

Malevich

DELPHI  CLASSICS

Masters of Art

Kazimir Malevich

(1879-1935)



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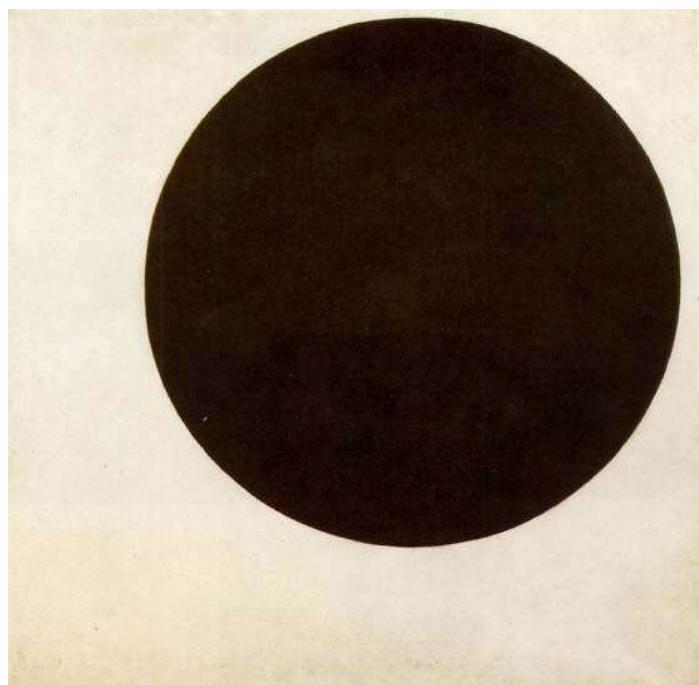
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Masters of Art Series

Kazimir Malevich



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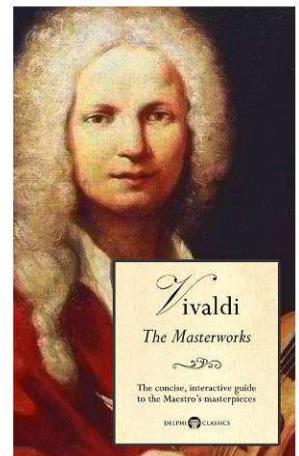
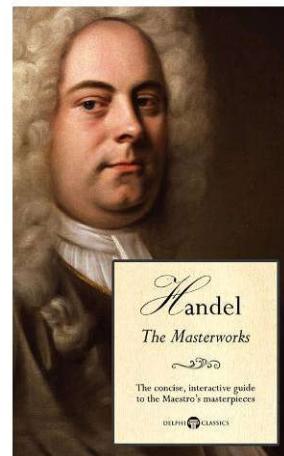
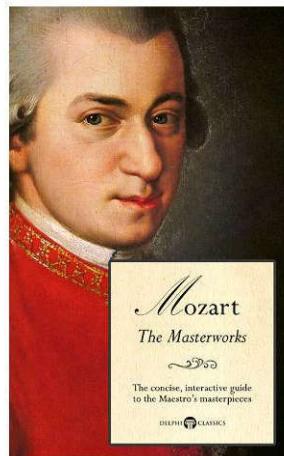
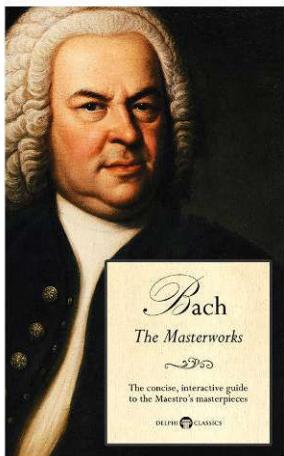


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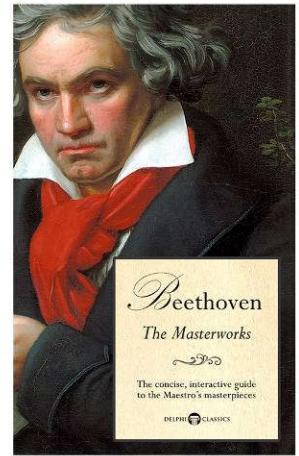
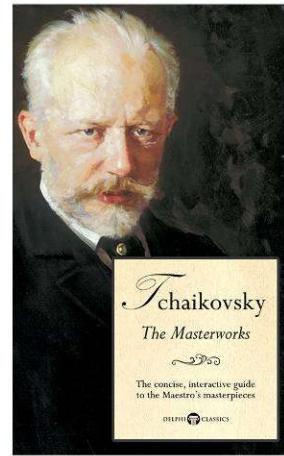
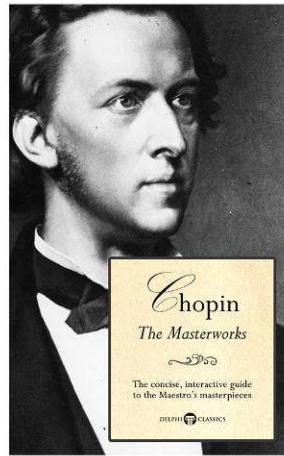
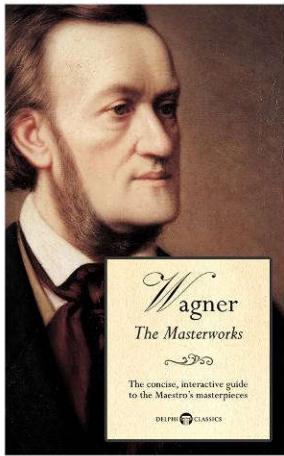
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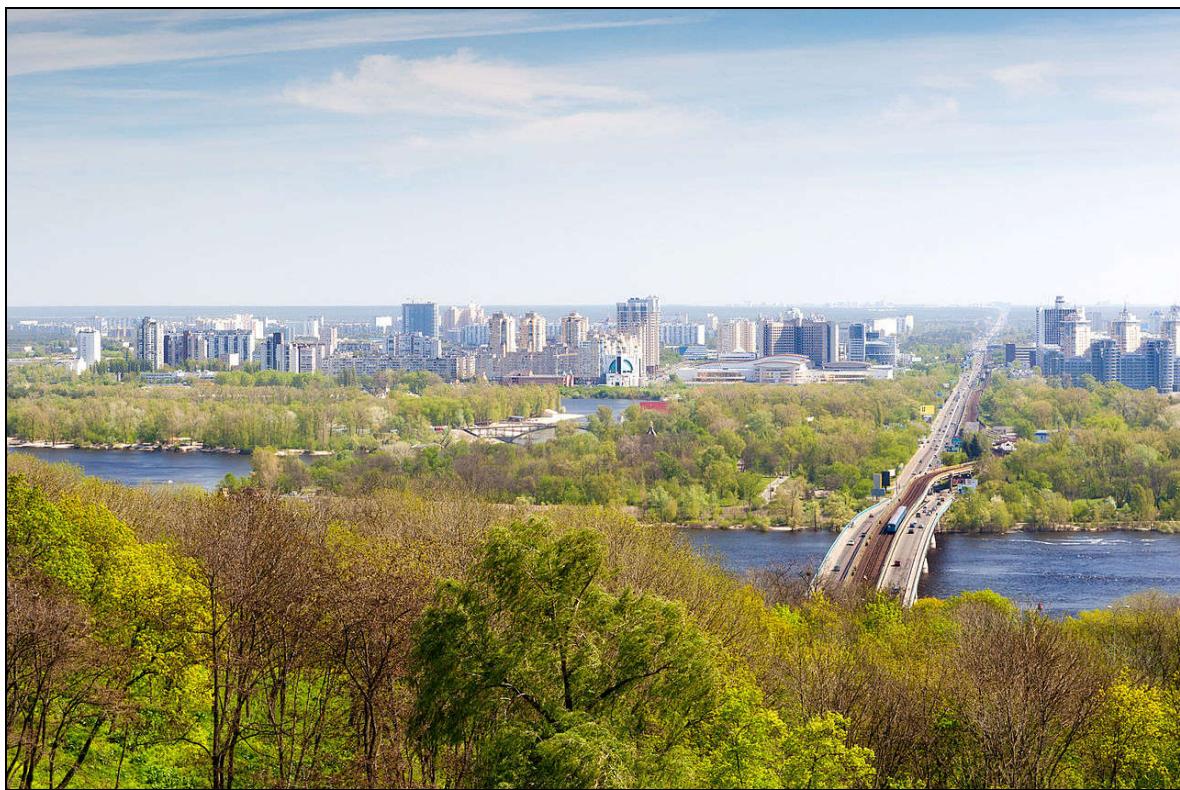


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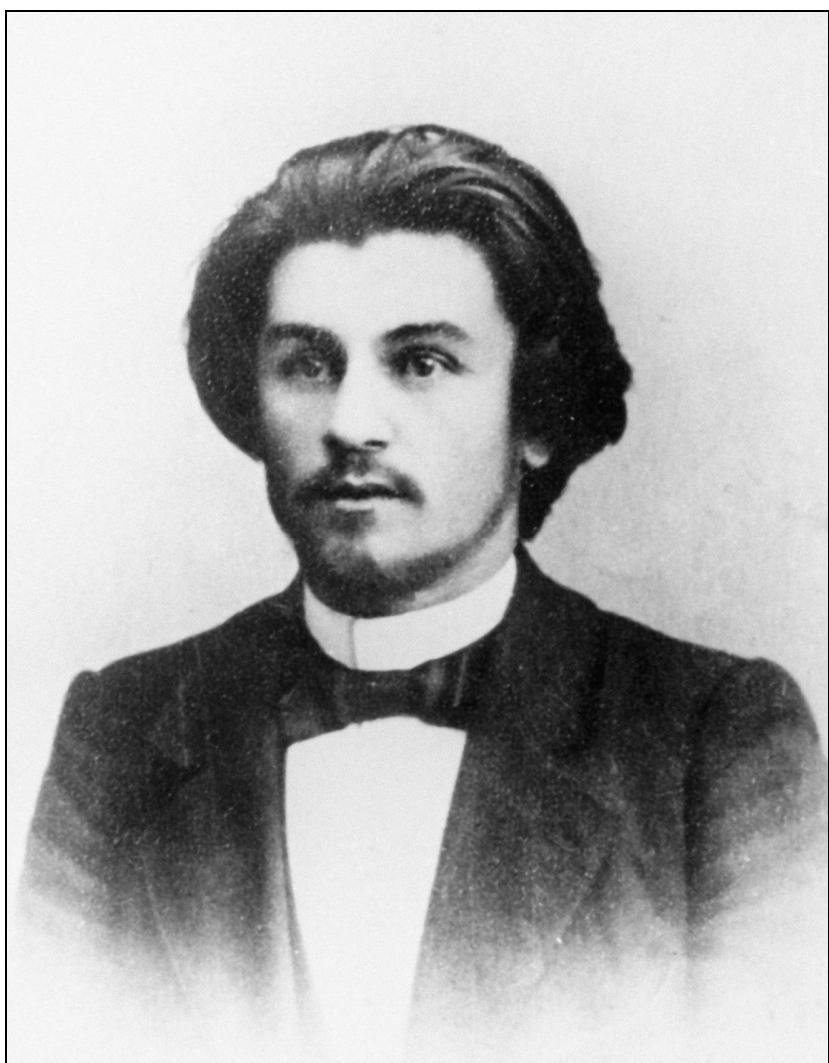
The Highlights



Photochrom of Kyiv in the late nineteenth century — Malevich was born near Kyiv in Ukraine to parents of Polish origin, who moved continuously within the Russian Empire in search of work.



Kyiv, today



Malevich as a young man

The Highlights



In this section, a sample of Malevich's most important works is provided, with concise introductions, special 'detail' reproductions and additional biographical images.

Landscape with Yellow House (1904)



A Russian artist that would have a profound influence on the course of modern art, Kazimir Malevich was born in Kyiv to an ethnic Polish family, who had settled near Kyiv, then part of the Russian Empire, during the partitions of Poland. Like most ethnic Poles, his parents were Roman Catholic, though his father was also known to have attended Orthodox services. They had fled from the former eastern territories of the Commonwealth (present-day Belarus) to Kyiv in the aftermath of the failed Polish January Uprising of 1863. Therefore, Malevich's native language was Polish, though he also spoke Russian and Ukrainian, due to his changing childhood surroundings.

The artist's father was the manager of a sugar factory and had a large family. Kazimir was the first of fourteen children, although only nine survived into adulthood. His early years were lively and rarely stable, as the family frequently relocated across various villages of modern-day Ukraine, amidst sugar-beet plantations, far from centers of culture. Indeed, until the age of twelve, Malevich knew nothing of professional artists, although he had been surrounded by art in his childhood. Among his earliest known influences was peasant embroidery, used to decorate walls and stoves. Inspired by these vibrantly toned works, he devised a peasant painting style, following his drawing studies in the Kiev School of Art in 1895.

The following year Malevich lived in Kursk, a city located on the confluence of the Kur, Tuskar and Seym rivers, 325 miles south of Moscow, where his father went to work for the railroad. Here he found employment as a draftsman and soon married Kazimira Zgleits — the sister of his brother's wife — and he started a family; the marriage was not destined to last.

In Kursk the aspiring painter found like-minded people with an interest in art. He formed a close friendship with Lev Kvachevsky, an enthusiastic painter, who had spent time at Saint Petersburg's Imperial Academy of Art. Another important friend was Valentin Loboda, a young accountant that worked for the railroad, who helped Malevich organise Kursk's sole art group. They had use of a common studio, where drawing sessions took place and the members' artworks could be exhibited. In spite of these promising activities, Malevich hungered for a greater stage on which to work and in 1904, after his father's death, he took the train to Moscow in search of formal artistic instruction, as well as more culturally promising circles.

He ended up in the renowned studio school of Fedor Rerberg, who specialised in training his students for the exacting entrance examinations of the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. This important institution was receptive to both Western and domestic contemporary trends and so a position there would have appeared indispensable to the young Malevich.

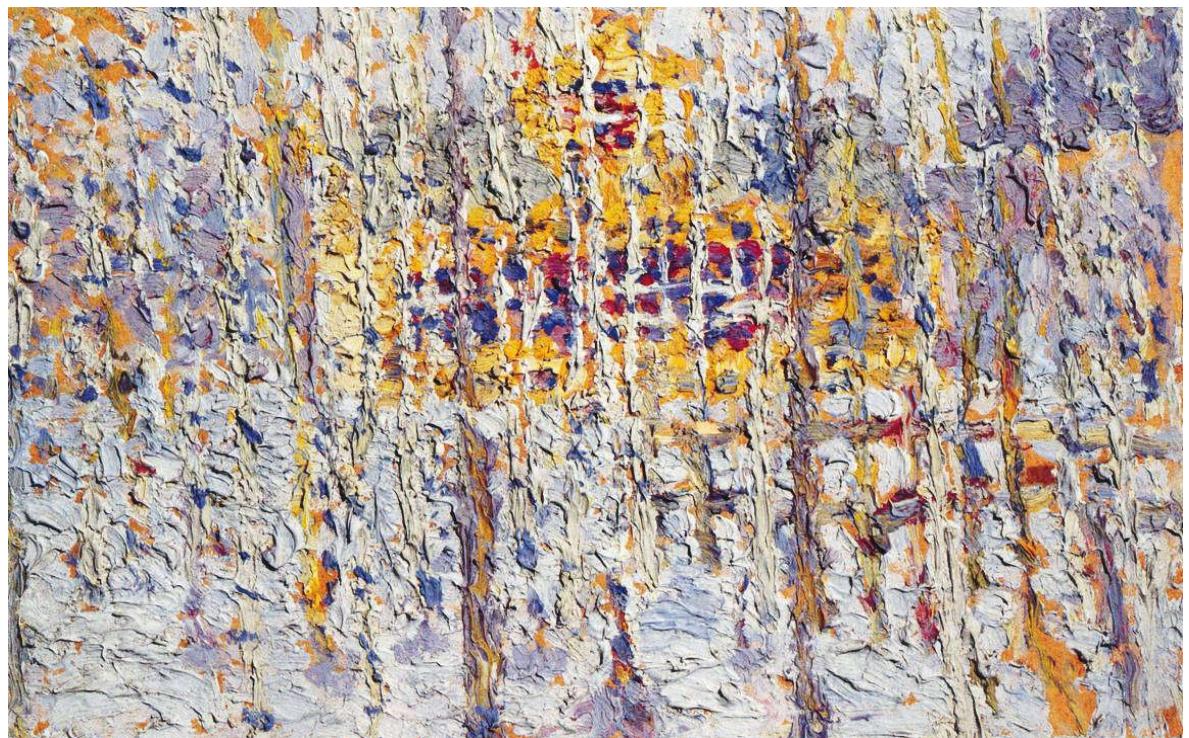
His promising arrival in Moscow, where he was introduced to several prominent artists and teachers, enabled him to arrange his first exhibition, "Moscow and Out-of-Town Artists," which was given at Kursk the following year. His close friends Loboda and Kvachevsky also took part in the show, as well as his tutor Rerberg. An additional prestige for the show came in the attendance of the prominent Moscow artist Konstantin Yuon (1875-1958). This exhibition enabled Malevich to familiarise his old friends with the artistic innovations of bustling Moscow, while giving the nascent art of Kursk a cosmopolitan audience.

Nonetheless, Malevich's exhibition would not prove beneficial to his academic studies, as he failed three successive attempts to pass the entrance examinations of the celebrated Moscow School in 1905, 1906 and 1907. In later years the artist would claim that he had been a student there, though there is no surviving evidence of his attendance, which has been called into question by some art historians. Instead, from 1905 until 1910, he toiled hard at Rerberg's studio. His early work was notably influenced by Impressionism, as well as Symbolism and Fauvism, as revealed in the following composition, completed in the year of his relocation to Moscow.

A small landscape painted in oil on cardboard, *Landscape with Yellow House* is one of the artist's earliest extant works. In spite of its diminutive size, measuring 19cm x 29cm, and daring economy of style, it successfully depicts a wintry scene of a woods covered in snow, with what appears to be a country house in the background. The composition is rendered in yellow ochre (an earthy pigment containing ferric oxide) tones — a customary choice for Russian artists, capturing the shimmering brilliance of a cold, yet clear winter atmosphere. Far from a standard representation of the scene, the artist uses thick and impasto brush strokes to capture the impression of a fleeting moment of time. The uneven forms of the trees and the building are given a sense of movement, as the landscape appears to breath, or perhaps exhale, with a colourful arrangement of light and snow.

No human form is part of the scene, allowing us to focus our attention on a nature untouched by man. The use of cropping, where the tree trunks are cut off at the top of the image, places the viewer in the midst of the snowy scene. This technique promotes immediacy, as though we are not viewing a painting, but are in fact immersed in the Russian landscape.

Of course, *Landscape with Yellow House* reveals the early innovations of Monet and the other early Impressionists, whose works were taking the Parisian art world by storm at the end of the nineteenth century. Two of Monet's paintings of Rouen Cathedral had been on display at Moscow's Shchukin collection since 1901 and so were likely familiar to Malevich. Like the Impressionists before him, Malevich developed his own 'tactile' style to portray the atmosphere of the scene, where each form is represented with small areas of thickly dabbed oil. Malevich was by no means the first Russian painter to capture the dissolving properties of air and light. Pioneering artists like Ilia Grabar and Konstantin Korovin had utilised similar techniques in their canvases. It would appear that the revolutionary concept of Impressionism had spread much further than the confines of France.





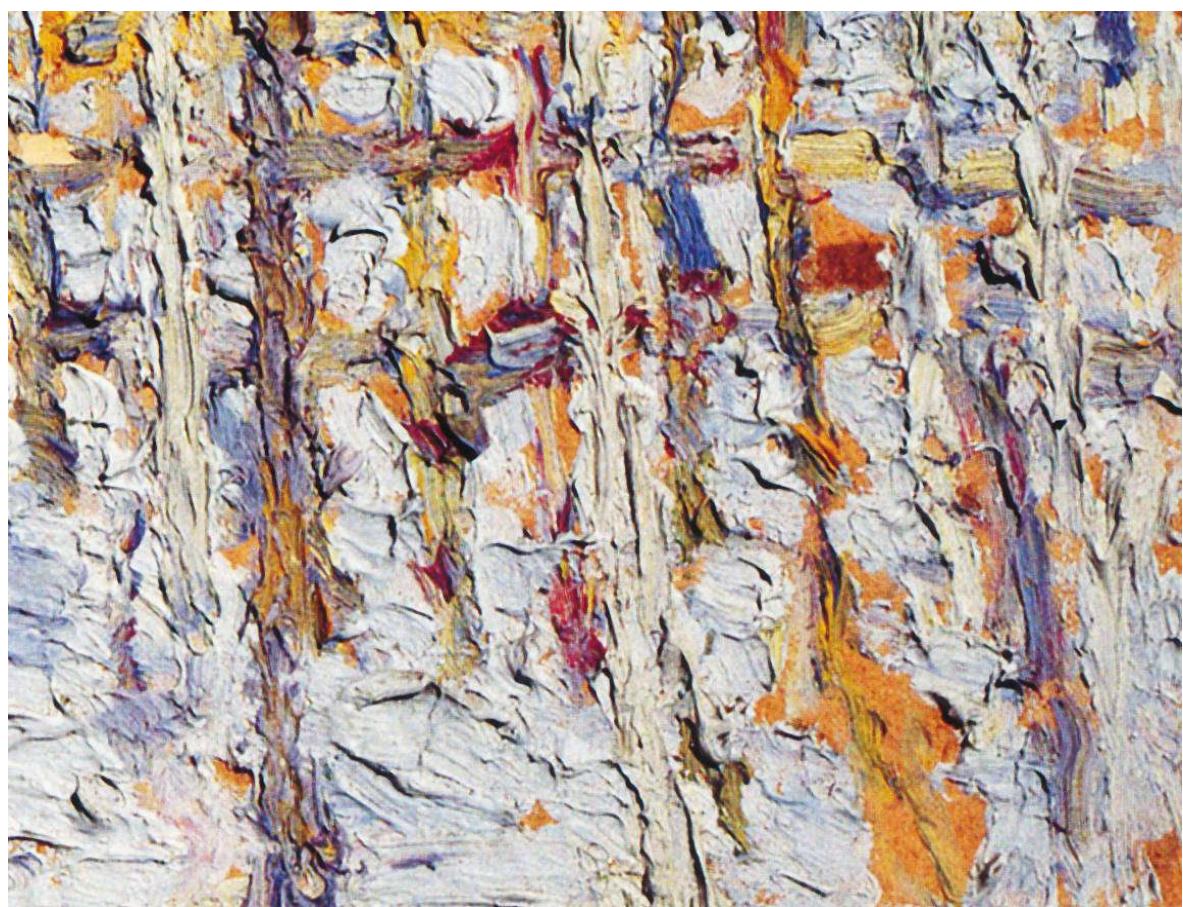
Detail (upper centre)



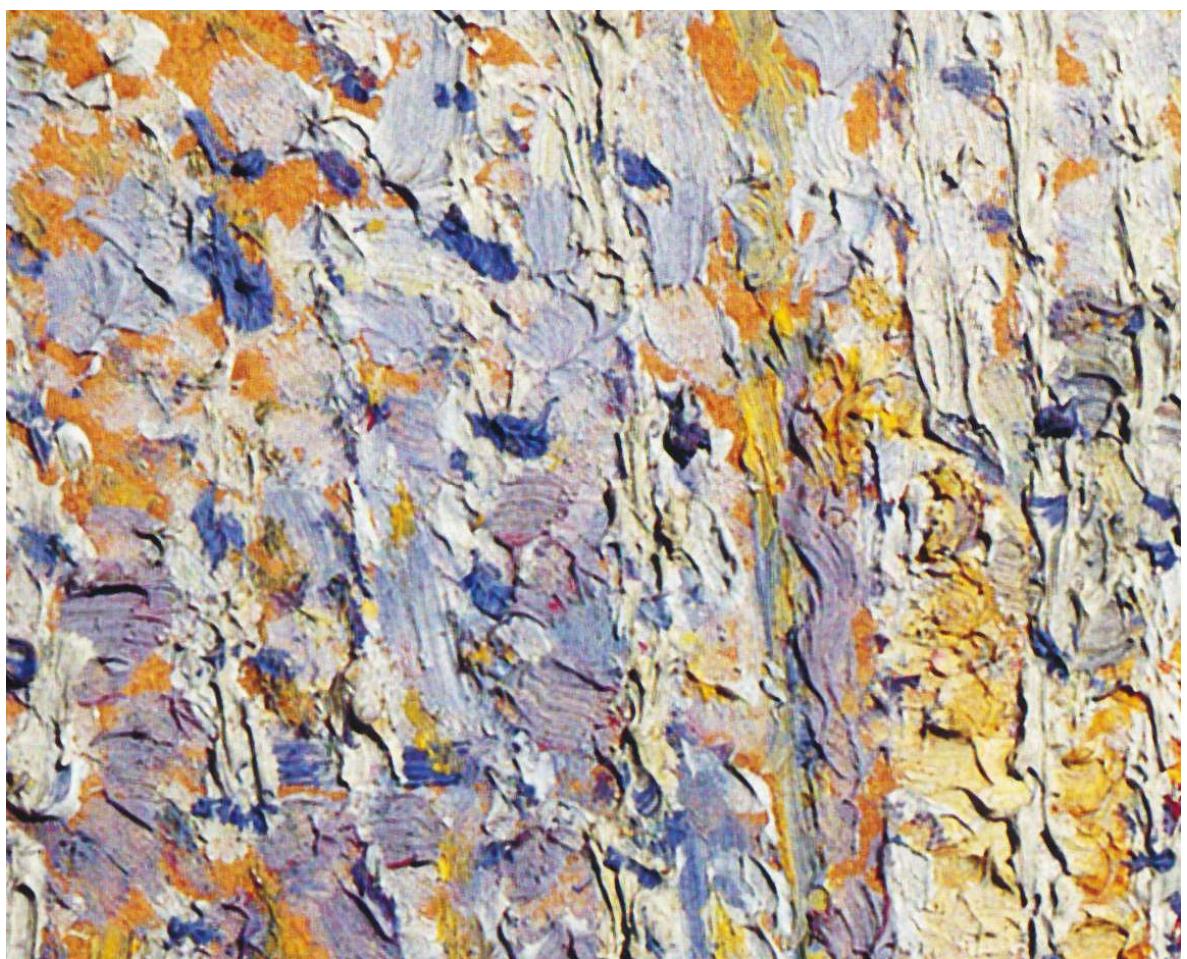
Detail (lower centre)



Detail (upper right)



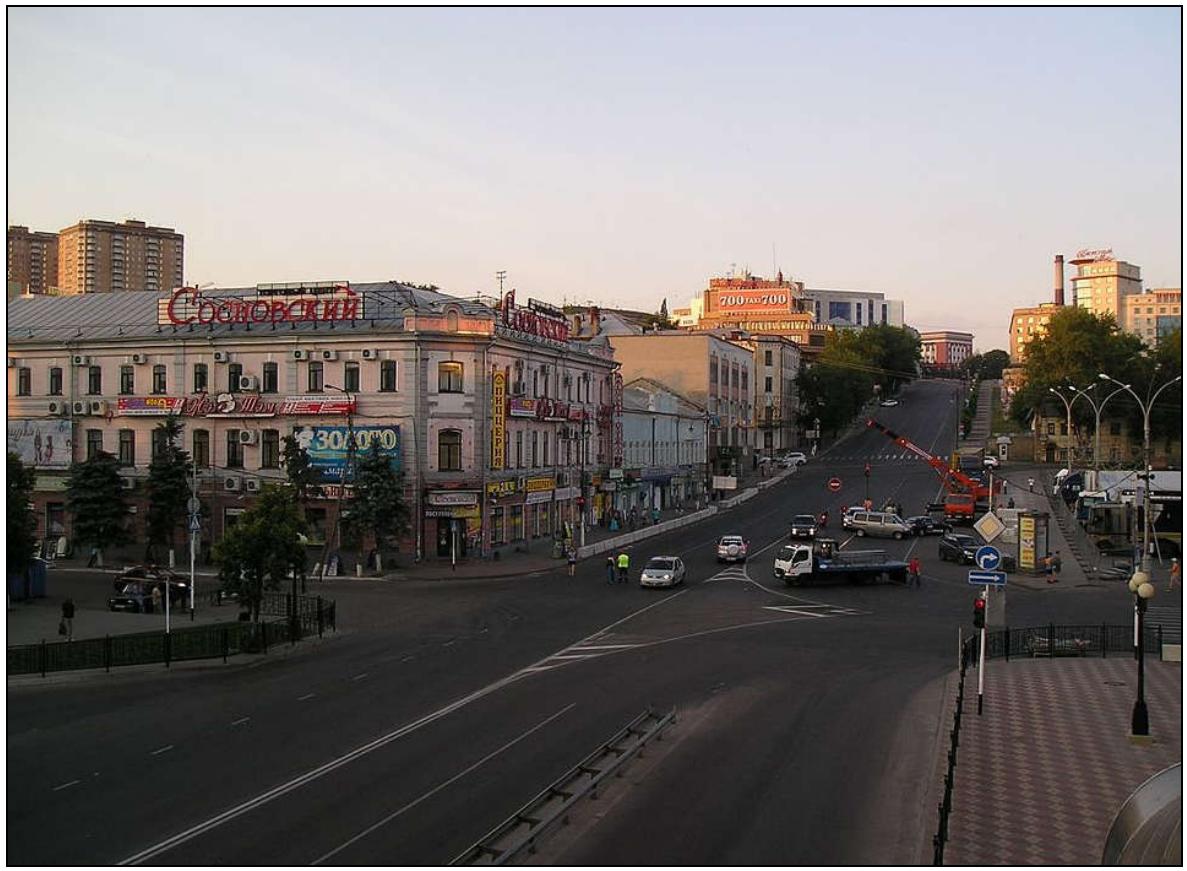
Detail (lower right)



Detail (upper left)



Detail (lower left)



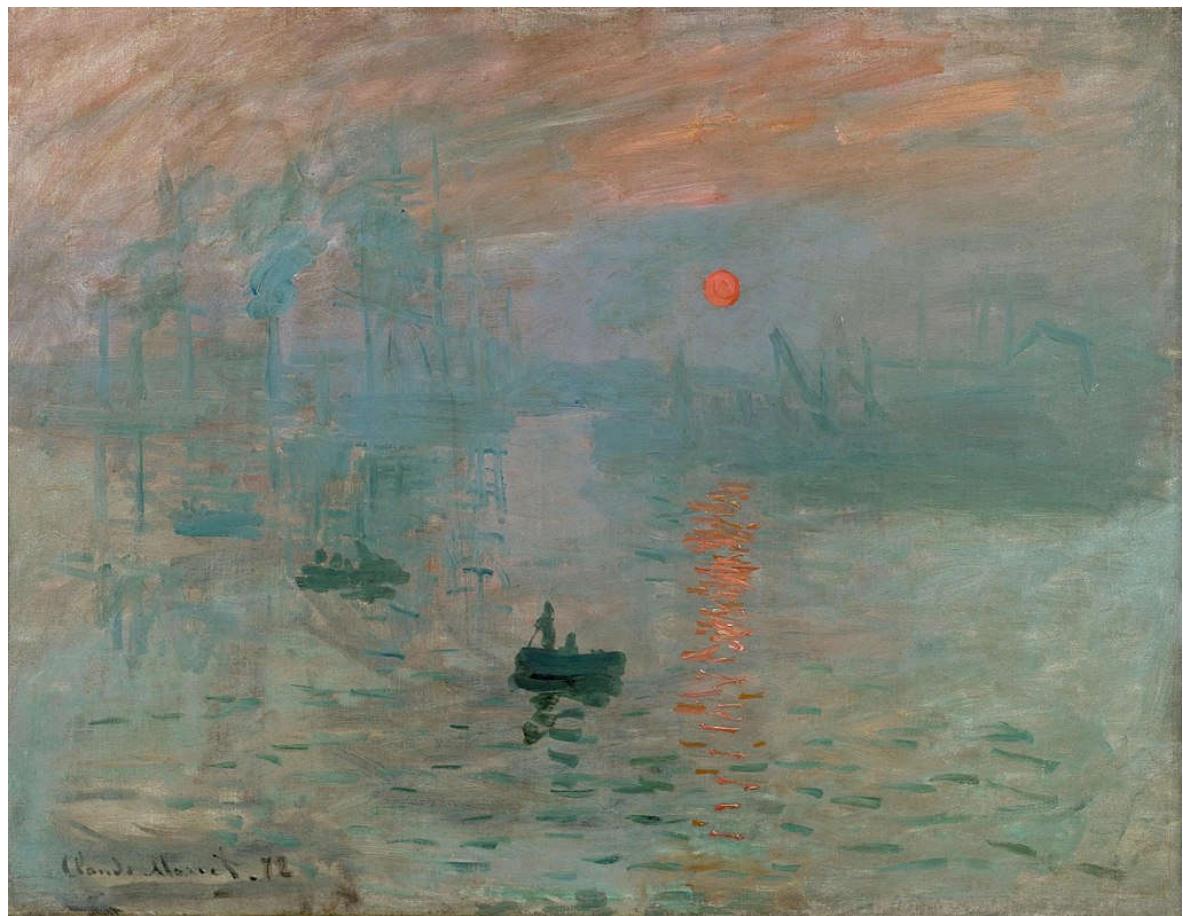
City centre of Kursk, Malevich's home form 1896-1904



House of Kazimir Malevich in Kursk



Malevich in Kursk, 1902



'Impression, Sunrise' by Claude Monet, first shown at what would become known as the "Exhibition of the Impressionists" in Paris in April, 1874. The painting is credited with inspiring the name of the Impressionist movement.



End of Sample