

Log

SPRING/SUMMER 2014
New Ancients

31



Log

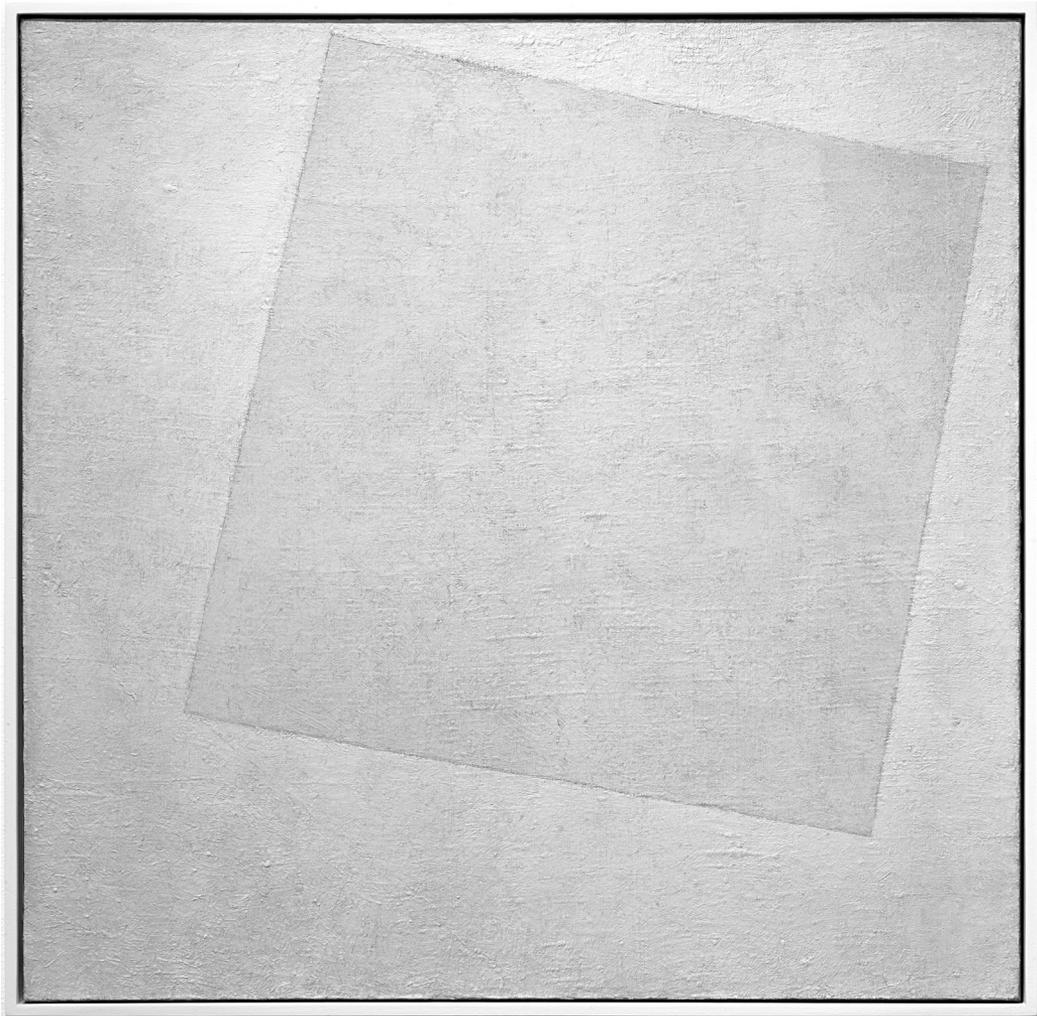
SPRING/SUMMER 2014

New Ancients

<i>Zeynep Çelik Alexander</i>	23	Neo-Naturalism
<i>Andrew Atwood</i>	47	Rendering Air: On Representation of Particles in the Sky
<i>Sarah Blankenbaker</i>	75	Idiosyncratic Perspectives
<i>Mark Ericson</i>	184	Domestic Inversion
<i>David Gissen</i>	96	The Path to the Acropolis, a Reconstruction
<i>Urtzi Grau</i>	139	What Kinds of Copies?
& <i>Cristina Goberna</i>		
<i>Mark Jarzombek</i>	145	The Shanghai Expo and the Rise of Pop-Arch
<i>Dora Epstein Jones</i>	18	The Pas de Chat: A Modern Tale of Discipline and Reward
<i>Thomas Kelley</i>	82	Five Self-Portraits
<i>Parsa Khalili</i>	100	Campus Martius East
<i>Amy Kulper</i>	86	Out of Character
<i>Carlo Lodoli</i>	72	The Ass Who Wanted to Become a Butterfly
	143	The Sadistic Sculptor
<i>Anna Neimark</i>	62	On <i>White on White</i>
<i>Marc Neveu</i>	55	The Truth of the Flying Pamphlet
<i>William O'Brien Jr.</i>	52	Labyrinth
<i>Jorge Otero-Pailos</i>	169	Space-Time 1964/2014
<i>Jason Payne</i>	161	Projekti Bunkerizimit: The Strange Case of the Albanian Bunker
<i>Emmanuel Petit</i>	31	Spherical Penetrability: Literal and Phenomenal
<i>Bryony Roberts</i>	13	Beyond the <i>Querelle</i>
<i>Bryony Roberts</i>	67	Re: Forms
with <i>Sarah Whiting</i>		
<i>Matt Roman</i>	172	The King's Gambit
<i>Jonah Rowen</i>	40	Some Difficulties in Drawing Spheres in Relation to Forms in General
<i>Daniel Sherer</i>	115	The Architectural Project and the Historical Project: Tensions, Analogies, Discontinuities
<i>Enrique Walker</i>	59	Scaffolding
<i>Cameron Wu</i>	107	Of Circles and Lines

Cover: Cameron Wu and Iman Fayyad, Analytical drawing of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, 2014.

Insert: Parsa Khalili, *Campus Martius East (Trakya Alani)*, 2013–2014, and Cameron Wu, Typological morphology of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, 2014.



KAZIMIR MALEVICH, *SUPREMATIST*
COMPOSITION: WHITE ON WHITE, 1918.
IMAGE © THE MUSEUM OF MODERN
ART / LICENSED BY SCALA / ART
RESOURCE, NY.

On *White on White*

To begin, let's describe it. We are looking at a painting of a square on a square canvas. It is at first a seemingly stable figure-ground, a relationship that could be described as on-off, 1-0, black-white. Only this painting is not black and white; it is white and white, and therefore it is not stable. As a result, one could also say that there are two squares added together, one on top of the other, producing a layering of two figures; or that there is a square subtracted from another square, forming a doughnut, a figure with a hole in it; or that the figure is not even present, only its shadow, dropped from an object beyond the grasp of the canvas displaying ground alone. The tonal difference in the whites produces a flickering between the figure and the ground: the cumulative effect of layered paint and the slight shift in hue of the two squares of white disengage the forms from the single surface described by the otherwise flat plane of the canvas. Whether or not we agree that the composition is a figure-ground, a figure-figure, or a ground-ground is not important. Important and stable in all interpretations is the notion that this painting is about rendering that difference, which through the *faktura* of painting – its material tone – produces a distance or a depth between the two.¹ Perhaps, then, it is possible to call this painting a kind of rendering. But this is aspirational, not yet a fact.

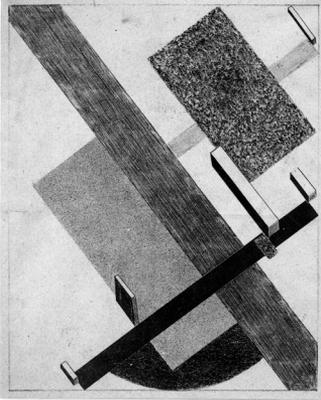
Three years before *White on White* (1918), Kazimir Malevich exhibited *Black Square*. In his 1927 book, *The Non-Objective World*, he wrote, “The black square on the white field was the first form in which non-objective feeling came to be expressed. The square = feeling, the white field = the void beyond this feeling.”² In the same essay, he equated “pure feeling” with “abstraction.”³ In another essay from the 1916 Moscow edition of his book *From cubism and futurism to suprematism* he wrote, “The square is not a subconscious form. It is the expression of intuitive reason.” And he continued to define a “new painterly realism, precisely painterly because in it there is no realism of mountains, sky, and water.”⁴ To a contemporary reader, Malevich's ideas seem contradictory. After all, we have come to expect *form* to stand in opposition to *feeling*,

1. For a thorough discussion of the concept of *faktura*, see Maria Gough, “Faktura: The Making of the Russian Avant-Garde,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 36 (Autumn, 1999): 32–59.

2. Kazimir Malevich, “Part II: Suprematism,” *The Non-Objective World*, trans. Howard Dearstyne (Chicago: Paul Theobald & Co, 1959), 76.

3. *Ibid.*, 74.

4. Kazimir Malevich, “Zhivopis' v futurizme” [Painting in Futurism], excerpted from the original Moscow 1916 third edition of *Ot kubisma i futurisma k suprematizmu* [From cubism and futurism to suprematism] in *Cherniy Kvadrat* [Black Square] (Saint Petersburg: Azbuka, 2001), 53–4. My translation.



EL LISSITZKY, *PROUN*, 1919–1920.
IMAGE © THE TRUSTEES OF THE
BRITISH MUSEUM.

5. Kazimir Malevich, “Iz ‘Kataloga X Gosudarstvennoy vystavki: Bespredmetnoe tvorchestvo i suprematizm” [From the Catalog of Tenth state exhibition: non-objective creation and suprematism] in *Cherniy Kvadrat*, 73.

6. Malevich, *The Non-Objective World*, 74.

7. *Ibid.*, 76.

8. *Ibid.*, 78.

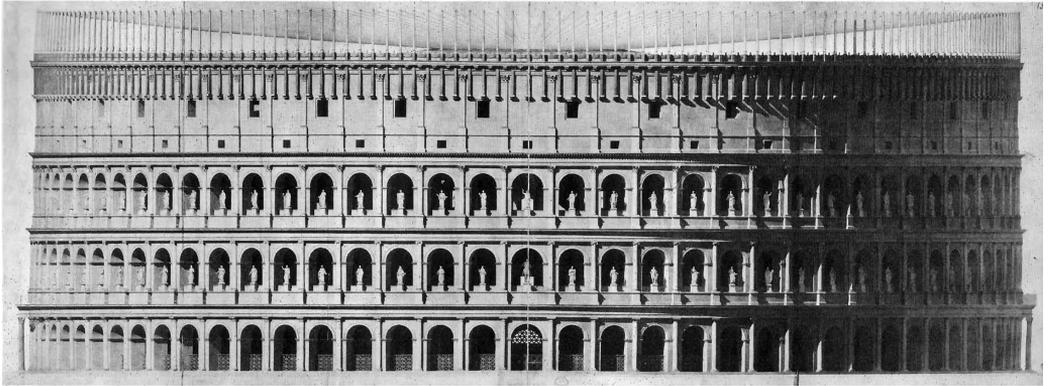
9. *Ibid.*, 94.

10. El Lissitzky, “A. and Pangeometry,” in Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 350.

intuition in opposition to *reason*, and *abstraction* in opposition to *realism*. But at the time of the formation of nonobjective art, these concepts reinforced one another. They coexisted in the parallel space of painting, where the construction of the white spectrum of infinity formed a deep emotional and simultaneously conscious world in the viewer.⁵

In *The Non-Objective World*, Malevich provides several examples that help to disassociate “feeling as such” with its descriptor, “actual artistic value,” from the material objects of the real world. For instance, an airplane that now functions “to carry business letters from Berlin to Moscow” first came about as an idea to manifest “the yearning for speed [and] flight,” not the other way around.⁶ Or an antique column, which no longer serves any “technical task in the building,” continues to present artistic value in its “material expression of a pure feeling.”⁷ Stripped of their temporary functions, material forms can be recognized as expressions of artistic feeling that are eternally meaningful and beautiful. But why should artistic objects ever serve a utilitarian function that they ultimately overcome? Malevich argues that painting can shed its relationship to representing the real world immediately and dismiss its value as a “copy of life.”⁸ “The Suprematists . . . have found new symbols with which to render direct feelings . . . for the *Suprematist does not observe and does not touch – he feels.*”⁹ The “feeling” of *Black Square* is in no way related to sensing the world or the experience of life. Rather, it offers an instance of the parallel world in pure art. “Painterly realism” – a reduced world of forms, materials, and compositions – operates at the very essence of rendering.

El Lissitzky, a painter, architect, student, and interpreter of Malevich, projected this concept into a technical reality. He famously named *Black Square* the “zero” of art, from which he built a three-dimensional world.¹⁰ He used this zero to establish a theory of “irrational space” where objects float free in parallel projection. In his famous essay, “A. and Pangeometry” (1925), Lissitzky redefined the principles of art through Nikolai Lobachevsky’s mathematical theorems of non-Euclidian geometry. Replacing the noun *art* with the abbreviation *A.*, he estranged the word from its common meaning and reassociated it with abstract, mathematical signification. He believed that if Lobachevsky’s theories did not resemble an image of our world, with their proofs of hyperbolic triangles whose angles added up to less than 180 degrees, then the space of painting could equally disengage from a mimetic representation of vision. This parallel to mathematics allowed him to recast Malevich’s argument on



JOSEPH-LOUIS DUC, COLOSSEUM RESTORATION, ROME, 1829. FOURTH-YEAR ENVOI. ELEVATION.

art through geometry. Rejecting the visual pyramid of perspective built on the illusion of a vanishing point set on a horizon line, Lissitzky proposed a theory of parallel projection:

*The solidly coloured [square] stamped out in rich tone on a white surface has now started to form a new space. . . . If we indicate the flat surface of the picture as 0, we can describe the direction in depth by - (negative) and the forward direction by + (positive), or the other way around. We see that suprematism has swept away from the plane the illusion of two-dimensional planimetric space, the illusion of three-dimensional perspective space, and has created the ultimate illusion of irrational space, with its infinite extensibility into the background and foreground.*¹¹

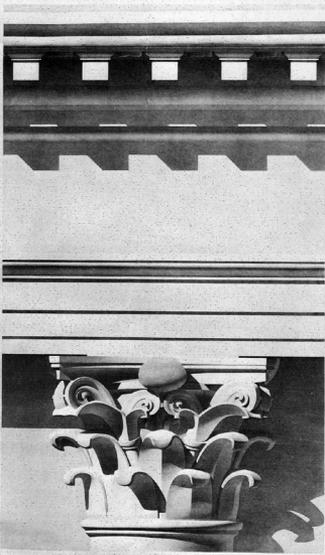
11. Ibid.

12. Yve-Alain Bois, "From minus infinity to zero to plus infinity: Axonometry, or Lissitzky's mathematical paradigm," in: *El Lissitzky: Architect, Painter, Photographer, Typographer* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1990), 27.

13. Malevich, "Iz 'Kataloga X Gosudarstvennoy vystavki," 74.

Lissitzky aligned himself fully with the classical notion that a painting ought to construct space, but his Prouns, which composed multiple three-dimensional forms, operated without a recognizable architectural enclosure set in perspective or skia-graphically shaded volumes. As Yve-Alain Bois has observed, their geometric construction relied on a special kind of axonometry, "a cavalier's perspective," or what we commonly refer to as parallel projection.¹² When Malevich called out, "I have ripped open the blue lampshade of color limits, [and] exited into the white; after me, comrade-aviators, swim into the void; I have established the semaphores of suprematism," he described this horizonless, infinite space for the parallel movement of all forms.¹³ The aviator takes over from the cavalryman: he moves toward the vanishing point, displacing the horizon line ever farther back, opening up the cone of vision to parallel construction. Taking the flatness of the canvas as a plane of reference, Lissitzky hoped to expand the depth of the composition by projecting the square in either direction, in and out of its surface. Here, oblique geometric forms represent the production of depth without relying on any indication of the real world.

In a 1976 essay, Bois describes the monochrome paintings



JOSEPH-LOUIS DUC, COLOSSEUM RESTORATION, ROME, 1829. FOURTH-YEAR ENVOI. CAPITAL DETAIL.

14. Yve-Alain Bois, “Malevitch, le carré, le degré zero” [Malevich, The Square, The Degree Zero], *Macula 1* (1976): 42. My translation.

15. M. Jules Pillet, *Shades and Shadows*, trans. Julian Millard (Philadelphia: Franklin Printing Company, 1896), 5.

by Malevich as “conception[s] of representation of space,” and each of Lissitzky’s Proun works as “an index of the world to come.”¹⁴ Both painters rendered objects and the space beyond; the former to present concept alone, and the latter to put that concept to use, bringing the formerly abstract and parallel world available to painting alone into life. Lissitzky’s suprematism is applied, and therefore allows us to make the final jump into architecture.

Consider the ink and wash drawings made by Joseph-Louis Duc following his receipt of the Prix de Rome in 1825. The detail rendering of the Corinthian order in the Colosseum is an elevation of the column capital and entablature from which an oblique isometric is projected at 45 degrees toward the bottom right corner of the drawing, following the academic Beaux-Arts method. This isometric image filled with wash gives the otherwise flat orthographic drawing the appearance of depth and renders it legible as three-dimensional form. M. Jules Pillet, who wrote the technical manual on this method, opened his discussion of shadow construction with the following observation: “The shadow of an object on a plane is nothing more than the oblique projection of the object on that plane.”¹⁵ The shadow then, as an “oblique projection,” is a kind of axonometric drawing cast against the vertical plane of the elevation.

From the point of view of the draughtsman constructing the long elevation of the Colosseum, the curving wall behind the columns doubles as a drawing plane inside of the orthographic drawing. Its convex surface performs the function of an abstract and immaterial canvas: it receives the projections of the oblique shadows. Following Lissitzky’s interpretation of Malevich, we can define this as the zero moment in the composition. Objects can be represented both in front of and behind its coordinates. In this way, the surface that receives the shadow, whether flat or convex, appears to work as the canvas of a proto-Proun. Lissitzky provides an anachronistic connection between Malevich’s suprematist painting and 19th-century academic rendering. It is thus possible to read *White on White* through the lens of a Beaux-Arts drawing. As such, the white square would be a shadow of an object that is hovering in front of the surface of the canvas.

Lissitzky’s incorporation of parallel projection in painting offers the link to understand the abstract capacity of architectural rendering. Perhaps if one were to write the history of rendering, locating *White on White* as a form of its modernity would shed light on the potential of this pervasive form of image making.

ANNA NEIMARK TEACHES AT SCI-ARC. IN 2011, SHE COFOUNDED FIRST OFFICE IN LOS ANGELES.