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Postmodern memory. A study on aesthetics of Eastern Europe

Abstract: The focus of this paper is on the Kazimir Malevich's suprematism, which is characterised by the concept of non-objectivity that has become a synonym for the Russian avant-garde. He was an artist whose sensibility and philosophy was primarily developed through an immediate experience, excitement, and reflection of painting. Non-objective aesthetics emerged for the first time as a basic nature of art, then it was raised to the universal substance of ontology and cosmology. Starting from the black, going through the coloured, and ending with the white scenery, the paintings of Malevich wield a significant relation to the Orthodox iconography in respect of its theory as well as theological and aesthetical background. While developing a substantial geometry of the icon, he came up with the postmodern architecture rendered by fractal forms.

Malevich claimed that socialism was the last instance of modernism, whereby the next stage would require abandoning the objective art in favour of non-objectivity. The postmodern era, announced by Russian artists and philosophers, has raised novel tendencies of iconolatry which make suprematism a prototype of the restoration that is taking place. It corresponds to an update of the memory in terms of arts that substantially relate to the iconographic issue. A coincidental transition towards the Russian socialism demonstrates the great significance of an aesthetico-political project.

Key words: iconography, Russian avant-garde, suprematism, non-objectivity, fractal geometry, architecture, postmodern era

Introduction

Pythagoras is known to be the first scholar who applied the Greek concept of cosmos in order to explain the Universe. However, it supposedly referred above all to the starry firmament, since the term stems from the verb meaning 'to equip' or 'to adorn' (Coomaraswamy, 2007). The Latin word ornament has the same origin.¹ Although it is considered to be a decorative element, there is also the

1 Coomaraswamy (2007) has pointed out that ornament or decoration is an integral part of the artwork, and not millinery as it was considered in the late modern period. The Latin word *ornare* originally meant 'to fit out,' 'to furnish,' 'to provide with necessities,' while in the 16th century Cooper spoke of the *tackling or ornaments of a ship* and

universal significance implied. In that respect, cosmology generates a primordial language that parallels with the genetic code or mathematical symbolism. It is a testimony of the conscious memory that constitutes time and history.

The interest for ornaments was fluctuating through historical periods. The classical antiquity marginalised it. Yet, the Greek civilisation produced three style variants – Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian – and the Romans took over almost all models from the Greeks, but only for decorative purposes. The Middle Ages revived ornamental forms through the iconographic design. The concept of icon changed the idea of ornament in regards to the universal significance that it implies (Milovanović, 2013). During the modern period, such a conception was rejected in favour of the objective realism. However, the postmodern era, the focus of which was on contemporary science, has restored interest in cosmology and iconography as well (Toulmin, 1983).

The roots of postmodern thought were intertwined with the revolution in mathematics and sciences at the beginning of the 20th century (Tasić, 2001). It coincided with the revival of the icon in Russia, which resulted in an avant-garde movement superimposing the cubistic and the futuristic ones (Pellegrinaggio, 2018). A striking cognation between the Russian avant-garde and the iconography indicates continuity of the memory that the postmodernity was based upon (Spira, 2008). The concept of the Eastern European aesthetics corresponds to such an update of the memory (Milovanović, Vujović, 2019).

There is no reliable source that would provide information concerning the time when the Russian avant-garde started. One should agree a belief that the turning point was the emergence of suprematism in 1915, which coincided to with key events in science and politics. In that regard, the suprematist manifesto of Kazimir Malevich presenting a programme of non-objective art is considered to be the avant-garde mainstream (Раткин, 1978). The same year, the general theory of relativity by Albert Einstein was published, which turns out to be significant for elucidation of the Eastern European aesthetics. The iconography concerns a dynamical substance of painting, that corresponds to the curved space of relativistic cosmology (Жегин, 1970). Studying the geometry of the icon, Pavel Florensky established the art theory of the spatio-temporal continuum (Флоренский, 2010). It implies a fundamental concept of field upon which the general theory of relativity is based (Nakov, 1975). In addition,

Malory of the *ornementys of an aulter*. Similarly, *décor* is related to *decorous* or *decent*, meaning: ‘suitable to a character or time, place, and occasion,’ but also to *decorum*, i.e. ‘that which is befitting.’

Clemena Antonova (2010) considers time to be an organising principle of pictorial art signifying presence in the icon. Milovanović et al. (2016) elaborated her conception in terms of the fractal geometry and the complex systems physics. The paper follows such a methodology in order to elucidate an update of the memory. The avant-gardists regarded artistic and social revolutions to be interdependent processes of the same continuum. That is why artists and critics often described the October Revolution as a continuation of the revolutionary process started by cubism and futurism (Erjavec, 2015). Malevich, like most avant-gardists, believed that manifestations of this could be seen in the art movement because both movements were organically inevitable. He sought to explain that the avant-garde movement implemented, within the artistic sphere, ideas that had been proclaimed by socialism and revolution (Мијушковић, 1998). But he actually revealed the same nature of totalitarian ideologies by identifying utilitarianism and the tendency towards an objective satisfaction, which meant that the revolution had been a triumph of the objective realism. One may conclude that socialism did not eliminate said system, but only developed it further while being, at best, its last stage. He finally realised that his programme was unattainable through socialism. He could only achieve it through suprematism that appeared afterwards (Malevitch, 1962). Did he indicate the postmodern era which coincided with a transition of the Russian socialism? – it is the question that inspires one to interpret the Eastern European aesthetics in terms of the postmodern memory.

Russian avant-garde and iconography. Non-objective cosmology

The avant-garde artists of Russia reached their professional maturity in 1910–1914, just when church architecture and icon painting were being rediscovered, due to collecting and curatorial activities of patrons such as Nikolai Likhachev, Ilya Ostroukhov and Stepan Riabushinsky, due to the scholarly analysis of art critics such as Igor Grabar and Nikolai Punin and the series of Moscow and St. Petersburg exhibitions that brought items of the ecclesial use to public attention. Furthermore, many of the avant-garde artists began their careers as icon painters or seminarists: Pavel Filonov, Filip Maliavin, Pavel Korin, and Vladimir Tatlin trained as icon painters; Boris Kustodiev, Aristarkh Lentulov, and Viktor Vasuetsov were students of theological academies. Many of them were also associated with Neorationalist movement between 1880 and 1890 at Abramtsevo, where Elizaveta and Savva Mamontov promoted artists in order to show appreciation for the tradition of wood carving, embroidery, and icon painting. Only

a few kilometres from Zagorsk, Abramtsevo was a place of artistic and spiritual sanctuary for many young artists, including Mikhail Nestorov, Viktor Vasnetsov and Konstantin Yuon, some of whom supported the Orthodox Renaissance of Russia's fin de siècle, and later contributed to the revival of Zagorsk as a religious and intellectual centre in the early 1920s led by Pavel Florensky. The concept of the reversed perspective which was described by Florensky, the creator of an energetic theology of the icon, is its defining feature in the view of Clemena Antonova (2010). It forms a peculiar system, concurrent to the linear perspective mode that is shaped during the modern period (Успенский, 1970).²

The Russian avant-garde began to manifest fully through the primitivist movement that started in about 1908. The concepts of French cubism and Italian futurism concurrently penetrated Russia, which turned to be crucial for the avant-garde design (Мијушковић, 1980). The primitivism relied upon the traditions of folk art, Byzantine iconography and children drafts, insisting on spontaneity and immediacy which were originally related to the East. For Russian avant-gardists, it was substantially a national phenomenon considering the East and Russia had been inseparably linked since the Tatarian invasion (Турбецкој, 2012) – but also as much before. The modern forms of art evolved from the Byzantine ones, which took inspiration from the Armenio-Georgian art. In that manner, the Eastern European aesthetics made a full cycle, elucidating a primordial significance of the artistic impression (Шевченко, 1913).³ The basic line of the impression is substantial dynamics that causes forms not to remain in an objective state, but to pattern the creation. Regarding that, futurist and cubist conceptions fell on the fertile ground of Russia, which had already cognised a dynamical substance of painting.

In suprematism, the act of painting consists of moments of energetic notes, which corresponds to the cosmology of non-objective energies (Lomac & Pandrta, 1978). According to Malevich, the category of objectivity is completely related to the concepts of practicality, usefulness, and utilitarianism, which corresponded to coercion, necessity and limitation – the expressions of the human nature. Being a sharp and irreconcilable contrast, non-objectivity is

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- 2 Avant-gardists regarded the iconography to be instances of primitive art that provided an alternative perception. Henri Matisse showed the same enthusiasm during his trip to Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1911: 'The icon is a very interesting type of primitive painting. Nowhere have I ever seen such a wealth of color, such purity, such immediacy of expression. This is the best thing Moscow has to offer' (Bowl, 2008, pp. 147–148).
 - 3 Cézanne, Gauguin and Rousseau played an important role in the Russian art, because their tendencies were towards the Eastern traditions and forms.

defined through the opposite concepts in repulsive terms that indicate what it is not or what it does not have (Мијушковић, 1998).⁴ A painter does not appoint concepts according to the elementary reality to which he relates, but in accordance to a substantial experience independent of the object (Наков, 1995). The release through non-objectivity represents a supreme state corresponding to the concept of field measured in dynamical units, discernible by an existence due to the supreme state (Nakov, 1975).

Whatever an artist tried to represent, his canvas should inevitably remain a surface. It follows that every art, including also the representational one, is substantially non-objective – however, many of the artists use it for affirmation and propagation of non-artistic ideologies. The concept of representation is perceived to be contrary to the very reality. Suprematist art tends to release a substantial reality potentiating its manifestation in a primordial state and to remove finally all incidents concerning the objective painting. Such a principle is not only artistic, but universal – which leads to the conclusion that substance of painting pertains substance of cosmology. Suprematism tends to reveal an immediate perception, to which Malevich often referred as the manifestation of the exalted Null (Malewitch, 1962).

If one assumes that mysticism transfigures the existence in an immediate perception through eliminating any mediation, Malevich would be considered a mystic (Nakov, 1977). A primordial substance is defined by him to be the Null. This way it is rendered as neither a unit nor a multitude, which corresponds to the apophatic conception of the Trinity (Лоски, 2003).⁵ Furthermore, he was indicating a ternary law of perfection that constitutes any non-form, non-personality, and non-legality (Малевић, 1993а).⁶ In his view, the focus of the Old

4 The term *non-objective* was coined by Andrei Bely (1907), who used it to characterise what he felt, which was a possible dead end of art.

5 Even the manners of the Eastern Europe that have mostly departed from the Orthodox tradition retain a tendency to consider the cosmos in an ecclesiological aspect. The motifs like that exist in the religious philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov, wherein the cosmic mysticism of Jakob Böhme, Paracelsus and Kabbalah are interwoven with the sociological concepts of Fourier and Auguste Comte. They are also found in the eschatological utopism of Fyodorov, in chilialistic tendencies of the social Christianity, and finally in the sophiology of Sergei Bulgakov that is regarded to be a failed ecclesiology. For these scholars, church is fused to the concept of cosmos which comes to be depersonalised. In that respect, suprematism does not deviate from it at all. In addition, it concerns a radical restoration of the Eastern European aesthetics at a beginning of the 20th century.

6 Malevich refers to the Russian language – wherein the number three (*тройка*) is the basis of some extremely important words: order (*строй*), to arrange (*устроить*),

Testament was specifically not placed on art because it had not achieved non-objectivity. Moses in the Book of Exodus had been looking for the promised land and that is why he was far from being non-objective. Therefore it was Christ who completed Moses' law by saying: 'The kingdom of God is among you' (Малевич, 1993b).

In that manner, Malevich alludes to the iconographic issue relating his philosophy of art to energetical theology of the icon. The remark is crucial for elucidating the Russian avant-garde in regard to its continuity. It was a restoration of the Eastern European aesthetics relying upon the Orthodox Christianity. The Black Square, which was set at an exalted position in the corner that had belonged to the icon, pointed out that such a place should not remain vacant (fig. 1).⁷ For Malevich, it was much more than art – it was a formula which all the surface and the volume structures were derived from. His architecture completely arose from the painting energies of suprematism (Харцијев, 1988). He continually rejoiced in the various meanings of the suprematist icon maintaining an atmosphere of the cult sacrament, reminiscent to that what had been the Tetractys for the Pythagoreans (Lomac & Padrta, 1978).⁸

to ruin (*расстроїму*) – wondering why the order of things should imply tripling and not doubling. Is there only one culture of the tripling, in whose law any existence has been formed? Is it just a mere coincidence, and could it be considered that there is concurrently a quintupling or a septupling? The term *Perestroika* (*Перестройка*), which refers to the restructuring of the Russian socialism, follows the same rule.

- 7 Malevich added that he viewed his square as a *gateway of revelation* (Nakov, 2010).
- 8 Malevich was an embodiment of spirituality in the supreme sense, stating it was actually the manner that discerned him from non-objective painters abroad (Харцијев, 1988). In that respect, one considers his note on transfiguration of church which is regarded to be a critique of the modern iconoclasm. The ecclesial painting is distortion of the God image which is buried under the layers of the fake glamour. It is masked by abstraction, skill and elaboration of one's own idealisation which is a bunch of unnatural combinations. The novel church should shake off all covers of the Gospel, in order to remain the divine Logos like a pure grain. Malevich points out that breaking bread by hands is intrinsically related to Christ and that it should present primordial connection with the earth. However, the ritual of breaking bread and drinking wine in the church takes on an objective character which is inadmissible, terrible and even nasty, vulgar and shameful (Малевич, 2010b).

According to Malevich, there is a connection between the bread and the earth. Suprematism makes one more aware of the connection with the earth, but it completely changes the architecture of its objects merging them to dynamical monoliths of planetary system (Малевич, 1920). The *Black Square* concerns weight of the earth – four

Substantial geometry

Filonov stated in 1912 that Cubo-Futurism had come to a dead end, due to mechanicism in its fundamentals. The geometric representation of volumes and dynamics in space and time was achieved, but substantial dynamics that would generate life was beyond its reach (Kovtun, 1992). Whilst dynamics in the futurist experience is always regarded objectively, suprematism postulates a non-objective dynamics – independent of the mechanical laws that apply to the spatial phenomena, but not to a painting surface (Мијушковић, 1998). On the other hand, cubism is a conception that everything one could perceive is defined by cross-sections between planes and surfaces (Andersen, 1974). In that respect, Cubo-Futurism – that had been specifically Russian synthesis – corresponded to an objective geometry of the spatio-temporal continuum.

Suprematism started from the last futurist exhibition in Moscow in 1915, which was titled 0.10. The Black Square was exhibited there, which, according to Milner's (1996) interpretation, signifies the origin of the geo-metrical system. Malevich divided the canvas into arshins and vershoks, which were the obsolete Russian units of measurement. As there are 16 vershoks in an arshin, the canvas should be divided into 2, 4, 8 and 16 parts – which is usually disregarded concerning the Black Square, since in the case of centimetres or inches all measures become arbitrary. It is fascinating that rhythmic relations within the painting were also present among his other paintings.

They were exhibited on two different walls, while the Black Square was hung at the top corner connecting them all (photo 1). It was an icon not only due to its location, but also due to the significance – in that respect the suprematist paintings are ornamental figures that communicate among themselves as well as to the observer.

elements that constitute the cosmos – whilst the whiteness emanating from the depth makes it non-objective. The geometric reduction of cubism and separation from any referentialism are there to denote not only that it is constituted in own incommensurability, but also that it becomes a sensual restoration of the silent nullity which is an unattainable source of the existence (Siena, 1978). It corresponds to the *tessera* that is a building block of mosaic which is used in the basic technique of Byzantine iconography (Betancourt & Taroutina, 2015). Regarding that, the ornament corresponds to a dynamical substance of the Orthodox icon which is inseparable from the ecclesial use (Цветковић, 2009). The significance of magic squares in iconography is also evident (Ernst, 2001).



Fig. 1. The Black Square by Kazimir Malevich

Source: (71)

Removing referential relations from the plastic and the conceptual structure, however, such art does not imply neither personality of the observer, nor any circumstances of perception – since there is no human space making a personality existent (Мијушковић, 1998). The observer is present neither in the centre of a painting, nor outside it, nor in the third place – but it is figured through a dynamical substance, which is what the icon does. In that regard, the Russian avant-garde restored the iconographic paradigm in order to escape representational art. The substantial elements of iconography, which should be discussed in relation to that, are: perspective, colours and geometry.



Photo 1. Paintings by Kazimir Malevich at the last futuristic exhibition 0.10 in Moscow 1915

Source: (80)

Perspective is a fundamental fact of the iconography. Unlike the modern concept that became a dominant mode of representation during the Renaissance, the iconographic perspective corresponds to a dynamical substance of painting (fig. 2). The binocular vision, which is a blend of two images from different viewpoints, gives some interesting results in this case (fig. 3). This kind of vision allows one to obtain a cubo-futuristic description of the spatio-temporal continuum implying a perspective depth related to the time domain (Antonova, 2010).⁹ What lacks, however, to realise the substantial geometry of the icon is non-objectivity, since the iconography does not represent reality but the original creation. Rosalind Krauss (1986) considers the avant-garde to be a discourse of the originality which is an imperative of starting from the Null, due to abstraction from the avant-garde practice the grid structure that is a paradigm of the nullary stage (fig. 4). Concerning the structure of a grid, the avant-garde indicates that originality is an operational hypothesis arising through repetition. In terms of substantial geometry, the grid corresponds to spatial rhythms defining a scale hierarchy.¹⁰

The colour flow was initially achieved in the icons by applying the light reflective paints to the clothes flowing into the background of the image (Шевченко, 1913). The colours are not regarded to be just decorative element, but a subtle symbolism of transcendence (Sendler, 1995). According to Malevich, painting is a sense for colour which is the constructive principle of creation. The colour flows and the original unity turns into painted energies arising the artistic sense (Малевич, 1993с).¹¹ In the coloured stage of suprematism, until 1917,

9 The relativistic cosmology introduced time into artistic space through the concept of curvature (Жегин, 1970). Diachronic images by Pablo Picasso, such as *Les Femmes d'Alger*, are characterised by the cubist geometry that concurrently presents diverse viewpoints whose sum makes up a given object (Miller, 2001). The futurist avant-garde efforts to represent movement and dynamism, such as Giacomo Balla's *Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio*, concerns the same point (Carlevaris, 2020).

10 A link between perspective and rhythms is clearly discernable in the meander which is an ornamental form of iconography. Its geometry generates a spatial flow that is twisted into depth, which concerns the dynamical substance of painting (Марјановић, 1995).

11 The painting process is defined by Malevich through an intuitive calculus constituting the colour theory of suprematism. Social phenomena are also expressed in the various colour scales. And so is the culture upon which it is based. Paints are the most dilute in the rural areas and the most dense in the cities. The final point is a metropolis where the colouration has been overcome and colours disperse in the white light. Such a hierarchy is the social generalisation concerning the three stages of suprematism – the black, the coloured and the white one.



Fig. 2. The Last Supper. On the left: the iconographic perspective corresponding to substantial art. On the right: the modern perspective corresponding to representational art

Source: (author)

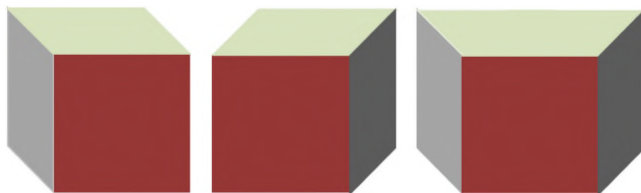


Fig. 3. The binocular vision giving a cubo-futuristic description of the spatio-temporal continuum

Source: (author)

non-objective painting was constituted on canvas by means of colours together with a strong contrast between black and white. Thereafter, the colour scale disappeared in white and the architectural suprematism proclaimed the basic element to be the form (Мальевич, 2010а). The suprematist whiteness (fig. 5) corresponds to the substance of painting. It appears in the same manner in the Orthodox iconography in the form of white areas on the robes of angels and saints (fig. 6).

After the disappearance of the colour scale, Malevich considered transfiguring it into the white colour, which unifies all colours into one. There is a million of colours at rest, whereas only single one in time (Мальевич, 1993с). In that respect, scaling designates the time domain of iconography related to the

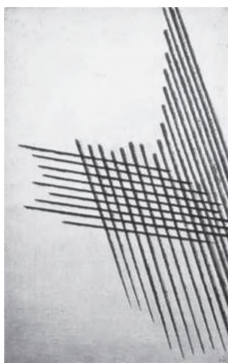


Fig. 4. Construction No. 90 by Aleksandr Rodchenko

Source: (79)

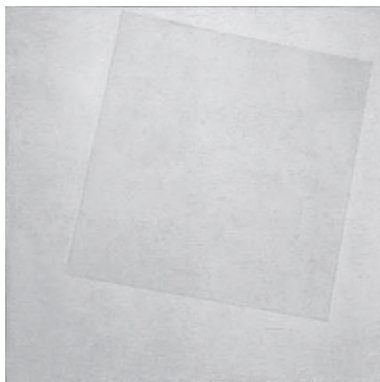


Fig. 5. The White on White by Kazimir Malevich

Source: (74)

perspective depth. The icon of Transfiguration highlights the von Koch curve – Christ is presented to his apostles through time, which is coincident with spreading of the mountain massifs towards the image interior (fig. 7).¹² The icon established this way refers to the dynamics manifested in the transition from a

¹² It is worth noting that the scale hierarchy also includes a relief element in the left corner, which related to the earth in the form of fractured and cracked rocks.



Fig. 6. The White Angel. A mural icon from the Serbian monastery Mileševa where were the relics of Saint Savas before having been burned in 1595

Source: (75)

horizontal position, through a semi-vertical one, to a vertical one in relation to the central figure of Christ. The substantial geometry corresponds to the self-similarity of fractal forms, which are dynamical patterns of non-objective energies (Milovanović & Tomić, 2016).

Geometry plays an extremely significant role in icons. Not only perspective is geometrically involved, but the composition too, which is often consciously regarded as geometrical. The forms of cross, circle and triangle are central in both the iconography as well as suprematism.¹³ The Knife Grinder by Malevich is a remarkable example of Cubo-Futurism, having a perspective that constitutes the spatio-temporal continuum (fig. 8).

13 Malevich favourite form seems to be the cross (Bowl, 2008). Influenced by the neoprimitivism, he initially imitated icons and exhibited the *Studies for a Fresco Painting* in 1908.



Fig. 7. Transfiguration. Left: The von Koch curve that indicates scaling wherewith Christ is presented to the apostles. Right: Substantial dynamics reflected in progression from the horizontal, through the semi-vertical, finally to the vertical position in respect to Christ's figure

Source: (70)



Fig. 8. The Knife Grinder by Kazimir Malevich

Source: (81)

A motion of geometric elements suggests self-similarity, considering that objectivity is broken due to the cubistic stratification of the scene.¹⁴ The instance

¹⁴ Through his teaching activities, Malevich referred to cubism in explanation of non-objective painting (Nakov, 2010). In Diego Rivera's opinion, 'cubism broke down forms as they have been seen for centuries and was creating out of the fragments new forms, objects, patterns and ultimately – new world' (Erjavec, 2015).

indicates significance of ornamental forms for generating fractal design, which is an important topic in elucidation of the suprematist art (Тарасенко, 2007).

Fractality and Postmodernism

1. Fractal Architecture

The term fractal was coined by Benoît Mandelbrot (1975) from a Latin adjective meaning 'fractured,' but also 'irregular' in the manner of fragmentation.¹⁵ Despite being like that, their structure implies a recurrent order called self-similarity – which is about figuring a pattern at different scales through a hierarchical description. It is a generative property related to growth of the organism, in each particular case defining a substantial geometry of the matter discussed. Through implication of artistic time inherent in the texture of a picture itself (Souriau, 1949), fractals relate to the dynamical substance of geometry.

Malevich's non-objective architecture is based upon the existence of dynamical substance that overcomes any weight (Nakov, 1977). In that respect, it coincides with the relativistic cosmology whereat gravity has been incorporated in a geometrical structure of the theory. However, a link between the general relativity and the fractal geometry is not an elucidated issue – which is necessary for elaborating his conception that concerns ability to create construction that is not dependent on relations between forms and colours, but founded upon weight, speed and expansion (Малевич, 1915).¹⁶ The complex systems physics using geometrical hierarchy to express dynamics in a concise manner is the appropriate framework for such an activity (Prigogine, 1980).¹⁷ In that relation, one has realised their remark on the complexity which concerns a strict law generating life (Малевич, 1989).

15 The concept is primarily related to the earth relief and some instances of geography such as the seacost of Great Britain, the left bank of the Vistula, the mountain massifs and the demarcation lines, wherewith there are significant differences in data of neighbouring states concerning the common frontier. The instances like that require a hierarchical description, which makes them irreducible to stationary figures. According to that, emergence of fractals in geometry is regarded to be re-examination of its foundations in the basic sense – measurement of the earth.

16 It concerns the concept of field flowing beyond canvas in order to involve the observer. Such a transformation potential of painting is woven into the spatial conception whose dynamical substance is not restricted by the edge of canvas.

17 The complex systems are defined by increasing complexity in the temporal domain, which corresponds to the perspective depth of iconography. The use of geometry to express dynamics is coincident with the basic concepts of general relativity.

According to energetical aesthetics of suprematism, the system serves as a weight distribution method, since there is no weight in the system. It denies a static nature of matter due to the substantial dynamics, which makes Malevich responsible for complete revolution in architectural design (Nakov, 1977). His architectons, i.e. the scale-free patterns of suprematist architecture, indicate a unification of the interior and the exterior by dissolving façade's primacy (fig. 9).¹⁸ Impressive and uniform faces of architectons coincide with the later paintings of Malevich, which present weightless bodies reminiscent to geometrical figures without any individuality or personality (Crone & Moos, 1991). The last instance of depersonalisation is an absent face, resembling the manner of how imams are portrayed in the Shiite Islam (fig. 10). The exclusion of faces was regarded by him to be a crucial achievement of non-objective art (Миљушковић, 1993).¹⁹

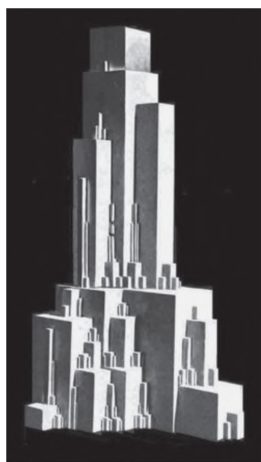


Fig. 9. An architecton by Kazimir Malevich. The scale-free patterns indicate unification of the interior and the exterior by dissolving façade's primacy

Source: (78)

18 Architectons and planits are regarded to be a direct response to the demand of the general upsurge of interest in the applied and decorative arts through 1920s (Bowl, 2015).

19 According to Malevich (1978), the face is not the human substance neither the switch is the electrical power. The same conception is used by Pavel Florensky when considering the icon. He states that the concept of the window is defined by light, since without it the window would be only treated as wood and glass (Флоренски, 1990). In that respect, the later paintings of Malevich are immediately related to theologico-aesthetical background of the Orthodox iconography.



Fig. 10. Absent faces. Left: The Woman with Rake by Kazimir Malevich. Right: Imam Ali portrayed in the Shiite Islam

Source: (76)



Photo 2. The Temple of Saint Sava in Belgrade, built at the palace where his relics were burnt in 1595

Source: (77)



Photo 3. The Yellamma Temple in Saundatti, photographed by Paul Prudence
Source: (72)

Postmodern architecture, rendered by fractal forms, is primarily based upon contemporary science (Jencks, 2002). The three-dimensional sphere, which is a basic model of the general theory of relativity, appears likewise in the traditional cosmology being a vision of the afterlife (Lipscomb, 2014).²⁰

Since it is partially presentable in terms of fractal geometry, one is not surprised by the fact that self-similar patterns occur not only in the Orthodox iconography – but also in the sacral architecture, which is the realisation of the Eastern European aesthetics (photo 2). Fractals are present as much in the Hindu temple as in the cosmological model of increasing complexity (photo 3). An evolving cosmos which is dynamical and self-similar is not typified merely by scaling, but there is an increase in complexity in terms of geometrical elements (Trivedi, 1993).²¹

20 *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri constitutes a model of cosmology that includes the Empyrean which is the abode of God. Dante regarded the Empyrean to be a mirror image of the Aristotle cosmos, bonding their boundaries together in order to make the three-dimensional sphere (Peterson, 1979).

21 The geometrical elements of circle, triangle, and square are assigned special symbolics to typify the basic energies. They are combined in increasingly complex figures to

2. Postmodern era

The Russian avant-garde has remarkably stepped out from the frame of Modernism, coming near to a postmodern view. Contrary to the modernist attitudes, it does not favour a strong demarcation between the old and novel art considering such classifications to be meaningless – which stems from a specific perception of past and future, tradition and history, originality and nation in artistic creativity. Reconsidering the modern conception of linear time, one suggests an assumption that creativity is already contained in the tradition which indicates a comeback to the origin. The paradigm like that implies continuity, inheritance and restoration of artistic experience that makes a struggle against individualism, which comes from conviction concerning the cosmological significance of art. It corresponds to iconographic style that is a common creation whose key tag is the absence of an individual personality (Мијушковић, 1998).

The upcoming era, that should appear after Modernism ended, was announced by Berdyaev who suggested a rather significant influence of the Eastern Europe in its establishment (Берђајев, 1989).²² He discerned that in Russia there had been no individualism which Modernism was characterised by. The Russian intelligence was principally presenting a model of community and organic culture, as opposed to the modernist concept of universalist and cosmopolitan one (Берђајев, 1987). Relating that, the avant-garde art did not demand to represent but to transfigure world – which coincided both with the social and with the scientific revolution. Avant-gardism differed from traditionalism only because it was considered that the modernist destruction could not be resisted by traditional methods (Groys, 1992).²³

In that respect, a continuity of the Eastern European aesthetics has been observed in socialism and postsocialism as well (Spira, 2008). When the

present particular qualities embodied in some aspects of creation. Such a creative aesthetics is inherent to the Orthodox iconography, but to the complex systems physics as well (Milovanović & Medić-Simić, 2020).

- 22 The Eastern Europe experienced the end of modernism even though it did not experience modernism itself, which is contemporaneity and originality of its history. The Russian philosophy of history has always been apocalyptic. The same applies to the Russian revolution which also arrived to the apocalyptic issue.
- 23 The Socialist realism is usually considered to be an antithesis of the avant-garde. However, Stalinism satisfied the fundamental demand that art should cease representing life and began transfiguring it through an aesthetico-political project.

German army came to Moscow during the Second World War, the plane with the icon of Our Lady of Kazan flew three times over the city (fig. 11).²⁴ A collapse of the Nazi army was accompanied by this ritual procession performed in the air. During the postmodern era some novel tendencies of iconolatriy emerged (Никољскаја, 2013),²⁵ which make suprematism a prototype of the ongoing restoration. It corresponds to an update of the memory in terms of arts that substantially relate the iconographic issue (Yates, 1966). The comprehensive synthesis tempered in the furnaces of the mystical tradition is not subject to any aesthetic or scientific particularism, much less ethical or religious one (Меденица, 2013). The substantial geometry to which it refers is permeating the diversity of life (fig. 12).

Conclusions

The Kazimir Malevich's suprematism is characterised by the concept of non-objectivity that has become a synonym for the Russian avant-garde. Non-objective aesthetics emerged for the first time as a basic nature of art, then it was raised to the universal substance of ontology and cosmology. Starting from the black, going through the coloured and ending with the white scenery, the paintings of Malevich wield a significant relation to the Orthodox iconography in respect of its theory and theologico-aesthetical background. The substantial elements of iconography, which have been discussed in relation to the above, are: perspective, colours and geometry. Developing the substantial geometry of the icon, he came up with the postmodern architecture rendered by fractal forms. It denies a static nature of matter due to the substantial dynamics, which makes him responsible for complete revolution in architectural design.

24 October 22th in the Orthodox ecclesial calendar (which is November 4th in the Gregorian one) is the feast day of Our Lady of Kazan, due to the deliverance of Moscow from Poles in 1612. Since 2005, it has likewise been celebrated in Russia as the *National Unity Day*, replacing the *Day of Great October Socialist Revolution* and also the postsocialist *Day of Reconciliation and Agreement*, both of which were held on October 25th (November 7th).

25 Contemporary relations have extended domains of some icons. The God's Mother and the Unburnable Rose-bush is recognised to be a protector of firefighters, Saint Matthew the Apostle has become a patron of the tax officers and bankers. Saint Elijah the Prophet is a protector of the airborne army, Holy Great Martyr Catherine is one for the rocket army, presumably because of the first multiple rocket launcher nicknamed *Katyusha* – due to a popular wartime song by Mikhail Isakovsky.



Fig. 11. Our Lady of Kazan
Source: (73)

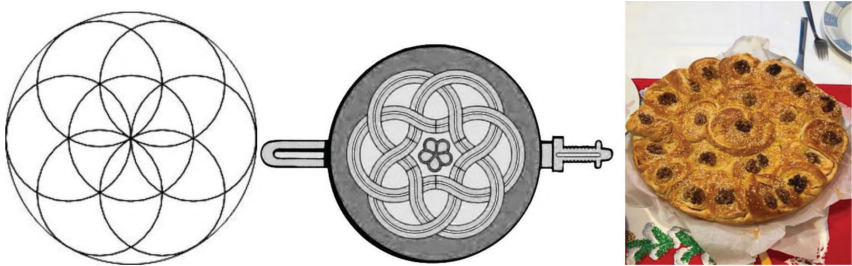


Fig. 12. Left: The Flower of Life which is a pattern attributed to Leonardo da Vinci. Middle: Depiction of Ali's sword and his shield in the Shiite Islam. Right: A cake that is baked for Christmas in the Serbian Orthodox Church
Source: (author)

Malevich claimed that socialism was the last instance of modernism, whereby the next stage should require abandoning the objective art in favour of non-objectivity. The postmodern era, announced by Russian artists and philosophers, has raised novel tendencies of iconolatri which make suprematism a prototype

of the restoration that is taking place. It corresponds to an update of the memory in terms of arts that substantially relate to the iconographic issue. A coincidental transition towards the Russian socialism demonstrates the great significance of an aesthetico-political project.

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