

Tetyana Filevska, compiler, editor, and with annotations and an introduction. *Kazimir Malevich: Kyiv Period 1928-1930; Articles, Documents and Letters.* Edited by Wendy Salmond, translated by Marta Skorupsky and Salmond (pages 123-62), Rodovid Press, 2017. 304 pp. Illustrations. Notes. List of Sources of Illustrations. Index. \$55.00, cloth.

The indomitable Suprematist Kazimir Malevich was singularly the most important artist of the twentieth century. Over the past few years, Malevich-mania has been spreading throughout Ukraine. It got its start in 2013 with the publication, by Rodovid, of the Ukrainian translation of Jean-Claude Marcadé's award-winning French-language monograph *Malévitch* (Ukrainian version—*Malevych*). It came to a peak with the Rodovid publication (in two languages) on Malevich's Kyiv period. This latter publication appeared first in Ukrainian in 2016 (as *Kazymyr Malevych: Kyivs'kyi period 1928-1930* [Kazimir Malevich: Kyiv Period 1928-1930]). It was then reissued in English translation in early 2017 (as the book under review here). A French-language version will soon be debuted as well. The work is unique in that it originated by pure happenstance when, in 2015, family members of Mar"ian Kropyvnyts'kyi (Marjan Kropiwnicki, 1903-89) made available new documents directly related to Malevich's appointment as an instructor at the Kyiv State Art Institute (1929-30).

Kropyvnyts'kyi was a painter of poetic landscapes in gossamer colour tones. From 1925 to 1929, he studied under the colourist Pavlo Holubiatnykiv (1892-1942) at the Kyiv State Art Institute. While there, he was assigned by the institute's rector Ivan Vrona (1887-1970) to take notes on Malevich's pedagogic discourses. Kropyvnyts'kyi's archive of institute materials, though small and hardly earth-shattering, thus opens up the prospect for a penetrating look at the last years of Malevich's creative life. Malevich's time in Kyiv served as a turning point, both personally and aesthetically. The corpus of these newly discovered materials was translated and organized into two sections in the book under review. Part 1, mostly theoretical in nature, inserts some of the new documents among previously translated and well-circulated Malevich writings from *Nova generatsiia* (*New Generation* [Kharkiv]) and *Avanhard-al'manakh* (*Avant-Garde-Almanac* [Kyiv]). Part 2 contains mostly new materials related specifically to the Kyiv State Art Institute. Part 3 is a stand-alone chapter providing background on Malevich's retrospective exhibition held in Kyiv; I comment on it below. Part 4 republishes known letters to Lev Kramarenko, a professor at the Kyiv State Art Institute who helped arrange Malevich's Kyiv retrospective, wrapping up loose ends after the artist's return to Leningrad from Kyiv. Also included are letters to Kramarenko's wife, the painter Iryna Zhdanko, as well as tender

correspondence between Malevich and his own wife, Natalia, which offers an intimate view of Malevich's state of mind during his sojourn in Kyiv. Finally, there is part 5, which is misleadingly called "Appendix" although it is not really an appendix as it offers no new additional documents or related material but serves more as an index and reference section. Here, in a rather unconventional and unsystematic format devoid of citation numbers, the compiler, Tetyana Filevska, provides general annotations, random explanations of acronyms, and occasional corrections (for example, to the dates of paintings mislabelled in the original documents). She includes, rather erratically, minimal biographic data on names mentioned in the documents, which accomplishes little in the way of enhancing one's understanding of the circumstances surrounding Malevich's Kyiv period. The notes are organized in a cumbersome way; they are separated only according to the titles of the documents provided in the body of the text—an ill-planned structure that proves to be more confusing than handy.

Notwithstanding this scholarly infelicity, the new materials in the book are most useful. Exposure to the Kropyvnyts'kyi archive of Malevich materials (which still remains in the possession of the family) has been a most fortunate event. It has yielded the Russian-language draft of Malevich's last article, written just prior to his arrest on 20 September 1930, the essay "Arkhitektura, stankovaia zhivopis', skul'ptura" ("Architecture, Easel Painting, Sculpture" [see 123-30]). This essay was published in Ukrainian translation, as "Arkhitektura, stankove maliarstvo ta skul'ptura" ("Architecture, Easel Painting, and Sculpture" [see 119-22]), in *Avanhard-al'manakh*, the Kyiv organ of the New Generation group; the group was headed by the Ukrainian futurist Mykhail' Semenko and his Panfuturist cohorts. Additionally, one finds a typescript of Malevich's "Iz 'zhivopisnoi diagnostiki'" ("From a 'Painterly Diagnostic'" [see 131-39]); this essay deals with his theory of the additional, or supplementary, element, a theory that he developed in his well-known essays published in the Kharkiv-based journal *Nova generatsiia* (1927-30). Also included is the original typescript of "Khudozhestvennoe obrazovanie v kino" ("Art Education in the Cinema" [see 140-45]), part of Malevich's extensive writings on film, and two additional texts "Obsledovanie formal'no-tekhnicheskikh distsiplin Kievskogo khudozh. in-ta" ("A Survey of the Formal-Technical Disciplines in the Kyiv Art Institute" [see 146-52]) and "Novaia akademiia khudozhestv" ("The New Academy of Arts" [see 153-63]).

Part 2 of the book contains fifteen individual documents related to Malevich's lectureship at the Kyiv Institute, which began in November 1929. At that time, after the 1926 reorganization of the State Institute of Artistic Culture (GINKHUK, located in Leningrad), Malevich worked at the State Institute of Art History (also in Leningrad), where he headed the

Experimental Laboratory of Visual Art. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the intractable experimenter Malevich would have taken an interest in the Kyiv Institute's progressive "formal-technical" disciplines program, commonly known as "Fortekh." Some scholars believe that because of the "Fortekh" program, Malevich intended to move his whole research laboratory and all of his students from Leningrad to Kyiv. In fact, the invitation to teach at the Kyiv Institute offered him some reprieve from the inhibitive institutional restrictions in Russia and the growing suspicions of his dissent. In any case, Kyiv was the last stronghold for new pedagogy modelled on the avant-garde legacy cultivated at the German Bauhaus and the Russian Vkhutemas.

The restructured Kyiv Institute placed a heavy emphasis on the disciplinary expertise of individual workshops (drawing and colour, space, drafting and modelling). The Institute's two-year "Fortekh" program, like the Bauhaus Preliminary Program (the Vorkurs), emphasized the pure elements of art and deviated sharply from traditional, academic norms of visual representation. It was oriented solely toward medium and technique, and it allowed for laboratory studies (such as colour theory) to cut across the institute's three faculties: architecture (including urban design), painting (inclusive of monumental mural works and interior design), and graphics (polygraphy). Steady commissions from the government provided students with the opportunity to obtain requisite practice in their area of specialization, and they also supported the institution financially. This context of functionalism made wide use of new technologies, and a variety of workplaces were opened up that required new skills in fields as diverse as photography and cinema (mostly for propaganda purposes) as well as theatre and costume design.

The Kropyvnyts'kyi materials regarding "Fortekh" contain mostly minutes from meetings; they provide insight into the leading personalities at the Kyiv Institute, and they hint at the context of Malevich's pedagogy. To round out this documentation, Filevska incorporates Malevich documents from other publications issued in recent years, namely, from Dmytro Horbachov's *Malevych ta Ukraina. "Vin ta ia byly ukraintsi": Antolohiia (Malevich and Ukraine. "He and I Were Ukrainians": An Anthology)* and from the extensive two-volume publication compiled and edited by Irina A. Vakar and Tat'iana N. Mikhienko *Malevich o sebe. Sovremenniki o Maleviche: Pis'ma. Dokumenty. Vspominaniia. Kritika (Malevich About Himself. Contemporaries About Malevich: Letters, Documents, Reminiscences. Criticism)*; the latter work was republished in an English translation edited by Wendy Salmond (*Kazimir Malevich: Letters, Documents, Memoirs and Criticism*). Minutes of meetings of the various units of the Kyiv Art Institute complete this section's materials. Here, we get a sense of the tone and atmosphere of the discussions

regarding the curriculum and other methodological and timely programmatic issues of the Kyiv Institute.

The institute, in order to give students maximum exposure to new possibilities for understanding modernism in the post-revolutionary world, liberally expanded the faculty, under Vrona's direction, to include other innovators, such as Malevich's nemesis Vladimir Tatlin, who taught at the Kyiv Institute in 1926-27 and who launched the slogan "art into life." The Kyiv Institute was a good fit for Malevich. Its pursuit of ideologically informed artistic outcomes and products coincided with the artist's utopian quest to transform the role of art in society and to transform society itself through art. Malevich's lectures and instruction complemented and contrasted with those of the permanent members of the faculty, among whom were Oleksandr Bohomazov, Mykhailo Boichuk, Viktor Pal'mov, and Nikolai Triaskin (Tatlin's assistant). Filevska offers their brief biographies at the end of part 2, under the title "The Kyiv Milieu of Kazimir Malevich in 1928-1930" (see 197-202).

Malevich's time in Kyiv culminated with a retrospective exhibition at the Kyiv Art Gallery in 1930; this is the topic of part 3 of the book. The story of this undertaking is a convoluted one, as one can make out from the flurry of letters included in this section. The exhibition entailed co-ordinating among three institutions: the Tretyakov Gallery, which owned the artworks; the Moscow venue, which had Malevich's artwork on display at that time; and the Ukrainian OSMU (Ob"iednannia suchasnykh myttsiv Ukrainy [Union of Contemporary Artists of Ukraine]), whose members, and specifically Kramarenko, were on staff at the Kyiv Art Institute. After a fair amount of negotiation (beginning in the middle of November 1929), the exhibition finally opened at the Kyiv Art Gallery on 20 March 1930 and lasted until 1 July. Noteworthy is the fact that this exhibition reflected the relative openness of Kyiv to continue engaging with modernism even while transitioning to a more socially conscious art promoted by the OSMU that was in contrast with other, rival organizations and groups, such as the Boichukists. When the OSMU was founded in 1926, its goal was to focus on progressive European trends while emphasizing the technically well-constructed object. One can speculate that Malevich's sculptural, three-dimensional "architektons" shown at his Kyiv exhibition must have been very appealing to OSMU members.

The unique aspect of this exhibition was that it served as a touchstone for understanding the artistic atmosphere of Kyiv at a time when Leningrad and Moscow were beginning to succumb to the suppression of the avant-garde. Review articles, such as "Vystavka khudozhnyka K. S. Malevycha" ("Exhibition of Artist K. S. Malevich" [see 211-12]) by [O. Ie.] from *Proletars'ka pravda* (*Proletarian Truth* [Kyiv]) and S. Iefimovych's "Vystavka

tvoriv khudozhnyka K. S. Malevycha" ("Exhibition of the Works of Artist K. S. Malevich" [see 212-17]) from *Radians'ke mystetstvo* (*Soviet Art* [Kyiv]), provide insight into the nature of the exhibition. Iefimovych's discursive review focuses on Malevich's evolution; overall, it amounts to a concise history of modernism peppered by a few requisite ideological notes. Alas, an opportunity was lost here by the compiler of this book to offer a full study of the momentous nature of the exhibition. Regrettably, only an "album" of a handful of Malevich's paintings shown at the exhibition is reproduced, and an organizational rationale for the selection is not provided.

All in all, the materials assembled in this book lay the foundation for a discrete assessment of Kyiv's distinct role in Malevich's artistic trajectory. There is some redundancy among the documents gathered from previously published sources; however, the new materials occasioned by access to the Kropyvnyts'kyi archive allow for a more substantive analysis of Malevich's brief time in Ukraine during an extremely volatile period in the history of artistic modernism. Perhaps Malevich's time in Kyiv will no longer be viewed as "kaleidoscopic," as the compiler states in the title of her introduction (9), but rather historic, as it deserves to be known.

Myroslava M. Mudrak
The Ohio State University

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