

KASIMIR MALEVICH

RAKU KICHIZAEMON XV



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Kasimir Malevich drawings and Raku Kichizaemon XV Jikinyū tea bowls

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front cover: Raku Kichizaemon XV *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl

named 'Gyō' (dawn, attain enlightenment, become clear) 2022

back cover: Kasimir Malevich Construction 3 h 1916 pencil on squared paper 16.6 x 10.8 cm

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I first saw drawings by Kasimir Malevich in 1970. I had only been working in my mother's gallery for a few years when Annely Juda Fine Art mounted an exhibition of the *Non-Objective World 1914 – 1924*, in June 1970, which included 12 Malevich drawings and two manuscripts, one of which was about his Suprematist theories. I was immediately struck by how much presence these small, subtle, beautiful avant-garde drawings had, especially for the time they were made, in Russia at the beginning of the 20th Century.

I met Raku Jikinyū in 2004 when I had the honour to be invited to his home to meet him and his wife, Fujiko. I knew very little about his work, but I was again struck by the subtle and avant-garde beauty of his tea bowls, just as I had been by Kasimir Malevich's drawings in 1970. Over the years I was invited a few times to Raku Jikinyū's home to see his recent work, and to his museum also to see previous generations' ceramics. Slowly, I got to understand his work a little more.

I was not so surprised when Raku Jikinyū told me that he would like to make an exhibition jointly with Kasimir Malevich in the Sagawa Museum in Japan in 2021, where he had been making annual exhibitions of his work juxtaposed with an artist he particularly appreciated. I immediately thought that this was a great idea, and suggested that the juxtaposition of Malevich drawings with his tea bowls would look wonderful in the Sagawa Museum, and I would be very honoured to make the exhibition in our gallery the following year. I'm now thrilled that a similar exhibition is being held at our gallery.

My mother and I met Andréi Nakov in 1973, who was studying Malevich and was embarking on the exciting adventure of writing the Monograph and the Catalogue Raisonné of Kasimir Malevich. More than 30 years later, the Catalogue Raisonné and the 4-volume Monograph were published. We have known each other for nearly 50 years, bonded by Kasimir Malevich, and without his help, this exhibition would not be possible. I am most grateful for his insightful essay in this catalogue, which was first published in the Sagawa exhibition catalogue.

There are many people who have helped to make this exhibition possible. I would particularly like to thank Junko Ando, Daisuke Hayashi, Rupert Faulkner and Kyoko Ando for all their tremendous help. I am most grateful to the lenders to this exhibition. Finally, I would like to thank Raku Jikinyū for his brilliant essay and introduction to the catalogue, but most of all for the fabulous tea bowls he has created. I am sure that this exhibition would not have come to fruition without the immense input by Fujiko, his wife.

David Juda, February 2022

From the Encounter with David to Kichizaemon X Malevich

by Raku Kichizaemon XV Jikinyū

This exhibition at Annely Juda Fine Art has come about thanks to my friendships with David Juda, Rupert and Kyoko Faulkner, and Kyoko's sister Junko Ando. It is the successor to an exhibition entitled *Kichizaemon X Malevich* that opened last autumn at the Sagawa Art Museum in Shiga Prefecture. This featured some 20 drawings by Kazimir Malevich kindly lent by David and other owners, together with a similar number of Raku tea bowls from my recent White Rock series.

Kichizaemon X refers to a series of exhibitions held annually at the Sagawa Art Museum since the opening of its Raku Kichizaemon Pavilion in 2007. The exhibitions have been momentous and challenging events in which I have presented the best of my most recent work. The 'X' indicates a theme, a work of art or an artist by whom or by which I have been especially moved. Interaction with the subject of the 'X' stimulates me to reflect on and recalibrate myself. Encounters of this kind are rare and very special. They are much more than taking a liking to something or indulging a passing interest. They can be life-changing experiences that inspire as well as terrify. There have been times when it has felt like being struck by a bolt of lightning. Each interaction has opened up a path to a new way of making and has broadened my artistic horizons.

On reflection, this sequence of encounters has been something truly miraculous and the *Kichizaemon X* series has become a lifework of sorts. Prior to *Kichizaemon X Malevich*, there were several other exhibitions that have remained especially close to my heart. These are *Kichizaemon X Indonesian Native Art* (2007), *Kichizaemon X Wols* (2018) and *Kichizaemon X Saitō Takashi* (2020). Each time the encounter was transformative and pushed me towards a new realm of creativity. The works I produced sought to resonate with their counterparts with both intensity and in a spirit of profound empathy.

As regards Malevich, my interest in him became all the greater in 2015 when the exhibition *Raku: The Cosmos in a Tea Bowl* was shown at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow. It was a large-scale exhibition of 170 works covering the sixteen-generation history of the Raku family from the time of our founder Chōjirō up to the present day. There was one work by Malevich I particularly wanted to see while I was in Russia. It was his *Black Square* of 1915 owned by the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. Its pure blackness has long affected me and has rooted itself deeply into my consciousness. I say more about this in my main essay so will not elaborate here.

Although I am personally captivated by the *Black Square*, I associate it less with myself than with the philosophy embodied in the Black Raku tea bowls of Chōjirō, which resonate more directly with Malevich's painting than my own work. As to the connection between Chōjirō and contemporary art, I touched on this in the catalogue of the *Raku: A Dynasty of Japanese Ceramists* exhibition that toured Europe in 1997. I wrote about Chōjirō in relation to the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp. It was a discussion about the underlying cognitive and existential raison d'être of art, and how art always transcends language. Thinking that there might be sympathy for the idea of commonality between Chōjirō and modern European art, I approached the Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art in Paris with the idea of an exhibition about the meeting of sixteenth-century Japan and contemporary western artistic philosophy. Unfortunately, this never came to anything.

When I mentioned this to Rupert Faulkner and David Juda, they were both very interested, and David suggested a project juxtaposing my tea bowls with drawings by Malevich, of which he showed me several examples when I visited London in 2019. They did not have the absolute and ultimate profundity of the *Black Square*, but rather a playfulness that released the spirit to hover freely as if dancing a cosmic dance. I was fascinated. Out of this came the idea of *Kichizaemon X Malevich* at the Sagawa Art Museum and its subsequent showing at Annely Juda Fine Art. David generously organised the loan of the many drawings from Europe shown in Japan. Until now there has never been an exhibition in the UK focusing on my work. Although I suspect the British public are not very familiar with Raku ceramics from Japan, I am interested to see how they respond to the interplay between the drawings and tea bowls in what could be considered a somewhat unusual juxtaposition.

The planning of this exhibition, which was very much David's brainchild, marked the beginning of a new adventure for me. Without his advice and encouragement, I would almost certainly have given up. I cannot thank him enough for his enthusiasm and support.

The exhibition features 20 tea bowls from my White Rock series, some of which were shown at the Sagawa Art Museum and others that I have made more recently. It also includes a Black Raku tea bowl by Chōjirō. This is in order to explain the background to my interest in Malevich and to show where my artistic roots ultimately lie. As far as matters of display and the catalogue are concerned, I left these entirely up to David. How an exhibition is organised is a reflection of the organiser's aesthetic sense and way of thinking. I am intrigued to see the outcome of his vision.

It was unfortunate that because of the Covid pandemic, David was unable to come to Japan to see the exhibition at the Sagawa Art Museum. While this was regrettable, David's wife, the contemporary artist Yuko Shiraishi, was able to see it while she was in Japan visiting her mother. As it happens, Yuko's mother, Kazuko Shiraishi, is one of Japan's most famous poets by whose work I have always been moved. The 1960s and 1970s, when she came to prominence, corresponded exactly with my youth. Her poetry was scintillating in how it challenged accepted conventions and left an indelible impression on me. As well as thanking David, I would like to use this opportunity to thank Yuko and Kazuko for all they have done.

I would also like to thank Rupert and Kyoko Faulkner and Junko Ando for having been so supportive of me over the years and for having translated my various writings. I would similarly like to express my sincerest gratitude to Andréi Nakov, Daisuke and Toshihiko Hayashi and the team at Mitochu Koeki, the staff of Annely Juda Fine Art, and the many other people who have made the exhibition possible.

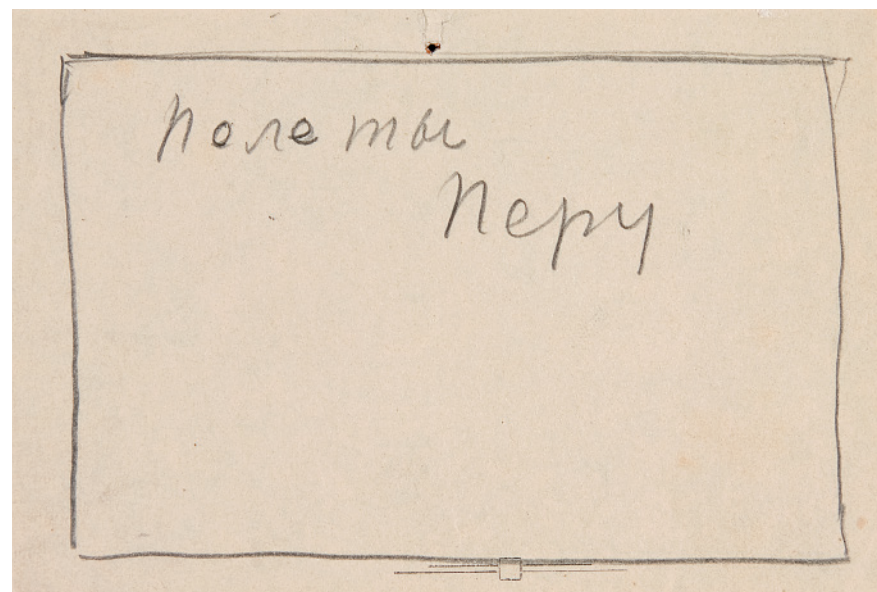
I know that Malevich, the remarkable precursor of contemporary art who lived through the early years of the Soviet Union, will continue to occupy a central place in my heart.

Raku Jikinyū XV
January 2022
Among the swaying grasses of Kuta

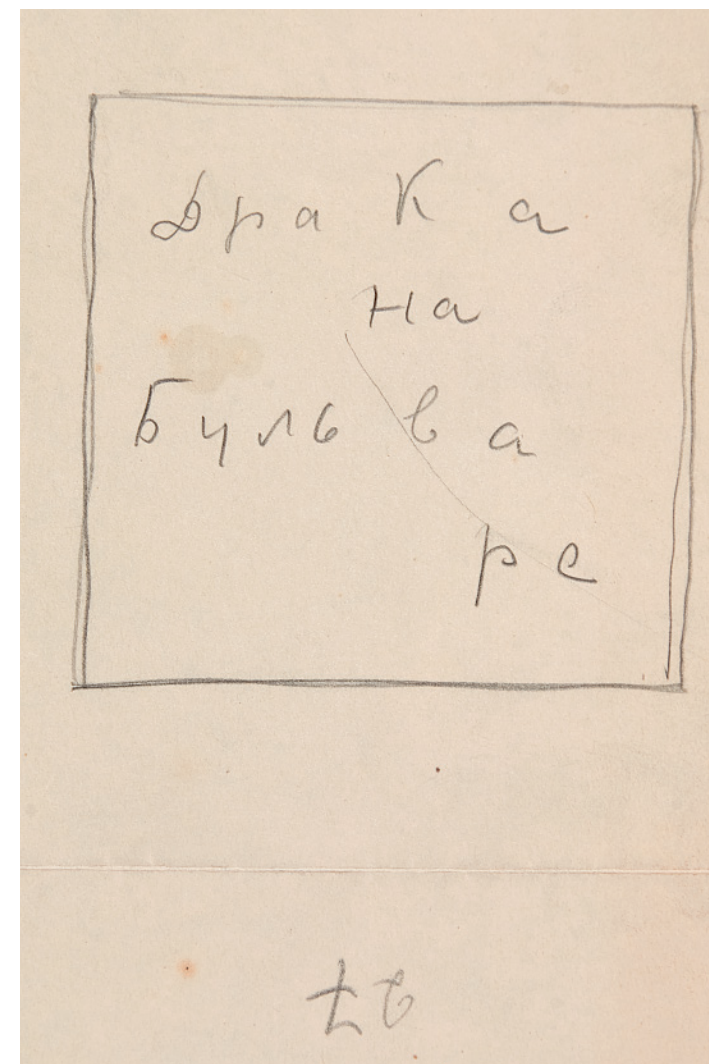
KASIMIR MALEVICH

Born near Kiev in 1879. Died in Leningrad (St Petersburg) in 1935.

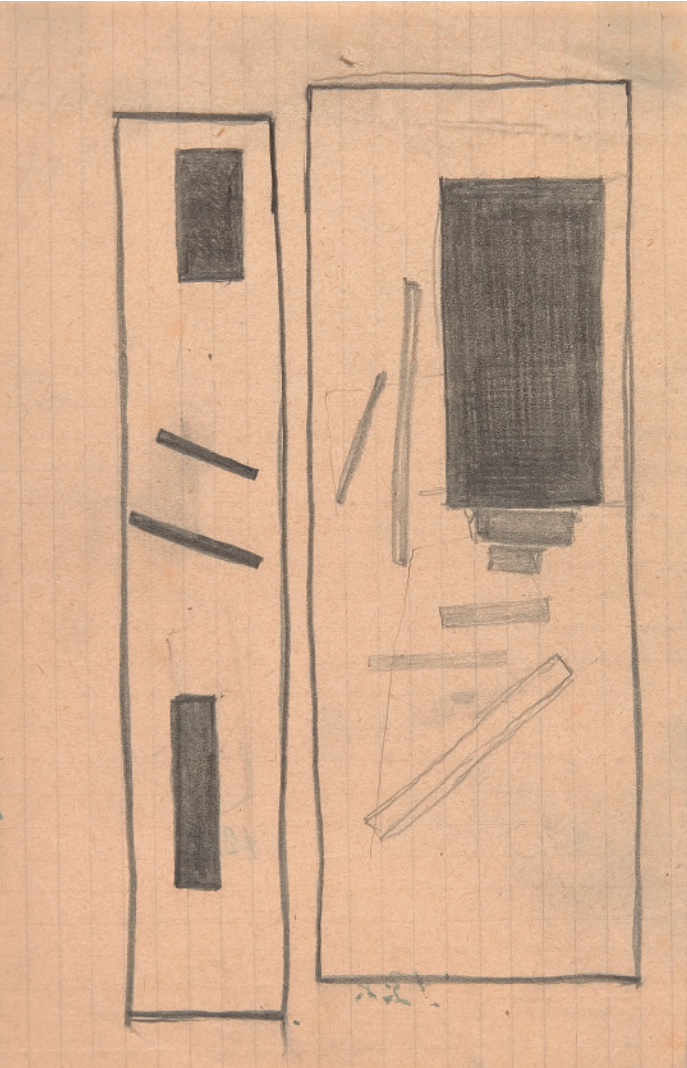
Kasimir Malevich was a Russian avant-garde artist famous as the pioneer of Suprematism and the championing of non-objectivity. His most representative works are his *Black Square* of 1915 and his *White on White* of 1918. These seminal modernist works had a major influence on the development of 20th century abstract art and minimalism.



1 Flight of the feather, Spring 1915
pencil on paper, 8.3 x 17.7 cm



2 Flight of the Boulevard, Spring 1915
pencil on paper, 17.8 x 9.4 cm



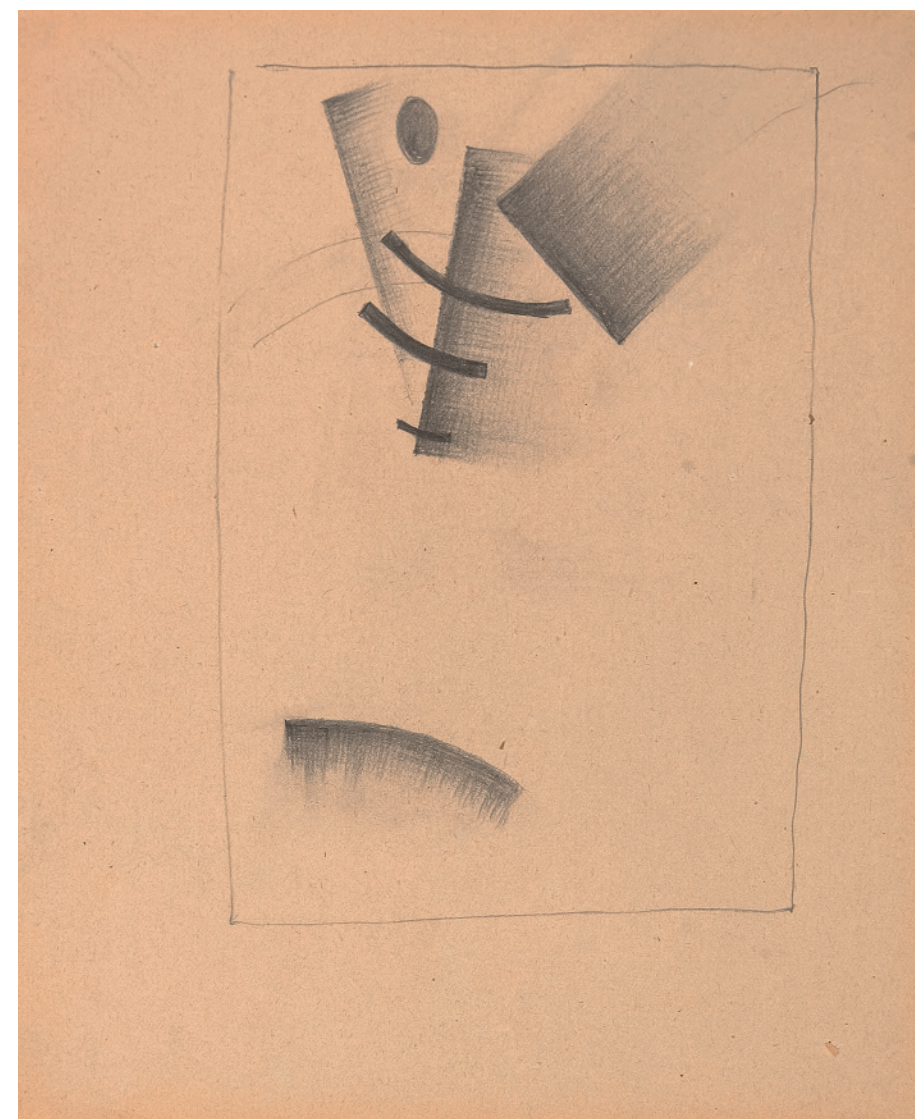
3 Composition 12 k, 1915
pencil on squared paper, 16.6 x 10.8 cm

4 Composition 9 m, 1917-18
pencil on paper, 17.7 x 11 cm



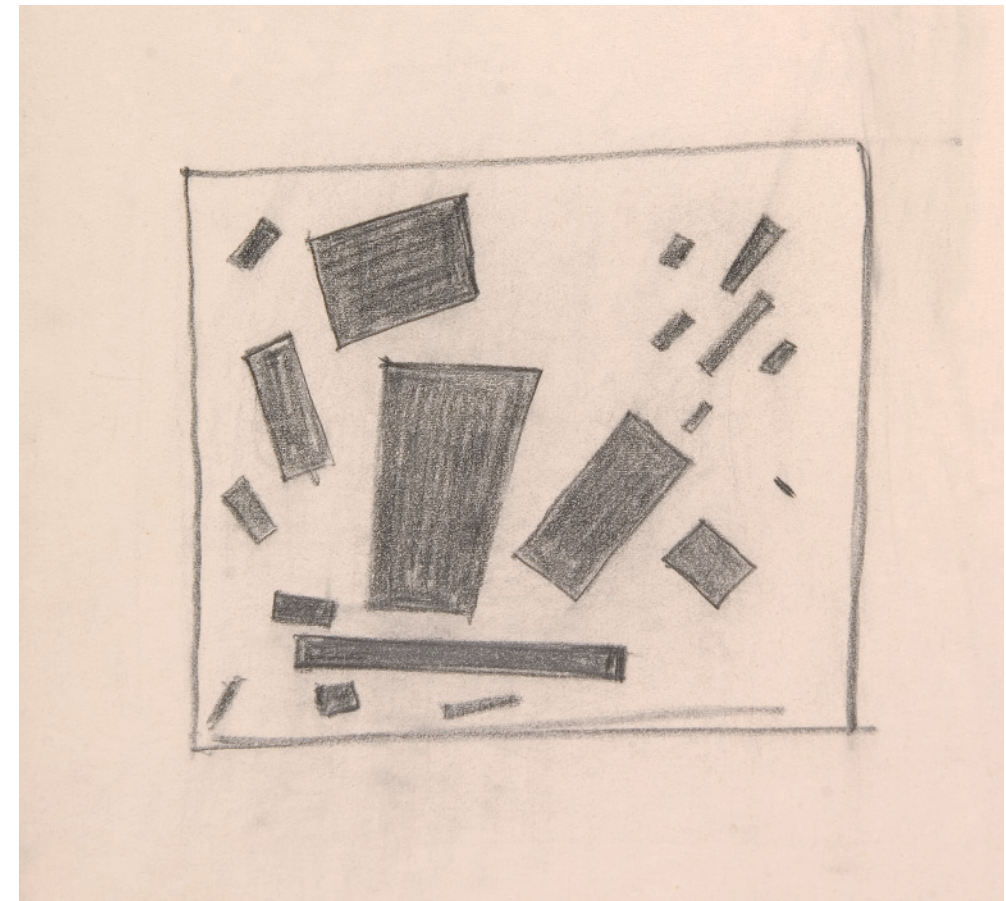


5 Composition 1 a, 1917-18
pencil on paper, 17.9 x 11.2 cm



6 Magnetic planetary composition, 1917-18
pencil on paper, 20 x 16.5 cm

7 Magnetic movement, early 1920s, motif of 1916
pencil on paper, 19.3 x 14.5 cm



Malewicz’s Suprematist Adventure: from the 0,10 Exhibition to Infinity

by Andréi Nakov

This essay was first published in the catalogue for the exhibition “KICHIZAEMON X MALEVICH” at the Sagawa Art Museum, Japan, 14 September 2021 - 16 January 2022

*Dr. Andréi Nakov is the author of the Catalogue Raisonné of Kazimir Malewicz, published by Edition Adam Biro, Paris 2002, and the 4-volume monograph, published in 2007 Paris (English version by Lund Humphrey’s, London 2010).
The numbers in the essay refer to the Catalogue Raisonné reference numbers.
The artist’s name is spelled in its original form in the essays contributed by Dr Andréi Nakov for this exhibition, as in the Catalogue Raisonné and Monograph.*

Born in Bulgaria in 1941, Andréi Nakov is a French art historian specialising in the Russian avant-garde, Futurism, Dada, Constructivism, contemporary art and European abstract art. Following the publication in 1975 by Champ Libre (Paris) of a critical body of essays on Malevich, Nakov went on to study the activities of the Suprematist group Unovis founded by Malevich in 1919. Nakov has lectured at many universities across Europe, and his publications have been translated into multiple languages.

Striking though it was, owing to the austerity of the renowned *Black Square* (1915), Suprematism was closeted for decades under the category of “geometrical” art, to which it was soon relegated. The geometrical reduction of the original *Quadrilateral* (1915) to a “Black Square” by the critic Alexander Benois was a grave mistake: from the outset Malewicz’s art was highly expressive and even, for different periods, distinctly “Expressionistic.” The conceptual specificity of his creative approach is by no means incompatible with the expressive dimension; indeed, the latter acts essentially as a counterweight to the artist’s pictorial practice. In fact, the conceptual intensity of his imagination brings to his production an entirely novel acuity, that of forms invented *ex-nihilo*, i.e. Non-Objective forms. Deprived of the anecdotal aspect of non-painterly (literary) subjects, the new creative approach is obliged to be all the more expressive, inasmuch as its expressivity places it instantly in the level of “living” abstract forms. From the very beginning of its modernist rise (around 1908) the formation

of new concepts, that is to say new forms, became central to Malewicz's creative manner, as attested by the strange artist's self-portrait (F-167, c.1908 -1909) (i) from the period of the young artist's studies at the Theodore Rerberg School in Moscow. In this impressive drawing titled *At Home* he depicts himself seated, displaying huge hands on his knees, a particularly impressive detail¹ (which was to reappear in *Bather* F-193 (ii) from 1911 and *On the Boulevard* F-125 (iii) of the same year²): obviously it was matter over mind?

The most striking thing about the self-portrait is the emptiness of the face: the eyes are not just closed, but non-existent. This attitude — an extremely original one for a portrait, it must be said — indicates that the picture's subject, in this case inspiration, derives from the “sphere of thought”; the domain of concepts, rather than from the visible realm as was the case for his Impressionist predecessors (Manet, Cézanne) and for the Expressionists. It was the “mysterious center of thought” (Gauguin's phrase) that drew Malewicz powerfully to the French painter, that “cerebral” artist “did not paint things as common-sense eyes saw them” (Malewicz, 1916). This *ex-nihilo* practice of Symbolist invention was to guide Malewicz's practice from this point on. Hence, we are far removed from the manual, even “tactile” practice (to use Henry Wölfflin's vocabulary) of Matisse, the Expressionists (Kirchner and Larionov), Kandinsky, even Paul Klee (before 1920); far too from the Romantic approach of Delacroix, Puvis de Chavannes and Redon, who were inspired by it. Nor is the conceptualization being contrasted to their manner, that of the classical (academic tradition of Ingres) for, by referring to the realm of literary subjects, the latter occasion's anecdotal themes constitute a world foreign to the new plasticity of the 20th Century to come. Malewicz blazed an altogether different trail, the path of a total visual invention based on no prior models. His inventiveness embraced the unknown, the Non-Objective, a universe of hitherto unrecognized abstract forms. It led to the art of Suprematism.

Malewicz was to accomplish the break with old models and, in general, the whole tradition of Western figuration, by invoking a “superior reason,” i.e. the revolution of *Alogism* which, as early as February 1914, unconditionally rejected all references to non-pictorial models. In Western Europe



(i) At home, 1908-09, 8.2 x 4.1 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: F-167



(ii) Bather, 1911, 105 x 69 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: F-193



(iii) On the Boulevard, 1911, 72 x 71 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: F-215

this fundamental change of aesthetic parameters gave rise to Dadaism and shortly afterwards, very differently but possibly even more decisively, to Surrealism and especially further abstraction (Kupka, Kandinsky, Picabia, Mondrian and others).

The first signs of this trend were Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades (for instance his *Pharmacie* of 1914).³ Three years later they would give rise to the iconoclastic provocation of the artist's famous *Fountain* (an upside-down urinal presented in New York), followed in the same iconoclastic vein by the “rectified readymade” *LHOOQ* of 1919, in which the artist sought to wring the neck of the myth of da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* by adding a mustache to a commonplace reproduction of that famous painting (in this a simple postcard).⁴ With this gesture Duchamp altered Leonardo's iconic work, not realizing that Malewicz had already done so five years earlier.⁵ The coincidence of these anti-classical revolts confirms similar aesthetic preoccupations of two artists engaged in a parallel fashion in deconstructing the cultural myths of the Western tradition.

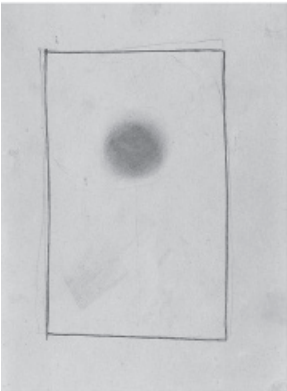
Duchamp's challenge to the narrative tenor of Western tradition was to lead in short order to the highly provocative and so sacrilegious image of the *Holy Virgin* (March 1920)⁶ by the French artist Francis Picabia, a protagonist of the Dada movement who had come to public notice as early as 1915 with a sarcastic treatment of the mechanistic stereotypes of masculine and especially feminine images. In the present case, Picabia's favorite subject of erotic attraction is sublimated through anti-academic irony, as was Malewicz's attitude in 1916 in his sarcasms about the “pornography of lubricious Venuses” and the statement that “lascivious bodies” were henceforth not the aesthetic concern of artists. Both Picabia and Duchamp were inclined to give the critique of figuration the form of erotic, hence intimately personal, provocation, whereas Malewicz's aesthetic revolt was by and large cultural. It was ambitiously philosophical and above all socially subversive. With the system of the new Non-Objective art, the logical foundations of art and, to begin with, language, were demolished. The very meaning of how we conceive reality was declared obsolete. Through a fundamental reversal of our figurative values all traditional, so-called *realist* or fundamentally *mimetic* values, were replaced by a new logic. The world, as it was henceforth to be

depicted, was now the antipode of the “old order.”

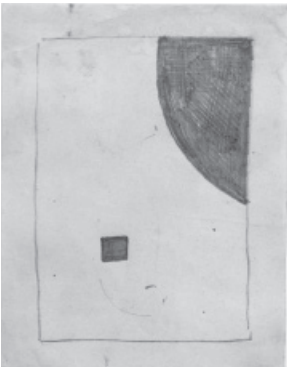
Thus, we begin to understand how in the process of creating a new visual universe drawing, by capturing the instantaneousness of hitherto novel, inevitably personal, conceptualized forms, played a crucial role. But how was the artist to stride forward amidst the tangle of invented forms? Malewicz has left us few precise indications about the manner in which his Suprematist sequence should be read. The only trace we know of that seething proliferation of ideas is a vague attempt at classifying the compositions identified in 1916 under the heading “Supremus” (barely a dozen works in all).

Later, in the mid-Twenties (approximately 1924-1925), once more with the help of his corpus of drawings, the artist embarked on a more systematic categorization of his Suprematist oeuvre. Under his guidance, his Leningrad assistant Anna Leporskaya (who related this episode to me), inscribed letters and numbers on the back of his drawings.⁷ But again we are faced with a stylistic interpretation rather than a chronological record. In contrast to Kandinsky or Paul Klee (who kept an almost obsessively precise register of his output) Malewicz left behind no notebook to keep track of his work — no orderly, systematic, fully explicit record at all. Very few, indeed extremely exceptional, drawings are accompanied by the indication “year . . .”, which suggests that the artist viewed them occasionally as milestones at a later date. These inscriptions were probably intended as teaching aids, as was the case of the album *Suprematism. 34 Drawings* (i.e. *compositions*), produced in December 1920 in the lithographic studio at the Vitebsk Art School. This booklet contains reproductions of Suprematist compositions dating from 1915 to 1919 but neither their date of creation nor their title is specified.

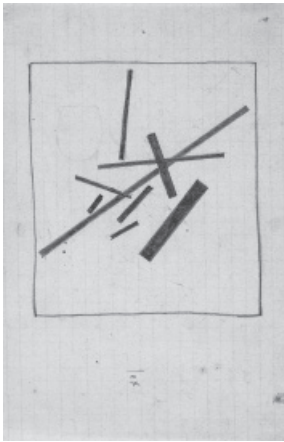
In 1927 the artist reproduced 24 compositions, again represented by drawings, in his book *Die gegenstandslose Welt* [The Non-Objective World] published by the Bauhaus press. Thus, once again drawings rather than paintings played the role of primal images. In the German-language book produced at the behest of the Bauhaus Institute each composition is scrupulously given a date and a title, yet even these indications need to be approached with caution, as they have an indisputably interpretative function. Here again the artist is referring to the emergence of an idea rather than



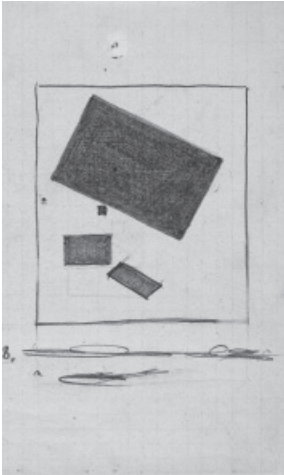
(iv) From the Series of Suprematist Drawing, 1917-18, 17.8 x 11 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-451
Collection Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo



(v) Composition, 6 f, 1920, 11 x 8.7 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-528



(vi) Construction 3 h, 1916, 16.6 x 10.8 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-273



(vii) Composition 2 c, 1915, 16.6 x 11.2 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-27

* * *

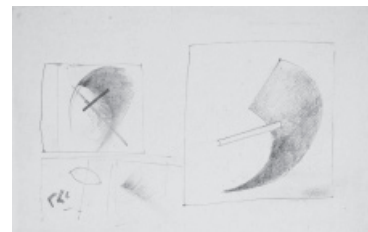
In every instance the graphic creation of Non-Objective planes — Suprematist forms — is particularly strong. The forms appear with a staggering simplicity and accuracy yet also with undeniable feeling. As Kandinsky puts it at the end of his life, “under the ice” one perceives “the fire” (of the new form). Thus a modernist Russian critic in Moscow was right

to group in 1922 the two painters, Kandinsky and Malewicz, under the same “Expressionist” banner.⁸ Far from any idea of “padding” a passive form, each Suprematist item is the affirmation of an incontrovertible intensity of matter—matter in motion if not in a state of seething activity.

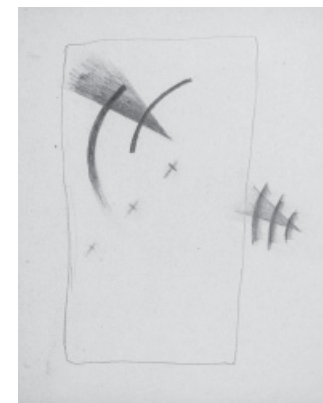
Hence the outlines of Non-Objective planes can be viewed as the shore of a Suprematist lake, who’s quivering the artist delimits vigorously. This material quality is visible in the fluidity of the lines that suggest a vital liquid, energy boiling over. The forces brought into play in the creation of Non-Objective planes are revealed to careful scrutiny, not only in the vibration of the surfaces but also through the intensity with which each outline is traced. This is equally perceptible in the execution of the border enclosing each composition, to such an extent in fact that one has the impression of being able to witness the almost biological quiver of a vital progression in the dynamic rendering of the periphery.

This vitality manifests itself too in the border’s irregularity, usually not a perfect rectangle but one that weds the direction of the forces produced by the orientation (movement) of the Suprematist planes. The forces marshaled in the composition result in irregular, not strictly rectangular borders; frames that seem to be “alive” because they are slightly pulled to one side. The line that delimits the space of the composition, and that defines its “frame” in the strict sense, appear to lift off in flight due to the dynamic orientation of the neighboring forms within that space.

The movements of the artist’s hand in response to the vital nature of the subject-matter is especially expressive in the drawings from the phase of “dissolving” forms (1917). In them, the Suprematist planes are involved in a symbiotic movement with the space in which they evolve. The intensity of the matter is totally freed from the descriptive limits imposed by an apparently geometric external form — a recognisably planar entity — an externally defined form, as it were. Like a cosmic magma the vitality of matter dictates the pulsation of the forms within the composition. The artist himself describes this later phase of the superior intensity of the Suprematist moment as a “dissolving” state (he actually uses the term “pulverising”).⁹



(viii) Spherical evolution of the plane, 1917,
14 x 21.5 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-446



(ix) Magnetic electric sensation, 1917-18,
20 x 16.5 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-551

With these compositions, all geometrical impulses are left far behind in a desire to transcend geometry. In fact, geometry as such becomes obsolete. Matter has “matured” to such an extent in this phase of liberation that the very notion of form as outline is exploded. Form opens up to space, giving rise at this point to a symbiotic relationship between form and space. In “colorless” (or “white”) Suprematism form reaches a level of sublimation beyond any and every rigid formal definition, i.e. the stratum of infinite transformation, of pure energy. Beyond definition, forms attain fluidness through the boundless explosion of energy and become endless new constellations in fusion; they transform into autonomous worlds, constantly renewed and renewable.

The “dissolving” compositions usher in a totally new chapter in the history of modern painting, a chapter beyond closed forms. This phase can be regarded as definitely transcending the “classical” aesthetic set in motion by the Italian Renaissance, in particular the thought of Leonardo da Vinci. For Malewicz, Leonardo stopped at the unlimited, the infinite, the boundary of visibility. The infinite was unknowable for the Italian master because “the form that has no limits cannot be represented,” can simply not be grasped. Whereas, for Malewicz the infinite was precisely a new challenge to the intellect and to the creative imagination. Thus the artist’s “white” period heralded a new era, for which he was dubbed in Germany “the new Moses.”¹⁰

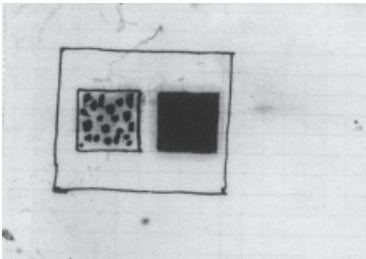
After fascinating German and Polish artists and critics on the occasion of the 1927 exhibition (Warsaw and Berlin) this type of work, based on open, “cosmic” forms had an impressive posterity in the art that László Moholy-Nagy produced in the second half of the 1930s. The successive dematerializations of Non-Objective planes initiated by Malewicz as of 1917 manifested itself in Moholy-Nagy’s work in the late 1930s in translucent materials (perspex) and particularly in his last sculptures which, like Malewicz’s “dissolving” compositions, took the form of open structures (perspex hanging sculptures), as they did later in the last period of Georges Vantongerloo. But this already propels us into post-war art, the art of Yves Klein, the Zero group in Germany and its Japanese counterpart exemplified by artists like Yamaguchi.

At this point in the Suprematist evolution it is important

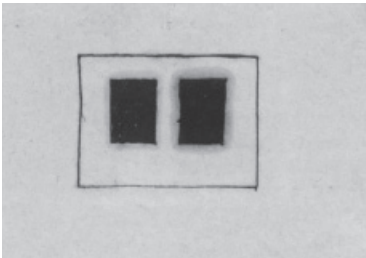
to remember that a few rare works by Malewicz straddle the borderline between painting and drawing. These are minuscule compositions, combining drawing with oils and other greasy substances (S-133 (x) and S-134 (xi)). Paul Klee’s contemporary work offers similar instances of the kind of alchemy that the Swiss artist was particularly fond of. The materials that one finds in S-133 and S-134 attest to a particularly rich and complex state which, especially in the latter case, impart a quasi alchemical note to the compositions. Much the same degree of intensity is present in the small gouache S-7 ((xii) cat.no. 12), included in this exhibition, not only because it belongs to the category of the artist’s very first Suprematist experiments by its size and physical intensity, but principally owing to the two quasi-rectangular shapes it contains. The position of these two rectangles suggests a kind of exploded composition that translates into a visual enlargement of the surrounding border. This inherent movement is too subtle at this early phase of Suprematism not to be pointed out.

Two compositions from the artist’s “dissolving” planes phase merit mention here as well: S-446 ((viii) cat. no. 15) and S-551 ((ix) cat.no. 16). In the former drawing, we observe forms that belly out like the sails of a boat riding the waves; they evoke the curves of some romantic vessel and suggest an indefinable poetic refinement. In the latter composition the romanticism of energy straddles the barrier of modernity, that of the electric and especially magnetic current that, at this stage of the Suprematist invention (1917-1918), appears to have struck the artist’s imagination vividly. His fascination with these energies is all the more comprehensible that, at the time in question, it was altogether in tune with supreme notions of the transformation of energy.

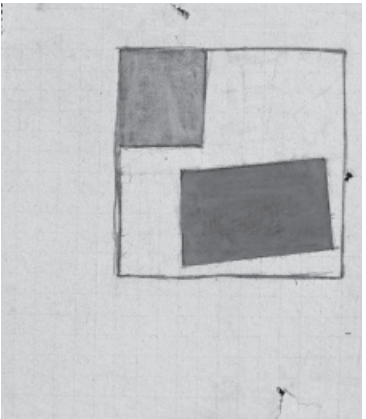
Only a few drawings of this type, and no paintings at all, are known to have survived.¹¹ The elements that announce this theme are already visible in 1916 in paintings in which an extraordinary liveliness of movement translates into a linear transformation of planes (S-240 (xiii) in the former Hack Collection and in S-287 (xiv)). In their case the acceleration of the planes results in their being transformed into straight lines and thus into prime symbols of a maximal energetic tension.



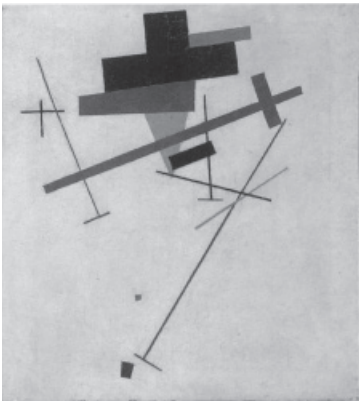
(x) Composition 12 c, 1915, 6.8 x 9.2 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-133



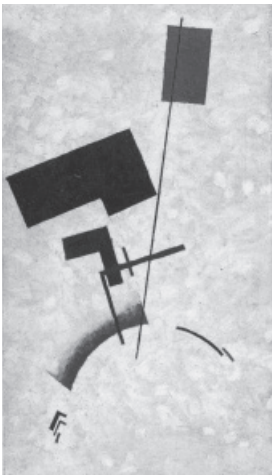
(xi) Two squares, 1915, 6.5 x 8.8 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-134



(xii) Composition 11c, 1915, 10.5 x 9 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-7



(xiii) Magnetic construction, 1916,
49 x 44 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-240

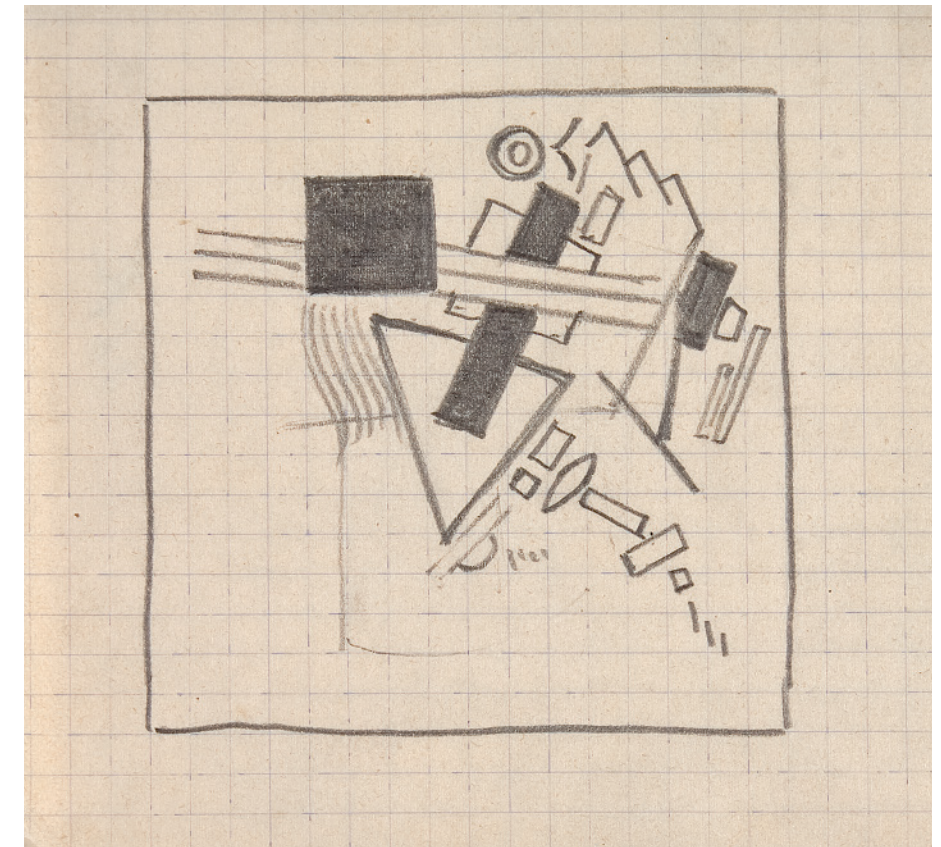


(xiv) Magnetic construction, motif of 1916,
73 x 40.5 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: S-287

As early as 1916 works of this type paved the way for the future Constructivist painting, a trend that inspired not only Moholy-Nagy but also, in the early 1920’s, Kandinsky and a number of other artists - Russian, Polish and German - attracted to abstraction. The infinite transformation of energy and subjects — such was the unlimited trajectory of Non-Objective art in this period, a magnificent and, above all, prophetic overture.

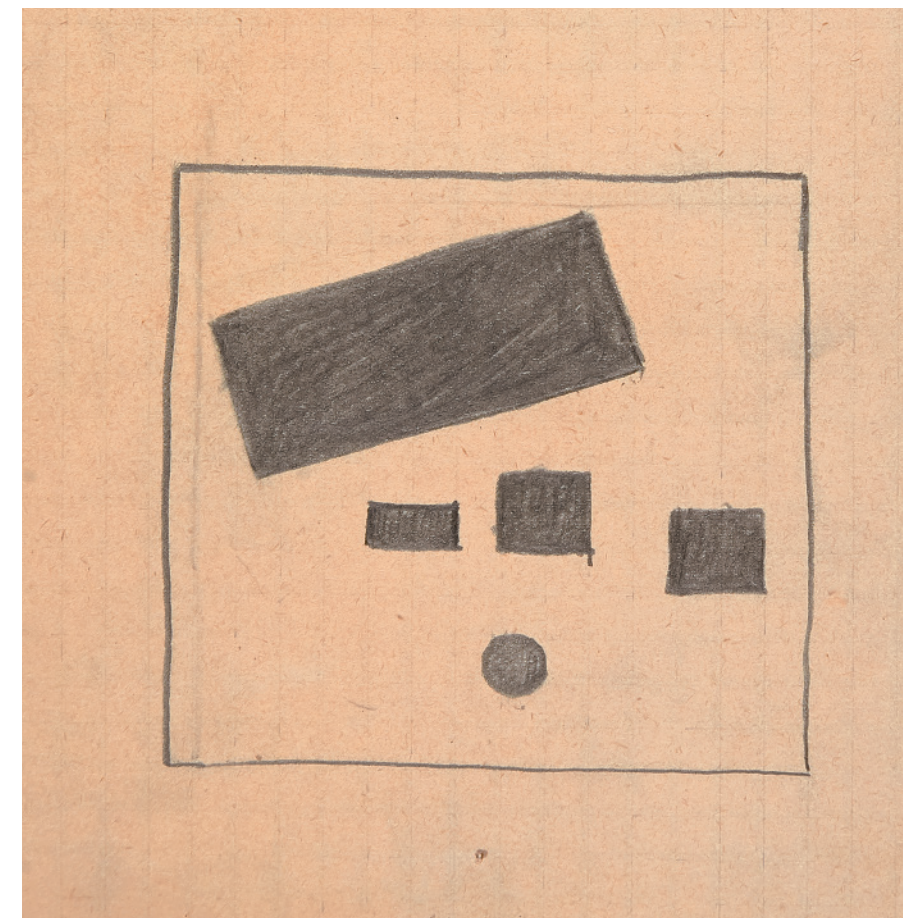
© Andréi Nakov, 2021

- 1 F-167, pencil on paper, 24,9 x 12,3 cm, Russian Art and Literature Archives, Moscow. The information concerning Kazimir Malewicz’s work refers to Nakov, A., *Kazimir Malewicz. Catalogue raisonné*, Paris: Société Nouvelle Adam Biro, 2002. The drawing in question follows another drawing in which the artist portrays himself with blank eyes but from the chest up (F-168, pencil on paper, 9,8 x 7,5 cm., Russian Art and Literature Archives, Moscow).
- 2 *Catalogue raisonné, op. cit.*, F-193 and F-215, both at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.
- 3 Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden. Jindrich Chalupsky considers this “rectified reproduction” one of the artist’s very first *ready-mades* (see Chalupsky’s important study, “Les ready-made de Duchamp et la théorie du symbole,” *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 7, no. 13, Craców, 1986, pp. 153-163.
- 4 This by now celebrated image measures only 19.7 x 12.7 cm. Under the heading “Tableau dada par Marcel Duchamp” [Dada Picture by Marcel Duchamp], it was reproduced in March 1920 in Picabia’s periodical 391, no. 12, Paris, two pages after the latter’s *Holy Virgin*.
- 5 See the latter’s *Partial Eclipse*, oil and pasted paper on canvas, 1914, Russian State Museum, St Petersburg (see the *Catalogue raisonné, op. cit.*, F-453). Note that the title has still not been confirmed. Most likely it is an Alogist, i.e. cryptic, title.
- 6 Reprinted a month after being reproduced in 391 opposite *Ingres’ Sainte Vierge in Les Hommes du Jour*, Paris, April 1920.
- 7 See Nakov, A., introduction (“L’approche méthodologique d’une création qui se veut extra-temporelle” [Methodological Approach to a Creation that Seeks to be Timeless]) to the *Catalogue raisonné, op. cit.*, pp. 25-45.
- 8 See Arvatov, Boris, “Dve gruppoviki” [Two Groups] in *Zrelisca* [Spectacles], Moscow, 17 October 1922. translated in Fr. by Michel Petris and Andrei Nakov in *Change*, N°26-27, Paris 1976 p.252-253.
- 9 Malewicz uses the Russian word *razpylenie*.
- 10 Kemény, A., “Die abstrakte Gestaltung vom Suprematismus bis heute” in *Das Kunstblatt*, no. 8, Potsdam, 1924, p. 245 ff.
- 11 Malewicz reproduced three examples of this type in his book *Die gegenstandslose Welt*, ill. 85, 86 and 87.

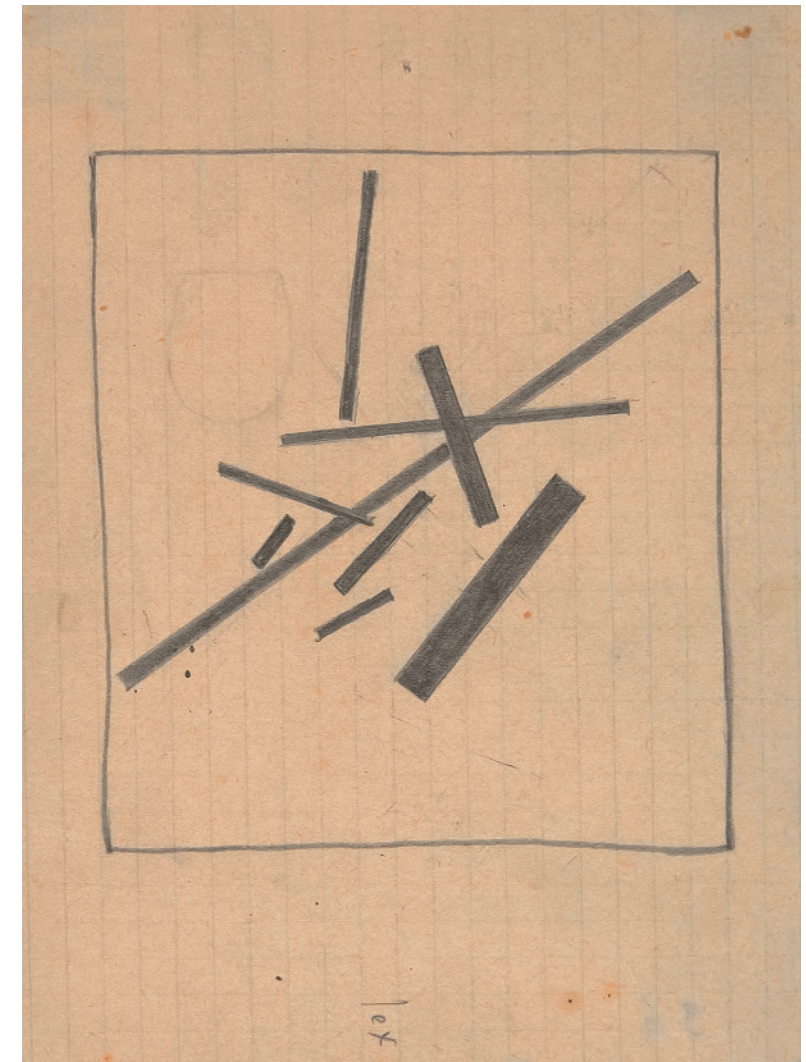


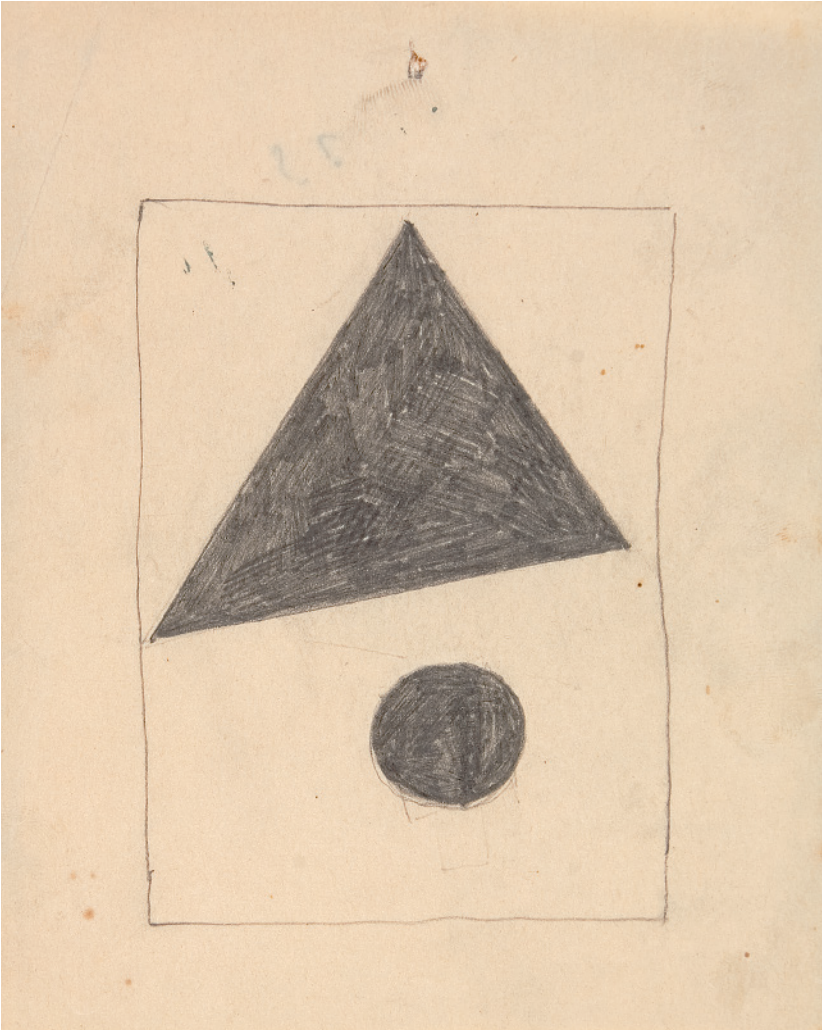
8 Construction 16 r, Summer 1915
pencil on squared paper, 11.2 x 16.4 cm

9 Composition 8 i, 1915
pencil on paper, 16 x 11.2 cm



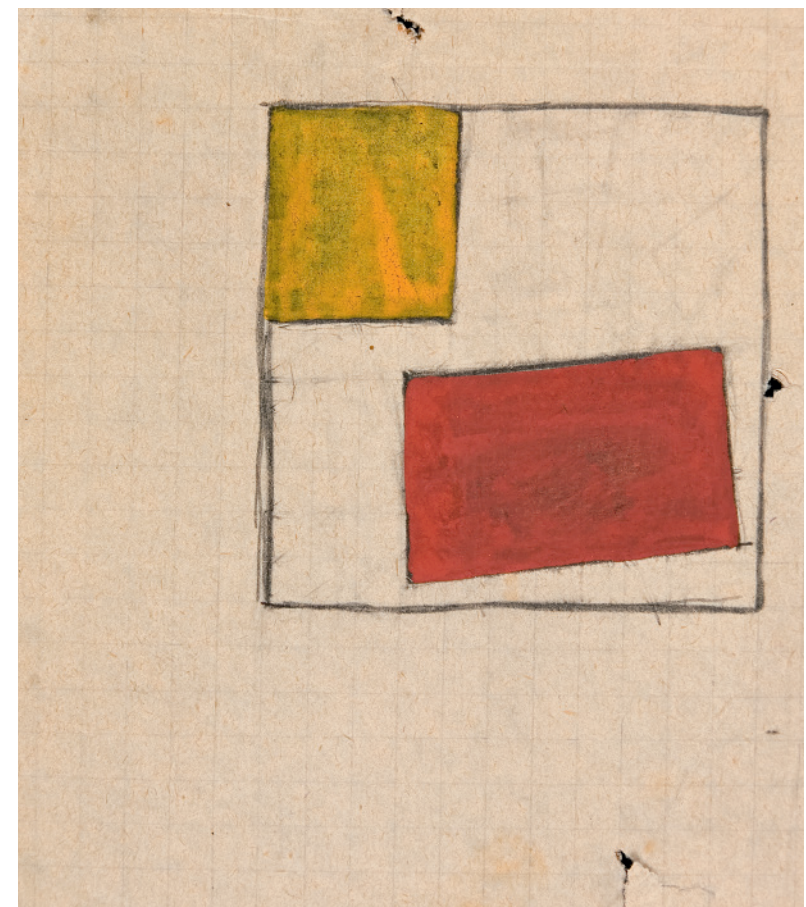
10 Construction 3 h, 1916
pencil on squared paper, 16.6 x 10.8 cm



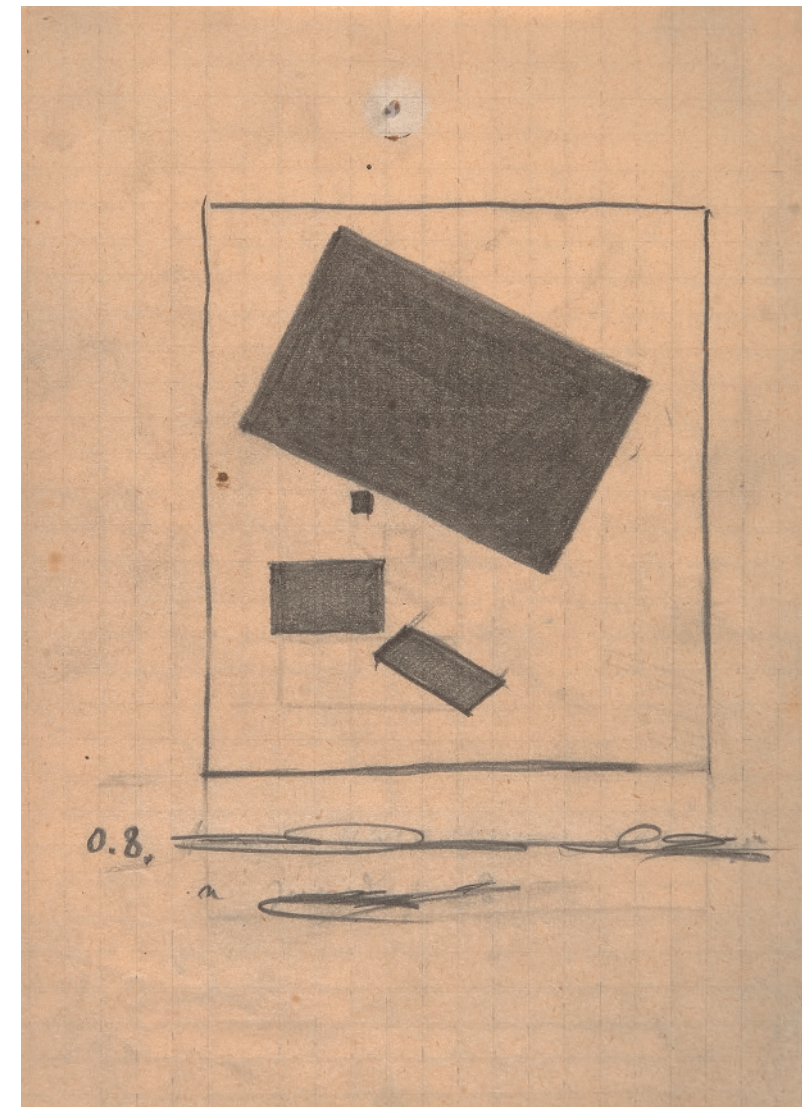


11 Composition 5 i, 1915-16
pencil on paper, 14.2 x 11.2 cm

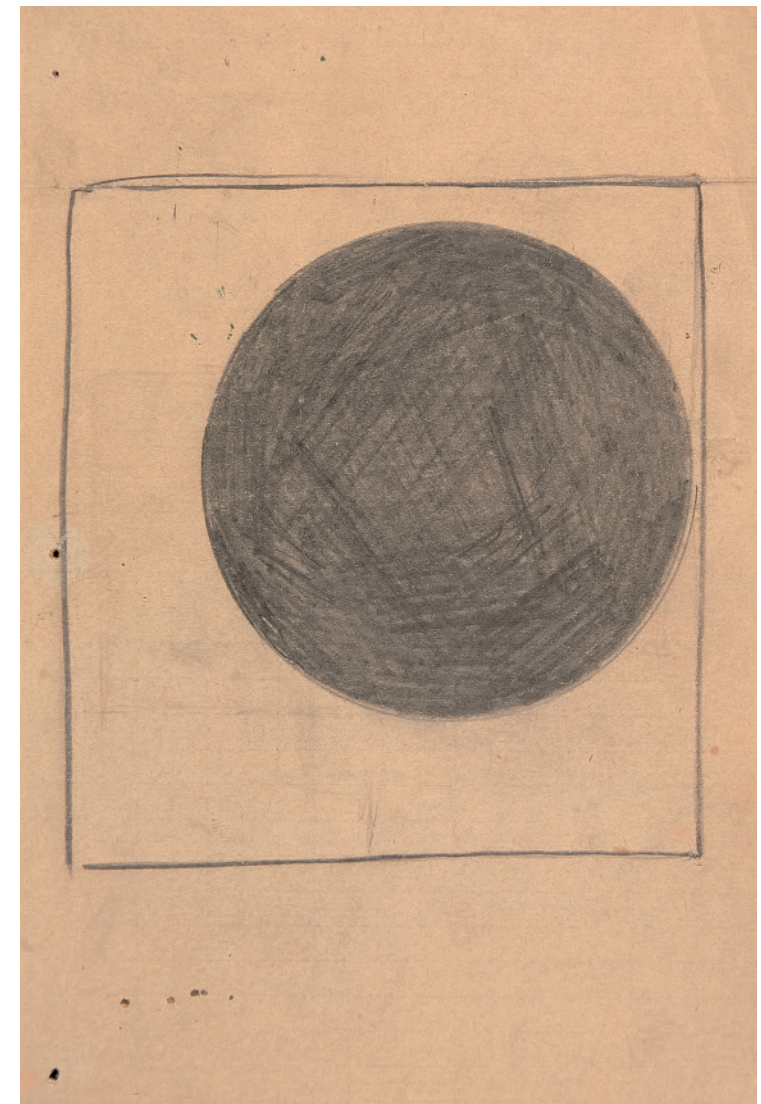
12 Composition 11 c, 1915
pencil and gouache on squared paper, 10.5 x 9 cm

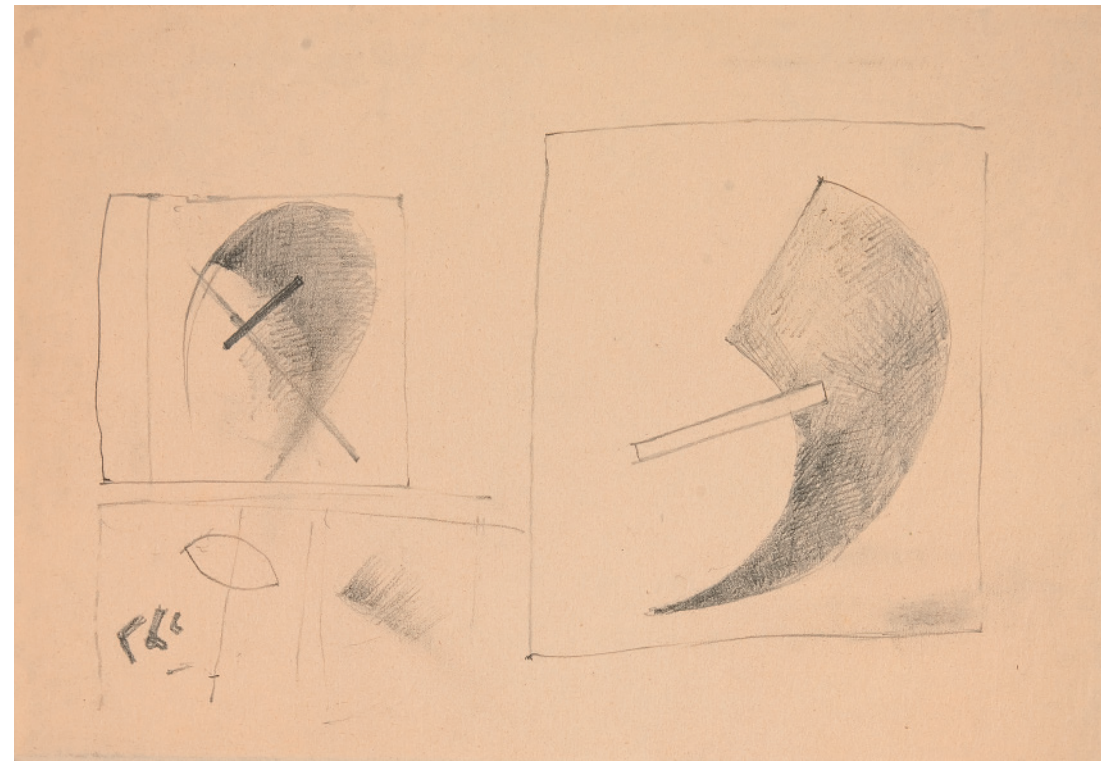


13 Composition 2 c, 1915
pencil on squared paper, 16.6 x 11.2 cm



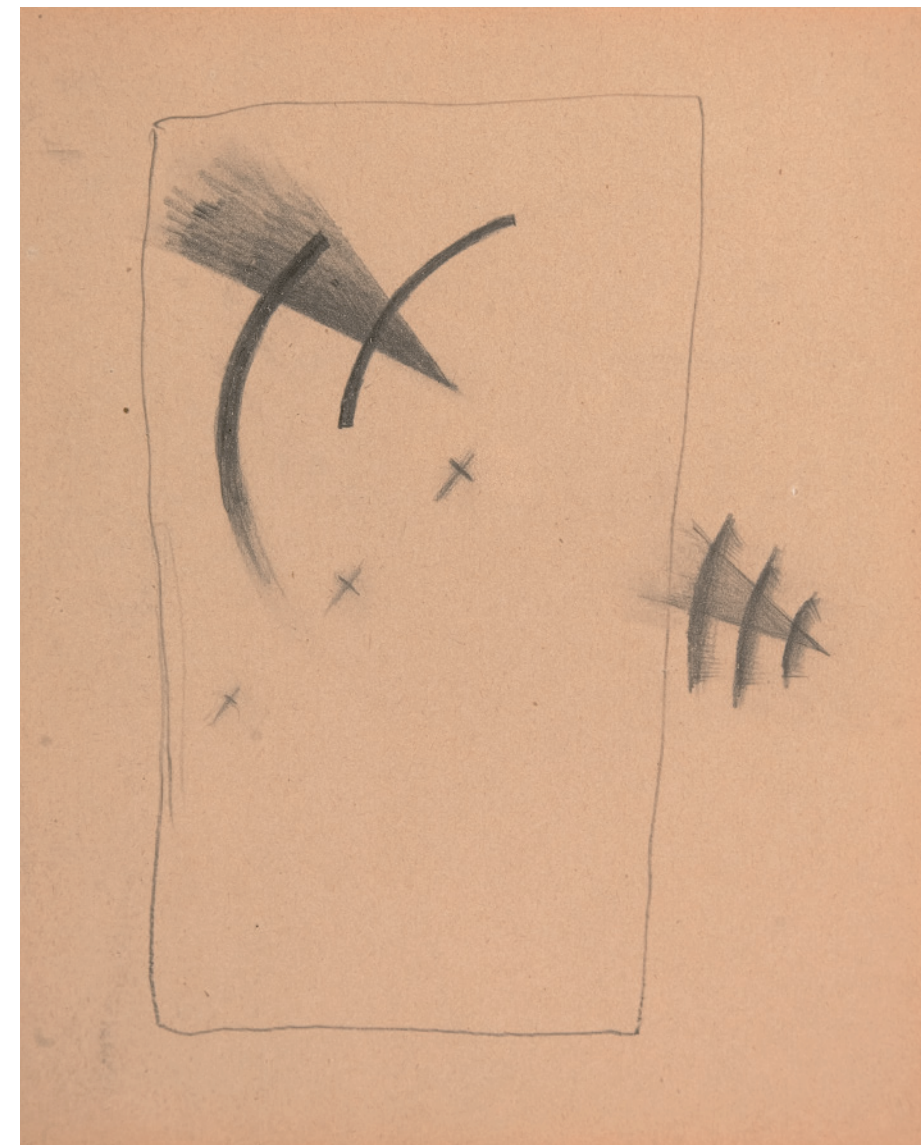
14 Rotating plane 12 i, 1915
pencil on squared paper, 16 x 10 cm





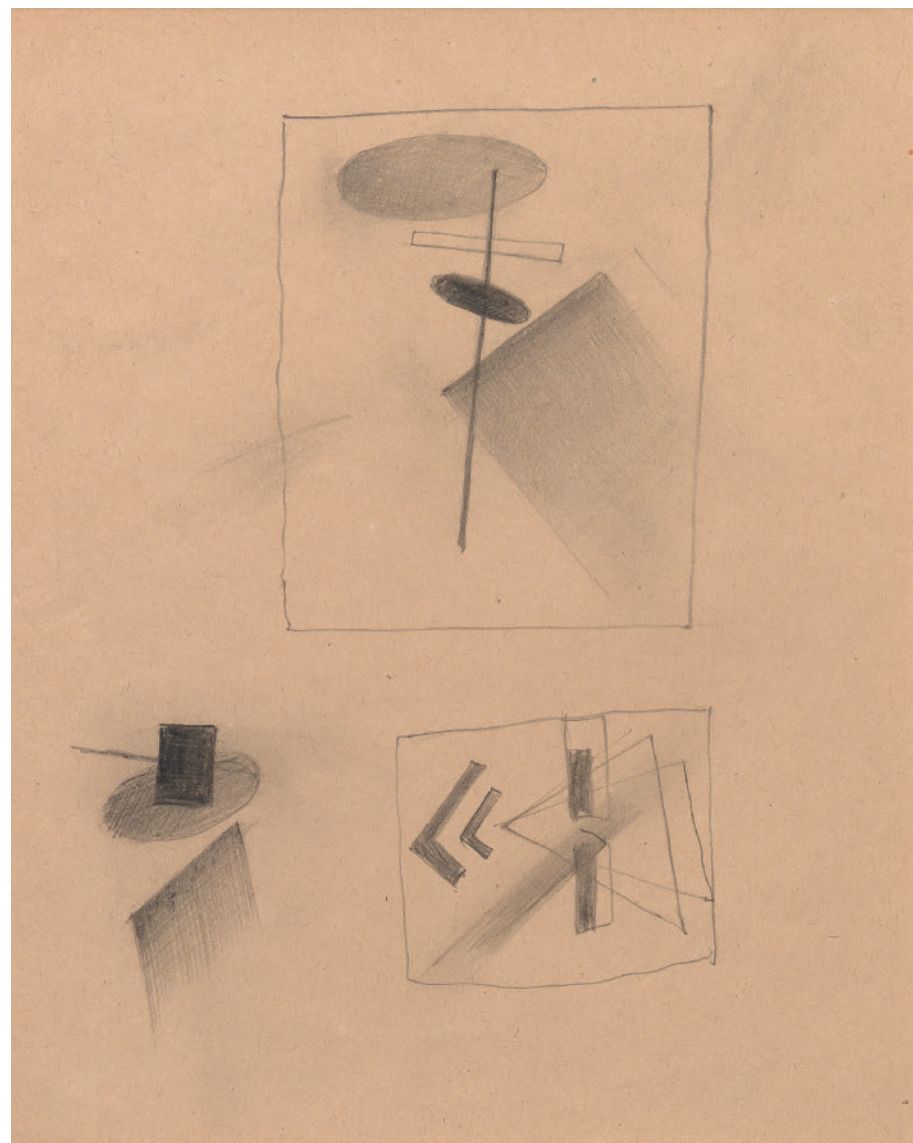
15 Spherical evolution of the plane, 1917
pencil on paper, 14 x 21.5 cm

16 Magnetic electric sensation, 1917-18
pencil on paper, 20 x 16.5 cm

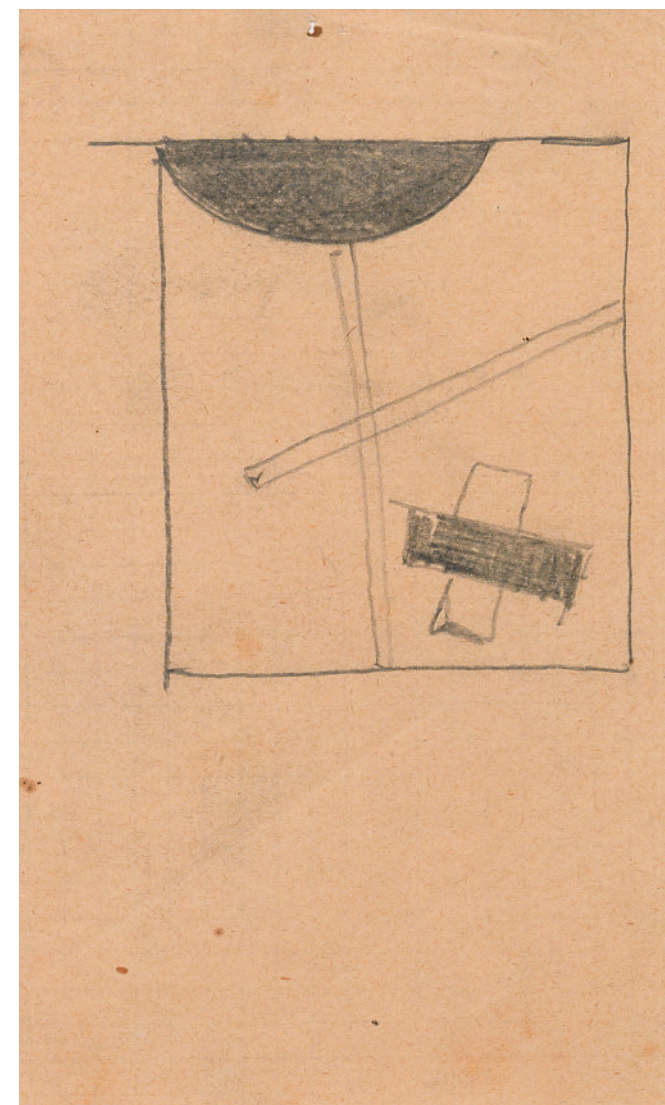


17 White Square and plan for dissolution, 1918
pencil on paper, 20 x 16.5 cm

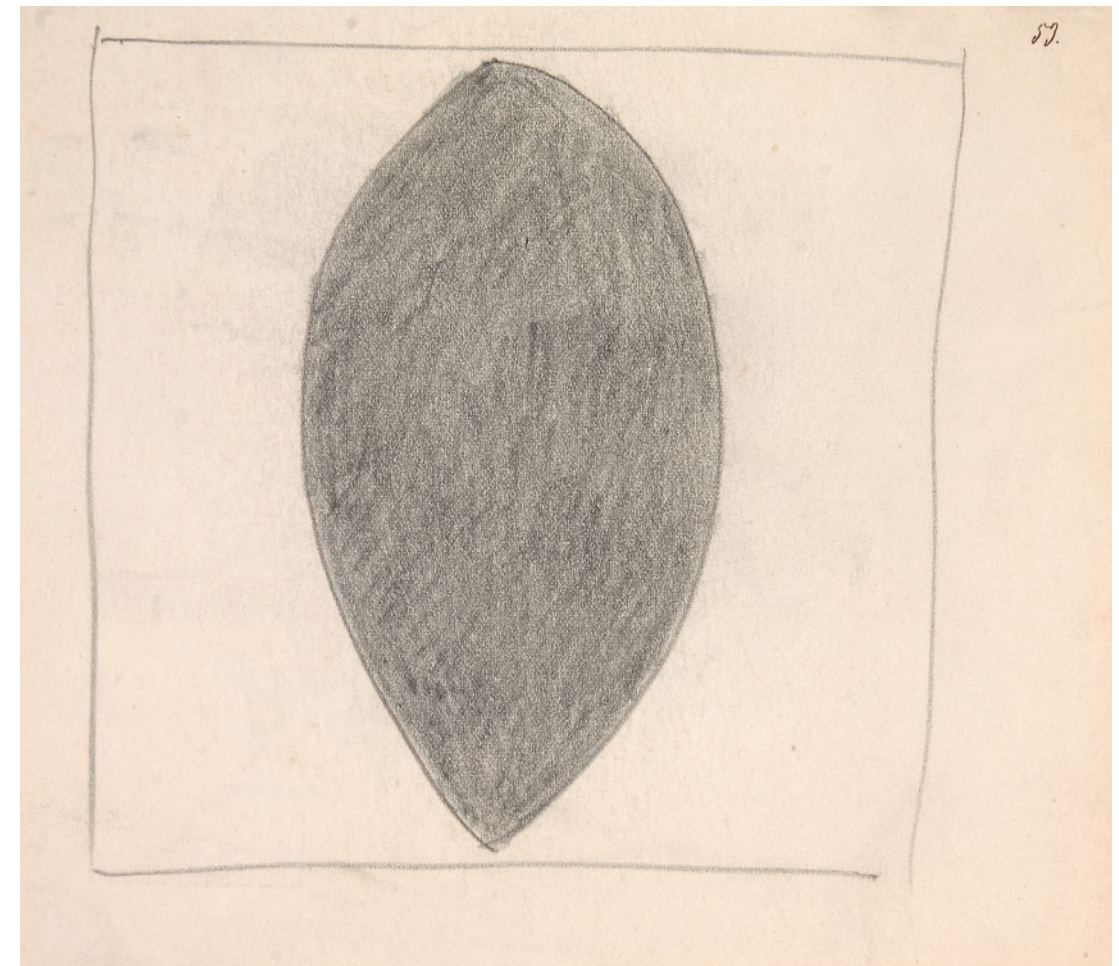




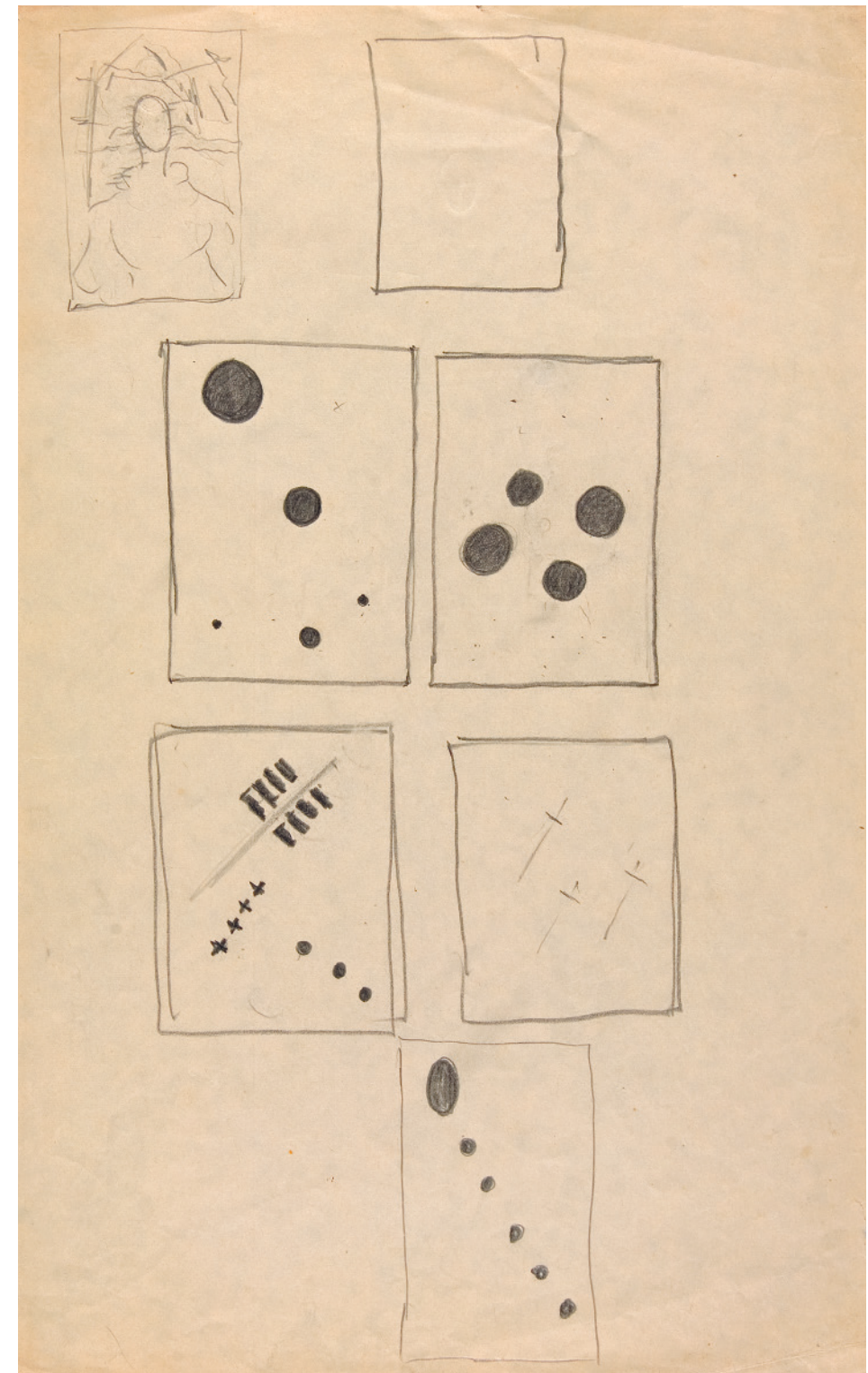
18 Composition with plan for dissolution and magnetic elements, 1918
pencil on paper, 20 x 16.5 cm



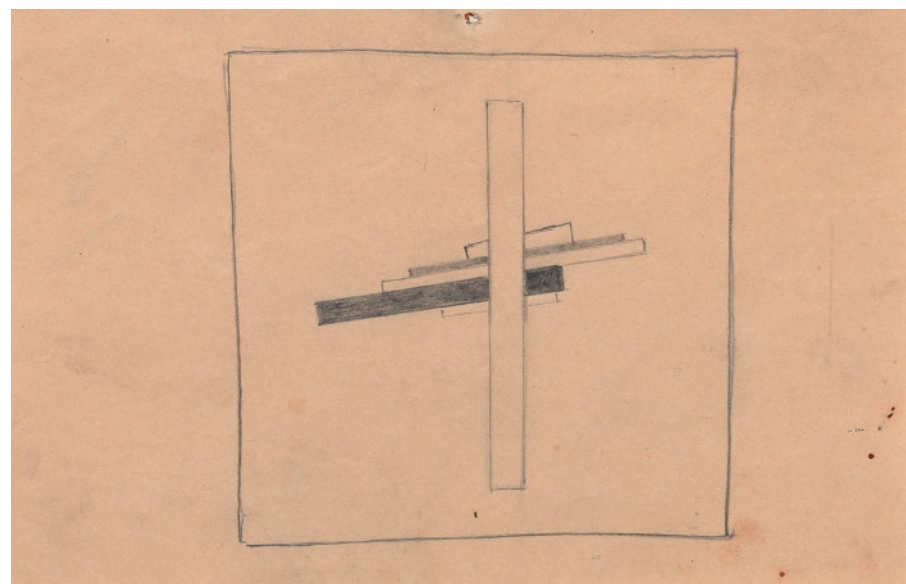
19 Planetary composition, 1915-16
pencil on paper, 17 x 10.5 cm



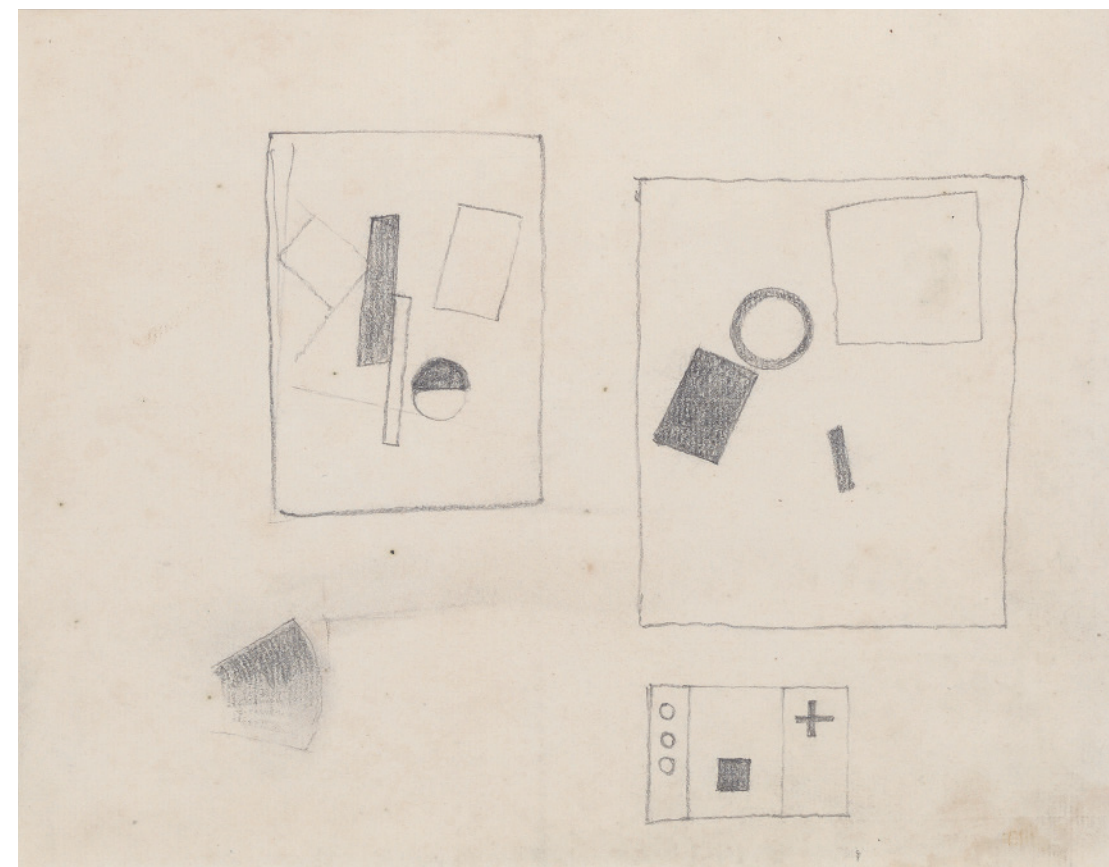
20 Black face, 1930-31, motif of 1920-22
pencil on paper, 16.9 x 20.1 cm



21 Magnetic sensations, c. 1929-30, motif of 1917
pencil on paper, 35.5 x 22 cm

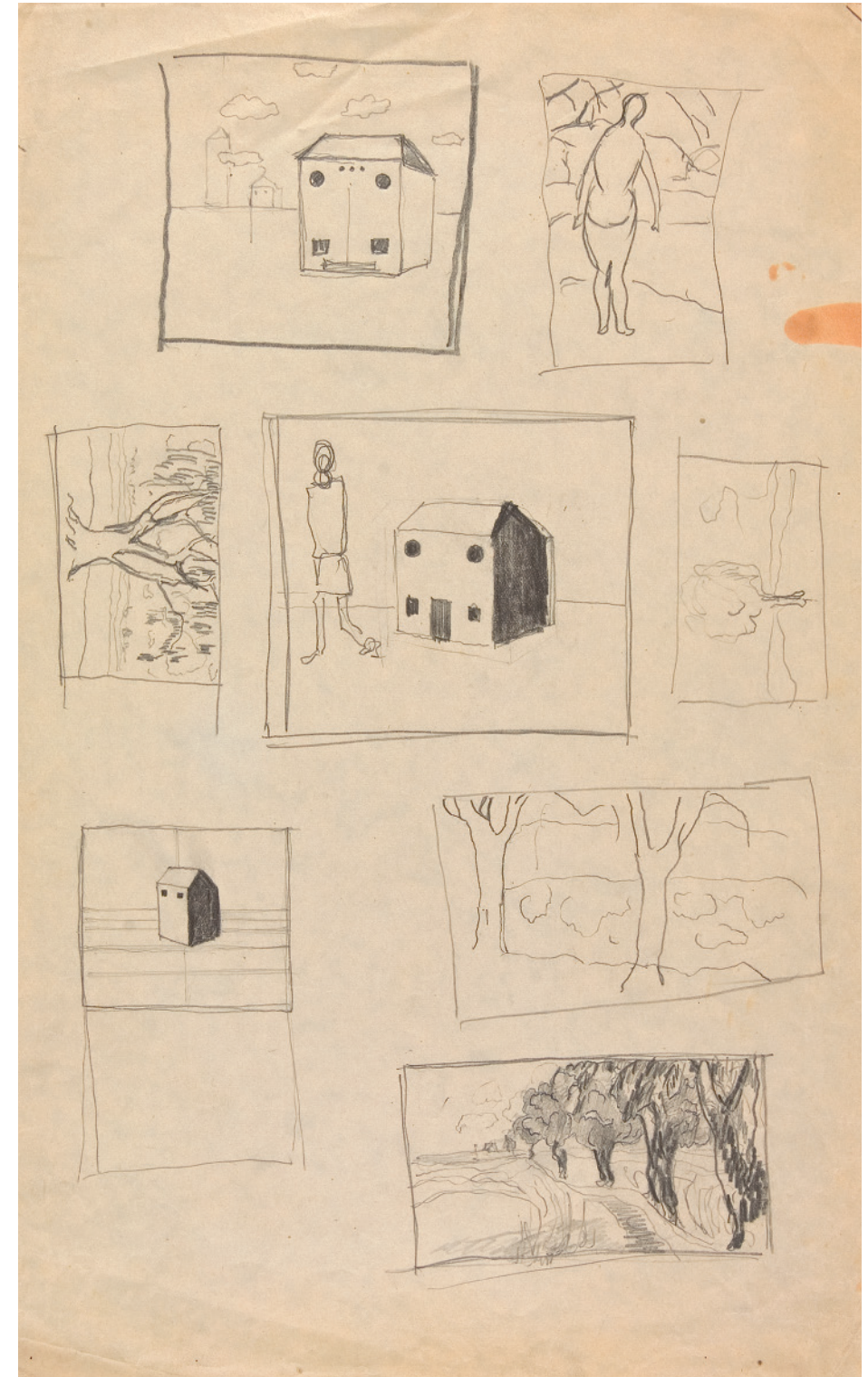


22 Composition 1d, motif of 1919-20, c. 1925
pencil on paper, 11.3 x 18 cm



23 Three Suprematist Compositions, motifs of 1915, 1917, 1920, c. 1924-26
pencil on paper, 20 x 25 cm

24 Landscape with prisons, c. 1930-31
pencil on paper, 35.5 x 22 cm



Chōjirō and Raku Tea Bowls

Raku tea bowls were first made in Japan’s historical capital of Kyoto by a potter named Chōjirō (d. c. 1589). Then, as today, their purpose was for drinking whipped tea (*matcha*) in the tea ceremony (*chanoyu*). In terms of technology, they were related to lead-glazed three-colour ceramics (*sosansai*) produced in southern China in the late 1500s. *Sosansai* wares were imported into Japan during the Momoyama period (1573-1615) and the arrival of Chinese artisans with the necessary technical knowledge led to the establishment in and around Kyoto of workshops producing domestic versions of them. It was in one such workshop that Chōjirō, whose father Ameya was originally from China, worked with three other potters, Tanaka Sōkei and his two sons Jōkei and Sōmi (see family tree opposite).

The earliest identifiable example of Chōjirō’s work is a powerfully sculpted two-colour lead-glazed tile ornament in the shape of a lion-dog inscribed with his name and the date 1574. It was Chōjirō’s sculptural ability that attracted the tea master Sen Rikyū (1522-1591) and led him to commission Chōjirō to make tea bowls for use in *wabicha*, the *wabi* way of *chanoyu*, of which Rikyū was Japan’s foremost and most renowned advocate.

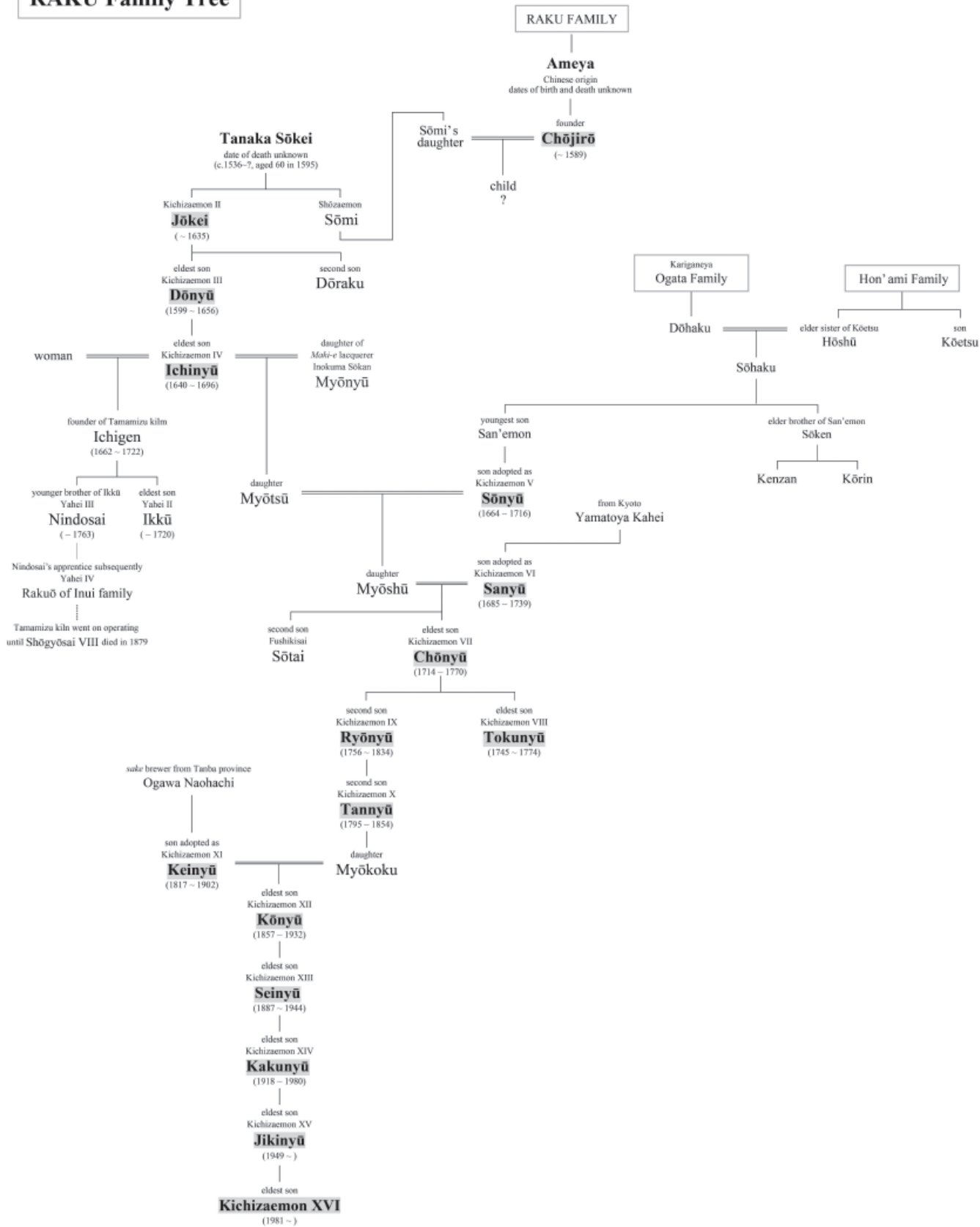
Records of utensils used in *chanoyu* gatherings indicate that Chōjirō began making monochrome Red Raku tea bowls in the late 1570s and started experimenting with Black Raku tea bowls from around 1580. These became increasingly sought after by followers of *wabicha* and were described as *ima-yaki*, literally ‘now wares’, which is indicative of how innovative and avant-garde they were thought to be.

The Raku (楽) of Raku ware and the Raku family derives from Jurakudai (聚樂第), the name of the palace built in 1586-1587 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), the de facto ruler of Japan from 1582 until his death, near Chōjirō’s workshop. A devotee of *chanoyu* who employed Rikyū as his official tea master, Hideyoshi presented Chōjirō with a seal bearing the Chinese character for Raku. As the recipient of the Raku seal and the pioneer of *wabi* tea bowls, Chōjirō is celebrated as the founder and first-generation head of the Raku dynasty. This is now in its sixteenth generation, its traditions and principles having been passed down from father to son, normally the eldest but sometimes the second or an adopted son, without written instructions.

Starting with Jōkei, heads of the Raku family have taken the first name Kichizaemon when succeeding to the family headship. The names in the family tree ending with ‘nyū’ are lay Buddhist names adopted on retirement or assigned at the time of death if this occurs prior to retirement. These names are used when referring to deceased family heads or a retired but still living former family head. Because this is not easy to understand, Jikinyū, who retired in favour of his elder son in 2019, sometimes - as in this exhibition - combines his former and current names as Kichizaemon Jikinyū XV.

Jikinyū has long been at pains to convey to non-Japanese audiences the proper meaning of Raku in terms of it being the name of a family dynasty that has been making Raku tea bowls continuously for nearly 450 years. Raku does not mean ‘raku’ in its usual Japanese senses of ‘easy’ or ‘enjoyable’. Furthermore, it signifies much more than what is implied by the now widespread non-Japanese use of the term to mean a way of making ceramics using a firing method ultimately derived from Japanese Raku practice that was introduced to the West by the British potter Bernard Leach in 1940 whereby earthenware pots are removed from a kiln and rapidly cooled in the outside atmosphere.

RAKU Family Tree



25 Raku Chōjirō I
Black Raku tea bowl 1580s
Yorozuyo (Thousands of Years, Eternity, All Generations)





Yorozuyo tea bowl boxes and the tea bowl in the tea room



RAKU KICHIZAEMON XV

Raku Jikinyū* was born in 1949 as the eldest son of Raku Kakunyū. He studied in Italy after graduating from Tokyo University of the Arts in 1973. In 1981, after the death of his father, he succeeded to the Raku family headship as Raku Kichizaemon XV. As the 15th generation of the family founded by Chōjirō during the Momoyama period 450 years ago, he has devoted his career to exploring the possibilities of the traditional tea bowl format in a constant search for new modes of expression. His avant-garde style is characterised by sculptural modelling achieved by bold trimming and the creative use of the *yakinuki* firing method.

*Jikinyū is the name assumed by Raku Kichizaemon XV on his retirement from the Raku family headship on 8 July 2019.



26 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2021
So (as it is, element)





27 Yakinuki-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Gyō (dawn, attain enlightenment, become clear)



28 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Ru (peak, polar point)





29 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Jō (graceful, whiteness wavering supplely, supple white ryhthm,
white wavering, rhythm wavering)







30 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2021
Kan (trunk, core)



KICHIZAEMON X MALEVICH

by Raku Kichizaemon XV Jikinyū

This essay was first published in the catalogue for the exhibition “KICHIZAEMON X MALEVICH” at the Sagawa Art Museum, Japan, 14 September 2021 - 16 January 2022

With a single sheet of polarising filter I try to merge my two cravings for darkness into one. An intense magnetic field that sucks in and swallows up all manifestations of existence in to the depths of infinity. What lies beyond this all-absorbing blackness? Perhaps somewhere without coordinates to signal a vanishing point, the grandeur of the universe finds its resting place in the infinitesimally small. At the coordinates of the point at infinity, the uniting of maxima and minima gives rise to time. All things circulate in a continuum of space-time.

What am I trying to ascertain?

My gaze fixes simultaneously on the black of Kazimir Malevich’s square and the black of the Raku tea bowls of Chōjirō. I filter out certain wavelengths and amplify others. My filter seeks to discern within the multi-layered depths of darkness the meeting point between real and imaginary, between essence and outward appearance. Confined by the limitations of individual existence, my mind cannot easily distinguish between truth and illusion.

This is because the world we perceive is only a reflection of what consciousness and the filters in our brains allow us to register. Consciousness tries to grasp the paradoxes of our phenomenal world and the constant inversion of truth and illusion. If we negate as meaningless our existence and the beliefs that underpin it, we are left with nothing but a dark void. But if we accept the idea of constant circulation in a continuum of space-time, our world begins to make sense.

Even in the statement ‘red apples taste good’, what is true and what is fiction? What is what depends on a person’s point of view, just as the principles of physics can only be said to hold good in the context of our earthly environment. Everything is mediated via the self. When I look at a work by Malevich, an image registers itself in my brain. What I see is not an objective truth but something filtered and interpreted by me. I am not able to discuss Malevich in an objective, academic way, but he unquestionably exists within and for me. Because the filters operating in my brain are constantly changing in focus and intensity, they generate myriads of further, overlapping filters. A polarising filter is formed by clusters of images interacting with a particular cognitive process. Even if I proceed boldly, I do not expect to find truth or truths as such. I find meaning in the process of analysis itself and the sequences of related images they open in my mind. I question whether there is such a thing as ‘real truth’, which is to say one that is not the product of an agenda of one kind or another. Such truths must exist. If they do, they must in my view lie in a realm where ‘truth’ and ‘faith’ come together outside the karmic cycle.

Through the filter born of my particular experiences as a maker, I try to overlay Kazimir Malevich onto Chōjirō, the inventor of the Raku tea bowl. There is a divide of 400 years between the late sixteenth century, when Chōjirō lived, and the early years of the twentieth century when Malevich was active. There is also a gap between the world of modern art and the culture of *chanoyu* (tea ceremony) for which Raku tea bowls were created. Despite these differences, I try to use my filter to identify areas of commonality between Malevich’s and Chōjirō’s philosophies. Encountering these two artists always moves me powerfully and causes me to review my own way of thinking. How can the culture of *chanoyu* in sixteenth-century Japan be connected with artistic expression in the early twentieth century?

The answer is that they each had an enormous impact on the society of their time in ways that still resonate today. In both cases they upturned prevailing value systems and social structures. The arts saw the rejection of stylistic conventions and the appearance of new forms of creativity as they struggled for expressive freedom. Japan’s Momoyama period (1573-1615) lasted only a few decades. Similarly, in just a few decades either side of 1900, the western world saw the collapse of conventions in all areas of the arts, from painting and sculpture to music and literature, as it was swept by a tidal wave of invention and experimentation.

In the field of music there was Arnold Schoenberg’s pioneering of atonality. This was preceded by Claude Debussy’s seminal opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1898) in which the seamlessness of the music suggests a melting of souls steeped in fin-de-siècle romanticism. The indulgent beauty of Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* (1899) is redolent of the intoxicating feeling of floating in a fog. Both of these works move me especially deeply and send me into a reverie in which I completely lose myself. Schoenberg went on to reject the comfort of tonality in his development of the twelve-tone technique, whereby each note is treated independently and accorded equal weight. Why did Schoenberg abandon the bitter-sweet sounds of post-romanticism and, as if flouting every rule that ever existed, seek limitless freedom in a wild frenzy of invention. Malevich called this ‘desert’. He reminisced, ‘The ascent to the heights of non-objective art is arduous and painful ... but ...’. An artist must push forward into the unknown by letting go of any urge to control and by overcoming the petit bourgeois fear that infinite freedom might lead to a barren nothingness. Schoenberg’s act of demolition was motivated by much more than just a strong desire for reform. The agony of waking from dreams of romantic lyricism to face the terror of liberated, isolated notes was matched by the intensity of his yearning for freedom. Schoenberg’s every thought, feeling, and emotion condensed themselves into a momentary but fateful and life-changing awakening.

In 1912, after a period in which chaos followed periods of inspired creativity and destruction spawned brilliance, Schoenberg brought to the world his landmark atonal masterpiece *Pierrot lunaire*. Could anyone stem the resultant flood of single, autonomous notes that gushed forth from the constraints of harmony? The path to artistic independence begins with the assertion of individuality cut off from, and unfettered by any kind of bond. Did Schoenberg prepare

himself for how freedom would bring with it the fear and pain of loneliness?

The early years of the twentieth century saw the beginning of the emancipation of the individual from strictures deriving from religion, ethics, morality, patriotism and social hierarchy. The price of emancipation was loneliness, isolation and existential suffering of a kind never known before. Who could have anticipated the agony of being cut off and isolated from the mothership and left to float eternally and meaninglessly in the darkness of the universe? As atomized individuals we no longer know where we belong. The only way to survive is to keep shouting that we are free and that anything goes in this world. But where does freedom lie? No plan yet exists explaining the relationship between isolated individuals and the whole. And we have still to find answers to the questions posed in the early twentieth century about the pain of isolation and alienation. Why do we keep forging ahead? Questions about human existence are too profound to be answered by art theorising obsessed with isms.

At the same time as Schoenberg composed *Pierrot lunaire*, Igor Stravinsky wrote a song cycle entitled *Three Japanese Lyrics* (1912-1913). Based on poems by Yamabe no Akahito, Minamoto no Masazumi, and Ki no Tsurayuki, it may not have been coincidental that Stravinsky sought inspiration in the minimalism of *waka* poetry. It also happens that Alban Berg's String Quartet Op. 3, a work I particularly admire, was composed in 1910. Its twisting and searing atonal sounds evoke intense pathos and feelings of passion. Although one can still discern in it traces of romanticism, it abandons God and spurns harmony and gentleness. A shriek of the soul witnessing the fin-de-siècle destruction of the time, it is an overture to the terrifying destiny we face in the present day. I am moved to tears every time I listen to it.

The term contemporaneity resonates particularly strongly when one thinks of the early twentieth century. In 1910 Vassily Kandinsky embarked on his series of *Composition* paintings, in which he disassembled figurative forms into lines and colours. *Composition no. 8* consists of circles, squares and other abstract shapes in a way not dissimilar to Malevich's Suprematist works. Slightly later, Piet Mondrian began experimenting with purely abstract forms in which he reduced objects into flat, geometric shapes. In 1912

Marcel Duchamp abandoned painting in favour of exploring Readymades, of which his *Fountain* of 1917 enjoys a mythical status within the annals of modern art. Art engaging with art, literature with literature, music with music. Everything was to do with severing connections with conventional forms and modes of cognition. By dismissing representation as debris from the past, Duchamp put paid to the notion of artistic style. His *Fountain* went even further by seeking to reject cognition. Duchamp had opened the floodgates and thrown a torch into the munitions store. Readymades had to be ordinary objects that would never ordinarily impinge on people's awareness.

The great problem was the act of selection. I had to pick an object without it impressing me and, as far as possible, without the least intervention of any idea or suggestion of aesthetic pleasure. It was necessary to reduce my personal taste to zero. It is very difficult to select an object that has absolutely no interest for us not only on the day we pick it but which never will and which, finally, can never have the possibility of becoming beautiful, pretty, agreeable, or ugly ...' (from Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp: Appearance Stripped Bare*, trans. Donald Gardner)

By *Readymades* Duchamp meant things that had no sensual or cognitive appeal to the eye. They were meaningless, without attributes and independent of anything else. His aim was to transcend cognition and language. Yes, let us go beyond our world and the way it is structured according to statements such as 'red apples taste good'. Let us destroy the fortress called preconception. We live among the rubble of received meanings. In our illusory nests of comfort and mundanity, we have forgotten how to think. All we do is mechanically perform the roles expected of us. Our inertia needs to have a bomb put under it. The complacencies by which we live – whether concerning beauty, cause and effect, or comforting ideas about pre-established harmony – need stabbing with a dagger. How far should we go in our efforts to transcend and dismantle? And at the end of this, what form will art take? Everything has become null and void. If we reject accepted ideas of landscape being beautiful or of red apples being delicious, there is nothing to guarantee the truth of existence or meaning. Does any

path lie ahead? In his later years Duchamp abandoned art and took up chess. The way he created worlds on a gameboard and played at the interface of chance and inevitability surely suggests what the end point for art should be.

It was only natural in a period when so many different ideas were being explored that reductionism should have come into being. In traditional artistic disciplines such as painting and sculpture, this took the form of abstraction and simplification. The Suprematism of Kazimir Malevich was one manifestation of this. Reductionism and its rejection of the place of narrative and meaning in art culminated in the adoption of geometric forms. Malevich did not come to Suprematism easily and went through his own darkness on the way. Had he been Duchamp, he would probably have given up along the way, but Malevich started conceptualising abstract forms as ‘non-objective art’. After phases of exploring Cubism, Futurism, analysis of colours and forms, and various other isms, Malevich suddenly, in 1913, started working with black planes. One wonders what was going on in his mind to have caused him to take such a radical step. The difference from his previous work is so enormous, it is impossible to fathom what this could have been. However, the moment I saw his *Black Square* in Moscow’s Tretyakov Gallery, its overwhelming presence swept away my niggling doubts. I was totally captivated. It hung in front me as a negation of everything. As I stood there, images of Chōjirō’s black tea bowls began to float between me and the painting. The barrage of intense black transcended beauty, form and stylistic individuality. It was resolute in its will to go beyond cognition. What was going on in Malevich’s mind? What change of consciousness did he undergo? What led him to the end point of a single black square? These were some of the questions that came to me after I had calmed down from the rush of awe and emotion that had overcome me.

The discovery had been made that under the surface of the Tretyakov Gallery’s *Black Square* there were two earlier paintings and an inscription reading ‘Negroes battling in a cave’. This had generated a great deal of interest. The title is very similar to that of a black square painted in 1897 by the French humorist Alphonse Allais. I am interested in a gossipy way whether a connection exists between Allais and Malevich, but in truth it doesn’t matter to me. The only thing of importance is the *Black Square* itself and the fact that it was created in the early twentieth century.

Who painted it and the isms the artist engaged with prior to its creation are of little concern. All products, irrespective of their origin, be they art or the outcome of other types of human activity, take on meaning the moment they come into being. The origins of something, why it was made, whether it was created by accident, whether falsehood was involved in its making, none of these matter. Over time, everything is repeatedly subjected to analysis, categorization, and definition. The cycle continues ad infinitum. Things are commented on, narrated upon, and validated within the contexts of different languages and cultures. Whether created in search for truth or in order to deceive, once something comes into being, it stands independently of its maker. It exists in silence insulated from the interfering noises of analysis and commentary. It does not matter to me that the *Black Square* is not a perfect square, nor that Malevich devoted himself to learning about colours, composition, and proportions. Nor do I care that it is said he painted it in a cosmic trance. And it doesn’t interest me particularly that in *The Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings* (1915) he displayed it high up on the wall in the so-called ‘red corner’ traditionally reserved in Russian households for hanging icons. None of these interpretations or hypotheses is useful. Surely it is impossible to determine what his motives and state of mind were when he painted it. In short, as with anything else, the only thing I can say with certainty is that the meaning of the *Black Square* exists solely in relation to myself. The one and only point of importance is that the first showing of the painting in 1915 marked the moment when ‘non-objectivity’ came into the world. The *Black Square* is a negation of meaning, objectivity, and individuality. It goes further than alogism and denies even its authorship. While the painting is the outcome of Malevich’s personal ambition and worldly concerns, it exists separately and remotely from the mental processes that operated during its creation. All you see in front of you is a terrifying world of blackness that seals over all traces of the cognition that gives rise to narrative and meaning. It belongs to the same world as Duchamp’s *Fountain* in the way it subverts its viewers’ preconceptions. It is a plain black nothingness that negates the cognitive foundations on which our value systems and understanding of the world are predicated. Is it possible to go further than this in effacement and transcendence? What can we find on the other side of the darkness of the painting’s nullifying presence? Malevich went on to use abstract geometric forms dancing ‘cosmic dances’ across his surfaces. What meaning do

these have and what more do they say than Malevich had already expressed? Were he Duchamp, he would probably have stopped at this point.

In Japan there was a person in the sixteenth century who ventured into a similar realm of expression as Malevich and lost his life on account of it. His name was Sen no Rikyū. Rikyū invented the two-mat tearoom, whose floor area measured a mere 180 centimetres square. It was the ultimate in minimal spaces ever designed. Rikyū commissioned Chōjirō to make Raku tea bowls covered in deep black glaze. His power of invention was extraordinary.

I mentioned earlier how images of Chōjirō's Black Raku tea bowls floated in front of me as I looked at Malevich's *Black Square*.

Raku tea bowls are a very special type of vessel made for use in *chanoyu*. Their inventor Chōjirō is my ancestor. His tea bowls reflected the profundity of the philosophy of Rikyū, who is regarded as the person who brought *chanoyu* to full maturity. The technical origins of Raku tea bowls lie in Chinese *sancai* wares, which are among the most colourful ceramics ever made. They are characterised by greens, yellows, purples, and browns. That Chōjirō should have abandoned polychromy in favour of monochromatic black is a measure of the profundity of his thinking. To reject colour is to deny both individuality and difference. In terms of shapes, Chōjirō avoided formal variation, lyricism and decorativeness in order to expunge any trace of intentionality and authorship. He took a path diametrically opposite to that of normal creative practice, which is essentially additive. Isn't it the case that even Malevich, after creating his *Black Square*, went on to experiment with geometric shapes arranged on white surfaces. Applying colours, shapes and lines to white canvases was the only option left to him. What form would his work have taken, if, rather than changing direction, he had tried to go beyond ultimate minimalism and continued to subtract? Chōjirō's tea bowls are the outcome of the struggle to reach that place. A canvas by Malevich painted with a black square, a tea bowl by Chōjirō clad in black glaze. It has been noted that the black of Malevich's *Black Square* is not due to his use of black pigment but a mixture of several other pigments. This is of no great consequence, just as it doesn't matter that the blackness of the glaze used by Chōjirō is the product of mixing together several minerals. The important point is that they both tried to transcend

the perception of black as colour. Malevich's *Black Square* is a dissolving of the self into blackness. Although we describe Chōjirō's tea bowls as 'black', the black is not truly black, nor deep purple, nor dark grey, but the fount of existence inexpressible in language. 'Mystery upon mystery – The gateway of the manifold secrets' (Lao Zi, *Daodejing* I. 1, trans. D. C Lau). This is to say the ultimate source of every existence. It is interesting that when children who come to the Raku Museum and see a black tea bowl by Chōjirō, they cleverly announce that it isn't black at all. Children's intuition is uncorrupted by preconception, so they immediately sense that 'black' is not the right word to describe the colour of a Chōjirō Black Raku tea bowl. If not black, what should it be perceived as? The black of Chōjirō's tea bowls is beyond description. It points to a realm which can only be reached by self-negation. But what did a little child philosopher once say about a Chōjirō tea bowl? 'Made of mud, innit?' Which is spot on! 'Mud' ... enigmatic stuff, neither black nor brown, which becomes liquid if mixed with water and solidifies when dried.

When thinking about this, the words of the fourteenth-century essayist Yoshida Kenkō come to mind.

Are we to look at flowers in full bloom, at the moon when it is clear? Nay, to look out on the rain and long for the moon, to draw the blinds and not be aware of the passing of spring – these arouse even deeper feelings. There is much to be seen in young boughs about to flower, in gardens strewn with withered blossoms. (*Tsurezuregusa* [Essays in Idleness], trans. Donald Keene)

'A moon on a rainy night'. Not to see the moon when you seek it, and to beg the rain to lift and reveal it, this saying means that when the interplay between clouds and the moon is shrouded in darkness, one is left to imagine the beauty of the view. The presence of total and all-encompassing darkness. This is the world of 'non-objectivity', the alogism of non-reason and non-meaning, and the darkness of the void. Despite the fact that Chōjirō and Malevich lived 400 years apart in very different social environments, I am convinced their respective blacks are reflections of identical world views. Everything is contained in a metaphor transcending vocabulary. Absolute darkness from which nothing can be drawn

out. Once a maker has experienced this darkness, how do they proceed? Chōjirō died a few years after inventing the Black Raku tea bowl. Rikyū was wrongly accused of insubordination and hubris by the authorities of the time and forced to commit ritual suicide. He accepted this fate without saying anything in defense. I wish I could ask Chōjirō and Rikyū what lies beyond darkness. I have a sense of what it might be, but I am fearful and hesitant in the face of the infinite depth of the darkness and the magnetic force with which it swallows up every kind of existence. What of Malevich? His advocacy of Suprematism, his referencing of icons, the cracked and textured surface of his painting, and the ‘Suprematist Funeral’ for which he left instructions in his will, to me these all seem to be unnecessarily grandiose considering that with his *Black Square* he had emphatically passed through and beyond Alogism. Why did he continue so energetically? What meaning did he find in playing with minimalist arrangements of abstract forms? What did he see after having experienced total nothingness? Where in life did he find meaning?

The world is constantly giving meaning to things to which meanings should not be given. It repeatedly classifies things and allocates fixed values to them. Despite the original intention of its creator, the *Black Square* has been subjected to imprisonment into the world of meaning and narrative interpretation. This is why art has always to be avant-garde. It has to bear its fangs, howl, and attack in order to break out. The phrase ‘[activité] terroriste de l’esprit’ coined by André Breton in praise of Alphonse Allais is very apposite in this regard. It seems to me that like the chess in which Duchamp engaged, terrorism and playing games complement each other on the gaming board. When I say terrorism, of course I don’t mean killing. What I mean is striking against stagnant values and outdated value systems.

Malevich’s career was subject to the mercy of the systems of imperial Russia and the Soviet state. Following his early, polychromatic Cubo-Futurist work, all of a sudden he painted the *Black Square*. Having then explored the minimalist world of geometric forms, he returned to colourful figuration. I don’t know whether there was a common thread connecting these different phases of activity. Malevich stated, ‘Under Suprematism I understand the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art’ (trans. Howard Dearstyne) www.tfo.upm.es). But was there anything

new in the idea of ‘supremacy of pure feeling’? He went on, ‘To the Suprematist the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth’ (trans. ibid). One can see the logic and intention behind Malevich’s negation of objectivity, but to me the argument he derives from this about the significance of Suprematist non-objectivity seems unimportant. Why I say this is because surely all art, be it Cubism, Surrealism or anything else, involves delving into feelings and the senses. The senses are nothing more than the slaves of our phenomenal world. In this respect the argument developed by Marcel Duchamp is more acute. Writing retrospectively, Malevich stated, ‘When, in the year 1913, in my desperate attempt to free art from the ballast of objectivity, I took refuge in the square form and exhibited a picture which consisted of nothing more than a black square on a white field’ (trans. ibid). The reaction of the critics and the public were, of course, predictable. Malevich’s reminisced, ‘Even I was gripped by a kind of timidity bordering on fear entering into this desert’ (trans. ibid). By ‘desert’ he meant ‘leaving the world of will and idea’ (trans. ibid). No one can fail to be terrified when faced with an ultimate negativity that says ‘NO’ to ideas, representation and even cognition. Malevich concluded, however, by saying, ‘But a blissful sense of liberating non-objectivity drew me forth into the “desert”, where nothing is real except feeling ... and so feeling became the substance of my life’ (trans. ibid). Was Malevich really sure, I wonder, that non-objectivity was ‘blissful’ and ‘liberating’? But let me stop questioning what Malevich meant, because no one will ever know what the answer is. All we can say is that he negated everything.

‘Is a milk bottle, then, the symbol of milk? (trans. ibid),’ Malevich questioned. With his *Black Square* he destroyed the fictions of our world and its lazy preconceptions about cognition, and about objects and their representation. This is the only argument, I think, he should have been clear about.

It may be possible to reduce the truth about the universe into a single mathematical equation. If it can, like this, be expressed in terms of geometry, Suprematism must be one form of ultimate truth finding expression through mathematics and geometry. Malevich’s geometric forms oscillate across his two-dimensional surfaces, overlapping and combining in a never-ending ‘cosmic

dance’. Each sheet or canvas contains the universe in its entirety. I have some more questions. Malevich, what did you find on the other side of your *Black Square*’s darkness, and beyond your resolve to embrace the nothingness that strips away all vestiges of individuality? Did you fully absorb into your being the nothingness of existence and then return to the world of separateness and individuality? Were your compositions of geometric forms dancing ‘cosmic dances’ joyous celebrations of living in the moment? Why did you need to return to the world of meaning through your exploration of geometric forms?

Kichizaemon X Malevich began when I started thinking about Malevich’s *Black Square* not so much in relation to my own work but to the black tea bowls of Chōjirō. Several years ago I had the idea of organising in Paris a collaborative exhibition combining the ‘ultimate blackness’ of Black Raku tea bowls with the work of modern and contemporary artists including Malevich and Duchamp. Unfortunately, this never came about. It would not have been a simple juxtaposition and superficial comparison of sixteenth century tea bowls with twentieth century works of art. It would have been a more profound exploration of the existential, cognitive, and expressive commonalities between monochromatic works created at different times in history and in different geographic locations. Why did Chōjirō abandon coloured glazes in favour of black? Why have so many modern and contemporary artists rejected figuration in order to explore the anonymity of monochromes? I wanted to get to the bottom of these questions. I don’t mean that Chōjirō and Malevich had identical philosophies. But it is surely true that despite working at different times and in different places, they occupy a similar space to one another in the way they were both searching for the universal truth of existence. It is only in the context of the present day that comparing these two artists from the West and Japan respectively is either possible or meaningful.

What I have written in this essay is the background to the staging of the current collaborative exhibition with Malevich. Since his *Black Square* cannot be loaned from Russia, I requested from among Malevich’s Suprematist works a selection of his drawings of abstract geometric shapes. Thanks to the generous cooperation of David Juda of Annely Juda Fine Art in London, we have been extremely fortunate to have been able to borrow a total of 22 such works. While my focus has on the whole been directed to the

connection between Chōjirō’s black tea bowls and Malevich’s *Black Square*, this time my tea bowls are being shown in conjunction with Malevich’s drawings of the type I have referred to in this essay as ‘cosmic dances’. I felt I did not need in this essay to dwell at too much length on these drawings, but I hope I have offered a sufficiently convincing rationale for the validity of the exhibition. My main observation about the drawings is the wonderful way in which they project the feeling of rhythmic space. The ‘cosmic dances’ they evoke in their universes of white suggest the birth of, or perhaps the return to, primordial forms in which all matter is interlinked. For the last ten years I have been making a series of tea bowls that I have tentatively called the ‘rock’ series. I have used this title because of the ruggedly sculpted shapes into which they are carved. Nobody has ever made tea bowls like these before. They are so new and fresh that it would be premature to give them individual names. Hence the temporary series title ‘rock’. Although I liken them to rocks, it is not that I have been imitating or incorporating rocky features from nature. Like ‘pebbles on the roadside’, they are ‘anonymous’ and simply exist in the world. I try to create them as artlessly as possible. I have discussed in another essay entitled *Chaire kō* (Thoughts about tea caddies) what I mean by ‘pebbles on the roadside’. I have shown examples of my ‘rock’ tea bowls in two previous *Kichizaemon X* exhibitions. They by no means all look the same and have gradually changed during the time I have been making them.

In last year’s *Kichizaemon X* exhibition, I collaborated with the *nihonga* painter Saitō Takashi. I had long been fascinated by the depth of the darkness residing in his soul. The tea bowls I showed next to his were of the ‘black rock’ type. Made from rough red clay, they stood there like precipices devoid of all colour beside Saitō’s monochromatic black surfaces.

For the current *Kichizaemon X Malevich* exhibition I responded to Malevich’s ‘cosmic dances’ and the whiteness of the surfaces on which they are drawn by making a group of ‘white rock’ tea bowls. Compared with Malevich’s geometric abstractions, the rough surfaces of these tea bowls are more organic, amorphous, irregular, and unstable. While the drawings are not as impactful as the *Black Square* that figures so prominently in my mind, I believe I have tuned into and responded to their distinctive qualities quite successfully. For me, the drawings are very significant in the sense that they have, hovering in the hinterland, the *Black Square*.

Interestingly, with my ‘black rock’ tea bowls, I had been reducing gradually the range of colours I used. Blood red disappeared, then green, then blue, and finally rust red. However, steered away from the monochromatic by Malevich’s ‘cosmic dances’, I was pleasantly surprised at what I managed to achieve by using colour again, albeit this was to only a small extent.

The question of whether or not tea bowls are works of art is futile and irrelevant. What concerns me is that as an individual born into a modern world that places so much importance on individualism, I can feel so alienated, so unsure of my identity, and so rootless. The struggle of being alive makes me want to cry out in pain. As I am not a social scientist, I am not able to analyse and explain the workings of the world. I am only able to gaze deeply into myself and try to believe that what is reflected within me through my interaction with the outside world is true and real. I recall the phrase ‘an umbrella on an operating table’ cited by André Breton. I am both the umbrella on the operating table and the surgeon with a scalpel dissecting myself.

The term Suprematism derives from the Latin *supremus*. For Suprematists it meant the primacy of pure feeling in art. I do not plan to delve into the progression of Malevich’s thinking, but if there is a connection between his *Black Square*, which was his most profoundly expressive achievement, and his ‘cosmic dances’ with their abstract geometric shapes, it may well have been one of the means by which he rescued himself from point zero.

Raku Jikinyū
Summer 2021
Among the swaying grasses of Kuta



31 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Kō (vast, generous, expansive light, vast sky)



32 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Sai (white and pure, tall and steep)







33 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Tan (sever, cut out)



34 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Ryū (soaring peaks, mountains upon mountains)





35 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Kō (clear and white, pure, innocent)





36 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2021
Shin (immerse, soak in)





37 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2021
Tan (turbulent, fast flowing)



38 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2021
Zen (gradual progress)





39 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2021
I (be pleased, enjoy)



40 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Ji (seasons, time, flow of time)





41 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Gai (soften, peaceful)



42 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Tan (moving gently with the wind and waves)







43 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Kan (clarity)



44 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Hō (heavy snowfall)





45 *Yakinuki*-type 'Rock' White Raku tea bowl 2022
Gai (end, edge, finishing point)





List of Works

Kasimir Malevich

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Flight of the feather, Spring 1915
pencil on paper, 8.3 x 17.7 cm
Catalogue Raisonne no: F-480
- 2

Fight on the Boulevard, Spring 1915
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Catalogue Raisonne no: F-479
- 3

Compositions 12 k, 1915
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Catalogue Raisonne no: S-190
- 4

Composition 9 m, 1917-18
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- 5

Composition 1 a, 1917-18
pencil on paper, 17.9 x 11.2 cm
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- 6

Magnetic planetary composition, 1917-18
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Catalogue Raisonne no: S-538
- 7

Magnetic movement, early 1920s, motif of 1916
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Catalogue Raisonne no: S-303, Monograph
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- 8

Construction 16 r, Summer 1915
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- 9

Composition 8 i, 1915
pencil on paper, 16 x 11.2 cm
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Construction 3 h, 1916
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- 26

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘So’ (as it is, element) 2021
Φ9.2-13.5, H11.3 cm
- 27

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Gyō’ (dawn, attain enlightenment, become clear)
2022
Φ15.6-11.1 cm, H12.9 cm
- 28

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Ru’ (peak, polar point) 2022
Φ11.5-11.4 cm, H12.5 cm
- 29

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Jō’ (graceful, whiteness wavering supplely, supple
white rhythm, white wavering, rhythm wavering)
2022
Φ15.4-11 cm, H12.4 cm
- 30

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Kan’ (trunk, core) 2021
Φ10.3-10.8, H12 cm
- 31

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Kō’ (vast, generous, expansive light, vast sky) 2022
Φ14.3-11.3 cm, H12.6 cm
- 32

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Sai’ (white and pure, tall and steep) 2022
Φ12.1-12.1 cm, H12.5 cm
- 33

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Tan’ (sever, cut out) 2022
Φ11.6-11.2 cm, H11.8 cm
- 34

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Ryū’ (soaring peaks, mountains upon mountains)
2022
Φ13.6-11 cm, H12.4 cm
- 35

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Kō’ (clear and white, pure, innocent) 2022
Φ15.2-9.9 cm, H12.6 cm
- 36

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Shin’ (immerse, soak in) 2021
Φ10.0-11.5, H12.5 cm
- 37

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Tan’ (turbulent, fast-flowing) 2021
Φ11.0-12.4, H10.8 cm
- 38

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Zen’ (gradual progress) 2021
Φ11.9-12.9, H12 cm
- 39

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘I’ (be pleased, enjoy) 2021
Φ9.9-12.8, H10.9 cm
- 40

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Ji’ (seasons, time, flow of time) 2022
Φ11.1-11.1 cm, H12.6 cm
- 41

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Gai’ (soften, peaceful) 2022
Φ12-10.5 cm, H12.1 cm
- 42

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Tan’ (moving gently with the wind and waves) 2022
Φ14.5-9.4 cm, H11.9 cm
- 43

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Kan’ (clarity) 2022
Φ10.5-11 cm, H11.5 cm
- 44

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Hō’ (heavy snowfall) 2022
Φ13.5-8.9 cm, H12.8 cm
- 45

Yakinuki-type ‘Rock’ White Raku tea bowl named
‘Gai’ (end, edge, finishing point) 2022
Φ12.9-8.5 cm, H11.6 cm

Raku Chōjirō I

- 25

Black Raku tea bowl named Yoro-zuyo (thousands of
years, eternity, all generations) 1580s
Φ9.7-9.7 cm, H7.1 cm

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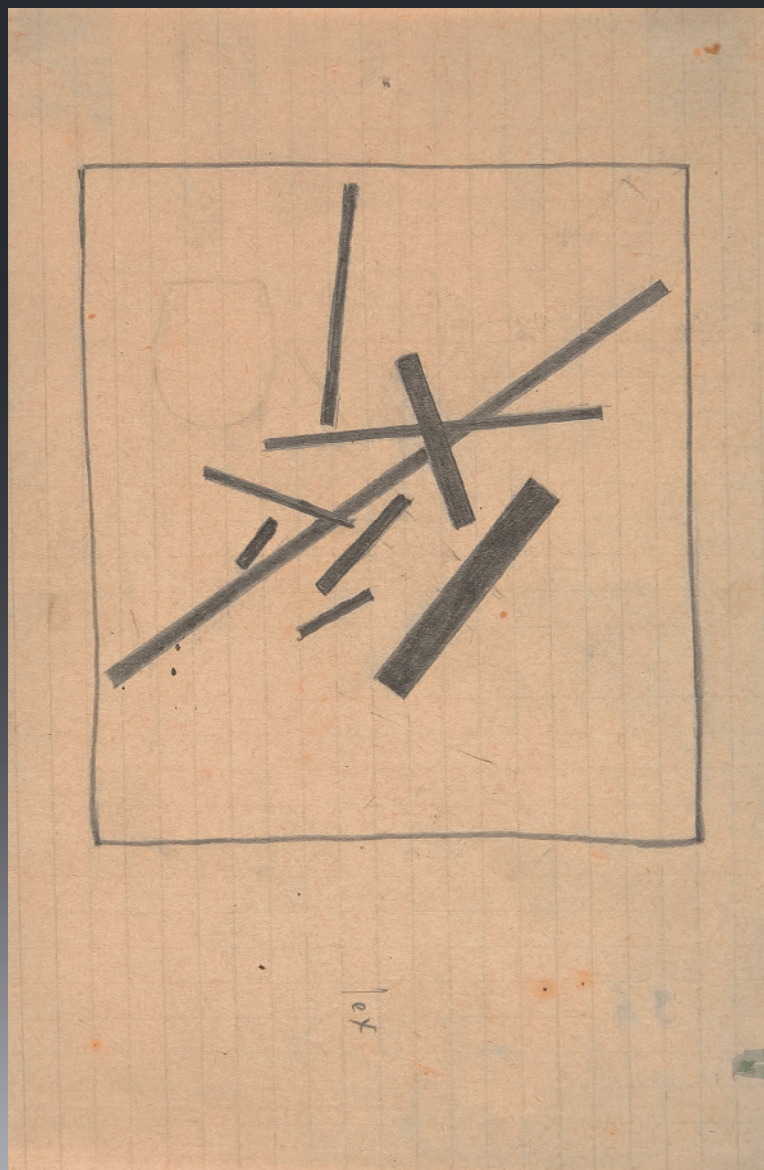
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