



Vassily Kandinsky, Bild mit rotem Fleck [Tableau with red stain], 25 février 1914, Oil on canvas, 130 x 130 cm. Donation of Mme Nina Kandinsky in 1976. Collection Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle. Public domain. Photo : Centre Pompidou, MINAM-CCI/Adam Rzepka/Dist. GrandPalaisRmn

PRESS RELEASE | EXHIBITION

KANDINSKY AND THE IMAGE (KANDINSKY FACE AUX IMAGES)

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LaM - Lille Métropole Museum of Modern,
Contemporary and Outsider Art

Exhibition co-organised by LaM and Centre Pompidou

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This exhibition-cum-event is devoted to Wassily Kandinsky, one of the most important artists of the 20th century. Co-organised by LaM and Centre Pompidou, it explores a little known aspect of the artist's work: the role of images. Visitors to the exhibition can discover Kandinsky's personal archives, a veritable hidden treasure, which have never been shown on such a scale in France. In particular, these documents reveal the secrets behind the making of the famous *Almanach*. It is a true dive into the creation of Kandinsky's work, offering the change to forge a new perspective on this artist and reshuffle the cards of the history of abstract art. This will be the inaugural exhibition to mark the reopening of LaM after a year and a half of renovation work.

An unprecedented angle of research on an iconic artist

Born in Moscow in 1866, Wassily Kandinsky was a pioneer of abstract art, active in Germany for many years. He belonged to the Blue Rider group of artists, which marked a decisive turning point in modernity, then taught at the Bauhaus School after returning to Russia for several years. He fled Germany when the school was closed by the Nazis in 1933 and moved to Paris, where he died in 1944.

As an abstract painter with a spiritual, inward-facing interest, Kandinsky is rarely associated with photographic images, scientific publications or press illustrations, yet he maintained strong ties with these media throughout his life.

They are not only an iconographic record of his work; they also acted as food for thought and an educational tool, fuelling his visual thinking process. Based around a rich collection of works and archives bequeathed by Nina Kandinsky to Centre Pompidou and loans from public and private European institutions, the exhibition offers an opportunity to re-examine the importance of images in the body of work of one of the founding figures of abstraction.

Between spiritual, popular and scientific inspirations: the construction of a rich visual culture

"Kandinsky and the Image" is structured around five areas - Memories, Materialisations, Reproduction, Legitimation, Inspiration - and organised chronologically. The first part of the exhibition shows how photography, postcards and sketches keep visual traces of memories of travel that feed the artist's figurative works. He was particularly marked by his ethnographic experience in the north of Russia, as well as by his travels in Italy, the Netherlands and Tunisia.

The exhibition also focuses on the way in which, during his journey towards abstraction, he was fed by different currents of thought and spiritualist experiences, such as theosophy. These experiences, especially those involving photography, date back to the late 19th century and aim to render visible psychic phenomena that are normally invisible to the naked eye. Furthermore, Kandinsky undertook in-depth iconographic work when preparing the *Almanach du Blaue Reiter*, published with Franz Marc in 1912. The artists that contributed to this project sought to offer a fresh perspective on art and images, and abolish the boundary between art and popular culture. Popular printed images, non-Western and self-taught art, and children's drawings became these artists' preferred sources of inspiration.

The impact of scientific and biological images in Kandinsky's work

The exhibition emphasizes the key position of scientific publications of the time, which the artist drew on to create his aesthetic, particularly during the period when he was teaching at the Bauhaus. His pedagogical image library and the book titled *Point and Line to Plane* are central in this section. Kandinsky also drew inspiration from work on body movement and research into geometry and astronomy.

Lastly, the final section of the exhibition focuses on the impact of biological images on his work from the Parisian years. Just like Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró and Jean Arp, Kandinsky peopled his works with organic forms, influenced by representations of plants and cells under the microscope.

Through the role of images, the exhibition invites visitors to retrace the avant-garde journey of this visionary artist and dive into the inspirations behind his iconic works, rediscovering them with fresh eyes.

"Kandinsky and the Image" will be accompanied by a rich catalogue with new essays on the artist and educational texts aimed at all audiences. Alongside the exhibition, children's drawings collected by Wassily Kandinsky will be presented in a quiet space for children, devoted to relaxation, learning and play based around the artist, inspired by his apartment at the Bauhaus.

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