

# The Conception of Synaesthesia in the Works of Wassily Kandinsky

SALOMĖJA JASTRUMSKYTĖ

Lithuanian Culture Research Institute  
amorfinis@yahoo.com

There are relatively few scientific studies of different levels on the synaesthetic links of music and painting in Wassily Kandinsky's creation. The reflective regress of aesthetics and art theory to the abstract painting, reconsideration of its significance in a certain way convey the intellectual load of Kandinsky's efforts to discover the synaesthetic principle of rendering the most sensitive shifts of the artist's conscious and subconscious and extremely subjective senses. Intellectually capacious idea of abstract painting became an ideal existence of synaesthetic aesthetics. In case of Kandinsky's creation, we can definitely speak of the purity of the relation between music and painting, not necessarily as a dialogue of hegemonic senses, but as a certain puritanical formula of art, which may become the starting point for the rise of new art paradigms. Kandinsky has given many synaesthetic aspects to his theory of colours, which are not usually accentuated associating his painting only with music. For Kandinsky colours were exceptional synaesthetic manifestations able to concentrate and convey the combinations, connections, entireties of various senses.

**Keywords:** Kandinsky, Synaesthesia, interaction of the arts, music, painting, Symbolism, Abstractionism.

Wassily Kandinsky, the artist of extraordinary talent, is an exclusive figure not only in the evolution of several important trends of art, first of all Symbolism, Fauvism, Expressionism and Abstractionism, but also in the history of cognition of the phenomenon of synaesthesia. On the other hand, he was a high-level conceptual theorist of modernist art, who wrote programme theoretical texts analysing the issues of interaction of painting and music especially relevant to us. The synaesthetic aspects of the works of Kandinsky as an artist and theorist are very interesting to us, because in the important

stages of his creative evolution, Kandinsky followed the paths delineated by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis and also tackled similar problems of 'musical painting'.

Different from other problems of his creation, there are relatively few scientific studies of different levels on the synaesthetic links of music and painting in Wassily Kandinsky's creation. It is natural, because the researchers were more interested in the rise of Abstractionism related to Kandinsky (as well as to the plastic searches of Čiurlionis, which are less well-known in the world), which actually marked an

essential turning-point in the evolution of the Western artistic consciousness and still is an inexhaustible aspect of perception and self-concept of modern culture; therefore, it is not by chance that this field of problems of Kandinsky's avant-garde creation is discussed in academic literature of art studies especially widely and comprehensively.

In fact, the reflective regress of aesthetics and art theory to the abstract painting, reconsideration of its significance in a certain way convey the intellectual load of Kandinsky's efforts to discover the synaesthetic principle of rendering the most sensitive shifts of the artist's conscious and subconscious and extremely subjective senses. Although abstract painting is currently a widespread principle of visual arts, which has incidentally survived more than one period of exhaustion and extinction, the moment of its origin is surrounded by extraordinary efforts of thinking and the creation of a universal and refined theory fostering an exclusive humanistic project.

The active search in the fields of theory and practice of synaesthesia have acquired a scale of a solid creative modernist art project in the ambitions of Kandinsky; however, due to its elitist esotericism and complexity it has received less attention from the researchers. It is understandable, because according to the author of the project, it must carry a message not only of art, but also of the transformation of human spirituality. Therefore, although the abstract painting established the principles of formalist aesthetics and also unfolded the formalist germs of synaesthesia, which had been formed in the Symbolist era, this trend of modern art goes far beyond the narrow

limits of conceptuality: for Kandinsky and other artists who were developing the idea of abstract painting it was not just another trend of art tackling the formal problems of musical architectonics in painting. Intellectually capacious idea of abstract painting became an ideal existence of synaesthetic aesthetics. In case of Kandinsky's creation, we can definitely speak of the purity of the relation between music and painting, not necessarily as a dialogue of hegemonic senses, but as a certain puritanical formula of art, which may become the starting point for the rise of new art paradigms due to its alchemic transparency<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Kandinsky is generally considered to be the first creator of expressive abstraction with the lineage from Gauguin and the symbolists through abstract expressionism and essentially seeking to penetrate and reveal the metaphysical realities beyond the visual appearance. Kandinsky's links with *fin-de-siècle* Symbolism provided a solid context for developing the idea of spirituality in art. When he arrived from Russia to Munich, Kandinsky started studying fine arts under Franz von Stuck, the representative of secession and Symbolism. Peculiar artistic climate in Munich and the prevalence of *Jugendstil* aesthetics allowed Kandinsky to envisage the value of abstraction and the possibility to erase the lines between different arts. The vision of Abstractionism is essential for the development of Modernism and is closely related with the philosophical tradition of Plato, Hegel, and Schopenhauer. The model of synaesthesia formed and established in abstract painting is the most universal, revealing the formalist tendencies of Western synaesthesia, summarizing the modernist aspirations of the aesthetic stage of synaesthesia, and the starting point for many works of postmodern art seeking the unity of the senses. Just like *Gesamtkunstwerk* has become a nearly timeless model of synaesthetic structure from Wagner to virtual media, the synaesthetic principles of Abstractionism are the foundation for the aspects of synthesis of visual and auditory senses. The appearance of abstract painting is indisputably related with the triumph of modern art.

Kandinsky's affinity with the thinking of Schopenhauer permeated by the spirit of panmusicality, which is especially important from the point of view of the genesis of the concept of synaesthesia, is revealed by the identical terminology used to consider the materialization of their spirit or idea, the exclusive importance of spontaneity and the category 'musicality' in different types of art. For example, when explaining the objectiveness of will in the work *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer used the conception of *inner necessity*. Kandinsky also used the early investigations of colour theory of Schopenhauer in the work *Farbenlehre*. Moreover, this philosopher was quoted by the co-authors of his almanac Franz Marc and Arnold Schonberg. Schopenhauer's exceptional appreciation of music has also greatly affected Kandinsky's ideas. For both Kandinsky and Schopenhauer *art is the only possible escape from the negative aspects of will*. Moreover, Kandinsky, referring to Woringer and Schopenhauer, used the metaphor of crystallization to express the state of ontological purity, which he proclaimed in abstract art. This metaphor is also characteristic for Klee: he pictures a crystal as metaphysically pure. Purity was the essential conception of Abstractionism, based on the Platonic vision of perfect, non-mimetic forms of art, which is extremely important for the practice of abstractionism.

In his texts Kandinsky emphasizes that art is the expression of absolute truths in artistic forms. The exclusive conception of purity in Kandinsky's aesthetic attitudes embodies the ideas of metaphysical perma-

nence, the position of spiritual being as an opposition to the material one, and not the constancy of transient appearance. Kandinsky states that there is an unchangeable, infallible *principle of inner necessity*, which gives the art the state of purity. Kandinsky believed that the essential thing, from which a work of painting must appear, is the inner necessity, *innere Notwendigkeit*. It is the essential conception of the whole aesthetic theory of Kandinsky, which substantiated the principal turning-point of visual art, *the shift from the representation of visual world to the rendering of inner, invisible experience*. Therefore, according to Kandinsky, a work of art should not depend on such external models as nature. Instead the determinant for a painting to appear must be the inner voice of the artist, the inner clang [musical in its deepest nature], *innere Klang*. According to Kandinsky, literature, music and art are the first and most sensitive areas, where the spiritual changes become tangibly perceptible. Regardless of whether the form is abstract or representative or an intermediate version of both, it must be created according to the principle of inner necessity.

Although Kandinsky could have been well familiar with the German idealistic philosophy because of the interests of the adherents of *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) group or with the Hegel's philosophy through his nephew, a famous French philosopher Alexandre Kojève, but he was undoubtedly greatly influenced by the Wilhelm Woringer's work *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, published in 1908, which had a roaring success among avant-garde artists. The influence of this work and especially

Woringer's conception of abstract expression on the most important Kandinsky's work *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (1911) has been lately widely discussed in the literature of art studies.

From many aspects emphasized as the aesthetic attitudes by the creators of *Blaue Reiter* in their theories and practice, the most exclusive was the idea of synthesis of arts, especially of music and painting, which incidentally clearly differentiated them from another avant-garde group *Der Brücke* (The Bridge). The artists of *Der Blaue Reiter* group undoubtedly looked out to Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*; however, their interpretations of the universal work of art were very liberal. Let us remember that Wagner sought to include all forms of art into a single representational art form of opera, where each component played its role, but did not lose its identity. Meanwhile Kandinsky as well as Schoenberg and their other peers admired the synthesis of arts, where one art form merged with another. The attractiveness of synaesthesia led the creators to the non-representative forms of art, including theatre. Kandinsky undertook this type of art seeking to implement his artistic attitudes. In 1911, in *Blaue Reiter Almanach* he published his play *Der gelbe Klang* (The Yellow Sound). This play contained various elements concentrating different senses, but it also constituted technical obstacles and therefore, the play was not staged at the time. However, the appearance of such works-projects in the almanac expressed the fundamental purpose of the publication: the idea of the synthesis of the branches of art and art of different nations. *Blaue Reiter Almanach*,

as the synthesis of arts and artistic ideas, implemented Kandinsky's ideal of monumental composition.

According to Kandinsky, painting had to purify its forms as much as materially possible, and then it could be merged with other similarly purified arts and thus create monumental syntheses. In the essay *Über Bühnen Composition* (On Stage Composition) published in the almanac, Kandinsky stated that synthetic art may support and strengthen the peculiar sound of one art by the identical sound of another art and thus, achieve an extremely strong effect.

Kandinsky was fascinated by the systemic nature of musical composition and analysis and he sought to bestow these principles on the visual arts. The form of music as art free from the burdens of the external world served as a reference point for Kandinsky in creating what he himself called the theory of painting harmony. According to Kandinsky, music, mastering the form, may achieve the results that are inaccessible to painting. On the other hand, painting overtakes music by a few details. Music, for instance, uses the duration of time, whereas painting may present the whole message to the viewer instantly. Arnold Schoenberg in 1911 wrote to Kandinsky: "When an artist achieves the moment, where he only desires to express the inner events and scenes in their own rhythms and tones, then the 'object of painting' ceases to belong to the recreating eye." According to Kandinsky, Schoenberg's music takes to completely new areas, where musical experience is no longer acoustic, but purely spiritual. Thus, the music of the future starts here. It is noteworthy that Schoenberg's twelve-tone music had a

strong effect on Klee's emphatically constructive musical ideas of painting. Close communication with Schoenberg and his push to creation in painting affected these two great coryphaei of modernist art. "A painter, who finds no satisfaction in mere representation, however artistic, in his longing to express his inner life," said Kandinsky, influenced by the friend, "cannot but envy the ease with which music, the most non-material of the arts today, achieves this end. He naturally seeks to apply the methods of music to his own art. And from this results that modern desire for rhythm in painting, for mathematical, abstract construction, for repeated notes of colour, for setting colour in motion<sup>2</sup>."

Kandinsky was certain that plastic arts would become the art in the abstract sense and would eventually achieve the pure painting composition. Borrowing the terminology from the theory of music, Kandinsky imagines the composition as such to be the paragon of painting. However, Kandinsky's relation with the purity of painting or its imagined future absoluteness is rather controversial. For Kandinsky a pure line, a pure colour, a pure composition threatens of dogmatic stagnation. However, for him this formal purity is just a means for achieving the aim: in 1925 he wrote that he actually wished that the viewer could see what is *beyond* the painting and would understand that the forms are just a tool.

Music was related to the creation of *Der Blaue Reiter* in many aspects. Due to Bergson's intuitive ideas music became

important because of its rhythmical and not only harmonic features and therefore, the organisation of form and colour in painting was perceived as analogous to the rhythms of music; it was also recognized that that all these qualities of arts rise more from intuitive than intellectual sources. The latter tendency was especially pronounced in the creation of Paul Klee, a Swiss artist who was briefly related to the *Der Blaue Reiter* group. Klee's theory and art practice is permeated by musical analogies and associations and his profound knowledge of music theory provided a strict and accurate foundation for applying the musical conceptions in artistic composition to establish the musicality of colours and forms.

The book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* along with the *Bleue Reiter Almanac* is rightly considered to be one of the most significant and influential documents of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. modernist art<sup>3</sup>. The ideas of this book were broadly discussed by Kandinsky's peers; besides, a few artists in other European cities, for instance, Kazimir Malevich in Moscow or František Kupka in Paris, were pursuing similar artistic searches.

Kandinsky's book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* consists of two parts. In the first part, he develops the philosophical reflections on art, where he emphasizes

2 Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the spiritual in art*, Courier Dover Publications, 1977, p. 20.

3 In 1912, an abbreviated version of the book was read as a paper in a conference of artists in St Petersburg. In 1914, it was for the first time translated and published in English. Surprisingly, this Kandinsky's theoretical work was not published until 1949. Although Kandinsky's book had been translated into French by Guillaume Apollinaire at the beginning of 1913, the start of World War I and Kandinsky's move from Germany to Russia postponed the publishing and the final version was not published before the death of the artist.

the priority of the spiritual origin over the material one. In the second part, Kandinsky presents the theory of colours, where multiple synaesthetic layers are disclosed. The original title of the book *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* appeals to the German idea of *Geist* as a formation of the whole inner world with all its components, which is higher than the appearance of the world. In German the conception *Geist* refers not only to the spirit but also to the emotion, intellect, and all aspects of human existence that are not purely corporeal. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., the artists became fascinated with this space of inner life and aimed at expressing *Geist* as an entirety, not just the external impressions of own emotions. Such focus on the deepening of the conception was especially initiated by Kandinsky and his peers in Munich, *Der Blaue Reiter* group. *Der Blaue Reiter* and its predecessor *Neue Künstlervereinigung* (New Artists' Association) expanded the expressions of inner life by new ideas, for instance, primitivism, apocalyptic thinking, rejection of materialism, which one way or another lead to the pure abstract art.

However, the essence of his manifesto was the discussion of spiritual qualities of colours, which was extremely elaborated by Kandinsky. In the chapter dedicated for colours, Kandinsky emphasized two fundamental qualities of colours: their relation with musical tonalities and their psychological power. In some aspects his colour ideas are more relative and closely related with Wolfgang Goethe's treatise about colours *Zur Farbenlehre* (1810).

Obviously, Kandinsky has given many synaesthetic aspects to his theory of col-

ours, which are not usually accentuated associating his painting only with music<sup>4</sup>. For Kandinsky colours were exceptional synaesthetic manifestations able to concentrate and convey the combinations, connections, enteries of various senses: "The expression "scented colours" is frequently met with. And finally the sound of colours is so definite that it would be hard to find anyone who would try to express bright yellow in the bass notes,"<sup>5</sup> stated Kandinsky in the book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. These and similar statements are very close to the registration of authentic synaesthetic experience today. It may be assumed that in his theory, Kandinsky could express his synaesthetic experience more freely than in the broader creation and thus, give it a universal scale.

The tunes of the senses in Kandinsky's conceptions of colour are very multiple and involving the whole spectrum of human senses without any clear hierarchal distinctions. It seems that in Kandinsky's

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4 Just like Goethe Kandinsky classified the colours into warm and cold. Warm colours approximate yellow and cold ones resemble blue. But Kandinsky developed his theory stating that colours have additional qualities. For instance, yellow is expanding and blue is shrinking. Yellow is also earthly, 'jabbing, weighing'. On the other hand, blue is heavenly, a representation of spirituality, a colour of immense plunge into oneself, inviting a person to the infinity and awakening the aspiration of purity and supernaturalism. Beside physical effects, colours also have spiritual qualities. Musically speaking, dark blue may be compared to deep tones of an organ. White is the colour of sublime silence, reminding of pauses in music in many aspects, and black is the colour of nothingness, eternal silence.

5 Wasily Kandinsky, *Concerning the spiritual in art*, Courier Dover Publications, 1977, p. 25.

synaesthetic conceptions of colours the limits of individual senses are eliminated and a directly experienced colour materiality is created. Kandinsky's theory of colours has a strong foundation of synaesthetic associations. Kandinsky's theory endowed the colours with the anthropomorphic features as well – this way it was attempted to explain their effect on the viewer. Although Kandinsky sought to cover his theory with the commonalities characteristic to Symbolism, he undoubtedly understood that colours had special qualities and tried to highlight them by synaesthetic principles.

A peculiar personification of colours is actually characteristic to Kandinsky's theory of colours. The artist differentiated between the purely physical effect of colour, which is superficial and transient, and its psychological effect, naming the latter the vibration of the soul. Kandinsky was certain that colours could affect the human body as a physical organism: certain colours cause special associations, which set in motion a chain of emotional vibrations in the body. Beside the associative powers, colours also are a direct means to affect the soul. In the famous affirmation, somewhat reminiscent of Baudelaire's aspiration 'to play an immense keyboard of the chords of senses', Kandinsky stated: "Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammer, the soul is the strings." Thus, the artist is the hand that makes the soul vibrate by touching the keys accordingly with the principle of inner necessity. This gesture of manipulation, controlling/creating hand, accentuated by both Baudelaire and Kandinsky, not only leads to the romanticist and symbolist sources of the visibility principle, but also indicates a

consistent tendency in the dissemination of the phenomenon of synaesthesia at that period maintaining that synaesthesia is a universal tool of the synthesis of arts.

In other words, it seems that there is no autonomy and trickster chance, as it has been perceived in the latter decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> c. In the aesthetic attitudes of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., *synaesthesia is instrumental, a certain messenger and constituent of the new transitions of art, a sensory Hermes*. Meanwhile in Kandinsky's theory of colours there is a massive sub-layer, where a non-referential, unpredictable, uncontrollable swarm of synaesthetic materiality thrives. It creates tension in Kandinsky's theory itself, but this tension turns into a rich source of associations and protects the origins of abstract painting from dogmatism. Maybe this was the reason why later on Donald Kuspit<sup>6</sup>, summarizing the abstract painting overly widespread in several continents a few decades later, which had turned into empty decorative experiments, noted that precisely the loss of authentic assumptions of abstract painting: inner necessity, synaesthetic materiality, musicality, etc., has determined the metamorphosis of abstraction into an empty, shell artistic pose, which had no relations to the aspirations of Kandinsky and other creators of this aesthetics. In this criticism of the genesis of Abstractionism a determining factor may be seen: when synaesthesia is removed from the assumptions of a work of art, regardless of the form it manifests itself in, the work loses

6 Donald Kuspit, "Utopian Protest in Early Abstract Art", in: *Art Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Summer, 1970, p. 437.

the ontological volume, as if collapses to a superficial repetition of certain clichés. Therefore, it is obvious that *the underlying vital foundation of Kandinsky's aesthetic theory and artistic practice was comprised of contradictory synaesthetic conceptions and their rejection as non-essential in the further practice of Abstractionism soon distorted and drained this initially so wide furrow of artistic novelty*. It means that *synaesthesia vitally assists the artistic novelty<sup>7</sup> and if it is eliminated, the new paradigm withers*.

By this special synaesthetic attitude Kandinsky is very close to the symbolists who sought the autonomy and direct materiality of individual sensory elements<sup>8</sup>.

7 In 1913, in his *Reminiscences* Kandinsky wrote that the primary aim of his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* as well as *Bleue Reiter Almanac* was to awaken the ability to experience spirituality in material and abstract phenomena, which would be irreplaceable in the future when enabling a limitless variety of experiences.

8 Unique and so far not researched Kandinsky's work *Der unbekanntes Stimme* (For an Unknown Voice) painted in 1916 and stored in Musee National d'Art Moderne, Georges Pompidou Centre of contemporary art in Paris. In this noncanonical work the creation of Kandinsky opens up for the category of authentic synaesthesia, which as a difference, *difference*, was enabled by the spacious dimension of postmodern aesthetics. Therefore, we should dare not to enclose Kandinsky's ideas in a local historical/geographical continuum of the origins of Modernism, but see the far-reaching implications of his aspirations. Lately it has been attempted to reveal Klee's creation exactly the same way for the discourse of postmodern aesthetics as a unique and potential formation. One of the exclusive works in Kandinsky's creative biography should not remain a marginalia of the established modernist canon, but should allow a clearer determination of authentic manifestations of the phenomenon of synaesthesia in the *œuvre* of the great innovator of art and to

Although *the musical principle became essential and uniting in Kandinsky's as well as Delaunay's and Klee's creation, that what is united is comprised of a rich fabric of synaesthetic senses and various matters opened by them*. Thus, the musical principle of painting is not soaring in an empty intellectual space, but is based on sensory suggestion, which is intricately intertwined and forms a thick synaesthetic layer. The musical principle of abstract painting organizes the diverse synaesthetic material being one of its aspects and the essential line of composition. Thus, the musicality of painting is never dissociated from the harmony of other senses: if the visual sense is subjected to the suggestion of the auditory sense, it inevitably assumes other

substantiate the presumptions of his aesthetic ideas more consistently. Meanwhile limiting by the above work as a peculiar, hermetic case of synaesthetic creation focused on conveying a single sensory manifestation, a painting representation of a separate sensory element, drawing it closer to the vocal suggestions of Munch's paintings *Scream* and *Voice*. In Kandinsky's case we see how the abstract paradigm of art enables conveying this sensory event by completely different 'iconography'. It should be noted that voice visualisation by the methods of abstract painting is popular among postmodernist artists attributing themselves to clearly articulated tendencies of synaesthetic creation. One of such painters known in this field shaped by post-institutional fragmentations of art is Philipa Stanton, who paints the voices of people in an abstract manner. Moreover, colour suggestions of a human voice are also found in Nabokov's novel *Lolita* distinguished by a repertoire of synaesthetic metaphors. Interestingly, Kandinsky in his abstract creation embraced not only programme tasks raised by his own theories, but also registered authentic or at least imaginary synaesthetic experiences as multiple, performative congestions of different sensory elements.



senses creating the harmonious and natural entirety. The sensory dome of the work of art remains consistently synaesthetic. Besides, most likely this dimension was clearly perceived by the futurists, who introduced the painting of not only music, but also of smells and tastes into the aspirations of the new painting.

Transition to abstract painting was a logical outcome of the search of spirituality in art. In Kandinsky's paintings the elements of reality lazily remained for a long time, although the intellectual and spiritual attitudes forced the artist to search for an objectless way of expression. Coping with abstract identities seen in his memoirs testify the aspiration for a pure abstract creation overwhelming the whole personality of Kandinsky. An interesting detail is that when seeing his own or other artists' works under unusual circumstances and experiencing them as completely objectless and depicting an unrecognizable reality, Kandinsky used to experience it as the manifestations of extraordinary artistic beauty. The mutual interaction of intellectual searches caused by such experiences forced Kandinsky to look for the method to convey these experiences in painting. Musical analogy and diverse synaesthetic treatment of colours and composition became the components of this consistent aspiration. Kandinsky's aesthetic attitudes stated in his texts clearly show the formation of a certain synaesthetic foundation, which is later changed, shaped, and organised by the principle of musicality of painting based on profound assumptions. The entirety and unity of sensory elements as well as their divisibility, fluidity, lability are clearly reflected

in Kandinsky's aesthetic attitudes and give them an undeniable synaesthetic contour in terms of all senses, the whole sensorium.

Between 1909 and 1913 Kandinsky developed his abstract style partially referring to the principles of musical analogy. Seeking to express the *internal musical sound* in painting abstractions, he formed three specific ways of creative expression: impression, improvisation, and composition, defining each of them by the level of conveyed spiritual intensity. His impressions did not actually mean the same as those of the French impressionists, but rather direct impressions of external reality conveyed in the linear-painting form. In this sense, they may also be considered to be the representations of reality, though more of the inner one than of the external one. Meanwhile the improvisations were already essentially unconscious, spontaneous, immaterial expressions of inner phenomena. Ultimately, the compositions meant an even higher level of dissociation from the direct visible reality: through them Kandinsky conveyed the expressive forms shaped within him through time. Therefore, Composition is the most complex form of creative expression. It encompasses the expression of slowly shaped inner sense, which has been maturing for a long time. In the composition, the mind, conscious, and the aim play the major role<sup>9</sup>.

According to Kandinsky, all artistic content is identical, regardless of the artistic means of expression. Music, dance rhythm

9 By 1914 Kandinsky had painted 35 improvisations. Between 1910 and 1939 Kandinsky was painting ten large compositions. *Composition IV*, where familiar object may be found, marks the transitional stage on the long path to pure abstract painting.

and line rise from the same source of expression and therefore, one may be translated into another. "This borrowing of method by one art from another, can only be truly successful when the application of the borrowed methods is not superficial but fundamental. One art must learn first how another uses its methods, so that the methods may afterwards be applied to the borrower's art from the beginning, and suitably."<sup>10</sup>

Kandinsky's conception of art based on synaesthesia expresses the unique identity of all arts, their unanimous structure, which may appear in various combinations and variations of different arts<sup>11</sup>.

Kandinsky was convinced that in abstract painting, the elements must comply with strict rules. They are not affected by the artist's will, because there are laws that rise from the composition elements themselves and their characteristic energy. The refined system of plastic arts was essentially based on autonomous principles, encompassing the variations of the dispersion of painting and musical elements and diverse sensory

aspects. The dependence of colours on the forms as explained by Kandinsky testifies the inseparability of certain synaesthetic qualities. It may be stated that this way Kandinsky has unintentionally introduced the synaesthetic constants into his theory of colours. However, it was an immanent, self-substantiating system seeking to become a universal foundation of abstract painting. In case of spiritually close Klee distinguished by exclusive sense of musicality and synaesthesia, his created plastic system sought the perfect analogy with mathematical and physical principles of music.

## Conclusions

Thus, the essence of Kandinsky's abstract painting and the underpinning aesthetic system was the aspiration to distinguish the fundamental plastic, musical, multiple sensory elements and to create a universal, flexible, performative base, from which the infinite variations of the system could be derived. The main aspect of this project was creating a universal, dynamic, plastic system uniting all arts, the starting point of which was the synaesthetic power of arts and senses.

Only anticipating the unrivalled universality of synaesthesia, i.e. the unity of all senses and arts, could Kandinsky have developed his aesthetic and constructive attitudes, respectively accentuating one or another aspect. Therefore, *in Kandinsky's aesthetic system, the synaesthesia hardly appears as the central emphasizes object or a purposeful aspiration, but rather as a natural prerequisite for the adequate functioning of this system.* In other words, synaesthesia was the *modus operandi* of Kandinsky's aesthetics.

10 Wasily Kandinsky, *Concerning the spiritual in art*, Courier Dover Publications, 1977, p. 19.

11 Kandinsky's book *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche (Point and Line to Plane)* (1926) was an organic continuation of his ideas expressed in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. The subtitle of Kandinsky's second work "Contribution to the Analysis of the Pictorial Elements" testifies that a systemic analysis of the main pictorial elements – point, line, and plane – is presented. Kandinsky sought to compile a manual of pictorial elements, which would provide the basis for the imaginary grammar of art, revealing inner laws, according to which the process of painting should go. By this attitude he is close to Klee, who sought to create the fundamental principles of painting equivalent to the ones in music. Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* was published in 1925 and Kandinsky's second work – a year later.

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