

Sculpture and architecture, until the present, destroy space *as space* by dividing it. The new sculpture and architecture must destroy *the work of art as an object or thing*.

...in specific expression, its particular nature. 'Although... e, the possibilities of plastic expression are different... covers these possibilities within its own domain and... bounds. Each art possesses its own *means of expression*... plastic means has to be discovered independently by... mited by its own bounds. Therefore the potentialities... d according to the potentialities of another, but must... ly and only with regard to the art concerned... ure of the spirit, all the arts, regardless of differences... in one way or another become more and more the... nate, equilibrated relationship: for equilibrated rela... ess the universal, the harmony, the unity that are

...rit, man himself creates a new beauty, whereas in the... described the beauty of nature. This new beauty has... he new man, for in it he expresses *his own image in*... ature. THE NEW ART IS BORN.

## 7 Kasimir Malevich (1878–1935) 'Non-Objective Art and Suprematism'

Malevich claimed that Suprematism began in 1913. Its first exposition took place, however, in December 1915; the works of 1913 to which he refers were set designs (involving squares) for the Futurist opera *Victory over the Sun*, which he saw as significant in the genesis of Suprematism. The *Black Square* of 1915 had served as a zero point from which Malevich could develop a vocabulary of coloured forms, mostly rectangular and often giving the appearance of 'flying' in pictorial space. By 1919 he believed he had burst through colour into white, the 'colour' of infinity. This text was originally published in the catalogue to the 10th State Exhibition, Moscow 1919, at which Malevich exhibited his 'White on White' canvases. The present translation is taken from Larissa Zhadova, *Malevich: Suprematism and Revolution in Russian Art 1910–1920*, London, 1982.

The plane which formed a square was the progenitor of Suprematism, the new colour realism, as non-objective art (see the pamphlet *Cubism, Futurism and Suprematism*, 1st, 2nd and 3rd editions, 1915 and 1916). [see IIA14]

Suprematism arose in Moscow in 1913 and the first works which appeared at an exhibition of painting in Petrograd aroused indignation among 'papers that were then in good standing' and critics, as well as among professionals — the leading painters.

In referring to non-objectivity, I merely wished to make it plain that Suprematism is not concerned with things, objects, etc., and more: non-objectivity in

general has nothing to do with it. Suprematism is a definite system in accordance with which colour has developed throughout the long course of its culture.

Painting arose from the mixing of colours and — at moments when aesthetic warmth brought about a flowering — turned colour into a chaotic mix, so that it was objects as such which served as the pictorial framework for the great painters. I found that the closer one came to the culture of painting, the more the frameworks (i.e. objects) lost their systematic nature and broke up, thus establishing a different order governed by painting.

It became clear to me that new frameworks of pure colour must be created, based on what colour demanded and also that colour, in its turn, must pass out of the pictorial mix into an independent unity, a structure in which it would be at once individual in a collective environment and individually independent.

The system is constructed in time and space, independently of any aesthetic considerations of beauty, experience or mood, but rather as a philosophical colour system, the realization of new trends in my thinking — as a matter of knowledge.

At the present moment man's path lies across space. Suprematism is the semaphore of light in its infinite abyss.

The blue colour of the sky has been overcome by the Suprematist system, it has been broken through and has entered into white, which is the true actual representation of infinity and therefore freed from the colour background of the sky.

A hard, cold system, unsmilingly set in motion by philosophical thought. Indeed, its real power may already be in motion within this system.

All the daubings produced by utilitarian intentions are insignificant and limited in scope. Their point is merely a matter of application and the past, and it arises from recognition and deduction by philosophical thought at the level at which we see the cosy nooks that cater for commonplace taste, or create a new one.

In one of its phases, Suprematism has a purely philosophical impetus, cognitive by means of colour: in another, it is a form capable of application by making available a new style of Suprematist decoration.

But it may manifest itself in objects as a transformation or embodiment of space within them, thereby removing their singularity from the mind.

It has become clear as a result of Suprematist philosophical colour thinking that the will is able to develop an artistic system when the object has been annulled in the artist's mind as a pictorial framework and a vehicle, and that, as long as objects remain a framework and a vehicle, his will must go on gyrating within a compositional circle and among objective forms.

Everything that we see arose from the colour mass transformed into plane and volume. Every machine, house, person and table, all are pictorial volume systems intended for particular purposes.

The artist too must transform the colour masses and create an artistic system, but he must not paint little pictures of fragrant roses since all this would be dead representation pointing back to life.

And even if his construction is non-objective, but is based on the inter-relation of colours, his will cannot but be confined between the walls of aesthetic planes, instead of achieving philosophical penetration.

I am only free when my will, basing itself critically and philosophically on that which exists, is able to formulate a basis for new phenomena.

I have ripped through the blue lampshade of the constraints of colour. I have come out into the white. Follow me, comrade aviators. Swim into the abyss. I have set up the semaphores of Suprematism.

I have overcome the lining of the coloured sky, torn it down and into the bag thus formed, put colour, tying it up with a knot. Swim in the white free abyss, infinity is before you.

## 8 Kasimir Malevich (1878–1935) *The Question of Imitative Art*

Malevich has been frequently represented as an other-worldly mystic, and after the Revolution in Russia he was indeed criticized for Idealism by artists and commentators whose own orientation was more explicitly political. Despite his idiosyncrasies, however, the present text demonstrates Malevich's cognizance of contemporary events and his determination to relate Suprematism to them while refusing the claims of previous styles of art adequately to represent the new life. Originally published Smolensk, 1920. The present translation is taken from T. Andersen (ed.), *K. S. Malevich: Essays on Art 1915–1933*, Vol. I, Copenhagen, 1969. (The 'constituent assembly', it should be noted, was the political body of the Provisional Government under Kerensky set up following the February Revolution of 1917, and dissolved by the Bolsheviks in the name of the Soviets – workers' councils – in October of that year.)

[ . . . ] After long centuries marking the destruction of the bearers of youth the day has come for the clash between youth and age. Today a desperate struggle is being carried on with the old man who is trying to stifle youth. Today we are witnessing one of the usual mistakes of the old, which does not comprehend the movements of new life; today the old men are striving to ensure that there may never be another spring; but there will be, for in it lies the birth of a new universal step. Today the avant-gardes of economics and politics are fighting to gain territory, in order to prepare a place for the foundations of the new world: all the young forces are collecting on it and will create a world in their new image. Today the man has awoken who shouts for all the world to hear and calls all humanity to unity. Our unity is essential for his being: not to obtain rights and liberty or to build an economic, utilitarian life, but in order that, by the safeguarding of our bodily needs, our being may advance to the single unity and wholeness on the path of universal movement, as our main and, indeed, only goal. The unity of all humanity is essential, for a new single man of action is needed. We wish to form ourselves according to a new pattern, plan and system; we wish to build in such a way that all the elements of nature will unite with man and create a single, all-powerful image. With this aim the economic principle leads us along its path and collects all the lives that have been scattered in the chaos of nature, separate and isolated, uniting them in his path: thus every personality, every individual, formerly isolated, is now incorporated in the system of united action.

This is why nowadays no individual personality is allowed to have the freedom of isolation or to live as it pleases, arranging a personal economic programme for its own vegetable-garden, since it must be included in the system of sharing and of common freedom and rights; hence the individual has no rights, for the rights are common to all, and the individual personality itself is simply a fragment from a united being, all of whose fragments must be joined together in one, since they originated from one. Thus all the many lives in nature, with all their various advantages, have become incorporated in man and have brought him their entire will and wisdom; now only he – man – as a centre can turn nature into another new image, which will be nothing less than man himself: a completed step on the eternal path. Our new society should occupy itself in this way, but in order to begin building we need a plan of action and a system. We already know that every aspect of our life is based on the economics of subsistence and of movement in general, whence stem politics, rights and liberty. Of these the most important is economics, which is the measure of our contemporary life: this is how we measure it, and anything that does not come under this measure is not contemporary. We should, accordingly, apply this measure absolutely, to all forms of our expression, in order to be in accordance with the general plan for the contemporary development of an organism. Thanks to the economic system, every individual is subject to it, whilst it can no longer produce anything apart from the system of sharing. The communist town is not arising from the chaos of private buildings, but according to a general plan: the form of each building will stem from this plan and not from the whim of individual personalities.

Freedom of the individual can only be in accordance with the common freedom; hence no personality has any private property, for all its forms are a phenomenon of the general economic movement. Hence arises the collective – a group of personalities linked by the agreement of collective individualism on the basis of common economic action, and forming a unit of the general unity. The joining together of all the collectives is the unity towards which contemporary life is moving. [ . . . ] None of the forms of economic development and of human consciousness that were found in the old world can exist any longer, for a new meaning has appeared. No form of the old can exist, for revolutionary perfection is ceaselessly bearing its being further and further by means of our consciousness, broadening and deepening space by energetic economic reasoning. If, on the other hand, we leave the old form, we are serving counter-revolutionary perfection. Each day, in economic and political life, brings purification from what is old – this is where perfection lies. But in art everything is the other way round: the older a work the more it is considered valuable, beautiful, artistic and skilful, just as in the wine trade old wine is the most prized. They always try to show the people that old art is valuable and beautiful, at the same time stifling, muffling and slandering everything modern. Today, when Revolutionary Perfection is bringing a new, youthful world of forms as the body of being, reactionary elements dig up and bring out into the street the remains of past perfection, showing them to the masses. It is not shown to aid understanding of the development of form, as an example of old life; no, they strive to prove