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THE NON - OBJECTIVE WORLD

Kasimir Malevich

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THE NON-OBJECTIVE WORLD

Kasimir Malevich

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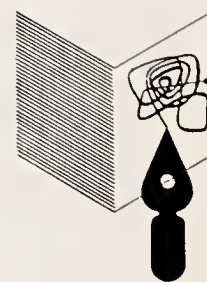


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THE NON-OBJECTIVE WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

A very important exhibition of Russian art was held in Berlin in 1922. In it were shown the works of all the different groups of artists who influenced the development of Russian art. Of special interest, quite naturally, were the works of those artists who came to the fore after the revolution. Along with artists already world-renowned, like Wassily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall and Alexander Archipenko, new and hitherto unknown artists appeared. The most important of these were the *Constructivist*, Vladimir Tatlin and the *Suprematist*, Kasimir Malevich. Their works attracted widespread attention and gained more and more influence.

The Constructivists saw the world through the medium of technology. They resolutely pursued a new course — that of reality. The determination to take possession of reality is clearly perceptible in their non-utilitarian constructions. They did not seek to create an illusion by the use of colors on canvas but worked directly in materials such as wood, iron and glass. They worked directly toward the solution of new problems of materials and form. Their works represent a transition to utilitarian architectonic structures.

The most important work of Constructivism was Tatlin's "Tower of the Third International." Tatlin was not an engineer but an artist. His tower was a synthesis of the technical and the artistic. It opened up the conventional body of the building and sought to combine the inside with the outside. It consisted of two cylinders and a pyramid of steel and glass. The cylinders contained assembly halls which rotated at different speeds in opposite directions. A huge spiral surrounded them. The triangle, Tatlin said, expressed the static concept of the Renaissance, while the spiral expressed the dynamic concept characteristic of our age. In a way, Tatlin brought to realization the futurist dream of a dynamic architecture.

The Suprematism of Malevich was in greatest contrast to the utilitarian aims of Constructivism. Malevich was opposed not only to any combination of art with utility but also to all imitations of nature. His aim was pure art and his own non-objective art is most radical. He insisted that art and the feelings which generate it are more basic and meaningful than religious beliefs and political conceptions. Religion and the state, in the past, employed art as a means of propaganda to further their aims. The usefulness of works of technology is short-lived but art endures forever. If humanity is to achieve a real and absolute order this must be founded on eternal values, that is, on art. A Doric temple is not beautiful today because it once served a religious purpose. This purpose no

longer exists. Its form originated from a pure feeling of plastic proportions and it retains its vitality and validity for all time. We are no longer aware of the original purpose of the temple but we admire it as a work of art.

When Malevich created Suprematism in 1913 he was already an established painter in Russia. He turned his back on all of his earlier accomplishments. His Suprematism compressed the whole of painting into a black square on a white canvas. "I felt only night within me and it was then that I conceived the new art, which I called Suprematism." This was expressed by a black square on a white square. "The square of the Suprematists . . . can be compared," he said, "to the symbols of primitive men. It was not their intent to produce ornaments but to express the feeling of rhythm."

In 1918 Malevich created his painting, "White on White." There again two squares, but what a difference! The painting, "Black Square on White" may be called static because the sides of both squares are parallel to each other. The painting, "White on White," in which the inner square is placed at an angle, has a dynamic character and this became one of the characteristics of Malevich's subsequent works, which were richer and more differentiated in form. The picture, "White on White" has a minimum of contrast in color and it was Malevich's opinion that this would be characteristic of the painting of the future. Malevich's color concept was static but his concept of form, on the other hand, was dynamic. This stands in sharp contrast to the Neo-Plasticism of Piet Mondrian, in which the forms are static while the colors constitute the dynamic element.

What was the reaction to Malevich's work? The critics and the public sighed, "Everything we have loved in art is lost. We are in a desert. . . . Before us is nothing but a black square on a white ground!" Malevich himself felt, as he said, "a kind of timidity bordering on fear when I was called upon to leave 'the world of will and idea' in which I had lived and worked and in the reality of which I had believed. But the blissful feeling of liberating non-objectivity drew me into the 'desert' where nothing is real but feeling and feeling became the content of my life. This was no 'empty square' which I had exhibited but rather the sensation of non-objectivity."

With his Suprematism, Malevich, in much the same way as Plato, broke through the barrier of sense perception of reality. They both held that the world as reported by our senses is an illusion. Malevich's simplicity and essentiality strongly influenced abstract painting not only in Russia but also in the West. A story is told of El Lissitzky which is to the point. Lissitzky was originally a pupil of Marc Chagall. He became so fascinated, however, with Malevich's Suprematism that he deserted Chagall and became a follower of Malevich. Since

everything must have a name he coined for his paintings a new "ism" — *Proun* and he considered his pictures a link between painting and architecture.

Malevich's great influence brought about a kind of inflation, a cheapening of his established values. Suprematism was so simple that everybody could imitate it and a trend toward mechanical painting developed. People came to think it possible to order a painting by telephone from a house painter by giving him the measurements and specifying the colors!

But do we not have a similar inflation in architecture today? Mies van der Rohe made a break with tradition as decisive as that of Malevich. Many of his imitators copy his forms without understanding their meaning — Mies van der Rohe's simplicity also seems so easy to imitate. This work of his, however, which seems so effortless is, in actuality, the result of unremitting and painstaking labor. Mies' imitators, however, failing to grasp the essence of his work, turn it into a fashion but then soon tire of it and try to escape from it into a world of ever-changing fancy.

In 1927 Kasimir Malevich came to Berlin and I got to know him personally. I recall taking long walks with him at that time, and engaging with him in profound and stimulating conversations. These were possible only with the aid of an interpreter, because he spoke no German and I no Russian.

Malevich came to Berlin for two reasons. He wanted to show his work, pre-suprematist and suprematist, as well. The exhibition, which took place at the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung, was made possible by the Novembergruppe. Malevich's second reason was to get his book, *The Non-Objective World*, translated and published. The translation from Russian into German was made by A. von Riesen and the book was published by Albert Langen, Munich, in 1927 as volume 11 of the series of Bauhaus books under the title of *Die Gegenstandslose Welt*. An English translation of the second part, *Suprematism*, was made by F. Van Loon in 1950 but never printed. The present translation, the first English version to be published, was made from the German text (the Russian manuscript being unavailable) by Howard Dearstyne. Dr. Samuel K. Workman has read the translation and made many valuable suggestions.

Kasimir Malevich's book, *The Non-Objective World*, heretofore obtainable only in the now rare German language edition, has thus far remained inaccessible to the English-reading public. It is altogether astonishing that more than thirty years should have elapsed between the original publication of the book and the appearance of the first English translation since it is, without question, one of the profoundest statements of aesthetic theory of the twentieth century, comparable in importance to that great work, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* by Malevich's countryman, Wassily Kandinsky.

L. HILBERSEIMER

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEORY OF THE ADDITIONAL ELEMENT IN PAINTING

Creative activity is expressed by means of lines, planes and three-dimensional shapes and produces static or dynamic forms of the most varied kinds, which still further differ from each other in respect to color, hue, structure, texture, organization and system.

Two basic types of creation can be distinguished: one, initiated by the conscious mind, serves practical life, so-called, and deals with concrete visual phenomena; the other, stemming from the subconscious or superconscious mind, stands apart from all "practical utility" and treats abstract visual phenomena.

We find the concrete element in the sciences and religion — the abstract in art.

Thus art has its definite place in the hierarchy of phenomena and can be examined scientifically.

This leads me to an investigation of individual visual effects in art and the ways in which they are achieved, in order to discover the cause of observable changes in art and in artists.

To this end I am choosing the special field of painting, since I am most familiar with it, and I will examine the activity of the painter as a combined function of the conscious and subconscious minds. The purpose of this is to determine how the conscious and subconscious minds react to everything constituting the environment of the artist and in what relation the "clear" and the "unclear" (the conscious and the subconscious minds), stand to each other.

I call this investigation of artistic production, in general and of painting in particular, which I will pursue in the manner indicated above, "the science of artistic culture". From this point on painting will be for me a "totality", a "body", in which all special conditions and causes will be revealed — the artist's conception of the world, his particular view of nature and the effect of his environment upon him. It is the document of an aesthetic phenomenon and contains (also when considered scientifically) exceedingly valuable material which will become the subject matter of a new science — the science of the nature of painting. Painting has hitherto been looked upon and treated by critics as something purely "emotional", without consideration for the particular character of the environment in which this or that art work

came into being; no analytic investigation has ever been undertaken which was able to explain what causes the development of an artistic structure, in its relation to the environment affecting it. The basic question, as to why a certain color system or construction was bound to develop within the "body" of painting, as such, has never been treated.

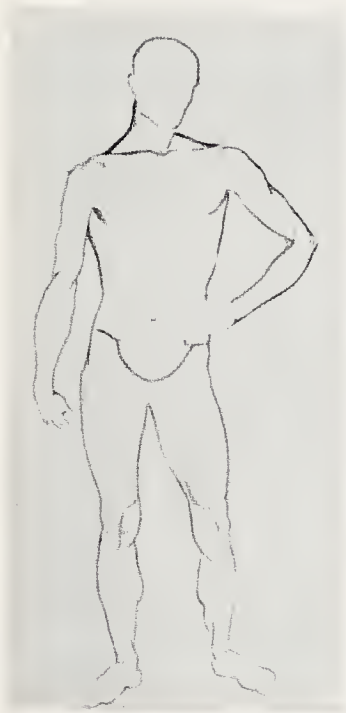
All these questions are today of greatest interest to us, especially in connection with modern art works which cast into the discard every familiar view of nature. We must explain the character of the new *additional* element which has forced its way into the creative organism of the artist and brought about an alteration in our conception of art.

(A physician regards an unusual condition of the human organism as a phenomenon indicating the presence of an "added element" which has produced the change. He is then able to determine the nature of this "added element" by an investigation of the blood or the urine.)

Our condition — our capacity to act and react — always depends upon the condition of our environment at any given time, so that the equilibrium of our intrinsic selves is constantly being upset.

The peculiar character of any new visual environment, exercising its effect upon us, constitutes that *additional element* which brings about a change in the normal relationship between the element of consciousness and that of the subconscious (ills. 1-8) and which, in the case of the "professional response", is expressed in a new, unfamiliar technique, in a certain unusual attitude toward nature — in a novel point of view. We are compelled either to heed the influence of the new environment or to resist it by establishing a definite authoritative standard. The nature of this resistance varies in the different professions and special fields; the forms which it takes can be classified according to the level of development which characterizes them. The types of standardizing resistance activity which develop in this way can be divided, on the basis of their compositional relationships, into two groups — that of "natural proportion" and that of "unnatural proportion".

Thus a definite normality becomes obligatory; everything which fails to conform to the norm is eliminated as a destructive (the norm-destroying) "living element". Now this eliminated element is the one which I call the *additional element*; this it is which develops and produces new forms, either



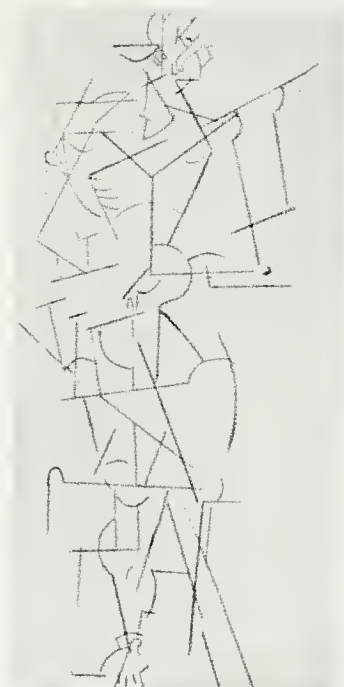
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1-4 Changes in the representation of "nature" under the influence of additional elements of the pictorial cultures of Cézanne and Cubism.

by causing the existing norm to evolve or by overthrowing it.

Life seeks constantly to set up norms; it longs for a state of rest, strives for the "natural". . . . And so we see the rise of *systems* which, above all else, serve to support and fortify order, in the sense of the accustomed norm and the state of inactivity within this norm. Life wishes not to live but to rest — it strives not for activity but for passivity. For this reason, agreement among the dynamic or static values of the additional element affecting the system is taken for granted, and a "bringing-into-agreement" of the dynamic elements — systematizing them, that is — amounts to transforming them into static elements, for every system is static (even when it is in movement), whereas every construction is dynamic because it is "on the way" toward a system.

The artist endeavors to guide the additional element toward a harmonious norm — a state of order.

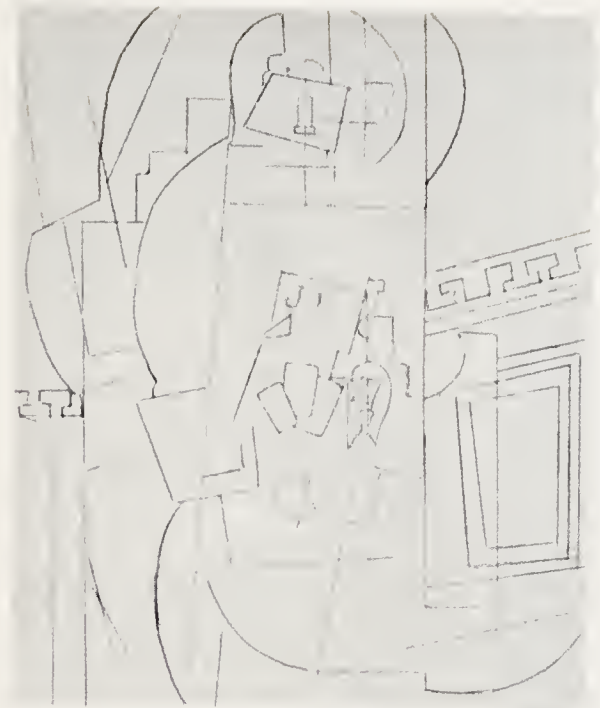
Every norm of an existing system holds within it the order established by the particular values of accepted additional elements and it continues to exist until new additional elements arise out of the various visual phenomena of the changing environment and cause the old norm to evolve or create a new norm.

The compelling, evolving element appears in the most diverse forms and colors and gains strength by deforming and reconstructing the opposing element of the norm which falls under its influence.

An investigation of the norm and a classification of individual visual phenomena (with regard to their relationship to one norm or another) has to be conducted through a search for analogies.

A visual phenomenon which affords no analogy at all with the values of our consciousness or our feeling cannot be judged; we are unable to determine whether it is normal or abnormal — natural or unnatural.

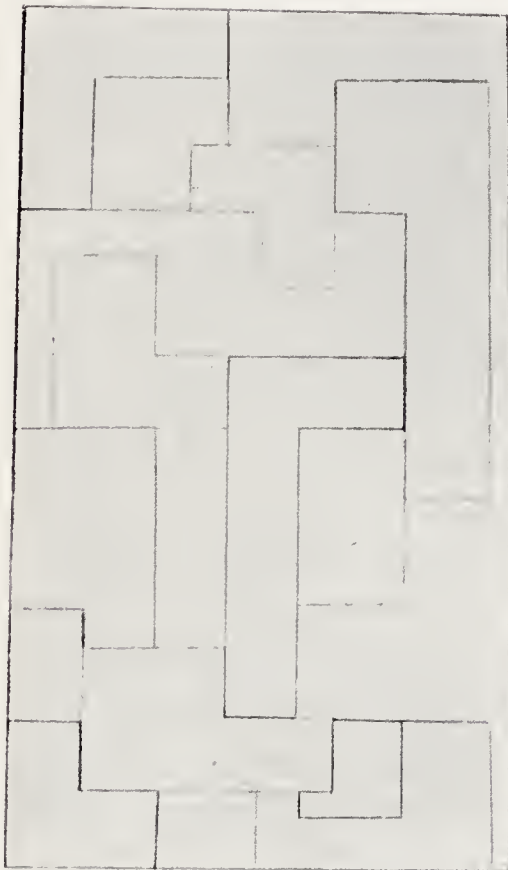
For the public (the majority of people) Rembrandt represents the normal in painting; Rembrandt is therefore the "decisive standpoint" from which a pictorial norm is evaluated. Cubism, to the public, is abnormal because it contains a new additional element — it signifies a new state of affairs in the compositional relationship of the straight line to the curve — a new norm. (See the formula for the "sickle shape.") This new norm destroys the familiar aesthetic order of "the established" and "the assured state of repose",



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5-8 Changes in the representation of "nature" under the influence of additional elements of the pictorial cultures of Cubism and Suprematism.

so that the public (the majority) becomes intent upon isolating the artists who create in the spirit of the new norm, together with their art.

And so it comes about that what appears normal to the majority is bound to be looked upon as abnormal by the minority.

The new art seems unwholesome to the majority of educated and uneducated persons, as well as critics; the new body of artists, on the other hand, finds the opinion of the majority abnormal.

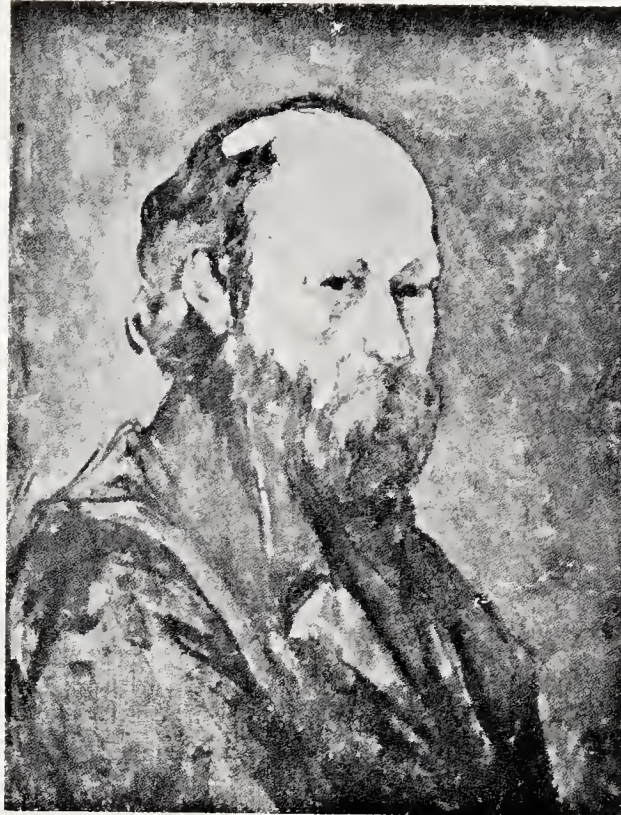
The cause of this phenomenon lies in the antagonism of two coexistent artistic (pictorial) norms. The old, familiar norm excludes everything other than concrete representation and lifelike proportions, while the new norm accepts only the law of pictorial values (ills. 9-11). Proportions in organic nature (the relationship of form and size in the human organs, for example) are based upon the law of technical utility and are normal in this utilitarian sense; the law of pictorial values, on the other hand, ignores naturalistic proportions which, viewed from the standpoint of the pictorial element, are bound to appear abnormal (the norm of Cubism).

Thus there arises in the minds of educated persons a confusion of two normalizing elements. To the painter a picture is composed of pictorial values — to the layman (to the public), on the other hand, it consists of naturalistically-proportioned “things” (eyes, noses, etc.).

The public (the layman) believes it has to look upon and treat Cubism and Cubists as something unwholesome because the representation of “things” (eyes, noses, etc.) in the paintings of the Cubists does not correspond with reality, and it comes to perceive the “improbability” of the representation by comparing this with the actual object — with the very thing, that is, which has nothing to do with pictorial values. The “thing” (the nose, the eye, etc.) is raised to the criterion by which an artistic (pictorial) representation is judged and thus the singular opinion of the public that art is not creative but imitative is clearly expressed.

Though it stands to reason, the fact that *creative* art is creative and not imitative (duplicative) appears, in the light of this, to be a long way from being understood, so that the essence of art (painting) remains inaccessible to the public. Furthermore, the normalizing artistic element is changeable and, in the long run, admits of no “repetition”, no “standstill”.

9 CÉZANNE



10 MALEVICH



9, 10 Examples of the "undermining" of naturalistic norms of representation.

Our conception of reality is likewise changeable and depends upon the interplay of those elements of reality which, as they make their appearance, *are subject to one kind of distortion or another* in the mirror of our consciousness (our brain), since our ideas and conceptions of matter are always distorted images having not the slightest relation to reality.

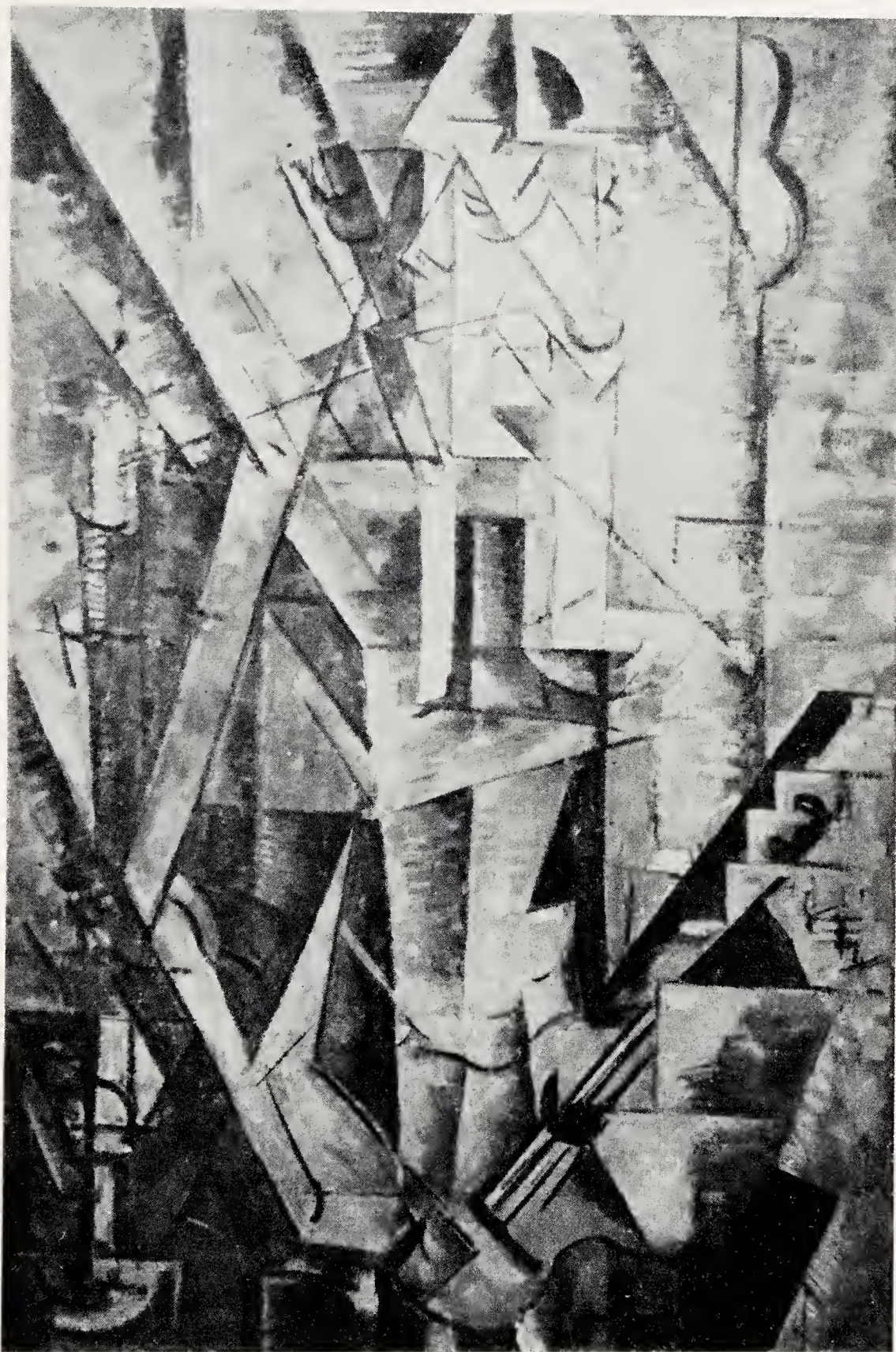
Matter itself is eternal and *immutable*; its *insensibility to life* — its lifelessness — is unshakeable. The changing element of our consciousness and feeling, in the last analysis, is illusion, which springs from the interplay of distorting reflections of variable, derivative manifestations of reality and which has nothing whatsoever to do with actual matter or even with an alteration in it.

Nature is nothing other than a human being's surroundings, in the midst of which the activity of his thought, feeling and action — of his nervous system, in other words — unfolds.

The human being is distinguished from the nature surrounding him by the fact that he is sure that he possesses a consciousness of which his environment (nature) cannot boast. Out of this arises a certain contradiction between nature and the human being, since the human being is unable to feel himself an immediate "part" of the total scheme of things. This totality of nature surrounds him on all sides like an inert, insensible "something" of matter. His lively consciousness and drive to activity continually incite the human being to fight against the sluggard, nature and so, indeed, he battles all his life long for his upright, conscious position of activity — for the vertical . . . and inevitably succumbs to sleep and finally to death.

The human being observes in nature the unconscious, "disorderly" activity of the elements and seeks to arrange this in conformity with the "lawfulness" of his consciousness.

Consciousness is to him the highest value of his existence, because he knows that nothing but consciousness supports him in an environment in which everything collapses without resistance. He recognizes consciously how the blind elements of the environment — the physical phenomena of nature — affect



11 UDALZOWA

11 Example of the "undermining" of naturalistic norms of representation.

him and influence the consciousness itself; he would like to free himself from this influence and attempts to regulate his relationship to nature.

Thus nature and the human being constitute two antitheses which are attracted to each other but to whom mutual understanding and cooperation are denied, since nature, in reality, is completely different from the caricature of it formed in the human mind.

Everything which we call nature, in the last analysis, is a figment of the imagination, having no relation whatever to reality. If the human being were suddenly to comprehend actual reality — in that very moment the battle would be decided and eternal, unshakeable perfection attained. . . . This is by no means the case, however, and so the hopeless struggle continues.

What we are fighting for, as has been said, is nothing other than our consciousness and, in this connection, the fact that our nervous systems and our brains do not function always and absolutely under the control of our conscious minds but rather, are capable of acting and reacting outside of consciousness, is left out of account.

The artistic (pictorial) conception, based upon feeling, of linear, two-dimensional and spatial phenomena is not supported on an intellectual understanding of the utilitarian relationships of these phenomena; it is non-objective and subconscious and, viewed from an intellectual standpoint, constitutes, as it were, a "blind, uncontrollable norm".

To the human being, nevertheless, the conscious mind is always the decisive factor (the virtue of existence).

A corpse is lifeless matter. Therein lies a contradiction because matter can never become a corpse; it is not born and cannot die. It changes its condition without suffering since it possesses no *values*.

The human being, on the other hand, does possess values and these cannot be destroyed, even by death. He is "evaluated" by his fellow men and this in accordance with the extent to which he is able to bring his consciousness to realization in his lifetime. The worth of human beings resides in no sense in their material bodies but rather, in their consciousness, the essence and content of which can be realized, in one form or another, in enduring values.

But what is the essence and content of our consciousness? — The inability to apprehend reality!

For that matter, the truth concerning reality actually doesn't interest us in the least. What interests us is changes in the manifestations of the perceptible.

But these changes, as is known, are also only changes in the formal point of view — illusions. We believe in these illusions; we accommodate ourselves to them and strive to prescribe to one nerve center or another an appropriate response. If this were possible — if one were able to turn the individual brain centers on and off at will, it is conceivable that he could call forth a definite activity outside of consciousness through the mechanical action of a directing influence from person to person. The conception of the perceptible could likewise be altered through the mechanical administration of new normalizing ideas.

Phenomena of this sort can be observed to some extent in life itself. A father strives, with some success, to rear his family (his children) in accordance with *his* standards; the state or rather, the government likewise seeks to influence, to guide the people in the direction of the appropriate constitutional norm.

An environment is erected about the citizen of the state which is calculated to compel him to look upon the normalizing element of the state constitution as the normalizing element of his own consciousness. The conception of reality in the consciousness of the masses — that is, in the consciousness of the individual — is thus influenced and reshaped by the prevailing state constitution or rather, by the adherents of this constitution (ills. 12-35).

Those who succumb to the regimenting power are advanced as loyal supporters of the state while those who preserve their subjective consciousness and individual point of view are looked upon and treated as dangerous and unreliable.

Persons of this latter category call themselves free people and are to be found especially in the "free occupations". Their convictions are not dependent upon any state constitutionality; their activities leave out of account the interest of the state and consequently a struggle develops between the state and the independent individual. The state is intent upon exercising a "useful" influence on the activities of the person engaged in a free occupation, which is to say, it imposes upon the creative worker the additional element which acts in sup-



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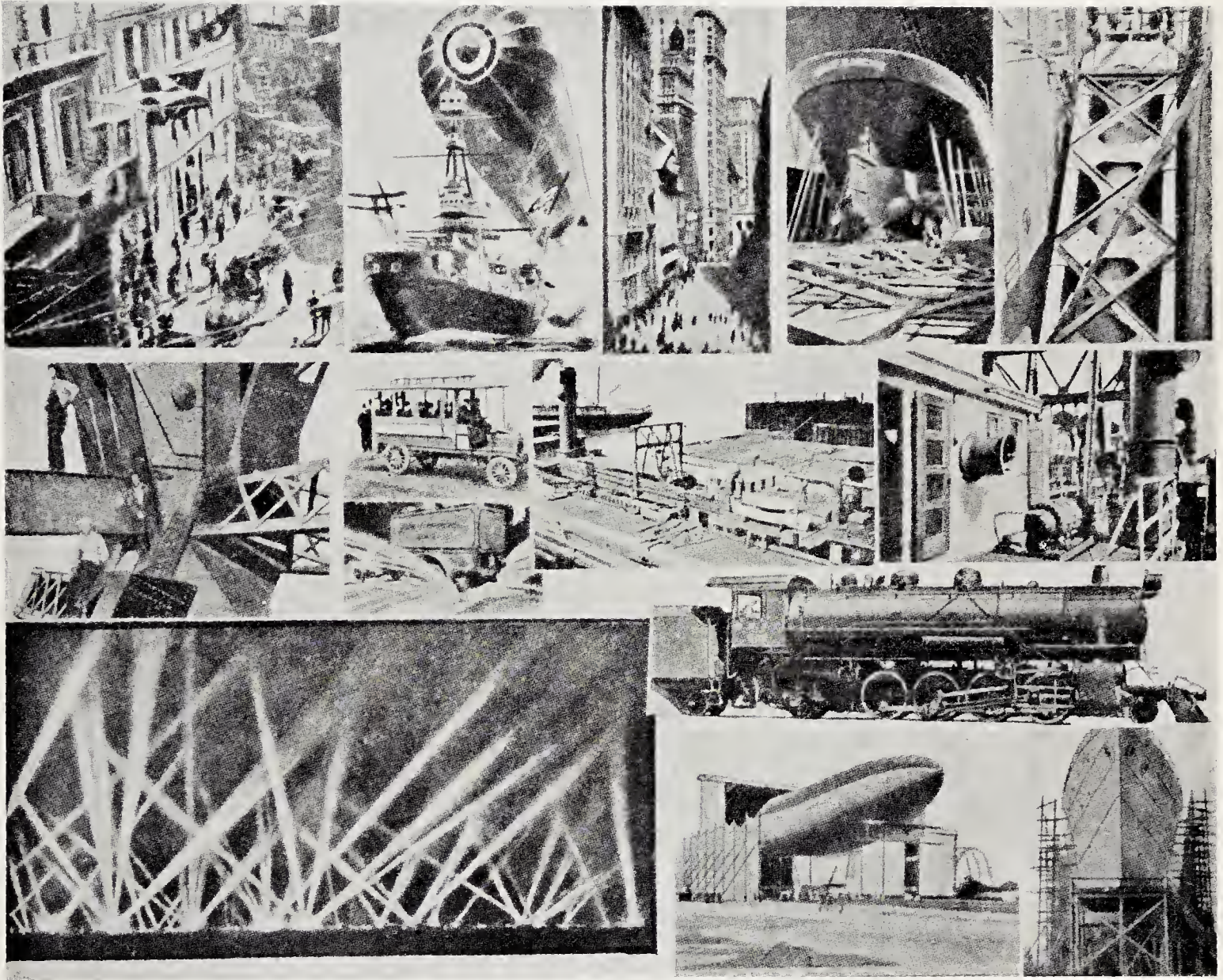


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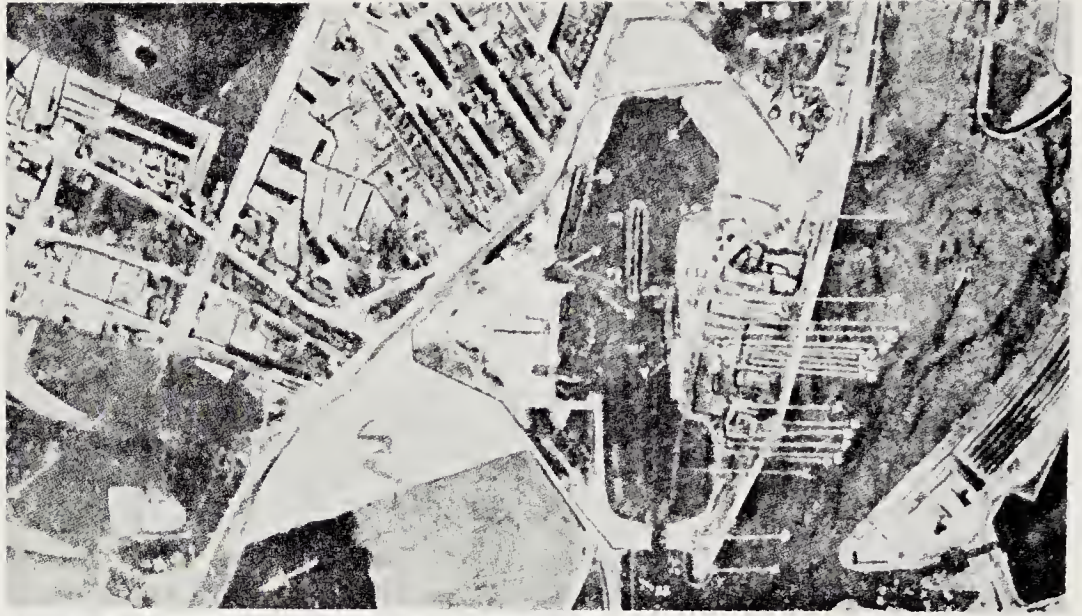


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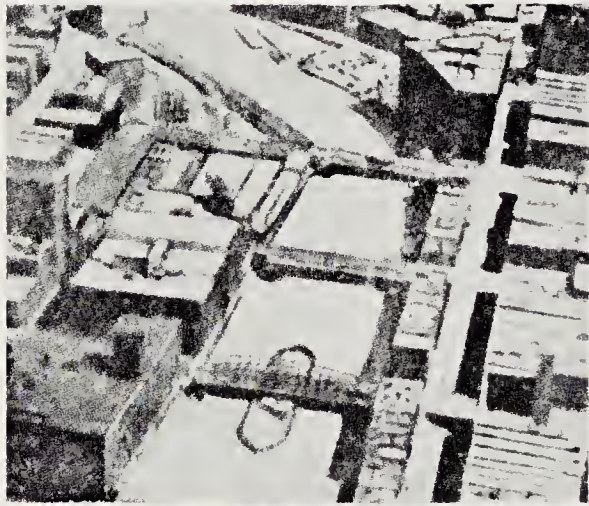
12-15 The environment ("reality") which stimulates the Academician.



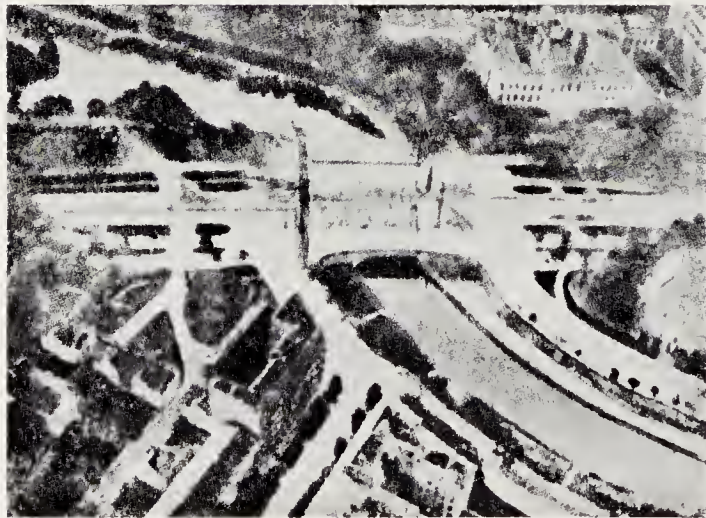
16-27 The environment ("reality") which stimulates the Futurist.



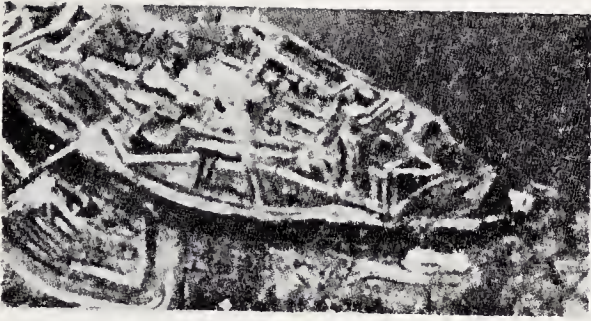
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28-35 The environment ("reality") which stimulates the Suprematist.

port of the constitution, so that the painter in his picture, for example, shapes the additional element to which he gives expression in conformity with the constitutional norm. For every creative form reveals possibilities for new conceptions, new norms, which have the power of overturning the harmony of the old point of view — the old norm.

The effect of new creative forms could be called “psychotechnics” and the new forms themselves looked upon as the activated minute parts of the content of the *new* additional element.

The effect of these activated and activating particles can be compared with the effect of bacteria in the human organism (in a diseased, exceptional condition of the latter), with this difference, however, that through the action of the additional element old conceptions of the conscious mind are destroyed (displaced, that is, by new conceptions), whereas the disease bacteria destroy the conscious mind (the brain) itself.

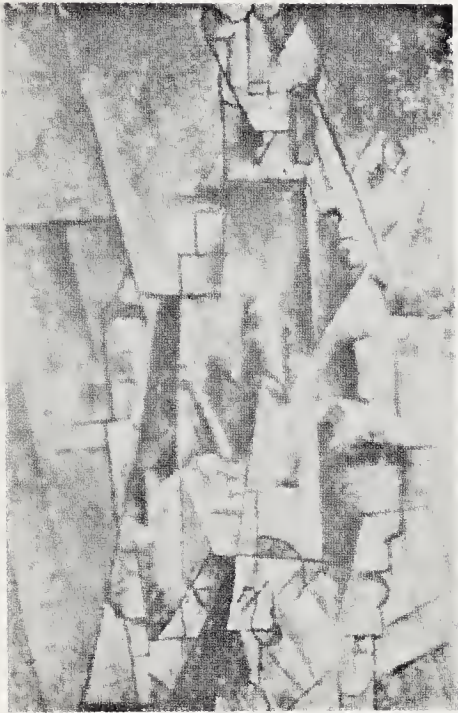
The additional element plays a decisive role in art since it throws a new light on the comparative values of “things”.

The additional element is the earmark of a culture and it is expressed in painting by a characteristic use of the straight line and the curve (ills. 36-39).



36-39 The cultures of additional elements of Cézanneism, Cubism and Suprematism.

37 PICASSO



38 PICASSO



39 MALEVICH



The action of the additional element in the painting of Cézanne, which can be recognized by its "fibrous" curves, brings about, in the artist, an attitude fundamentally different from the action of the sickle-shaped additional element of Cubism or the straight line of Suprematism.

We can observe, even in Cézanne's pictures, how the realistic, objective element of the representation (trees, water . . . the landscape) is being absorbed by the pictorial element. The realism of Cézanne is of a distinctly pictorial nature and bears not the slightest resemblance to the realism of the academician (ills. 40-43).

If the sickle-shaped additional element of Cubism now makes its appearance, we recognize in it the third qualified type of realism and arrive at a new norm which transforms the fibrous pictorial element of Cézanne into rigidly geometric shapes, creates a new kind of texture and prescribes a characteristic, special kind of space composition limited by the "six-planar" cubist form.

Thus "things" can actually be seen in quite different ways, depending upon the viewpoint of the directing artistic norm.

In this way an out and out contradiction arises between the laws of art (painting) and the laws of science, as in the case, for example, of comple-

mentary colors. (The investigation of "color harmonies" in pictures, in which the methods of expression spring from different norms, led to recognition of the fact that every pictorial norm has its own laws, even in the matter of complementary colors).

A close investigation of new art movements in painting would bring to light voluminous material which would have to be utilized in working out a



42 SCHISCHKIN



43 CÉZANNE

40-43
Modification of the naturalistic representation of trees under the influence of the additional element of the culture of Cézanne.

substantiated and causative theory for the new creative art, in order to release it from the isolated "exceptional position" in which it finds itself because of its apparent contradiction of all other norms of human creation.

What, then, is the cause of the remarkable dualism in the realm of human creation?

If we compare the activity of the engineer with that of the artist, we recognize an essential contrast, not only in their handling of material but also in their determining ideologies.

The artist uses forms in such a way as, through contrasts, to bring them into pictorial harmony — the form itself is for him the essential thing. The engineer ignores the art values in the form — to him the thing that counts is the usefulness of the construction.

The artist reproduces nature and delights in it; the engineer wages a continual battle with it.

The one finds it splendid — the other dangerous.

So it comes about that creative energy finds expression in different ways (in accordance with different norms).

The utilitarian constructions of technology, which develop out of the skillful pitting of one natural force against another, have in them no trace of an "artistic" imitation of natural forms; they are new creations of human culture.

A work by a realistic artist reproduces nature as it is and represents it as a harmonious, organic whole. In such a reproduction of nature *no creative element* can be discerned because the creative element is not to be found in the unchanging synthesis of nature as such but rather, in the variable synthesis of its interpretation.

An artist who creates rather than imitates *expresses himself*; his works are not reflections of nature but, instead, new realities, which are no less significant than the realities of nature itself.

The depicting of the events of daily life, in the manner of the above-mentioned reflected images, falls to the lot of those who lack the capacity for *new* creation and are slaves to appearances.

The "art" of such an "artist" is devoid of any additional element for, after all, it is the additional element which, in art, is forever fashioning nature into new forms.

The inventive engineer, the creative artist and the professional "copyist" thus represent three possible forms of productive activity, of which the work of both the inventive engineer and the original artist expresses *the creative*, while the imitator, as reproducing agent, serves *the existing*.

The basis of this diversity in activity, in my opinion, resides in the fact that our conceptions of things around us, transmitted mechanically by our senses, with the co-operation of one brain center or another, can turn out to be different from each other.

The existence of a capacity such as this to form varying conceptions (which must have at its disposal an unusually sensitive nervous system) is the first requisite for progress and it is the exact antithesis of that mechanical, professional "method of perception" which becomes habitual with persons pursuing a calling and which is always of a reactionary nature.

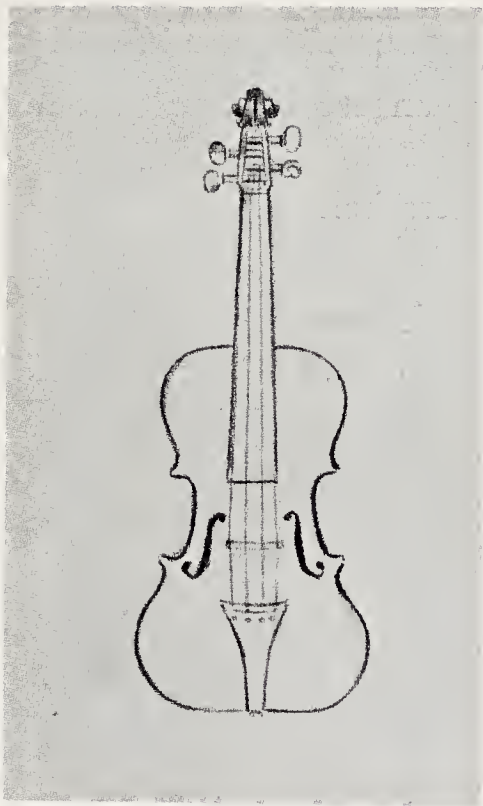
In addition to these two avenues of accomplishment, a third — so to speak, intermediate — approach lies open to human effort. This is a combining, reorganizing activity, which can also be viewed in part as a professional activity in the above-mentioned sense, but which is, nevertheless, of an entirely progressive, variable nature.

We must at this point, therefore, distinguish among three categories of activities:

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| 1. that of invention (the creation of the new) | } | progressive |
| 2. that of combination (the transformation of the existing) | | activity |
| 3. that of reproduction (the imitation of the existing) | } | reactionary |
| | | activity |

If we compare a violin with the representation of one in a picture by Pablo Picasso (ills. 44-49), it is possible to insert between the reality itself and the object as represented a whole series of progressively evolving sketches, which serve, so to speak, as associational links between the two extremes. Such associational links constitute a record of the characteristics of various developmental stages along the road of progress as we understand this from the above-mentioned categories of activities.

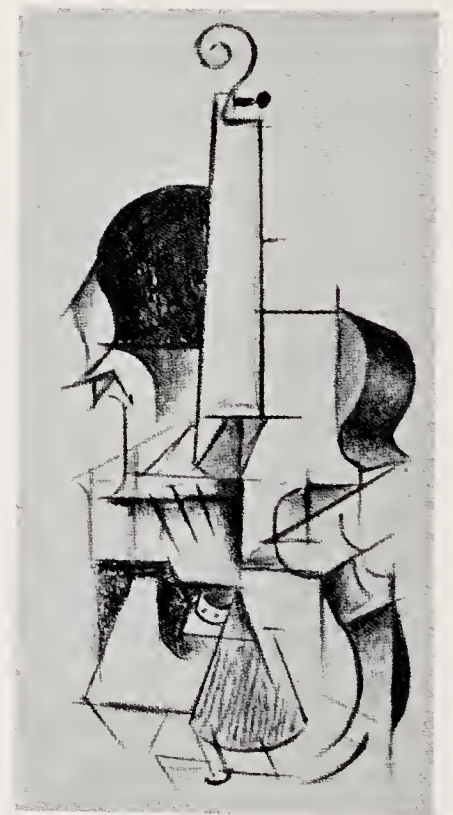
For an artist like Picasso objective nature is merely *the starting point* — *the motivation* — *for the creation of new forms*, so that the objects themselves can scarcely, if at all, be recognized in the pictures.



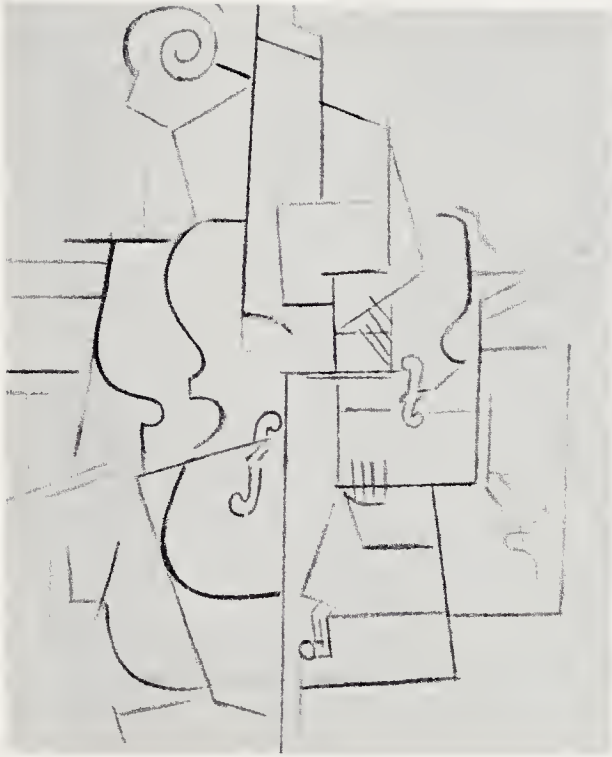
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45



46

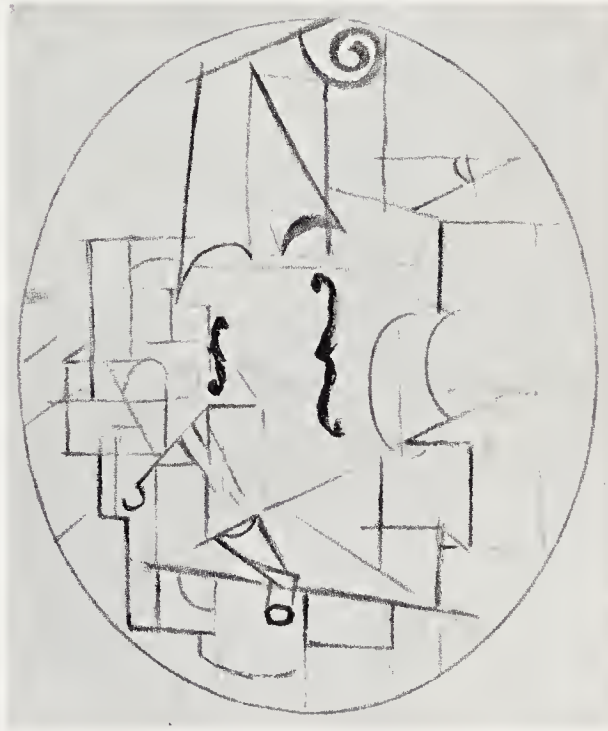


47



48

44-49 Modification of naturalistic representation under the influence of additional elements from the pictorial cultures of Cubism and Suprematism.



49

Artists of the third category, on the other hand, who are not endowed with the capacity to create original or composite works, are forced to content themselves with copying nature “as it is” (ills. 50, 51). The works of such artists are always comprehensible to the public (the majority of people) because they present nothing new, whereas the works of the creative artist contain new solutions of the eternal conflict between the subject and the object and bear little or no resemblance to accustomed reality.

An invention or an art work becomes available or understandable to the general public very gradually through its practical employment or its mass-production. Solutions of the most complex problems — the result of the invaluable creative activity of superior people — become general property and prepare the way for new creative activity.

Creative workers are thus always a step ahead of the general public — they show it the road of progress.



50 Photograph



51 Painting

In the field of technology the steps in development are clearly evident (wheelbarrow, carriage, railway coach — airplane).

This is likewise true in the field of art — art in general and painting in particular.

The phenomenon of light in nature stirs up in the brain a series of pictorial (optical) conflicts (ills. 52, 53). The resolution of these conflicts comes about through the setting up of appropriate systems — pictorial (artistic) norms — which, in turn, serve as the basis for new creative activity.

(Every art work — every picture — must consequently be looked upon as a solution of a conflict between the subject and the object).

Thus the objective-representative art of painting develops into light and color painting.

This light and color painting, in turn, requires one form or another of systematization of color values, etc. which then eventually finds expression in new pictorial norms (Impressionism, Divisionism, Cézanneism, Cubism, etc.).

We therefore differentiate two categories of creative work: the artistic-aesthetic (the province of the artist) and the productive-technical (the field of the engineer — of the scientist).

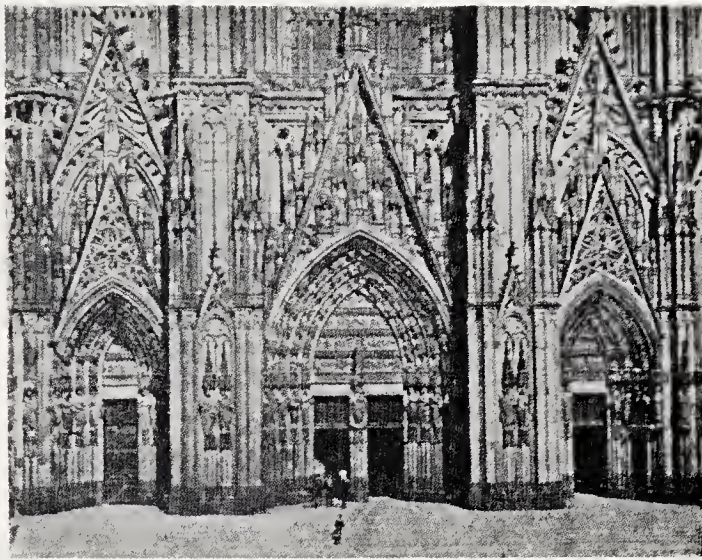
Out of artistic-aesthetic creation proceed absolute, enduring values; out of scientific (productive-technical) creation proceed relative, transitory values.

The wheelbarrow, the carriage, the railway coach — the airplane . . . all these are links in that long chain of unsolved problems and errors which calls itself science — technology; and if socialism relies on the infallibility of science, technology, a great disappointment is in store for it because it is not granted to the scientists to foresee the "course of events" and to create enduring values.

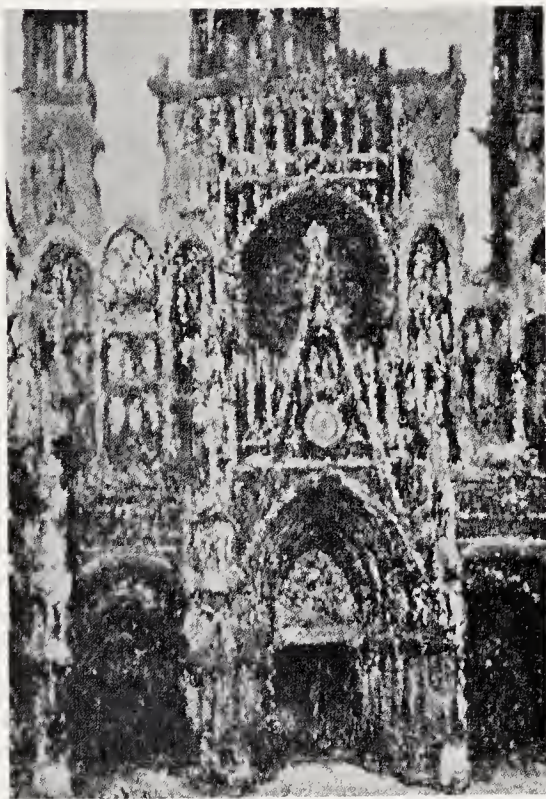
Giotto, Rubens, Rembrandt, Millet, Cézanne, Braque, Picasso, on the other hand, grasped the essence of things and created enduring, absolute values.

If it is possible to maintain that works of art are creations of our subconscious (or superconscious) mind, we are bound to acknowledge that *this subconscious mind is more infallible than the conscious.*

52



53



52, 53 An impressionist alteration of "nature".

Consciously the human being recognizes in nature a dangerous aggregate of natural powers and attempts to devise measures of security and combat with which to oppose it. In his "struggle for existence" he erects a mighty industry and fails to realize that the threat of nature is nothing more than a figment of his oversensitive imagination. He battles against a creation of fantasy — and is blind to the perfection of nature.

In art the relation of the human being to nature is an entirely different one. To the artist nature is always perfect, in storm and rain as well as when the sun shines.

The paths of science and art lie far asunder so that the scholar has more in common with the clergyman — with the priest — than with the artist.

A machine is painted to protect it against the destructive natural forces of the atmosphere, just as a mortal is embalmed (by the priest) as a protection against the evil spirit. . . . This is the nature of the scientific conservation of values!

Art values — in the present case the aesthetic arrangement of the forms and colors on the picture plane — are essentially imperishable and immeasurable because they are timeless. The public, to be sure, evaluates works of art (pictures) on the basis of external characteristics which are in accord with the "familiar" — the approved — on the basis of subject matter, the fidelity to "nature" of the thing depicted, etc.

If, then, a picture displays new additional elements so that it is no longer possible to fit it into the framework of the familiar norm, it is rejected by the public. . . . The public's lack of understanding, however, does not alter in the slightest the actual artistic value of a picture so that when, after a certain lapse of time, the people have accustomed themselves to the unfamiliar, the picture will inevitably come into its own.

The newest art movements, which do not aim at objective representation (imitation) of existing things, are still today bitterly opposed by the public. This is to be explained by the fact that the color harmony with which the public is already to some extent familiar and which has thus far appeared exclusively in objective representation, suddenly becomes non-objective and sets in motion a habitual reaction, so that this very harmony seems disharmonious to the indignant citizen, jarred out of his repose. A real work

of art, however, can never be disharmonious because the artist's very purpose is to transform the discord of ostensible reality — the cacophonous din of our surroundings — into a true artistic harmony.

The struggle of the energetic artist with an indolent society is a chronic, unavoidable state of affairs. An acceleration of progress in the realm of art appreciation can hardly be achieved since the public never willingly allows itself to be converted to new insight, even when this is quite obviously and in every respect advantageous. "I don't want to make another change in my old age . . ." is the invariable response.

The new art is always of a subjective nature; it appears unintelligible and disharmonious as long as it has not put itself across, that is, as long as its subjective individuality has not been recognized by the public and "elevated" to objective normality.

As has already been stated, two approaches to creative work lie open to the human being: the scientific-formal (that of the conscious mind) and the aesthetic-artistic (that of the subconscious or superconscious mind).

The scientist, for whom consciousness is, in every respect, the determining factor, never yields to the temptation of granting the subconscious or superconscious any prerogatives in connection with his altogether concrete work; the artist, on the other hand, who expresses, above all, the insight of the subconscious or superconscious — and who wishes, on this basis, to be understood — is compelled, in his work, to draw upon not only the subconscious or superconscious but also the conscious mind. Consciousness plays for the artist, admittedly, in his rather more abstract than concrete work, a subordinate role but still it does play a role, so that the lack of understanding of the public can be gauged to some extent by its exclusive "appreciation" of the "scientific-formal" in art.

The truly creative element in art — the aesthetic-artistic — is, obviously, of a distinctly subjective nature; it creates new artistic realities not found in "objective nature" (just as, for example, the musical ear recognizes possibilities of harmonic order in the discordant hubbub of our surroundings and is able to bring these possibilities to realization).

Every work of art — every picture — is the reproduction, so to speak, of a subjective state of mind — the representation of a phenomenon seen through a subjective prism (the prism of the brain).

It is altogether reasonable, therefore, to suppose that one could discern in a painting the development of the creative impulse and the motivating frame of mind of the artist from the distinctive character of the form relationships, the color harmony and the texture, through a comparative analysis of the probable aims, the means employed and the expression achieved.

The results of such an analytic investigation could be represented, in the case of the form element, by a definite combination of the straight line and the curve and, in the case of the color element, by a definite spectrum.

A formula set up in this manner could be looked upon as a means of assessing the relationship expressed in a painting between the creative personality (the subject) and the inducing phenomenon (the object), provided one is content to evaluate a work of art (a painting) in accordance with the trend of the time (the current state of culture, technology and progress), for a work of art cannot actually be measured at all. It comes into being independent of time, since art does not progress.

Let us therefore agree to determine the characterizing element of a picture in accordance with the relationship of the straight line and curve.

Since this characterizing relationship of the straight line and the curve can prove to be quite variable, it will be most efficacious to group more or less similar manifestations of it into categories, to allow for the possibility of pictorial variation in the examples within the individual categories and to represent this by a graphic formula. As soon as this graphic formula begins to affect the particular relationship of the straight line and the curve of another category it assumes the role of an additional element and brings about the formation of new characteristic relationships.

Hence we can distinguish in the field of painting a whole series of the most diverse art movements, the most varied special states of the "culture of painting" (ill. 54), and each of these art movements, each special state of the "culture of painting", exhibits a characteristic additional element which is

КРИВАЯ ЕЗАННА

**СЕРПОВИДНАЯ КРИВАЯ
КУБИЗМА**

**СУПРЕМАТИЧЕСКАЯ ПРЯМАЯ
МАЛВИЧА**



A



B¹

B²



C



A 1



B¹1



B²1



B³1



C 1



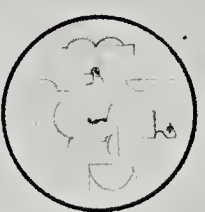
A 2



B¹2



B²2



B³2



C 2



A 3



B¹3



B²3



B³3



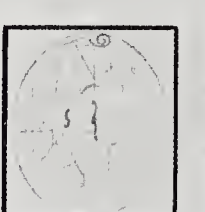
C 3



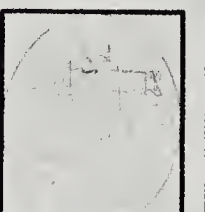
A 4



B¹4



B²4



B³4



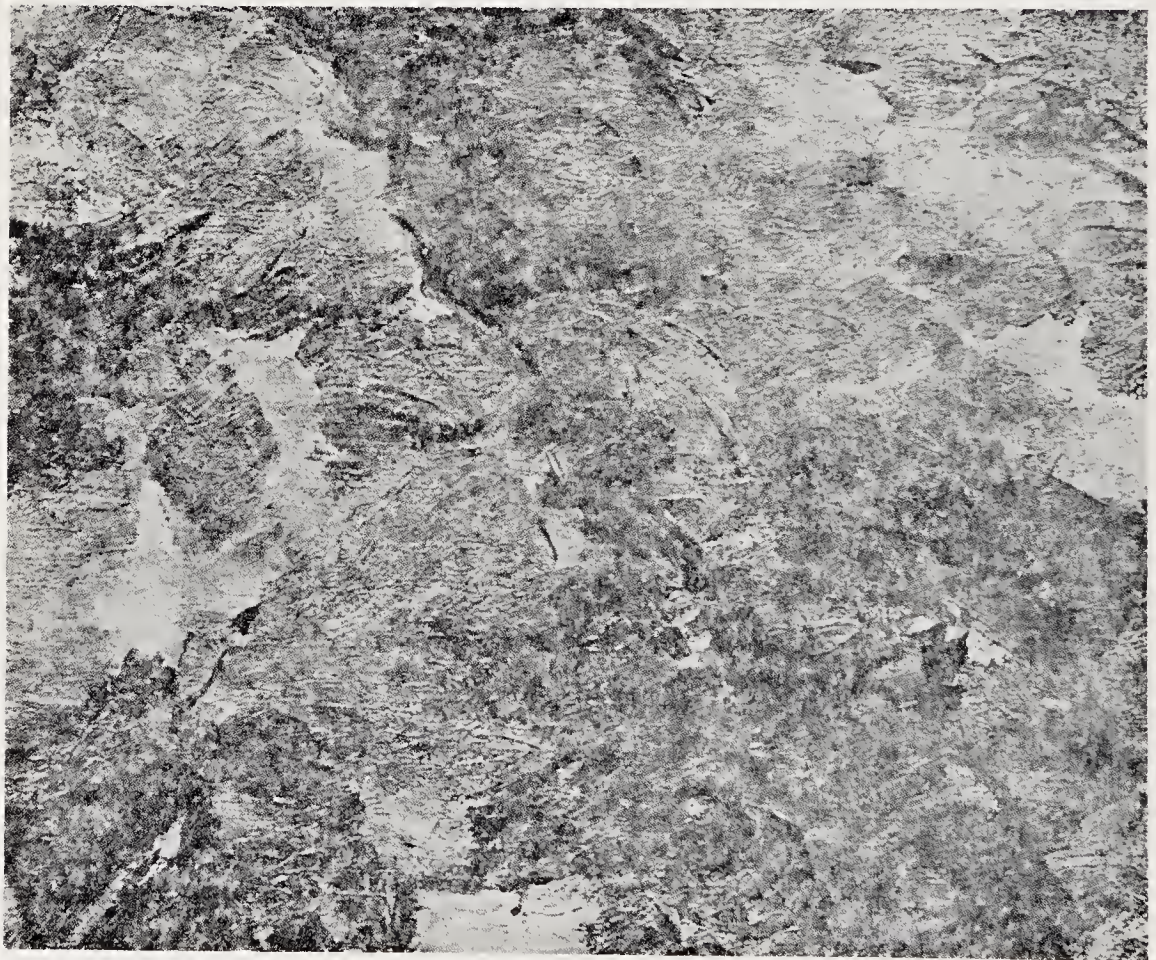
C 4

54 Analytic investigation of form development in the pictorial cultures of Cézanne (A, A1, A2, etc.), Cubism (B, B1, B2, etc.) and Suprematism (C, C1, C2, etc.). Additional elements of these cultures.

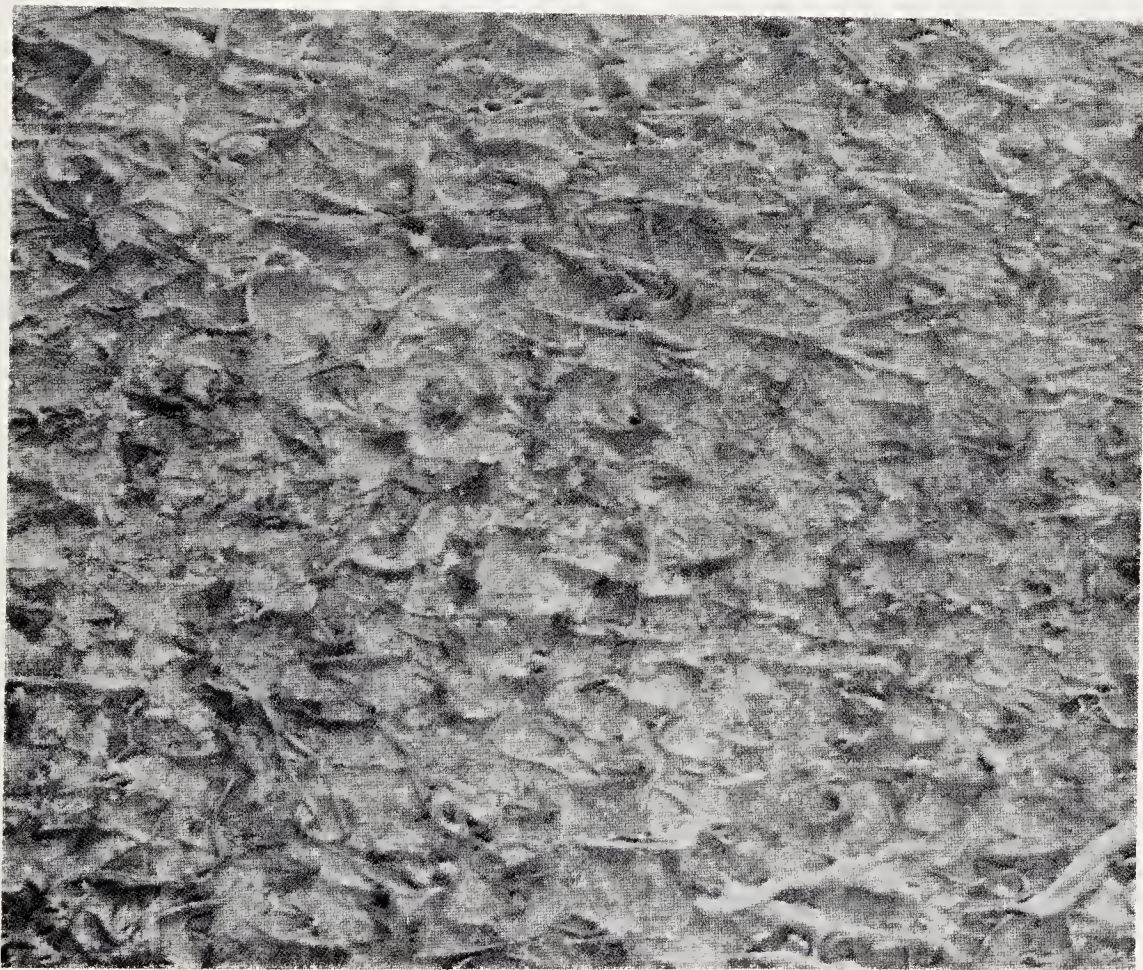
expressed in a definite combination of the straight line and the curve, as well as in a definite set of color values.

Painting or rather, a particular example of it, is to the investigator a document of form and color values which can be recognized in the structure and texture of the painting (ills. 55, 56). He finds "the formula for the creative stimulus of the artist" not only in the smallest parts of the pictorial surface but also in the larger areas and recognizes it in a definite curved, wavy or straight linearity. The sum total of these peculiarities, then, determines the *spotted, hazy, mat, smooth, transparent or opaque character of the pictorial structure.*

The objective of the next step in the investigation would be to establish the reason for this or that character of the pictorial structure by means of an examination of the connection between the form and color elements.



55 The structure of Cézanne's painting.



56 The structure of an impressionist painting.

A picture is a recording, so to speak, of a varying color energy which is concentrated in planes or lines, so that the general concept, "painting" must be broken down into the following specific categories:

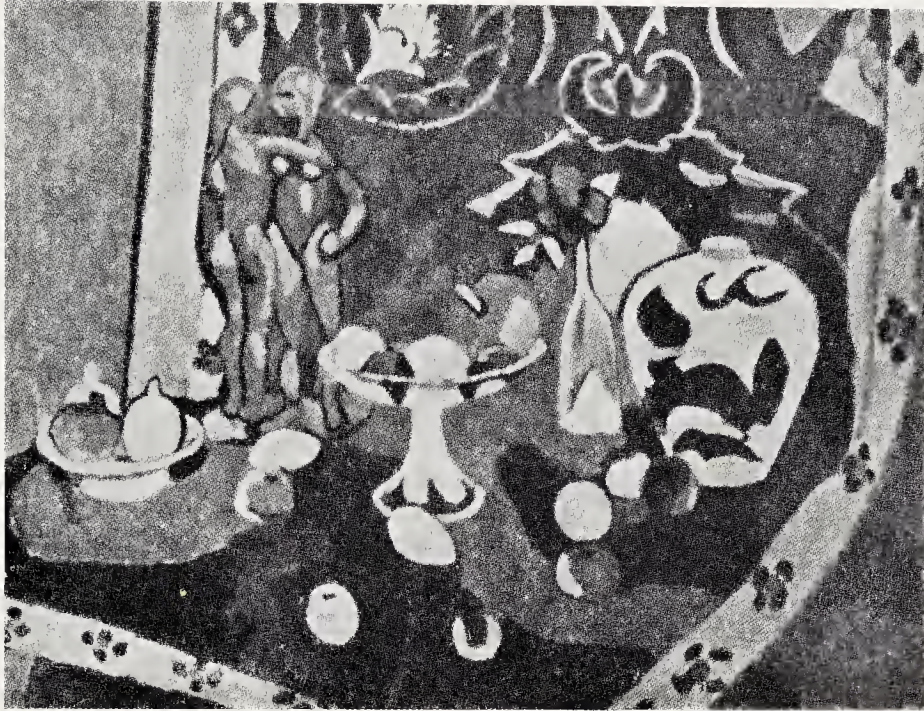
1. colored graphic art, 2. painting in color planes and 3. true painting (ills. 57-59).

(The colored graphic art of a Holbein, the painting in color planes of a Matisse or Gauguin and the true painting of Rembrandt and Cézanne.)

We can easily recognize the differences in these three color languages by the nature of their pictorial structures, the character of the color reticulation, etc., etc.



57 The colored graphic art of Holbein.



58 Painting in color planes by Matisse.



59 True painting by Cézanne.

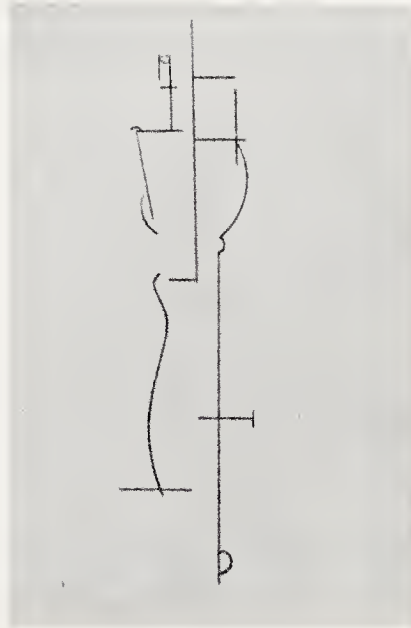
From a particular relationship of the straight line and the curve (in the sense of the formula mentioned above), we can discern, furthermore, the connection of the individual picture with one "pictorial culture" or another (which is characterized by the formula of the additional element) and the extent of the participation of the conscious mind and of the subconscious or superconscious (that is, of the "scientific-formal" and the "aesthetic-artistic").

One could determine in this way, for example, the characteristic elements of Impressionism, Expressionism, Cézanneism, Cubism, Constructivism, Futurism and Suprematism and could make diagrams of relationships which would reveal the whole systematic development of the straight line and the curve, the laws of form and color structures (together with the relation of these to the phenomena of social life in various epochs), the distinguishing features of one "artistic culture" or another and the distinctive nature of textures, structures, etc.

An investigation of painting carried out in this manner could be likened to a bacteriological investigation. The (additional) element which insinuates itself into an organism — the bacterium or bacillus, for example, the tubercular bacillus — brings about certain changes in the organism. If one represents the normal condition of the healthy organism by a definite linear relationship, it would be possible to indicate the change in condition caused by the added element by a definite displacement of the linear system.

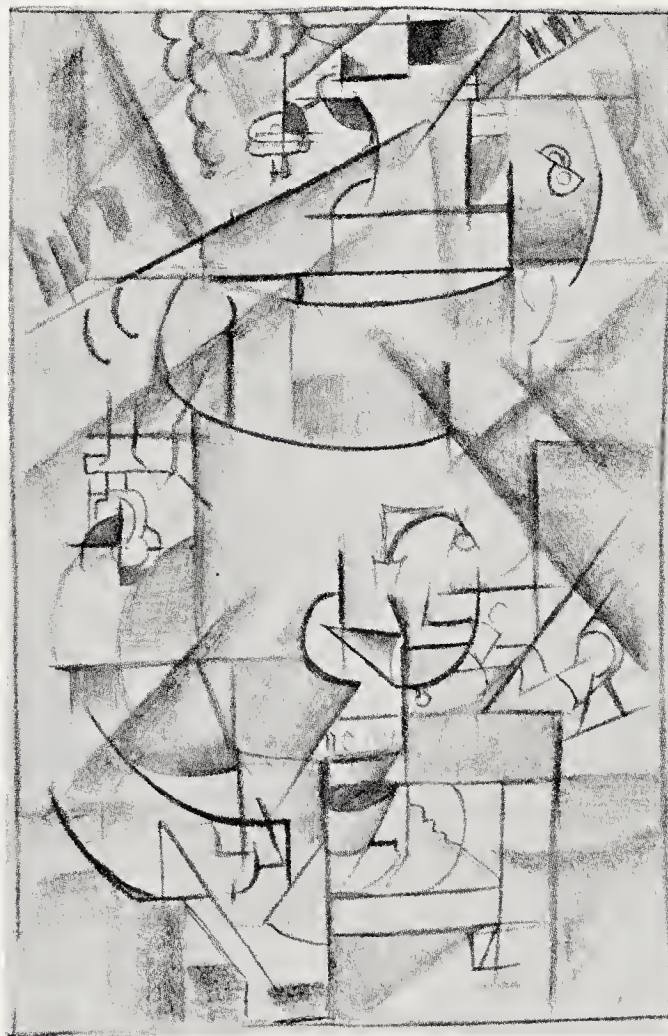
A rigidly organized cubist structure (ills. 60-62) undergoes under the influence of Suprematism a similar displacement of its characteristic linear order. A rearrangement of the structure begins to take place, which leads to the new suprematist organization.

The investigation of all phenomena of this sort is of utmost importance to the understanding of effective methods of teaching in art schools, just as research in the field of bacteriology is extremely important to the physician in search of new and efficacious methods of treatment. The recognition of that relationship of the straight line and the curve which characterizes a pictorial culture and which, by appearing as an additional element, brings about the transformation of other, existing types of relationships, is therefore for us a necessity of the first order.



61

60 Influence of the suprematist straight line on cubist art.



62

61, 62 Suppression of "repetitive lines" in Cubism.

The beginnings of Futurism and Cubism led many physicians to the assumption that the Futurists and Cubists, as the result of a pathological disturbance, lost the capacity to perceive phenomena in their entirety and they attempted to prove this hypothesis by comparing drawings of the Cubists with drawings of the mentally ill in which the subject matter was dismembered and presented as separate, unrelated parts.

The discourses of the scholars and the choice of examples to support their arguments astonished me, since they believed it possible to solve the question at hand solely on evidence attained from sick persons and took no notice whatever of the positive basis of Cubism, in which an entirely sound striving after a strictly organized structure is surely unmistakable.

The critics have invariably sought to represent every new form of art as, first and foremost, an unwholesome phenomenon. It has pleased them recently to trace these new art forms back to class pathology and to call them Philistine, mystic, idealistic, etc., but they reproach the artists, above all, with the charge that their works are unintelligible to "the masses of the people".

The Barbizon school, in its day, called forth from the public a storm of indignation because of its renunciation of naturalistic representation. Later, when the Barbizon school had come to be considered "normal" and the new impressionist movement began to attract notice, the public and the critics fell with redoubled vigor upon the Impressionists. . . . Yet there was no question here of an "infraction" of the familiar norm (now represented by the Barbizon school), for the Impressionists, since they embraced to an ever-increasing extent the pictorial content of nature, developed the pictorial element further and carried the existing artistic culture to completion by means of a new additional element — "light" (as such). This, however, brought about a change in pictorial structure and, as a result, the visual conception of nature (which the public, thanks to the Barbizon school, had come to accept) likewise underwent a change. In addition, it was thought necessary to view Impressionism as an unsound, abnormal phenomenon because the use of pale blue, cold "light effects" in a pictorial representation seemed contrary to nature and contradicted the hitherto current norm. Cézanne and later the Cubists and Futurists aroused in the public still greater indignation because their pictorial representations diverged sharply from every norm. The generalization of visual phenomena

here went so far that the layman could no longer identify anything and he looked upon the new artistic point of view as insane.

Quite obviously a radical revision of all existing norms was taking place here. A new conception of the world came into being, the content and meaning of which were misconstrued, since the abandonment of the representative element in painting by no means justifies the assumption of a sickly decadence in the power of perception, much less the degeneration of a class.

One was accustomed to observing the phenomena of color in inseparable association with the "real" forms of nature — with clouds, people, villages, etc. — and couldn't understand why the color structure of the picture suddenly left the well-worn path and green, blue, white, gray and red things became arranged in a new and "incomprehensible" relationship, so that clouds, villages and landscapes disappeared.

After many years, nevertheless, the public came to recognize the validity of the Impressionists, Cézanne and even, indeed, the Cubists . . . so that today the pictorial works of the founders and adherents of these new pictorial cultures are collected in museums and very carefully preserved.

This is not to say, however, that the museum collections have become the object of serious investigation in the art schools. We can see how the public and the educators adopt every possible measure to shield the higher schools from the penetration of the futurist "pestilence". (Since the relationships of things in the new art are not grasped, they are thought to signify destruction, because every cubist picture exhibits the disintegration of the object — every suprematist picture, non-objectivity itself).

We have here an exact parallel with the efforts of the health authorities. Just as they seek to combat every illness with all the resources at their command and isolate the sick from the healthy, the attempt is also made in the field of art to protect the existing norm against all influences which might destroy the traditional form of representation — the precedent. But in spite of all hygienic measures no possibility exists, either in medicine or art, of excluding the additional element.

Countless currents are in evidence in the painting of our time, each of which exerts an influence on a certain circle of people through its particular contribution to the hitherto existing principles of art (through its special character,

that is). (The artists themselves are the most responsive to all of these influences and they are the more so, in fact, the more sensitive are their nervous systems).

The various movements in painting can be divided into two main groups:

1. that of pure color and
2. that of mixed color. One could also call this second group that of the "color-timid" because no definitely pure colors are to be met with in it.

In addition to these, still another group exists and this represents, indeed, the lowest form of artistic creation. To this group belong the eclectics who produce the most impossible art works, since they have the capacity to assimilate and make use of the whole multiplicity of elements of various pictorial cultures. (I designate such works as a mixture of artistic notions and sensations).

From a thorough investigation of all these phenomena I derived a series of *diagrams in which the characteristic lines of development of form and color were represented. Among these the course of development of the straight line and the curve in the various phases of Cubism turned out to be especially clear.*

While investigating Cézanneism, Cubism and Suprematism, I succeeded in distinguishing three types of additional elements and in denoting these by special, characteristic symbols. This opened up the possibility of detecting, in any painting whatsoever, the presence of elements of different cultures and their relationship to each other so that, in appraising the works of a painter about to receive instruction, his specific talents could be recognized without difficulty and thereby the selection of the most effective method of teaching him would be facilitated.

The capacities and talents of an art student should not be judged by rules of aesthetics, if for no other reason than that the aesthetic element is of a decidedly subjective nature. Only a strictly scientific, objective approach can succeed here. Every art school, or "university of the arts", must be divided into a series of departments — of, for example, music, poetry, painting, architecture — in each of which the phenomena of one culture or another are investigated. In the case of every student in the department of painting, the level of development of the particular pictorial culture most meaningful to him must be accurately determined to enable him to develop his abilities to the fullest.

The understanding of the diversity of pictorial cultures, unfortunately, is still very deficient and though we distinguish, along with the main divisions of creative art (graphic art, painting, architecture,) various movements (art trends), such as Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, etc., the definitions of these are still so unclear that, without scientific analysis, a clarification seems impossible.

Over a period of many years I have conducted various experiments with painters who were under the influence of one additional element or another and I have arrived at interesting results. I placed these individuals "infected with painting" in related groups, in accordance with the representative, characteristic condition exhibited by them (depending upon the additional element present). I then decided to check the results of my theoretic investigations in practice.

I succeeded in dividing the students into two groups. One group worked in a conscious, theoretic manner, the other subconsciously and intuitively, I noted, moreover, that the students of the first group, after overcoming Cézanneism, were easily able, with the help of theoretic understanding, to reach the final (fourth) stage of Cubism, whereas the students of the second group scarcely advanced beyond Cézanne. One can contend, on the basis of this, that the first phase of Cubism represents the extreme limit of pictorial potentialities. Conventional painting cannot stand either analysis or synthesis, so that the various phases of Cubism in which the element of analysis or synthesis is decisive cause the painter to return to subject matter. Even in the second phase of Cubism objective subject matter can no longer be recognized. The artist who wishes to develop his art beyond the potentialities of conventional painting is forced to resort to theory and logic and thereby to place the creative activity of the subconscious under the control of the conscious mind.

I demonstrated to certain art students working in line with the culture of Cézanne various fragmentary and constructive organizations of additional elements. The effect on all of the students was equally strong in spite of the fact that they differed from each other in the nature of their pictorial "infection".

I tried constantly, with theoretic logic, to make an impression on their consciousness and continued this until the latter began to react to the proper phenomena.

As soon as this took place, the theoretic, logical element began to lose its importance, so that the solution of the composition (that is, the creation itself) was finally left to the subconscious. In the case described insight was beginning to develop and this must be looked upon as the result of an active correlation between the element of consciousness and that of subconsciousness (or super-consciousness).

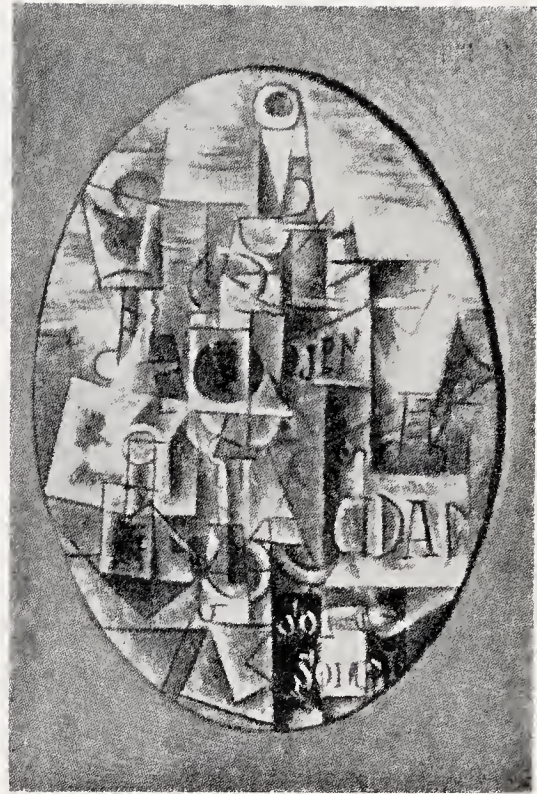
In another case I tested the simultaneous effects of two pictorial cultures. I prescribed for a painter who leaned strongly toward Cézanne a large dose of the cubist combination of the curve and the straight line from various stages in the development of all four phases of Cubism. The simultaneous effects of two pictorial cultures (that of Cézanne and that of Cubism) attained in this way shook powerfully the artistic conceptions and methods of representation of the painter. An object being represented changed its proportions; *under the influence of the sickle form of Cubism, certain lines dropped out of the visible object temporarily and then, however, the object reappeared, as such and in its entirety* (ills. 63-66).

The result of this was an incessant fluctuation in the creative activity of the painter, who first embraced the fibrous form of Cézanne and then employed the sickle form of Cubism. The object vacillated between "analysis" and "synthesis". The nervous irritability of the artist increased; even his purely external behavior underwent a change, in that spontaneous cheerfulness alternated with indifference. The basis of this lay in the temporary predominance of some one of the additional elements; the sickle form called forth concentration and composure (the state in which the painter strove to force his intellect to grasp the system which hovered before him); as soon as he had found the solution, however, he fixed it upon the canvas in a happy frame of mind and with ease.

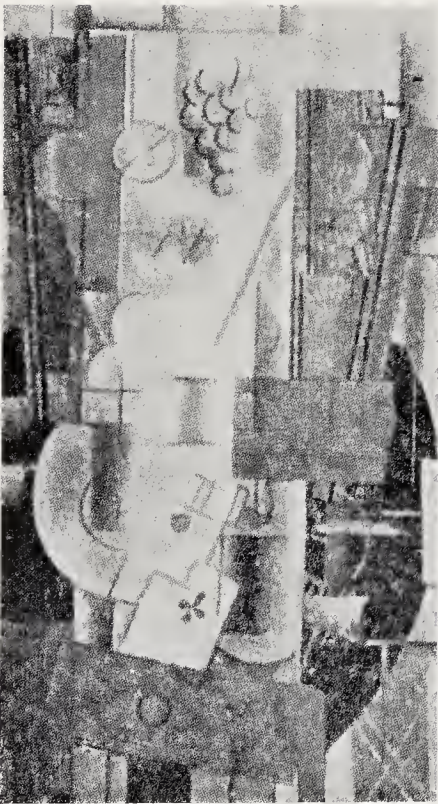
Thereupon I increased the dose of cubist additional elements until an impediment became apparent in the work and finally pictorial paralysis set in, so to speak. The painter would have liked to simplify the problem for himself through theoretic calculation but he nevertheless failed to attain his goal in this way, since his drive toward pictorial creation in the manner of Cézanne's emotional compositions strongly predominated. Evidently the solu-



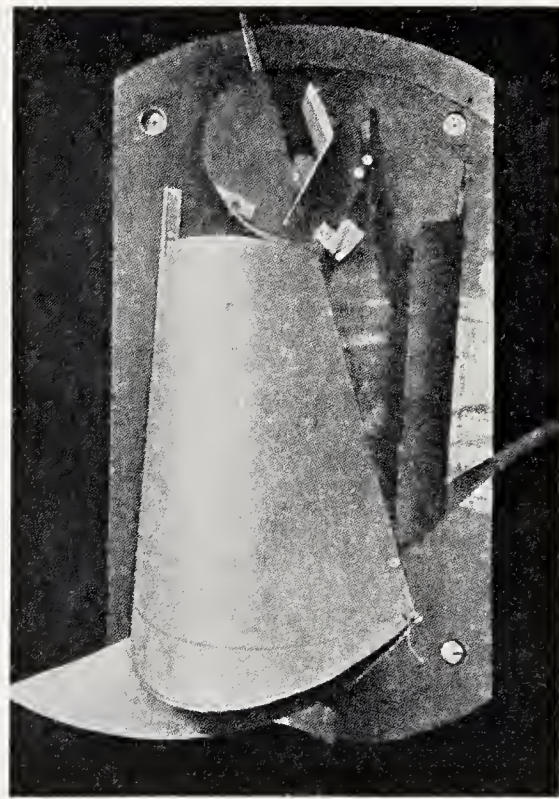
63



64



65



66

63-66 Various phases of Cubism.

tion (allowing the feelings to take creative form) cannot be reached in a purely theoretic way. Theory serves only as a kind of foundation within the framework of consciousness, but the final solution always remains reserved for the subconscious (or superconscious) — for the emotions or feelings.

The standstill in the painter's work, which points to a conflict between two additional elements appearing on the scene at the same time, is the decisive moment when the pictorial crisis sets in and when the painter is faced with the necessity of making a clear-cut choice of one of the two cultures.

In the case of one such crisis I observed that the fibrous form of Cézanne made itself more and more clearly evident until it completely displaced the sickle form of Cubism. . . . The Cézanneist remained in the pictorial rut and failed to arrive at Cubism. In such a case it might be most efficacious to shield the painter from the influence of movements (pictorial cultures) incompatible with him and through the unhindered further development of his own particular pictorial culture to bring about a kind of satiation, by means of which a basis favorable to the reception of new pictorial stimuli (stemming from the initial phase of Cubism) could be laid.

One of the painters adhering to the culture of Cézanne, who came under my observation, despite the fact that considerable doses of Cubism were administered to him, held out for an unusually long time; his "artistic organism" put up a strong resistance to the additional element of Cubism. The subconscious center, which was very decidedly attuned to the harmonies of Cézanne, here struggled with the conscious mind which was already convinced theoretically by Cubism and continually made use of the cubist sickle form.

The conscious mind advanced a whole series of logical hypotheses which the painter accepted, in spite of the fact that he leaned as much as ever toward the culture of Cézanne. The conscious mind resisted the subconscious bias by pointing out all the advantages and truths of Cubism. The decline in influence of the sickle form could nevertheless immediately be foreseen. In order, now, to accelerate the crisis, I introduced the suprematist straight line and began, with suprematist elements, to exert an influence upon the painter by means of theoretic logic. As a result of this such heavy demands were made on his conscious mind that the functioning of the subconscious, creative center was made difficult. The painter was now exposed to the simultaneous influence of

the additional elements of three different cultures: the purely pictorial (loose, light) of Cézanne, the crystalline (severely geometric) of Cubism and the planar of Suprematism. This resulted in an eclectic confusion out of which nothing could issue but an "aesthetic miscarriage".

This experiment acquainted me with the effect of each individual additional element but besides, it became evident in the painter's work itself that every element of a culture exercises an influence peculiar only to it, that, consequently, every element actually has its own particular aspect and represents the essence of a new construction. The surface of the painting (the above-mentioned "confusion" in the picture) therefore carried various conflicting elements, such as conventional painting and tone and color, of which two, tone and color contradict the pictorial principle.

I knew that it would be impossible for the painter to resolve these conflicts intuitively, that he had to solve the problems with the conscious mind instead, which is to say, he had to recognize what was preventing him from achieving a pictorial unity. This kind of work, naturally, is not easy for a painter; it tires him and offers him no possibility of creating a painting on the basis of inspiration. I saw that in spite of all the efforts of the painter to stick to the suprematist straight line, his relapse into the culture of Cézanne was inevitable because he had embraced Suprematism only on the basis of logic and theory, whereas his entire inner self was attuned to the pictorial. I determined in this way the extent of the potential influence of three (continually applied) additional elements.

In another experiment I carried the cultivation and development of one added element or another through to its ultimate norm. I was able thereby to ascertain that when the norm, that for example of the culture of Cézanne, was reached, cubist curves in their typical combinations began, quite inconspicuously, to develop. In this period the painter understood the theoretic directions and incorporated them with ease into the system, which he resolved either with the help of theoretic fundamentals or in a creative, subconscious way. His being had been brought into harmony with the laws of Cubism. During this period in the development of the sickle form a leaning toward the suprematist straight line became evident from time to time but I tried by every means to counteract this tendency because it was the result of theoretic logic, whereas

I wanted to hold the painter in the pure culture of the cubist additional element which was developing within him. I isolated him from Futurism and Suprematism, whereupon he began, with unusual energy, to build up pictorial volumes in the cubist manner. As soon as this isolation was lifted, however, his nervous system began to absorb other elements and some new form or element foreign to the nature of cubist composition would force its way into the cubist system and produce an eclectic conglomeration. In one case in which the isolation was broken a cubist element happened to get into the suprematist system and it so disturbed the unity of the painting that a pictorial substance of a Cézanne-like consistency even became recognizable. This circumstance was important to me because it signified that the gradual development of pictorial cultures in a painter, through his strict isolation, confirms him in the most recently experienced of these, since he rejects all other systems and retains only this one system in his subconscious mind. His approach to form remains free of eclectic adulteration. Such a painter, coming under the influence of a new additional element, accepts this as such and, instead of introducing it into his most recent system, works over the latter and develops it into a new system.

In the course of my observations I distinguished between several types of painters whom I divided into distinct categories: A, B, C, D, etc. I broke these down further into separate groups: A₁, A₂. . . B₁, B₂, etc. The groups (categories) A₁, A₂D, A₃D, A₄, and A₅ proved to be especially characteristic—the categories A₂D and A₃D, “the hollow ones”; A₄, the eclectics; A₅, the integrated or stable people. In the hollow ones, A₂D any pictorial culture whatsoever advanced by category A₁ can develop. The category of hollow ones, A₃D is able to transform itself into the culture with which it is inoculated by category A₁. It remains constant and differs, in this respect, from category A₁ which is unstable, changes, and creates new forms of pictorial cultures. The other category, A₂D in which one can develop a culture and carry it to exhaustion and which one can thereupon inoculate with a new culture, has a constitution with the capacity to transform itself and assume the shape of the new culture with which it has been inoculated. The hollow ones of category A₂D have the power of resistance and develop the additional element of a pictorial culture with which they have been inoculated without

going beyond the limits of the given system — these people create the “schools”. They are like an electrical battery in which the energy of the additional element of category A_1 , with which they have been inoculated, is stored up. If this energy becomes exhausted, the individual is empty or, in other words, “discharged” and is consequently able to assimilate any new culture whatsoever, whether of the past or the future, and to live by it. This means that if a painter of category A_2D , for example, has been a Cubist he can move backwards to Cézanne and continue from Cézanne to Manet, Renoir and finally to Corot. I have been able to identify a number of such cases among the painters under my observation. (At the proper time, if the opportunity arises to publish all the material on the observations which I made of these painters, I will attempt to gather together my experiments in a separate treatise in which, then, I will go into closer detail). Discharged (hollow) individuals of category A_2D possess a great capacity for assimilation. They can endure very high tension and produce works of great power. Some of the painters of category A_2D who came under my observation stood the high tension of the steel-like culture of the city for a number of years, whereas others (of category A_3D) were unable to muster the necessary energy for even a single year. They need at all times the presence of category A_2 . The painters of category A_2D require a constant environment (an unchanging, stable milieu), in which they subsist and give forceful expression to their energy, yet they are able to maintain themselves for a number of years in solitude. If they are transplanted to another culture, however, the steel-like, metallic charge becomes dissipated in a few years and takes on the new form of its surroundings. The dynamic plane of the surface of their works becomes rough and then breaks up into individual brush strokes, forms a bark-like mass with all sorts of gradations in tone and finally results inevitably in a loosening-up of the surface of the painting and, in so doing, it approaches the character of a surface by Cézanne and then of the Impressionists. Contact of an individual of group A_2D with a new environment immediately becomes apparent either in a relaxation of the steely-elastic condition of the pictorial surface, of the metallic character of the construction and in the destruction of the geometric form of the plane and of space, or, conversely, in a tautening of slackened lines and color patches as soon as the individual comes into metallic surroundings. In a

picture of such a painter, one element or another can always be identified, which led to the destruction of the method of representation formerly peculiar to him. The steel-like surface of the painting becomes limp, is absorbed and forms a pasty mass with slimy, colored transitions of different consistencies. This state is characterized by a weakening of the lines which often become fibrous but which, for the most part, form transparent, overlapping patches displaying a compact, slate-like elasticity.

The softened color masses indicate that the pictorial activity is beginning to grow weak in character, that the nervous system is passing out of the tense state of taut rectilinear contrasts into one of fibrous, curved combinations. The pictorial center of the brain slackens, so to speak, its centrifugal motion, which had hitherto been so pronounced that the fibrous lines, thrown against the walls of the centrifuge, took on a homogeneous straight and tense form, whereas the color areas, pressed against it, became a compact, metallic, clay-like or colored mass. The brain's weakened centrifugal feeling reveals all of the above-mentioned conditions of the masses in their limp state, while, conversely, an increase in the centrifugal motion restores the slack masses and lines to their taut condition. A painter with a weakened centrifugal feeling will always, even in the city, take on soft-bodied aggregations of color masses. It is impossible for him to grasp the color energy or line in the metallic tensions of machines; his brain "crumples" and his conscious mind becomes incapable of bringing a taut line into relationship with other lines. It always seeks the static element in contrasts of light and shade of walls, the loose, clayey, ochre-colored masses with blue-bluish, brownish green tones — it suffers from color timidity. The technique of such a painter expresses itself in bark-like masses of color and in characteristic crisscross brush strokes; this is very distinctly easel painting and it can grow out of the use of two different methods — the visible and the concealed. The development of a producer of such easel painting follows along the course, "Cézanne-Rembrandt" (perhelion and aphelion). When the hollow ones of category A₂D, on the other hand, arrive again in urban cultural surroundings, the process is reversed, that is, their pictorial state becomes taut again. (I have not actually observed, by the way, any such cases of a return to the city).

Painters of category A₂D can never, among other things, go beyond certain

limits in the development of one pictorial element or another. They stand between two spheres of influence and the slightest leaning toward the suburbs draws them away from the metallic pole. The portrayal of nature (clouds, mountain slopes, woods, etc.) constantly attracts them. A painter of category A_2D has no will-power of his own: he can only embrace the will of another and cultivate this wonderfully. This category forms the most favorable basis for the realization of every kind of idea; doctrines, systems and states are sustained by it. Category A_4 — the eclectics — is to be looked upon as the most dangerous; it wants to create works out of all sorts of contradictory systems. (In politics one would call this category “the compromisers”).

Painters of category A_1 have the capacity to bring forth new additional elements with the power to overturn the accustomed point of view and set up a new artistic order. The reason for this is that the additional element brings about a revamping of reflected visual images. Thus nature becomes now Cézanne realism, and now cubist or futurist. (In the course of observing an individual who had been inoculated with the additional element of one pictorial movement or another, I noted that the condition of the pictorial mass gradually changed. My explanation of this is that certain fluctuations in the “sensation of weight” are brought about in the painter’s consciousness through the influence of the additional element.)

In this way new projections of visions which are taking shape in the brain appear on the pictorial surface and become living realities. The phenomena of nature or of pictorial form become transposed to a new plane where the relationships of the elements begin to break away from objectivity and establish a new kind of order. The transformation of visual phenomena is not wilful or the result of a loss of precision in the painter’s capacity to see but rather, takes place in accordance with immutable laws determined by the additional element active at a particular time. The painter, under the influence of one additional element or another, strengthens or weakens the impression received by him, that is, he omits certain elements of the phenomenon or introduces

new ones. The objective aspect of the representation, which was formerly of chief importance, retreats into the background; it disintegrates on the new plane and thereby becomes lost to those who do not understand the law of transformation. Thus a violin, for example, seen through the eyes of a Cubist, appears completely changed when represented. It passes from objective to subjective representation (on a new pictorial plane) and ceases to be the real objective "thing".

Understanding of the laws determined by the various additional elements makes it possible to recognize in the finished painting which additional element influenced the painter during the creation of the picture and to which of the previously-mentioned categories he belongs. The repetition of a certain new visual image makes possible its reduction to a formula, so that it becomes a norm for ever-widening circles and can finally be looked upon as objective reality. In this way the masses of the people pass from one level of consciousness to another. Every additional element exercises a strong influence on the attitude of the painter toward the life roundabout him (even in respect to economics and politics). It makes him dependent upon certain living conditions, upon a very definite environment without which he cannot create successfully. So the Futurists and Cubists, for example, distinctly belong to the big city. They are completely imbued with the energy of the city, of great industry and reflect its taut, dynamic geometry. The hammering machines, the racing wheels. . . are a necessary part of the environment which inspires their metallic creation. A painter of Cézanne's culture, on the other hand, always gravitates away from the big city, the farmer and the "land" are to him not incompatible. He displays an especial preference, nevertheless, for the suburbs and the medium-sized provincial towns. It is to be assumed, therefore, that one could attain, in a painter, a far greater productive power if he were always allowed to work in an environment suited to him. Thus the Cézanneist group should have an academy outside of the big city since in provincial surroundings a painter of this group would be least exposed to the influence of elements alien to his nature and would not have to waste his strength. He would be able to create stronger works with a smaller expenditure of energy.

The development of Millet's painting, the pictorial culture of which still

resided, so to speak, in the center of the village, (it was, that is, a rural, purely pictorial culture), can be followed, via Cézanne, down to the present day.

The village, as center of the required environment, was no longer suited to the painting of Cézanne, but equally alien to it is the art of the big city, of the industrial worker (and the more so, in fact, the more intensive is the metallic culture proceeding out of industrial work). The art of the industrial environment has its first beginnings in Cubism and Futurism, that is, at the point where conventional painting leaves off. These two cultures (Cubism and Futurism) differ, incidentally, in their ideologies. Whereas Cubism during the first phase of its development (ills. 63-66) still stands at the edge of the culture of Cézanne, Futurism, already pointing toward abstract art, generalizes all phenomena and thereby borders on a new culture — *non-objective Suprematism*.

I call the additional element of Suprematism "the suprematist straight line" (dynamic in character). The environment corresponding to this new culture has been produced by the latest achievements of technology, and especially of aviation, so that one could also refer to Suprematism as "aeronautical". The culture of Suprematism can manifest itself in two different ways, namely, as dynamic Suprematism of the plane (with the additional element of the "suprematist straight line") or as static Suprematism in space — abstract architecture (with the additional element of the "suprematist square").

As has already been said, the art of Cubism and Suprematism is to be looked upon as the art of the industrial, taut environment. Its existence depends upon this environment, just as the existence of Cézanne's culture is dependent upon a provincial environment. To increase the effectiveness of those engaged in art, the state should assume the responsibility of making a suitable environment (a beneficial "climate") available to artists of the most varied cultures and, indeed, this could be accomplished by arranging for academies to be located not always and of necessity in large cities but also in the provinces and the country.

Nature untouched, the nature of the farmer, the provinces, the city and great industry. . . these constitute the different types of environment, for each of which a particular artistic culture is most appropriate, most closely related intrinsically.

One can therefore speak, in connection with the additional elements of various pictorial cultures, of favorable and unfavorable environments. If, for example, a Futurist, Cubist or Suprematist were to be transplanted to the provinces and isolated from the city, he would gradually divest himself of the additional element for which he has an affinity and, under the influence of the new environment, relapse into the primitive state of imitating nature.

The sickle form of Cubism and the straight line of Suprematism, both familiar to him, would be suppressed by the external conditions of the new environment, in which nothing of metallic culture, of restless movement, of geometry and tautness is in evidence. His creative drive would no longer be incited to intensive work but would fall more and more under the influence of the new surroundings and finally accommodate itself to the provincial environment. The elements of the city, which the painter has assimilated, disappear in the provinces, just as an illness contracted in the city is overcome in a sanitarium in the country. These considerations can unquestionably cause the general public and the learned critics to view Cubism, Futurism and Suprematism as evidences of sickness, of which the artists can be cured. . . . One has only to remove the artist from the center of energy of the city, so that he no longer sees machines, motors, and power lines and can devote himself to the agreeable sight of hills, meadows, cows, farmers and geese, in order to heal his cubist or futurist illness. When a Cubist or Futurist, after a long sojourn in the provinces, returns with a lot of charming landscapes, he is greeted joyfully by friends and critics as one who has found his way back to wholesome art.

This characterizes the attitude not only of the provincial but also of dwellers in the big city, for they — even they! — have not yet become a part of the big city's metallic culture, the culture of the new humanized nature. They are still drawn out of the city into the peace of the countryside and this explains the leaning of many painters toward rural nature. The pictorial culture of the provinces is incensed at the art of the big city (Futurism, etc.) and seeks to combat it, because it is not objective-representational and consequently seems unsound. If the viewpoint that Cubism, Futurism and Suprematism are abnormal were correct, one would necessarily have to conclude that the city itself, the dynamic center is an unwholesome phenomenon because it is

largely responsible for the "morbid alteration" in art and the creators of art.

The new art movements can exist only in a society which has absorbed the tempo of the big city, the metallic quality of industry. No Futurism can exist where society still maintains an idyllic, rural way of life.

Conventional painters fear the metallic city for they find there no truly pictorial element. . . . Futurism reigns in the city.

Futurism is not the art of the provinces but rather, that of industrial labor. The Futurist and the laborer in industry work hand in hand — they create mobile things and mobile forms, both in works of art and in machines. Their consciousness is always active. The form of their works is independent of weather, the seasons, etc. . . . It is the expression of the rhythms of our time. Their work, unlike that of the farmer, is not bound up with any sort of natural laws. The content of the city is dynamism and the provinces always protest against this. The provinces fight for their tranquility. They sense in metallization the expression of a new way of life in which small, primitive establishments and the comforts of country living will come to an end. The provinces therefore protest against everything which comes from the city, everything which seems new and unfamiliar, even when this happens to be new farm machinery.

It is nevertheless to be expected that the culture of the city will sooner or later embrace all the provinces and subject them to its technology. It is only when this has taken place that futurist art will be able to develop its full power and thrive in the provinces as well as in the city. Futurism is, to be sure, today still exposed to relentless persecution by the adherents of the idyllic art of the provinces. The followers of this art, incidentally, are provincial only in their attitude toward art, for otherwise they already lean toward "futuromachinology", for life itself, indeed, is already futurist.

The more active the life, the more intensive and consistent is the creation of dynamic form.

The Futurist should by no means portray the machine; he should create new abstract forms.

The machine is, so to speak, the "overt" form of utilitarian movement and it produces new form-formulae through multiplication by the creative energy of the Futurist.

In this connection, the difference between the kind of "multiplication" of form brought about by the creative activity of the Futurist and that of the so-called realistic (naturalistic) painters can be seen in the fact that the multiplication occasioned by the Futurist yields an increase while the realist never goes beyond $1 \times 1 = 1$.

The subconscious or superconscious mind plays the leading part in the creative activity of the Futurist, since he transforms the elements of the city, just as it does in the case of every true artist.

The role played by science and theory is completely subordinate. *Futurism will become the art representative of the environment of the working man, whose job it is to build machines (to construct dynamic elements), since his (the worker's) dynamic life forms the substance of this artistic culture.*

He has no taste for conventional painting (easel painting) — this belongs in the provinces. Thus painting stands at the cross-roads and has the choice of going either in the direction of a metallic organization of materials or in the direction of easel painting — plastic painting.

So some stick to their old principles, whereas others begin to move along a new road, they enter actual space and express the dynamic energy of the city in the new formulae of Cubism and Futurism. A third group degenerates into industrial art (a mistaken course for art which, under the most favorable circumstances, leads to a sensitive choice of materials, out of which at some later date works of art can develop). There is no place for painting and architecture in the utilitarian productions of industry. It is only through a misunderstanding that applied art, the job of which is to create useful forms, could have come into existence.

We note that in practice Futurism is rejected and persecuted while provincial art is supported and cultivated. We can infer from this that even in the big city provincial art has not yet been surmounted.

We observe further that propagandistic art (political art, advertising art), in which currently active social or religious doctrines are presented, is pushed into the foreground. And then one inevitably ends up with, what is most important, a portrayal of the person of the leader, the teacher or the martyr, so that the masses may see in him both the personification of their ideal and their own likeness. The art which has grown out of the dynamic environment

of the city is rejected because every representation of the above-mentioned sort is alien to it.

We can conclude, therefore, that three different courses lie open to art — that of the provinces, that of the city and that of applied art.

The artists constitute, accordingly, three different camps which fight one another and confront each other with their knowledge, temperaments and energy.

The adherents of the pictorial culture of the provinces reproach the artists of the city on the score that their art is incomprehensible to the masses (the general public). A representation of a rustic tilling the soil is doubtless more readily understood by the farmer than a picture of a workman operating a complicated machine. . . .

The Futurist replies that futurist paintings could also be intelligible to the general public if the public would make an effort to relinquish its accustomed, obsolete way of thinking and to acquire the new point of view which, however unfamiliar, is entirely justified.

The workman who constructs a modern motorized plow is quite correct in maintaining that this new plow, once its mechanism has been understood, is just as easy to operate as an outmoded, primitive plow; one has only to recognize that it is an improvement over the old plow to realize that it represents a valuable new advance.

PART II

SUPREMATISM

Under Suprematism I understand the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art.

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.

The so-called "materialization" of a feeling in the conscious mind really means a materialization of the *reflection* of that feeling through the medium of some realistic conception. Such a realistic conception is without value in suprematist art. . . . And not only in suprematist art but in art generally, because the enduring, true value of a work of art (to whatever school it may belong) resides solely in the feeling expressed.

Academic naturalism, the naturalism of the Impressionists, Cézanneism, Cubism, etc. — all these, in a way, are nothing more than dialectic methods which, as such, in no sense determine the true value of an art work.

An objective representation, having objectivity as its aim, is something which, as such, has nothing to do with art, and yet the use of objective forms in an art work does not preclude the possibility of its being of high artistic value.

Hence, to the Suprematist, the appropriate means of representation is always the one which gives fullest possible expression to feeling as such and which ignores the familiar appearance of objects.

Objectivity, in itself, is meaningless to him; the concepts of the conscious mind are worthless.

Feeling is the determining factor . . . and thus art arrives at non-objective representation — at Suprematism.

It reaches a "desert" in which nothing can be perceived but feeling.

Everything which determined the objective-ideal structure of life and of "art" — ideas, concepts and images — all this the artist has cast aside in order to heed pure feeling.

The art of the past which stood, at least ostensibly, in the service of religion and the state, will take on new life in the pure (unapplied) art of *Suprematism*, which will build up a new world — the world of feeling. . . .

When, in the year 1913, in my desperate attempt to free art from the ballast of objectivity, I took refuge in the square form and exhibited a picture which consisted of nothing more than a black square on a white field, the critics and, along with them, the public sighed, "Everything which we loved is lost. We are in a desert. . . . Before us is nothing but a black square on a white background!"

"Withering" words were sought to drive off the symbol of the "desert" so that one might behold on the "dead square" the beloved likeness of "reality" ("true objectivity" and a spiritual feeling).

The square seemed incomprehensible and dangerous to the critics and the public . . . and this, of course, was to be expected.

The ascent to the heights of non-objective art is arduous and painful . . . but it is nevertheless rewarding. The familiar recedes ever further and further into the background. . . . The contours of the objective world fade more and more and so it goes, step by step, until finally the world — "everything we loved and by which we have lived" — becomes lost to sight.

No more "likenesses of reality", no idealistic images—nothing but a desert!

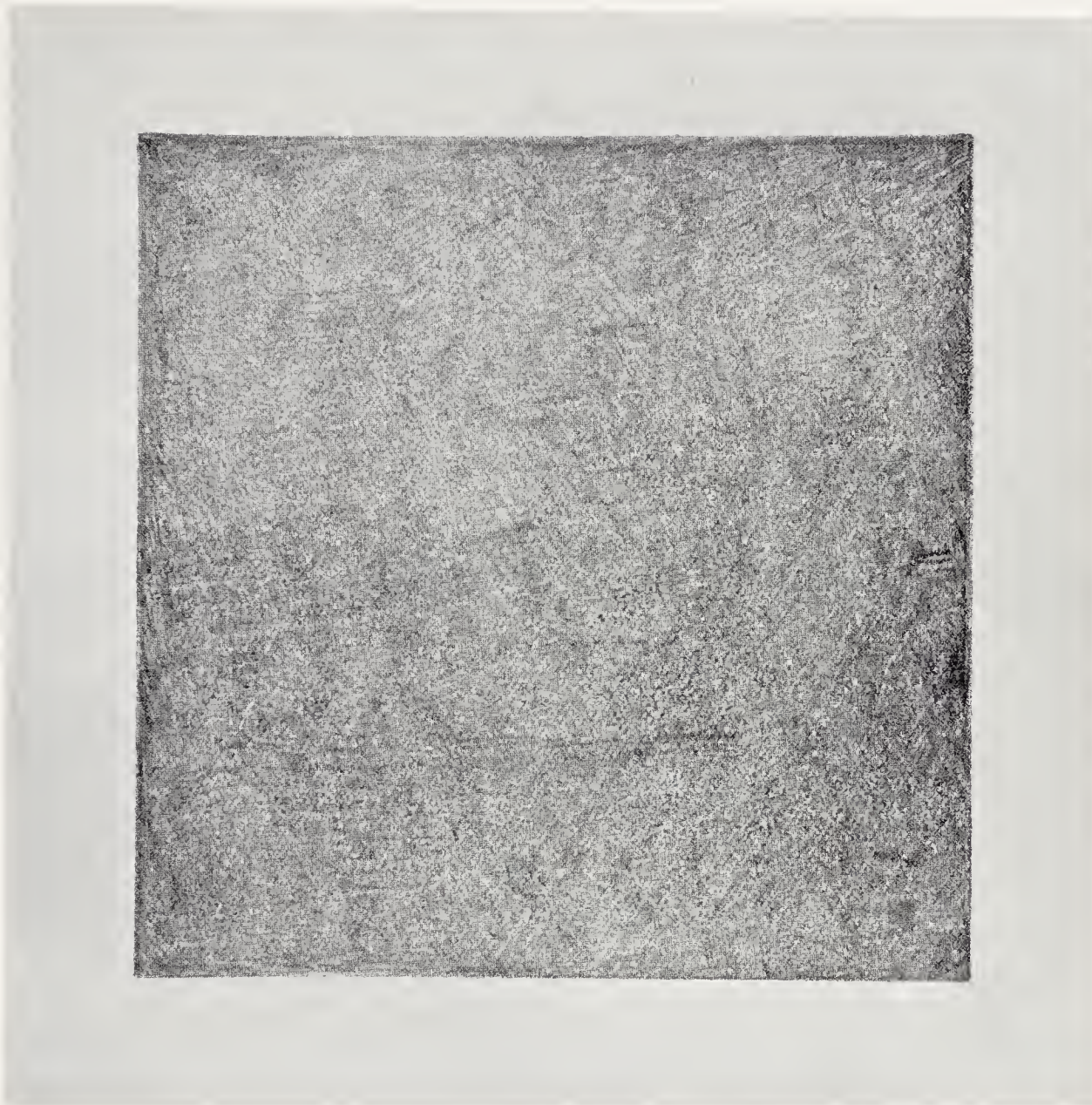
But this desert is filled with the spirit of non-objective sensation which pervades everything.

Even I was gripped by a kind of timidity bordering on fear when it came to leaving "the world of will and idea", in which I had lived and worked and in the reality of which I had believed.

But a blissful sense of liberating non-objectivity drew me forth into the "desert", where nothing is real except feeling . . . and so feeling became the substance of my life.

This was no "empty square" which I had exhibited but rather the feeling of non-objectivity.

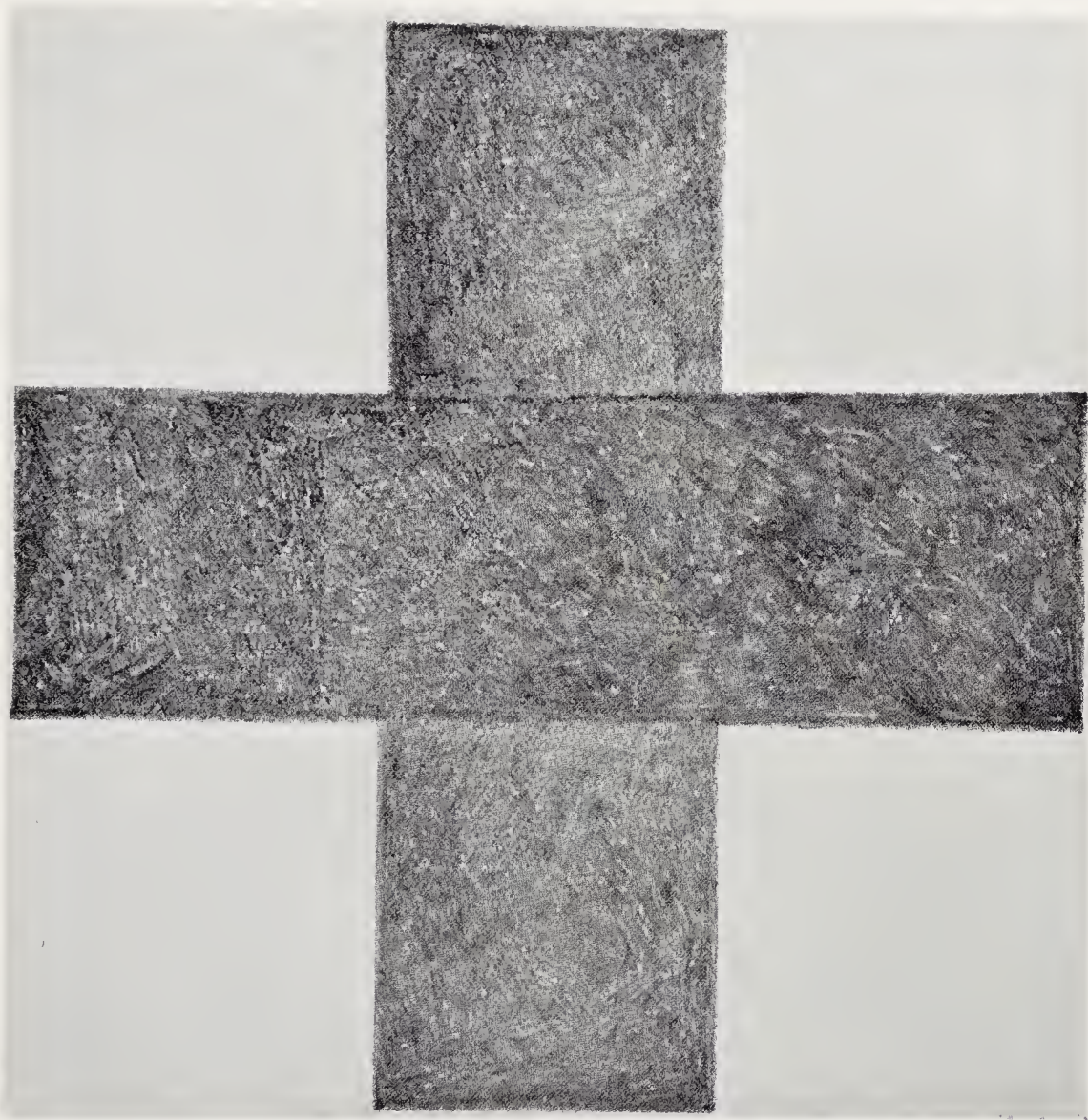
I realized that the "thing" and the "concept" were substituted for feeling and understood the falsity of the world of will and idea.



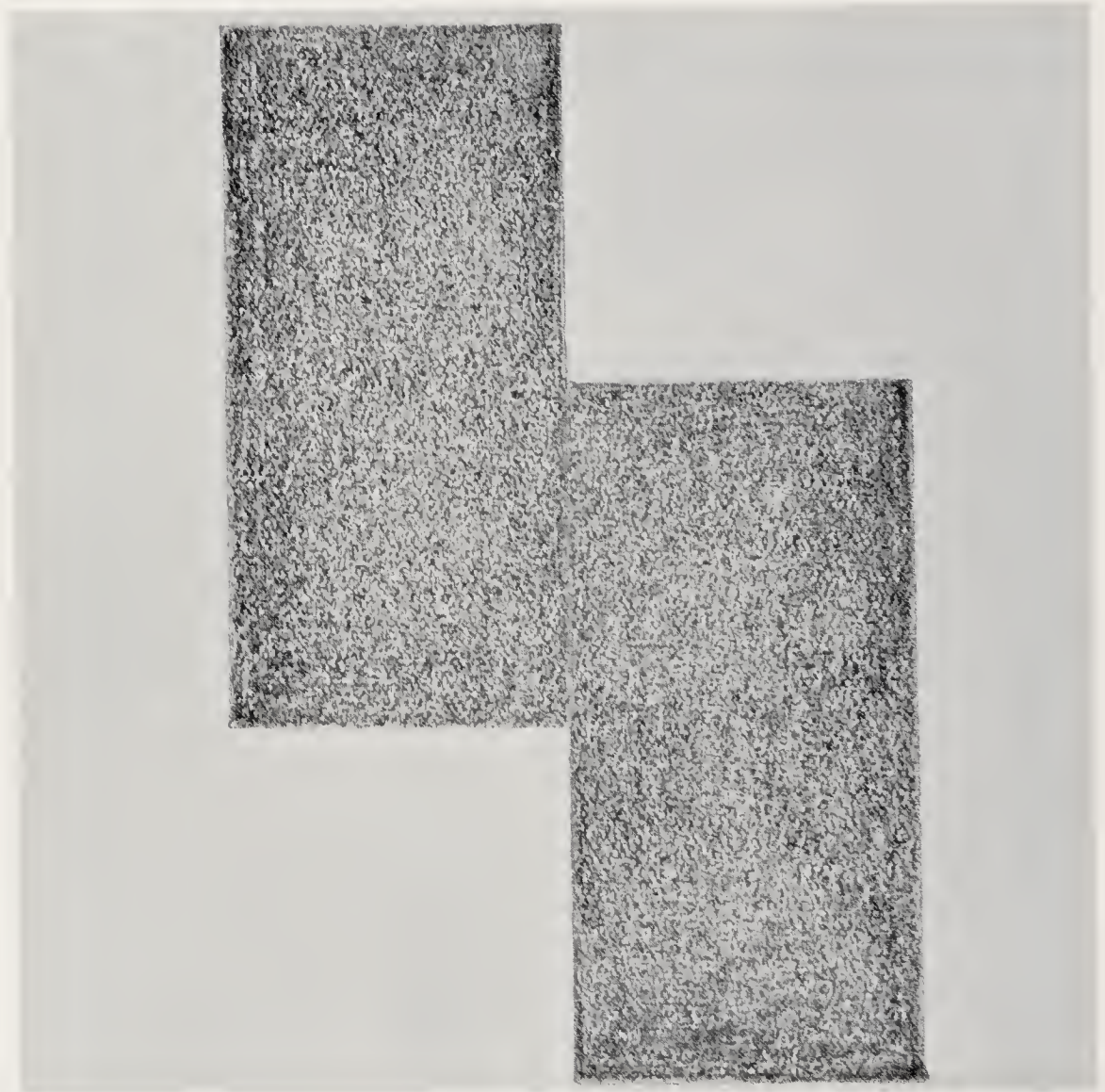
67 The basic suprematist element: the square. 1913.



68 The basic suprematist element: the first suprematist form to develop out of the square. 1913.



69 The second basic suprematist element. 1913.



70 Movement of the suprematist square, producing a new bi-planar suprematist element. 1913.



71 Elongation of the suprematist square. 1913.

Is a milk bottle, then, the symbol of milk?

Suprematism is the rediscovery of pure art which, in the course of time, had become obscured by the accumulation of "things".

It appears to me that, for the critics and the public, the painting of Raphael, Rubens, Rembrandt, etc. has become nothing more than a *conglomeration* of countless "things", which conceal its true value — the feeling which gave rise to it. The virtuosity of the objective representation is the only thing admired.

If it were possible to extract from the works of the great masters the feeling expressed in them — the actual artistic value, that is — and to hide this away, the public, along with the critics and the art scholars, would never even miss it.

So it is not at all strange that my square seemed empty to the public.

If one insists on judging an art work on the basis of the virtuosity of the objective representation — the verisimilitude of the illusion — and thinks he sees in the objective representation itself a symbol of the inducing emotion, he will never partake of the gladdening content of a work of art.

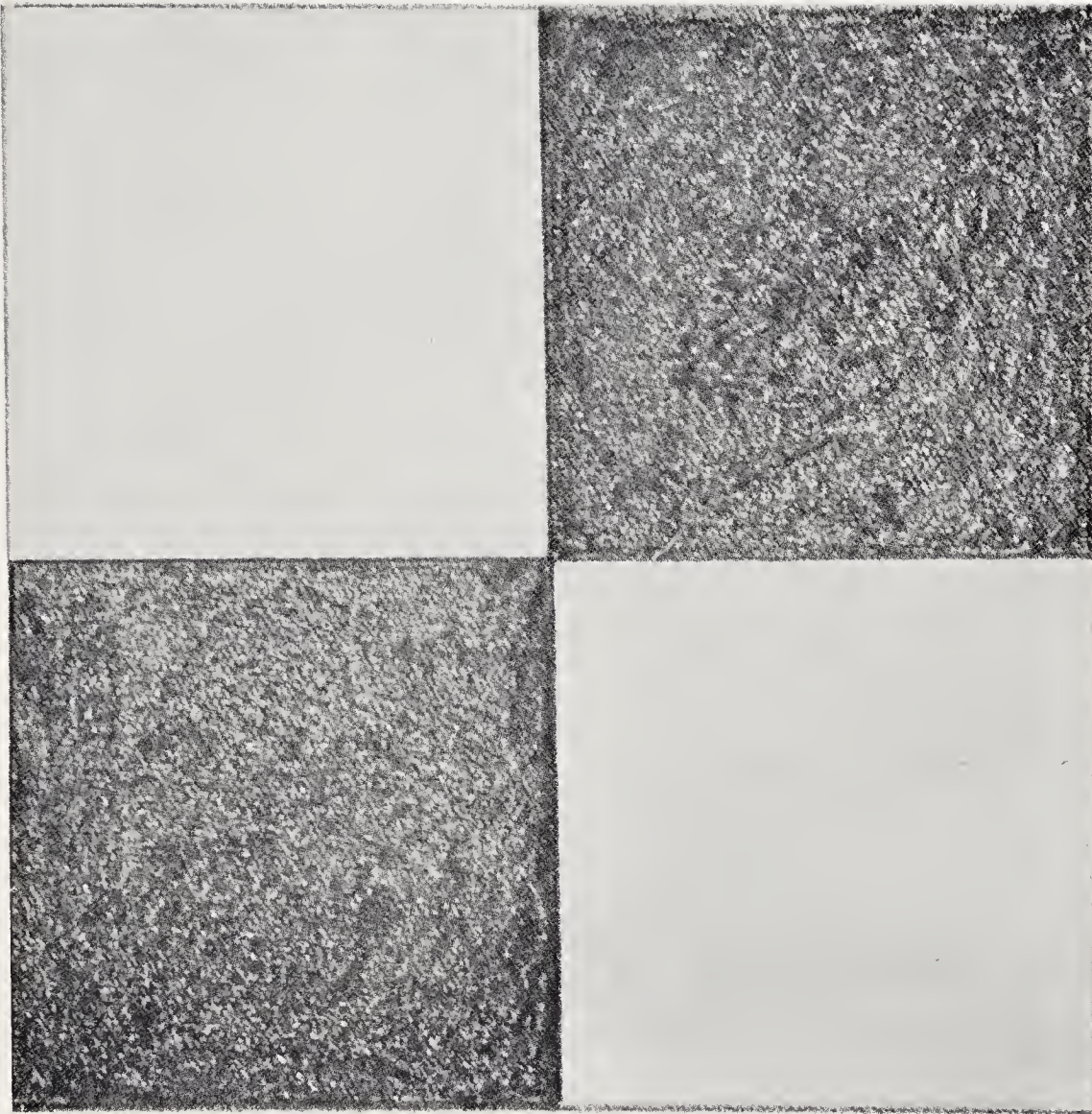
The general public is still convinced today that art is bound to perish if it gives up the imitation of "dearly-loved reality" and so it observes with dismay how the hated element of pure feeling — abstraction — makes more and more headway. . . .

Art no longer cares to serve the state and religion, it no longer wishes to illustrate the history of manners, it wants to have nothing further to do with the object, as such, and believes that it can exist, in and for itself, without "things" (that is, the "time-tested well-spring of life").

But the nature and meaning of artistic creation continue to be misunderstood, as does the nature of creative work in general, because feeling, after all, is always and everywhere the one and only source of every creation.

The emotions which are kindled in the human being are stronger than the human being himself . . . they must at all costs find an outlet — they must take on overt form — they must be communicated or put to work.

It was nothing other than a yearning for speed . . . for flight . . . which, seeking an outward shape, brought about the birth of the airplane. For the airplane was not contrived in order to carry business letters from Berlin to Moscow, but rather in obedience to the irresistible drive of this yearning for



72 Suprematist composition of squares. 1913.

speed to take on external form.

The "hungry stomach" and the intellect which serves this must always have the last word, of course, when it comes to determining the origin and purpose of *existing* values . . . but that is a subject in itself.

And the state of affairs is exactly the same in art as in creative technology. . . . In painting (I mean here, naturally, the accepted "artistic" painting) one can discover behind a technically correct portrait of Mr. Miller or an ingenious representation of the flower girl at Potsdamer Platz not a trace of the true essence of art — no evidence whatever of feeling. Painting is the dictatorship of a method of representation, the purpose of which is to depict Mr. Miller, his environment and his ideas.

The black square on the white field was the first form in which non-objective feeling came to be expressed. The square = feeling, the white field = the void beyond this feeling.

Yet the general public saw in the non-objectivity of the representation the demise of art and failed to grasp the evident fact that feeling had here assumed external form.

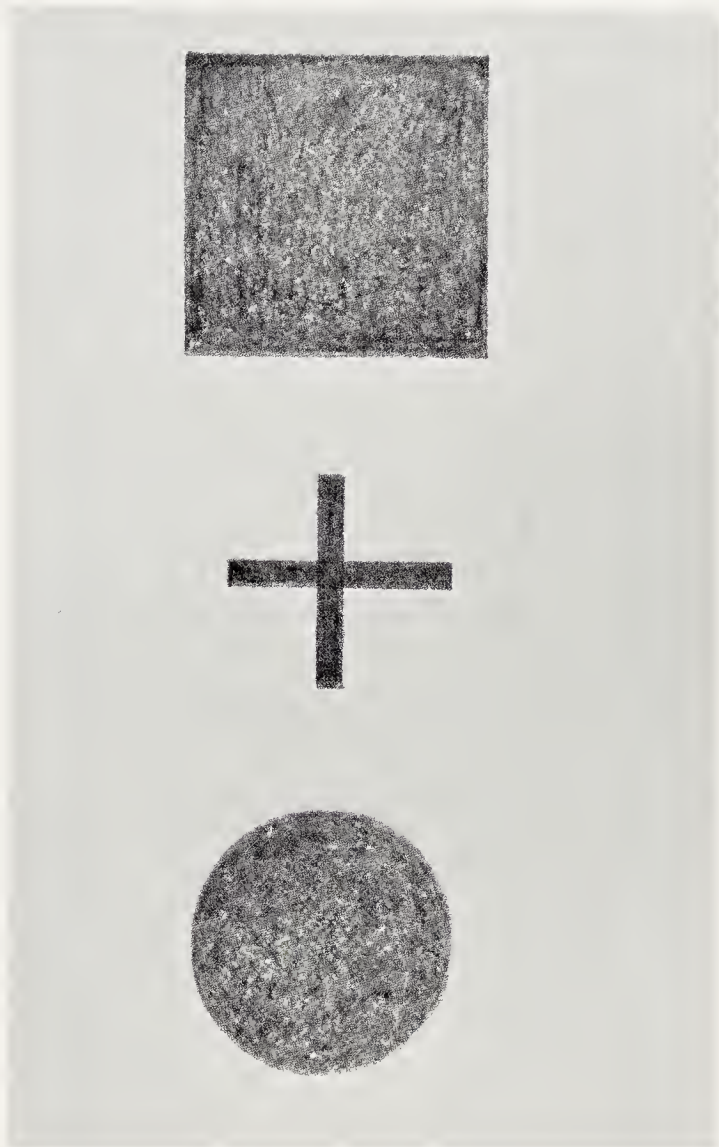
The suprematist square and the forms proceeding out of it can be likened to the primitive marks (symbols) of aboriginal man which represented, in their combinations, *not ornament but a feeling of rhythm*.

Suprematism did not bring into being a new world of feeling but rather, an altogether new and direct form of representation of the world of feeling.

The square changes and creates new forms, the elements of which can be classified in one way or another depending upon the feeling which gave rise to them.

When we examine an antique column, we are no longer interested in the fitness of its construction to perform its technical task in the building but recognize in it the material expression of a pure feeling. We no longer see in it a structural necessity but view it as a work of art in its own right.

"Practical life", like a homeless vagabond, forces its way into every artistic form and believes itself to be the genesis and reason for existence of this form. But the vagabond doesn't tarry long in one place and once he is gone (when



73 Contrasting suprematist elements. 1913.

to make an art work serve "practical purposes" no longer seems practical) the work recovers its full value.

Antique works of art are kept in museums and carefully guarded, not to preserve them for practical use but in order that their eternal artistry may be enjoyed.

The difference between the new, non-objective ("useless") art and the art of the past lies in the fact that the full artistic value of the latter comes to light (becomes recognized) only after life, in search of some new expedient, has forsaken it, whereas the unapplied artistic element of the new art outstrips life and shuts the door on "practical utility".

And so there the new non-objective art stands — the expression of pure feeling, seeking no practical values, no ideas, no "promised land".

An antique temple is not beautiful because it once served as the haven of a certain social order or of the religion associated with this, but rather because its form sprang from a pure feeling for plastic relationships. The artistic feeling which was given material expression in the building of the temple is for us eternally valid and vital but as for the social order which once encompassed it — this is dead.

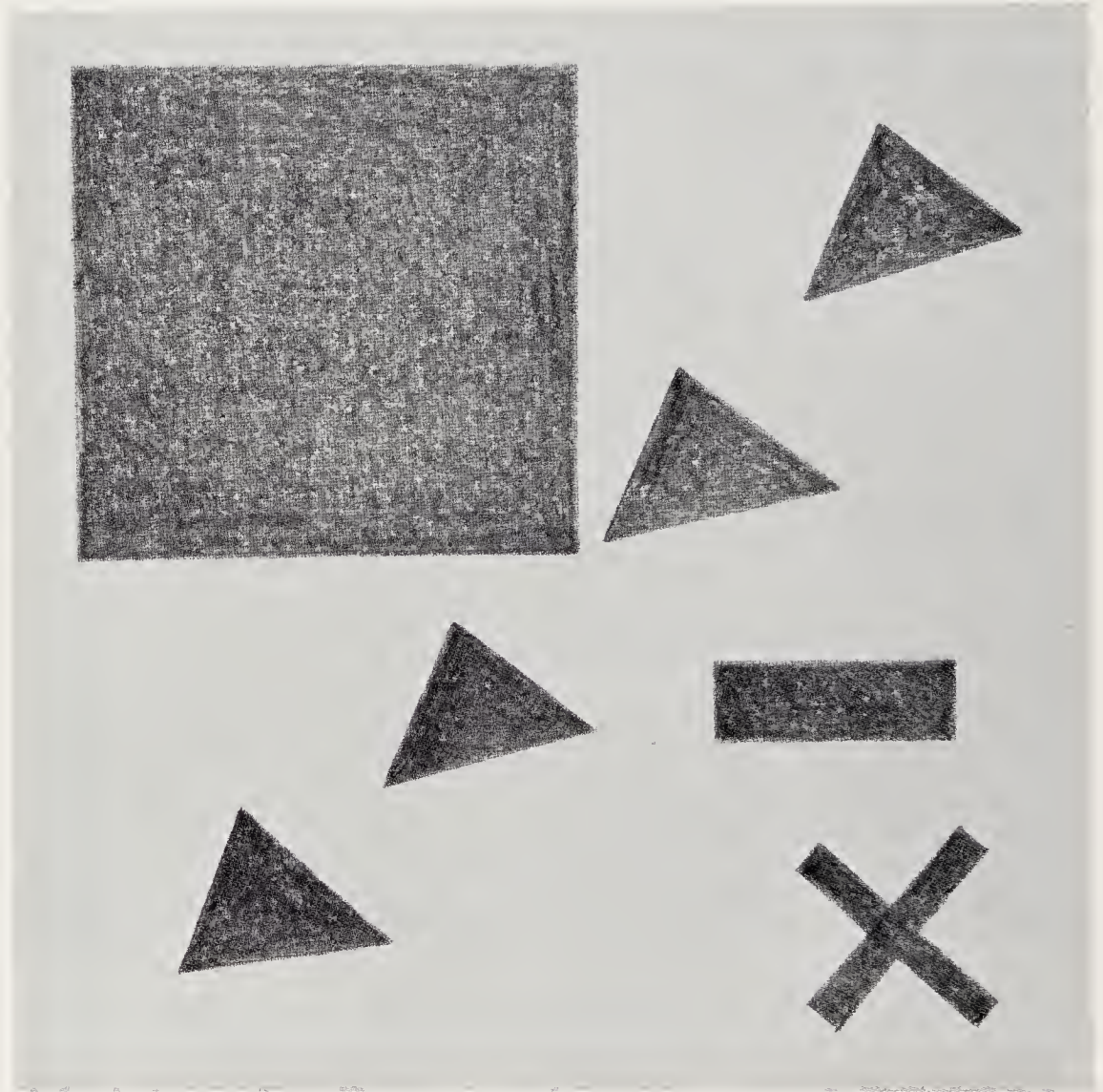
Life and its manifestations have hitherto been considered from two different standpoints — the material and the religious. It would seem that a consideration of life from the standpoint of art ought to become a third and equally valid point of view. But in practice art (as a second-rate power) is relegated to the service of those who view the world and life from one or the other of the first two standpoints. This state of affairs is curiously inconsistent with the fact that art always and under all circumstances plays the decisive role in the creative life and that art values alone are absolute and endure forever. With the most primitive of means (charcoal, hog bristles, modelling sticks, catgut and steel strings) the artist creates something which the most ingenious and efficient technology will never be able to create.

The adherents of "utility" think they have the right to regard art as the apotheosis of life (the utilitarian life, that is).

In the midst of this apotheosis stands "Mr. Miller" — or rather, the portrait of Mr. Miller (that is, a copy of a "copy" of life).



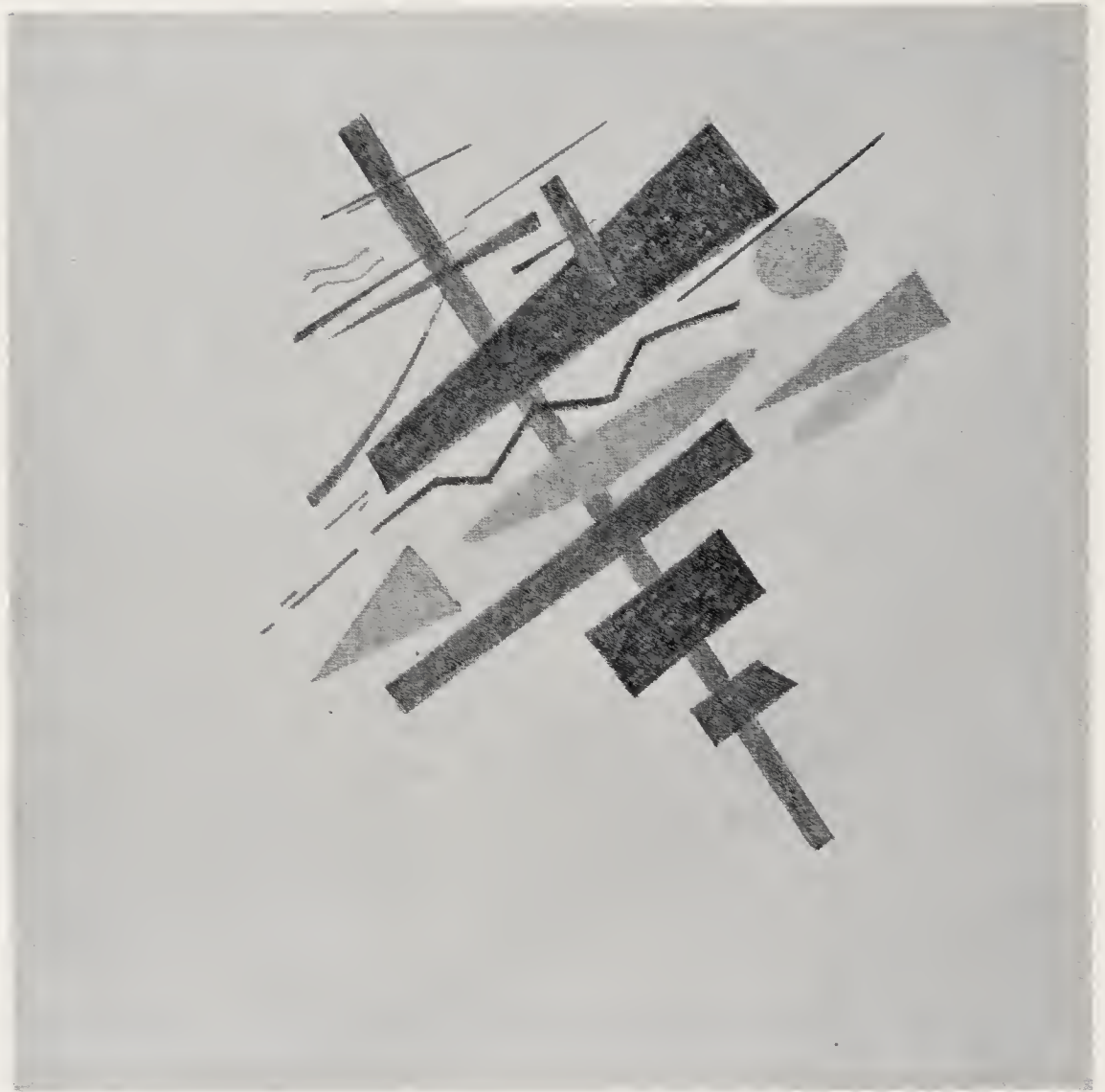
74 Composition of suprematist elements. 1913.



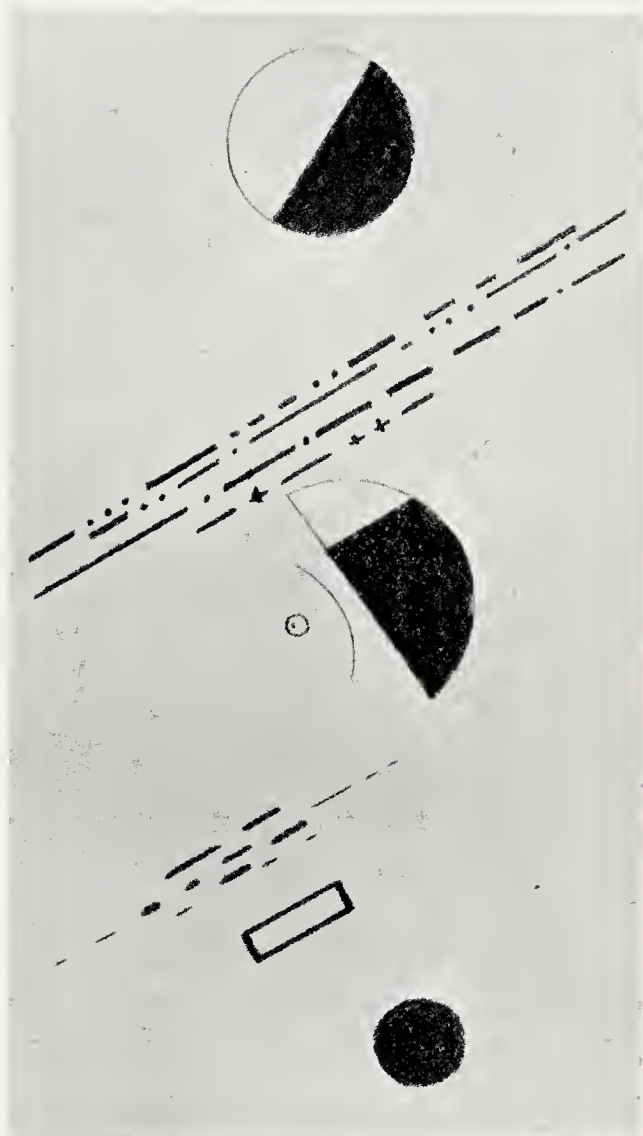
75 Suprematist composition employing the triangular form. 1913.



76 Composition of suprematist elements expressing the sensation of flight. 1914-15.



77 Composition of combined suprematist elements, expressing the sensation of metallic sounds—dynamic (pale, metallic colors). 1915.



78 Suprematist composition expressing the feeling of wireless telegraphy. 1915.

The mask of life hides the true countenance of art. Art is not to us what it could be.

And moreover, the efficiently mechanized world could truly serve a purpose if only it would see to it that we (every one of us) gained the greatest possible amount of "free time" to enable us to meet the only obligation to nature which mankind has taken upon itself — namely to create art.

Those who promote the construction of useful things, things which serve a purpose, and who combat art or seek to enslave it, should bear in mind the fact that there is no such thing as a constructed object which is useful. Has the experience of centuries not demonstrated that "useful" things don't long remain useful?

Every object which we see in the museums clearly supports the fact that not one single, solitary thing is really useful, that is, convenient, for otherwise it would not be in a museum! And if it once seemed useful this is only because nothing more useful was then known. . . .

Do we have the slightest reason to assume that the things which appear useful and convenient to us today will not be obsolete tomorrow. . . ? And shouldn't it give us pause that the oldest works of art are as impressive today in their beauty and spontaneity as they were many thousands of years ago?

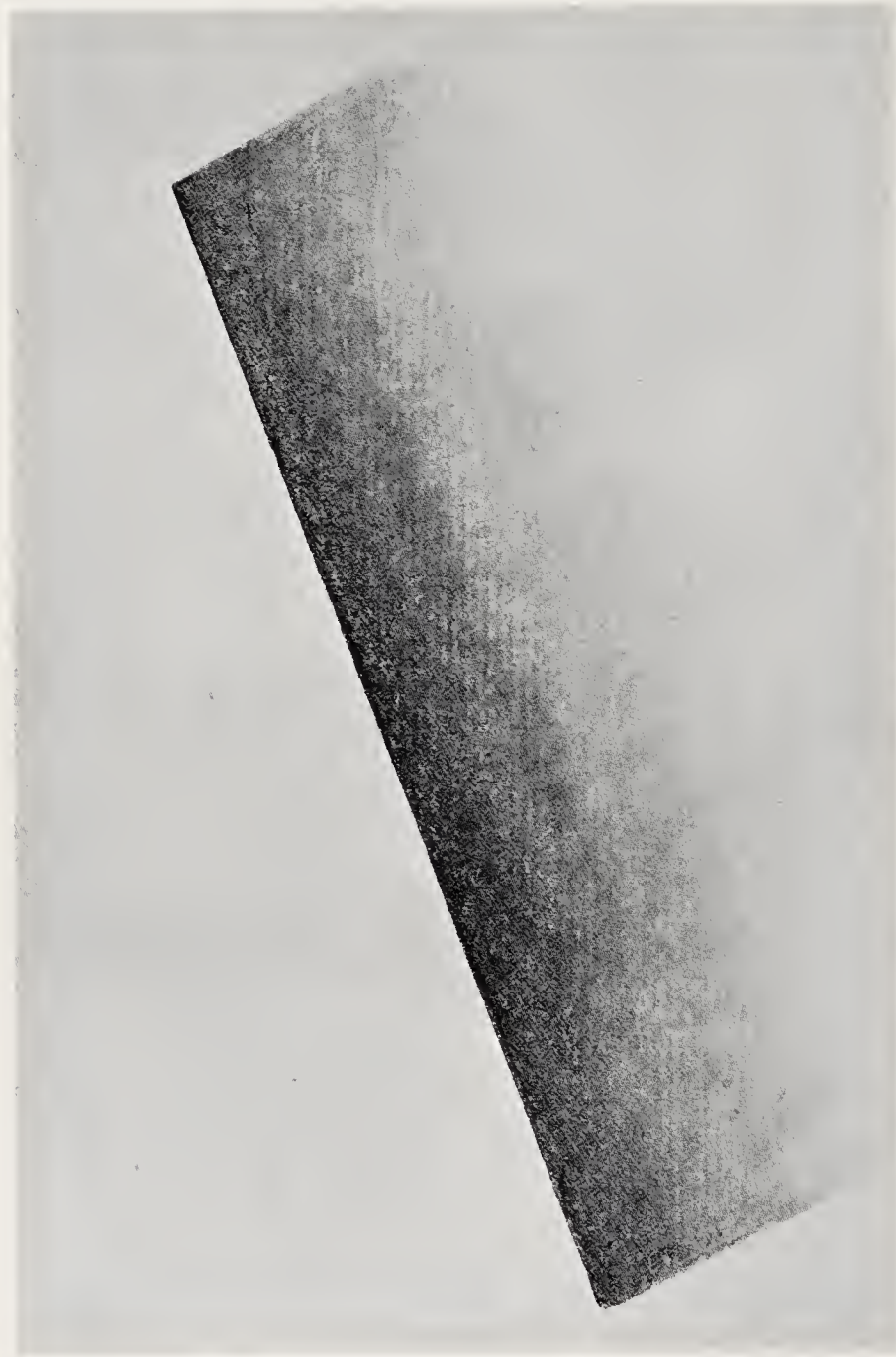
The Suprematists have deliberately given up objective representation of their surroundings in order to reach the summit of the true "unmasked" art and from this vantage point to view life through the prism of pure artistic feeling.

Nothing in the objective world is as "secure and unshakeable" as it appears to our conscious minds. We should accept nothing as predetermined — as constituted for eternity. Every "firmly established", familiar thing can be shifted about and brought under a new and, primarily, unfamiliar order. Why then should it not be possible to bring about an artistic order?

The various complementary and conflicting feelings — or rather, images and ideas — which, as reflections of these feelings, take shape in our imaginations, struggle incessantly with each other: the awareness of God against that of the Devil; the sensation of hunger versus a feeling for the beautiful.



79 Suprematist composition, white in white, expressing the feeling of fading away. 1916.



80 Suprematist element denoting fading away. 1917.



81 Suprematist composition expressing magnetic attraction. 1914.

The awareness of God strives to vanquish the awareness of the Devil — and the flesh at the same time. It tries to “make credible” the evanescence of earthly goods and the everlasting glory of God.

And art, too, is condemned, except when it serves the worship of God — the Church. . . .

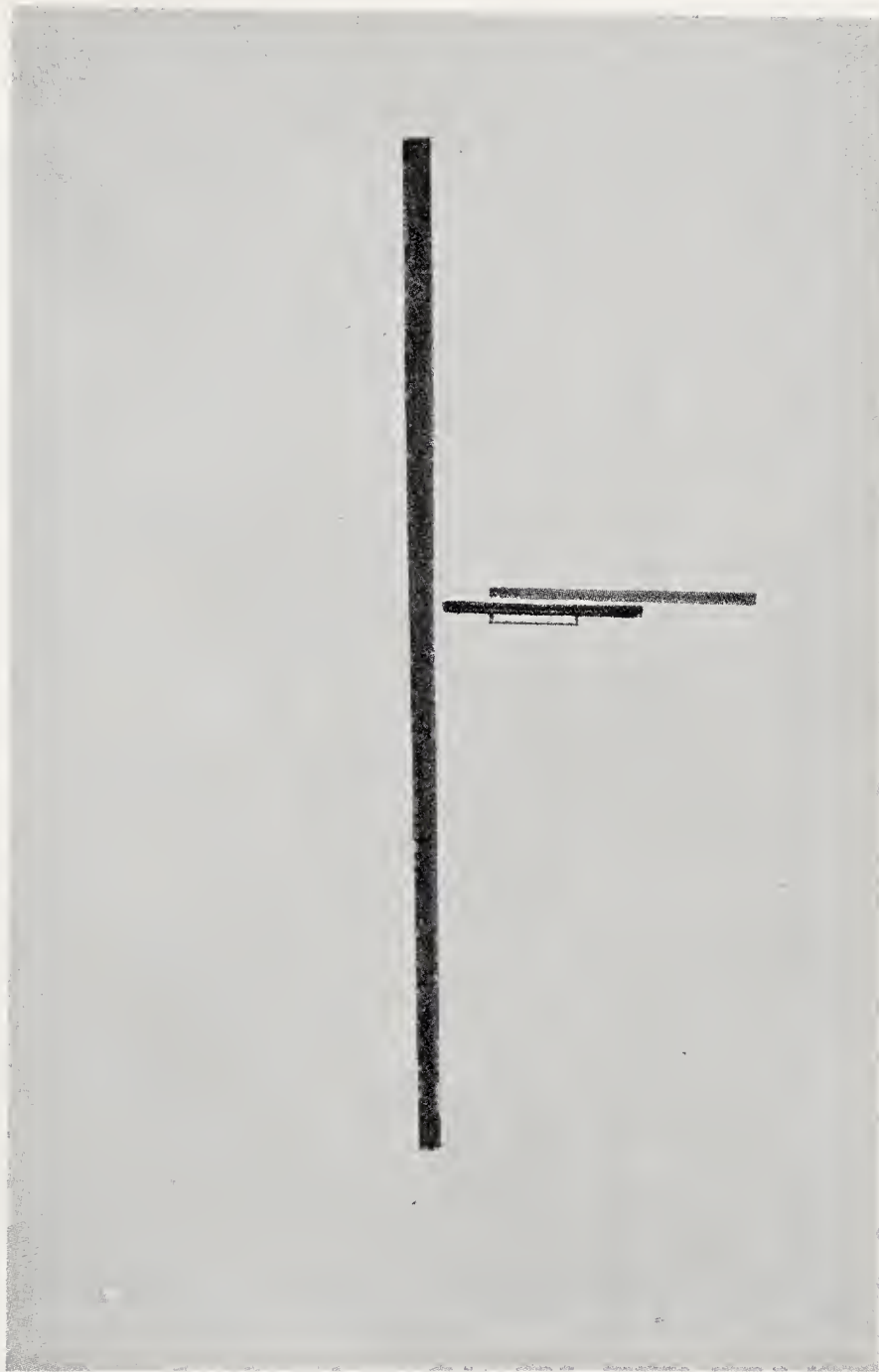
— Out of the awareness of God arose religion — and out of religion the Church.

— Out of the sensation of hunger developed concepts of utility — and out of these concepts trade and industry.

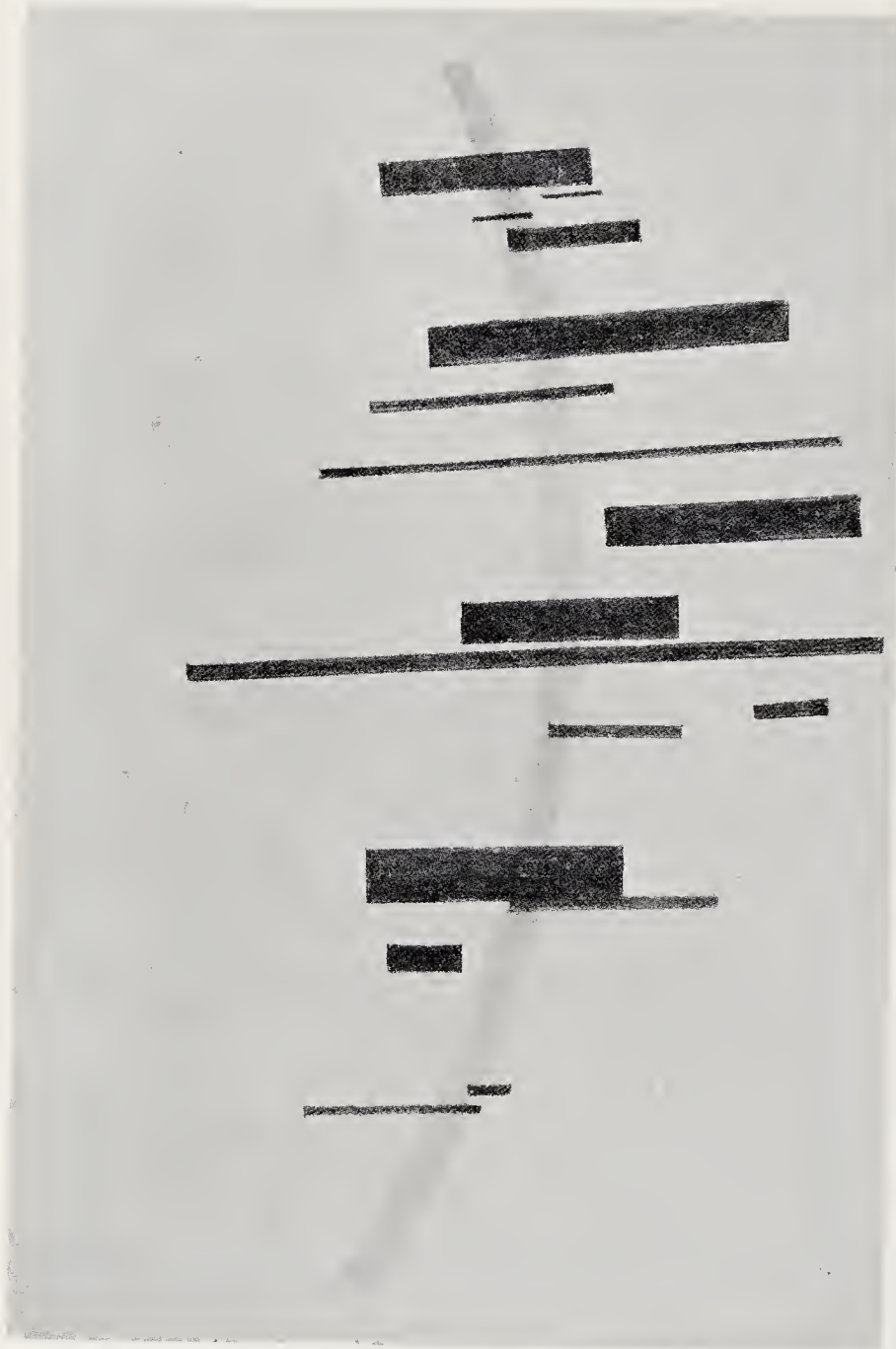
Both the Church and industry tried to monopolize those artistic abilities which, being creative, are constantly finding expression, in order to provide effective bait for their products (for the ideal-material as well as for the purely material). In this way, as the saying goes, “the pill of utility is sugar coated”.

The aggregated reflections of feelings in the individual’s consciousness — feelings of the most varied kinds — determine his “view of life”. Since the feelings affecting him change, the most remarkable alterations in this “view of life” can be observed; the atheist becomes pious, the God-fearing, godless, etc. . . . The human being can be likened, in a way, to a radio receiver which picks up and converts a whole series of different waves of feeling, the sum-total of which determines the above-mentioned view of life.

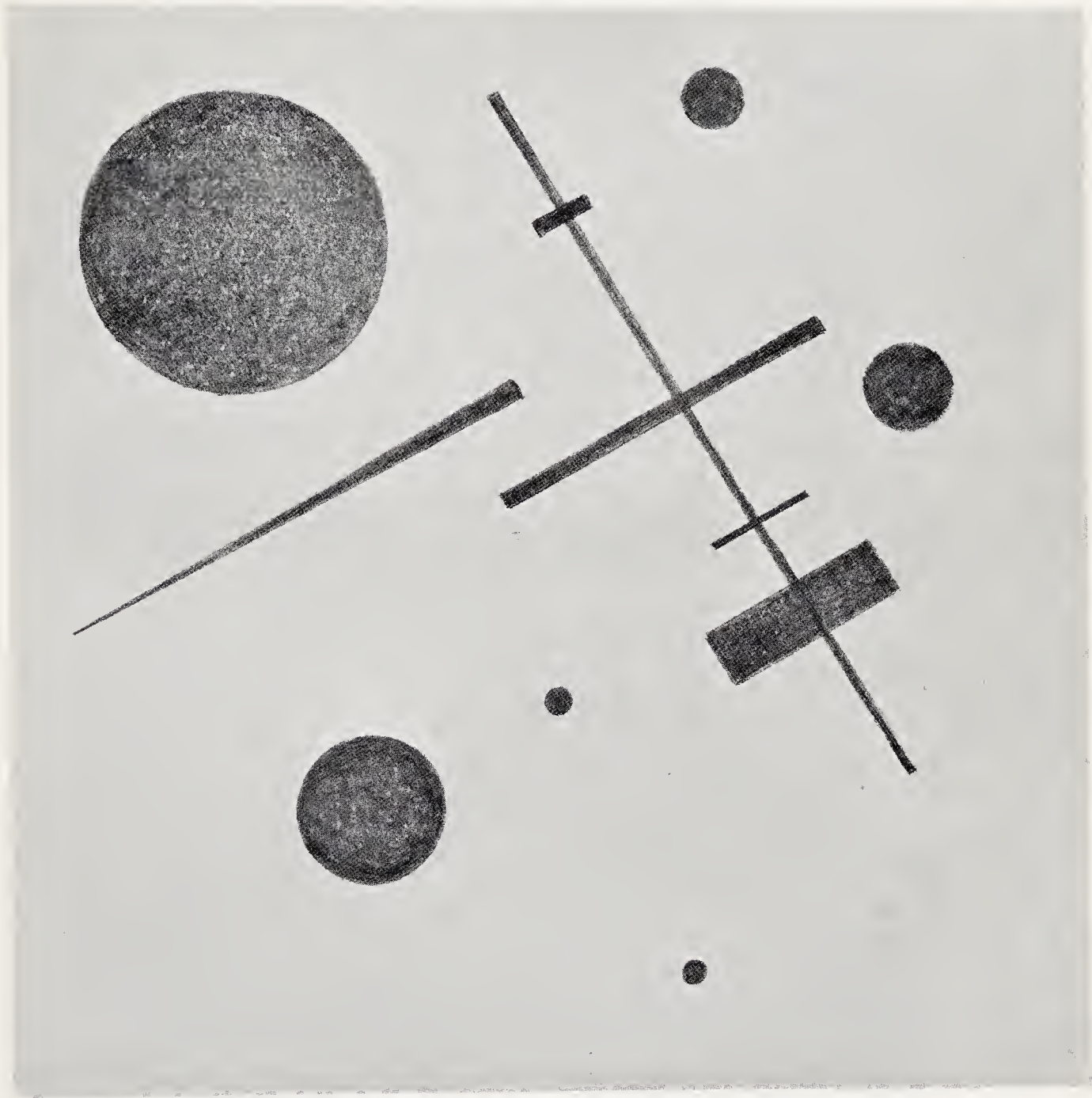
Judgments concerning the values of life therefore fluctuate widely. Only art values defy the shifting drift of opinion, so that, for example, pictures of God or the saints, in so far as the artistic feeling incorporated in them is apparent, can be placed by atheists in their collections without compunction (and, in fact, actually are collected by them). Thus do we have, again and again, the opportunity of convincing ourselves that the guidance of our conscious minds — “creation” with a purpose — always calls into being relative values (which is to say, valueless “values”) and that nothing but the expression of the pure feeling of the subconscious or superconscious (nothing, that is, other than artistic creation) can give tangible form to absolute values. Actual utility (in the higher sense of the term) could therefore be achieved only if the subconscious or superconscious were accorded the privilege of directing creation.



82 Suprematist composition expressing magnetic attraction. 1914.



83 Suprematist composition conveying the feeling of movement and resistance. 1916.



84 Suprematist composition expressing the combined feeling of the circle and the square. 1913.



85 Suprematist composition conveying a sense of the universe. 1916.



86 Suprematist composition conveying a feeling of universal space. 1916.

Our life is a theater piece, in which non-objective feeling is portrayed by objective imagery.

A bishop is nothing but an actor who seeks with words and gestures, on an appropriately "dressed" stage, to convey a religious feeling, or rather the reflection of a feeling in religious form. The office clerk, the blacksmith, the soldier, the accountant, the general . . . these are all characters out of one stage play or another, portrayed by various people, who become so carried away that they confuse the play and their parts in it with life itself. We almost never get to see the *actual human face* and if we ask someone who he is, he answers, "an engineer", "a farmer", etc. or, in other words, he gives the title of the role played by him in one or another affective drama.

The title of the role is also set down next to his full name, and certified in his passport, thus removing any doubt concerning the surprising fact that the owner of the passport is the engineer Ivan and not the painter Kasimir.

In the last analysis, what each individual knows about himself is precious little, because the "actual human face" cannot be discerned behind the mask, which is mistaken for the "actual face".

The philosophy of Suprematism has every reason to view both the mask and the "actual face" with skepticism, since it disputes the reality of human faces (human forms) altogether.

Artists have always been partial to the use of the human face in their representations, for they have seen in it (the versatile, mobile, expressive mimic) the best vehicle with which to convey their feelings. The Suprematists have nevertheless abandoned the representation of the human face (and of natural objects in general) and have found new symbols with which to render direct feelings (rather than externalized reflections of feelings), for *the Suprematist does not observe and does not touch — he feels.*

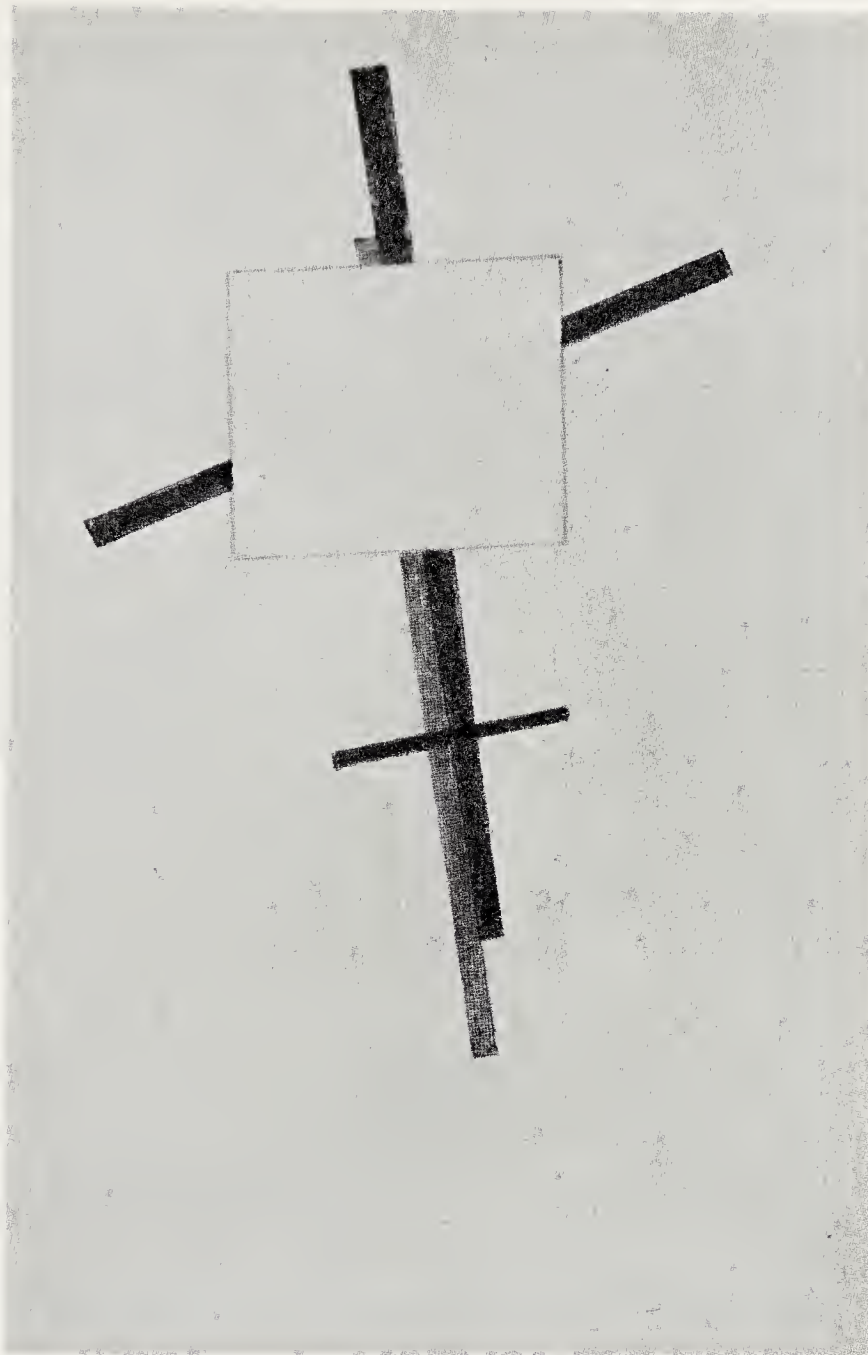
We have seen how art, at the turn of the century, divested itself of the ballast of religious and political ideas which had been imposed upon it and came into its own — attained, that is, the form suited to its intrinsic nature and became, along with the two already mentioned, a third independent and



87 Suprematist composition conveying the feeling of a mystic "wave" from outer space. 1917.



88 Suprematist composition conveying the feeling of a mystic will: unwelcome. 1915.



89 Suprematist composition expressing a feeling of non-objectivity. 1919.

equally valid "point of view". The public is still, indeed, as much convinced as ever that the artist creates superfluous, impractical things. It never considers that these superfluous things endure and retain their vitality for thousands of years, whereas necessary, practical things survive only briefly.

It does not dawn on the public that it fails to recognize the real, true value of things. This is also the reason for the chronic failure of everything utilitarian. A true, absolute order in human society could only be achieved if mankind were willing to base this order on lasting values. Obviously, then, the artistic factor would have to be accepted in every respect as the decisive one. As long as this is not the case, the uncertainty of a "provisional order" will obtain, instead of the longed-for tranquility of an absolute order, because the provisional order is gauged by current utilitarian understanding and this measuring-stick is variable in the highest degree.

In the light of this, all art works which, at present, are a part of "practical life" or to which practical life has laid claim, are in some sense devaluated. Only when they are freed from the encumbrance of practical utility (that is, when they are placed in museums) will their truly artistic, absolute value be recognized.

The sensations of sitting, standing or running are, first and foremost, plastic sensations and they are responsible for the development of corresponding "objects of use" and largely determine their form.

A chair, bed and table are not matters of utility but rather, the forms taken by plastic sensations, so the generally-held view that all objects of daily use result from practical considerations is based upon false premises.

We have ample opportunity to become convinced that we are never in a position for recognizing any real utility in things and that we shall never succeed in constructing a really practical object. We can evidently only *feel* the essence of absolute utility but, since a feeling is always non-objective, any attempt to grasp the utility of the objective is Utopian. The endeavor to confine feeling within concepts of the conscious mind or, indeed, to replace



90 Suprematist elements in space. 1915. (Brought to full development in the year 1923.)

it with conscious concepts and to give it concrete, utilitarian form, has resulted in the development of all those useless, "practical things" which become ridiculous in no time at all.

It cannot be stressed too often that absolute, true values arise only from artistic, subconscious or superconscious creation.

The new art of Suprematism, which has produced new forms and form relationships by giving external expression to pictorial feeling, will become a new architecture: it will transfer these forms from the surface of canvas to space.

The suprematist element, whether in painting or in architecture, is free of every tendency which is social or otherwise materialistic.

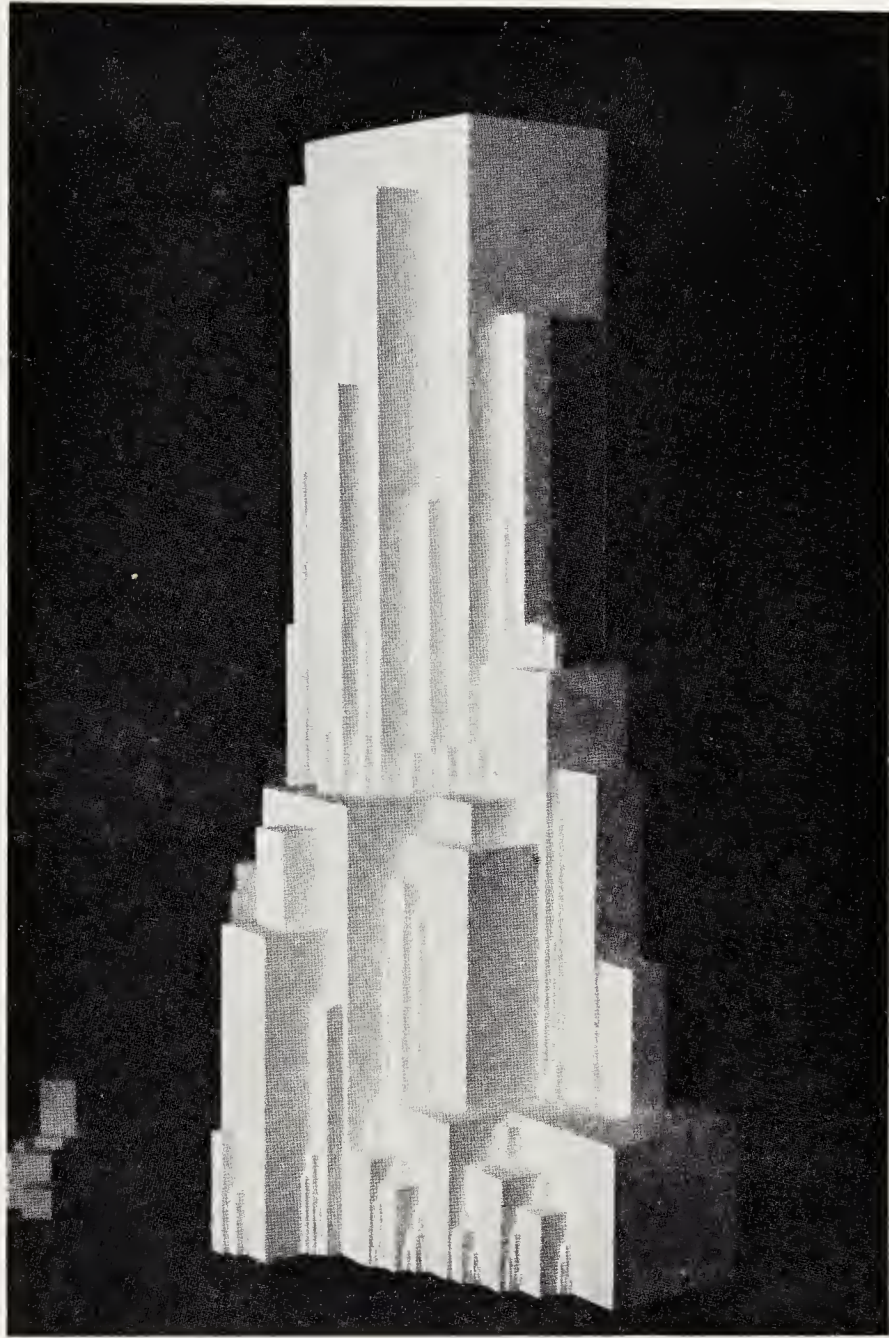
Every social idea, however great and important it may be, stems from the sensation of hunger; every art work, regardless of how small and insignificant it may seem, originates in pictorial or plastic feeling. It is high time for us to realize that the problems of art lie far apart from those of the stomach or the intellect.

Now that art, thanks to Suprematism, has come into its own — that is, attained its pure, unapplied form — and has recognized the infallibility of non-objective feeling, it is attempting to set up a genuine world order, a new philosophy of life. It recognizes the non-objectivity of the world and is no longer concerned with providing illustrations of the history of manners.

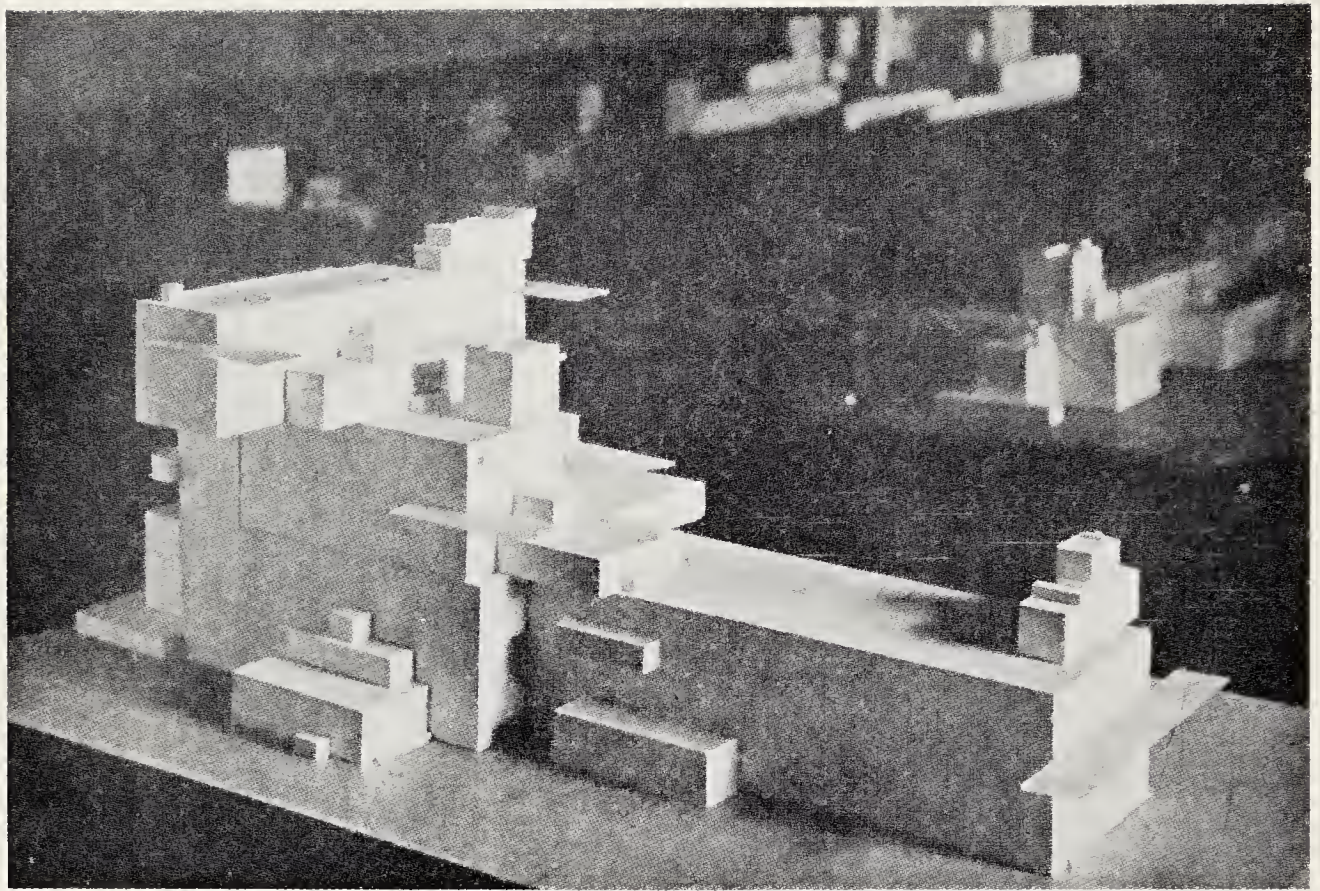
Non-objective feeling has, in fact, always been the only possible source of art, so that in this respect Suprematism is contributing nothing new but nevertheless the art of the past, because of its use of objective subject matter, harbored unintentionally a whole series of feelings which were alien to it.

But a tree remains a tree even when an owl builds a nest in a hollow of it.

Suprematism has opened up new possibilities to creative art, since *by virtue of the abandonment of so-called "practical considerations", a plastic feeling rendered on canvas can be carried over into space.* The artist (the painter) is no longer bound to the canvas (the picture plane) and can transfer his compositions from canvas to space.



91 Suprematist architecture of pure form.



92 Suprematist architecture of pure form.

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