A Study in Communicating Environmental Priorities

An Architectural Thesis:
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Kandinsky Foundation of Non-Representational Art
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Preface
Art is going through a rebirth of expressionism and this intrigues me. It's not the expressionism itself that intrigues me, we've seen all too much of this before, but the backbone of what good expressionism does. Expressionism, sometimes associated with modernism, works with the notion of the subjective rather than the objective. Objectivity is the process of reproducing the visible while subjectivity attempts to make visible through emotional and behavioral manipulations. Paul Klee once stated, "Modern art is to make visible, not to paint the visible." (1)

In investigating how we perceive objects within our environment, we, as designers, might be better able to produce an architecture which is more meaningful; more beautiful. As LeCorbusier said, "One uses stone, wood, cement, and turns them into houses or palaces; that's construction. It calls for skill. But suddenly, you touch my heart; you make me feel good. I am happy. I say: it's beautiful. This is architecture. It is art." (2)

(1) Klee, Paul, (unknown source).
Background
This thesis process began as an investigation to relate environmental cues to the user in an attempt to create an architecture which enhances the priorities of the program. By expressing the priorities of the program, I mean translating a message to the user through manipulation of the architectural fabric; a message which helps to express the overall purpose of the built environment. The vehicle in which I originally chose to express these goals was a museum which exhibited the work of a common group of contemporary artists (I later abandoned this in order to work with one special artist.) In keeping on track with the thesis, the design was intended to reflect the message of the artwork it contained. My first task then was to research and select a group of artists whose work exhibited an inter-related message. During my search for a group of artists, I learned something which was very valuable to my appreciation and suggested understanding of current art. It was something that changed the direction of my project and perhaps my artistic values.

In my thesis proposal statement I spoke of denoting a group of artists whose work exhibited an avant-garde nature. More specifically, the artists’ works were to be researched and judged for their overall content and message relating to the world of art and, ultimately, today’s society. In looking back, I find what I was really doing was searching for reason within art. In my previous art history classes, as well as architectural history for that matter, I was led to believe that this artist’s work was significant because of this or that artist.
was significant because of that. This process of learning led me to judge the beauty of art in a very rational manner. So my search for an avant-garde trend in the art world focused on what the art said and why the art said it. Anything else was perceived as an insult to the world of art.

In pursuit of this selection, I studied endless numbers of periodicals and eventually visited the art center of New York City. It was here that many of my artistic values changed. After visiting many contemporary galleries and contrasting this experience with visits to museums which exhibited past greats, something began to surface which was perhaps very obvious. None of the works seemed to inter-relate with the others as far as a social or artistic message was concerned. In fact, each painting or sculpture seemed to evolve from sources which were very different or opposed from one another. This was very puzzling to me because art is enjoying its greatest peak ever as far as economic security and quantities of buying and selling. This was all happening in spite of the lack of unifying concepts or rational roots. Art just didn’t seem to be contributing a message to the public or even caring about one for that matter. What was wrong? Was the public too blind to recognize the lack of rationale or had I just missed the boat concerning the value of art in today’s society.

Art is going through a period now when each individual artist seems to be doing his or her best to be different, to be popular, to be rich. The market for painting and ob
sculpture is loose and inflated. People are buying anything that seems to look different in hopes of latching on to a budding Picasso. Art has gone commercial. This exaggerated market searching for something new encourages artists to do their own thing in hopes of being discovered. It even seems that talent has been replaced by something which is now valued more; style.

Something really nice seemed to emerge out of this though. That something is the very same that kept me from seeing any order to the madness in the beginning. I began to think that maybe art didn’t have to contain any deep meaning to be considered good (although I don’t mean to downplay the importance of layers of information within art). After all, what is art? It is nothing that you can describe or put your finger on. Webster will tell you that it is the "activity of using imagination and skill to create beautiful things"(3), but that’s just because they had to include the word in their dictionary. In fact, the concept of art seems to fade away when you try to define it. Art has to do with values, beauty, and feelings very personal and very different in every person. This realization led me away from trying to stamp a group of contemporary artists with false rationale and toward an artist of the past named Wassily Kandinsky, the artist I chose to commit my project to.

Wassily Kandinsky was one of the first abstract expressionist painters. He worked throughout the first half of the twentieth century on a style which was free of any objective labels. He stated, "In my view, a

geometric boundary allows a color a much greater possibility of arousing a pure vibration than the boundaries of any object whatsoever which always spreads very loudly and very restrictedly in arousing a vibration appropriate to it (horse, goose, cloud, etc. . .)." (4) Kandinsky hoped that each viewer might let the tones of color and juxtaposition of shapes produce an emotion not like those dictated by objective symbolism. Each of his paintings meant something very different to each person who saw them. After all, beauty is within the beholder.

The challenge then is to create an architecture which contains the same energy and ideals as the paintings of Kandinsky. This thesis deals with methods of revealing information to the user which would help support the function of the facility. I would like to continue then with an explanation of the thesis criteria and the evolution of an architectural project.

Thesis Issues
The environment which we interact within is very complex. It consists of trees, grass, rocks, bushes, as well as people, automobiles, signs, and buildings. Nothing is experienced by itself. An object is at all times influenced by its surroundings. Thus at every instant, we are exposed to more visual stimuli than we can possibly recognize. As animals within the environment we are affected by this bombardment of eclectic imagery. The environment communicates many messages regardless of how jumbled. As designers, we must be capable of ordering the physical environment in ways which begin to make it more legible to the user, for so much information exhibited in such a careless manner certainly leads to confusion.

Architecture then is more than merely an object within the environment. Architecture has the ability to communicate, or reveal information to the user. This information, if presented in a controlled manner, can inform the user of environmental priorities and, in turn, make the user more aware of and more comfortable within the environment. And, it is important to us that we sense this.

In contrast to the art of painting or sculpture, the architect is forced to focus very functional needs, and hence, architecture is rarely practiced independent of these requirements. But too often architects neglect the programatic function of the facility and produce structured monuments catering to their own ideals. This tends to remove the architecture from its intended purpose and loose any possibility the architect might have had in making the user’s visit to the environment more meaningful in regard to the purpose of the visit. So I’m
This study investigates the communicative role of architecture within the sequence of space in time.

saying that the architectural form can communicate messages to the user which can heighten and strengthen the experience of perceiving and partaking within an environment.

Also contrasting from other visual arts, architecture exists within a three dimensional environment as we see it. Being a three dimensional environment, the user takes part in architectural space instead of perceiving it externally. Therefore it's communicative possibilities are strengthened due to the possibility of revealing information over time to a user who is active within the environment. Information which can reinforce the process which the user is subjected to or encouraged to participate within.

It is imperative then to attempt to understand how elements within the environment act as indicators. This study investigates the communicative role of architecture within the sequence of space in time. To determine this we must understand how we perceive and what we perceive. An understanding of the former will shed insight on the latter. This proposal reviews current thought concerning how we perceive objects in order to establish an understanding of how visual information may be arranged within the environment.

As a communicative tool, I am taking the psychological viewpoint that a building, like any other object in this world, is available to us only as a perceptual experience. It must therefore be dealt with as a sensory object or series of sensory objects. This viewpoint also
states that perception is interpretive, purposeful, and, by nature, creative. We use our visual information to create, qualify, and modify our understanding of the visual world and in turn use perceived patterns to direct new exploration. (5)

It is important to note that a recent group of individuals who concern themselves with what they call phenomenology strongly disagree with the idea that a building is available to us as a perceptual experience. Chrisian Norberg-Schulz writes: "...Architecture cannot take the immediate experience as its point of departure." (6) "What one describes in this way are subjective architectural experiences, and one would have to arrive at the absurd conclusion that architecture comes into being only when experienced. It is nonsense to say then that man is the center of architectural space, and that the directions of architectural space change with the movements of the human body. Architectural space certainly exists independently of the casual perceiver and has centers and direction of its own." (7) Norberg-Schulz is stating that space exist with direction of its own even without the presence of a visitor. I’ll give him that. What he is neglecting is the fact that the perception of the environment changes with differing viewpoints. What you see depends on where you stand and the circumstances involved in seeing.

Norberg-Schulz’s viewpoint also seems to be valid when perceiving a two dimensional object such as a painting. Perceptual experience, though, concerns the independent existence of things as they register in the mind. Rudolf Arnheim, a pioneer in the study of the art of visual

What you see depends on where you stand and the circumstances involved in seeing.


perception, states: "The frequently quite complex total image of an object (within a three dimensional progression) results from the spontaneous integration of the multiplicity of the particular visual projections. Such a total image is just as concretely perceptual as the individual sensory registrations."(8) Thus assessing visual information received from the objects we perceive within architectural space can communicate a message to the user as he progresses through space in time.

Being concerned with built form as a perceived phenomenon, I will review specific properties of the three dimensional experience that apply to architecture. In understanding these fundamentals, the architect is better able to conceptually organize architectural space in a way that is meaningful to the user as a communicative tool. Of course each individual perceives objects in a way which is very personal and differing from that of others. Nevertheless, we physically perceive objects in a very similar manner and, because of this, universal tendencies evolve that I will focus on.

It should be noted here that I am focusing on perceptual tendencies and perceptual goals within the communicative possibilities of the architectural environment. Of great significance also is understanding how we perceive elements within the environment physiologically. But due to its highly technical nature and great length, I will not attempt to discuss it. Do realize though that the findings of perceptual psychologists like Rudolf Arnheim are reflective of this field. His findings and writings are rooted within this body of knowledge as we know it.

The example of a cube well illustrates one of the very basic human tendencies to reduce perceived form to simple geometric elements. From no place of observation can one see more than three sides of a cube. Still everybody operates with the visual image of a complete cube. The particular qualities of such a mental image are not easily described, yet we can suggest how they come about. In publications such as "Visual Thinking", Arnheim discusses how we as viewers dissect the physical environment and attempt to make sense of what we see.

Our minds generally order elements into forms we can more easily relate to. Similar to the example of the cube, we tend to reduce the objects we perceive in the world into simple elements. In some cases though, we are unable to do this. For instance, LeCorbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp, France is made up of various shapes which do not reduce into a simple geometry. In no way can a viewer understand the form from one viewpoint. A person must walk around the building to verify its angles and curves before arriving at an image of the entire form. A person's experience of objects within the environment is greatly effected by the complexity of the object's form.

As mentioned earlier, Norberg-Schulz stated that architectural space has characteristics of its own outside the realm of time. What he fails to observe, though, is that a work of architecture is experienced as an event or happening. Recalling Arnheim, he writes: "This temporal aspect (architecture as an event) is not simply identical with what a person's sight or a film camera records on a journey through the building. It is not an affair private to the viewer but
belongs to the objective nature of the work of architecture. As an event occurring in time, the architectural experience resembles those generated by music, the dance, the theater, or the film.\(^{(9)}\) There are, of course, features that separate architectural space from the more static arts. Noted are a few differences which enhance the communicative properties of architectural space and landmarks within space as an experience in time.

First of all, the communicative properties of architecture are obvious due to the fact that the user literally takes part in the architectural environment. Unlike music, dance, theater, etc., the user is the center of the perceptual experience. He is, say, a player instead of an onlooker. Therefore the communicative nature of the environment is enhanced due to the user's attatchment. For example, one must visit Corbu's chapel at Ronchamp to fully understand its spacial relationships and communicative properties.

Architecture as a sequence in time also enhances the communicative properties of its components. It is true that elements of any nature are influenced by the context of the whole, but architectural space, being a series of perceptual experiences, has the ability of revealing the sequencial experience in time. In this manner, the communicative nature of the architectural environment can be revealed to the user in a controlled fashion (assuming the sequence to be of linear fashion in time). To cite an example, painted interior domes of Baroque cathedrals were intended to change in appearance as a person progressed through space. Some features were

meant to be viewed from an angle in the middle of the nave whereas one would perceive it very differently if standing directly beneath it. These paintings also dealt with illusion but serve the purpose of the example well. Similarly, the appearance of walls, windows, niches and other parts of buildings is changed by perspective as the viewer’s position in the architectural sequence changes.

Ultimately, there exists a communicative correlation between the experience of objects in time and the overall situation that generates them. Arnheim states: "In architecture, the experience of traversing the building must be firmly imbedded in an image of the building's spacial totality because the sequence makes sense only as an aspect of the building's timeless being."(10) Here, Arnheim speaks of the communicative properties of an environment being ordered to achieve a clarity and legibility of message.

Similarly, Julian Hochberg, Centennial Professor of Psychology at Columbia University, states that: "Our perception of space - and the perception of architectural volumes and objects - depends fundamentally on our perceptual intentions and on sequential acts by which those intentions are realized over time. (11) Again it is important that the parts do not make as much sense unless the whole is introduced. The viewer tends to make use of a perceptual tool which Hochberg terms as "parsing". Parsing is the act of giving a meaningful sequence to a series of glances in order to determine relationships between parts. In a very basic example: If a sequence of individual corners (see dia.) are presented successively at the same place in

(10) Ibid. p. 17.
space, the sequence soon exceeds the viewer's ability to remember individual items. If, however, the viewer is told or shown that the views are successive corners of a cross, starting with the upper left hand corner and proceeding clockwise, the individual corners take their place in a spacial map of a cross. Perhaps such relationships can occur in architecture with the use of an object which acts as a landmark.

Architecture then possesses great opportunities to communicate to the user of the environment due to its three dimensional qualities. Three dimensional environments offer opportunities of sequencial experience within the realm of time. With the understanding of basic perceptual principles similar to those mentioned, we, as designers, can create spaces which provide a sequence which is more interesting, pleasing, and comprehensible. Perhaps then we can produce an architecture which strengthens and heightens the function or process in which we are dealing. A process which is meaningful to the user.

Kandinsky’s Work
Around the dawn of the twentieth century, the art of painting had been primed for an era of constant contradiction in investigating art for art’s sake. Monet and the impressionists began to challenge the nature of painting and perception of the painted subject. Soon after, a man named Picasso challenged the notions of the impressionists and investigated the very nature of painting, implied space, and the physical restrictions of a two-dimensional means of communication. Here, Picasso worked with the representation of physical objects to depict an implied spatial movement to the viewer. At the same time, Wassily Kandinsky manipulated the notions of implied space working with a non-objective subject matter to portray a truly non-representational interpretation of space.

Kandinsky worked with colors and forms to create emotion and a sense of space which was totally free of any objective labels. "In my view, a geometric boundary allows a color a much greater possibility of arousing a pure vibration than the boundaries of any object whatsoever which always speaks very loudly and very restrictedly in arousing a vibration appropriate to it (horse, goose, cloud etc...)." (13) In other words, Kandinsky communicated emotional qualities from the picture plane to the viewer. In not using objective symbolism in his paintings, he was stating that art and its appreciation was an experience very private to the individual. No longer was the value in painting dependent on what it represented. What was stressed in his paintings is what they meant individually to the viewer.

It may be argued that art is a construct of society and that "good" art should represent the

thought or goals of a society during a certain period in time. Therefore Kandinsky’s paintings mean nothing due to their lack of social statement. But the very nature of Kandinsky’s work said something of society without the need of objective labels. Society at this time was evolving from a departure from secular bonds, a break from traditional family structure, and consequently, the rise of the individual. The individual is exactly what is stressed in Kandinsky’s paintings. Beauty was truly within the eye of the beholder. It was this subjective attitude that set the base for the abstract expressionistic epoch to follow.

Like art, a work of architecture is generated from a person’s interpretation of a set of issues. I would like to discuss my interpretation of Kandinsky’s painting in hope of establishing basic issues which can generate architectural fabric. I will first talk of very general relationships and goals which I see being established within his paintings. I will then get a bit more specific in terms of Kandinsky’s manipulation of the two dimensional canvas.

As mentioned earlier, a very dynamic feature in the canvases of Wassily Kandinsky is his manipulation of space. A viewer studying his paintings has the sensation of being drawn into a world very different from the one we know. This world extends endlessly in all directions into space which is undefined. The canvas itself seems to be a door which permits one to enter this neverending zone. A door which closes you within until your concentration is broken.
In the midst of this interpretation of space exists objects, objects of two classifications. The first class of objects dominate the space. They tend to break it down into layers and zones which tend to suggest areas of possible closure. Within this region of closure is seen possible habitation whereas the area beyond seems to extend into neutral infinity.

The second classification of objects are the life of the space. They are the objects which seem to make this area livable due to their delicate human scale. They do not seem to be located in any specific area though. Once you think you can verify the location of an object, it seems to move. Its not that the objects actually move in space. But an ever present ambiguity prohibits their description within space.

A result of these spacial descriptions underlines the real statement that Wassily Kandinsky dedicated his work to. The real message behind his paintings, as I as well as many noted scholars see it, is dependent on the viewer perceiving these spacial manipulations. Each object, line, and form within his paintings are seen within a context of their own. The viewer delights in the abstract painted forms and their relationships to each other. The paint is exploited for what it really is, nothing less. What is stressed is the elements that make up a painting rather than what they can allude toward. This is the basis which I chose for my major departure in developing an architectural environment.
Of course these very general descriptions of spacial organization, or lack of, are dependent of many more subtle and precise manipulations of the painted canvas. Following is a breakdown and brief description of the building blocks of Kandinsky’s pallet.
Scale

During the Bauhaus years, Kandinsky used a very large canvas to overtake the viewer. But within this overwhelming scale existed many elements which tightened up the space in a very intimate, very personal manner. The initial scale then was very large while breaking down to a more comfortable, personal scale.

Rhythm

Line was manipulated in many of Kandinsky's works to perform an expression of rigidity, pulse or tension. A constant rhythm is set up which leads the eye across the surface of the canvas while, at the same time, the viewer is invited to look deep into the painting. This great depth is arcaded constantly by objects in space which cannot be defined or given a location. They do however flank the journey with a continuous rhythm.
Movement

Because western cultures read from left to right, Kandinsky attempted to create a movement toward the left in his paintings. "As in reading, a picture plane is read from left to right. The right end is home. Finished. Reading to the left implies greater freedom from the limits of time." Also, to Kandinsky, the upper portion of the canvas represented the heavens while the lower the earthly. Therefore, movement was also directed slightly upward, freeing the image from being tied to the ground.

Proportion

Kandinsky felt the boundaries of a picture plane related to the way people experienced life. The vertical orientation related to the heavens and allowed the spiritual notion in a painting soar. The horizontal orientation surrounded the viewer with earthly bounds. When an object was placed at the top of a painting, its mass seemed to be exaggerated. An object at the bottom of the plane appeared much more stable.
Color

Colors to Kandinsky were very emotional and were the basis of the spiritual in his paintings. Individual colors each held a position in which emotion they could evoke. His work constantly contained a struggle of contrasts to either heighten or hold back the colors. The following are the five basic colors in which others are derived.

BLUE  mysterious, spiritual, recedes into canvas in an amorphous fashion.

YELLOW sharp, annoying, stabs at viewer.

RED  sturdy, strong, holds position well.

WHITE very pure, like a pause in music, heightens colors to higher contrast.

BLACK deep, end, dragging other colors downward when mixed.
Texture

In Kandinsky’s work, texture is a primary tool used to suggest and contradict depth. He worked with two primary ideas which were incorporated to "Free the painting from the canvas," the ideal plane and the material plane. The ideal plane is the area which the objects Kandinsky painted lived. The material plane is the backdrop of the painting which suggests the infinite and supports that notion of deep space Kandinsky dealt with. The material plane is dull, muted, and fuzzy while the objects living in the ideal plane are generally crisp and vibrant. This allows them their floating appearance. These items in the ideal plane often incorporate texture’s sensation of distance to constantly contradict one another to create a sense of spatial ambiguity.

Kandinsky used these tools to create space within his paintings which would come alive. He treated his paintings as vehicles to extract emotion from the viewer. I chose to display Kandinsky’s work in my thesis project in regards to his subjective outlook of art. Creating a piece of architecture which reflects this can be a wonderful thing. I feel working with Kandinsky’s paintings as subject matter will be a great challenge in communicating these ideas.
Applied Issues
In view of the relationship of creating an environment which is reflective of the programatic intentions and the assessment of Wassily Kandinsky’s paintings, I would like to discuss some priorities which will act as general concepts and will ultimately establish design guidelines. These concepts are meant to reinforce the communicative properties of the architecture. An architecture which can be perhaps more meaningful to the user.

Kandinsky’s paintings were said to be very separate from any objective symbolism. The project also should produce a separation of the subjective experience from any objective relationship. A separation which makes the experience of viewing the painting, and emotions which evolve, very personal and individual. This can be done within the experience of architecture also. I propose to make a very obvious and deliberate separation between the subjective experience of the architectural form and the very objective nature of using the architecture. Only extenions of the architectural process and function will extend from the ground and be visible to the user as he approaches the environment. In this manner, the individual will be able to react to the architectural form in light of how it appears to them aesthetically, not what it represents.

Another point of departure for the architectural representation concerns the material Julian Hochberg discussed. "Our perception of space...depends on our intentions and sequential acts by which those intentions are realized over time." (14) In an architectural setting, I see this as very important to the process of relating messages or intentions to the user. To reinforce

this notion, I am using a special landmark within the Kandinsky environment to establish perceptual priorities throughout the experience of the space or sequence of spaces. This landmark will be located in a central space within the project much like the space which Kandinsky creates within his paintings. The user will initially focus on this landmark when entering the project and constantly be reminded of its existence throughout the experience of the architecture. When arriving at the space, the viewer will be able to sense the type of space which Kandinsky created within his paintings. Architectural forms and objects will take the place of his painted two dimensional objects.

I stressed that one of the great strengths of Kandinsky’s paintings was their ability to highlight the materials involved and not try to mold them into symbols of things they are not. I think this is very crucial to the user’s experience of a Kandinsky generated environment. The findings of perceptual psychologists can be very important in producing an architectural fabric which is supportive of this. It was stated that people have a universal tendency to reduce objects they perceive in the world into simple geometric forms. If they are unable to do this, they are forced to inspect the object from different angles in an attempt to understand it. Consequently, if complex objects are surrounded by simple geometric forms, they are highlighted. I am manipulating this psychological construct to reinforce the understanding and potential message of the architecture. Viewers perceived each painted form in Kandinsky’s paintings as independently expressing the emotional possibilities of the
paint. I will treat the architectural form in a similar manner. The architectural fabric is to be composed of an assemblage of independent, simple geometric element which are very easily understood by the viewer. In contrast, the more complex forms of people and automobiles are highlighted also as objects within the environment. As in the paintings, the viewer might perceive these objects as functionally independent of traditional architectural form.

The concept of continuing space will also be stressed with the objects and processes of the environment. The project is located next to a river. This river represents a physical restriction as well as an element within the environment. As a process within the environment, I would like to introduce it into the architecture as an element or object. The transition of the water as an object to its process into the river reinforces the qualities of continuous or infinite space. An event that will be obvious to the user.

I said this river also acts as an implied barrier in the environment. I plan to extend objects or forms past the river which will still be perceived as part of the architectural environment. These extended objects will also begin to mimic objects which are not directly participants in the immediate architecture. Therefore the surrounding context will be perceived as a continuation of the architectural environment.

What is very important throughout the assessment of Kandinsky's paintings is the experience of the
individual. In fact, as I had stated earlier, this statement of the individual is one factor that makes Wassily Kandinsky's paintings timeless. There is no controlling symbolism which tends to date the paintings or exclude the understanding of less knowledgable viewers. The layman's experience is every bit as important as the scholar. I think, then, that the architectural process should stress the individual and not the group. Cyril Connolly, author of The Unquiet Grave, stated, "Art is made for the alone, by the alone."(15) It is this factor that seems so relevant to a architectural environment.

In reinforcing the individual within the architectural experience, the image one perceives of the entire architectural environment should be reinforced by the parts. As Arneheim stated, "The experience of traversing the building should be firmly imbedded in an image of the building's spacial totality because the sequence makes sense only as an aspect to the building's timeless being."(16) The exterior form should, at times, relate to the interior to assist the user in understanding his location in space. The experience of the individual spaces within the architecture, then, should reinforce the qualities that the exterior environment suggests.

These have been the major concepts that I am using in hope of increasing the communicative possibility of the architecture. They are, I guess, tools to guide me through design. I will next represent how these ideas evolved into a three dimensional environment.


This museum and research foundation will cater to the translation and internalization of the ideas and works of Wassily Kandinsky. In dealing with these issues, this facility will provide amenities to increase understanding of the paintings of Kandinsky. A museum to display paintings, a library for scholarly study, a theater for public presentation, and a gallery to display works of contemporary practitioners will be provided to serve the artist, the scholar and the interested public.
General

I would now like to describe the architectural solution which I arrived at during my thesis. Keep in mind the goal of the total environment during the individual spacial descriptions. Kandinsky investigated the emotional possibilities of the painted surface free of objective symbolism. I, in turn, am investigating the separation of architectural elements from their typical objective relationships. The architecture is meant to reinforce the independent perception of the element. The viewer, then, is encouraged to recognize these elements as contributing to the image or spirit of the whole.

The spacial descriptions which follow will first cover the priorities which generated the spaces. Then the actual manifestation of an architectural solution will be discussed along with some supporting technical information. I will start more generally by covering some basic planning principles and focus in on individual spacial manipulations.
The Site

The specific site is located on the north bank at the marriage of Fall Creek and White River in Indianapolis, Indiana. It contains a levee along the southern boundary which rises about eight feet and falls close to fifteen feet down to the river plane. The river is flanked by a dense row of trees. An access road curves past the mainly flat site to the north. The site sits within an industrially zoned area which tends to be very disorienting to the visitor. To the north-west sits a historic pumphouse exhibiting a classical revival style. This facility receives minimal activity.

This site worked very well with my project in light of two important factors. The site is located in an area which possesses no dominant planning principle. Like the sensation when studying one of Kandinsky’s paintings, I wanted the user to feel detached from any strong ordering context. In this manner, the elements can be expressive of the project without contradicting regional planning. Second, the site is located adjacent to a body of water. Water, such as a river, implies a definite physical boundary to man. The project then can work with this to provide an implied extension of the architectural fabric. This feeling of extended space was very dominant in the paintings of Kandinsky.
Two general organizational requirements evolved from this specific site. First, public accessibility had to occur from the north due to the location of the access road. Also, exterior activity spaces would be oriented to the south providing separation from the automobile distractions as well exposure to the southern sun and views to the river. As mentioned earlier, spacial activities will occur below the ground plane in order to reinforce the separation from the objective nature of traditional architectural form.

Four main design elements are present on the site: A series of planes, an arcade, a winding band, and a water element.
Planes

I think there is a need, despite the definite lack of orientation, to make a statement of placement within the overall city context. The series of planes help to accomplish this. They penetrate the landscape at areas of major function within the project; the entry, museum, theater, and restaurant/gallery. They produce a layering of the perceived exterior space as do the major forms in Kandinsky's paintings. Planes then continue past the functional environment to the other side of the river to suggest a continuation of immediate space. This plane which occurs on the opposite bank of the river begins to take a form which mimics the skyline of the buildings across the river. This suggests that even the urban skyline is an extention of the project, thus continuing space indefinitely.

These planes are to be constructed of steel columns which rise out of the ground and are reinforced by horizontal steel channels. These steel channels attach 8' x 8' square limestone panels. These limestone panels can be viewed as a material of great strength and permanence. These limestone planes are the dominant forms on the site.
Arcade

Kandinsky’s paintings always imply a movement to the left. He always establishes a contradicting rhythm to, perhaps, downplay any definite direction. This is the function of the arcade. The arcade also stands separate of any direct architectural interpretation, thus drawing attention to it as an object which occurs within architecture. In trying to establish a dominant contradicting rhythm, the arcade is sheathed in red painted aluminum panels. The slick finish and strong, sturdy color helps to establish it as a dominant form within the environment.

The gift shop within the horizontal element of the arcade is supplied with support systems from removable interior floor panels. The entire form is steel framed with extra lateral support supplied by the reinforced masonry elevator cores occurring at the gift shop’s entry and exit.
As many elements within Kandinsky's paintings do, the HVAC supply takes the form of a free-flowing band which winds throughout the project. This form assists in breaking up any definite patterns established by the forms. The user comes in contact with the form as he enters the project as well as being enclosed by it in the exterior gallery.
Water

To build upon the idea of an implied extention of space, I am bringing the river into the project to be viewed as an element. As a person enters the facility, he is presented with a mass of water that represents an object within space, not a traditional form of water. This is accomplished by constructing a concrete water trough with perfectly straight edges to permit the water to gently drape over the edge. This water mass extends and empties into the center of the exterior gallery where it meets with a fountain. This fountain then drains down the hillside to the river (Fall Creek). This progression from element, to fountain (another element), to river reinforces the notion of continuation past the limits of the site as the water progresses down river.
Floor Plan

A. Lobby
B. Theater
C. Museum Sequence
D. Gallery
E. Luncheon Bar
F. Exterior Dining/Sculpture Gallery
G. Library
H. Gift Shop (above)
I. Gallery Storage
J. Loading Dock
K. Coatroom
L. Mechanical Room
Entry

The forms which the architectural environment displays are of a very dominating scale. This is to act as a focus, or possibly sculpture, within the surrounding context. As the user enters the vicinity, he becomes aware of this. The user then proceeds down the entry drive to an intimate subspace enclosed by trees which contains a small form denoting arrival. He then drives out of this subspace toward an open, explosive space. In doing so, his view is directed toward a tall dancing fountain within the midst of the Kandinsky environment. This fountain occurs within my interpretation of the place a person perceives in Kandinsky's paintings. This fountain will be a focus throughout the process.
Parking

Upon arriving at the place to enter the facility, the visitors are separated from their automobile. A valet will then take the car to its parking destination, which the viewer is unaware of. Later, after experiencing the museum, the person is directed to a spot that serves as a lookout which suspends the viewer within the Kandinsky environment. Here, the person can study the objects within the environment from a lofty perch. To the viewer's surprise, though, his automobile has been placed on a pedestal (parking platform) within the elements. The visitor then has an attachment to the architecture by contributing an element within the environment.
Lobby

The lobby is based on an experience very similar to the entry sequence. The user stands within a space which is flanked by planes, objects, and elements; a space much like that within Kandinsky's paintings. Like the entry sequence, the vista is directed toward the fountain within the center of the exterior gallery. The elements that occur within the exterior environment penetrate the lobby space to assist in user orientation within the environment. The water form appears to penetrate through the ground plane and creates a wall enclosing one boundary of the space. The lobby space, then, relates to the image of the whole.
Theater

My interpretation of the space created within Kandinsky's paintings is portrayed in the theater. The function of the theater is to reinforce the qualities of the paintings. Again, it is important here to note that I perceive the paintings as stressing the perception of individual pieces which relate to the whole composition. To capture this spirit in the theater presentation, I have chosen to project films on fragmented screens throughout the theater. Each screen will exhibit a piece of information which relates to the whole message. In this manner, the user will have to wander through the theater independently to see the simultaneous parts of the presentation and, therefore, each arrive at a separate conclusion of the message. To reinforce independent movement of the user, I have structured the theater with a dense grid of large, view obstructing columns.
Museum

Kandinsky worked in very distinct phases throughout his career. The museum spaces will therefore be divided into separate units. The movement from one space to the next will restrict the flow to one person at a time. This will reinforce the independent perception of the paintings and formulation of very separate interpretations. The paintings are to be hung in an imaginary plane apart from the background to reinforce their object-like quality.

At the end of the museum sequence, the user will move to a glazed cube which serves as a lookout over the environment. Here, the person can find his car among the objects within the space. The museum process is concluded by descending down the elevator, from the lookout cube, which empties into the gallery space.

The separate museum spaces appear to topple down from the top of the limestone plane. They are structured by lateral beams which cantilever from the main columns of the limestone plane. The units are then framed and clad in a shiny blue fiberglass panel to contrast with the coarse limestone. The separate museum spaces are then read as separate objects.
Interior Gallery

The gallery reflects my view of Kandinsky's infinite space. The ceiling plane steps down to the back wall. Natural light washes the ceiling forms as they layer back to distort the viewer's perception of depth. This creates an ambiguous spacial reference in which to highlight the objects (paintings and sculpture).

The art is to appear, as stated, as objects within space. There is no rational order in the exhibition the work in an attempt to reinforce their separate identity. To reinforce their object-like appearance, the paintings will be suspended in space with a reference plane close behind. The sculpture will be shown on a pedestal in a similar notion to the automobile presentation. All of these tactics are to highlight the concept of objects within an indefinable space.
Exterior Gallery/Dining

The gallery opens up to the exterior sculpture gallery which also serves as an exterior dining plaza. This is the area with the central fountain which has been a focus throughout the sequence of experience. The exterior gallery space also serves as an area where the user is placed among the elements of the environment. This is very representational of the space within Kandinsky’s paintings. A layer of humanly scaled information is presented by the surrounding partial closure while the large objects within the environment represent another layer of form.

The connection, and continuation, of the water element to the river is very obvious here as an unobstructed view is available to the river and across the bank. As stated, there are also accommodations for exterior dining. This area flows into the interior dining space in inclement weather.
Gift Shop

The final activity in the sequence of the project is the gift shop. Like the dining area, the gift shop is a very necessary function within the program due to its financial aid. A gift shop also seems to almost be a cliche' in museum facilities. It is the place where people acquire physical reminders of their experience. The gift shop is therefore a very crucial experience in translating a message of an environment.

The user enters an elevator at the end of the gallery and rises up to the horizontal element in the arcade, the gift shop. The space is very long and narrow stressing movement only by the individual (rather than the group). Items are displayed for purchase very independent of one another. Their presentation is much like that of gallery pieces; thus stressing their object-like nature. They are objects contributing to the overall experience. At the completion of the gift shop process, an elevator delivers the user back to the initial lobby space.
Photographs
Entry from North East.
Entry from North-West

View east along levee
Entry view.
Exterior model view

Cut-away model view
View within exterior gallery

View east at gallery daylighting
View looking north from levee bank

View north from river
Personal interpretation of Wassily Kandinsky's Paintings.
Facility Program

This museum and research foundation will cater to the translation and internalization of the ideas and works of Wassily Kandinsky. In dealing with these issues, this facility will provide amenities to increase understanding of the paintings of Kandinsky. A museum to display paintings, a library for scholarly study, a theater for public presentation, and a gallery to display works of contemporary practitioners will be provided to serve the artist, the scholar and the interested public. Spacial descriptions and square foot allocations are listed below.

**Kandinsky Museum**

3500

Spaces for the display of Kandinsky's paintings will be provided in a very controlled area. Layout of the spaces will be arranged in order to reinforce the positive aspects of the sequence of works in time.

**Contemporary Gallery**

6000

A very flexible gallery will provide space for contemporary artists to display their work to the public for appreciation and sale. Selection of it's content will be the decision of the museum curator. An exterior display court will be directly accessible to the gallery. Gallery shows will rotate approximately four times a year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXTERIOR DISPLAY</td>
<td>An exterior display space will be provided in relation to the contemporary gallery in order to display artists' works which have been designed to be outdoors. Space provided should be secure while facility is closed and should be linked with an exterior dining court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDITORIUM</td>
<td>Space should also comfortably accommodate groups of 25, 50, 100 or 200 people. Space will be utilized either following the museum per session or independent of the museum activity such as public presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBRARY</td>
<td>A library will be provided to house books, periodicals, films and other documents to increase understanding of Kandinsky's work as well as other fields related to the study of &quot;emotional&quot; art. The space will provide study areas, film booths and space for other necessary equipment. It shall only be an in-house research collection though (no check outs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUNCHEON BAR</td>
<td>A luncheon bar will be provided serving catered food (cold plates or warmed on site) and refreshments including bottled beer and wine with space common to the exterior dining space overlooking the sculpture garden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOOK CENTER 500</td>
<td>A book store will be located in direct visual relationship with the facility entry. Here, souvenirs, information, and books on related art can be obtained or purchased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARKROOM 150</td>
<td>A darkroom is necessary for the documentation of works as well as assisting published media with visual documentation. The darkroom should be in direct relationship to the preparation room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIEWING ROOM 200</td>
<td>A viewing room is provided for private inspection for a piece of art by a certain member of the public or a visiting scholar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREPARATION ROOM 250</td>
<td>Framing, repair, photography and other needed services can be accomplished here in order to provide a protected in-house service area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIVATE STORAGE 200</td>
<td>This space is privately accessed for storage of damaged or in route works of Kandinsky. It serves as a layover space for a valuable painting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALLERY STORAGE 4000</td>
<td>Gallery storage is provided to serve as a layover space for contemporary pieces before or after the periodic exhibitions. This space should be in direct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
access to the contemporary
gallery and loading dock.

LOADING DOCK
2000
Area is needed to unload
shipments in direct access to
gallery storage. Loading zone
should be large enough to
accommodate a 65' long trailer.

150 Coatroom
250 Maintenance storage
300 Public rest rooms and
janitorial storage.

OFFICE SPACE
1100
250 Director
200 Curator
150 Facility Manager
150 Head of research foundation
150 Secretary
200 Restrooms

CIRCULATION &
MECHANICAL
3000
15 % of total square footage

TOTAL
29300 +/-

This has been an estimate of the spaces and
square-foot requirements involved. Additions or
deletions may occur through further understanding
of the project.
Wassily Kandinsky is a pivotal figure in modern art and, perhaps more than any other painter, identified with the transition, early in the second decade of this century, from representational to abstract painting. Born in Russia in 1866, Kandinsky did not begin his serious career as a painter until early in the twentieth century. In Munich, between the years 1908 and 1914, he made his most decisive contributions to modern painting. Forced to leave Germany at the outbreak of World War I, Kandinsky lent his considerable organizational skills to the young Soviet government, setting up cultural institutions and imbuing them with modern notions. With the gradual erosion of an initially favorable cultural climate, Kandinsky left Russia to accept an important teaching position in the recently established Bauhaus—the school of visual and social experiment created in Weimar by the architect Walter Gropius. Kandinsky’s second stay in Germany lasted until 1933 when, following the liquidation of the Bauhaus by the Nazis, he found refuge in Paris to spend there the last eleven years of an eminently fruitful and influential life.

Kandinsky’s oils, watercolors, drawings and prints are, of course, enjoyable and rewarding each for their own sake and quite apart from the artist’s pivotal position within the historical evolution of twentieth-century art. Knowledge of his life and related development as an artist, however, adds greatly to the full comprehension
of his oeuvre, which, thereby, assumes significance as an integrated whole, rather than in unrelated parts. With the possible exception of Piet Mondrian, no painter of our era has left us as consistent a heritage or a sequential progression as clear and illuminating as Wassily Kandinsky.

From pictorial beginnings, Kandinsky, somewhat like his Fauve contemporaries in France, gradually attenuates forms for decorative and expressive purposes until, in the most radical departure known to the art to the twentieth century, he proclaims through his works and through accompanying texts, the independence of color and form from recognizable subject matter. His use of non-representational forms toward pictorial ends took place early in the second decade of this century when others, like Picabia, Kupka, Delaunay, Malevich, and Mondrian moved toward similar conclusions. He was, therefore, not alone in projecting content solely through formal means, but it is undeniable that he place himself at the inception of a new mode of pictorial thought, through originality and inventiveness as well as the sheer authority and strength of his art. The same intellectual integrity and courage that propelled him into a position of leadership before World War I, later enabled him to abandon earlier modes and exert a decisive influence during the consolidation years at the Bauhaus. During the Bauhaus period the spiritual aspirations of his earlier phase were converted into a grammatical framework as painterly intuition was harnessed by carefully established systems. Kandinsky's works of the last, Parisian years are particularly moving for their detachment and their distance from dogmatic attitudes. The paintings and the watercolors of
these late years represent the culminating achievement of insights gained in a wise and measured life.(17)
Munich Period 1900-20
Bauhaus Period 1921-33
Paris Period 1934-44
Bibliography


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Klee, Paul, (unknown source).


