

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF
arranged BY
THE SOCIÉTÉ DES MODERNES
ANONYME
FOR THE
BROOKLYN MUSEUM
NOVEMBER
DECEMBER
1916
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Blauer Kreis, 1922.
W. KANDINSKY

MODERN ART

BY KATHERINE
S.
DREIER

TEXT



COMPOSED BY

KATHERINE S. DREIER & CONSTANTIN ALADJALOV
SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME—MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK—NEW YORK



Weisser Punkt, 1925.
W. KANDINSKY

TO
WASSILI KANDINSKY
this book is dedicated
As My Gift to His 60th Birthday,
and in recognition
Of the Thirty Years' Fight
which never abated
And is Carried On To-day
with the same
Vigor, Enthusiasm and Philosophic Calm,
which he has always shown.

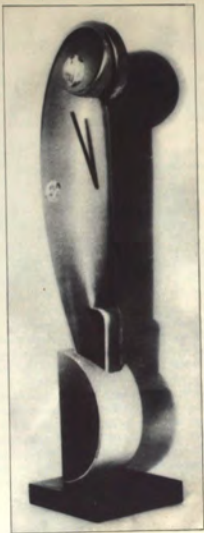


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Introduction

NO matter what the opinion might be regarding the permanency of the movement presented by this exhibition of paintings and sculpture, it is beyond doubt that the tendency to break away from the tradition of Raphael is not local, nor is it merely the whimsical creation of the moment. It has its exponents and its followers in all countries, and even before the mental and social reactions brought about by the great War, "Modern Art" made its appearance in many notable exhibitions in this country and in Europe. Without at least a section devoted to works of this category, no contemporary exhibition can claim to display comprehensively the art of to-day.

The Brooklyn Museum does not, however, assume to take sides, either as advocate or opponent, in the controversies of contending schools. It does not believe that the development of taste can be forced by dicta on the part of the artists themselves, or of the critics, or of the art museums as expressed in their exhibitions. It remains with the public, as is shown by the history of art, to arrive at its own final judgments, unhampered by urging from any source whatever. In the conviction, however, that the public must see in order to judge, the Brooklyn Museum admits to its galleries all types of work which show real creative talent and power of original expression. It is a forum wherein is carried on, by graphic example, artistic discussion, which, after all, is vital to the progress of art.



"Z" by KAKABADZE

FOREWORD

THE dominant thought in assembling these groups was to show how universal Modern Art has become, and that instead of dying out, as its enemies are constantly proclaiming from the house-tops, it is growing in volume, strength and vigor as the years pass on.

To those of us who have watched the growth of this movement almost from its inception, one fact stands out specially clearly and that is that it appears not to be dependent, or to rest upon the reputation of a few well-known names, but has a vitality and strength, which inspires and leads even those of ordinary talent to heights which otherwise they would never reach. Like the saints of old, it is so infinitely bigger than any one man or than some personal conception of beauty as expressed in old and dying forms.

The secret of this power lies in the fact that cosmic forces are at work and with such potentiality enter the individual who perceives them that it clarifies his vision and sweeps him upwards to greater heights. It is bigger than any one nationality and carries the follower into a large cosmic movement which unites him in thought and feeling with groups throughout the world. Though this is true, it does not mean that it kills that strange quality which each nation stamps on its sons and daughters, but rather that nationality is no longer the whole substance, but a flavor which adds a charm.

Few people can distinguish on the whole the difference between Primitive Art and Modern Art. But when one searches deep into the origin which brought forth both, one finds a distinct difference. Primitive Art, according to all authorities, was the outgrowth of symbolism that dwelt among the tribes. It was a tribal expression and the artist was the tribe's craftsman, expressing in forms what each individual felt. The symbolism he expressed grew out of the people. The opposite is true of Modern Art. Modern Art is the outgrowth of a cosmic expression, which those who are sensitive respond to, but it has nothing to do with the people, for it is something beyond the people, being still in the future

for them. These artists, expressing Modern Art, are therefore the vanguards; they are proclaiming a new era, which is not only finding its expression in the art of painting or sculpture, but in architecture, music, literature, poetry, science and even politics.

Some nations respond more to the sensations through the eye than others. Some nations respond more to the emotions through the ear. In some nations the eye is so little trained to receive any emotion whatsoever, except those of a personal intimate nature, that they cannot even imagine such a phenomena, as emotion through painting, such as abstract music awakens. We Americans, as a people, belong rather to this latter group. The emotion of joy is attained through the eye by the average person amongst us only when he meets a loved one, or perhaps through the sparkle of sunlight, but it is a strange and new world to receive this same reaction when looking at a painting. That is why the old art in America still has such a deep hold on its people. It is not the art to which they respond, but the subject which it represents. That is why the American modern decorator has introduced that tragic attitude of starving a people esthetically, when he bans pictures from the walls of homes and claims that it is better to have no pictures at all than to have bad ones. But when one asks why bad ones, he cannot answer. If the esthetic emotion of joy was received through the eye to the extent that it is in some countries, such a condition could not exist. In consequence we are facing in America a very curious anomaly. From one angle it is the most stimulating country for any modern person to live in, for it is the one modern expression of life without a past. This, however, is so involuntary and has been so little perceived intellectually by us as a people, that you find a smaller audience in the appreciation for Modern Art here than you do in almost any other country. In Europe, where the artist is not nearly so stimulated towards modern reaction as in this country, there exists a larger appreciative audience—people who intellectually realize what the artist is striving for and though they live in an atmosphere far less up-to-date than we, they are conscious of it, whereas we are not. Hence this tragic illusion of the average modern

European artist, who desires not only to come to America but to bring his work, for they cannot realize how involuntary our modern reactions are.

The aim of the Societe Anonyme is educational and to stimulate thought and reaction in the world of art, to keep it vital and alive like a flowing stream, not a stagnant pool—therefore, it was meet for this assemblage to contain various groups which have never been shown here before.

One of the most important of these is Mondrian, who after twenty years of slow, steady development has reached a clarification of thought, as expressed in line and form, that has drawn unto itself a considerable group of vital young men and women. ——— Even more has his influence been felt along the line of architecture, or interior decorating, as we would call it. And here his influence has spread throughout all of Europe. Such men as Vantongerloo, Van Doesburg, such groups as the Bauhaus in Dessau, or Eaumeister in Stuttgart, have all been filled with this cosmic feeling of a finer division of space and color within a room itself. No thought, which is cosmic, can, however, be claimed by any one individual and so though Mondrian has created for himself a position which is unique as a leader in this line of thought which has been taken over by architects, it has found early expression in other countries as well. For a long time it was customary in Russia to bring in a variation of colors within the same room and not to paint or paper all four walls alike, as we do. This thought has been most successfully expressed through the Bauhaus in various galleries in Germany, of which I have written in greater detail in connection with the exhibition of Moholy-Nagy in Dresden, which has been given a full page reproduction in this book, because of the room in which it was held.

But there are a number of other movements of equal importance. I presume Pevsner and Gabo's contribution to the importance of depth in sculpture in contrast to mere circumference, which Archipenko also introduced through his idea of the concave, is a very distinct contribution.

Or take Pevsner and Gabo's work in connection with kinetics, of which I speak at greater length in my introduction to Russia.

Or take Malevitch's theory, on which the Suprematists base their paintings, or Leger and Ozenfant's thought regarding "Interieurs Mechaniques" or De Chirico's "Interieurs Meta-physiques"—all these thoughts are of tremendous importance to the young painter or sculptor who receives through them a new pulsation of life, a new outlet for his artistic expression and emotions—for they are forces towards development and growth.

This book is the outgrowth of the International Exhibition of Modern Art held at the Brooklyn Museum. No one person could in so short a time have assembled so high a quality of paintings. It is, therefore, not the work of one person, but really represents the modern group of Europe, for my long experience and personal friendship with many of these artists made it possible for me to turn to them in all friendliness and ask their aid, which they gave with a generosity which only artists extend to each other, when the aim is art and not personal advancement. I, therefore, want to express my deep appreciation and thanks in this Foreword for the aid which was rendered in the selection of the works by Kandinsky of Russia, Mondrian of Holland, Campendonk and Kurt Schwitters of Germany, Bragaglia and Pannaggi of Italy, Leger of Paris and special thanks for the indefatigable energy which Marcel Duchamp rendered in gathering the works together in Paris and Helma Schwitters, the wife of Kurt Schwitters, in Germany.

But though this book is an outgrowth of the assemblage of these pictures, it would never have come into existence, but for the Manager of the Polygraphic Company of America, David Werblow, through whose courage, energy and vision this Special Catalog came into being. We had all hoped that it might be achieved, but it would after all have remained only a dream but for him—through him this collection will now go forth into the world to be a lasting stimulation to many a young spirit. If the Catalog could not have come into existence without the Polygraphic Company of America, neither could it have reached its height of beauty without the fine work of Constantine Aladjalov, who is responsible for the perfection of the title page, maps and the so-called advertisements—which are in

reality, however, little bouquets of appreciation which the Societe Anonyme through the kindness of others is able to present to its fellow fighters in the field of battle for greater life in the Arts.

When one considers that all this work has been done out of love, one realizes the vigor and vitality of the Modern Art Movement. Only cosmic forces can bring forth such response, for no one has the patience, the perseverance, to devote so much time and energy to a passing thing. The seed that is sown, one cannot escape. Much of it will not fall on friendly soil, but that is an old truth, whose law we know. If, however, any young talent is safeguarded from mis-directed efforts by this Exhibition, or this book, in being true to itself, and not to feel the need of compromise with a public that does not yet understand, we will feel that we have served our purpose. Our work is to preserve the energy of art and direct it to future fruition. To encourage artists to be true to themselves and the vision that is God given. The greatest difficulty is to sustain the enthusiasm and the vision of one's youth in Art and the power of the modern movement is that those of us who have continued to keep true to our vision have not grown old.





RUMANIA

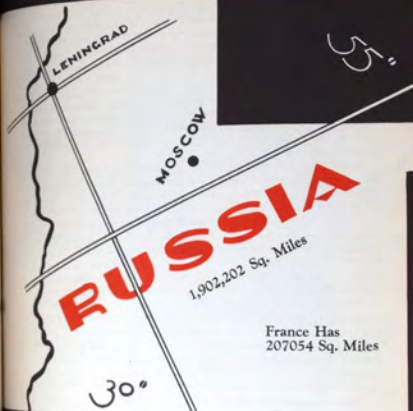


soon decided to work out his theories in art by himself. Throughout the years he has been searching for the essence of his subject and does not rest until he has reached perfection. This has often given an impression that he repeats himself, but the perfect eye sees the difference. His works are to be found in many private collections and as far west as the Museum of Portland, Oregon.



BRANCUSI

THE most brilliant of modern sculptors, so-called by them all. Born in Rumania in 1876, he reached Paris after having already completed his studies at Bucharest and laid the foundation of his fame through his early exhibitions. For a short while he went to work with Rodin, but their point of view differed to such an extent that he



France Has
207054 Sq. Miles

THE service which Soviet Russia renders to the rest of the world has been chiefly that it has scattered most of its creative and living spirits over the whole world, like the sower sowing his seed, so that all might benefit by that great spiritual contribution which Russia has to give. Before the revolution Russia was such a closed book to the average person that few knew of the spiritual, intellectual and artistic richness its people possessed to such a high degree. But now we find them in all countries, these creative forces, showing us beauty along lines which we never visualized.

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One of the most important of these men, to whom this book has been dedicated and who is celebrating his 60th birthday this year, is Wassili Kandinsky. It is true that before the war he had left Russia to start with Franz Marc the great new movement in Germany called "Expressionism," or as Professor Cizek would call it "The awakening of feeling, as expressed through art." It was he, who with Franz Marc started the group called "Der Blaue Reiter," which was to be such a tremendous force in Germany—an almost greater force than cubism in France, for it was based on less narrow conceptions and therefore was able to take deeper root in the soil of the nation in which it was planted. It enabled one to understand cubism, whereas cubism did not enable one to understand expressionism.

During the war Kandinsky returned to Russia and after the revolution was asked to organize 43 new museums for the Soviet Government. This was a superb task, as they gave him full freedom of selection and since the Soviet Government belongs to the experimental expression of the new era, the new art had much kinship with it. When this work was accomplished Kandinsky returned to Germany, since he felt that his work temporarily was completed in Russia. Here, he was called to the Bauhaus, which had been started in Weimar under the leadership of the modern German architect, Walter Gropius, who was gathering an international group of men around him.

There are two other Russians, who stand out with tremendous force and vitality and who have introduced a new medium into the world of sculpture, which has hitherto not existed. I am talking of Pevsner and of his brother and pupil Gabo. In 1920 they issued a manifesto, consisting of five theses, of which the two last, given here, are the most important:

- 4—We deny that circumference is the one means toward form in space. One cannot create space through circumference. Just as one cannot measure water with a yard stick. Space is nothing else than infinite depth, therefore, we consider depth as a measure of space.
- 5—We deny the static as the only measure of rhythm. We insist there is a new element in the pictorial arts. We insist that kinetics is a new element in art. It is the foundation of the outward reality of our time.

The outgrowth of these thoughts was the creation of sculptural three-dimensional pieces built out of celluloid. Some of them in abstract forms emphasizing the element of depth instead of our face.

Besides these, there are two more important groups that have come out of Russia, the Suprematists and the Constructivists.

The Suprematists, who are leaving an eventful influence on their generation, started on the following basic principles: The simplest pictorial

KANDINSKY



forms were chosen, with rhythm as an essential relationship of universal of appeal. The pictures consist of simple geometric forms in simple pure colors. As simple as these principles are, they allow for numberless combinations of the greatest variety of rhythm of related planes, in the balance of distributed color masses, in the proportion between full and empty space. Malevitch was the founder, leader and theorist of this movement and he wrote a book "From Gitanne to Suprematism, A New System in Art." His theories were the mystic.

The fourth group, or school, has been that of the so-called Constructivists. The relation of the Constructivists to the Suprematists is so close that it is hard to know where the one ends and the other begins. The Constructivists aim for the same precision, order and organization as science. This expression has taken hold of the Imaginative Hungarian, as well as Paladini and Pannaggi, the Italians, whereas in the Netherlands the Dutch group, led by Mondrian, are more closely related to the Suprematists.

Aside from this the Russians Gabo and Pevsner have brought attention to the value of kinetics meaning thereby to use actual movement as an element of expression. This thought of movement Marcel Duchamp has also been working at for years. Very few examples of these experiments have reached completion, but there are sufficient ones established what one might call sculptural kinetics.

DAVID BURLIUCK



BORN in Russia July 22nd, 1882. In 1896 he began his study of art at Kazan, which he continued in Odessa in 1901. A year later he left for Munich and in 1902 he went to Paris. In 1908 he organized the first modern exhibition in Russia and in 1909 the first company for the publishing of futuristic literature. From 1910 to 1918 Burliuck published thirty Almanachs devoted to the problems of the forms in art and literature. During this sametime he lectured on Modern Art and Literature in thirty-three cities throughout Russia. In 1917 he returned to Munich, where he joined Kandinsky in the organization of the "Blauer Reiter." In 1914 "Der Sturm" organized Burliuck's first independent exhibition in Germany. In 1918 he was officially honored in Russia by the title of "Father of the Russian Futurists" in a special manifesto signed by them. In the same year he left Russia for the East reaching Japan in 1920, where he stayed for two years. In 1922 Burliuck reached New York and in the autumn of 1923 Dr. Christian Brinton and Mr. Fox, Director of the Brooklyn Museum organized an exhibition of 44 of his canvases at the Museum. In 1924 he became a member of the Societe Anonyme which organized his second important exhibition in New York. Few men have as long and constantly worked for modernism as Burliuck.



CONSTANTINE ALADJALOV

BORN November 5th, 1900, at Bakou, in the Caucasus. When he was eight his family moved to Rostoff, where he began to study and had his first exhibition at the age of sixteen. Later he went to Petrograd to continue his studies. After the outbreak of the revolution he returned to Bakou where with the famous Russian poet Serge Gorkoletsky, he founded a little theatre and experimented in producing modern plays and settings. From there he went to Persia, then to Constantinople, reaching New York, January, 1925. His pictures are already in the museum of Donkey, of Rostoff, of Helsinki and at the National Museum of Bakou, also in private collections at Petrograd, Warsaw, Rostoff, Tiflis, Constantinople and New York, as well as in the collection of the late Gouache Khan of Persia. Extremely glad with a rare sense of beauty in proportion.





PEVSNER

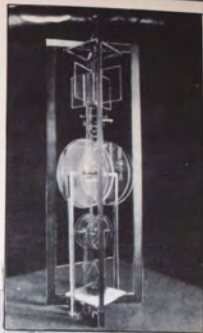
Pevsner was born at Moscow and after completing his studies of art at the Academy in Kiev, where he carried off the Gold Medal, he went to Paris in 1911. In 1912 he returned to Russia, where he became a professor of art at the Moscow Art School. Here he was surrounded by a whole vital group of young Suprematists. However, he was considered too radical and after the revolution he returned to Paris, where he is working now. Art to Pevsner is the most holy of holies and his approach therefore towards his work, or what he demands of others towards their work, is far more related to the Chinese attitude of the artist to his work than the western point of view.

GABO

BORN in Brjansk, August 5th, 1890, a brother of Pevsner, but to avoid confusion he dropped his last name and simply kept the first as his professional one. He considers himself the pupil of his brother and stands in very close spiritual relationship with him. He was trained as an engineer, but was unable to complete his studies because of the war. Since the war he has devoted himself to sculpture. The new stereometric spatial circumference reached its full realization in 1915. To complete this conception, he withdrew into the mountains of Norway until he and Pevsner in 1920 proclaimed their manifesto. Since 1925 he has been living in Berlin. Many of his 3-dimensional constructions are actual designs for public fountains, monuments, etc. It would be interesting to find some municipality that had the courage to use them.



PEVSNER



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LISSITZKY

IN his life film, as he calls this short biographical sketch, Lissitzky states that he was born a couple of dozen years before the big October revolution—but some hundreds of years ago, his ancestors helped in increasing the world by their discoveries—but that their descendants, the present generation, are creating a period more marvelous still. They increased the earth—we decrease it on the one hand, but extend Space and Time on the other. To Lissitzky the cleavage in 1918 between Yesterday and Tomorrow was tremendous and he for one wants to do everything to make it more pronounced. To him the old art belongs to the period of the dinosaurs and not to the period of the radio. "But why, he asks, "do you call our Modern Art abstract? In the radio wave abstract or realistic?" His present period is a period of black and white with a flash of red.



ALEXANDER
ARCHIPENKO



HE was born in southern Russia and reached Paris when quite young. Extremely gifted, he began to develop in the freedom of Paris an art of his own which was to amaze and delight all who saw it. He was the first who took up the question that that which is concave is also convex and through the illusion of the eye gave the same results. His sculptured painting was another remarkable introduction and it is a pity that for a time he has abandoned this form of expression. In 1921 the Societe Anonyme gave him the first exhibition which was followed in 1923 by a second one by the same organization. His works are to be found in most of the museums of Europe.



NICOLAI VASILIEV

BORN near Moscow November 3rd, 1889, he graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, Moscow, with the greatest honor and received the first prize in the exhibition in 1914. In 1918 he became Assistant Professor at the Academy in Moscow.



RUSSIAN TEA

NICOLAI CICKOWSKY

BORN in 1894 in the city of Minsk, White Russia, he studied in the Vilna Art Academy and the Moscow Higher Art School. He reached the United States in 1923 and exhibited at the Sesqui-Centennial in Philadelphia and other American exhibitions, working with Mr. Narodny in the Artel of Arts. His painting reproduced here represents a famous Russian legend.





Torso by PEVSNER



MIRO



SPAIN

ONE of the leaders of the surrealists of Paris, a remarkably gifted young Spaniard with a strong individuality. Though one may not like his pictures, one cannot forget them.

