but that which is the essence of painting itself can be shown here best of all—the combination of color, its saturation, the relation of colored masses, depth, texture; anyone who is interested in painting can give his full attention to all these things.

The picture appears to be slippery; it imparts a sensation of the extratemporal, of the spatial. In it arises the sensation of what could be called the fourth dimension, because its length, breadth, and density of the layer of paint are the only signs of the outside world—all the sensations that arise from the picture are of a different order; in this way painting becomes equal to music while remaining itself. At this juncture a kind of painting emerges that can be mastered by following precisely the laws of color and its transference onto the canvas.

Hence the creation of new forms whose meaning and expressiveness depend exclusively on the degree of intensity of tone and the position that it occupies in relation to other tones. Hence the natural downfall of all existing styles and forms in all the art of the past—since they, like life, are merely objects for better perception and pictorial construction.

With this begins the true liberation of painting and its life in accordance only with its own laws, a self-sufficient painting, with its own forms, color, and timbre.

MIKHAIL LARIONOV
Rayonist Painting, 1913

For biography see p. 79.

The text of this piece, “Luchistskaya zhivopis,” appeared in the miscellany Oslinyi khvost i mishen [Donkey’s Tail and Target] (Moscow, July 1913), pp. 83-124 [bibl. R319] and was signed and dated Moscow, June 1912. It has been translated into French, although without the Whitman quotations [bibl. 121, pp. 110-12] and into German [ibid., German edition, pp. 111-13]. A similar text had been published as a separate booklet in Moscow in April of the same year [bibl. R361; reprinted in bibl. R7, pp. 477-83]; this alternate version lacked the Whitman quotations and the short conclusion on pneumorayonism and omitted, inter al., the curious references to
Guillaume Apollinaire as an "artist" and to Natalya Goncharova as a "realist cubist." Both Oslinyi khvost i mishen and the booklet contained rayonist illustrations by Larionov and Goncharova, although the former also contained several lithographs mounted separately, as well as photographic reproductions of works by Mikhail Ledantiyu, Aleksandr Shevchenko, et al. (see p. 83, 87).

Larionov seems to have formulated rayonism in 1912, not before; no rayonist works, for example, figured at his one-man exhibition at the Society of Free Aesthetics in Moscow in December 1911, at least according to the catalogue and to contemporaneous reviews. According to bibl. 132, p. 28, Goncharova was the first to use the term rayonism, although Larionov's interest in science (manifested particularly while he was at high school) had obviously stimulated his peculiarly refractive conception of art. While rayonism had apparent cross-references with Franz Marc, the Italian futurists, and later, with Lyonel Feininger, the upsurge of interest in photography and cinematography in Russia at this time provided an undoubted stimulus to Larionov's concern with light and dynamics. It is of interest to note that in 1912/13 the Moscow...
photographer A. Trapani invented the photographic technique of "ray gum" [luchisty gummi]—a version of the gum-arabic process—which enabled the photographer to create the illusion of a radial, fragmented texture. Larionov himself exhibited several "photographic studies" at the "Donkey's Tail" in 1912, and his famous picture Glass (1912–13) at the Guggenheim Museum demonstrates an obvious interest in optics. Of possible relevance to Larionov's derivation of rayonism was the peculiarly "broken" texture that Mikhail Vrubel favored in so many of his works in the 1890s and 1900s—a technique admired by a number of young Russian artists. Moreover, Vrubel's theory of visual reality came very close to Larionov's formulation, as the following statement by Vrubel would indicate: "The contours with which artists normally delineate the confines of a form in actual fact do not exist—they are merely an optical illusion that occurs from the interaction of rays falling onto the object and reflected from its surface at different angles. In fact, at this point you get a 'complementary color'—complementary to the basic, local color . . . ." (quoted in Nikolai Prakhov, Stranitsy proshlogo [Pages of the Past] [Kiev, 1958], pp. 159–60, where neither source nor date is given). Goncharova shared Larionov's interest in radiation and emanation and at her one-man exhibition in 1913 presented several works based on the "theory of transparency" formulated by her fellow artist Ivan Firsov.

Painting is self-sufficient;
it has its own forms, color,
and timbre.
Rayonism is concerned with
spatial forms that can
arise from the intersection
of the reflected rays of
different objects, forms
chosen by the artist's
will.

How they are provided for upon the earth, (appearing at intervals),
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth,
How they inure to themselves as much as to any—what a paradox appears
their age,
How people respond to them, yet know them not,
How there is something relentless in their fate all times,
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward,
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same great
purchase.

—Walt Whitman
I hear it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the destruction of
them?).

—Walt Whitman

Throughout what we call time various styles have emerged. A temporal dis-
placement of these styles would in no way have changed the artistic value
and significance of what was produced during their hegemony. We have
inherited Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek, Cretan, Byzantine, Romanesque,
Gothic, Japanese, Chinese, Indian styles, etc. There is a great deal of such
classification in art history, and in fact, there are infinitely more styles, not
to mention that style that is peculiar to each work outside the general style of
the time.

Style is that manner, that device by which a work of art has been created,
and if we were to examine all art objects throughout the world, then it would
transpire that they had all been created by some artistic device or other; not a
single work of art exists without this.

This applies not only to what we call art objects, but also to everything
that exists in a given age. People examine and perceive everything from the
point of view of the style of their age. But what is called art is examined
from the point of view of the perception of artistic truths; although these
truths pass through the style of their age, they are quite independent of it.
The fact that people perceive nature and their environment through the style
of their age is best seen in the comparison of various styles and various
ages. Let us take a Chinese picture, a picture from the time of Watteau, and
an impressionist picture—a gulf lies between them, they examine nature
from completely different points of view, but nevertheless the people who
witnessed their creation understood them, just as the artists themselves did,
and did not doubt for a moment that this was the same life and nature that
surrounded them (at this juncture I am not concerned with connoisseurs of
art as such). And often the artist Utamaro, whose age coincided with that of
Watteau, is spumed by those who reject the age of Watteau, but who cannot
surmount the difference of style between Japan and our eighteenth century.
There are ages that are completely rejected, and even those who are inter-
ested in art ignore them. These are eras that are very remote, for example,
the Stone Age. There are styles that are in the same position because of a
considerable difference between the cultures of the people who created them
and those who have to respond to them (Negro, Australasian, Aztec, Kolu-
shes, etc.)—despite the fact that whole nations have apprehended and embodied life only in that way, age after age.

Any style, the moment it appears, especially if it is given immediate, vivid expression, is always as incomprehensible as the style of a remote age. A new style is always first created in art, since all previous styles and life are refracted through it.

Works of art are not examined from the point of view of time and are essentially different because of the form in which they are perceived and in which they were created. There is no such thing as a copy in our current sense of the word, but there is such a thing as a work of art with the same departure point—served either by another work of art or by nature.

In examining our contemporary art we see that about forty of fifty years ago in the heyday of impressionism, a movement began to appear in art that advocated the colored surface. Gradually this movement took hold of people working in the sphere of art, and after a while there appeared the theory of displaced colored surface and movement of surface. A parallel trend arose of constructing according to the curve of the circle—rondism. The displacement of surfaces and construction according to the curve made for more constructiveness within the confines of the picture's surface. The doctrine of surface painting gives rise naturally to the doctrine of figural construction because the figure is in the surface's movement. Cubism teaches one to expose the third dimension by means of form (but not aerial and linear perspective together with form) and to transfer forms onto the canvas the moment they are created. Of all techniques, chiaroscuro, in the main, is adopted by cubism. For the most part this trend has decorative characteristics, although all cubists are engaged in easel painting—but this is caused by modern society's lack of demand for purely decorative painting. A movement parallel to cubism is spherism.

Cubism manifests itself in almost all existing forms—classical, academic (Metzinger), romantic (Le Fauconnier, Braque), realist (Gleizes, Léger, Goncharova)—and in forms of an abstract kind (Picasso). Under the influence of futurism on the cubists, there appeared a transitory cubism of futurist character (Delaunay, Lévy, the latest works of Picasso, Le Fauconnier).

Futurism was first promoted by the Italians: this doctrine aspires to make reforms not merely in the sphere of painting—it is concerned also with all kinds of art.

In painting, futurism promotes mainly the doctrine of movement—dynamism.

Painting in its very essence is static—hence dynamics as a style. The fu-
tourist unfurls the picture—he places the artist in the center of the picture; he examines the object from different points of view; he advocates the translucency of objects, the painting of what the artist knows, not what he sees, the transference of the sum total of impressions onto the canvas and the transference of many aspects of one and the same object; he introduces narrative and literature.

Futurism introduces a refreshing stream into modern art—which to a certain extent is linked to useless traditions—but for modern Italy it really serves as a very good lesson. If the futurists had had the genuine painterly traditions that the French have, then their doctrine would not have become part of French painting, as it now has.

Of the movements engendered by this trend and dominant at present, the following are in the forefront: postcubism, which is concerned with the synthesis of forms as opposed to the analytical decomposition of forms; neofuturism, which has resolved completely to reject the picture as a surface covered with paint, replacing it by a screen—on which the static, essentially colored surface is replaced by a light-colored, moving one; and orphism, which advocates the musicality of objects—heralded by the artist Apollinaire.

Neofuturism introduces painting to the problems posed by glass and, in addition, natural dynamics; this deprives painting of its symbolic origin and it emerges as a new kind of art.

Orphism is concerned with painting based on this musical sonority of colors, on color orchestration; it is inclined toward a literal correspondence of musical to light waves, which stimulate color sensation—and it constructs painting literally according to musical laws. In fact, painting must be constructed according to its own laws—just as music is constructed according to its own musical laws; the laws germane only to painting are:

Colored line and texture.

Any picture consists of a colored surface and texture (the state of this colored surface is its timbre) and of the sensation that arises from these two things.

Nobody would begin to assert that the art connoisseur turns his primary attention to the objects depicted in a picture—he is interested in how these objects are depicted, which colors are put on the canvas, and how they are put on. Therefore, he is interested in the one artist and appreciates him, and not another, despite the fact that both paint the same objects. But the majority of dilettanti would think it very strange if objects as such were to disappear completely from a picture. Although all that they appreciate would still remain—color, the painted surface, the structure of painted masses, texture.
They would think it strange simply because we are accustomed to seeing what is of most value in painting in the context of objects.

In actual fact, all those painterly tasks that we realize with the help of objects we cannot perceive even with the help of tangible, real objects. Our impressions of an object are of a purely visual kind—despite the fact that we desire to re-create an object in its most complete reality and according to its essential qualities. The aspiration toward the most complete reality has compelled one of the most astonishing artists of our time, Picasso, and others with him, to employ types of technique that imitate concrete life, create surfaces of wood, stone, sand, etc., and change visual sensations into tactile ones. Picasso, with the aim of understanding an object concretely, stuck wallpaper, newspaper clippings onto a picture, painted with sand, ground glass; made a plaster relief—modeled objects out of papier-mâché and then painted them (some of his "violins" are painted in this manner).

The painter can be expected to possess complete mastery of all existing types of technique (tradition plays a very important role in this) and to work according to the laws of painting, turning to extrinsic life only as a stimulant.

Chinese artists are allowed to take examinations only after they have learned to master the brush so well that brushstrokes in Indian ink on two transparent sheets of paper of the same size coincide when one sheet is placed on the other. From this it is obvious just how subtly the eye and hand must be developed.

The first to reduce a story to painterly form were the Hindus and Persians—their miniatures were reflected in the work of Henri Rousseau, the first in modern Europe to introduce a story into painterly form.

There are reasons to suppose that the whole world, in its concrete and spiritual totality, can be re-created in painterly form.

Furthermore, the qualities peculiar to painting alone are what we value in painting.

Now, it is necessary to find the point at which—having concrete life as a stimulant—painting would remain itself while its adopted forms would be transformed and its outlook broadened; hence, like music, which takes sound from concrete life and uses it according to musical laws, painting would use color according to painterly laws.

In accordance with purely painterly laws, rayonism is concerned with introducing painting into the sphere of those problems peculiar to painting itself.

Our eye is an imperfect apparatus; we think that our sight is mainly responsible for transmitting concrete life to our cerebral centers, but in fact, it
arrives there in its correct form not thanks to our sight, but thanks to other senses. A child sees objects for the first time upside down, and subsequently this defect of sight is corrected by the other senses. However much he desires to, an adult cannot see an object upside down.

Hence it is evident to what degree our inner conviction is important with regard to things existing in the outside world. If with regard to certain things, we know that they must be as they are because science reveals this to us, we do remain certain that this is as it should be and not otherwise despite the fact that we cannot apprehend this directly by our senses.

In purely official terms, rayonism proceeds from the following tenets:

- Luminosity owes its existence to reflected light (between objects in space this forms a kind of colored dust).
- The doctrine of luminosity.
- Radioactive rays. Ultraviolet rays. Reflectivity.

We do not sense the object with our eye, as it is depicted conventionally in pictures and as a result of following this or that device; in fact, we do not sense the object as such. We perceive a sum of rays proceeding from a source of light; these are reflected from the object and enter our field of vision.

Consequently, if we wish to paint literally what we see, then we must paint the sum of rays reflected from the object. But in order to receive the total sum of rays from the desired object, we must select them deliberately—because together with the rays of the object being perceived, there also fall into our range of vision reflected reflex rays belonging to other nearby objects. Now, if we wish to depict an object exactly as we see it, then we must depict also these reflex rays belonging to other objects—and then we will depict literally what we see. I painted my first works of a purely realistic kind in this way. In other words, this is the most complete reality of an object—not as we know it, but as we see it. In all his works Paul Cézanne was inclined toward this; that is why various objects in his pictures appear displaced and look asquint. This arose partly from the fact that he painted literally what he saw. But one can see an object as flat only with one eye, and Cézanne painted as every man sees—with two eyes, i.e., the object slightly from the right and slightly from the left.

At the same time, Cézanne possessed such keenness of sight that he could not help noticing the reflex rubbing, as it were, of a small part of one object against the reflected rays of another. Hence there occurred not the exposure of the object itself, but as it were, its displacement onto a different side and a partial truncation of one of the object's sides—which provided his pictures with a realistic construction.
Picasso inherited this tradition from Cézanne, developed it, and thanks to Negro and Aztec art, turned to monumental art; finally, he grasped how to build a picture out of the essential elements of an object so as to ensure a greater sense of construction in the picture.

Now, if we concern ourselves not with the objects themselves but with the sums of rays from them, we can build a picture in the following way:

The sum of rays from object A intersects the sum of rays from object B; in the space between them a certain form appears, and this is isolated by the artist's will. This can be employed in relation to several objects, e.g., the form constructed from a pair of scissors, a nose, and a bottle, etc. The picture's coloration depends on the pressure intensity of dominant colors and their reciprocal combinations.

The high point of color tension, density, and depth must be clearly shown.

A picture painted in a cubist manner and a futurist picture provide a different kind of form (a rayonist one) when they radiate in space.

Perception, not of the object itself, but of the sum of rays from it, is, by its very nature, much closer to the symbolic surface of the picture than is the object itself. This is almost the same as the mirage that appears in the scorching air of the desert and depicts distant towns, lakes, and oases in the sky (in concrete instances). Rayonism erases the barriers that exist between the picture's surface and nature.

A ray is depicted provisionally on the surface by a colored line.

What has most value for every lover of painting is revealed in its most complete form in a rayonist picture—the objects that we see in life play no role here (except for realistic rayonism, in which the object serves as a point of departure); that which is the essence of painting itself can best be revealed here—the combination of colors, their saturation, the interrelation of colored masses, depth, texture; whoever is interested in painting can concentrate on all these things to the full.

The picture appears to be slippery; it imparts a sensation of the extratemporal, of the spatial. In it arises the sensation of what could be called the fourth dimension, because its length, breadth, and density of the layer of paint are the only signs of the outside world—all the sensations that arise from the picture are of a different order; in this way painting becomes equal to music while remaining itself. At this juncture a kind of painting emerges that can be mastered by following precisely the laws of color and its transference onto the canvas. Hence the creation of new forms whose significance and expressiveness depend exclusively on the degree of intensity of tone and the position that this occupies in relation to other tones. Hence the
natural downfall of all existing styles and forms in all the art of the past—for they, like life, are merely objects for the rayonist perception and pictorial construction.

With this begins the true liberation of painting and its own life according to its own rules.

The next stage in the development of rayonism is pneumorayonism, or concentrated rayonism; this is concerned with joining elements together into general masses between spatial forms present in a more sectional, rayonist background.4

MIKHAIL LARIONOV
Pictorial Rayonism, 1914

For biography see p. 79.

The text of this piece, "Le Rayonisme Pictural," appeared in French in Montjoie! (Paris), no. 4/5/6, April/May/June, 1914, p. 15. This was Larionov's first contribution to the French press and was printed just as the "Exposition de Natalie Goncharowa et Michel Larionow" opened at the Galerie Paul Guillaume, Paris [see bibl. 119], at which rayonist works by both Goncharova and Larionov were presented. In places the text is similar to that of Larionov's "Rayonist Painting"; however, the occasional repetitions have been retained in order to preserve the original format of this, the first elucidation of rayonism to be published in the West.

Every form exists objectively in space by reason of the rays from the other forms that surround it; it is individualized by these rays, and they alone determine its existence.

Nevertheless, between those forms that our eye objectivizes, there exists a real and undeniable intersection of rays proceeding from various forms. These intersections constitute new intangible forms that the painter's eye can see. Where the rays from different objects meet, new immaterial objects are created in space. Rayonism is the painting of these intangible forms, of these infinite products with which the whole of space is filled.

Rayonism is the painting of the collisions and couplings of rays between
3. Aksenov means, presumably, Cézanne's *Mardi Gras* of 1888, which was in the Sergei Shchukin collection. It is now in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

4. Anton Rubinstein's opera *The Merchant of Kalashnikov* was staged by Sergei Zimin's company in Moscow in the winter of 1912/13.

5. In 1909 Petr Konchalovsky was commissioned by the merchant Markushev to execute panels and ceiling decorations for his Moscow villa. The Moscow Salon was the name of an important exhibiting society that held regular shows between 1910 and 1918. Konchalovsky's contribution to the first show in the winter of 1910/11, included his designs for the Markushev villa—*Gathering Olives, Gathering Grapes, Harvest, and The Park*.

6. In November 1911 Konchalovsky, together with Georgii Yakulov, designed the decor for a charity ball called "A Night in Spain" at the Merchants' Club, Moscow.

7. The portrait of the artist Yakulov was executed in 1910 and at present is in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. For Konchalovsky's own description of the work see bibl. R103, vol. 2, pp. 434ff.

8. Italian patriot and revolutionary. The reference, presumably, is to Mazzini's almost constant exile from Italy, during which he never ceased to believe in his dogmatic and utopian principles of Italian nationalism and working-class solidarity—despite the fact that for much of his life he was out of touch with the real moods of the Italian populus.

9. A reference to the prehistoric ivory figures of Brassempouy in southern France.

**BURLIUK, pp. 69-77**


2. Which Cézanne landscape Burliuk has in mind is not clear, perhaps *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire* (1896–98), which was in the Ivan Morozov collection, and is now in the Hermitage.

3. Poet, philosopher, and lexicographer.

4. Leading futurist poet, cosigner of "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste."

**LARIONOV and GONCHAROVA, pp. 87-91**

1. The ego futurists were primarily a literary group, formed in 1911 and led by Igor Severyanin.

2. The neofuturists were an imitative and derivative group active in 1913. Their one publication, *Vyzov obshchestvennym vkusam* [A Challenge to Public Tastes] (Kazan, 1913), contained parodies of futurist poems and rayonist drawings.

3. Goncharova and Larionov broke with the Knave of Diamonds after its first exhibition in 1910/11, thereby alienating themselves from David Burliuk—and condemning "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste." Larionov regarded the Union of Youth as a harbor of outdated symbolist ideas, an attitude shared by several artists and critics, although Larionov still contributed to its exhibitions.

4. An allusion to *vsechestvo* [literally, "everythingness"], i.e., the concept that all styles are permissible—an attitude shared by Shevchenko [e.g., see bibl. R355].

**LARIONOV, pp. 91-100**

1. The Whitman extracts are from *Leaves of Grass*: the first from "Beginners," in "Inscriptions"; the second from "I Hear It Was Charged Against Me," in "Calamus." Larionov's choice of author is significant: Whitman was known and respected in Russia particularly among the symbolists and futurists, and his *Leaves of Grass* had become popular through Konstantin Balmont's masterful translation (Moscow, 1911). For contemporaneous attitudes to Whitman in Russia, see Balmont, "Pevets lichnosti" in bibl. R44, no. 7, 1904. pp. 11–32; Chukovsky, "O poize broma" in bibl. R44, no. 12, 1906. pp. 52–60, and Chukovsky, *Uot Utitem: Poeziya gryudschei demokratii* (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923). Also see nn. 3 and 6 to "Rodchenko's System," p. 305.

2. Undoubtedly Larionov owed some of his ideas, both in his theory and in his practice of rayonism, to the theories of the Italian futurists. He would, for example, have seen the Russian translations of *La pittura futurista* and *Gli espositori al pubblico* (see p. 79).
3. The actual word Larionov uses is viro; this, presumably, is a corruption of the French word vitraux (plural of vitrail), meaning leaded- or stained-glass windows.

4. Larionov did not, in fact, develop this theory, although a booklet devoted to the subject of pneumorayonism was scheduled for publication, according to an advertisement in the miscellany Oslinyi khvost i mishen [Donkey's Tail and Target]; among Larionov's contributions to his exhibition "No. 4," in 1914, one work, Sunny Day, was subtitled "Pneumorayonist Color Structure" [bibl. R318]. A further development was "plastic rayonism," which appeared as a subtitle to two still lifes shown by Larionov at the "Exhibition of Painting 1915" [bibl. R277]; one review of this exhibition also referred to it [bibl. 230, p. 7].

ROZANOVA, pp. 102-110
1. See pp. 69-70.
2. Rozanova has in mind the first cycle of "World of Art" exhibitions (1899-1906) rather than the second (1910-24), since many radical artists—Natan Altman, Natalya Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, et al.—were represented in the latter. The Union of Russian Artists was a moderate exhibiting society based in Moscow that espoused the ideas of realism and naturalism, although, unexpectedly, the Burliuks and Larionov were represented at its 1906/1907 session in St. Petersburg, and Larionov and Aristarkh Lentulov were at its 1910 session. It held regular exhibitions between 1903 and 1917, and 1922 and 1923.

MALEVICH, pp. 116-35
1. Malevich is referring to "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste." See p. 69.
2. Konstantin Somov: member of the World of Art (see Introduction). Boris Kustodiev: member of the second World of Art society. Known for his colorful scenes of Moscow merchant life.
3. Malevich has in mind the rejection of the nude in painting by the Italian futurists, one of the main points of their La pittura futurista: Manifesto tecnico [see bibl. 120, pp. 65-67], which had been translated into Russian and published in Soyuz molodezhii [Union of Youth] (St. Petersburg), no. 2, 1912, pp. 23-28 [bibl. R339].
4. The word Malevich uses is predmetnost (from the noun predmet, which means "object"; cf. bespredmetnyi, "nonobjective"). "Objectism" or "objectness" would therefore render the meaning of the Russian.
5. All contributed to the "0.10" exhibition.

KLYUN, pp. 136-38
1. For explanation of lubok see n. 4 to Introduction, p. 298.
2. These were titles of unpublished translational poems by Stepanova herself, or by Olga Rozanova. For examples of Rozanova's verse see bibl. R332. For some details on Stepanova's graphics and poetry see Evgenii Kovtun. 'Varvara Stepanova's Anti-Book.' From Surface to Space. Russia 1916-24. Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1974. Exhibition catalogue, pp. 57-63 (text in English and in German).
3. It is not clear what exactly Stepanova has in mind—perhaps Rozanova's essay "The Bases of the New Creation" (pp. 102ff.).

KLYUN, pp. 142-43
1. Klyun, a friend and one-time disciple of Kazimir Malevich, is here objecting both to Malevich's occasional recourse to "objective" titles for suprematist paintings (e.g., Painterly Realism of a Football Player) and to his aerial, more representational phase of suprematism.
2. Klyun means Malevich's Lackey with a Samovar (exhibited at the "Shop" in 1916).
Russian Art of the Avant-Garde Theory and Criticism 1902-1934
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