

so known as

Wassily Kandinsky, Vasilij Kandinskij, Wassily Wassiljewitsch Kandinsky, Vasili Vasilievich Kandinsky, Vassily Kandinsky, Vasilyevich Kandinsky, Vasilii Vasil'evich Kandinskii, Kandinsky, Wa-hsi-li K`ang-ting-ssu-chi, K`ang-ting-ssu-chi, Vasilij Vasil'evic Kandinskij, Wassili Kandinsky, Vasilij Kandinski, Василий Васильевич Кандинский, Vasily Kandinsky, 瓦西里·康定斯基

Date of birth

1866

Date of death

1944

A pioneer of abstract art, Vasily Kandinsky believed that color and form could function as vehicles for direct expression, awakening powerful feelings in the viewer. He argued that the emotional properties of abstract art could transcend language and that images don't need to represent something identifiable in order to be powerful.

Having received musical training early in his life, Kandinsky approached color with a musician's sensibility, often analogizing color to sound. In his seminal 1912 text, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, one of the most important and widely read art treatises of the 20th century, he advocated that art could move beyond imitation of the physical world, inspiring, as he put it, "vibrations in the soul." He wrote, "Color directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings."

During the first decade of the 20th century, Kandinsky's work showed influences of Fauvism, pointillism, and Impressionism, but he soon began forging a new path alongside artists that shared his radical sensibility. As one of the founding members of the New Artists' Association of Munich (Neue Kunstlervereinigung Munchen, or NKVM), the leading movement of Modern Art in 20th-century Germany, he created works that were increasingly abstract. In 1911, Kandinsky brought together the **Blue Rider** (Der Blaue Reiter) group, nine like-minded Expressionist artists who believed that symbolic associations of sound and color in art could produce a spiritual experience. Famously, he began teaching at the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1922, where he made color theory a significant part of the school's curriculum. Following the Nazi government's closure of the Bauhaus in 1933, Kandinsky settled in Neuilly-sur-Seine, near Paris, where he resided until his death.

The Art Institute is home to numerous works by Kandinsky, including *Improvisation No. 30 (Cannons)*, notable for its incorporation of both abstract forms and references to the material world.

Key Contributions at the Bauhaus:

Kandinsky taught theoretical courses on color theory and form, encouraging students to explore the emotional impact of shapes and colors.

He worked closely with other influential modern artists like Paul Klee, blending ideas from architecture, design, and fine art to push the boundaries of what art could be.

His time at the Bauhaus led to a more geometric style in his later works, focusing on circles, squares, and triangles to convey universal themes of harmony and balance.

Kandinsky's influence at the Bauhaus cannot be overstated—it was a pivotal moment that helped shape modern art as we know it today.

7. Kandinsky's Legacy: The Lasting Impact on Modern Art ☐ ☐ ☐

Wassily Kandinsky's contributions to abstract art helped pave the way for many modern and contemporary artists. His works challenged traditional ideas of what art could be, pushing the boundaries of form, color, and expression. ☐ ☐

Kandinsky's Influence on Modern Art:

Abstract Expressionism: Artists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko drew inspiration from Kandinsky's emphasis on emotional expression through abstraction.

Color Theory: His ideas about color and emotion have influenced generations of artists, designers, and educators.

Spirituality in Art: Kandinsky's belief in the spiritual power of art continues to resonate, especially with artists exploring themes of spirituality and self-expression through non-representational forms.

Today, Kandinsky's paintings are celebrated in major museums around the world, and his ideas about art as a universal language of emotion continue to inspire new generations of artists. ☐ ✨

Wassily Kandinsky - Pintura Amarilla - Alfombra a Medida Arte Bauhaus

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) □ □

1. Who was Wassily Kandinsky?

Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian-born artist and one of the pioneers of abstract art. He believed in the spiritual power of colors and shapes to express emotions and inner truths. □ □

2. What is abstract art?

Abstract art is a style that does not depict recognizable objects or scenes but instead uses color, form, and line to evoke emotions or ideas. Kandinsky is often credited as one of its founding figures.

3. What are Kandinsky's most famous works?

Some of his most famous paintings include Composition VII, Yellow-Red-Blue, and Improvisation 28. These works showcase his move toward pure abstraction and his belief in the emotional power of art. □ □

4. How did music influence Kandinsky's art?

Kandinsky believed that art and music were closely connected, and he often compared his paintings to musical compositions. He used terms like "Composition" and

"Improvisation" to describe his abstract works, emphasizing their emotional and rhythmic qualities. □ □

5. What did Kandinsky teach at the Bauhaus?

At the Bauhaus, Kandinsky taught courses on color theory and abstract form, helping to shape the modern art movement with his emphasis on geometric abstraction and spiritual expression. □ □

6. How has Kandinsky influenced modern art?

Kandinsky's focus on abstract form, color, and emotional expression has had a lasting impact on many art movements, including Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and contemporary abstract art. □ □

Conclusion: Wassily Kandinsky—A Visionary of Modern Art
□ □ □

Wassily Kandinsky's journey through art was one of bold exploration, blending emotion, spirituality, and abstraction to create a new language of color and form. His work continues to inspire artists, designers, and thinkers worldwide, proving that art can transcend the material world to touch something deeper—our innermost feelings and the mysteries of the human spirit. As one of the

true visionaries of modern art, Kandinsky's legacy lives on, reminding us that creativity has no limits. ✨

KANDINSKY AND ABSTRACTION: THE ROLE OF THE HIDDEN IMAGE

By Rose-Carol Washton Long

IN AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT published in 1919, Vasily Kandinsky claimed he painted his first abstract work in 1911.¹ However, in his essays written before the First World War, he made no mention of abstract works before the middle of 1913.² No wonder then that one of Kandinsky's biographers, when faced with describing the paintings of the period 1911–1913, wrote in 1924: "One thinks one sees in the works from 1911–1913 vegetables, meteorological forms, remnants of trees, water, fog, but by careful concentration one is able to make these figments of our imagination disappear."³ This expression of uneasiness about the seeming presence of images in Kandinsky's works betrays the conflict many have felt when seeking to establish a clear cut-off date for Kandinsky's excursion into abstraction. Kandinsky's remarks of 1919 have been used to support the misconception that the imagery, actually visible in his paintings of 1911 through 1914, does not really exist. This contradiction between what one sees in the paintings and what one frequently reads is partly due to the fact that Kandinsky's interpretation of abstraction changed between 1913 and 1919.

The keyboard is color, the eyes are hammers, and the heart is a piano with several strings. The musician is the hand that plays, feeling one note or another in order to create vibrations in one's soul."

9. See Kandinsky, "Reminiscences," Lindsay & Vergo, p. 364. 40. This theory, according to Kandinsky's own footnote, was informed by the experiments of a Russian music teacher, Madame A. ZakharinUnkovskaya, at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Kandinsky was fascinated with her method, which he considered special and precise, since it allowed for "translating the colors of nature into music, of painting the sounds of nature, of seeing sounds in color and hearing colors musically." On the Spiritual in Art, Lindsay & Vergo, p. 159. 41. After attending a concert of the composer's music in Munich on January 1, 1911, the artist began a long-lasting correspondence with him that was only interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. What particularly captured Kandinsky's attention were Schonberg's theories of music, even though in a letter of January 13, 1912, Kandinsky freely admits that his knowledge of

music and musical theory is rather rudimentary and that he awaits the visit of his friend the Russian composer Thomas von Hartmann, who will explain to him the nuances of Schonberg's theory as expounded in his book *Theory of Harmony* (1911). Kandinsky insisted that excerpts from Schonberg's article "On Parallel Octaves and Fifths," from his *Theory of Harmony*, should be published in Kandinsky's personally footnoted Russian translation in the catalogue to the second salon organized by the sculptor Vladimir Izdebsky in Odessa, December 1910. 42. For discussion of Schonberg's work, see R. P. Morgan, *XXc. Music* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1991), pp. 62–77. On the relationship between Kandinsky and Schonberg, see Peter Vergo, "Music and Abstract Painting: Kandinsky, Goethe and Schonberg," in *Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art 1910-20* (London: Tate Gallery, 1980), pp. 41-63. 43. *On the Spiritual in Art*, Lindsay & Vergo, p. 215. 44. *On the Spiritual in Art*, Lindsay & Vergo, p. 217. 45. Peg Weiss discusses in detail Kandinsky's admiration for Hodler and his tendency toward the use of melodic and

rhythmic elements in his work; see her article "Kandinsky and the Symbolist Heritage," *Art Journal* 45 (Summer 1985), pp. 137-45. 46. On the Spiritual in Art, Lindsay & Vergo, p. 217. 47. On the Spiritual in Art, Lindsay & Vergo, p. 217. 48. The connection to music is not the only analogy Kandinsky brings up in this context. The tranquil, elevated style of Gothic architecture, which shows a poised rhythmic composition of well-balanced structural parts, creates for him a spiritual mood as in painting. See On the Spiritual in Art, Lindsay & Vergo, p. 218. 49. During this decade, Kandinsky did not abandon his notion of making a Composition; he attempted to paint a Composition VIII around 1918 (as a dated study is entitled Study for Composition VIII). 50. A new institution, called the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment (Narkompros), was assigned the task of coordinating the cultural affairs of the newly born Soviet Union. Its head, Anatolii Lunacharsky, invited such avant-garde artists as Vladimir Tatlin and Aleksandr Rodchenko to join the Department of Visual Arts (IZO). In January 1918 they invited Kandinsky to join IZO, where he was later appointed

editor of Visual Art, a periodical published by IZO Narkompros. In October 1918 Kandinsky established contact with German artists and the architect Walter Gropius, who would be the founder of the Bauhaus in 1919. For detailed discussion of the period see Clark Poling, *Kandinsky: Russian and Bauhaus Years, 1915–1933* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1983), chaps. 1 and 2, pp. 12-56. 51. However, since the beginning of the Weimar Republic in Germany, following the November Revolution in 1918, an art society called the November Gruppe, the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Work Council for Art), and the Bauhaus all postulated the goal of creating art that would respond to the needs of a new, more egalitarian society. For a detailed discussion of this period, see Poling, *Kandinsky: Russian and Bauhaus Years*, chaps. 1 and 2, pp. 12-56. 52. In 1920-21 Kandinsky had been involved with the Russian School Vkhutemas (Higher Art Technical Studios); the Bauhaus was structured according to the same system of studios as the Vkhutemas and also propagated the synthesis of the fine and applied arts. 53. In its importance regarding Kandinsky's pictorial

theories of the post- World War I period, Point and Line to Plane is comparable to On the Spiritual in Art of the pre-World War I years. The book was first published in 1926 in volume 9 of the Bauhaus Books. According to Kandinsky's introduction, the ideas presented in the book were the re

Kandinsky asked Gabriele Münter to accompany him at his summer art seminars in the Alps located close to Munich in the summer of 1902. She agreed, and their connection shifted from business to personal. Kandinsky found art school, which is typically thought to be challenging, to be simple.

During this period, he began to establish himself as a theorist of art and an artist.

At the start of the 20 century, the number of his remaining works rose; much survives of the landscapes and cities he produced, utilizing vast swathes of color and identifiable features. Kandinsky's paintings, for the greater majority, did not include any human beings; an anomaly is *Sunday, Old Russia* (1904), in which

Kandinsky reconstructs a vibrant scene of villagers and nobility in front of a city's main walls.



Sunday, Old

Russia (1904) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Metamorphosis

Couple on Horseback (1907) displays a man on horseback tenderly hugging a lady as they ride by a Russian village with glowing walls across a turquoise river. The horse is subdued, but the foliage on the trees, the village, and the reflection in the river sparkle with splashes of color and brightness. The way the field of view is condensed into a flat, luminous surface in this painting displays the impact of [pointillism](#). [Fauvism](#) may

be seen in these early pieces as well. Colors are utilized to represent Kandinsky's perspective with the subject matter rather than to depict objective nature.



Couple on

Horseback (1907) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The Blue Rider (1903), depicting a little shrouded man on a racing horse riding over a rocky landscape, was

one of his most important works from the first decade of the 20th century. The rider's cape is a moderate blue with a deeper blue shadow. The opposites to the autumn trees in the backdrop are more hazy blue shadows in the front. The blue rider is conspicuous (although not completely defined) in the artwork, and the horse moves in an unusual manner (which Kandinsky was surely aware of). Some art scholars concur that the rider is holding a second person (possibly a child), however, this might be a shadow cast by the lone rider.

This deliberate disjunction, which allowed spectators to engage in the construction of the work, became a more deliberate method utilized by Kandinsky in later years, culminating in the abstract works from 1911 until 1914.

The Blue

Rider (1903) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Kandinsky depicts the riders on horseback in *The Blue Rider* as a stream of colors rather than in particular detail. When compared to contemporaneous painters, this picture is not unique in that sense, but it suggests

the route Kandinsky would follow only a few years later. From 1906 through 1908, Russian abstract artist Kandinsky traveled extensively over Europe (he was a member of Moscow's Blue Rose symbolist movement) before settling in the little Bavarian town of Murnau.

In 1908, he purchased a copy of Charles Webster Leadbeater and Annie Besant's *Thought-Forms*. He entered the Theosophical Society in 1909. At this period, he produced *The Blue Mountain* (1909), illustrating his move toward abstractions.

The Blue

Mountain (1909) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Dr. Alexey Yakovlev](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via *Wikimedia Commons*

A blue mountain is framed by two wide trees, one red and the other yellow. At the base, a group of three

cyclists and numerous more crosses. The riders' faces, clothes, and saddles are all one color, and neither they nor the strolling characters have any actual detail.

Fauvist inspiration may also be seen in the flat surfaces and curves. *The Blue Mountain's* extensive use of color exemplifies Kandinsky's preference for an artwork in which color is portrayed irrespective of form and in which each hue is given equal emphasis.

The arrangement is flatter, with four sections: the yellow tree, the red tree, the sky, and the blue mountain with the three horsemen.

The Blue Rider Period

Kandinsky's paintings from this time are huge, emotive colored masses that are judged independently of shapes and lines; these no longer serve to delimit them, but instead, overlap freely to produce paintings of tremendous energy. Because music is abstract in essence does not aim to portray the outside world, but conveys the inner sensations of the soul in an

instantaneous way—it was vital in the formation of abstract art.

Kandinsky's works were occasionally identified using musical terms; he labeled his most impulsive canvases "improvisations" and more sophisticated ones "compositions."

Composition

V (1911) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Kandinsky the painter was also an art theorist; his theoretical writings may have had a greater impact on the history of Western art than his artworks. He was a founding member of the Munich New Artists' Association and served as its president in 1909. However, the group was unable to merge Kandinsky's unconventional attitude with traditional aesthetic notions, and the organization disbanded in late 1911.

Kandinsky then founded the Blue Rider with painters including Franz Marc, August Macke, Albert Bloch, and Gabriele Münter.

The Blue Rider Almanac was published in 1912, and two displays were conducted. More of each were planned, but the advent of World War I in 1914 put a stop to these ambitions, sending Kandinsky back to Russia via Switzerland and then on to Sweden.

Cover of *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac. (c. 1912), designed by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

His writings in *The Blue Rider Almanac* and the thesis “On the Spiritual in Art” (1910) were both defense and advocacy of abstract art, as well as a statement that all artistic mediums were similarly competent at attaining a degree of spirituality. He felt that color may be employed in an artwork as a separate entity from the visible depiction of an item or other shape. These concepts had an almost instantaneous international influence, especially in the English-speaking community.

Michael Sadleir of the London-based *Art News* assessed his piece in 1912. When Sadleir released an English version of Kandinsky's write-up in 1914, interest in him skyrocketed.

Bookplate of

Michael Sadleir, 1882; [Sadleir](#), *Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

That year, excerpts from the text were published in the magazine *Blast* and the weekly artistic daily *The New Age*. However, Kandinsky had gained some attention in Britain previously; in 1910, he took part in the Allied Artists' Exhibit (organized by Frank Rutter) at the Royal Albert Hall. Sadleir's enthusiasm in Kandinsky also resulted in the acquisition of many wood-prints and the abstract work *Fragment for Composition VII* by the elder Michael Sadleir, in 1913, after a trip by the father and son to see Kandinsky that year in Munich. Between 1913 and 1923, these paintings were shown at Leeds, either at the university or at the Leeds Arts Club.

The Russian Abstract Artist's Return to Russia

Kandinsky discovered Nina Andreevskaya in 1916 and married her on the 11th of February, 1917. Kandinsky was interested in Russian cultural politics and worked on art instruction and institution reform from 1918 until

1921. During this period, he produced little but dedicated his time to creative training, with a curriculum centered on form and color study; he also assisted to establish Moscow's Institute of Artistic Culture. His mystical, evocative concept of art was eventually condemned by the Institute's extreme adherents as being too personal and materialistic.

Kandinsky was summoned to Germany in 1921 by its creator, architect Walter Gropius, to join the Bauhaus of Weimar.

Return to Germany and the Bauhaus

Kandinsky taught a complete beginner designing course and an intensive theoretical class at the Bauhaus, as well as painting workshops and a seminar in which he supplemented his color theory with new components of form psychoanalytic theory. In 1926, his second conceptual book (*Point and Line to Plane*) was published as a result of the advancement of his works

on forms studies, notably on point and line formations.

Cover of the
book *Point and Line to Plane* (1926) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via

His investigations into the effects of pressures on straight lines, which resulted in the opposing tones of curving and slanted lines, corresponded with the work of Gestalt psychologists, whose research was also debated at the Bauhaus. Geometrical features, notably the circle, semi-circle, angles, straight lines, and bends, were increasingly important in his instruction and paintings.

This was a really fruitful time.

This flexibility is exemplified in his works by the handling of planes rich in colors and gradients, such as *Yellow-red-blue* (1925), in which Kandinsky demonstrates his independence from the prominent suprematism and constructivism trends of the period. *Yellow-red-blue* (1925) is a two-meter-wide work with numerous primary elements: a slanted red cross, a yellow rectangle, and a big bleak blue sphere; a plethora of sharp black lines, arcs, monochrome rings,

and dispersed, colorful checker-boards add to its sensitive sophistication.

Yellow-Red-

Blue (1925) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

This basic visual recognition of shapes and the main hues current on the painting is only a first strategy to the inner world of the piece whose admiration requires deeper assertion, not only of the shapes and colors implicated in the artwork, but also

their interaction, position in relation to each other on the canvas, as well as their overall harmony.

Greater Synthesis

Kandinsky developed his work in a living-room studio while living in a Paris flat. In his works, biomorphic shapes with fluid, non-geometric edges appear—figures that resemble life forms yet reveal the creator's inner existence. Kandinsky employed unique color combinations that evoked Slavic popular art. He also sometimes blended sand with pigment to give his works a grainy, rustic feel.

This phase refers to a synthesis of Kandinsky's prior work, in which he utilized and enriched all components.

In 1936 and 1939, he completed his final two large works, enormous paintings that he had not created in many years. *Composition IX* (1936) has strongly contrasted, forceful diagonals, with the main form resembling a fetus in the womb.

Composition

IX (1936) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Star pieces or little squares of color and colored bands stand out against the black backdrop of *Composition X* (1939), while cryptic hieroglyphs with hues cover a massive maroon bulk that appears to hover in the upper-left corner of the painting. Some traits are clear in Kandinsky's artwork, while others are more subtle and hidden; they present themselves only gradually to individuals who have a deeper relationship with his work.

His shapes (which he gently harmonized and positioned) were meant to connect with the observer's spirit.

Composition

X (1939) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Kandinsky the Painter's Unique Art Style

Wassily Kandinsky's art combines music and mysticism. Kandinsky's paintings in his early years exhibit a distinct expressionism approach, owing to his enthusiasm for contemporary music and tactile inclination. However, he

accepted all creative trends of his period and forebears, such as Art Nouveau, Fauvism and the Blue Rider, Surrealism, and the Bauhaus, only to evolve closer to abstractionism as he studied spirituality in the artwork.

His object-free canvases depict spiritual abstraction evoked by music and feelings via a unity of sense. His works contain the uncertainty of form depicted in a range of colors as well as opposition against traditional aesthetic norms of the art world, motivated by his Christian faith and the internal requirement of an individual. This can be seen in his early works such as *Improvision 10* (1910) and *Composition IV* (1911).

Improvisation

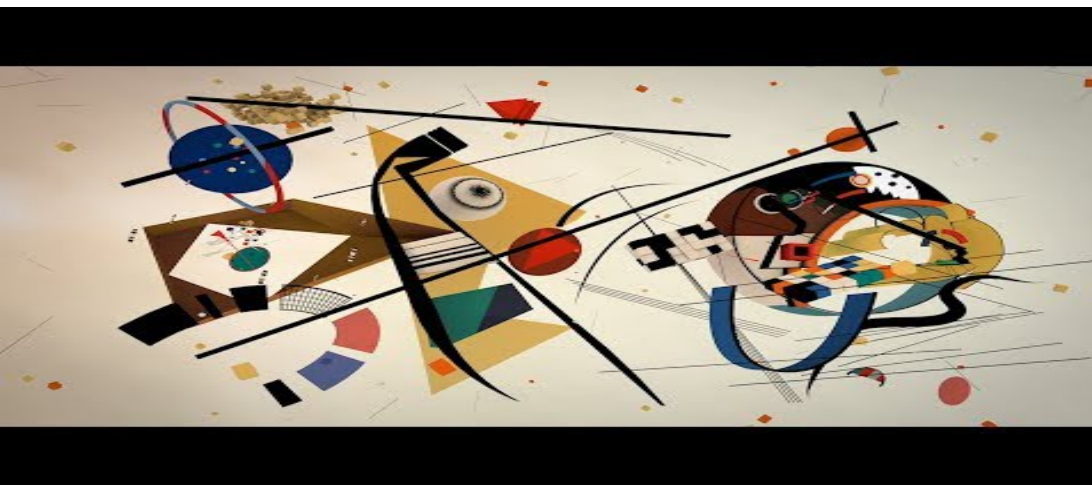
10 (1910) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Over the duration of his creative career, his trademark or distinctive style can be further characterized and separated into three classifications: impulsive emotional responses, representational elements, and ultimate artworks. Kandinsky's artworks got more vivid and emotive as he moved away from his early Impressionist

influence, with sharper outlines and distinct linear features.

But ultimately, Kandinsky rejected graphical depiction with more multisensory billowing typhoons of colors and patterns, eliminating conventional examples to complexity and laying-bare different abstract forms.

What stayed constant, however, was his divine undertakings of representations and citations to Christianity. Kandinsky's later paintings are also notable for their emotional coherence. He proved the uniformity of forms in his works, opening the path for even further abstraction, with different scales and vivid hues harmonized by a precise contrast of proportions and colors. Wassily Kandinsky frequently employed black in his works to emphasize the effect of vividly colored shapes, and his shapes were frequently biomorphic techniques to introduce surrealism into his work such as *Last Watercolor* (1944).



Last

Watercolor (1944) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The Conception of Kandinsky's Artworks

Kandinsky began the first seven of his 10 compositions, writing that “music is the supreme instructor.” The first three are only preserved in black-and-white images by another painter and colleague Gabriele Münter. While there are studies, drawings, and riffs especially of *Composition II* (1910), Kandinsky's first three

Compositions were confiscated during a Nazi raid on the Bauhaus in the 1930s. They were shown in the State-sponsored exhibition “Degenerate Art” before being burned.

Captivated by Christian prophecy and the concept of a New Age, doomsday is a frequent topic throughout Kandinsky's first seven Creations.

Sketch

for *Composition II* (1909) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Kandinsky painted works in the years leading up to

World War I depicting an impending apocalypse that would transform personal and societal reality, as he wrote of the “artist as oracle” in his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912). Kandinsky pulled from biblical legends such as Christ’s resurrection, Noah’s Ark, Jonah, and the whale, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, Russian myths and legends, and the common mythical sensations of death and resurrection.

Never seeking to visualize any of these tales as a story, he utilized their shrouded symbolism as emblems of the motifs of destruction and death that he perceived were impending in the pre-World War I environment.

Cover of the
book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain,
via Wikimedia Commons

Kandinsky believed that a real artist who creates art out

of “internal need” lives at the top of an upward pyramid, as he expressed in his writings. This ascending pyramid is piercing and moving forward. At the pinnacle of the pyramid, the contemporary artist stands alone, producing fresh breakthroughs and heralding tomorrow’s realities. Kandinsky was cognizant of scientific advances as well as the contributions of modern artists to fundamentally new ways of viewing and expressing the environment.

Composition IV (1911) and artworks that followed are mainly concentrated on eliciting a spiritual awakening in both the spectator and the artist. Kandinsky, like in his picture of the doomsday by water such as *Composition VI* (1913), puts the observer in the situation of encountering these epic narratives by interpreting them into modern terms with a feeling of desperation, urgency, and confusion).

Composition

IV (1911) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Within the confines of language and visuals, this spiritual connection of spectator and artwork may be articulated. Kandinsky also described the connection between artist and audience as being open to both the senses and the thinking, as seen by his [*Der Blaue Reiter*](#) *Almanac* writings and hypothesizing with musician Arnold Schoenberg. Kandinsky theorized that (for illustration), yellow is the color of middle C on a brassy

horn; black is the color of finality and the end of everything; and that color combination generates resonances, similar to notes performed on a piano.

Kandinsky began learning to play the keyboard and cello in 1871.

Kandinsky also established a philosophy of geometric shapes and their connections, suggesting that the sphere is the calmest form and embodies the human spirit, for instance. Kandinsky's iconic setting for Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" exemplifies his synaesthetic notion of a global correlation of shapes, hues, and musical notes. Wassily Kandinsky produced the stage version of "Pictures at an Exhibition" in Dessau in 1928. The original drawings of the stage components were recreated using current video technology and synced with the soundtrack in 2015, based on Kandinsky's preparation papers and Felix Klee's director's screenplay.

Kandinsky was engaged on his *Composition VI* (1913) in another session with Münter during the Bavarian abstract art years. He had meant the piece, which had taken nearly six months of research and planning, to conjure a deluge, baptism, devastation, and regeneration all at the same time.

Composition

VI (1913) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

He grew stuck after sketching the piece on mural-sized wooden panels and was unable to continue. Münter

informed him that he was stuck in his head and couldn't get to the real subject of the photograph. She advised him to merely say the phrase deluge and concentrate on the tone rather than the content.

Kandinsky created and finished the mammoth piece in three days, reciting this term like a mantra.

Kandinsky Exhibitions

The Lenbachhaus gallery in Munich holds the largest collection of Kandinsky's paintings in Europe and some of the most notable Kandinsky Exhibitions to date are as follows:

- *Kandinsky*, a significant exhibition of Kandinsky's art, was shown at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum from 2009 through 2010. A collection of Kandinsky's art was on display at the Guggenheim in 2017, titled *Visionaries: Creating a Modern Guggenheim*.
- From the 11th of June through the 4th of September, 2011, the Phillips Collection in

Washington, D.C. had an exhibition titled *Kandinsky and the Harmony of Silence*, which included *Painting with White Border* and its preliminary studies.

- *Vasily Kandinsky: Around the Circle* will be on display at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum from the 8th of October, 2021 until the 5th of September, 2022, in tandem with a sequence of solo exhibits highlighting the works of modern artists Annie C. Jones, Etel Adnan, and Cecilia Vicuna.

Notable Artworks

Kandinsky's artworks were influenced heavily by music. The pieces were often named using musical themes. Here are some of the artist's most famous pieces.

- *Small Worlds* (1922)
- *On White II* (1923)

- *Circles in a Circle* (1923)
- *Soft Hard* (1926)
- *Brown with Supplement* (1935)
- *Composition IX* (1936)
- *Composition X* (1939)
- *Circle and Square* (1943)

Circles in a

Circle (1923) by Wassily Kandinsky; [Wassily Kandinsky](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Further Reading

Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian abstract artist who led an interesting life. If you would like to learn more about Wassily Kandinsky's biography and artwork, then look no further. We have compiled a list of great reading recommendations in case you would like to explore this artist even further.

Concerning the Spiritual in Art (Kindle version 2012) by Wassily Kandinsky

This book is one of the most important texts in the history of [contemporary art](#) since it was a pioneering work in the drive to liberate art from its conventional links to practical reality. It was written by the famed nonobjective artist Wassily Kandinsky and describes Kandinsky's own philosophy of painting as well as crystallizing concepts that influenced many other

contemporary painters of the time.

This publication, along with his own ground-breaking works, had a significant effect on the evolution of contemporary art.

The first section, titled “About Aesthetic,” calls for a metaphysical transformation in art, allowing artists to portray their inner lives in ethereal, non-material terms. Painters should never have to rely on the physical universe for creative art, just as musicians do not rely on the material world for their songs. Kandinsky examines the neurology of colors and the vocabulary of form in the second section, “About Painting.”

Concerning the Spiritual in Art

- One of the most important documents in the history of modern art
- Written by the famous nonobjective painter Wassily Kandinsky
- A stimulating and necessary reading experience for every art lover

[View on Amazon](#)

Point and Line to Plane (Kindle Edition 2012) by Wassily Kandinsky

Kandinsky gives a comprehensive explication of the fundamental dynamics of non-objective painting in this publication, one of the most significant books in 20th-century art. He discusses the notion of point as the “proto-element” of paintings, the function of point in the environment, song, and other arts, and the union of point and line that resulted in a distinct visual vocabulary using his own nomenclature.

He then delves into an engrossing examination of line, including the effect of power on line, lyric and dramatic aspects, and the conversion of many events into forms of linear representation.

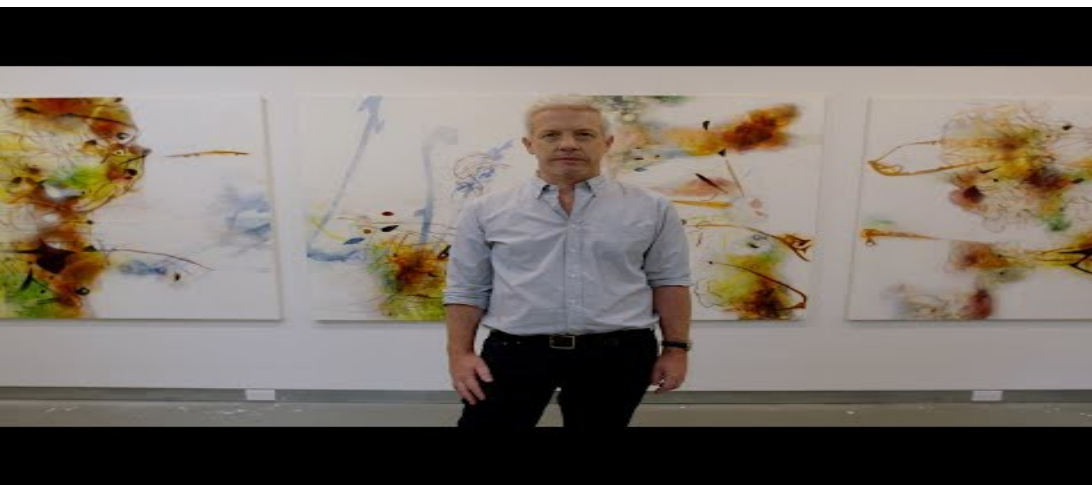
Kandinsky shows out the natural connection of the components of paint, commenting on the role of textures, the component of time, and the link of all these aspects to the fundamental material plane called upon to accept the substance of a piece of artwork, with great creative insight.

Point and Line to Plane (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)

- One of the most influential books in 20th-century art
- A detailed exposition of the inner dynamics of non-objective painting
- Illustrates the importance of Kandinsky's effect on 20th-century art

And that concludes our look at Kandinsky the artist. Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian abstract artist, popularized abstract painting in the 19th century and early 20th centuries. In his unique perspective on the form and function of art, Kandinsky the artist emphasized the merging of the visual and auditory. Noises were regarded as colors by him, and this unusual viewpoint inspired the production of Kandinsky's artworks. Kandinsky, the painter, thought that the purpose of art was to convey the artist's originality and inner vision, which required the elevation of objective truth. Kandinsky's paintings aimed to show that total abstraction allowed for deeper, sublime perception and that copying nature inhibited this quest.

Read also our [wassily kandinsky art web story](#).



Wassily Kandinsky the painter was not known for making portrait paintings. Kandinsky's art was known for being abstract. However, one portrait painting by Wassily Kandinsky is that of *Gabriele Munter* (1905).

What Kind of Art Did Wassily Kandinsky Make?

Kandinsky's paintings were examples of abstract art. He was very influenced by music. Many of his paintings were representational of how he experienced music and art in a synergistic manner.

Wassily Kandinsky was a pioneer of abstract art, and his art style evolved significantly over the course of his career. He is often credited with creating the first purely abstract paintings in the history of Western art. Kandinsky's art style can be categorized into several phases:

1. **Early Expressionism** (1900–1910): In the early part of his career, Kandinsky was associated with Expressionism. His work during this period was influenced by his experiences in Russia and featured bold colors and dynamic brushwork. Notable paintings from this era include "The Blue Rider" and "Study for Improvisation V."
2. **Der Blaue Reiter** (The Blue Rider) Period (1911–1914): Kandinsky, along with artist Franz Marc, co-founded the artistic group "Der Blaue Reiter," which aimed to express spiritual truths through art. During this period, Kandinsky's art became more abstract, and he began to emphasize the symbolic and spiritual aspects of color and form. "Composition V" and "Composition VII" are iconic works from this phase.
3. **Abstract Period** (1914–1921): Kandinsky's art entered a fully abstract phase during and after World War I. He developed a style characterized by geometric shapes, fluid lines, and a non-representational approach to composition. Kandinsky believed that color and form could evoke emotions and spiritual experiences directly, without the need for representational elements. "Yellow-Red-Blue" and "Composition VIII" exemplify this period.
4. **Bauhaus Period** (1922–1933): Kandinsky joined the Bauhaus, a renowned school of art, design, and architecture, in 1922. During his time there, he continued to explore abstract art, merging elements of geometric abstraction with a focus on color theory. His teachings and writings at the Bauhaus had a lasting impact on the development of abstract art. Notable works from this period include "Composition X" and "Several Circles."

Throughout his career, Kandinsky's art style reflected a deep interest in the spiritual and emotional dimensions of art. He believed that abstract forms and colors could communicate universal truths and transcend the limitations of representational art. His contributions laid the groundwork for the development of abstract expressionism and modern abstract art movements.

This salience seems unlikely, judging by his early life. The Russian-born artist studied law and economics initially, and only took up painting at the age of 30. However, on moving to Germany in 1896, he soon developed his innovative ideas within a few distinct groups, outlining his theories in key texts.

In 1911, having settled in Munich he formed the Der Blaue Reiter, or Blue Rider group, with a number of fellow painters, including the Swiss-German artist Paul Klee. As Art and Time explains, the group's name was a reference to "horses and the harmony of the natural world."



Lyrical (from Sounds) (1911) by Wassily Kandinsky

Yet these naturalistic sympathies were alloyed with a progressive desire to express certain numinous, non-figurative expressions directly onto the canvas.

In the *Der Blaue Reiter* entry in *Art in Time*, we explain, "Kandinsky developed his profound belief in the evocative possibilities of form and colour into some of the first truly abstract art of the twentieth century. Kandinsky's ideas were fuelled by an interest in Theosophy, a movement that insisted on following transcendental truths that could not be explained by science."

Music also inspired him to create artworks of high spiritual rather than visual fidelity. "In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911) Kandinsky drew an analogy between abstract painting and music, commenting that 'music has been for some centuries the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena, but rather to the expression of the artist's soul, in musical sound.'"

Why did he try to paint music? Well, some desire might stem from the way in which the artist experienced aural and visual sensations. "He had synesthesia," our text states, "a condition in which one sees sounds as colours and hears colours and forms as sounds, referred to in his book of prose poems and wood cuts, *Klänge* ('sounds')."



Cossacks (1910-11) by Wassily Kandinsky

If Kandinsky developed these ideas among a lesser-known group of artists, he went on to popularize them at the best-known art school of all time, the Bauhaus. "Kandinsky joined the group in 1922, as a master in the small wall painting workshop," we note in our Bauhaus entry in *Art in Time*, and during this time developed his theories concerning a kind of painting that might bridge some gap between spiritual impulse and logical understanding.

Singling out the 1926 painting, *Several Circles*, the book notes that this oil-on-canvas work "seems to relate to his 1926 textbook, *Point and Line to Plane*, in which he described the 'point' (an 'ideally small circle') as the purest and most basic element of painting, motionless in itself but with the potential to create a moving line or static plane. Circles according to Kandinsky, would appear to shift when placed in tension with other forms, and the cosmic appearance of *Several Circles* is suggestive of his desire to reconcile spirituality and logic."



Google's Kandinsky doodle, 2014

The artist left Germany after the Nazis closed the Bauhaus in 1933, settling in France. While his ultimate ambition to create an all-encompassing theory of painting, elevating the form to equal the cerebral purity of music and logic, might not have been wholly successful, it's hard to underestimate the influence of his work. Before passing away in 1944, Kandinsky personally influenced Tachisme, the French abstract painting school, while his paintings, exhibited in 1939 at New York's MoMA, inspired the city's Abstract Expressionists. So while he might not have been the first to paint non-figurative forms, the beauty and ambition of his work helped ensure that he certainly wasn't the last.

Wassily Kandinsky: The Father of Abstraction

Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian artist known for his artistic theories and innovation. He viewed art as a spiritual vehicle and the artist as a prophet. Kandinsky was the first known



Published: Nov 24, 2019 written by [Jacqueline Lewis](#), *BA Art History and Architecture*

Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian artist known for his artistic theories and innovation. He viewed art as a spiritual vehicle and the artist as a prophet. Kandinsky was the first known and recorded European artist to create fully abstract artworks. This would change the trajectory of Modern Art and open possibilities in the art world for the rest of time.

1. He had an ethnically diverse background



Wassily

Kandinsky, Anonymous Photographer, circa 1913

[Wassily Kandinsky](#) was born in Moscow, Russia in 1866. Though he is known as a great Russian painter, his lineage is technically both European and Asian. His mother was a Muscovite Russian, his grandmother a Mongolian princess and his father a Serbian Kyakvita.



Portrait of Wassily

Kandinsky, Gabriele Muntz, 1906

Kandinsky grew up in a well to do family. At a young age he was well traveled. He specifically felt at home in Venice, Rome and Florence. [Kandinsky](#) asserts that his attraction to color began around this time. He noticed color in art and the world around him, more specifically, how it made him feel.

He finished secondary school in Odessa. Throughout his schooling, he performed locally as an amateur pianist and cellist.

2. He did not begin painting until age 30



Munich-Schwabing with the Church of St. Ursula, Wassily Kandinsky, 1908, early period work.

In 1886, Kandinsky started studying law and economics at the University of Moscow. His interest in art and color peaked while exploring the city's architecture and vast wealth of art. He felt a deep connection with Rembrandt's works after visiting the city's churches and museums.

In 1896, at the age of 30, Kandinsky began to study art [Anton Azbi's](#) private school before eventually being accepted into the Academy of Fine Arts. Kandinsky says that Claude Monet was one of his biggest artistic inspirations.

The light and color changes in [Monet's Haystacks](#) series seemed to take on a life of their own and he was deeply drawn to that. Kandinsky also cites musical composers, philosophers and other artists as inspirations, specifically those in Fauvist and Impressionist circles.

3. Kandinsky was an Art Theorist



Composition

VII, Wassily Kandinsky, 1913, Tretyakov Gallery,
According to Kandinsky, the most complex piece he created.

Kandinsky was not only an artist but also an Art Theorist. He believed that visual art was much deeper than its purely visual characteristics. He most notably wrote "[Concerning the Spiritual in Art](#)" for the Blue Rider Almanac (1911).

“Concerning the Spiritual in Art” is an analysis of form and color. It declares that neither are simple concepts, but they do connect to idea association that stems from the artist’s inner experience. Given that these connections are all within the viewer and artist, color and form analysis is “absolute subjectivity” but enhances the artistic experience nonetheless. “Absolute subjectivity” is something that has no objective answer but subjective analysis is valuable for understanding in itself.



Small Worlds I,

Wassily Kandinsky, 1922

Kandinsky's article discusses three types of painting: impressions, improvisations, and compositions. Impressions are external reality, what you visually see and the starting point of art. Improvisations and compositions depict the unconscious, what cannot be seen in the visual world. Compositions take improvisations a step further and develop them more fully.

Kandinsky saw artists as prophets, with the ability and responsibility to open viewers up to new ideas and ways of experiencing. Modern art was a vehicle for new thought and exploration.

4. Kandinsky created the first historically recognized abstract art



Composition

VI, Wassily Kandinsky, 1913

Given his theory, it makes sense that Kandinsky painted works that did not just capture reality but the unconscious experience of moods, words, and other subjects. This came to fruition through abstract paintings that focused on color and form with little or no figurative elements. Kandinsky was the first European artist to create fully [abstract works](#).

Kandinsky's abstraction did not translate to arbitrary imagery though. As musical composers inspire visual and emotional responses using solely audio, Kandinsky wanted to create a full sensory experience using the visual. He wanted to evoke emotions and sound and the viewer's own experience through pure colors and forms. His interest in music led to his view of paintings as compositions, with sound imbued in on their canvas like the visual is imbued in musical composition.

5. Kandinsky was forced to return to Russia



In Grey,

Wassily Kandinsky, 1919, exhibited at the 19th State Exhibition, Moscow, 1920

After sixteen years of studying and creating art in Germany, Kandinsky was forced to return to Moscow from Munich. Now, in his middle ages, Kandinsky felt like an outsider in his mother country. He made little art during the first few years until finally feeling better and more creative by 1916.

At this time, he became involved in the Russian art world. He helped organize the Institute of Artistic Culture in Moscow and became its first director.

Ultimately, Kandinsky found that his artistic spiritualism simply did not fit in with the dominant Russian art movements. Suprematism and Constructivism were the major artistic styles. They glorified the individual and

materialism in a way that clashed with Kandinsky's spiritualistic views. He left Russia and returned to Germany in 1921.

7. Kandinsky's record sale is \$23.3 million



Rigide et

courbé (Rigid and bent), Wassily Kandinsky, 1935, oil and sand on canvas

[Rigide et courbé](#) sold on November 16, 2016 at Christies for a record 23.3 million dollars. Before that sale, Kandinsky's *Studie für Improvisation 8* (Study for Improvisation 8) sold for 23 million.



Given Kandinsky's historical importance for abstract art, it is no wonder that his works sell for substantial amounts. Many sell for less than 23 million but they still remain valuable in the art market.

8. Kandinsky died a French citizen



Composition

X, Wassily Kandinsky, 1939

After the Bahaus moved to Berlin, Kandinsky also moved, settling in Paris. Even though he is known as a Russian painter, he became French citizen in 1939



He painted some of his most prominent art while living in France and ultimately died in Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1944.

The Blue Rider Period

Kandinsky's paintings from this time are huge, emotive colored masses that are judged independently of shapes and lines; these no longer serve to delimit them, but instead, overlap freely to produce paintings of tremendous energy. Because music is abstract in essence does not aim to portray the outside world, but conveys the inner sensations of the soul in an instantaneous way—it was vital in the formation of abstract art.

Kandinsky's works were occasionally identified using musical terms; he labeled his most impulsive canvases “improvisations” and more sophisticated ones “compositions.”

Kandinsky the painter was also an art theorist; his theoretical writings may have had a greater impact on the history of Western art than his artworks. He was a founding member of the Munich New Artists' Association and served as its president in 1909. However, the group was unable to merge Kandinsky's unconventional attitude with traditional aesthetic notions, and the organization disbanded in late 1911.

Kandinsky then founded the Blue Rider with painters including Franz Marc, August Macke, Albert Bloch, and Gabriele Münter.

The Blue Rider Almanac was published in 1912, and two displays were conducted. More of each were planned, but the advent of World War I in 1914 put a stop to these ambitions, sending Kandinsky back to Russia via Switzerland and then on to Sweden.

Wassily Kandinsky and his masterpiece "Yellow-red-blue (1925)," you can start by introducing the artist's revolutionary approach to art, highlighting his departure from the dominant art movements of his time like suprematism and constructivism.

Next, delve into a detailed analysis of "Yellow-red-blue (1925)" by describing its key elements: the slanted red cross, yellow rectangle, and blue sphere, along with the intricate black lines, arcs, rings, and checker-boards that contribute to its intricate composition.

Transition into the deeper layers of the artwork by emphasizing the significance of not just recognizing the shapes and colors but understanding their interaction, positioning, and overall harmony within the piece.

Further explore Kandinsky's artistic evolution in his Paris studio, where he introduced biomorphic shapes with fluid, non-geometric edges, reflecting both organic forms and his inner emotions. Mention his unique use of color inspired by Slavic art and his experimentation with texture by incorporating sand into his pigments for a rustic effect.

By combining these insights with engaging visuals and perhaps discussing Kandinsky's broader artistic philosophy



Cover of *Der*

Blaue Reiter almanac. (c. 1912), designed by Wassily Kandinsky; Wassily Kandinsky, Public domain, via *Wikimedia Commons*

His writings in *The Blue Rider Almanac* and the thesis "On the Spiritual in Art" (1910) were both defense and advocacy of abstract art, as well as a statement that all artistic mediums were similarly competent at attaining a degree of spirituality. He felt that color may be employed in an artwork as a separate entity from the visible depiction of an item or other shape. These concepts had an almost instantaneous international influence, especially in the English-speaking community.

Michael Sadleir of the London-based Art News assessed his piece in 1912. When Sadleir released an English version of Kandinsky's write-up in 1914, interest in him skyrocketed.

ABOUT COMPOSITION VII

In Composition VIII Kandinsky explores these multiple possibilities of confining different colors within different shapes, as with the blue right angle and the pink acute angle, or the blue circle outlined in pink and yellow counterpoised by the yellow circle haloed in blue. The very careful balance between the circular and the linear elements within the composition is played out by the colored circles of varying sizes that are distributed throughout the pictorial field, enlivening the surface and contrasting with the sharp linear forms that include di

agonals moving toward the upper right. It is revealing that in 1929 Kandinsky explained in an answer to a psychologist's questionnaire that he felt the same love for the circle motif as he had felt for the 185 horse motif during his early pre- World War I years. Kandinsky began to use the circle motif in his works in 1921, but by 1923 it assumed a much more prominent position within his pictorial vocabulary. The circle, which came to play such a strong role in *Composition VIII*, had certainly gained importance among the artists of the avant-garde in the several years preceding this work. Aleksandr Rodchenko in Russia and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy at the Bauhaus had each, in different ways, used the circle as an almost iconic image (figs. 19, 20). Like the form of the square, which for Malevich was replete with possibilities, so did the form

It has been suggested that *Composition VIII* was essentially conceived by Kandinsky as being constructed on an "ideal plane" that comes into existence in the

process of moving toward abstraction, eliminating modeling and thus the third dimension, and anchoring the 187 picture to the surface. But Kandinsky felt that the flat depiction on a picture plane had serious constraints and that the picture must exist on that ideal plane, which would be situated somewhere in front of the physical plane. In this respect, we are reminded of the preoccupations of his Russian contemporaries at the beginning of the second decade of the century. They very strongly emphasized the importance of the "surface plane" and *faktura* as active components of pictorial expression. Even in his geometric abstract works, Kandinsky does not abandon his goal of achieving harmony and the inner expression of the soul. His definition of pictorial composition, given twelve years earlier in *On the Spiritual in Art*, still rings true with *Composition VIII*: "Clashing discords . . . opposites and contradictions – this is our harmony. Composition on the basis of this harmony is the juxtaposition of coloristic and linear forms that have an independent existence as such, derived from internal necessity, which create

within the common life arising from this source a whole that is 189 called a picture."

