

**THE  
GREATER  
STAGE**

# THE GREATER STAGE

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# THE GREATER STAGE

## Foreward

This essay was first conceived in the summer of 2018, soon after I had just put on the exhibition, *Technologies of Self*. It has taken some three years to refine the central ideas around abstraction in art, develop the terminology and style for discussing the ideas, and situate them in a relevant philosophical and historical context. The intent is to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation for our engagement works of art in particular, though much of the discourse is more broadly relevant to the processes by which we interpret meaning into the world we observe around us.

The methodology for this undertaking relies on a seamless synthesis of ideas from East and West, done without prejudice. I find such an attitude is hard to come by. Personally, I have learned it through the aesthetic taste of my father and uncles, all of whom have tirelessly supported the Arts of Asia starting in the 1950's, when most patrons were found in the West. I would like to dedicate this work to Virendra Kumar and Pradeep Kumar, two of my uncles who have passed on since I started working on this project, and with whom I looked forward to sharing this work upon its completion. Both Virendra and Pradeep played a seminal role in the development of abstraction in modern Indian art, and they would have enjoyed seeing the works published here, in context with the philosophical discussion and other International works of art. I would like to further offer most sincere thanks my father Navin, and uncles Sunit Kumar and Vinit Kumar for their valuable input and encouragement. Thanks are also due to Sonali Jain for providing design feedback, to Prof. Piet Hut of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton and Prof. Harald Wiltsche of Linköping University for discussions on Husserlian phenomenology, Prof. Catherine Pruiett for sharing her thoughts and feedback as an expert on Abhinavagupta, and to Stephen Burlingham for fun conversations on using art to advance discussions on consciousness in modern society.

Fig. 1  
Gustav Klimt. **Adele Bloch-Bauer I**. 1907  
Oil, Silver, and Gold on Canvas, 140 x 140 cm  
*Neue Galerie, New York*



GUSTAV  
KLIMT  
1907

# Part 1: Aesthetic Theory

## ONE

### Work of Art as a Call to Action

Infused with a spirit of self-importance, we all proclaim ourselves the protagonist in the story of our lives. Whether this act of putting ourselves at the center of our narratives is a luxury or necessity, we learn the hard way that the conceit of centrality is not the substance from which meaning is constructed. Meaning is found along the path of contributing — in a significant way — to something larger than, and beyond the concept of, a self. So as we dwell within the confines of our narratives, we secretly wait for a *call to action* that will stir our imagination, lead us to The Greater Stage, and invite us to participate on it. It is a stage where we can discover a role in the unfolding of a grand plot far larger than the existential imperatives of our solitary lives.

Without the call to action, the plays of life are stuck. Stuck not in the first act, but in a waiting room. Stuck in the process of searching for the proper stage on which the theater can play out. Without this stage, our lives are destined to follow the template of the invisible tragedy of being dominated by the default, passive, and reactive flows of existence. Fortunately, the call to action requires only a *transformation in perspective*. It is in this context that works of art come to have such extraordinary value: we recognize in works of art the occasion for experiencing this call to action. That is to say that the true *raison d'être* of a work of art is to facilitate transformations of perspective, and in doing so, to create the condition of possibility for seeing The Greater Stage.

In consonance with the call to action, we define a work of art as a material object that is judged to have been created for the sole purpose of setting up a spatiotemporal occasion for transformation in perspective. In other words, a material object becomes a work of art when a particular kind of judgment is made about the purpose of an object's creation. This judgment is conditioned upon a prior point of view on how works of art are presented, on what kinds of images serve as works of art in our cultural milieu, and on how to infer the intent of the creator. All of these factors upon which our judgment of art is conditioned are part of the *retained structures of perspective*. Perspective can be thought of, for now, as similar to terms such as mental set, mindset, and point of view, while *retained structures* can be thought of as temporally persistent constituent parts of perspective which coordinate with each other to give rise to one's perspective as a whole.

The result of this definition is that a material object is never fundamentally, universally, or eternally qualified as works of art. Material objects *become* works of art for a viewer in the fulfillment of a communicative intent in the moment of

Fig. 2  
F. N. Souza. **Untitled**. 1955  
Oil on Board, 99.1 x 76.2 cm  
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viewing. This important distinction frees a work of art from the problematic of viewers projecting their experiences onto the intent of the artist. Ernst Gombrich described the artist as producing works of art in an iterative feedback between ‘making’ and ‘matching’<sup>1</sup>, with the viewer (beholder) undergoing a similar iterative feedback through the dual roles of embodied actor (‘making’) and perceiver (‘matching’). The artist can thus be seen as the first *agentive viewer* of a work of art. This interpretation means there is no fundamental dichotomy between artist and viewer; viewers, including the artist, are differentiated from each other by the retained perspective that they bring to the viewing experience. And each viewer is capable of judging for themselves whether a material form is sufficient for establishing an intent to provide an occasion for perspectival transformation.

While one’s perspective — or more colloquially, the viewer’s knowledge, predisposition, context, expectations, and mental set — influences judgments on what is a work of art, the work of art is defined by how one’s perspective changes upon coordination with the material object and not by the specific contents of the perspective. In this way, a work of art is a type of object that is distinct from any particular content or aesthetic qualities that one may imagine the work embodying. This interpretation frees art from the kinds of circularities and ontological pitfalls that plagued Martin Heidegger’s discussion in *The Origins of Art*: “What art is we should be able to gather from the work. What the work is we can only find out from the nature of art. It is easy to see that we are moving in a circle”<sup>2</sup>. Modern (embodied) phenomenology has converted the ontological trap into a knot that can be untied and dissolved, with a work of art setting up an anticipation of aesthetic perception, rather than itself requiring the fulfillment of some aesthetic perception<sup>3</sup>. An important distinction that this essay adds is that the qualifying judgment of a work of art (similar to the anticipations it sets up), does not fall in the realm of the perceptual. The qualifying judgment of a work of art does not need to be explicitly cognized or made manifest.

The question before us is to unearth the nature of the judgment that makes an object a work of art (the qualifying judgement). The qualifying judgment is something that one can become aware of in a posterior act of reflection. For example, evidence of the qualifying judgment is often found when we notice, having walked into a museum or a gallery (being co-located in space and time with a work of art), a certain reflectiveness, calm, and *aesthetic distance* has been induced in our point of view. The qualifying judgment often takes place without our being reflectively aware of it. However, when the judgment is actually brought into our awareness, it is often as a posterior validation for a judgment that took place (one that mutated the retained structure of perspective) in the background. In such posterior validation, we see some of the retained structures of perspectives that participated in the qualifying judgement. When retained structures of perspective are then further judged as being representations of the necessary conditions for seeing some signified content, those retained structures are called *founding judgments* for that content. By recognizing *founding judgments*, our perspectival state comes out of concealment and discloses itself in a manner

Fig. 3  
S. H. Raza. **Village au calvaire et eglise au ciel rouge**. 1956  
Oil on Canvas, 88.9 x 116.9 cm  
Private Collection, USA  
© 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS London





accessible and comprehensible to us. What we seek here is an understanding of the *founding judgments* for seeing an object as a work of art. Founding judgments are often associated with presentative affects (*anubhāva* [consequents] in the language of Abhinavagupta <sup>4</sup>). In the case of a work of art, the presentative affects of the founding judgment is the establishment of some minimal yet consequential level of aesthetic distance.

The founding judgment of a work of art does not specify what trajectory one's perspective will evolve through once one begins a critical viewing of the work of art. Instead, the founding judgment makes us susceptible to a different class of dynamic trajectories of perspective. It establishes a *differential susceptibility* compared to if founding judgment having not been established at all. This differential susceptibility of a work of art is the basis of its *call to action*. A work of art need only establish a differential susceptibility, as gauged through the emergence of presentative affects (minimally including, but not limited to, aesthetic distance). To be clear, the value of a work of art is not in actualizing a newly opened up trajectory in perspectival dynamics, but rather merely in establishing their possibility. Thus, an object becomes a work of art prior to critical viewing. A work of art serves a preparatory function, and does not require that a discernible perspectival transformation is actually or verifiably induced when it is viewed.

The experience of art, or aesthetic experience, does not include the entire set of possible perspectival trajectories that are contingent upon the founding judgment of a work of art. The conception of aesthetics presented herein is a departure from the prevalent view of aesthetics established by propagated by Alexander Baumgarten<sup>5</sup> and Immanuel Kant<sup>6</sup> in the tradition of Continental philosophy, which considers aesthetics to be a matter of the judgment of taste and beauty. When aesthetics is a matter of judgments of beauty and taste, then aesthetic value is found in the objectified *contents* of consciousness, and thus cannot be dissociated from the issue that “The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real.”<sup>7</sup> The alternative, which avoids entrapment in the problematic of the beauty-ontology nexus, is to consider aesthetics as a matter of the way in which contents are experienced (i.e. *aesthetic experience*). Works of art overcome the beauty-ontology nexus when they are able to establish a suspension of judgment concerning that which is real, facilitating a kind of Husserlian phenomenological epoché<sup>8</sup>, and is well described by Ernst Gombrich, “If all art is conceptual, the issue is rather simple. For concepts, like pictures, cannot be true or false. They can only be more or less useful for the formulation of descriptions”<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, one of the inevitable conclusions of considering the Beholder’s Share in art is a suspension of judgment. The onset of this suspension of judgment is often correlated with a dwelling or immersion (*ekaghanata* <sup>4</sup>) in perspective, which can be quantified reflectively as a reduction in the fractional time during which one sees objectified presentations during the viewing experience.

Fig. 4  
Krishen Khanna. **Reclining Woman**. 1967  
Oil on Canvas, 111.8 × 132.1 cm



## TWO

# Nature of Aesthetic Experience

In describing aesthetic experience, the first cue is taken from the nature of *aesthetic distance*, in which the contents of objectifications are viewed with the quality and valence of a distant onlooker, with minimal interference from a dualistic conceptualization. In the experience of art, one is likely to find moments (presentations) in which one sees forms as being emergent *for a viewer*. In other words, one characteristic of the experience of art is that it allows one to see the spontaneous emergence of dualities as appearances that arise as coherent explication of experience. Dualities of appearance include dualities such as that between subject and object, time and space, sensibility and intuition, form and substance, reference point and perspective, viewer and work of art. Dualities found in the momentary objectifications of presentations are in contrast to the unity of reality (the virtual field). The focus of the experience of art is not in making distinctions between subject and object or in the contents of the distinctions. Rather, perceiving the emergence of such dualities moves the focus towards the unity of experience prior to the objectification. In other words, the experience of art is a kind of inner perception or reflective awareness that *brings consciousness back to itself*.

In these moments, if the contents contain a representation of the perspective, then these moments appear as moments of objectified self-awareness, self-disclosure, or inner perception. It is akin to the witnessing of creation. It has a kind of stillness that catalyzes one to wake up and recognize how one sees the world. The 10th century metaphysician Abhinavagupta describes this experience as being “characterized by a resting (*visrānti*) on one's own consciousness (*samvit*), which is due to the emergent state of *sattva*, is pervaded by beatitude (*ānandā*) and light (*prakāśa*)” that “...is not conditioned by further specifications, this perception is apt to become the object of relish, and, as such, it is neither a form of ordinary cognition, nor is it erroneous, nor ineffable, nor like ordinary perception”<sup>4</sup>. In this formulation of aesthetic experience, beauty as sensation of pleasure or judgment of taste is explicitly mentioned by Abhinavagupta as an obstacle (*vighna*) to aesthetic experience. The experience of art goes beyond seeing the emergence of subject-object dualities. The experience of art has a perspectival structure that allows one to intensely perceive contents in a way that removes possibility of suffering those contents as if actually lived through by an individual (see the following section for a detailed explanation). This perspectival structure seems to require the nexus of immersion, suspension of judgment, aesthetic distance, engagement (non-indifference), and stillness. In the experience of art, our own lives are seen as if we were watching actors in a play; it differentiates itself from the natural attitude in which we are in the waiting room and searching for The Greater Stage. The experience of art takes us out of the mundane self that engages in making particular judgments about oneself and

Fig. 5  
J. M. W. Turner. **Stormy Sea Breaking on a Shore**. 1840-1845  
Oil on Canvas, 44.5 x 63.5 cm  
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection



gives rise to emotions as felt by individuals. Aesthetic experience has the “...the faculty of suppressing the thick layer of mental stupor (*moha*) occupying our consciousness”<sup>4</sup>, it *pierces the veil* of the standard conceptual and perceptual flows of everyday life, and pushes the boundaries of our conceptual apparatus.

While the intensity of aesthetic experiences is often described in emotional terms, aesthetic experience is not limited to experiences that can be conveniently described by emotions or other conceptual labels. Instead, aesthetic experience often involves the abstracted contents of *indefinite feelings*: intense feelings that have sufficient subtlety and nuance that there are no clearly identifiable consequents through which the feelings can be signified. Indefinite feelings weaken the associative affects the most common modes of objectification, meaning that indefiniteness and abstraction have the potential to promote creativity, while also resulting in the overall stillness of the experience. In the case of indefinite feelings, aesthetic experience can be analogized as a *pseudo* blank canvas. There is no definite sign, symbol, or presentation that can be reflectively validated as an adequate representation of the perspective. Instead, one waits for the *pseudo* blank canvas to be painted by the subsequent movements of the mind. And as we continue to witness the work of art, and as that blank canvas becomes colored by subsequent objectifications, we are watching ourselves return from aesthetic cognition to ordinary cognition. We start in the midst of ordinary life, enter a new world, and return to the same ordinary life, but with a new perspectival structure. It qualifies us for a re-engagement with the world, it takes us *out of the box*, and allows us to start fresh. This new perspective is the second sense in which the experience of art brings us back to ourselves, a little more free from the historical particulars that initially dominated our perspective, and also with a new objectification (the canvas of aesthetic experience) that represents the experience. Aesthetic experience opens up new avenues for perspectives, and sensitizes one to their context in previously unseen ways.

Something special happens in the rare cases when an object is both judged to be a work of art and actually rises to the level of an experience of art. One sows the seeds with the judgment on a work of art, and then reaps the harvest in the experience of art. The harvest was not the result of some passive or reactive historical flow, but an active awakening enabled by a cultural, material, and spatiotemporal context. Art becomes those moments which cultivate a spirit of active consciousness. This agentive nature of art is described by Utpaladeva (c. 900-950), a grand-teacher of Abhinavagupta, as: “The fact of being in a state of *camatkāra*, of being on the point of enjoying something (characterized by a rest in one's own Self) is, without any exception, a form of will [the will is the first moment of Consciousness, before it crystallizes in the forms of discursive cognition]”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the experience of art becomes a type of moment in which we cultivate a seed of agency and an attitude that is conducive to meaningful engagement with the world.

Fig. 6  
Natvar Bhavsar. **Untitled**. 1971  
Pigment on Canvas, 116.8 x 88.9 cm



### THREE

## Convergence of Generality and Distance in Emotion

The above description on the experience of art is just the beginning. One of the central qualities of aesthetic experience is the claim that one can perceive the contents of experience with intensity, but with neither indifference nor suffering. Since this is a claim that is evidenced by actual lived experience, providing a theoretical explanation of how this phenomena is possible would be a significant step in understanding aesthetic experience. This endeavor is undertaken for the difficult case of intense emotions (a choice of case study partly inspired by the treatment of *rasa*) in aesthetic experience. One recognizes one's own emotional state as an inference upon the presentation of some objectified content in experience. There are a number of presentations that, when perceived in a particular context, lead one to infer and recognize oneself as being in a particular emotional state. These presentations constitute a plurality of consequents of the emotional state, and serve to define what it means to feel an emotion. In temporal cognition, when one reflectively certifies oneself as feeling an emotion, then one does so on the basis of co-presentation of the consequents.

An emotion, however, is not the presentation in which the consequents are found: an emotion refers to the perspectival state. In the normal course of life, one's prior attitude and beliefs are a major determinant and enabler for the evocation of an emotion. So much so emotions tend to require certain retained structures of perspective as a condition of possibility to be found in *ordinary cognition*. The retained structures of perspective necessary for an emotion are expounded upon by identifying the *founding judgments* for the emotion to arise. For desire, the founding judgment is usually that one would be better off having obtained the object of desire. For irritation, the founding judgment is usually that the irritant is an obstacle to some cognized future occurrence. The common structure to these founding judgments is a particular way for a subject of relating to an intentional object. The emotion differs from the founding judgment in creating a topological nexus in perspective that allows for the presentative affects (consequents) of the emotion to appear. The founding judgments, alongside the external sediments which induced the transition to the emotive state, are the *determinants* (*vibhāva*, causes) of the emotion. Unlike the consequents of the emotion, the determinants do not usually reveal themselves with immediacy in moments of reflection. Founding judgments are those determinants that are found as *logical (eidetic) essences* of the experience. All other determinants are *historical* in nature. Furthermore, the perspectival substructure usually survives the presentations of emotional state; and thus make it amenable to subsequent objectification.

Fig. 7  
Akbar Padamsee. *Untitled*. 1964  
Oil on Canvas, 99.1 x 99.1 cm





In ordinary life, emotions tend to have a degree of suffering as secondary effects. Yet, suffering is itself subsequently disclosed through its own presentative affects that correspond to founding judgments that take the form of *implications for a self*. Thus, the correlation of suffering with emotion is not a necessary one. Suffering from an emotion arises when the founding judgments of the emotion encodes a subject-object relation that often rapidly leads (through associative and digressive movements in perspective) to other founding judgments with *implications for a self*. In other words, these *implications for a self* arise when both the founding judgments and the historical particulars (contextual determinants) provide support for its subsequent discursive or associative discovery. When the historical particulars no longer serve as determinants for the emergence of the emotion, the discursive search for implications for a self loses its support. Aesthetic experience is one of the forms in which one can experience an emotion without it being supported by historical particulars that have implications for a self, and owing to the lack of historical particulars, the experience is said to have the property of *generality* (*sādhāranya*). The result is that one can dwell in the feeling of the emotion, and see the consequents of emotions, without importing the notion of any *implication for oneself as a self*, and thus avoid suffering. This means that the founding judgments of emotion do not need to encode particular subject-object relations that induce suffering. The emotion is experienced *with generality*, i.e. as an ideal or eidetic essence of the emotion as it is usually experienced with historical particulars in the natural attitude.

In ascertaining the presence of an emotion in aesthetic experience, one finds an alternate path for arriving at the topological nexus in perspective that allows for the characteristic presentative affects of the emotion to appear. The act of judging the general nature of aesthetic experience corresponds to a moment of temporal cognition in which one certifies that the experience belongs to the *same* emotion, but with a *different* coordination of historical causes or variations in its presentation. In contrast, the quality of generality in aesthetic experience arises from *abstraction*: naturally, the emotion as experienced with historical particulars is not the exact same emotion, and emotive experiences cannot be reduced to the sum of objective parts. A general property means that the perspective evoked has a structure shared by many other more complex perspectives that we live through. When the emotive substructure of perspective revealed by the work of art is common across viewers, the work of art becomes not merely a sediment (which is public by nature), but a gateway to a kind of social experience. Generality permits (in principle) experiences to be shared across people of different backgrounds, whose historical particulars have constructed diverse and varied retained perspectives. One can investigate either the hermeneutic aspect of how shared perspectival structures develop historically, or what it means for there to be shared experiences in an audience.

Fig. 8  
Paul Sérusier. **The Talisman: The Aven River at the Bois d'Amour**. 1888  
Oil on Wood, 21.5 x 27 cm  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France



## FOUR

# The Partnership of Art and Civilization

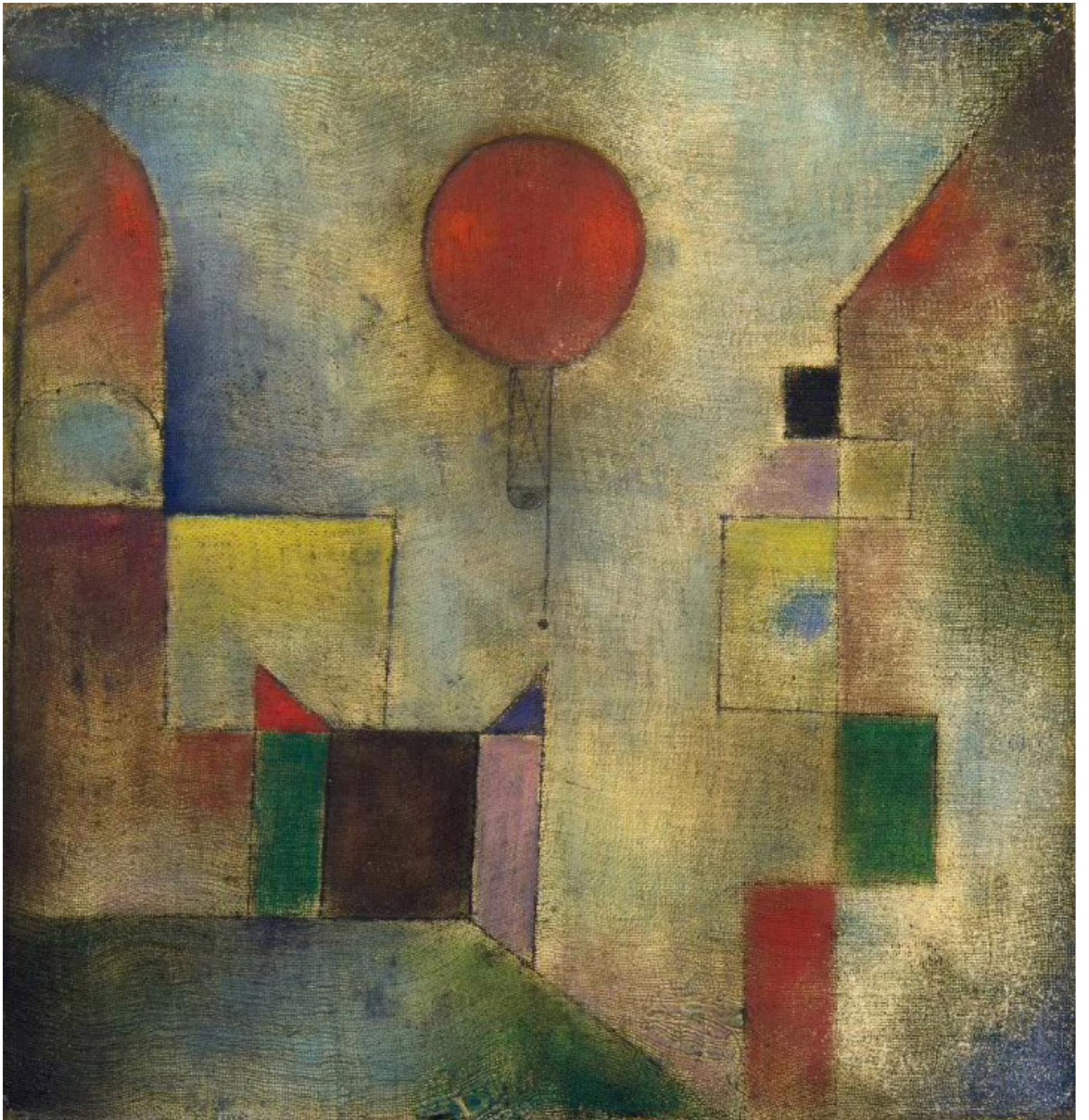
The Greater Stage is a play whose content unfolds on a higher level than reactive and passive historical flow. While the script of this play is highly personalized — crafted for each of us based on the historical particulars of our lives — it also takes place on an intersubjective stage where each living entity has a role. The essence of The Greater Stage, is thus found in the general and shared implications of deviating from the standard conceptual and digressive flows of life. Its essence is a way of living that is not necessitated by biological survival, and that manifests the creative implications of ever more rarified perspectival heights.

Civilization is one of the mundane names for the essence of The Greater Stage. In its historical form, civilization evolved from innovations that pierced the veil. Civilization established the knotted motions of technologies creating surplus, surplus supporting specialization, and specialization enabling the innovation on which new technologies are based. Each retained loop of this movement is seen as a historical milestone, with civilization evolving through the innovations of agriculture (creating surplus for survival), traditions of craftsmanship (represents specialization), legal structures and currencies (abstractions of human value), and onwards. This historical movement arises from transformations in perspective that represent new ways of seeing the world, and understanding who we are, but also those which, as retained structures, are capable of leaving behind sustainable and reproducible imprints (sediments) on the historical record.

In acknowledging the contextual and interdependent origins of perspectives, reality permits the concurrency of disjoint, conflicting and dissonant points of view. The partitioning of perspective into poles such as subject and object, inside and outside, form and substance, these are attitudes that are retained in the structure of perspective. These retained attitudes are defaults that result from the *challenge of concurrency*...from the difficulty in finding pathways that differentiate contradictory factors on the basis of their contingent factors. The challenge of concurrency cannot be resolved in one-shot; representation starts small and expands. In other words, apparent contradiction is the seed that calls for growth, expansion, and evolution; if only we heed its call. Eventually, from it arises new ways of seeing the world.

Rare and unexpected ways of seeing the world are discovered through making finer and finer discernments and distinctions within the content that presents itself in objectifications. Finer discernments eventually become brilliant new patterns of logic. By the time they become part of our communicable culture and traditions, they conceal themselves as a transparent part of the retained

Fig. 9  
Paul Klee. **Red Balloon**. 1922  
Oil on Canvas, 31.1 × 31.7 cm  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
© 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



structure of perspective, as default ways of seeing the world. Cognizing the generality of the historical process of discernment in turn acts as both an impetus and a support for making finer discernments still. And accelerating the discovery of ever finer discernments is the system of language. It simultaneously creates repeatable patterns while opening up a vast and easily explorable space of combinatorial possibilities. This mirrors how, in the historical evolution of civilization, the dynamics of perspective appears as a dialectic tension: convergence on existing and operationalized methods of discerning forms, divergence from them in creating new methods, and resistance to new discoveries from seeing reality through the lens of tangibly objectified perspectives.

New perspectival substructures are not statements of truth, but rather become *historically retained* — i.e. part of the historical record — on account of the constructive potential of the visions they enable. Constructive potential means that the retained structures arising out of the new modes of inference and representation have sufficient generality to meaningfully coordinate with and act upon other historical particulars. Each of these self-sustaining and constructive modes of objectification can be analogized with metabolic pathways. Metabolism here can be interpreted as an information theoretic method of preserving information. For example, biological metabolism is the name for the physicochemical activity that enables free energy transduction on the level of individuated organisms<sup>9</sup>. In comparison, the metabolism of civilization creates the informational order — in excess of biological metabolism — needed to create the work products, institutions, traditions, and historical flows of complex human societies. In contrast to biological metabolism, it is not molecules that perform the free energy transduction for the metabolism of civilization. Rather, it is the objectified ideas that humans produce from their specialized activities, activities that provide new avenues for thinking, for coordinating actions between and amongst humans, and for exploiting planetary resources. Thus, the metabolism of civilization emerged from, and grows out of, discovering new perspectival structures and patterns for their objectification.

The discovery and implementation of new metabolic pathways, emerging from perspectival shifts, is a contingent and historical process, that simultaneously represents continuity and disruption. Situating a work of art as a catalyst for perspectival transformation makes the experience of art one of the means for mediating factor between tradition and change. Art becomes a symbol of the vital force that allows for innovation and its integration into retained perspective. A static work of art, in its very definition, is a reminder that we can only have retained perspective if we also have that which induces variation in perspective. Art stands in ever continual dialogue with civilization. It presumes a capacity to read into the origins of a material form: was the form made as a product of human ingenuity and imagination, or in the standard course of nature's play? Yet it stands before us tempting us to find new rules for playing the game. A work

Fig. 10  
Vasudeo S. Gaitonde. **Untitled**. 1958  
Oil on Canvas, 61 x 58.8 cm  
Exhibited at his one-man show at Kumar Gallery 1958



of art is a form of surplus, enabled by civilization, that is discerned to serve no purpose in supporting an existing biological or civilizational metabolic process. Thus, the metabolism of civilization is the context which provides the hermeneutic support for judgments on what qualifies as a work of art.

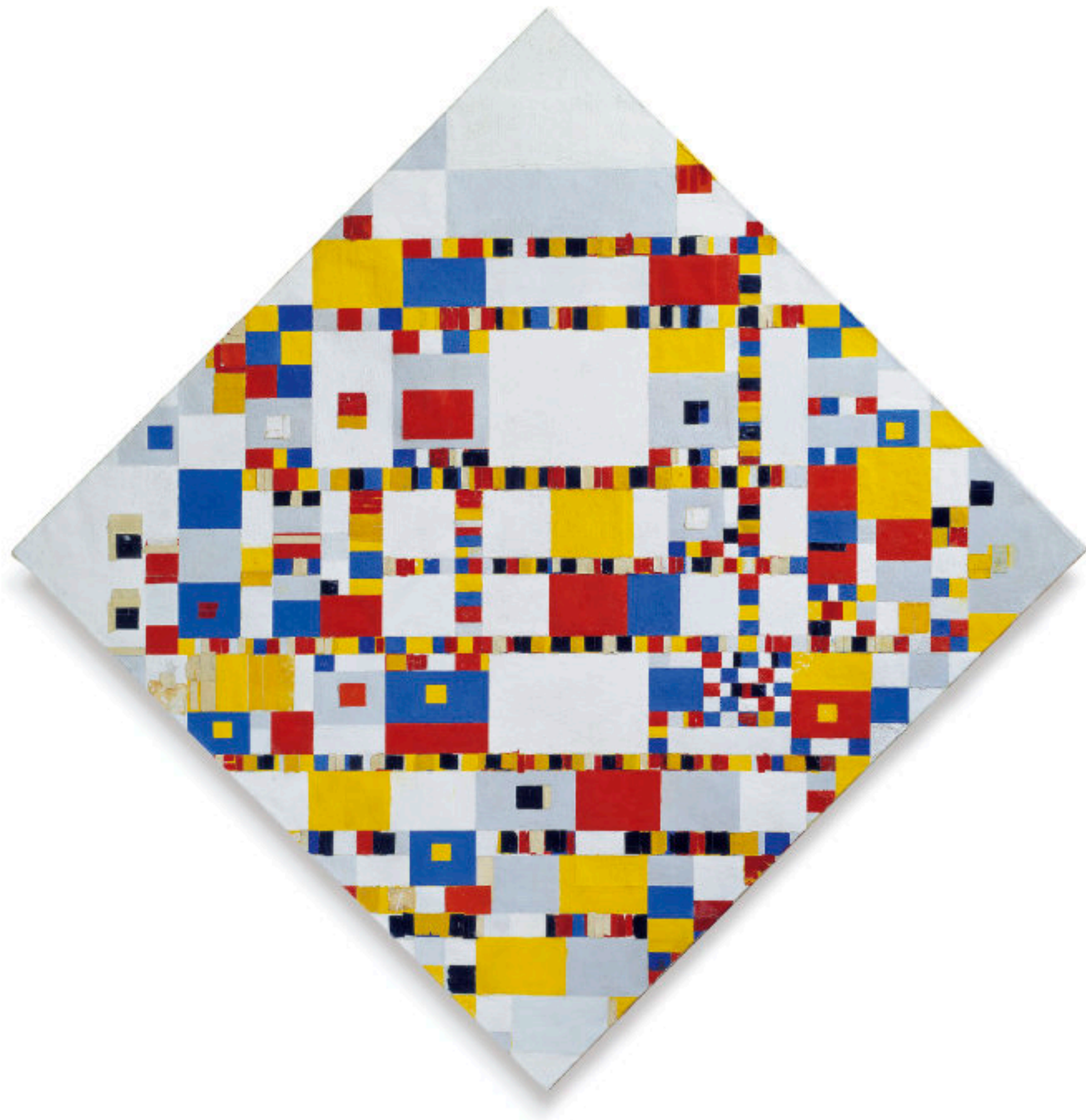
Art history, as the intersubjective tradition relating to the history of works of art, is the historical evolution of our shared understanding of what constitutes art. In the course of history, our understanding of what material objects set the stage and prepare us for transformation in perspective continually evolves. It becomes a history whose flow is driven by the dialectic tension at an interface of what is, and is not, a work of art. One may write the history of innovation as a history of reactions to other ideas or pressures. Yet coexisting with historical forces is the essence of perspectival dynamics from which sparks of creativity come, and the essence of how these sparks coalesce into the burning flame of a living intersubjective tradition.

Museums are emblematic of the evolution of a society's shared understanding of what is art. Stepping inside a museum itself, one expects art, and expects that those material forms that are encountered are works of art. The milieu of a museum anticipates judgment of a material form as a work of art, before one even sees the works themselves! The modern conception of the encyclopedic museum further deepens the experience of art: it broadens what we can judge as art, it creates a free variation over the cultures and contexts of history, it dissolves the need for shared cultural heritage while judging works of art. It challenges us to synthesize and find generality amidst the differences in objectified reactions to a diverse range of works.

Objectifications of experience will inevitably arise when viewing a work of art. And some of these objectifications will leave behind historical imprints, which include descriptions in writing, debates on art or the artwork, participating in shared experiences with other people viewing the work. In turn, the historical imprints become the topic of discussion and dialogue, eventually becoming part of a shared understanding of art (and which then manifests in our judgments on what qualifies as a work of art). Art history thus evolves as a living historical tradition constructed out of the historical imprints left behind by the chain of objectifications arising from works of art. This first step of writing about art is the role of a historian or critic, and their role is not only to dwell in the experience of art, but to reflect back upon how the material form of a work of art served as a determinant in bringing about aesthetic experiences. The goal is to disclose the correlation between material form and aesthetic experience. When art history builds a tradition of understanding the *causal efficiency* across multiple instances of works of art, we can term this critical role a study of noetic-noematic correlations<sup>8</sup>, and a formalization of the role of critic (*vyākhyātr*)<sup>4</sup>.

Fig. 11  
Piet Mondrian. **Victory Boogie Woogie**. 1944  
Oil on Canvas, 126 x 126 cm  
Gemeentemuseum den Haag, Hague, Netherlands





# Part 2: Abstraction in Art

## FIVE

### Images and Signs

Aesthetics here is understood as relating to those cognitive experiences which have the properties of generality, distance, and self-representation. Immediately, the primary question is how to discuss works of art between people given that the subjective aspects of viewing aesthetic experience. Recall that just like no object is a work of art for everyone in every moment of time, similarly no description of a viewing experience of a work of art is adequate for everyone in every instance of viewing. Elaboration of viewing experiences thus should proceed in broad brush strokes, as an attempt to unfold the logical essences of perspectival dynamics and their correlations with material forms. Dealing with the logical essences of perspectival dynamics allows the task to mostly circumvent the immense complexity that lurks within the psychology of perception. In other words, the discussion on works of art begins with the documentation of the ways in which the material form of the artwork relates to the qualities of the viewing experience .

Describing viewing experiences requires reflective elaboration of one's own perspectival dynamics. Assuming from self-evident experience the possibility of such reflective elaboration, nothing — except careful and patient observation — precludes this task. Specifically, such reflective elaborations (moments of introspection) are defined by our capacity to attest that the signed content found in moments of objectification matches with our feelings and expectations in the non-objective intervals (perspectival movements). When objectifications have this introspective quality, a chain reaction of objectifications goes beyond simple associative correlations between signs. It starts to reflect the interplay between retained in perspective and the objectifications that emerge from it, or as Gombrich describes, between “expectation and observation, the waves of fulfillment, disappointment, right guesses and wrong moves”<sup>1</sup>.

Abstraction in its literal sense refers to the partial and incomplete representation of an object, and by definition there is a loss of information between a perspective and the sign for a moment of objectification. The consequence of abstraction is that varied content can end up sharing the same symbols and signs when reduced to an objective representation. This loading of a multiplicity of meaning fulfillment of signs establish the conditions of possibility for the generality of experiencer. Notably, abstraction in representation does not always inhibit objectification, and in fact often can facilitate the use of signs and symbols. The earliest forms of art, indeed, use abstraction to reduce interpretive

Fig. 12  
Nasreen Mohamedi. **Untitled**. 1960  
Oil on Canvas, 66 x 105.4 cm  
*Private Collection, USA*



degrees of freedom or unnecessary information and communicate as directly as possible (to those with a shared understanding of the use of signs) the object or idea being represented.

Abstraction in art is definitively not abstraction in the literal sense described above. Abstraction in art is a degree of distortion and dissonance in visual representation that disables immediate identification of a known object in the work of art. The lack of immediate identification allows the viewer to dwell longer in gulf between image and sign for a while longer, and even relish the interval prior to the emergence of an objectified presentation in experience. Historically, the early abstractionists of the modern era explicitly recognized the power of abstraction, likening non-objectified perspectival movements to mystical and spiritual experience. Some artists even sought to construct visual vocabularies that could target specific kinds of spiritual effects (i.e. perspectival movements).

What we get on the retina...is a welter of dancing light points stimulating the sensitive rods and cones that fire their messages into the brain. What we see is a stable world. It takes an effort of the imagination and a fairly complex apparatus to realize the tremendous gulf that exists between the two. Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*<sup>1</sup>

Following Gombrich, it is convenient to think of the work of art as an *image* for the durations when the viewer is not cognizant of some representational content, and as a *sign* in the moments when the work is objectified and the viewer sees representational content in the work. The image is aligned with the notion of *sensation*, it is what we would call non-objective, it is the *feeling* or *evocation* of the work. The sign is aligned with the idea of perception, it is objectified, it is intentional. The gulf between image and sign is bridged in the process of iterative feedback between making and matching. One can point to the definiteness of the signified experience and have a sense that we know what we are talking about. And in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, definite intentional experiences rely on a deeply embedded - hidden yet present - schematism with which sensation is interpreted<sup>10</sup>. This schematism relates to the *retained structures of perspective*. The retained structure of perspective is responsible for the anticipations (prior to objectification), which shape the schema with which we recognize and discern objects in moments of objectification. Despite how deeply it is embedded, it is indeed mutable, and there are correlations between the schema with which one sees the world and the attitude and mental set one brings to each moment of experience.

What we called “mental set” may be precisely that state of readiness to start projecting, to thrust out the tentacles of phantom colors and phantom images which always flicker around our perceptions. And what we call “reading” an image may perhaps be better described as testing it for its potentialities, trying out what fits. The activation of these phantoms has been most frequently tested in many psychological experiments in which an image is flashed on screen for a brief moment only... once a projection, a reading, finds anchorage in the image in front of us, it becomes much more difficult to detach it. This is an experience familiar in the reading of puzzle pictures. Once they are solved, it is hard, or even impossible, to recover the impression they made on us while we were searching for the solution. Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*.<sup>1</sup>

Fig. 13  
Gulam Rasool Santosh. **The Pass**. 1962  
Oil on Canvas, 86.4 x 108.6 cm



Our investigation begins with the rising of experience to moments of classification. In classification, one recognizes a presented form (some form in the painting) as belonging to some named class. One can reproducibly identify the stimulus for the classification event (the painting), and the linguistic signifiers of the class following classification. However, what it means for an object to belong to that class, in terms of experience or in terms of neuroscience, is not as well defined. Such a classification is associated with a topological feature in one's perspective that is the condition of possibility for binding the linguistic signifier to the presented stimulus.

Fig. 14  
Paul Klee. **In the Current Six Thresholds**. 1929  
Oil on Canvas, 43.5 × 43.5 cm  
*Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York*  
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## SIX

# Imitative Abstraction

Imitative abstraction takes as its reference the mental set of the viewer for recognizing objects in images and then challenges it in some way. More specifically, these are works of art where abstraction is deployed in order to disable immediate recognition of objects. Imitative abstraction requires, however, that there be enough abstraction that the delay between setting eyes upon the work and recognizing the object is long enough that we don't take the object's presence for granted. Typically, the greater the degree of abstraction, the greater the delay in recognizing the object.

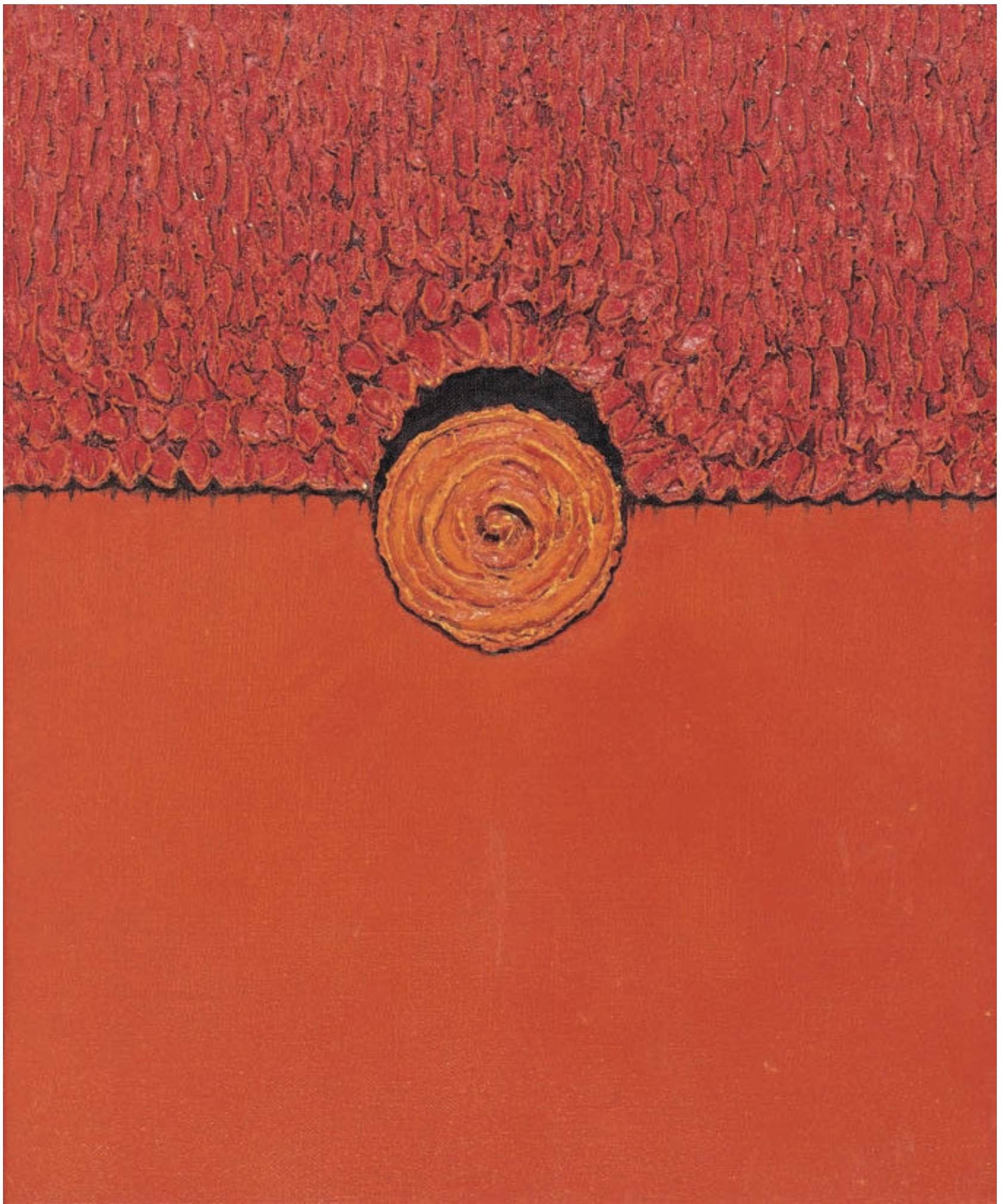
Incomplete representation can facilitate projection of objects onto the visual cues presented in a work of art. Yet without there being a prior expectation for the way in which some signed object might appear, representation cannot be called incomplete or abstracted. A work falls into the category of imitative abstraction when the viewer, after having discerned the object, responds in the affirmative that an object is indeed intended to be present in the painting. Abstraction becomes a quality with which an object is represented, but it does so in a very particular way.

In the duration prior to the discernment of the object in the image, the viewer is able to dwell in the sensations of texture, color, and movement. The image induces a perspectival transformation that is parallel to the process of identifying the objects in the work. Thus, when recognition of the object is delayed, one sees it from a vantage point and mental set that is modified by non-objective sensations of the work of art. In other words, abstraction changes how one interprets the contents found in the work of art. This effect is in stark contrast to what happens when the recognition of the object is not delayed, in which case sensations of texture, color, movement become subordinate to its recognition. Thus, absent the delay, any deviation from one's prior expectation becomes substrate for a reactionary judgment. Abstraction instead transforms those very expectations and makes one less judgmental. Abstraction primes a person for seeing a recognizable object in a new light, in a different mood, emotional valence, or attitude. Such a delayed recognition, on account of some abstractive quality, is found in the stylistic movements of modern art, such as Impressionism, Expressionism, and Cubism. These movements are named after the particular method for achieving abstraction, and the method of abstraction will invariably be coupled to the ways in which perspective is transformed prior to recognition of the object.

In typical representational art, a discerned object rapidly becomes the substrate for mind wandering (digressive and associative thinking). Only after the vitality of this mind-wandering is exhausted does a viewer notice and enjoy the use of

Fig. 15  
Sohan Qadri. **Untitled**. 1976, Copenhagen  
Oil on Canvas, 61 x 50.8 cm  
Kumar Gallery, New Delhi



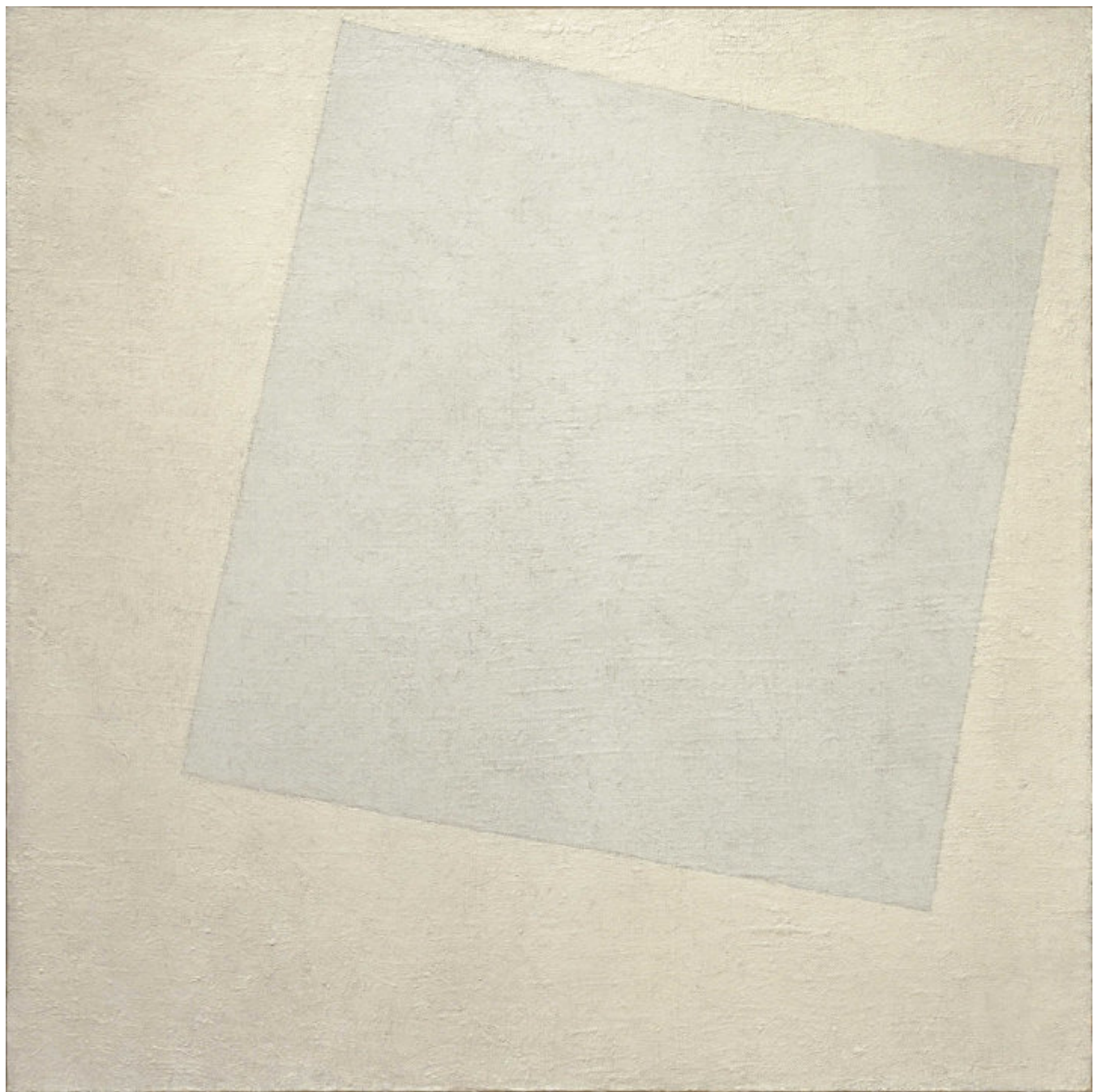


color, movement, texture, and how these aspects are employed by the artist. These aspects are usually discerned in representational art only upon breaking the spell of illusion in an act of stepping close to the work of art and focusing on a local features to the exclusion of global synthesis. Imitative abstraction brings these sensational aspects of art from the local to the global level, making them an equal player and participant in the experience. Imitative abstraction creates a deeper coupling between the object and its environment, as well as between the viewer's context and the experience of a discerned object.

Subsequent viewings of imitative abstraction are subject to the psychological phenomenon called *associative pictorial recall*. If an object is discerned even once in an image, the brain is immediately able to discern it again<sup>11</sup>. Associative pictorial recall is a force that primes a viewer to anticipate an object's presence in the work of art, and thus counteracts abstraction on subsequent viewings. Just as artists learned how to create the illusion of representation through a process of making and matching<sup>1</sup>, some artists learn to deploy abstraction to modulate the degree and certainty with which objects are discerned.

In some works of art, abstraction and representation can coexist. The work of art presents both areas where objects are discerned and areas where abstraction dominates, doing so in such a way that the viewer does not anticipate recognizing objects in the abstract areas. The balance between abstraction and representation is such that one naturally — while keeping the full work in sight and without limiting the gaze to a small part of the work — settles into an observation and exploration of textures, surfaces, gradations of color, and movement. The coexistence between abstraction and representation has a special function. The *context* for the object is abstracted, and the object becomes elevated out of the ordinary and mundane ways in which it might normally be encountered in experience. The objects, having first appeared in a normal course, are now distanced and detached from their everyday common concerns. In other words, abstraction can induce aesthetic distance and generality for representational content, and can suspend one's anticipations upon discerning an object. Such coexistence between abstraction and representation has a deep connection with the way in which dramatic scenes are experienced with aesthetic distance and generality. Nonetheless, in both the cases — that of delayed discernment of objects in an abstracted image and that of the elevation of a discerned object out of its context through an abstract setting — the work of art adds some new quality or cadence to our conception of the discerned objects, challenges our normal expectations, and (however subtly) establishes a new way of thinking.

Fig. 16  
Kazimir Malevich. **Suprematist Composition: White on White**. 1918  
Oil on Canvas, 79.4 x 79.4 cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York



## SEVEN

# The Disavowal of Representation

There is a moment where abstraction in representation gives way to indeterminacy and the work departs from the realm of being imitative. Neither does the viewer recognize an object in the work of art, nor do they anticipate such a discernment. Works with this level of abstraction are non-representational. The lack of representational content is certainly correlated with the suppression of discursive and associative thinking. However, no degree of abstraction can completely arrest the background process of projection. Inevitably, the viewer will experience a moment of objectification. What non-representational artworks require is that such moments of objectification are predicated upon a *founding judgment* that their contents are not found in representations of the work of art.

This founding judgment can be made explicit in a later moment, when the viewer affirms that the content seen in the moment of objectification is purely the viewer's share, and that their projections are not definitively found in the work of art. One neither affirms with conviction that the objects seen in their mind's eye are found in the work of art, nor seeks such an affirmation in the first place. It is a kind of suspension of judgment. A work is verified as a non-representational work upon the reflective disavowal of the work of art as representing some object. This disavowal guides the viewer away from indulging a chain reaction of objectifications. Instead, the viewer is allowed to naturally dwell in the non-objective perspectival movements, the feelings, and the direct evocations of the work of art. The work of art is allowed to remain an image instead of becoming a sign. One finds meaning in non-representational works of art, primarily in the subtle transformations of perspective and evocations it induces.

Non-representational works of art create the ideal “opportunity to study this process of playful transformation through context and expectation...”<sup>1</sup>. The horizon of one's experience is no longer tethered and anchored by the connotations of a specific objects. One no longer treads in a swamp of illusion. Eventual objectifications that arise from the viewing experience do so with less intensity and sharpness. Any support that the material form provides to the content of spontaneous objectifications becomes dissonant when subjected to reflective verification. Thus, non-representational art directs us to dwell, for prolonged periods of time, in the unity of the experience, allowing any aggregate meanings to emerge as gentle and diffuse integration of objectifications.

If disavowal appears to conflict with the tendency for projection, it is because the labeling of objectifications as projections has an implication that does not fit with

Fig. 17  
Biren De. **Untitled**. 1967  
Oil on Canvas, 99.1 × 58.4 cm



Péren de '67

the context of non-representational art (where one no longer expects objectifications to be acts of classifying objects). Yet, despite the inadequacy of the term *projection*, in abstract art the vitality of the background process which leads to objectifications is more relevant than ever <sup>1</sup>:

...we all probe the distant and indeterminate for possible classifications, which we then test and elaborate in a game of projections...we must always rely on guesses, on the assessment of probabilities, and on subsequent tests, and in this there is an even transition from the reading of symbolic material to our reaction in real life.

The reflective disavowal of representational content in a work of art means that the viewer does not exit from this silent testing, from the game of projections. Instead, even as the mind appears more quiet than normal, there is a higher level of energy and engagement than if content was actually discerned. Abstraction establishes a viewing context with both quietude, energy, and the removal of certain anticipations from one's perspective. The result is often that — in addition to the spiritual evocations — abstraction encourages people to be creative and dream up new ideas. Abstract art enables movement through perspectival planes beyond what we might normally encounter if we are confined to the objective expectations specified by the mental set we bring to the experience.

As the representational quality of the work of art is disavowed, emergent meanings for the work of art become characterizations of a viewer's perspectival movements instead of being interpreted as implications for a self. For example, one can have a mental set which actively anticipates that the content of spontaneous objectifications are correlated with the perspective of an agentive viewer. Indeed, objectifications normally take the form of what one normally calls thoughts, memories, and linguistically signed emotions, which are understood as arising for a subject. Yet, one does not need to relate the content of objectifications to the qualities of an experiencing subject. Instead, one can simply consider the logical essences of the viewing experience, apprehending it in relation to the qualities of the objectifications, such as their sharpness, the differential likelihood of their representational content, their temporal frequencies, and their correlations with the material forms of the work of art. Recent studies in neuroscience has begun to describe the affect of abstraction in such terms, with the abstraction found in Chinese landscape painting described as reducing self-referential processing <sup>12</sup> and modern abstract works of art as inducing higher degrees of conceptual abstraction and psychological distance <sup>13</sup>. Significantly, both the reduction of self-referential processing, and higher degrees of abstraction and distance, were described in the theory herein as important factors in aesthetic experience.

Fig. 18  
Barnett Newman. **Onement I**. 1948  
Oil on Canvas, 69.2 x 41.2 cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
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(ARS), New York



## EIGHT

# Spatial Melodies

A lack representational content does not mean the lack of form. Works of abstract art necessarily contain textures, patches of color, and geometric elements with discernible spatial extent. In principle, the act of discerning of any of these as an individuated entity is an objectification. However, in non-representational works of art, the anticipation is that the qualities of the discerned objects are purely sensational. As such, the discernible spatial forms of non-representational art are not a particularly conducive substrate for subsequent objectifications that are discursively or associatively linked to the original objectification of spatial forms. The objectification of spatial forms in thus closer in analogy to the individual beats of a melody rather than a character in a play.

Individual notes in a musical score can be discerned and elaborated upon. Yet the clear and prevalent orientation towards notes in a melody is that they coordinate with each other to form a greater meaning, the overall temporal sense and evocation of the whole. Similarly, the spatial forms of an abstract work of art are not just individually discernible: they coordinate with each other in the same way notes of a melody to create a unique viewing experience. The individual spatial forms are potentially discerned in isolation, but mostly experienced through a higher order, emergent evocation from the whole work of art. They are like phases in a continuous evolution<sup>14</sup>, rather than themselves being objectified. The experience as a whole resembles the experience of performing a ceremony or ritual, where one dwells within the experience, yet the subtle movements of the overall experience are differentiable from the discrete actions (in this case, thoughts) that occur during the experience. The idea is not to find meaning in any one movement, or any one objectification. Meaning is found in the temporal sequence as a whole.

In abstract works of art, one can consider not only the coordination of parts to create emergent meanings, but also the particular fashion in which those parts coordinate with each other. For example, the illusion of representation takes hold of the viewer in representational works when individuated spatial forms coordinate upon the physical act of stepping back:

The connoisseur, therefore, is no longer advised simply to stand back. He should look at the painter's handiwork closely admire his touch and magic of his brush which conjure up an image. There is an increasing awareness of the fact that what we enjoy is not so much seeing these works from a distance as the very act of stepping back, as it were, and watching our imagination come into play, transforming the medley of color into a finished image.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, the stepping back of abstract art is a psychological stepping back (not a physical one). Instead of the illusion of representation, the psychological

Fig. 19  
Sohan Qadri. **Untitled**. 1985, Copenhagen  
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 50.8 cm  
Kumar Gallery, New Delhi

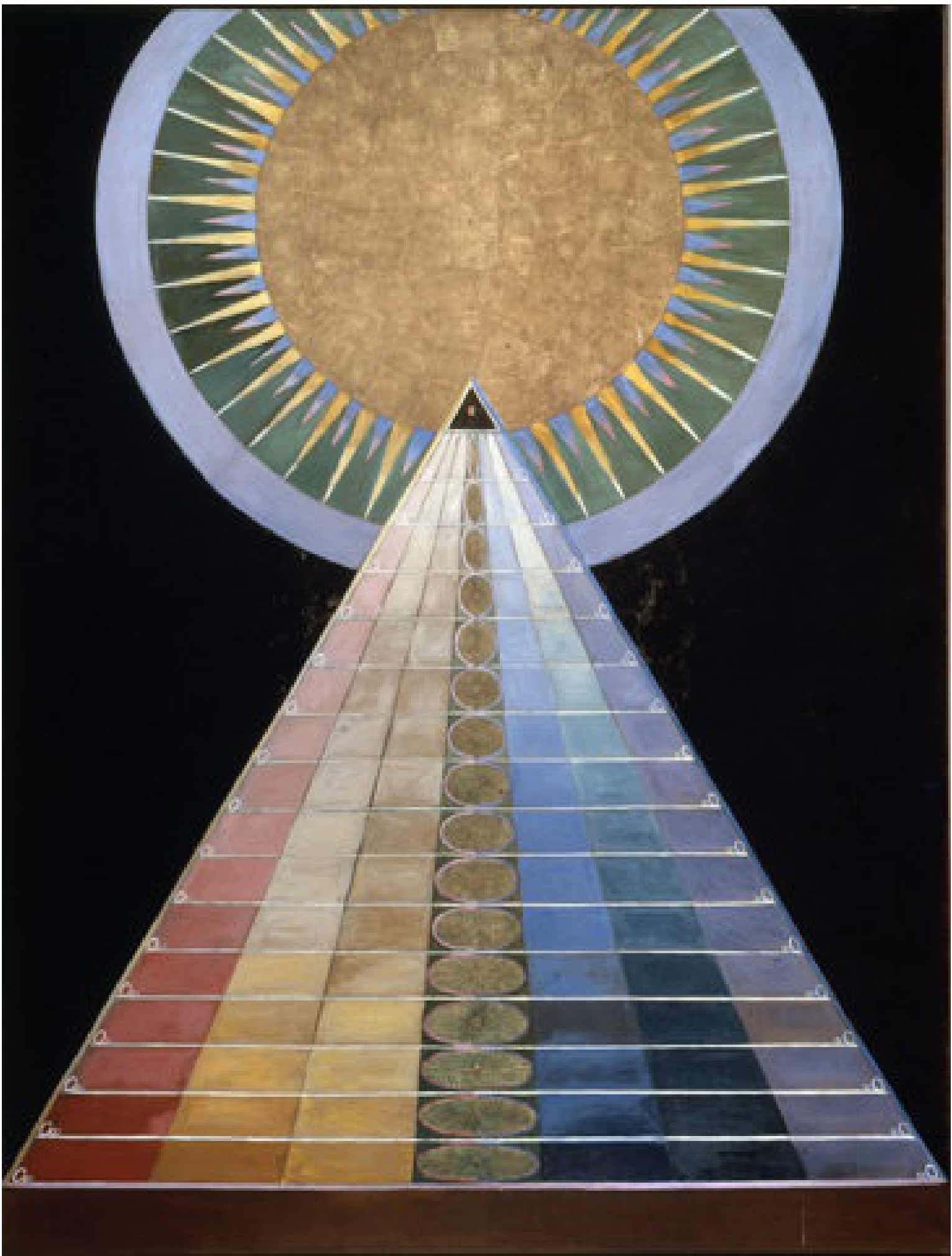




stepping back establishes the necessary condition of possibility for aesthetic experience and for experiencing emotions with generality. The psychological distance found in non-representational works of art allows one to step back from the temporal immanence of sensation to feel the tempo and movement of one's experience.

The analogy with music suggests a further investigation of the tempo and rhythms of the viewing experience. Potentially individuated spatial forms presuppose the existence of edges between these forms. As the activity of neurons in the primary visual cortex is highly sensitive to edges<sup>11</sup>, the pre-objective rhythms of coordination between spatial forms has some deep relationship with the possible spontaneous rising of experience into objectified relief. In other words, one line of investigation in the spirit of Fechner's *experimental psycho-aesthetics* is between the mathematical patterns with which objectifications arise and the mathematical patterns of spatial forms. The materiality of a work of art establishes a set of permutations of discernible forms which serves as the generative kernel of determinants for the horizon of possible objectifications that may arise in the viewing experience. Within that horizon, the viewing experience corresponds to a specific temporal sequence of moments of objectification actualized from that horizon. Each of the objectifications in this horizon has its own protentions and retentions. These protentions and retentions are superimposed with the perspectival movements induced by the material forms of the work of art to produce a multi-dimensional cadence and quality, tempo and rhythm, of the viewing experience. In other words, even when representational content is disavowed in abstract works of art, it is nonetheless important to consider how the composition of a work of art energizes not only the perspectival movements of the viewing experience, but also the temporal signature of objectifications.

Fig. 20  
Hilma Af Klint. **Group X, No. 1, Altarpiece.** 1915  
Oil on Canvas, 231.1 x 177.8 cm  
*The Hilma Af Klint Foundation, Stockholm*



## NINE

# Perspectival Reductionism

Complementary to its capacity to elevate us out of our prior representational context, abstract art also has the potential to induce a sense of focus or concentration (*dhyāna*). Facilitation of such immersion or single-pointedness is often materially executed in a work of art by providing only a single, or limited number of, salient discernible spatial forms. These spatial forms tend to be geometric, either the line or a circle, and serve as a *focal point*. In other words, these spatial forms have enough salience that they are directly discerned in moments of objectification. However, their function relies on the fact that the simplicity of representation decreases the sharpness of the objectification, discourages subsequent objectification, and thus attenuates its capacity to become a substrate for associative thinking.

The iterative failure to start the engine of associative thinking, despite finding a clear object to focus attention upon, leads to immersion in one's perspectival movements and quenches objectification. The viewing experience is likened to a continuous annealing, where the space of possible objectifications is reduced over the early moments of viewing. It culminates in an immersion that approximates a state of concentration, a meditative progression one step beyond the generic spiritual quality of abstract works of art. The dimensionality of perspective appears to be reduced (i.e. perspectival reductionism).

Upon exiting this viewing experience, the world expands considerably. One encounters their surroundings anew and re-populates perspectival structures useful for productively interacting with one's environment. The value of perspectival reductionism in abstract art is to reset some of the viewer's anticipations about the world — even those unrelated to the work of art. Yet the reset of anticipations is easily exaggerated, and the feeling of an empty mind, or of concentration, should not be taken as a total reset of perspective. One's anticipations and expectations are often set by one's nature as an embodied entity, and thus exists outside the immanent contents of possible conscious representations. Reset of these hidden and retained structures of perspective is contingent on achieving more rarified forms of agentive experience; often, these more rarified forms are discerned from more common aesthetic experience not in the feeling of the experience, but as a judgment on the spontaneously emerging patterns of objectifications arising from the aesthetic experience. Regardless of degree, because patterns of objectification by nature coordinate context with perspective, meditative qualities nonetheless can be said to very weakly loosen the hold of prior habits.

Fig. 21  
Gulam Rasool Santosh. **Untitled**. c1985  
Oil on Canvas, 231.1 x 177.8 cm



## TEN

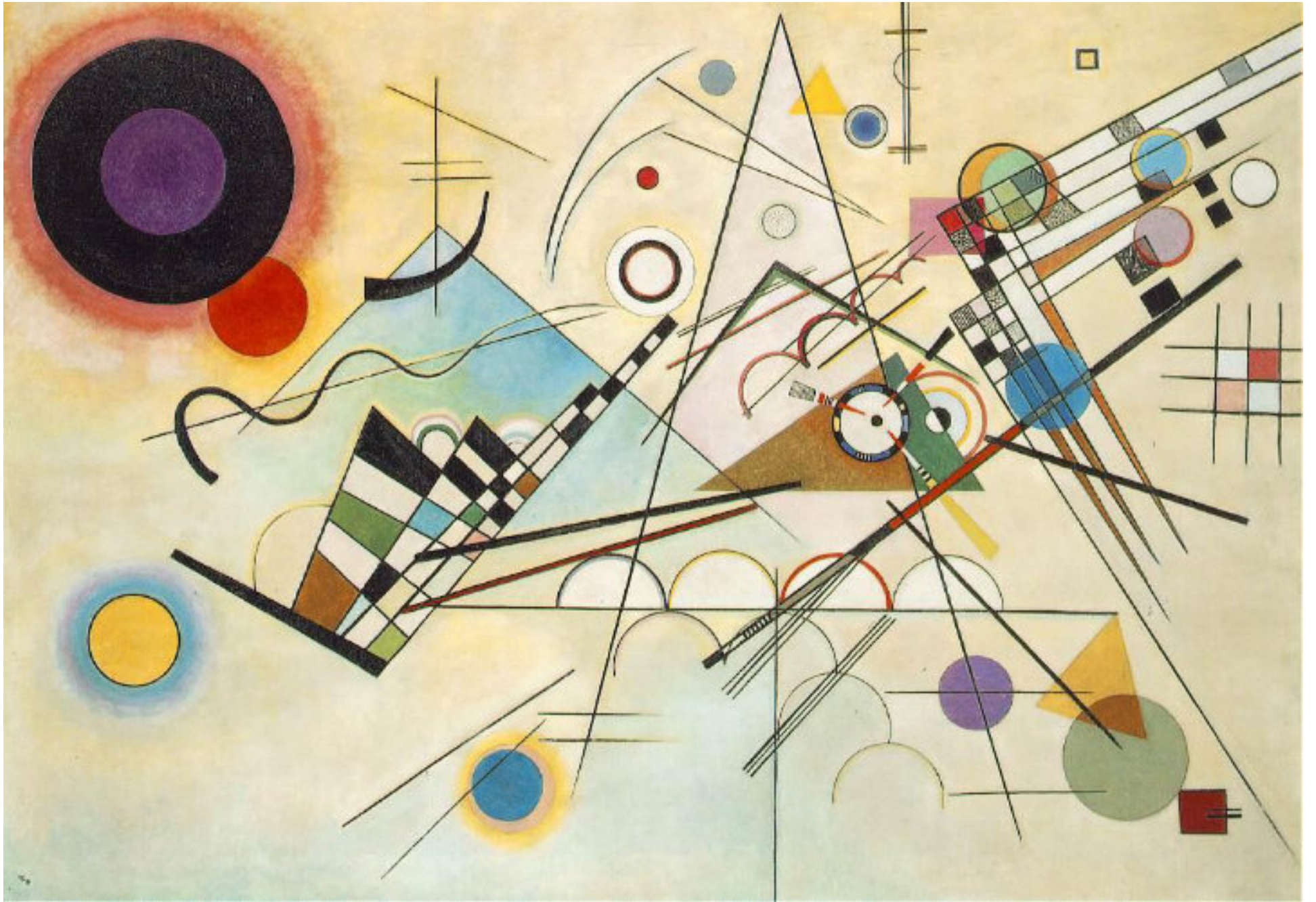
# Anticipations of Emergent Meaning

So far, abstraction has been discussed in the context of a viewer anticipating the absence of representational content. There is a unique form of abstraction that challenges this mental set while retaining most of the attributes of abstract art discussed so far. Think of the moments when one enters a museum and sees the signs and symbols of an ancient language. It is clear to the viewer that the coordination of spatial forms have a higher order meaning, that they act as signs. And yet signed meaning is one that is inaccessible to the viewer. Some modern works of abstract art are able to produce a similar effect. The language from which the signs are sampled are not one of an ancient civilization, but a kind of private visual vocabulary constructed by the artist. As this visual language is initially inaccessible to the viewer, it is experienced mostly as non-representational works of art are. In some cases, the viewer may eventually discover or project a method of interpretation onto the work of art and thus uncover some emergent representational content; in such a case, it is seen by the viewer as the discovery of a new mode of communication. In other cases, the viewer may simply learn to recognize the visual idiom as the style of an artist.

Let's consider further instances where the viewer discerns spatial forms as signs of representational communication, yet is unable to discern their meaning. The anticipation of the viewer is that some objectification will eventually emerge that can be reflectively verified as the meaning of the work of art, as there is a conviction that the spatial forms represent the use of a visual vocabulary. And yet, each time an objectification is found, it is disavowed as being a representation of the meaning of those signs. One leaves the overall viewing experience thus with a kind of purity to the anticipation of finding some more abstract or general syntheses of perceptual data. It is the generality of emergent meaning, a feeling which tacitly accepts the nature of spatial forms as producing emergent meanings without being encumbered by any particular representational content.

A special case of the anticipation of emergent meanings is when the general essence of the emergent meaning is understood as relating to communication with other conscious agents. In this variation, works of art often partly depart the realm of pure non-representation, in order to represent some aspect of the communicative process. What must be retained is not the absence of representation, but rather the lack of perceived content in the communicative channel. One perceives speech, without knowing what is spoken, or perceives

Fig. 22  
Vassily Kandinsky. **Composition VIII**. 1923  
Oil on Canvas, 140.3 x 200.7 cm  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
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writing without knowing what is written. There are just enough contextual clues from the material form that one discerns some aspect of communication in moments of objectification. Each time an objectification emerges, the *intent* of communication becomes its representational content.

It bears repeating that in both cases, retaining the logic of abstract art is essential, for the representation of communicative processes must be viewed as a part to the whole: if an artist manages to do so, the emergent meanings can evolve from corresponding to simple communicative intents, to the idea of intersubjective meanings, historical processes, and civilizational networks. The essence of abstraction allows for ever more complex notions to be conceived of in their generality, without any particular content. This is a turning of the mirror onto the logical essence of perspectival transformation and the intersubjective structures built upon them.

Fig. 23  
Shanti Dave. **Untitled**. c1970  
Oil on Canvas, 83.8 x 63.5 cm





## ELEVEN

# Brief Conclusion

The preliminary descriptions of the various rhythms and tempos of abstraction act give an indication of how abstraction facilitates creative movements in perspective. It provides evidence that works of art can indeed establish aesthetic distance and generality, and actually manifest as a calling to *The Greater Stage*. These writings cannot begin to hope to describe the script for the transcendent and personalized *Greater Stage* of each individual, but it is hoped that they may reorient readers towards reflection on the qualities and movements of perspective, and an exploration of how the seeds of insight may be brought to manifest.

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Fig. 24  
Mohan Samant.  
**Faces of Bombia**. 1972  
Oil on Canvas, 231.1 x 177.8 cm



