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A Feeling of *Somewhere:* Kandinsky on the Emotional Impact of Color

Introduction

In 1911, Wassily Kandinsky urged his viewers to boldly follow the artist into the uncharted terrain of painterly abstraction, so as to gradually, but surely, gain command of its universal language of colors.[1] As conceived by Kandinsky, to carry through this project, it was necessary to demonstrate that colors have aesthetic effects that are the same for everyone, at least principally.[2] This aspect of Kandinsky's thinking coincides with discourse and practice in psychology, a nascent science around 1900. A shared interest united artists and psychologists at the time: a search for universal elements of experience in people's responses to colors. While artists and art theorists tended to stress the classification of specific aesthetic effects, psychologists could appreciate the general psychological operations that were at work in questions concerning associated experiences. Yet, as experimental psychologists started testing numerous responses to colors in laboratory experiments, they generated data documenting interpersonal differences.[3] One central problem, which was familiar to art practitioners, was that color impressions appeared to be relative and variable – the same color could be perceived differently by various persons, or by the same person under different circumstances.[4] Against this backdrop, the task that Kandinsky faced is apparent: To defend his universalist conception, he had to explain how aesthetic effects of colors are universal, despite intersubjective variability. Kandinsky's explanation of how this proceeds, starting with basic colors and forms, rates as one of his most lasting and controversial ideas. For some scholars, Kandinsky's position is characterized by an overwhelming – and, so it is sometimes said, misplaced – reliance on colors actually producing the same effects in different people.[5] Nevertheless, Kandinsky's references to «universality» are not without contradiction.[6] While he clearly had faith in the value of empirical evidence, he did not present a consistent view on whether or how universality depends directly on agreement.[7]

This paper examines Kandinsky's confrontation with individual differences – how he addresses them and the consequences for understanding his painting. My aim is to assess how the core concept that Kandinsky used – notably the notion of «sensitivity» – addresses the tensions that arise from the universality postulate and the recognition of interpersonal differences. In what follows, sensitivity sits at the nexus of great themes in Kandinsky's conception of the universal language of color. I begin by describing how Kandinsky pursued universal laws that relate sensory impressions of colors to aesthetic effects. From here, looking at his painting *Composition 6* sheds light on how, according to Kandinsky, deeper feelings arise through contrasts and oppositions between more basic feelings, which are colors (and forms). In a third section, I consider how Kandinsky's critics proposed the exis-

1 Wassily Kandinsky, cover design for *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, c. 1910, color and ink on paper, 17.5 × 13.3 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, Gabriele Münter Stiftung 1957, inv. GMS 611.

tence of a special color sense to give the notion of sensitivity a physiological basis. I will end by touching upon open questions concerning Kandinsky's universalist conception.

Universality and Sensitivity

At the core of Kandinsky's universalism is the view that colors – and to a lesser extent forms – have inherent aesthetic effects that are principally accessible to experience. This is the basis of his notion of the «abstract language».[8] Important to Kandinsky's conception of this language, from its inception in his notes of 1904 to its climax in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (dated 1912 but published in December 1911) and his writings of the 1920s, was the notion that the aesthetic effects of colors awaited discovery by artists and viewers (fig. 1).[9] This discovery entailed learning to see emotive content in color one had previously assumed color was incapable of possessing. According to Kandinsky, the meaning of colors is not exhausted by their reference to naturalistic things. There is another component; the component of «inner sound».[10] To explain this idea, he referred to the poetry of Maurice Maeterlinck, who, according to Kandinsky, had insisted on the «pure sound» that words evoke, and had prioritized this pure sound over the referential character of words. Kandinsky intended to establish the same principle for the visual arts. In particular, he insisted that each artistic element – colors among them – conveys properties specific to itself. He viewed each coloristic element as having an *«independent existence as such»* – that is, an inner sound that can resonate with viewers.[11]

Inner sounds, as Kandinsky conceives of them, are characteristics of colors, such that as an element in art, the feelings that colors convey are made accessible to experience in accordance with those characteristics. Given this notion, Kandinsky's central claim in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst,* which is assumed throughout his writings, is that colors can be identified to have specific aesthetics effects.[12] Kandinsky catalogs various effects produced by colors. The definitive examples are yellow and blue, which represent the poles of warmth and coldness. Yellow, Kandinsky explains, «is a typically earthly color»; it «is disquieting to the spectator, prickling him, stimulating him, revealing the nature of the power expressed in this color, which has an effect upon our sensibilities at once impudent and importunate».[13] In stark opposition to yellow stands blue, which is «the typically heavenly color», fluctuating between «superhuman sorrow» and appearing «remote and impersonal».[14] This was also translatable to psychological properties, with yellow being «maniacal» as opposed to the «tranquility» of blue.[15] Kandinsky limits his description of the aesthetic effects of color to physiological and psychological effects: it does not encompass «the delicate, incorporeal vibrations of the spirit», which are necessary for the experience of inner sound.[16]

Centrally in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* Kandinsky crystallizes a conceptual – and experiential – distinction between three types of effect: physical effects, psychological effects, and, lastly, vibrations of the soul. Conceived by him as a progression from rough to fine, he claims that these effects form a path, leading an outer nervous vibration of the physical body to an inner vibration of the spirit, such that, ultimately, an inner sound can resonate with the soul of the viewer.[17] If inner sounds – constituted as effects of color – are to play this role as porters of emotions, they must be accessible to viewers for experience. Kandinsky's gambit was to argue that both artists and viewers must develop the proper channels of observation, such that they become sensitive to inner sound. This begins with an analysis of simple colors, the floor of Kandinsky's experiential hierarchy. The reasoning now proceeds in the following manner: «This starting point consists in the weighting-up of the inner value of one's materials, on an objective scale, i. e., the examination – in our case – of color, which by and large must affect every man.»[18] Kandinsky devises a range of introspective exercises to aid both artists and viewers in tapping into the «main sounds» of simple colors, such that, eventually, their effects might penetrate the soul.[19] The threshold from physical to psychological effect – or, from coarse to fine emotion – is easily passed: «Only familiar objects will have a wholly superficial effect upon a moderately sensitive person.»[20] Kandinsky compares the gradual improvement of people's sensitive abilities to the calibration of an instrument, explaining that «just as an instrument is improved, becomes finer the more its strings are made to oscillate … so it is with the soul».[21]

It becomes clear that for Kandinsky sensitivity is the relative ability to *see* – and *feel* – the effects of color.[22] While grounded in anthropological-phenomenological structures of perception and related physiological and psychological processes, he did not think that all people have equal command of this ability. Accordingly, inner sounds are not equally in everyone's experiential grasp; it depends on the person's sensitivity whether they can «trail» *(Spüren)* the effects of colors and forms and slowly but surely discover inner sound.[23] How did this play itself out with respect to Kandinsky's painting? The viewer's ability to understand Kandinsky's work now becomes a matter of grasping the language in which visible instances of feelings occur, which are colors (and forms). In the next section, I consider this issue by turning to *Composition 6.*

2 Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition 6*, 1913, oil on canvas, 195 × 300 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. GE-9662.

Kandinsky on *Composition 6:* A Phenomenal Chaos?

Kandinsky's painting *Composition 6* (fig. 2/pl. 7) was first shown to the public in 1913, in an exhibition at *Der Sturm* gallery organized by Herwarth Walden in Berlin.[24] The artist published a commentary in which he explains that the painting arose out of the motif of the «Deluge» (flood). In his commentary, Kandinsky first describes the reverse-glass painting (fig. 3, unfortunately lost) that served as the inspiration for the composition. In beginning this reverse-glass painting, he took various «objective forms», such as «nudes, the Ark, animals, palm trees, lightning, rain, etc.» and overlaid these with forms and colors, until the figures underneath were nearly unrecognizable.[25] Yet, he experienced a sense of failure. After taking some time away from the work and then returning to it afresh, Kandinsky remarks he «was struck, first by the colors, then by the compositional element, and then by the linear form itself».[26] After laying out the first design of *Composition 6,* he then began «balancing the individual elements one against the other».[27] He contrasted «indefinite lines» with «sharp, rather evil, strong, very precise lines» and with colors, describing, for example, how «the pink and the white seethe in such a way that they seem to lie neither upon the surface of the canvas nor upon any ideal surface. Rather, they appear as if hovering in the air, as if surrounded by steam».[28] In organizing these elements, Kandinsky was led by the «exhausting search for the right scale, for the *exact* missing weight» which would cause the whole painting «to vibrate».[29] This weighting of elements eventually found balance in a «feeling of ‹somewhere› about the principal center», which «determines the inner sound of the whole picture».[30]

As seen, the viewer's ability to understand Kandinsky's intention with this work becomes a question of grasping the universal language of colors (and forms). Yet, standing in front of *Composition 6,* some observers appear to have been overwhelmed.

3 Wassily Kandinsky, *The Deluge*, c. 1912, reverse-glass painting, lost.

Gallery visitors must have tripped over its heaping forms, swirling lines, and scattered colors, seeing no apparent structure in this painting with its impressive dimensions of 195 × 300 cm. At the time, Kandinsky's critics often observed a loss of definition in his painting. The artist Wyndham Lewis for example lamented the way in which Kandinsky sacrificed the very particulars «of the material and solid universe» for paintings that are «ethereal, lyrical and cloud-like».[31] On a more positive note, the poet and critic Theodor Däubler saw intensive «color harmonies clouding *[dahinwolken]*» in Kandinsky's work and thought that the colors were so powerful that they did not need the definition of form anymore: «We no longer want to tolerate a theater set by drawing: let us drop it. And we are immediately at home. In the disembodied soul *[In der körperlosen Seele]*».[32] Following the writer Wilhelm Hausenstein, «Kandinsky's means of expression is color. Mind you: color, not painting».[33] Hausenstein thought that the slightest adjustment in the interaction of colors resulted in a fully new experience. Yet, all too many critics found no firm footing in Kandinsky's paintings and, accordingly, were unable to understand the intended meaning.[34] As one critic phrased it, Kandinsky's works lacked «possibilities for empathy».[35]

By 1910, the notion that colors can elicit strong feelings was hardly a point of controversy.[36] However, there was a tendency among both art critics and psychologists to assume that color could not reach the same level of precision as line in communicating feelings. The art historian and psychologist Max Deri for example emphasizes that it is certainly possible to «draw a line that ‹is› audacious, defiant, sad, striving», such that these feelings are universally understandable to viewers.[37] Nevertheless, with Kandinsky's paintings, it was hardly possible to understand the emotive content, because viewers will not be able to follow their gaze in the direction intended by Kandinsky.[38] Following a similar line of thought, Anton Meyer asserts «a strongly rising line symbolizes a life-strengthening, a feeling of pleasure» whereas a «strongly falling line symbolizes a feeling of displeasure».[39] For Meyer, the problem with Kandinsky's paintings was that viewers had no way of knowing whether the lines were rising or falling. As such, viewers were left with an arbitrary flood of feelings.

These considerations about differences between line and color invoke the famous dispute over the relative importance of *disegno* (drawing or design) and *colore* (color or finish), which took place between Florentine and Venetian art theorists of the sixteenth century and remained influential for centuries. Within this com-

parison, the principle of *disegno* was viewed as an intellectual approach to painting, which manifested in definition of line, whereas *colore* was viewed as sensual, which manifested in the atmospheric use of color. While theorists of the sixteenth century contrasted *disegno* and *colore* in the debate, they viewed them as complementary qualities of painting.[40] The central question was which element should take priority as artistic underpinning of painting. A brief glance at this *paragone* helps to highlight a pivotal thing about Kandinsky's work: he intentionally seeks interactions and oppositions between line and color and is not about to prioritize one element over the other as underpinning of his work. Kandinsky precisely creates contrasts between elements – and associated feelings – believing that such contrasts will give rise to a deeper experience. As early as 1904, he states in a letter to Gabriele Münter: «Different contrasts and forms-feelings are best mixed, if a deep and serious content is to be expected.»[41] The idea that deep emotive content arises out of contrast and opposition between more basic feelings translates to opposition between lines and colors in his paintings.[42] Indeed, as Kandinsky explains in his commentary on *Composition 6,* he attempts to generate an elusive feeling of «somewhere» out of interplay between various clashing and opposing elements.

With *Composition 6* Kandinsky attempts to give that elusive yet specific quality of a feeling of «somewhere» a visual form, such that it can be experienced by others. Debates about feelings in psychological circles around 1900 provide a potential context. Here, a central problem was how to account for qualitative differences between feelings. Theodor Lipps, for example, laid out a theory of feelings, according to which it was pointless to classify feelings through fixed linguistic categories. For, there is an indefinite pool of feelings, more than any spoken language may encode, and each has its own specific quality. Only experience could account for qualitative differences between them. Following Lipps, «I know [the differences in feelings] because I experience them».[43] For Kandinsky, too, there are (at least) as many feelings as there are appearances of colors, forms, and combinations of these elements. The elusive character of his work cannot be reduced to a limitless number of feelings, however. According to Kandinsky, a successful work of art will precipitate a specific emotion in the viewer; this must be negotiated by the artist and be accessible to the experience of viewers.[44]

At this juncture in the development of Kandinsky's account, there is a worry. Given that the meaning of color in his painting appears to have been neither cognitively nor intuitively accessible to viewers, what trust did they have in the existence of a universal language?[45] As just described, Kandinsky's response was to cast this as a question of insufficient sensitivity.[46] In the context of his writings, he allows that viewers may presuppose that the justification of the common language is forthcoming (assuming that it is enough, at first, to point to color's physical and psychological effects). This claim may have been unproblematic in the context of the art theory, as many artists and theorists presupposed that there existed definitive links between colors and effects.[47] However, reliance on this presupposition was closely monitored in the context of art criticism. After all, the existence of a *universal* language of color as the basis of Kandinsky's paintings was the very question under consideration. Per his own account, we are at least owed an account of what secures the link between colors and aesthetic effects.[48] In 1914, he remarked that the time is not yet ready for «seeing» and «hearing».[49] Kandinsky had to redeem his promise at some point, however.

An Evolving Color Sense?

Some of Kandinsky's commentators addressed a color sense that was purported to exist and necessary for understanding the artist's works but was also, so the argument went, currently underdeveloped in most people. At the turn of the twentieth century, especially physiologists and anthropologists speculated about a color sense that was understood as a special color-perceiving ability responsible for the quality of color perception.[50] Formulated amid debates about human differences and evolutionary theories about the development of the senses, people argued that the color sense is probably malleable. As Nicholas Gaskill has noted, approaches to the color sense fall on the spectrum between the physiology of the optical nerves and the psychology of cultural difference.[51] While notions of the color sense were applied to aesthetic perception with varying attitudes around 1900, it was usually argued that those with a more developed color sense had a heightened ability to see and experience nuances between colors. Michael Sadleir, who compiled an English translation of *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* in 1914, explained Kandinsky's work within this set of ideas. He argued that the artist's «analysis of colours and their effects on the spectator is not the real basis of his art, because, if it were, one could, with the help of a scientific manual, describe one's emotions before his pictures with perfect accuracy. And this is impossible».[52] Instead, Sadleir believed that Kandinsky's art ultimately relied on a color-music sense that lies «dormant» in most people.[53] While Sadleir was convinced of the musical character of Kandinsky's paintings, he also thought that the parallels between line and color in painting, and harmony and rhythm in music, needed the conviction of solid proof. «Otherwise» Sadleir warned, Kandinsky «may be condemned as one who has invented a shorthand of his own, and who paints pictures which cannot be understood by those who have not the key of the cipher».[54]

This was not just one instance of a discursive apology from an art critic trying to make sense of new art forms that confronted audiences. At the time, many conceived of a condition in which little color sense exists, or is even lacking, that is followed by a condition in which the color sense is highly developed. This notion of development from simple to complex inspired hypotheses about the possibility of improving the color sense through aesthetic education, as well as the potential an enriched color sense could have for visual art.[55]

The idea that Kandinsky's work required a highly developed color-sense was no isolated thought. The psychologist Helge Lundholm, who met Kandinsky in Stockholm in 1916, carefully considered this possibility as well in an essay published in the Swedish art journal *Flamman* in 1917.[56] *Composition 6* had been on show at the *Baltiska utställningen* (Baltic exhibition) in Malmö in 1914, and it was subsequently on display at Gummesons Gallery in Stockholm in 1916, where Lundholm saw it. In looking at the painting, Lundholm examined whether color was an accurate means to transmit emotions from «soul to soul» on a par with music.[57] He did not believe there existed a direct correspondence between colors and emotional states, however. Even if it were possible to establish such a connection scientifically, he emphasizes, «I doubt strongly that even the most artistically educated observer will be sensitive enough, to let the color tones in him evoke the state of the soul that scientifically corresponds to the chord».[58] The notion that a color-sense exists seems to have been wide-spread. What was questioned, however, as Lundholm's account indicates, was whether this sense in fact develops in the direction suggested by Kandinsky.

The Promise of Sameness

Left hanging after all of Kandinsky's efforts is still the most basic question about why we should assume that the effects of colors are universal. As Kandinsky develops the play, viewers must improve their sensitivity – their ability to see/feel – such that aesthetic effects of colors can come into their experiential grasp.[59] The viewer, he explains, «has only to open wide his *soul to experience*».[60] Kandinsky's is a teleological account that aims for a deeper, spiritual plane of experience, starting with basic effects of colors, the floor of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, in setting out to show that spiritual effects build upon psychological and physiological effects, Kandinsky ultimately saddles himself with a problem, insofar as empirical verification of even the floor of his hierarchy failed.[61]

Throughout his writings, Kandinsky stresses that, ideally, in singular, concrete instances of encounters with his work, people's affective experience will be the same, such that an exact mediation of emotions is possible. This promise of sameness is a controversial claim. Among others, it raises the question why Kandinsky believes sameness of experience is necessary for interpersonal understanding. Nevertheless, Kandinsky's universalist conception has been very valuable. It has given us a sense of how a felt emotion as specific and elusive as a feeling of «somewhere» may be expressed through contrasts and tensions in visible instances of feelings, which are colors.

Notes

1 *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art,* ed. by Kenneth Lindsay/Peter Vergo, New York 1994 (Boston 1982), p. 169.

2 Cf. Wassily Kandinsky, *Gesammelte Schriften 1889–1916. Farbensprache, Kompositionslehre und andere unveröffentlichte Texte,* ed. by Helmut Friedel. München/Berlin et al. 2007, p. 406. «Diese zwei Elemente – Farbe und Zeichnung – sind die wesentlich ewige unveränderliche Sprache der Malerei. Jede isoliert genommene Farbe bei gleichen Empfangsbedingungen ruft unvermeidlich eine und dieselbe Seelenvibration hervor.»

3 Cf. Jakob Segal, Psychologische und normative Ästhetik, in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft,* 1907, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 1–24, here p. 18. «Zeigt sich doch schon bei den Versuchen mit einfachsten Formen und Farben, wo die Versuchspersonen möglichst gleichen Bedingungen unterworfen werden, eine weitgehende Verschiedenheit.» See also Jacob Segal, Beiträge zur experimentellen Ästhetik. I. Über die Wohlgefälligkeit einfacher räumlicher Formen. Eine psychologisch-ästhetische Untersuchung, in: *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie,* 1906, Vol. 7, p. 53–124; Edward Bullough, The «Perceptive Problem» in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Single Colours, in: *British Journal of Psychology,* 1908, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 406–463, esp. p. 407; Edward Bullough, The «Perceptive Problem» in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Simple Colour-Combinations, in: *British Journal of Psychology,* 1910, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 406–447.

4 Cf. Alfred Lichtwark, *Die Erziehung des Farbensinnes,* 3. Ed., Berlin 1905, p. 10. «Dieselbe farbige Erscheinung wirkt nicht zweimal ganz gleichartig auf denselben Menschen, ja, nicht einmal unsere beiden Augen empfinden Farbe unter allen Umständen gleichmässig.» To be sure, color subjectivism – based on qualia, among others – has a long philosophical tradition, which cannot be discussed here.

5 See, for example, Paul Crowther, *The Language of Twentieth-Century Art. A Conceptual History,* New Haven 1997, p. 27. Scholars have often emphasized a reading according to which, for Kandinsky's language of colors to be universal, the same color must have the same pre-determined effect on everyone. Magdalena Bushart, Die Expressionisten und die Formfrage, in: *Das Problem der Form: Interferenzen zwischen moderner Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft,* ed. by Hans Aurenhammer a. Regine Prange, Berlin 2016, p. 239–256, here p. 241: «Diese Sprache ist überindividuell und überzeitlich gültig; unter gleichen Bedingungen entfaltet sie in jedem Menschen und zu jeder Zeit die gleiche Wirkung.»

6 Unfortunately, the nuances of conceptions of «universality» around 1900 and the complexity of this discourse cannot be discussed here. Please refer to the author's PhD dissertation: Jane Boddy, *Hypersensitivity. Universalist strategies in Endell, Avenarius, and Kandinsky, 1890–1920,* PhD dissertation, University of Vienna 2020.

7 Kandinsky's positioning relative to debates in psychological aesthetics is controversial. Magdalena Bushart has argued that Kandinsky drew from empathy aesthetics and experimental psychology. To date, there is no documented proof testifying Kandinsky's knowledge of specific texts by Wilhelm Wundt, Gustav Fechner, Theodor Lipps – or other proponents of psychological aesthetics – prior to 1921. See Bushart 2016 (as Note 5), p. 242.

8 Kandinsky 1994 (as Note 1), p. 169.

9 The title that Kandinsky had devised for his book, *Farbensprache,* indicates the importance of communication in his color theory. Earlier manuscripts on Kandinsky's color theory, such as «Definieren der Farben» or «Farbensprache», are kept at the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation in Munich. They are published in Kandinsky 2007 (as Note 2), p. 249–312.

10 For references to the notion of inner sound, which abound in Kandinsky's texts, see, for example, Kandinsky 1994 (as Note 1), p. 147.

11 Ibid., p. 193.

12 Kandinsky's positioning relative to Goethe's notion of aesthetic effect *(ästhetische Wirkung)* has been discussed elsewhere, so I will not linger on it here. See, for example, Annika Waenerberg, Goethe and Kandinsky oder visuelle Motive und abstrakte Kunst zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts, in: *Icon to Cartoon. A Tribute to Sixten Ringbom,* ed. by Marja Terttu Knapas a. Åsa Ringbom, Helsinki/Helsingfors 1995, p. 339–353; Barbara Hentschel, *Kandinsky und Goethe. «Über das Geistige in der Kunst» in der Tradition Goethescher Naturwissenschaft,* Berlin 2000, esp. p. 59–85; Nadia Podzemskaia, Vasilii Kandinsky's Color Doctrine and the History of the Tables from «On the Spiritual in Art», in: *Experiment,* 2003, Vol. 9, p. 83–112, here p. 97; Raphael Rosenberg, *Turner—Hugo—Moreau. Entdeckung der Abstraktion,* München 2007, p. 316; Christopher Short, *The Art Theory of Wassily Kandinsky, 1909–1928: The Quest for Synthesis,* Oxford 2009, esp. p. 29–40.

13 Kandinsky 1994 (as Note 1), p. 180–181.

14 Ibid., p. 182.

15 Ibid., p. 187, 182.

16 Ibid., p. 201.

17 Ibid., p. 157, 197.

18 Ibid., p. 177.

19 Ibid., p. 178.

20 Ibid., p. 157.

21 Ibid., p. 102.
22 Cf. Kandinsky 2007 (as Note 2), p. 581. «Wer sehen kann, wird das Richtige fühlen.» For Kandinsky, sense perception and the capacity to experience emotions are linked. In the text «Rückblicke», he speaks about the capacity to experience the spiritual in material and abstract phenomena as the «Fähigkeit des Erlebens», see Wassily Kandinsky, Rückblicke, in: *Kandinsky 1901–1913,* Berlin 1913, p. I–XXIX, here XXVII. Cf. Marion Ackermann, Kandinsky und der ideale Betrachter, in: *Der Blaue Reiter,* ed. by Christine Hopfengart, Köln 2000, p. 34–40, here p. 37, exh. cat., Bremen, Kunsthalle, 2000.
23 My reference to «Spüren» comes from a letter by Kandinsky to Gabriele Münter (dated January 31, 1904). Here, Kandinsky speaks of «Feinemfindenden». For this letter, see Reinhard Zimmermann, *Die Kunsttheorie von Wassily Kandinsky. II Dokumentation,* Berlin 2002, p. 183.
24 Herwarth Walden ed., *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon,* Berlin 1913, p. 20, cat. nr. 181.
25 Kandinsky 1994 (as Note 1), p. 385.
26 Ibid., p. 386.
27 Idem.
28 Ibid., p. 387.
29 Idem.
30 Idem.
31 Wyndham Lewis, A review of contemporary art, in: *Blast. Review of the great English vortex,* 1915, Vol. 2, p. 38–47, here p. 40, 43.
32 Theodor Däubler, *Der neue Standpunkt,* 2. Ed., Leipzig 1919, p. 183.
33 Wilhelm Hausenstein, *Die Bildende Kunst der Gegenwart,* 2. Ed., Stuttgart/Berlin 1920, p. 331.
34 Cf. Max Deri, *Die Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert. Entwicklungsgeschichtliche Darstellung auf psychologischer Grundlage,* 4. Ed., 2 Vols., Berlin 1923, Vol. 1, p. 289.
35 Emil Utitz, Kunstwahrheit und Naturwahrheit, in: *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration,* 1914, Vol. 34, p. 272–318, here p. 306.
36 Cf. Emil Utitz, Kritische Vorbemerkungen zu einer ästhetischen Farbenlehre, in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft,* 1908, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 337–360, here p. 348.
37 Max Deri, Kunstpsychologische Untersuchungen, in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft,* 1912, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 1–67, and No. 2, p. 194–265, here, p. 17, 18. Deri states that the specific feeling negotiated by the artist must be common to all viewers. Artists must therefore stick to «general lines» as porters of general feelings *(Allgemeingefühle)*.
38 Deri 1923 (as Note 34), p. 289.
39 Anton Mayer, *Der Gefühlsausdruck in der bildenden Kunst,* Berlin 1913, p. 49–50.
40 Cf. Maurice Poirier, The *Disegno-Colore* Controversy Reconsidered, in: *Explorations in Renaissance Culture,* 1987, Vol. 13, p. 52–86, here p. 76.
41 Translation as cited in Hans Konrad Röthel, Introduction, in: *Vasily Kandinsky. Painting on glass (Hinterglassmalerei),* New York 1966, p. 7–15, here p. 12, exh. cat., New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1966–1967. For the German original, see Zimmermann 2002 (as Note 23), p. 183.
42 The idea of there being a correlation between opposition and deepening – or progression – from simple to complex is older and can for example also be found in Goethe's color theory. Cf. Jutta Müller-Tamm, Farbe zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst: Goethe, Oken, Carus, in: *Das Bild der Natur in der Romantik. Kunst als Philosophie und Wissenschaft,* ed. by Nina Amstutz, Anne Bohnenkamp, Mareike Hennig a. Gregor Wedekind, Paderborn 2021, p. 95–117, here p. 97.
43 Theodor Lipps, Gefühlsqualitäten, in: *Psychologische Untersuchungen,* 1912, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 81–110, here p. 83.
44 Consider Kandinsky's famous shorthand for the mediation of emotions: «Emotion - Gefühl - Werk - Gefühl - Emotion» Wassily Kandinsky, Malerei als reine Kunst, in: *Der Sturm,* 1913, Vol. 4, No. 178–179, p. 98–99, here p. 98.
45 At the time, some thought that Kandinsky's paintings were not understandable, because the way the artist tried to communicate feelings was not predicated on conventions, which were thought to be necessary for any language to reach a level of generality. Cf. Fritz Burger, *Cézanne und Hodler: Einführung in die Probleme der Malerei der Gegenwart,* 2. Ed., München 1918, p. 108.
46 Cf. Reinhard Zimmermann, *Die Kunsttheorie von Wassily Kandinsky. I Darstellung,* Berlin 2002, p. 384.
47 Cf. Hanna Brinkmann, Jane Boddy, Beatrice Immelmann, Eva Specker, Matthew Pelowski, Helmut Leder a. Raphael Rosenberg, Ferocious Colors and Peaceful Lines. Describing and Measuring Aesthetic Effects, in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte,* 2018, Vol. 65, p. 7–26.
48 For a discussion of Kandinsky's own attempt to verify his famous allocation of forms and colors empirically, see Beatrice Immelmann, Jane Boddy, Raphael Rosenberg, Helmut Leder a. Hanna Brinkmann, Kandinsky's Bauhaus Questionnaire: Color-Form Correspondences between Introspection and Experiment, in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft,* 2019, Vol. 64, No. 2, p. 261–287.
49 Kandinsky 1994 (as Note 1), p. 285.
50 See, for example, Hugo Magnus, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Farbensinnes,* Leipzig 1877; Grant Allen, *The colour-Sense: Its origin and development. An essay in comparative psychology,* London 1879.
51 Nicholas Gaskill, The Articulate Eye: Color-Music, the Color-Sense, and the Language

of Abstraction, in: *Configurations,* 2017, Vol. 25, No. 4, p. 475–505, here p. 485. As Gaskill pointed out, the notion of a special faculty of color perception – along with hypotheses about its material basis somewhere in the brain or at the nerve threads of the retina – was itself older. Ibid., p. 482–483.

52 M. T. H. Sadler, Translator's Introduction, in: *The Art of Spiritual Harmony by Wassily Kandinsky,* trans. M. T. H. Sadler, Boston/New York 1914), p. ix–xxv, here p. xxi. For the spelling Sadler/Sadleir, see Adrian Glew, «Blue Spritital Sounds»: Kandinsky and the Sadlers, 1911–16, in: *The Burlington Magazine,* 1997, Vol. 139, No. 1134, p. 600–615, here p. 600.

53 Sadler 1914 (as Note 52), p. xxii. For a historical discussion of the color-sense in the context of color-music around 1900, see Gaskill 2017 (as Note 51).

54 Sadler 1914 (as Note 52), p. xxv.

55 For an account of the development of the color sense based on training, exercise, and habituation, see Lichtwark 1905 (as Note 4). For further discussion on the poor state of the average color sense, cf. Rudolf Czapek, *Grundprobleme der Malerei* (1908), Grafrath 2015, p. 29–30. For musings on the potential of an enriched color sense for visual art, see George Santayana, *The sense of beauty. Being the outline of aesthetic theory* (1896), New York 2017, p. 47.

56 Helge Lundholm, Kandinsky, in: *Flamman. Tidskrift för modern konst,* 1917, Vol. 5, n. p. The reference for Lundholm meeting Kandinsky is Vivian Endicott Barnett, *Kandinsky and Sweden,* Malmö 1989, p. 41.

57 Lundholm 1917, n. p. (as Note 56). Translations from Swedish by Maria Billinger.

58 Ibid., n. p.

59 Perhaps unsurprisingly, Kandinsky's reference to sensitivity has been viewed as being elitist. Cf. Felix Thürlemann, «Wer sehen kann, wird das Richtige fühlen». Kandinskys Entwürfe zu einer Kompositionslehre, in: Kandinsky 2007 (as Note 2), p. 689–694, here p. 694.

60 Kandinsky 1994 (as Note 1), p. 290.

61 Cf. Immelmann/Boddy et al. 2019 (as Note 48).