

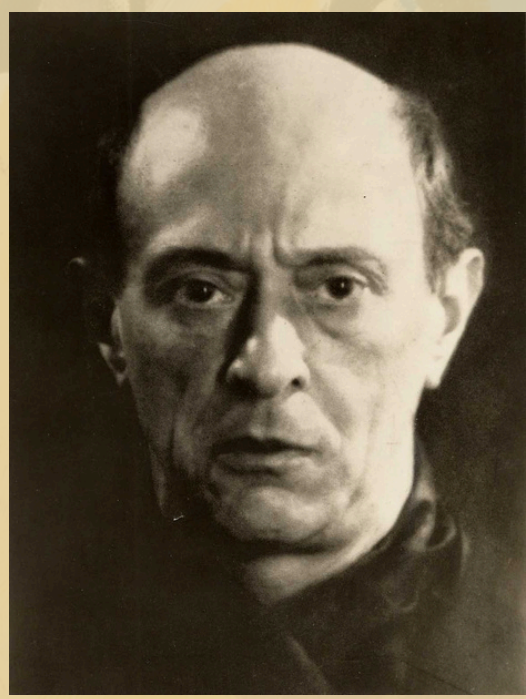
Arnold Schönberg and Wassily Kandinsky

Different arts, but shared ideas

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Introduction

In 1911, Arnold Schönberg's music was seen as provocative. His new atonal style of music full of dissonances deterred large parts of the audience. Wassily Kandinsky, who recently started creating more abstract paintings, was fascinated by Schönberg's music, even though he wasn't a musician. In the following few years, they shared a friendship and some collaborations. What exactly are their shared ideas about music and painting that led them to creating their unique art in their respective fields?



Arnold Schönberg -
Caricature. (CR121)

Question:

What are the shared artistic beliefs of Schönberg and Kandinsky?

Methodology:

The essay examines the personal letters between the two and compares it to various text publications by both artists. Wassily Kandinsky's most important text in that matter is "On the Spiritual in Art" (1911). At the same time, Arnold Schönberg concluded his harmonic ideas in "Theory of Harmony" (1911). From the letters, publications and interviews, three main principles about art and music are detected.

Shared principles for painting and music:

1. Art doesn't have to be harmonic. The art of the future intentionally uses dissonances.
2. Art shouldn't come from conscious planning, but from the direct expression of feelings.
3. Art speaks for itself and shouldn't be interpreted or explained.

Quotes:

"I think that today's harmony isn't found in the geometric way, but in the directly anti-geometric, anti-logical way. And this way is the way of the "dissonances in art", in the art of painting equally as in music. And today's dissonance is the consonance of tomorrow."

Wassily Kandinsky

"I write music as music without any reference other than to express my feelings in tone."

Arnold Schönberg

"Art belongs to the unconscious! You should express yourself! You should express yourself directly!"

Arnold Schönberg



- 1) Letter from January 18, 1911, quoted after: Wassily Kandinsky und Arnold Schönberg. Der Briefwechsel., published by Jelena Hahl-Koch, Berlin 1993, p. 15.
- 2) Anonymous: »Arnold Schönberg, On First Visit, Receives the American Press«, in: *Musical Courier*, 11.11.1933, S. 7.
- 3) Letter from January 24, 1911, quoted after: Wassily Kandinsky und Arnold Schönberg. Der Briefwechsel., published by Jelena Hahl-Koch, Berlin 1993, p. 17.

Background Image:
Wassily Kandinsky: "Impression III"
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