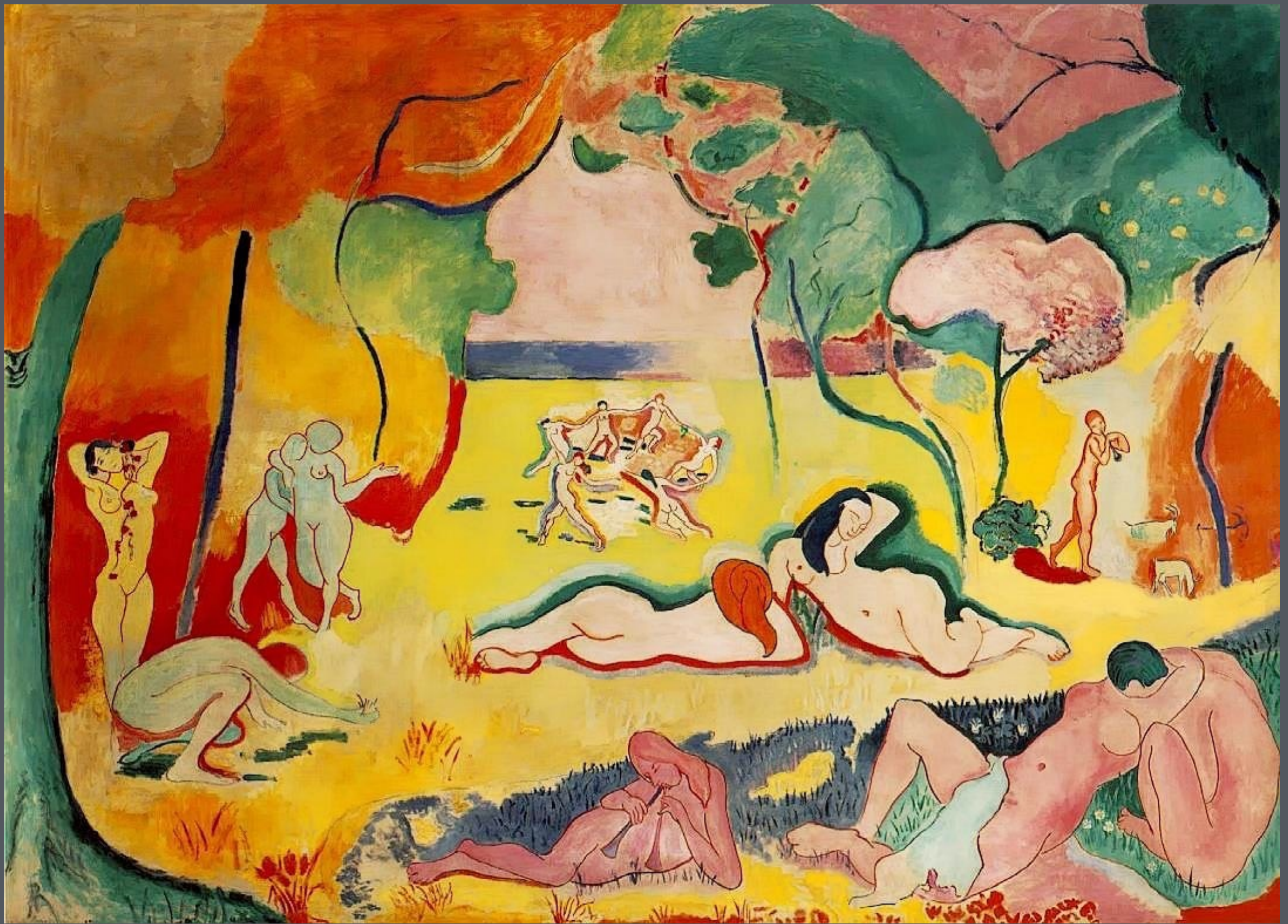
**Lesson of Impressionism = ?**





Cézanne, Mt St Victoire, 1902-06





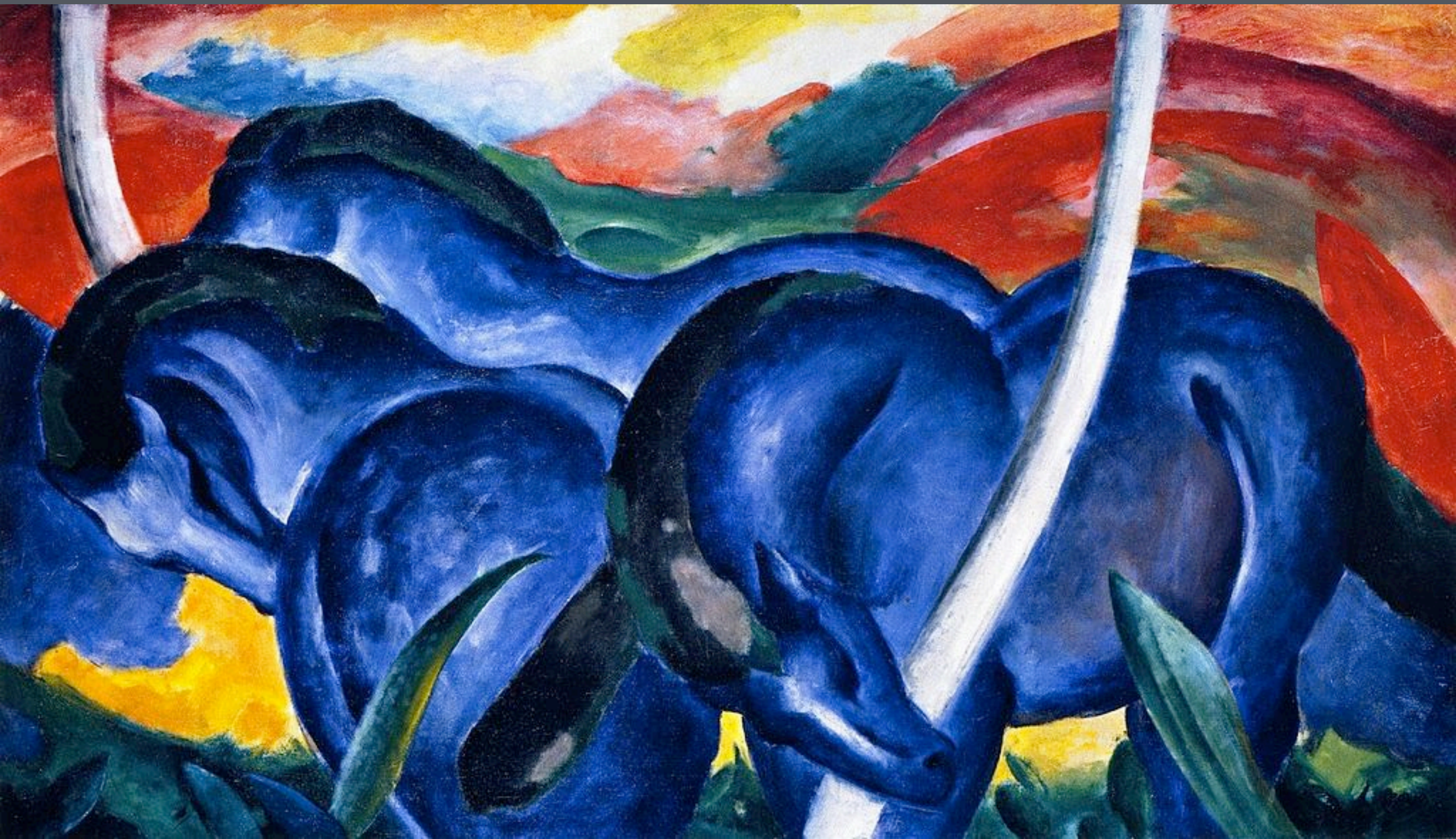
Matisse, Joy of Life, 1906



**Kirchner, Potsdam  
Square, Berlin, 1914**







**Franz Marc, Large Blue Horses, (1911)**



**Picasso, Portrait of  
Vollard, 1910**





Picasso, Smoker, 1913-14

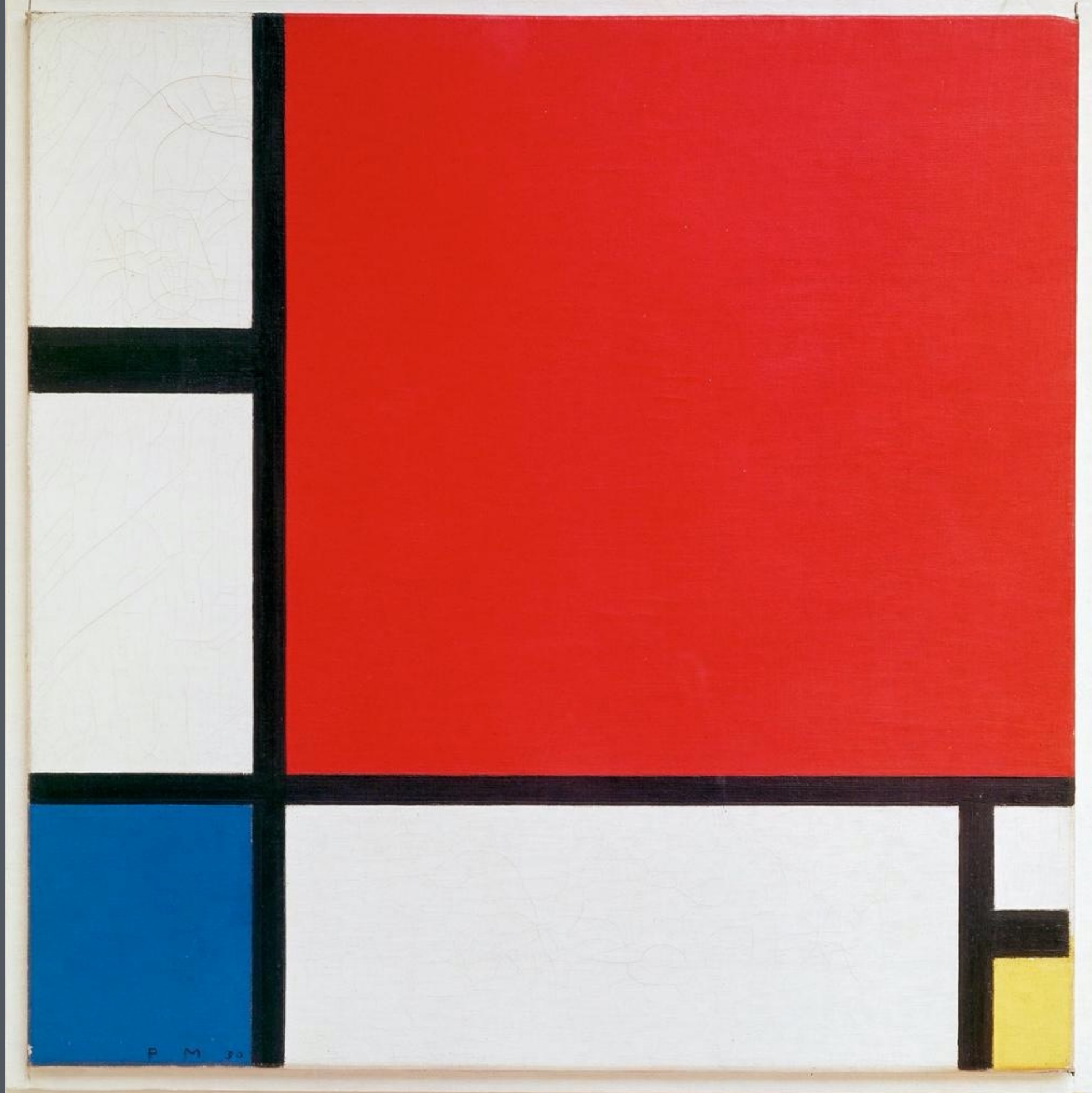






**Wassily Kandinsky, Composition VI, 1913**





Piet Mondrian, Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow 1930



Wassily Kandinsky

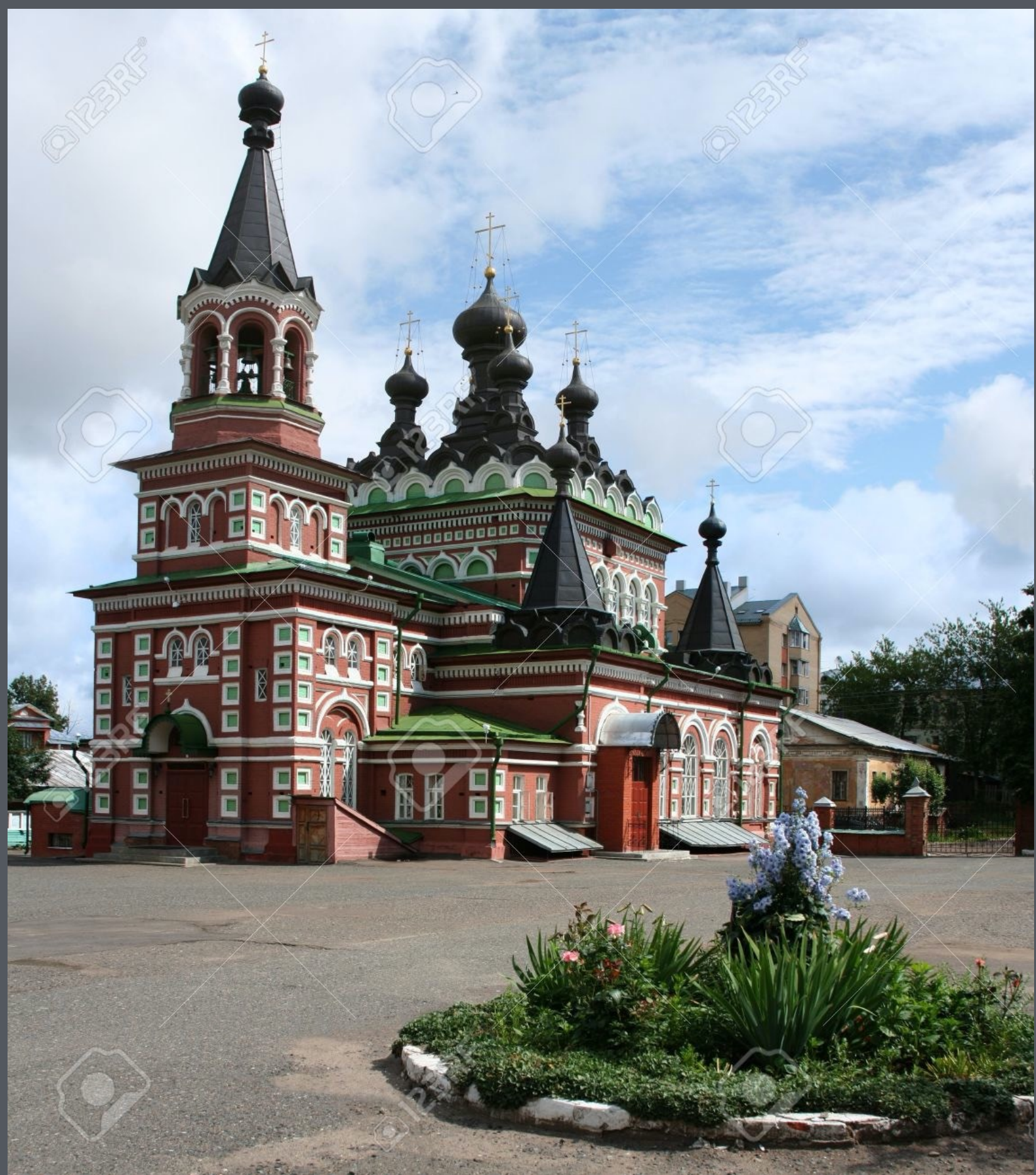


# Russian orthodox church in Kirov

B. Moscow

studies law &  
economics

1889 encounters  
peasant/folk culture -  
deep impact







Adam and Eve, 1792  
 Anti-Christ, undated  
 Lubok prints - note composition, color - bold and graphic





**Vasili Maximov, The Sick Man, 1881**

**Icon Corner = worship space in home - connect spiritual to daily life  
equivalent in the west to “home altar”**



## Nineteenth-Century Russian Icon

Not about artist's  
individualism but a copy  
of the original.

Not an illustration, but  
serve to lift worshipper to  
the prototype represented  
here, to a higher level of  
consciousness.

Achieved by stylization.







**Gauguin, Vision After Sermon, 1889  
Buxheim Saint Christopher, Hand-  
colored woodcut, 11 X 8, 1423.  
Mask, Lega (Zaire), 19th-20th c**



**Monet, Haystacks (Effect of Sun and Snow), 1891**



**“That it was a haystack the catalogue informed me. I could not recognize it. This non-recognition was painful to me. I considered that the painter had no right to paint indistinctly. I dully felt that the object of the painting was missing. And I noticed with surprise and confusion that the picture not only gripped me, but impressed itself ineradicably on my memory. Painting took on a fairy-tale power and splendour.” - Kandinsky**





**Kandinsky, Rapallo, Boats, 1905**  
**Kandinsky, Park of St. Cloud, 1906**

**Loosely Impressionist**

**Teaching himself to see and represent light and color.**

**Coming to an understanding of painting also related to subjectivity (not rules).**





Kandinsky, Song of the Volga, 1906

Style:: pointillist/Seurat? On black paper, decorative patterning, stained glass  
Subject: Medieval, pre-Renaissance, time of greater spiritualism





**Matisse, Joy of Life, 1906**

**1906 sees Matisse in traveling exhibit to Germany**

**Inspired, moves to Paris - sees this painting in Paris, 1906**

**Remember: Fauvism - exaggerated color, etc = filtered through artist's subjectivity BUT also painting as independent object.**





**Kandinsky, Murnau (A Village Street), 1908**  
moves to foothills of Alps - moved by colors of the landscape  
K = heightened sensitivity to color (synaesthesia)





Kandinsky, Houses at Murnau, 1909  
manipulates space; broken brushwork - like Song fo the Volga





**Kandinsky, Autumn Impression, 1908**  
**Note flatter, longer brushwork, less build up of strokes**





**Kandinsky, Nature Study from Murnau, No 1., 1909**  
greater simplification, more schematic





**Kandinsky, The Waterfall, 1902**

**Kandinsky, The Waterfall, 1909**

**Focus on form, not surface of things, arrangement of form and color for pictorial purposes**





**The Waterfall, 1909**



**Bavarian painting on  
glass 19th c**

**Interest in local folk  
art tradition.**

**1. Expression of true  
spiritualism (locally  
generated).**

**2. Alternative pictorial  
language.**

**3. Artist lacks training,  
and therefore style is  
authentic  
(primitivism).**





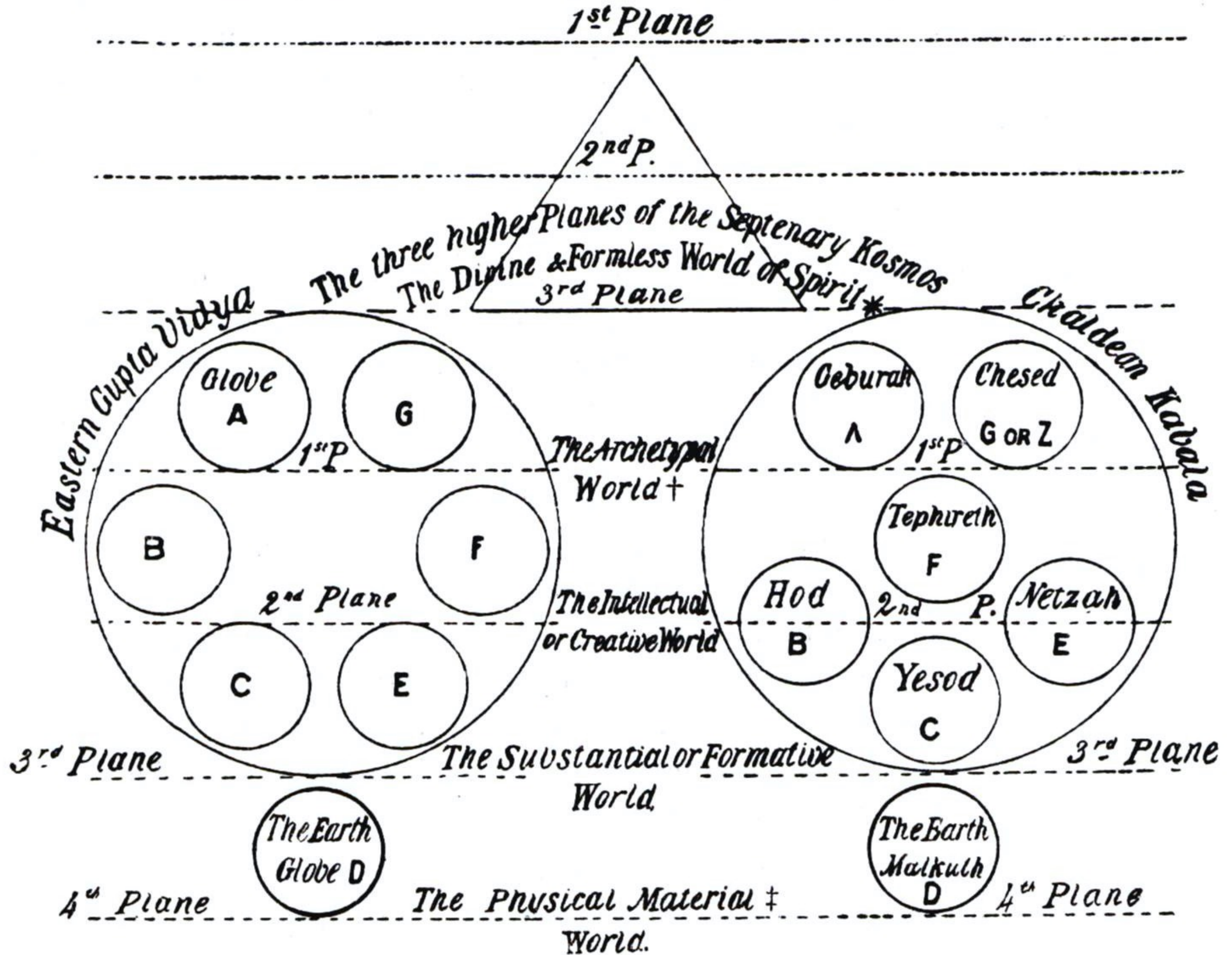
## **1909 joins Theosophy Society**

### **“western Buddhism”**

**goal - transcendental knowledge to be gained by looking at structure of religion and scientific knowledge for core principals.**

- 1. Life directed toward evolution to higher plane.**
- 2. Exalted knowledge drawn from everyday phenomena.**
- 3. Art and religion worked together to reveal fundamental truths.**
- 4. Both art and religion would help us transcend the material world.**
- 5. In this transcendent state, ultimate revelation will come through a reconciliation of opposing forces.**





From: THE SECRET DOCTRINE: THE SYNTHESIS  
OF SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND PHILOSOPHY. by  
H. P. BLAVATSKY, 1888





Um 1910

**Berlin, c1910**  
**Theosophy = corrective to modernity**





**First Abstract Watercolor, 1910**

**Source: enters student and sees painting on its side, and struck by its formal beauty, not about subject.**





**First Abstract Watercolor, 1910**

**Note: seems to lack formal structure, but nonetheless has coherence.  
Not a representation of reality, but a reality unto itself.  
Not a negation, but a creation something new.**



**The Art of Spiritual Harmony; first  
published in German in 1910.**

**Theorizes color.**

**Color stirs the soul.**

**Not based on science/vision/optics.**

**For example:**

**BLUE =**

**heavenly color**

**retreats from the spectator**

**moves toward its own center**

**beckons to the infinite**

**arousing a longing for purity and the**

**super sensuous**

**light blue is like the sound of the flute**

**dark blue has the sound of the cello.**

THE ART OF SPIRITUAL  
HARMONY BY WASSILY  
KANDINSKY: TRANSLATED  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
M. T. H. SADLER

ILLUSTRATED



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
1914





**Kandinsky, Impression III (Concert), 1911**

**paintings like music - an arrangement of elements, not representation of things**  
**Impressions = observations/responses to natural world**



**Kandinsky, Improvisation  
No. 7 (Storm), 1910**

**Improvisation =  
spontaneous expression  
of mood or feeling, with or  
without recognizable  
representational elements**







**Kandinsky, Sketch for Composition II, 1910 (completed II lost)**

**Compositions - planned, intricate structure - like symphony**

**WK - interested in work of Arnold Schoenberg, atonal music (absence of traditional keys or tonal centers)**





**Matisse, Joy of Life, 1906**  
**Kandinsky, Sketch for Composition II, 1910**

**different, but both about structure of color and form to invoke response in viewer - a non-intellectual response**





**Anti-Christ, undated (Lubok print)**  
**Kandinsky, Sketch for Composition II, 1910**

note parallels





Poussin, Deluge, 1660-64  
Composition VI inspired by a painting of the deluge (this one?)





**Kandinsky, Composition VI, 1913**

**this painting resembles such a cataclysm**





**Kandinsky, Composition VI, 1913**

**Scale = immerses viewer into the painting**

**the formal qualities and size contribute to what WK called the “inner sound” of the painting**





Poussin, Deluge, 1660-64





**Kandinsky, Composition VI, 1913**





Kandinsky, Sketch for Comp VII, wc





Kandinsky, Sketch for Composition VII, 1913





Kandinsky, Composition VI, 1913





**Cathedral of St. Denis,  
Kandinsky, Composition VI, 1913**



**WK's goals:**

**Counter materialism of the age.**

**Return to something powerful, emotional, and unique to art (not surface qualities of things or vision)**

**K's solution to materialism and search for spiritualism is an art form that cannot be pinned down or likened to something known. Nothing against which to judge it.**

**Thus, presents a kind of prelapsarian reality.**

**A painting that allows us to transcend the literal and arrive at a deeper understanding of experience of the world (to which we do not attend to on a regular basis).**