

perished because of a negative and exclusive solution to the question of shading.

Our age is obliged by force of circumstances to finish what our predecessors passed on to us. The path of search in this direction is broad, its bends are diverse, its forks numerous; the solutions will be many. Among them, those connected in our art with the name of A. Exter will remain as an example of courage, freedom, and subtlety. The upsurge of strength and courage in the plastic arts wanes neither beyond the Rhine nor at home, and it is expressed in the high level of pure painting unprecedented in our country, a phenomenon that is characteristic of its contemporary state.

DAVID BURLIUK

Cubism (Surface—Plane), 1912

For biography see p. 8.

The text of this piece, "Kubizm," is from an anthology of poems, prose pieces, and articles, *Poshchetchina obshchestvennomu vkusu* [A Slap in the Face of Public Taste] (Moscow, December 1912 [according to bibl. R350, p. 17, although January 1913, according to KL], pp. 95-101 [bibl. R275]). The collection was prefaced by the famous declaration of the same name signed by David Burliuk, Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchenykh, and Vladimir Mayakovsky and dated December 1912. The volume also contained a second essay by David Burliuk on texture [bibl. R269], verse by Khlebnikov and Benedikt Livshits, and four prose sketches by Vasiliï Kandinsky [for further details see bibl. 133, pp. 45-50]. Both the essay on cubism and the one on texture were signed by N. Burliuk, although it is obvious that both were written by David and not by Nikolai (David's youngest brother and a poet of some merit). David Burliuk was deeply interested in the question of cubism and delivered several lectures on the subject: on February 12, 1912, he gave a talk "On Cubism and Other Directions in Painting" at a debate organized by the Knave of Diamonds in Moscow [see pp. 12 and 77-78], and on the twenty-fourth of the same month, again under the auspices of the Knave of Diamonds, he spoke on the same subject under the title "The Evolution of the Concept of Beauty in Painting"; on November 20, 1912, he spoke on "What Is Cubism?" at a debate organized by the Union of Youth in St. Petersburg, which occasioned a scornful response by Aleksandr Benois [see

bibl. R262], which, in turn, occasioned a reply by Olga Rozanova [see p. 103]. Burliuk's references to the Knave of Diamonds members Vladimir Burliuk, Aleksandra Exter, Kandinsky, Petr Konchalovsky, and Ilya Mashkov, all of whom had contributed to the first and second "Knave of Diamonds" exhibitions (and Mikhail Larionov and Nikolai Kulbin, who had been at the first and second exhibitions, respectively), would indicate that the text is an elaboration of the Knave of Diamonds lecture; moreover, the Knave of Diamonds debate had been chaired by Konchalovsky, and it had witnessed a heated confrontation between the Knave of Diamonds group as such and Donkey's Tail artists [see p. 77-78]. As usual with David Burliuk's literary endeavors of this time, the style is clumsy and does not make for clarity; in addition, the text is interspersed somewhat arbitrarily with capital letters.

Painting is colored space.
 Point, line, and surface are elements
 of spatial forms.
 the order in which they are placed arises
 from their genetic connection.
 the simplest element of space is the point.
 its consequence is line.
 the consequence of line is surface.
 all spatial forms are reduced to these three
 elements.
 the direct consequence of line is plane.

It would perhaps not be a paradox to say that painting became art only in the twentieth century.

Only in the twentieth century have we begun to have painting as art—before there used to be the art of painting, but there was no painting Art. This kind of painting (up to the twentieth century) is called conventionally—from a certain sense of compassion toward the endless sums spent on museums—Old Painting, as distinct from *New Painting*.

These definitions in themselves show that everyone, even the most Ignorant and those with no interest in the Spiritual, perceives the eternal gulf that has arisen between the painting of yesterday and the painting of today. An eternal gulf. Yesterday we did not have art.

Today we do have art. Yesterday it was the means, today it has become the end. Painting has begun to pursue only Painterly objectives. It has begun to live for itself. The fat bourgeois have shifted their shameful attention



Vladimir Burluk: *Portrait of David Burluk*, 1911. Etching. Location unknown. Reproduced from B. Livshits: *Polutoraglazi strel's* [The One-and-a-Half-Eyed Archer] (Leningrad, 1933). David Burluk was, in fact, blind in his left eye.



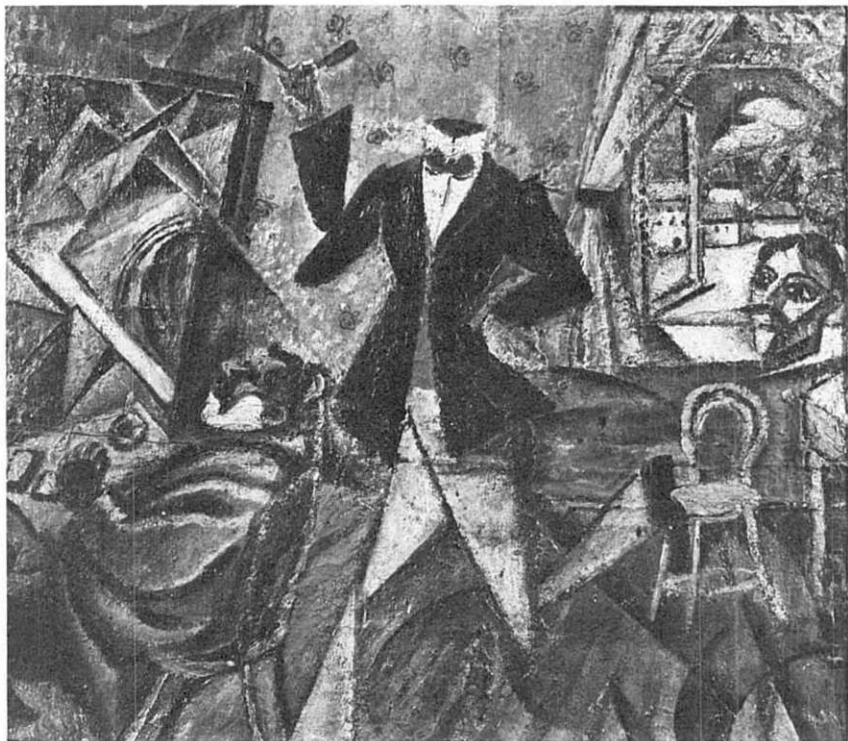
David Burluk, ca. 1913. Photograph courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Burluk, New York. In his futurist campaigns David Burluk used to wear a top hat, just as Malevich used to wear a wooden spoon and Mayakovsky a yellow waistcoat.

from the artist, and now this magician and sorcerer has the chance of escaping to the transcendental secrets of his art.

Joyous solitude. But woe unto him who scorns the pure springs of the highest revelations of our day. Woe unto them who reject their eyes, for the Artists of today are the prophetic eyes of mankind. Woe unto them who trust in their own abilities—which do not excel those of reverend moles! . . . Darkness has descended upon their souls!

Having become an end in itself, painting has found within itself endless horizons and aspirations. And before the astounded eyes of the casual spectators roaring with laughter at contemporary exhibitions (but already with caution and respect), Painting has developed such a large number of different trends that their enumeration alone would now be enough for a big article.

It can be said with confidence that the confines of This art of Free Paint-



David Burliuk: *The Headless Barber*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 53.5 x 61 cm. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Max Granick, New York. Burliuk offers his own interpretation of Larionov's "barber" theme in a more cubist, analytical fashion, while maintaining the spontaneity and illogicality peculiar to Russian cubofuturism.

ing have been expanded during the first decade of the twentieth century, as had never been imagined during all the years of its previous existence!

Amid these trends of the New Painting the one that Shocks the spectator's eye most is the Direction defined by the word *Cubism*.

The theoretical foundation of which I want to concentrate on now—thereby Placing the erroneous judgment of the contemporary "admirer" of art on a firm, more or less correct footing.

In analyzing the art of former painters, e.g., Holbein and Rembrandt, we can infer the following tenets. These two artistic temperaments comprehend Nature: the first chiefly as line.

The second as a certain complex of chiaroscuro. If for the first, color is

something merely, but with difficulty, to be abolished—traditionally by the help of drawing (contour)—then for the second, drawing (contour) and line are an unpleasant feature of the art of his time. If Rembrandt takes up the needle, his hand hastens to build a whole forest of lines so that “the shortest distance between two points” would vanish in this smokelike patch of etching. The first is primarily a draftsman. Rembrandt is a painter.

Rembrandt is a *colorist*, an impressionist, Rembrandt senses *plane* and colors. But of course, both are the Blind Instruments of objects—both comprehend art as a means and not as an aim in itself—and they do not express the main bases of the Modern New Painting (as we see in our best modern artists).

The component elements into which the essential nature of painting can be broken down are:

- I. line
- II. surface
(for its mathematical conception see epigraph)
- III. color
- IV. texture (the character of surface)

see article on texture ¹

To a certain extent Elements I and III were properties, peculiarities of old painting as well. But I and IV are those fabulous realms that only our twentieth century has discovered and whose painterly significance Nature has revealed to us. Previously painting only *Saw*, now it *Feels*. Previously it depicted an object in two dimensions, now wider possibilities have been disclosed. . . . * I am not talking about what the near future will bring us (this has already been discovered by such artists as *P. P. Konchalovsky*)—a *Sense of Visual ponderability*—A *Sense of color Smell*. A *sense of duration of the colored moment* . . . (I. I. Mashkov).

I shall avoid the fascinating task of outlining the plan of this inspired march along the path of secrets now revealed. Instead, I shall return to my subject.

In order to understand Painting, the art of the New Painting, it is essential to take the same standpoint vis-à-vis Nature as the artist takes. One must feel ashamed of the fatuous adolescent's elementary view of Nature—an extremely literary, narrative standpoint. One must remember that Nature, for

* The Painting of Aleksandra Exter—hitherto little noticed by the Russian critics—provides interesting attempts at widening the usual methods of depiction.

The questions she raises with such conviction—how to solve color orchestration, how to achieve a sense of plane—and her unceasing protest against redundant forms, place her among the most interesting of modern artists.

the Artist and for painting, is Exclusively an object of visual Sensation. Indeed, a visual sensation refined and broadened immeasurably (compared with the past) by the associative capacity of the human spirit, but one that avoids ideas of the coarse, irrelevant kind. Painting now operates within a sphere of Painterly Ideas and Painterly Conceptions that is accessible only to it; they ensue and arise from those Elements of visual Nature that can be defined by the 4 points mentioned above.

The man deprived of a Painterly understanding of Nature will, when looking at Cézanne's landscape *The House*,² understand it purely narratively: (1) "house" (2) mountains (3) trees (4) sky. Whereas for the artist, there existed I linear construction II surface construction (not fully realized) and III color orchestration. For the artist, there were certain lines going up and down, right and left, but there wasn't a house or trees . . . there were areas of certain color strength, of certain character. And that's all.

Painting of the past, too, seemed at times to be not far from conceiving Nature as Line (of a certain character and of a certain intensity) and colors (Nature as a number of colored areas—this applies Only to the Impressionists at the end of the nineteenth century). But it never made up its mind to analyze visual Nature from the viewpoint of the essence of its surface. The conception of what we see as merely a number of certain definite sections of different surface Planes arose only in the twentieth century under the general name of *Cubism*. Like everything else, Cubism has its history. Briefly, we can indicate the sources of this remarkable movement.

I. If the Greeks and Holbein were, as it were, the first to whom *line* (in itself) was accessible

II. If Chiaroscuro (as color), texture, and surface appeared fleetingly to Rembrandt

III. then Cézanne is the first who can be credited with the conjecture that Nature can be observed as a Plane, as a surface (surface construction). If line, Chiaroscuro, and coloration were well known in the past, then *Plane* and surface were discovered only by the new painting. Just as the whole immeasurable significance of Texture in painting has only now been realized.

In passing on to a more detailed examination of examples of a surface analysis of Nature in the pictures of modern artists, and in passing on to certain constructions of a theoretical type that ensue from this view of Nature—as plane and surface—I would like to answer the question that should now be examined at the beginning of any article devoted to the Theory of the New Painting: "Tell me, what is the significance of establishing definite

names for Definite Painterly Canons, of establishing the dimensions of all you call the Establishment of Painterly Counterpoint? Indeed, the pictures of modern artists don't become any better or more valuable because of this. . . ." And people like to add: "Oh, how I dislike talking about Painting" or "I like this art."

A few years ago artists wouldn't have forgiven themselves if they'd talked about the aims, tasks, and essence of Painting. Times have changed. Nowadays not to be a theoretician of painting means to reject an understanding of it. This art's center of gravity has been transferred. Formerly the spectator used to be the idle witness of a street event, but now he, as it were, presses close to the lenses of a Superior Visual Analysis of the Visible Essence surrounding us. Nobody calls Lomonosov³ a crank for allowing poetic meter in the Russian language. Nobody is surprised at the "useless" work of the scientist who attempts in a certain way to strictly classify the phenomena of a certain type of organic or inorganic Nature. So how come you want me—me, for whom the cause of the New painting is higher than anything—as I stroll around museums and exhibitions looking at countless collections of Painting, not to attempt to assess the specimens of this pretty, pretty art by any means other than the child's categorization of pictures: Genre, portrait, landscape, animals, etc., etc., as Mr. Benois does? Indeed in such painting, photographic portraits should be relegated to the section with the heading "unknown artist." No, it's high time it was realized that the classification, the only one possible, of works of painting must be according to those elements that, as our investigation will show, have engendered painting and given it Life.

It has been known for a long time that what is important is not the *what*, but the *how*, i.e., which principles, which objectives, guided the artist's creation of this or that work! It is essential to establish on the basis of which canon it (the work) arose! It is essential to reveal its painterly nature! It must be indicated what the aim in Nature was that the artist of the given picture was So attracted by. And the analysis of painterly phenomena will then be a Scientific criticism of the subject. And the spectator will no longer be the confused enemy of the new art—this unhappy spectator who has only just broken out of the torture chamber of our newspapers' and magazines' cheap, presumptuous, and idiotic criticism, a criticism that believes that its duty is not to learn from the artist but to teach him. Without even studying art, many critics seriously believe that they can teach the artist What he must do and *how* he must do it! . . . I myself have personally encountered such blockheaded diehards.

Line is the result of the intersection of 2 planes. . . .

One plane can intersect another on a straight line or on a curve (surface).

Hence follow: I *Cubism* proper—and II *Rondism*.

The first is an analysis of Nature from the point of view of planes intersecting on straight lines, the second operates with surfaces of a ball-like character.

Disharmony is the opposite of harmony.
 dissymmetry is the opposite of symmetry.
 deconstruction is the opposite of construction.
 a canon can be constructive.
 a canon can be deconstructive.
 construction can be shifted or displaced
The canon of displaced construction.

The existence in Nature of visual poetry—ancient, dilapidated towers and walls—points to the essential, tangible, and forceful supremacy of this kind of beauty.

Displacement can be linear.

Displacement can be planar.

Displacement can be in one particular place or it can be general.

Displacement can be coloristic—(a purely mechanical conception).

The canon of the Academy advocated: symmetry of proportion, fluency, or their equivalent harmony.

The New painting has indicated the existence of a second, parallel canon that does not destroy the first one—the canon of displaced construction.

- 1) disharmony (not fluency)
- 2) disproportion
- 4) coloristic dissonance
- 3) deconstruction

All these concepts follow from the examination of works of the New painting. Point 3) I placed out of sequence, and it has already been examined above. Both Cubism and Rondism can be based on all these four basic concepts of the Canon of Displaced Construction.

But Cubism and Rondism can also live and develop in the soil of the Academic Canon. . . .

Note. In the past there was also a counterbalance to the Academic Canon living on (fluency) harmony, proportion, symmetry: all barbaric Folk arts were based partly on the existence of this second canon (of displaced Con-

struction *). A definitive examination of our relation to these arts as raw material for the modern artist's creative soul would take us out of our depth.

* *Note to above note.* In contrast to the Academic Canon, which sees drawing as a definite dimension, we can now establish the canon—of Free drawing. (The fascination of children's drawings lies precisely in the full exposition in such works of this principle.) The pictures and drawings of V. V. Kandinsky. The drawings of V. Burliuk.

The portraits of P. Konchalovsky and I. Mashkov, the *Soldier* Pictures of M. Larionov, are the best examples of Free drawing . . . (as also are the latest works of N. Kulbin).

In poetry the apology is vers libre—the sole and finest representative of which in modern poetry is Viktor Khlebnikov.⁴

Note II. The examination of the wide field of (painting's) concepts does not fall into the scope of this article:

Line
Color orchestration
which ought to be the subject
of separate investigations.

NATALYA GONCHAROVA

Cubism, 1912

For biography see p. 54.

The text of this piece, "Kubizm," is part of an impromptu speech given by Goncharova at the Knave of Diamonds debate of February 12, 1912 [see pp. 12 and 69-70]. The text is from Benedikt Livshits, *Polutoraglaziye strelets* [The One-and-a-Half-Eyed Archer] (Leningrad, 1933), pp. 80-81 [bibl. R310; French translation in bibl. 131, p. 88]. Livshits mentions that Goncharova composed a letter on the basis of this speech and sent it the day after the debate to various newspaper offices in Moscow, but it was not published until the French translation in bibl. 132, pp.

3. Aksenov means, presumably, Cézanne's *Mardi Gras* of 1888, which was in the Sergei Shchukin collection. It is now in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow.
4. Anton Rubinstein's opera *The Merchant of Kalashnikov* was staged by Sergei Zimin's company in Moscow in the winter of 1912/13.
5. In 1909 Petr Konchalovsky was commissioned by the merchant Markushev to execute panels and ceiling decorations for his Moscow villa. The Moscow Salon was the name of an important exhibiting society that held regular shows between 1910 and 1918. Konchalovsky's contribution to the first show in the winter of 1910/11, included his designs for the Markushev villa—*Gathering Olives, Gathering Grapes, Harvest, and The Park*.
6. In November 1911 Konchalovsky, together with Georgii Yakulov, designed the decor for a charity ball called "A Night in Spain" at the Merchants' Club, Moscow.
7. The portrait of the artist Yakulov was executed in 1910 and at present is in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. For Konchalovsky's own description of the work see bibl. R103, vol. 2, pp. 434ff.
8. Italian patriot and revolutionary. The reference, presumably, is to Mazzini's almost constant exile from Italy, during which he never ceased to believe in his dogmatic and utopian principles of Italian nationalism and working-class solidarity—despite the fact that for much of his life he was out of touch with the real moods of the Italian populus.
9. A reference to the prehistoric ivory figures of Brassempouy in southern France.

BURLIUK, pp. 69-77

1. "Texture" [*fakura*] in "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste." See p. 69 and bibl. R269.
2. Which Cézanne landscape Burliuk has in mind is not clear, perhaps *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire* (1896-98), which was in the Ivan Morozhnik collection, and is now in the Hermitage.
3. Poet, philosopher, and lexicographer.
4. Leading futurist poet, cosigner of "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste."

LARIONOV and GONCHAROVA, pp. 87-91

1. The egofuturists were primarily a literary group, formed in 1911 and led by Igor Severyanin.
2. The neofuturists were an imitative and derivative group active in 1913. Their one publication, *Vyzov obshchestvennyim vkusam* [A Challenge to Public Tastes] (Kazan, 1913), contained parodies of futurist poems and rayonist drawings.
3. Goncharova and Larionov broke with the Knave of Diamonds after its first exhibition in 1910/11, thereby alienating themselves from David Burliuk—and condemning "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste." Larionov regarded the Union of Youth as a harbor of outdated symbolist ideas, an attitude shared by several artists and critics, although Larionov still contributed to its exhibitions.
4. An allusion to *vsechestvo* [literally, "everythingness"], i.e., the concept that all styles are permissible—an attitude shared by Shevchenko [e.g., see bibl. R355].

LARIONOV, pp. 91-100

1. The Whitman extracts are from *Leaves of Grass*: the first from "Beginners," in "Inscriptions"; the second from "I Hear It Was Charged Against Me," in "Calamus." Larionov's choice of author is significant: Whitman was known and respected in Russia particularly among the symbolists and futurists, and his *Leaves of Grass* had become popular through Konstantin Balmont's masterful translation (Moscow, 1911). For contemporaneous attitudes to Whitman in Russia, see Balmont, "Pevets lichnosti" in bibl. R44, no. 7, 1904, pp. 11-32; Chukovsky, "O polze broma" in bibl. R44, no. 12, 1906, pp. 52-60, and Chukovsky, *Uot Uitmen: Poeziya gryadushchei demokratii* (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923). Also see nn. 3 and 6 to "Rodchenko's System," p. 305.
2. Undoubtedly Larionov owed some of his ideas, both in his theory and in his practice of rayonism, to the theories of the Italian futurists. He would, for example, have seen the Russian translations of *La pittura futurista* and *Gli espositori al pubblico* (see p. 79).

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Theory and Criticism
1902-1934**

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[*passar ao Ocidente, somente desde 1915 mas
conscientemente na época do 1º Rabo de Abril
(março 1912)*]

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