

The foundation for these statements was laid by Yevgeny Kovtun, who wrote the following in a preface to the publication of his letters to Matiushin: "For two years, almost until the vernissage itself, Malevich kept his new artistic experiments secret."<sup>25</sup>

At the Leningrad art scholar's disposal were Malevich's letters to Matiushin, which refuted this point; however, for certain reasons they did not attract his attention. The essays and publications by Kovtun, the country's pioneer in the study of the Russian avant-garde, for a long time were treated as primary sources, inasmuch as the letters of Suprematism's founder were inaccessible to other scholars. Donated by Matiushin in 1928 to the archive of the State Institute of the History of the Arts, and in 1936 transferred to the Manuscript Department of the Pushkin House,<sup>26</sup> these letters were closed to study in the twentieth century; access to them for other scholars was permitted in 2002. The letters were not published in full until 2004, in the two-volume *Malevich on Himself; Contemporaries on Malevich* (Malevich o sebe, Sovremenniki o Maleviche).

In fact, verification of the Udaltsova/Stepanova information makes the situation unambiguous: the gathering "in an elegant hotel room" took place in October 1915 in Moscow, after which Malevich made a decision to show Alexandra Alexandrovna his pictures, as he reported to Matiushin, just as he reported the fact that this meeting had taken place. Exter had no reason to break out in spots and make an effort to find out the name in November 1915, to say nothing of December, inasmuch as she had known both the pictures and the notes of the Suprematist since October. In any case, it is clear that the "exhibition circle" gathered not before the December vernissage in Petrograd but in fall 1915 in Moscow; at this meeting, according to Udaltsova's own statement, Malevich explained Suprematism.

On the whole, all the passages about the preparations for "0.10" recorded by Stepanova from what Udaltsova said go to prove the astonishing ability of human memory to deform real history in the name of one's own version of the "truth." Not one of the statements by contemporary witnesses to the events has been supported by the documentary evidence.

## N. M. Davydova and Suprematism's Public Affirmation

### *Davydova's Background and Circle*

After Malevich moved to Moscow from his Kuntsevo dacha in September 1915, he needed to unite innovators around the new painting he had discovered. He