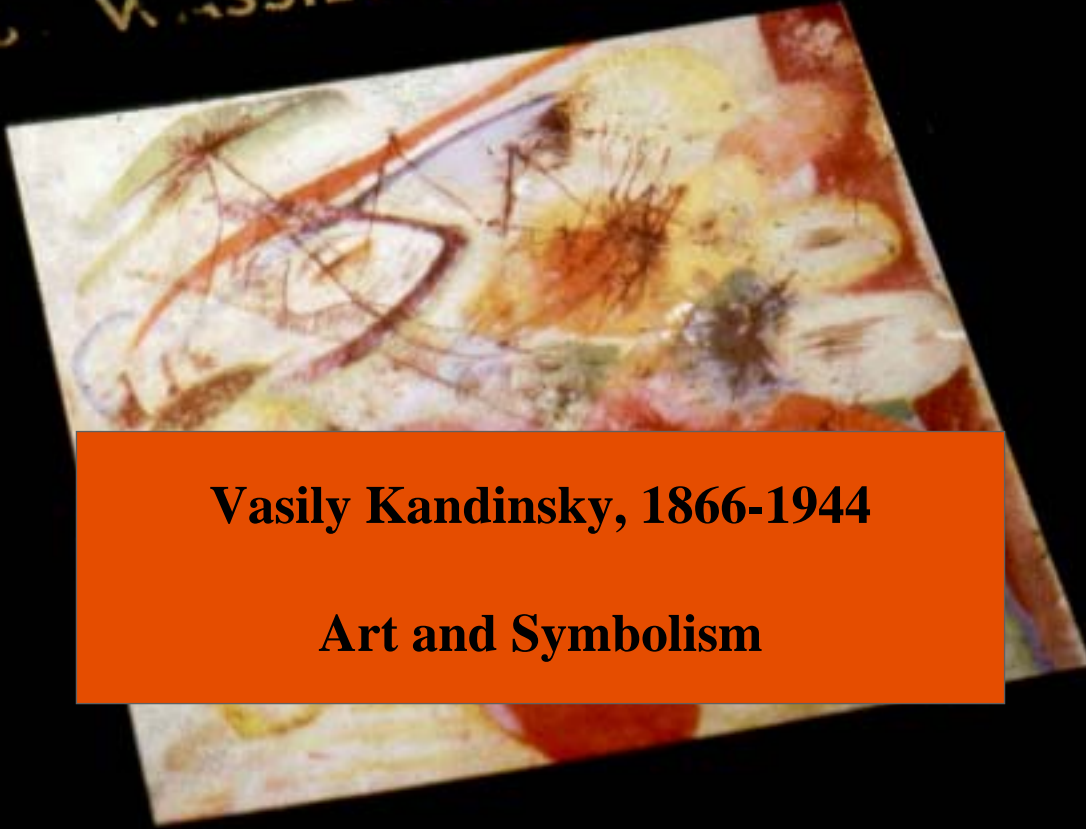




ON THE SPIRITUAL IN ART
BY WASSILY KANDINSKY



Vasily Kandinsky, 1866-1944

Art and Symbolism

What were the elements in this new art to come?

Childhood in Old Russia



Childhood, the Russian Church
and the iconostasis



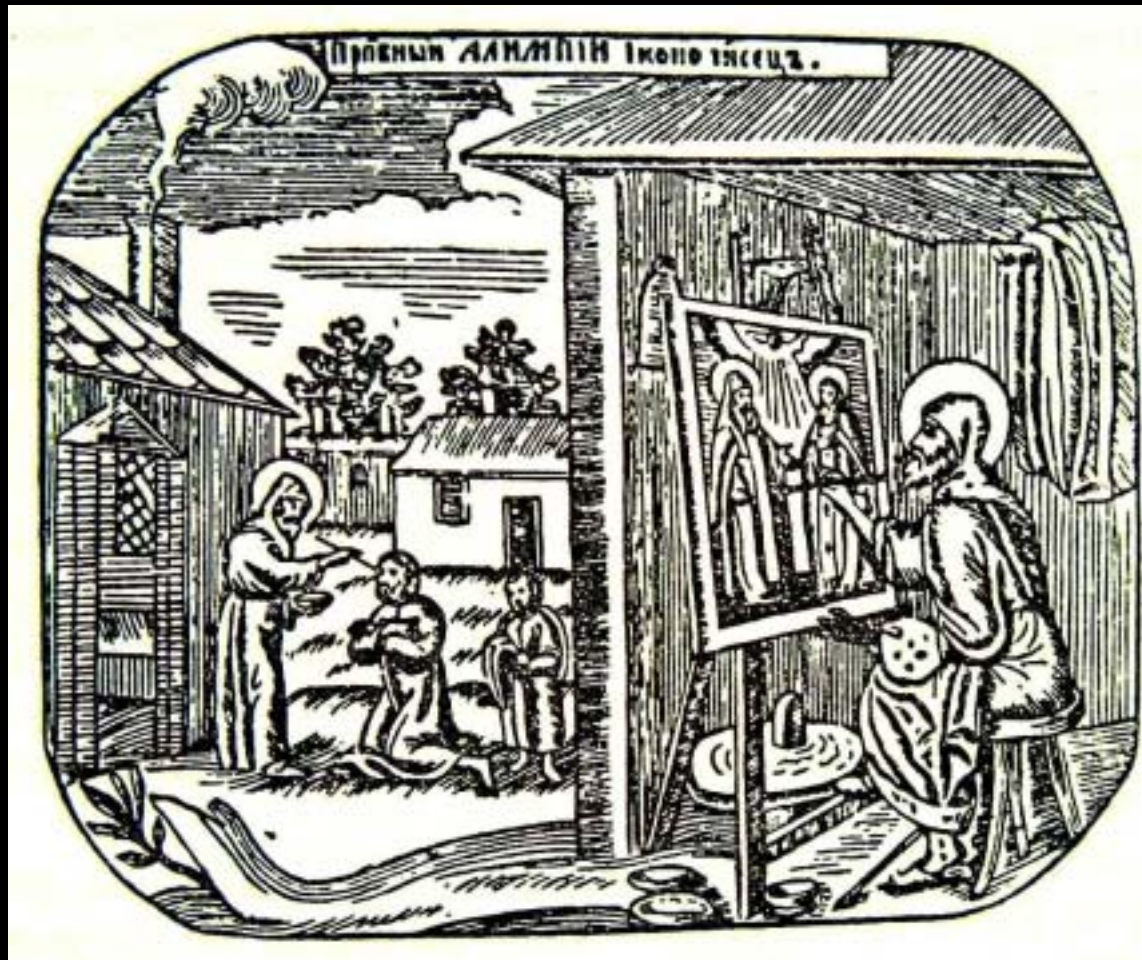
Childhood, the Russian Church
and the iconostasis



The icon has the power to save a city



The icon has the power to confirm the truth



The artist has the power to give sight

What were the elements of this new art to come?

Munich and the ferment of the new, 1897-1914

The Announcement of the magazine...

The great upheaval,
The shifting emphasis in art, literature and music,
The multifariousness of form, the constructive principle,
the composition of these forms,
The intensive turn to the inner realm of nature
and, associated with it, the rejection of the
beautification nature's exterior—
—Such are, generally sketched out, the signs
of the new inner renaissance
To show the characteristics and manifestations of this turn,
To emphasize their inner cohesion with epochs of the past,
To make known the expression of inner intensions
in every form that has an inner resonance—
Such is the goal that “The Blue Rider” shall strive to reach.



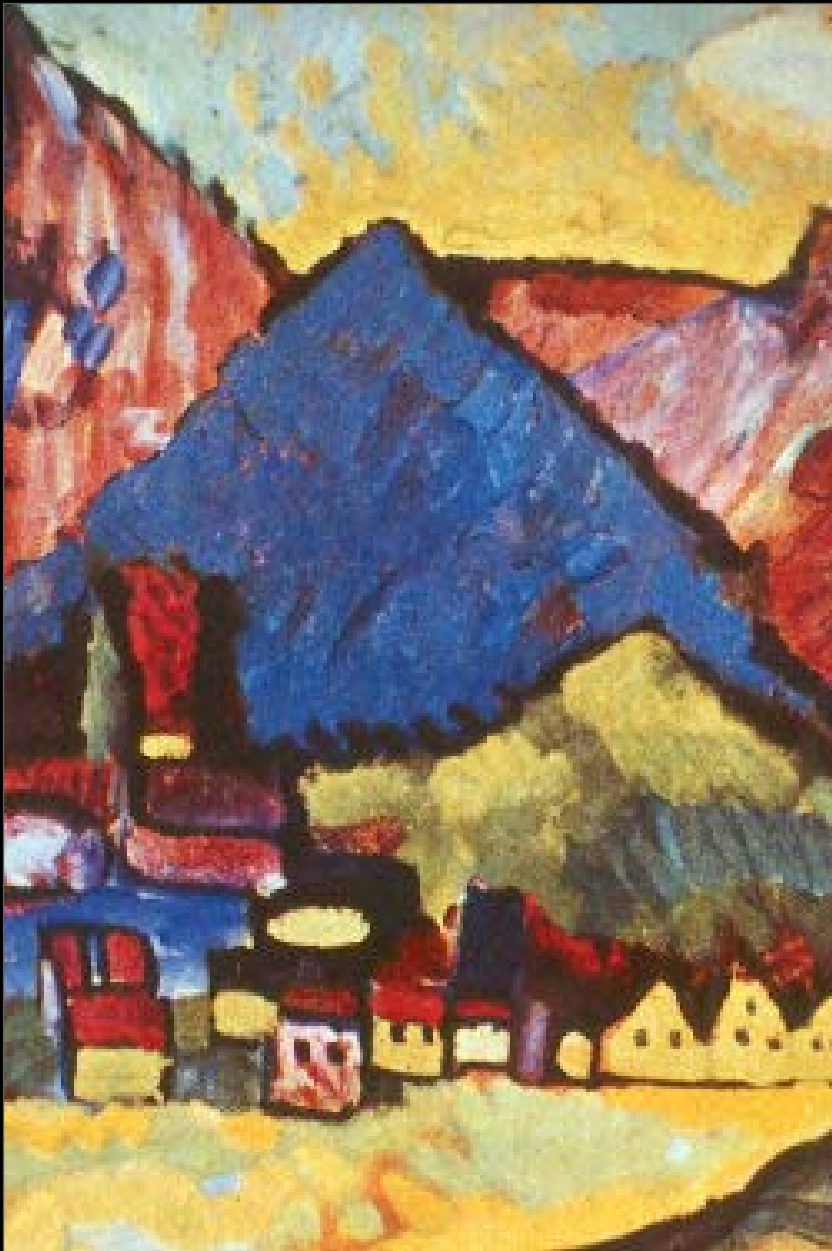
The artist as St. George, the Spiritual Knight

KANDINSKY



**ÜBER
DAS GEISTIGE
IN DER KUNST**

DRITTE AUFLAGE



Every work of art is the child of its age... and so each period of culture produces an art of its own which can never be repeated.

A large acute triangle divided into unequal segments, the narrowest one pointing upwards, is a schematically correct representation of spiritual life. The lower the segment the larger, wider, higher, and more embracing will be the other parts of the triangle.

The entire triangle moves slowly, almost invisibly, forward and upward and where the apex was 'today,' the second segment is going to be "tomorrow," that is to say, that which today can be understood only by the apex, and which to the rest of the triangle seems an incomprehensible gibberish, tomorrow forms the true and sensitive life of the second segment.

At the apex of the top segment, sometimes one man stands entirely alone.

His joyous vision corresponds to a vast inner sorrow, and even those, who are closest to him, do not comprehend him.



St. George and the Dragon, Russian Icon, 14th C.

At the apex of the top segment, sometimes one man stands entirely alone.

His joyous vision corresponds to a vast inner sorrow, and even those, who are closest to him, do not comprehend him. Angrily, they may call him a knave or a fool.

Of course, there are periods, when art lacks a high champion altogether, when there is no spiritual nourishment. These are times of retrogression in the spiritual world...

The solitary seekers, the hungry of soul, the visionaries are derided or dubbed as spiritually abnormal.



St. Vladimir saves the Church, ca. 1911, painting on glass.



At the apex of the top segment,
sometimes one man stands entirely alone.

His joyous vision corresponds to a vast
inner sorrow, and even those, who are
closest to him, do not comprehend him.

Portrait of Kandinsky, ca 1911.

What were the elements of this new art to come?

Munich and the ferment of the new, 1897-1914.

The new visual forms of art for a new Europe



Blue Mountain, 1909.

Impressionist “facture,” Neo-impressionist division of color, Fauve intensification of color

The new visual forms of art for a new Europe



When you let your eye stray over a palette covered with colors, two main results are produced:

The first is a purely physical effect when the eye itself is enchanted by beauty and the multiple delight of color... all these are physical sensations which, as such, are only of short duration. They are superficial and leave no lasting impression if the soul remains unaffected.

Then, there is the psychic effect. The first, physical elementary force develops the channel, through which the deep, inner emotion reaches the soul...

Through this, color is a means of exercising direct influence upon the soul. Color is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer, while the soul is a piano of many strings. The artist is the hand through which the medium of different keys causes the human soul to vibrate.

It is thus evident that color harmony can rest only on the principle of the corresponding vibration of the human soul. This basis can be considered as the principle of innermost necessity.

An art of seeing and feeling, of sensation and intuition, of sight and soul...

The new visual forms of art for a new Europe



Chevreul and the "Law of Simultaneous Contrast"

An art combining the color empiricism of 19th C. science in the work of Chevreul (perhaps through the Delaunays) with the color spiritualism of late 19th - early 20th C. Theosophy

The new visual forms of art for a new Europe



St. George and the Dragon, ca. 1911. Oil on glass.
From the glass painting tradition at Murnau,
an art of the people, the primitive, the uncontaminated origin, the true source.

What were the elements in this new art to come?

So much for the artistic form, what about the spiritual content?



All Saints Day, 1911. Oil on glass.

Objects become symbols...



The Last Judgment, ca. 1911, oil on glass.

Symbols become sounds...

“Color harmony can rest only on the principle of the corresponding vibration of the human soul.
This basis can be considered as the principle of innermost necessity.”



Composition IV, 1911, oil on canvas.

Symbols...

The clash of battle, the Cossacks and the castle on the mountain, the lovers...each a sound, a vibration in the soul. "Color harmony can rest only on the principle of the corresponding vibration of the human soul. This basis can be considered as the principle of innermost necessity."



Small Pleasures, 1913, oil on canvas.

Objects become symbols become vibrations in the soul...
“Color harmony can rest only on the principle of the corresponding vibration of the human soul.
This basis can be considered as the principle of innermost necessity.



Black Lines 1913, oil on canvas.

And art becomes not about objects or symbols but sounds to vibrate the soul...



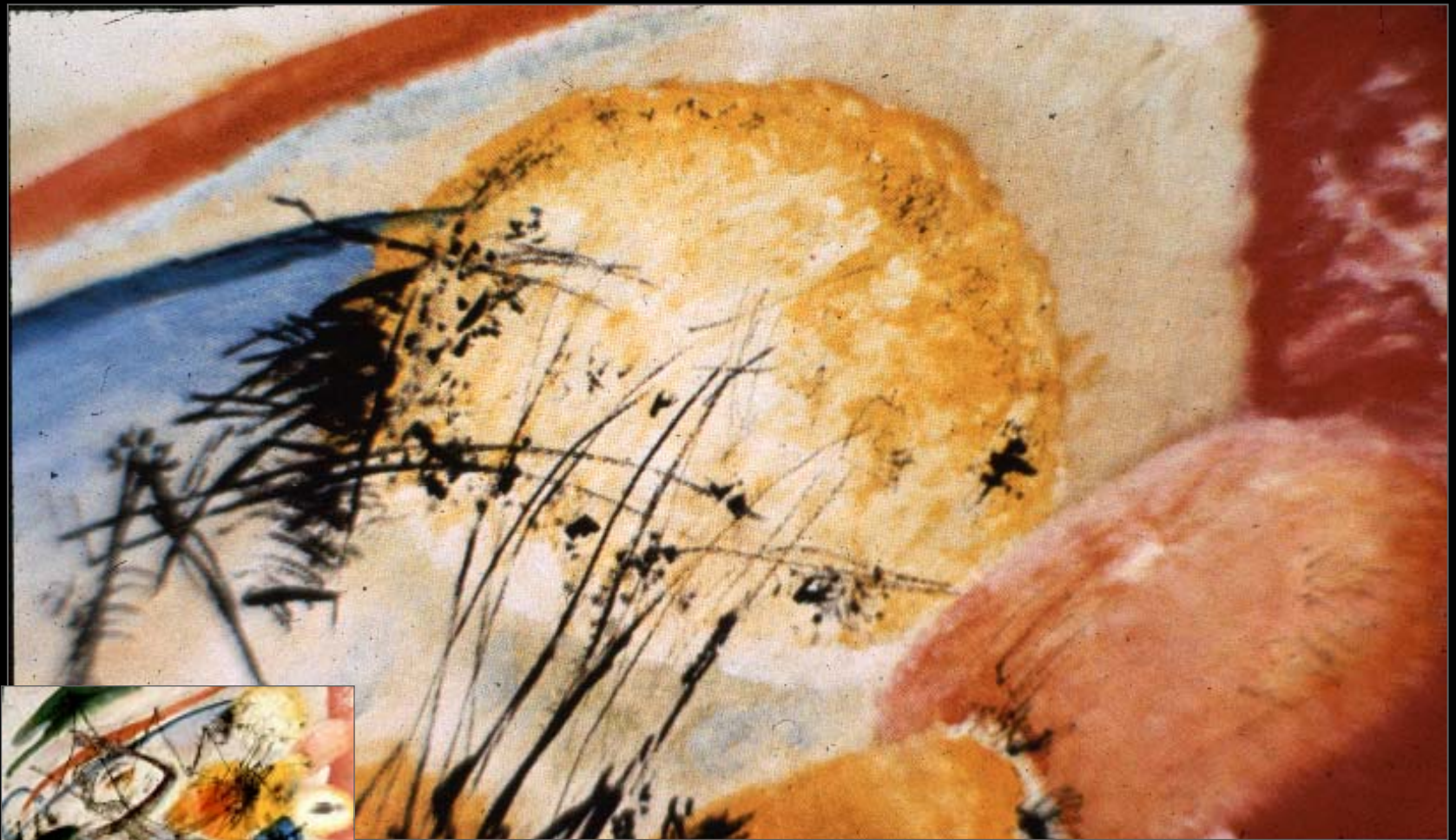
Black Lines 1913, oil on canvas, det.

And art becomes not about objects or symbols but sounds to vibrate the soul...



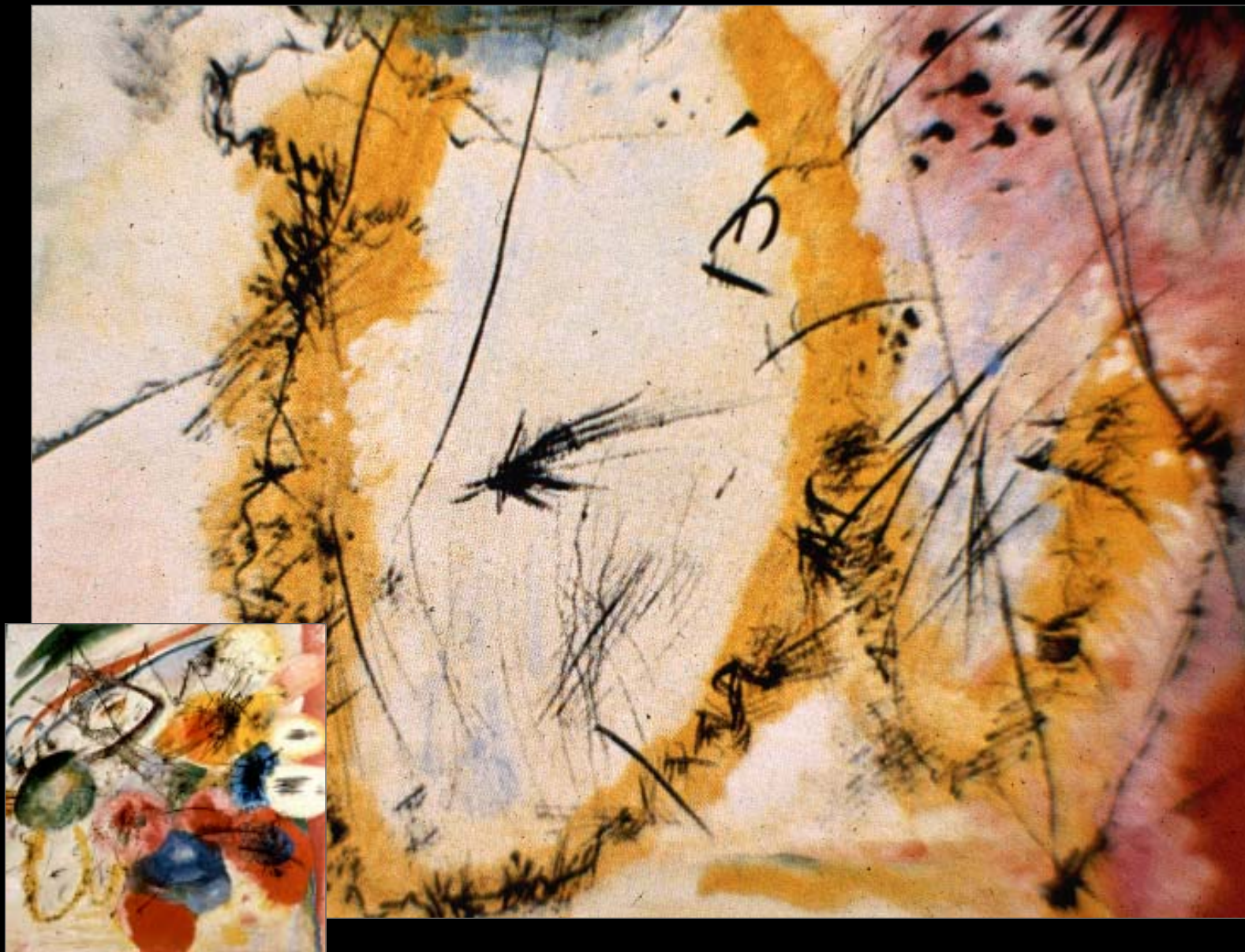
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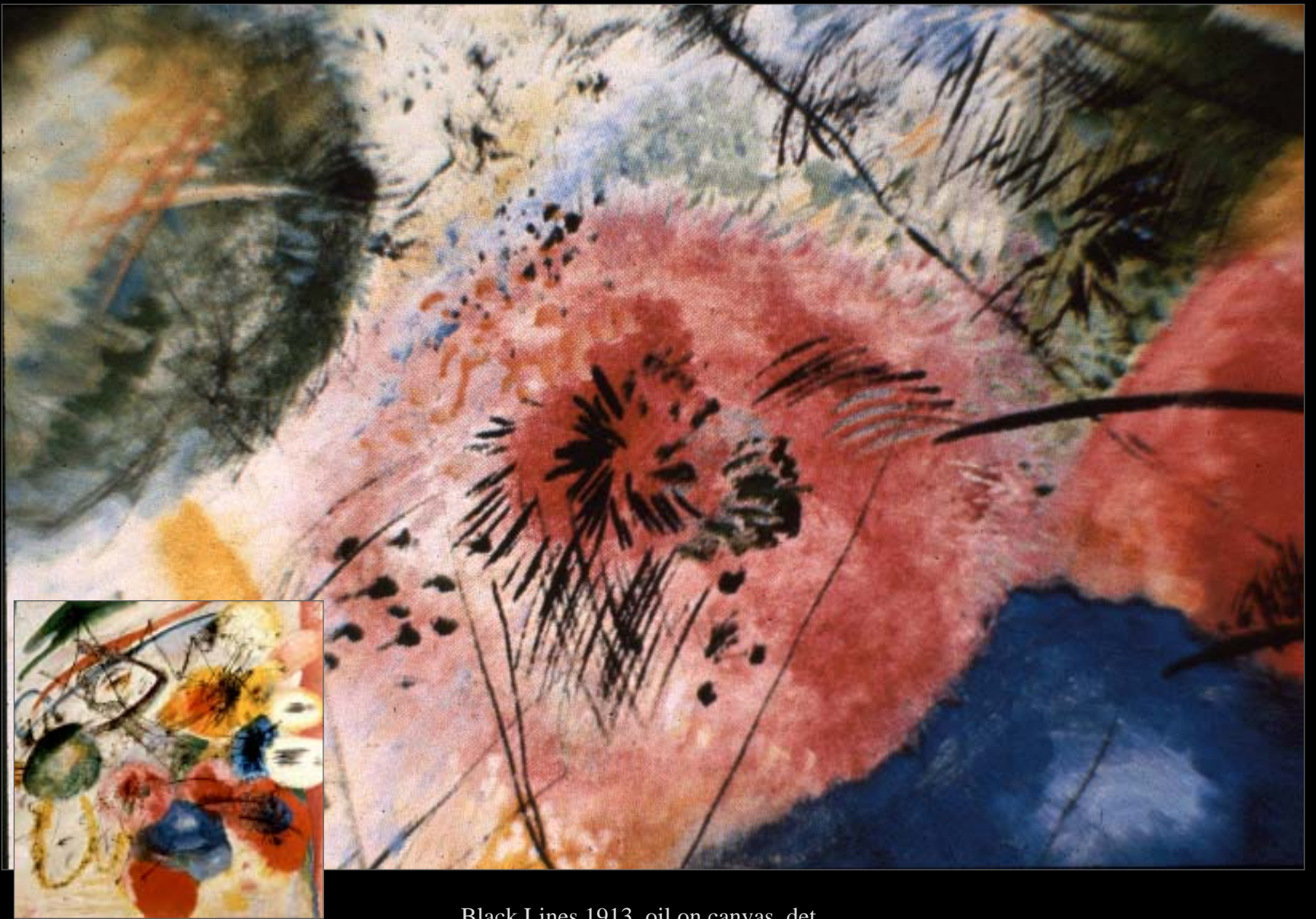
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“According to Kandinsky, Composition VII was constructed to evoke the combined apocalyptic themes of the Flood, the Last Judgment, and the Resurrection, as well as the Garden of Eden in one grand pictorial scheme. The painting was intended to express catastrophe and destruction as much as the hope of spiritual and aesthetic renewal, stunning the viewer with its inherent energy of expression.”



Sketch I for Composition VII, 1913, oil on canvas.

“Color harmony can rest only on the principle of the corresponding vibration of the human soul.
This basis can be considered as the principle of innermost necessity.



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, stunning the viewer with its inherent energy of expression.”

What were the elements in this new art to come?

War and Revolution, 1914-1918



In Gray, 1919.



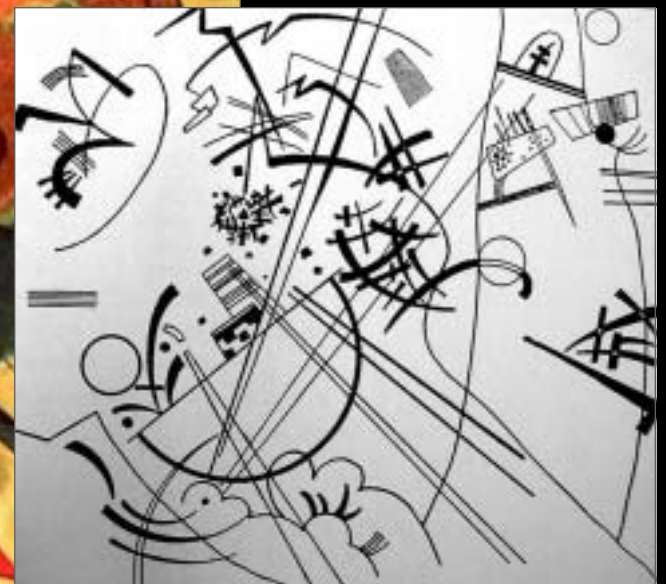
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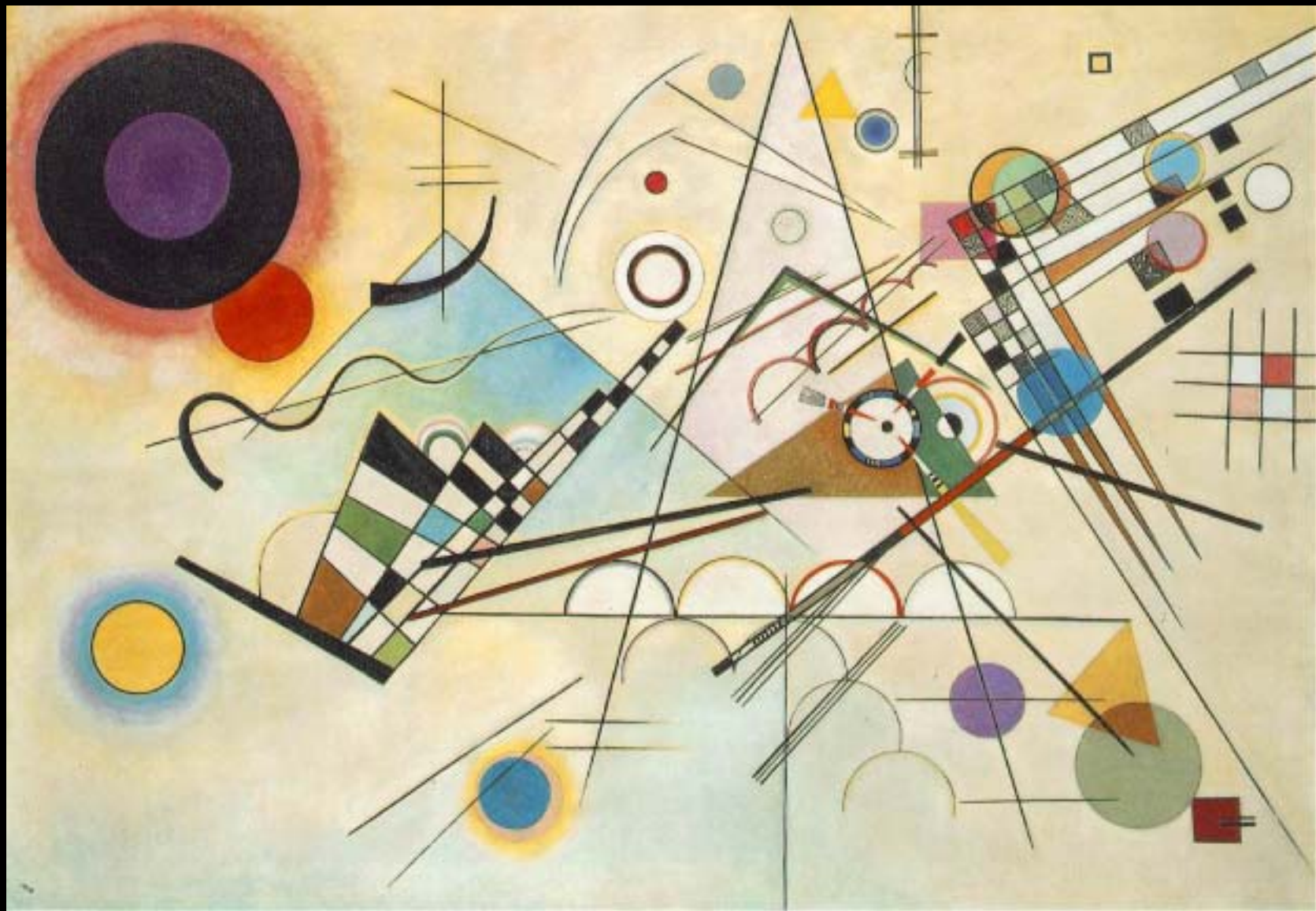
War and Revolution, 1914-1918

followed by clarification, objectification,
the “non-subjectification” of forms and

The Bauhaus, 1922-1933

Wassily Kandinsky
POINT AND LINE
TO PLANE





Composition VIII, 1923.

What were the elements in this new art to come?

Nazism



In Brown, 1933.

What were the elements in this new art to come?

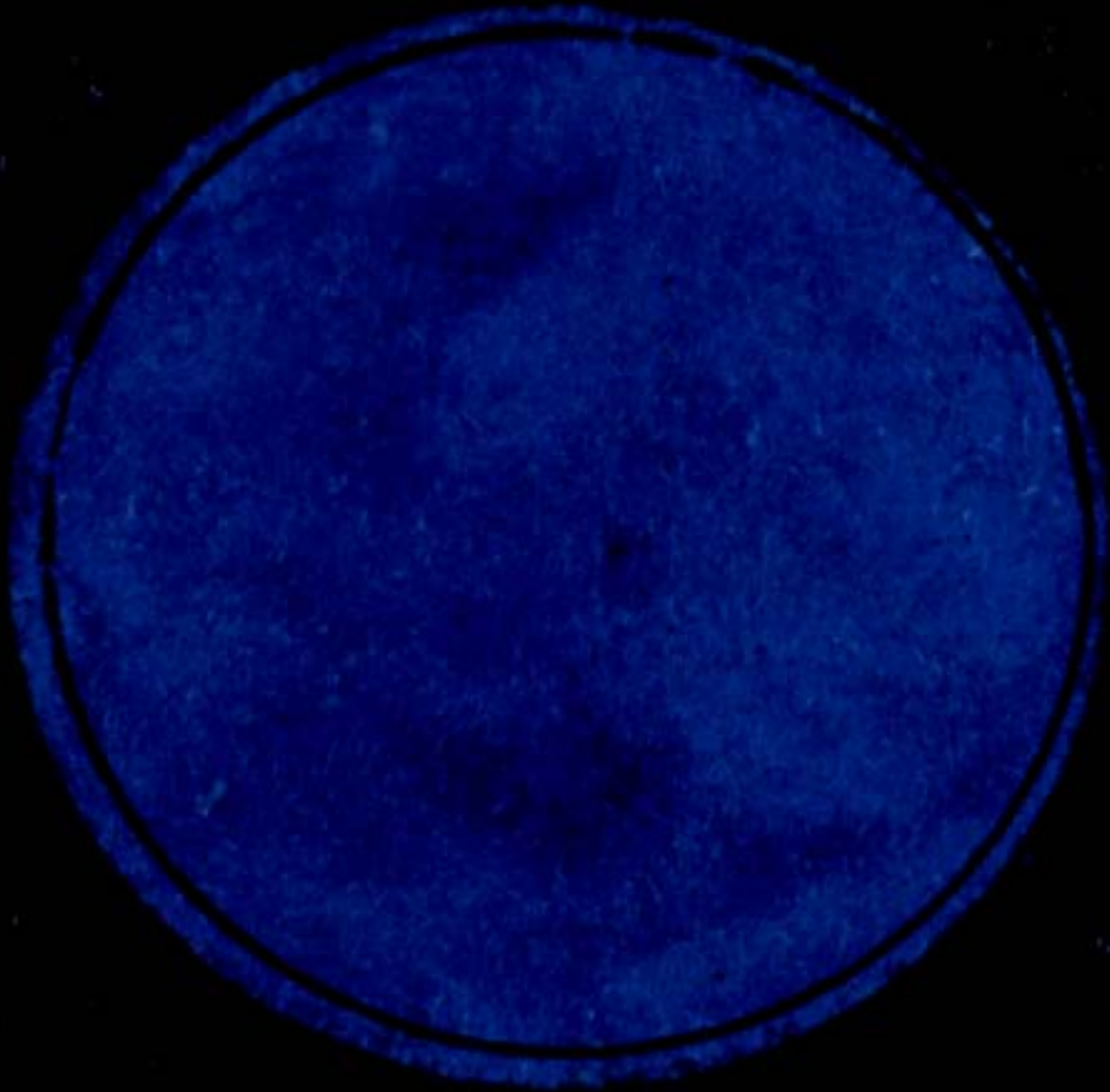
Old age and coming to an end



“Violet, a cooled-red both in the physical and spiritual sense, possesses an element of frailty, expiring sadness. This colour is considered proper for dresses of older women, as the Chinese actually use as the colour of mourning. It is similar to the sound of an English horn, the shepherds flute, or the deep, low tone of wood instruments (for example, a bassoon).”



Tempered Elan, 1944.



“Blue is the typical heavenly colour. When very dark, blue develops an element of repose. When it sinks into black, it echoes a grief that is hardly human. It attains an endless, profound meaning sinking into the deep seriousness of all things where there is no end.”

THE SPIRITUAL IN ART
WASSILY KANDINSKY

