

## THE LIFE OF ENERGIES

(for Nikola Tesla and the early Oswald Spengler)

by John Young

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The heart is not an organ, this band of energy which surges back and forth, can be seen in two ways. The first is that of a ceaseless motion, a regular force, which constitutes and overlaps into other systems and the circulatory system of the body. The second is that of the heart as transformer, transforming nervous energy into blood-circulatory-energy.

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Works of art belong to the first category, for they are no different, as it were, to any other objects in the world - and it happens to be the social case that such forms of energy are considered as an art-energy.

3

Every art, every music, every writing has a support surface. This surface is a matrix of every possibility with that surface. In that sense, every surface has infinite potentialities (given the correct experimentations). In painting, the matrix surface may comprise of, at times, most essentially canvas and paint, in music, score and performance- instruments, in reading, the alphabet and a mediating instrument like the teletype or the brain.

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We can ask; what is the sublime the unsayable, the showable which can be demonstrated by works of art? In historical treatise, we see that Cézanne has rendered the haptic visible, it is an energy of visual hapticness. Mallarme has written the oral readable - the throat movement and sound energies transferred directly onto paper. Let us clarify this further. For Cézanne, the principle activity was to realize that a three-dimensional object can be rendered flat. This flatness is a transference of the historical categories of reality to illusion. In his canvases we can see the axis of illusion, which is the horizontal axis moving into the canvas. On his canvas we can see the vertical axis of the reality of the picture plane. But what exactly happens in this transference? A better way of saying the above could be that it is the rendering of depth into flatness. Maybe we can pause here for a moment, for I feel Merleau-Ponty in Cézanne's Doubt and the Eye and Mind goes a bit further. Let us look instead at a tree by Cézanne - on one side of the trunk there is an edge, and on the other the paint (of the trunk) melts into the sky. This is recognition of certain energies of the existence of the infinite potentialities of the matrix surface. These certain energies can loosely be seen as those concerned with classical illusionism. With classical illusionism there are always edges. With the edge, we have, as it were, a slowing down of the energy, to the point of static energy which eventually becomes a halting-edge; on the other side, the energy speeds up to the extent that it melts back into the infinitude of the matrix surface. This slowing down at the edge, however, does not serve a negative purpose, some people have tried to judge this halting- edge as the high spot of illusionism, but to judge is to try to convince ourselves that there is only reality and illusion. Some people might find this way of looking immensely comforting. But for our purposes, the edge is the pointing-out-ness from the matrix of painting, towards a contextual worldview, which is the Theory, (this is the inevitable 'bad' side of it) and the pointing-away-ness of the matrix towards another (in this case, the haptic). It is this transferenceness which is the unsayable, the sublime, the showable in a work of art.

There are other art works, which remain on the opposite pole of discussion, and these are the energies which see the matrix as tabula

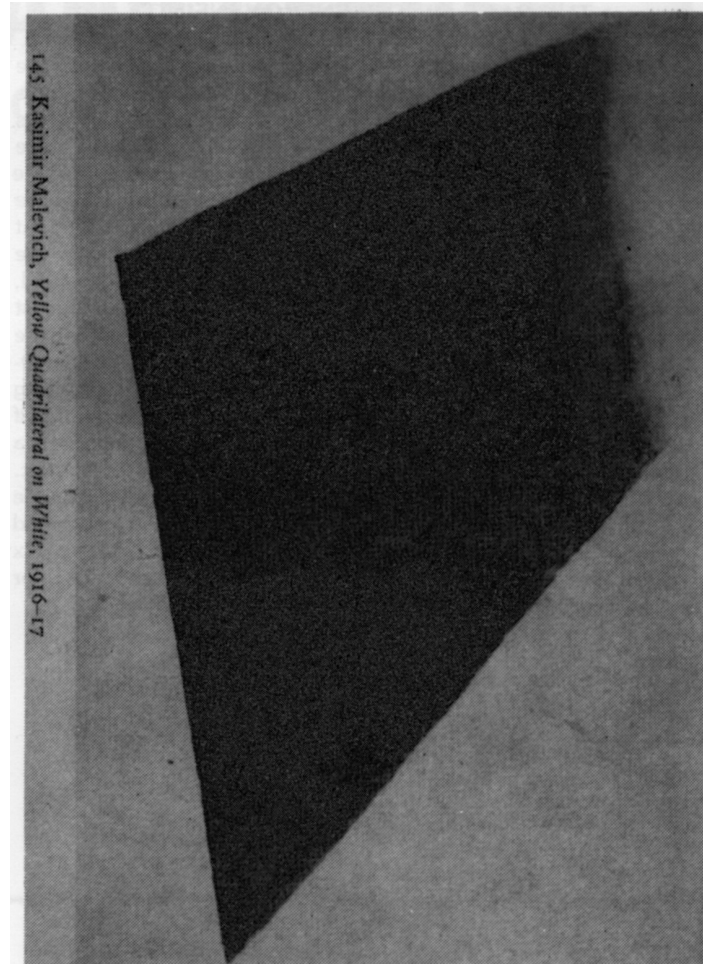
rasa, this type of energy activity can be called Romantic. Energy in transit of this sort is intuitive in a way, and does not care for the infinite potentialities of the matrix, they merely rest on top of any matrix they adhere to. In a sense, these bands of energy are like maps, which whether they are printed on paper, written on stone, incised in clay, constructed above a matrix, makes no difference to the data carried by the energies. Radical transformation of such energies are possible as it is not the doing of such energies which count (what direction or vector such energies head towards) but rather, the pattern they form. I am at odds with myself as to whether such patterns are static, and thus forming new Theories. I am inclined to be optimistic, and feel that the sheer movement of these bands of energy in a prescribed pattern or structure, still changes its nature according to the delayed intrusion of energy from other sources - (as in the case of a score of music which is later interpreted and played). Now, these patterns can overlay other energy sources, which in their turn can recognise the matrix-possibilities - but this is the hope of this sort of pattern. And until these patterns are applied, they remain relatively static. These energy patterns prey on the good will of other energies to submit themselves to the pattern. The complete submission of energies into the pattern is hyperconformism. The partial submission of energies to patterns exist in a twilight world similar to Cézanne's trees, or the apple-edges and orange-drapes (colour). Every 'object' is energy situations similar to these - a stool of unpolished wood exists in a twilight energy situation. Whilst perhaps pure decoration of a chair to the extent that it is unseatable is more like the map-situation. A tree trunk, which one happens to sit on, is like an accidental fall of colour on a canvas, it is almost a matrix-surface.

#### THE MATRIX SURFACE IS A CITY

Too long now have we held the idea that a city can be guided through. Let us try to remember an old story that a city in China is so vast that by the time we have reached the other end, the beginning would have changed, all the buildings we have seen exists no more, and new roads have been laid on old ones. The matrix surface of paintings are no longer canvases and point, but ever changing in its conditions. Energies which once passed through this matrix will realize that different directions are observed, and yet, a new infinity is opened up to these energies. (Is this the reason why energies travel at different speeds?)



Landscape painting on silk. Qing Dynasty.



Kasimir Malevich: *Yellow Quadrilateral on White*, 1916-1917.

Two examples of halting-edges becoming Theory and the melting back into the matrix surface: a landscape painting on silk, Ch'ing Dynasty, Chinese, and Kasimir Malevich's *Yellow Quadrilateral on White*, 1916-17, oil on canvas.

## THE RAGE OF THE ENERGY INFINITE

But we may well ask, what is the nature of the matrix surfaces? Are they co-ordinates? are they streets and alleys? these matrix surfaces must surely be composed of some things at certain times. Well, this is difficult, because paint and canvas today can be polymer and nature tomorrow, yet, the matrix is not a standing energy pattern, like the Romantic pattern - because to become the painter, one must realize also that the matrix surface takes on different modalities at different times; this in a similar way to Cézanne's trees, must reach into the infinity of its being in time. The city always lives with this in its mind, that today is never ever today, nor yesterday ever tomorrow. I must admit it has apparent standing patterns, like the grid, the spiral and the cobweb, but they are in a sense virtual. The city, in carrying energy- infinite, is *infinite* over again, for the carrying of itself is ever changing in its potential. It is only when a city stops carrying an infinitude of itself that a *vast* explosion and *self destruction* would occur; and this is a rage of the energy-infinite towards its matrix surface turned static. Just like the romantic energy situation, if forced onto a matrix surface and seeing it as tabula rasa results in a possible explosion and repulsion of the static energy pattern by a quick changing matrix surface. We must, however, feel completely safe in all situations, for fear itself only incites a closing down of possibilities.

## THE RELATIVE SPEED OF ENERGIES

This leads us to another point, the relative speed of energies and the matrix surface. Matrix surfaces of a slow changing speed can normally withhold more energy-speeds than vice versa. This is because energy can actually anticipate what its surfaces ahead are, and thus, to make necessary adjustments all the time actually all the energy out of such a band if confronted with a very fast matrix. But if the matrix surface and the energy travels at the same speed, a certain *dance* occurs which in turn re-energises the surface and the energies. We see this in Constable's paint-matrix-energy soil, Vermeer's colour transparency-matrix-energy and the luminosity of the light depicted. Most modern art and post-modern art are in fact energy strands travelling very quickly but are slowed down by the bothersome task of pinpointing the nature of the matrix at a specific time. We see attempts of slow energy vectors, like the works of Morandi harmonizing ' with slow matrix of traditional linen and oil, and in such cases, the dance is inevitable.

### Footnotes

1. Although this article was written in 1982, the appearance of the article 'Fear of Texture' by Imants Tillers in Art & Text 10, Winter 1983, seem to have simultaneously and quite independently opened up an area of concern not unlike the concerns of this particular article. In particular, the discussion of the relation between the 'dot-screen' and the 'image of dematerialisation'.
2. Cézanne's Doubt in Sense and Non-Sense by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Northwestern Uni. Press 1964. Eye and Mind in Aesthetics edited by H. Osborne, Oxford Uni. Press 1972.
3. 'Hyperconformism' as a strategy is described more thoroughly in 'On Some Alternatives to the Code in the Age of Hyperreality: the Hermit and the City Dweller', by T. Blake and J. Young, Art & Text 2, Winter 1981.

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