

Dancing with Color

Dance with me Henri (Center window), Stanley Whitney

As light filters in through Stanley Whitney's stained-glass windows, titled *Dance with me Henri*, washes of yellow, red, blue, purple, orange, and green dance across the white walls of the gallery. Inspired by the bold shapes and whimsical colors of the windows designed by Henri Matisse at the *Chapelle du Rosaire* (Chapel of the Rosary) in Vence, France, these windows capture light and color in new ways.

Featuring stylized leaves and curving abstract forms in blue, yellow, and green, Henri's windows marked a stark contrast to the traditional stained glass one may encounter in a chapel. Similarly, Stanley's windows diverge from the tradition of including realistic figures in stained glass. At first glance, the artworks appear as linear grids of uniform pigments, but upon closer investigation, the gently-curving lead lines and tiny bubbles in each mouth-blown glass pane highlight that each window is unique.

The windows also connect to Stanley's interest in jazz, with the improvisational elements of the music appearing in the meandering lines and choice of colors. This spontaneity is furthered by the sun and trees outside the windows—every time the wind blows or the sky becomes overcast, the colors and shapes cast by the artwork change.



Stanley Whitney. *Dance with me Henri* (Center window). 2021. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Commissioned by the Baltimore Museum of Art, supported by Art Fund established with exchange funds from gifts of Dr. and Mrs. Edgar F. Berman, Equitable Bank, N.A., Geoffrey Gates, Sandra O. Moose, National Endowment for the Arts, Lawrence Rubin, Philip M. Stern, and Alan J. Zakon, BMA 2021.167

Classroom Activities

- What does it mean for an artist to be inspired by another's work? Invite students to compare and contrast Stanley Whitney's *Dance with me Henri* windows to Henri Matisse's *Chapelle du Rosaire* windows. Have students work in small groups to create Venn diagrams of similarities and differences. Then, ask students to compare their diagrams and discuss any common themes that arise.
- Stanley is inspired by the improvisational nature of jazz to create his artwork. Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, and Ornette Coleman are some of the artist's favorite musicians.* Have students listen to a jazz song, such as Miles Davis' "Out of the Blue," and list what words or ideas come to mind. Using those words as inspiration, ask students to create an original artwork or story. Students can share their work with the class to see how they each interpreted the music.

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*Source: Gagosian



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Stained Glass in the Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence, Henri Matisse

Henri Matisse. *Stained Glass in the Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence*. 1948–1951.

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