

syntheses, nature's moods and artists' experiences—painting reached a state of decrepitude and found its end in suprematism.

The nature that was ornamented by the neorealists and neoimpressionists was torn to pieces by futurism. Suprematism has carefully painted these benumbed forms with different colors and presents them as new art (*Boy with Samovar*<sup>2</sup>).

Now the corpse of painterly art, the art of daubed nature, has been laid in its coffin, sealed with the Black Square of Suprematism, and its sarcophagus is now exhibited for public view in the new cemetery of art—the Museum of Painterly Culture.<sup>3</sup>

But if the art of painting, the art of expressing nature, has died, then color, paint, as the basic elements of this art, have not died. Liberated from the centuries-old bond of nature, they have begun to live their own life, to develop freely, and to display themselves in the New Art of Color—and our color compositions are subject only to the laws of color, and not to the laws of nature.

In Color Art the colored area lives and moves, affording color the utmost force of intensity.

And the congealed, motionless forms of suprematism do not display a new art but reveal the face of a corpse with its eyes fixed and dead.

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## KAZIMIR MALEVICH

### Suprematism

For biography see p. 116.

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A plane in the form of a square was the ancestor of suprematism, of a new color realism—of nonobjective art (see first, second, and third editions of the booklet *Cubism, Futurism, and Suprematism*, 1915 and 1916<sup>1</sup>).

Suprematism appeared in 1913<sup>2</sup> in Moscow, and its first works were shown at an exhibition of painting in Petrograd;<sup>3</sup> it provoked the indignation of the "venerable newspapers of those days" and of the critics, and also of professional people—the masters of painting.

In mentioning nonobjectivism, I wanted merely to point out that suprematism does not treat of things, of objects, etc., and that's all; nonobjectivism, generally speaking, is irrelevant. Suprematism is a definite system, and within this system, color has made its substantial development.

Painting arose out of a mixture of colors and changed color into a chaotic confusion of tones of aesthetic warmth, and with great artists, objects themselves served as painterly frameworks. I have found that the closer the framework to the culture of painting, the more it loses its system, breaks down, and establishes a different order, which painting then legitimizes.

It became clear to me that new frameworks of pure color painting should be created that would be constructed according to the needs of color; second, that color in its turn should proceed from a painterly confusion into an independent unit—into construction as an individual part of a collective system and as an individual part per se.

A system is constructed in time and space independent of any aesthetic beauty, experience, or mood, and emerges rather as a philosophical color system of realizing the new achievements of my imagination, as a means of cognition.

At present, man's path lies across space—across suprematism, the semaphore of color in its fathomless depths.

The blue of the sky has been conquered by the suprematist system, has been breached, and has passed into the white beyond as the true, real conception of eternity, and has therefore been liberated from the sky's colored background.

This system, cold and durable, is mobilized unsmilingly by philosophical thought, or at least, its real force is already moving within that system.

All colorations of utilitarian purpose are insignificant, are of little spatial value, and contain a purely applied, accomplished aspect of what was discovered by the cognition and inference of philosophical thought within the compass of our view of those cozy nooks that serve the philistines' task or create a new one.

Suprematism at one stage has a purely philosophical movement cognizable through color; at a second stage, it is like form that can be applied and that can create a new style of suprematist decoration.

But it can appear in objects as the transformation or incarnation in them of space, thereby removing the object's intactness from consciousness.

Suprematist philosophical color thought has demonstrated that the will can manifest its creative system precisely when the object has been annulled as a painterly framework in the artist; and while objects serve as the framework and means, the artist's will moves in a compositional circle of object forms.

Everything we can see has arisen from a colored mass that has been transformed into plane and volume: any car, house, man, table—they are all painterly volumetrical systems destined for definite objectives.

The artist should also transform painterly masses and form a creative system, but he should not paint nice pictures of sweet-scented roses because that would be a dead depiction reminiscent of the living.

And even if his depiction is constructed abstractly, but based on color interrelations, his will will be locked up amid the walls of aesthetic planes, instead of being able to penetrate philosophically.

I am free only when—by means of critical and philosophical substantiation—my will can extract a substantiation of new phenomena from what already exists.

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.

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MIKHAIL MENKOV

For biography see p. 114.

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One should not look at a picture with the preconceived aim of gaining a definite impression from it. Its painted surface gives us a visual sensation that at first glance is hardly perceptible. One should not ask for more.

When you have cultivated your taste for the colored surface, then your enjoyment of it will become more definite.

3. In 1918 IZO Narkompros established a Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund with the aim of acquiring works of art and theoretical materials for a complex of diverse museums, among them five so-called Museums of Painterly (sometimes called Artistic or Plastic) Culture in Moscow, Petrograd, Nizhnii-Novgorod, Vitebsk, and Kostroma. Aleksandr Rodchenko was head of the Museum Bureau and by mid-1920 the Bureau had acquired 1,200 paintings and drawings and 106 sculptures, which it dispersed among the museums mentioned above and other provincial museums. The Museums of Painterly Culture were "collections of works of painting, sculpture, applied art, popular art, spontaneous art, and works done by experimental painterly and plastic techniques. These Museums are constructed on the principle of the evolution of purely painterly and plastic forms of expression . . ." [bibl. R420, p. 80]. The largest was the one in Moscow—housed in the same building as Svomas/Vkhutemas. It contained examples of most of the avant-garde, including Aleksandr Drevin (three works), Vasilii Kandinsky (six), Kazimir Malevich (nine), Lyubov Popova (two), Rodchenko (five), Olga Rozanova (six), Vladimir Tatlin (one), and Nadezhda Udaltsova (four); Klyun was represented by two canvases and by a small collection of his research writings and tabulations on color. Although initially the Museum Bureau included Derain and Picasso on its list of wants and stipulated that acquisitions should cover all periods, it concerned itself almost exclusively with Russian art of the early twentieth century. Each museum was divided into four sections—(1) experimental technique, (2) industrial art, (3) drawings and graphics, (4) synthetic art. The museums worked in close conjunction with the local Svomas and, in the case of Moscow, Petrograd, and Vitebsk, with Inkhuk. For further details see bibl. R16, R66, R420. The artist Aleksei Grishchenko presented a list of proposals concerning the museums in February 1919—see bibl. R16, p. 83.

MALEVICH, pp. 143-45

1. I.e., *From Cubism to Suprematism*. See pp. 116ff.
2. Malevich saw the genesis of suprematism in his 1913 decor for the futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun* (see p. 116), one backdrop of which was an apparently abstract composition [reproduced in bibl. 45, pl. 99; bibl. 83, p. 383].
3. I.e., at "0.10," December 19, 1915-January 19, 1916.

ROZANOVA, p. 148

1. An extract from Rozanova's "The Bases of the New Creation" (pp. 102ff.) was also included in this section of the catalogue. Rozanova had died a few months before, and the "First State Exhibition" had been devoted to a posthumous showing of her works; works at the "Tenth State Exhibition" by Ivan Klyun, Aleksandr Vesnin, and others were dedicated to her.
2. The journal *Supremus* never actually appeared, although it was prepared for publication in Moscow early in 1917 under the editorship of Kazimir Malevich. Apart from Rozanova's piece, a contribution by Malevich [bibl. 160, p. 148] and an essay on music by Mikhail Matyushin and the composer Nikolai Roslavets were scheduled.

RODCHENKO, pp. 148-51

1. This is the title of the first section, and the closing line, of Max Stirner's *Die Einzige und sein Eigenthum* [The Ego and His Own], first published in Leipzig in 1845. Max Stirner (pseudonym of Joseph Kaspar Schmidt) had achieved a certain popularity in Russia in the 1900s because of the more general interest in individualism and intuition generated by such varied influences as Bergson, Nietzsche, and Steiner. Stirner's philosophy of extreme individualism had appealed in particular to the symbolists; a Russian translation of *Die Einzige und sein Eigenthum* appeared in St. Petersburg in 1910 under the title *Edinstvennyi i ego dostoyaniye*. Just after the Revolution, there was a renewal of interest in Stirner, albeit from a highly critical standpoint, mainly because Marx and Engels had treated him in some detail [see their "Sankt Max," in *Dokumente des Sozialismus*, ed. Eduard Bernstein (Berlin: Verlag der Sozialistischen Monatshefte, 1905), vol. 3, 17ff.].

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by John E. Bowlt**

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