VASILII KANDINSKY

ON THE SPIRITUAL IN ART (1920)

[Beginning of one-page manuscript 850910-58, KAG Folder 12]
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Vasilii Kandinsky

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[End of one-page manuscript 850910-58]

[A. General]

[Beginning of typescript 850910-44, KAG Folder 1]

Preface

This little book was written in 1910 and appeared in its first German edition in 1912. In 1914 four quires were published in Russian, but the War hindered further printing.

In the present Russian edition the analysis of color section remains unchanged and the ten years that have elapsed have only served to convince me even more of the correctness of my approach to this analysis. But [the sections on the] analysis of drawn form and the analysis of the bases of construction and composition on which I had been working since 1915 (mine was the first experiment in this field) have increased significantly in size. I was unable to bring the brief “Doctrine of Drawn Form” from abroad, which I wrote in two languages at the time, and have introduced it in this book in an even more compressed form.

Gravitating constantly towards my own painting, but distracted by other circumstances sometimes beyond my control, I have been unable to approach the topic of this book with the required depth and comprehensiveness. Above all, what is needed at this point is a long series of both physical and psycho-

1. Editors' note: The exacting task of organizing and transcribing the many scattered sections of the KAG materials relating to On the Spiritual in Art [O dukhovnom v iskusstve] was undertaken by Irina Menchova. Her calligraphic expertise, efficiency, and patience are much appreciated. Unless indicated otherwise, all footnotes are Kandinsky's.

2. Editors' note: Although the heading “B. Painting” appears later in this text, the opening typescript does not carry the heading “A. General” which figures in the other editions of On the Spiritual in Art. However, it can be assumed that the omission was a casual oversight inasmuch as the four sections of the conventional “Part A” are in place and follow the established sequence.
logical experiments. The property of time creates the essential and favorable soil whence a theory of painting will be born in its full measure. Very soon the "feeling" that dictates the work of art to the artist will also extract its material from the world of objective knowledge lying outside the artist – the exact discipline of art.

[Beginning of manuscript 850910-46, KAG Folder 3]\(^3\)

These are complex phenomena whose various aspects touch upon each other. At certain points they fuse and interfuse so that it becomes difficult to establish the boundaries of their each totality, yet it is still more difficult to recognize all their points of contact and fusion instantly or to avoid a narrow-minded judgment of this or that phenomenon. One of the properties of the man of the "future" (who has now been born) should be identified as an ability – acquired after much torment – to see a phenomenon in its complexity together with all its points of contact and fusions; but it is a property that is being acquired slowly and painfully. On the one hand, the new eye encompasses the greater sum of phenomena and, by segmenting one from the other, penetrates to the essence, to the depths, of the schematically isolated phenomenon ever more sharply. It is this ability of the "eye" that makes the great dualistic process possible: concealing its hidden roots in the past, the process has sprouted strong buds in the present that are the tree trunks of the future. Hence, it is becoming ever easier to fathom each individual phenomenon of art and the individual arts that are now fusing into a common art, into a common spiritual sphere partaking of the universal spiritual sphere of art, the world of science, religion, and philosophy.

The aspiration towards the primitive has now generated an entire literature concerning the exotic arts, especially of Africa, Mexico, Tahiti, and so on, and so on. This is organically connected with the aspiration towards the particular phenomena of art that, conventionally, are now called "dilettante," an aspiration that is still hard to discern, but which has an important future. So called "children's art" should also be relegated here as being a related phenomenon. But whereas literature on the "primitive" could constitute a special library and literature on "children's art" is represented by much serious research and in many collections, both private and public, so far not much attention has been given to "dilettante art." The [general] attitude is very

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3. Editors' note: KAG contains five manuscript pages written by Kandinsky in ink that he meant to insert "on printed page 2" (according to his own instruction at the top of the first page). Since "printed page 2" is missing in the Soviet proofs, it is impossible to know the exact point of insertion, although between the end of the Preface and the beginning of the Introduction would seem to be the logical context. In addition to these four pages, 850910-46 also contains a loose page, numbered "1" and carrying Kandinsky's instruction "insert after the first paragraph," which has, therefore, been duly inserted after "and philosophy," even though the reference to the primitive seems to be more relevant to the third paragraph.