



"eine Suite", Kandinsky, 1922

KANDINSKY

A CASE-STUDY

THE LOGIC OF A PERSONAL PICTORIAL LANGUAGE
Natural to artists, but naturally puzzling to scholars

Fré Ilgen, 2015-2016

*“A true work of art speaks immediately to the spectator.
The spectator should immediately respond to the work of art.”*

Kandinsky, “On the Artist”, 1916¹

¹ Kandinsky, “On The Artist (Om Konstnären)”, Stockholm, 1916, in Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p. 417.

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1. Foreword

While art history continues to excite and interest us for a good many reasons, the perception of history in general and art history in particular results from a consensus of views. Because such a consensus evolves building on the actual research usually done by one individual researcher, various persons have described history writings to be as truthful as the author of the writings. This does not imply distrust of the motivation or capacity of the researcher, but simply acknowledges that every individual researcher has to make choices: individual researchers are human beings who cannot know or see everything. In the case of art history, in contrast to, for instance, physics, biology, or technology, the selection of data any researcher makes is based on individual human observation, not on an empirical and objective processes. As a logical result we should continue to evaluate critically the stream of art history publications, while admitting that the published facts will repeatedly have to be re-explored. In summary, art historical explorations can never be perfect or final.

Catalogues raisonnés for any artist are examples of important publications traditionally building on the research of one individual art historian.² In general, the vast amount of data collected are not often checked by a second person. The artworks of artists for whom a catalogue raisonné is composed are generally dispersed over several countries if not continents. In the best case and with adequate financial resources the main researcher can travel and try to see as many works as is possible. Even in exceptional circumstances such an effort is restricted and unavoidably includes not seeing and directly researching many works. For these works the researcher depends entirely on the quality of photos (in case of two dimensional works, of the front and reverse sides), documents, data of materials and correct sizes provided by the current owner of the artwork. For obvious reasons, current owners do not always like to unframe their possessions and often merely provide unchecked or old data provided to them by a third person (such as the gallery where they purchased the work). The process naturally implies that it is rarely financially feasible, nor pragmatically manageable, to acquire a second opinion from at least one other specialized researcher traveling and checking the same data.³

In Kandinsky's case an attempt was made to circumvent the dilemma of one author alone assuming responsibility for critical decisions such as authentication, by making the

² Examples are the catalogues raisonnés on artists as diverse as Gustave Moreau (Pierre-Louis Matthieu), Malevitch (Andrei Nakov), Rothko (David Anfam). Sometimes two editors or various authors are involved, as was the case for Mondrian (Robert P. Welsh, Joop M. Joosten) or Pollock (Francis V. O'Connor, Eugene V. Thaw). Kandinsky's catalogue raisonné was produced by a single author, the leading Kandinsky specialist Vivian Endicott Barnett.

³ See Appendix I and II, for further comments on catalogues raisonnés, and on lists of Kandinsky's works, including how sizes of the same works frequently fluctuate in official sources.

Société Kandinsky an editorial board responsible for the catalogue raisonné.⁴ The board members, of course, were busy people with diverse professional obligations and so they chiefly trusted the professionalism and reputation of their main researcher. In fact, it would not be realistic to expect such professionals to invest time or the means to double-check the data of the originals themselves; this means they generally confirmed the data and conclusions selected and proposed by the main researcher.

Catalogues raisonnés are valuable assets: they provide vast collections of basic data for any researcher studying the artistic development of the involved artist, and for any public or private collectors to understand the historical position of the work they have. It is, however, important to acknowledge that any catalogue raisonné is inevitably open to human mistakes, including the decision of what works to include in the first place.

One issue is that the art market treats catalogues as fool-proof publications, the absolute and sole reference for claims of authenticity. This situation attributes to the main researcher and involved editorial board more power, and subsequent responsibility, than any objective researcher should wish to claim or be granted.⁵ It is quite interesting that hardly in any other field of human knowledge the research of a single specialist, without being double-checked, can have such an impact. For the protection and defense of an individual researcher, who has the courage to write a catalogue raisonné, one should therefore not see a catalogue raisonné as final and only proof of authenticity, but as a sound foundation on which particular research can verify the authenticity of any particular artwork. Within reason this applies also to those artworks not included in the catalogue raisonné. In each case, finding a consensus between various specialists is desirable, and, if this is accomplished, artworks that were not included should obviously be included in new editions of the catalogue raisonné, the so-called “addenda”.

The Société Kandinsky (dissolved at the end of 2014) has decided not to include “eine Suite”, a watercolor by Kandinsky from 1922, in the catalogue raisonné or in the addenda. While the reasons for this decision have never been communicated in specific detail, but, as is custom only in quite neutral wording, and since the various members of the committee did not see the original work (only an ektachrome) it is clear that the committee confirmed the opinion of the main researcher, the only member of this committee who has seen the original work albeit in a framed form. Hereafter, she will be referred to as the “author Catalogues Raisonnés”. This formulation is chosen, because the critical remarks in this case-study are not aimed at this particular scholar of Kandinsky’s watercolors and of his drawings, but should be seen as critical remarks on any catalogue raisonné as closed book and single reference for authentication.

⁴ Société Kandinsky existed between 1979 and 2014.

⁵ As a logical result, after the various art market scandals concerning forgeries of works authenticated by scholars, even specialized, and well-regarded scholars hardly dare write authenticity certificates.

In this particular context the reader should understand this publication as example of how an intense study of all artistic features of “eine Suite” will demonstrate definitely that this work could only have been created by Kandinsky himself and only in the given year of 1922. As such, exploring the exciting and rather complex and certainly non-linear process of Kandinsky’s creativity, as it loops back and forth through his own artistic oeuvre, we can see this to be exemplary of how many artists work. This investigation makes clear both the sophisticated composition and characteristic expression of the watercolor under consideration here. This work may have puzzled scholars in general, as it is unusual, not to say unique, however, as will be shown, this work does not entirely stand on its own, rather it displays a clear kinship to various works across Kandinsky’s oeuvre. This sophistication, and not in the least this puzzlement it raises in scholars, should speak for itself; were it a forgery it would not be such a conundrum as any forger worth his salt would prefer not to puzzle scholars.

While I am grateful to Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch, whom I admire for their sincere and profound interest in the artist as person, for asking me to conduct this research, I am also indebted to many Kandinsky scholars from whom I have learned much. My personal friendship with the late Thomas M. Messer encouraged my own interest in this multi-faceted artist, whose complex artworks, his continuous artistic development and his writings offer many as of yet unexplored angles and facets.

It is important to acknowledge that artists then and today rarely keep accurate data on every single work they create. Artists focus on the creative act, not on documenting their own history in little detail. Though Kandinsky repeatedly made efforts to list his artworks, the large shifts in his practice, and in the world, prevented him from being accurate. This natural feature of an artist’s profession makes any precise, scholarly research an interesting challenge, because not all works or data are accessible and many are dispersed across the globe.

Art historians such as Will Grohmann, Hans Roethel, Jean Benjamin and Vivian Endicott Barnett have accomplished the sheerly immense task of editing the various catalogues raisonnés. Nonetheless, one must acknowledge also that such a data collection is continuously challenged by the impossibility of being complete and flawless. This case-study may have been evoked by the decision of the author Catalogues Raisonnés and the committee’s decision not to include “eine Suite” in the Catalogue Raisonné of the Watercolors, but is not a criticism of the impeccable professionalism of the researcher. Should the argument for “eine Suite” be considered correct, it will merely show that catalogues raisonnés can naturally not be complete nor flawless. I return to this point in Appendix I.

As I am not only an independent scholar but also a professional artist, I have the advantage of being able to share some insights into Kandinsky’s work that are specific,

natural and logical to the professional artist, but are often challenging to the art historian.⁶ For instance, I will present evidence that in Kandinsky's work *the sailboat* is much more a dominant motif than has so far been noticed. Or that Kandinsky occasionally finds an artistic expression by chance, even by accident, which he later, sometimes many years later, explores more consciously. This happens in my own work as well, and I know this is familiar to many other artists.

The purpose of this publication is to guide the reader through the complex development of a creative artist, allowing him or her to decide in the end if the argument is correct that "eine Suite" is a genuine Kandinsky, or not. Simultaneously, since the Kandinsky Society no longer exists, this case-study may function as an example how in-depth research may help shed light on works not included in the catalogues raisonnés.

For my research I would like to thank the following persons: From the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Richard Armstrong, Lindsay Cash, Carmen Hermo, Megan Fontanella, Linnea Wilson; from Centre Pompidou in Paris, Christian Briend and Anne Lemmonier; Hanna Byers from Sotheby's in New York; Wencke Clausnitzer-Paschold from the Bauhaus Archiv in Berlin; Francesca Cruz from the Collection Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch in Berlin; Annegret Hoberg from the Städtische Gallerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich; from the Museum of Modern Art in New York Emilie Cushman, Marta Dansie, and Jay Levenson; and Regina Abels, Gunda Luyken, Beat Wismer from the Museum Kunstpalast in Dusseldorf. For additional information, not only on Kandinsky but on subjects valuable to this case-study, and other substantial help, I am indebted to: Alexander Arzamastsev, Francois Blanchetière (Musée Rodin), Annett Klingner, Serge and Marianne Lemoine, Patricia Railing, Betty Anne Besch Solinger, Lynn Stern. Last but not least, I am especially grateful to both Jacqueline Ilgen and Pamela Biel for their important work helping to modify my writing.

Fré Ilgen

⁶ In this sense, I personally understand this case-study to be an extension of my book *ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness* Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag GmbH & Co, 2014 (ISBN 978 3 8030 3364 2).

KANDINSKY

BETWEEN FREE EXPRESSIONISTIC EXPLOSION AND CONTROL

*“... The irreconcilable is reconciled. Two opposing paths lead to one goal – analysis, synthesis. Analysis + synthesis = the **Great Synthesis**. In this way, the art that is termed “new” comes about, which apparently has nothing in common with the “old”, but which shows clearly to every living eye the connecting thread. That thread which is called **Inner Necessity**. Thus the Epoch of the Great Spiritual has begun.”*

Kandinsky, Berlin, April 1922⁷

2. Introduction

As there are many thorough studies on Kandinsky’s artworks and on his writings, this essay will attempt to focus on certain features typical to artists in general. These are characteristics of artistic production that any researcher should consider, although they may not always seem logical for consideration when studying an artist’s development.

First, one should be clear that an artist like Kandinsky was chiefly interested in his own artistic development: he used his art to improve his understanding of “reality” and make this accessible to others. Kandinsky neither sought fame nor fortune nor a place in history.

Second, having said this, it is still quite important to understand the influence of economics on artists’ capacity to create works. This simple pragmatic fact plays a larger role than commonly is acknowledged. Especially for the artists of Kandinsky’s generation, many of whom had coped with harsh times of World War I, the Russian Revolution (and the serious shortage of foodstuffs in the aftermath of these upheavals), the Great Depression, the widespread socio-political tensions in the 1930’s, and World War II.

⁷ Quoted from Kandinsky, emphasis his, “Foreword to the Catalogue of the First International Art Exhibition, Düsseldorf, as published in English in Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p .479. Original text in German (from copy at Bauhaus Archives, Berlin): “Das Unvereinbare ist vereint. Zu einem Ziele führen zwei entgegengesetzte Wege – Analyse, Synthese. Analyse + Synthese = Große Synthese. So entsteht die Kunst, die „neu“ genannt wird, die scheinbar mit der „alten“ nichts Gemeinsames hat, die den verbindenden Faden jedem lebendigen Auge klar zeigt. Den Faden, der die Innere Notwendigkeit heißt. So hat die Epoche des Großen Geistigen angefangen.“ Einführung für die I. Internationale Kunstausstellung Düsseldorf. Exhibition, organized by artists from “Das Junge Rheinland”, May 28th – July 3rd 1922, in the building of Leonhard Tietz, AG, Düsseldorf. See also Armin Zweite, (concept and editors: Kai-Uwe Hemken/Ulrike Gärtner), *K.I. – Konstruktivistische Internationale 1922-1927, Utopien für eine europäische Kultur* Dusseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg, Halle 1992 (ISBN3 926154 13 6).

This social-economic context helps to understand, for instance, why Kandinsky's paintings from about 1913 are exceptionally thinly painted, and why he certainly was very thrifty with his materials in other ways as well. For instance, in 1917-1918, while in Russia after the Russian Revolution, he only painted small sized works, not abstractions, but small landscapes and subjects inside or at a "dacha" (a small country house) and only small works on the reverse side of glass ("Hinterglassmalerei") with the exception of only two average sized paintings on canvas.⁸ This would seem to be an artist's response to economic tension, while his retreat into the countryside quite likely was an escape for the violence in the cities. One could imagine that Kandinsky happened upon a pile of cheap (or free) small, possibly standard, pieces of glass and used what he found.⁹

Third, it is quite revealing to acknowledge that many genuinely creative artists do not develop their works in a linear way. One cannot blindly correlate features of the artwork only within a sequence of compositions within a specific and short time frame. Very often a creative artist during the continuing path of development may step aside from his usual path, spontaneously creating something untypical for that moment. In such cases, the artist himself may leave such an experiment for what it is and continue to work in the vein typical for that particular phase. Often years later such a single experimental work may prove to be an early precursor of works that later blossom into importance. This one can see clearly in, for instance, Auguste Rodin,¹⁰ but as an artist myself I know this from my own experience.

This point naturally puzzles and challenges art historians. In Kandinsky's case, for instance, there exists an untitled drawing, dated by the artist 1913, which various scholars describe as a mistake made by the artist. These authorities date this particular work as typically about 1924.¹¹ Part of the confusion is that some artists, including Kandinsky, have occasionally re-dated their works to much earlier years. Quite a few artists repeatedly recycle older works, which in some cases may include reworking an older work, and do not necessarily completely repaint the piece. In Kandinsky's case it does not seem unlikely, that,

⁸ See footnote 18.

⁹ See Appendix III.

¹⁰ See Fré Ilgen, *ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness*, in which I discuss this feature of Rodin in §4.

¹¹ The drawing is labelled # 549. See CRD-01 (for this and other abbreviations, see the List of Literature), p. 272: "Although Kandinsky considered this drawing to be for *Kleine Freuden* and dated it 1913, several art historians have found the motifs and emphasis on geometry to be closer to his 1924 canvas *Rückblick*, # 711, CRP-02, p. 667, which is clearly reminiscent of the 1913 painting. The present work differs significantly from a study for *Kleine Freuden* (cat. No. 286); the paper and the way in which it is signed and dated is consistent with a group of drawings based on earlier works but executed probably in the 1920s (see p.24)."

lacking the funds to buy new paper, he may have picked up older works and added details at a later date.¹²

In addition, artists occasionally may review their previous works, when they select works for a new catalogue, or, as Kandinsky did, when they attempt to list all works to date. In such a process the artist may find to his own surprise an interesting composition in some much older drawing that matches his current interest and which he might use for a new painting. This option shows how a drawing of 1913 can certainly be related to a painting of 1924, and there is no need to doubt the artist's dating the drawing.

This example is mentioned here merely to demonstrate that the moment one questions the authenticity of the artist's signature or his dating of a work, the door opens to uncertainties on many levels. As a side note, and not unimportant regarding Kandinsky, is that later, posthumously, his wife Nina Kandinsky inscribed a note on the reverse side of several watercolors and drawings, authenticating the items, and often adding the year, sometimes a title or reference to one of the lists Kandinsky made himself of his works, the so called *Handlists*. Interestingly, some scholars accept many of Nina Kandinsky's thus authenticated works, including many unsigned and undated works, even in private collections, but not all of these examples are accepted. In the end there is, therefore, no final, unanimously accepted authority that allows an empirical evaluation of the authenticity of any Kandinsky work. One can only see the work in a larger context, research and publicly present available data. In this context, one should appreciate and acknowledge the information offered by the various catalogues raisonnés, though it is just as important to understand and acknowledge the limitations of the perfection of the data, a natural and unavoidable situation given the size of the enterprise of authentication. For the defense and protection of the authors of any catalogue raisonné it is therefore logical as well as pragmatic when evaluating the authenticity of a given artwork to rely not only on the data in catalogues raisonnés, but also to remember that these publications remain sources of information that through time have to be adjusted, extended and corrected.¹³

Kandinsky's artworks have wide appeal because of their level of complexity and visual dynamics. Nonetheless scholars find analysis of his works beyond an artistic development in mere general and linear terms to be a challenging undertaking.¹⁴ Part of the challenge is that

¹² It is quite revealing to look at his 1913 drawings Nr. 284, 287 or 291 (all numbers from CRD-01) – where one could take any of these three works and simply add some of Kandinsky's geometry (references to the rhomboid, more styled calligraphic lines, etc), and in doing so create the impression the work should be dated 1922-1924.

¹³ See Appendix I for notes on the Catalogues Raisonnés of the watercolors.

¹⁴ Very good attempts have been made by outstanding scholars. See Paul Overy, *Kandinsky, The language of the eye* (London: Elek Books Ltd, 1969, SBN 236 17770 2). See Matthias Haldemann, *Kandinskys*

throughout his artistic life Kandinsky continued to use a pictorial language very much his own, including a relatively limited set of basic forms, of which a sailing or rowboat and a mounted rider are probably most consistent; even with these icons Kandinsky continued to change their appearances. While the works are visually instantaneously attractive, they are still hard to “read” – they present neither a clear narrative nor a clear easily appreciated aesthetic structure.

As a whole, Kandinsky’s focus always was understanding reality as he personally understood it actually to be: this was a great synthesis of both universal and personal features in the cohesion and turmoil of continuous change. The pictorial language is means to an end, but not an end in and of itself. In a comparable way, the reader does not have to be aware of the language or specific letter font of this text, as long as both language and letter font, in their cohesion, make the text readable. It is, however, interesting to appreciate the language and font type used if one wishes to understand why the text is readable.

It is both exciting and revealing to contemplate deeply Kandinsky’s artworks and to find the logic behind his artistic development at the same time as one can see that an essential part of this logic is that Kandinsky often returned to earlier depictions and experimented with novel features. This reveals his capacity to accomplish a clear cohesion in his total oeuvre, while at the same time producing such a heterogeneous body of work. In order to penetrate his oeuvre in depth, one must recognize that for Kandinsky transformation, as for any creative artist, of each artistic idea into a next is both natural as well as evident to the viewer. His drawings, for instance, may have been studies for watercolors, or oil paintings, or, some watercolors may have functioned as compositional and color studies for paintings, but he does not repeat himself (with only a handful exceptions). Transformation is indeed a process natural to most artists. In the case of Kandinsky, it is quite revealing to discover that a sense of humor and playfulness were also relevant ingredients for his personal process of transformation.

Therefore, in order to prove that the watercolor “eine Suite” 1922 is both characteristic and unique for that year, and created by this artist and nobody else, this case-study focuses on the characteristics and uniqueness of this particular work. The reader will find many facts and the circumstances that demonstrate that a main reason this watercolor has not been widely acknowledged as yet, in addition to the fact that this work has been in a private collection for forty years, depends on its uniqueness, being created just after Kandinsky’s more expressionist phase and just at the start of his more constructive phase (at the Bauhaus). A person who wished to forge a Kandinsky would certainly concentrate on

work-phases more readily identified with Kandinsky such as his early lyrical or his later Bauhaus phases.

This essay will show how each feature of “eine Suite” is either pre-announced in drawings, watercolors and/or paintings of previous years, but also re-appears in much older works, and/or finds its echo in the following years. In addition, there are remarkable coincidences in color and iconography with one other, larger watercolor, of 1922, the “Aquarelle No 23”.

Because neither Kandinsky’s life, nor his artistic development as a whole are the focus of this case-study, the following chapter is not intended to be more than a general introduction leading to 1922. For more information on his works and life before 1922, the reader is referred to the many existing publications. The reader familiar with Kandinsky is advised to skip chapter 3. and proceed to chapter 4.

3. Prior to 1922: Moscow – Berlin – Weimar

As a logical consequence of the artistic accomplishments of the 19th century, Wassily Kandinsky is the modern artist as visual researcher: he did not aim at mere optical phenomena, but searched for those specific compositions, forms and colors that offer the viewer a profound visual experience.¹⁵ He often changed his compositions, though from around 1909 the foundation for his fabulous paintings, works on paper and his graphic works were set: delightful balance between figurative elements and formless areas, general sense of non-gravity in no-thingness, application of subtle contrasts between pastel colors and brighter or darker colors, with strong thick to thin lines, a revolving and dynamic perspective and strong tactility. As Cézanne had already observed in art contrasts are fundamental.

Without belabouring the point, which lies outside the scope of this publication in any case, it is quite clear Kandinsky’s focus revolved around the position of the individual and objects in complex space/time. One can, therefore, place Kandinsky in line with the German Romantic painters such as Caspar David Friedrich. Kandinsky’s interest depicting objects and people in non-gravitational space is also related to the interests in space/time and motion in Cubism and Futurism, even more than those of Suprematism or Constructivism. Kandinsky’s interest in chaotic, apocalyptic turmoil, his emphasis on the “inner drive”, obviously relate to the contemporary need to cope with psychological features of the dark side of humanity brought to the fore by the catastrophic World War I. As such, his works, chiefly those before

¹⁵ See Fré Ilgen, *ART? No Thing! Analogies between art, science and philosophy* (Engwierum, NL: PRO Foundation and Artists Bookworks, 2004, ISBN 90 9018543 7), for an extensive discussion of many aspects of Kandinsky’s works, interests and theories. See Fré Ilgen, *ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness (op. cit.)*, for a focused discussion of Kandinsky’s interest in the Japanese artist Kuniyoshi, and to demonstrate the plausibility that a particular sketch by Kuniyoshi inspired Kandinsky to explore non-gravitational space in his works from about 1910 onwards.

and around 1919, share the foundational motivations of Dada and Surrealism. His positive vision on life led to an interest in the idealism of Constructivism and Bauhaus, as he intelligently understood that their approach could lead to more than mere melancholia. He was convinced that a person cannot only focus on rational nor only on psychological features of perception in art, and he wished to push for the Great Synthesis as the real and only future, a way to fuse both the rational and the emotional.

While his formative works from his Murnau days in Bavaria display quasi impressionist, outdoor and figurative paintings, his first proper creative phase is known as lyrical abstractionism. “Lyrical” here refers to the understanding that Kandinsky, who befriended composer Arnold Schönberg, attempted to visualize music. It is important to note that Kandinsky’s gradual turn from painting landscapes, which he had done first in a post-impressionistic style, then in an expressionistic style, to more or less abstraction was enhanced by the artist’s encounter with Arabic culture (in his case, Tunisia – his friend Paul Klee traveled to Egypt), studying Arabic artifacts in one of the first exhibitions in Munich and his intense study of Japanese art, especially woodblock prints. The resulting works are emotionally laden, dynamic, freehand paintings. His historical ‘Composition’ studies, often linked to music, clearly also echo his interest in Asian and Arabic calligraphy. I consider this period a kind of late virtuoso phase,¹⁶ a phase of self-liberation, in which Kandinsky pushed himself to trust his own intuition. Here a kind of intense meditative effort to free the body from mere reason, allowed his hands to collaborate freely with his eyes and have the confidence to wait for results.

Kandinsky did not change his approach abruptly but rather needed a few years gradually to develop his more dynamic compositions in which there is no horizon at all, no frontal view, and semi-recognizable figures, mountain-shapes, tower-shapes, cloud-shapes that enter the canvas from any angle, floating, as it were, through space and time. Early examples of this approach are his studies for “Composition II”, “Glassbild mit Sonne”¹⁷; compositions which have the appearance of being assemblages of partial scenes pasted together.¹⁸ Though he experimented with full non-gravitational compositions in works on paper beginning in 1910, Kandinsky's dynamic compositions really blossomed in about 1913.

¹⁶ I purposely mention 'late virtuoso phase', because if an artist has a virtuoso phase, this may happen when he or she is twenty to thirty-five years of age; Kandinsky was forty-four. See Fré Ilgen, *ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness*, for many examples from history demonstrating the validity of speaking about a virtuoso phase and a maturation phase.

¹⁷ “Entwurf zu ‘Komposition II’”, ca. 1910, see Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel, *Das bunte Leben, Wassily Kandinsky im Lenbachhaus* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1995, ISBN 3 7701 3785 X), picture 306, p. 247. “Glassbild mit Sonne”, 1910, Lenbachhaus, *ibid.*, picture 318, p. 263.

¹⁸ See Fré Ilgen, *ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness* (op. cit), p. 113-116, and p. 269.

One example of this is his fabulous study for “Improvisation 30 (Canons)”,¹⁹ the linear studies for “Bild mit weißem Rand”,²⁰ and the painting itself.²¹ This non-linear development culminated in 1914, for example in the paintings for Edwin R. Campbell, currently at the Museum of Modern Art New York. One can recognize four main elements in his works: masses, contrasts, the running over of color beyond the outlines of forms, and the existence of two centers of the composition.²² The artist here builds on the baroque, using more than one center in an artistic composition. Living in Bavaria at the time, Kandinsky had a natural interest in Baroque art which was to be found in his immediate environment.

While in principle in the drawings, watercolors and paintings from 1913-1919 one can clearly perceive a gradual change of a kind of overall composition that covers the whole picture plane towards a composition in which non-gravitational space revolves around one or multiple focal points, there are various reasons to assume that Kandinsky consciously looked for more clarity and structure in 1919-1922;²³ this search culminated in a series of important works created in the summer of 1922.

Because of World War I Kandinsky could not stay in Munich, where he had developed his first major style: there he and Franz Marc had become known as the founders of the “Blaue Reiter” Almanac. His return to Moscow in 1915 was difficult and long. In 1914, and in 1916, he enjoyed welcome interludes in Sweden.²⁴ Here we have the phenomenon of an

¹⁹“Improvisation 30 (Canons)”, January 1913, Lenbachhaus, see Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel, *Das bunte Leben, Wassily Kandinsky im Lenbachhaus* (op cit), picture 480, p. 414.

²⁰ Entwurf zu „Bild mit weißem Rand“, 1913, *ibid.*, picture 496-497, p. 429.

²¹“Bild mit weißem Rand” (“Painting with White Border”), May 1913, in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. See Dorothy Kosinski, Richard Armstrong, *Kandinsky and the Harmony of Silence: Painting with White Border* (Washington DC: The Phillips Collection in association with Yale University Press, 2011, ISBN 978 0 300 17078 8).

²² Discussed by Magdalena Dabrowski in excellent essays, providing much background information on Kandinsky’s major paintings of mainly his “lyrical” period. See Magdalena Dabrowski, *Kandinsky Compositions* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, ISBN 0 87070 406 0), p. 32. Dabrowski, on p. 45, specifically discusses Kandinsky’s “Composition VII”, also refers to the realistic probability Kandinsky would have been familiar with the fresco by Peter von Cornelius (1836-1839) “The Last Judgment” above the main altar of Saint Ludwig’s Church in Munich.

²³ This observation has been confirmed by other scholars before, for instance, by Thomas M. Messer, describing Kandinsky’s painting “Red Spot II”, 1921, in the Lenbachhaus. See Thomas M. Messer, *Vasily Kandinsky* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1997, ISBN 0 8109 1228 7), p. 104.

²⁴ For a good study on that period, see Vivian Endicott Barnett, *Kandinsky and Sweden* (Malmö, Stockholm: Malmö Konsthall, 1989, Moderna Museet, 1990, ISBN 91 7704 0376). Kandinsky was married to his cousin Ania Shemiakina in Russia in 1892-1911, but was with Gabriele Münter in Munich-Murnau and Paris from about 1902. Münter had arranged an exhibition of both her and of Kandinsky’s works at Gallery Gummesons Konsthandel, Stockholm, where he had exhibited before. Kandinsky arrived December 1915 from Moscow, departed again on March 16. By that time Kandinsky had decided to end their relationship in

artist pursuing different stylistic elements at the same time. Kandinsky worked on a line of figurative paintings and “Hinterglassmalerei” (painting on the reverse side of glass sheets; when displayed a little in front of a wall the light reflecting on the wall will illuminate the colors from the back, providing a color-glow quite different from oil paint on canvas) with fairy tale narratives, interiors, or landscapes, while at the same time he was pushing forward the development of his abstracted works. This, however, turns out to be more common among artists than is generally acknowledged. Often this is part of the natural maturation process. In Kandinsky’s case, his ultimate decision for his abstracted work was motivated by the broad and international upsurge of refiguring the position of the artist in society after World War I, an upsurge driven by political as well as by economic changes.

For the rest of this case-study, it is important to be aware of the several serious issues in Kandinsky’s daily life in 1917-1911. This includes issues that influenced his creative output as well as his motivations for changing his artistic style, and led him to desperately want to escape the impossible situation in Moscow, motivating Kandinsky to make his start at the Bauhaus a success.

Back in Moscow, after the Russian revolutions in February and October 1917, he found himself in a difficult politically and culturally transitioning climate, while one hardly could speak of any economy. Kandinsky was just fifty, eleven years older than Malevitch, some twenty-five years older than other leading artists of the time.²⁵ He had inherited a large apartment building from his father before the war, which he sold in 1917, but he kept an apartment for himself on the top floor. He purchased the adjoining plot with the intention to build a new house and studio.²⁶ After the October Revolution everything was confiscated. To younger generations Kandinsky may have seemed to be a representative of the bourgeoisie, and they did not welcome him as player in the few opportunities offered by the Revolution. This is an important element for understanding that he had some reputation built up in Germany as leading pioneer of abstract art, but now was challenged by a new generation of artists who emphasized artists should directly contribute to the revolution and

a friendly manner, while Münter seemed to attempt to continue. See for instance p.19 on their strained relationship.

²⁵ For a detailed study, see Clark V. Poling, *Kandinsky in Russland und am Bauhaus 1915-1933*, in Peter Hahn, *Kandinsky – Russische Zeit und Bauhausjahre 1915-1933* (Berlin: Bauhaus Archiv, Museum für Gestaltung, 1984, ISBN 3 89087 011 2).

²⁶ In May in Moscow he met the thirty years younger Nina Andreevskaya, whom he married in February 1917. While on their honeymoon in Helsinki they learned belatedly of the Russian (February) Revolution. In the summer of 1917 they stayed at the Akhtyrka estate of his relatives. Here he created the small figurative paintings mentioned in the Introduction. Their son Vsevolod was born in September, and they learned about the October Revolution – leading to the expropriation of Kandinsky’s real estate property in Moscow. See Annegret Hoberg, “Chronology”, in Richard Armstrong, *Kandinsky* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2009, ISBN 978 0 89207 3917), p. 293-294.

new society rather than facilitate upper-class collectors. Because Kandinsky always was sincerely interested in what artworks offer any other person, it will have been less a challenge for himself to shift gear, but more to the general art scene in post-revolutionary Moscow to take him for who he was.

Early in 1918 the artist Wladimir Tatlin invited Kandinsky to become a member of the Department of Visual Arts (IZO) of the Narkompros, NKP, the Peoples Commissariat for Education, presided by Anatoly Lunacharsky, who commissioned many projects of avant garde artists as visual symbols for the revolution. Kandinsky became very active in organizations and in various teaching positions,²⁷ as well as in film and theater, and this sparked his interest in projects across creative disciplines. In such a position, also building on his experience and contacts acquired in his time living in Germany, he got in touch with German artist groups. This also included Walter Gropius. These connections further led him initially to build up a good relationship with some of the young artists in Russia, collaborating in some important committees, such as the one established to reorganize the Russian Museum and found the Museum of Painterly Culture.

Differences between Kandinsky and his younger colleagues quickly began to arise concerning the general approach to art and in what way this should be widely respected, researched and promoted. While Kandinsky emphasized the visual experience of works of art in general viewers, the younger generation, led by Malevitch and Tatlin, progressively became more convinced that through purely objective, rationalized forms, shapes and compositions, and cheap production (preferably industrial) one could improve society as a whole.²⁸ Their emphasis thus on Constructivism and the constructive approach grew rapidly.

In May 1920 Kandinsky was appointed director at the INKhuk, the Institute of Artistic Culture, where in June of the same year he presented his educational plans. This pedagogical program directly builds on his “The Spiritual in Art” – “das Geistige in der Kunst”, and emphasizes psychological, scientific, and spiritual aspects of perception, encouraging the study of the interrelationships between painting, sculpture and architecture. Although his plans were initially approved, the growth of emphasis on the constructive approach made Kandinsky resign by the end of 1920. Undoubtedly, the seriousness of everyday life in Moscow at that time contributed to this decision. As well as the growing economic problems, food shortages and privation of necessary goods, may have caused the artist’s son’s death on June 16, 1920; Vsevolod was two years old. Moreover, at this time, some

²⁷ Kandinsky, for instance, was also teaching at the SVOMAS, the Free State Art Studios (its precursor being the Stroganoff Art School, who had printed Kandinsky’s “Poetry without Words”, 1903). This institute became in 1920 the vChutemas, the Russian Bauhaus. Kandinsky was also appointed at Moscow University and director of the Museum of Painterly Culture in Moscow. Ibid., p. 294-295.

²⁸ This development was driven by the general upsurge of industries in the whole of Europe after World War I, in need of new concepts for many products that could be mass produced. See Fré Ilgen, *ART? No Thing! Analogies between art, science and philosophy* (op cit).

artists around Malevitch objected to his educational program: they thought Kandinsky was bourgeois and subjective. Kandinsky became involved in a new institute, the Russian Academy for Artistic Sciences (RAKhN), that opened in October 1921.

In the fall of 1921 the opposition to his plans from the Constructivist side grew. At that moment he and Nina had already decided to travel to Berlin in December of that year. A certain section of the Constructivists, calling themselves Productivists, claimed that artists only work for the industries to produce good but simple products for the masses instead of producing high art, and these artists clearly opposed Kandinsky's understanding of fine art. In this climate Kandinsky himself designed some cups and saucers intended for mass production. Though maybe also an attempt to fit in, in the end these designs were part of his mental preparation for the Bauhaus.²⁹ His intense involvement in education caused Kandinsky to transform his art language to one that would be easier to communicate, hence less freehandly expressionistic: the pragmatic perimeters of such subjects motivated him to filter his form language to fewer forms and much less complex compositions: decoration printed, or hand-painted, on porcelain is, after all, quite different from free oil painting on canvas.³⁰

Ever since Kandinsky's forced departure from Germany in 1914, friends and loyal supporters were motivated to bring him back from Russia. Living in Russia shortly after the Revolution was not an easy and simple time as the reminiscences of Nina Kandinsky make clear: hunger and cash problems were standard.³¹ Simultaneously, because of the brand new communist administration it was not very easy for anyone to travel abroad. It seems that Wassily and Nina Kandinsky were able to leave Russia for Germany only by the coincidence of a large exhibition of Russian avant-garde at the Van Diemen Galerie, Berlin, a lobby by various friends including the young artist Ludwig Baer, and Berlin art writer Konstantin Umansky. According to Nina Kandinsky, in 1921 her husband received an invitation to join the Bauhaus. After accelerated administrative procedures they arrived in Berlin December 1921. They were under-nourished and apparently still shaken by the loss of their only son, but must have felt relieved to have escaped the harsh situation in Moscow, looking with hope and excitement towards what the new times could bring.

²⁹ See CRW-02, p. 16, 17.

³⁰ See the later discussion on Kandinsky's pictorial means to understand the culmination of this change in 1922.

³¹ For more information, see Annegret Hoberg, "Vasily Kandinsky: Abstract. Absolute. Concrete", in Richard Armstrong, *Kandinsky* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2009, ISBN 978 0 89207 3917), p. 34-38.

Walter Gropius appointed Kandinsky as teacher at the Bauhaus in 1922.³² These were very dynamic times, involving exceptional initiatives to clarify the social relevance of art in post World War I Europe. Although not relevant to this study, this fact helps explain why Gropius waited three months before he visited the Kandinskys.³³ In addition, Kandinsky was busy himself with his exhibitions in Berlin and Munich, certainly he also took up contact with old friends and collectors. In Berlin Kandinsky, who just turned fifty-five, worked on his print portfolio “Kleine Welten” (“Small Worlds”) and a group of murals. In both one can clearly see Kandinsky’s own tendency toward more openness, structure and clarity, in compositions, his use of geometric forms and primary colors.

4. Summer 1922: Transition and Preparation

After some difficulties attempting to get an apartment for themselves, he and Nina Kandinsky moved to live in Weimar in later June 1922.³⁴ Initially they stayed as guests in Walter Gropius’ house for the summer.³⁵ Once they were able to move into their own small apartment in Cranachstrasse, one can surmise why Kandinsky focused during the summer of 1922 on small works, often on watercolors. Once he had completed the preparation for his first teaching semester at the Bauhaus, he began again to find more clarity in his form and composition language.³⁶

³² See Vivian Endicott Barnett, “The Artist Reinvents Himself: Changes, Crises, Turning Points”, in Richard Armstrong, *Kandinsky* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2009, ISBN 978 0 89207 3917), p. 65-67. See also footnote 36 of this case-study.

³³ See also the catalogue of the important exhibition *K.I.* (“Constructivist International”) on such a special artist’s initiative, in which Gropius, but also Kandinsky’s friend, art historian Will Grohmann, and Kandinsky through his ideas and writings, were involved in one way or another. See Armin Zweite, (concept and editors Kai-Uwe Hemken/Ulrike Gärtner), *K.I. – Konstruktivistische Internationale 1922-1927, Utopien für eine europäische Kultur* (Dusseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Halle, 1992, ISBN3 926154 13 6). In preparation, for instance, the organizing artists met with Gropius in Weimar March 1922.

³⁴ Though end of March 1922 Gropius discussed with Kandinsky his teaching at the Bauhaus, and it is widely accepted that he was appointed in April, the final contract was only signed by him and Walther Gropius June 10th, confirmed by Thüringisches Ministerium für Volksbildung (Thuringian Ministry for Popular Education) June 16th.

³⁵ See Nina Kandinsky, *Kandinsky und ich – Mein Leben mit einem großen Künstler* (München: Knauer Verlag, 1976, ISBN 3 426 72226 7), p. 99. Gropius himself left for a holiday, to return before the new semester would start in fall.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100: “Ein Glück daß Kandinsky sein Atelier im Bauhaus hatte, denn zu Hause konnte er aus Platzgründen nur zeichnen oder aquarellieren.“

Of course Kandinsky was very interested in making his teaching engagement at the Bauhaus a success: he saw little future for his person or his art in Russia. To meet his pedagogical goal, he needed to make his artistic approach accessible to young students, to offer them basic creative principles. Kandinsky also had to meet the challenge that the main emphasis at the Bauhaus was on architecture and interior design, not on free studio painting, so he had to make this area of artistic enterprise accessible to his students.

Kandinsky was appointed to teach the Wall Painting Workshop and the Preliminary Course. This meant he needed to make his artworks simpler and demonstrate a readable clarity. The artist's friendship with Paul Klee, whom he had met in 1911, doubtless provided motivation, as both men shared the ambition to describe the basics of artistic creation for educational purposes.³⁷

Thus, the summer of 1922 was a pivotal period for him. In July and August, he worked hard, creating with students four large murals, "Entwurf für das Wandbild in der juryfreien Kunstausstellung," (A, B, C, D), to be exhibited in fall at the Lehrter Bahnhof, Berlin. Here, too, we see how he focused on reduction. In September he and Nina took a holiday at the Baltic Sea at the house of Gropius' mother in Timmendorf.

Will Grohmann writes:

Kandinsky refers to his years in Weimar as pictorially cold and restrained, with reference to color. On January 21, 1924, he wrote to the author: 'In 1921 my cool period began, from which I now often emerge.' But the works of 1922 are scarcely cooler than those of 1921, and the term applies best to 1923 (and to Composition VIII, 'The Blue Circle')....He wisely cut down the number of colors used to red, yellow, and blue, save for one of the color harmony violet-ocher-green, a combination he would often employ again in works of the Paris period. Meshwork, checkerboard, and circle, conical forms and freely curving lines are the main elements, and their combinations are richly diversified.³⁸

Between 30 April and 15 June of 1922 Kandinsky showed his works in Berlin at the Galerie Goldschmidt und Wallerstein (no catalogue), published "Kleine Welten" at the Propelaen Verlag (Berlin), exhibited in Munich at Hans Holz / Thannhäuser³⁹, and in October 1922 at Carl Gummesons Kunsthandel, Stockholm, Sweden (with catalogue).⁴⁰

The following years saw a leap in the artistic output of Kandinsky, climaxing in 1924-1925.⁴¹ This upturn in productivity was clearly driven by a larger number of exhibitions all

³⁷ At the Bauhaus, Kandinsky finished his manuscript, originally started in 1914, published in 1926 as *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*. Paul Klee's major work *Das bildnerische Denken* was posthumously published in 1956.

³⁸ WG, p. 184 and 185.

³⁹ Thannhäuser, Munich, mentioned in catalogue *Wassily Kandinsky - Retrospective*, Charleroi Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1972.

⁴⁰ See Max Bill, *Wassily Kandinsky* (Paris: Maeght Éditeur, 1951), p. 120. See CRW-01, p. 34

⁴¹ See Appendix III – a plausible explanation for the relatively small size of the works made in 1924-1925 is that Kandinsky just needed a larger quantity of works for all the exhibitions, for the supporters of the Kandinsky

over Europe, and an exceptional financial support system managed by a group of collector-friends organized in the “Kandinsky-Gesellschaft” (Kandinsky Society, 1925-1933). This gave the artist a welcome monthly supplement to his meager Bauhaus salary.⁴² Though his art, mostly through exhibitions, inspired many colleagues in the USA, Japan, and in India, a fact hardly known, it took a while until more American collectors appreciated Kandinsky sufficiently to begin to purchase his work.⁴³

For further studies on Kandinsky’s artistic and personal life, from the closing of the Bauhaus by the Nazis in 1933, his move to Paris, continuing his serious financial issues and struggles with colleagues, galleries and collectors, until his death in December 1944, the curious reader may consult the many existing books. Kandinsky is one of the most prominent artists and theorists of the 20th century, whose artworks visually appeal to many viewers in a most natural way, and specialized scholars also continue to be interested in describing why this is so.

His artworks do not seem to be too complex to handle, the immediate impression is that Kandinsky was both intuitively daring and even occasionally playful, while simultaneously having absolute control. To be able to get closer to the artist juggling with pseudo-uncontrolled intuition and perfect control, a viewer must look longer and repeatedly at his creative output, and become aware of the clarity in his total development. This development is not linear, not empirically logical, and closely interrelated to his personal life and social environment – as is the case with all genuinely creative artists. To offer some potential keys to unlock part of the visual appeal of his works, this essay, while focusing on a particular watercolor, will analyze the evolution of the pictorial “alphabet” particular to Kandinsky.

At this point it should be reiterated that many artists, including Kandinsky, use a personal or personalized pictorial alphabet, often based on real objects (in Kandinsky, mainly the boat as well as the rider), though the subject of the artwork is not intended as narrative associated with these objects. The objects are merely used as an artistic means of expression such as contrasts, depth, or dynamics.⁴⁴ In principle, Kandinsky developed his own artistic

Foundation (in exchange for their contribution they could select works), while he fortunately also sold quite a few works at the time.

⁴² For an excellent essay see Vivian Endicott Barnett, *Kandinskys Werke aus Privatsammlungen*, in Armin Zweite *Kandinsky – Kleine Freuden – Aquarell und Zeichnungen* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1992, ISBN 3 7913 1195 6), p. 43-54, which details the artist’s struggles, troubles and happy encounters with gallerists and collectors, typical and recognizable to any artist.

⁴³ For a good review of Kandinsky’s influence on early American abstraction, see Gail Levin and Marianne Lorenz, *Theme & Improvisation: Kandinsky & the American Avant-Garde 1912-1950* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, the Daytona Art Institute, 1992, ISBN 0 8212 1921 9).

⁴⁴ This has been observed by Kandinsky scholars, for instance Annegret Hoberg, describing Kandinsky’s development from about 1920 and following years, in *Kandinsky – The ‘Natural World’ and a New ‘Artificial*

interpretation of space-time, somewhat related to but still very different from either Cubism or Futurism.

5. “Eine Suite,” 1922 – an Analysis



eine Suite, 1922



No. 23, 1922

As is the case for most works of Kandinsky, except for those of which the month or precise date are mentioned in the Handlists of watercolors and of paintings, or are inscribed by the artist or by Nina Kandinsky on the reverse side, the exact date (day or month) of “eine Suite” is unknown.⁴⁵ The year 1922 is clearly signed by the artist on the front side, as was his habit

World', in Michael Baumgartner, Annegret Hoberg, Christine Hopfengart, *Klee & Kandinsky, Neighbors, Friends, Rivals* (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2015, ISBN 978 3 7913 6626 5), p. 280-281: “Alongside the use of purely geometric elements, this pertains in particular to the now unrestricted pictorial space with its expansive backgrounds, and the possibility of spatial rotational movement that is heightened through the use of elements such as trapezoids, stripes, and checkerboard patterns. But in contrast to the ‘mechanistic’ approach of Constructivism, which Kandinsky consistently rejected for himself in at times sharply worded statements, he deploys ‘geometric’ and ‘free’ figures, now devoid of any reference to objects, as instruments for striving toward continually purer painterly forms. This is true both for the way in which elements ‘hover’ in space in their own cosmos, something he retained all the way into his late oeuvre, as well as for the multifaceted quality and complexity of his quasi-geometric paintings until the end of the Bauhaus phase – which always seem to resonate with drama, emotion, and various levels of meaning, qualities that distinguish Kandinsky’s abstract paintings of the period fundamentally from those of his artist colleagues.”

⁴⁵ See the picture of this watercolor on the front side of this case-study, and the picture of the reverse side inscribed by Nina Kandinsky: “Kandinsky, aquarelle, eine Suite, 1922, N. Kandinsky”. This inscription style is common for Nina Kandinsky to confirm a work on paper by Kandinsky as is several times documented in the various Catalogues Raisonnés, like # 492 in CRD-01, p. 247. An untitled watercolor inscribed on the reverse as “Kandinsky/Aquarelle No. 31-1922”, # 582 in CRD-02, p. 41, with the french inscription “Aquarelle” could also be by Nina Kandinsky, though I have not seen the handwriting myself. An example, acknowledged to be

during the largest part of his life, in the lower left corner. The composition and the combination of pictorial elements are typical for 1922, as I will demonstrate with help of another specific watercolor that exists having secure dating and more than randomly coinciding pictorial elements and colors. This particular combination only occurs in these two watercolors. This is watercolor “Aquarelle No 23”, dated late summer 1922, currently at the Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou.⁴⁶ The same pictorial elements occur in each of the five or six oil paintings Kandinsky produced in 1922,⁴⁷ and in “Weisses Kreuz”, currently at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Though they can be distinguished in earlier works, it is quite evident that compositional features and pictorial elements fuse in the here discussed works.⁴⁸ Once such various features have been recognized, each individually and while comparison these three works, the reasons for assuming the more than random kinship will become obvious.

Regarding the inscription by Nina Kandinsky on “eine Suite”, it is important to notice that in the German language it would be “Aquarell”, while in French it is “aquarelle” as Nina Kandinsky wrote. The combination of German “eine” with the French “aquarelle” and “eine Suite”, quite typical for a person who lived first for many years in Germany before living another stretch of time in France. Even more so, because it is documented that Nina signed this work in the 1970’s, when she had been living in France since the late 1930’s. Simultaneously, it is rather remarkable that “Aquarelle No. 23” also displays the French word for watercolor, though the watercolor made a little earlier that same year 1922 is formally

inscribed by Nina Kandinsky, is watercolor “Entwurf zu ‘Bewegte Ruhe’”, December 1923, #659, CRW-02, p. 89. Interestingly this work is inscribed using the German “Aquarell”.

⁴⁶ “Aquarelle No. 23”, 1922, # 568, CRW-02, p. 22, currently at the Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, a bequest from Nina Kandinsky, 1981.65.115.. Regarding the dating Vivian Endicott Barnett writes, CRW-02, p. 22: “This watercolor was first exhibited in early October 1922 in Stockholm. Since the artist was on holiday in September, it is assumed that he painted the work before the late summer.” She mentions that Nina Kandinsky has noted watercolors “No. 18”, “No. 19” and “No. 20” were shown in April in Berlin, before they and “Aquarelle No 23” were exhibited in Stockholm at Gummesons Konsthandel in October 1922. If both watercolors had indeed been created around the same time, this would imply both “Aquarelle No 23” and “eine Suite” (probably No. 24.) would have been created August 1922. Nina Kandinsky, (op. cit.) p. 100, mentions they went for holiday in September to the house of Gropius’ mother near Timmendorf, on the Baltic coast.

⁴⁷ While Grohmann (1958), who knew Kandinsky personally, writes about six oil paintings for 1922, in CRP-02 only five are recorded.

⁴⁸ “Weisses Kreuz”, 1922, # 684, CRP-02, p. 638. This painting, oil on canvas mounted on board, 100 x 110 cm, is mentioned in Kandinsky’s own Handlist II of the oil paintings as No. 243, started in Berlin and finished in Weimar, January-June 1922.

known as “Aquarell für Galston” using the German version of the word.⁴⁹ There can be multiple explanations for these differences. One is that Nina Kandinsky started using the French “aquarelle” at some point when they lived in Paris. Supporting this observation, it has to be noted here that, as part of the bequest from Nina Kandinsky directly, “Aquarelle No. 23” was taken into the collection of the Centre Pompidou in 1981.



Weisses Kreuz, 1922

There are also some compelling differences between the three works here compared. “Weisses Kreuz” is obviously different, because it is an oil painting. Differences between “Aquarelle No. 23” and “eine Suite” are the size (the first is almost double the second), composition (the first much more complex), but also in general impression. “Aquarelle No. 23” has all black lines and black shapes that stand out in the same black quality as happens when the artist prints the black layer using lithography, and some watercolors painted over the black (some others painted earlier than the black shapes), and also showing some tiny pencil lines. In general, “Aquarelle No. 23” seems quite equal in clarity of shapes and colors in all parts of the composition. Kandinsky listed “Aquarelle No. 23” quite early as watercolor, therefore undoubtedly is formally a watercolor, and correctly is acknowledged as watercolor in all publications and the CRW-02. Nonetheless, in principle, this could also be described as a lithograph with some watercolors locally added.⁵⁰ The black parts may even be partially

⁴⁹ Both mentioned likewise in Vivian Endicott Barnett, CRW-02 both on page 22. Additionally, it should be noted that, although the “Aquarell für Galston” is not mentioned in the Handlist, the “Aquarelle No. 23” is.

⁵⁰ An example of Kandinsky adding watercolors to a lithograph is his “Annual Contribution for the Kandinsky Society”, 1925 (not included in CRW-02), private collection, on loan to the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern. See Michael Baumgartner, Annegret Hoberg, Christine Hopfengart, *Klee & Kandinsky, Neighbors, Friends, Rivals* (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2015, ISBN 978 3 7913 6626 5), p. 178. An earlier example of Kandinsky using a printing technique (etching) combined with watercolor (and Indian ink) is “Entwurf zu ‘Komposition IV’”,

retouched by the artist after the printing process. This is a practice not unusual to artists, and Kandinsky was working with lithography in summer 1922, also for the portfolio “Kleine Welten”.

“Eine Suite” does not show pencil lines,⁵¹ and the black shapes were clearly added while the paper was still wet from applying watercolor, giving both a clear but also a more watery impression. Later, the section “Exceptional Features” will show that this watery impression is not something exceptional and accidental, nor a feature distant from other works by Kandinsky.

5.1 Title and date

The watercolor discussed here is signed on the back side: “Kandinsky, aquarelle, eine Suite, 1922, N. Kandinsky”.⁵² It is generally known that Kandinsky had a profound interest in music. His friendship, with for instance, the composer Arnold Schönberg has been mentioned in most literature. Likewise, Kandinsky’s so-called lyrical paintings were said to express audible “tones” into visual ones. Therefore, though especially from about the early 1920’s onwards many of the titles of his artworks are based on simplified perceptual or psychological notions and sometimes a title occurs with clear reference to a term from music.⁵³

1911, # 267, CRW-01, p. 236. Besides lithography, because of Kandinsky’s use of etchings and woodcuts through a large part of his career, one may assume he occasionally may have made some black forms and lines using a woodblock, adding watercolors.

⁵¹ This is not exceptional for Kandinsky. One can find other watercolors, included in the *Catalogue Raisonné*, that also do not show any pencil marks and are comparably spontaneously painted. For instance: watercolor, # 361 “Entwurf zu ‘Komposition VII’” 1913 (CRW-01, p. 322), or # 367 “Komposition in Rot, Blau, Grün und Gelb”, 1913 (CRW-01, p. 328).

⁵² This work should not be confused with a different watercolor, “Suite” (No. 424), 1931, listed as Nr. 67 in catalogue Will Grohmann, *Kandinsky Retrospective* (Charleroi: Charleroi Palais des Beaux Arts, 1972), sized 32 x 51 cm, collection Madame Kandinsky, Nueilly. “Suite,” however, in CRW-02, titled “Reihen” (Rows/Rangées), July 1931, sized 32.5 x 50 cm, # 1034, p. 307: “Also known as “Suite”; “Folge”, inscribed on reverse ‘No.424/1931/Reihen.’ Note: because in the mentioned exhibition the title “Suite” was chosen, one may assume Nina Kandinsky to have inscribed this title on the reverse side after the 1972 exhibition in Charleroi. For understandable reasons, the author CRW has followed Nina Kandinsky’s inscription.

⁵³ For instance, references to the main form and color in a work, like “Black Square”, “Composition with Red Triangle”, or titles like “Floating” (“Schweben”), “Heavy between Light” (“Schweres zwischen Leichtem”), “Cool-Coloured” (“Kühlfarbig”), or more perceptual-psychological titles as “Sombre Ascent” (“Trüber Aufstieg”); one finds musical references like “Melodious” (“Melodisch”, # 677, 1924), drawings with titles like “L’ Overture” (# 1242, November 1938, CRD-02, p. 327).

Kandinsky occasionally worked on two watercolors at the same time. This can be concluded from his own listing of two watercolors under a single date.⁵⁴ This is normal for an artist working in watercolor – one can continue working on one sheet while the colors of the other are drying. Besides, when an artist has “activated” watercolor paint with water, he likes to use the paint.

“Aquarelle No. 23” and “eine Suite” are very different works. Kandinsky has very precisely pre-defined the shapes of the first and the colors are almost merely filled in. None of the colors or black touches seem at random. “Eine Suite” is much more free, painterly and expressive. The difference in clarity between the two watercolors could make it seem unlikely that the two works were made on the same day, although, from an artist’s point of view, this still could be the case. When an artist has focused mainly on a work that is very precisely executed, he will surely feel a natural need for free motoric expression. This need to balance results in the creation of two diametrically opposed works on the same day.

While there are idiosyncratic features throughout Kandinsky’s oeuvre, there are specific reasons for stating that the watercolor “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” were created by Kandinsky around the same time. Regarding the dating of “Aquarelle No. 23”, the author CR writes:⁵⁵ “Since the artist was on holiday in September, it is assumed that he painted the work before the late summer.” Though in earlier and later works references to Kandinsky’s above described pictorial signature elements do occur, only in these two watercolors are they applied in exactly the same way. Here he concentrates mainly on the seven sharp conical forms, the rider, (sailing) boat, sails, checkerboard, small curved meshwork, parallel lines, and the colors. Each I will explore later.

Kandinsky himself dated the oil painting “Weisses Kreuz” as January-June 1922. He started the work in Berlin, and it is documented to be finished in Weimar. As was mentioned earlier, the Kandinskys moved to live in Weimar in later June 1922, so he must have finished the painting in the last days of that month. Though the cliché is that artists first work on paper as sketches for a painting, this is definitely not an unbreakable rule. Other scholars have acknowledged that Kandinsky certainly did not always make works on paper as sketches that later led to a specific painting. So one might imagine that Kandinsky, once he had finished and looked at “Weisses Kreuz” was inspired to search for ways to push the composition further. This could be the genesis of the two watercolors that are comparable in some aspects with the oil work.

Though hypothetical, it seems likely both watercolors functioned as virtual intermediary between the oil paintings “Weisses Kreuz” and “Schwarzer Raster” both from 1922. There are also other, but less obvious, similarities to other 1922 and 1923 paintings.

⁵⁴ See Appendix II, referring to Kandinsky’s own Handlist, for instance: nr. 37 + 38, 39 + 40, 41 + 42.

⁵⁵ See footnote 40.

This trend culminates in painting “Im Schwarzen Viereck”.⁵⁶ If this could be true one could speculate that Kandinsky may first have started “eine Suite” after viewing “Weisses Kreuz”, because both are semi-square formats. It should be added that other watercolors and drawings made that same late summer and fall also show kinship with “Weisses Kreuz”, “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” though in a more hidden way.



Weisses Kreuz, 1922



Schwarzer Raster, 1922

The pictorial elements of “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No 23” indicate that they must have been done between the definitely dated studies for the murals, “Entwurf für das Wandbild in der juryfreien Kunstausstellung,” and at the same time or after the “Weisses Kreuz” in late June of 1922,⁵⁷ and watercolor “An die See und die Sonne” of September 1922.⁵⁸ This certainly implies a date of July-August, but probably late August and corresponds to the author CR’s statements. Here it should also be noted that many scholars acknowledge works of summer 1922 to be pivotal in Kandinsky’s artistic development.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Oil paintings “Schwarzer Raster”, 1922, # 687, CRP-02, p. 640; # 700 “Im Schwarzen Viereck”, 1923, # 700, CRP-02, p. 654.

⁵⁷ See especially “composition” and “checkerboard”.

⁵⁸ In CRW-02, listed as # 573, p. 24.

⁵⁹ For instance, Karole Vail, in Richard Armstrong, Helmut Friedel, Alfred Pacquement, *Kandinsky* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2009, ISBN 978 0 89207 391 7), p. 228 notes “White Cross (Weißes Kreuz) marks a turning point in Kandinsky’s work; the painting borrows elements from the artist’s earlier Munich years as well as Russian Constructivist influences. Its floating organic crescents and soft shapes of color hark back to the Bavarian landscapes – particularly to imagery such as horsemen and mountains – as well as to overlapping diagonal planes, circles, and the black-and-white grid that often recur in his later works.” Note: Vail’s reference here to “grid” is the equivalent to what Grohmann dubbed “checkerboard” (a notion I took over).



Im Schwarzen Viereck, 1923



An die See und die Sonne, 1922

5.2 Signature

Kandinsky signed his (oil and “Hinterglass”) paintings in many different ways: beginning around 1916 he used only the “V” (Vassily), put at an oblique angle, within which he put the “K” (Kandinsky), adding underneath the lower line of the “V” the two last digits of the year.

Initially Kandinsky signed early temperas with his whole name, from about 1910, however, most drawings and various watercolors are neither signed nor dated. He usually signed his works on paper with a loosely drawn circle or triangle and a “K” inside, as a monogram, somewhat randomly placed on the lower left or right. From about 1916 this changed gradually into the same monograms used for his paintings, now always in the bottom left corner. In both the catalogues raisonnés of the drawings and of the watercolors one can find an oddity: in 1916-1917 Kandinsky still signed many works using the circle or triangular shape and “K” inside, but also put his monogram (the “V” with the “K” inside) on various works beginning in 1917, although it seems more typical for 1918 and onwards, when he only used the “V” and “K” inside plus the year. This seems odd, because in general when an artist decides to change his signature or monogram he mostly tends to stick to that change, though obviously this is not an infallible strict rule.⁶⁰ In about 1917 Kandinsky also started putting a small dot above the number “1” or the letter “i” (when he indicates a specific month), but at first this did not appear in all works.

Many of the works from this period are either in Russian collections, were in the George Costakis Collection Moscow, or were in the collection of Nina Kandinsky until 1972-1980. Some have Russian inscriptions. This is not surprising because in the years 1915-1916

⁶⁰ For instance, watercolor # 428 “Untitled” (1915-16), CRW-01, p. 375; # 460 “Komposition V” (1916), CRW-01, p. 402; # 462 “Untitled” (c.1916), CRW-01, p.403.

Kandinsky was mainly in Russia. Still, it is interesting to note that these works from the same years can be divided in two groups, one with the signature monogram typical for the time, the other with the monogram more typical for later. One explanation could be that Kandinsky long after finishing the works, went through them, discovering them to be unsigned, and signed these works according to the monogram he had been using at that (later) moment. For instance, in the early 1930s Kandinsky attempted to make a typed list of his drawings from 1910-1933.⁶¹ Kandinsky started the Handlist of watercolors, often mentioned in this publication, only in 1922. It would be quite natural for any artist at such moments of attempting to record what one has created in a past decade to go through the works and spontaneously decide to sign (and perhaps even date the works).

Comparing all his signatures, one is quick to conclude there are hardly two exactly the same in a hundred works. This is to be expected of quick handmade monograms in a freehand style. Sometimes both legs of the “V” curve slightly to a same direction, sometimes the “V” is sharper, while the “K” also often is slightly but clearly different. The monogram is therefore obviously no ground for granting or not granting authenticity to a given work. Such a judgement can only be estimated by studying and combining all features. Of course, sometimes such handmade monograms seem to match. The monogram on “eine Suite” comes pretty close to the signature on watercolor “Kühles Gelb” (“Cool Yellow”) of 1924.⁶²

5.3 Nina Kandinsky’s Inscription

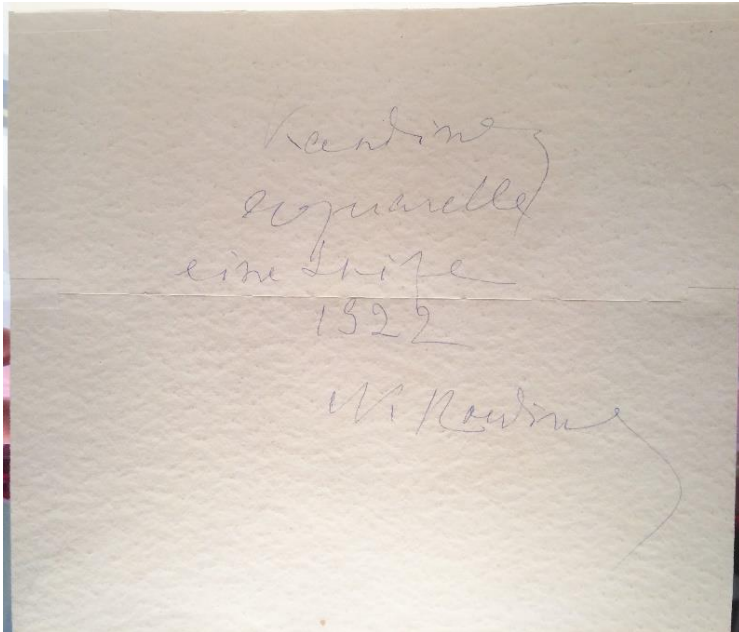
Nina Kandinsky frequently inscribed on the reverse side a confirmation the work to be of Kandinsky, often adding a short work reference (such as “aquarelle”), a title or year for many works on paper. The Catalogues Raisonnés of the watercolors and of the drawings mention this when the author CR has concluded works were inscribed and authenticated by Nina Kandinsky. One can assume that at least some of these inscriptions were made long after Kandinsky had passed away. Nina Kandinsky’s authentication of “eine Suite” as “Kandinsky, aquarelle, eine Suite 1922, N. Kandinsky” matches how such works have been accepted for the various catalogues raisonnés and when given to museums.⁶³ The handwriting could be

⁶¹ See CRD-01, p. 9.

⁶² “Kühles Gelb”, October 1924, # 715, CRW-02, p. 115.

⁶³ For instance “Im Kreis,” 1913-1914, # 379, CRW-01, p. 339: “Inscribed on reverse mount: ‘Sans No 1911’ ‘En cercle’ and by Nina Kandinsky: ‘Circonscriit’”; the work is listed by Kandinsky himself in the Handlist: “1911. En cercle”; interesting is to note that the date in the CRW-01 is a few years later than the artist himself had decided, and is thus based on personal interpretation of the author CR (see CRW-01, p. 339 for the argumentation). This work was part of the bequest from Nina Kandinsky in 1980 to the Centre Pompidou. Another example is “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’”, 1928, # 852, CRW-02, p. 211: “Inscribed on reverse by Nina Kandinsky: ‘Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’”. This work is not in the Handlists, comes straight from Nina Kandinsky and is mentioned to be in a private collection. See Appendix I for some detailed discussion. Another

identified to be by Nina Kandinsky, by comparing it to her handwritten documents acknowledged by art institutions.



eine Suite, 1922, reverse side, (knife) incision visible

Some scholars prefer to only acknowledge works that directly came from the personal collection of Nina Kandinsky and no works “from other sources”, even though Nina Kandinsky may have authenticated such works. There is, however, no precise public information which works would thus not be accepted. Nina Kandinsky managed Kandinsky’s works from his death in 1944 for some thirty-five years until the Société Kandinsky (1979-2014) took over responsibilities, including authentication. In the various Appendices of this publication there are some references to acknowledged works inscribed on the reverse side by Nina Kandinsky in a comparable way to how “eine Suite” is inscribed by her. In the lists in the Appendices the reader can see that the majority of drawings from the bequest of Nina Kandinsky are unsigned, undated, but, show the inscription, or are authenticated otherwise by Nina Kandinsky. With justification they thus all have been accepted and acknowledged by the committee of the various catalogues raisonnés, and can, therefore, be enjoyed in various museums, especially at the Centre Pompidou.⁶⁴

example, including also a French title likely given in about 1980 to a drawing of much earlier date: ‘Untitled’, 1917, inscribed on the reverse by Nina Kandinsky: “Kandinsky/Dessin 1917/ 34 ¼ x 25”, # 435, CRD-01, p. 220.

⁶⁴ The two other main collections of Kandinsky acquired their main bulk of Kandinsky’s not through Nina Kandinsky. The Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus made its acquisitions via the estate of Gabriele Münter and her husband Johannes Eichner; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum by purchase and on advise of Hilla von Rebay.

5.4 Paper and size

The paper Kandinsky used for “eine Suite” is a heavier paper than the kind which was used frequently at the time.⁶⁵ The paper sheet used for “Eine Suite” measures 25.5 cm wide. In this case only the top is hand-cut, showing irregularities at 24 cm: therefore, one can assume that the original paper sheet measured longer than 24 cm. Based on the usual sizes of paper that Kandinsky used, one might conclude the original paper measured roughly 25 x 35 cm. In Kandinsky’s own Handlist of watercolors pencil notes on most works from 1922-1923 indicate sizes of 42 x 47 cm, although several are sized 25 x 36.5 cm.



Arc and Point, February 1923



Detail with horizontal disruption of the paper’s surface like in eine Suite

This is not a marginal or abstruse issue: many of the works on paper by Kandinsky show one or more sides cut by hand, that is, without precise 90 degree corners. This regular irregularity, as it were, has been confirmed by staff, specifically responsible for the works on paper, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, MoMA New York and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus. One clear example of such hand-cut sheets is the watercolor “Entwurf zu Komposition VII”, 1913.⁶⁶ The left side is cut quite irregularly and jaggedly.

The front side of “eine Suite” shows some slight disruption over the horizontal width of the work, which gives the impression as if the paper was once folded. Close examination shows that this disruption of the surface existed before the watercolor was created: there are no cracks in the paint or ink so the sheet was not folded after the media were applied. An examination of the reverse side indicates clearly that someone made a cut with a sharp

⁶⁵ In the archives of the Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch Collection there is a letter, dated Berlin, 3rd May 1994, by (Chemist) Mr. B. Werthmann, BAM Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung, stating the paper material of this watercolor is typical for the time it is dated.

⁶⁶ #361 “Entwurf zu ‘Komposition VII’”, 1913, see CRW-01, p. 322.

knife into the (now) reverse side, making the disruption not a fold, but an incision. A comparable, though much less prominent, disruption of the paper's surface can also be found in a watercolor in the collection of the Guggenheim.⁶⁷ In order to save paper, thriftiness, which played a major role all through Kandinsky's life, made the artist cut existing sheets of paper into various sizes, not necessary of equal dimensions.

Cutting sheets of paper often is done by putting the sheets on top of one another, thus by chance the sheet underneath may be damaged slightly. When one looks at both the sizes of watercolors and of drawings Kandinsky made in and around 1922, it is not unlikely he may have cut a sheet of about 25 x 36.5 cm into, for instance, one sheet for a watercolor sized c. 25 x 24 cm, the rest of c. 25 x 12 cm to be used for pencil or ink drawings: the smaller parts could have been divided again to have the dimensions of around 15.5 x 10.5 cm to make the paper less awkward in size. Comparing the sizes of watercolors to the sizes of the smaller drawings makes this plausible,⁶⁸ especially considering Kandinsky's need to be thrifty.

An overview of a variety of drawings and watercolors from the period 1921-1923 shows that Kandinsky did not favor any particular kind of paper. For instance, for watercolors he used at least five different kinds of paper in 1922 alone. An optical examination of the paper of "eine Suite" indicates similarity with the paper used for "Aquarelle No. 23", but the two are not exactly the same. The paper of the Kandinsky watercolor in the collection of the Guggenheim, a watercolor auctioned in 2015 at Sotheby's, or a watercolor in a public collection in Italy are closer matches.⁶⁹ Most works on paper show marks at one or more sides of having been cut out from a larger piece of paper. The one cut side of "eine Suite," the horizontal line, resulting from an

⁶⁷ This is watercolor # 609 "Arc and Point" ("Bogen und Spitze"), February 1923, see CRW-02, p.53. The paper surface disturbance, presumably resulting from the pressure by a knife cutting through a paper that was on top of this sheet, proceeds horizontally at about 17 cm from the bottom. A person who frequently handles Kandinsky works on paper confirmed to the author that she repeatedly noticed such incisions made by a knife on the reverse side. It is interesting to note that about # 609 in CRW-02 is mentioned: "inscribed on reverse mount: 'No58/1923/'Bogen und Spitze'", while in the photograph of the reverse side, that I kindly received from the Guggenheim, it only says "No 58" and underneath "1923".

⁶⁸ An earlier example of a watercolor made on such an oddly sized and smaller remnant of a sheet of paper is # 471, also known as "Kleines Aquarell", 1917, 20.7 x 14 cm. See CRD-01, p. 413.

⁶⁹ The watercolor at the Guggenheim is # 720 "Grau" (also known as "Black Circle"), October, 1924, see CRW-02, p. 118. # 754. "Rot in Spitzform" (Red in Pointed Form), March, 1925, see CRW-02, p.146, currently at the Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Italy. The watercolor auctioned at Sotheby's: # 665 "Untitled" (also known as "Aquarelle mouvementée"), 1923, see CRW-02, p. 92. In CRW-02: "Inscribed on reverse: 'No 109 Aquarelle mouvementée, 1923'." The CRW does not mention that this note in pencil is Kandinsky's own handwriting, and the next sentence is not mentioned either, also in his handwriting: "Coll. Mdm. N. Kandinsky"; there is also a label from Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Couleurs et Toiles Fines, Paris (a Paris artist's supply shop 1905-1996), and a Paris based customs stamp.

accidental scoring of the paper, and the kind of paper used as dated by laboratory research, all are commensurate with verified Kandinsky works from 1922.

5.5 History

The archives of the Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch Collection include a letter from 1991 stating the watercolor originally came from a source in Russia (USSR), while the inscription by Nina Kandinsky on the reverse side is from about 1975.

The name of Mr. Ehrenburg appears in one of these documents as the Russian collector and possible original owner of this watercolor.⁷⁰ While there is no definite proof, this could be Ilya Ehrenburg, the famous Russian Jewish writer, journalist and poet.⁷¹ He frequently was in Western Europe. Before World War I he lived in Paris, where the painters Amedeo Modigliani, Pablo Picasso, Diego Rivera and Fernand Léger were some of his close friends; several made portraits of Ehrenburg. Kandinsky was also in touch with Diego Rivera, though it is not clear if he and Rivera ever met.⁷² It is quite likely that Kandinsky met Ehrenburg in Dessau.

After the Russian October Revolution Ehrenburg intensified his contact with the Futurists and Suprematists in Moscow. Here is another potential contact point between Ehrenburg and Kandinsky. Like the Kandinskys, Ehrenburg and his wife also suffered from the bad circumstances in Russia at that time, and also they left Russia as soon as they could in 1921. The Ehrenburgs went to Paris. As unwelcome foreigners they could not stay, so they moved to Berlin in 1922 for about two years. Ehrenburg was in Berlin also acquainted with many Russian artists such as El Lissitzky, Tatlin and Rodchenko, and with others, such as Le Corbusier and Léger. The Dessau Bauhaus Archives record that Ilya Ehrenburg visited the Masters' houses ("Meisterhäuser") shortly after their completion in 1925, the year the

⁷⁰ In 1976 Mr. and Mrs. Pietzsch purchased the picture from Galerie Brusberg, Berlin, Germany. Earlier that same year Mr. Dieter Brusberg had bought the work from Galerie Schindler, Bern, Switzerland. Mr. Werner Schindler states in a letter of 31st March 1991 that according to Mr. Dominik M. Brunner, who as staff of Galerie Schindler had consulted in the bequest of this watercolor, then owned by Mr. Kristian Madsen, Copenhagen, Danmark, this Kandinsky formerly was owned by the collection Ehrenburg.

⁷¹ Ilja Grigorjewitsch Ehrenburg (1891-1967).

⁷² Kandinsky much appreciated what Diego Rivera wrote about him, mentioned in Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p. 776. Diego Rivera wrote a tribute to Kandinsky in context to an exhibition in San Francisco in 1931. See Will Grohmann, *Wassily Kandinsky – Life and Work* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1958), p. 242. It is likely that Diego Rivera's wife Frida Kahlo met Kandinsky in 1939 in Paris in the circles around André Breton who also knew Rivera well. On Kandinsky's relation with the Surrealists, see Thomas M. Messer *Kandinsky in Paris 1934-1944* New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1985 (ISBN 0 89207 049 8), p. 52-53.

Bauhaus moved from Weimar to Dessau.⁷³ Because Kandinsky and Paul Klee belonged to the first who moved into these houses, the likelihood that Ehrenburg and Kandinsky met at this time is great. While solid proof does not exist, there is a great possibility that Ehrenburg received the watercolor “eine Suite” directly from the artist. Kandinsky is known to often have given his watercolors to friends and visitors – why not to the much younger Russian journalist and poet, especially as he knew Ehrenburg wrote about art and they may have had common friends or acquaintances?

5.6 Composition

**The logic of artists jumping back and forth in their creativity:
logic natural to artists but challenging to scholars.**

Kandinsky wrote:

Or I sought involuntarily to juxtapose the tragic (use of) color with sublimity of linear form (Picture with Rowboat and several of the landscapes). For a time, I concentrated all my efforts upon the linear element, for I knew internally that this element still requires my attention. The colors, which I explored later, lie as if upon one and the same plane, while their inner weights are different. Thus, the collaboration of different spheres entered into my pictures of its own accord. By this means I also avoided the element of flatness in painting, which can easily lead and has already so often led to the ornamental. This difference between the inner planes gave my pictures a depth that more than compensated for the earlier, perspective depth. I distributed my weights so that they revealed no architectonic center. Often, heavy was at the top and light at the bottom.⁷⁴

The composition “Weisses Kreuz”, “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” exemplify Kandinsky’s search for an asymmetrical dynamism, intended to lead a viewer to “read” the picture from right to left and up, and to evoke a strong sense of non-gravitational space. The sense of depth in these works does not result from normal perspective, as it might in pictures of landscapes or architectural spaces, but rather comes from the juxtaposition or overlapping of contrasting shapes, painted with a transparency that allows the viewer to see both at the same time. The viewer’s eyes must jump back and forth continuously. The result is a visual suggestion of different levels: one level, black and geometric, that is read precisely, the other level less explicit or less sharply painted.

⁷³ See: http://www.meisterhaeuser.de/de/geschichte_bewohner_gaeste.html After his stay in Berlin, early 1924 Ehrenburg returned for a brief visit to Moscow, in spring of the same year he and his wife moved to and were allowed to stay in Paris. His next trip to Moscow was in 1926.

⁷⁴ Kandinsky in his Cologne Lecture, 1914, quoted in *Kandinsky über seine Entwicklung*, edited by Johannes Eichner, in Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p. 397. The whole Cologne Lecture can be found at p. 392-400 of this book of Kandinsky’s writings. Art historian and philosopher Eichner was the husband of Gabriele Münter, Kandinsky’s partner in his Munich days.

These works, like others from 1922, show the zenith of the important transition phase in Kandinsky's artistic development. He has changed from the more complex and often mere expressionistic and free painterly compositions of the years in and around 1911-1919 and moved towards the clear and much more geometric style of his Bauhaus work. This transition phase evolved in Moscow in 1920, and in 1923 proceeded into the next, the so-called Bauhaus period. Scholars have long noted the close relationship between "Weisses Kreuz" and "Aquarelle No. 23."⁷⁵ One must note here that these works share the blending or fusing of the motifs "rider" and "sailboat".

To be able to detect Kandinsky's idiosyncrasy in a particular work one has to filter down compositional and pictorial elements occurring in multiple works. For this case-study it is revealing to note Kandinsky's particular preference at this time for the semi-circle or boat shape in the bottom left corner, tilting to the right, the position of the rider, and a stretched triangular form, a kind of stylized calligraphic emphasis, that could originate from Arab writing, curving to the right and up. Especially at about the same location in the lower right part, this is also to be seen in "Weisses Kreuz" and in "Aquarelle No 23".

In the 1983 Guggenheim catalogue another watercolor of 1922 is shown in addition to "Weisses Kreuz" and "No. 23".⁷⁶ While the kinship between these three works is remarkable, one could easily add "eine Suite" with similar features to the line-up. In "Weisses Kreuz" and "Aquarelle No. 23" the diagonal line is the lance of the rider, and in # 570 it goes diagonally in the opposed direction, perhaps to be understood as a mast, not as lance. In the same way one can conclude "eine Suite" not to contain a lance, but a large (red) arabesque instead.

Kandinsky's painted works involve a playfulness, even a kind of humor, and a free experimentation with all his pictorial and compositional means. This may have been inspired by spontaneous drawing and painting as it surely was in the infrequent free watercolors, that are not precisely executed nor show pencil lines of a pre-defined composition. During this time, he developed a special preference for the diagonal from the lower left corner up to the top right corner. As is typical for artists such as Kandinsky, who enjoy experimenting, these trials do not occur in a precise sequence of a group of works made one after the other, but show up once in a while, and only become visible as a sequence over a longer period of time.

It is revealing, for instance, to find that in his earliest period, when he was focusing on Medieval scenes, he made a drawing of a Viking-like ship with a rectangular, as opposed to triangular, sail. This perfectly realistic image, floating horizontally, appears as early as

⁷⁵ See Thomas M. Messer, *Kandinsky: Russian and Bauhaus Years* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1983, ISBN 0 89207 044 7), p. 150-151.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.150-151. The third work is untitled, marked as # 570 in CRW-02, p. 23, and in the Handlists mentioned as "No. 28".

1902.⁷⁷ Preannounced in some paintings and drawings from 1909 and surely inspired by the non-gravitational space in Japanese blockprints and drawings (as well as in the work of Matisse and Derain, discussed later), the image shows up again in 1911-1912 but here Kandinsky flipped a similar Viking-like ship, including sail and boat with oars, on an angle tilting to the right.⁷⁸



Flusslandschaft mit Boot und ummauerter Stadt
(River Landscape with Boat and Walled City), 1902



Berg, 1911-1912

This is typical for creative artists playing freely around with their compositions: often they search randomly for some structure or cohesion. For instance, the main sail at first glance seems to be a triangular mountain and this is also implied by the title “Berg.” Kandinsky had depicted such triangular mountains in the past. Yet a closer look soon shows a second boat (with oars) tilting in the opposite direction. The line indicating the top side of this second boat may have been understood by Kandinsky as coinciding with right-angled contour of a shape reminiscent of the Viking sailboat. The mountain indicated by the title can be observed at the right side of the composition, with some houses and a tower on top. From this point on Kandinsky haphazardly introduces the sailboat motif tilting under the same angle to the right in other works as well.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Drawing # 26 “Flusslandschaft mit Boot und ummauerter Stadt” (“River Landscape with Boat and Walled City”) from 1902, CRD—01, p. 41. This work is not signed nor dated, but inscribed by Gabriel Münter “Kandinsky, 1902 / in meinem Skizzenbuch. G.M.”

⁷⁸ A good example of Kandinsky’s occasional interest in rectangular sails can be found in other works as well: watercolors # 327 “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 31 (Seeschlacht)’” from 1913, CRW-01, p. 295; and the exceptional cartoon-like watercolor with a bird eye’s view on several sailboats # 448 (also known as “Study for No. 209”) from 1916, CRW-01, p. 390.

⁷⁹ An example is watercolor # 428, from 1915-16, CRW-01, p. 375, that shows a larger sailing vessel, tilting to the right, with a freely drawn rectangular shaped main sail. In addition, the black line describes the loosely curved shape, still reminiscent of the rectangular sail, and seems to pre-announce the curved back of the rider as Kandinsky started to explore in about 1921, culminating in works like “eine Suite”. A very precise rendering of a Viking ship, including dragon-bow, is watercolor # 475. This work is not signed, not dated, not in the Handlists, yet was accepted directly from Nina Kandinsky in 1980 by the Centre Pompidou, CRW-01, p. 415.

Beginning in 1918, Kandinsky started to exhibit a preference for the triangularly shaped sail above a rectangular: this culminates in 1922.⁸⁰ In some prints, lithographs and woodblock prints, the ship is tilted exactly in the opposite direction, due to the fact that an artist’s drawing for such printing techniques will come out on paper in reverse.⁸¹



Tekst khudozhnika, 1918



An die See und die Sonne, 1922



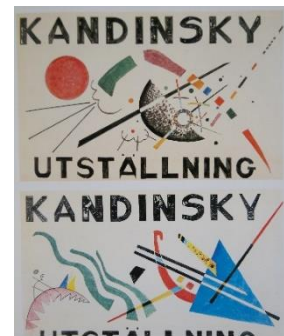
No 23, 1922



eine Suite, 1922



No 28, 1922



Poster Gummesons
Konsthandel, 1922

⁸⁰ For instance, in watercolor # 510 “White Oval” from 1919, CRW-01, p. 449. Likewise, in the oil painting “Red Oval” from 1920, # 668 in Hans K Roethel and Jean K Benjamin, *Kandinsky* (New York: Phaidon, 1979, original edition 1977 (ISBN 0 7148 2053 9)), p. 61.

⁸¹ Examples are: lithograph “Kleine Welten II” from 1922, and woodcut “Holzschnitt für Ganymed Mappe”, from 1924 in black ink only.

KANDINSKY – A Case-study

Fré Ilgen

Both top pictures are examples of mirror images of the final prints, on purpose flipped by the author, demonstrating how Kandinsky originally will have created these compositions.



Kleine Welten II, 1922



Holzschnitt für Ganymed Mappe, 1924



Aquarell für Galston, 1922



Composition Lyrique, 1922



Komposition mit rotem Dreieck, 1922



Mural Wall B, 1922



Grauer Fleck, 1922

Therefore, the tilted sailboat in “eine Suite” has a longer history in Kandinsky’s oeuvre than has been noted to date, and is actually very typical for 1922, as is, for instance, demonstrated in “Aquarell für Galston”, “Composition Lyrique”, the oil painting “Weisses Kreuz”, “Mural B”, Aquarell No. 23”, “eine Suite”, “An der See und die Sonne”, “Grauer Fleck”, “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck”. In the following years one finds fewer examples

but this tilted boat motif continues to reverberate throughout Kandinsky's work. This motif finally led to two interesting oil paintings of 1925: "In Blue" and "Gelb, Rot, Blau".⁸²



In Blue, oil painting, 1925



Gelb, Rot, Blau, oil painting, 1925

Kandinsky thus developed a general preference for larger, often nearly geometrical shapes which he liked to combine with a complexity of smaller shapes. A good early example of this kind of combination is the famous oil painting "Painting with White Border" from 1913.



Painting with White Border, 1913

A natural aspect of an artist's creative development is the exploration of shapes and compositions initially at random and then to implement the results of his experiments in new works that differ fundamentally from the original context. For instance, it could be that Kandinsky's reviewing his playful interest in the rectangular Viking-sail, led him to start

⁸² "Im Blau", 1925, # 731, CRP-02, p. 687; "Gelb-Rot-Blau", 1925, # 757, CRP-02, p. 709.

exploring large tilted trapezoid forms and the way that this added dynamism to the composition. This also seems to occur from about 1921 up into subsequent years.⁸³ Scholars have offered various interpretations for Kandinsky's interest in larger trapezoid forms.⁸⁴

During his life an artist builds not only a visual memory of the things that interest him but also a motor memory.⁸⁵ This causes an artist to make same or very similar forms without consciously thinking about them. Given this tendency, it is not surprising that there is at least one other watercolor that includes exactly the same curve or the same part of an ellipse, bending the same way, with a rounded form on the same spot above this curve. This is "Komposition Z",⁸⁶ a much earlier work of 1915, which does not seem to include the rider motif. There is, however, a semi-circular boat with oars, making it a rowboat, though a playful viewer might see sails as well.



Komposition 'Z' , 1915



Schwarzer Kreis, Dec 1922

⁸³ For instance, watercolor # 544, "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II", 1921, CRW-01, p. 477 (watercolor, ink, and, quite likely the main red spot, locally oil paint); oil painting "White Cross" from 1922, # 684, CRP-02, p. 638, watercolor # 570 (probably No. 28), 1922, CRW-02, p. 23. In # 568 "Aquarell No. 23" from 1922, CRW-02, p. 22, there is just the merest indication of such a trapezoid space, while it is obvious in the oil painting "Im Schwarzen Viereck", 1923, # 700, CRP-02, p. 654. These works often also display the lance of the charging rider, also to be found in the much earlier "Painting with White Border", 1913, and, without lance, in "The Rider", 1911,.

⁸⁴ An example is the interesting hypothesis of the picture-in-picture principle, offered by Matthias Haldemann in his essay "The Theater of Pictures: Kandinsky's Abstraction of Abstraction", in Richard Armstrong, *Kandinsky* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2009, ISBN 978 0 89207 3917), p. 75-85.

⁸⁵ Any person has innate motor or physical reflexes, like the knee-jerk reflex, and learned reflexes (like all movements involved in walking stairs). These are stored in one's spine. Physical specialized persons, like athletes or artists have many other motor actions, required for one's specialization, physically memorized. I discuss this at length in "ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness" (op cit.).

⁸⁶ "Komposition Z" 1915, # 392, CRW-01, p. 350.

This form is thus typical for Kandinsky. In the idiosyncratic way that Kandinsky's creativity developed there was often not a direct line between particular moments or the use of particular icons. Not every next work contains exactly similar forms. Rather one typically finds form kinships by cross comparing works from roughly the same time period, but also within a larger time frame. Works can be compared with others from far earlier. The arabesque, for instance, is clearly visible (in white) in one of his designs for a mural in the Jury Free Art exhibition, wall B,⁸⁷ also created summer 1922, and realized with Bauhaus students. The arabesque returns in watercolor "Schwarzer Kreis", dated December 20th 1922.⁸⁸ This work combines a tilted sailboat that also suggests the arabesque, in principle two intertwining arabesques, to depict choppy water, and thus this work is linked to elements that feature in the oil painting "Schwarzer Fleck," 1921.⁸⁹



Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II, 1920



Schwarzer Fleck, 1921

Typical of Kandinsky's nonlinear artistic development, his jumping back and forth to favor certain shapes, is the way he forms the motif of the sailboat shape.⁹⁰ This element is clearly present in works before 1922, such as in watercolor "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II"⁹¹ where it

⁸⁷ Gouache, included in the Catalogue Raisonné of watercolors, # 577, CRW-02, p. 39.

⁸⁸ "Schwarzer Kreis", 1922, #589, CRW-02, p. 45. The oil painting "Im schwarzen Kreis", # 690, CRP-02, p. 643, follows the watercolor closely. There are only minor differences, which is unusual for Kandinsky, who mostly transformed the same compositions between work on paper and canvas.

⁸⁹ The oil painting "Schwarzer Fleck", 1921, # 681, CRP-02, p. 636.

⁹⁰ The boat initially appears as a sailboat, then for some years as rowboat, after which time Kandinsky preferred the sailboat again. This is of minor importance for the motif as such. Later this case-study will show that the sailboat is perhaps the most central feature in his works over a longer period.

⁹¹ "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II", 1920, # 544, CRW-01, p. 477.

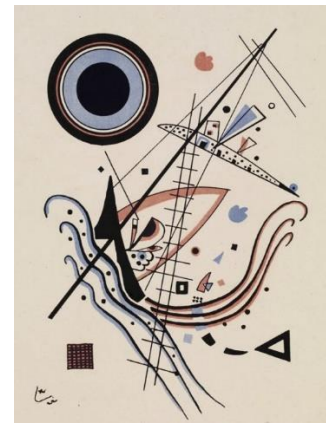
appears as a violet shape, or more hidden in the oil painting “Multicolored Circle”, from 1921.⁹² The motif is not easy to discern, but nonetheless present in the center of the oil painting “Schwarzer Fleck” from 1921.⁹³ The same boat motif can clearly be observed as bluish semi-circle in watercolor “Aquarell für Galston” from May 1922.⁹⁴ The same form lengthens into a rather long boat and in dark blue in “Weisses Kreuz” finished in late June of the same year. This motif in a similar though more linear shape occurs in his design for a mural in the Jury Free Art exhibition, wall B, from July, on the right side and in brown color. It again returns to become a blue semi-circle in “eine Suite” and less clearly as a curved, bluish and stretched triangular in “Aquarelle No. 23” as a green and black semi-circle on the left.



An die See und an die Sonne, 1922



eine Suite, 1922



Blu, 1922

The two groups of little black squares, formally identified by Grohmann as “checkerboard”, in both “eine Suite” and in “Aquarelle No. 23”, are also identical. They can also be related to the designs for two murals for the Jury Free Art exhibition of the same year.⁹⁵ In September of this year, while on holiday at Gropius’ mother’s house, Kandinsky made the watercolor “An die See und die Sonne”,⁹⁶ (“To the Sea and the Sun”). He gave this watercolor to Gropius; the title indicates that the picture contains a sailboat, which here consists of the

⁹² This painting, catalogued as # 679, CRP-02, p. 632, depicts the sailboat as partially curved form in black, with expressively painted red, blue and white, with a set sail on top that seems to bulge, an extra and clear triangular sail next to the boat’s stern, while it hides an irregular gray, blue and black shape that one may associate with the rider.

⁹³ # 681, CRP-02, p. 636. This painting shows a boat shape clearly pre-announcing the boat shape in “Weisses Kreuz”, which also has a colored line underneath. The sailboat motif is enhanced by a wavy double colored arabesque along the length of the boat, indicating a choppy sea.

⁹⁴ # 567, CRW-02, p. 22.

⁹⁵ The checkerboard motif is discussed later.

⁹⁶ # 573, CRW-02, p. 24.

same full semi-circle boat as “eine Suite” with a different but obviously triangular shaped sail, positioned under the same angle. “An die See und die Sonne” also includes the checkerboard motif, and various other elements related to both “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” including a larger triangular sail in the background. Kandinsky continued his interest in sailboats in his lithography “Kleine Welten II” in black and mixed colors,⁹⁷ and this, in turn, evolved more to become the longer and more recognizable boat shape in the watercolors “Composition Lyrique”,⁹⁸ and study for “Blu”.⁹⁹ Kandinsky continued to use the long boat form in “Grauer Fleck,” but here it pointed in the opposite direction as compared to “Weisses Kreuz”.¹⁰⁰ In 1923 his focus on such sophisticated use of the sailboats motif slackens notably.¹⁰¹ The shapes that in 1922 still can be associated with “sailboat” gradually dispersed into more abstracted constructions of mere triangles, lines, rectangles, squares.

“Aquarelle No. 23” displays two possibly three sailboats, tilting to the right and side by side: the left with a green/black boat shape and triangular brown/black sail, the right one with a bluish/yellow boat shape and a possibly squarish “Viking ship” sail indicated by a light blue watery form showing the top line. The possible third sailboat seems to show a boat from the front as a thin black half circle line with a larger sail indicated by various forms. This third boat is however not as clear as the other two.

Another pictorial feature is even more surprising: a double and regularly curling line, simultaneously in black and orange,¹⁰² clearly referring to folded sails. In “eine Suite” a double line of such forms can be seen immediately above the light blue boat shape. The

⁹⁷ While other studies in watercolor for the prints of “Kleine Welten” are documented, such as # 559, CRW-02, p. 18, the original watercolor for this particular lithograph with the sailboat motif is not included in the Catalogue Raisonné of the Watercolors, nor in the addenda. One may assume the whereabouts of the original is unknown.

⁹⁸ ‘Untitled, also known as “Composition Lyrique,” December 3, 1922, # 586, CRW-02, p. 43.

⁹⁹ “Study for ‘Blu’”, December 15th, 1922, # 587, a study for a lithograph, CRW-02, p. 44.

¹⁰⁰ “Grauer Fleck,” December 22, 1922, # 592, CRW-02, p. 46.

¹⁰¹ Exceptions are oil painting “Weisses Bild”, # 697, CRP-02, p. 649 (watercolor # 617, April 1923, CRW-02, p. 57), including, for instance, a small Lyonel Feininger kind of double masted boat, or fast clipper, at the bottom right corner, perhaps watercolors “Pfeilform nach Links”, # 624, May 1923, CRW-02, p. 60; “Zarte Spannung”, # 638, July 1923, CRW-02, p. 67; “Lyrisch” (a flotilla of highly stylized sailboats), # 644, July 1923, CRW-02, p. 70; likewise in “Schweben”, # 674, February 1924, CRW-02, p. 97; and, both from October 1923, when Kandinsky and Nina spent another holiday at Gropius’ mother’s house: “Im Glücklichen Hafen”, # 651, 1923, CRW-02, p. 85; “Im Timmendorf,” # 655, CRW-02, p. 87.

¹⁰² For the meaning of the same color combination as in the “choppy sea” arabesque in oil painting # 681 “Schwarzer Fleck”, 1921, CRP-02, p. 636, see footnote 98.

same folded sails occur in “Entwurf zu roter Fleck II”,¹⁰³ and in “Aquarelle No. 23”. A more precise and recognizable rendering of such folded sails can be seen in one of the “Kleine Welten” lithographies of 1922. One can find early sources for Kandinsky’s interest in folded sails in his early sketchbooks. There are no folded sails in “Weisses Kreuz” but the two graphic symbols, often described as reversed number “3”s, clearly result from the experiment of reducing such “folded sails” to linked half circle forms.¹⁰⁴

The impression of a boat moving on water is enhanced by the strong presentation of a row of exactly seven black conical shapes, which in “eine Suite” one could associate with waves, but the position in “Aquarelle No. 23” above the boat shape makes it clear that Kandinsky did not intend these conical shapes to evoke any narrative. He seems to use them here as strong pictorial elements, oriented toward the center of the picture plane and at an angle, thus adding dynamic to the picture. The history of these conical shapes in Kandinsky’s oeuvre will be discussed later.

In the painting “Weisses Kreuz” the sailboat has two parallel sails. In “eine Suite” above the light blue semi-circle boat one sees a triangular negative space in the background, evoked by a sharp and blue outline on the right and emphasized by the curved violet shape on the left. This violet shape is a reflection of other sails too, as was mentioned earlier.¹⁰⁵ Once the sailboat motif has been recognized, the triangular background can be registered as a triangular sail. A few months later, the watercolor “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck”, dated December 20th 1922,¹⁰⁶ displays a large triangular red sail, or a “positive” space, almost exactly where in “eine Suite” is the triangular and a “negative” space to indicate the main sail. Though not precisely identical, in “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck”, the top right of the sail looks like it is flopping in the wind on the spot where the main sail in “eine Suite” is breached by an intervening blue curved plane – two different methods to invoke similar impressions.

The sailboats and sails of “Aquarelle No. 23” were described earlier. An extra sail is the violet flapping sail-like form in the middle of the top. In “Weisses Kreuz” Kandinsky

¹⁰³ “Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II”, # 544, CRW-01, p. 477. Two such wobbly lines of folded sails: one in black and orange, the other in black and green.

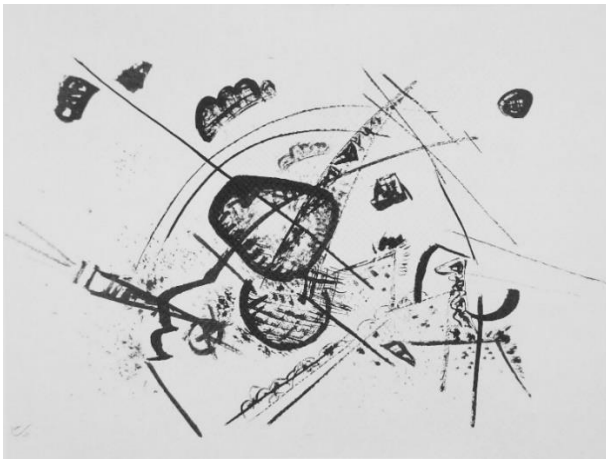
¹⁰⁴ In some later works the “3” shape evolves into an arabesque, as in watercolor # 600, from January 1923, CRW-02, p. 49; or in the oil painting # 692 “Schwarze Form”, 1923, CRP-02, p. 645. In the first work the reference is still to bulging sails.

¹⁰⁵ This violet “sail” in “eine Suite” matches the exact position and relationship to the semi-circular boat as in “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck”, but can also be found in the earlier watercolor # 566, 1922, CRW-02, p. 21. In the latter work the motif is much smaller and in the lower right corner, flipped sideways. It also surfaces in watercolor # 567, known as “Aquarell für Galston”, CRW-02, p. 22, and drawing # 492, 1922, CRD-01, p. 247.

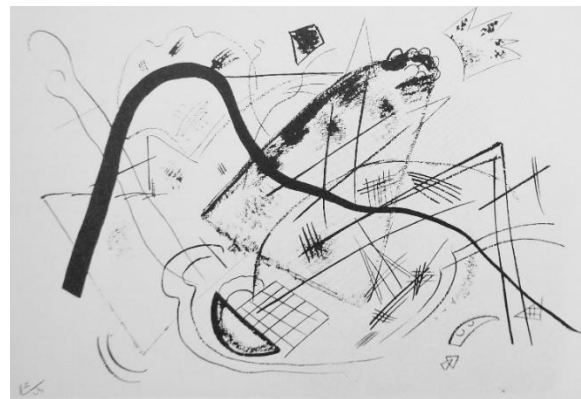
¹⁰⁶ # 588, 20 December 1922, CRW-02, p. 44.

indicates the main sail by the large distorted geometrical plane, also called rhomboid; this association is strengthened by the diagonal mast-like black line that fuses with the rider's lance. As earlier described, Kandinsky's fascination with the sailboat motif evolved through his whole life, but seems to play a special role in 1922.

In verified drawings made by Kandinsky during the same time period, such as earlier mentioned # 492, 1922, the semi-circle boat with a sail, thin and curving to the right such as occurs in violet in "eine Suite" appears. There is also an arabesque not similar to, but still an arabesque like the one in "eine Suite". Another drawing¹⁰⁷ from this period clearly shows the rider with curved back such as appears in "Aquarelle No. 23" and a drawing from 1923 shows many motifs found in "eine Suite":¹⁰⁸ the semi-circle boat, the curved back of the rider fusing with a depiction of a sail, with a little square on the spot where in "eine Suite" a comet-like dot orange-red with black core, and in "Weisses Kreuz" as a full red circle, symbolizing the rider's head. This 1923 drawing, furthermore, includes a clear arabesque; this figure evolved from the brown boat outline in the 1922 mural design "Panel B",¹⁰⁹ turned upside down.



Drawing # 492, 1922



Drawing # 533, 1923

A similar hermeneutic trajectory links the compositional locations of the full black circle, in "eine Suite" and "Aquarelle No. 23." The figure of the sailboat occupies approximately the same location in both combined with the black curved stretched triangular shape and, in "Weisses Kreuz" it appears on the left side. The black circle with an orange outline, like a tiny sun, a halo, are present already in watercolor "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II", and show again as full red circle in "Weisses Kreuz", exactly as in "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II" and in "eine Suite". In "Aquarelle No. 23" this motif has mutated to a small and shifted black and orange square,

¹⁰⁷ # 511, 1922-1923, CRD-01, p. 255.

¹⁰⁸ # 533, 1923, CRD-02, p. 264.

¹⁰⁹ "Entwurf für das Wandbild in der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand B", 1922, # 577, CRW-02, p. 39.

and reverberates in “Grauer Fleck”¹¹⁰ as a loosely circular blob in watercolor. Though announced in earlier works, the variants of a small selection of motifs occur mainly in 1922.

While on holiday in September 1922,¹¹¹ Kandinsky wrote the foreword for the catalogue of his upcoming exhibition at Gummessons Konsthandel, Stockholm, Sweden. After acknowledging that at the time the two different objectives in art, one aiming only at consciousness, here he refers to the rational, geometrical approach of the Constructivists, the other aiming to reveal the unconsciousness, here he refers to DaDa, as kind of precursor of Surrealism, and also early Surrealism, with its organic rather than geometric underpinnings, Kandinsky emphasizes the importance of “the great synthesis” of both.

Kandinsky wrote:

In painting as well as in the other fine arts, it is not difficult to distinguish these two movements. It is more difficult to fit these two motive forces into the right places. Therefore, there will be confusion arising here as the two movements fight with each other. Analysts, educated in the purely materialistic, only want to create art ‘consciously’, and therefore feel that they must throw the subconscious element – intuition – overboard.¹¹²

These words mirror Kandinsky’s motivation at that moment in 1922 to combine the geometric with the organic in a new synthesis, thus creating a visual conflict or visual tension that evokes a sense of life that is more than pure geometry, or pure organic shapes can offer alone. One side of this coin can lead to interesting artworks, in his view, but with less visual appeal than through the synthesis he wants art to strive for. A synthesis does not imply a blending of the elements: the contrasts, that make an artwork interesting to look at moreover do not just remain, but are intensified. “Eine Suite” evokes such tension-laden synthesis almost to the extreme. The high contrasts in the composition of “eine Suite”, as mentioned in the introduction, may seem awkward, but define the exceptional quality of this small but powerful work.

The Kandinsky scholar Hans Roethel, while acknowledging that Kandinsky continued to use the pictorial means of his signature style, confirmed the difficulty that art historians experience viewing Kandinsky’s work from the early 1920’s thus:

While it can be said that the prewar paintings were abstract in form but full of meaning, the content of the postwar works now became even more hermetic than before, and the forms resulted in practically nonobjective patterns which can be viewed and understood aesthetically but do not lend themselves to verbal interpretations.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ # 592, 22 December 1922, CRW-02, p. 46.

¹¹¹ See section 3 “Prior to 1922: Moscow - Berlin - Bauhaus”.

¹¹² See Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p. 479.

¹¹³ See Hans K. Roethel and Benjamin, Jean K. Benjamin, *Kandinsky* (New York: Phaidon, 1979, ISBN 0 7148 2053 9, originally published 1977), p. 35.

The visual evidence afforded by the watercolors, a specific oil painting and a few drawings confirm that “eine Suite” fits naturally in the period around 1922. All through 1922, obviously pre-announced in works from 1920-1921, and continued but much less in 1923-1924, Kandinsky uses similar shapes, predominantly a fusing and blending of both his main motifs, a rider sometimes with lance, always curved back, facing left and a sailboat.

Only in “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” two particular variations of Kandinsky’s virtual alphabet occur: a same line of seven conical shapes, always in the same position, and the particular character of the checkerboard-motif. These, however do not occur in this characteristic way in any works before or after, while these works clearly do not represent copies of each other. This particular feature alone makes “eine Suite” in its immediate kinship to “Aquarelle No. 23” outstanding as a work that only Kandinsky himself could have created.

As fakes or forgeries on the market so far have shown, forgers, for obvious reasons, choose to create an “unknown Kandinsky” from his earlier period, before about 1920, where he exhibited a more freehand and widely popular expressionist style. In addition, the earlier period is generally more popular and the style is much easier to copy. Since Kandinsky lived between 1915 and 1921 in Russia, it can also be argued that works were hidden in private collections. Thus forgers have preferred to produce works putatively from the period 1915-1921. Likewise, forgers also choose the post 1923 rigid Bauhaus style. These works, however, are much better documented and do not fool a specialist. In any case, a forger intending to please the specialists and the market must avoid copying from the much more sophisticated transition period around 1922 with its complicated blend of the organic/expressionistic with the rational/geometric.

Quite to the point for understanding the sophistication of 1922 works like “eine Suite” is a quote from Will Grohmann, concluding from Kandinsky’s own writings (“Point and Line to Plane”):

The artist must treat with great responsibility the divisions between upper and lower, and right and left. The top of the picture surface is where there is relaxation, lightness, freedom, where all inhibitions are reduced to a minimum. The bottom is the place of condensation, gravity, and dependence, but the artist can deviate from this law for the purpose of differentiating the organism. The right is to the left as the bottom to the top, as heaviness to lightness. The left side of the picture surface is movement away from; the right side, the place of movement homeward. The ‘square of tensions’ is thus defined as Heaven, Earth, Home, Distance. Arrangement of the pictorial elements can emphasize the character of the picture surface or obliterate it – in the latter case, the elements “are suspended” in space. Spatially, the actual picture surface can be moved forward or backward like an accordion, chiefly by means of color.¹¹⁴

An interesting feature of Kandinsky’s search for dynamic compositions that capture and hold the viewer’s gaze is the bewilderment caused by compositional decisions he defined as “Verschiebung” (“Displacement”). Kandinsky described displacement as: “... not a creation of forms, but instead a recognizing of the same at another level – a recognizing in which the

¹¹⁴ See WG, p. 183.

original form serves as a ladder and the clairvoyance of the artist – the inner necessity – as a motive force on this ladder.”¹¹⁵ From a perceptual angle, Kandinsky uses recognizable shapes in clear compositions, but, in contrast to his early works, by dissolving the recognizable shapes, for instance his rider or his boat, into parts, he shifts, displaces, places these parts under oblique angles, and composes them in illogical combinations. The resulting composition offers something still semi-recognizable and bewildering at the same time. He has stated himself that harmony in our times is based on contradictions.¹¹⁶

Art historian Matthias Haldemann writes:

Kandinsky combined logically contradictory elements such as abstract and representational fragments. He sought discontinuities and used resistance to construct tensions and keep the externally heterogeneous work open to our perception and imagination. Yet for all the objectivity, he removed the appearance of objectivity from the work and cast it as a metaphor of a fragmented world.¹¹⁷

This is also the reason why this process in some cases leads to recognizable motifs, like the sailboat in his lithograph “Kleine Welten II” (1922). Kandinsky, however, often pushes the displacement to levels that simply confuse the general viewer who nonetheless is attracted to the image. Around 1922 Kandinsky discovered this works best by heightening the experience of displacement through the combination of the amorphic or more organic shapes with geometric lines and shapes, as well as the use of a small selection of clear colors. In “Weisses Kreuz”, “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23”, Kandinsky thus accomplished a high level of visual sophistication by displacing the boat shape, mast, curly folded sails, large stretched sail, perceived as rhomboid, or geometrical plane, and combining these with features of the rider as motif. The rider motif has now dissolved to the depiction of the curved back of the rider, with some reference to the horse. The main mast of the boat has now fused with the lance of the rider, who has been transformed from the St. George of Kandinsky’s earlier works.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Quoted from 1912, see Paul Weber’s excellent essay, “Kandinsky’s pedagogy from the perspective of his theory of displacement”, Annemarie Jaeggi, including a homage by Christian Derouet, *Vassily Kandinsky – Teaching at the Bauhaus* (Berlin: Bauhaus Archiv/Museum für Gestaltung Berlin, 2014, ISBN 978392261350), p. 154.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in video on Kandinsky’s painting “Rückblick”, 1924, on the website Kunstmuseum Bern: “Gegensprüche und Widersprüche sind die Harmonie unserer Zeit”, see: www.kunstmuseumbern.ch/de/sehen/sammlung/video-highlights-sammlung/wassily-kandinsky-rueckblick-1924-1125.html

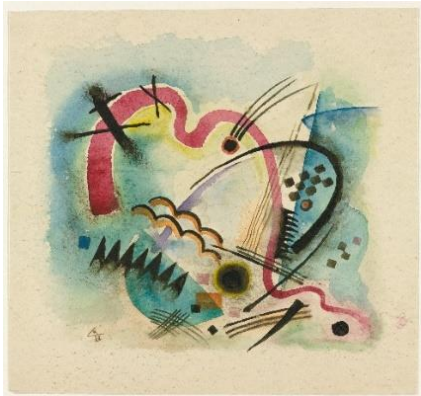
¹¹⁷ Matthias Haldemann, “The Theater of Pictures: Kandinsky’s Abstraction of Abstraction”, in Richard Armstrong, *Kandinsky* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2009, ISBN 978 0 89207 3917), p. 84.

¹¹⁸ Clark V. Poling, “Kandinsky in Russland und am Bauhaus 1915-1933”, in Peter Hahn, *Kandinsky Russische Zeit und Bauhausjahre 1915-1933* (Berlin: Bauhaus Archiv, 1984, ISBN 3 89087 011 2), p. 28, describes “Aquarelle No. 23” as follows “Die Anordnung von Schrägstrichen und Halbkreisen kehrt die Beziehung um, die in einem unbezeichneten Aquarell von 1922 zu beobachten ist, dass ein Motiv aus der Münchener Periode beinhaltet. Es handelt sich um den lanzetragenden Reiter, dessen Chiffre - die doppelte Kurve oben

5.7 The Colors

Kandinsky was aware of existing color theories by Goethe and Schopenhauer, among others, and he was seriously interested in psychological interpretations of color-perception.

Pre-announced in earlier watercolors of 1922 like certainly in “Aquarell für Galston”,¹¹⁹ furthered in the oil painting “Weisses Kreuz”, the main colors black, a specific red, an orange, two blues, a green, a yellow, stand out in similar ways in both watercolors “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23”. The typical cool red of the arabesque in “eine Suite”, for instance, matches the same red of a red curved form just right of the center of “Weisses Kreuz”. As described earlier, it makes sense for any artist who works with watercolor to work on various artworks simultaneously as the watercolor takes some time to dry: this is even more true when applied in the partially watery way Kandinsky often preferred in 1916-1922. Especially the color-combinations of the abstracted “sails” waves of black and orange, or the rider’s “head” using black (circle or square) with orange “shadow”, and the touch of green point to a remarkable color-kinship in both works. Even though the main color impression seems different, in watercolor “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck”, dated December 20th 1922,¹²⁰ Kandinsky used exactly the same colors as in “eine Suite” and in “Aquarelle No. 23”.



eine Suite, 1922



Komposition mit rotem Dreieck, 1922

rechts – eine wahre Vereinfachung der abstrahierten Form von Pferd und Reiter darstellt, die mit dem Heiligen Georg im Bild mit weißem Rand von 1913 in Verbindung steht.“ (“The order of diagonal lines and semi circles flips the relationship that can be observed in an unmarked watercolor of 1922, which contains a motif from the Munich period. This concerns a lance-carrying rider, whose symbol – a double curve at the top right – shows a true simplification of the abstracted shape of horse and rider, that can be connected with St. George in the ‘Painting with White Border’ from 1913.”). Karole Vail also recognizes the rider (‘horsemen’) clearly, see footnote 63.

¹¹⁹ # 567, May 1922, CRW-02, p. 22.

¹²⁰ # 588, 20 December 1922, CRW-02, p. 44.

Interestingly, Kandinsky uses the same colors, including an emphasis on a similar light blue and yellow, yellow green, violet, red, black in “eine Suite” as he did in the oil painting “Gelb-Rot-Blau” from 1925.¹²¹ This painting also includes many elements from the earlier work: comparable arabesque, a larger circle with black outline and orange halo at approximately the same spot in the composition as in “eine Suite,” the virtual head of the rider, the three curved lines close to the “head” circle, the tilted shape reduced to a curved line, a line with



Gelb, Rot, Blau, oil painting, 1925

“bound up sails” (in the painting only in similar orange, but no black emphasis), a row of conical forms, the small meshwork (in the painting moved to the bottom right corner) together with the three parallel lines now more precisely drawn, the small checkerboards also floating on the right half of the composition, and the black dot at the right corner in very much the same spot as in “eine Suite”. In this oil painting Kandinsky clearly tries to paint the background in a way that resembles the watery paint in “eine Suite” and other, comparable watercolors from the period. This does not imply that “eine Suite” is the sketch for this oil painting. Scholars have emphasized before that Kandinsky from about 1921 on understood his watercolors as individual works of art, not necessarily studies for oil paintings.¹²²

A short reflection on Kandinsky’s ideas on color can be described as follows.¹²³ Yellow as “typical earthly color” is as close to white and light as blue is to black and dark. Green can

¹²¹ “Gelb-Rot-Blau”, 1925, # 757, CRP-02, p. 709. Kandinsky made a watercolor which is a more precise study for this oil painting: “Entwurf zu ‘Gelb-Rot-Blau’” 1925, CRW-02, p. 146.

¹²² Vivian Endicott Barnett, for instance, in “To My Dear Friend of Many Years – Klee and Kandinsky’s Works on Paper, 1911-1937”, in in Michael Baumgartner, Annegret Hoberg, Christine Hopfengart, *Klee & Kandinsky, Neighbors, Friends, Rivals* (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2015, ISBN 978 3 7913 6626 5), writes: “In 1922 Kandinsky began to make watercolors as independent works rather than as studies for paintings or prints.” P. 259.

¹²³ The various short quoted descriptions in this short description on color are from Paul Overy, *Kandinsky, The language of the Eye* (London: Elek Books Ltd, 1969, SBN 236 17770 2), p. 93. On p.94 Overy mentions that Josef Albers was already a student at the Bauhaus when Kandinsky arrived in 1922.

simply be evoked by mixing a little blue into yellow. This can be seen in “eine Suite”, though on the bottom right of the watercolor one can spot an unmixed green while in “Aquarelle No. 23” green stands out more clearly. Blue is, in his perception, “the typical heavenly color”, representing a “call to the infinite”, and a “desire for purity and transcendence”. Red to Kandinsky has “unbound warmth” but not the “irresponsible appeal of yellow”, “... it glows in itself.” Furthermore, he acknowledges his interest in orange and violet. All colors are prominent in both “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23”. For a more precise discussion of Kandinsky’s ideas on color, one is advised to study the available literature on Kandinsky.¹²⁴ Here it should be noted that while Kandinsky had specific thoughts about colors, he did not follow exact rules as to how to use colors in an artwork. He clearly selected his colors for certain pictorial parts based on their proper functioning in the whole synthesis of forms but not to symbolize a specific psychological message: a red straight line is not intended to symbolize aggression, but rather to lead the eye of the viewer into the composition, to provide a visual experience on the contrast with other forms and colors.

5.8 Extraordinary Features

The composition of “eine Suite” may puzzle some viewers and scholars alike, because it seems not so particular for Kandinsky in general. The square format and partially watery or blurry shapes distinguish this work from, for instance, watercolor “Aquarelle No. 23”. Square formats, however rare, do occur in Kandinsky’s oeuvre,¹²⁵ as do the application of watery blurred parts as they evolved in works throughout his artistic development.¹²⁶ The paucity of details is merely a result of the sizes of this work, in principle it is about half the size of the more detailed “Aquarelle No. 23”.

Two specific features of “eine Suite” seem to puzzle some scholars: the black ink on the top left that seems to dissolve into the blue watercolor, and the red arabesque dissolving at the bottom right. In most watercolors Kandinsky painted such forms with sharp and not dissolving edges.

¹²⁴ For instance, in Kandinsky’s book “On The Spiritual in Art”, especially “Chapter V. Effects of Color” in Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p. 156 - 160.

¹²⁵ For instance, water colors: Untitled (also known as “Entwurf zu ‘Komposition VIII’”), c. 1922, # 571, CRW-02, p. 24; “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Weiss II’”, 22 December 1922, # 593, CRW-02, p. 46; “Pfeilform nach Links”, May 1923, # 624, CRW-02, p. 60; “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’”, 1928, # 852, CRW-02, p. 211.

¹²⁶ For instance, water colors: Untitled, January 1923, # 599, CRW-02, p. 49; “Rote Mitte (Graphisch)”, October 1923, # 654, CRW-02, p. 86; “Strich Zentraler” November 1924, # 734, CRW-02, p. 125; “Entwurf”, April 1924, # 690, CRW-02, p. 104; “Schwebende Linie”, December 1924, # 739, CRW-02, p.128; “Inneres Kochen”, November 1925, # 757, CRW-02, p. 147; “Grau-Blau”, December 1925, # 764, CRW-02, p. 151; “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’”, 1928, # 852, CRW-02, p. 211; “Gespannt”, July 1930, # 979, CRW-02, p. 282.

A study of Kandinsky's works on paper, shows that the artist carefully added black as late as possible to any composition. This is a practical solution many artists will recognize, because black may muddy other colors or the image. Also, black brings a strong contrast and emphasis into a composition. When an artist is in the process of creating a balanced composition, it is a natural decision to wait applying black in the last phase of the work.¹²⁷ Kandinsky added black more or less as last color on top of everything; in case of watercolors he probably waited until the other colors dried, a logical process and not an indication that "eine Suite" is strange.

The procedure is different for an artist working on a new lithograph. He may initially print the main lines and forms of the composition only in black as a way to study the impact of the whole composition. As a next step he decides to add colors; here the artist initially experiments by applying watercolors to the first print, maybe even adding some black parts in Indian ink as well. In order to add colors to a lithograph the artist or craftsperson commissioned by the artist has to split each color, process and print it separately. The shape of each color must be initially applied to the stone in black ink. There can be financial or circumstantial reasons why the artist may decide not to process the lithograph into an edition with the given colors. This could be an explanation for why "Aquarelle No. 23" gives the impression of being a unique black lithograph with added watercolors. Though some detailed study is required to assess this possibility, it demonstrates the complex way artists work, and shows how the label "watercolor" or "lithograph" may oversimplify the situation. Equally, even the correct category for a given work for the catalogue raisonné may become a dilemma.

In "eine Suite" Kandinsky did not first draw lines in pencil, the process he frequently used in the larger watercolors, but immediately painted various colors and shapes. Quite likely the red arabesque was one of the first forms, followed by the larger blue colors; this can be concluded, because the blue was clearly painted around the arabesque. Once this had dried then he added the curved orange "folded sails", adding some more black forms parallel to these orange lines. The next step added the violet "sail" shape, and Kandinsky hardly allowed this to dry before he added the final black. After the black dried, he seems to have added some more water and perhaps some more blue. For the same reasons the red arabesque is "touched" by water, and this is most clearly visible at the bottom right corner.

Various watercolors exemplify Kandinsky's love of experiment with dissolving the sharper edges of black forms. Quite likely he did this by dabbing ink with a dry and thin brush. This kind of use of paint in "eine Suite" matches that in the watercolor "Reiter" from

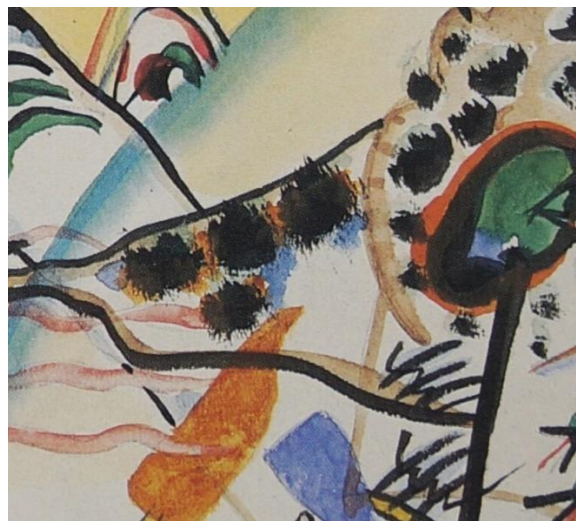
¹²⁷ Some exceptional artists handle black in an entirely different way such as, for instance, Georges Rouault, Henri Matisse, Max Beckmann, Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko.

1916, “Entwurf zu ‘Grüner Rand’” from 1919, “Jahresabschluss” from 1922, and in “No. 10 Aquarelle mouvementée” from 1923.¹²⁸

Indian (black) ink, when dried, stays solid black when a brush with water touches it, but some parts may dissolve just a little. This is why some black ink in the work has drifted into the surrounding watercolors. Ink does not dissolve homogeneously into water but in miniscule particles, sinking and settling kind of randomly clustered on the paper during the drying process. This “washed ink” effect appears in “eine Suite” in several places, including the “small meshwork” (discussed later), and the crossing black lines at the top left. The artist’s signature, too is a little washed out. In the red of the arabesque one can see this effect where the “hairs on a curve,” a typical Kandinsky pictorial element discussed later, are painted onto the “back” of the arabesque.



Entwurf zu ‘Grüner Rand’, 1919



Detail



Eine Suite, 1922



Detail



Detail

¹²⁸ “Reiter”, 1916, # 436, CRW-01, p. 380; “Entwurf zu ‘Grüner Rand’”, 1919, # 519, CRW-01, p. 459; “Jahresabschluss”, December 1922, # 596, CRW-02, p. 48; “No. 10 Aquarelle mouvementée”, 1923, # 665, CRW-02, p. 92.

The overall impression is that Kandinsky in “eine Suite” did not follow his more standard procedure adding black only when other colors and the paper are entirely dry. This can have been by accident, as he was in a hurry to work, and ignored that some parts of the paper were still wet, or could have been on purpose for the sake of experimentation. In either case the dissolving of the black forms, like the crossing lines at the top left, partly result from contact with water, but mainly arise from intentional brushwork. This effect can be found in many of Kandinsky’s confirmed watercolors, certainly also in “Aquarelle N 23”.

Other clear examples of partially washed, colored forms include much earlier watercolors such as “Auferstehung” of 1911 or 1912, “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 30 (Kanonen)’”, or “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 31 (Seeschlacht)’”, both from as early as 1913.¹²⁹



Auferstehung, 1911 or 1912



Improvisation 31 (Seeschlacht), 1913

In the first and last one can also clearly see how Kandinsky used both washing over a dried black form and a calligraphic line; in “Seeschlacht” this is a green form. The same technique of calligraphic lines in the same red as used for the arabesque in “eine Suite” to be partially washed appears in more watercolors of 1913.¹³⁰ In quite a different watercolor, dating from

¹²⁹ “Auferstehung” (also know as “Das Jüngste Gericht” or “Jüngster Tag”), 1911, CRW-01, p. 246 – earlier titled “Study for one of the representations of the ‘Last Judgement’”, 1912, WG, p. 76; “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 30 (Kanonen)’”, January 1913, # 325, CRW-01, p. 291; “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 31 (Seeschlacht)’”, 1913, # 327, CRW-01, p. 295.

¹³⁰ Visible as the top left hooked calligraphic form in “Entwurf zu ‘Bild mit weißem Rand’”, 1913, # 339, CRW-01, p. 303. This work does not appear in any Handlist, nor is it signed or dated, and is presently in the Lenbachhaus, Munich. Compare also watercolors “Entwurf zu ‘Komposition VII’”, 1913, # 359, CRW-01, p. 321; “Komposition in Rot, Blau, Grün und Gelb”, 1913, # 367, CRW-01, p. 328.

his short figurative interlude in 1916, probably made while he was in Sweden, Kandinsky used with great effect a gradual washing out of an orange-red line circumscribing the main image as a frame line.¹³¹ He continued to use a non-monochrome application of watercolor into the 1920's, gradually more and more consciously applying the color and exploring this effect.¹³²



Promenierendes Paar im Garten, 1916



Detail



Entwurf zu 'Bild mit weissem Rand', 1913



Jahresschluss, 1922



No. 10 Aquarelle mouvementée, 1923

Kandinsky's interest in occasional experiments with more fluid or washed watercolor led him to make more works that seem to be independent of the generally rigid compositions of his

¹³¹ "Promenierendes Paar im Garten", early 1916, # 439, CRW-01, p. 382.

¹³² Not a clear example, but still also displaying such an effect is "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II", 1920, # 544, CRW-01, p. 477. Also compare 'Untitled' (also known as "Boats"), 1921, # 548, CRW-01, p. 482. Or "Grauer Fleck", 22 December 1922, # 592, CRW-02, p. 46, which also does not have a full or sharp black signature but one possibly washed. Good examples are "Haltlos", November 1924, # 726, CRW-02, p. 121; "Braun um Bunt", November 1927, # 806, CRW-02, p. 173.

Bauhaus phase.¹³³ The strange watercolor “Verschwimmend” from 1932 represents the culmination of this experimental direction.¹³⁴



Verschwimmend, 1932

The experimental artist may happen upon a certain effect, ignore it for a while and then use it to great effect. This is the case with a drawing of 1913. These are little drops of wet ink that may initially just have dripped by chance from Kandinsky’s brush or pen, and created small, splashed circles on the paper.¹³⁵ The same year he mimicked these drips by blowing on small wet ink blobs to fade them out: the result clearly differs from accidental dripping. A much more controlled version of this technique, using black drops of ink purposely dropped into spots of water and watercolor, can be found in “Auf Schwach Grau,” a watercolor from 1923.¹³⁶ Some years later, in 1928, the artist created watercolor “Doppeltes nach Oben”, which uses the same spontaneous and splashed drips as the drawing of 1913. This is the last appearance of this technique in any of Kandinsky’s other known works on paper.¹³⁷

Such examples demonstrate that although the first impression given by “eine Suite” is that it differs greatly from Kandinsky’s other works, an in-depth comparison of putatively peculiar aspects with the larger context of the artist’s oeuvre tells another story. Repeatedly, one finds that these aspects are not exceptional but rather typical for Kandinsky’s development. He occasionally dropped or avoided a technique for a period of time but then

¹³³ “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’”, 1928, # 852, CRW-02, p. 211 (not signed, not dated, in no Handlist, inscribed on the reverse side by Nina Kandinsky, currently in a private collection); “Schwimmend”, July 1928, # 880, CRW-02, p. 224 (a work clearly including rough expressive notations of a large sailing vessel recalling his work from 1916-1919); “Verhalten”, June 1931, # 1015, CRW-02, p. 299; the strong “Heiss”, July 1931, #1039, CRW-02, p. 310.

¹³⁴ “Verschwimmend”, July 1932, # 1088, CRW-02, p. 337.

¹³⁵ “Zeichnung nach Blauer Fleck”, 1913, # 326, CRD-01, p. 172 (not signed or dated).

¹³⁶ “Auf Schwach Grau”, February 1923, # 607, CRW-02, p. 52.

¹³⁷ “Doppeltes nach Oben”, June 1928, # 866, CRW-02, p. 218.

refreshed his own focus and took up the item again. The following exploration of particularities in the various pictorial elements of “eine Suite” clearly identifies this work to be very typical for Kandinsky in 1922.

6. Pictorial Elements

“A sensitive eye will always recognize the same character in his most varied works”
Kandinsky, “On the Artist”, 1916¹³⁸

Scholars have, in general, assumed that Kandinsky progressed from figuration, clear in his Murnau period and in his longer continuing interest in fairy or medieval tale illustrations, towards full abstraction, evolving from his last Moscow days into his Bauhaus period. Some scholars have nonetheless acknowledged that Kandinsky in principle always combined abstract elements with elements that formally can be defined as being abstracted, but are not really abstract because they still clearly refer to realistic objects.¹³⁹

Of course the viewers’ first impressions of a work have validity, yet as Kandinsky himself urges in the quotation at the start of this section, sometimes a deeper exploration of a given picture, an artist’s personal pictorial vocabulary, is called for. Most of these pictorial elements have been recognized already by scholars, though not explored in depth. In general, I follow Will Grohmann, a close friend of Kandinsky’s, and an early authority on his works. This section is offered as a key to unlock Kandinsky’s complex and sophisticated world.

Although certain features of Kandinsky’s works inspired by Japanese and Arab cultures will be mentioned, there seems still much to explore which undoubtedly springs the perimeters of this current case-study. For instance, Kandinsky’s works from about 1910 rather explicitly offer associations with cave and rock paintings from various parts of Europe and Africa. Before World War I in Germany popular exhibitions in various cities presented magnificent copies of such ancient cave-paintings manually made by artists. Some of his pictorial elements, like the “hairs on a curve”, occur in such copies. Because Kandinsky, like so many of his generation, was much interested in so-called primitive art, like expressed in the “Blaue Reiter” Almanac, this would seem worth exploring.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Kandinsky, “On The Artist (Om Konstnären)”, Stockholm, 1916, in Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p.415.

¹³⁹ See the quote from Matthias Haldemann on page 41 in this case-study.

¹⁴⁰ Exemplary is the research project by German ethnologist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938). See on the internet the Frobenius-Institut, Goethe University, Frankfurt a. Main. See Karl-Heinz Kohl, Richard Kuba, Hélène Ivanoff, *Kunst der Vorzeit, Felsbilder aus der Sammlung Frobenius* (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2016, ISBN 978-3-7913-5503-0). On Kandinsky’s interests in ethnography, see Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia – The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, ISBN 0 300 05647 8).

One aspect of Kandinsky's personality, less-often mentioned, is his great sense of humor as expressed through his pictorial language. One revealing example is to be found in Kandinsky's continued interest in adding boats in all forms and shapes, initially rowing boats, mostly sailboats to his work, sometimes funny little steamers. Even in his Bauhaus period this motif is presented in a geometrized cartoon style. As he wrote:

Once I was told by quite a talented lady (ladies are more open): why do you allow yourself to hide such sweet things into these tragic works? At that time, she presumably was the only one who discovered my secret. Unfortunately, she was horrified.¹⁴¹

6.1 Conical Forms

The row of triangular or jagged shapes – originating from mountains or “castle-tower” roofs, were described by Grohmann as “conical forms”. Only in “Aquarelle No. 23” and in the “eine Suite” watercolor one finds the exact same row of seven similar sized, black and triangular forms. In 1920 such a row of seven triangular shapes pop up,¹⁴² at first they differ greatly in individual size. See also the following when “hairs on a curve” is discussed.



Weiss however focusses on Kandinsky's interest in folk art, while her book reveals interesting features, she stretches his interest; her descriptions of Kandinsky consciously including pictorial elements with shamanistic meaning seem far fetched.

¹⁴¹ “Einmal sagte mir eine sehr begabte Dame (die Damen sind offener): wie erlauben Sie sich nur, in solche tragischen Werke solche Süßigkeiten hineinzustecken? Sie war scheinbar damals die einzige, die mein Geheimnis erriet. Nur war sie leider entsetzt.” Kandinsky in a letter to Will Grohmann, see Barbara Wörwag (in collaboration with Annegret Hoberg), *Wassily Kandinsky, Briefe an Will Grohmann 1923-1943* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag GmbH, 2015, ISBN 978 3 7774 2366 1), dated 1st November 1934, letter Nr. 216 p. 407.

¹⁴² “Entwurf für eine Tasse und Untertasse”, 1921, # 556, CRW-02, p. 16.

History:

In Kandinsky's earliest, still existing sketchbooks one finds drawings of small houses with pointed roofs,¹⁴³ and linear sketches of landscapes, tree-lined and with mountains.¹⁴⁴ When Kandinsky sketched houses, landscapes and villages, he assumed perspectives interesting to him, sometimes bird's-eye perspectives. The sculptural forms of trees, vegetation and persons, expressed from the outset his interest in space and spatiality.

Another inspiration for his artistic development was provided by Kandinsky's visit to Tunisia in 1905. A 1909 drawing includes a triangle, which probably arose in a spontaneously composed sketch.¹⁴⁵ The jagged forms of trees and mountains begin to evolve in individual drawings from around 1910.¹⁴⁶ The watercolor "St. Georg II", dated late February 1911, shows at the bottom right corner the probable first appearance of the shape with a regular jagged outline, without any associative contents, which can be seen as conical shapes.¹⁴⁷ In 1913 his jagged conical shapes still have clear references to landscapes and castle or church spires. In his 1916-1917 sketchbooks, intertwining and jagged lines of mountain ranges appear as dynamically noted abstractions.¹⁴⁸ Around 1917 the row of jagged forms occasionally can be associated with mountains, occasionally with choppy waves of water.¹⁴⁹



St. Georges II", late February 1911



Drawing #517, 1919



Kreise auf Schwarz, 1921

¹⁴³ Sketchbook 3 – p. 54, CRD-02, p. 51 with a sketch of some buildings near Munich, including a particular pointed roof. An interesting sketch of a row of houses in Amsterdam, Sketchbook 15 - pages 10-11, CRD-02, p. 132.

¹⁴⁴ Sketchbook 8 – pages 24-35, CRD-02, p. 86 - 88.

¹⁴⁵ # 117, ink and pencil on paper (envelope) CRD-01, p. 70.

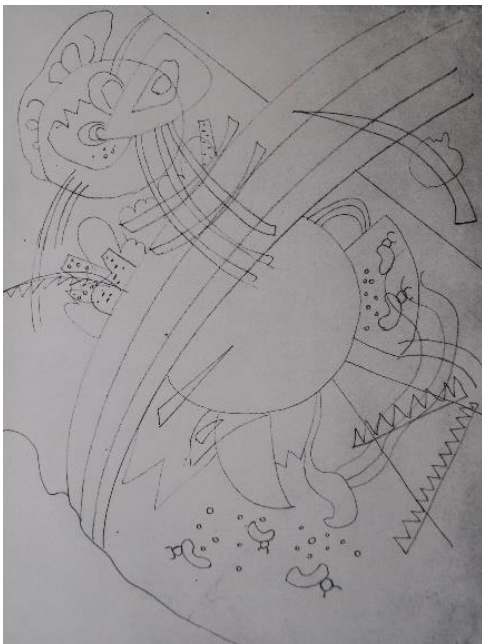
¹⁴⁶ For example, in # 142, # 143, # 144, CRD-01, p.80-81.

¹⁴⁷ "St. Georges II", late February 1911, # 268, CRW-01, p. 237.

¹⁴⁸ For example, Sketchbook 32 - p. 8, CRD-02, p. 272.

¹⁴⁹ See, for instance, drawing # 476, CRD-01, p. 239. See also watercolors 'Untitled', 1919, # 514, CRW-01, p. 451; 'Untitled', 3 August 1919, # 516, CRW-01, p. 452; 'Untitled', 1919, # 517, CRW-01, p. 453.

As already proven, around 1919-1920 Kandinsky started to reduce and clean up his compositions: this resulted in much more open compositions.¹⁵⁰ The jagged forms in a row of five and another of four, show in the oil painting “Red Oval” from 1920. In the next year in drawing “Entwurf zu ‘Kreise auf Schwarz’” one finds the first indication of longer rows of such like-sized jagged forms, but here there are more than just seven.¹⁵¹ The same can be observed in the oil painting resulting from this sketch.¹⁵² Before 1922 these rows of conical shapes never show in a group of exactly seven. Remarkably, exact constellation only occurs in two watercolors “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23”, not in any oil painting. After 1922, Kandinsky changed this motif, changing the row of exactly similar triangular shapes into a “saw”-like depiction, but even more importantly he often also separated the triangular shapes into different precise triangles.



Entwurf zu ‘Kreise auf Schwarz’, 1921



Aquarelle No. 23, 1922

6.2 Hairs on a curve

This motif has not been recognized nor named by Will Grohmann, therefore, “hairs on a curve” is suggested here by the author. The exact same row of similar sized, black and

¹⁵⁰ “Entwurf zu ‘Grüner Rand’”, 1919, # 519, CRW-01, p. 459, shows such a curved form with one jagged side, remarkably similar to a watercolor from 1922, ‘Untitled’ (also known as “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck”), # 588, CRW-02, p. 44.

¹⁵¹ “Entwurf zu ‘Kreise auf Schwarz’”, 1921, #487, CRD-01, p. 245.

¹⁵² “Kreise auf Schwarz”, 1921, # 682, CRP-02, p.637.

triangular “hairy” forms on a curve are only to be found in “Aquarelle No. 23” and “eine Suite”. In “Aquarelle No. 23” the black “hairs” stand on a yellow curved shape, in “eine Suite” on a reddish curved arabesque.



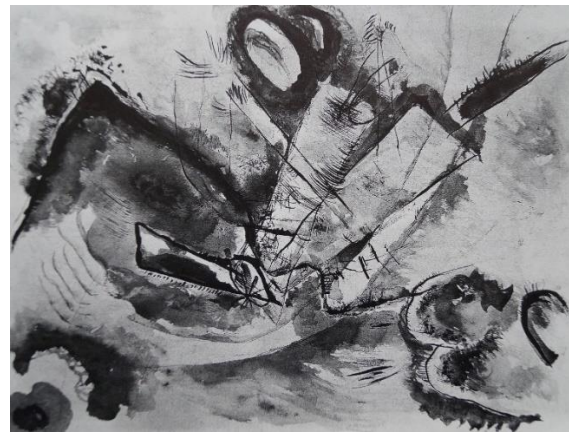
Eine Suite, 1922, indicated Hairs on Curve



Entwurf für den Umschlag des Almanachs
'Der Blaue Reiter', 1911



Improvisation, c. 1914



Composition, c. 1915-1915

History:

The watercolor “Entwurf für den Umschlag des Almanachs ‘Der Blaue Reiter’” from 1911¹⁵³, depicts a rider on a horse standing on top of half a sun with spiky halo: this seems a likely precursor of the motif “hairs on curve”. Ever since Kandinsky started using calligraphic

¹⁵³“Entwurf für den Umschlag des Almanachs ‘Der Blaue Reiter’”, 1911, #277, CRW-01, p. 247.

notations in about 1911-1912, he frequently presented short, sometimes longer lines, of repetitive and little groups of parallel black strokes in his work. Examples include the watercolor known as “Abstrakte Komposition” and the “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 28’ (Zweite Fassung)”.¹⁵⁴ In about 1913 he began to combine very short calligraphic notations, little strokes or wavy forms, with longer black hand-painted lines.¹⁵⁵ In 1914 in the watercolor “Improvisation”, halfway the left side he shows an intentional form that can be described as slightly curved and with “hairs”, and also in other works.¹⁵⁶ In 1915 this notation is present but more hidden and unclear in the quite expressionistic, often even wild mass of spontaneous strokes, typical for that year and for Kandinsky’s psychological state of mind.¹⁵⁷ Kandinsky returned briefly to painting fairy tales and the like in 1915-1916, which includes a return to depicting outlines of mountain ranges using jagged or zig-zagged outlines, sometimes in swirling compositions.¹⁵⁸ In the watercolor “An eine Stimme”¹⁵⁹ the intentional form of this motif, as mentioned in connection with “Improvisation”, returns just above the center.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ ‘Untitled’ (also known as “Abstrakte Komposition”), p. 111-1912, # 309, signed but not dated, CRW-01, p. 279; “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 28’ (Zweite Fassung)”, 1912, # 316, signed but not dated, CRW-01, p. 284.

¹⁵⁵ “Improvisation”, c. 1914, signed but not dated, CRW-01, p. 346. For instance, in his various 1913 watercolors all titled studies for “Bild mit Weissen Linien”: # 349, CRW-01, p.314; # 350, CRW-01, and # 351, CRW-01, both p. 315. See also watercolor “Betonte Mitte”, 1913-1914, # 378, p. 338, with a central black shape, perhaps to be read as a black sail, that has little black jagged teeth at the top – could be associated as well with the mane of a horse. But it is not clear if Kandinsky intended to incorporate such narrative contents or whether the shape merely results from his quick notation of forms in ink.

¹⁵⁶ For instance, at the bottom right of watercolor ‘Untitled’ (also know as “Composition”), c. 1914-1915, # 387, not signed and not dated, CRW-01, p. 347. This work shows an interesting analogy to William Turner’s depictions of steam and sailships in a stormy sea.

¹⁵⁷ One might relate this wild episode in Kandinsky’s artistic development to the psychological turmoil he must have experienced, caused by World War I and what this meant to the artist personally, including the disappearance of sales in those countries in Europe where he just started to establish himself, his forced return to Moscow, his decision to end his relationship with Gabriele Münter, and the large challenge at age fifty to start his life and profession almost entirely anew, not exactly in a friendly environment. See also drawing # 377, c. 1915, signed with a stamp ‘K but not dated, CRD-01, p. 191, which includes in the middle an irregularly curved line with little hairs.

¹⁵⁸ For instance, “Picknick “, January 1916, # 432, CRW-01, p. 378.

¹⁵⁹ “An eine Stimme”, September 1916, # 458, CRW-01, p. 401.

¹⁶⁰ After seeing the clear rendering of a sailboat in ‘Untitled’ (also known as “Study for No. 209”), March 1916, # 448, CRW-01, p. 390, it becomes obvious to see a sailboat from an angle from above in “An eine Stimme”.

In sum, between 1916 and 1920 the “hairs on a curve” notation appears frequently, gradually becoming clearer as, discussed earlier, Kandinsky comes to reduce and clean up his compositions.¹⁶¹



An eine Stimme, 1916



Entwurf zu 'Weisses Oval', January 1919

The motif hardly ever occurs, however, on the outline of a curved line or shape, the watercolor “Entwurf zu ‘Weisses Oval’” is the exception that proves the rule.¹⁶² In this work such “hairs” follow the contour of a green shape at the top right, and a small zig-zag line is attached to a blue triangular sail. The way, however, this “hairs on a curve” motif occurs in “eine Suite” and in “Aquarelle No. 23” is unique in all of Kandinsky’s work. One can observe, however, that in a comparable way, the “hairs on a curve” motif occurs in the study for the mural “Wand B”,¹⁶³ created summer 1922 in white on the far right side approximately in the same position as in “eine Suite”. The motif cannot be found in any of the known oil paintings, not before, nor after, though Kandinsky worked on creating comparable visual effects later by using repetitions of lines or little triangles.

¹⁶¹ A good example is watercolor ‘Untitled’, 1919, # 517, and related drawing (for some reason included in the CRW-01, while other drawings are not) # 517a, both together CRW-01, p. 453. Also compare the oil paintings “Rotes Oval” from 1920, # 668, CRP-02, p. 618, and “Spitzes Schweben” from 1920, # 669, CRP-02, p.619.

¹⁶² “Entwurf zu ‘Weisses Oval’”, January 1919, # 510, CRW-01, p. 449. This watercolor shows at the far right a curved line (a black and a light blue “shadow”) with little “hairs” as well.

¹⁶³ “Entwurf für das Wandbild der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand B”, 1922, not signed or dated, # 577, CRW-02, p. 39.

6.3 Checkerboard

The “checkerboard” is a term used by Will Grohmann. While Kandinsky, who is known to have played chess (sometimes with Paul Klee), used squares from about 1920, he united them into a loosely checkerboard structure in 1921, and in 1922 one can see him focusing on the checkerboard. Only in the “Aquarelle No. 23” and in “eine Suite” the exact same repetition of three rows of three little blackish squares occur.

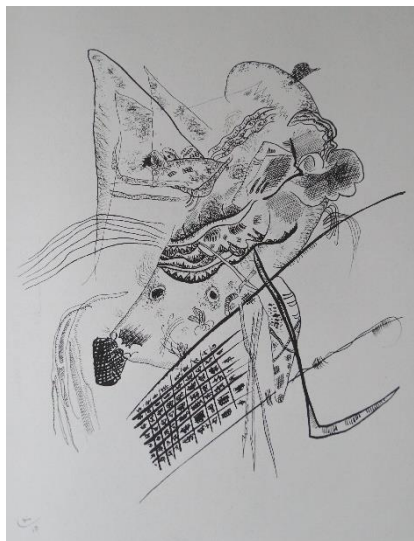


History:

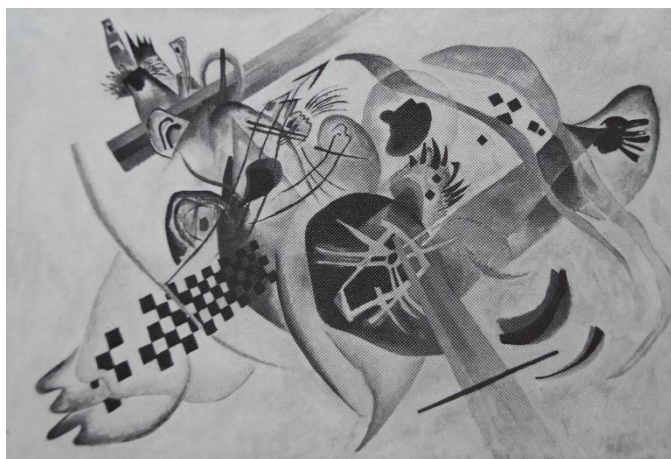
Kandinsky’s development of the checkerboard was a natural result of developing his much earlier interest in loosely drawn crossing lines evolving into a kind of meshwork or grid. Such interest in overlapping and crossing lines can be related to his early interest in trees, but also in his interest in architectural and perspective space, as is seen in his early sketchbooks. One very early colored grid is found in “Farbstudie mit Rauten.” This would be a very early grid if the suggestion in the Catalogue Raisonné that the work, though not signed or dated, would be from 1913, is correct. This is doubtless an experimental study the artist himself probably never intended as an individual artwork. While the impulse to collect everything the artist ever touched is understandable, it is still surprising such studies, not acknowledged by the artist himself, neither signed nor dated, are included in the Catalogue Raisonné of the Watercolors, where other works that are signed and dated by the artist as genuine works, are not.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ “Farbstudie mit Rauten”, 1913, # 346, CRW-01, p. 310 (color) and p. 312. See Appendix I, Notes on the Catalogues Raisonnés.

In general, loosely drawn grids can be found in drawings and watercolors from 1915 to 1920.¹⁶⁵ The first deliberately chosen grid that is filled in and thus becomes a precursor of the actual checkerboard occurs in drawing # 456 from 1918.¹⁶⁶ In 1920 the checkerboard emerges in the watercolor “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Weiss I’”, and, equally, in an oil painting.¹⁶⁷ In “Spitzes Schweben”, another painting from 1920, several square grids are pressed into elliptical form.¹⁶⁸



Drawing #456, 1918



Auf Weiss I, oil painting 1920

The following paintings including the checkerboard are “Schachbrett” (“Chessboard”) from 1921,¹⁶⁹ and “Weisses Kreuz” from 1922. This last painting has the checkerboard at approximately the same position and angle as in “eine Suite”. Importantly, the only other work that incorporates a checkerboard in a loosely painted, partially dissolved manner is the

¹⁶⁵ For instance, drawings: ‘Untitled’, 1916, # 413, CRD-01, p. 209; ‘Untitled’, 1917, # 450, CRD-01, p. 227.

Watercolors: “Aquarell mit schwarzen Strichen”, February 1916, # 442, CRW-01, p. 386; “Entwurf zu ‘Grüner Rand’”, 1920, # 520, CRW-01, p. 459; “Spaziergang”, 1920, # 523, CRW-01, p. 461; ‘Untitled’, 1920, #529, CRW-01, p. 464.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Untitled’, 1918, # 456, CRD-01, p. 231.

¹⁶⁷ “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Weiss I’”, 1920, # 521, CRW-01, p. 460. Oil painting “Auf Weiss I” from 1920, 95 x 138 cm, Handlist II, no. 224, # 665, CRP-02, p. 617.

¹⁶⁸ “Spitzes Schweben”, # 669, CRP-02, p. 619.

¹⁶⁹ “Schachbrett” (“Chessboard”), 1921, # 678, CRP-02, p. 631. For this work no year is mentioned, but the painting is ordered between two works of 1921, while the signature clearly shows “21” – the absence of the year will be assumably the printer’s mistake, or of the manuscript writer. The whole composition of this oil painting is very similar to the watercolor study ‘Untitled’, 1922, not signed or dated, # 561, CRW-02, p. 19. Either the watercolor was made later than the oil painting, or wrongly dated in CRW-02.

design for the mural of the “juryfreie Kunstausstellung”, walls C and D.¹⁷⁰ Kandinsky started to work on these mural designs while still in Berlin, but as has been noted he continued working on these designs in summer. The murals themselves were executed with students for display in autumn 1922.



Schachbrett, oil painting, 1921



Weisses Kreuz, 1922



juryfreie Kunstausstellung, walls C and D, 1922



Aquarelle No.23, 1922

Related to the checkerboard in “eine Suite” and in “Aquarelle No. 23” there is a kind of partial checkerboard in the watercolor “An die See und die Sonne”, dated September 1922.¹⁷¹ However, here the checkerboard is less playful, more rigid in shape, therefore, the

¹⁷⁰ “Entwurf für das Wandbild in der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand C”, 1922, not signed or dated, # 578, CRW-02, p. 39; “Entwurf für das Wandbild in der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand D”, 1922, not signed or dated, # 579, CRW-02, p. 40.

¹⁷¹“An die See und die Sonne”, September 1922, # 573, CRW-02, p. 24.

development of the motif fits naturally between “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” and the much more rigid display in “Entwürfe zu ‘Kleine Welten IV’”.¹⁷²



An die See und die Sonne, 1922

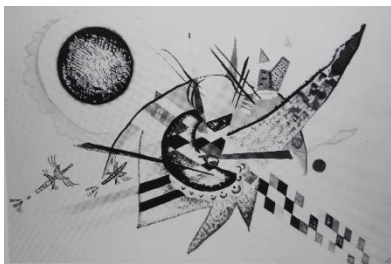


Kleine Welten IV, 1922

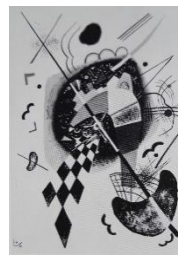


Schwarzer Raster, oil painting, 1922

These facts and observations help to set the date for “eine Suite” (and “Aquarelle No 23”) for July-August, although August seems more likely. The oil painting “Schwarzer Raster” from the same year has similarities to “Spitzes Schweben”, though it is also more like works by Mondrian. After 1922 the checkerboard occasionally reoccurs, but never in the way as in “Weisses Kreuz”, “eine Suite” or “Aquarelle No. 23”. From about the end of 1922, the checkerboards evolved in more rigid forms, superficially reminding one of Mondrian, from the watercolor “Grauer Fleck” of December 1922, to, in 1923, oil paintings “Auf Weiss II” and “Komposition VIII”.¹⁷³ The oil painting “Gelb-Rot-Blau” from 1925 remains an exception. A later checkerboard painting is “Quadrat” of 1927, consisting of three checkerboard planes revolving over each other.¹⁷⁴



Drawing #562, 1921



Untitled, #599, 1923

¹⁷²“Entwurf zu ‘Kleine Welten IV’”, # 559, CRW-02, p. 18. A comparable checkerboard, but with various colors, can be seen in ‘Untitled’, 1922, # 562, CRW-02, p. 19; certainly also in “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Weiss I’”, 1920, # 521, CRW-01, p. 460. These represent a creative looping back by Kandinsky to reclaim earlier experiments.

¹⁷³ “Auf Weiss II”, 1923, # 694, CRP-02, p. 647. “Komposition VIII”, 1923, # 701, CRP-02, p. 655. Other 1923 paintings with Mondrian-like grids are “Offenes Grün”, # 704, CRP-02, p. 658; “Ohne Stütze”, # 706, CRP-02, p. 660. Exception is watercolor ‘Untitled’, January 1923, # 599, CRW-02, p. 49, showing an elongated checkerboard plane comparable to “Entwurf zu ‘Kleine Welten IV’”, # 559, CRW-02, p. 18.

¹⁷⁴ “Quadrat,” 1927, # 820, CRP-02, p. 761.



Drawing #428, 1916

6.4 Boat

The boat motif has been recognized by others, but not as main motif, nor named as such by Will Grohmann, and has not been the subject of special research. Section 5.6 “Composition” describes the importance of comparing the boat-motif in “eine Suite” and other works by Kandinsky in 1922. Kandinsky’s preference for boats to be not narrative-based, but results from his attachment to the compositional function the shape of a boat provides. The geometry of boats provide direction and thus enhances dynamics and offers a powerful contrast to the formless space on paper or canvas. Simultaneously, boat shapes and sizes by association provide an immense depth to even the smallest works.

History:

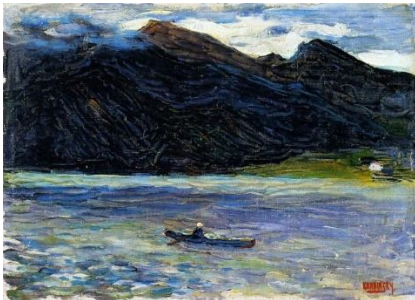
A very early painting depicting sailboats, still in a rather traditional way, is “Odessa Port” from 1898, a work not listed in any catalogue raisonné, but found in the collection of the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. An early sketch of 1904 shows sailboats, barges and buildings in the Amsterdam harbor, interestingly drawn as if from a bird’s eye perspective.¹⁷⁵ Sailboats by themselves also occur in works made during Kandinsky’s stay in Holland.¹⁷⁶ Kandinsky’s visit to Tunisia in 1905 evidently stimulated his interest in boats anew.¹⁷⁷ In his Murnau period 1902-1910 Kandinsky painted various small boats on lakes, and while

¹⁷⁵ Sketchbook 15, 1904, pages 14-15, CRD-02, p. 120.

¹⁷⁶ Sketchbook 16, 1904, pages 9-14, CRD-02, p. 140.

¹⁷⁷ Sketchbook 18 – page 5, CRD-02, p. 140 (a rowboat in Sousse); Sketchbook 18 – pages 20 and 25, CRD-02, p. 157-158 (sailboats in the harbor of Sousse).

traveling, in Rapallo, Italy, and Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and elsewhere in Holland. He visited Sestri Levante, south of Rapallo, Italy, 1905-1906.¹⁷⁸ In 1906 he sketched gondola boats in memory of visiting Venice.¹⁷⁹



Kochel, lake with boat, 1902

The discussion of the boat motif must now pause for a description of Kandinsky's encounter with the revolutionary works by Matisse which changed his life. A subject that in general so far has only been noticed but not explored.

Kandinsky sails with and away from Matisse

Artists often develop a taste for a certain motif from their own daily lives, but only become aware of the creative potentiality of the motif by seeing it handled by another artist. In a similar way, Kandinsky already had some interest in occasionally depicting rowing and sailboats, as his early sketchbooks demonstrate. It is quite likely, however, he became aware of the creative potential of including such boat shapes in his works and the way they can express the ultimate dynamism of nature by seeing how Henri Matisse and possibly André Derain used and transformed sailboats in their early "Fauvist" paintings and drawings made in Collioure.¹⁸⁰

While attempting to liberate themselves from Impressionism, which still depicted "real reality", Matisse and Derain searched for a more free play of colors and forms. Thus in some of their works sails or masts become free triangular colored planes and rhythmic patterns of thick lines. Simultaneously, human figures depicted in such paintings become mere rounded almost shapeless forms, only slightly but sufficiently reminiscent of human beings. In Kandinsky's Murnau paintings from about 1908, but becoming more prominent

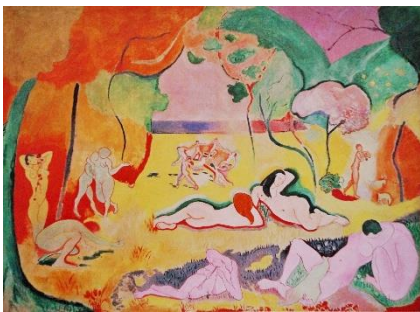
¹⁷⁸ Sketchbook 20, 1905-1907, pages 71-76, CRD-02, p. 187-188. Especially a pencil study of a boat in Sestri Levante "Boot in der Sonne" is striking in relation to the later works, because Kandinsky drew the masts crossing horizontal beams with strong pencil strokes. See also Sketchbook 22, 1905-1906, pages 1, 11-19, CRD-02, p. 194-196.

¹⁷⁹ Sketchbook 23, 1906-1907 and probably 1903, page 91, CRD-02, p. 215.

¹⁸⁰ A very good book on the important Collioure phase is Joséphine Matamoros and Dominique Szymusiak, *Matisse-Derain, Collioure 1905, un été fauve* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005, ISBN 2 07 011815 0).

from about a year later there are loosely shaped triangular color planes, either representing mountains or perhaps sails, as well as abstracted, somewhat blobby human figures.

From May 22, 1906 to June 1, 1907, Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter lived in rented facilities in Sèvres, near Paris. Münter also rented an apartment in the center of Paris for the month November of 1906, in the same building as Michael and Sarah Stein, American collectors, who were related to but to be distinguished from the famous writer Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo Stein. Gertrude and Leo Stein became of historical importance as very early collectors in Paris of the formative works by both Matisse and Picasso, while Michael and Sarah Stein owned a nice group of Matisse's key works from his Collioure period. This period marked Matisse's transition from Postimpressionism to Fauvism. Besides seeing the works at Michael and Sarah Stein, Kandinsky and Münter saw many Matisse's in exhibitions and some other private collections.¹⁸¹



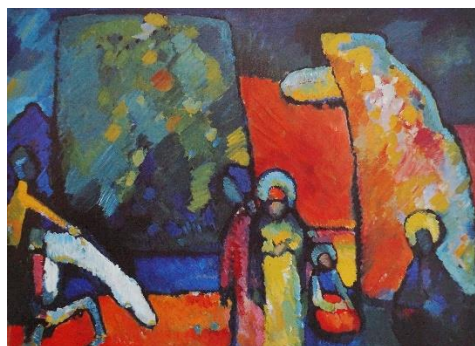
Matisse, Le Bonheur de vivre, 1905-1906



Matisse, Collioure, 1905



Derain, Les Voiliers à Collioure, summer 1905



Kandinsky, Improvisation 2 (Trauermarsch), 1909

At the time, Kandinsky himself was still painting his kind of Russian fairy tales in toned down tempera colors. In the Salon d' Automne, Paris fall 1906, in which Kandinsky participated with twenty-one works and received an award, Kandinsky and Münter saw many fauvist paintings, including examples by Matisse and Derain. In 1907, at the Salon des Indépendants Matisse's painting "Le Bonheur de vivre," created in Collioure, 1905-1906, created quite a stir. This painting was finished a year before Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)", which

¹⁸¹ See Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel, *Das Bunte Leben, Wassily Kandinsky im Lenbachhaus* (Cologne: Dumont Verlag 1995, ISBN 3 7701 3785 X), p. 159-160.

some see as a radical response to this phase of Matisse's work. The strong colors, the use of color shapes that seem to be flat, the dark-colored outlines, the specific way of depicting persons, reduced to cartoon-like flat somewhat blobby forms, seem to reverberate in Kandinsky's works from 1909, like his "Improvisation 2 (Trauermarsch)".¹⁸²

Works by Matisse were included in 1907 in a traveling exhibition in Germany, including a stop in Munich. Kandinsky mentioned the stir caused in Munich by Matisse.¹⁸³ Other works by Matisse were also exhibited in Munich in 1907. In addition to these shows, Grohmann mentions the group exhibition in September 1909 of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München at H. Thannhauser's Moderne Galerie, an exhibition that included not only Kandinsky himself, but also Derain.¹⁸⁴

Kandinsky mentions Matisse in his famous booklet "The Spiritual in Art" (1910), after describing the way that Cézanne transforms a still life or landscape or person into something that by itself has "an internal, painterly quality: a picture." His description is as follows:

This is what Henri Matisse, one of the greatest of the modern French painters, also calls his works. He paints 'pictures' and in these 'pictures' he seeks to reproduce the 'divine'. To achieve this, the only resources he uses are the object (a person or whatever it may be), which he uses as point of departure, and those means that belong to painting and painting alone – color and form.¹⁸⁵

In 1909-1910, Kandinsky wrote five "Letters from Munich" for publication in the Russian magazine "Apollon". In the last one, dated October-November 1910, he mentions Matisse while describing the gradual path in art from depicting the perceived world towards expressing an inner necessity; here Kandinsky described the evolution of linear composition as key to him. Kandinsky believes that Manet depicts reality as it is transformed in the painterly way of Impressionism. He continued:

For Manet, this artistic necessity consisted almost exclusively in what was pictorially necessary, that which beauty demanded, but not, at the same time, that which was internally necessary. I said 'almost'. When I paused to consider this 'almost', there appeared before my eyes with unexpected clarity the link that exists between the objectless song of Manet and that definite internal necessity which, translated by the talent of the artist from the realms of unconscious possibility to those of

¹⁸² Will Grohmann mentions that Kandinsky must have seen both Salons. WG, p. 48, and also the Matisse exhibition at the Cassirer Galerie in Berlin, WG, p. 54.

¹⁸³ Hilary Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse, A Life of Henri Matisse: the early years, 1869-1908* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998, ISBN 0 679 43428 3), p. 341: "... described by the alert young Wassily Kandinsky as a bomb going off in the heart of Munich". Note: Kandinsky in 1906, born 1866, was forty years old, actually three years senior to Matisse, born 1869. See also Peter Kropmans, "Die deutsche Matisse-Première vor 90 Jahren – München 1906" in *Weltkunst* (Munich), 1 July 1996, p. 1519.

¹⁸⁴ WG, p. 62-64.

¹⁸⁵ See Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306 80570 7), p. 151.

conscious creation, has been explored by no less outstanding talents – Cézanne, van Gogh, and later preeminently, by Matisse and Picasso.... Slowly, one thing has led to another. ¹⁸⁶

Works by Derain were included again in another large group exhibition in early 1912 in Munich, likewise works by Kandinsky. In addition, Grohmann mentions that Kandinsky read Matisse's essay in "Kunst und Künstler", 1909.¹⁸⁷ The "Blaue Reiter" Almanac, first edition published 1912 (revised edition in 1914), includes a picture of Matisse's painting "La Danse" and "La Musique".¹⁸⁸ Kandinsky writes in his essay "On the Question of Form":

The two paintings by Henri Matisse show how the 'rhythmic' composition (La Danse) has an internal life and consequently a sound that differs from the composition in which the elements of the painting seem to be combined unrhythmically (La Musique). This comparison is the best proof that harmony lies not only in a clear-cut scheme but also in a clear rhythmic pattern. ¹⁸⁹

In a draft for a lecture in 1914, Kandinsky writes:

Thus, e.g., in 'Composition 2' I mitigated the tragic element in the composition and drawing by means of more indifferent and (totally) indifferent colors. Or I sought involuntarily to juxtapose the tragic (use of) color with sublimity of linear form ('Picture with Rowboat' and several of the landscapes). ¹⁹⁰

As such, one may understand Kandinsky's preference including boat forms, either rowing boats or sailboats, as medium for bringing in "the tragic element" – either in color or in form (often linear and black). Rowing oars or masts and ropes holding masts and sails allow for free and even calligraphic application.

An in-depth study about how much Kandinsky was inspired by seeing works of Matisse and Derain is beyond the scope of this case-study. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the Impressionists, and not in the least van Gogh, depicted boats in all kinds of ways in the past. The exposure to how Matisse and Derain transformed the real boats and scenes came at the right moment of Kandinsky's own development. This offered him a way towards an art that is purely visually appealing, necessarily including sufficient but not too obvious references to shapes from reality.

In addition to these influences, Kandinsky's development was clearly enhanced by the waves of Japonism, at the end of the 19th century. This trend in art evolved using explicit black and emphasized contour lines and such lines in decorative patterns, for instance, in Jugendstil, Art Nouveau, or in the work of individual artists such as Pierre Puvis de

¹⁸⁶ See Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (op cit.), p. 79.

¹⁸⁷ WG, p. 87.

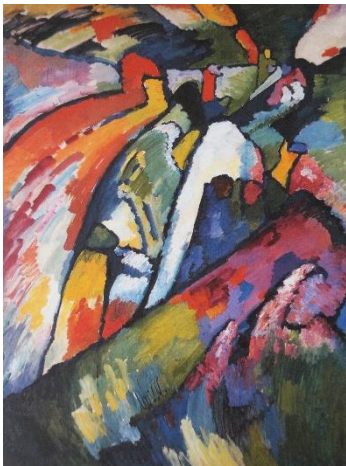
¹⁸⁸ See Klaus Lankheit, *The Documents of 20th-Century Art, The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965, SBN 670 17355 x, first edition of "Der Blaue Reiter), p. 107 and p. 159.

¹⁸⁹ See Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (op cit.), p. 182.

¹⁹⁰ Cologne Lecture "Kandinsky über seine Entwicklung" Johannes Eichner, "Kandinsky und Gabriele Münter, von Ursprungen Moderner Kunst" (Munich, 1957), in Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (New York: Da Capo Press 1994, ISBN 0 306 80570 7), p. 392-400. This lecture was never presented, the text was posthumously published and slightly edited by Johannes Eichner.

Chavannes, Gustave Moreau (Matisse's teacher), Paul Gauguin, Alphonse Mucha. Kandinsky soon understood how to use linear shapes as separated from colored shapes, thus distinguishing himself from Matisse and Derain's conscious tendency towards ornamentation. Kandinsky repeatedly mentioned his interest in Japanese block-prints and drawings, that show geometrized black lines, and do not merely follow the contour of a shape or ornament. In this work independent lines add a special dynamism to the composition. One great example is Kuniyoshi, whose works Kandinsky owned. Another aspect of his interest in the power of independent black lines is emphasized by his interest in flowing Arabic calligraphy.

A third and most important observation is that Matisse and Derain made Kandinsky aware of the creative power to select certain pictorial shapes originating from the real world, such as boats, or the rider, and to transform or reduce them to some essential basic elements. The artist then applies these transformed elements into a composition in a variety of ways that do no longer refer to the real world. Kandinsky for a long time avoided depicting Euclidian, precise triangles, not because he could not paint them but as a way to refer to billowing or even flopping sails.



Improvisation VII, 1909



Study for Improvisation VII, 1909

The several features here summarized that resulted from his encounter with Matisse, gradually merge into Kandinsky's works from about 1909-1910 onwards. These culminate in his so-called Bauhaus period, for which summer 1922 is pivotal, including the work "eine Suite". In combination with his understanding of particle science that the "real reality" consists of a dynamic play of many forces in non-gravitational space, Kandinsky gradually sensed that he could only, or best, depict the "real reality" in art by incorporating consciously or unconsciously perceivable shapes drawn from the perceived real world such as sailboats. These shapes become the tragic element, a notion used by Kandinsky himself, and as intermediaries to understand the vastness of non-gravitational and multi-dimensional space.

In addition, and this is typical for an artist like Kandinsky, the use of sailboats offered him a brilliant tool, or as part of his own logic, helped him to keep the tendency to sheer chaos in his works in check. Many artists who create the wildest works, have their own logic that keeps them in control, and allows them freely to explore their creative intuitions. Max Beckmann, Willem de Kooning or Frank Stella are just three examples. Kandinsky recognized in Kuniyoshi the need for some clarity and structure in the sheer chaos of non-gravity. Often the artists do not like to pin down or describe in words their logic, because they prefer the viewer not to merely focus on such logic but to really look for themselves.

Therefore, Kandinsky did not describe his interest in sailboats in any of his texts; he knew that if he did so, many viewers and critics would only focus on the sailboat as narrative. This is exactly what he did not want, not in a strict or literally sense. It speaks also for Kandinsky's sense of humor that he continued using boats almost all through his artistic career – mostly as sailboats, peaking around 1922-1924, sometimes as funny little steamers.

Boats History Continued

In "Improvisation VII" from 1909, various tilted (row) boats importantly enhance the work's dynamics. In the painting these boats are not as recognizable as they are in the preliminary sketches.¹⁹¹ In a 1910 sketch on an envelope of a sailboat occurs with people on board.¹⁹² There is also an example of this image in a work from 1911.¹⁹³

After about 1912 Kandinsky's gradual fascination for including a boat in his painting grew. After that year rowboats pop up repeatedly, as in the watercolors "Boot" ("Boat") from 1912,¹⁹⁴ or "Rudern (Entwurf zu Improvisation XXIV)".¹⁹⁵ There are also boats in various

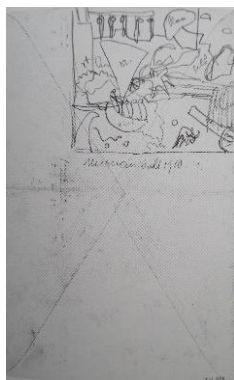
¹⁹¹ Paul Weber remarks on this in his excellent essay, "Kandinsky's pedagogy from the perspective of his theory of displacement", in Annemarie Jaeggi (including a homage by Christian Derouet), *Vassily Kandinsky – Teaching at the Bauhaus* (Berlin: Bauhaus Archiv/Museum für Gestaltung Berlin, 2014, ISBN 978392261350), p. 160.

¹⁹² "Entwurf zu 'Improvisation II'", July 1910, not signed or dated, # 134, CRD-01, p. 77.

¹⁹³ "Entwurf zu 'Impression V (Park)'", March 1911, # 190, not signed or dated, CRD-01, p. 97. See also "Entwurf für Boot", 1911-1912, not signed or dated, # 210, CRD-01, p.106. This drawing has a clear resemblance to two watercolors, each titled "Boot", each dated 1911-1912, both signed but not dated, #295 and #296, CRW-01, p. 264-265.

¹⁹⁴ "Boot," 1912, published in Ernst and Majella Bücher, *Gegenklänge – Aquarelle und Zeichnungen von Wassily Kandinsky*, (Cologne: M. DuMont-Schauberg, 1960) including an essay by Jean Cassou, published in collaboration with Nina Kandinsky, numbered in index 30. Catalogued as watercolor "Boot", 1911-1912, # 295, CRW-01, p. 264.

¹⁹⁵ Watercolor "Rudern (Entwurf zu Improvisation XXIV)", is mentioned as "Entwurf zu Improvisation XXIV (Rudern)", 1911-1912, 25 x 32.1 cm, # 297, signed not dated, CRW-01, p. 266. The same work is dated 1910 in Jean-Jacques Aillagon, Centre Pompidou, *Kandinsky – Hauptwerke aus dem Centre Georges Pompidou* (Cologne: DuMont, Centre Pompidou, Kunsthalle Tübingen, 1999, ISBN 3 7701 4787 1), picture 11., p. 58.



Entwurf zu 'Improvisation II', 1910



Drawing #194, 1911



Entwurf zu ‚Komposition VII‘, drawing #297, 1913

sheets from Kandinsky's famous "Composition" series. This has been noticed but not actually discussed by scholars.¹⁹⁶ The motif appears also, less obviously, as sailboats, for instance, in watercolor "Entwurf zu Skizze für Sintflut II", summer 1912.¹⁹⁷

The drawing "Entwurf zu Komposition VII", 1913,¹⁹⁸ shows several boats, including a small sailboat in a semi-circular shape and slim sail (with irregular, wavy right outline). The boat is tilted as in later works, including "eine Suite". The sail is much the same in place as the violet curved shape in "eine Suite", and occupies the same shape and position on top of the boat as in "Aquarell für Galston", and roughly like in "Aquarelle No. 23". Kandinsky early on combined boats with his rider motif, of which the watercolor "Entwurf zu 'Bild mit weißem Rand'" from 1913 is an example.¹⁹⁹ The red boat is on the lower left side, a possible

Inventory number Centre Pompidou: AM 1981.65.88, 25 x 32 cm. There are three watercolors with a similar though in details different motif, listed in CRW-01: # 295, # 296, # 270. The oil painting "Improvisation XXIV 'Rudern'", 97 x 107.5 cm from 1912, is in the collection of the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.

¹⁹⁶ For instance, Magdalena Dabrowski, discussing the various drawings for the oil painting "Composition VII" of 1913, writes, "It essentially includes all the elements, such as the oval form intersected by an irregular rectangle in the center: the oval boat-like shape in lower right; another triangular boat-like form at left in the middle section; and a heavily delineated S-shaped form, possibly a mountain, shaded by cross-hatching, surrounding the central motif." Magdalena Dabrowski, *Kandinsky Compositions* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, ISBN 0 87070 406 0), p. 41.

¹⁹⁷ "Entwurf zu Skizze für Sintflut II", summer 1912, # 319, CRW-01, p. 286-287. This watercolor is to be distinguished from "Auferstehung", 1911 or 1912, #276, CRW-01, p. 246, as discussed in Appendix I, Notes on the Catalogues Raisonnés of the Watercolors, with the title "The Last Judgement". Their way of painting is quite related, though.

¹⁹⁸ "Entwurf zu Komposition VII", 1913, # 297, signed but not dated, CRD-01, p. 161.

¹⁹⁹ "Entwurf zu 'Bild mit weissem Rand'", 1913, # 339, CRW-01, p. 303. Art Historian Peg Weiss offers an alternative theory, suggesting the inspiration for Kandinsky using both the rider and rowboat as motif would be related to *Mir-susne-khum*, the messenger of the highest god of the Russian Vogul-tribe, who would come to earth on horseback or by boat and two rowers. Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia – The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, ISBN 0 300 05647 8), p.54.

sail indicated tilting to the right, a small rider with an arched back, comparably to be found in quite a few works, culminating in “eine Suite” and indicated is a horse charging to the left holding a huge lance (in the related painting more clear as a white lance, see page 39). Such a combination or fusion of the motifs rider and sailboat appear as the main topics in “eine Suite” (but a rider without the lance, a feature frequently recurring in Kandinsky’s work, like in his early painting “Lyrical”, described later).



Improvisation 26 (Rudern), 1911



Entwurf zu ‚Bild mit Weisssem Rand‘, 1913

Quite likely during his important transition phase between 1909-1913, as he moved from traditional landscape or scene depiction with all objects standing on a horizontal plane as a result of normal everyday gravity, towards a non-gravitational space where solid matter does not exist, Kandinsky noticed that using boats as indicated but not precisely rendered boat-shape contrasted well with his blurry painting of non-matter. This early step into semi-abstractness gives the effective impression that he is depicting colored mists, while oars and sails provided ample reasons to introduce black, calligraphic lines. This echoes both his interest in Japanese works on paper and prints, as well as his interest in Arabic calligraphy. At the time, Kandinsky was interested in biblical subjects such as the Deluge and Apocalypse and inspired by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer.²⁰⁰ Kandinsky wrote:

My starting point was the Deluge. My point of departure was a glass-painting that I had made for my own satisfaction. Here are to be found various objective forms, which are in part amusing (I enjoyed

²⁰⁰ For more background information, see the various books on Kandinsky’s Munich period: Magdalena Dabrowski, *Kandinsky Compositions* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, ISBN 0 87070 406 0); Thomas M. Messer, *Kandinsky in Munich 1896-1914* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1982, ISBN 0 89207 030 7); Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich – The Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979, ISBN 0 691 00374 2). Or, for a somewhat different approach: Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia – The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, ISBN 0 300 05647 8).

mingling serious forms with amusing external expressions): nudes, the Ark, animals, palm trees, lightning, rain, etc.²⁰¹

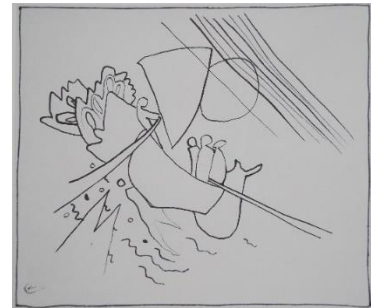
It should be added that Kandinsky merely used such a potpourri to help him get started to find out what he really liked to do. Many artists work this way, although it can puzzle scholars and critics who assume artists plan ahead precisely, or follow logical sequences.



Untitled, 'Study for No. 209', 1916



Drawing #428, 1916



Drawing #438, 1917

Kandinsky's oil painting "Improvisation XXXI 'Seeschlacht'" from 1913, is an obvious reference to sailboats as a sea battle is unlikely to happen with rowboats. This work will be discussed later in the section 6.5 Sails. It is possible to spot sailboats in the famous series of paintings for the US collector Edwin R. Campbell from 1913-1914.²⁰² Kandinsky's 1916-1917 sketchbooks include some realistic depictions of sailboats as well.²⁰³

In drawing # 428 from 1916, one can clearly recognize the same semi-circular boat and same slim sail curving to the right, as, for instance, in "eine Suite", though the boat-shape itself tilts to the left.²⁰⁴ Drawings # 435 and # 438 from 1917 show how the artist favored sailboats over rowboats, but already in the transformed and tilted semi-circle kind typical for 1922.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Quoted in Magdalena Dabrowski, *Kandinsky Compositions*, p. 37. Or, see, Kenneth C. Lindsay, Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky – Complete Writings on Art* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994, ISBN 0 306-80570-7), p. 385.

²⁰² These paintings are currently in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

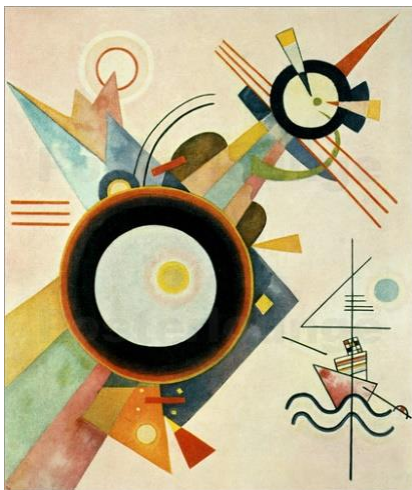
²⁰³ Sketchbook 32 – p. 11, CRD-02, p. 273. See also "Zeichnung für Hafen", 1916, CRD-01, p. 212 (related to Hinterglasbild, "Hafen", 1916, # 612, CRP-02, p. 584).

²⁰⁴ 'Untitled', 1916, # 428, CRD-01, p. 217.

²⁰⁵ 'Untitled', 1917, #435, CRD-01, p. 220, inscribed on reverse by Nina Kandinsky: 'Kandinsky/Dessin 1917/ 34¼ x 25' (Bequest 1981, Centre Pompidou); 'Untitled', c. 1917, signed but not dated, # 438, CRD-01, p. 222. The author CRD mentions here that drawing # 438 would have a close kinship with oil painting "Improvisation II", 1910, CRP-01. The dating difference is remarkable.

A remarkable watercolor from March 1916,²⁰⁶ shows a clearly recognizable sailboat, seen from bird's eye perspective: here the tilted main sail and mast, an extra sail, the wavy lines in the water surface evoke the direction and speed, as in a comic book or cartoon. This work is so revealing because it shows oblong blobs as sailboats seen from above crossing formless waters. The bird's eye perspective used by Kandinsky is not from immediately above a subject, but at a slight angle. This preference appears already in his early sketches, such as the one of the Amsterdam harbor from 1904, and in his famous painting "Impression III (Konzert), 3. Januar 1911", which shows a large black piano and audience. In the sketches one can see that Kandinsky first drafted a piano and audience from reality, with normal perspective in a room, gradually changed this to a bird's eye view, perhaps inspired by Cubism. An important step in his fascination for boats is seen in painting "Red Oval" from 1920, a synthesis of a rowboat and a sailboat. The special importance of this particular painting is that the ship is now depicted from the side as two-dimensional curved shape, tilted in a manner he started to use frequently, culminating in "eine Suite" and others. There is also a large geometrical "sail" seemingly independent from the boat itself, as later depicted in "Weisses Kreuz".

The theme of sailboats before 1922 is also considered in section 5.6 "Composition". Some other aspects arise in the next section. After 1922 sailboats continue to interest Kandinsky, sometimes as funny additions, like in "Die Pfeilform," depicting a small comic-like steamer on a wavy sea at the lower right, or in "Gegenklänge," as rather small sailboat, tilted in the same manner as "eine Suite", displayed over a stormy sea.²⁰⁷



Die Pfeilform, oil painting, 1923



Gegenklänge, oil painting, 1924

²⁰⁶ 'Untitled' (also known as "Study for No. 209"), March 1916, # 448, CRW-01, p. 390. This composition would also correspond to an oil painting, whose whereabouts are unknown, Handlist II No. 209, # 613, CRP-02, p. 589.

²⁰⁷ "Die Pfeilform", 1923, # 699, CRP-02, p. 653, and "Gegenklänge", 1924, # 724, CRP-02, p. 678.

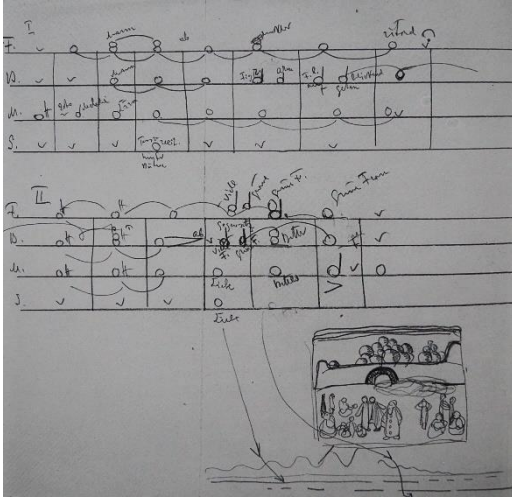
6.5 Sails

This motif as such has been neither recognized nor named by Will Grohmann or any other scholar to date. The issue of sails is considered also in Section 5.6 “Composition” earlier in this essay, and also the earlier discussion on Matisse and Derain is relevant to understanding the painterly context of “eine Suite”. Kandinsky uses sailboats and sails in ways that allow their geometric shapes to be considered abstract, although the images are instantaneously associated with sailboats, hence not abstract in a strict sense.



The advantage to an artist to have “sail” as a motif on his mind is that it allows him to distort triangles partially, or evoke power and tension through bulging sail shapes. As such much more freedom than, for instance, the Constructivists or Suprematists had, who obliged themselves to stick to more or less precise Euclidian forms. It is interesting to notice that just because the Bauhaus is associated with strict fundamental geometrical forms, one is tempted to mistake Kandinsky’s triangular forms for exact geometrical renderings. Kandinsky, however, uses both.

Thus far the scholarly literature on Kandinsky has recognized the sail only when the title of the work explicitly refers to sailboats or when the image does not leave much to the imagination. In many cases it is more helpful to speak about the central geometrical form often present in Kandinsky’s works from about 1919, a geometrical form distorted in space, as a rhomboid. I argue that the sail is one of the consciously chosen main themes in Kandinsky’s works, especially between 1919 and 1925.



Bühnenordnung, 1908 – 1909



Entwurf zu ‚Allerheiligen II‘, 1911

History:

A drawing from 1908-1909 “Sketch for Stage Composition” shows a kind of geometric grid with little circular and curved marks. This obviously does not correspond on a one to one basis to his later abstract works, but is still remarkable in that context.²⁰⁸ It is remarkable, because some motoric movements of the artist’s hand while drawing have a profound effect on his painting, and thus a decisive influence on his preference for shapes. A pencil line sketch of 1911 “Entwurf zu ‘Allerheiligen II’” consists of a swirl of little blobby figures, riders on horseback, persons in boats, in contrast to two crossing large triangles, another “sail”, and curved larger shapes that will be intended to be hills. These “hill” outlines have a clear kinship to later arched riders. For this case-study, one of the two large triangular sails in this work, positioned under a tilted angle not unlike the main sail in “eine Suite”.²⁰⁹

His oil painting “Improvisation XXXI ‘Seeschlacht’” from 1913,²¹⁰ shows several sails. In fact, one can read at the bottom center a large sailing vessel colored orange-yellow with a large and transparent main sail only indicated by a few black outlines. There are also some extra smaller sails also indicated by outlines, and roughly in the center there is a smaller green sailboat with bulging blue sail that seems to jump forward, and another blueish boat

²⁰⁸ “Skizze für Bühnenkomposition”, 1908-1909, not signed or dated, (Bequest Nina Kandinsky 1980, Centre Pompidou), # 105, CRD-01, p. 66.

²⁰⁹ “Entwurf zu ‘Allerheiligen II’”, summer 1911, not signed or dated, # 201, CRD-01, p. 102.

²¹⁰ “Improvisation XXXI ‘Seeschlacht’”, 1913, National Gallery of Art, Washington (acquired 1978). The watercolor “Entwurf zu ‘Improvisation 31 (Seeschlacht)’”, 1913, signed not dated, # 326, CRW-01, p. 292, shows an even more clear depiction of the large main vessel – associated with the kind of towering man-of-war, Kandinsky may have seen paintings in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and as depicted by Turner in the early 19th century. The black blob in the bottom right corner seems to depict a small boat in front of or guiding the large ship.

with green sail approaches from the left. The large triangular shape defined by the yellow top left corner and red top right corner could also be the main sail of the large orange-yellow sailing vessel.



Impression V (Park), 1911



Improvisation 31 (Seeschlacht), 1913

A little earlier, in 1911, Kandinsky created the oil painting “Impression V (Park),” that also shows a large triangle and various black outlines, but in this canvas clearly depicts mountains.²¹¹ In the context of the discussion of the main sail in “eine Suite” as negative space and the same triangular form as positive form a red main sail in “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck”, it is revealing to see that the “negative” space in “Improvisation XXXI ‘Seeschlacht’”, becomes the “positive” space as red mountain in painting “Impression V (Park)”. One of Kandinsky’s idiosyncratic features is that he occasionally swaps negative and positive spaces in works of a given period. Piet Mondrian also did this, transforming his famous apple trees into abstractions, emphasizing and geometrizing the negative spaces between the branches, finally leading to his famous and idiosyncratic grids.



ein Suite, 1922



Komposition mit rotem Dreieck, 1922

²¹¹ In the watercolor “Berg”, 1911-1912, not signed or dated, # 315, CRW-01, p. 283, Kandinsky depicts two rowboats with each five rowers, in direct combination with a large triangular mountain in the back. As is discussed earlier (discussing the Vikingship as motif) both boats could also be sailboats, the mountain not the large triangle but separate “blobby” hill with some buildings on the top right. In CRW-01 this work is related to oil painting “Improvisation 26 (Rudern)”, CRP-01, # 352.



6.6 Rider

In section 5.6 Composition there is a discussion of the validity of recognizing the rider in “eine Suite” as main motif blended or fused with the sailboat.

History:

Early temperas from around 1900-1903, and items in Kandinsky’s sketchbooks from 1905-1907, repeatedly show the artist’s interest in riders on horseback, either from fairy tales, medieval times, or reality.²¹² This includes knights with lances and a Don Quichote.²¹³ Beginning around 1910-1911 there are many works on paper with riders, mostly seen from the side.²¹⁴ This extensive interest is obviously related to his involvement in designing the cover for the “Blaue Reiter” Almanac. Around 1913 the rider seems to have found its preferred place in the right side of the composition, riding to the left, arched backwards and often carrying a long lance.²¹⁵

²¹² Sketchbook 20-page 31, “Pencil study for ‘Sturmglöcke’”, 1905 – 1907, CRD-02, p. 182.

²¹³ Sketchbook 23-page 93, “Pencil study for ‘Don Quichote’ of 1907”, CRD-02, p. 215. This sketchbook is mentioned in CRD-02, p. 204: “1906 – 1907 and probably 1903.”

²¹⁴ A remarkable drawing is “Zeichnung zu ‘St. George’”, 1911, not signed or dated, inscribed by Gabriele Münter ‘St. Georg 1911’, # 197, CRD-01, p. 101. St. George is reduced to only one form in outline (an oblong shape, could be a boat shape), crossed by one calligraphic “lance” (or “mast”) stroke.

²¹⁵ For instance in drawings related to “Entwurf zu ‘Bild mit weissem Rand (Moskau)”, # 276, # 277, # 278, # 282, # 283, CRD-01, p. 151-154.



St. George I, 1911
(Lenbachhaus, not in Cat Raiss.)



Lyrisches, (orig. Jockey), 1911



Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II, 1920

An important indication of Kandinsky's styling the rider is expressed in his brilliant painting "Lyrical" from 1911. Thomas Messer explains that the original title by Kandinsky himself would have been "Jockey", explaining why this rider looks so different from the depictions of "St. Georg".²¹⁶ For the current argument it is important to note some special features of this 1911 painting in immediate comparison to "eine Suite" and "Aquarelle No. 23". The painting displays the same clarity of colors, the styling of a rider running left, the curve of the arched back and connected to the curved helmet, very much like "Aquarelle No. 23", the sequence of small parallel strokes here clearly indicating the horse's manes, but quite the precursor of the "hairs on a curve" motif, the long calligraphic black strokes, one of which is "shadowed" by another color in the painting a greyish blue, the irregular "sail-like" negative white space in the back, created by adjoining color forms, the three parallel lines indicating either speed as in a cartoon or the horse's tail. In the lower left, the horse's front legs can be seen to fuse with a mast of a sailboat, rising above blue waves. For Kandinsky's fusion of the motifs of boats and rider as early as 1913, see section 6.4 Boat.

As there is so much correspondence among these works and even the rider's face of the 1911 painting matches the two-squared face of "Aquarelle No. 23" closely, one might question the dating of "Lyrical." After all, it is known that artists like Kandinsky, or Archipenko, occasionally re-dated their works for historical claims. This is clearly not the case, however, although it does show how the artist's logic of return to motifs could lead a scholar astray.²¹⁷

In both "Aquarelle No. 23" and "eine Suite" the rider has some lines behind its head that evoke speed— in "Aquarelle No. 23" there are five such curved lines, in "eine Suite"

²¹⁶ Collection Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, see Thomas M. Messer, *Vasily Kandinsky* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1997, ISBN 0 8109 1228 7), p. 72-73.

²¹⁷ Differences in dating in the current literature can, however, also be the result of the interpretation of a researcher. For instance, as earlier mentioned, the rather extreme difference in dating between the drawing 'Untitled', # 438, CRD-01, p. 222, dated by the author CRD-01 c. 1917 (the work is signed but not dated), and the clearly related oil painting "Improvisation II", signed and dated 1910, CRP-01.

three such lines²¹⁸ – such use of three lines occurs in Kandinsky's works more often, as it does in the oil painting "Red Spot II", 1921.²¹⁹ In the same year as "eine Suite", the watercolor "Schwung" demonstrates that Kandinsky rarely though occasionally used triple curved lines in such a context.²²⁰



Aquarelle No.23, 1922



Im schwarzen Viereck, oil painting 1923

After 1922 Kandinsky does not use the rider as leading or clear motif anymore, it has already nearly disappeared in 1923. "Im Schwarzen Viereck" with a large geometrized rider provides a strong exception.²²¹ Like the other motifs the rider is now more dispersed and geometrized.²²² This is another observation that supports building the case for the authenticity of "eine Suite".

6.7 Arabesque – Calligraphic Form – Whiplash Line

Grohmann has acknowledged the arabesque as a motif.²²³ Throughout Kandinsky's artistic development he displayed a pictorial preference for a slowly arching, curving, wavy or

²¹⁸ In oil painting "Weisses Zentrum" from 1921, # 677, CRP-02, p. 630, there are three curved parallel lines clearly visible at the top right, and in obvious relationship to a longer black curve, associated with the curved line in "eine Suite", though here not as obvious as the rider.

²¹⁹ "Red Spot", oil painting from 1921, # 675, CRP-02, p. 628. Picture here is the watercolor "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck", # 544, CRW-01, p. 477.

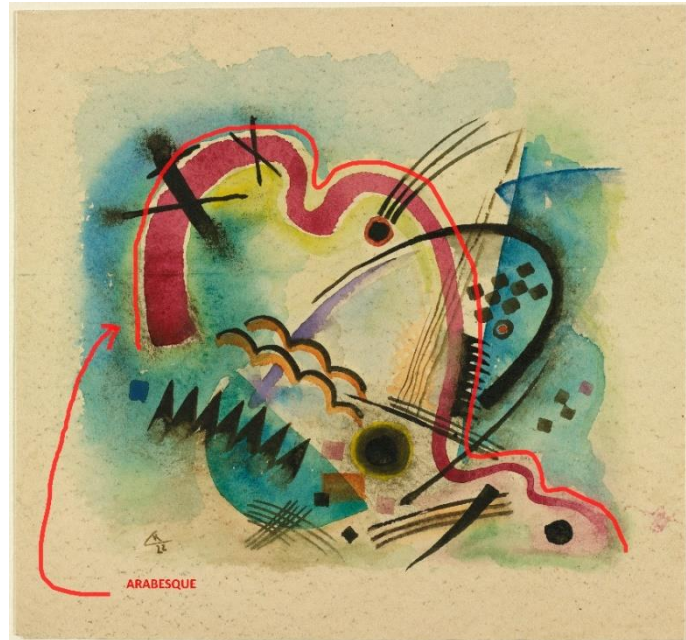
²²⁰ "Schwung", 21 December 1922, # 591, CRW-02, p. 45. Other watercolors: "Zeichnung in Farbe", 1928, # 870, CRW-02, p. 220; "Dämmerig", Oct 1928 (also known as "Dämmerung"), # 902, CRW-02, p. 235. And the oil painting "Spitz und Rund" ("Pointed and Round"), 1925, CRP-02, p. 691.

²²¹ "Im Schwarzen Viereck" from 1923, # 700, CRP-02, p. 654.

²²² For instance, in the oil painting "Rosa Viereck" ("Pink Oblong"), 1923, # 705, CRP-02, p. 659 (and WG p. 362). One can still recognize in the top right the hair lines pointing at a circle, prominent in "eine Suite".

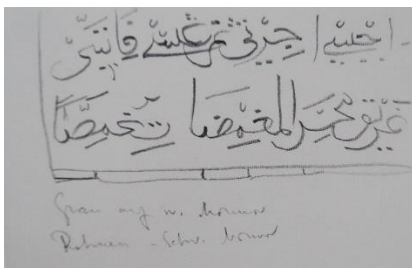
²²³ Grohmann defines such lines as "whiplash line". WG, p. 191.

whiplashing line that seems to originate from the outlines of hills or mountains, in his Murnau time, or from the back and neck lines of the horse and rider. It is part of the artistic fingerprint to have such shape preferences to return all through the artist's career, without these items necessarily containing the same meaning nor being expressed exactly in the same shapes.



History:

During Kandinsky's visit to Tunisia in 1905 he copied Arabic calligraphy in his sketchbook,²²⁴ while earlier his frequent sketching of dramatic trees enhanced his interest in the expressiveness of curved and crossing lines. This may also have been inspired by his serious interest in Japanese drawings and prints some of which incorporate calligraphic arabesques



Sketchbook 18, 1909



Drawing #193, 1911

²²⁴ Sketchbook 18-page 34, 1905, CRD-02, p. 161.

and geometrized thunder flashes. Around 1910-1911 abstract and powerfully noted zig-zag and curved lines appear in Kandinsky's work.²²⁵ An early oil painting in which Kandinsky experimented with strong black calligraphic forms, evolving from his linear landscape drawings, is "Impression V (Park)" from 1911.²²⁶ Such arabesques appear in sketches for "Komposition IV".²²⁷ In the drawing "Entwurf zu 'Improvisation 24 (Troika II)'" from 1912, arabesqued calligraphic lines are evident, and from that moment on continue to evolve.²²⁸



Drawing #399, 1916



Gelb, Rot, Blau, oil painting 1925

In his 1916-1917 sketchbooks there are calligraphic free pencil lines that seem to include indications of a main sail in the background.²²⁹ A particular drawing stands out,²³⁰ because of the way the arabesque curls and bends left, in combination with a roughly indicated boat shape and sails tilting together to the right, plus the small circle emphasizing the lower right. All these elements seem to make this sketch a rough precursor of "eine Suite", produced six years later. This happens all the time to artists: sometimes many years later a certain work from the past, while maybe not even making sense at the time of creation, suddenly makes perfectly sense in the artist's later development. Therefore, the point is not that this

²²⁵ "Entwurf zu 'St. Georg III'", mid-late March 1911, not dated or signed, inscribed by Gabriele Münter 'Hl. Georg/No.3/31 III 1911', # 192, CRD-01, p. 98; "Entwürfe", 1910-1911, not signed or dated, # 193, CRD-01, p. 99; "Entwurf zu 'Improvisation 19A'", 1911, not signed or dated (pencil on envelope), bequest Nina Kandinsky 1980, Centre Pompidou; # 194, CRD-01, p. 99.

²²⁶ "Impression V (Park)", 1911, Bequest of Nina Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, Inv.nr. AM 1976-851, D/B 128.

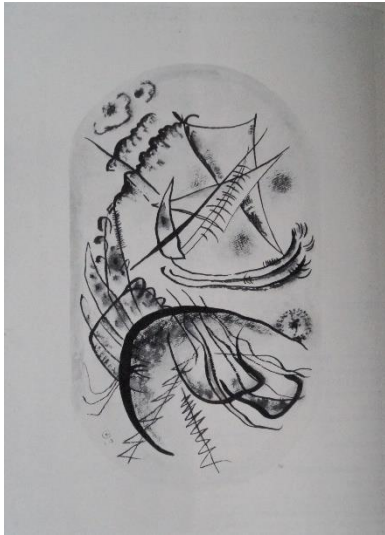
²²⁷ Two drawings with the same title and date: "Zeichnung nach 'Komposition IV'", 1911, Bequest Nina Kandinsky 1980, # 185, and # 186, CRD-01, p. 95.

²²⁸ "Entwurf zu 'Improvisation 24 (Troika II)", probably 1912, not signed or dated, #2 13, CRD-01, p. 107.

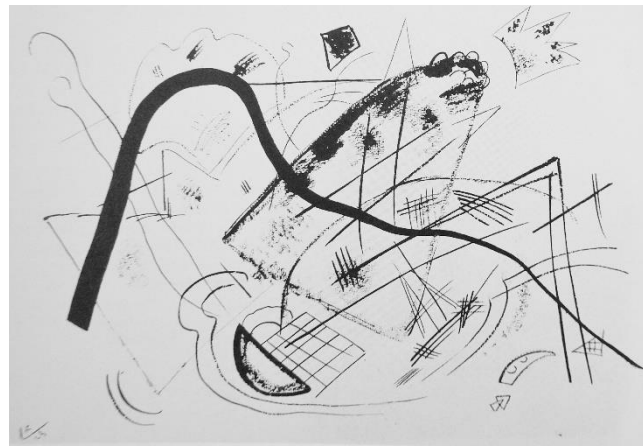
²²⁹ Sketchbook 32-page 3, 1916-1917, CRD-02, p. 271.

²³⁰ 'Untitled', early 1916, not signed or dated, # 399, CRD-01, p. 202.

particular 1916 drawing to be a sketch immediately leads to “eine Suite”, but to reiterate by example that an artist’s creative development does not necessarily follow a linear path.



Leicht über Schwer, January 1918



Drawing #533, 1923

The watercolor “Leicht über Schwer”, dated January 1918, shows a handpainted curve not unlike the curved arabesque in “eine Suite”. This work does not depict the rider, and incorporates some other visual analogies like the jagged forms at the left side, various groups of long parallel lines, reference to folded sails as clouds, a tilted sail, but these are less clear to pin down.²³¹ Kandinsky’s developing interest in the arabesque is mirrored in both oil paintings, watercolors and drawings in these years, evoking more a sense of spontaneity and less of control. In 1919-1920 the arabesques become more and more clear and prominent, and gradually assume a geometric form.

While the actual shape of the wavy calligraphic form, arabesque, or whiplash line differs in shape and in color, red in “eine Suite”, orange in “Aquarelle No. 23”, in “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” both modalities are typical for Kandinsky and both pictorially lead from the bottom right corner diagonally upwards to the left half of the composition.²³² The gestural, or organic line characterises Kandinsky’s intentions at this time.

In both works the diagonal reading is also additionally emphasized by a black line that leads movement into the opposite direction – from the left higher side bending towards the bottom right corner. In “eine Suite” this describes a more or less a precise hyperbolic curve, the symbol for the back of “the rider”, while in “Aquarelle No. 23” it is a mere hand painted organic line/shape. Both have a clear kinship to Asian calligraphy. The wavy calligraphic

²³¹ “Leicht über Schwer”, 1918, # 489, CRW-01, p. 428. The kind of dot (with a halo) just above the curved arabesque in this watercolor remarkably returns as a mirror or flipped image in “eine Suite”.

²³² For instance: “Painting with White Border” from 1913; “Gelb-Rot-Blau”, 1925, # 757, CRP-02, p. 709.

form, arabesque, or whiplash line features prominently in “eine Suite” and matches quite well though not exactly to the same form in the oil painting “Gelb-Rot-Blau” from 1925 mentioned earlier in section 5.6 “Composition”.

6.8 Small Meshwork

This motif, named by Will Grohmann as meshwork, can be found in “Weisses Kreuz” at the right side just above the blue-green sphere with the orange halo, in “eine Suite” at the bottom, left of the middle, and in “Aquarelle No. 23” just above the lower left corner.



History:

The gradual evolution of the small meshwork motif in Kandinsky’s artworks came about simultaneously with the precursors of the checkerboard. Therefore, one should read both items as gradually evolving together as one and the same interest of the artist. There are reasons, however, to divide the two since from a certain point in time Kandinsky started to use them as separate elements. In 1913, in the lower left corner of the watercolor # 376, we can find one of the first of such motifs as pictorial element.²³³

²³³ ‘Untitled’, not dated, # 376, CRW-01, p. 337.



Aquarell mit schwarzen Strichen, February 1916



Entwurf zu 'Graues Oval', 1917

In 1916 this little grid pops up again, and in the same lower left corner, in the watercolor “Aquarell mit Schwarzen Strichen”.²³⁴ In that year, Kandinsky uses the motif a few times more but differently placed, and sometimes several times within one work. In 1917, in the watercolor “Entwurf zu ‘Graues Oval’”²³⁵ it is clearly visible in the lower side, just left of the middle. Between 1918 and 1920 the motif is to be found in various works, and on various spots, for instance in the top right corner and distorted in the lower left corner, of watercolor # 493 from 1918.²³⁶ Kandinsky did not seem to use this motif often in 1920-1921, with, so far as can be found, one exception.²³⁷ In 1922, as has been mentioned, it occurs in “Weisses Kreuz”, “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23”. In “Weisses Kreuz” it is in the right half. In both “eine Suite” and “Aquarelle No. 23” it describes a quasi-circling motion in the lower left quarter; in “Aquarelle No. 23” this occurs twice. In the 1922 watercolor # 569,²³⁸ identified as No. 27 in the Handlist, indicating a later creation than “Aquarelle No- 23”, a

²³⁴ “Aquarell mit Schwarzen Strichen”, February 1916, # 442, CRW-01, p. 386.

²³⁵ “Entwurf zu ‘Graues Oval’”, 1917, also known as “Sedate”, # 482, CRW-01, p. 423.

²³⁶ ‘Untitled’, 1918, # 493, CRW-01, p. 435.

²³⁷ It is visible in oil painting “Schwarzer Fleck” from 1921, # 681, CRP-02, p. 636, in about the same spot as in “Weisses Kreuz”.

²³⁸ ‘Untitled’, 1922, # 569, CRW-02, p. 23. This two times appearance of the motif also occurs in “Grauer Fleck”, 22 December 1922, # 592, CRW-02, p. 46.

variation of this motif is used, and several small meshworks are placed in the lower left quarter. In the watercolor “Jahresschluss”²³⁹ the motif occurs in about the middle of the bottom, and a similar smaller meshwork appears a little higher, analogously to “Aquarelle No. 23”. From early 1923 on this motif mutates into much straighter lines, geometrized like most of Kandinsky’s motifs. Kandinsky clearly did not make a rule out of this, but he did prefer to put this particular motif or pictorial element in the lower left quarter of the picture, and did not use it all the time. The combination of the location and the cohesion with various works in 1922 place “eine Suite” clearly in that year.



Untitled, 1922, # 569

6.9 Black Dot at Bottom

From a certain point in time in Kandinsky’s compositions one encounters a larger black dot, a heavy compositional emphasis, as if the whole dynamics of the composition revolves over and around it; the viewer is grounded by this motif. Typical for Kandinsky’s artistic capacity such a black dot is not positioned exactly in the middle but stands in a subtle cohesion with the black and the calligraphic form that curves downwards. The works present a kind of off-balance and yet balanced cohesion.

Demonstrating that Kandinsky preferred such subtle or careful tension between balance and off balance, Grohmann summarized the artist’s own statements:²⁴⁰ “In other words, spherical space, simultaneity, a constellation of points, replace the center.” The average forger would not notice nor hardly be able to reproduce this subtle but sophisticated relationship. Such a person would probably create a composition with no cohesion or with too obvious relationships, such as simple symmetry. It took Kandinsky

²³⁹ “Jahresschluss”, December 1922, # 596, CRW-02, p. 48.

²⁴⁰ WG, p. 152.

many years to develop the artistic sensibility to place such visual emphasis on the right spot. This is a normal feature of being a professional artist and part of what one may call a maturation process.



Paradies, 1911-1912



eine Suite, 1922



Aquarell No. 23, 1922

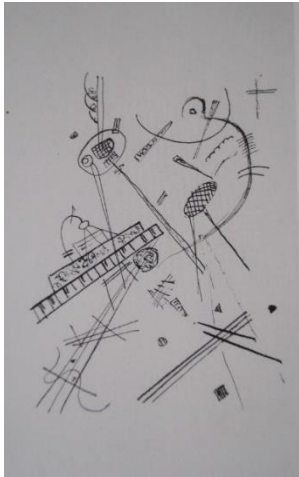
History:

Though earlier some random emphasis occurs in his works,²⁴¹ in general, Kandinsky probably started around late 1913 to prefer putting a visual emphasis in the lower right corner; this tendency evolves in more conscious exploration of such emphasis in 1916. He occasionally shifts such emphasis for instance to the lower left corner or to the middle. While, as discussed earlier, in the years 1913 – 1920 he gradually started to revolve and contract his compositions around the virtual middle of the paper or canvas, in a discontinuous or jumping development, he experimented with adding such a visual emphasis in the lower corners. But only in about 1920 does this seem to have become a conscious interest and is then continuously explored. In time Kandinsky prefers larger dot-like shapes, sometimes swapped for small squares,²⁴² but this only really plays a role in 1922. As is the case with several of the other pictorial elements discussed here, after 1922 Kandinsky continued using

²⁴¹ For instance, in watercolor “Paradies,” 1911-1912, not signed or dated, # 312, CRW-01, p. 281, with a light green blob in that lower right corner, and in a remarkable similarity to the way that, in “eine Suite,” the lower right a black dot sits under the “tail” of the arabesque, an arabesque-kind of calligraphic line starts just above this green blob.

²⁴² For instance, drawing # 511, 1922-1923, not signed or dated, CRD-01, p. 255. This drawing displays a small square where in “eine Suite” a black dot appears; this drawing also has three parallel lines and crossing lines in the lower right, comparable to the combination of pictorial elements with lines in the lower right of “eine Suite”.

such visual emphases, but then focused less on the lower right corner. As has been stated, the oil painting “Gelb-Rot-Blau” from 1925 presents an extraordinary exception.



Drawing # 511, 1922- 1923



Gelb, Rot, Blau, oil painting 1925

Once the artist had sufficient experience in manipulating visual emphasis in various and more sophisticated ways he sometimes used a small “Mondrian”-like grid for local emphasis, while in general Kandinsky motivates a viewer to roam over the whole composition. Kandinsky’s development of the black dot at the bottom as visual emphasis peaks in his focus in 1922, contributing to the importance of this particular year.

7. From 1922 Onwards: The Bauhaus Period

The work from Kandinsky's Bauhaus years, 1922-1933, almost demonstrates the opposite to his free flowing expressionist Munich and Russia periods. One sees in Kandinsky's works around 1921 that more precision and more control are intruding in his paintings. Now, at the age of fifty-five, he started to upgrade the seriousness of his own visual research, a natural step after a burst of about ten years of free flowing creativity. This undoubtedly was partially motivated by his involvement in developing a new art education method first in Moscow, then in Germany at the Bauhaus, as discussed at the start of this essay. But this is also a logical step because one can see in Kandinsky's development towards 1921 that the spontaneity in his lyrical abstract phase had started to run out and become routine.

This, too, is an experience, a development, known to many serious, self-critical, mature artists and in general the kiss of death for the dogmatic side of abstraction. Pure abstraction tends to move away from anything that lies within human interest, it does not obviously offer any experience natural to the viewer. To my opinion, Kandinsky was able continuously to renew his work. He continued playing with his boat-motif, often sparked by a clear sense of humor, which kept his creative fantasy close enough to “real reality”, real visual and also spiritual interests. In fact, Kandinsky’s works, though abstracted, never were

entirely abstract. As he stated himself, the mind cannot operate without the body, a statement expressing that in our experience of life and world we cannot only rationalize nor only follow emotions. Kandinsky correctly concluded we need a (great) synthesis of both for acknowledging and expressing reality as we sense.

The free-reign drive of a virtuoso phase sparks spontaneous creative power in artworks, but at some point the artist inevitably discovers to his dismay that it does not matter what he attempts, what comes out is always good. This sparks the self-doubt if good is good enough, the hunger for substantial artistic greatness, not to be mistaken for “fame and fortune,” and feeds self-doubt that may threaten to sap all spontaneity. The serious artist will turn such self-doubt into a new motivation to work towards greatness. This is not merely a flipping of a switch, but requires hard work and stamina and may feel like the necessity to break through a virtual wall with violence. Kandinsky's Bauhaus period can be seen as his struggle to break through his wall. He succeeded.

Kandinsky's third period, the so-called Paris years, evolved when he was about age sixty-five and exemplified the mature liberation that erupted through the other side of his virtual wall. The changes he experienced in his life, including living the idealism of the Bauhaus and the forced ending by the Nazis of all the movement strived for, contributed to this. With all idealistic goals gone with the wind, the artist inevitably ends up being thrown back onto his self. In this phase his paintings showed a tendency towards microscopic organisms, inspired by new scientific research.

As witnessed in his extensive writings, Kandinsky expressed his ideas on spirituality in his extensive writings on many aspects of both Occidental and Oriental cultures, mainly Indian and Japanese, and he also had an interest to Sufi or Islamic culture as well. In addition, he was seriously interested in and knowledgeable about ancient Egyptian art.²⁴³ From his own statements it is evident that Kandinsky saw himself more as Oriental than as Occidental.

²⁴³ See Annegret Hoberg, “Vasily Kandinsky, Abstract, Absolute, Concrete”, in Richard Armstrong (ed.), *Kandinsky* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2009, ISBN 978 0 89207 391 7) p. 48-49.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Reasons to Assume that “eine Suite” is Genuine

Here is a summary of the evidence that “eine Suite”, a watercolor from 1922, is a genuine work by Kandinsky until proven otherwise.

title and date match Kandinsky’s style in late summer 1922, supporting the observation that this time was of pivotal importance in Kandinsky’s development;

the signature varies across Kandinsky’s life, but this particular signature is correct for the period from about 1916-1917 onwards, while a very close match can be found in one other watercolor of a few years later;

the inscription on the reverse by Nina Kandinsky, from a legal point of view, should be sufficient by itself;

the kind of paper matches the kinds of paper Kandinsky used at the time, especially as he used at least some five different kinds in 1922, while some other works seem to be created on the same kind of paper although conclusive proof requires further laboratory research;

the sizes of the paper correspond to paper sizes Kandinsky used as does the way the paper of “eine Suite” is cut and the incision appearing on the reverse side;

the history of this work matches historical facts, including the fact that around 1974-1980 many watercolors and other works on paper were exhibited or published for the very first time;

the composition incorporates the level of sophistication in a clear whole that fits exactly at that moment in Kandinsky’s artistic development, is pre-announced in much earlier works and finds its echo in later works;

the colors fit exceptionally with the colors Kandinsky used in the given period in a similar way, most specifically in “Aquarelle No. 23”, but also in an oil painting like “Gelb-Rot-Blau” from 1925;

all pictorial elements of “eine Suite” are prefigured in a multitude of earlier works, some obvious and plain, some rare, while the acknowledgement of the sailboat and rider are key, plus the specific way of depicting the row of conical shapes.

8.2 Notes on Forgery

a forger in general aims for commercial success, and therefore a forger will always wish to mislead but not puzzle Kandinsky specialists;

therefore, a forger would never select a paper size Kandinsky only occasionally chose, and would prefer a larger sized, rectangular paper format, more common to Kandinsky and similar to the already authenticated “Aquarell No. 23”;

a forger would never use a sheet of paper with an incision as visible as the one in “eine Suite”, because in case of Kandinsky such a mark is not required to evoke a sensation of aging and only would make specialized dealers, auction houses and art historians balk;

a forger would also prefer to create an unknown work from Kandinsky’s so-called lyrical period of before 1919, because works from that period were never exactly documented, especially from his Russian time, and in their expressive dynamics easier to forge than the sophisticated works from 1920-1924 and later;

any forger looking for the higher profits prefers forging oil paintings – as has been demonstrated in various scandals;

in context to “eine Suite” it is important to acknowledge that around 1975-1976, the time the current owners acquired the work, watercolors of Kandinsky did not represent such a high market value, were hardly involved in exhibitions and limited in publications at that time; at that time the rich information available in the catalogues raisonnés were not published until 20 years later, meaning a forger could not have an overall view on Kandinsky’s works, and quite unlikely could have put specific and typical elements in such a sophisticated composition;²⁴⁴

the argument, stated in a letter by one of the members of the Société Kandinsky, that “eine Suite” could not be by Kandinsky’s hand but belongs rather to a group of works created by someone in his closer circles, does not hold, and has been refuted by other scholars and seems hardly more than an assumption, or even gossip, because proof for or any documentation of such a group of works does not exist; simultaneously, Hans Konrad Roethel, the famous early Kandinsky specialist, who seems to have been the origin of this

²⁴⁴ All through his life Kandinsky almost always included watercolors in his many exhibitions. Since the World War I exhibitions including his watercolors have rarely been staged. Only since the 1970’s have watercolors frequently been included in exhibitions of Kandinsky, receiving a boost for their market value in the later part of the 1970’s.

idea, never saw “eine Suite”, and the other members of the Société Kandinsky only saw an ektachrome of the work.²⁴⁵

it should be acknowledged that any forger before 1975, the year the work was purchased, did not have access to the vast amount of literature and real works as the author of this case-study had.

²⁴⁵ Dusseldorf, 9th June 1992, letter by Armin Zweite, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, member of the Société Kandinsky, directed to Mr. Heiner Pietzsch, Berlin. Dr. Zweite describes the process of the Catalogue Raisonné Committee, their meeting at Dusseldorf early March 1992. He mentions the original watercolor of the Pietzsch Collection was then not at their disposal, but Vivian Endicott Barnett, the author CR, who had seen the original in New York, reported and showed an ektachrome (a transparency). Dr. Zweite admitted that he cannot say more as he has not seen the original himself, but that he has full confidence in Barnett’s judgement. Furthermore, he mentions that this work is not listed in the Handlist, although this by itself would not be a reason to doubt the authenticity of the work, but that the stylistic features, according to Barnett, make it seem to be from a very different group of works, created in close or larger circles around Kandinsky. Like Hans Konrad Roethel, she considers this watercolor to belong to a total group of similarly structured works that cannot be attributed to Kandinsky himself: “... Offenbar ist sie [Vivian Endicott Barnett], ebenso wie Hans Konrad Roethel, der Meinung, daß dieses Blatt zu einer ganzen Gruppe sehr ähnlich strukturierter Werke gehört, für die Kandinsky selbst als Autor nicht im Frage kommt.“ And, in the same letter: „Daß es kein Eintrag im Hauskatalog Kandinsky’s für dieses Aquarell gibt, spricht nicht gegen die Autorschaft Kandinskys, wohl allerdings die stilistischen Merkmale, die es offenbar, so die Meinung von Vivian Endicott Barnett, einer ganzen Reihe von Werken zuzurechnen, die in dem näheren oder fernerem Umkreis von Kandinsky entstanden sein dürften.“ Dr. Zweite added that Nina Kandinsky’s signature is not always solid proof of authenticity. This seems a bold statement, as explained in section 5.3 Inscription Nina Kandinsky, mentioning “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’”, # 852, CRW-02, p. 211.

9. Afterword

The liabilities involved in authentication of artworks in immediate context to the globally expanded art market have widened the gap between the traditional mission of art history, the mission of museums, and the art market's requirement for solid and simple proof of authenticity. For pragmatic reasons, the art market prefers catalogues raisonnés to be flawless encyclopedias, although this is not a realistic option. The result is that art historians have started to balk and back out from authentication. Obviously, this is no solution, though quite understandable given potential liabilities. There is an interesting public and legal question as to what degree specialists and public institutions can claim the role of specialists and specialized institutes while refusing commentaries of authentication.²⁴⁶

Furthermore, any editor or editorial committee responsible for a catalogue raisonné, confronted with a person requesting authentication of a specific artwork, needs to consult with the author of the catalogue raisonné, but before making a definite decision, should allow the possibility of a second opinion. This, after all, is natural in all fields of science. In the end, the main motivation for inclusion in a catalogue raisonné should not be the work's sale value, but first and foremost to do justice to the broad creative spectrum of a particular artist.

²⁴⁶ See Appendix I, the statement provided by the Lenbachhaus to the author of this case-study.

APPENDIX I

About the Catalogues Raisonnés of the Watercolors, the Société Kandinsky, and “eine Suite”²⁴⁷

The Catalogues Raisonnés of the Watercolors, published in 1992 and 1994, were projects realized by the Société Kandinsky.²⁴⁸ The historical importance of this publication and the art historical accomplishment by the author CR²⁴⁹ are beyond any doubt. The following analyses and observations may help any student of Kandinsky correctly to study the several catalogues raisonnés of drawings, watercolors and oil paintings, and, in general, may support appreciation of such publications which does not imply unconditional acceptance of all the contents of the same.

For deciding which works to select for the Catalogue Raisonné, in the preface to Volume I, the author writes in December 1990, that she has depended on decisions made approximately fifteen years earlier by Hans K. Roethel and Jean K. Benjamin, and states:

I have attempted to see all the Kandinsky watercolors, gouaches and temperas and have personally examined the majority of works included in the present volume. Wherever feasible, I have determined the medium, checked the dimensions and looked at the reverse of the object. Elsewhere, I have had to rely upon information from the owner or from published sources. In a few cases, works have been

²⁴⁷ See also Section 1 “Foreword”.

²⁴⁸ Société Kandinsky, founded on the initiative of Nina Kandinsky (1893-1980). The Société Kandinsky was formally dissolved at the end of 2014. Kandinsky passed away in 1944, and copyright is only viable seventy years after the death of the artist. This information about the mission of the Société Kandinsky is taken over from the web-site of the Centre Pompidou: “Created by Nina Kandinsky in 1979, the Kandinsky Society is a not-for-profit association (Loi 1901), with its headquarters at the Centre Pompidou. The society unites the directors of the three museums of Paris, Munich and New York, Kandinsky specialists and various personalities designated by Nina Kandinsky. Claude Pompidou was the society’s president from 1979 to 2007. The society’s vocation is firstly to watch over the integrity of the work. To this end, the Society has financed the publication of catalogues raisonnés in continuity with those that the great German Kandinsky specialist, Hans Roethel and Jean Benjamin, had established. Mrs Vivian Barnett has published catalogues raisonnés for the watercolours (2 volumes, published in 1994), for the drawings (in 2006) and for the sketchbooks (in 2007). Secondly, the Kandinsky Society has ensured that the testamentary dispositions, preceding Nina Kandinsky’s bequest in 1980, were respected, in particular the bequest to the Berne Museum and that of three paintings to Soviet museums. The Society also practices a policy of purchase with the aim of completing the Centre Pompidou collection. In 2001, for example, it proceeded with the acquisition of three 1915 watercolors from Mrs. Nina Ivanoff, Alexandre Kojève’s companion. It bought the works offered in homage by his colleagues to the Bauhaus in 1926. In 2006, the last purchase was a 1930 watercolor entitled Verdunkeln (Darken). Finally, the Kandinsky Society subsidises the publication of Kandinsky’s manuscripts. It grants bursaries for activities that increase knowledge of the artist’s work.”

²⁴⁹ Vivian Endicott Barnett, curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York 1980-1991. Since then she has worked as an independent scholar and important author of numerous essays on Wassily Kandinsky.

omitted because it was not possible for me and other members of the Catalogue Raisonné Committee of the Société to study the objects and it proved impossible to judge the works from photographs.²⁵⁰

The author CR's statement is professional, clear, honest and sound. It is quite important to note her use of the phrase "wherever feasible", and "elsewhere, I have had to rely upon information from the owner or from published sources", as these formulations suggest that not all data are empirical, and not all data are available for new research, as explained in Section 1 "Foreword". Empirical research and assembling of any catalogue raisonné would require more than one researcher studying and measuring each individual work, and all involved documents, rechecking data, and checking the data delivered by third persons beyond the decision to accept or not accept data delivered by third persons. Such an enterprise is at all times pragmatically, that is physically and financially, nearly impossible.

This certainly is the case in Kandinsky research. The main groups of works are accessible at the Lenbachhaus, the Centre Pompidou and the Guggenheim, but there are also many works dispersed over galleries, auction houses, public and private collections in many countries in the world. It should be noted, for instance, that author CR was assisted by a range of other persons in assembling certain components of her research, for instance in the enormous task of collecting all data on exhibitions and publications, but in the end, as it seems from the publications, she was mainly alone responsible, as is confirmed in each of the catalogues raisonnés.

The collected data for individual works are useful to any person interested in Kandinsky's development, but it would have been helpful if in the Catalogue Raisonné explicit mention had been made as to which works were measured by the researcher, and for which works the sizes were provided by third persons such as collectors, museum staff, gallerists, auction houses, etc. After all, many persons are likely to be unwilling to unframe a work and measure the sizes of the paper and artwork precisely, while most galleries, museums and collectors prefer to quote the sizes they once received from another source.²⁵¹

Though any catalogue raisonné gives the impression of offering absolute and precise data, pragmatically this is hardly feasible. Artists are hardly careful administrators, for instance, and do not always sign and date their works, and when studying an artist's creative output an art historian cannot escape the occasional subjective interpretation. These subjective interpretations obviously impact on the ordering in catalogues raisonnés. One proof of the skepticism that must be brought to bear even on a very precise catalogue

²⁵⁰ CRW-01, p. 10.

²⁵¹ This also explains the fact that in the Catalogue Raisonné one occasionally finds the note that the reverse side of the work could not be studied.

raisonné can be found in the discrepancies in measurements, as shown above. Each person measuring a series of works on paper is bound to make a few misreadings.

This happened to myself when checking sizes at the Centre Pompidou, the Guggenheim, and MoMA,²⁵² looking at works on paper 1921-1923. I had the great advantage that I could rely on another person to double check my reading of the sizes, thus avoiding errors. The results can be found in Appendix IV. Of various works three different sizes can be noted: sizes in the involved Catalogues Raisonnés, sizes in the data base of the Centre Pompidou, sizes I measured (and had double checked). Most are tiny differences, but demonstrate the non-empirical feature of any one-person research and naturalness of human error.²⁵³

The issue of errors is not intended as criticism aimed at any researcher, which would be unjustified, but rather points to the inevitability of finding errors and confusions when large amounts of data are to be catalogued. Will Grohmann, a close friend of both Wassily and Nina Kandinsky, listed in his famous book of 1958 (for which Nina Kandinsky collaborated), a particular watercolor as “Sketch for On Points”, 1928. He stated that his work is signed, dated and he gives specific sizes.²⁵⁴ The picture of this work is titled “Sketch for On Points”/“Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’”, “Projet pour ‘sur pointes’”, “Abozzo per ‘Sulle punte’”. The author CR describes the work as being not signed, not dated, not in the Handlists, and gives sizes that differ substantially from Grohmann’s, adding Grohmann and Nina Kandinsky erroneously state this work would be number 263 in the Handlist.²⁵⁵ While indeed Grohmann mentions “263” as reference, he and Nina chose the correct picture for “Sketch for On Points”. The author CR thus demonstrates correctly the mistake of referring to “263”, while judging from the picture in the Catalogue Raisonné, she seems correct as well that this work is not signed and not dated. The wrong reference to “263” in the Handlist and the note that the work was signed and dated, can simply have been a typo by either Will Grohmann himself, or by the person preparing the data for print. The substantial differences

²⁵² At the Lenbachhaus I could not check the sizes, because the works were framed and behind glass and understandably but unfortunately I was not allowed to see them unframed.

²⁵³ I used a measuring tape provided to me by the assistant curator of the Centre Pompidou. For other differences in sizes, and also in dating works, see footnote 155 and 156.

²⁵⁴ WG, p. 347: “Sketch for On Points (KK 433), 1928, 263. 18 7/8 x 12 5/8”. (signed:) “<K 28” I.I. Collection Rudolf Probst, Mannheim. CC 722.” The picture of this work is on p. 409.

²⁵⁵ “Entwurf zu ‘Auf Spitzen’” (Study for ‘On Points’, Etude pour ‘Sur pointes’), 1928, # 852, CRW-02, p. 211: sizes 36.8 x 35.2 cm (14 ½ x 13 7/8 in), adding: “Apparently, Nina Kandinsky and Will Grohmann confused this work with a watercolour recorded in the Handlist as number 263, ‘Zu einem Punkt’, which is also dated 1928. The present work, which is not recorded in the Handlist, is a study for ‘Auf Spitzen’ of 1928 (Roethel and Benjamin no.876).” p. 211. In a 1972 catalogue, Charleroi, the painting is listed as “Sur des pointes” (listed in 1984, # 876, CRP-02, p. 806, likewise in French as “Sur pointes”).

in sizes I myself could not check. This seemingly trivial example demonstrates that even extensive studies done by serious scholars, in this case Will Grohmann, are indeed susceptible to error.

To realistically appreciate, honor and defend the immense work of the involved researcher who accomplished the huge task of assembling a catalogue raisonné of an artist, one cannot and should not make the catalogue raisonné the sole source responsible for authentication, nor for dating when the work was not dated by the artist (and in cases the author CR prefers a certain date differing from the date given by the artist, one has to be open for reconsidering such a claim).

Authentication should rely on various sources, like testimony from next of kin and others known to have been close to the involved artist, double checked data and judgement offered by specialists. It should not depend on the sole judgement of any one author of a catalogue raisonné. In Kandinsky's case this obviously includes the testimony of his wife Nina Kandinsky. Her judgement, as she often confirmed authenticity by inscribing herself in pencil on the reverse side, is in principle legally valid. With this authentication alone, and with justification, many unknown, even unsigned and undated, and even not located works have been included in the various catalogues raisonnés and in important public collections.²⁵⁶

Needless to add, that for the catalogues raisonneés to remain trustworthy, anyone responsible for future addenda cannot decide in some cases to trust the authenticating inscriptions or declarations of Nina Kandinsky and ignore these in other cases. This has unfortunately been the case in the assembly of Kandinsky's catalogues raisonnés.²⁵⁷ The largest tranche including hundreds of Kandinsky's drawings, sketchbooks and many watercolors was accepted in 1980, some earlier in the 1970's, by the Centre Pompidou and the Lenbachhaus, although most of these works are not signed, not dated, do not occur in the Handlists, and have not previously been documented and were rightfully acknowledged and authenticated by Nina Kandinsky. In case of the Lenbachhaus, unsigned and undated works were also accepted as part of the bequest from Gabriele Münter.

Concerning the series of Kandinsky's works listed in the Catalogue Raisonné for the watercolors there are some from the year 1922, which the author CR has specifically indicated as works listed in Kandinsky's own Handlist of watercolors.²⁵⁸ Author CR writes:

²⁵⁶ For instance, the main and large bulk of drawings by Kandinsky at the Centre Pompidou are unsigned and undated. These are authenticated solely based on Nina Kandinsky's judgement – most between c. 1975-1980. Simultaneously there is, for instance, a very early oil painting titled "Odessa, Port" (1898, 65 x 45 cm), in the collection of an important museum, the State Tretyakov Gallery, in Moscow, that is not included in the Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings, nor in the addenda of later date.

²⁵⁷ The legal aspects of this are currently under further investigation.

²⁵⁸ As far as is known the following Handlists exist: two Handlists of woodcuts, one Handlist of paintings, one Handlist of oil studies, one Handlist of "Farbige Zeichnungen" ("Colored Drawings"), initially started in about 1904, CRW-01, p. 16. In 1922 Kandinsky started a Handlist of Watercolors – the Handlist frequently

By the time Kandinsky returned to Germany at the end of 1921, he had begun to keep track of his watercolors and, the following year, he started to record them in a separate Handlist of watercolors. There seems to be a correlation between the numbered watercolors at the beginning of the Handlist and those in Nina Kandinsky's handwritten lists of works sent to exhibitions from 1922-4 which she made in a notebook.²⁵⁹ According to her list in this notebook, watercolors numbered 1-22 were exhibited at the Galerie Goldschmidt-Wallerstein in Berlin (for which there was no catalogue). Subsequently, the unsold works, plus a watercolor numbered 23, were recorded by Nina as having been shown in Stockholm at Gummessons Konsthandel in October of the same year. The numbers and dates of the fourteen watercolors correspond exactly with Nina's handwritten list.²⁶⁰

A confusion arises with the note by Will Grohmann, after all a close friend of the Kandinskys, in his major book published in 1958,²⁶¹ that the artist created about twenty-five watercolors in 1922. Author CR in the Guggenheim catalogue from 1980,²⁶² mentions a total of seventeen watercolors registered for that year. This is the number Kandinsky listed himself; the Handlist does not show all numbers listed. Fourteen years later, in the Catalogue Raisonné,²⁶³ the author CR listed a total of thirty-eight works to be identified for 1922, correctly repeating only seventeen watercolors are certain to be listed in Kandinsky's Handlist, a total of five watercolors as uncertain to be listed in the Handlist, works for which she used her own judgement as they were neither described nor registered by Kandinsky, and a total of eighteen watercolors as "Not in Handlist" including several gouaches and works with tempera. See Appendix II. The author CR includes in her CRW five works

mentioned in the main text. A machine typed Handlist of drawings dates from c. 1931 (considered by Vivian Endicott Barnett to be incomplete and sometimes contradictory). Handlist = *Hauskatalog* in German. From the Handlist of watercolors it seems feasible the handwritten notes were inscribed at various different moments, maybe even years or decades apart. Already the notes referring to sales (hardly any artist sells a work on the day of finishing the work) indicate that Kandinsky himself, quite likely also Nina, made notes at later dates in the Handlists.

²⁵⁹ Nina Kandinsky's notebooks are at the Centre Pompidou.

²⁶⁰ CRW-01, p. 34.

²⁶¹ WG, p. 172: "In 1922 he completed six paintings and about twenty-five watercolors (Kandinsky began to keep a catalogue of his watercolors in 1922). Although he needed considerable time to adjust himself to his new circumstances, he accomplished a great deal. A sign that he had burned his bridges, and intended to stay in Germany forever, is the fact that early in 1922 he once again began to note the titles of his works in German (from No.244 on in KK)." More firmly, Grohmann states, WG, p.186: "The number of watercolors also increased. We have twenty-five dating from 1922, ..."

²⁶² See Vivian Endicott Barnett in Thomas M. Messer, *Kandinsky Watercolors* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1980, ISBN 0 89207 027 7), permalink: https://archive.org/stream/waterco00solo/waterco00solo_djvu.txt : "In 1922 Kandinsky began to catalogue his watercolors in a Handlist. He recorded seventeen watercolors during that year, ..." In the foreword to this catalogue Thomas Messer thanks Nina Kandinsky for allowing Vivian Endicott Barnett to study Kandinsky's own Handlist.

²⁶³ CRW-02, p. 18-48.

indicated as “possibly” or “probably”, the following numbers of Kandinsky’s own Handlist are missing from the Catalogue Raisoné for 1922: (15, 16,) 19 or 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26.²⁶⁴

In both volumes of *Kandinsky Drawings, Catalogue Raisoné* some addenda to the Catalogue Raisoné of the watercolors have been published. There are twelve watercolors in CRD-01. As well as two gouaches, two oil paintings on cardboard, all from 1903-1919; none listed in the Handlist, while some as reference to authenticity have an inscription on the reverse side by Nina Kandinsky. Also not included are twelve watercolors from 1903-1943, some including gouache paint, none of 1922 in CRD-02, plus an addendum of seven oil paintings, also none of 1922.²⁶⁵

The Société Kandinsky and “eine Suite”

Considering these facts in combination with the argument in the main text of this case-study why “eine Suite” is likely to have been made simultaneously to “Aquarelle No. 23”, it seems plausible to consider the watercolor titled “eine Suite” to correspond to No. 24 in the Handlist. It is remarkable that in the Handlist several numbers are not mentioned. Kandinsky often made tiny pencil sketches in the Handlist to identify what work belonged to what title and date. As one example of a discrepancy between the Handlist and the Catalogue Raisoné is that while there is a sketch in the Handlist identifying watercolor No. 22, to which even is added “Guggenheim”, this work is not included in the Catalogue Raisoné. In this context it is remarkable that another watercolor, listed as No. 34 in the Handlist, is included in the Catalogue Raisoné by reproduction of a small pencil sketch copied from the Handlist, with the note that the location of this work is unknown.²⁶⁶

Two unsuccessful attempts have been made to include “eine Suite” in the CRW. The first was in 1991 to which the Société Kandinsky answered in March 1992, signed by the

²⁶⁴ The information provided to the author by the Centre Pompidou (images of the Handlist 1922-1923 give the impression the first work of 1922 included is No. 22. The CRW-02 starts with mentioning # 563, (‘probably’) No. 17, 1922, CRW-02, p. 20. Here the author CR also mentions: “Although Kandinsky did not record numbers 16-21 in his Handlist of watercolors, they appear in lists of works prepared by his wife in 1922 in a manuscript notebook (Fonds Kandinsky)”. Furthermore, the last work prior to 1922 indicated as being included in the Handlist is # 523 “Spaziergang”, in the Handlist as “1920, No. 14 Promenade” (in collection of Nina Kandinsky until 1976, as gift by her since then at Centre Pompidou), CRW-01, p. 461. The author CR does not mention anything about No 15, nor in which year 1920-1922 No. 16 would be positioned. In the main text I have therefore added No. 15 and 16 between brackets. Interesting is to note that title “Promenade” chosen by Nina, like “Suite”, is a word that is used in both the French and German language – “Spaziergang” obviously not.

²⁶⁵ CRD-01, CRD-02.

²⁶⁶ ‘Untitled’, 2 December 1922, # 585, CRW-02 noted here is: “Probably acquired by unknown person in Germany, mid-1920s” p. 43.

author CR.²⁶⁷ While she confirms the right position of the signature (“signed at the bottom left with the monogram “K”, 1922”), in formally correct, neutral words the Société concluded this work would not be included in the catalogue raisonné of the watercolors which was at that time already in preparation for print. The statement in this letter that was the work “Sans titre. 1922” and the failure to refer to any inscription on the reverse side make one question whether the researcher saw the work out of its frame and inspected the reverse side. If she would have looked at the original one would assume she at least would have mentioned the work to be wrongly framed (with the signature at the bottom right). It seems likely the author CR only studied the not so good ektachrome. The rest of the committee cannot be blamed because, as is documented, they only saw an ektachrome of the front side.²⁶⁸

Although for Kandinsky under the auspices of the Société Kandinsky all decisions regarding the Catalogue Raisonné were established, it is important to acknowledge that all actual work was done by the author CR alone, trusted and reconfirmed by the other Société members. This is a normal procedure because the other members were busy museum directors.²⁶⁹

When the author of this case-study saw the watercolor in 2014 it was incorrectly framed: the work had been flipped sideways, the signature was on the bottom right side.²⁷⁰ It seemed the work was framed in this way up to this time, that would include when it had been shown to Author CR in New York, and not taken out of the frame which explains that she had not seen the reverse side. In the formal letter from the Société Kandinsky, a 5.5 x 5.3 cm black/white picture of the watercolor is pasted onto the letter. This picture is printed with rather high contrast and does not show much detail. On the top is the inscription in a blue pen “Société Kandinsky”. Nowhere is there a clear statement denying authenticity, no reference is made to the inscription on the reverse side by Nina Kandinsky, nor was there any recognition that the work had been incorrectly framed. All of these points bring one to

²⁶⁷ A letter dated Berlin 25th October 1991, with the request by Mr. Brusberg, Galerie Brusberg, on behalf of Mr. Heiner Pietzsch, addressed to Mrs. Vivian Endicott Barnett in New York, and her answer as Secrétaire de la Société Kandinsky dated Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, March 23rd 1992, are in the archives of the Collection Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch. Here the relevant passage: « ... a décidé de ne pas inclure l’oeuvre que vous avez soumise à son examen, à savoir: Sans titre. 1922 Aquarelle et encre de chine sur papier, 24 x 25.5 cm Signee en bas à gauche monogrammé ‘K’; datée 1922 ».

²⁶⁸ See footnote 245.

²⁶⁹ This is clearly stated in Dusseldorf, 9th June 1992, letter by Dr. Armin Zweite, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, member of the Société Kandinsky, directed to Mr. Heiner Pietzsch, Berlin. See footnote 275.

²⁷⁰ Quite a few standard framers by habit assume any work of art has to be signed at the bottom right, and frame the work accordingly. Kandinsky, however, after first signing his works more or less randomly, from about 1916-1917 made it his habit to always sign on the lower left corner.

wonder whether the original work was actually viewed, or maybe even only briefly, or only the ektachrome, or only this small black and white image, had been seen.

A second attempt was by letter, by the author of this case-study in name of Mr. Pietzsch, in October 2014 with the request to meet in New York. Because no response was received, new professional pictures of front and reverse side of “eine Suite” were forwarded with help of the Guggenheim in New York to the author CR who responded she had not heard from the Guggenheim, hence had not seen the new documentation. She moreover repeated the earlier decision of the Société Kandinsky.²⁷¹ This letter was written a month before the Société Kandinsky was formally dissolved. Upon dissolution of the Société Kandinsky at the end of 2014, the three major institutes holding most of Kandinsky’s work formulated the following collective statement:

The Catalogue Raisonné Committee of the Société Kandinsky no longer examines and studies works attributed to Wassily Kandinsky regarding their possible inclusion in an Addendum to the catalogue raisonné. None of the members of the committee gives opinions. Likewise, the curators and staff at the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum cannot authenticate works of art. We regret that we cannot assist you and cannot refer your query to an expert.²⁷²

This leaves scholars, collectors, galleries, auction houses and museums to make up their own minds upon studying the available data.

Notes on the Catalogues Raisonnés of the Watercolors

These notes are a selection and summary of observations and are not intended to diminish the importance of the Catalogues Raisonnés, but to demonstrate the need for further research and re-validation of works. The main reason is twofold: most catalogues raisonnés in fact and for practical reasons depend on the research of one person alone, challenged by incomplete data, which means that the scholar must interpret in ways that are not empirical. Therefore, new interpretations and addenda should always be allowed and welcomed. Besides, as the author CR acknowledges, for instance for dating unsigned or undated works, she has to follow her own hypotheses, making a judgement at best subjective.²⁷³ Therefore,

²⁷¹ A friendly letter to Fré Ilgen, October 20th 2014, on official stationery of the Société Kandinsky, Centre Georges Pompidou, contains the following excerpt: “...The members of the Catalogue Raisonné Committee of the Société Kandinsky studied the watercolor belonging to Heinz Pietzsch and decided not to include it in the catalogue raisonné. We informed Mr. Pietzsch in a letter dated 23 March 1998. The decision was definitive and the work has not been included in any of the addenda.” Note: 1998 should be 1992 (see above).

²⁷² Quoted in official statement provided by the Lenbachhaus in an email to the author of this case-study, dated 29th April 2015.

²⁷³ For example, the author of the CR writes while describing ‘Untitled’, 1913, not dated, # 376, : “The work on paper can be dated later than the glass painting because the distinctive Indian ink lines and circular forms

the following notes are not personally aimed at any author CR, as stated before, but rather aim to shed light on the reasons to appreciate these volumes for what they are.

Most importantly, it is unfortunate that the author CR did not indicate in her research which works she actually viewed, nor did she state from which works the reverse sides were actually viewed (sometimes it is mentioned information on the reverse side was not available), and of which works information from third persons was used. There is no mention as to whether any of the immense quantity of data were double-checked.

While I researched only a limited number of works on paper by Kandinsky, I found discrepancies between the sizes I measured and had verified by double checking by either my research assistant or a staff-member of one of the museums and the sizes noted by some museums owning Kandinsky's works, and the sizes quoted in the catalogues raisonnés. See Appendix IV.

In some cases the author CR gives an exact description of who wrote a title or year on the reverse side, but unfortunately not in all cases (sometimes it is mentioned information on the reverse side was not available). For the watercolor "Entwurf zu Roter Fleck II", 1921, # 544, CRW-01, p. 477, the Catalogue Raisonné only notes: "Inscribed on reverse mount: 'Kandinsky 1921'". In reality, there is both an inscription on the backside of the mount and on the work itself. On the mount it reads 'Kandinsky 1921', but, not mentioned in the Catalogue Raisonné, and rather importantly: in the artist's own handwriting, plus the stamp of the Kunstmuseum Dusseldorf and "1964/68." On the work itself one clearly can see a stamp with cyrillic writing graciously identified by the specialized art historian Dr. Alexander Arzamastsev as a customs stamp "Commission of Export Control of Works of Art and Antiquities", typical for the 1960s and 1970s, and an unidentifiable short word in Cyrillic "не prob.", written in pencil. The recent publication of this museum's graphic collection describes the Russian stamp and pencil mark on the reverse side of the work itself, and the name on the reverse side of the mount as well.

Another example is the watercolor auctioned at Sotheby's, 'Untitled' (also known as "Aquarelle mouvementée"), 1923, # 665, CRW-02, p. 92. The Catalogue Raisonné notes: "Inscribed on reverse: 'No. 109 Aquarelle mouvementée, 1923'" but fails to mention that this is in pencil in Kandinsky's own handwriting, plus the sentence, in his handwriting as well: "Coll. Mdm. N. Kandinsky", as well as a label of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Couleurs et Toiles Fines", Paris, a Paris artist's supply shop 1905-1996, and a Paris customs stamp. Besides, the

occur only in other watercolors from late 1913. The fact that the compositional elements are not reversed in the watercolors reinforces the hypothesis." (p. 337, CRW-01).

French title makes it evident the work was thus inscribed while both Vassily and Nina Kandinsky were in Paris.



No. 10 Aquarelle mouvementée, 1923



Annual Contribution for the Kandinsky Society, 1925

Some combinations of print technique and watercolor are included in the Catalogue Raisonné, some others are not. An example of Kandinsky adding watercolors to a lithograph is his “Annual Contribution for the Kandinsky Society”, from 1925, not included in CRW-02, private collection, on loan to the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern.²⁷⁴ An earlier example of Kandinsky using a print technique combined with watercolor is included in the Catalogue Raisonné, an etching with watercolor and Indian ink on paper.²⁷⁵ Besides lithography, because of Kandinsky’s use of woodcuts through a large part of his career, one may assume he occasionally may have made some black forms and lines using a woodblock, adding watercolors. This technique would explain some monochromatic black shapes in some of his watercolors that do not seem to be handpainted Indian ink.

The author of any catalogue raisonné is bound to make judgements based on interpretation and intuition for example when the signature, date or any inscriptions on the reverse side are missing, but such conclusions are not empirical and should indeed allow other interpretations as well. One example is “Farbstudie mit Rauten” supposedly from 1913.²⁷⁶ This study is neither signed nor dated, nor titled by Kandinsky. The only reason for including this in the Catalogue Raisonné, as with the other three “Farbstudien”,²⁷⁷ is that

²⁷⁴ Michael Baumgartner, Annegret Hoberg, Christine Hopfengart, *Klee & Kandinsky, Neighbors, Friends, Rivals* (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2015, ISBN 978 3 7913 6626 5), p. 178.

²⁷⁵ “Entwurf zu ‘Komposition IV’”, 1911, signed not dated, # 267, CRW-01, p. 236.

²⁷⁶ “Farbstudie mit Rauten”, 1913, not signed or dated, “inscribed l.l. not by artist: ‘15/16’”, # 346, CRW-01, p. 312.

²⁷⁷ “Farbstudien mit Angaben zur Maltechnik”, 1913, not signed or dated, #344, CRW-01, p. 311; “Farbstudie-Quadrat mit konzentrischen Ringen”, 1913, not signed or dated, # 345, CRW-01, p. 312; “Farbstudie mit

they were part of the Estate of Gabriele Münter. It seems clear that “Farbstudien mit Angaben zur Maltechnik” was from 1913 as indicated by a label on the reverse side referencing it was in an exhibition that year.



Farbstudie mit Rauten, 1913

“Farbstudie mit Rauten”, whose square grid is very untypical for 1913 and looks very different from the other, much more freehand and circular shaped color studies typical for Kandinsky at that time, is also on a paper different from “Farbstudie-Quadrat mit konzentrischen Ringen”. The author CR mentions these works were done on the same paper of a particular 1913 sketchbook.²⁷⁸ It is, however, not necessarily logical to assume a work made on paper from a specific and dated sketchbook would therefore be from that year. Artists do not always work systematically, may use a sketchbook now and again, may even occasionally in a haste to create, unintentionally skip one or several pages in a sketchbook, and later, in need of paper, leaf through old sketchbooks and work on some empty sheets.²⁷⁹ Underwriting this observation, CRD-02 documents that in a sketchbook numerous sheets have been removed.²⁸⁰ This explains why “Farbstudie mit Rauten” gives the impression possibly being from many years later than “Farbstudien mit Angaben zur Maltechnik,” and could fit in Kandinsky’s evolving interest in the checkerboard motif around 1920, continued in following years. Compare the work, for instance, with the geometric and colorful grids of

konzentrischen Ringen”, 1913, not signed or dated,” inscribed l.l. and l.r. not by the artist: ‘17/18“, # 347, CRW-01, p. 313.

²⁷⁸ In context to “Farbstudie mit Rauten”, # 346: “The sheet comes from the Haas und Hussel sketchbook (p. 15) in which the artist made numerous watercolors and drawings in 1913” (CRW-01, p. 312).

²⁷⁹ Examples that Kandinsky occasionally left pages blank in his sketchbooks can be found repeatedly in the CRD-02, even in 1913. For instance: Sketchbook 29, 1913-1914, pages 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and pages 14-32 are all blank. CRD-02, p. 262.

²⁸⁰ Sketchbook 23, “1906-1907 and probably 1903”: “Numerous sheets have been removed at the beginning and in the middle of the sketchbook” (CRD-02, p. 204).

watercolors “Einige Flächen”, or “Kariertes”.²⁸¹ It is possible, of course, that Kandinsky created “Farbstudie mit Rauten,” as chance experiment in 1913. Because the work is neither signed nor dated, the decision as to what is the top and if the work was intended in a horizontal or vertical format is arbitrary.

Several undated and sometimes unsigned works from about 1915-1917 present other difficulties to the Catalogues Raisonnés. See section 5.2. Signature, for a summary of how Kandinsky several times during his career changed his monogram-signature, making the years 1915-1917 particularly challenging for any author of Catalogues Raisonnés. The author CR’s reasoning can be followed, but it cannot be seen as only possible interpretation. Artists do tend to occasionally pick up works from years back for instance while viewing all works when moving from one studio to a next, something Kandinsky did regularly, or when Kandinsky in 1922 decided to make an inventory of all his watercolors, the so-called Handlist. At such moments artists may wish to improve such works, factually changing or adding to some older works, and/or looking backwards, decide to date and sign undated and unsigned works.

Here are a few examples of watercolors where the dating is controversial. Kandinsky decided to change # 428, 1915-1916, from a vertical to a horizontal position, signed and dated twice: one signature with 1915, as usual for that year, and one signature with 1916 in the way that became more his habit about two years later.²⁸² Kandinsky may have decided the change in position favored by himself when he reviewed his work, for instance, in 1922 when he started his Handlist, and decided that the work actually was made in 1916. Some more examples of works that make dating open for discussion: # 462 (signed but not dated), which author CR identifies as of the same sketchbook as # 461, and with a comparable composition (see above for the discussion on works originating from sketchbooks). # 408 from 1915, signed and dated lower left, is reproduced correctly in color, but flipped upside down in black/white on the page where it is described.²⁸³ An example of the challenges for any researcher are two watercolors which seem a pretty close match, but have been differently dated. One is not dated, the other is dated 1917. The author CR reasons about the 1917 work that it “closely resembles a larger version and a drawing of the same motif

²⁸¹ “Einige Flächen”, December 1925, # 762, CRW-02, p. 150; “Kariertes”, December 1925, # 766, CRW-02, p. 152.

²⁸² ‘Untitled,’ 1915-1916, “Signed and dated l.l.: ‘K/16’ and u.l.: ‘K/15’”, # 428, CRW-01, p. 375.

²⁸³ ‘Untitled,’ 1915, # 408, CRW-01 black and white image, p. 360; color image: p. 369, mentioning the work to be signed in the lower left – such a signature is noticeable in the color reproduction, hence the bl/wh picture is turned upside down.

dated 1915 (see no. 414.).”²⁸⁴ Besides the simple fact that once an artist has finished an ink drawing he does not necessarily make a watercolor with the same composition immediately, watercolor # 414 is signed with the “V” and “K”, indicating a later signing than 1915-1916. This work has an inscription on the reverse side (not by the artist), dating the work to be from 1920. As the work is not dated on the front side, this could offer reasons for the dating of 1920. Although the decision of the author CR to date this work 1915-1917 is understandable, it is still arbitrary.

An interesting other note concerns the dating of a not signed or dated watercolor in the CRW-02 to be of 1922, while the oil painting with the matching composition is signed and dated 1921. The author CR reasons that she follows the statement by Nina Kandinsky written on the reverse that the work would be of 1922. This is another example that in cases of doubt, or with missing data, for the CRW the opinion of Nina Kandinsky was decisive.²⁸⁵

Here I would like to embark upon a longer discussion of a particular watercolor, shown to me in a New York private collection.²⁸⁶ The analysis of the watercolor study for “The Last Judgment” in the David M. Solinger Collection yields some interesting results. First and foremost, the work is signed but not dated, while the painterly style shows the evolution of techniques from 1912 destined for more prominence in the course of Kandinsky’s development. A short analysis will show once again that an author CR cannot escape personal interpretations, and other options are just as valid. I am grateful to Mrs. Betty Ann Besch Solinger, widow of Mr. David M. Solinger, and to his daughter Ms. Lynn Stern for allowing me to study this important work. Ms. Stephanie Wiles, The Richard J. Schwartz Director, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, kindly offered a good picture of the work.

The signature on this work is difficult to see in the dark-colored bottom left corner, but can be discerned to show a “K” inside a loosely curved “V”, but not a “K” inside a triangular shape as would be more typical for 1910-1915. In principle, Kandinsky used various ways of signing and there are many examples where he signed with his full name

²⁸⁴ ‘Untitled,’ (also known as “Abstraktnaya Kompozitsiya”), 1915-1917, “Inscribed on the reverse by A.A. Sidorov: ‘1920’”, # 414, CRW-01, p. 364; ‘Untitled’, 1917, (also know as ‘Kleines Aquarell’), # 471, CRW-01, p. 413. The corresponding drawing is ‘Untitled’, (signed and dated) 1915, inscribed on the reverse by Nina Kandinsky ‘Kandinsky/Dessin 1915/ 20 ¾ x 14’, # 382, CRD-01, p.194. In Nina Kandinsky’s collection until 1980.

²⁸⁵ The watercolor: ‘Untitled,’ 1922, not signed or dated, # 561, CRW-02, p. 19. The oil painting “Schachbrett”, 1921, # 678, CRP-02, p. 631.

²⁸⁶ “Study for Last Judgement”, 1912, WG, p. 76 and 346. The same work as “Auferstehung”, 1911, not dated, # 276, CRW-01, p. 246. The work is a promised gift to the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, where also all notes and related documents of David M. Solinger will be stored.

until about 1910. After that, he preferred to sign with a “K” inside a loosely painted/written triangle until about 1910-1915/1916, thereafter gradually changing to sign with a “K” inside a loosely curved “V.” After about 1916-1918 he seemed to prefer to sign with the “K” inside a sharper “V” plus the last two digits of the year.



Study for “The Last Judgment”, 1911 or 1912?

Will Grohmann dates the work to 1912. Since Grohmann’s important book, the work is included in the CRW-01, a catalogue of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, and, upon my request, recently remeasured. Now there are four different sets of sizes registered.²⁸⁷ Because the measurements taken by Ms. Lynn Stern were double checked by a third person, and it is not documented if this was done for the other publications, it seems reasonable to consider her measurements the most accurate. The sizes mentioned in the CRW-01 will intend to mark the sizes inside the brown taped image. The author CR is aware though that the artist partially painted over the brown tape, after all, she reproduced an image of the work including the brown tape, thus one could or even should consider the work to include the brown tape, hence provide the sizes outside the brown tape.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ In the notes of David M. Solinger, likely from 1952 when he purchased the work, the dimensions are given as 12 ½ x 9 ½ (31 x 24 cm). Grohmann, WG, p. 346, measures the work to be 12 1/8 x 9 3/8 inches. # 276, CRW-01, p. 246 offers the dimensions 11 ¾ x 8 ¾ inches (30 x 22.2 cm), 12 3/8 x 9 3/8 inches (31.4 x 23.4 cm) mounted. In the catalogue of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 2003, likely taken over from David M. Solinger’s notes one can read 12 ½ x 9 ½ inches (and on label, reverse side: frame: 20 x 17 inches). The measurements made in 2016 by Lynn Stern and double checked are 12 ½ x 9 5/16 inches (inside brown tape 11 7/8 x 8 7/8 inches), mount 19 ¾ x 16 ½, and there is a front overmat 19 7/8 x 16 5/8.

²⁸⁸ This particular watercolor still shows brown tape framing the work. Paper tape that artists traditionally have used for stretching paper to be used for watercolor. An artist will soak the paper in water on both sides, flattened it on a board, and then use the paper tape to hold it in place. When the paper dries it is stretched

Notes in the archives of the collector David M. Solinger include a mention of the year 1913, which is crossed out, and the year 1912 appears with a question mark.²⁸⁹ Grohmann describes the group of works Kandinsky created on the end of the world and this “includes one more painting (the last of 1910) which looks like a fragment, a watercolor (ed.: here Grohmann refers to the watercolor under discussion) and two paintings on glass of 1911.”²⁹⁰ It is important here to note that Grohmann acknowledged that Kandinsky picked up features of these works later on, such as in 1914 in the painting on glass titled “The Apocalyptic Horsemen”.²⁹¹

The author CR reasons that this work was made in 1911, and she refers to letters from August 1911 by Kandinsky to Gabriele Münter that he was working on paintings of the Last Judgement. She adds “The present watercolor presents in slightly more abstract form the images of a glass painting which is inscribed with the Russian word for Resurrection and dated August 1911”.²⁹² The argument of the author CR to date the work to be from 1911 makes sense when one compares the composition of the work to the painting on glass “Resurrection”, dated August 1911. Likely following the CRW-01, the catalogue of the David M. Solinger Collection published by the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Cornell University lists the work as being from 1911 although for the dimensions the catalogue relies on David M. Solinger’s notes.

However, in 1911 Kandinsky’s works were still implicitly more figurative, and this started to perceptibly loosen up in early 1912. It could be that Kandinsky just made this

completely flat and will stay flat when water and color are added. The artist usually removes the brown tape afterwards (using water). Especially because many non-artists do not know this about the brown tape and it is rare in Kandinsky’s works to find such un-removed tape, it is unfortunate that this was not mentioned in the catalogue raisonné.

²⁸⁹ The archives also note that the work was exhibited in 1956 at the Andrew Dickson White House, the art historical museum on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Furthermore, the work was shown also at “The New Gallery, July 1961” and mention the name of photographer Walter Rosenblum. In his notes, the collector mentioned on what page and with what number this work is published in Will Grohmann’s book, and notes, “See letter 1/9/59 from Will Grohmann in file”. His notes also refer to the publication in CRW-01. The work has four labels on the reverse side: one from The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art Cornell University (from the exhibition “The David M. Solinger Collection: Masterworks of the 20th Century”, 2003), a hand-typed label “Kandinsky, Study for the Last Judgement, Watercolour & India Ink, 1912”, a label of the Uptown Gallery; a label stating that “Ultra-Violet Filtering Plexiglass” had been added when the work was reframed and protective plexiglass added in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the Uptown Gallery.

²⁹⁰ WG, p. 111.

²⁹¹ CC 665, WG, p. 404.

²⁹² CRW-01, p. 246.

watercolor indeed in 1911 as free experiment, quasi pre-announcing the process of gradual liberation in his artistic expression.



Auferstehung and Engel des Jüngsten Gerichts, both August 1911



Drawing for woodcut Jüngster Tag, 1912

Other interpretations are also possible. For one, artists do not necessarily first work on paper and upon finishing, start an oil painting, but can continue working and re-working works on paper even while working on an oil painting, or painting on glass, or after the oil painting with the same subject has been finished.

Will Grohmann mentions that Kandinsky finished his oil painting “Deluge I” on March 22, 1912. Kandinsky also created that same year a woodcut “Last Judgement” (“Jüngster Tag”), for which he first created a drawing in 1912.²⁹³ This drawing is not an exact sketch for the watercolor here discussed, but shows remarkable kinship in such elements as the mountain as center, the weird “tea-pot” castle on top of the mountain, similar blobby figure in the bottom right corner. Probably most remarkable indicator for a 1912 dating, beside the more “wild” painting style, is the yellow-orange form entering the composition from the top left and sliding diagonally downwards to the right.

The author CR correctly recognizes the resemblance to the angels’ trumpet, perhaps announcing the Last Judgement of the title in the work on glass “Last Judgement”, (“Auferstehung”).²⁹⁴ In “Last Judgement” the figure is clearly a trumpet, and there is also a recognizable angel, including face and hands. The combination of the “trumpet” with the “teapot” castle behind it in both here depicted paintings behind glass is an angel with a mountain and castle. However, in “The Last Judgment” in the David M. Solinger Collection

²⁹³ Vorzeichnung für den Holzschnitt ‘Jüngster Tag’ (Preparatory Drawing for the Woodcut ‘Judgement Day’), signed but not dated, 1912, CRD-01, p. 115

²⁹⁴ “Auferstehung” (also known as “Jüngster Gericht”) (“Resurrection”), Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel, *Das bunte Leben, Wassily Kandinsky im Lenbachhaus*, Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1995 (ISBN 3 7701 3785 X), p.338. Titled “Last Judgement”, 1911, 664, WG, p.404.

the “castle shapes” above the yellow now “boat-shape” can be associated with parts of a sailing vessel, less with a rendered castle and trumpet.

It is typical for artists at work that they unintentionally combine forms and shapes by chance that later offer also intriguing associations. Becoming aware of such association may inspire an artist for his next work. As such, it is revealing to point at the vanishing of the angel’s face and hands in the watercolor “Study for Last Judgment”, while all pictorial elements now emphasize the association with a sailing vessel more clearly. This is the same in the drawing for the woodcut of 1912, although here the position and size of the former-trumpet/now-sailing-vessel changed size and position and lands at the top left corner.

Last but not least, though not included in the Catalogues Raisonnés, is the fact that many of Kandinsky’s works on paper were hand-cut on one, on two or on three sides. A whole new research project would also be necessary to decide on the different papers Kandinsky used. This is not a simple issue, because he also experimented widely, meaning for watercolors he did not only use paper fabricated for watercolor. Kandinsky, for instance, occasionally used paper fabricated for printing for his painted works.

APPENDIX II

Basic data for Kandinsky's 1922 output

Notes:

Nearly each individual work is uniquely sized. There are various reasons why this is so:

Kandinsky may have been an atypical artist and have taken a particular liking to cutting each single work into a different size – this is quite unusual, because artists in general prefer to keep working and not lose time in unnecessarily cutting paper, but research has shown Kandinsky did just that. We may assume for economic reasons to, for instance, cut a paper in two parts, one for a larger watercolor, the other part for a possible smaller drawing. In the Handlist of watercolors one finds many different sizes of works, but still large groups on the same paper sizes: for instance, most works from 1922-1923 are indicated with sizes of 42 x 47 cm, while quite a few are noted with sizes 25 x 36.5 cm.

It could be that works on paper were displayed in some overmat and framed, and cut by involved gallerists, museum staff, owners, or framers.

The margin of different sizes of works from the same years can also be the outcome of data transmission through the years from one source to the other, while nobody checked the sizes at the original work on paper; a logical consequence of humans handling information across time.

Drawings 1922

Listed in Catalogue Raisonné, Volume One, Individual Drawings

Nr.	Title	Materials	Sizes paper
# 488	Ohne Titel c.1921-1922 <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	pencil on heavy grayish tan paper	36 x 27.6 cm (image 20 x 14.1 cm)
# 489	Ohne Titel, c.1921-1922 <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	pencil on paper	31.65 x 23.9 cm (image 23.7 x 20.1 cm)
# 490	Ohne Titel c.1921-1922 <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	pencil on tan paper from sketchpad	15.4 x 10.6 cm
(# 491	Ohne Titel, 1921, dated 1.1)		
# 492	Ohne Titel, 1922 <i>(inscribed on reverse by Nina Kandinsky '1922/N1. Zeichnung zu einem Aquarell/ 43 ¼ x 33')</i>	India ink on heavy paper	33.1 x 43.2 cm
# 493	Ohne Titel <i>(inscribed on reverse by Nina Kandinsky: 'Kandinsky/1922/N.2')</i>	India ink on paper	30.4 x 24.8 cm
# 494	Ohne Titel <i>(signed on reverse 1.1 K/22, inscribed on reverse No.3/1922)</i>	India ink on paper	29.5 x 25.4 cm
# 495	Ohne Titel (List of drawings 1922, 4)	India ink on paper	24.5 x 30.5 cm
# 496	Ohne Titel (signed and dated 1.1: K/22)	India ink on paper	25 x 32.5 cm
# 497	Ohne Titel <i>(signed and dated on reverse 1.1 K/22; inscribed on reverse '1922/No.6')</i>	India ink on paper	22.5 x 16.8 cm

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# 498	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten I' <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tracing paper	26.8 x 23.4 cm
# 499	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten I' <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tracing paper	28.1 x 23.4 cm
# 500	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten I' <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tracing paper	25.9 x 22.6 cm
# 501	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten III' <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tracing paper	30 x 23.8 cm
# 502	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten III' <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tracing paper	31.8 x 22.7 cm
# 503	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten III' <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tracing paper	31.7 x 22.5 cm
# 504	Entwurf für ein Wandbild In der Juryfreien Kunstschau <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tracing paper	24 x 20 cm
# 505	Entwurf, early 1920s <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on paper	10.2 x 9.6 cm
# 506	Ohne Titel, c. 1922 <i>(no picture in Cat-Raisonné, not signed or dated – in private collection – similarities to 'Weisses Kreuz')</i>	India ink and pencil on paper	28 x 24 cm
# 507	Entwurf zu 'Radierung mit India ink on tan paper Fünf Diagonalen' <i>(not signed, not dated, from collection Nina K)</i>		25.1 x 21.3 cm (image 15.2 x 10.3 cm)
# 508	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on thin cardboard	7.3 x 12.3 cm
# 509	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tan paper	15 x 10.3 cm
# 510	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	Pencil on tan paper	14.9 x 10.2 cm
# 511	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 <i>(not signed, from collection Nina K)</i>	India ink on tan paper	16.8 x 10.3 cm

Watercolors 1922

Listed in "Kandinsky, Catalogue Raisonné of the Watercolors" Volume Two 1922-1944

Notes:

- # all watercolors are created with pen and ink (Indian ink) and watercolor on paper (sometimes with visible pencil lines – note that while working with watercolor, pencil lines may be washed out, though not as a rule;
- # with * indicates a work in Kandinsky's own Handlist;
- # a work is marked as "probably" or "possibly" in the Handlist because the work is likewise marked in the Catalogue Raisonné;
- # for comparison: 'Eine Suite' paper measures 25.5 x 24 cm – image H 19.5 x W 20.9 cm
- # when titles are described as "known as", this is copied from the Catalogue Raisonné;

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Nrs. Catalogue Raisonné	titles/indications	sizes paper	sizes image
# 559	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten IV'	27.3 x 23.5 cm	
# 560	Entwurf zu 'Kleine Welten VII'	32.5 x 25 cm	27.3 x 23.5 cm
# 561	Ohne Titel	18.5 x 21.8 cm	
# 562	Ohne Titel	32.5 x 47 cm	
# 563 (probably *N.17)	Ohne Titel	31 x 46 cm	
# 564 (possibly *N.18)	Ohne Titel	32.5 x 47.5 cm	
	(known as 'The Black Line')		
# 565 (possibly *N.19 or 20)	Ohne Titel	40.5 x 36 cm	
	(known as 'Abstrakte Komposition mit schwarzem Strich')		
# 566	Ohne Titel	47.6 x 32.7 cm	
# 567	Ohne Titel	27.6 x 18.3 cm	
	(known as "Aquarell für Galston")		
# 568 (* N. 1922,23)	Ohne Titel	33 x 47.8 cm	
	(known as "Aquarelle No. 23")		
# 569 (probably *N.27)	Ohne Titel	26 x 35 cm	
# 570 (probably *N.28)	Ohne Titel	32.8 x 47.8 cm	
# 571	Ohne Titel	28 x 23.5 cm	
	(known as "Entwurf zu ,Komposition VIII'")		
# 572	Ohne Titel	32.5 x 47.8 cm	
	(known as "Aquarell für Gropius")		
# 573	"An die See und die Sonne"	32 x 24 cm	
	(known as "Aquarell für Gropius")		
# 574	"Entwurf für ein Ausstellungsplakat"	35 x 61.3 cm	
	(known as "Links von der Tür")		
# 575	"Entwurf für ein Ausstellungsplakat"	38.5 x 61 cm	
	(known as "Rechts von der Tür")		
# 576	"Entwurf für das Wandbild in der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand A"	34.7 x 60 cm	
# 577	"Entwurf für das Wandbild in der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand B"	34.7 x 60 cm	
# 578	"Entwurf für das Wandbild in der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand C"	34.7 x 60 cm	
# 579	"Entwurf für das Wandbild in der Juryfreien Kunstschau: Wand D"	34.9 x 60 cm	
# 580	"Entwurf für die vier Eckstücke In der Juryfreien Kunstschau"	34.8 x 57.8 cm	
# 581	Ohne Titel	34 x 24 cm	
# 582 (* xi 1922, 31, Nov)	Ohne Titel	32.8 x 47.6 cm	
#583 (* xi 1922, 32)	"Entwurf zu 'Betonte Ecken'"	46.9 x 41.7 cm	
# 584 (* xi 1922, 33)	Ohne Titel	46.7 x 42.5 cm	

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# 585 (* 2 xii 1922, 34)	Ohne Titel	47.5 x 33 cm
<i>Note: the picture in the Catalogue Raisonné shows a blurry image of a pencil drawing – this seems to have been copied and enlarged from a tiny sketch Kandinsky had made to mark this “watercolor” in his Handlist;²⁹⁵</i>		
# 586 (* 3 xii 1922, 35)	Ohne Titel	31.5 37.7 cm
# 587(* 15 xii 1922, 36)	“Entwurf zu ‚Blau““	22.4 x 16.9 cm
# 588 (* 20 xii 1922, 37)	Ohne Titel (known as “Komposition mit rotem Dreieck“)	38 x 31.6 cm
# 589 (* 20 xii 1922, 38)	“Schwarzer Kreis“	47 x 42 cm
# 590 (* 21 xii 1922, 39)	“Heller Kreis“ (known also as “Circles”; “Circles in a Circle”)	36 x 36 cm
# 591 (* 21 xii 1922, 40)	“Schwung“	46 x 42 cm
# 592 (* 22 xii 1922, 41)	“Grauer Fleck“ (know also as “Solidity“)	46.7 x 42.5 cm
# 593 (* 22 xii 1922, 42)	“Entwurf zu ‘Auf Weiss II’	46.5 x 41.5 cm
# 594 (* 23 xii 1922, 43)	“Graue Form“	46.7 x 42.2 cm
#595 (* 1922, 44)	Ohne Titel (known as “Overture”)	26.9 x 36.6 cm
# 596 (* 1922, 45)	“Jahresschluss“	26.9 x 36.5 cm
# 597 (* 1922, 46)	Ohne Titel	33 x 48.5 cm

Paintings 1922

Listed in the Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings, Volume Two 1916-1944²⁹⁶

Nrs.	Handlist II paintings	Title	sizes
# 683	no. 242	“Blauer Kreis“ Painted in Berlin, dated 1.1.	110 x 100 cm
# 684	no. 243	”Weisses Kreuz“ Painted in Berlin and Weimar (Jan-June)	100 x 110 cm
# 685	no.244	“Weisse Zickzacks“ Painted in Weimar	95 x 125 cm
# 686	no.245	“Blau-Rot“ Painted in Weimar	120 x 110 cm
# 687	no. 246	“Schwarzer Raster“ Painted in Weimar	96 x 106 cm

²⁹⁵See picture of two pages of the Handlist, CRW-02, p. 34.

²⁹⁶ Hans K. Roethel and Benjamin, Jean K. Benjamin, *Kandinsky, Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil-Paintings, Volume Two 1916-1944* (London: Sotheby’s Publications, 1991, ISBN 0 85667 166 5).

APPENDIX III

Kandinsky's creative output c.1916-1925

Though it is always difficult to know the reasons for a flux in an artist's creative output, the following numbers show an impact of the Russian Revolution, in 1917 when Kandinsky mainly focused on small sized works and works on small sized glass, his involvement as teacher at the vChutemas in 1919 which caused Kandinsky to spend much time on non-artistic, administrative activities, but also inspired him to pick up serious painting again. And later as director at the INKhuk from 1920 when Kandinsky started focusing on a more clear form and composition language, his problems living under harsh conditions in Moscow up to 1921, the interval caused by the change from Moscow to Weimar via a stay in Berlin (1921-1922), the leap into creative abundance, after having settled as Bauhaus professor. This short overview of Kandinsky's creative output is helpful to understand why the works created in summer 1922 reflect a pivotal moment in the artist's personal life as well as in his artistic style.²⁹⁷

year	paintings	watercolors	drawings
1916	16	37	50
1917	29	22	16
1918	17	13	19
1919	6	10	10
1920	10	23	3
1921	8	14	4
1922	5	38	19
1923	19	67	36
1924	24	81	15
1925	28	24	79

Notes:

in 1916 works are mostly small sizes, only 2 paintings c. 100 x 78 cm;

in 1917 paintings include 11 small landscapes, 8 small "Hinterglass" with figures, only 2 larger paintings c. 100 x 130 cm;

in 1918 all concern "Hinterglass" paintings, small sizes, c. 25 x 31 cm;

in 1920 including 5 paintings c. 100 x 140 cm;

in 1921 all paintings are c. 120 x 140 cm;

in 1922 each painting is c. 100 x 115 cm;

in 1923 as average each painting c. 100 x 110 cm;

in 1924 most paintings are c. 50 x 70 cm;

in 1925 drawings include sketches for illustrating "Point and Line to Plane";

Output of *paintings* in following years – next page:

²⁹⁷ See section 3 Prior to 1922: Moscow-Berlin-Weimar.

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Output of *paintings* in following years:

1926	47
1928	25
1929	53
1930	54 (all quite small, c. 30 x 50 cm)
1931	24
1932	12
1933	7
1934	15
1935	16
1936	10
1937	11
1938	8
1939	14
1940	11
1941	6
1942	14
1943	27
1944	10

Note:

The obvious change in creative output in the years 1926-1944 has a variety of complex causes, including socio-political changes (the gradual pressure on art and the Bauhaus of the Nazi regime, the economic crisis at the end of the 1920 's, and in the early 1930 's, Kandinsky's subsequent move to Paris, World War II), the resulting continuous financial distress of the Kandinskys, but also changes are caused by the artist gradually developing a much more detailed and complex painterly style, which, in turn, demanded a much slower pace of painting.

APPENDIX IV

Research at
the Centre Pompidou,
the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus

Notes:

Additional research on Kandinsky's original works has been conducted at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum Kunstpalast Dusseldorf, while also closely studying works at display in exhibitions at Sotheby's New York, museums, art fairs and auction houses;

both at the Centre Pompidou and at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum the author of this case-study was allowed to measure the selected works, double checked by the research assistant or a staff member of the museum;

in case of MoMA and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus the works were presented framed and behind glass, and thus it was not possible to measure the sizes;

the information herein focuses only on the sizes of the selection of viewed works, all other results of this research is incorporated in the main text of this case-study.

Centre Pompidou I - Drawings

Notes:

front numbers refer to CRD-01; inventory number Centre Pompidou is added separately;

the "Sizes measured in research" refer to measurements taken by the author of this case-study at the Centre Pompidou and double checked by a third person present.

Nr.	Title	Inventory Number Centre Pompidou	Materials	Sizes paper Catalogue Raisonné	Sizes paper Centre Pompidou	Sizes measured in research
# 481	Ohne Titel, c.1919-1920 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-296	ink on tan paper	17.7 x 22.1 cm		
# 489	Ohne Titel, c.1921-1922 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-294	pencil on paper	31.6 x 23.9 cm (image: 23.7 x 20.1 cm)	31.6 x 23.7 cm	
# 490	Ohne Titel, c.1921-1922 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-295	pencil on tan paper from sketchpad	15.4 x 10.6 cm	10.6 x 15.4 cm	15.3 x 10.5 cm
# 492	Ohne Titel, 1922 inscribed on reverse by Nina Kandinsky '1922/N1 Zeichnung zu einem Aquarell/ 43 ¼ x 33'	AM 81-65-300	India ink on heavy paper	44 x 49.6 cm (image: 33.1 x 43.2 cm)	33 x 43.3 cm	44 x 49.6 cm is sizes board, not paper Image: 32.9 x 43.2 cm
# 508	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-309	Pencil on thin cardboard	7.3 x 12.3 cm	7.3 x 12.3 cm	7.25 x 12.2 cm
# 509	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-311	Pencil on tan paper	15 x 10.3 cm	10.3 x 15 cm	15 x 10.2 cm
# 510	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-312	Pencil on tan paper	14.9 x 10.2 cm	14.9 x 10.2 cm	14.8 x 10.2 cm
# 511	Ohne Titel, 1922-1923 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-313	India ink on tan paper	16.8 x 10.3 cm	16.8 x 10.2 cm	16.8 x 10.2 cm
# 512	Ohne Titel, 1923 not signed, from collection Nina K	AM 81-65-310	Pencil on heavy paper	8.9 x 12.4 cm	8.75 x 12.4 cm	8.9 x 12.4 cm
# 525	Ohne Titel	AM 81-65-330	India ink and pencil on paper	37,5 x 36,5 cm (image: 21,4 x 20,3 cm)	37.6 x 36.7 cm	37.5 x 36.6 cm (image: 21.1 x 20.3 cm)
# 535	'Reminiscence du Tableau Avec bordure blanche', 1923 (signed on reverse by Nina Kandinsky 'N.8 1923 Kandinsky /36 ¼ x 25")	AM 81-65-328	India ink on heavy paper	33.6 x 46 cm (image: 25,2 x 36,2 cm)	25.2 x 36.45 cm	

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# 540	Ohne Titel	AM 81-65-326	India ink and pencil on paper from sketchpad	38.8 x 31.5 cm (image: 28 x 22,6 cm)	30 x 23.1 cm	paper 30.35 x 23 cm
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Centre Pompidou II – Watercolors

Notes:

front numbers refer to CRW-01 and CRW-02; inventory number Centre Pompidou is added separately;

the “Sizes paper Research” refer to measurements taken by the author of this case-study at the Centre Pompidou and double checked by a third person present;

marked * means reference in Handlist Watercolors.

Nr.	Title	Inventory Number Centre Pompidou	Sizes paper Catalogue Raisoné	Sizes paper Centre Pompidou	Sizes measured in research
# 528	Ohne Titel	AM 81-65-297	21.1 x 19.1 cm		21 x 19 cm
# 545	‘Etude pour Schwarzer Fleck’	AM 81-65-112	25.5 x 33.2 cm	25.5 x 33.2 cm	
# 568 (* N. 1922,23)	Ohne Titel known as ‘Aquarelle No. 23’	AM 81-65-115	33 x 47.8 cm	33 x 47.8 cm	32.8 x 47.8 cm
# 593 (* 22 xii 1922, 42)	‘Entwurf zu ‘Auf Weiss II’	AM 1976-1324	46.5 x 41.5 cm	45.4 x 40.4 cm	
# 596 (* 1922, 45)	‘Jahresschluss’	AM 81-65-116	26.9 x 36.5 cm	26.9 x 36.5 cm	
# 637 (* VII 1923, 84)	‘Etude pour ‘Im Schwarzen Viereck’	AM 1994-72	36 x 36 cm	36 x 36 cm	36.1 x 36.8 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim

Notes:

front numbers refer to CRW-02; inventory number Guggenheim is added separately;

the “Sizes measured in research” refer to measurements taken by the author of this case-study at the Guggenheim, assisted and double checked by staff of the Guggenheim.

1922

Nr.	Title	Materials	Sizes paper according to Catalogue Raisoné	Sizes measured in research	Inventory Number Guggenheim
# 570	Untitled, 1922 Inscribed on reverse side	Watercolor, gouache, ink and graphite on paper	32.8 x 47.8 cm	32.8 x 47.9 cm	50.1296
# 592	Gray Spot/Grauer Fleck, December 22, 1922	Watercolor, gouache, ink and graphite on paper	46.7 x 42.5 cm	46.8 x 42.6 cm	37.253

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1923, 1924

Nr.	Title	Materials	Sizes paper according to Catalogue Raisonné	Sizes measured in research Supported by assistant of the Guggenheim	Inventory Number Guggenheim
# 609	Arc and Point/Bogen und Spitze, February 1923 Inscribed on reverse side	Watercolor, ink and graphite on paper	46.5 x 42 cm	46.4 x 42.1 cm	50.1290
# 612	Dream Motion/ Träumerische Regung, March 1923 Inscribed on reverse side	Watercolor, India ink and graphite on paper	46.4 x 40 cm	46.4 x 40 cm	38.258
# 720	Gray/Grau Inscribed on reverse side (not by the artist)	Watercolor, gouache, ink and graphite on paper	48.9 x 33.8 cm	48.8 x 33.7 cm	38.272

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus I

Notes:

catalogue Lenbachhaus is Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel, *Das bunte Leben, Wassily Kandinsky im Lenbachhaus*, Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1995 (ISBN 3 7701 3785 X);

all mentioned sizes are as provided by the Catalogue Raisonné being the same as in the catalogue Lenbachhaus; all works are framed and behind glass, there was no double checking possible of the sizes for this research, nor could I view the reverse side;

watercolor # 325 was not shown – for conservation reasons this work would need to lie flat all the time and could never be shown (raising an interesting question about the usefulness of such a work in a public collection).

watercolor # 345 shows no black crayon but pencil;

watercolor # 359 seen in the exhibition on Kandinsky & Klee.

Nr.	Title	Materials	Inventory number Lenbachhaus + catalogue Lenbachhaus	Sizes paper according to Catalogue Raisonné
# 325	Entwurf zu 'Improvisation 30 (Kanonen), January 1913	Gouache, watercolor, Indian ink and crayon on heavy tan paper mounted on cardboard	GMS 584; # 480, p. 414	53 x 52.5 cm
#327	Entwurf zu „Improvisation 31 (Seeschlacht)“, 1913	Watercolor, Indian ink and black crayon on paper	GMS 584; # 481, p. 415 Not signed, not dated, not in the Handlist; inscribed lower left bottom by the artist: ‚4‘	30.3 x 24.2 cm

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# 339	Entwurf zu „Bild mit weißem Rand“, 1913	Watercolor, Indian ink and black crayon on paper	GMS 354; # 489, p. 423 Not signed, not dated, not in the Handlist; inscribed u.r. “Dasselbe in Aquarell (grösser) bei von Assendelft”, and lower right, (not by the artist): ‘1’	30.3 x 24.1 cm
# 345	Farbstudie - Quadrate mit konzentrischen Ringen, 1913	Watercolor, gouache and black crayon on paper	GMS 446; # 502, p.433 Not signed, not dated, not in the Handlist;	23.9 x 31.5 cm
# 346	Farbstudie mit Rauten, 1913	Watercolor and pencil on paper	GMS 368; # 503, p.435 Not signed, not dated, not in the Handlist; inscribed l.l. not by the artist: ‘15/16’	24.1 x 30.3 cm
# 359	Entwurf zu „Komposition VII“, 1913 (auch genannt „Zu Komposition 7“)	Watercolor, Indian ink and pencil on paper, mounted on grey paper	GMS 136; # 525, S. 459 Signed but not dated	18.5 x 27.1 cm

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus II

Notes:

catalogue Lenbachhaus is Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel, „Das bunte Leben, Wassily Kandinsky im Lenbachhaus“, DuMont, 1995.

all mentioned sizes are as provided by the Catalogue Raisonné being the same as in the catalogue Lenbachhaus; all works are framed and behind glass, hence it was not allowed to double check the sizes for this research, nor to see the reverse side;

watercolors # 255 and # 380 were not shown, caused by communication problem;

Nr.	Title	Materials	Inventory number Lenbachhaus + catalogue Lenbachhaus	Sizes paper according to Catalogue Raisonné
# 367	Komposition in Rot, Blau, Grün und Gelb, 1913	Watercolor and gouache on paper	GMS 369; # 551, p. 485 Not signed, not dated, signed l.r. (not by the artist): ‘6/17’	30.3 x 24.1 cm
# 439	Promenierendes Paar im Garten, Early 1916	Watercolor, Indian ink and pencil on paper	GMS 159; # 611, p. 531 Signed, not dated, not in the Handlist;	25 x 22.8 cm
# 255	„Entwurf zu „Komposition II“ (also known as „Zwei Reiter und liegende Gestalt“, c.1910	Watercolor and pencil on thin cardboard	GMS 353; # 306, p. 247 Signed, not dated, not in the Handlist;	32.9 x 32.9 cm
# 267	„Entwurf zu „Komposition IV“, 1911	Etching with watercolor and ink on paper	GMS 460; # 380, p. 312	picture 14 x 21 cm paper 19 x 26-3 cm

Other works studied:

Museum Kunstpalast Dusseldorf:

544 Entwurf zu 'Roter Fleck II"', 1921

Watercolor on paper,

Note: quite likely the main red form is no watercolor but oil paint (or gouache)

See main text for remarks on the inscriptions on the reverse side to differ from the Catalogue Raisonné

Sizes in CRW-01, p. 477: 19.1 x 22.9 cm

Sizes in catalogue MKP: 19.4 x 23.1 cm

Museum of Modern Art New York:

"Fourth Annual Print for the Kandinsky Society", etching, 1929, # SC513.1963

"Tekst Khudoznika", catalogue, 1918, # 490.2001

"Postcard for Bauhaus Exhibition Weimar July - Sept 1923", # 143.2010

436 "The Horseman", January 1916, # 106.978

(also known as "The Desert", "Die Wüste")

Watercolor and Indian ink on paper

Sizes CRW-01, p. 380: 32.2 x 24.9 cm

Sizes databank MoMA: 32.1 x 25.1 cm

717 "Black Relationship", watercolor, October 1924, # 341.1949

(also known as "Black relation", "Le cercle noir")

Watercolor and Indian ink on paper

Sizes CRW-02, p. 116: 36.8 x 36.2 cm

Sizes databank MoMA: 36.9 x 36.2 cm

Sotheby's New York:

665, Untitled, also known as "No. 10 Aquarelle mouvementée", "Bewegt", 1923

Watercolor, Indian ink and pencil on paper, 33 x 47.5 cm

See main text for remarks on the inscriptions on the reverse side to differ from CRW-02, p. 92

In addition: several works on display in public and private collections.

LIST OF LITERATURE

The following abbreviations are used for frequently quoted books:

CRW-01

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CRW-02

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