

atism. Once again the avant-gardist metaphysician was forced to become the champion of art's freedom and purity, denouncing the Constructivist materialists ("kharcheviki"), "slaves of life's ugly face." Years had been spent on this polemic, which possessed the supremely paradoxical nature so characteristic of Malevich's art. His Suprematism had great style-shaping potential, which he himself realized in his planning for an all-encompassing "Suprematist order." However, an analysis of all these processes, which unfolded in another period, falls outside the framework of this book, which is limited in time to the emergence, development, and conclusion of painterly Suprematism.

### "There Can Be No Question of Painting in Suprematism"

#### *The First One-Man Show*

Lazar Lisitsky (1890–1941), the future El Lissitzky, was in Moscow from the middle to the end of October 1919, having come from Vitebsk to obtain materials and equipment for the studios at the People's Art School. He was able not only to persuade but also to help Malevich to make the move to Vitebsk during those hard times. On November 5, 1919, a qualitatively new stage in the Suprematist's life began in that provincial city. However, decamping to another geographical location was not the reason for this; the departure itself was internally motivated.

A fateful event had occurred in the great artist's life work: white Suprematism ended when Malevich made his exit from painting.

In fall 1919, he personally prepared for his first one-man show in the former salon of K. Mikhailova on Bolshaia Dmitrovka in Moscow. It was held as the Sixteenth State Exhibition, organized by the Museum Bureau of Narkompros (People's Commissariat of Education), and its opening was scheduled for early November. However, Malevich had to leave with Lisitsky, whose trip was over, and could not wait for the vernissage. On November 7, the Suprematist informed Gershenzon from Vitebsk: "in a week my exhibition will open on B. Dmitrovka. [. . .]"<sup>20</sup> In December 1919 the freshly minted Vitebsk resident kept himself informed about his exhibition's further fate through Stepanova, who worked in the Museum Bureau.<sup>21</sup> However, due to the harsh winter and shortage of fuel, the exhibition did not open until March 25, 1920; its closing date is not recorded anywhere, but according to indirect information, it was still open in the summer.