

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
October 1994

FACT SHEET

EXHIBITION **KANDINSKY: COMPOSITIONS**

DATES January 26 - April 25, 1995

ORGANIZATION Organized by Magdalena Dabrowski, Senior Curator, Department of Drawings, The Museum of Modern Art

SPONSORSHIP This exhibition is supported by a generous grant from Robert Lehman Foundation, Inc. Additional support has been provided by Lufthansa German Airlines and the National Endowment for the Arts. An indemnity for the exhibition has been granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

CONTENT As one of the great pioneers of modernism, Russian artist Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944) is most closely identified with the beginning of abstract painting in the second decade of this century. This is exemplified in an exhibition devoted to what Kandinsky referred to as his most important -- and possibly his most beautiful -- body of work, the ten *Composition* paintings.

The exhibition features approximately forty works, many of which have never before been seen in the United States. Seven of the surviving *Composition* paintings are presented along with numerous, richly colored preliminary studies in oil, watercolor, ink, and pencil. Executed between 1910 and 1939, these monumental paintings and related studies make up a singular body of work exemplifying the artist's transition to "non-objective" painting, as well as conveying the fundamental principles of art Kandinsky expounded in his treatise *On the Spiritual in Art* (1911).

The evolution of Kandinsky's ideas and pictorial imagery is traced in the *Compositions* and their process works. The predominantly figurative style of *Compositions* I-III (1909-10) shifts to the gradual elimination of representational elements in *Compositions* IV, V, and VI (1911-13) to mere

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suggestions of recognizable subject matter in *Composition VII* (1913) and to the purely geometric idiom in *Compositions VIII-X* (1923-39). As a group, this distinctive body of work reveals not only Kandinsky's unusually deliberate and systematic creative process, but also the genesis of his concept of *Composition*.

PUBLICATION

Vasily Kandinsky: *Compositions* by Magdalena Dabrowski. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. 144 pages. 39 color and 66 black-and-white illustrations. Hardbound. \$39.95. Paperbound. \$22.50. Distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York; both available in The MoMA Book Store.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9750.