

Aesthetics Of Early Abstract Art: A Perspective Of Paintings And Writings By Wassily Kandinsky

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Abstract: Wassily Kandinsky, a pioneer of abstract art, fundamentally transformed modern aesthetics by theorizing the spiritual, psychological, and structural basis of visual form. His work, including theoretical treatises such as *Point and Line to Plane* (1926) and *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), framed a system wherein point, line, and colour hold symbolic and compositional power. This paper examines Kandinsky's theoretical contributions and the metaphysical framework underlying his artistic production. It investigates the evolution of his visual language and its application in paintings such as *Composition IV*, *Composition VII*, and *Composition VIII*, while exploring the philosophical, spiritual, and semiotic implications of abstraction. Drawing upon analyses from Dee Reynolds, Felix Thürlemann, Vivien Barnett, and other scholars, this study contextualizes Kandinsky's contributions within early 20th-century modernism. Furthermore, the study expands on viewer response theory, examining how abstract forms elicit complex perceptual, emotional, and symbolic readings.

Ultimately, Kandinsky's aesthetic vision is not merely stylistic but ontological: it asserts that abstraction can connect viewers to deeper realities beyond material representation. His legacy remains a cornerstone of modern art theory, continuing to influence contemporary digital, conceptual, and immersive art forms.

Key words- Abstract Art, Early Abstract Art, Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, inner necessity, Piet Mondrian

1. Introduction

The early 20th century heralded a paradigm shift in the arts as traditional representational systems gave way to modernism. Amid this revolution, Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) emerged as a visionary artist and theorist who bridged art, spirituality, and psychology. In a time when scientific progress and industrialization redefined human perception, Kandinsky proposed that art must reflect inner realities rather than external appearances. He did not merely abandon figuration; he redefined the essence of visual art.

This paper explores Kandinsky's aesthetic innovations and philosophical underpinnings. It dissects the symbolic and formal visual grammar he developed in *Point and Line to Plane* (1926), wherein, the point is the origin of all forms, and lines and planes are results of dynamic forces. Kandinsky's visual theory corresponds to his spiritual philosophy outlined in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), where he advocated an art that resonates with the soul and the universal.

Kandinsky's abstraction was not a retreat from meaning but an invitation to deeper perception. The visual was no longer a mirror but a window—to spiritual content, to inner necessity, and to cosmic resonance. Through formal analysis, historical comparison, and viewer-response theory, this paper examines the enduring relevance of Kandinsky's work.

2. Theoretical Framework: Kandinsky's Visual Grammar

Kandinsky offered great service to the world of art in general and graphic art in particular through his fundamental work '*Point and Line to Plane*'. Basics of visual art hitherto lacked in the area of a well-founded theoretical support. Music had since long a theoretical frame, but the difficulty concerning visual art was the unresolvability of the issues of calculation and intuition and the question as to which of the either reigned over another. It was for the need of such investigation which was of deeper human concern that the basic principles to these were elucidated, arrived at and established. Kandinsky's work professed the framework of such guiding principle. The theme of his work is stated as through pedantic investigation of each separate phenomenon both in isolation and interaction with other phenomenon to drawn comparisons and general conclusions.

Resorting to explain the most basal of the visual elements, the point, he holds that it is the source, which is potent with myriad manifestations. The forces of execution transform a point into other elements to fulfil the compositional need. A single equipoised, balanced force generates a straight line whereas two opposing forces applied simultaneously or successively, produce a zigzag line or a curve.

Each line has a property, an identity and comes from valid reasons. It denotes a meaning-both individually and collectively in order to reveal to the on looker the composition. The compositional elements together serve to constitute the overall meaning and they are meaningful in terms of their singular entity as well. The horizontal line expresses coldness and flatness, vertical line expresses warmth, diagonals express a value in between or can be termed lukewarm. The straight line seems lyrical but there arises query and wonder when two forces meet. Angularity is produced (acute, obtuse and right angles) when the forces that go into making a straight line work alternately, whereas when the forces work together, they result in curves. The corresponding colour harmony suggested by Kandinsky is another substantial contribution made by him towards formulation of a grammar of visual vocabulary. He relates right angle to the colour red, the 60-degree angle to yellow and the obtuse angle to blue. When translated into three plane surfaces formed by these lines in combination- we have squares, triangles and circles. The sum of tones often produces a resultant composition which is quite different than what might be expected out of the individual tones.

Relating straight lines to lyric, curvature to resultant of opposing forces and angular forms to colour correspondence was ingeniousness of Kandinsky, which never was sought to be established before. What matters most here was an attempt by him to do so. But, their generalization can possibly be doubted. Relating linear forms to colour cannot be established with certainty. If so, 'Pointillism' by Georges Seurat could have had universal acceptance and could have been established as a cure-all and know-all mode of visual art, where in we find him relating different colours to different state of being of a human existence, his variegated experiences and moods. If as per Kandinsky the colour red represents right angles, can it be termed a universal? It cannot for in our common-sense perceptions we don't find a causal relationship between the colour red and right angles. There can be red coloured natural objects which are round or oval in shape and they have constituted our causal relationship of shape and colour in such manner. Pomegranate or peach are red but they are not right angles. They are round shaped spheres. So this causality as established by Kandinsky is beyond sense perceptions and is reflective of a different hermeneutics altogether. These are propositions which are based on resultant impressions that these lines leave on us. If not red, then what can be the colour of right angle and if red then can it be proven to be the only possible colour that can reflect right angle? Both these questions remain unanswered or create an ambiguity of answer, lacking certainty- thereby resulting into their denial as valid and established universals. Kandinsky illustrates the significance with reference to different natural and racial preferences and thereby relating them to their sensibilities.

Also, in terms of human life, Kandinsky equates straight, zigzag and curved lines to birth, youth and maturity, every curved line potently and inherently possess the possibility of a surface- a space that is governed out of different forces. The curve, resorting to move back to its origin, produces a circle whereas the external force is greater than the internal force. Again, we have the formation of spirals when the inner force is greater than the outer force. The complimentary formations, as per Kandinsky, are circle and triangle, straight line and curve, yellow and blue colours.

The living element behind each line is the force with which it is drawn- intensity and intention of its execution- which engenders and determines tension. Kandinsky explained curvature in detail. They may be of different geometrical variation- geometrically wavy or freely wavy. They can also be flat or ascending with difference in their degree of arc. A non-compromise in execution, Kandinsky says, sets the rule of obtaining maximum impact of an element's force "a powerful means for compositional ends". Repetition, opposition, convergence and divergence result in variations in compositional execution.

As can be seen, the line is not only an element of the visual arts, but is an essential prerequisite in music, architecture, technology and in nature as well. Kandinsky's concern was to establish the independence of creative, artistic fundamentals over the natural representation. The main difference that lies in respect of line in nature and in painting is its freedom in the later. Whereas in nature there is no free line, in painting, a line can run freely, 'without being externally subordinated to the whole; without having an external relation to the centre'. This strength of freedom of a line is 'natural' in realm of visual language. The tonality in respect of execution of line predominates the effect that lines are to create as visual stimuli. The vertical lines and horizontal lines in a canvas can determine the mood of it depending on whether the vertical or horizontal line is longer resulting in warmth or coldness of the mood. As per Kandinsky the most objective form of the surface is square.

About generic principle of the composition Kandinsky holds that the top of the picture surface is the domain wherein all inhibitions are reduced to minimum. There remains relaxation, freedom and lightness. The bottom space is filled with condensation, gravity and dependence. "Right to the left as bottom to the top or heaviness to lightness"- remains the generic principle of composition as per Kandinsky.

Resorting to the square shaped picture plane of the canvas the areas were demarcated by Kandinsky. The left portion perceived to be movement retreating from activity, the right to be homecoming, top compared with serenity and bottom with gravitational pull, activity, concentration and bondage. The tension created by the interplay of different segments, the 'Square of tensions' can be defined as 'heaven, earth, home, distance'. Compositional balance and property decide the nature and Character of the picture surface. The formal elements stand suspended in space. The spatial movements of formal elements depend on the application of colour.

Analysing the square of tension as suggested by Kandinsky we come to know about its difference from the classical approach of 'golden section'. Though apparently fixed in a square the movement of the pictorial elements is that of a curve. The bottom and right sides are the areas of mass and movement of activity- whereas the top and left sides recede- effecting breathing space and momentum into the design.

Relating to square Kandinsky had underlined the emphasis of Malevich to employ square as the basal elements of design, in a way. The other major premise that can be arrived at by this is the establishment of graphic art by means of elements of abstraction. The elementary line with its immense possibilities is explored by Kandinsky for all its possible manifestation of form, thickness, curvature, surface element, texture and combination of spatial arrangements.

Vagueness also got a source to grow, root itself in the rigidity of a square to seek solace in- as if a discipline of structure to resort to balance, proportion and rhythm. Kandinsky sought to propose the other universal elements of his theory- to divide and fill up the picture surface by means of tensions and lyric, harmony and disharmony of shapes. Nature of composition would chiefly depend on the personality of the artist and his sensitivity to portray the exactness of experiences particular to his epoch-either through concentric or excentric. But then he brings in the enigmatic element and leaves it to the capacity of art itself to either comfort itself into the portrayal of the epoch or to be projective of future possibilities as was the case with him- paving the way towards the abstraction. This uncertainty of prediction is the strength of artistic creation, he says. There also remain invisible and intangible factors which cannot be foreseen in this futuristic projection.

His subsequent considerations were for the nature of the surface other than the square and rectangle. The circular surface poses both simplicity and complexions. The reason for complexity is due to the reason that whereas the top or upper parts flow leftward and rightward, the right and left parts flow downward. The oval shaped surface can possibly be termed the transitory surface between the geometric and angular and the organic.

The other aspects of great importance as dealt by him are interplay of surface and the pictorial elements in terms of texture. The material surface varies in texture- smooth, rough, grainy, shiny, even, wavy, which may either strengthen the compositional elements or works as contrast to these. Also, the material forms or elements can be of distinct varieties and pose different appeals when employed against a smooth background either lying solidly or floating in an intermediate space.

Kandinsky's core contribution lies in his visual grammar—a set of principles that treats the visual elements of painting as symbolic entities. In *Point and Line to Plane*, he establishes that the point as a “silent being” capable of infinite transformation, the line as a dynamic element—straight lines suggesting forceful direction, curves indicating inner tension, and zigzags reflecting conflict. Angles and shapes like triangles, squares, and circles as bearers of emotive charge.

Each shape and gesture are imbued with meaning. For instance, a right angle conveys resistance, while a spiral signifies evolution. Colour is also integral: red is active and intense; blue is introspective; yellow radiates lightness and movement. This semiotic system resonates with musical structures, where tones combine into harmonies and rhythms (Kandinsky, 1926).

3. Philosophical and Psychological Foundations

In his book *‘Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst’* published in 1912, Kandinsky, one of the pioneers of abstract art, considers inner necessity as the sole factor in order to arrive at the choice of the elements, equating this to ethics wherein we find inner freedom to be the sole criterion. He posits the illusionistic and transitory nature of the material world and points that the same is foreign to the spirit. He attributes the role of science and the social movements to be two determining factors towards materialistic approach of the modern man against which he places his art as a rebellion. He says that when religion, science and morality (the last through the strong hand of Nietzsche) are shaken and when the outer supports threaten to fall, man turns his gaze away from the external and towards himself. This internalization is the quest of the soul—which he feels is ever derogated by the materialistic approach of the modern world. Quest of the spirit and influence of Theosophy are recorded in his literary effort *‘On the Spiritual in Art’* by the painter Wassily Kandinsky. We find the manifestation of individual angst and empathy through the development of abstract art which upholds the theories of existentialism.

Kandinsky's theory is indebted to German Idealism, Theosophy, and Goethean colour theory. Influences include Plato's theory of Forms, which posits abstract ideal realities beyond the sensory world, Goethe's Theory of Colours, which links colour with human psychology, Theosophy, espousing hidden spiritual realities accessible through heightened intuition. Central to Kandinsky's worldview is the concept of “inner necessity” (*innere Notwendigkeit*)—the idea that true art arises from an internal spiritual compulsion, not from aesthetic fashion or external observation. He believed that when form aligns with inner necessity, it awakens spiritual resonance in the viewer (Kandinsky, 1911).

Moreover, Kandinsky anticipated ideas from Carl Jung's analytical psychology, such as the archetypal nature of symbols and the individuation process. As art historian Moshe Barasch (1985) noted, Kandinsky positioned the artist as a “seer,” revealing the spiritual structure behind visible phenomena.

4. Structural Composition and Spatial Theories-

Kandinsky's compositional approach was revolutionary. Rejecting classical balance rooted in the Golden Ratio, he proposed a psychological spatial map- top: freedom, lightness, bottom: gravity, density, Left: the past or withdrawal, Right: return or resolution. He termed this layout the “Square of Tensions”, a field of oppositional energies that give form its emotive weight. Lines placed within this field do not merely delineate

form—they express movement, resistance, aspiration, or collapse. Unlike traditional art that seeks harmony through equilibrium, Kandinsky's abstraction thrives on contrapuntal tension. Circle assumed the centre stage of Kandinsky's attention in around 1923. Experimentations and improvisations of the compositions based on the circles were his major works during the period. 'In black form', 'In the black square', 'Open green', 'Black circle' (1922), 'Circles within a circle' (1923) are his works where circles and circular segments are emphasized with greater importance than triangles, rectangles and many other elements of geometric forms. 'Arrow form', is another work with circular forms. Kandinsky found the circle intriguing owing to the internal forces and inherent potentialities of the circle. He says, "... if I make such frequent vehement use of the circle in recent years, the reason for this is not the geometric form of the circle on its geometric properties, but my strong feelings for the inner force of the circle and its countless variations; I love the circle today as I formerly loved the horse for instance- perhaps even more, perhaps I find more inner potentialities in the circle, which is why it has taken the horse's place..... in my pictures. I have said a great many 'new' things about the circle but theoretically although I have often tried, I cannot say very much." (As remarked in a psychologists' poll of artists in Plaut, 1929).

5. Viewer Perception and Hermeneutics

Kandinsky did not consider the viewer a passive observer but a co-creator of meaning. He emphasized that each spectator carries a history of visual experiences, which shape their responses to form and colour. Perception of this space as a flat entity is the viewer's sensitivity and prerogative. The artist's expectation of such a viewpoint of the spectators is solicited as per Kandinsky. The viewer's is the task of perceiving the living elements of the picture. As he says "...to discover the living elements, to make their pulsations perceptible and to ascertain the laws governing them." To infer liveliness in the work of abstraction was the task that he sincerely sought the favour of philosophy. He says "..... (To draw consequence from these data is) the task of philosophy and it is spiritual relationship within the limits of a given epoch's capabilities." His theory aligns with semiotics of Charles Peirce's triadic model: sign, object, and interpretant, Roland Barthes' concept of "writerly" texts: meaning is produced, not consumed.

Kandinsky's compositions function similarly to poetry or music—they require interpretive labor and evoke non-verbal cognition. The painting, then, becomes a site of psychological projection. As Barnett (1994) notes, Kandinsky's artworks do not depict but suggest—they operate through association, rhythm, and symbolic resonance.

6. Compositional Analysis of Key Works

Kandinsky championed the cause of portrayal of the language of abstraction with his series of 'Compositions' which are not impromptu exercises in free colour composition, but are determinately created and derived chiefly from Biblical iconography. The significance of apocalyptic imagery, as per Dee Reynolds, in Kandinsky's semi-abstract paintings is not allowing the process for their decipherment, to point to the function of abstraction itself, which was to herald the release from an old, corrupt world, and the birth of a new, purified one. The path towards abstraction was not only a movement away from material reality, it was also a move towards a new vision of reality. Kandinsky's pre-war apocalyptical paintings such as 'Judgment Day', 'the Deluge' and 'the Resurrection' portrays destruction and reconstruction on the thematic level where the material content or the figurative content is destroyed in order to create a new, purified psychophysical content.

6.1 Composition IV (1911)

As per the analysis of 'Composition IV,' 1911, by Dee Reynolds, we find in it the culmination of a crucial phase in Kandinsky's development, encompassing the elements of figurative, iconographical and abstract depiction. Kandinsky, in his literary discourse about the picture posits the view of the spectator in consideration, saying that the content is 'what the spectator lives, or feels, while under the effect of the form and colour

combinations of the picture'. His commentary ascribes to the pictorial elements of form and colour qualities which result from the spectator's imagining activity, for example, static configurations are described as if they were moving, and colours are described as 'light-cold-sweet'.

Dee Reynolds points that the iconographical approach, epitomized by the work of Washton Long, is useful in providing keys to Kandinsky's sources, but in a limited scope. Jean-Marie Floch and Felix Thürlemann, in their analyses of the composition, credits Kandinsky with the creation of a new pictorial 'language' surpassing both figurative and iconographical frameworks. Thürlemann holds that 'the detour via iconographical comparisons is not necessary to comprehension of the 1911 painting'. In his analysis, Thürlemann divides the painting into sections, and compares the contrast between long, straight, unbroken lines in the lower right and shorter, bent, intersecting lines in the upper left. He considers two different 'colour syntagms' on the left of the picture plane- the disorganised patch of colours on the left of the picture, and the differentiated, ordered configuration of colours in the 'rainbow'. There remains a spatial alignment of each of these colour syntagms with one of the clusters of black lines (the 'horsemen'), the relationship of opposites in the colour syntagms directs to the confrontation of the linear clusters. As 'right hand side implies order and left-hand side confusion, height of the linear cluster on the right indicates its dominance over the left and thereby, the relationship of the linear clusters portrays the dominance of order.

Composition IV is analysed in the following manner by Thurlemann-

Left side of the picture when compared with right, it appears that the left side portrays conflict and the right-side harmony. There remains similarity/contrast in the left and upper right. In lower left, the portrayed sun is devoid of any aura as source of light stands separates from colours of rainbow. In upper right there remains an integration wherein colours of rainbow form the aura of the sun. The colours on upper right blend and expand. The left side of the picture plane, from a view point of colour analyse, is suggestive of conflict, potential order and the right shows realization of harmony by portrayal of expansion of colour. On analysis of linear elements, we refer to Kandinsky's literally work, point and line to plane, where Kandinsky discussed on a linear structure of the composition, describing it vertical diagonal accent, illustrating the principles lines of forms of the compositions. In the centre, the vertical lines work as fulcrum for the contours of the compositional structure, forming roughly a diamond shape. From bottom of the vertical line near the centre, diagonal vectors are suggested – with the reclining figures till the edge of the escarpment to the right and then on the top of the vertical towards right of centre. Subsequently, the outline is balanced by the diagonal at the bottom of the picture plane, joining the back of the horseman in centre and extending to the tip of the vertical line of the left of centre. As the edges are intersected at the corners of the canvas, the entire diamond is not visible, although the diamond framework creates a sense of mobility.

Ascending movement is blocked as a resultant of conflict between the area pointing towards opposite directions, whereas to the right their remains dominance of ascending movements. The vertical line constitutes the base for a triangular structure of imaginary diagonal line linking the heads of the reclining figures on the right to the top of the vertical line right of centre. This suggests rising movement of the reclining figures. The depicted mountain slopes towards the upper right and leads to the attention of the spectator towards the 'standing pair' the vertical portion in turn upholds the suggestion of the rising movement in the reclining couple on the lower right.

Chromatic analysis of the composition suggests contrasts between blue in the mountain and use of yellow colour in the escarpment. This creates an optical contrast wherein blue recedes and yellow advances. Kandinsky moderates the opposition of colour contrast by using colour composition. This moderation is more significant towards right side of the picture place than the left. In the top right corner, we find presence of radish, purple modulating the opposition between blue and yellow in the sun motive in top in right hand corner, in a small area amidst the escarpment and the mountain as well as in the bottom right-hand corner. The edges of colour melt into each other and moderate the contrast of blue and yellow.

As per the phenomenon of simultaneous contrast both blue and yellow are toned down in their opposition wherein they are tinged with greenish after the reddish purple. This makes the yellow appear colder and blue colour warmer and brighter.

Kandinsky invested positive emotional elements of ascending movement and chromatic harmony in the right side of picture plane, along with cheerful association. Use of colours on the right side suggests more lucidity and ease of flow, together with the harmonious line, they contrast with aggressive and spiking lines in the left. Thus, the composition exalts imaginary value which transcends the material visual elements. Dissociation of contour and line creates a disembodiment.

Lines are used independently of contours, creating a contrast with their angular lines. The effect is clearly visible in the castles shape on the top of the centre through which colors of the sky are seen which fluid and mobile.

Kandinsky orchestrates advancing and receding colors and creates ambiguous, spatial effects. To explain this point, Thurlmann says that the mountain is position in front of the yellow escarpment, contradicting the advancing movement of yellow and the receding movement of blue.

6.4 Composition VIII (1923)

In Composition VIII, we find implied movement of colors and forms creating patterns of dynamism. Absence of a single geometrical centre and suggested movement towards several directions necessitates looking at it in sequential scanning movements. Dynamism which is suggested by lines converging in angles is in contrast with restful form of circle. Dynamics is seen to be operating around the two-dimensional plane; movement remain towards the spectator. The spectator is deprived of a privileged view point from outside the picture and is presented in to active imaginative involvement with the portrayal of the pictorial space. Impression of depth is created by overlapping of various elements as the forms do not seem to be contained in a single plane in stability, superimposition results in optical ambiguity and dynamism. The composition presents various centres of dramatic interest such as large and complex circular form in the top left-hand corner, in the direction of which the checkerboard form with two acute angles near the corner towards the direction of which the checker board form with two acute angles on the right-hand sides of the picture is pointing, the circle remains enclosed in a triangle towards right hand side of centre. Many angular forms are directed towards the centre.

Remarkable portrayal of the large circle towards the upper left draws attention because of its size and striking black ring, creating a feeling of heaviness. A high level of excitement seems to be created when to accumulation of contrasting tensions, by the second circle. The forms of this circle remain the lack point in middle of the white circle. The triangle is seen to be contrasting with the white circular area inside it with its outwardly pointing acute angles, this contains a graphically severe form of the circle, that is a point, towards which three red tipped elongated angular forms penetrates in wards, forming a counter point to the excentric angles of the triangle, transgressing the thick circumference of the circle, extending through the white space and touching the black point at the centre. Dynamism of the elongated form creates a compelling centripetal movement, also sustains is maximize thereby. The central black point which pulls them in to the depth also ensures a short arrest of the movement. It ensures a contrast which escalates tension and maintains that indefinitely. Then the other centre of attraction is seen to be the pink rectangle at the top right-hand corner. This acts as a pulling force for the linear portrayal of lines in the upper part of the picture plane, pointing in its direction and thus providing a counter point of cumulative smaller movements to the strong right – left thrust of the double angled checker board form passing in front of it. Counterpoint of contrasting movements is created by angular forms pointing upwards and downwards. This again is endorsed with dynamics of colour, which are more prominent in circular form whereas in angular forms movement across the plane and into depth is suggested through the direction of the angles.

The picture creates a sense of “drama” in the spectator by means of contrasting relation amongst the pictorial elements. The most striking examples being i.e. elongated angular forms which pierce the circle which is enclosed in the triangle. This stops closer to the black point in the centre. Though the red tapering forms are

statue, yet owing to their acute angles and the fact that they are all pointing towards the black point creates an impression in the spectator that they are directional and dynamic. Owing to angular nature such congregation creates sense of aggression, excitement, suspense and desire. On the contrary, the circular forms appear to be self-contained and their coloration suggests receding movements – towards and away from a spectator.

A Bauhaus-era piece, this work is austere and geometric. The absence of a single focal point compels the eye to move rhythmically. Circles, triangles, and lines interact as vectors of motion. The spatial ambiguity and overlapping forms create dynamic tension.

7. Abstraction, Apocalyptic Themes, and Symbolism

Kandinsky was the first artist to develop the potential of abstraction to the point of making it the basis of his work. This achievement is of far greater significance than the disputed timing of his first abstract water colour, which bears the date of 1910, or related controversies over who was really the first abstract artist. Discussing the reception of Kandinsky's paintings, Thomas Messer points out that spectators tend to equate a lack of recognizable imagery with lack of meaning. According to Vivien Barnett, the meanings of the pictorial elements are generated internally, first, within the composition of an individual work and, second, in relation to other works by Kandinsky and it follows from this that meaning ... is self-referential and hermetic within Kandinsky's art. It is indeed the case that pictorial elements acquire meaning through these contexts, but the content of the picture does not consist in decipherable meanings, but is produced by the experience of the spectator while looking at the picture. Kandinsky's theoretical writings focus on, and invite the spectator to reflect on, this imaginary dimension of pictorial space.

Kandinsky's writings convey a vivid picture of the difficulties involved in making the transition to abstraction and also emphasize the crucial role of anti-materialist ideas in deciding him to take this step. Both Kandinsky and Mondrian undertook serious literary efforts to educate and orient the spectators to the 'inner' effects of colour and form. Their theories have been criticized for their conformity to the dogmas of subjectivity. To overcome the seemingly difficulty in appreciation of art by a spectator, Kandinsky resorted to explain about this transition into abstraction by means of writing. In its early stage, abstract art needed the support of verbal and literary language for appreciation and understanding. In the context of picture-spectator relation, Kandinsky, as per Dee Reynolds, portrays an essentialist view of art as a 'transparent mediator' to universal reality and subjective experience. His connotations about effects of colour and form is attributable to association with objects, based on previously gathered sense perception and cultural background of the spectator. As per Kandinsky, 'form is . . . the expression of an inner content' and that 'every work of art . . . produces in every man without exception a vibration that is at bottom identical to that of the artist'¹. Affirming a different level of maturity in interpreting the pictorial elements, Kandinsky says that the content of the picture does not consist in the objects represented, but in the effects of the pictorial elements 'these contents are indeed what the spectator lives, or feels, while under the effect of the form and colour combinations of the picture'. 'It is common enough for the spectator who sees the object to imagine he sees the painting. He recognizes a horse, a vase, a violin, or a pipe, but may easily let the purely pictorial content escape him'². Nameable objects, from the view point of a spectator, are easy to relate and provide a link between the image and the language. Kandinsky's works holds supreme the power of visual language over the power of language to define, categorize and immobilize meaning. Rather than naming, it is in effect, 'suggesting'. As per Mosche Barasch, Kandinsky repeatedly stressed on the 'inner' character of colour, about its power to evoke a mood and stimulate inner experience apart from representing reality.³ As per Kandinsky, colour was also a way to decipher the inner hidden reality behind the tangibility of objects we perceived in everyday experience.

"The colour white 'in isolation' conjures up an emotion, an 'inner sound'. So do the horse and the goose. But the last two emotions are totally different. White cloud, white glove, white fruit dish, white butterfly,

¹ Ibid, p.258

² Ibid, p 827

³ Barasch, Mosche, *Theories of Art*, 3, Routledge, New York, p 325

white tooth, white wall, white stone. You can see that the colour white in all these cases is an element of secondary importance. For the painter it can be a major element, as a colour, but in all those cases it is itself coloured by the 'inner sound' of the object"⁴.

Kandinsky suggests that the more we advanced in our understanding of what remained behind the external appearance, the more we perceived its 'inner sound'. Perception and impact of colour, as per Kandinsky is proportionate to spiritual development, thereby meaning that lower the spiritual development, superficial is the effect of colour and at a higher level of development, however, there arises from this elementary impression of colour a more profound effect.

Kandinsky's abstraction is not devoid of content—it often references eschatological and redemptive themes. Works such as Judgment Day and The Resurrection reflect a spiritual allegory: the destruction of materialism and the birth of a purified consciousness.

Dee Reynolds (2002) interprets these themes as expressions of symbolic apocalypse—the dismantling of form to reveal spiritual order. Abstraction becomes not an aesthetic exercise but a metaphysical event. The inner resonance of colour and form, for Kandinsky, is akin to divine language.

8. Kandinsky in Context with Piet Mondrian

Kandinsky's and Mondrian's strategies of eliminating figurative objects and constructing pictorial spaces where forms and colours can be imaginatively experienced as rhythmic relationships rather than as individual, material entities are inseparable from their hostility to bourgeois materialism. According to Mondrian, 'overwhelming individualism' and 'a petty attachment to material things' characterizes the bourgeoisie⁵, and he declares that 'A concept of beauty free from materialism must reshape our materialistic society'⁶. Apart from the problem of whether aesthetic consciousness can in fact 'reshape' society, this also raises the question of whether the overcoming of materialism and individualism by ascribing properties of animation to the inanimate work of art does not once again involve the attribution of 'magical' properties to the object, unless one maintains critical consciousness of one's own role in this process. Moreover, in Mondrian, the elements of modernity singled out as agents of destruction of the old reality (for example the flashing advertisements and the fast rhythms of New York) themselves epitomize the materialist society which the artist intends to subvert, and which can appropriate his innovations.

On critical analysis and evaluation, we find that the quest for objectlessness was based upon the premise of illusory nature of the external reality which is, as per Kandinsky, transitory and foreign to the spirit and hence were refuted by both Kandinsky and Mondrian. The non-materialist quest had led towards search and establishment of the elements themselves as eternal and a mode of union between the individual and the universal.

Under guidance of Theosophy, Mondrian's refinement of the line attained supremacy. In vertical-hizontals lie his presentation of the possibilities of endowing meaning to space and livening it. Both Kandinsky and Mondrian's initiation of inclusion of the spectator, guiding him to understand the reason of depiction and the role of the depicted elements is a noteworthy phenomenon in art history. It is appropriate to quote Mondrian in this context who says that if one is not an artist, one must be guided to know the laws. He stresses on the necessity of such a conception and says if viewers are to be well informed and if mankind is to progress, it is essential that the confusion which is everywhere present about abstract art should be removed. Their literary efforts were not a pre conceived theory, but a realisation that dawned as derivative of their realisation during

⁴ Ibid, p 767

⁵ Ibid, p121

⁶ Ibid, p109

the process of painting. The aspect of elevation of the spirit, nature of the spirit, musical analogy to colour possibilities of line, colour and form both organic and geometric were undertaken by Kandinsky. In Mondrian we find the negation of fantasy and resultant data of sense perception. He posits greater importance to intuition than imagination. His efforts for formulation of a universal pictorial language undertook experimentations on the simultaneity of analytic and constructive function of line and forms, wherein, as per him, we find lines are endowed with depiction of separation and union at the same time.

10. Conclusion

Wassily Kandinsky revolutionized not only visual form but the ontology of art itself. He proposed that painting was not about representing the world but revealing the unseen. Through a systematic theory of colour, line, and composition, he developed an aesthetic grammar that paralleled music, psychology, and mysticism.

His works—from the chaos of Composition VII to the geometry of Composition VIII—embody the belief that art can evoke spiritual truth. Kandinsky's vision endures as a call to experience art not with the eye alone but with the soul.

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