

AFTER NYNE

THE ART LOVER'S MAGAZINE

A Century of Influence: Robert Kelly on Malevich

September 28, 2016



As a painter, discovering Malevich is as an experience akin to freefall; embracing in essence a visual leap of faith. It cannot but be an epiphany of sorts, where both the act of painting and the suspension in beholding a painting, give way to the vertigo Malevich wanted the viewer to experience with his pure formal distillations.

For me as a younger artist discovering this sense of permission, or letting go, allowed me to move beyond description or representation, into pared down compositions that had much to say in their sparseness.

Growing up in New Mexico - rich with a mythic landscape, Old World folkloric undertones, deep literary and artistic traditions, O'Keefe's crosses, and a parched beauty - made for an easy bridge to Malevich's concerns.

In moving to New York in the early 1980's and the further merging of this childhood background with the incongruous rigors the contemporary art market, I

deepened my interest in historical continuity rather than the rupture of it, so often found in the present art market. Russian Constructivism, the Bauhaus, and the Brazilian Neo-Concretists were movements that I found many shared sensibilities.

My canvases have their own layered history which also contain telltale references to the historical in their collaged and palimpsestic surfaces that underlie the block on block lays of colour. In my upcoming exhibition with Sophia Contemporary, entitled *Black on Bone – Selected works*, and my works included in *Frieze Masters* presentation, adjacent to those by Kazimir Malevich, it is hard to imagine that the legacy of the Black Square (first version 1915) is now a century old.

Robert Kelly: *Black on Bone – Selected works* is at Sophia Contemporary Gallery, 28 September - 28 October 2016
www.sophiacontemporary.com

Image Credit: Costas Picades