

Abstract series relates painter's mysterious life

By JEFF GROVE
Assistant Arts Editor

Vasily Kandinsky is alive and well at the Ackland Art Museum — in spirit if not in fact. The museum's current exhibition of watercolors by the Russian master seeks to explore Kandinsky's artistic development by relating it to the conditions under which he worked.

Ackland Director Evan Turner feels that Kandinsky is one of the most important and underestimated artists of this century.

"When one realizes the significance of Kandinsky's contribution to the development of twentieth-century art it is astonishing that his work is not far better known," Turner said.

Turner admitted that Kandinsky was one of the most difficult painters to understand. But he said the post-1945 generation could appreciate Kandinsky's work more easily than the artist's contemporaries.

Turner said the paintings require intense concentration on the part of the viewer. Everything in Kandinsky's work is balanced. All excess details have been pared away. Turner compared Kandinsky's paintings to algebraic equations because of their sense of proportion and sparseness.

A sort of "intellectual knitting" is necessary in dealing with Kandinsky's work, according to Turner. "Your return is absolutely proportionate to your investment," he said.

The 50 paintings in the show, which runs through Oct. 17, are selected from the permanent holdings of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Hilla von Rebay Foundation. Turner said that Kandinsky was not better known in the United States because most of his works were "tightly held" by such small groups as these. Some of the paintings in the current show have not been exhibited in

years. Others never have been on public display. This show is one of four now touring the country to remedy that situation.

Turner has arranged the paintings in chronological order by month and year, enabling visitors to follow Kandinsky's development as an artist.

The painter was born in Russia in 1866 but did not begin painting until he was 30, at which time he went to Munich to study. His early works were representational. But World War I and the Russian Revolution intervened, and Kandinsky left for his homeland in 1914. He moved toward abstraction in his paintings, his goal being the elimination of a narrative quality from painting. The Soviet government, however, took a dim view of Kandinsky's theories, and the painter again set out for Munich. He stayed there until the Nazis forced him out in 1933, then continued his work in Paris until his death in 1944.

There is a distinct evolution to be seen in the paintings in the show, as recognizable objects give way to geometric confrontations. But Turner points out that a Kandinsky painting is "not just a chance dawdle" but a conscious decision in arrangement. It doesn't take long to see that Turner is right.

The perfect arrangement of "Hard But Soft" and the muted shades of "Evasive" convince a viewer that there is a grand design behind the apparent chaos. So do the firmness evoked by "Unshakeable" and the courage inherent in "Into the Dark."

In addition to the show, explanatory gallery talks will be given at 3 p.m. Sept. 19 and at 12:15 p.m. Oct. 6. A lecture by Vivian Barnett, associate curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, will be held at 8 p.m. Wednesday in Room 115 in Ackland.

A series of Russian and German films from the early 1900s will be shown to il-



Photo courtesy of Ackland Art Museum

"Hard But Soft," one of Kandinsky's watercolor works... artist's works are now on exhibit at Ackland Museum

lustrate the artistic climate which fostered Kandinsky's move into abstraction. Titles include *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Last Laugh*, *Metropolis*, *Battleship Potemkin* and *Pandora's Box*, as well as a number of short films. The films will be shown in Carroll Hall on Sunday afternoons during the run of the show. More information on the series is available at the Ackland museum.

The total offering of "Kandinsky Watercolors" is comprehensive and ambitious. It is, as Turner said, a difficult show. But its potential rewards will make any effort to see and understand it more than worthwhile. The Ackland Art Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, from 2 to 6 p.m. Sundays, and is closed Mondays.

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Raleigh Mayor Pro-Tem Walters said resolutions advocating a nuclear arms freeze would hurt the United States, keeping the United States at its current lower arms level.

"That's exactly what the Russians are proposing right now," he said.

President Ronald Reagan opposes a nuclear arms freeze at the present level so petitions which advocate this type of freeze prompt opposition, said Matthew Murphy, public information officer with the Pentagon's Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in Washington, D.C.

"Any proposal which calls for a freeze or a moratorium is opposed by the administration because we feel we can do better," Murphy said.

The administration does respond to each petition or letter, Murphy said.

"We don't ignore them (petitions) by any means," he said. "That would be the worst thing we could do. We're convinced that the people that support this are sincere in their beliefs. But we are just as sincere. We think that if we can get the information to them, we can alter their opinion."

As its response, the Reagan administration sends information packets detailing different kinds of arms freezes — such as one at the present level or one with negotiations — and the administration's ideas on the expected results of each freeze.

Walters said some opponents of the resolution attended the Raleigh public hearing held to discuss the issue.

"We had about as many people at our public hearing opposed to it as for it," he said. He added he had received phone calls

thanking him for his attempt to stop the resolution.

The coordinators of the various movements said they had encountered little organized opposition to their efforts. *The Daily Tar Heel* was unable to find any names of organized groups actively opposing the Freeze Movement although some conservative groups, such as the National Congressional Club and the Moral Majority, have made statements expressing their differing views.

Dr. John Stevens of Advocates for Nuclear Arms Freeze in Asheville and Carroll Webber of Greenville Peace Committee said their efforts were progressing more slowly than those of other groups.

Advocates for Nuclear Arms Freeze, a loosely organized group with approximately 400 members, focused on the 11th Congressional District in its petition drive and will present the petitions to various governmental bodies in October.

Greenville Peace Committee has focused mainly on educating the public about the freeze movement.

Although the Coalition to Reverse the Arms Race in Greensboro is grounded in religious groups, Sallie Clotfelter said the coalition would move into politics.

"We're not afraid to take our position into the political arena," she said. "But we do see our primary role as reaching people through religious views."

The Freeze Campaign's overall success in North Carolina resulted from its participants' credibility, Raleigh coordinator Everts said.

"You can't stick the people that are involved in the freeze off in some convenient corner and forget about them," he said.

freeze

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prompted citizens' involvement against nuclear arms.

"Reagan's administration has been scaring people," he said. "His confrontational policies have got a lot of people on their feet and moving."

The fellowship, consisting largely of pastors, wants a nuclear freeze declared and carried out, followed by the dismantling of nuclear weapons.

Phillips does not equate abolition of nuclear weapons with total disarmament, saying his organization seeks to eliminate "principal weapons of mass destruction (which lead to) a war without winners."

Another concern voiced by proponents of nuclear disarmament is the diversion of funds resulting from weapon expenditures.

Dr. Dirk Spruyt, of the Triangle chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, agrees that there will be no winners in a nuclear war. "This country and a good portion of the world would not survive in a meaningful sense," he said.

Spruyt said the Triangle PSR chapter hopes to host a national PSR seminar this

spring, possibly at UNC.

Although physicians have a working knowledge of the human body, many are unable to face the potential horrors of nuclear war. Denial and suppression, brought on by the stress of being a doctor, is one problem PSR tries to deal with, Spruyt said.

Bob McMahon, of the War Resisters League, said there has been denial and suppression surrounding the nuclear arms issue brought on by President Reagan.

"The Reagan administration is opposed to arms control," he said.

The League, which McMahon said is the second-oldest pacifist organization in the country, is not only for a nuclear freeze, but advocates general disarmament.

Although the League is limited in what it can do — it cannot lobby in Washington, for example — McMahon said its efforts in educating the public are not wasted.

"Symbols are important," McMahon said. "It does put pressure on the Reagan Administration in their determination not to yield to it."

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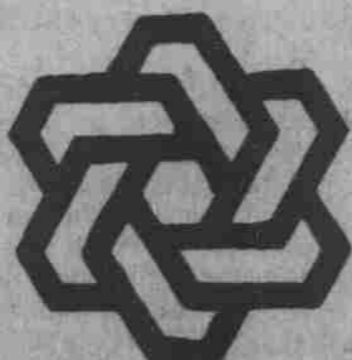
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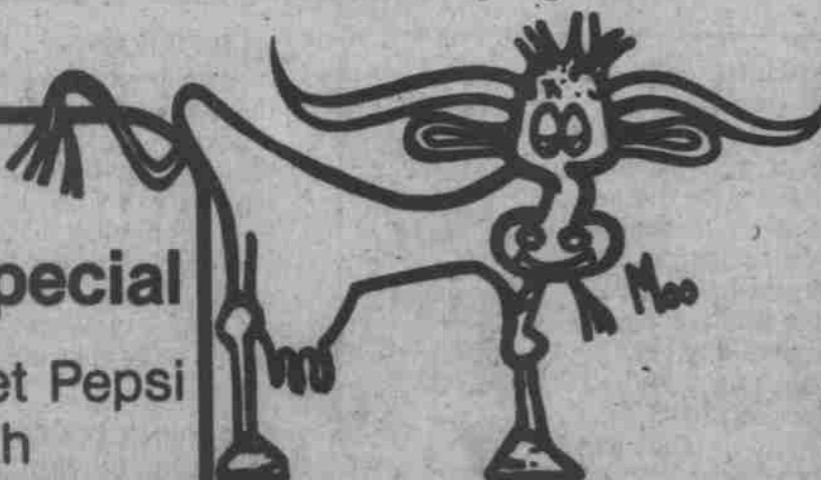
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