

instead of serving us as our own hands, have become enemy hands. instead of anonymity there was celebrity and the masterpiece, wisdom was dead. . . . to reproduce is to imitate, to play a comedy, to walk the tightrope. . . .”

the renaissance puffed up human reason with pride. modern times with their science and technology have made man a megalomaniac. the atrocious confusion of our epoch is the consequence of this overestimation of reason.

the evolution of traditional painting towards concrete art, beginning with cézanne and via the cubists has often been explained, and these historical explanations have confused the problem. abruptly, “according to the laws of chance,” the human mind underwent a transformation about the year 1914: an ethical problem presented itself. most of these works were not exhibited until about 1920. there was a blossoming of all the colors and all the forms in the world. these paintings, these sculptures, these objects, were liberated from conventional element. in every country adepts of this new art arose. — concrete art influenced architecture, furniture, cinema, typography.

certain “surrealist objects” are also concrete works. without any descriptive content, they seem to me exceedingly important for the evolution of concrete art, for, by allusion, they succeed in introducing into this art the psychic emotion that makes it live.

concrete art aims to transform the world. it aims to make existence more bearable. it aims to save man from the most dangerous folly: vanity. it aims to simplify man’s life. it aims to identify him with nature. reason uproots man and causes him to lead a tragic existence. concrete art is an elemental, natural, healthy art, which causes the stars of peace, love and poetry to grow in the head and the heart. where concrete art enters, melancholy departs, dragging with it its gray suitcases full of black sighs. [illustrations 18, 27, 28a, b, c]

Concrete art

In 1909 the Russian painter Rossiné came to see me in Switzerland and showed me drawings in which he had represented his inner world with colored dots and curves in a way that had never been seen before. These were no abstractions of landscapes, people, objects, as in cubist pictures. I showed him canvases covered with a black web, a network of strange writing, runes, lines, spots, produced in months of painful work. My colleagues had shaken their heads and evaluated my work as unsuccessful sketches. Rossiné, however, was impressed. His work and mine, I think, were concrete art. The earliest of my concrete pictures now extant were done in 1915. Two of these