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| **Suprematism 1915-1920s** |
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| Suprematism is the artistic practice of painting light from colour to light itself. Originally developed and exhibited by Kazimir Malevich in December 1915 at the Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10 in Petrograd, the term Suprematism meant ‘dominant’ — a term commonly used in the art world that, in the case of Suprematism, referred to colour as it appears to the painter’s eye and, accordingly, on the canvas. Suprematism has been considered the logical development of Claude Monet’s explorations of colour in light developed during the Parisian Impressionism movement. Malevich later used spinning discs and light projectors between 1916 and 1919 in order to capture light itself. Artists in Malevich’s milieu such as Ivan Kliun began to investigate colour using discs in 1914, while between 1916 and 1919 there was a surge of experimentation with discs and projectors. Kliun, Alexandra Exter, Liubov Popova, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Olga Rozanova produced a great variety of paintings of colour and light and, apart from Exter, they showed together at their first major group exhibition, Non-Objective Creation and Suprematism (Moscow, 1919). In 1920 Malevich taught at the Practical Art Institute in Vitebsk where El Lissitzky adapted architectural geometrical systems to a Suprematism of the cosmos. Malevich’s students including Ilia Chashnik and Nikolai Suetin also explored the Suprematism of cosmic space and infinity as demonstrated at the 1923 Petrograd Exhibition of All Trends, the final manifestation of Suprematist painting. These artists later adapted Suprematism to the design of porcelain and graphics in the 1920s.  [Image: LastFuturists.jpg]  Figure 1 Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10, Petrograd, December 1915-January 1916  Exploring how the eye sees colour and light, Malevich began experimenting with the optical phenomenon of afterimages produced in the eye by strong light (the sun, primarily) where fields of bright, luminous colours at the light-end of the spectrum appear — reds, oranges, yellows. If the light is diminished by, say, a cloud passing over, colours at the dark-end of the spectrum appear — greens, blues, violets. Malevich organised these phenomena of optical, spectral colours onto a luminous field of light — the white canvas — using a geometrical system, and at times he used a simplified non-Euclidean geometry in order to capture wide, expansive spatiality. In 1916, Malevich explored luminosity using spinning discs, devices employed by scientists for measuring luminosity in the eye (Malevich’s drew upon Hermann von Helmholtz’s scientific *Treatise on Physiological Optics* for instruction). He titled these works Supremus. As a result of this experimentation, Malevich became aware of the energy of centrifugal forces, resulting in ‘Supr[ematist] Construction of Colour’ in 1917-1918 which he called ‘Non-Objective Suprematism.’ In 1917, following the initiative of Rozanova, Malevich began to create works with beams of coloured light projected onto screens through the use of light projectors. Then, in 1919 and 1920, Malevich created a series of canvases titled ‘Suprematism of the Spirit,’ which constituted the Suprematism of the space of infinity not visible to the eye, and only able to be imaginatively considered (but not fathomed). |
| Further reading:  (Patricia, 2013)  (State Russian Museum , 1978)  (Zhadova, 1978) |