

“new plane of the world edifice”—was inherent in Suprematism from the very beginning.

The “Amazons” and Suprematism

In fall 1915 Malevich was counting especially on Exter. At first he did come to believe in his success, inasmuch as he had was inexperienced in society etiquette, which did not allow for the baring of one’s true feelings. For example, the avant-gardist described in glowing terms the reception arranged for him in Germany in 1927. In fact, German intellectuals neither understood nor accepted the exotic “Russian professor,” with his grandiose modernist enthusiasm, a rejection for which there were a great many objective and subjective reasons. To Malevich, however, the mere assiduous attention of his German colleagues meant an utter triumph.⁹¹

In fall 1915 Exter quickly and irrevocably refused to participate in “0.10.” Popova and Udaltsova’s colleague would scarcely have hidden from them her impressions from her visit to Malevich’s studio, and after visiting the Verbovka exhibit they, too, were able to assure themselves just how “uninteresting” and “primitive” Malevich’s minimalist geometric compositions were in the context of the inventive ornaments of Exter, Puni, and Yakulov. These Suprematist “newcomers,” whose crude simplicity was perplexing, must also have contributed their mite to the artists’ notion of nonobjectivity’s “dilettantism” and “simple decorativeness.”

In the brief time frame of October–December 1915, Malevich’s activity had an extremely negative effect on Suprematism’s propaganda among Moscow women artists. It would have been hard to expect anything else. Like Exter, the serious Cubists believed that his rectangles and stripes might yet be useful as unpretentious arabesques for embroidery; however, they were glaringly inappropriate and simply offensive “in a frame and called a painting,” to use Tugendkhold’s words.

As a consequence, the Moscow group immediately formed a united front against the Suprematist’s attempts to “foist” his humiliating “ism” on them. On November 22, 1915, a day after “Verbovka” closed, Malevich wrote to Matiushin:

Everyone was in an uproar. Our whole exhib[ition] circle lodged a protest over me leaving Futurism and wanting to write a few words in the catalog and call my things Suprematism. [. . .] So you see how our comrades, so to speak, are