

The Museum of Modern Art

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PRESS PREVIEW:
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Forty-six watercolors by Wassily Kandinsky, spanning the entire career of one of the most influential artists of this century, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from April 2 - May 11, 1969.

"Kandinsky had no immediate circle of followers, but his inspiration has been acknowledged by artists as different in goal and method as Diego Rivera and Arshile Gorky," according to the exhibition wall label. "It is his search for a new way to communicate deeply felt truths that links Kandinsky to the revolutionary spirit of our time."

Kandinsky's first purely abstract work -- his famous untitled watercolor dated 1910 -- and examples from the abstract period that followed are included in the exhibition along with several early descriptive works and a full range of more formal and geometric works from his mature years at the Bauhaus and in Paris. Forty of the watercolors, many of which have never been seen in the United States, are on loan from the artist's widow, Mme Nina Kandinsky.

KANDINSKY WATERCOLORS was directed and installed by William S. Lieberman, Director of the Museum's Department of Drawings and Prints and Curator of Painting and Sculpture. It will travel in this country after the New York showing.

In search for a more expressive art free from academic conventions, watercolor provided a medium in which Kandinsky could create spontaneously. Many of his watercolors were studies or sketches for larger oil paintings, but, in their form and expression, stand as complete works in themselves.

Born in Moscow in 1866, Kandinsky left his native city and a promising legal career at the age of thirty to go to Munich to study art. Moscow, however, was to remain a constant source of inspiration in Kandinsky's art, and he once wrote: "I have the feeling that at bottom I have always painted this single 'model' merely strengthening

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the expression and perfecting the form over the years."

In Kandinsky's early works, "motives drawn from nature are gradually replaced by a vivid play of color and line as he found a way to translate the lyrical responses of his youth to form." In Munich, he became part of a small group of revolutionary artists united under the symbol of a "Blue Rider," committed to a new art guided by the individual spirit rather than academic standards and realistic traditions. The aims of this group were summarized in 1910 by Kandinsky in his book Concerning the Spiritual in Art.

Forced to leave Munich at the outbreak of World War I, Kandinsky returned to Russia. Despite a new regime after the Revolution of 1817, which offered for a time expanded opportunities to artists, Kandinsky became discouraged by the conflicting goals within the artistic community, and returned to Germany where he joined the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1922.

During his eleven years at the Bauhaus, Kandinsky pursued his explorations into the expressive powers of the formal means of art -- color, line, image -- and explained the theoretical background of his experiments in Point and Line to Plane, published in 1926.

When the Nazis closed the Bauhaus in 1933, Kandinsky moved to Paris, where he continued his deeply personal art until his death in 1944. "Both his heritage and his formal discoveries merge during the final years in Paris. The last works suggest a mysterious language of signs, as evocative shapes and unexpected color harmonies recall the ancient and primitive arts of his homeland and at the same time convey a wholly contemporary freedom in the use of formal means to transmit emotion directly."

This showing of watercolors by Kandinsky -- one of the first so-called Abstract Expressionists -- provides an introduction to the major exhibition PIONEERS OF THE NEW AMERICAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE opening at The Museum of Modern Art in June.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, and Joan Wiggins, Assistant, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.