

Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, preface to *The Blue Rider Almanac* (1911)*

A great era is beginning and by this time has begun: the spiritual "awakening," the emerging inclination to regain "lost balance," the inevitable necessity of spiritual cultivation, the unfolding of the first blossoms.

We are standing at the threshold of one of the greatest epochs that mankind has ever experienced, the epoch of Great Spirituality.

In the nineteenth century just ended, when the flowering—the "great victory"—of the material seemed most intense, the first "new" elements of a spiritual atmosphere were formed almost unnoticed. They will give and have given the necessary nourishment for the flourishing of the Spiritual.

Art, literature, even "exact" science are turning in varying degrees toward this "new" era; they are all governed by it.

Our first and most important goal is to reflect artistic events directly connected with this change and the facts needed to shed light on these events, even in other fields of the spiritual life. Therefore, the reader will find works in our series that bear an inner relationship to one another in the aforementioned context, although they may appear unrelated on the surface. We honor and attend, not to the work that has a certain recognized, orthodox, external form (which usually is all there is), but to the work that has an inner life connected with the great change. And that is only natural, since we don't want the dead but the living. Just as the echo of a living voice is only a hollow form, which has not arisen out of a distinct inner necessity, there have always been and will increasingly be works of art that are nothing but hollow reverberations of works rooted in such inner necessity. They are hollow, aimless lies that poison the spiritual air and lead wavering spirits astray. By deception they lead the spirit not to life but to death. And we want to try to expose the emptiness of this deception with all available means. This is our second goal.

It is only natural that in questions of art the artist is called upon to speak first. Therefore the contributors to our volumes will be primarily artists, who will now have the opportunity to say openly what they previously had to hide. We are therefore asking those artists who feel our goals inwardly to turn to us as brethren. We grant ourselves the use of this great word because we are convinced that in our case the authoritative usage will automatically disappear.

It is equally natural that the people for whom the artist essentially works, who are called laymen or the public and who as such have hardly any opportunity to speak, should have an opportunity to voice their feelings and their ideas about art. So we are ready to provide space for any serious remarks from this quarter. Even short and unsolicited contributions will be published in the "opinions" column.

Nor, in the present situation of the arts, can we leave the link between the artist and the public in the hands of others. This is criticism which harbors something unhealthy. Because of the growth of the daily press, many disreputable elements have crept in among the serious interpreters; with their empty words they are building a wall in front of the public instead of a bridge. In order that not only the artist but also the public gets to see the distorted face of contemporary art criticism in a strong light, we will devote one special column to this regrettable, damaging force.

Since our works occur at irregular intervals, and life events cannot be arranged according to human schema, our series will not appear at fixed times but rather spontaneously, whenever there is enough important material.

It should really be unnecessary to emphasize that in our case the principle of internationalism is the only one possible. However, in these times even this must be noted: that an individual nation is only one of the creators of the whole; alone one can never be seen as the whole. Like the personal, the national is automatically reflected in each great work. But in the final analysis this national coloration is of secondary importance. The whole work, called art, knows no borders or nations, only humanity.

The Editors:
Kandinsky, Franz Marc

* This preface was intended for the first edition of *The Blue Rider Almanac* (first published in 1912), but was ultimately not included in the publication.