

Black²

Malevich and ArtScience

Exhibition and symposium marking the 100th anniversary of Malevich's iconic painting

When he first showed *Black Square* in 1915, Kazimir Malevich unleashed some of the deepest secrets underlying the “objectless” nature of physical reality. From black-body radiation to the eventual prediction of black holes, the indelible *Black Square* evokes the quantum revolution that took the world by storm. A century later, amidst the resurging convergence of art and science, a new revolution is underway: **Black²**. Featuring ground-breaking artworks in the spirit of Malevich as well as panel discussions with art theorists and cutting-edge physicists, **Black²** will take place in April and July of 2015, in Moscow and Amsterdam, a city that holds the biggest collection of Malevich's work outside of Russia.

“By 1918 Malevich had moved beyond electromagnetism to depict the world about him as ultimately formless and colorless energy. That year he produced his first white-on-white painting, a white cross on a white canvas. The square had shed its material being and merged with infinity in a glare of pure whiteness. Malevich had entered the fourth dimension, achieving a sort of cosmic consciousness, a nirvana.” Arthur I. Miller, Colliding Worlds

Today, in 2015, the radical aesthetic, philosophical and social ideas of Kazimir Malevich are being re-examined through the prism of the pivotal scientific, cultural and planetary transformations of the past 100 years. The birth of quantum physics, space exploration, astonishing urban and geopolitical transformations – seminal changes intuited and pioneered by Malevich in aesthetics – today propel the creativity of artists inspired by his utopian vision of Supremus and Suprematism.

Their work has moved from metaphors expressed through oil paintings and architectonic models to direct sensory explorations of physical phenomena. Nanomaterials that offer almost complete light absorption (Frederik De Wilde, *Nano Black Cube*), levitation techniques (Evelina Domnitch and Dmitry Gelfand, *Photonic Wind*), and coherent light sources such as lasers (Vladimir Grafov, *Translucent Supremacy*) constitute the palette of Malevich's revisited legacy.

The 0.10 Exhibition in 1915 signalled the collapse of traditional aesthetic values and social structures. Are we building a new civilization today?



Symposium Black²

Date: 6 May 2015, 2.30 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.

Venue: KNAW, The Trippenhuis, Kloveniersburgwal 29, 1011 JV Amsterdam ([route description](#))

Despite the attention lavished on Malevich down through the years, much confusion still surrounds his biography and artistic pursuit – from disputes about the place and date of his birth and the disappearance of his gravestone and coffin at the end of the Second World War to the mysterious destiny of certain artworks and the mostly unexplored and untranslated scope of his philosophical writings. Having penned hundreds of pages of iconoclastic philosophical essays, Malevich was no less gifted as a writer and theorist than as a visual artist. Perhaps, because his writings are so deeply steeped in scientific musings, they have been virtually inaccessible for the vast majority of art theorists and historians.

Thankfully, the tide has begun to change in recent years owing to Malevich's double impact on the trajectory of ArtScience and its historication. For the Black² symposium, art theorists, artists, Malevich scholars and physicists will endeavour to open a new chapter in the Malevich legacy.

Symposium participants

Arthur I. Miller (London, UK), historian, physicist, philosopher of science, author of *Colliding Worlds: How Cutting-Edge Science is Redefining Contemporary Art*, discusses the interaction between art and science in the twentieth and twenty-first century avant-garde.

Igor Malevich (Minsk, BY), award-winning scientist, will present his 30-year research on the contradictions and grey areas in the artist's biography, as well as offer his interpretation of Malevich's ideas from the perspective of contemporary physics.

Evelina Domnitch (Amsterdam, NL), artist, symposium moderator.

Dmitry Gelfand (Amsterdam, NL), artist and art theorist, ponders Malevich's convergence with early twentieth century scientific research and with Russo-Soviet cosmism. He will also recount how Malevich's "Objectless World" informs his and E. Domnitch's collaborative aesthetic pursuit of macroscopic quantum phenomena.

Frederick De Wilde (Brussels, BE), sculptor and art-science researcher, explores the creative potential of hacking the substrate of our universe: quantum noise. Observations of carbon molecules in space led him to nano-engineer a blacker-than-black sculpture that absorbs all visible light.

Sjeng Scheijen (Amsterdam, NL) elucidates the provocative guise of Malevich's works, his 1918 writings for a Russian anarchist newspaper, and his brewing conflict with communist authorities.

Biographies of participants

Arthur I. Miller is Emeritus Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at University College London. He took a PhD in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. From 1991 to 2005 he was Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at University College London, where he founded the Department of Science & Technology Studies. He has lectured and written extensively on research in the history and philosophy of nineteenth and twentieth century science and technology, cognitive science, scientific creativity, and the relationship between art and science. He is a Fellow of the American Physical Society, a Corresponding Fellow of l'Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences, and was awarded fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, as well as grants for research from the American Council of Learned Societies, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung. He was an



Associate Editor of the *American Journal of Physics*. In the autumn term of 1977 he was visiting professor at L'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris. He was Vice Chairman, Division of History of Physics, American Physical Society for 1983-1984, and Chairman for 1984-1985, and has been a Director of the International History of Physics School at the Ettore Majorana Centre for Scientific Culture, Erice, Sicily. He published a number of books on the topic of creative thinking in art and science, including *Insights of Genius: Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art*, *Einstein, Picasso: Space, Time and the Beauty that Causes Havoc*, *Empire of the Stars: Friendship, Obsession and Betrayal in the Quest for Black Holes*, *Deciphering the Cosmic Number: The Strange Friendship of Wolfgang Pauli and Carl Jung*, and recently *Colliding Worlds: How Cutting-Edge Science is Redefining Contemporary Art*. <http://www.arthurimiller.com/>

Igor Malevich is an award-winning Doctor of Physico-Mathematical Sciences who also worked as a diplomat in China and South Korea. He has taught at Harvard University as well as at leading universities in Germany and Finland. His career has included work on the Soviet system of Moon laser location, on satellites and on lidar systems (used for space and undersea surveillance). He has also helped advance medical technology in the field of immune system laser stabilisation. He is the author of *Kazimir Malevich. Ascension to the Cross of Fate*.

Dmitry Gelfand and **Evelina Domnitch** create sensory immersion environments that merge physics, chemistry and computer science with uncanny philosophical practices. The artists employ current findings, particularly in the domain of mesoscopics, to investigate questions of perception and perpetuity. Having dismissed the use of recording and fixative media, Domnitch and Gelfand's installations exist as ever-transforming phenomena offered for observation. Because these rarely seen phenomena take place directly in front of the observer without being intermediated, they often serve to vastly extend the observer's sensory envelope. <http://portablepalace.com/> <http://synergeticalab.com/>

Frederik De Wilde acts on the border area between science, technology and art. The conceptual crux of his artistic praxis is the notions of the intangible, inaudible, invisible. It is this interstitial territory that De Wilde explores in his various works. Sometimes focusing on the side of the technological, and often situated in the perceptual, conceptual, social—human—register, his art is grounded in the interaction between complex systems, both biological and technological. Moreover, the indistinct, diffuse, 'fuzzy' arena where the biological and the technological overlap and commingle is a productive and favoured ground for his projects/projections. <http://frederik-de-wilde.com/projects/>

Sjeng Scheijen studied Slavic Languages at Leiden University and is a specialist in fin-de-siècle and early modern Russian art. He writes regularly on film, poetry, dance, classical music and politics both for specialists and the general public. He was appointed artistic director of the Dutch-Russian Cultural Year 2013. He has curated several exhibitions on Russian art, including *Ilya Repin, Russia's Secret* and *Working for Diaghilev*, both for the Groninger Museum, on socialist realism for the Drents Museum in Assen, and on early avant-garde art for the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht. In 2008 and 2009 he was the cultural attaché for the Netherlands Embassy in Moscow. He advises various cultural institutions, auction houses, and the Dutch Government on Russian art and Russian-European cultural politics. <http://sjengscheijen.com/>