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## Revisiting the Issues of Studying the Creative Heritage of Kazimir Malevich: Russian and Foreign Bibliography

**Ekaterina M. Tolstikhina\*** and **Marina V. Moskalyuk**

*Dmitri Hvorostovsky Siberian State Academy of Arts  
Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation*

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**Abstract.** The article considers issues related to the study of the creative heritage of Kazimir Malevich. It characterizes Russian and foreign researchers and their main works, highlights and analyzes the difference of domestic and foreign researchers' approaches to the study of the artist's heritage. Besides, the article reveals the basic principles used by researchers and including mainly a chronological study of life and creative biography, philosophical and art history analysis, art history and linguistic analysis of graphic sheets, attribution and technology in the works of K. Malevich, and determines the predominance of art history analysis in both Western and Russian bibliography.

**Keywords:** Kazimir Malevich, avant-garde, Suprematism.

Research area: theory and history of art.

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The heritage of Kazimir Malevich invariably arouses interest among a wide circle of people interested in art, including the scientific community. The modern volume of art criticism, philosophical, cultural publications on Malevich's work is a complex, heterogeneous field, and therefore the problem of its systematization becomes more and more urgent. It is necessary to identify the main methodological approaches to the study of Malevich's work in domestic and foreign humanities. Hence, the objective of this work is to analyse the main publications and study methodological approaches to Malevich's work. A review of the writings of authors who address the life and work of Malevich is further proposed not in chronological order, but in terms of importance and volume of publications (although, of course, this approach is not without a certain degree of subjectivity due to the need to rank articles). In general, in the work we rely on the main works in the vast bibliography of the famous artist, the value of which is generally recognized today.

D.V. Sarab'ianov (1923-2013), who comprehensively studied the biography and works of K. Malevich, is an outstanding researcher of Malevich's work in Russian art criticism, as well as his student A.S. Shatskikh, who dated Malevich's *Black Square*, reconstructed Februarism, and composed 5-volume collected works of K. Malevich. Many works of Sarab'ianov, first of all, the article *Malevich in the era of the Great Change* (Sarab'ianov, 1990), raise the problem of dating. In this regard, it is also important to note Shatskikh's work *Kazimir Malevich and Supremus Society* (Shatskikh, 2009), which uses historical documents that build an accurate biographical view of Malevich's life, starting with the Februarism movement, which appeared in 1913, and ending with the 1917 Supremus Society. The basis of research is the use of general scientific methods, the historical method, stylistic, philosophical and art history analysis.

A comprehensive methodology is necessary in the works of D.V. Sarab'ianov and A.S. Shatskikh, since Malevich's biography is full of inaccuracies and contradictions; art historians clarify them through the use of his-

torical materials. Philosophical, art history and stylistic analyses not only contribute to a true understanding of the facts of biography, but also open up the possibility of arranging semantic accents in the artist's work.

The article by E. Luk'ianov *Suprematist insight of Leo Tolstoy and the philosophical revelations of K. Malevich* (Luk'ianov, 2006), in which portrait as a way of transforming reality is considered through the prism of the main development vectors of Malevich's creativity, seems unusual to us. This thesis unfolds in the characteristics that divide the concept of "portrait" into a series of blocks. The portrait-hologram indicates the principle of holism as a reflection of the whole in parts. A portrait-rebus speaks of the process of perceiving the world, but not of reproducing a holistic picture of the world. Besides, portrait-still-life and portrait-archetype are also distinguished, when it regards the disappearance of objects, after which their archetypes remain. Here, references to exact sciences are important, first of all, physics, the idea of the fourth dimension and going beyond the boundaries of the binary system, the image of the incalculable. Separate blocks include portraits-icons and metaphysical portraits. Luk'ianov uses philosophical and art history analysis and general scientific methods that allow him to form an art history classification of Malevich's portraits through the prism of evidence.

E.V. Basner also uses the methodology of philosophical and art history analysis in his article *Painting by Malevich from the collection of the State Russian Museum (Problems of the artist's creative evolution)* (Basner, 2000). E.F. Kovtun (1928-1996) also carries out the study *The Beginning of Suprematism* (Kovtun, 1989) in the methodology of philosophical and art history analysis. In addition, we should pay attention to the article by I.A. Azizyan (1935-2009) *Kazimir Malevich: universalism and messianism* (Azizyan, 2001), in which the author considers the philosophical tradition of Russian messianism, namely, the concept of all-unity by V.S. Solov'ev and the idea of anthropodicy by N.A. Berdyaev. Justification of man by creativity is combined with the general idea of Russian spiritual culture about the

transformation of man through the transformation of the world. The article uses Malevich's philosophical treatises and works, the analysis of which allows us to draw a number of conclusions, for example, that Malevich's denial of the mimesis and assertion of the life-creating role of art are associated with the conscious denial of causal rationalism and positivism. The same principle can be seen in the comparison of black, red and white periods in the work of K. Malevich with the fundamental ontology of Martin Heidegger, which D.V. Sarab'ianov and A.S. Shatskikh in the work *Kazimir Malevich. Painting. Theory* refer to (Sarab'ianov & Shatskikh, 1993).

Studies dedicated to the opera *Victory over the Sun* should be singled out in a separate group. The article by J. Kiblitkii *Regarding the black square in the opera "Victory over the Sun"* (Kiblitkii, 2000), as well as the article by T.V. Kotovich *The futuristic opera "Victory over the Sun"* (Kotovich, 2008) show the relationship of opera and creation of Malevich's main work *The Black Square*. A.S. Shatskikh and D.V. Sarab'ianov write about the same in their works. In a narrower aspect I.A. Vakar touch upon this topic in his work *Academic Years of Kazimir Malevich in Moscow. Facts and Fiction* (Vakar, 1990). I.N. Karasik in his article *Malevich in the Judgments of Contemporaries* (Karasik, 1990) speaks of such historical documents as notes by Yudin and Punin, but does not draw new conclusions of his own.

Another block of research on the work of K. Malevich is devoted to the problem of attribution and the technologies that characterize the colourful surface of his works. For example, the article by E. Petrova *Malevich's works in the State Russian Museum and their new dating* (Petrova, 2000) is devoted to that. Technological analysis allows the attribution of works and clarifies the creation date on the basis of historical documentation and scientific analysis of the colourful surface. The article by S. Rimskaia-Korsakova *On the technological study of Malevich's paintings* (Rimskaia-Korsakova, 2000) is devoted to the same direction. It speaks of a colourful surface: colouration (colour and light), while scientific analysis, for example, images in the light, allows trac-

ing Malevich's creative career, discovering improvements and corrections made by the artist before the completion of the work. The article by O. Klenova *Features of the creative method of Malevich revealed during the restoration of his works* (Klenova, 2000) points to the knowledge gained from studying the documentation from the State Russian Museum. It covers technological issues, for example, the use of varnish by Malevich, the technology of applying the paint layer in terms of the safety of work, the problem of oil breaks. The article by B.P. Toporkova *From the Experience of Restoring Malevich's Architects* (Toporkova, 2000) is also of a technological nature. The new study of the heritage of K. Malevich also makes some discoveries. The recent study by the staff of the State Tretyakov Gallery of the Black Square showed that initially Malevich painted a cubofuturistic composition, and on top of it he painted a protosuprematist one. Its colours can be seen in crack patterns in the paint, explained by Ekaterina Voronina, one of the researchers on this issue, whose publication is being prepared for printing.

Thus, the whole variety of domestic studies of the work of K. Malevich can be divided into several blocks, such as:

- a diverse philosophical and art history analysis of the work of K. Malevich as a whole;
- philosophical and art history analysis of certain areas of creativity of K. Malevich (for example, portrait);

- a chronological study of the life and creative biography of K. Malevich based on documents;

- attribution and technology in the works of K. Malevich.

Further, we find it important and interesting to compare the methodology of scientific publications on the work of K. Malevich in Russian art criticism with the methodology of foreign authors. We will pay special attention to the latest and most complete work *Malevich. Tate Publishing* (2014), which consists of several large semantic blocks.

In the first section *the Icon of the New Time*, the conversation about Malevich begins with the exhibition "0.10". There is a comparison of *The Black Square* with the icon. It is

noteworthy that the work appeals to Russian history. On the one hand, this is due to the need to immerse the European reader in a historical context that is not required in such a detailed form in domestic works. On the other hand, this is an important methodological move, which allows drawing conclusions about the development of Malevich's work as a result of historical changes in the sociocultural environment that surrounded him. A parallel is drawn between the social revolution in society and the revolution of methods and views taking place in the creative development of Malevich. An analysis of various influences on Malevich's work is undertaken, and historical facts are used that confirm that Malevich was at an early stage familiar with the works of C. Monet, P. Gauguin, P. Cezanne, A. Matisse, P. Picasso. A thesis appears on the synthesis of Western European and Russian traditions, which allows obtaining a new quality in the works of Malevich. The analysis of the historical sociocultural situation and the analysis of biographical information are used as a way to determine the causes and consequences of the development of Malevich's creative path.

The second section of the aforementioned publication *K. Malevich becomes Russian* gives biographical information about the birth and family of the artist; determines the source of the development of creativity from symbolism to Suprematism as a result of the influence of the works shown by P.M. Tretyakov (icons, Russian realistic art) and French art (P. Cezanne, P. Gauguin, Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, A. Matisse and P. Picasso) shown by I.A. Morozov and S.I. Shchukin in Moscow. The section provides an analysis of the work of K. Malevich *The Shroud of Christ* (1908), *Self-portrait* (1908-1910) from the perspective of the influence of French artists on Malevich. In relation to the works presented by Malevich at the 1912 exhibition, an important thesis "iconic peasant life" is formulated. Further, this thesis is expanded by comparison with P. Gauguin and N. Goncharova, who introduce cubism into the Russian icon. Another thesis that appears when analysing the works presented by Malevich in France, is *Kazimir Malevich as a world artist*. The next block is alogisms. The works *The En-*

*glishman in Moscow* (1914), *The Cow and the Violin* (1913) are considered. Historical and art history analysis cause important observations. For example, between 1908 and 1915 Malevich borrowed from French Symbolism, Fauvism, Cubism and Italian Futurism; he is defined as tacking between styles and trends in art.

In the third section *Language, Space, Abstraction*, an art-philosophical analysis is applied, which allows revealing the principles of Russian futurism on the basis of the opera *Victory over the Sun*, identifying the opera as the first appearance of geometric figures in Malevich's work. In conjunction with the opera, the cover *Three* and futuristic book design are considered. *Arithmetic and Grammar*, rarely cited in Russian publications, is also mentioned. We also note the uniqueness of the analysis of linguistic principles and expressive means, which are presented in the analysis of small works by Malevich, which include font compositions.

The fourth section *K. Malevich as a Curator* considers the organization of the exhibition space for Malevich's works at the exhibition "0.10", which was the first to show Suprematist works. There is a discussion of the iconostasis and special characteristics of the artist's works, which he placed at the exhibition in the red corner. The various exhibitions in which the artist participated or which were initiated by him are also indicated; the causal relationships of the specificity of the exhibitions and the development of the work of K. Malevich are determined. In addition, the work includes the sections *Colour of the Masses*, *Suprematism in the Streets*, *Malevich in Vitebsk*, *Architecture*, *Modernism*. *K. Malevich draws up diagrams*, *From Suprematism to Supernaturalism*. We note the completeness of the study, the publication of rare materials and sketches, the use of the entire set of methodological tools, starting from philosophical and art history analysis and ending with the problems of attribution and confirmation of historical facts.

Thus, we have characterized the monumental collective monograph *Malevich. Tate Publishing* (2014); we emphasize once again that philosophical and art history analysis is the leading method in it with very interesting sharp style comparisons; in addition, an introduction

of new material in the circle of study compared to Russian art history can be noted.

Let us turn to other foreign authors. In the article by Ch. Douglas *On the Philosophical Origins of Subjectless Art* (Douglas, 1980), Malevich is included in a single historical process with the West, the significance of the artist's work is brought to the global level. The author uses knowledge in the field of art history and philosophy, draws a number of conclusions, interfaced with cubism, Orphism, Italian futurism. Douglas also evaluates Western art ideas in comparison with Malevich's ideas. This allows us to distinguish four aspects of the aesthetics of modernism: understanding the nature of sensations; the role of the psyche in the work of the artist; the idea of universal dynamism; the role of colour in painting. We should note that when comparing Western European trends and their theoretical basis with the work of Malevich, Douglas highlights and constantly emphasizes the new quality that Malevich receives in his works. In another article *Nonobjectivity and Decorativeness* (Douglas, 1993), Ch. Douglas raises the issue of decorative art as the possibility of expressing the cosmic principle and universal meanings through emblems and symbols, concluding that Suprematism is a universal form of expression, while the ground for the nonobjectivity in painting is prepared by the evolution of the ornament of decorative fabrics.

In our review, we should also refer to the popular publication *Malevich* (Neret Gilles, 2003) by Gilles Neret (1933-2005), in which the narrative is arranged in chronology and consists of several thematic sections: roots of abstraction, the all-seeing eye, Malevich's cosmos, waiting for the doomsday. We should note the analysis of the historical situation, in particular the influence of Western European movements and artists on the work of Malevich. Historical and art history analysis allowed us to reveal the influence of popular print; in addition, the author analysed patriotic popular prints, which had never been seen in articles on Malevich's works. The appeal to the works in pencil on paper with the texts of Olga Rozanova and the primitivism of Malev-

ich is remarkable. Conducting a philosophical and art history analysis, Gilles Neret draws a conclusion about iconography, supplementing the information with expertise facts, for example, writing about the cross that is the symbol of Christ, which received an erotic meaning (horizontal line is a woman, vertical line is a man). In addition, philosophical and art history analysis allows comparing the painting *Workers* (1933) with the icon *Our Lady of Hodegetria*.

Thus, foreign articles on the work of Malevich can be characterized by highlighting the following blocks:

- chronological study of the life and creative biography of K. Malevich;

- philosophical and art history analysis, including on the basis of a comparison with Russian art material of past centuries;

- philosophical and art history analysis, incorporating Malevich's work in the global art space;

- art and linguistic analysis of graphic works by Malevich, including the appeal of foreign authors to graphic works, sketches by K. Malevich, reproductions of which are extremely rare;

- historical and art history analysis of the role of curatorial practice in the life and work of K. Malevich.

Summing up, we can talk about the predominance of art history analysis both in the Western and in the domestic bibliography of Kazimir Malevich's work, while attribution of works and appeal to technological aspects are inherent mainly in domestic works. With all the abundance and diversity of literature, it should be noted that the final fundamental monograph, which fully includes both biographical material and creative heritage, has not yet been published. The complete catalogue with updated chronological data, taking into account private collections, is no less relevant. In addition, we can also state that there is no generally accepted periodization of Malevich's work. All this shows that, with the seemingly complete study of the famous Russian avant-garde artist, the problems of further research work are very extensive.

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## К вопросам изучения творческого наследия Казимира Малевича: русская и зарубежная библиография

**Е.М. Толстихина, М.В. Москалюк**

*Сибирский государственный институт искусств  
имени Дмитрия Хворостовского  
Российская Федерация, Красноярск*

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассмотрены вопросы, связанные с изучением творческого наследия Казимира Малевича. Дана характеристика и изучены основные труды российских и зарубежных исследователей. Выделена и проанализирована разница подходов к изучению наследия художника у отечественных и зарубежных исследователей. Выявлены основные принципы, используемые исследователями и включающие преимущественно хронологическое изучение жизненной и творческой биографии, философско-искусствоведческий анализ, искусствоведческо-лингвистический анализ графических листов, атрибуцию и технологию в произведениях К. Малевича. Определено преобладание искусствоведческого анализа как в западной, так и в отечественной библиографии.

**Ключевые слова:** Казимир Малевич, авангард, супрематизм.

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