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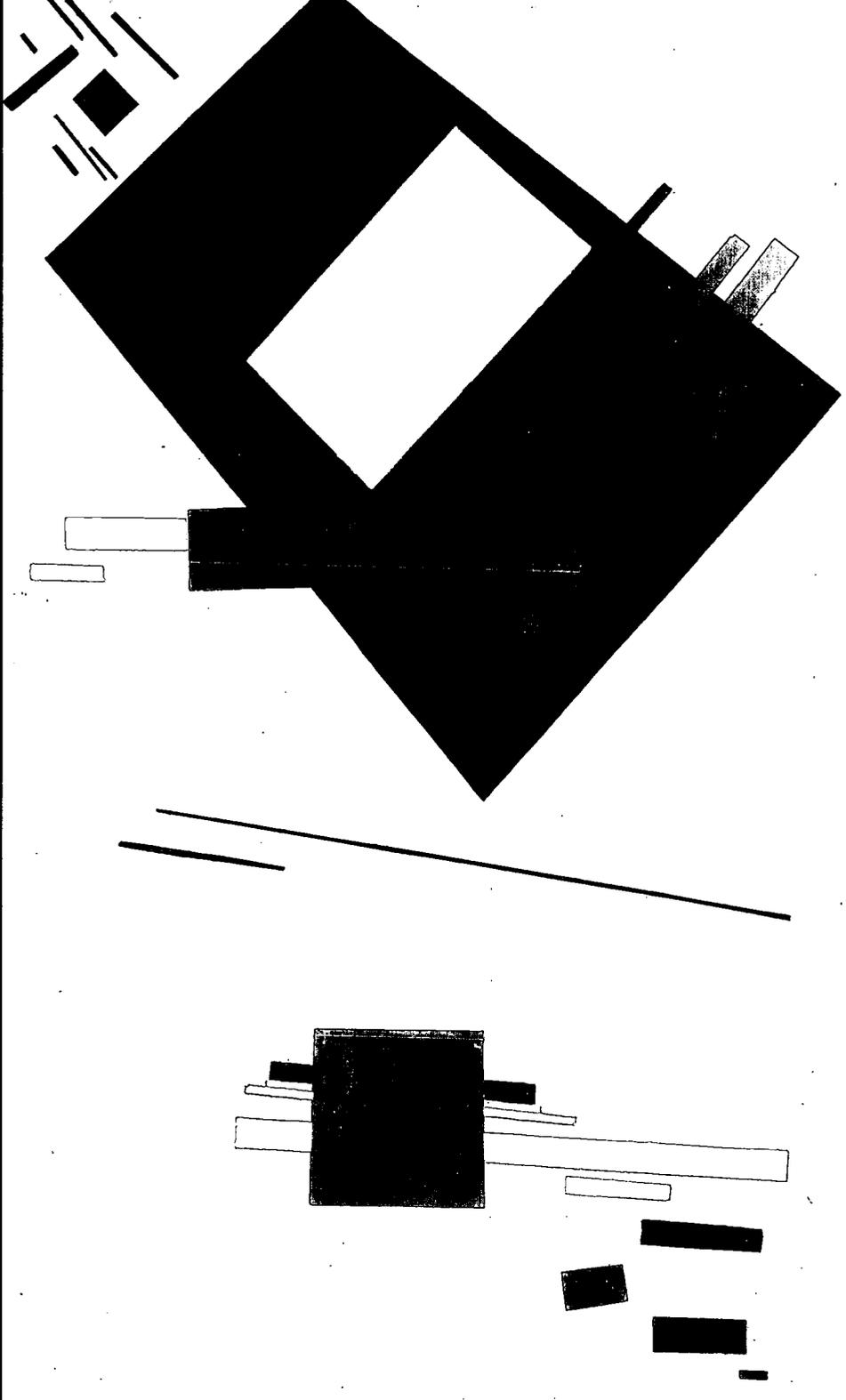
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ABSTRACT

The resources of this packet provide an overview of the career of Kazimir Malevich, (1878-1935), a Russian painter from Kiev (Ukraine) and a leader in geometric abstraction who developed a style called "Suprematism." Influences on and innovations of Malevich's art are examined, and his art is related to the historical and cultural context in Russia during the early decades of the 20th century. The guide accompanies 20 colored slides that are reproduced as black and white in the text. Contextual information, discussion questions and student activities are given for each slide reproduction. The guide concludes with a time line, time line discussion questions and activities, and a bibliography. A second booklet provides extensive information on the life and times of Malevich, gives excerpts from historic writings about the artist, and includes an annotated chronology of his life, a description of "Malevich's Teaching Charts," and suggested readings. Six study prints are given. (MM)

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MALEVICH

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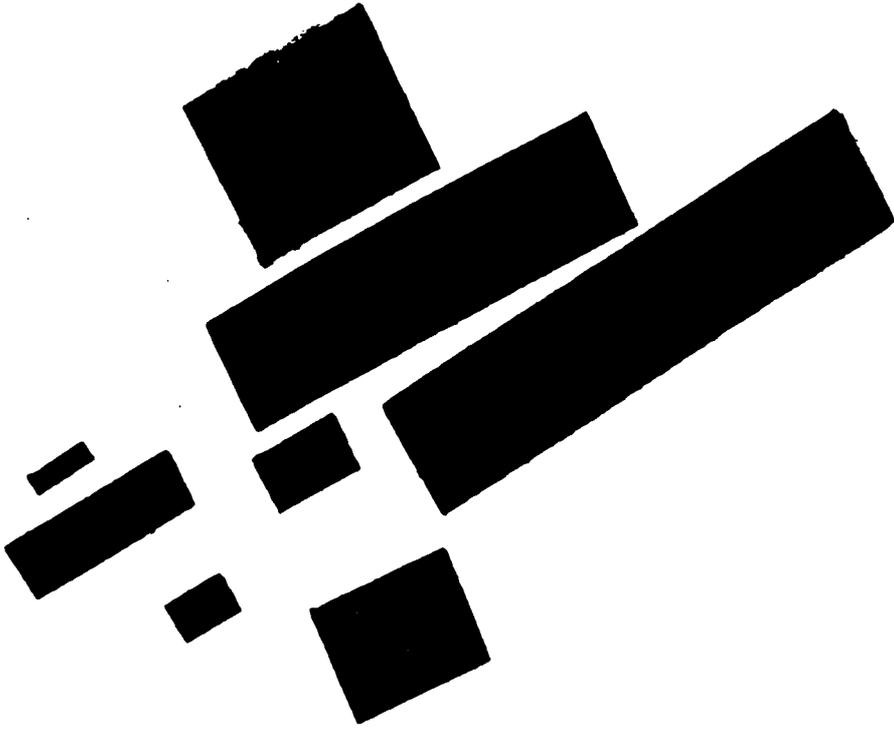
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Kazimir
MALEVICH

Kazimir Malevich Teaching Packet

The goals of this packet are to:

- Δ Provide an overview of the career of Kazimir Malevich, a Russian painter from Kiev who became a leader in geometric abstraction and developed a style called *suprematism*
- Δ Examine influences upon and innovations of Malevich's art
- Δ Relate Malevich's art to the historical and cultural context in Russia during the early decades of the twentieth century
- Δ Suggest discussion questions and teaching activities that can be adapted by the teacher to the interests and levels of the students

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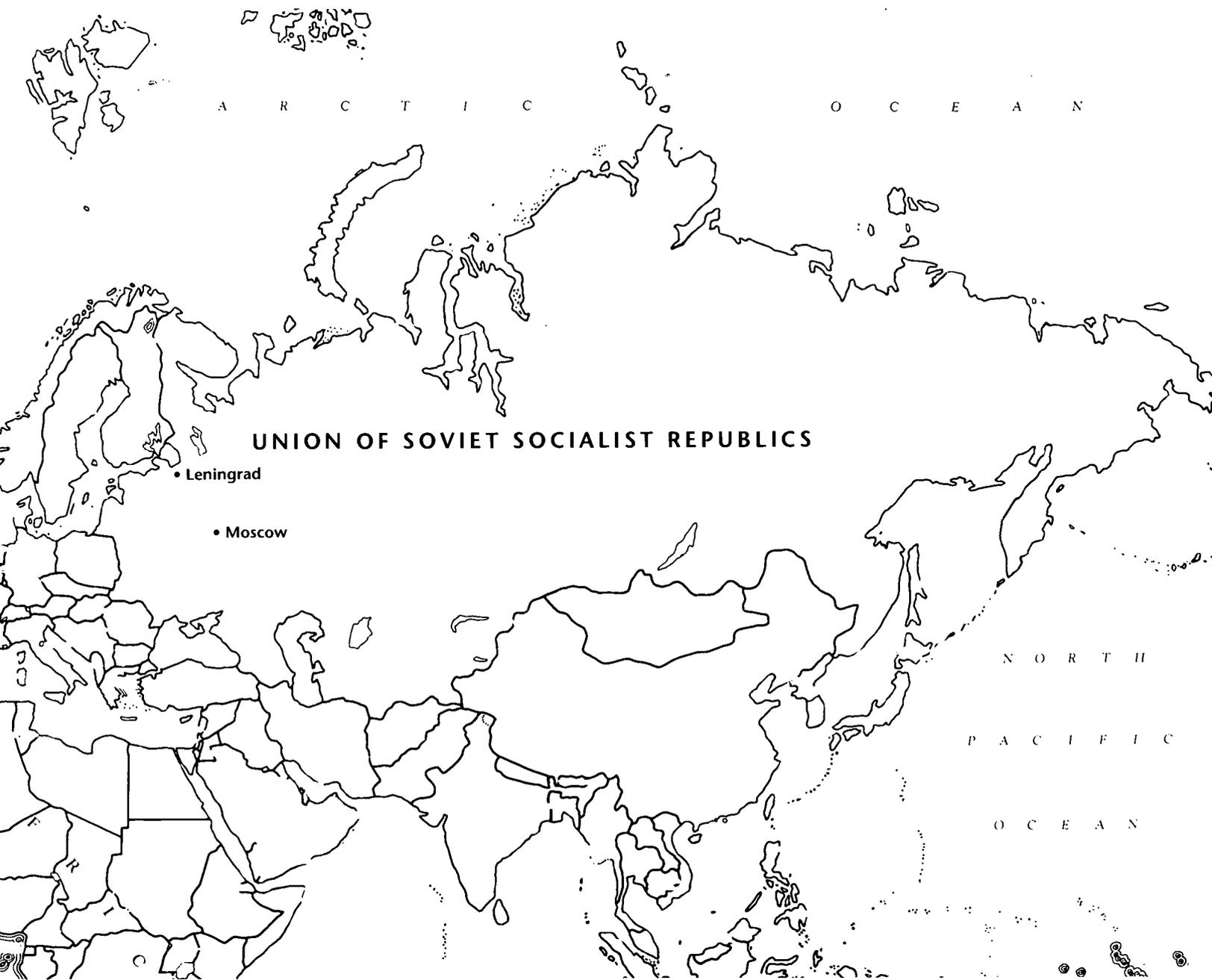
Contents

The teaching packet contains several components:

- Δ Booklet containing background and historical information about Malevich's art:
 - 5 **Kazimir Malevich at a Glance**
 - 6 **Nonobjective Art**
 - 8 **Malevich and the Russian Avant-Garde**
 - 10 **Text sheets** providing specific information about the slides, as well as related discussion questions and activities
 - 46 **Timeline** and related activities
 - 48 **Select Bibliography**

- Δ Twenty color slides (those marked with an asterisk are also reproduced in color prints):
 1. *On the Boulevard*, 1903
 2. *Landscape*, early 1900s
 3. *Shroud of Christ*, 1908
 4. *Self-Portrait*, c. 1908–1909
 5. *Bather*, 1911
 6. *Chiropodist (at the Bathhouse)*, 1911–1912
 7. *Taking in the Rye*, 1912*
 8. *Knife Grinder/Principle of Flickering*, c. 1913*
 9. *Cow and Violin*, 1913
 10. *Portrait of the Composer M. V. Matiushin*, 1913*
 11. *Enemy*, 1913
 12. *Black Square*, 1929
 13. *Red Square (Peasant Woman, Suprematism)*, 1915
 14. *Suprematist Painting*, 1915*
 15. *Suprematist Painting*, 1917–1918*
 16. *Suprematism, Splitting of Construction Form 78*, c. 1917–1919
 17. *Front Program Cover for the First Congress of Committees on Rural Poverty*, 1918
 18. *Future Planits for Leningrad. The Pilot's House*, 1924
 19. *Woman with a Rake*, c. 1928–1932*
 20. *Girl with a Red Staff*, 1932–1933

Please review the materials, and adapt them for your students' needs.



A R C T I C

O C E A N

UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

• Leningrad

• Moscow

N O R T H

P A C I F I C

O C E A N

Kazimir Malevich at a Glance

1. Kazimir Malevich was a Russian artist. The objects selected for this packet cover the most important years of his career: 1903–1933.
2. Early in his career Malevich worked his way through French styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: impressionism, post-impressionism, symbolism, and fauvism. (See slides 1–4.)
3. Malevich was part of a group of avant-garde Russian artists—including Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, and Vladimir Tatlin—who had been similarly influenced by French art.
4. Malevich and his colleagues became concerned with producing an indigenous Russian art, rather than imitating the French. To this end, they developed a style called neo-primitivism, influenced by Russian folk art and religious icons. (See slides 5–7.)
5. Eventually, Malevich and his colleagues combined ideas from the European styles of cubism and futurism to shape their idea of an art for the future. (See slides 8–10.)
6. Interest in cubo-futurist theories led these Russian artists away from imitating the appearance of the natural world, and toward experimentation with painting that soon became an end in itself.
7. Around 1915, Malevich developed a nonobjective style he called *suprematism* to indicate that it was the ultimate in art. Suprematist works are characterized by simple geometric forms of pure color. (See slides 12–14.) Considering his paintings the ultimate rejection of representation and the absolute simplification of color and form, Malevich believed that his art communicated “pure feeling” and—because of its purity—could raise mankind to a higher spiritual plane.
8. Other artists, working independently in several countries, were developing nonobjective styles at this same time. Among these artists were Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian.
9. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, nonobjective art, including suprematism, received the official support of the new Soviet government. During the next decade Malevich concentrated his efforts on administration, teaching, theory, and architecture. (See slides 17, 18.)
10. By the late 1920s, nonobjective art had fallen out of favor with the Soviet government, and in the final years of his career Malevich returned to figurative art. (See slides 19, 20.)

Nonobjective Art

The terms *abstract*, *nonrepresentational*, and *nonobjective* are used virtually interchangeably to refer to art that is not tied to the natural world. Of the three terms, *abstract* is probably used most frequently, but it is also the most problematic, because it actually has two meanings when applied to art: it can denote art that does not attempt to reproduce what is visible to the eye, or art that simplifies or refines natural appearance, but does not eliminate it. *Nonrepresentational* emphasizes that the art portrays nothing of the natural world, while *nonobjective* offers a variation on the same idea, designating art that does not represent objects. Whatever word is employed, these terms describe the work of several artists who, in the second decade of the twentieth century, began to produce paintings independent of references to nature. Kazimir Malevich's contribution to the development of nonobjective art was unique, but he was by no means alone in that achievement.

Rejecting representation (the attempt to present an image of the natural world) as the primary function of painting was not a step that artists took suddenly. Instead, the process was a gradual one, with roots in the mid-nineteenth century. The advent of photography in 1839 played a significant role in freeing painting from the need to reproduce nature, although there was no simple cause-and-effect relationship between the development of the modern camera and nonobjective art.

France dominated Western art throughout the nineteenth century, and therefore French artists provide the most instructive examples of the sources of abstraction. In the 1860s, Edouard Manet presented the world he experienced every day, rather than one that was the product of his imagination and intellect. His contemporary subjects were produced in a manner that asserted that they were paintings—two-dimensional surfaces rather than illusions of a window into another world. Impressionist artists, such as Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir, recorded their observations of the world, but captured those “impressions” with thick paint and loose brushstrokes that made the viewer aware of the act of painting.

The shifting balance between the importance of image and painting was best articulated by the artist Maurice Denis in 1890: “A picture—before being a warhorse, a nude woman, or some sort of anecdote—is essentially a surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order.” For artists who agreed with Denis that a painting was a painting first and an image second, reproducing the natural world was no longer a primary concern. Indeed, the post-impressionists (for example, Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh) rejected the impressionists' emphasis on recording appearances, in order to concentrate on communicating emotion. In the process, they liberated the use of color from the need to replicate the actual color of objects.

Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, the inventors of cubism in the first decade of the twentieth century, presided over the destruction of the idealized, single view of objects that had dominated Western painting for centuries. Their “bizarre little cubes” offered an analysis of the subject that involved multiple perspectives, reflecting their understanding that our ability to “know” a subject actually is the result of a series of glances. With their emphasis on intellectual activity, Picasso and Braque stood on the brink of nonobjective art, but remained firmly committed to external reality.

A number of other artists were willing to take the final step into nonrepresentation in the 1910s, among them the Czech Frantisek Kupka, Robert Delaunay in France, Arthur Dove in the

United States, and Wyndham Lewis and David Bomberg in England. The seemingly independent—but virtually simultaneous—development of nonobjective art in several countries is demonstrably linked to developments in France during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the importance of sociocultural factors should also be acknowledged. People's view of the world and their relationship to it had altered considerably around the turn of the century. Some factors in these changes were technological, such as the appearance of the Ford automobile in 1893 and the Wright brothers' first successful powered flight in 1903. They not only introduced new modes of transportation, but also provided new ways for people to experience the world. Scientific advances also had a tremendous impact: developments such as Roentgen's discovery of x-rays in 1895 and the publication of Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* in 1905 provided a different concept of reality. In the face of these dramatic changes, many artists felt that it was only appropriate that art should be transformed as well.

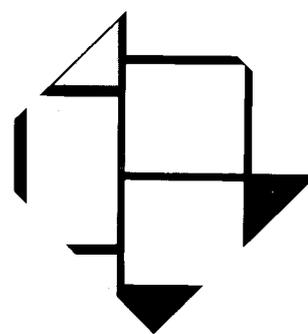


Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, and Kazimir Malevich were the most influential of the artists working nonobjectively in the 1910s. Each arrived at his version of nonrepresentational art independently, but the three shared a belief in the significance of their experiments. Kandinsky, a Russian who worked in Germany before World War I, was one of the first artists to produce a non-objective painting; he was closely associated with the expressionist movement and came to abstraction through subjective feeling, calling for artists to express their “inner necessity.”

LEFT: Kandinsky, *Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)*, 1913, National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

Mondrian, a Dutch artist who worked primarily in Paris, slowly evolved a non-representational style through his investigation of the structure of nature, eventually reducing paintings to basics—nothing but vertical and horizontal lines, and no colors beyond the primaries (red, yellow, and blue), and the neutrals (gray, black, and white). His work was rigorous, unemotional, and, above all, rational. He sought to achieve in painting the perfect balance he hoped would someday also be reached by individuals and society.

Malevich's approach differed from that of Mondrian and Kandinsky, who both shifted gradually and methodically from representation into nonobjectivity. Moving swiftly and emphatically, Malevich produced an art devoid of references to nature. The elegant simplicity of his work was the result of his ability to synthesize what most other artists saw as an extremely complex set of issues.



RIGHT: Piet Mondrian, *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow, and Blue*, c. 1921/1925, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild

Despite this difference, Malevich shared common concerns with the other two artists. For Kandinsky, Mondrian, and Malevich, nonobjective art was more than just an arrangement of forms and colors. For each of these artists there were philosophical, even spiritual, considerations involved. Abandoning representation might have some scientific rationale, but ultimately it required a leap of faith. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that they considered their paintings laden with meaning. Sharing a utopian vision, they believed that the artist could prepare the way for a life of universal harmony.

Malevich and the Russian Avant-Garde

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russia was a country mired in the past. Because of its limited manufacturing capacity, it was unable to participate successfully in the European economic community. Its political and economic system was essentially a continuation of feudalism, with vast tracts of land in the control of a tiny percentage of the population who owed allegiance to the tsar. The societal constraints imposed by this system led to increasing tensions in the early years of the century. Riots in 1905 resulted in limited reforms, especially the rapid expansion of industrialization, but there were continued calls for changes in the political-economic system. As Russia moved haltingly into the modern age, the country's manufacturing center, Moscow, gained in importance, prospering as a result of increased international trade.

The capital city of St. Petersburg (modern Leningrad) was the traditional center of the Russian art world. In the late nineteenth century, as artists began to rebel against the conservative Petersburg Academy, they focused their activities in Moscow, where they found important patrons among the wealthy merchant class. Russia had established close cultural ties to France in the eighteenth century, and French examples continued to be of great importance for both conservative and avant-garde artists in the early twentieth century. The proliferation of art journals meant that news of recent developments in France made its way even to artists who stayed in Russia, although some artists traveled regularly to Paris. The superb collections of recent French art amassed by Moscow merchants, especially that of Sergei Shchukin, were of great importance to Russian artists. As the center for the emerging avant-garde, Moscow became a magnet for young artists struggling to find a new way in art, so it was not surprising that Kazimir Malevich chose to move there in 1907, when he was twenty-nine years old.

In the early years of the twentieth century, French art was the dominant influence on the Russian avant-garde, with Russian artists condensing decades of French developments into ten or fifteen years. The Russians formed themselves into groups whose primary function was to organize exhibitions that kept pace with recent French art.

The Russians were eager to grasp French advances in art, but they wanted to do more than merely imitate the work of their French contemporaries. As powerful and influential as the French examples were, the Russians also wanted to establish a comparable but independent and, most of all, *Russian* art. To this end, they looked to traditional Russian arts, especially folk art and icons (stylized religious images), as examples. In actuality, this interest in "primitivism," or sources outside the "high art" tradition, placed Russian artists once again on the same path as the French artists. (For example, Gauguin had sought to revitalize Western art through the "primitive" cultures of the South Pacific.) However, Russian-style primitivism did provide a local flavor to their investigations.

Along with Malevich, Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov were among the leaders of the neo-primitivist movement. Goncharova's position of prominence is a reminder of the significant role that women artists played in the Russian avant-garde. Eventually, these artists set aside neo-primitivism in favor of a combination of cubism and futurism, appropriately termed cubo-futurism. The Russians found futurist theory especially attractive because of the emphasis it placed on embracing the modern world and planning for the world of the future. In 1912, Goncharova and Larionov developed rayonism, an independent movement based on the fractured planes of cubism and the lines of force of futurism. Rayonist paintings eliminated the object, in its place producing an image of the rays of light (French, *rayons*) that made vision

possible. While these paintings, first exhibited in 1913, were not truly nonobjective, since they still dealt with perception of the natural world, they were an indication of the Russian avant-garde's increasing interest in the theory of nonrepresentational art.

When they were exhibited in 1915, Malevich's suprematist paintings were, beyond question, examples of nonobjectivity (see slide 13). The Latin word *supremus* means "ultimate" or "absolute," and Malevich and his followers viewed suprematism as no less than a completely new beginning for painting, capable of bringing artists and viewers to a "higher spiritual plane." However, suprematism was not the sole type of nonobjective work appearing among the members of the Russian avant-garde. Earlier in 1915, Vladimir Tatlin had exhibited a series of reliefs constructed from "found" materials that made no attempt to illustrate the natural world. Open, dynamic compositions that incorporated space as well as solid elements, these reliefs relied on the inherent properties of the materials to determine color and form. Called "constructivist," Tatlin's works, although originally carried out in three dimensions, had obvious implications for paintings. Eventually artists who worked in a variety of media were attracted to his insistence on "truth to materials" and his rejection of idealism. There was a dramatic difference, from the theoretical standpoint, between the materials of constructivism and the interest in achieving a spiritual, dematerialized world, which was the goal of suprematism.

In order to understand the relationship between the Russian avant-garde in art and the emerging communist regime, it is important to recognize that the artistic avant-garde was well entrenched, and nonobjective art well established, before the Russian Revolution of 1917. In actuality, there were two revolutions in 1917: the tsar's government, weakened by ineffectual reforms and stretched to the breaking point by Russia's horrific losses in World War I, was overthrown in February; in October, Alexander Kerensky's provisional government was in turn overthrown by the Bolsheviks who placed Vladimir Lenin at the head of the government. There were immediate efforts to link avant-garde art and the revolution; artists as well as members of the new government saw the newly developed nonobjective art as the appropriate visual language for the new political system.

Almost immediately, avant-garde artists were given positions of power within the arts administration of the new communist government. Malevich's rise to power in the art school of Vitebsk shows the extent to which the most extreme forms of art were embraced. The old, traditionally oriented staff of the school resigned, not wishing to be associated with what they assumed would be a short-lived shift in government. Marc Chagall, a native of Vitebsk, was appointed director of the art school in 1918. Malevich joined the faculty in 1919, and Chagall soon resigned, recognizing that most of the faculty and students were entranced with Malevich's much more radical ideas of art. Under Malevich's direction, the school was involved in projects to decorate the city for official occasions. In 1920, a visitor to Vitebsk described the brick buildings on the main street as covered with white paint on which green circles, red squares, and blue rectangles had been painted—suprematism applied on a large public scale.

Despite its early enthusiasm for nonobjective art, the government gradually withdrew support for the avant-garde between 1920 and 1925, and then began actively to suppress it. In its place, the government demanded representational art that it felt would be more readily intelligible to the masses. In 1923, Malevich reiterated his view that his nonobjective vocabulary was the basis of a universal language, but he was increasingly ineffective in convincing the authorities. When a retrospective exhibition of Malevich's work was held at the Tretyakov Gallery in 1929, the organizer of the exhibition felt the need to explain that, while he valued the artist's discoveries, he recognized how alienated the suprematist program was from the Soviet public.

1. On the Boulevard, 1903

Oil on canvas

21½ x 26 in (56 x 66 cm)

State Russian Museum, Leningrad

At the beginning of the twentieth century, recent developments in French art were enormously influential on the Russian artists eager to escape the domination of traditional ideas about art. Although no longer a radical style for French artists, impressionism was still a cry for freedom among the Russians.

About 1900, Malevich abandoned traditional art training and began to work on his own; his paintings developed a distinctly impressionist flavor. The parklike setting in *On the Boulevard* was probably based on a place in Kiev, but could just as well be Copenhagen, Boston, or Paris. The focus on contemporary urban life is typical of impressionism, as is the interest in depicting middle-class people engaged in leisure activities.

Although Malevich included very few details (note for example the featureless faces of the women in the foreground), he carefully established the illusion of depth in his scene. Just to the right of center, a path recedes into the distance at a diagonal, leading the viewer into the middleground of the painting. Successive layers of space are established by the row of trees and people lining the path in the foreground, the people who sit or stand along a second path in the middleground, and the city buildings at the boundary of the park in the background.

Like the impressionists, Malevich concentrated on observing and recording the effects of sunlight as it played across the objects in the scene. This is especially apparent in the areas that depict the paths and lawn, where broad brushstrokes are arranged in patches of varied colors to suggest areas of light and shadow, rather than merely the local green of the grass.



1. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Kazimir Malevich loved nature as a boy and later as a young artist. Read the following excerpt from his *Autobiographical Notes* (1923–1925) to the class as a story:

I remember very well, from the time I was a child, those forms and states of nature that excited me and caused specific reactions. . . . I was impressed by storms, thunder, and lightning, and then the perfect calm after a thunderstorm. I was excited by the alternation of day and night. I remember, too, how difficult it was to go to bed or to tear myself away from my enthusiasm for observing, or rather simply looking at the burning stars, at the open sky as dark as a rock.

The impressionists loved to paint out-of-doors. They wanted to capture the way objects look in sunlight and air. Have students look at *On the Boulevard*. Ask: How is Malevich's enjoyment of nature shown in the way he painted the scene?

ACTIVITY

Ask: What do you enjoy in nature? Think of that place or thing and describe it using each of your five senses. Then draw a picture that captures the feelings

DISCUSSION

Read the passage quoted above to the class. Ask them to think of their favorite place out-of-doors. Where is the place (a park, a forest, a backyard, a lake, a beach)? Ask: What do you like about it? At what time of day or season is it the nicest?

ACTIVITY

Have students write a list of twenty adjectives that describe their favorite place at their favorite time of day. Then ask them to draw a picture of this place, trying to express the adjectives visually.

DISCUSSION

Read the passage quoted above. Ask: What is the best part of Malevich's writing and why? Do you share any of his feelings?

ACTIVITY

For one week, have students keep a journal describing their experiences in nature. Encourage them, like Malevich, to use vivid adjectives and the experience of all their senses to make their writing rich and powerful. After one week have them compare with other classmates and decide whether writing about their experiences made them more aware of them.

2. Landscape, early 1900s

Oil on cardboard

7½ x 12¾ in (19.2 x 31 cm)

State Russian Museum, Leningrad

Like many artists of his era, once Malevich began to absorb recent ideas of art in France, he compressed what had been for the French a gradual development over several decades into a few years of intense experimentation with a variety of styles. In *Landscape*—a much smaller work than *On the Boulevard*—Malevich moved from the broad, loose brushstrokes of impressionism to the dots of neo-impressionism. Concentrating on a narrow section of the world, he relied on fewer details and colors to convey the idea of landscape than he had employed in *On the Boulevard*. Although no figures are included in the scene, the house suggests the presence of human beings.

Less concerned with the science of color and light central to the neo-impressionist style than with the effect it established, Malevich seems to have been most interested in the overall pattern created by the touches of paint on the surface of the canvas. The row of trees, shown without foliage so as to emphasize the framework of branches, forms a screen that can be read as simultaneously in front of and linked to the image of the house. As a result, Malevich called attention to the flatness of the picture plane.



2. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask the class: Is it easy or difficult to tell what is in this painting? Why? In making patterns, shapes or motifs are repeated over and over. What do you see repeated in this painting?

ACTIVITY

Have students make a landscape from scraps of colorful patterned wrapping papers.

DISCUSSION

Notice how this painting does not show deep space. Ask: What makes it look so flat?

ACTIVITY

Have students use artists' "tricks" to draw a landscape that depicts deep space (for example, objects farther away are drawn smaller and closer to the horizon line, close objects are more clearly drawn). Then have them draw the same scene as a flat pattern without that illusion of deep space.

DISCUSSION

Compare this painting with *On the Boulevard*. Ask: What differences do you notice? (Some possible answers are: small dots of color instead of loose brushstrokes, flat design instead of the illusion of receding space, less definite details, no figures.) Ask: Which painting depends more on the observation of nature? Then read the following passage from Malevich's writings:

I continued to work as an Impressionist in my studio garden. I understood that the essence of Impressionism was not to draw phenomena or objects to a "T" but that the whole point was in the pure texture of painting. . . . My entire work was like that of a weaver, who weaves an amazing texture of pure fabric, with the sole difference that I gave a form to this pure fabric of painting, a form that sprang only from the emotional requirements and properties of painting itself. (Chapters from an Artist's Autobiography, 1933)

ACTIVITY

Using crayons or craypas, have students make a picture "weaving" of a tree in sunshine with dots or dabs of color.

3. Shroud of Christ, 1908

Gouache on cardboard

9 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (23.4 x 34.3 cm)

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

This work appears as an abrupt departure from the impressionist and neo-impressionist examples of Malevich's early career. However, the work is consistent with that phase of his career in that it reflects a continuing interest in exploring the developments of late nineteenth-century French artists. This particular example is indebted to both symbolism and art nouveau. It signals a shift away from realism for Malevich, and toward a symbolist concern with ideas as opposed to appearance. The art nouveau style is reflected in the emphasis on pattern, the use of flowing line, and the reliance on the rhythm of repeated form. The suggestion of depth within the work comes from the arrangement of color and form, rather than from atmospheric or linear perspective.

Shroud of Christ strays from the traditional depiction of the lamentation of Christ in a manner that combines ideas from Western and Eastern cultures. The dead Christ is mourned by nature itself, yet He holds the promise of new life. His naked, stylized body lies on a shroud of flowers spread amid a field of lotus leaves. His dark halo surrounded by golden rays represents the eclipsed sun, and the arms of the traditional cross on the halo are replaced by three smaller celestial bodies likewise in eclipse. A range of jagged mountains painted in an Oriental fashion marks the horizon line of the landscape. In the upper corners of the work, sun and moon are shown as simultaneously in eclipse, further evidence of nature's sorrow at Christ's passing.

To some extent Malevich used archetypal symbols to express Christ's transcendence of death; however, the precise meaning that might be attributed to the objects in *Shroud of Christ* is not yet fully understood. The obscure imagery of *Shroud of Christ* is typical of many symbolist paintings, as is its religious subject matter. The symbolists sought to examine fundamental questions about life and its meaning, often turning to religious subjects to explore these themes even if they then treated them in a nontraditional fashion. Although a surge of interest in religious subjects was stimulated by the Western symbolist movement, the Russian artists' receptivity to these ideas was tied to the growing influence of native Russian arts, particularly icons.

One common theme for Russian icons was the Tree of Jesse, literally the family tree of Christ traced back to the patriarch Jesse and establishing the connection between Old and New Testaments. Here, that notion is turned upside down, and Christ's death makes possible a new Tree of Life, the symbol of wholeness and unity.

In Malevich's brief symbolist phase, he turned for the first time to the spiritual concerns found in many of his later works. In *Shroud of Christ*, his use of vivid color and strong patterning, and his rejection of perspective devices, seem to have been an early indication of the influence of traditional Russian icons; they also herald the neo-primitivism that would emerge shortly in his work.

3. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask the class: Is this scene something Malevich saw with his own eyes, or did it come out of his imagination? Explain your answer. What parts of the painting are patterned?

ACTIVITY

Have students create a picture from their imagination on a patterned background.

DISCUSSION

Ask: Is this work painted from imagination, memory, or directly from nature? Use fine art reproductions to clarify this question. Many examples will defy exact placement or suggest a combination of methods. The discussion and disagreement will stimulate students to be more observant and critical in their thinking about art.

ACTIVITY

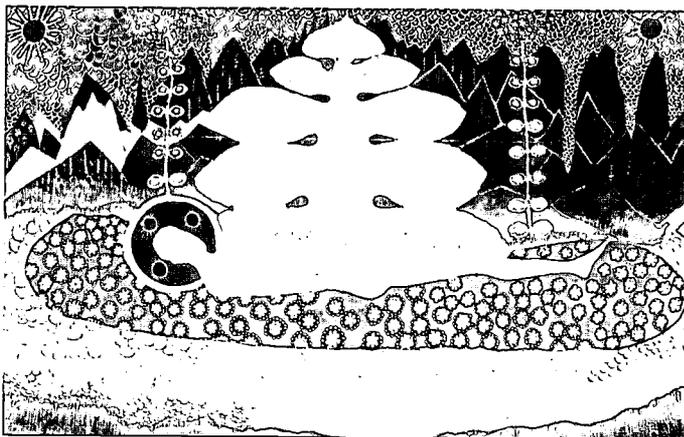
Have students draw something three ways: from reality, from memory, and from imagination. Make the subject a familiar one, such as their house or pet. Remind them to think carefully about how “imagination” can be different from “memory.”

DISCUSSION

Art that seeks the “transcendent” spiritual or inner vision, as opposed to a likeness of physical reality, often shares certain features. Some of these include flat space, bright color, intricate pattern, and symmetrical composition. Discuss why these features might be chosen to express transcendence.

ACTIVITY

Have students make a symmetrical inkblot image, then transform it into a picture from their imagination, creating their own symbolic language. Have them embellish it with fantastic patterns, details, and designs.



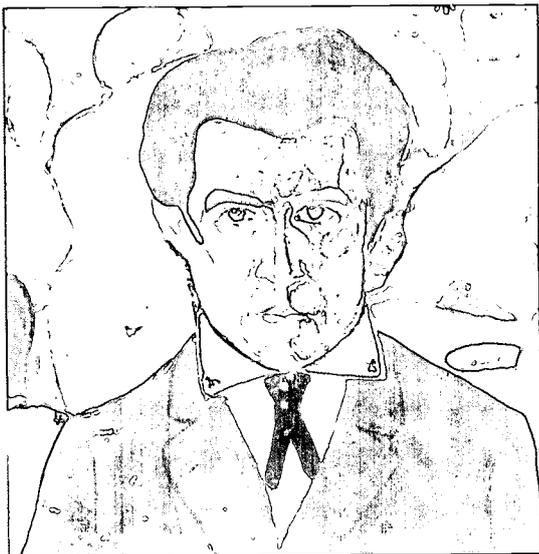
4. Self-Portrait, c. 1908–1909
Gouache and varnish on paper
10⁵/₈ x 10⁹/₁₆ in (27 x 26.8 cm)
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

By the time he painted this *Self-Portrait*, Malevich was beginning to move beyond his examination of late nineteenth-century developments in French art. Working ever closer to the contemporary avant-garde, he was now influenced by the expressionism of the early twentieth century.

The artist confronts the viewer with an intense stare. The bold composition is intensified by the use of sharply contrasting reds and greens throughout the painting. These colors are intended to convey emotional power, rather than to reproduce naturalistic appearances. The artist's head is strongly modeled with unblended areas of highlights and shadows, suggesting the planes of the face while eliminating conventional details. Strong outlines define the forms in the absence of many of the traditional indications of space. Vague shapes inspired by female figures occupy the background of the work. This area seems deliberately ambiguous and can be read either as a glimpse of a painting hanging behind the artist, or as a mental vision of the artist, made visible.

Much of this style is indebted to the post-impressionists, especially Gauguin and Van Gogh, who were instrumental in liberating color from the burden of representation. Such free use of color was also of great importance to the early practitioners of expressionism in France, who were known as the fauves. Henri Matisse, the most famous of these “wild beasts,” had shocked Paris in 1905 with his “barbaric” paintings. His fauve works were familiar to Russian artists, thanks to the Moscow collector Sergei Shchukin. Such paintings emphasize the personal expression of the artist and his ability to make visible emotional and spiritual states.

Self-Portrait may have been shown as part of the First Moscow Salon of 1910–1911, an exhibition organized as a forum for innovative artists. Although there is some question whether or not this particular work or another self-portrait was included in that exhibition, there is no doubt that Malevich was a participant. By the beginning of the new decade he was no longer working alone, but had become part of a group of like-minded avant-garde artists situated in Moscow.



4. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Looking at this *Self-Portrait*, ask students to guess what kind of person Kazimir Malevich was. Have them list some adjectives that describe his personality, and describe what aspect of the painting led each one to choose that particular adjective. Ask: If you were to paint a self-portrait, what physical features would you emphasize? What personality traits would you want to bring out? How could you do this? (Remind them of composition, facial expression, color, clothing worn, objects included, and background.)

ACTIVITY

Have students list some adjectives that they think describe their personality at the bottom of a piece of plain paper. Above these words, have them draw or paint a self-portrait that really shows these qualities. Without signing the works, have them share first the words and then only the pictures with classmates. Ask: Which “description” do you believe best expresses the inner “you”? Do you share any qualities with Kazimir Malevich?

DISCUSSION

In this painting, Malevich was influenced by French artists known as the fauves, or “wild beasts.” The critics called them this because of their bold and expressive use of color. Observe and name all the colors in the facial skin tones of this portrait. Ask: In what other ways is this painting bold or “wild”?

ACTIVITY

Have students paint a “wild” self-portrait.

DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY

Collect as many postcard reproductions of portraits and self-portraits as you can. If works by Van Gogh, Gauguin, or Matisse are among these, encourage students to identify the similarities with Malevich’s *Self-Portrait*. If you have sufficient reproductions, make a game of comparative looking. Let each student select one card at random. Call for student participation by categories: century of execution, style, social status of the sitter, sex of the sitter. Take the discussion further with factual and interpretive questions, and make continual comparisons and contrasts with Malevich’s *Self-Portrait*.

5. **Bather, 1911**

Charcoal and gouache on paper (mounted on paper)

41¾ x 27¼ in (105 x 69 cm)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Bather, with its single naked, crude figure in a simplified landscape, is an example of Malevich's full-fledged neo-primitivism. This creature is not out for a genteel stroll as in *On the Boulevard*; instead his oneness with nature gives him an awkward power.

The unity of figure and ground is accomplished by using the same colors throughout the painting. Similarly to the post-impressionist approach used by Paul Cézanne in his late canvases, the paint is applied with long loose strokes, arranged in patches of color. These divisions focus attention on the surface of the canvas, rather than suggesting details within a realistic scene. As a result, the heavy black outline defines the figure.

The ungainly form lumbering across the landscape manages to convey a sense of dynamic movement as the result of the strong diagonal formed by his swinging arms and reinforced by the position of his legs captured in mid-stride. Enormous extremities serve to exaggerate both the sense of frozen movement and the clumsiness of the figure.

What seems so casual, even crude, in conception and execution was in reality carefully calculated by the artist. Evidence of this exists in the finished work, especially in the area surrounding the calves and feet of the figure: faint charcoal lines mark alternative positions of these elements, which Malevich later rejected.



5. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask: What are the two most important colors in this painting (red and green as in *Self-Portrait*)? Who is this person in the painting? (Explain that there is no right or wrong answer.) Why do you think the artist made the man's hands and feet so large? Have you ever felt as if your hands and feet were very large? When or why?

ACTIVITY

Explore the use of complementary colors with the students. Complementary pairs are: red and green, blue and orange, and yellow and violet. Ask students to describe the feelings the colors give: warm or cool, noisy or quiet. Next, have students trace their own hand or foot on paper, then complete an imaginative composition by adding elements to this image. Suggest that they use complementary colors plus neutrals (black or white) for outlining. (Hint: Craypas allow experimentation with blending. When mixed, complements yield a neutral or gray color. Malevich's work includes an area in which a neutral has been produced by the blending of complements.)

DISCUSSION

Ask students if they can tell what Malevich's bather is doing. Is he going quickly or slowly? Is he graceful or clumsy? Is he drawn with correct proportions? Why does Malevich distort the figure rather than paint him realistically? (Think about the distortion used by cartoonists or Hollywood make-up artists.)

ACTIVITY

Play selected portions of a ballet by Igor Stravinsky (*The Rite of Spring*, *Petroushka* or *The Firebird*) for the class. Stravinsky, a contemporary of Malevich, encouraged an expressive style of dance. Have students paint expressively and freely as they listen to the music, remembering the use of distortion in *Bather*. They may use dancing or moving figures as a subject.

Break the class period into short timed segments: (1) explanation of the story-line in the musical segment; (2) listening with eyes shut; (3) listening while painting. Repeat with a contrasting segment of the music. Look at the completed paintings, grouped according to the musical segments. Ask the class to select similar works with similar moods.

DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY

Paul Cézanne said: "The artist should not be too timid, too sincere, and should not be too subservient to nature." Ask the class: Are you too timid, too sincere, or too "subservient to nature" when you paint? From memory and imagination, have students do quick, gestural studies of figures in motion, using tempera or acrylic paints and large brushes. Critique the finished works on the basis of Cézanne's dictum.

6. **Chiropodist (at the Bathhouse), 1911–1912**

Charcoal and gouache on paper

30 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 40 $\frac{1}{6}$ in (77.7 x 103 cm)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

A chiropodist is someone who treats ailments of the hands and feet. Obviously the latter are being attended to in Malevich's painting. But this scene is not set in some antiseptic surgeon's office; instead, the procedure takes place in a communal bathhouse—an image drawn from the life of the vast peasant populations of Russia.

A more complex image than *Bather*, this work has three figures and sufficient details to indicate an interior setting. Although these bodies are covered, their massive extremities indicate that they are stylistically related to *Bather*. The simplified hands and feet belie their gawky appearance by their ability to perform the delicate movements required to hold a cigarette or tend to a foot. Each face has features indicated merely by a few black lines. In imitation of folk art or "primitive" cultures, the men at either side of the painting have eyes shown in their frontal, full-faced aspect, rather than naturalistically in profile.

From the application of paint to the arrangement of the composition, this painting was strongly influenced by the work of Paul Cézanne. As in *Bather*, Malevich applied color in a series of patches, although in this work he limited his palette so as to focus attention on form rather than on the emotional power conveyed by color. His composition is based on Cézanne's *The Card Players* (1890–1892), a work of such importance to Malevich that he kept a reproduction on his studio wall throughout much of his career.

In its provincial subject matter and its neo-primitivism, *Chiropodist (at the Bathhouse)* is close to the contemporary paintings of Malevich's colleagues Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov. Although there is no question of the debt all three artists owed to recent French art, by 1912 they had become disenchanted with European influences. Increasingly, they chose subjects based on traditional life in Russia. In an effort to break away from this Western-oriented avant-garde and to call attention to art that they felt affirmed a particularly Russian character, Goncharova and Larionov organized the Donkey's Tail exhibition in Moscow in March 1912, where *Chiropodist (at the Bathhouse)* was exhibited for the first time.



6. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Community bathhouses were places where people went to swim, take a steam bath, relax, and talk. In this painting, a foot doctor is helping someone at the bathhouse. Ask: What is in the very center of the painting? Does this painting make you smile? Explain why.

ACTIVITY

Have students draw a picture of a place in their community where people get together to relax and have fun. Ask them to find a way to make the picture happy, funny, or surprising.

DISCUSSION

Ask: Have you ever seen a painting of a chiropodist before? What do you think was interesting to Malevich in this scene? How does Malevich make the whole picture seem connected?

ACTIVITY

Mundane images of ordinary, everyday life can sometimes be the most unusual. Have students keep an “image journal” of scenes from their life for an entire day, using a black marker for drawing bold lines that describe the scenes simply.

DISCUSSION

Compare *Chiropodist (at the Bathhouse)* with Paul Cézanne's *The Card Players* of 1890–1892 (available in H. H. Arnason's *History of Modern Art*, p. 46). Note similarities in composition and spatial treatment. Ask the class: What are some of the differences between the two paintings? What do you think fascinated Malevich about this work by Cézanne?

ACTIVITY

Select a different work by Paul Cézanne. Have students use the work as a basis for a painting or sketch of their own. The class critique of these works can then focus on such questions as: Can you better understand Malevich's interest in Cézanne because of your own interpretive work based on Cézanne? Why was Cézanne such an important figure in the development of twentieth-century art? What aspects from Cézanne did you keep, and what elements are your own?

7. Taking in the Rye, 1912

Oil on canvas

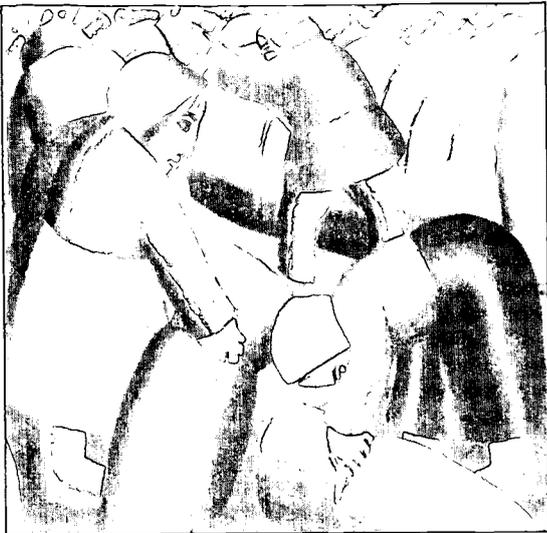
28 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 29 $\frac{3}{8}$ in (72 x 74.5 cm)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Images of men and women working in the fields occur frequently in Malevich's paintings. A continuation of his interest in provincial life, these images use the cycle of the crops to express human reliance on the rhythms of nature. *Taking in the Rye* focuses on the culmination of that cycle: the harvest.

By eliminating any suggestion of sky and allowing only a narrow view of the landscape, Malevich focused attention solely on the activity of harvesting. The reapers and their crops are represented by simplified forms arranged in a shallow space. The only indication of depth, beyond the shading and highlighting to indicate the cylindrical forms, is provided by overlapping figures, and by using smaller forms to indicate objects that are to be read as some distance from the foreground.

The distinctly tubelike appearance of the forms in *Taking in the Rye* was undoubtedly influenced by the French artist Fernand Léger, whose paintings had recently been shown in Moscow. Léger's style was a version of cubism based on machine forms. Yet for Léger, and seemingly for Malevich, the machine aesthetic was intended to communicate adaptability to a technological age, not inhumanity. Ironically, while machines may have influenced Malevich's forms, the harvest itself is depicted as a back-breaking, strictly manual task. *Taking in the Rye* celebrates Russian peasants as French realist paintings had championed mid-nineteenth-century rural life. Such treatment elevates the importance of commonplace subjects at the expense of traditional ones, but at the same time, it stereotypes these people, by identifying them so intimately with their crops that, in Malevich's case, they take on the tubular appearance of the grain sheaves they harvest. Thus, such works focus attention on the subject of rural life, but do not necessarily call for any change in the society that binds these people so closely to the natural environment.



7. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Simple geometric shapes and repetition were important to Malevich. A tubular form is a cylinder. Discuss cylinders, and ask the class to make a list of human, animal, and plant forms that are essentially cylindrical.

ACTIVITY

Have the class create “tube designs,” “tube people,” or “tube creatures” from rolled and taped construction paper elements glued to a tagboard or cardboard background. (Hint: Offer a wide variety of sizes of rectangular papers for creating the tubular elements.)

DISCUSSION

Why does Malevich make his farmers look metallic? Have the class list some adjectives describing the qualities of metal. How does Malevich create the illusion of metal in the painting? (The illusion is created through shadow and highlights.) How does he create an illusion of receding space? (Receding space is indicated by the diminishing size of the forms toward the top of the canvas.)

ACTIVITY

Set up a still life of several simple metallic objects. Using black and white crayons on gray paper, students can model the forms to create an illusion of three dimensions and metallic surface. Encourage close observation of the simple shape outlines, relative sizes, varieties of grays, location of shadow or reflection, and use of strong white highlights.

DISCUSSION

In depicting peasants as machines, Malevich meant to create a heroic image, not a dehumanized one. Ask: If we did not know that Malevich welcomed industrialization, how could we guess this from the painting? What qualities in addition to heroism do these stylized peasants possess? (They have simplicity, humility, and so forth.) Have students justify their answers with concrete evidence from the painting. Ask: Despite our greater awareness of the perils of progress today, in what ways do we still idealize the role of technology?

ACTIVITY

In 1912, Russia was a primarily rural economy that looked forward hopefully to industrialization. Malevich’s father worked in a sugar refinery. Many far-reaching changes in agriculture and industry occurred during Malevich’s lifetime. Using the timeline in this packet, compare American history to that of Russia. Students may choose either Russia or America, and do research to find the additional significant dates that mark industrial or agricultural change.

8. Knife Grinder/Principle of Flickering, c. 1913

Oil on canvas

31¼ x 31¼ in (79.5 x 79.5 cm)

Yale University Art Gallery

Gift of Collection Société Anonyme

The striking differences between *Taking in the Rye* and *Knife Grinder/Principle of Flickering* are explained by Malevich's new interest in futurism. In essence, the subjects of the two works are not that dissimilar; both fit easily into the category of provincial scenes that dominates this period of Malevich's career. However, instead of being static and isolated like the objects depicted in the harvest image, the knife grinder and his equipment visibly interact with their environment. *Taking in the Rye* conveys the rhythms of the universe through allusion to the vast cycles of nature, while in this painting such rhythms are communicated by the more compact revolutions of the grinding stone.

Futurism was an artistic movement founded in 1909 by a group of Italians who were committed to overthrowing the past and embracing the future. As it did in Russia, the machine age seemed especially attractive in Italy where society remained primarily rural. Like cubism, futurism fractured objects into planes; but in place of the static, centralized images of the cubists, the futurists attempted to give visual expression to the world's energies and forces. Their primary approach was to emphasize the mutual interaction of objects and environment, and to depict movement through the technique that they called "simultaneity." Malevich's knife grinder has temporarily set up shop on the steps of an elegant house, the setting indicated by the decorative carving of the steps to the right of the figure and the portion of a balustrade visible in the upper left corner. Hard at work, with his left foot he pumps the treadle while his hands bring the knife back and forth to the grinding wheel. His head bobs up and down in concentration. Malevich captures the knife grinder's actions by indicating successive positions of objects "simultaneously" within the painting. Such fragmentation of action is intended to stand for the continuous whole.

Principle of Flickering, the work's alternate title, draws attention away from the specific activity depicted in order to emphasize Malevich's attempt to conceptualize movement. One of the most striking examples of futurism's influence on Malevich, the painting was included in the March 1913 Target exhibition.



8. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask: What does this painting remind you of (kaleidoscope, puzzle, broken mirror)? Have students point out various parts of the man's body. Can they tell what the background shapes are meant to be? (The shapes are a stairway.) Can they find the wheel where the knife is being sharpened? Ask students to imagine noises and sounds that might come from the painting, and then to make them. Which part of the painting does the sound come from?

ACTIVITY

Have students attempt to draw a person or machine that appears to be moving and then add sound-describing words to the picture.

DISCUSSION

Which is more important in this painting, man or machine? Why? Discuss the terms *static* and *dynamic*. Ask: What makes this such a dynamic composition (contrasting colors, diagonal lines, repetition of forms suggesting change in placement)?

ACTIVITY

Each student can create the illusion of motion by pasting fragments of images from magazines together as a collage. Many magazines have photographs of automobiles, airplanes, motorbikes, and athletes, all of which would contribute to a dynamic composition, if overlapped, repeated, and fragmented, as in *Knife Grinder*.

DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY

In 1913, the Russian poet Aleksandr Shevchenko wrote the following:

The world has been transformed into a single monstrous, fantastic, perpetually moving machine, into a single huge non-animal, automatic organism, into a single gigantic whole constructed with a strict correspondence and balance of parts.

In the spirit of Malevich and Shevchenko's idealization of the machine age, have students write a poem praising their favorite machine (one that they own or use). (Optional: To accompany the poem, have students sketch a futurist-style portrait of their favorite machine in action.)

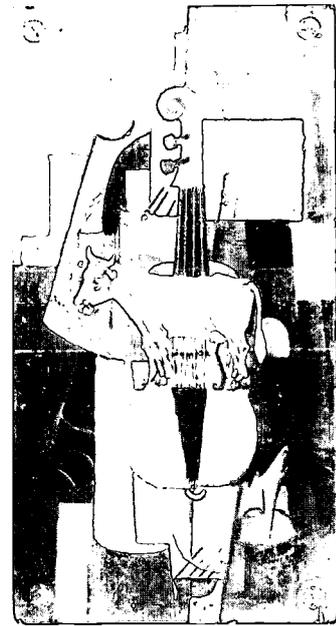
9. Cow and Violin, 1913

Oil on wood

19¼ x 10¾ in (48.8 x 25.8 cm)

State Russian Museum, Leningrad

Cow and Violin is an example of a significant shift in Malevich's work that came about 1913. With this work and others he produced in 1913 and 1914, Malevich abandoned provincial subject matter and changed his style under the influence of synthetic cubism. Developed by Picasso and Braque in Paris in 1911–1912, synthetic cubism resulted in paintings that consisted of forms built up through an arrangement of simple, flat areas of color. Texture and pattern played a role in synthetic cubism, but were generally subordinated to the overall composition. Malevich's use of this style, barely more than a year after its creation, indicates that he had virtually caught up to the most recent innovations of the French avant-garde. However, Malevich was not satisfied with imitating the synthetic cubist style, but used it to meet his own goals. In place of the typically logical subject matter of the French cubists—mostly still lifes or cafe scenes—*Cow and Violin* presented the absurd combination of the titled objects, each painted realistically, but with no attempt to maintain natural scale.



Malevich explained his composition on the back of the canvas: “Alogical juxtaposition of two forms ‘violin and cow’ as an aspect of the struggle against logic by means of the natural order, against Philistine meaning and prejudice.” If the combination of cow and violin did not seem conventionally sensible, it served as a reminder of the links among all natural phenomena. Thus, using what he termed *alogism*, Malevich intended to go beyond the boundaries of logic in order to examine intuitive relationships that offered a deeper understanding of the world. By presenting the irrational juxtaposition of cow and violin, he offered viewers the opportunity to gain that same insight.

Cow and Violin is a painterly manifesto of Malevich's alogism, a product of his personal theories of art. Malevich's interest in “transrational” thought was partially shaped and certainly shared by other members of the Russian avant-garde, including members of the literary movement, Zaum. Zaum poets sought a literary equivalent to Malevich's visual attempt to transcend the earth and its limiting rationalism.

9. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Children and artists both often like nonsense. Ask the class: What is nonsense, and why is it fun? What Anglo-American nursery rhyme has a cow, a violin, and some nonsense in it? (Hint: a violin is also called a fiddle.) What sound does a cow make? What sound does a violin make? What does a cow like to do? What does a violin like to do? Describe the things you see in this painting other than a cow and a violin.

ACTIVITY

Have students write a nonsense poem based on this painting for a younger friend to enjoy.

DISCUSSION

Name some of the absurd or illogical aspects of this painting. Ask the class to consider these questions: In what situations is it important to be logical? In what situations could being illogical be acceptable or good? Is truth always the same as rationality? Why did Malevich paint this painting?

ACTIVITY

Have students make a funny and illogical drawing of their favorite animal and their favorite musical instrument together, adding any additional elements they might need to create a successful composition.

DISCUSSION

Like the surrealists and dadaists, Malevich shows an interest in unexplainable and illogical juxtapositions. Dreams often bring together unusual or mystifying objects, people, and events for all of us. Ask that one or two students describe a recent dream. Point out elements of the irrational in the dream, as well as any example of vivid imagery, as seen in *Cow and Violin*.

ACTIVITY

Have students re-create a dream in an artwork, letting a cubist sensibility help them combine their dream ingredients. Compare the results with Malevich's playful painting.

10. Portrait of the Composer M. V. Matiushin, 1913

Oil on canvas

41 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 41 $\frac{7}{8}$ in (106.35 x 106.3 cm)

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Mikhail Vasilievich Matiushin (1861–1934) was a multitalented individual best known for his work as a composer, although he was also a musician, painter, and publisher. When he met the much younger Malevich in 1912, Matiushin was an established figure in his fifties. However, despite the age difference, the two became lifelong friends. Their correspondence indicates that they regularly discussed theories about art, and Matiushin seems to have served as a sounding board for Malevich during the period from 1912 to 1915 when the artist made his most revolutionary advances in painting.

Malevich's portrait of Matiushin was painted in autumn of 1913, when artist and composer were collaborating on the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* (see *Enemy*, slide 11). Strongly influenced by synthetic cubism, the portrait is composed of flat forms with different textures and patterns, some of which are shaded to indicate shallow space. Remnants of conventional portraiture remain, suggesting the type of bust-length view found in the artist's *Self-Portrait*: an area of realistically painted forehead and hair appears just above center, and a portion of the composer's shirt front and tie is found at the lower center of the work. However, the portrait attempts to communicate the idea of Matiushin rather than reproducing his physical appearance.

With both artist and subject caught up in work on *Victory over the Sun*, it is not surprising to find that Malevich seems to have been influenced by the opera itself as he presented the composer. The drawer-front (with a keyhole) in the lower center of the portrait probably refers to a passage in the libretto in which one of the characters says: "Yes everything here is not that simple, though at first glance it appears to be a chest of drawers—and that's all! But then you roam and roam' (*He climbs up somewhere*)." (Quoted in Susan P. Compton, "Malevich's Suprematism—The Higher Intuition," *Burlington Magazine* 118 [August 1976], 581.) In the portrait, it is the composer's head, or intellect, that one finds when one "roams" above the drawer. The painting's greatest sense of dynamism and its strongest indication of depth are provided by the diagonals located "behind" the realistic portion of the head, perhaps intended to suggest Matiushin's powers as an innovator. The regular division of the ruler or measuring device that runs across the canvas has

been associated with Matiushin's novel use of the extended scale in his composition. This strong horizontal element emphasizes the surface of the picture plane and disrupts the cubist conventions of the painting, providing a foretaste of Malevich's own stylistic innovations.



10. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask the class to describe how they imagine Matiushin looks, and to name the parts of the painting that are clues for their ideas. Ask them to guess at some of Matiushin's personality traits.

ACTIVITY

Go around the classroom, having each student in turn add a phrase to complete a sentence that begins: "My name is M. V. Matiushin and I . . . " (They should think about what he likes to eat, wear, do at noon, and so forth.) Then have each member of the class create a cubist-style portrait of M. V. Matiushin, with his or her sentence written underneath.

DISCUSSION

Ask: Have you ever drawn a portrait of someone and felt there was more to tell? What is missing in a visual representation of an individual?

ACTIVITY

Have students create a portrait of a close friend or family member in which they communicate the *idea* of this person rather than his or her physical appearance. The class critique can include discussion on how ideas about the subjects are expressed.

DISCUSSION

What are the similarities and differences between this work, which has a strong relationship to cubism, and *Knife Grinder*, which is very much like a futurist work?

ACTIVITY

As a young artist searching for new content, Malevich went through many stages. He was influenced by many individuals and "isms" before he developed his own unique ideas. This is a common progression for many artists. Have students write a short essay relating this to events in their own life. Ask them to pinpoint who or what their current "main influence" might be, and to discuss the nature of this influence.

11. *Enemy*, 1913

Graphite pencil, watercolor, and India ink on paper

10 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in (27.1 x 21.3 cm)

Leningrad State Museum of Theatrical and Musical Arts

With a libretto by the futurist-influenced poet Alexei Khruchenykh and music by Mikhail Matiushin, the opera *Victory over the Sun* was an important event for the Russian avant-garde, but it is probably best remembered today because of Malevich's designs for sets and costumes. The opera was conceived at Matiushin's *dacha*, or country cottage, July 18–19, 1913, during a meeting the participants called the First All-Russian Congress of Futurists. A manifesto was issued announcing the establishment of "futurist theater," and the group began work on the opera.

Victory over the Sun had its première less than five months later, on 3 December 1913, in St. Petersburg (Leningrad). As the producers intended, the audience was generally outraged by the flouting of theatrical conventions. In place of acts and scenes, the opera was presented in two "actions"—the first composed of four "pictures," the second of two. Lacking any traditional narrative, the opera had a first part concerned with plans to capture the sun, while its second "action" took place in the "tenth country" of the future after the sun had been subdued. Little more than personifications of qualities, the characters spoke or sang their "messages" to the audience rather than to each other, and there was almost no stage action. The libretto was shaped by the ideas of the literary movement Zaum and therefore was allusive and ambiguous (see slide 9).

The commitment to the future was made clear in the opera, although what the future entailed was not spelled out. The victory over the sun, although taking place offstage, was the central event of the opera; it cleared the way for the future through the overthrow of the symbol of logic and reason. Furthermore, domination over the sun—giver of light and hence visibility—signaled the ability to transcend nature and conventional reality.

Malevich's costume designs for *Victory over the Sun* were based on geometric shapes and are related to his cubo-futurist paintings of 1912–1913. The armorlike casings for the body transform its natural lines and severely limit the player's ability to use conventional acting techniques to communicate with the audience. Instead, the costume itself conveys character through the abstract elements of form and color. The design for *Enemy* is based on triangles, with some areas brightly colored and others left neutral. One of the revolutionary features of the production was the use of strong spotlights to focus attention on selected parts of the actor's costume, fragmenting them in a cubist manner. The costume's neutral areas were intended to facilitate these lighting effects.

There is no way to know precisely how Malevich intended his designs to be translated into functional costumes, since no costumes survive from the 1913 performances, and what costumes were manufactured were not made according to his drawings. However, he did design and paint the sets for the opera. Despite his limited involvement in the actual production of the opera, Malevich attached special significance to his work on *Victory over the Sun*, recognizing that it marked a major step in his commitment to the ideas of nonrepresentational art.

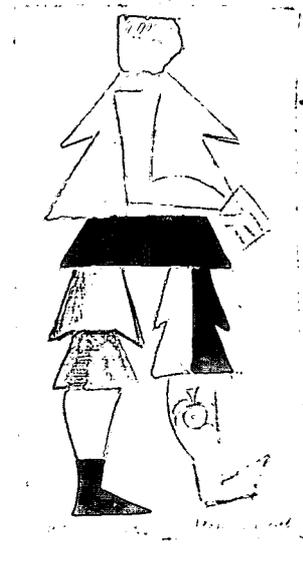
11. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask the class to consider these questions: How is a stage like a painting? How is it different? How are costumes like our everyday clothes? How are they different? What shapes do you see in this costume? What feeling does the costume have?

ACTIVITY

Have students design a hat to go with this costume. (This could be either a drawing project, or the actual creation of a hat using tagboard and construction paper.)



DISCUSSION

Cubo-futurist designs worked well for many practical things, including costumes and clothing items. Many popular clothing styles today are bold and geometric and may remind us of cubo-futurist designs. Have students notice their own clothing. Which clothes incorporate geometric designs?

ACTIVITY

Students can create cubo-futurist tee-shirts by designing with geometric elements and bright, flat colors. Use crayons, brush-on paints, or squeeze-on paints made especially for fabric.

DISCUSSION

Ask the class: What does this costume design remind you of (a harlequin, a peasant, an Elizabethan)? What makes it visually interesting? Compare this "enemy" with one attired like the character of the enemy in a movie or book.

ACTIVITY

Malevich worked closely with futurist poets who found new levels of meaning and creative freedom by using language in an illogical or arbitrary way. Have the class brainstorm a cast of characters with descriptive names, such as the Wandering Friend or the Robot Visitor. Let the ideas come from a free-thinking and irrational spirit. When the cast is set, students can choose a favorite and design a costume for that character. In keeping with cubo-futurist ideology, let geometry and flat color be a common denominator for the project. (This activity could be extended to the writing and producing of an experimental theater piece or puppet show.)

12. **Black Square, 1929** (re-creation of 1915 original)

Oil on canvas

31¼ x 31¼ in (79.5 x 79.5 cm) (irregular)

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Malevich painted this *Black Square* in 1929 as a new version of a painting he had originally produced for a 1915 exhibition. So badly cracked that it was deemed unsuitable for exhibition in 1929, the original *Black Square* is too fragile to travel today. Thus, as it did in 1929, this version of the *Black Square* stands for Malevich's revolutionary statement of 1915.

Unlike many works considered radical by contemporaries, only to seem tame, even banal, today, *Black Square* maintains its ability to startle. Consisting of a black area, not quite a square, surrounded by a white field, it is simple in the extreme, and therein lies its complexity. So bold as to be self-evident, it is at the same time so subtle as to be difficult to grasp.

Black Square was a manifesto of nonobjectivity, establishing painting as independent of representation. No longer responsible for description, art became purely intellectual. *Black Square* was the simplest of approximately thirty nonrepresentational works that Malevich exhibited in December 1915. He acknowledged that he had created a new type of painting with the name *Suprematism*, which he defined as "the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art." He went on to explain: "To the suprematist the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth." (Quoted in H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art*, 3rd ed. [New York: Abrams, 1986], 187.)

The 1915 presentation of these suprematist paintings took place in Moscow in a group show called the *Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10 (Zero-Ten)*. The deliberate misreading of *one-tenth* as *zero-ten* was intended to indicate that the ten artists in the exhibition had gone beyond zero. Malevich assumed a position of leadership among these avant-garde artists with his suprematist work.

Photographs document the presence of *Black Square* at the *Zero-Ten* exhibition; yet there is still some controversy over precisely when the work was painted. Today many scholars believe it dates from sometime in 1915 before the December exhibition; however, Malevich later claimed that suprematism had originated in 1913. This was probably less an attempt to back-date his achievement than an acknowledgment of what he recognized as the sources of the new movement. Despite the radical departure in appearance, *Black Square* and the other new works had clear theoretical connections with his earlier career. The emphasis on feeling and the reflection of nature had been explored through alogism (see slide 9). While the earlier paintings relied on the viewer to grasp the relationships between objects, with suprematism the artist eliminated the objects and tapped that intuition directly.

Malevich's reference to 1913 as the date when suprematism began is usually interpreted today as a reference to the importance he attached to his work on *Victory over the Sun*. Included among Malevich's set designs for the opera was a highly abstract sketch for a backdrop. Consisting of a diagonal line dividing a square into a black and a white triangle, the work was probably intended to be read as the edge of the sun against the darkness of space. Related to the subject of the opera and hence still tied to representation, the sketch nonetheless—in its combination of cosmic subject, geometric form, and elimination of color—was close to the suprematist paintings Malevich would produce sometime in the next two years. All that remained was to eliminate all references to nature, in order to liberate the artist. As Malevich said, "The artist can be a creator only when the forms in his picture have nothing in common with nature." (Quoted in Alan C. Birnholz, "On the Meaning of Kazimir Malevich's 'White on White,'" *Art International* 21 [January 1977], 13.) He felt he had achieved that act of valid creation with *Black Square*.

13. Red Square (Peasant Woman, Suprematism), 1915

Oil on canvas

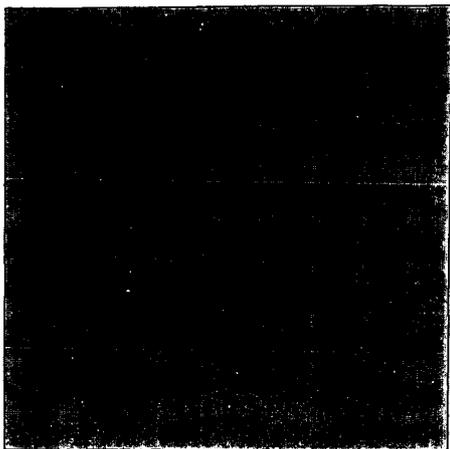
20⁷/₈ x 20⁷/₈ in (53 x 53 cm)

State Russian Museum, Leningrad

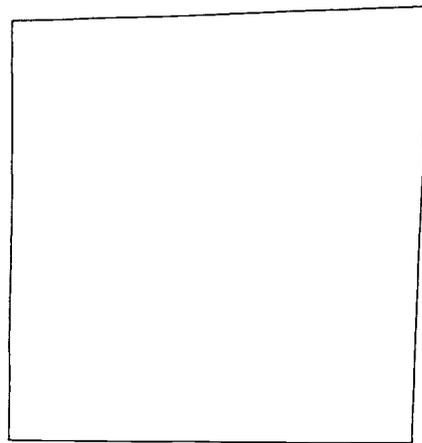
Malevich divided suprematism into three stages: black, red, and white. These terms, however, refer not only to the actual colors of the paintings, but also to degrees of philosophical complexity (see slide 14). Representative of the primary phase of suprematism, *Black Square* was the most extreme example of his new theory of painting and had the most straightforward title of all the suprematist paintings in the 1915 *Zero-Ten* exhibition. Malevich referred to the “first” suprematist painting as “the face of the new art.”

Malevich had not arrived at suprematism casually. He considered the break with representation to be of great significance. Other than *Black Square*, the paintings in the 1915 exhibition had titles that alluded to the natural world, among them *Red Square (Peasant Woman, Suprematism)*. Malevich explained how these references to nature should be understood: “In naming some of these paintings, I do not wish to point out what form to seek in them, but I wish to indicate that real forms were approached in many cases as the ground for formless painterly masses from which a painterly picture was created, quite unrelated to nature.” (Quoted in Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863–1922* [New York: Abrams, 1970], 161.) Thus, he did not intend viewers to look for a peasant woman in the painting, but to understand the continuing importance of earthly forms for the image he produced.

The red area of *Red Square (Peasant Woman, Suprematism)* is even less “square” than the black portion of *Black Square*. Malevich was not interested in producing a precise geometric form in either of these cases. Although he referred to these shapes as “square,” he also discussed them as “quadrilateral,” a more accurate term. For Malevich, the use of geometric, as opposed to natural, forms was what was significant. By achieving true creativity in art through the elimination of conventional representation, the artist could point the way to a better future for all the world.



12



13

14. **Suprematist Painting, 1915**

Oil on canvas

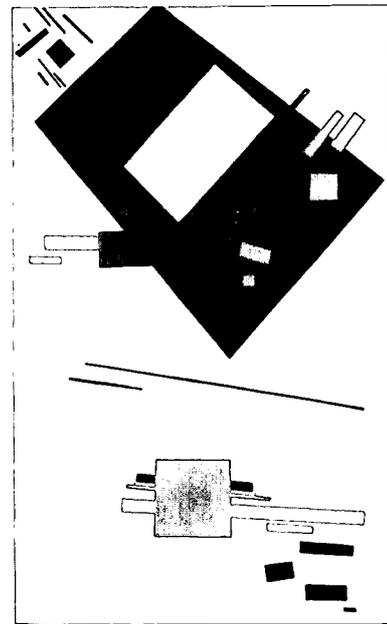
31½ x 24¾ in (80 x 62 cm)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

According to Malevich, multicolored works such as *Suprematist Painting* were to be categorized as part of the second, or “red,” stage of suprematism. These more complex examples involved not only multiple colors, but also a renewed sense of depth created by the overlapping forms of the compositions—characteristics that contributed to a sense of dynamism and even of process within the works.

Despite such differences, *Suprematist Painting* has obvious connections to the stark first phase of suprematism called the “black” stage. One such link is the white ground it shares with *Black Square* and *Red Square (Peasant Woman, Suprematism)*. The white is painted loosely, while the areas of black and color are added with tighter brushstrokes arranged parallel to the edges of the forms in order to define their shapes.

The placement of forms in this work allows for greater expression of movement and dynamism. The largest form is a black quadrilateral, further reinforcing the connections to *Black Square*. In this instance, the black “square” is pushed up and set on an angle in relation to the rectangle of the canvas. The subtle tension created by the diagonal of the upper edge of *Red Square (Peasant Woman)* gives way to a much more overt dynamism in this composition. That dynamism is heightened by the smaller rectangles distributed across the composition. A sense of depth is reintroduced into Malevich’s painting by overlapping forms and is made more apparent because of the different colors of the figures. The composition establishes a relationship of one area to another, but no conventional scale is established because of the nonobjective nature of the work.



12, 13, 14. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The following discussion questions and activities are meant to be used in reference to the three suprematist works: *Black Square*, *Red Square (Peasant Woman, Suprematism)*, and *Suprematist Painting* (slides 12–14).

DISCUSSION

Ask the students: Have you ever made an abstract picture and then had someone ask, “What is it?” Why do you think this happens? How do you feel when this happens?

ACTIVITY

Make a game of composing abstract compositions. Fill a box with varied geometric shapes cut from brightly colored construction paper. With eyes closed, each student selects several shapes from the box and glues them down to a white paper. Make the composition “pure” and nonobjective (“just a design”), avoiding reference to the natural world.

DISCUSSION

Ask the class to consider the following questions: What feelings does the neutral tone black give? What do you feel when you think about red? Does the painting with many shapes seem more active than *Black Square* or *Red Square*? Why or why not? Which shapes seem to weigh more?

ACTIVITY

Use a felt board and geometric felt shapes for the creation of adjustable compositions. Call two students at a time up to the board: one to create a composition, the other to analyze the relationships of shape, color, and space. Class members may have suggestions for variations and improvements. Encourage students to notice the impact of slight changes. Favorites can be re-created in construction paper for display.

DISCUSSION

Malevich, as a suprematist, wanted artists to feel free from the domination of nature. Ask: What do you think this implies?

ACTIVITY

To help clarify Malevich’s leap toward pure expression, use a verbal parallel. Have students brainstorm two lists of words on the blackboard, one of natural objects and the other of abstract ideas. For example, list 1: tree, house, dog; list 2: harmony, love, infinity. Ask: Can you paint a picture of love? Imagine a realistic work depicting a mother and child posed affectionately. Is this a picture of love? Malevich might say the artist of such a work was imprisoned by reality. What would that mean? Have students accept the nonobjective challenge and compose a purely geometric composition suggested by one of the abstract terms.

15. Suprematist Painting, 1917–1918

Oil on canvas

41¾ x 27¾ in (106 x 70.5 cm)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

The works Malevich produced in the third, final “white” phase of suprematism consist of white geometric objects painted on a white ground of slightly different tonality. In these white-on-white paintings the ground is the same as that found in works from the earlier stages of suprematism, but the object is presented even more subtly. *Suprematist Painting* (1917–1918) (Museum of Modern Art, New York), with its white square set at an angle within a square field, is the third phase’s equivalent of *Black Square*. As devoid of superfluous elements as the work of 1915 seemed, the white-on-white paintings are further stripped of what Malevich considered the unnecessary aspects of painting.

The geometric form in *Suprematist Painting* (1917–1918) is three curves set against a single bar placed diagonally on the canvas. Malevich reintroduced curving shapes into his paintings after the first group of suprematist works was exhibited in 1915. Unlike the sharp angularity of the earlier quadrilateral forms, which emphasized their constructed character, the curves could be associated with natural forms. For Malevich, the artist’s act of creation was of primary significance; yet the details of his work had meaning for him as well. He allowed so few elements in his paintings that it is natural for us to consider specific issues, such as why he placed three curves in this painting, or why the diagonal is placed at this particular angle. Malevich rarely provided clear-cut answers to such questions; however, scholars have arrived at reasonable responses. One possible explanation for the motif is the three bars of the traditional Russian cross. While Malevich did not consider his art conventionally religious, he did recognize the spiritual aspect of his interest in transcending reality. The three curves could also be read as part of complete spheres. Their shape suggests movement, and perhaps the potential of revolving around the diagonal, as planets revolve around the sun. The diagonal element is also dynamic. Its angle with respect to the right edge of the painting has been calculated to be 22–23 degrees—an angle that appears in many of Malevich’s compositions around 1917 and is also the angle of the axis of the Earth as it revolves around the sun.



Color, as well as form, had cosmic associations for Malevich. He saw white as replacing blue to represent the heavens: “The blue color of the sky has been defeated by the suprematist system, has been broken through and entered white as the real concept of infinity.” (Quoted in John Golding, “The Black Square,” *Studio International* 189 [1975], 104.) The suggestion that the old way could be replaced by something new was no longer a matter for mere theoretical speculation in 1917–1918, since the Russian Revolution had transformed the society in which Malevich lived. He saw the revolution as bringing about the new world once only dreamed of by him and the other members of the artistic avant-garde.

16. Suprematism, Splitting of Construction Form 78, c. 1917–1919

Graphite pencil on paper

12³/₁₆ x 9⁵/₈ in (32.5 x 24.5 cm)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Malevich's suprematist paintings give the impression of having been painted boldly and without any hesitation. In reality they were carefully planned and executed, sometimes with the assistance of preparatory drawings. *Suprematism, Splitting of Construction Form 78* is relatively large and complete in comparison to many of the artist's suprematist drawings. Closely related to *Suprematist Painting* (1917–1918), this particular drawing may have been produced after the painting.

The same basic form—three curves set against a single diagonal bar—appears in both painting and drawing. However, in the painting there is a sharp difference between the arc of the uppermost crosspiece and the two lower ones, while in the drawing the same arc is maintained in all three crosspieces. Perhaps a more obvious change is the presence of a small, unshaded bar in the drawing, which appears to be on top of the larger form. A freehand border defines a rectangle enclosing the forms in the drawing. The title, a date of 1917, and the signature of the artist appear at the bottom of the work. The forms and tonal range of the drawing are very close to a lithographic print of 1920, published in Malevich's *Suprematism: 34 Drawings*.

15, 16. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The following discussion questions and activities are intended to cover both *Suprematist Painting* (1917–1918) and *Suprematism, Splitting of Construction Form 78* (slides 15–16).

DISCUSSION

This painting is white on white and hard to see. It is an experience in “whiteness.” Ask: are all varieties of white the same?

ACTIVITY

Locate a variety of white objects to compare. A color-sample book from a paint store would be useful for showing many subtly different whites. Make a language-development activity of naming varieties of white: “milk white,” “polar bear white,” “cloudy day white,” and so forth.

DISCUSSION

What temperature, time of day, or other association from nature does white remind you of? (Repeat this question with other colors.)

ACTIVITY

Have students write a poem inspired by two or more things of the same color. This poem may thoughtfully describe them, compare them, contrast them, and/or ask questions of them. Students can then paint the images from the poems, painting with large brushes, or drawing boldly with the side of a piece of crayon or graphite. Encourage students to simplify forms, including only the important parts.

DISCUSSION

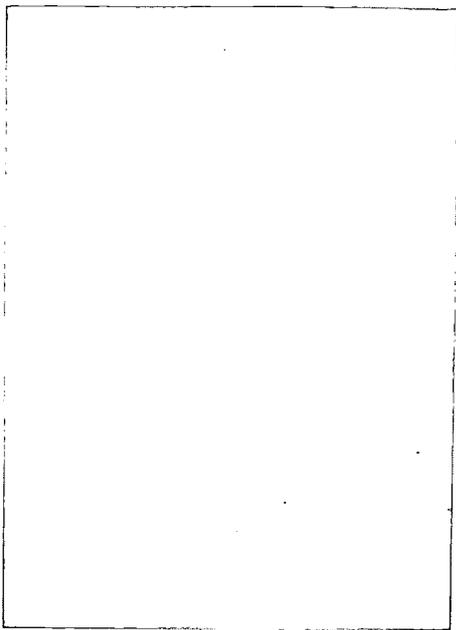
Copy this quotation from Malevich’s writings onto the blackboard:

I have breached the blue lampshade of color limitations and have passed into the white beyond: follow me, comrade aviators, sail on into the depths—I have established the semaphores of Suprematism. I have conquered the lining of the colored sky, I have plucked the colors, put them into the bag I have made, and tied it with a knot. Sail on! The white, free depths, eternity, is before you. (Quoted in John E. Bowlt, ed., *Russian Art of the Avant-garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902–1934* [New York: Viking Press, 1976], 145.)

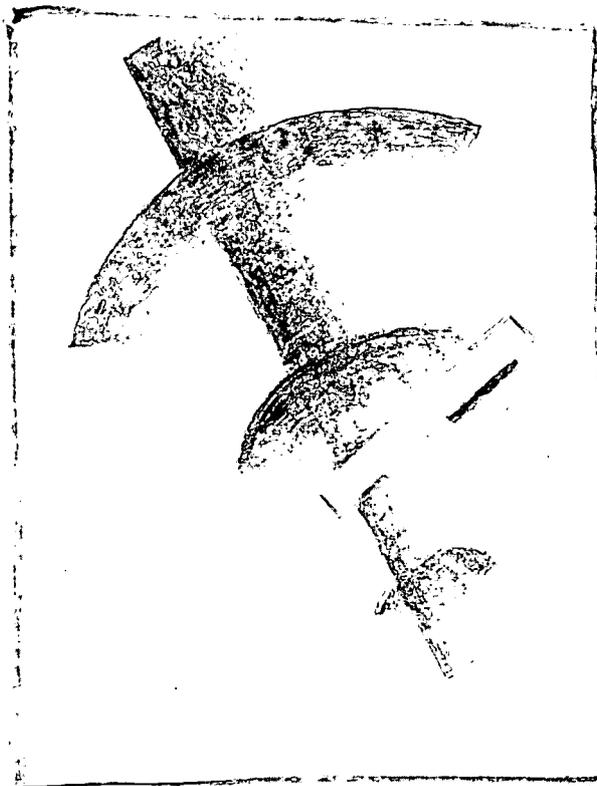
Then ask the class: Are white and black like other colors? Why or why not? Why are black and white frequently associated with the cosmic or infinite? What are semaphores? (Semaphores are a system of visual signals, as with hand-held flags.) In what sense does Malevich feel free?

ACTIVITY

Send students on a “treasure hunt” through the art history section of the library, looking for paintings that are white on white, or nearly so, or black on black. (Example: *The White Girl* by James McNeill Whistler. This painting is far from nonobjective, but the ideas behind it were quite radical in 1862.) On the day when the class will discuss the images, suggest that everyone dress in all white or all black, and bring refreshments that are white or black. Let students brainstorm other ways to set the mood for a swim in the “free depths of eternity.”



15



16

17. Front Program Cover for the First Congress of Committees on Rural Poverty, 1918

Color lithograph

19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (48.5 x 64.8 cm)

State Russian Museum, Leningrad

Malevich was involved in the arts administration of the new government from the first months of the revolution. In addition to his bureaucratic duties, he undertook art projects for the new regime, but they were often ephemeral—for example, his decorations for the 1917 May Day parade in Moscow. One surviving project is the portfolio he designed in 1918 for the First Congress of Committees on Rural Poverty.

During the first stages of the revolution, attention had been focused on urban areas, and leaders relied on factory workers for support. In 1918, with the revolution well under way, it was possible to turn attention to the mass of peasants in the countryside. In Lenin's words, the Committees on Rural Poverty marked the beginning "of the revolution in rural districts."

The conference took place 3–8 November 1918, in Petrograd, the new name for tsarist St. Petersburg. The portfolio contained texts of two major speeches that were delivered at the congress, along with some comments on the peasants' economic situation. The size of the original edition is unknown, but very few copies of the cover are recorded today. Since they were printed on a fine quality paper, it is possible that only a small number were produced for the official delegates.

The text on the cover of the portfolio reads: "Congress of Committees on Rural Poverty, Northern District 1918." The artist's initials, "KM," appear in the lower right-hand corner. "Proletariat of the World Unite" is printed on the back of the cover (not illustrated). Malevich's unusual typography and suprematist-inspired design for the cover had a significant impact on Soviet artists in the years following its publication.

This project is a good example of the early success, but also the potential difficulties, of the alliance between nonobjective art and the new sociopolitical system. To those committed to avant-garde art, it seemed perfectly appropriate that there should be an alliance between the new style of art and the new world. However, Malevich's nonobjective designs required words to communicate the specific message. On the other hand, traditional, realistic images may have been rooted in the old tsarist culture, but they had the advantage of being comprehensible to the vast illiterate segment of the population. Malevich believed his art was a new, universal language, but ultimately it did not prove to be readily intelligible and, therefore, was eventually abandoned by the government.



17. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask the class: What shapes or parts of shapes do you see on this book cover design? Which is the largest? the smallest? Which shapes seem to be in front? behind? What is your favorite shape? Why?

ACTIVITY

Make a book of basic shapes. Each page, devoted to one shape, could include the shape and the shape name (a sentence or poem for older students). The cover design can be a composition incorporating all the shapes. Use a simple print-making technique, such as potato prints or cardboard prints, and bright, primary tempera colors.

DISCUSSION

Malevich used a limited color scheme and repeated shapes, but made his composition active and interesting. How? (Eccentric placement of forms, many diagonal placements, variety of sizes, slight variations of similar forms.)

ACTIVITY

Have each student design a banner with his or her name on it, making each letter a unique geometric design, yet still a readable letter. Have them choose a color scheme carefully, to complement the design. (Students may want to use rulers, compasses, protractors, and templates as shape guides.)

DISCUSSION

Are you alert to good design in your everyday life? Ask each student to bring to class one well-designed object. (For furniture or unwieldy objects, a photograph or sketch will have to suffice.) This object may be furniture, clothing, jewelry, dishware, an advertisement, the package design of a household product, a book cover, or a fabric or wrapping paper design. Ask the students to consider the relationship of fine art to applied design. Why do the students consider their objects successful designs? Do any of the designs seem to have been influenced by art historical movements? How do the designs that incorporate type and letter forms do so while still retaining visual unity? Is geometric form crucial to any of the designs?

ACTIVITY

Design an everyday object using geometric shapes. Bring in examples of commercial art, such as magazine advertisements or corporate logos, in which the lettering has been stylized almost to the point of illegibility. What was the designer's purpose in distorting the alphabet? Did the designer succeed?

18. Future Planits for Leningrad. The Pilot's House, 1924

Graphite pencil on paper

12 x 17¹/₁₆ in (30.5 x 45 cm)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

In 1920, Malevich declared that painting was dead, announcing that “there can be no question of painting in suprematism. Painting had run its course long ago, and the painter himself is a prejudice of the past.” (Quoted in Milka Bliznakov, “Suprematism in Architecture,” *Soviet Union* 5 [1978], 245.) He redirected his energies toward writing and teaching, publishing several treatises on art and holding a variety of teaching and research positions in the 1920s. He had joined the faculty of the art school in Vitebsk in 1919, and in 1920 he organized interested students and faculty into a local UNOVIS collective. UNOVIS, a Russian acronym for “Affirmation of the New Art,” intended to complete the transformation of the art world by promoting and teaching nonobjective art and architecture. Since Malevich was inventing new forms of buildings for the new social order, he also invented a new architectural vocabulary. *Planits*, for instance, means “houses for earth people.”

The inclusion of architecture in Malevich's suprematist program was something recent, although he emphasized its roots in his earlier work: “The development of volumetric Suprematism began during 1918 from elements which arose in 1915.” (Quoted in Bliznakov, “Suprematism in Architecture,” 241.) No matter what date should be assigned to his first interest in translating the spatial concepts of suprematism into architecture, from 1919 until the late 1920s his art-making efforts were focused on the creation of a suprematist architecture.

Malevich's architectural drawings and models were examples of theoretical architecture, conceived with no specific plans for construction, but as part of his larger plan for preparing for the future. While he placed great emphasis on the arrangement of form—solids and voids—in designing these buildings, he also considered materials, structure, and issues of comfort and safety. He did not always assign specific functions to his buildings, “so man can use it for his own purposes.” However, he seems to have assumed that most of the buildings would serve as housing, as is the case with *The Pilot's House*.

Malevich designated his *Pilot's House* as a future *planit* for Leningrad. It was appropriate that one of his buildings would be for a pilot; the aviator was one of the heroes of the avant-garde, and what better house for a pilot to occupy than one shaped like a biplane? The development of powered flight, one of the great miracles brought about by advances in technology, became a symbol for new ways of thinking about the world. Malevich was fascinated with the pilot's view of the earth, and there are indications that his conception of that experience influenced the compositions of suprematism. For him, the suprematist artist was the cultural equivalent of a pilot.

18. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Ask: Does the house or apartment you live in look anything like this house? How is it different? Would it be fun to live in this house? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY

Have students design a house that looks like something else. Ask them to think about why the house would be fun to live in, and how it would be different from an ordinary house.

DISCUSSION

What is *modern*? Ask the students: Does this house look "modern"? In approximately what year was your house or apartment built? (If they don't know, have them find out as homework.) What do you think the house of the future will look like?

ACTIVITY

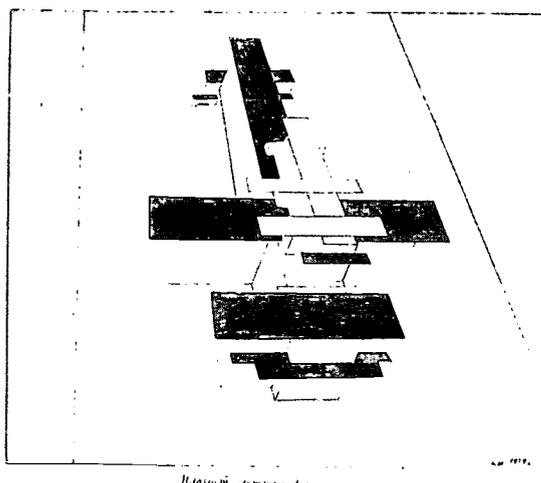
Have students design a house for themselves when they are grown up. Suggest that they make the design of the house have something to do with what job they think they might have.

DISCUSSION

In 1924, with a hopeful attitude toward technology, the airplane pilot was considered a hero of the new world. (Remember Malevich's earlier preoccupation with the sky and flights into infinity in his opera designs and suprematist paintings.) Who are today's heroes? Who will be the heroes of the future?

ACTIVITY

Have students sketch a house design (or build a model) for an individual in a heroic profession of the future. Have them make notations on their sketch as to why certain features of the house will serve the needs of the inhabitant.



19. Woman with a Rake, c. 1928–1932

Oil on canvas

39¾ x 29½ in (100 x 75 cm)

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



Malevich made an astounding return to figurative painting around 1928. There is no clear explanation for this turn of events, although he was not alone, among the artists who developed a type of nonobjective art during the second decade of the twentieth century, in eventually choosing to return to representation. Yet Malevich was not completely comfortable with his decision to produce figurative works again, and he frequently back-dated these later paintings to the time of his presuprematist works. Such “creative” dating underscores the connections between these later peasant images and the earlier rural subjects he had produced.

Woman with a Rake is typical of the works Malevich painted between 1928 and 1932, with its faceless person dressed in an abstracted peasant costume standing against a landscape of horizontal bands of color. The simplified treatment of the woman’s body and the suprematist-influenced costume are similar to designs for clothing Malevich had produced around 1923. The precise, idealized image of the world is reinforced by the short, carefully blended brushstrokes used to apply the paint.

Positioned at the center of the canvas and facing the viewer directly, the figure dominates both the painted landscape and the composition of the painting. Unlike the peasants in Malevich’s paintings of 1912–1913, she is not shown actively engaged in work, nor is she embraced by the earth (compare *Taking in the Rye*, slide 7). Instead, she stands solemnly holding her rake, her body thrusting above the horizon line into the sky—able to bridge the twin worlds of earth and cosmos that had fascinated Malevich throughout his career.

20. Girl with a Red Staff, 1932–1933

Oil on canvas

27½ x 24 in (71 x 61 cm)

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Malevich’s return to figurative painting in the final stages of his career was undoubtedly influenced by the Soviet government’s growing support in the 1920s for traditional styles. His suprematist-based teaching and research increasingly came under attack, and his theoretical treatises went without publishers by the end of the decade.

Girl with a Red Staff was one of a group of portraits of family and friends Malevich painted between 1932 and 1934; in this instance, the model was his sister-in-law. Much more detailed than the works of 1928–1932 (compare *Woman with a Rake*, slide 19), this final series of works maintains an air of mystery. Typical of this group of paintings, *Girl with a Red Staff* shows a single figure against a neutral background, with an idealized face and a solemn pose that give the work something of the formal, classical character of the Italian Renaissance.

The work seems a far cry from the “pure feeling” of Malevich’s suprematist paintings, yet Malevich must have felt there was some connection between these apparently disparate periods of his career; the signature in many of these late portraits includes a monogram of a small black square framed in a larger square (in this example the monogram is located in the lower left).

19, 20. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The following discussion questions and activities cover both *Woman with a Rake* (slide 19) and *Girl with a Red Staff* (slide 20).



DISCUSSION

Look at how these women farmers are created from simple shapes and bold colors. Ask: Are these women young or old? Do they like their work? How can you tell?

ACTIVITY

Teach the class to fold long pieces of paper accordion-style and cut away simple shapes to make a row of "paper dolls," in male and female versions. Then, using colored pencils, markers and/or construction papers and paste, have them decorate, dress, and differentiate each doll in the row they've made. Special printed, shiny, cellophane, or velour papers add excitement to the decoration process.

DISCUSSION

Have students compare and contrast these two works. Ask: Which painting is more naturalistic and why? Which one reminds you most of *Enemy* (the costume design, slide 11), and why?

ACTIVITY

Use the paper-doll project in the preceding activity in a more sophisticated version that stresses the contrast between Malevich's paintings: one abstracted, the other more naturalistic. Have students design the dolls as a progression from left to right, moving gradually from stylized geometry to greater detail and modeling of form.

DISCUSSION

One by one, compare the earlier works by Malevich to each of these paintings. Ask students to observe similarities and differences with each comparison. Then, list all the interests that remained consistent throughout the many changes and experiments in Malevich's career. Ask: Why do you think Malevich abandoned "pure" abstraction at the end of his career?

ACTIVITY

In the 1930s, American art also swung toward realism, "art for the masses," and nostalgia for rural life. Obtain a reproduction of Grant Wood's *American Gothic* (reproduced in M. Brown, S. Hunter, J. Jacobus, N. Rosenblum, and D. Sokol, *American Art* [New York: Prentice-Hall, 1979], 428 pl. 67) for students to compare and contrast with these works by Malevich. Have students make a version of *American Gothic* that would take it toward abstraction, in the manner of any of Malevich's geometrically inspired works.

Timeline

Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935)

- 1874 The first impressionist exhibition is held in Paris.
- 1878 Kazimir Malevich is born in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine.
- 1887 French symbolist poet, Stéphane Mallarmé, publishes *Poésies*.
- 1888 The box camera ushers in the age of mass photography.
- 1889 Malevich attends classes at the Kiev School of Drawing.
- 1890 Paul Cézanne paints *The Cardplayers*.
- 1894 Nicholas II becomes the last tsar of Russia.
- 1900 Max Planck proposes the quantum theory of energy. Sigmund Freud publishes his "Interpretation of Dreams." Anton Chekhov writes *Uncle Vanya*.
- 1905 Malevich is painting outdoors in a neo-impressionistic style. Einstein publishes his first (special) theory of relativity. Matisse is dubbed a "wild beast" or fauve.
- 1907 Malevich moves to Moscow. Pablo Picasso paints *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*.
- 1910 Malevich and other Russian artists switch from late impressionist or fauvist styles to neo-primitivism.
- 1911 Ernest Rutherford formulates his theory of atomic structure.
- 1913 Malevich working in a cubo-futurist style. Igor Stravinsky completes his ballet, *The Rite of Spring*. The futurist opera, *Victory over the Sun*, with costumes and sets by Malevich, is staged in St. Petersburg.
- 1914 Outbreak of World War I.
- 1915 Malevich exhibits completely nonrepresentational works in the *Zero-Ten* exhibition in Petrograd (St. Petersburg).
- 1917 February and October revolutions in Russia. The Soviet regime is established.
- 1919 First nonstop transatlantic flight is accomplished. Malevich contributes suprematist works to an exhibition in Moscow and publishes his first long theoretical essay.
- 1924 Lenin dies, and Stalin assumes control of the Soviet government.
- 1925 The Bauhaus, an art and design school, is built in Germany. The structure is an example of the new international style in architecture.
- 1927 Malevich visits the Bauhaus and meets Walter Gropius and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.
- 1929 The U. S. stock market crashes. The beginning of a world economic crisis. The first Five-Year Plan is begun in Russia.
- 1930 Malevich is expelled from the State Institute for Art History.
- 1932 In Russia, farms are collectivized by force, and widespread famine results. Social realism becomes the official Soviet art.
- 1933 Adolf Hitler is appointed German chancellor. The Bauhaus is closed and its style condemned.
- 1934 The purge of Russia's Communist party begins.
- 1935 Malevich dies, at age fifty-seven.
- 1936 Malevich is represented with seven paintings and six drawings in the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Malevich's works are not shown again in Russia or the West until 1945, at the *Exhibition of Russian Painting* in Palm Beach, Florida.

TIMELINE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

Kazimir Malevich was twenty-two years old in the year 1900. Ask students: How old will you be in the year 2000? Like Malevich, you began life in one century and will live your adulthood in another.

Swift scientific and technological advances are a major part of the character of the twentieth century. How did these influence Malevich's paintings and ideas? Mention specific events, paintings, and ideas from the timeline and from your general knowledge.

Ask students what they think and/or hope will be the character of the twenty-first century. How do they think the character of that century will shape the arts?

MALEVICH AS A TRAILBLAZER

1. Abstraction and nonobjectivity were trends that emerged in the early twentieth century. Trailblazing artists with unique variations on these trends included Malevich, Mondrian, Kandinsky, and others. Have students find dates for nonobjective works by other artists to add to the timeline.
2. Several later developments in painting and sculpture owe a strong debt to Malevich, including the color field paintings of the abstract expressionist era (1940s and 1950s) and the geometrically "pure" works of minimalism (1960s and 1970s). For extra credit, students can research a comparative example (in the form of a report on a specific painting or sculpture) to demonstrate Malevich's influence deep into our century.

ART AND POLITICS

1. Do you think art should be something that everyone can understand? If artists are careful to be certain that art is easy to understand and appreciate, does this affect the quality of the art? Ask: Who should decide what is good or bad art? Toward the end of your classroom work on Malevich, have each student select his or her favorite work by Malevich and write a short paragraph of explanation. Display and tally the results. Let this lead to a discussion on the right of freedom of expression and choice. Find instances of the repression of ideas to add to the timeline, and notice the two that are already there.
2. Malevich was serious in his intentions, despite the humor apparent in some of his work. His emerging goal was the transformation and improvement of society as a whole. Has art ever changed society?

Art, whether it changes society or not, certainly has an important relationship to society. For one week, have students scan newspapers and magazines for articles in which art and society are linked. Post these over the week, and then discuss the articles and the climate of American politics today in relation to art. How would "alogism" or suprematism be received today? Also, consider the validity or inadequacy of the notion that art continually advances in development.

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KAZIMIR MALEVICH 1878-1935

National Gallery of Art
September 16–November 4, 1990

Things have disappeared like smoke; to gain the new artistic culture, art approached creation as an end in itself and domination over the forms of nature.

Kazimir Malevich, 1916¹

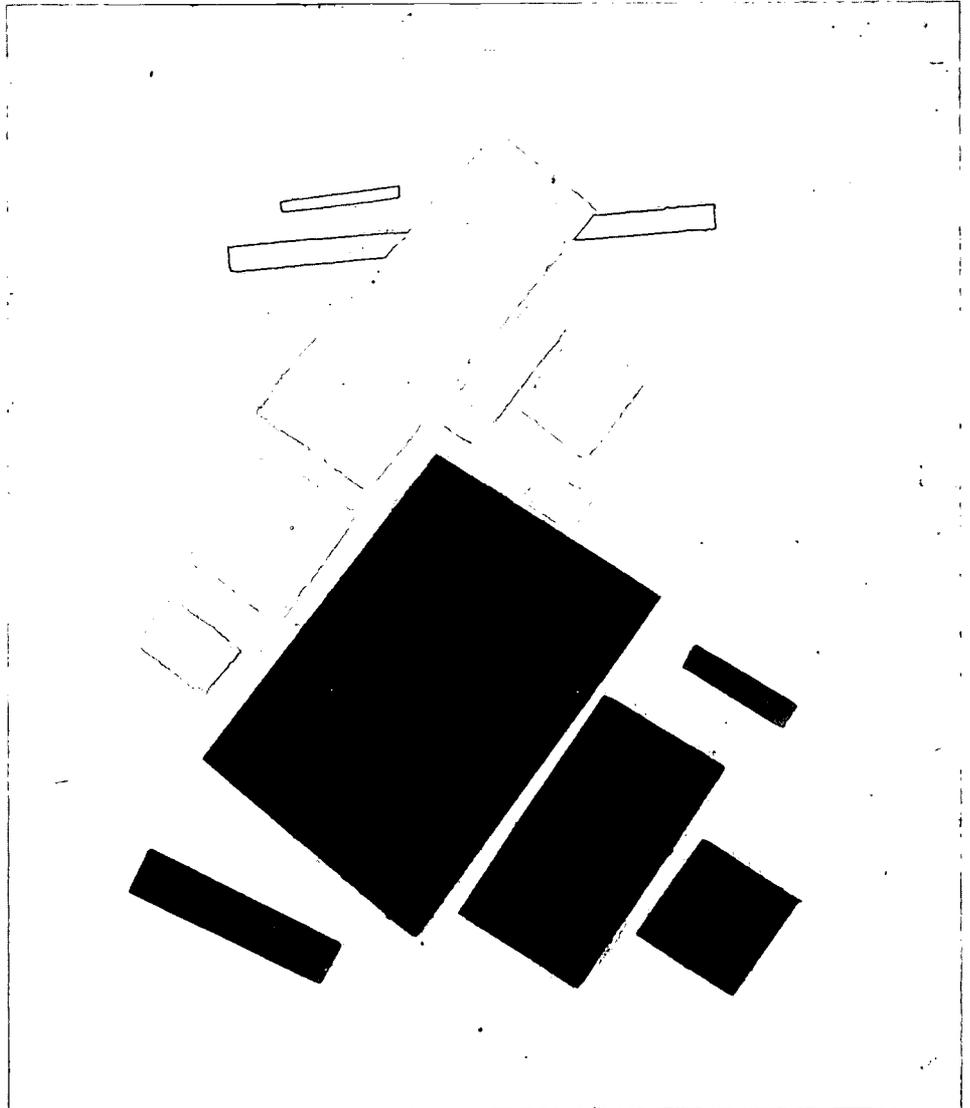
As access to his work and archival documents has improved, it has gradually become possible to explore and chart the development of Malevich's career. Yet scholars have had to face an array of problems. Although Malevich

left a rich body of ambitious philosophical and autobiographical texts (many of which remain unpublished), they are often elliptical in expression and resistant to interpretation. No less problematic has been the dating of his artistic

Although Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935) has long been recognized as one of the seminal figures in the history of twentieth-century art, he remains, for many reasons, little understood.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1917 Revolution in Russia, the Bolshevik regime had encouraged avant-garde artists such as Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin, and Wassily Kandinsky to create a comparable revolution in art. These artists and others, placed in positions of power, were asked to organize all art schools and the entire artistic life of the country. However, by the early 1920s, some artists began to feel that the abstract formalist approach of Malevich and other members of the avant-garde was too limited in its appeal and essentially unintelligible to the general public, and an organized opposition movement began to gather momentum. Official political opposition followed, growing steadily over the next decade. In 1931, the conservative association of proletarian artists formulated its concept of art as ideology, and in 1934 socialist realism, based on naturalistic depictions of workers, was officially adopted as the exclusive style for all forms of Soviet art.

Thus, during the final decade of his life, Malevich witnessed the decline of his own reputation. Until recently, Western scholars were granted only limited access to his paintings, most of which had been hidden for decades in the storage rooms of Russian museums. Archival sources also were largely inaccessible. Soviet scholars encountered similar obstacles in their quest to document the extraordinary career of this artist.



Airplane Flying, 1915, oil on canvas (no. 45), Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The exhibition and this publication are made possible at the National Gallery of Art by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

production. Following an intensely innovative period of non-objective painting between 1915 and 1919, Malevich concentrated for almost a decade on philosophical writing, teaching, and developing principles for suprematist architecture and design. When he took up painting again in the late 1920s, he returned to a largely figurative vocabulary. In some cases he resumed earlier styles, literally recreating, for example, impressionist paintings that he made in the beginning of the century. In other cases the late pictures evoke earlier works in their similar or even identical subject matter. In style, however, they reflect the suprematist path that he had since traveled. Many of these late pictures inexplicably carry dates from earlier periods, thus presenting puzzling dilemmas for art historians attempting to establish an accurate history of his career: In the current exhibition, the dates assigned reflect the combined efforts of many scholars.

Although Malevich received little formal education, he was apparently determined to be an artist at an early age. In the last years of the nineteenth century, he discovered the works of the Russian naturalist painters called the "Wanderers," and his early works were based on their example. Although few of these works have survived, his own written account, composed at the end of his life, describes the young artist's passion: "... as soon as I got off work, I would run to my paints and start on a study straightaway. . . This feeling for art can attain huge, unbelievable proportions. It can make a man explode."²

A dramatic change occurred in Malevich's art while he was living in Kursk, working as a technical draftsman for the railroad: "... while sketching, I stumbled upon an extraordinary phenomenon in my perception of nature. It was a sunny day, the sky was cobalt blue. One side of the house was in the shade and the other side was lit by the sun. For the first time I saw the bright reflections of the blue sky, the pure, transparent tones. . . . I began working in bright, joyful, sunny paints. . . . From that time on, I became an impressionist."³



Self Portrait, 1908-1909, gouache and varnish on paper (no. 12), State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Gift of George Costakis, 1977

Malevich was painting outdoors in an impressionist manner by 1903, and works such as *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1906 (no. 5), illustrate Malevich's mastery of light-filled compositions and a high-keyed palette. He even experimented with the divisionist technique of Georges Seurat and Paul Signac, exemplified in the exhibition by two tiny, freshly painted landscapes (nos. 3-4).

Malevich's stylistic shift away from impressionism was in part stimulated by examples of progressive art from Western Europe. Many Russian artists who had traveled to European cities such as Paris brought back photographs and reports of current artistic developments. By the 1890s, Russian artists could study contemporary French art in exhibitions as well as in two remarkable collections assembled in Moscow by the collectors Sergei I. Shchukin (1854-1935) and Ivan A. Morosov (1871-1921). In addition, reproductions of advanced French art were available in both Russian and foreign periodical literature.

By 1907, when the artist had settled in Moscow with his new wife, Malevich's art manifested an increasingly independent vision. He developed a mystical and sometimes overtly religious content, as in the richly colored gouache, *Shroud of Christ*, 1908 (no. 92). These subjects were conceived in the stylized, arabesque forms of art nouveau, but also betrayed echoes of Russian symbolism.

A striking *Self Portrait* from 1908-1909 (no. 12) attests to the heightened emotional pitch of these new works. The nearly hallucinatory intensity of the artist's face is enhanced by the saturated reds of the nude figures in the background. As is typical of Malevich's work from this period, color no longer depends on direct observation of nature, but is unified in an overall scheme that determines the chromatic "mood" of the picture in the manner of symbolist painting. This portrait may have been exhibited in 1910 in Moscow together with other works grouped under the rubric "red series."

In spite of its affinities with French art, Malevich's art came to rely increasingly on Russian precedents. In 1910 the artist met the dynamic

neo-primitivist painters Mikhail Larionov (1881-1964) and Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962). These artists, seeking an antidote to the artistic hegemony of their Parisian contemporaries, looked to indigenous Russian art forms such as icon painting and folk art, particularly the popular print or "lubok." In 1911-1912 Malevich made an impressive group of large gouaches in this new neo-primitivist manner. The neo-primitives based their subjects on the lives of the Russian peasantry, for whom Malevich always maintained a special sympathy. In *The Bather* (no. 18), a giant figure strides heavily across a non-descript landscape, flailing limbs of monstrous proportions. Malevich filled the entire frame of his picture with this powerful, monolithic figure, vigorously applying gouache in thin layers of brilliant color. He undoubtedly saw Henri Matisse's large paintings, *Dance II* and *Music*, both 1910, which arrived in Shchukin's house at the end of 1910. In comparison to Malevich's peasant, Matisse's powerful compositions seem the very embodiment of French refinement.

Malevich continued to explore themes of rural labor in 1912 in paintings such as *Peasant Woman with Buckets and Child* (no. 21), where stiff, darkly colored figures move awkwardly, burdened by heavy loads. For his magnificent composition, *The Woodcutter* (no.



23), Malevich employed radically simplified, cylindrical forms that shine as if cut from metal. Like the earlier *Bather*, this monumental worker looms large in the picture frame, but his movements seem frozen, and his mechanized limbs merge with the pile of cut logs. Scholars have long speculated how Malevich (who never went to Paris) might have seen works such as Fernand Léger's *Nudes in the Forest*, whose tubular shapes and simplified color schemes seem to inform the Russian artist's peasant pictures of 1912–1913; but only one far less characteristic painting by Léger—*Study for Three Portraits*—was exhibited in Russia at the time. The issue of affinities between the two artists must remain a subject of speculation.

Malevich and his contemporaries were keenly aware of the cubist canvases of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso by this time, and Italian futurist theories had also made a significant impact on Russian intellectual life. Always quick to absorb the fundamentals of a new style, Malevich soon adapted a highly personalized version of these modes, which he would later call "cubo-futurist." The dynamic composition of *Knife Grinder* (no. 27) is a key example of this new development. A fractured, mustachioed man, more urban artisan than rural peasant, stoops



over a knife-sharpening machine, apparently on a stairway landing. Kinetic energy is suggested in the brilliant sequential handling of polychromed, splintered forms as well as in the subtitle, "Principle of Flickering."

1913 was a decisive year for Malevich, one that witnessed the famous theatrical production, *Victory over the Sun*. This "First Futurist Opera," the climax of many futurist events in 1913, was a collaborative production that would have profound consequences for Malevich's art. His close associates included three of Russia's most radical literary figures: Velimir Klebnikhov (1885–1922), Alexei Kruchenykh (1886–1968), and Vladimir Maiakovsky (1893–1930). The last two had issued a futurist-style manifesto at the end of 1912, titled "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste." Kruchenykh's proclamations about the "word as such," or the word divorced from traditional meaning, would find a parallel in Malevich's art: "We were the first to say that in order to represent *the new* and *the future* we need totally new words and totally new relations among those words...."⁴ The Russian futurists invented the term *zaum* meaning "transrational" to describe their inventions.

Following the cue of these semantic experiments, Malevich exhibited a group of works at the end of 1913



LEFT TO RIGHT: *Bather*, 1911, charcoal and gouache on paper (no. 18), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, acquired from Hugo Häring, 1958; *The Woodcutter*, 1912–1913, oil on canvas (no. 23), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, acquired from Hugo Häring, 1958; *Knife Grinder: Principle of Flickering*, 1913, oil on canvas (no. 27), Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Collection Société Anonyme, acquired by Katherine S. Dreier from Galerie van Diemen exhibition, Berlin, 1922

under the title "Zaumnyi realism." Several are included in the present exhibition, including *Cow and Violin* (no. 32), which features provocative juxtapositions of deliberately contradictory elements, resulting in displacements of meaning and jarring clashes of scale. The artist inscribed his intentions on the back of the panel: "The alogical juxtaposition of two forms 'violin and cow' as an aspect of the struggle against logic by means of the natural order, against Philistine meaning and prejudice." By repudiating conventional meaning and form, Malevich, like his literary counterparts, created a new pictorial language; ultimately, his aim was to transcend entirely the natural world. As he later asserted, "I have... escaped from the circle of things...."⁵

Malevich consistently traced his invention of suprematism back to 1913 and the production of *Victory over the Sun*. He wrote to his friend, the musician Mikhail Matiushin (1861–1934) in 1915, "All the many things I put into your opera *Victory over the Sun* in 1913 gave me a lot of innovations except that nobody noticed them. As a result I have accumulated now a lot of new ideas."⁶ Although the formal and intellectual roots of suprematism may be traced back to Malevich's experiments for the opera, there is no evidence that his

suprematist paintings date earlier than the spring of 1915. The first public manifestation of suprematism took place in December of that year when Malevich dramatically revealed thirty-nine totally non-representational paintings in a group exhibition in Petrograd called "O.10. Last Futurist Exhibition."

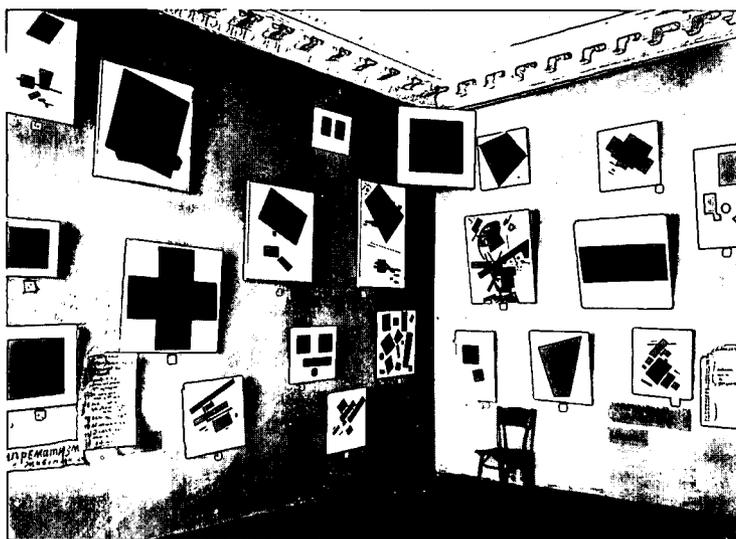
Included in the exhibition was *Black Square* (Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow). It was hung high, like an icon, across a corner. This emblem of suprematism, the most reductive, uncompromisingly abstract painting of its time, represented an astonishing conceptual leap from Malevich's work of the previous year. With *Black Square*, Malevich's renunciation of the material world was complete: "I have transformed myself in the zero of form and dragged myself out of the rubbish-filled pool of Academic art,"⁷ he declared in the brochure that accompanied the exhibition.

One of the stated goals of suprematism, an art of "pure sensations," was to attain a new reality in a non-objective world: "The square framed with white was the first form of non-objective sensation, the white field is not a field framing the black square, but only the sensation of the desert of non-existence, in which the square form appears as the first non-objective element of sensation. It is not the end of art... but the beginning of true essence."⁸

During the course of 1913–1914 Malevich had arrived at a critically important turning point on his path to suprematism. In a series of paintings that he called "transrational realism," autonomous colored planes emerged from a cubo-futurist matrix, establishing a strong counterpoint within the composition and undermining its pictorial unity, but introducing a new, "supra-realist" coherence (see nos. 34–41). In the suprematist works of 1915–1916 (see nos. 42–56), those planes of color, now fully isolated as independent forms, are suspended on a white

ground representing an extra-natural, infinite space. This arrangement of forms implies continuous motion in a dynamic field perpetually charged with energy. In 1915 Malevich wrote: "art is the ability to construct, not on the interrelation of form and color, and not on an aesthetic basis of beauty in composition, but on the basis of weight, speed and the direction of movement."⁹

In 1919, Malevich would establish three stages of his suprematist work: the black, the red or colored, and the white. In the final phase, realized in the monochromatic paintings from 1917–1918



Installation photograph of "O.10. Last Futurist Exhibition," 1915

(nos. 59–61), the artist achieved the ultimate stage in the suprematist ascent toward an ideal world, for white symbolized the "real concept of infinity." Although the white paintings were Malevich's last achievements within this phase of high suprematism, he did return to the suprematist idiom in his paintings from the late twenties.

By 1919 Malevich had cultivated a following of devoted students at the Popular Art Institute in Vitebsk where he formalized his teaching program under the acronym UNOVIS (Affirmation of the New Art). UNOVIS was later relocated in Petrograd (now Leningrad) where Malevich exhibited unsigned works collectively with his students. Under the auspices of GINKhUK, or the Institute of Artistic Culture, Malevich continued his teaching program, which was dedicated to renewing art according to suprematist principles. In their aim to trans-

form life at every level on a suprematist model, Malevich and his students produced designs for fabrics and porcelain, and developed plans for suprematist architecture.

However, Malevich found himself at odds with forces that were increasingly hostile to his idealist, non-utilitarian philosophy. His ideas came under attack from conservative artistic groups who promoted naturalistic paintings on the theme of the worker's role in society as the only genuine proletarian art. By the end of 1926 Malevich was dismissed as director of GINKhUK; the school was eventually disbanded.

In an atmosphere of increasing intimidation, Malevich eagerly accepted an invitation in March 1927 to show his work in Poland and Germany. Accompanying the exhibitions of his work in Warsaw and Berlin, he lectured to enthusiastic audiences with the aid of twenty-two didactic charts produced under his supervision by his students. Before leaving Germany on 5 June he entrusted his paintings, charts, and a group of theoretical writings to two German associates. Perhaps he

feared that his life's work would be destroyed if it remained in Russia. Some of the works that he left in Germany were later acquired by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in the mid-1930s; the remainder were acquired by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in the late 1950s. Today these pictures constitute the majority of Malevich's work in the West.

After his return to Russia, Malevich resumed painting. With his teaching activities severely curtailed and the possibility of publishing his writings virtually extinguished, he embarked upon a pictorial path that has yet to be satisfactorily explained. Reverting to figurative art, Malevich produced work during these last years that was in part closely imitative of his earliest work (no. 85). He seems to have been responding to the political pressures of a socialist realist aesthetic (no. 86), while, at the same



Self Portrait, 1933, oil on canvas (no. 91), State Russian Museum, Leningrad, acquired from the artist's family in 1935

time, seeking an entirely new mode of expression—superficially representational, but imbued with suprematist

allusions, and perhaps alluding to the threatening atmosphere in which he lived and worked. In these late works, the rigid, faceless, two-dimensional peasants, hovering against narrow, deserted landscapes, evoke (as one discerning critic wrote in 1930) "the 'machine' into which man is being forced—both in painting and outside it."¹⁰

In spite of mounting adversity (he was imprisoned for three months in 1930 and interrogated about his philosophy of art), Malevich continued to paint. The *Self Portrait* from 1933 (no. 91), one of his last paintings, though an anomalous, equivocal anachronism in "Renaissance" style, stands as a striking evocation of "The Artist": the suprematist Malevich, meanwhile, is identified at the the lower right by a small black square.

1. "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting," 1916, in Troels Andersen, ed., *K. S. Malevich. Essays on Art, 1915-1928* (Copenhagen, 1971, 2d ed.), vol. 1, 19. The frequent awkwardness of syntax and vocabulary in Malevich's writings are due to the artist's own idiosyncratic style.

2. Malevich, Letter to Lev Yudin, quoted in Evgenii Kovtun, "Kazimir Malevich: His Creative Path," *Kazimir Malevich, 1878-1935* [exh. cat., Stedelijk Museum] (Amsterdam, 1988), 153.

3. Malevich, "Autobiography," 1933, trans. Alan Upchurch, *October*, no. 34 (Fall 1985), 38.

4. Alexei Kruchenykh, *Troye*, 1913, as quoted in Andrei B. Nakov, *Kazimir Malevich* [exh. cat., Tate Gallery] (London, 1976), 10.

5. "From Cubism," 1916, in Andersen, *Malevich. Essays on Art*, 1971, vol. 1, 19.

6. Quoted in Nakov, 12.

7. "From Cubism," 1916, in Andersen, *Malevich. Essays on Art*, 1971, vol. 1, 19.

8. "Suprematism," 1922, in Troels Andersen, ed., *The Artist, Infinity, Suprematism, Unpublished Writings, 1913-1933* (Copenhagen, 1978), vol. 4, 146.

9. Quoted in Nakov, 25.

10. Adolph Donath, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 9 July 1930.

VICTORY OVER THE SUN

*How extraordinary life is without a past
With danger but without regrets and memories*

These lines were written in 1913 for the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun*, a collaboration between Malevich who designed the costumes and set designs, Mikhail Matiushin who wrote the music, and Alexei Kruchenykh who wrote the libretto. Although it was staged only twice, on 3 and 5 December, the opera played to a full house at St. Petersburg's Luna Park Theater. It consisted of two "actions" containing six scenes. In the first action, the sun, symbol of logic, reason, and the visible world, is captured by a band of futurist strongmen. The second action takes place in the "tenth land" of the future where "everyone breathes easier and many don't know what to do with themselves from the extreme lightness."

The opera's inventors outraged the audience by flouting every possible theatrical convention. The performers were mostly nonprofessionals who

recited or sang their lines, accompanied by an out-of-tune piano. The non-narrative text was composed in the "transrational" language of the future, *zaum*, meaning "beyond the mind." *Zaum* language loses much in translation, for it relied on free association of sounds and images and made playful use of neologism and puns. Just as Malevich would abdicate the world of objects in his paintings to create a new pictorial language, the authors of *zaum* poetry set out to divest words of all predictable meaning.

Malevich painted the stage sets himself and made brightly colored costumes out of cardboard. The costumes, related to the artist's cubo-futurist paintings of 1912-1913, were ingeniously constructed to determine movements for the actors that were in keeping with their character. For example, the futurist strongman could only flex his arms upward. Colored spotlights enhanced the fragmented quality of the figures as they lumbered about the stage in their stiff attire. Unfortunately none of the actual

costumes survive, but Malevich's original sketches for the costumes and set designs are included in the exhibition (nos. 112-133).



Futurist Strongman, 1913, graphite pencil on paper (no. 120), Leningrad State Museum of Theatrical and Musical Arts, acquired from the State Research Institute of Music, 1937

MALEVICH ON ART

Excerpts from Troels Andersen, ed.,
*K. S. Malevich. Essays on Art, 1915–
1928*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen, 1971, 2d ed.)

*From Cubism and Futurism to
Suprematism: The New Realism in
Painting, 1916*
Vol. 1, p. 19

Only with the disappearance of a habit
of mind which sees in pictures little
corners of nature, madonnas and
shameless *Venuses*, shall we witness a
work of pure, living art.

I have destroyed the ring of the
horizon and escaped from the circle of
things, from the horizon-ring which
confines the artist and the forms of
nature.

This accursed ring, which opens up
newer and newer prospects, leads the
artist away from the *target of
destruction.*

And only a cowardly consciousness
and meagre creative powers in an artist
are deceived by this fraud and base
their art on the forms of nature, afraid of
losing the foundation on which the
savage and the academy have based
their art.

To reproduce beloved objects and
little corners of nature is just like a thief
being enraptured by his legs in irons.

Only dull and impotent artists screen
their work with *sincerity*. In art there is a
need for *truth*, not *sincerity*.

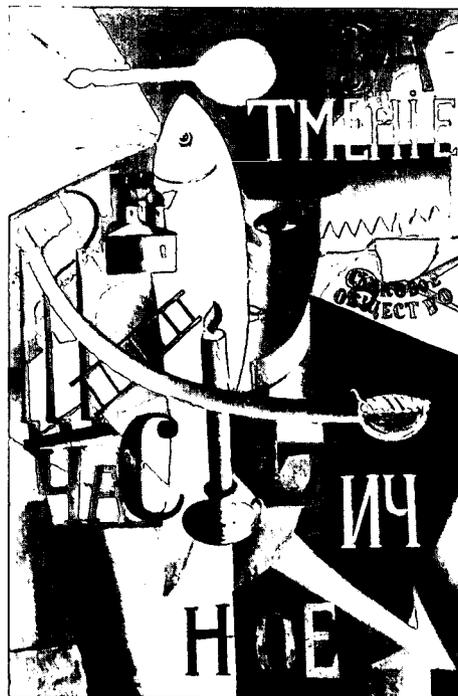
On New Systems in Art, 1919
Vol. 1, pp. 90–91

We notice in art a tendency towards the
primitive, towards simplifying what is
seen; we call this movement primitive
even when it arises in our modern
world. Many people relate Gauguin to
the primitive tendency, to the primeval,
but this is incorrect. In our age there
can be no such thing as the primitive in
art, for we have passed through the

primitiveness of the prehistoric drawing,
and the new approach is an apparent
primitivism towards a counter-primitive
movement. It is essentially a movement
in reverse, a decomposition and a dissi-
pation of what was collected into its
separate elements; it is the attempt to
escape from the objective identity of the
image to direct creation and to break
away from idealisation and pretense. I
wish to create the new signs of my inner
movement, for the way of the world is in
me, and I do not want to copy and
distort the movement of the subject or
any other manifestation of nature's
forms. But Gauguin, who was unable to
find forms for the colours seething in the
cauldron of his brain, was forced to
embody them in the world he saw on
the island of Tahiti.

The apparent primitivism in many
contemporary artists is the tendency to
reduce forms to geometrical bodies; it
was Cézanne who called for and illus-
trated this process by reducing the
forms of nature to the cone, cube and
sphere.

Cézanne's works are related to the
primitive, but Cézanne neither con-



An Englishman in Moscow, 1914, oil on canvas (no.
38), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, acquired from
Hugo Häring, 1958

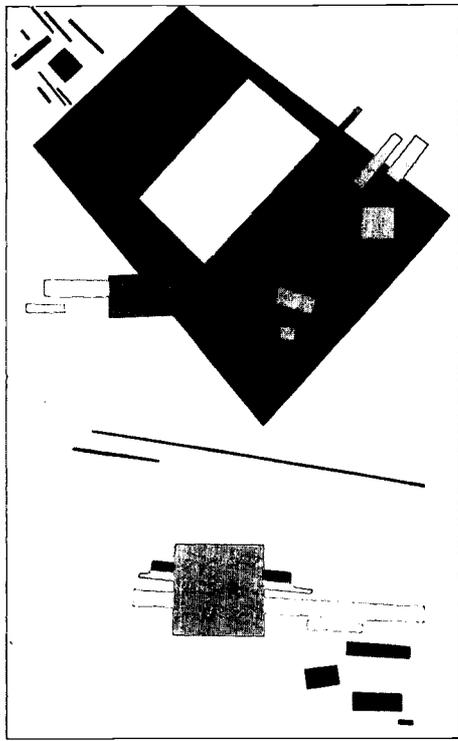
ceived nor based his works on primi-
tivism as a lack of skill. He knew about
prehistoric primitivism, he knew the
classics, the pseudoclassics, the Realists
and Impressionists, and he knew on
what to base his work. Cézanne's aware-
ness of painting is more vivid than that
of his predecessors. He said: "I base
nature on geometric principles and
reduce her to geometry not for sim-
plicity's sake, but to express surface,
volume, the straight and crooked line
more clearly, as sections of painterly
plastic expression." In recognizing the
necessity for such an action he was
nevertheless unable to achieve the
expression of plastic, painterly composi-
tions without an objective basis; neither
did he apply the tendency which was
destined to develop in the great move-
ment of Cubism.

On New Systems in Art, 1919
Vol. 1, pp. 98–99

The main axis of Cubist construction was
the straight and the curved line. The first
category called forth other lines, form-
ing angles, and the second curves of
reverse shape. On these axes were
grouped different types of painterly
texture: lacquered, prickly and matt;
collages were used for textural and
graphic variety, plaster was introduced
and the bodily texture was always con-
structed in such a way as to achieve
Cubist textural and formal rhythm, and
constructive unity amongst the elements
of painterly and graphic form.

It was the Cubists who first began to
consciously see, know and build their
constructions on the foundations of the
general unity of nature. There is nothing
single in nature; everything consists of
various elements and gives possibilities
for comparison. Take a lamp. It consists
of the most varied units, both painterly
and formal. Technical formation has
created the organism of the lamp from a
mass of separate and different units; the
result is a living organism which is not a
copy. Similarly a Cubist construction is
formed from the most varied units into a
definite organization.

If the purpose of forming the organ-
ism of the lamp was burning and light-



Suprematist Painting, 1915, oil on canvas (no. 50), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, acquired from Hugo Häring, 1958

ing, then the Cubist formation aims at the expression of dynamics, statics and a new symmetry leading to the organization of new signs in the culture of a transitional world.

On New Systems in Art, 1919
Vol. 1, pp. 109–110

The latest movements in painterly art have been greatly guided by two figures: Cubism by Cézanne and Dynamic Futurism by Van Gogh.

...For [Van Gogh] form was simply a tool through which dynamic power passed. He saw that everything trembles as the result of a single, universal movement: he was faced with conquering space, and everything rushed into its depths. There was an incredible tension of dynamic action in his brain which he could see more clearly than in grasses, flowers, people or the storm. The movements of his brain's growths were locked in elemental striving in his skull, and, perhaps, finding no outlet, were fated to die in the furrows of his brain.

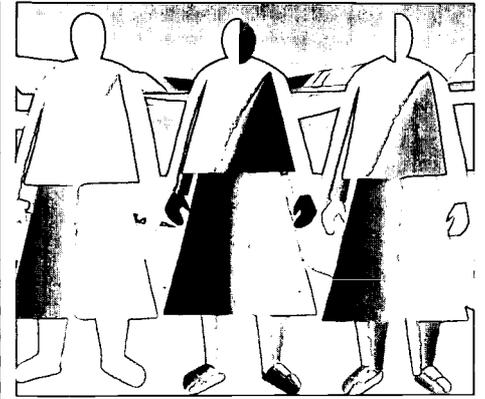
His landscapes, genre-paintings, and portraits served him as forms for ex-

pressing dynamic power, and he hastened in the ragged, pointed painterly textures to express the movement of dynamism; it was as if a current passed through every growth, and their form made contact with world unity. All the purely Impressionist aims that have been attributed to Van Gogh are as false as in the case of the progenitor of the Impressionists, Monet, who sought painterly texture in light and shade as Van Gogh did dynamics in the texture of colour. But thanks to the fact that with Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Monet all these actions were in the form of a subconscious germ they fell into the all-embracing junk of objectivity, a situation that was worsened by the critics who attached to them the collective label of Impressionism.

But in spite of all labels the subconscious and the intuitive grew, and eventually Cézanne's "Impressionism" developed into the Cubist body, whilst Van Gogh's became Futurist Dynamism. The latter began to express dynamics with great force by means of the splitting and scattering of things thrown by energetic power onto the path of universal unity of movement towards conquest of the infinite.

Suprematism. 34 Drawings, 1920
Vol. 1, pp. 123–124, 125

The Suprematist apparatus, if one may call it so, will be one whole without any fastenings. A bar is fused with all the elements like the globe, in itself bearing the life of perfection so that every Suprematist body that is built will be included in a natural organization, and form a new satellite. One only has to find the interrelationship between two bodies speeding through space: the earth and the moon; perhaps a new Suprematist satellite can be built between them, equipped with all the elements, which will move in orbit, creating its own new path. Studying the Suprematist form in motion we come to the conclusion that the only way movement to any planet can be achieved along a straight line is by a circular movement of intermediate Suprematist satellites which create a straight line of



Girls in the Field, c. 1928, oil on canvas (no. 71), State Russian Museum, Leningrad, accessioned from the Ministry of Culture of the U.S.S.R. in 1977

rings from one satellite to another. Working on Suprematism I made the discovery that its forms have nothing in common with the technology of the earth's surface. All technical organisms, too, are nothing other than little satellites, a whole living world ready to fly off into space and occupy its own special place. For in fact each of these satellites is equipped with a mind and is ready to live its own individual life.

What, in fact, is the canvas? What do we see represented on it? Analyzing the canvas, we see, primarily, a window through which we discover life. The Suprematist canvas reproduces white, but not blue space. The reason is obvious: blue does not give a true impression of the infinite. The rays of vision are caught in a cupola and cannot penetrate the infinite. The Suprematist infinite white allows the optical beam to pass without encountering any limit. We see moving bodies. Their movements and nature remain to be discovered. Having found this system I began to investigate the passing forms, whose whole existence ought to be discovered and found out; they have taken their place in the physical world as a whole. This discovery demands a great deal of work. The construction of Suprematist colour forms is in no way connected with aesthetic necessity. Both colours, forms and figures also have a black and a white period. The most important in Suprematism—its double basis—are the energies of black and white serving to reveal the forms of action.

CHRONOLOGY

Adapted and abridged from the chronology by Joop Joosten, in the catalogue for the present exhibition.

Note: "Old Style" dates before 1918, when the Western calendar was introduced, precede Western dates, which are within parentheses. Numbers for specific works correspond to those in the catalogue for the present exhibition.

1878

Kazimir Severinovich Malevich is born 14 (26) or 11 (23) February in Kiev.

1889

The family moves to Parkhomovka where Kazimir attends the agricultural school. He teaches himself to paint in a simple peasant style and eventually attends classes at the Kiev School of Drawing.

1896

The family moves to Kursk when Malevich marries Kazimira Ivanovna Zgleits. They have two children, Galina and Anatolii; Anatolii later dies of typhoid fever.

1904

Begins studies at the Moscow Institute for Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture.

1905

"Bloody Sunday," 9 (22) January, St. Petersburg, in which working-class citizens demonstrating for improvements in working and living conditions are massacred.

Malevich participates with striking workers in the Battle of the Barricades in Moscow. Returns to Kursk for a time and paints outdoors in a neo-impressionist style.

1907

The first recorded inclusion of his work in an exhibition sponsored by the "Moscow Association of Artists."

Exhibition of the Moscow Symbolist group "Blue Rose" makes a profound impression on Malevich.

1908

A large section of French artists such as Cézanne, Gauguin, and Matisse is included in the exhibition "Golden Fleece," also organized by the "Blue Rose."

Exhibits *Studies for Fresco Painting* (nos. 6-9) at the "Moscow Association of Artists."

1909

His wife leaves him. He marries Sofia Mikhailovna Rafalovich, with whom he has one daughter.



Malevich in Vitebsk, c. 1920

1910

Meets neo-primitivist painters Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962) and Mikhail Larionov (1881-1964) whose work, inspired by Russian folk art and icons, influences his own. Goncharova invites him to take part in the first exhibition of the "Jack of Diamonds," a collaboration of the avant-garde; he exhibits three works, including *Still Life* (no. 14).

1911

Four works shown in the second exhibition of the St. Petersburg group "Union of Youth."

1912

Goncharova and Larionov organize the exhibition "Donkey's Tail," asserting independence from Western artistic sources. Several neo-primitivist paintings by Malevich are shown (including nos. 15, 16, 17, 19, 20). Four of these are included in the third "Union of Youth" exhibition. Shows five transrational realist paintings at the first "Contemporary Art" exhibition in Moscow.

1913

At the "Target" exhibition in Moscow, exhibits "cubo-futurist" works including: *Morning in the Village after Snowfall* (no. 24), *Peasant Woman with Buckets* (no. 25), and *Knife Grinder: Principle of Flickering* (no. 27). Designs costumes and sets for a futurist opera, *Victory over the Sun* (see nos. 112-133), which is staged in December. In the final "Union of Youth" exhibition, Malevich shows cubo-futurist paintings and transrational realist works (including *Face of a Peasant Girl*, no. 26, and *Perfected Portrait of I.V. Kliun*, no. 29).

1914

The Italian futurist poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) visits Russia in January. The following month, Malevich and a friend hold a futurist demonstration in downtown Moscow.

Germany and Austria declare war on Russia. Malevich makes six anti-German posters in the style of Russian folk prints.

1915

Exhibits *Lady in a Tram* (no. 35), *Aviator* (no. 37), *Lady at the Advertising Column* (no. 40), and *An Englishman in Moscow* (no. 38) at the "Futurist Exhibition: Tramway V" in Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg).

At the "0.10. Last Futurist Exhibition" in Petrograd, Malevich exhibits thirty-nine completely nonrepresentational works that he calls suprematist. He publishes a brochure, "From Cubism to Suprematism in Art, to New Realism in Painting, to Absolute Creation."

1916

Participates in the futurist exhibition, "The Store" with paintings including: *Cow and Violin* (no. 32), *Aviator* (no. 37), and *An Englishman in Moscow* (no. 38).

Malevich is ordered to report for military duty, and, in December, to the front.

1917

2 March (15), Czar Nicholas abdicates.

25 October (7 November), the October Revolution establishes the Soviet Regime.

With signing of the armistice at Brest-Litovsk, Russia's participation in World War I ends.

1918

Western calendar is introduced.

Central government moves from Petrograd to Moscow.

The government establishes Free State Art Studios (SVOMAS) in Petrograd and Moscow. Malevich has a free studio in both cities as well as a textile studio in Moscow.

Collaborates on designs for the "Congress of Committees on Rural Poverty" held at the Winter Palace in Petrograd (nos. 134-136).

1919

Civil War breaks out; extreme economic difficulties result. Petrograd Museum of Artistic Culture, housing only contemporary art, is established. In a magazine article Malevich questions the validity of traditional museums of older art.

Exhibits suprematist works in Moscow at the "Tenth State Exhibition: Non-Objective Creation and Suprematism," including a recently developed series of "white on white" compositions (nos. 59-61).

Completes first long theoretical essay, "On the New Systems in Art."

As part of SVOMAS, teaches at the Popular Art Institute in Vitebsk. Promotes suprematism within an educational

program called "Affirmation of the New Art" (UNOVIS).

"Sixteenth State Exhibition," Moscow, a retrospective exhibition of Malevich's work.

1920

Daughter Una (1920-1989) born in April.

In December UNOVIS publishes Malevich's book *Suprematism: 34 Drawings*.

1921

Aleksander Rodchenko (1891-1956) and four colleagues participate in the exhibition "5 x 5 = 25;" the catalogue announces the "end of painting" and the move toward constructivism. By the end of the year considerable differences emerge between this group and Malevich's suprematist group.

1922

Begins writing a major philosophical text, "Suprematism. The World as Non-Objectivity."

Malevich leaves for Petrograd with a number of students from Vitebsk to promote UNOVIS there. Participates in UNOVIS exhibition at INKhUK.

At the "First Russian Art Exhibition" in Berlin, exhibits cubist and suprematist works including a "white on white" painting. The American collector Katherine Dreier buys the cubist work *Knife Grinder: Principle of Flickering* (no. 27).

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) is established in December.



Malevich with his daughter Una, 1927-1929

1923

Sketches designs for suprematist architecture (nos. 156-160).

Second wife, Sofia, dies.

1924

21 January, Lenin dies. Malevich writes a long, eulogistic essay.

26 January, Petrograd renamed Leningrad.

The Petrograd Museum for Artistic Culture replaced by the Institute for Artistic Culture and eventually given official status. It consists of a museum and five scholarly departments, one of which, the formal-theoretical department, is directed by Malevich.

At the Venice *Biennale*, he exhibits *Planit* (architectural) drawings (nos. 156-160) and the paintings *Black Square*, *Black Cross*, and *Black Circle* (nos. 62-64).

1925

At the Institute, presents a series of charts that explain his theory of the "additional element."

Builds a series of models, described as "arkhitektons," from rectangular blocks of plaster and wood, to illustrate his



Malevich working on *Girl with a Red Staff* (no. 88), 3 April 1933

ideas for a suprematist architecture (nos. 167-170).

Marries Natalya Andreevna Manchenko (1902–1990).

1926

His "arkhitektons" are shown at the Institute. The exhibition is attacked by his opponents, and Malevich is dismissed from the Institute. The Institute itself is dismantled and merged with the State Institute for Art History.

1927

Visits the Bauhaus in Dessau where he meets Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy.

Exhibits at the "Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung."

Returns to the State Institute for Art History in Leningrad where he collaborates on plans for satellite cities near Moscow. Leaves a group of writings, theoretical charts, and works of art in Germany.

1929

The First Five-Year Plan, stressing industrialization, collectivization, and the eradication of illiteracy, is inaugurated at the Sixteenth Party Congress. As a result, the All-Union Cooperative of Artists is established to supervise the arts and promote creative uniformity.

At the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, new works shown in a retrospective that travels to the Kiev Art Gallery, whose director is punished for showing works by the "bourgeois" Malevich.

1930

Malevich and his department are expelled from the Institute. He is interned for several months and questioned "about the ideology of existing trends."

At the Berlin exhibition "Soviet Painting" he shows two works back-dated 1913 and 1915, though the paintings are recent.

1932

The Soviet government dissolves all official art groups and replaces them with unions.

Malevich's painting *Sportsmen* (no. 75) included in the exhibition "Art from the Imperialist Epoch," as an example of

pre-Revolutionary "bourgeois" art.

Forced collectivization of farms results in a disastrous famine during the winter of 1932-1933.

1934

Chaired by Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers meets in Moscow and officially adopts socialist realism as the exclusive style for Soviet writers and artists.

1935

15 May, Malevich dies after several months of illness. His body is placed in a "suprematist" coffin and cremated.



Malevich lying in state in his Leningrad apartment, 1935

MALEVICH'S TEACHING CHARTS

Alison Hilton

Not only an artistic style, suprematism developed into a comprehensive philosophical system, which Malevich explored through paintings and drawings, as well as writings, lectures, and teachings. The twenty-two charts that were produced under Malevich's supervision form an important component of that system.

After the 1917 Revolution, Malevich

served as both teacher and administrator in the Art Department, IZO, under the Commissariat for Popular Education (Narkompros), and he took part in the development of the Free Art Studios, SVOMAS, in Vitebsk. There, with his assistants and pupils, Malevich developed a new plan of art training based on collective and experimental principles, called UNOVIS ("Affirmation

of the New Art"). In 1922 Malevich moved with several students to Petrograd (now Leningrad) where he established UNOVIS within the framework of the State Institute of Artistic Culture, GINKhUK.

Photographs, a few surviving instructional materials, the artist's writings, and recollections by Malevich's colleagues and students allow us to form a portrait

of the artist as a teacher. He was committed to freedom for art and for the artist, within a certain stylistic framework. He helped students develop individually, in harmony with their perceptions and inner feelings; the classroom was a laboratory for the careful "diagnosis" of the students' natural creative inclinations and the formulation of "prescriptions" for guiding them to maturity. Malevich used perceptual tests, assignments, interviews with individual students, and demonstrations and lectures illustrated with diagrams and charts. The charts help to clarify aspects of his philosophy and convey a sense of his teaching methods.

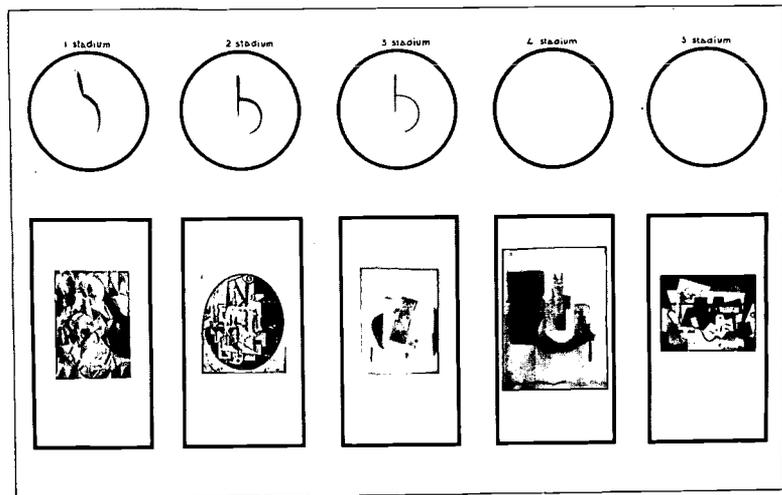
The charts, made in 1925, were intended to accompany a group exhibition about the Institute that would travel to Germany. Malevich never succeeded in obtaining permission to send it abroad. In 1927, however, an exhibition of his own work went to Poland and Germany, and the artist traveled with it, taking the charts with him. He wrote to a colleague at home, "I demonstrated your charts as well as mine and both aroused great interest... Glory falls like rain."¹

The charts reflect the overall program of the State Institute, but they are most directly related to the work of Malevich's own department. Their arrangement in three groups corresponds to the main emphases of research by Malevich and his assistants in the field of "painterly culture." The first section (charts 1–8) concerns analysis of a work of art through identification of "formative elements" and color scales; the second (charts 9–16) demonstrates the analysis of sensations that contribute to "painterly behavior," and a proof of the ideological autonomy of art; the third (charts 17–22) demonstrates Malevich's new teaching methods. It is impossible to tell exactly how much Malevich himself contributed to the charts; only one bears a notation in his own hand. Probably he planned the sequence and supervised the work of his assistants Anna Leporskaia, Lev Yudin, and Konstantin Rozhdestvensky. The German captions were for the viewers; the texts in Russian probably were intended as

prompts for Malevich when he discussed the charts. (No transcripts or notes of any lecture on the charts survive.)

Like Malevich's other theoretical writings, the captions on the charts rely on a highly specialized vocabulary. It is difficult to understand Malevich's theory of the "additional element" defined on chart 4 as "a formula or sign that refers to the entire composition and order of the painterly body, its coloring and its stage of development within a given culture." The viewer must first identify

Malevich's key concept of the additional element, by analyzing cubism in five distinct stages. The "formative element" is taken through various stages of development, from the tentative, broken line of the first stage; to the more pronounced curves of the second and third stages; and then the flat planes of the fourth and fifth stages. Each stage is represented by a specific work. The chart summarizes Malevich's conclusions, reached after examination of many cubist works. In his own words:



DER ENTWICKELUNGSGRAD DES ERGÄNZUNGSELEMENTS GIBT DIE MÖGLICHKEIT JEDES MALEREISYSTEM IN STADIEN ZU KLASSIFIZIEREN

Chart 5. The degree of development of the additional element allows us to classify each painterly system according to stages. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. From left to right, the works illustrated are: Georges Braque, *Violin and Jar*, 1910, detail; Pablo Picasso, *The Violin*, 1912; Unidentified collage; Pablo Picasso, *Guitar and Bottle*, 1914; Georges Braque, *The Guitar*, 1919.

the characteristic structural units of each style or "painterly system" illustrated. The appropriate "additional elements" for each of five painterly cultures are: impressionism (light), Cézannism (a modulated contour), cubism (a "sickle," or vertical line with attached curve), futurism (movement), and suprematism (a diagonal rod). Students were not expected to understand any of the concepts from one chart alone; later charts in a sequence built upon ideas set out in earlier charts. Above all, Malevich intended the charts to guide and assist the viewer in a process of analysis leading to creative development.

The example shown here develops

*We established that in new art each painterly system has its own characteristic forming element... [from] which the artist... forms various sensations... and content. We also called these forming elements additional or deforming, when they turn one system into another, for example, Cubism into Suprematism.*²

1. Letter to Matiushin, in Troels Andersen, ed., *K. S. Malevich. The Artist, Infinity, Suprematism. Unpublished Writings 1922–35* (Copenhagen, 1978), vol. 4, 214.

2. "New Art," 1928–1930, in Troels Andersen, ed., *K. S. Malevich. Essays on Art, 1915–1928* (Copenhagen, 1971), vol. 2, 124.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Special Tours

Tours begin at the East Building Information Desk

Wilford W. Scott, Lecturer
Tuesday, October 2 through Saturday, October 6 at 12:00 p.m.; Sunday, October 7 at 2:30 p.m.

Sally S. Shelburne, Lecturer
Tuesday, October 30 through Saturday, November 3 at 12:00 p.m.; Sunday, November 4 at 2:30 p.m.

Sunday Lecture

September 30
4:00 p.m., East Building Auditorium

Malevich and the Quest for the Zero Degree of Painting
Yves-Alain Bois, Professor of the History of Art
The Johns Hopkins University

Special Lecture Series

East Building Auditorium
Tuesdays at 12:15 p.m.
No reservations necessary

"A World of Unseen Forms": *The Art of Kazimir Malevich*
Alison Hilton, Associate Professor of Fine Arts, Georgetown University

September 25
The House-Painter and "The Donkey's Tail"
Malevich and the Russian Avant-Garde, 1903-1915

October 2
"Victory over the Sun"
From Futurism to Suprematism, 1913-1918

October 9
Artists in Revolution
Colleagues in Russia and Europe, 1918-1927

October 16
Prophets of the Future
Malevich's Last Works and His Legacy, 1920/1935-1990

Films

"Victory over the Sun" documents a recreation of the 1913 Russian futurist opera with stage and costume designs by Kazimir Malevich, music by Mikhail Matiushin, and text by Aleksei Kruchenykh. Directed by Robert Benedetti and produced by Douglas Cruickshank.

October 10 through October 14
Wednesday through Saturday at 12:30
Sunday at 1:00
East Building Auditorium

"Russian Avant-Garde Film Series"
A program of recent and classic Soviet cinema, including experimental films of the 1920s, will be presented October 20 through December 15. Please consult the fall film calendar.

Special Appointment Tours

A limited number of tours is available Tuesdays through Fridays for adult groups of 20 or more and for school groups of 10 or more. For appointments, please call the Education Department (202) 842-6247 (for adult tours) or (202) 842-6249 (for school tours).

Teaching Packet: includes slides and texts on selected works in the exhibition for use in preparing for school tours. Available to school groups. Call (202) 842-6249. After the close of the exhibition, these materials will be available on a free-loan basis from the Department of Education Resources: Extension Programs Section, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC 20565.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Troels Andersen, *Malevich. Catalogue Raisonné of the Berlin Exhibition, 1927, including the Collection in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 1970.*

Troels Andersen, ed., *K. S. Malevich. Essays on Art. 4 vols. Vol. 1, 1915-1928. Vol. 2, 1928-1933. Vol. 3, The World as Non-Objectivity. Unpublished Writings, 1922-1925. Vol. 4, The Artist, Infinity, Suprematism. Unpublished Writings, 1913-33. Copenhagen, 1968-1978.*

Larissa A. Zhadowa, *Malevich. Suprematism and Revolution in Russian Art 1910-1930, London, 1982.*

Kazimir Malevich, 1878-1935, exh. cat., State Russian Museum, Leningrad; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1988.

Kazimir Malevich: 1878-1935, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Los Angeles, 1990.



On the Boulevard (detail), 1903, oil on canvas (no. 1), State Russian Museum, Leningrad, acquired from Leningrad Writers' Club, 1977

This exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art, The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, following an initiative by Dr. Armand Hammer. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

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76

Woman with a Rake.

ca. 1928–1932

Oil on canvas

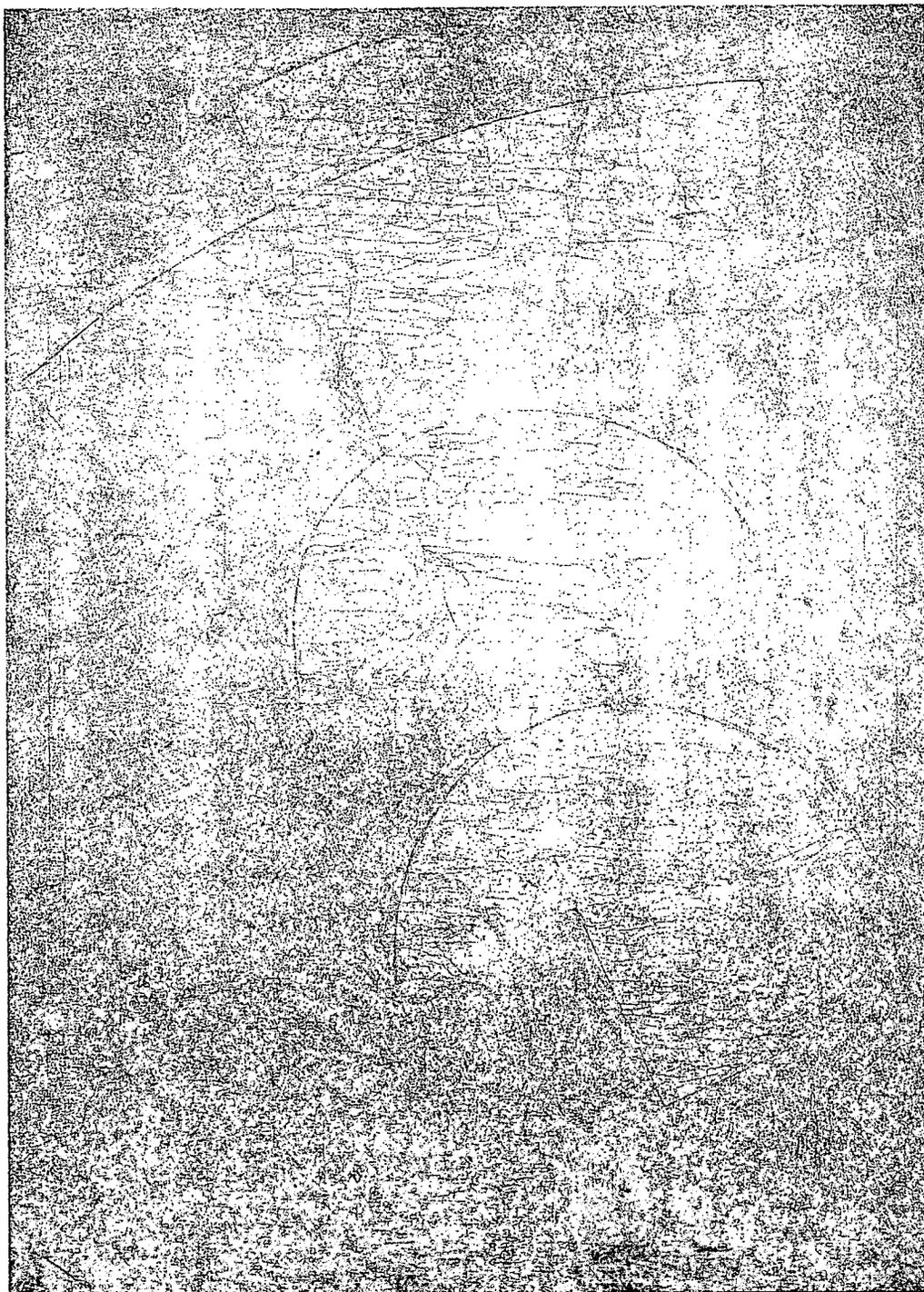
39 3/8 x 29 1/2 (100 x 75)

State Tretyakov Gallery



59

Suprematist Painting,
1917–1918
Oil on canvas
38³/₁₆ x 27⁹/₁₆ (97 x 70)
Stedelijk Museum

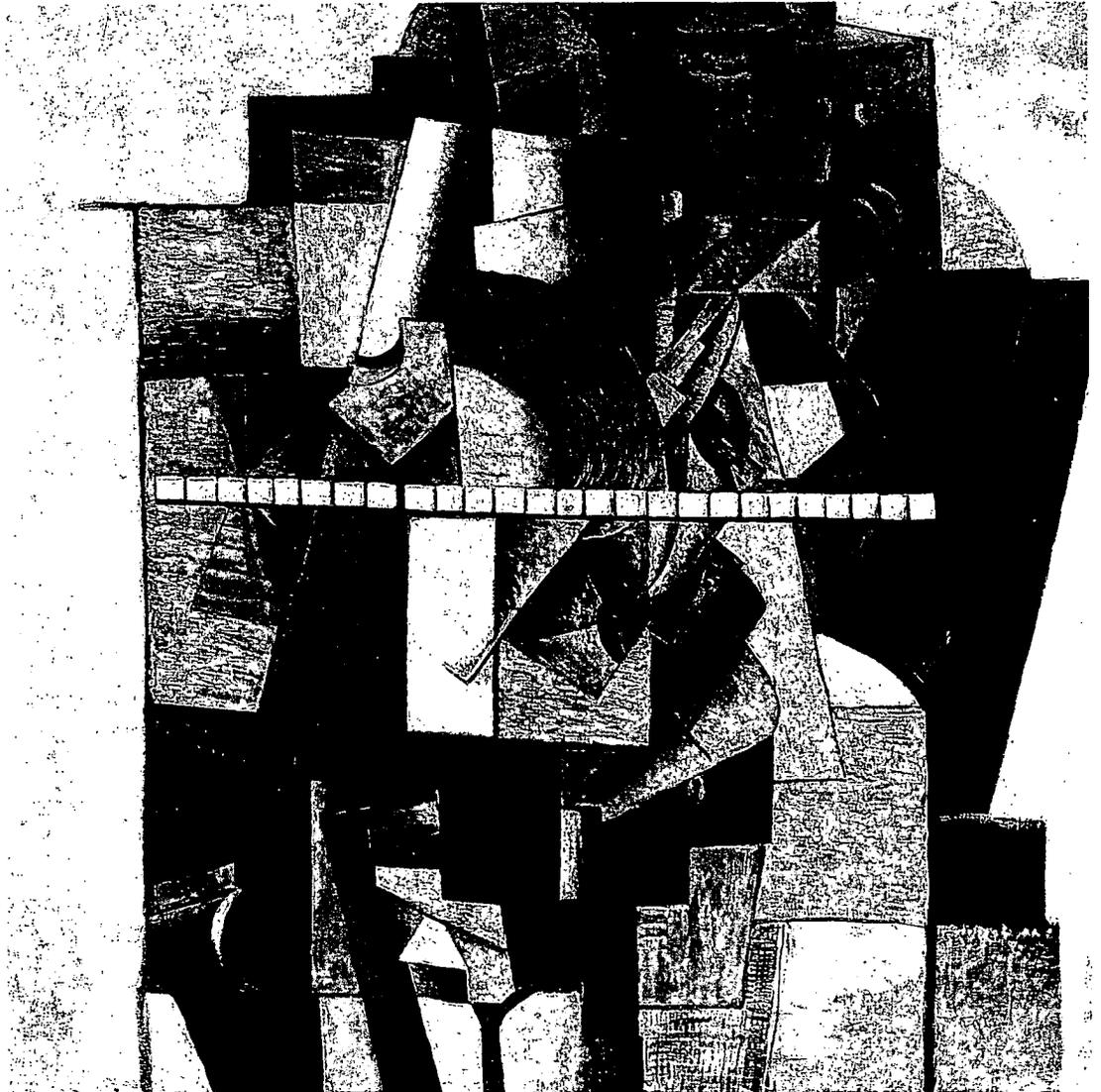


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64

33

Portrait of the Composer
M. V. Matiushin, 1913
Oil on canvas
41 7/8 x 41 7/8
(106.3 x 106.3)
State Tretyakov Gallery

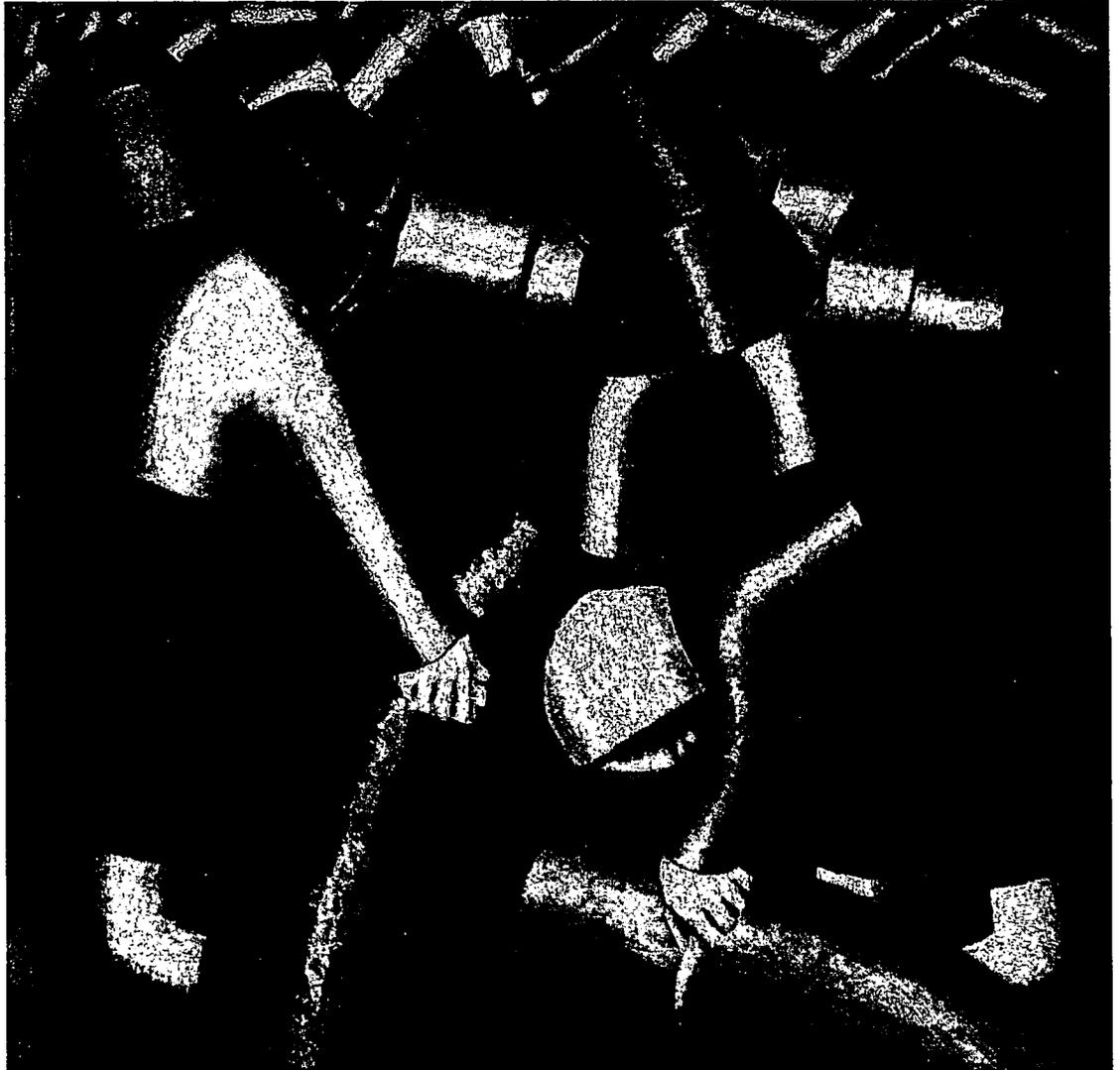


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65

22

Taking in the Rye, 1912
Oil on canvas
28 3/8 x 29 3/8 (72 x 74.5)
Stedelijk Museum



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66

27

Knife Grinder/Principle of

Flickering, ca. 1913

Oil on canvas

31 1/4 x 31 1/4 (79.5 x 79.5)

Yale University Art Gallery

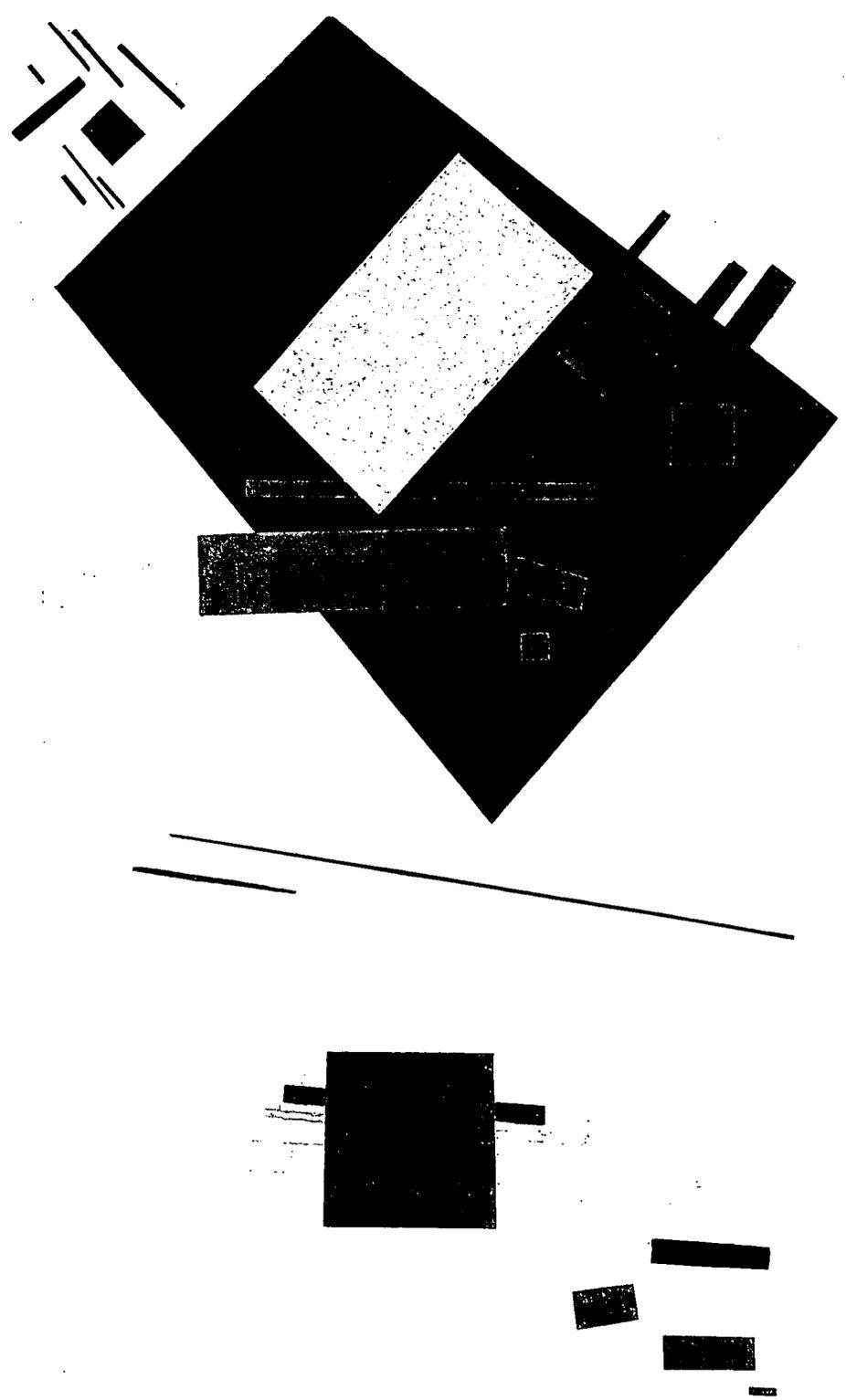


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67

50

Suprematist Painting, 1915
Oil on canvas
39 7/8 x 24 3/8 (101.5 x 62)
Stedelijk Museum



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Kazimir Malevich
Suprematist Painting, 1915
oil on canvas
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

109



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