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PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

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△ IMPROVISATION

Kandinsky's bold, brilliant, outstanding example of a purely abstract painting, with its use of nonrealistic colors and simplified but still recognizable figures and objects.

▷ IMPRESSION III (CONCERT), 1911

Compared with Kandinsky's *Improvisation XI* (above), this painting looks at first sight like a purely abstract work. Without the help of the subtitle, it would be easy to miss the suggested presence of a grand piano and the audience.



Painting, especially, has advanced with almost fantastic strides during the last decades."

WASSILY KANDINSKY, POINT AND LINE TO PLANE, 1926

mosaic-like paintings inspired by Russian and German folk art. Even at this time, he began to use color in his paintings to express his experience and emotions.

months in Paris. During this time, his artistic development was to have been stimulated by the fauves (see p.274), a new French avant-garde group whose strident primary colors and sketchy, seemingly childish scenes made a powerful impact.

KANDINSKY



CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL IN ART, 1911

The cover of Kandinsky's book shows his woodcut *Standing and Falling Tower with Rider*. The book sold well, despite his publisher's concerns.

Toward abstraction

In 1908–09, Kandinsky entered his first period of artistic greatness and innovation. His colors grew brighter, as well as bolder, and by 1910, the figures and objects in some of his paintings had become so simplified that they were not easily identified. The end of the process, in 1911, would be abstract art—art that made no attempt to copy the visible world, its meaning consisting in its lines, shapes, and colors alone.

Kandinsky's progress can be illustrated by comparing works such as *Improvisation XI*, *Impression III*, and *Composition V*, all from 1910–11, in which the identifiable representational elements are progressively eliminated. The artist described the moment of illumination when he entered his studio in the twilight and saw a

KEY MOMENTS

1896

Gives up the law and leaves Russia to

1901

Establishes the Phalanx group and designs

1909

Founds the New Artists' Association

1910

Paints the first of his *Compositions*

1910–11

Paints on a new series, *Impressions*, and

1913

Completes *Composition VII*, the last of the series before the outbreak of World War I

1922

After a decade in Russia, he leaves for Germany, making many economic adjustments

1942

Paints smaller-scale pictures, including *Self-Portrait*, shortly before his death in 1944



Arnold Schoenberg

In 1911, Kandinsky heard music with atonal elements by the great Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg and was convinced that it was "the music of the future"; he painted *Impression III* as a tribute to the event. The two men then corresponded and became close friends. Schoenberg also painted—though in expressionist style—and exhibited with the Blue Rider group. Later, Schoenberg devised the revolutionary 12-tone system for which he is best known. Having experienced a painful anti-Semitic incident, in 1923 he broke with Kandinsky, whom he believed to hold similar views. After Hitler came to power, Schoenberg settled in the United States.