

Kandinsky and the dawning of the Free Spirit. The vision, exercises and meditations of a spiritual artist (Ten Have, 2010)

By Doctor Loucas van den Berg

Introduction

'The free mind can flourish only in an era where man sees the necessity of a spiritual solstice. These days, mankind is determined by the outward life in a restless, nervous manner and the inner self is dead to him.'

The above is an 1896 quotation by the Russian Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) who at that moment, 30 years old, decides to become an artist. These words have remained relevant to this date.

To Kandinsky, generally viewed as one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century, painting from a free unconditioned mind is essential. In order to stimulate this state of mind, he develops exercises in concentration, meditation and observation. Exercises that bring about a transformation of the consciousness. They, together, form the core of this book. In his teachings, Kandinsky has addressed himself not only to artists but to all who wish to broaden their perception to one of unity. Herein, judgments disappear and the space and expression of the soul spontaneously appears. This is what Kandinsky calls 'the creation from an inner need'.

The meditations and exercises in observation would never have reached us, had not his widow, Nina Andrevskaja Kandinsky, taken the initiative upon his death in 1944 to exchange views with the Swiss artist Hans Hermann (1922-2002). Hans Hermann is well acquainted with her. He was an arts teacher at the Goetheanum in Dornach, twelve years of which as *Sektionsleiter*. He is familiar with the works of Kandinsky and the German expressionists and was given a woodcut by Kandinsky himself. Upon Kandinsky's demise, Nina Kandinsky expresses the hope that the exercises in consciousness, given by Kandinsky to his students, will be worked on. She sees in Hans Hermann the one man to take care of this wish. Through his talks with Kandinsky's widow, Hermann succeeds in penetrating deeply into the material and opening it up to his personal students.

The authors of this book have studied and incorporated Hans Hermann's notes, which are frequently referred to as 'source Hans Hermann'. In 1999, Loucas van den Berg decided to study this material together with H el ene Jansen, one of Hermann's former students, and make it accessible to a modern audience. An intensive research followed, in which the writers aimed to describe and use the teachings for educational purposes in such a manner that they were fit to be used in different professions. They found a clear build-up in the exercises. Kandinsky enjoys working his way through all polarities and judgments. He creates space for the authentic experience within him, the inner voice. Sometimes he calls this '*the dictation by the deceased*

wife'. Thus referring to the painter Henri Rousseau who sees all of his work as a dictation by his deceased wife. Put more generally: Kandinsky has strong views on the importance of the inner need in which man and artist do not just blurt out all emotions and thoughts, but instead search for the authentic form, the impulse from the heart. Kandinsky learns throughout his life to view beyond the chaos deeper and deeper into the light and energy behind all outward appearances. He observes so clearly that it enables him to draw all life's processes in their abstraction and figuration. Processes that we can only view through the lens of a microscope and other scientific instruments.

While painting he has come into contact with this observation and has grown towards it. In this manner he surpasses personal preferences and antipathies connected with the ego and becomes an authentic individual within the framework of a world with a sense of community. This is not the result of a thought process but of a process of experiences. Wassily Kandinsky did not work according to a preconceived method but by way of inner need and the intensification of observation. Therefore, Kandinsky's exercises are not only suitable for artists but for all who wish to broaden their consciousness, to refine their observation and to create beyond the ego from the soul.

Although Kandinsky chose the way of art, his goal was not solely the elevation of art. He also wanted to use art to elevate society spiritually and set mankind free. The blossoming of the free spirit, to him, is a turning point, the birth of something new, launched by him and his artist friends Franz Marc, August Macke and Paul Klee before the onset of WWI.

The authors take up this thread in the twenty-first century. Kandinsky viewed the year 2000 as a turning point in history from where mankind could learn to live more from his spiritual basis. He himself laid the foundation for this new twenty-first century. 'His twentieth century' he said 'was one of fear, senselessness and aimlessness'. Everything had to be efficient and practical and art was viewed upon as dangerous nonsense. Anyone who advanced in this field was considered an atheist. Kandinsky, on the opposite, saw art as an opportunity to formulate a spiritual answer to the materialistic mentality and its show of war, judgment and power. An answer strengthening the individual and his authentic impulse.

Kandinsky looked for answers not only in art, but also by means of organizing exhibitions with peers such as the members of Der Blaue Reiter. Thus, he attempted to form a front against the moral of power and bourgeoisie. All of his exercises and words have remained relevant in the twenty-first century. On the contrary: in these times our creativity from the soul is often masked, in need of a free spirit to stand strong as an individual and realize personal growth. A free spirit that will not be demonized by forces aiming at harnessing him, both spiritually and socially. Admittedly, at present we are in a position of joining various schools of consciousness, but it remains difficult to not become immersed in a belief system. Kandinsky was a master at returning time and again to the personal ultimate creativity making our soul visible.

In this book the authors have connected Kandinsky's teachings and meditations to the reflections and works by befriended artists such as Franz Marc, August Macke,

Paul Klee and Gabriele Münter. This being said to indicate that Kandinsky's development did not stand alone but was arrived at within a larger context. Firstly, the authors render a comprehensive biography of Kandinsky. Further, they apperceive once again a number of Kandinsky's paintings, based on his exercises in consciousness. We can notice Kandinsky's spiritual development by looking closely at his paintings. Kandinsky has indicated repeatedly that his spiritual growth is to be found in his artworks themselves.

The authors have, as indicated above, worked through the assignments in Kandinsky's exercises themselves and share their drawings and insights with the reader. This in order to show clearly that anyone can successfully complete these assignments and exercises; without training or artistic talent. The point is not whether one draws or paints to a high standard, but to intensify and elevate the art of observation. In choosing to reproduce Kandinsky's works the authors have, moreover, let themselves be led by simplicity and studies illustrating his exercises in consciousness. Kandinsky practiced extensively in black and white with ink and pencil on paper, as well as in woodcuts. The reader is referred to the catalogues included in the bibliography for a list of his well-known paintings in colour.

Structure of the book

The book is structured as follows. Chapter 1 starts off with a biographical description of Kandinsky's colourful life. Partly because there is no known extensive biography of the artist in Dutch and partly to offer a framework and context to the thematic chapters 2 through 8. Kandinsky lives in the turbulent fin de siècle, with its many scientific discoveries and art movements and encounters the Russian Revolution and both world wars at close quarters. Time and again, he is forced to reinvent himself. Kandinsky resides in Europe between 1896 and 1914, mainly in Munich and Murnau in Germany. During WWI he flees via Switzerland to Russia, where he has first hand experience of the 1917 Russian Revolution. In 1922 he leaves Russia, poor and disillusioned, and is appointed professor at the Bauhaus in the German city of Weimar in 1923, to be followed by appointments at Dresden and Berlin. During this time he develops his free painting class and his theory of art. In 1933, the Bauhaus is forced by the Nazis to close its doors. Kandinsky's works of art are labelled *entartet* and he escapes to Paris where he is to spend the final years of his life. He dies in 1944. With all these major ruptures in his life, he is forced to leave behind his paintings and continue from his inner tuning and inspiration.

In chapters 2 through 8 the structure is related to the growth in consciousness Kandinsky lives through and practices, refines and expresses in his work for the rest of his life. Each chapter includes an extensive exercise by Kandinsky in order to be able to experience his observation and growth in consciousness. The reader is invited to elevate his/her personal consciousness by an artistic route. These exercises are illustrated by way of drawings and our personal experiences. The style of drawing may be labelled simplistic in black and white. This way, it is easy to follow Kandinsky's process in essence. We do not need to be a painter like Kandinsky for these exercises in consciousness to have a direct and personal effect on us. Kandinsky himself has completed a large number of exercises and pre-studies in black and white.

In chapter 2 the vision of Kandinsky as teacher in consciousness is discussed as well as his significance for modern times. The exercise in this chapter leads the reader well beyond his personal limits of what he is able to see and experience physically; he will face the unknown. This exercise makes him ready to research other points of view and experience limitless freedom. Kandinsky says in this regard: *'Two points have remained essential throughout my life: energy and planning. Should I wish to explore my energy, it is then imperative for me to start to move'*. When we start out to draw and observe, we are often full of thoughts, worries and emotions. Kandinsky does not want to display his worries, only the essence, the pure soul form of matter.

Chapter 3 discusses working with polarities in our lives. This does not apply to artists only, but to each and everyone who wishes to shape his life based on free spirit. Kandinsky accepts self-knowledge as the basis of a new life and new art. He also teaches this to Franz Marc, Paul Klee and August Macke. Kandinsky is someone who exceeds a way of dualistic thinking and teaches us self-realization amidst chaos. In his Paris studio, later in life, he continues to work unperturbedly and pays great attention to the skies, even when bombs strike all around him. Kandinsky shows us in a startlingly honest way that we need to produce a first hand account in which we are not led by other people's concepts.

Kandinsky's breakthrough in this field covers the integration of extremes and polarities in his personal life by means of research and meditation. He does not beautify the world. He is able to observe openly all that happens around him. He sees the phenomenon in itself and is not afraid to make us of it. For instance, he paints hope and despair, left and right, love and death, loneliness and connection, beauty and ugliness of each human being and object. His research aims to halt life's polarities and to experience that there is beauty present in everything. The reader is taken along in an exercise of polarity and, in an artistic manner, taken to free space where new inner inspiration and direction may be found.

Kandinsky, the teacher and his modern concepts of teaching and art are at the heart of chapter 4. The goal is to turn the student into the master of his own life and his own visions. To this end, inner strength must be developed. As we have worked through the polarities of chapter 3, we arrive at a new space. Through feelings, fabrications and creations, we arrive at the greatest inner space where separateness becomes unity and aversion becomes repentance. We practice this inner strength to become the pure base of our own observation. For example: look at the clouds and the space in between them. After five minutes you will not be able to remember what you have seen at the start. This is where the transformation of life takes place continuously. They collide, dissolve, are scattered. A cloud reshapes itself every second. A second exercise is to go silent in between two thoughts. One becomes aware of a thought but does not slide into the next association. You wait and enlarge your space, looking around you without any form of judgment. Between two thoughts, out of nowhere, a glimpse of something may come up, coming from deeper down, from nothing. These exercises take the student into 'being'. He sees things in a completely new composition. Kandinsky relates: *'The painter needs to focus his open eye on inner life and he must force his ear to listen closely to the mouth of inner need. Then all means are sacred'*.

In chapter 5 we describe how Kandinsky, Macke, Marc and Klee have observed clearly as artists and in which way they have managed to surpass their personal sympathies and antipathies connected to their egos. They become authentic individuals within the framework of a world with a sense of community. This is not the result of a thought process, rather that of a process of experience. They express the inner sound and open up to the whole. They are painting this connection. They respond to one another, to the zeitgeist and are able to view all its sides and facets. Each and every experience and form passes through them and is transformed to a new imagery of compositions built from points, lines and planes.

Should we wish to paint this on canvas, we should start with one part. This very first part carries within it all possibilities of the whole, like a seed carries within it the full potential of a plant. The student learns in this chapter to communicate on paper with another person from a free, unconditional observation. Each person is totally free to add a line, a point, a plane to the canvas or paper. The other responds in a non-reactive manner, instead transforms the line, plane, point into something new. It adds an essential part. The transformation process has started. Each addition changes the whole. It is a very exciting process. The separate parts sometimes repel each other or fuse together. Again and again, new variations reveal themselves, thus slowly bringing forward the painting's specific quality.

Chapter 6 discusses Kandinsky's experiences with black and white. During the summer of 1911 he faints due to the season's high temperature. However, through it all, he notices the black might be a gateway to a new insight, a new white experience. From that day on, he makes a conscious decision to use black and white. Black and white help us to change our consciousness. We find that our crises can offer us so much, can show us paths never before thought of. A human being may submerge into black, however, black can add lustre to various other colours. A greater sense of reality.

White can feel as a deep sense of silence, however, it is also capable of illuminating its surroundings. White is able to fortify other colours. White can transport us to the place of our soul. White is capable of cleansing us of our old thoughts and emotions. Kandinsky wants every fellow human being, in making use of his exercises, to be able to reflect on personal transformations with life's dark and light experiences. The deeper Kandinsky penetrates into the black and white of his personal life and embraces them, the less clearly he sees a goal, a belief, a sense of a higher power. Everything has its own value, now.

Chapter 7 includes the most extensive and intense exercise Kandinsky undertakes with his students: the solar exercise, based on personal experience with the Moscow setting sun. The solar movement itself transforms all by the minute. This, to him, is a revelation. The light has assisted him to pass through all stages of observation. The bright light influences our mood and observation differently to the all-dissolving setting sun. The exercise familiarizes us with all stages of our creative energy by seeing through the motions, colours and expressions of the solar movements. The artist and contemporary, Pierre Bonnard (1867 – 1947), voices this process as follows: 'You may permit yourself every possible freedom regarding, lines, colour-proportions and –ratios, but mind there is a freedom much greater, i.e. the freedom to view things differently day by day. Everything changes continuously. This, now, is to

be the new inspiration. Your awareness of this continuous change, makes you hungry for life. Nothing in this life is ever repeated in the exact same manner. Once life repeats itself, it has ceased to be, it is dead. The challenge is to live life in the ever changing present'.

Kandinsky has developed this transpersonal exercise in an era when psychology and spirituality were by no means as advanced as these days. It is an exercise to achieve an awareness of unity. The sun is the symbol of all-illuminating light; it makes us view reality differently in all its forms. All is included in the colour of the sun.

Chapter 8 includes a retrospect following the completed exercises in consciousness. We also describe Kandinsky's effects on us and our society. Having done the solar exercise in chapter 7 we achieve an enormous free creativity, able to take on all forms and shapes.

There is no need for us to reconnect to ancient spiritual communities, we are free to commit ourselves intuitively to the universal consciousness within ourselves. The book's exercises teach us to view the whole from the observer's position.

The entire teachings of Kandinsky's seeing and observing is a path of learning. He makes us participants to his personal path to development. We grow alongside him towards focus and becoming centred. We learn, together with Kandinsky, to take up our personal space in a fundamental way, so we may come to know how to observe freely and surpass thinking. Kandinsky has learned how to elevate art to the higher plane we call life.

Loucas van den Berg - The expression of the free spirit

Doctor Loucas van den Berg is an artist, writer, psychologist and historian and has written books on the Healing Voice, self-realization through the arts, and Kandinsky. Currently he is writing his autobiography of impressions, a lively book in which art, perception and the free spirit come together. He is director of the AMEG, the Academy for Music, Education and Healing. He is a pioneer in HV (Healing Voice) and communication, spirit healing and artistic perception and imagination. The inspiration and realization of one's own power has always been his guideline. His work has an international character.

Programs available

Loucas van den Berg in his book 'Kandinsky and the dawning of the free spirit', has a completely new approach to dealing with the realized good and the images of the painter, Kandinsky. To this end he had access to previously never before published material and turned this into exercises on perception, colour, meditation and expression for everyone in every field, and making it accessible. The goal is always taking people's overall potential to achieve power.

At a glance, this approach is accessible by means of

- PowerPoint presentation with images and text from Loucas' Kandinsky book.
- Workshops in the field of new perception and expression based on Kandinsky exercises.
- Courses: On the basis of Kandinsky's and his own art, Loucas shows how the underlying ideas, energy, shape and colour of an object or idea can be artfully translated and can be used for individual growth and transformation.
- Retreats in which the deep effect of Kandinsky exercises can be experienced for growth and transformation.

These programs are organised in museums and /or business settings. You are welcome to contact Loucas, both for individually and groups purposes. Courses, both in German and English, are possible.