

Portrait of Jennie: Art Instrumentality in the Realm of Post-history

By Vitaly Patsyukov, published by NERO

*“But she must have known what I was thinking,
for as we passed the fifth bench,
she told me without my asking. “It’s Jennie,”
she said; “just so’s you’ll know.”*

Robert Nathan “Portrait of Jennie”

This text combines reflections on contemporary creative process and a search for the ideal in conditions of destabilized reality, which is represented by the mythologem of Jennie, the heroine of Robert Nathan’s novel *Portrait of Jennie*, who is eminently present while at the same time remaining invisible. The idea of presence which insists on the phenomenon of disappearance in a dubious reality, have been vividly expressed in the projects of my friend, the remarkable Swiss artist Marco Fedele di Catrano, and they have become for me a kind of a provocation for writing this text. The structure of the book was shaping up by independent phases, perhaps under the impact of our stratified reality. At the same time in the process of its realization I was discovering a new wholeness, a program of human behavior in an environment which is not ready for this wholeness, which has been infected with the virus of our technology-based civilization. Therefore the structure of the text became its context and a commentary to the following artistic “entities” and chapters:

- I. “Portrait of Jennie”;
- II. Presence and disappearance;
- III. The state of chaos and the theory of the Big Bang;
- IV. The Dreaming Universe and the Archetype of the “Eternal Return”.

The symmetry here is created by simple analogies and juxtapositions of the discrete and wave phenomena in contemporary art; it is based on contours and it outflows the limits of Marco Fedele di Catrano’s project while at the same time returning into its paradoxical geometry focused on a search for a non-linear equilibrium, a concept introduced by Kazimir Malevich.

Moreover, the invasion of scientific ideas into artistic imagery and the birth of new integrality in human thinking resonate in these texts allowing a simultaneous existence of mysticism, science, and independent art.

What then determines the face of the world today? Shall we be able to penetrate its surface and discover new spatial forms to enable man to secure a

livable habitat here and now, or we shall find different dimensions glimmering before us and that would be the reality of our future?

I. Portrait of Jennie

*“I felt that I was truly working against time,
and felt myself carried forward on a wave of exultation
as the picture bloomed under the brush,
as I saw, each time I stepped away from it,
its growing strength, its gathering beauty.”*

Robert Nathan “Portrait of Jennie”

The images of Jennie, the heroine of Robert Nathan’s *Portrait of Jennie*, the randomness of her appearances, her comings and goings, carry a remarkable logic which opens up a universal drama of our personal destinies as well as the destiny of our civilization. Leaving the confines of literary fiction they acquire the status of archetypes of visual reality which deeply moved the artistic optics of Marco Fedele di Catrano. Their traces are present in the space of his entire project compelling me to view the world with the eyes of Robert Nathan and Marco Fedele di Catrano, so that I come to believe in the absolute reality of Jennie’s existence. Moreover, I come to see everything I have seen in my life as encounters with different dimensions which are showing through the strange surface of illusions concealing the genuine events.

For Marco Fedele di Catrano the phenomenon of Jenny with its ideal composition coming into conflict with the physical laws of spatial-temporal structure of our life becomes a metaphor and the meaning of the lofty being of contemporary art. I am in complete agreement with this attitude and accept the image of Jennie in all its dimensions.

In keeping with his visual philosophy the artist captures in his art the main vector of the drama contained in “The Portrait of Jennie” which is a constant search for the “lost time”. His special techniques enable him to visualize the idea of the inseparability of his artistic quests from the traumas and tragic counterpoints of our immediate surroundings, and also its metaphysics and the universal forms of human existence.

In the projects of Marco Fedele di Catrano the images of Jennie strive to preserve the ruins of independent classical art as they slowly melt and glow creating the effect of disappearance. In the fissures of their process of decay we glimpse that magic which condones the presence of timeless culture with its utopias and hopes, its permanent wakefulness in the darkness of fears and delusions. Ruined as Palmira, which acquires additional romantic aspects in digital reproductions, she demands insistently to be returned into our world. However, once she finds herself among the ghosts the contours of her visionary images become blurred and only

touch our memory like the light wings of a disappearing butterfly compelling us to come to life. The clearances in the somnolent entropic strata give us a hope for a new beginning and indicate new dimensions looming ahead. They radiate sensuality which is a salvation for us all. Not one cusp or sharp edge cutting through space is dead.

Made more visual with video-technologies the artist's installations resonate poignantly with unusual illusions which we find in their photographic evidence and "captured moments of life", where man features as a "surplus element", to recall Malevich. Man's image does not require any computer participation but appears as realistically able to travel across other dimensions and leave a trail there without any miraculous interference. At the same time, according to the artist's own comments, this evidence raises new questions, those concerning concreteness and universality. Each video document, and each of its phases, appears as readymade stage sets, suggesting that this is how we all live: proceeding from one scene to the next, and then at some point someone else claims our place or we manage to return into the original stage sets. The art of the installation, consisting of visual documents, is not based here on any tricks but is transformed into a genuine miracle. The question posed by existential philosophy is solved by the artist with the help of immediate clarity of the screenshot; its space, in the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, "depends on the direction of our attention." (*Being and Nothingness*).

Anthropocentric meanings are losing their priority in our entropic civilization while the internet functioning of public systems is beginning to operate quite well without man's presence. The visual matrix of dual existence in the dialectic of 0 and 1 moves man into the void of zero dimensions, that is, into a zone of natural disappearance. But since when have this situation emerged whereby from spectators of the "disappearance" mystery we have become its participants? According to Marco Fedele di Catrano, we live in an intellectual historical reality, in a special critical phase of it, but the essence of our existence remains unchanged. Contemporary visual-philosophical models certainly help us to comprehend the processes in which we participate and through this comprehension they suggest to us some outcomes towards eternal existential values.

"I don't think," says the artist, "that the situation of 'missing' is connected with the internet – this is how it has always been. People come and go, I mean it both in the global sense: death and birth, and in the local sense, what happens in human relationships. Considering the age of our planet Earth and the scope of the Universe what is one private person? Does he mean any thing at all? What is he for? And mainly, what will happen after all this?"

Turning the human body into an object of art Marco Fedele di Catrano in fact poses the eternal question: who comes after Man? His face to face encounter with the onslaught of "the new technologically imagined world" makes him to affirm the need to return to our ever receding roots. His risky strategies suggest that we should calmly look at our quickly changing landscape and our place in it. His experience rejects nostalgia and insists that we should leave the confines of Euclidean stereotypes and penetrate the depths of the emerging radical physicality.

He proclaims the coming of the “resurrected human being”, a person who is inseparable from the planet Earth but strives to embrace other dimensions as well.

II. Presence and Disappearance of the Artifact

*“The spectacle now permeates our entire society”-
Guy-Ernst Debord*

1. Endless Pauses between Cause and Effect

In his strategies Marco Fedele di Catrano views any visual reality as his personal physical state, as a striving for a new equilibrium in a situation “in between”, such as emergence and disappearance, attraction and alienation, ideal reflection and compact materiality, action and intention. His strange pauses, hovering and gleaming, and the piercing temporal stretches conceal the secret of his art and his ethical mission: to restore and recover what has been lost. His installations, constructions, objects, and projections, as well as his aimed energetic breakthroughs do not belong entirely within the physical dimensions: they acquire meanings as they lose gravity in the space between the past and the future, between dream and vigilance, when reason abandons its dubious rights and embraces the moments of evasive harmony, so fleeting and unpredictable. Marco’s visual techniques enable him to penetrate the inner layers of his artifacts and artistic processes. The topography of his actions is based on nostalgic as well as modern spatial forms, inviting one to participate in the events which arise within its art territory, such as symbolic partings and meetings, mystical and at the same time reflexive imagery. The plots of these events are simple and natural: night strolls with a dog, gymnastic exercises, a walk around some mirror-lined spherical room, visual paradoxes, shifts and dislocations happening on a computer screen, or various forms of social assistance observed in street scenes which can be seen as a performance. However, these recurring elementary actions and their resultant effects create a miracle: the rolling sphere loses its size and mass and is thus transformed into an object ready to absorb all the dimensions of our reality: in the ray of a small flash-light the phosphorescent body of a dog becomes capable of assuming a wave-like state and turn into a binary system of “yes” and “no”; a gymnast repeats canonical movements and thus acquires some special phenomenality giving him a chance to break away from the earthly gravity; traditional haircut becomes a process of creating a black square within a space which is quite unsuitable for it.

The art of Marco Fedele di Catrano comes alive in the organic shifts which reveal man’s unique behavior in most banal situations when weightlessness and the idea of selflessness triumph. The artist views the world as consisting in fragments, mise-en-scenes, and quantum flashes where wholeness is achieved in the context of insignificant distinctions leading to the alteration of the original conditions and

unpredictable results. It is not accidental that the hidden dramatic structure of his projects is influenced by the phenomenon of uncoordinated events and evolutionary confusion in time and space – this brings to mind the film “Portrait of Jennie” (1948) based on the like-named novel by Robert Nathan. The reality of his ideals glimmer through the artist’s concepts, assuming various visual forms but “not entrenched in a particular chronotope,” to quote Mikhail Bakhtin: they fade out and reappear, showing a blurred vision of the protagonist’s face, his message and context, distorted by various interferences and moving within his local space as well as that of the viewer’s reflections and imagination. The tangible structures created by Marco Fedele di Catrano exist rhythmically, as if swaying on oceanic surface, they seem to multiply the visible world and explode its traditional envelope of the linear one-dimensional optics. Bringing out the structure of the universe the artist finds himself as it were alone with the world. He endows the iconology of conceptual culture with deep sensuality and energetic impulse. In his Moscow project Marco Fedele di Catrano shows a genetic code of art, its incessant thought-provoking process, its insistent questioning, its sources, where we can distinctly hear the Biblical question: “Who are we, whence we came and where we are going?”

2. Coordinates of Disappearance. The Eternal Drama of Existing “In-between”

“As for time, for us it is forever running out.”

Jean Louis Diott

“My space has shriveled to a dot.”

Osip Mandelstam

The phenomenon of disappearance runs through the entire world culture and is conveyed through visual-meaningful dialogues and contexts. We find its images in rock painting, in the Early Renaissance, in the work of the masters of Northern Renaissance; it is further actualized in the work of Surrealists and reaches particularly radical forms in the intellectual strategies of Conceptualism. The theme of disappearance as tragic emptiness and at the same time an attempt at bridging gaps in time, an existential paradigm known as “in-between”, is amply illustrated in the personalized work of Marco Fedele di Catrano. Experiencing the surrounding reality as a super-personal, gravity-filled state the artist feels a compelling desire not only to discover appropriate imagery for its inevitably repressive power and convey it in his art, but also to find in himself an ability to establish a non-linear equilibrium in the drama of reverse perspectives which prompt almost visionary representations. The unending dialogue between the deeply personal and the life-oriented, which mark the creative process of Marco Fedele di Catrano, secured for him a niche of his own in the history of that element of disappearance creating empty pauses of meditative concentration and the coordinates of waiting for the imminent after the loss of the preceding phase.

The phenomenon of disappearance in this system is part and parcel of those visual essences that we find in quantum mechanics and of that transition from discrete to waveform imagery when in our confusion we can no longer retain our position as an observer and lose bearings. At such moments the object under observation is concealed from our view as it returns to the natural environment of its hidden origins. The artist's angle of vision in such circumstances embraces realist constructions deriving from the European and Russian mythology with their spatial paradoxes which had once influenced the birth of non-Euclidean geometry and Einstein's theory of relativity. Some universal scientific and figurative paradigms have been brought into focus in the artist's personal optical philosophy with their prisms intersecting in the losses of digital series we find in the poetics of John Cage and Jannis Kounellis and the disappearance of whole nations in Milorad Pavic's postmodernist commentaries to his *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

"What was here before us?" questions Marco Fedele di Catrano peering into the emptiness of the former human habitat and the environment of the objects which have recently existed in that three-dimensional space. And his question brings to mind that which had been asked by Paul Gauguin: "Who are we, whence we came and where we are going?" And the artist's question carries the universal human drama with its spatial cycles revealing our birth trauma whereby we "remain forever within the coordinates of disappearance." The question "Whence we came?" led to disappearance and suppressed our historical cultural memory. "Where are we going?"—this illusory direction no longer has any guiding power leaving us in the eternal state of "waiting for Godot". Ascesis triumphs in this spatial-temporal waiting taken to the extreme of its visual evidence and confirming the Biblical maxim that one needs to die to become alive again. The art of Marco Fedele di Catrano belongs precisely to this vector of radical and at the same time traditional culture where principles of geometry and its metaphysics triumph in each work highlighting the distinctive coordinates of its vibrant, vital spaces. They are inseparable from human existence and from the personal feelings of the artist who reacts as a sensitive receiver to all the changes in the topography of human destinies, our civilization and history. His artistic attitude towards the art of geometry brings out its sacral values, which are imperceptible to the eye and are eminently natural as the very matter of our reality, but which he constantly tends to turn into sacral objects. Within the space of his works the artist recreates some unique non-linear states capable of opening up organically and drawing the viewer into the essence of his representations, and thus he extends our corporeality into external spaces which then cease to be external. Its paradoxical spatial texture is constantly explored by the artist and serves to illustrate the extreme situations we all experience while simultaneously reminding us about the unity of all the living creatures, about the life's traumas affecting us, unaware of the borderlines between our living, social media, and the forces of gravity underlying our environment. As he depicts the topography of the human habitat the artist captures all the traces of the drama, passions, and hopes associated with it as well as attempting to harmonize its unstable equilibrium and present the experiences of a concrete being as a historical universal and as his own understanding of its physical and sensual

meanings. These mise-en-scenes of our lasting “divine comedy” create a zone of extraordinary gravitation possessing some hidden symmetry, a zone of soaring as it were, where man’s position seems to be almost hanging in the balance of our everyday life to which we all become accustomed forgetting about our existential fears.

The artist moves as it were along the power lines of his installations exploring each spot carefully on the way, and thus he forms a personal structure of it which can be determined not only with the help of any technical devices but also with your own inner gesture, touching and fragile, not yet separated from your tactile feelings, not yet alienated from them as a blue print or diagram. Marco Fedele di Catrano weaves the fabric of his images without leaving their inner dimensions which allows his space to follow its own passive voice overpowering the viewer who can thus personally relate to the dramas and hopes preserved in the memory of social reality and living art. The artist’s creative process is permeated with its breath and the beating of its heart; he stops, stands still and then resumes his perpetual labors in the manner of Kafka’s protagonist, who is building a refuge for himself. His world, influenced as it is by media technologies, becomes a very private space for him, it constantly variegates and flows overcoming material resistance while at the same time subjugating to it and accumulating a potential of inner light energy. This space is filled to the brim with the artist’s vibrant presence, leaving no empty spots except for what Kazimir Malevich defines as “zero forms”, that is, metaphysical layers as concentrations of intense inspiration. Its imagery launches a qualitatively new phase, a standstill providing real opportunities, bared to the core, for a super-personality on the eve of the next event, similarly to the situation described in Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot”. At such moments his plastic forms acquire quantum characteristics, such as discreteness, objectivity, artistic structure, wave phenomena; it is as if the artist rejects any linear logic, jumps into the unknown, into some hidden world, and realizes his intentions with the help of light flashes and quantum radiation.

The eightfold appearance of Jennie in the present-day space-time matches naturally the contours of Malevich’s Suprematist constructions. Her image intersects with the four-dimensional coordinates of one of the chronotopes of our world while retaining her unique embodiment in the ideal structure of the literary work named *The Portrait of Jennie*.

Jennie makes her appearance in the modern times between the mid-1910s and mid-1930s. It was precisely within these decades that Malevich was formulating his Suprematist philosophy concluding it with a mystical visualization of his departure-disappearance, his flight to Planet Jupiter.

III. The State of Chaos and the Theory of the Big Bang

1. Kazimir Malevich: The Black Square. Dialogues with the Scientific Models of the Images of the Universe

*“Herein is the deity, who commands crystals
to emerge in a different form of being.
Here is a true miracle.”
Kazimir Malevich*

Kazimir Malevich is a paradoxical figure but he is a great figure precisely due to his paradoxicality, an artist who cannot be viewed in traditional terms. The Malevich paradox derives from the phenomenon of gnostic revelations while at the same time being a product of the crossroads between science and art. His art and writings as well as his way of experiencing the world and his path in life follow a different logic in principle, one that belongs to the realm of dreams, to other spatial dimensions and an absolutely different relationship with them. To refer to the Nobel prize-winning physicist Ilya Prigozhin, this logic can be found in the area of innovative imaginative harmonies, in quantum states and instant transitions, which belong in the area of non-linear equilibriums.

Today we can ruminate on the theme of the “black square” in connection with the discovery of relic particles, the primary elements of our universe, and the theory of the Big Bang phenomenon. Relic particles were discovered in the 1960s which coincided with the first rise of extraordinary interest towards Malevich’s art. Relic particles provided evidence to the birth of Cosmos in the first ten to the minus 43rd of a second degree. In actual fact, not only the humankind was reminded about the birth of our world but people could also re-live it within the space of universal consciousness and the depths of personal memory. Modern physics describes this situation in picturesque terms as an explosion of some highly dense mass, so dense in its gravity that it simply excludes the existence of either time or space. The explosion occurred fourteen billion years ago and in the initial milliseconds of its instant expansion it created a reality with a temperature of several million degrees. The image of the Big Bang was presented in physical-mathematical models as something reminiscent of boiling ether accompanied by spiral-like whirls and phasic transformations in the structure of the matter. In the course of its fourteen-billion-years existence our Universe has been expanding incessantly and becoming increasingly rarified, it has been passing through periods of critical temperatures and subjected to radical changes. Many physicists are convinced that we are currently living in a “condensed” or “frozen” phase in the evolution of the Universe, which differs in principle from its earlier epochs. The phasic transitions, which are examined as visualized systems in the scientific research, are remarkably reminiscent of the states of consciousness depicted by

Malevich himself in one of his poems where he identifies the birth of his own personality with that of the Universe.

I am now seventeen versts away from Moscow.
It is three minutes after one, 11 July, 1918, the first hour of the day.
These three minutes mark the end
Of our fast-moving age within me. Millions of stripes rush by.
My vision is dulled, no longer able to perceive the place with its rays.
I can't see any more. My eyes are blinded by new sparkles.
The clumsy pace and rhythm are increasingly a burden
While my eyes are stimulated by the whirl of intuitive flashes.
We rock the space. The pace and rhythm are the levers
Which raise what is revolving in the infinity of our consciousness,
Like small-size grains the old materialism
Is scattered as chuff from the rear
Of some different mode of pace and rhythm.
Many turned out to be unprepared and asleep,
Now slumbering in the womb of death.
Four minutes after one I came into the world with the storm,
I was aware of my conception and my beginning,
I saw my nativity. I watched the origination of my own self.
Through great gyration and running start
High temperature was giving birth to me.
Thus I began my ceaseless run towards the disapproval
Of the warranty of signs by death. This is why I touch
On all that is protruding from a smooth surface.
However I also polish any smooth surface
With overall brisk rhythms separating each rhythm with colors.
And I rush on, crushing and correcting things on the way.
I have become like the wind, and so all those who had failed
To provide their skulls with potholes in the spiral revolution
Should accept the caution of their signs.
My new materiality had been established,
It rests secure on the globes of my heels.
From now on I shy away from practical thinking.
Such is my new quality and such is the essence
Of my concept of the material. What has been considered
As material is now dead. It has not simply perished
But disappeared.
Everything is preparing to greet me.

These lines convey the revelation that appeared to Malevich, the insight of the primary states of reality in their visual-psychic forms captured in a paranormal state. The picture of a visionary state depicted by Malevich does not require any substantiation or logic demonstration. Remarkably, however, this apocalyptic

image has been corroborated by the latest scientific paradigms which derive from figurative interpretations of the cosmological and physical models of the Big Bang. In reality scientists have no way of knowing how the “first atom” exploded, where it happened, and what sort of atom it might have been. For the first time science found itself in a situation when it had to resort to figurative hypotheses in developing its systemic methods. However, images employed in scientific research and modern technologies visually coincide with the images deriving from the artist’s personal consciousness and revelations coming to him in dreams. It is not accidental that at the time when Malevich created his “Black Square” – in the summer of 1915 –he experienced a number of severe psychological and physical shatters. In a letter to his close friend Mikhail Matyushin he wrote that he saw a new Suprematic reality in his dreams in which he is literally soaring among some dynamic elements occasionally touching them.

According to Jean Baudrillard, parallel reality emerges as a result of the disintegration of the previous world. Then what are we left with: order or disorder? Or are they present simultaneously and their duality concentrates the dilemma of good and evil? Exodus. Outcome. Malevich’s cross and outcome beyond the zero form.

The first person in the history of science who made an attempt to describe the phenomenon of the Big Bang was the Belgian physicist and Catholic priest Abbé Georges Lemaître. In 1931 he proclaimed the idea of the Big Bang in his very imaginative paper as it were “reversing the film” of the general evolution and observing in his mind’s eye how galaxies approach one another until what he called the “primeval atom” or “single quantum” formed. The explosion of that primeval atom gave birth to our world, but who was responsible for that event remains a big question to this day, the same as the Big Bang itself.

Reading his paper in the presence of Albert Einstein at the library of the Pasadena Observatory on Mount Wilson, Lemaître made a lyrical digression: “The evolution of the world may be compared to a display of fireworks that has just ended: some few red wisps, ashes, and smoke. Standing on a cooled cinder, we see the slow fading of the suns, and we try to recall the vanished brilliance of the origin of the worlds.” Einstein, as a true artist at heart, responded with an appreciative comment: “This is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened.”

In 1915 Kazimir Malevich visualized this “beautiful” hypothesis in his Suprematist theory launched with the “Black Square”. The explosion produced by his “Black Square” sent off to Cosmos numerous scattering particles which also led to the creation of a Universe and the start of Time and Space. As an X-ray picture shows, underneath the surface of the “Black Square” -the one painted in 1915 - one can make out a geometric composition of triangles and rectangles which seem to have lost orientation, some kind of relic nanoparticles which suggest a representation of the world reminiscent of that suggested by Abbé Lemaître.

IV. The Dreaming Universe and the Archetype of the “Eternal Return”

In his religious-philosophical theories Abbé Lemaître referred to the system of Hermes Trismegistus, a great ancient philosopher, a precursor of Pythagoras and Plato. He viewed the birth of the world in geometric terms with a basis in a square. The geometry of this, the most ancient, mystic-scientific theory places within the square a triangle which is supported by the sides of the square with its outer configuration. In its turn the square, according to Hermes Trismegistus, revolves and thus creates a circle, the formula of which corresponds to the constant ratio of “Pi”. This image of the structure of our Universe exactly coincides with the dynamic geometry of Kazimir Malevich: it is characterized by projection multidimensionality and the presence of the ratio “Pi” which, according to mathematicians, lies at the basis of the harmonious proportions of all the Suprematist elements. Whereas the square itself, or rather the inter-relationship of the identical black and white spaces in it, can be represented in terms of a binary system as 0 and 1, all the other Suprematist equilibriums are dominated by the principle of the triangle. In his essay “Man is the Most Dangerous Phenomenon in Nature” (c. 1924) Kazimir Malevich notes that “Everything derives from one and the same Cell.” And he further elaborates this idea: “And each grain is a law unto itself. In Art the triangle definitely plays a great role, partly for religious reasons. The Trinity. God’s eye within a triangle. It is as if the law of the triangle reigns supreme and through this tripartition shapes up any shapelessness, ugliness, and lawlessness into a triple law of perfection.” Malevich’s search for a universal code of artistic reality proceeds from a special logic, which is based on symbolism when signs have to be subjected to disciplinarian treatment. A symbolic mentality is characteristic not only of higher spiritual activity, such as prophetic, no field of creative activities practiced by humans can do without it. In order to help digest this method and make it generally accessible, another Russian thinker of the 1920s, Pavel Florensky, presented his plan for compiling “a glossary of signs”. For reasons beyond his control his plan remained unrealized. Florensky managed to complete only one entry, that on “The Dot”, which comes close to the evolution of Malevich’s own artistic thinking. Malevich’s Suprematism starts with a “dot” and follows its various metamorphoses through spatial transformations.

Malevich’s outwardly well-established position conceals a vast world of non-determinacy, absolute freedom, and unpredictability. Such perception of the world is close to the philosophy of quantum physics with its realm of vibration, excitation, and quantum leaps. In fact the “tremor” characteristic of physical fields exists even in the spaces which appear as empty. In the space, which seems to be free of any matter but which actually obeys the concept of emptiness, and of “zero form” proposed by Malevich, this quantum tremor makes the notion of “nothingness” still more meaningful. Excited quantum states create a new texture of our reality, one consisting of tiny particles known as strings. They have not been physically discovered and exist only as a metaphorical concept. They are imagined as vibrating threads of energy without any thickness but possessing length and thus being one-dimensional entities. Moreover, they are so tiny – several thousand billions of billions smaller than the atomic nuclei – that they are viewed as dots

even in mathematical models. Their energy derives from the energy of excitation which is frequently mentioned by Malevich in his descriptions of basic and radical states of substance as cosmic matter: “Motion as a source of excitation remains the only real mode of perception. ... I imagine Cosmos, or the Universe, as a multitude of forces coming from revolving centers or excitations. All the circles thus formed are not separate systems but exist in constant mutual inclusions. (*Suprematism. The World as Abstraction or the Eternal Rest*. 1922) Malevich’s research in the field of universal free units as constituent particles in the structure of the Universe finally resulted in a unique “theory of everything”: that is, the theory of strings. According to this theory the entire Cosmos is based on a single fundamental unit known as the string while the rich variety of particles simply reflects the various types of strings’ vibration. The phenomenon is reminiscent of the functioning of ordinary string instruments. Violin strings can vibrate in many different ways and each sounds as a different music note to our ear. Metaphorically speaking, the different notes which can be played on one and the same string may be responsible for all the discovered particles. At the ultra-microscopic level our universe can be seen as a symphony of strings whose vibrations lie at the basis of the existence of matter.

The “Black Square” was first displayed at the exhibition called “0.10”: and this fact testifies to the great significance of numerical sets for Malevich. Addressing numerical series Malevich experienced them as a projection towards the future. The problem of infinity presents a torturous task for mathematicians, whose consciousness requires that the potential onward movement of the series be stopped, the same as one wishes to stop the senselessness of the constantly regenerating civilization. Pavel Florensky and his friends, major Russian mathematicians Dmitry Yegorov and Nikolai Luzin, found a way of completing infinity by giving it a name. In one of his drawings Malevich shows Madonna with child painted black, similarly to his “black square” which he called “royal black infant”. Malevich concludes his series of trans-finite numbers with the philosophy of “Name Worship”, but at the same time he reverses the direction of the time arrow towards the past, to the dot which had given the start to the process of genesis. Presenting Daniil Kharmis with his famous book *God is Not Cast Down*, Malevich inscribed it as follows: “Go and stop progress”, appealing to him to return to the “zero form”.

In 1920, almost 100 years ago, Kazimir Malevich declared that the time of painting is over. He exclaimed in his essay called “Suprematism. 34 Drawings”: “Painting is out of the question. Painting has long become obsolete!” He then completed his last “picture of the changing space” in Suprematist manner. The inflation of the painting matter, professed by Malevich, that is, of the matter as such, was corroborated by the French mathematician René Thom who replaced the paradigm of Darwinian evolution with his own catastrophe paradigm. His catastrophe theory vividly visualized the hidden and the open processes of our geopolitical life, such as world and local wars, economic crises, genetic shifts in human organisms, and the revolts of the traumatized nature. Fortunately, as a result of a catastrophe each time some deep-going layers of human consciousness rise to the surface. Human subconscious in these processes acquires particular relevance

compelling us to pay attention to the relic forms in different logical systems. Kazimir Malevich, Franz Kafka, Karl Jung, John Cage, Marcel Duchamp, and one of the most paradoxical physicists of our times Fred Alan Wolf all meet up in the layers of this logic which is close in structure to dreaming. The “dreaming universe” is given a most convincing image in the philosophies of new knowledge and its forecasts. “Does the universe dream that it exists?” Fred Alan Wolf asks his revolutionary question. “Is it still sleeping or is it all the result of the Big Bang?” The model proposed by the “visionary physicist” is based on a complex of holographic images and a quantum theory of multiple worlds, which was being formulated over the last decade. The endless variations of the images of man’s presence in this world, the conditions of total scanning of all the forms of human life and activities, and numerous surveillance cameras provided science and art technologies with an opportunity to examine the processes of questionable wakefulness of our civilization and to look on it as uninterrupted dreaming. It is not surprising that earlier researchers of dreams – psychologists, neurophysiologists, and physicists – never considered the problems of dreams as something bordering on cosmic phenomenality and the functioning of the human brain where the dialogue is carried on in the absence of cause and effect connections but takes the form of flares or wave quanta outbursts. This theory presupposes that our memory functions by creating and registering holographic images; however, brain functioning depends on “who” is observing and “what” is being observed. It is precisely our predisposition to self-analysis combined with the above-mentioned holographic model that enabled Malevich to spot metamorphoses of the “neuron cells” in extra-personal memory.

The harmony of our “dreaming universe” can be found in Ilya Oblomov’s dreams, in the reveries of Chernyshevsky’s heroine Vera Pavlovna who reflects on and poses “borderline questions” such as “what is to be done?” This harmony shows in the tight space of Daniil Kharms’ casket, in Ilya Kabakov’s series “Olga Markovna is Dreaming”, and in Pavel Peppershtein’s forecasts about Russia’s future.

The physicist Saul-Paul Sirag, one of the most authoritative adepts of the “dreaming universe” who has been regularly experimenting with the changing states of human consciousness, views creativity and dreams origin as absolutely identical processes. In his diaries he writes that “dreams are something mysterious but one thing is certain: this is a living space, not a mathematical abstract but reality.” Unwinding the time backwards, in the direction of the “royal black infant”, Malevich also experiences a dreamlike state and his great “nothingness”, and thus he achieves weightlessness. He moves on and turns black into white to create his “white square”, an embodiment of the “white world (world-building) which is a sign of the purity of human life.” (Suprematism. 34 Drawings. 1920) The route of his flight intersects with the reflections of another man of genius: Pavel Florensky who at about the same time formed a vision of the reverse time flow and the unique space of imaginary numbers where one can move about with supersonic speed without losing one’s corporeality. According to Mikhail Bakhtin’s reminiscences, Malevich was actually carrying about a portable telescope and from

time to time he looked at the outer space to return into the primeval depths of the universe, into the space of his “black square”. In his will Malevich requested that his body should be dressed in a white shirt and black trousers and placed into the specially constructed flying machine in the shape of a cross so that his wide-spread arms would turn into wings.

Jennie

Marco Fedele di Catrano, and I together with him, are both carrying on an unending dialogue with Robert Nathan, occasionally turning into an argument. Jennie never disappears, her phantom is verging on absolute reality, she comes to life and lives in the work of every artist crossing through epochs and cultures, breaking through time stretches and their cyclic states. Her image carries an open system of ethical, artistic and organic values, affording us a chance to come into contact with the image of Jennie, so life-like that we are aware of the unquestionable genuineness of its presence in the space where there is no division into real life and culture, ideals and actual reality, the past and the future.

Leaving this world Jennie apparently disappears as a physical entity. This fact is registered in *The Times* of 22 September in the year 1930-plus. In reality her departure-death, which is accompanied by a catastrophe verging on the Apocalypse, causes a tragic damage to the space, extending its abyss in the same manner as it happens in Malevich’s legendary opera “Victory over the Sun” when the curtains with the image of the sun is torn. The death of Jennie signifies the birth of a new world which is not yet visible to us but is depicted in a work of art named *The Portrait of Jennie* - according to the literary plot the picture was later exhibited at the Metropolitan, one of the best museums of Western civilization.

The “Black Square” by Malevich affirms the possibility of changing our reality, returning it to the primary roots of being. The “Black Square” is in the possession of the State Tretyakov Gallery which is one of Russia’s finest national art museums.