

AN ABSTRACT ART

BY CHRISTINE HEMP

When the painter Kandinsky lay in hospital, aching from some mysterious complaint, he wept

to think about the surgeon's knife, about being wheeled into a room without intersecting circles

and squares in the cool blues that he loved, the altered shapes in which he lived. Nurses cooed and patted

his shoulder, but he was not assuaged. His cry spattered off the pale green walls and smeared

the yellow corridors, stopped those who heard its pitch and timbre, its truth if not the implication.

"You do not understand!" he moaned, and the words like a jazz refrain traveled up the vents and out

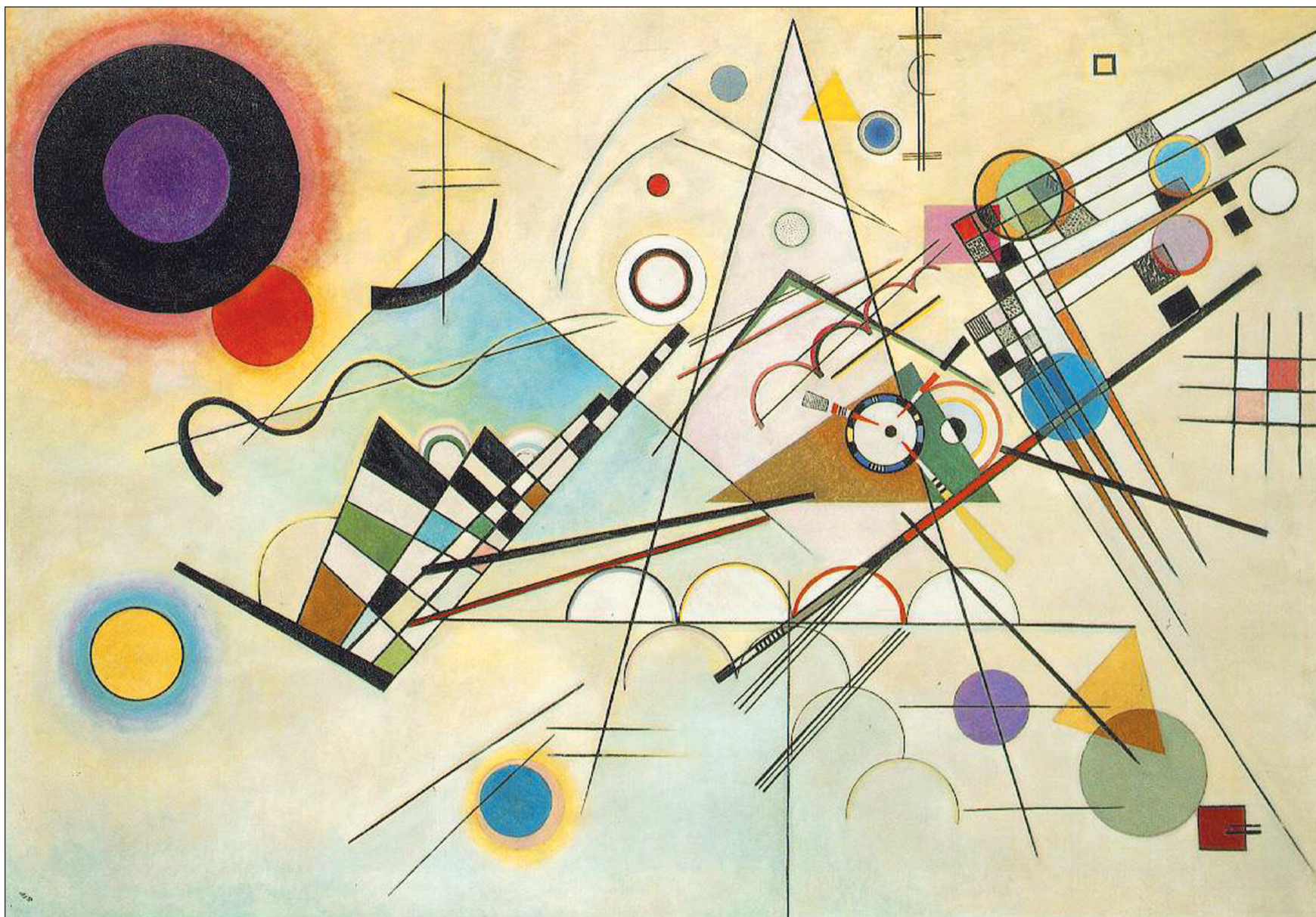
the windows, through the operating room, behind the laundry door. "I have no skin! I have no skin!"

Throwing off the nurses, he clutched himself, as if his arms could wrap his torso in the layer

of gauze he needed to face those unknown places. What they didn't see was that he knew his own

condition: Outside his picture plane—without a brush and palette knife—he lay naked and alone;

arcs and lines could not stay the bleeding edges. Random forms conspired to erase him from creation.



Christine Hemp was a staff art writer for *THE magazine* for six years. She has read her poems and essays on NPR's "Morning Edition." She is a recent recipient of a Washington State Artist Trust Fellowship for Literature, and currently lives in Port Townsend, Washington.