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January 30, 2022

### None for Freedom and None for Logic

Kasimir Malevich and Alexander Rodchenko are both Russian painters in the early twentieth century, and they both produce radical monochrome paintings to declare the total rejection of the past and the advent of their new interpretations of art. However, while Malevich abandons object depictions to free the sensation of colors and forms spiritually, Rodchenko disputes arts' abstract and spiritual nature and logicalizes aesthetics with scientific materialism.

Following the groundbreaking work *Black Square* in 1915, *Red Square (Painterly Realism of a Peasant Woman in Two Dimensions)* further rejects all previous symbolic paintings and declares Malevich's pursuit for the purity of forms and colors, which he calls suprematism. As its name suggests, *Red Square* is essentially a pure red square placed right in the middle of a white canvas. The shape of the red square is proportional to the white canvas so that it gives the visual effect of two canvas floating on top of each other. The simplicity of this artwork, which does not require any skill of painters other than using large strokes of pure color, contrasts the delicacy of classical paintings that aims to restore the objection of depiction accurately. Even for audiences with the experience of appreciating abstract cubist and Italian futurist paintings, *Red Square* will still shock them with the extreme reduction of compositions.

Indeed, as Malevich identified himself as a futurist in his earlier career, he aims to preserve the utmost motion and dynamics. After experimenting with Italian futurism painting, he criticized the intentional representation of speed and motion since "the wholeness of things vanished as their flashing particles hid themselves among other running bodies" (Malevich: 177). Therefore, in front of decades of previous post-impressionism works, Malevich needs strong

statements to affirm his pure pursuit of dynamics and intuition in painting. In this context, Malevich resorts to the purest object – an absolute square – with the purest color – an energetic red and an undecorated white. Although the work is amusingly subtitled *Painterly Realism of a Peasant Woman in Two Dimensions*, no portrait is involved for the audience's imagination but a big square of red. However, because nothing is involved, the brightness of the red and the plainness of white are set free. Since viewers' task of interpreting the painting is completely lifted, they can immerse themselves entirely in the sensational enjoyment of the pure colors and perfect geometric shapes. Thus, this work states for Malevich that even without any superfluous portraits, the enjoyment from sensations can still be presented spiritually.

Following Malevich's footsteps, Rodchenko painted his *Pure Red Color, Pure Yellow Color, Pure Blue Color* six years after. This is also a monochrome painting reduced to three primary colors, red, yellow, and blue. The pure colors are also produced by large and thick brushes, which does not involve artists' skill. Like Malevich, Rodchenko sets a clear boundary between himself and art production history. Contrary to how Henri Matisse may describe arts as "a beautiful path on the squalid life of the rich," Rodchenko believes that art must be accessible to the public (Rodchenko: 340). Thus, he uses the most basic colors, which anyone can readily appreciate regardless of their social status or education. Even an illiterate Russian farmer will be amazed by the pure yellow of ripe wheat widespread in his land in the autumn. Contrary to how German expressionists may use "art as a means of escaping from a life that is not worth living," he addresses that art comes from life and must serve for life (Rodchenko: 340). Thus, he takes the basic square shape, which can be found in everyday life and is utilized in productions. Even a Russian ironmaker can pick up a chunk of steel with his hands full of calluses and magically convert it to perfect tube steel that can be used to construct buildings where everybody lives.

However, as Rodchenko rejects all previous art culture, he necessarily rejects the spiritual freedom and enjoyment of art suggested by Malevich. The first clue is their different interpretations of square planes. The square block of red can still be viewed as an object in Malevich's work. Floating on the white squares, Malevich's red squares can confuse the dimensions of the picture and give viewers a spiritual experience. However, Rodchenko's plane squares are purely three canvasses. As Rodchenko describes, "every plane is plane" (Rodchenko: 202 in AS). In this case, Rodchenko only focuses on the materialistic nature of the components in arts.

Second, while the red in Malevich's painting gives viewers' freedom to savor the vibrance spiritually, Rodchenko's red is integrated with other two primary colors, yellow and blue, to represent a scientific theory of colors. Scientifically, the combination of those three colors on canvases can produce any color used throughout the painting history, including the exuberant orange used in Matisse's *Joy of Life* and Kirchner's eerie purple in *Street Dresden*. The theory of three primary colors repels all abstract sensations aroused from them, which Rodchenko calls "the delirious magic art of the sorcerers" (Rodchenko: 340). The oranges do not mean intense optical joys but represent a mixture of red and yellows with specific proportions; the purple does not hint at urban residents' blasé attitude but represents a mixture of red and blue.

In conclusion, Rodchenko's ideology is defined as constructivism, which describes art closer to science and mathematics. The process of constructing arts must follow the properties of the material, which includes the media of presentation, color, space, time, and so on. Thus, painting becomes an experiment in which artists construct art pieces based on an organized composition of materials found from the everyday socialist life of Russian comrades. Just like scientific experiments if for improving people's lives, art is also constructed for the mass.

Learned from Malevich, Rodchenko uses his *Pure Red Color, Pure Yellow Color, Pure Blue Color* as propaganda to make a bold cut from the history of art that precedes. However, Rodchenko makes one step further, which effectively terminates the history of art and demystifies art as a division of scientific materialism. From this point on, color is color; the material is material. Making arts is nothing different from any other social activity in socialist life, and everything follows logically.