

Dialogues Between Music and Painting: Aesthetic Mediation in Artistic Media

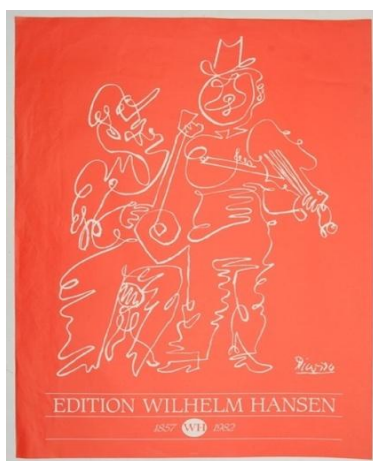
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Abstract: *This article examines the aesthetic mediation between music and painting through selected historical cases involving Stravinsky and Picasso, Cage and Rauschenberg, and Schoenberg and Kandinsky. It investigates the philosophical implications of intermodal artistic dialogues, emphasizing how visual and auditory expressions intertwine to form a deeper understanding of perception and subjectivation. Through a detailed analysis of specific artworks and musical compositions, the article explores how this art forms influence and transform each other over time.*

Keywords: aesthetic mediation, music and painting, visual arts, auditory perception, intermodal art

Can contemporary individuals recognize their dreams, lives, desires, and limitations through art? Can we explore the aesthetic conditioning and subtle mediation involved in the auditory-visual experience of the world? Is an aesthetic dialogue between music and painting possible? How can a composer choose to represent a painting in sound? Each case is unique, and while no general rules apply, there is a certain coherence in how music and painting engage in an aesthetic dialogue, as seen, for example, in artists such as Stravinsky and Picasso, Cage and Rauschenberg, Schoenberg and Kandinsky.

In the first instance, the initial collaboration or open dialogue occurred between Picasso and Stravinsky through “Ragtime”, as a kind of reciprocation, since Stravinsky had dedicated a five-bar sketch of clarinet music to Picasso. On Picasso's poster for 'Ragtime,' a continuous line wraps around two musicians while simultaneously cutting across their silhouettes; at first glance, it appears to be the sketch with fluid movement. However, upon closer inspection of the musicians' heads, a complete treble clef and a pair of barred eighth notes are visible, and, surprisingly, Picasso is integrating Stravinsky's symbols with his own.



Poster: Igor Stravinsky, “Ragtime”.
Work by Pablo Picasso

In the case of the aesthetic dialogue between the works of John Cage and the paintings of Robert Rauschenberg, the latter created five works that he collectively called White Paintings; his goal was to create a painting that appeared untouched, as if it had existed from the beginning, untouched

and completely pure. John Cage, for his part, testified that his decision to create 4'33” arose after seeing Rauschenberg's White Paintings. Cage's work begins when the pianist sits down at the piano and concludes 4 minutes and 33 seconds later. The keyboard lid closes at the end of the first part, opens for the second, and closes and opens again for the third. It concludes when the pianist lowers the lid for the third time. The work invites listeners to perceive ambient sounds as its central musical elements. From now on, we can say—following Nicholls—that Cage compels us to listen more deeply to ambient sounds, while Rauschenberg teaches us to look more closely at ambient images; both—through an aesthetic dialogue—have transformed our relationship with art.

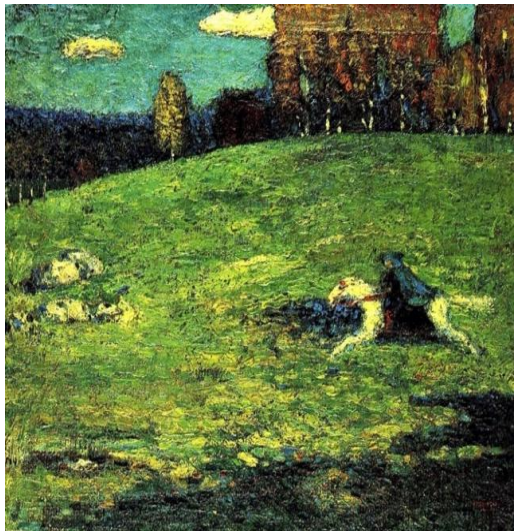


White Painting [3 panels] (1951).
Work by Robert Rauschenberg

Take the case of Wassily Kandinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg was a musician with painting skills, while Kandinsky was a painter who played the cello and piano. The similarity of ideas between the two artists is expressed in documents outlining their aesthetic philosophies, Schoenberg's “Style and Idea” and Kandinsky's “Concerning the Spiritual in Art”, as well as in their correspondence.

In Kandinsky's painting, “The Blue Rider”, the subject matter is clearly defined, as is the tonality of “Transfigured Night” from the outset; however, the vague outlines of Kandinsky's pictorial elements blur the importance of forms and prioritize color over defined shapes, in the same way that—as Beaumont comments—the undefined outlines of the melodic

lines make Schoenberg's "Transfigured Night" a celebrated piece of program music for string sextet, in which harmonic functionality is almost absent.



Der Blaue Reiter 1903.
Work by Wassily Kandinsky

Epilogue

Our existential experience is continually shaped by artistic expressions (music, painting, literature, and sculpture), making the aesthetic process a continuous interaction between self-formation and dissolution.

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