


# Wassily Kandinsky

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Wassily Kandinsky, c. 1913 or earlier	
<b>Birth name</b>	Wassily Wassilyevich Kandinsky
<b>Born</b>	16 December [O.S. 4 December] 1866Moscow
<b>Died</b>	13 December 1944 (aged 78)Neuilly-sur-Seine
<b>Nationality</b>	Russian
<b>Field</b>	Painting
<b>Training</b>	Academy of Fine Arts, Munich
<b>Movement</b>	Expressionism; abstract art
<b>Works</b>	<i>On White II</i> , <i>Der Blaue Reiter</i>

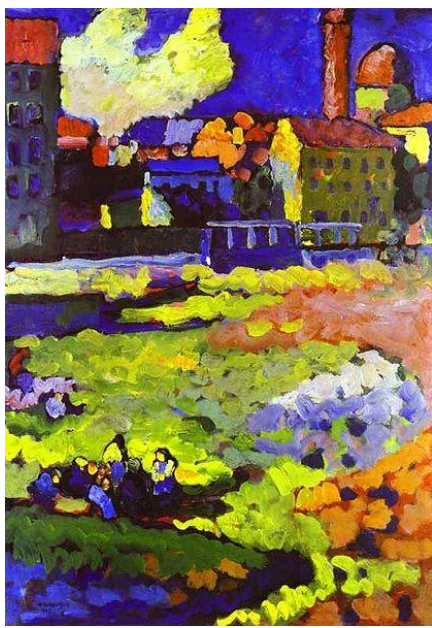
**Wassily Wassilyevich Kandinsky** (English pronunciation: /kənˈdɪnski/; Russian: Васи́лий Васи́льевич Канди́нский, *Vasilij Vasil'evič Kandinskij*; 16 December [O.S. 4 December] 1866 – 13 December 1944) was a Russian painter, and art theorist. He is credited with painting of the first purely abstract works.

Born in Moscow, Kandinsky spent his childhood in Odessa. He enrolled at the University of Moscow and chose to study law and economics. Quite successful in his profession—he was offered a professorship (chair of Roman Law) at the University of Dorpat—he started painting studies (life-drawing, sketching and anatomy) at the age of 30.

In 1896, he settled in Munich and studied first in the private school of Anton Ažbe and then at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich. He went back to Moscow in 1914, after World War I started. He was unsympathetic to the official theories on art in Moscow and returned to Germany in 1921. There, he taught at the Bauhaus school of art and architecture from 1922 until the Nazis closed it in 1933. He then moved to France where he lived the rest of his life, and became a French citizen in 1939. He died at Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1944.

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## Artistic periods



An early period work "Munich-Schwabing with the Church of St. Ursula" (Kandinsky 1908)

Kandinsky's creation of purely abstract work followed a long period of development and maturation of intense theoretical thought based on his personal artistic experiences. He called this devotion to inner beauty, fervor of spirit, and deep spiritual desire *inner necessity*, which was a central aspect of his art.

Kandinsky learned from a variety of sources living in Moscow. Later in his life, he would recall being fascinated and unusually stimulated by colour as a child. The fascination with colour symbolism and psychology continued as he grew. In 1889 he was part of an ethnographic research group that travelled to the Vologda region north of Moscow. In *Looks on the Past* he relates that the houses and churches were decorated with such shimmering colours that, upon entering them, he had the impression that he was moving into a painting. The experience and his study of the folk art in the region, in particular the use of bright colours on a dark background, was reflected in much of his early work. A few years later, he first related the act of painting to creating music in the manner for which he would later become noted and wrote, "Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the harmonies, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the

hand that plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul."

It was not until 1896, at the age of 30, that Kandinsky gave up a promising career teaching law and economics to enroll in art school in Munich. He was not immediately granted admission in Munich and began learning art on his own. Also in 1896, prior to leaving Moscow, he saw an exhibit of paintings by Monet and was particularly taken with the famous impressionistic *Haystacks* which, to him, had a powerful sense of colour almost independent of the objects themselves. Later he would write about this experience:

“That it was a haystack the catalogue informed me. I could not recognize it. This non-recognition was painful to me. I considered that the painter had no right to paint indistinctly. I dully felt that the object of the painting was missing. And I noticed with surprise and confusion that the picture not only gripped me, but impressed itself ineradicably on my memory. Painting took on a fairy-tale power and splendour.”

He was similarly influenced during this period by Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* which, he felt, pushed the limits of music and melody beyond standard lyricism.

Kandinsky was also spiritually influenced by H. P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), the most important exponent of Theosophy in modern times. Theosophical theory postulates that creation is a geometrical progression, beginning with a single point. The creative aspect of the forms is expressed by the descending series of circles, triangles, and squares. Kandinsky's book *Concerning the Spiritual In Art* (1910) and *Point and Line to Plane* (1926) echoed this basic Theosophical tenet. Illustrations by John Varley in *Thought Forms* (1901) influenced him visually.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Artistic metamorphosis (1896–1911)

Art school, typically considered difficult to get through, was easier for Kandinsky because he was older and more settled than the other students. It was during this time that he began to emerge as a true art theorist in addition to being a painter. The number of existing paintings increased at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and much remains of the many landscapes and towns that he painted, using broad swathes of colour but recognizable forms. For the most part, however, Kandinsky's paintings did not emphasize any human figures. An exception is *Sunday, Old Russia* (1904) where Kandinsky recreates a highly colourful (and fanciful) view of peasants and nobles before the walls of a

town. *Riding Couple* (1907) depicts a man on horseback, holding a woman with tenderness and care as they ride past a Russian town with luminous walls across a river. Yet the horse is muted, while the leaves in the trees, the town, and the reflections in the river glisten with spots of colour and brightness. The work shows the influence of pointillism in the way the depth of field is collapsed into a flat luminescent surface. Fauvism is also apparent in these early works. Colours are used to express the artist's experience of subject matter, not to describe objective nature. Perhaps the most important of Kandinsky's paintings from the first decade of the 1900s was *The Blue Rider* (1903), which shows a small cloaked figure on a speeding horse rushing through a rocky meadow. The rider's cloak is a medium blue, and the shadow cast is a darker blue. In the foreground are more amorphous blue shadows, presumably the counterparts of the fall trees in the background. The Blue Rider in the painting is prominent, but not clearly defined, and the horse has an unnatural gait (which Kandinsky must have known). Indeed, some believe that a second figure, a child perhaps, is being held by the rider, though this could just as easily be another shadow from a solitary rider. This type of intentional disjunction, allowing viewers to participate in the creation of the artwork, would become an increasingly conscious technique used by Kandinsky in subsequent years, culminating in the (often nominally) abstract works of the 1911–1914 period. In *The Blue Rider* Kandinsky shows the rider more as a series of colours than of specific details. In and of itself, *The Blue Rider* is not exceptional in that regard when compared to contemporary painters, but it does show the direction that Kandinsky would take only a few years later.

From 1906 to 1908 Kandinsky spent a great deal of time travelling across Europe, (he was an associate of the Blue Rose symbolist group of Moscow) until he settled in the small Bavarian town of Murnau. *The Blue Mountain* (1908–1909) was painted at this time and shows more of his trend towards pure abstraction. A mountain of blue is flanked by two broad trees, one yellow and one red. A procession of some sort with three riders and several others crosses at the bottom. The faces, clothing, and saddles of the riders are each a single colour, and neither they nor the walking figures display any real detail. The flat planes and the contours also are indicative of some influences by the Fauvists. The broad use of colour in *The Blue Mountain*, illustrates Kandinsky's move towards an art in which colour is presented independently of form, and which each colour is given equal attention. The composition has also become more planar, as it seems that the painting itself is divided into four sections- the sky, the red tree, the yellow tree, and the blue mountain containing the three riders.

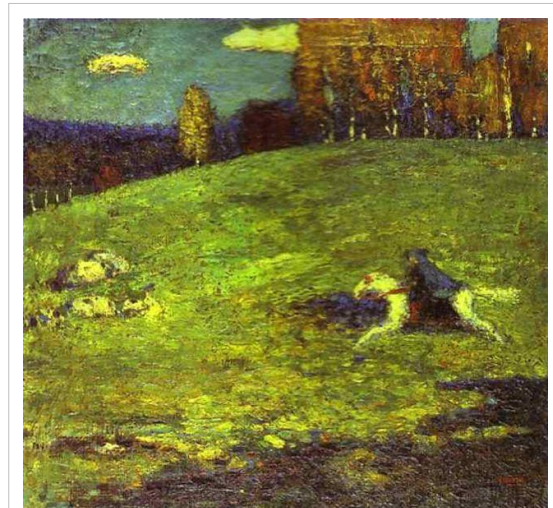
### The Blue Rider (1911–1914)

*See also Der Blaue Reiter*

The paintings of this period are composed of large and very expressive coloured masses evaluated independently from forms and lines which serve no longer to delimit them but are superimposed and overlap in a very free way to form paintings of an extraordinary force.

The influence of music has been very important on the birth of abstract art, as it is abstract by nature—it does not try to represent the exterior world but rather to express in an immediate way the inner feelings of the human soul. Kandinsky sometimes used musical terms to designate his works; he called many of his most spontaneous paintings "improvisations", while he entitled more elaborated works "compositions".

In addition to painting Kandinsky developed his voice as an art theorist. In fact, Kandinsky's influence on the history of Western art stems perhaps more from his theoretical works than from his paintings. He helped to found the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists' Association) and became its president in 1909. The group was unable to integrate the more radical approach of those



Kandinsky's *Der Blaue Reiter* (1903).



like Kandinsky with more conventional ideas of art and the group dissolved in late 1911. Kandinsky then moved to form a new group The Blue Rider (Der Blaue Reiter) with like minded artists such as August Macke and Franz Marc. The group released an almanac, called *The Blue Rider Almanac*, and held two exhibits. More of each were planned, but the outbreak of World War I in 1914 ended these plans and sent Kandinsky home to Russia via Switzerland and Sweden.

Kandinsky's writing in *The Blue Rider Almanac* and the treatise *On the Spiritual In Art*, which was released at almost the same time, served as both a defence and promotion of abstract art, as well as an appraisal that all forms of art were equally capable of reaching a level of spirituality. He believed that colour could be used in a painting as something autonomous and apart from a visual description of an object or other form.

These ideas had an almost immediate international impact, particularly in the English speaking world.<sup>[2]</sup> As early as 1912 *On the Spiritual In Art* was reviewed by Michael Sadleir in the London-based *Art News*.<sup>[3]</sup> This interest in Kandinsky grew apace when Sadleir went on to publish a translation into English of *On the Spiritual In Art* in 1914. Extracts from the book were published in 1914 in Percy Wyndham Lewis's periodical *Blast*, and Alfred Orage's weekly cultural newspaper *The New Age*. Yet Kandinsky had received some notice earlier in Britain, taking part in 1910 in the Allied Artists' Exhibition organised by Frank Rutter at London's Royal Albert Hall. This resulted in his work being singled out for praise in a review of that show by the artist Spencer Frederick Gore in *The Art News*.<sup>[4]</sup>

Sadleir's interest in Kandinsky also led to Kandinsky's first works entering a British art collection, with Sadleir's father, called Michael Sadler, acquiring several woodprints and the abstract painting "Fragment for Composition VII" in 1913. This followed a visit by him and Sadleir to meet Kandinsky in Munich also in 1913. These works were regularly displayed in Leeds either in the University or the premises of the Leeds Arts Club between 1913 and 1923.<sup>[5]</sup>

### Return to Russia (1914–1921)



In his own words, *Composition VII* was the most complex piece he ever painted  
(Kandinsky 1913)

“The sun melts all of Moscow down to a single spot that, like a mad tuba, starts all of the heart and all of the soul vibrating. But no, this uniformity of red is not the most beautiful hour. It is only the final chord of a symphony that takes every colour to the zenith of life that, like the fortissimo of a great orchestra, is both compelled and allowed by Moscow to ring out.”

— Wassily Kandinsky<sup>[6]</sup>

Through the years 1918 to 1921, Kandinsky dealt with the cultural development politics of Russia and collaborated in the domains of art pedagogy and museum reforms. He devoted his time to artistic teaching with a program based

on form and colour analysis, as well as participating in the organization of the Institute of Artistic Culture in Moscow. He painted little during this period. In 1916 he met Nina Andreievskaya, who in the following year became his wife. His spiritual, expressionistic view of art was ultimately rejected by the more radical members of the Institute as too individualistic and bourgeois. In 1921 Kandinsky received the mission to go to Germany to attend the Bauhaus of Weimar, on the invitation of its founder, the architect Walter Gropius.

### The Bauhaus (1922–1933)



"On White II" (Kandinsky 1923)

The Bauhaus was an innovative architecture and art school whose objectives included the merging of plastic arts with applied arts, reflected in its teaching methods based on the theoretical and practical application of the plastic arts synthesis. Kandinsky taught the basic design class for beginners and the course on advanced theory, and also conducted painting classes and a workshop where he completed his colour theory with new elements of form psychology. The development of his works on forms study, particularly on point and different forms of lines, lead to the publication of his second major theoretical book *Point and Line to Plane* in 1926.

Geometrical elements took on increasing importance in his teaching as well as in his painting, particularly circle, half-circle, the angle, straight lines and curves. This period was a period of intense production. The freedom of which is characterised in each of his works by the treatment of planes rich in colours and magnificent gradations as in the painting

*Yellow – red – blue* (1925), where Kandinsky shows his distance from constructivism and suprematism movements whose influence was increasing at this time.

The large two meter width painting that is *Yellow – red – blue* (1925) consists of a number of main forms: a vertical yellow rectangle, a slightly inclined red cross and a large dark blue circle, while a multitude of straight black or sinuous lines, arcs of circles, monochromatic circles and scattering of coloured checkerboards contribute to its delicate complexity. Kandinsky was one of Die Blaue Vier (Blue Four), with Klee, Feininger and von Jawlensky formed in 1923. They lectured and exhibited together in the USA in 1924.

In front of the hostility of the political parties of the right, the Bauhaus left Weimar and settled in Dessau from 1925. Following a fierce slander campaign from the Nazis, the Bauhaus closed at Dessau in 1932. The school pursued its activities in Berlin until its dissolution in July 1933. Kandinsky then left Germany and settled in Paris.

## The great synthesis (1934–1944)

In Paris he was quite isolated since abstract painting—particularly geometric abstract painting—was not recognized, the artistic fashions being mainly Impressionism and cubism. Kandinsky lived in a small apartment and created his work in a studio constructed in the living room. Biomorphous forms with supple and non-geometric outlines appear in his paintings; forms which suggest externally microscopic organisms but which always express the artist's inner life. He used original colour compositions which evoke Slavonic



*Composition X*, painted during WWII. (Kandinsky 1939)

popular art and which are similar to precious watermark works. He also occasionally mixed sand with paint to give a granular texture to his paintings.

This period corresponds, in fact, to a vast synthesis of his previous work, of which he used all elements, even enriching them. In 1936 and 1939 he painted his two last major compositions; canvases particularly elaborate and slowly ripped that he hadn't produced for many years. *Composition IX* is a painting with highly contrasted powerful diagonals and whose central form give the impression of a human embryo in the womb. The small squares of colours and the coloured bands seem to stand out against the black background of *Composition X*, as stars' fragments or filaments, while enigmatic hieroglyphs with pastel tones cover the large maroon mass, which seems to float in the upper left corner of the canvas.

In Kandinsky's work, some characteristics are obvious while certain touches are more discrete and veiled; that is to say they reveal themselves only progressively to those who make the effort to deepen their connection with his work. He intended his forms, which he subtly harmonized and placed, to resonate with the observer's own soul.

## Kandinsky's conception of art

### The artist as prophet

Writing that "music is the ultimate teacher," Kandinsky embarked upon the first seven of his ten *Compositions*. The first three survive only in black-and-white photographs taken by fellow artist and friend, Gabriele Münter. While studies, sketches, and improvisations exist (particularly of *Composition II*), a Nazi raid on the Bauhaus in the 1930s resulted in the confiscation of Kandinsky's first three *Compositions*. They were displayed in the State-sponsored exhibit "Degenerate Art" then destroyed along with works by Paul Klee, Franz Marc and other modern artists.

Influenced by Theosophy and the perception of a coming New Age, a common theme among Kandinsky's first seven *Compositions* is the Apocalypse, or the end of the world as we know it. Writing of the "artist as prophet" in his book, *Concerning the Spiritual In Art*, Kandinsky created paintings in the years immediately preceding World War I showing a coming cataclysm which would alter individual and social reality. Raised an Orthodox Christian, Kandinsky drew upon the Jewish and Christian stories of Noah's Ark, Jonah and the whale, Christ's Anastasis and Resurrection, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the Revelation, various Russian folk tales, and the common mythological experiences of death and rebirth. Never attempting to picture any one of these stories as a narrative, he used their veiled imagery as symbols of the archetypes of death / rebirth and destruction / creation he felt were



imminent to the pre-World War I world.

As he stated in *Concerning the Spiritual In Art* (see below), Kandinsky felt that an authentic artist creating art from "an internal necessity" inhabits the tip of an upwards moving triangle. This progressing triangle is penetrating and proceeding into tomorrow. Accordingly, what was odd or inconceivable yesterday is commonplace today; what is *avant garde* today (and understood only by the few) is standard tomorrow. The modern artist/prophet stands lonely at the tip of this triangle making new discoveries and ushering in tomorrow's reality. Kandinsky had become aware of recent developments in sciences, as well as the advances of modern artists who had contributed to radically new ways of seeing and experiencing the world.

*Composition IV* and subsequent paintings are primarily concerned with evoking a spiritual resonance in viewer and artist. As in his painting of the apocalypse by water (*Composition VI*), Kandinsky puts the viewer in the situation of experiencing these epic myths by translating them into contemporary terms along with requisite senses of desperation, flurry, urgency, and confusion. This spiritual communion of viewer-painting-artist/prophet is ineffable but may be described to the limits of words and images.

### Artistic and spiritual theoretician

As the *Der Blaue Reiter* Almanac essays and theorizing with composer Arnold Schoenberg indicate, Kandinsky also expressed this communion between artist and viewer as being simultaneously available to the various sense faculties as well as to the intellect (synesthesia). Hearing tones and chords as he painted, Kandinsky theorized that, for examples, yellow is the colour of middle-C on a piano, a brassy trumpet blast; black is the colour of closure and the ends of things; and that combinations and associations of colours produce vibrational



*Composition VI*, (Kandinsky 1913)

frequencies akin to chords played on a piano. Kandinsky also developed an intricate theory of geometric figures and their relationships, claiming, for example, that the circle is the most peaceful shape and represents the human soul. These theories are set forth in *Point and Line to Plane* (see below).

During the months of studies Kandinsky made in preparation for *Composition IV* he became exhausted while working on a painting and went for a walk. In the meantime, Gabriele Münter tidied his studio and inadvertently turned his canvas on its side. Upon returning and seeing the canvas—yet not identifying it—Kandinsky fell to his knees and wept, saying it was the most beautiful painting he had seen. He had been liberated from attachment to the object. As when he first viewed Monet's *Haystacks*, the experience would change his life and the history of Western art.

In another event with Münter during the Bavarian Abstract Expressionist years, Kandinsky was working on his *Composition VI*. From nearly six months of study and preparation, he had intended the work to evoke a flood, baptism, destruction, and rebirth simultaneously. After outlining the work on a mural-sized wood panel, he became blocked and could not go on. Münter told him that he was trapped in his intellect and not reaching the true subject of the picture. She suggested he simply repeat the word "*uberflut*" ("deluge" or "flood") and focus on its sound rather than its meaning. Repeating this word like a mantra, Kandinsky painted and completed the monumental work in only

a three-day span.

## Theoretical writings on art

The analysis made by Kandinsky on forms and on colours doesn't result from simple arbitrary ideas associations, but from the inner experience of the painter, who has passed years creating abstract paintings of an incredible sensorial richness, working on forms and with colours, observing for a long time and tirelessly his own paintings and those of other artists, noting simply their subjective effect on the very high sensibility to colours of his artist and poet soul.

So it is a purely subjective form of experience that everyone can do and repeat taking the time to look at his paintings and letting acting the forms and the colours on his own living sensibility. These are not scientific and objective observations, but inner observations radically subjective and purely phenomenological which is a matter of what the French philosopher Michel Henry calls the *absolute subjectivity* or the *absolute phenomenological life*.

### *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

Originally published in 1911, Kandinsky compares the spiritual life of humanity to a large triangle similar to a pyramid; the artist has the task and the mission of leading others to the top by the exercise of his talent. The point of the triangle is constituted only by some individuals who bring the sublime bread to other people. It is a spiritual triangle which moves forwards and rises slowly, even if it sometimes remains immobile. During decadent periods, souls fall to the bottom of the Triangle and men only search for external success and ignore purely spiritual forces.

When we look at colours on the painter's palette, a double effect happens: a *purely physical* effect on the eye, charmed by the beauty of colours firstly, which provokes a joyful impression as when we eat a delicacy. But this effect can be much deeper and causes an emotion and a vibration of the soul, or an *inner resonance*, which is a purely spiritual effect, by which the colour touches the soul itself.

The *inner necessity* is for Kandinsky the principle of the art and the foundation of forms and colours' harmony. He defines it as the principle of the efficient contact of the form with the human soul. Every form is the delimitation of a surface by another one; it possesses an inner content which is the effect it produces on the one who looks at it attentively. This inner necessity is the right of the artist to an unlimited freedom, but this freedom becomes a crime if it is not founded on such a necessity. The art work is born from the inner necessity of the artist in a mysterious, enigmatic and mystic way, and then it acquires an autonomous life; it becomes an independent subject animated by a spiritual breath.

The first obvious properties we can see when we look at isolated colour and let it act alone; it is on one side the warmth or the coldness of the coloured tone, and on the other side the clarity or the obscurity of the tone.

The warmth is a tendency to yellow, and the coldness is a tendency to blue. The yellow and the blue form the first big contrast, which is dynamic. The yellow possesses an eccentric movement and the blue a concentric movement; a yellow surface seems to get closer to us, while a blue surface seems to move away. The *yellow* is the typically terrestrial colour whose violence can be painful and aggressive. The *blue* is the typically celestial colour which evokes a deep calm. The mixing of blue with yellow gives the total immobility and the calm, the *green*.

Clarity is a tendency to the white and obscurity is a tendency to the black. The white and the black form the second big contrast, which is static. The *white* acts like a deep and absolute silence full of possibilities. The *black* is a nothingness without possibility, which is an eternal silence without hope, and corresponds to death. That's why any other colour resonates so strongly on its neighbors. The mixing of white with black leads to gray, which possesses no active force and whose affective tonality is near that of green. The *gray* corresponds to immobility without hope; it tends to despair when it becomes dark and regains little hope when it lightens.

The *red* is a warmth colour, very living, lively and agitated, it possesses an immense force, it is a movement in oneself. Mixed with black, it leads to *brown* which is a hard colour. Mixed with yellow, it gains in warmth and gives the *orange* which possesses an irradiating movement on the surroundings. When red is mixed with blue, it moves



away from man to give the *purple*, which is cooled red. The red and the green form the third big contrast, while the orange and the purple form the fourth one.

### Point and line to plane

Kandinsky analyzed, in his writings, the geometrical elements which compose every painting, namely the *point* and the *line*, as well as the physical support and the material surface on which the artist draws or paints and which he called the *basic plane* or BP. He didn't analyze them on an objective, exterior point of view, but on the point of view of their inner effect on the living subjectivity of the observer who looks at them and lets them act on his sensibility.

The *point* is, in practice, a small stain of colour put by the artist on the canvas. So the point used by the painter is not a geometric point, it is not a mathematical abstraction, it possesses a certain extension, a form and a colour. This form can be a square, a triangle, a circle, like a star or even more complex. The point is the most concise form, but according to its placement on the basic plane it will take a different tonality. It can be isolated or put in resonance with other points or lines.

The *line* is the product of a force. It is a point on which a living force has been applied in a given direction, the force applied on the pencil or on the paint brush by the hand of the artist. The produced linear forms can be of several types: a *straight* line, which results from a unique force applied in a single direction, an *angular* line, which results from the alternation of two forces with different directions, or a *curved* or *wave-like* line produced by the effect of two forces acting simultaneously. A *plane* can be obtained by condensation, from a line rotated around one of its ends.

The subjective effect produced by a line depends on its orientation: the *horizontal* line corresponds to the ground, on which man rests and moves; it possesses a dark and cold affective tonality similar with black or blue. The *vertical* line corresponds to height which offers no support; it possesses a luminous and warm tonality close to white and yellow. A *diagonal* possesses by consequence a more or less warm or cold tonality according to its inclination according to the horizontal and to the vertical.

A force which deploys itself without obstacle as the one which produces a straight line corresponds to *lyricism*, while several forces which confront or annoy each other form a *drama*. The *angle* formed by the angular line possesses as well an inner sonority which is warm and close to yellow for an acute angle (triangle), cold and similar to blue for an obtuse angle (circle) and similar to red for a right angle (square).

The *basic plane* is, in general, rectangular or square, thus it is composed of horizontal and vertical lines which delimit it and define it as an autonomous entity which serves as support to the painting, communicating its affective tonality. This tonality is determined by the relative importance of horizontal and vertical lines, the horizontals giving a calm and cold tonality to the basic plane, while the verticals give it a calm and warm tonality. The artist possesses the intuition of this inner effect of the canvas format and dimensions, which he chooses according to the tonality he wants to give to his work. Kandinsky even considers the basic plane as a living being that the artist "fertilizes" and of which he feels the "breathing".

Every *part* of the basic plane possesses a proper affective colouration which influences the tonality of the pictorial elements that will be drawn on it, and which contributes to the richness of the composition which results from their juxtaposition on the canvas. The *above* of the basic plane corresponds to the looseness and to lightness, while the *below* evokes the condensation and heaviness. The work of the painter is to listen and to know these effects in order to produce paintings which are not just the effect of a random process, but the fruit of an authentic work and the result of an effort towards the inner beauty.

## Quotations on Kandinsky

- "The 'Pioneer' [Kandinsky] did not just produce a body of work whose sensuous magnificence and rich inventiveness eclipse even the most remarkable of his contemporaries. He also provided an explicit theory of abstract painting, exposing its principles with the utmost precision and clarity. So, the painted work is accompanied with a group of texts that at the same time clarify his work and make Kandinsky one of the main theorists of art. Facing the hieroglyphs of the last canvases of the Parisian period (which are said to be the most difficult), they provide the Rosetta stone on which the meaning of these mysterious figures is inscribed." (Michel Henry, *Seeing the invisible, on Kandinsky*, p. 2)
- "Kandinsky was fascinated by the expressive power of linear forms. Lyricism is the pathos of a force whose triumphant effort enters into action and encounters no obstacle. Because the straight line results from the initiative of a single, unopposed force, its domain is that of the lyric. When two forces are present and thus enter in conflict, as this is the case with the curve or the zigzag line, we are in domain of drama." (Michel Henry, *Seeing the invisible, on Kandinsky*, p. 52)
- "Kandinsky calls abstract the content that painting must express, that's to say this invisible life that we are. In such a way that the Kandinskian equation, to which we have alluded to, can be written in reality as follows : Interior = interiority = invisible = life = pathos = *abstract*." (Michel Henry, *Seeing the invisible, on Kandinsky*, p. 11).
- "Like the final climax of a giant orchestra, Moscow resounds victoriously." (Wassily Kandinsky on the sunset of Moscow, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, p. 9).

## References

Note: Several sections of this article have been translated from its French version: *Theoretical writings on art, The Bauhaus* and *The great synthesis* artistic periods. For complete detailed references in French, see the original version at [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vassily\\_Kandinsky](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vassily_Kandinsky)

- [1] Sixten Ringbom, *The sounding cosmos; a study in the spiritualism of Kandinsky and the genesis of abstract painting*, (Abo [Finland]: Abo Akademi, 1970), pgs 89 & 148a.
- [2] See Michael Paraskos, "English Expressionism," MRes Thesis, University of Leeds, Leeds 1997, p103f
- [3] Michael Sadleir, Review of *Über die geistige Kunst* by Wassily Kandinsky, in "The Art News," 9 March 1912, p.45
- [4] Spencer Frederick Gore, "The Allied Artists' Exhibition at the Royal Albert Hall (London)", in "The Art News," 4 August 1910, p.254
- [5] Tom Steele, "Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club 1893-1923" (Mitcham, Orage Press, 2009) 218f
- [6] Kandinsky, by Hajo DUCHTING, Taschen, 2007, pg 7

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