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is there an Old Age Content?*

(or, why do geezers keep on doing it?)

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Martin Lindauer did the empirical research: both a style of youth and a style of old age can be identified, and a study of late Titian and Monet, of Kollwitz and DeKooning and so many other artists confirms it. But a style is a vehicle of content... might there be an old age content? Style is material—the eye/hand/body/mind interaction with the medium. An object is the result and you can measure it. (That's science.) Content, however, is the message of individual experience—the marks of learning left on the paths of life. (That's story telling.)

Youth—we grow, we learn,
we imagine and aspire
to the world of our dreams

Maturity—we've figured out how to do it,
and so we work to make manifest that world of our dreams
as all the while things are happening.

Age—we recede,
it's not so much what we will do,
but to look back
and to contemplate what we have done.

We—artists—make our art
to say the content of our lives...

the dreams of our youth,
the work and world of our maturity,
our old age of contemplation.

So, Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944) ,
some content from
his work in the world of his maturity
and his work in contemplation of his past...



The dreams of our youth—
our sources, and among so many for K, I am going to offer only two—
the power of the image, and the power of the image maker...

On the left, an icon of the icon of the Virgin drives out the pestilence,
and on the right, the brush of the icon painter gives sight to the blind.



On the Spiritual in Art (1911)

And so in the work of his early maturity, K. published a book to send his message to the world.

“Red, ...an inner, highly vivid, lively, restless appeal...

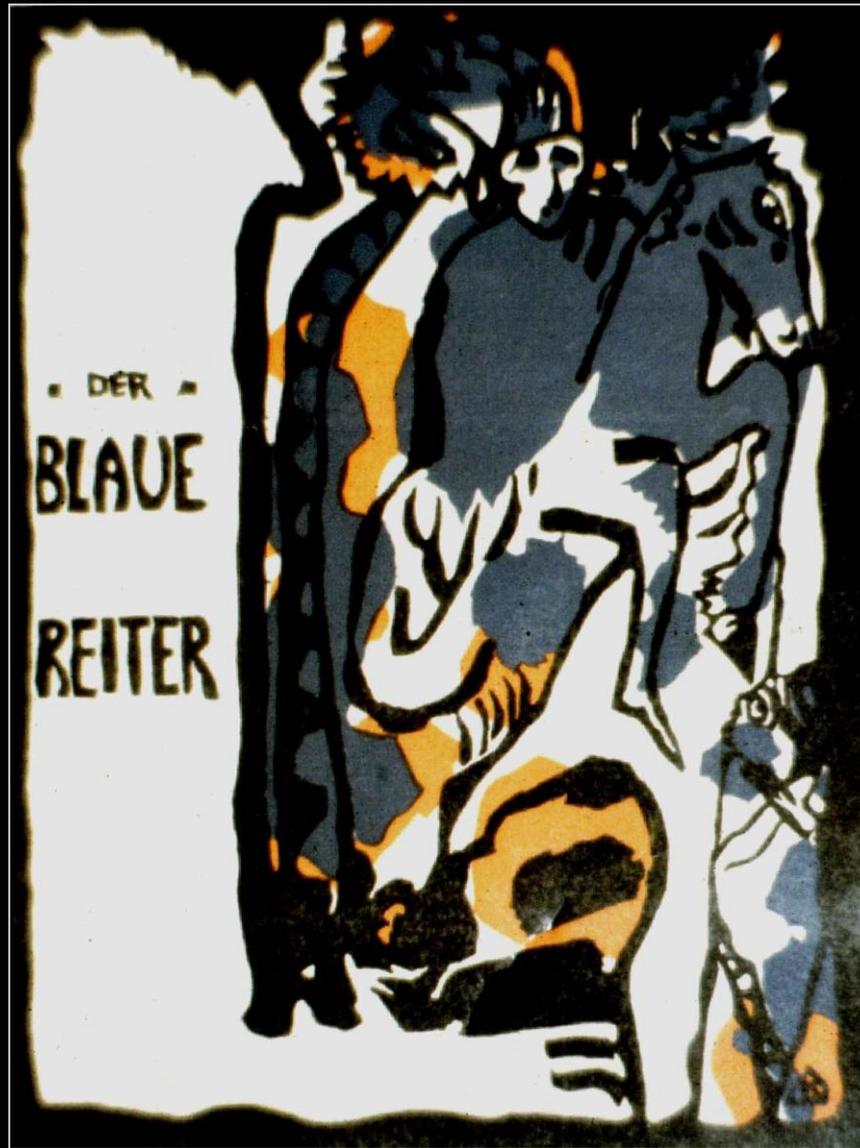
“Arouses the feeling of strength, energy, ambition, determination, joy, triumph.”



“The capacity of profound depth is found in blue....

“The deeper the blue the more it beckons us into the infinite, arousing a longing for purity and the supersensuous.”

Chapter 5, The Effect of Color in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912)



The Blue Rider Almanac (1911)

And he made a magazine to show how others shared his message—the cover was St. George (in blue) and the dragon.



The Last Judgment, 1911

And he made many paintings to affirm his message and to sell to spread his message in the world.

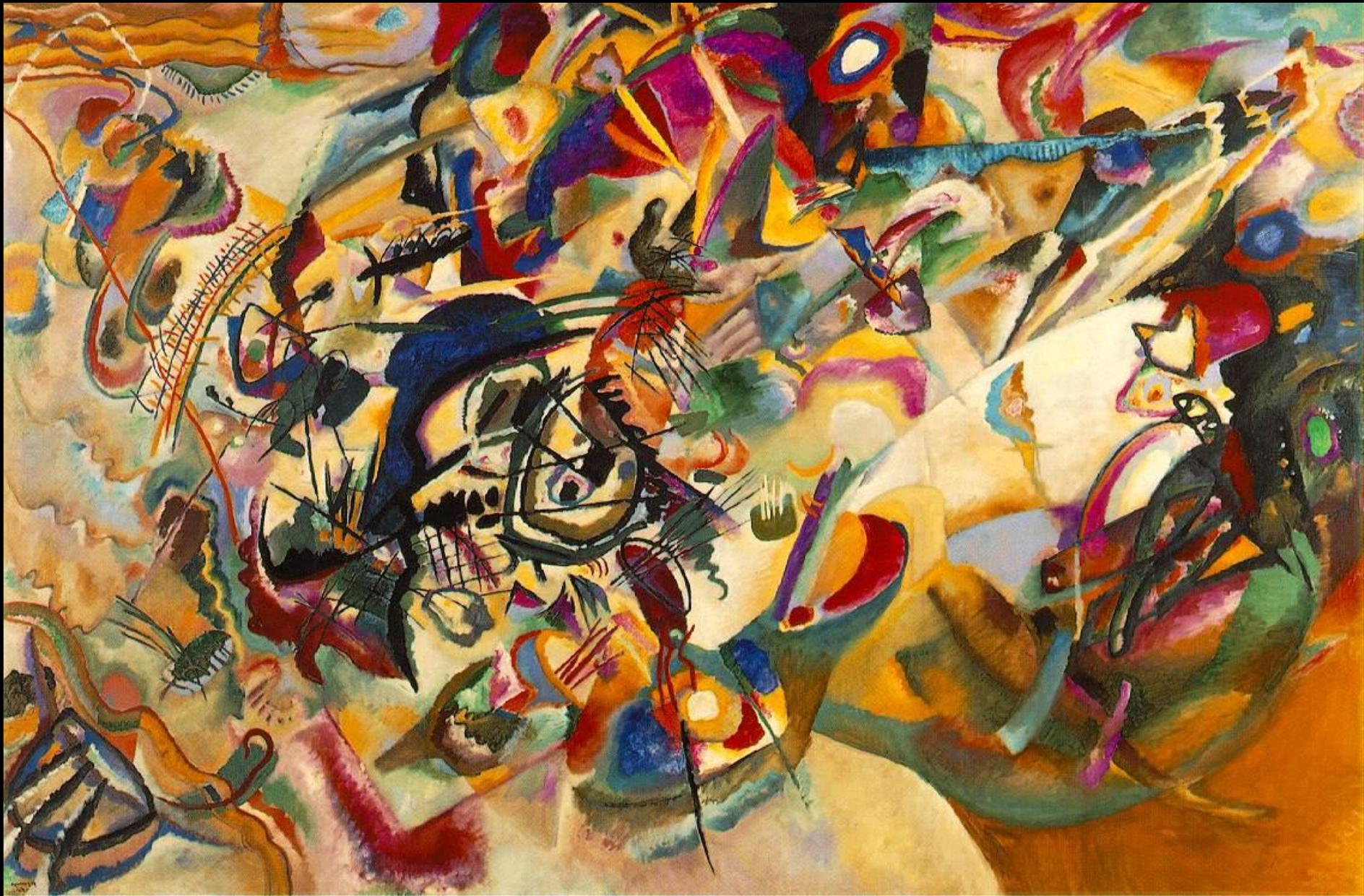
(Top left, the black lines of the angel of destruction; top center, the city destroyed; top right, the angel Gabriel.)



With White Border, 1913

And he made many paintings to state his message and to sell to make his way in the world.

(Center, the knight with the great white spear to kill the dragon.)



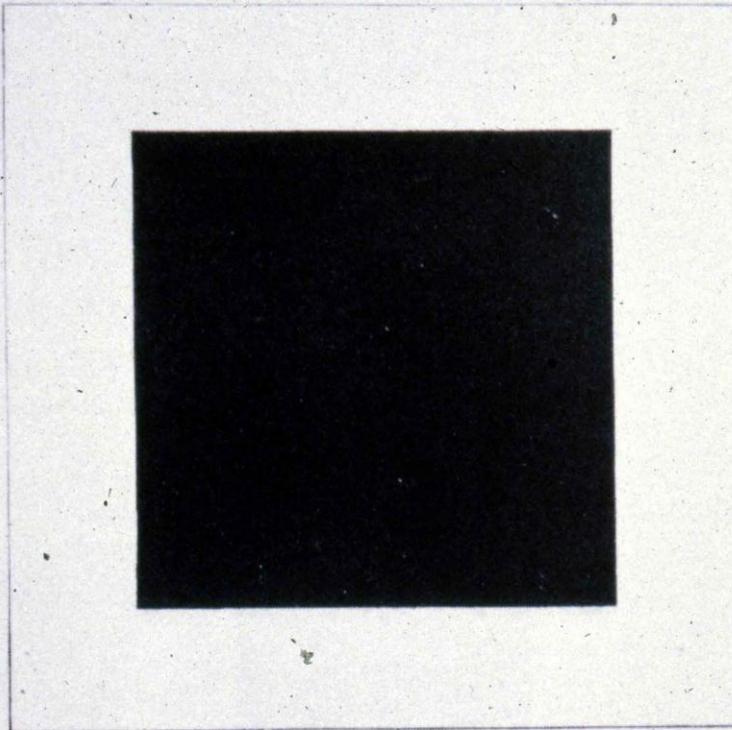
Composition VII, 1913, oil on canvas, 80 x 120 in.

“The painting was intended to express catastrophe and destruction as much as the hope of spiritual and aesthetic renewal...”

Maturity—

It's 1913 and K has figured out how to make what he wants
and gone to work to make the world of his dreams
manifest in this world of human affairs
by means of a school, publications and exhibitions...
but things happened* ...

*Things happen: that's Fate
What you make of it: that's Destiny



1) Красная Супрематическая Простота
во всем и везде, где только, и есть, и будет, и
будет за все время
2) Красная и черная / Простота / Простота, как
орудие на работе в области промышленности
для всех людей, как средство для построения
и развития

W. Kandinsky

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The first thing
that happened was
WWI and Kandinsky's
return to Russia (1914-16)
(leaving all his work behind in Germany)

and then
the Russian Revolution (1917)
(losing his only source of income)

and then
Suprematism and Constructivism
(1917-1921)
(the abstract avant-garde art developed
independently in Russia to build for a new society)



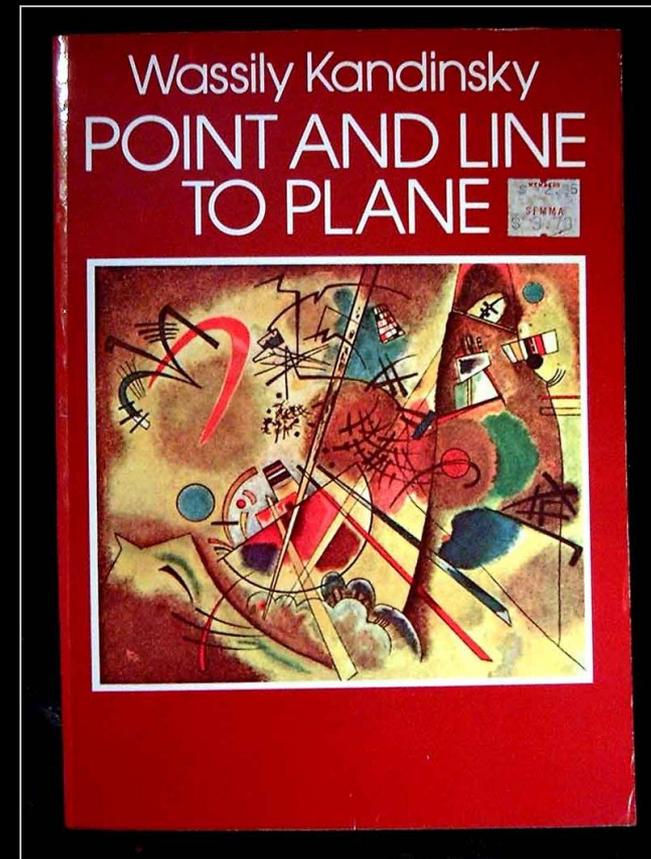
MALEVICH, SUETIN (left) and CHASNIK (right) in Inkhu, Petrograd



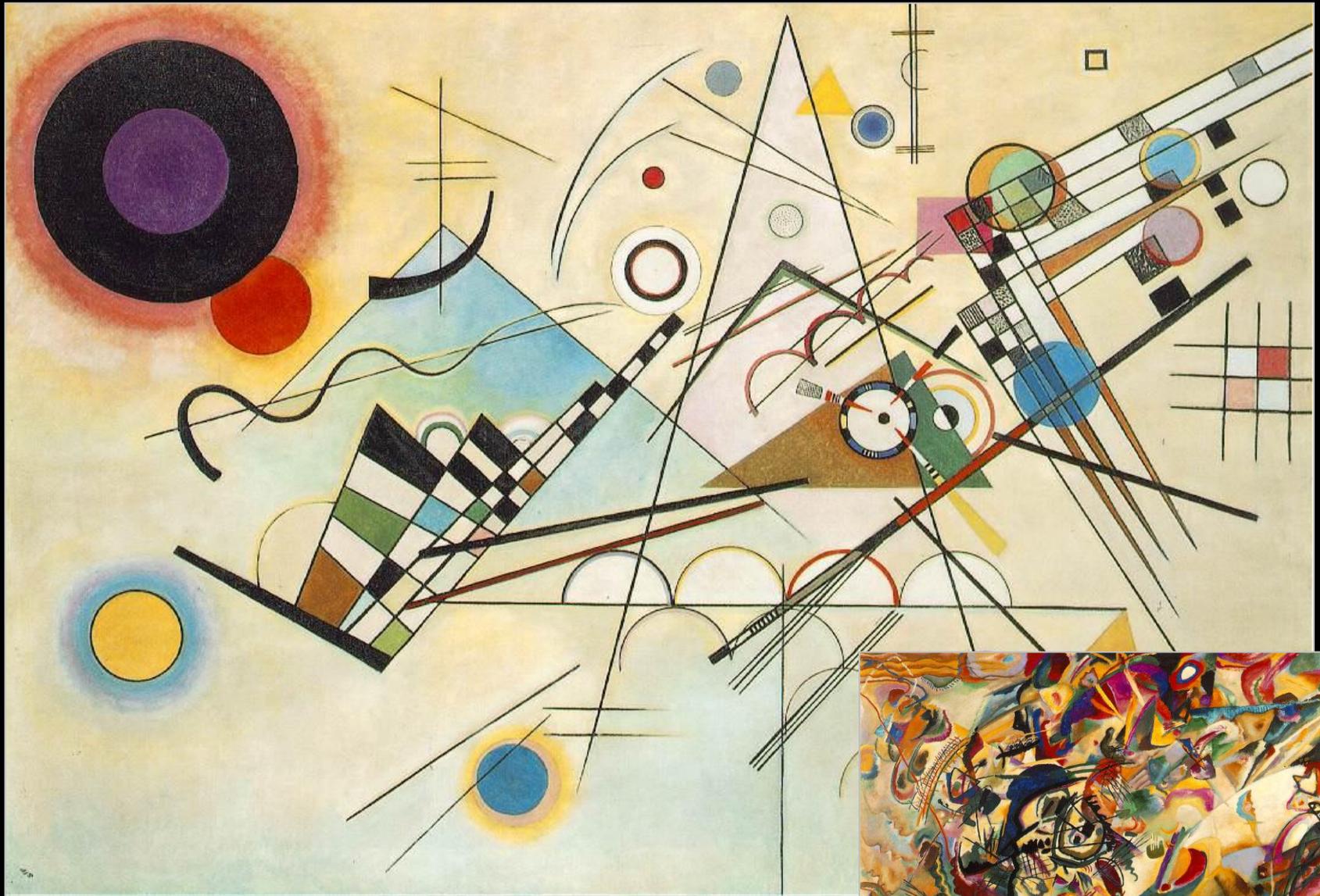
In Grey, 1919.



“Grey is the immobility of desolation.
The darker the grey becomes the greater is the predominance of desolation, of suffocation.”
(Inset, K.’s exhibition in Moscow with the painting center right on the wall. Next year he leaves for the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany.)



The second thing that happened to Kandinsky was teaching at The Bauhaus (1922-1933) with the “non-subjectification” of forms followed by analysis, clarification and objectification— from “On the Spiritual in Art” (1911) to “Point and Line to Plane” (1926).



Above, *Composition VIII* from 1923, the early years at the Bauhaus,
And on the right, *Composition VII* from 1913 in Munich
It had been ten years of war and revolution and displacement...

Hausfuchung im „Bauhaus Steglitz“

Kommunistisches Material gefunden.

Auf Veranlassung der Dessauer Staatsanwaltschaft wurde gestern nachmittag eine größere Aktion im „Bauhaus Steglitz“, dem früheren Dessauer Bauhaus, in der Virlbuschstraße in Steglitz durchgeführt. Von einem Aufgebot Schutz-

war jedoch verschwunden, und man vermutete, daß sie von der Bauhausleitung mit nach Berlin genommen worden waren. Die Dessauer Staatsanwaltschaft setzte sich jetzt mit der Berliner Polizei in Verbindung und bat um Durch-



The third thing that happened to K. was Hitler came to power and the Nazis closed the Bauhaus in 1933.

Alle Anwesenden, die sich nicht ausweisen konnten, wurden zur Feststellung ihrer Personalien ins Polizeipräsidium gebracht.



In Brown, 1933

“It is dangerous to mix red with black because the dead black subdues the glow of red and brings about the unemotional, hard immovable Brown... in which the red sounds like a hardly audible simmering.”

And the last thing that happened was K's 1933-1944
refuge in Paris and the years of old age and death.



“Violet, a red cooled with blue both in the physical and spiritual sense,
possesses an element of frailty, expiring sadness....
as the Chinese actually use it as the color of mourning. “



Tempered Elan, June 1944. (K.'s last completed painting.)

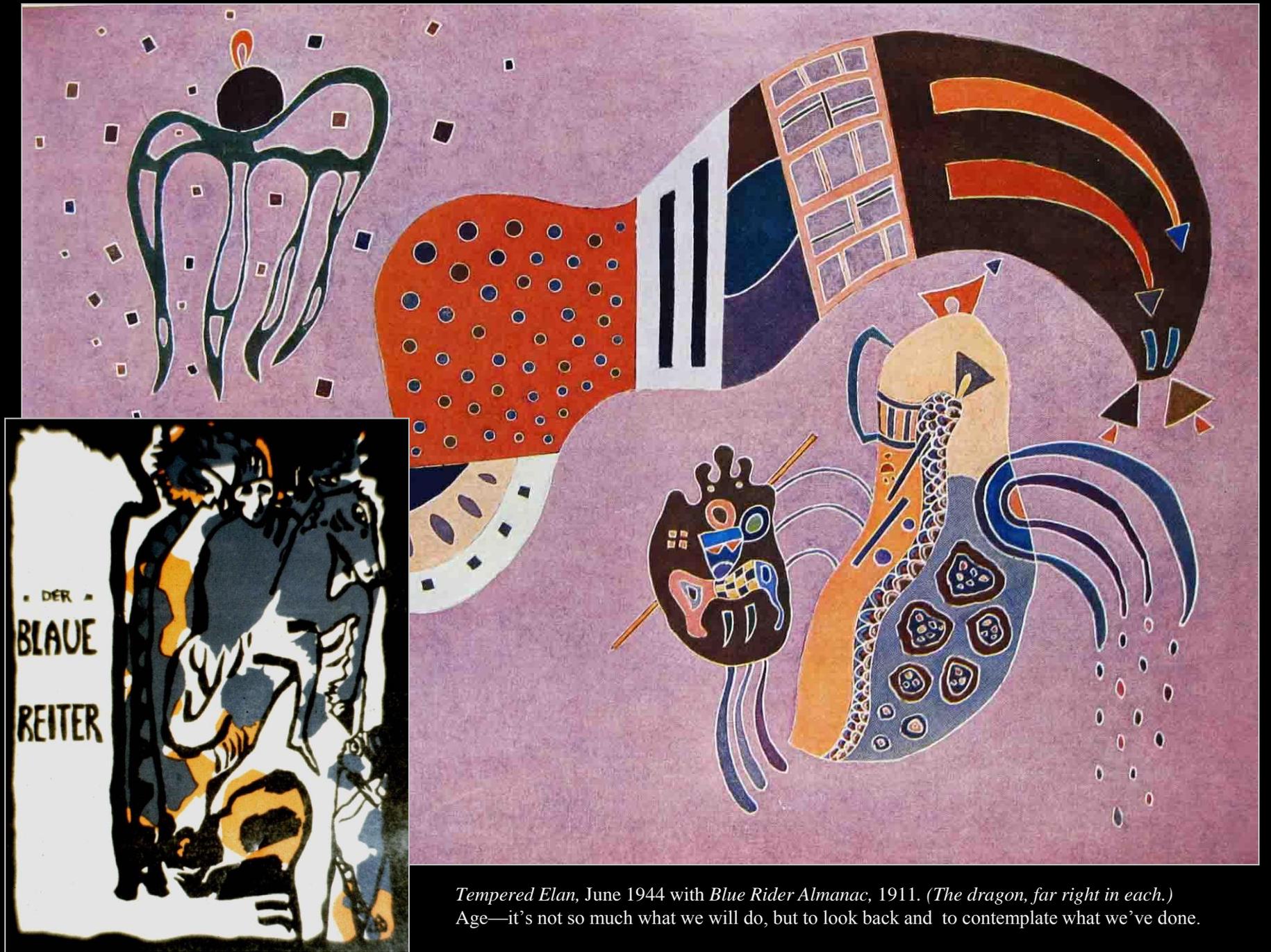
Age—it's not so much what we will do, but to look back and to contemplate what we've done.



Tempered Elan, June 1944 and *Apocalypse*, 1911. (*The Angel of Death*, top left in each.)
Age—it's not so much what we will do, but to look back and to contemplate what we've done.



Tempered Elan, June 1944 and *With White Border*, 1913. (The knight with lance, center in each.)
Age—it's not so much what we will do, but to look back and to contemplate what we've done.



Tempered Elan, June 1944 with *Blue Rider Almanac*, 1911. (The dragon, far right in each.)
Age—it's not so much what we will do, but to look back and to contemplate what we've done.



Top, *Tempered Elan*, June 1944. Photo from Abrams, pub 1962.
Bottom right, same painting, photo from Taschen, pub. 2010.



Fig. 17. Uroboros, "Serpent that Eats His Own Tail", representation of the hermetic alchemical transmutation process and symbol of eternity, time, etc.

“As a great circle, or a serpent biting its own tail, (the symbol of eternity and endlessness) these six colors stand before us... while to the right and left stand two great possibilities of silence, birth and death.”





END

