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Russkii kosmizm i russkii avangard (English title: Russian
Cosmism and the Russian Avant-Garde) (review)

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artistic trends, thus going beyond the scope of his previous works and emphasizing the relationship between the Russian avant-garde and the Russian Cosmist movement. He sees this connection in the fact that abstract artists (e.g. Malevich) freed form from the constraints of gravity and in their relationship with Theosophy, in which the cosmic aspiration is a central feature. We can also recall the passion of Kandinsky, Rerikh, Scriabin and Churlionis for the Theosophical ideas of Madame Blavatsky. Another link between these movements, perhaps even a utopian strain, is the “prometeism,” the longing for transformations, sometimes even on a universal scale.

The book consists of two main parts. In the first part, the author considers the creative activity of central avant-garde figures (Kandinsky, Malevich, and Filonov) in the cosmic-artistic aspect. In the second part, the author analyzes the work of F. Infante, now living in Moscow. In Linnik’s opinion, Kandinsky was in a way the first “psychonaut.” His cosmos is the cosmos of the human spirit and, in the author’s opinion, Kandinsky emerges in the history of culture as the discoverer of a new world beauty.

The artist appears here as creator of the world, demonstrating that creation is active and cosmogenic. Kandinsky used in his work symbols and hieroglyphs, which were like signs or archetypes. Here, Linnik observes many common features between Madame Blavatsky’s explanations in *The Secret Doctrine* and Kandinsky’s graphic concepts. Linnik believes that many of the artist’s works could be interpreted as an exact *videoserie* to accompany the text of *The Secret Doctrine*—a very original idea for future publishers of Blavatsky’s works!

The rigid and maximally schematized geometricity of Malevich’s cosmos presupposes a view opposed to the biomorphism of a geocentric world outlook. This geometricity lends to Malevich’s view a certain fundamentality while at the same time incorporating archaic features such as Plato’s geometric theories. Here, the cosmos of Malevich is not chaotic, it is rational.

Natural earth objects—mountains, heaps of sand, trees—are in conical form, bound by the laws of gravity. Malevich’s compositions are purposefully artificial and rectilinear. His works make use of this logical, geometrical en-

RUSSIAN COSMISM AND THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE

by Yury Linnik. “Svyatoi Ostrov” Publ.,
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In this book, Yury Linnik studies the connection between the Amaravella group and preceding and neighboring

gineering despite the natural forces of gravity. Such a sense of weightlessness is intrinsic not only to Malevich's works, but also to Kandinsky and to abstract painting in general. Abstract painting conveys a sense of weightlessness by rejecting the real object, the thing, which always sits firmly on the ground. On the other hand, composition in realistic painting obeys the Earth's law of gravity, thereby creating the sense of a horizon, a horizontal line.

I might argue with Linnik in regard to some details, but I stand rooted to the spot in mute rapture when reading phrases such as at the end of the story about Malevich: "Was the 'Black Square' a peculiar peep-hole in the vacuum of the abyss?" Yes, I state that Linnik's phraseology is immanently isomorphic with respect to the cosmogenetic semantics of Malevich! And let me be shot by my readers for saying so.

In the author's opinion, the artist P. Filonov managed to implement the idea, proposed by Plato, of the cosmos as an organism. Filonov's cosmos is biological (this feature leaps to the eye when one sees his works). The texture of his canvasses looks like a living tissue placed under the microscope. His "organic cosmos" strives to provide an alternative to the "mechanical cosmos" of the constructivists. Filonov's cosmos is, in this respect, in tune with the ideas of the prominent scientist K. Tsiolkovsky, who imagined that the cosmos was filled with life and happiness from the moment of its origin.

Linnik acquaints us at the beginning of this book with such "picturesque cosmos" with the aim of expressing, in the second part, his delight at the cosmos of Francisco Infante. Infante has been an active participant in conferences on light and music in Kazan and his works may also be familiar to *Leonardo* readers (see *Leonardo* Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 11, 1992; Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 442-443, 1994). Infante records on film his numerous "artifacts," which he creates through methods such as the use of large, reflecting mirror planes (smooth, polyhedral and curved). He thus creates astonishing optical illusions of the transformation of space. His work convincingly realizes the expansion of consciousness with minimal effort.