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**ALEKSANDR DEINEKA (1899-1969)**  
**AN AVANT-GARDE FOR THE PROLETARIAT**

2011

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**A**leksandr Deineka (1899–1969): *An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat* is the first exhibition and publication to present this outstanding figure of socialist realism—and, by extension, the historical period from which his work was borne—in a twofold context: the end of the avant-garde and the advent of Soviet socialist realism. It covers Deineka's entire oeuvre, from his early paintings of the 1920s to the twilight of his career in the 1950s, when the dreamlike quality of his first works gave way to the harsh materiality of everyday life, the life in which the utopian ideals of socialism seemed to materialize. Combining Deineka's graphic work, extraordinary posters and celebrated contributions to illustrated magazines and books with his imposing monumental paintings, this catalogue displays a variety of subject matter—factories and enthusiastic masses, athletes and farmers, the ideal and idyllic image of Soviet life—in works that are not only outstanding ventures into painting and creations of great beauty, but also formidable metaphors of the Soviet utopia and its conviction that social and material reality could be transformed by the revolutionary dialectic of capital and labor.

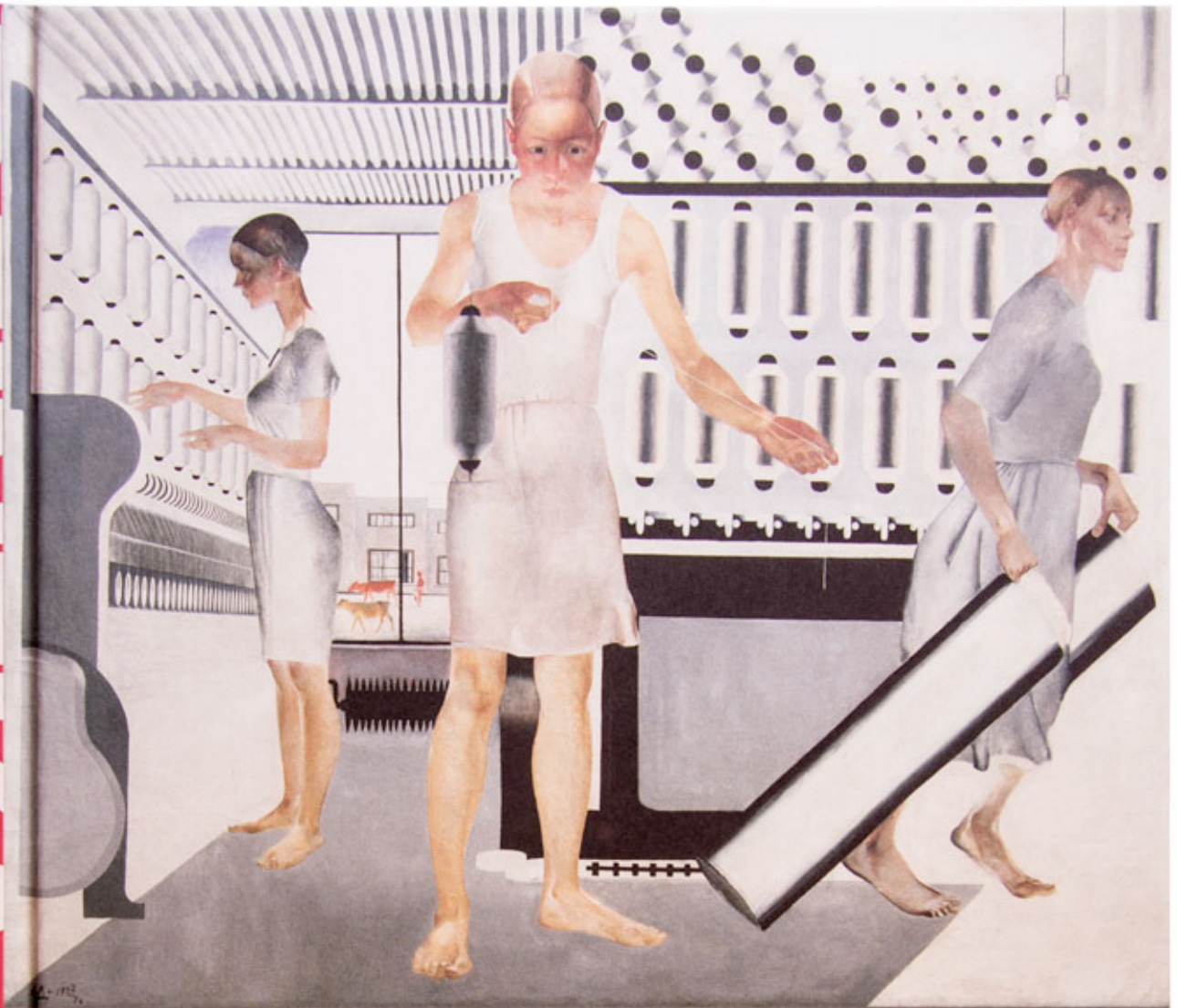
In addition to an exhaustive anthology with over fifty historical documents written between 1913 and 1964 translated directly from the Russian—several of them previously unpublished—this publication includes essays and texts by Boris Groys, Manuel Fontán del Junco, Christina Kiaer, Ekaterina Degot, Fredric Jameson, Irina Leytes, Alessandro De Magistris, John Bowlt, Hubertus Gassner, Eckhart Gillen, Aage Hansen-Löwe, Michael Hagemester and Evgeny Steiner.

In *Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969): An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat*, the presentation of Deineka's oeuvre side by side with a careful selection of works by avant-garde and revolutionary artists—from Kazimir Malevich to Aleksandr Rodchenko, and from Gustavs Klucis to Aleksei Gan—and realist artists—such as Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin or Iurii Pimenov—exposes a unique and unexplored set of relationships between the Russian avant-garde and an art—socialist realism—that viewed itself as a contemporary artistic and political form of avant-garde art made for the proletariat, more in sync with the political construction of the Soviet utopia than the avant-garde. Thus, beyond being a mere monograph of Aleksandr Deineka, this catalogue is also an history of the events that took place between the onset of the avant-garde around 1913 and the death of Stalin in 1953, exploring the diverse forms of an art that not only permeated all spheres of life during this period but also imitated a political power that represented itself in demiurgic artistic terms in its effort to transform life in the most radical way.



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ALEKSANDR  
**DEINEKA**

[1899-1969]

AN AVANT-GARDE  
FOR THE  
PROLETARIAT





This catalogue and its Spanish edition  
are published on the occasion of the exhibition

**ALEKSANDR DEINEKA (1899-1969)**  
**An Avant—Garde for the Proletariat**

Fundación Juan March, Madrid  
October 7, 2011 – January 15, 2012

**ALEKSANDR**  
**DEINEKA**

**[1899–1969]**  
**AN AVANT-GARDE**  
**FOR THE PROLETARIAT**

# Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969)

## An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat

In 1985, a time when the Soviet regime was still in power, the Fundación Juan March organized an exhibition titled *The Russian Avant-Garde, 1910–1930. Ludwig Museum and Collection*, the first show in Spain to display art works by the Russian avant-garde. In the past 23 years, various exhibitions devoted to the leading figures of this movement—among them, Kazimir Malevich (1993), Aleksandr Rodchenko (2001), and Liubov Popova (2004)—have been staged at the Fundación, including the recent *Total Enlightenment. Conceptual Art in Moscow, 1960–1990*, held in 2008. This show brought together the work of a number of Soviet artists such as Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov, Vitalii Komar and Aleksandr Melamid. Straddling between concept art and their own particular style of Soviet pop art, these artists focused on and raised issues regarding Soviet culture during the Stalin era, from his rise to power following Lenin's death in 1924 to his death in 1953.

These exhibitions therefore addressed two moments in Russian history: the great experiment that was the Russian avant-garde in the years preceding the Stalin era and, secondly, the unofficial and decidedly postmodern form of Soviet art that emerged a decade after Stalin's death. In order to complete this historical overview, it became obvious that the interval between both periods, a defining moment in the history of modern Russia, deserved our attention. And so, Soviet revolutionary art and art produced during the Stalin era, in particular, are at the core of the present exhibition.

On account of its social, political, economic, and also cultural particularities, the Stalin era is a period of history well-known to many. Traditionally associated to the darker years of the Soviet regime—which indeed it was—Stalinism became the subject of much historical (and political) debate following Khrushchev's rise to power. It is an era known for the Five-Year Plans that revolutionized the country's agriculture and introduced industrialization, the victory of the USSR in the Second World War, ever-increasing oppression under totalitarian rule, in short, the radical pretensions of totalitarianism. In the arts, Stalinism is associated to "socialist realism," an artistic style that was enforced in 1932.

In spite of the vast amount of literature on Stalinism and the span of years it encompasses, the art produced during the period has not been explored in depth. Further aspects that remain unknown are the implications of socialist realism, the meaning of its tropes ("realist in form and socialist in content"), its aims and purposes, and, most importantly, its connection to earlier avant-garde movements and other forms of realism that developed concurrently outside Russia.

The relatively unknown art of the Stalin era—the focus of only a few exhibitions in the Soviet Union, Europe and America—tends to be disregarded (or casted out *a priori* from the usual canon) as an unremarkable effort that simply resulted in a pretentious and monumental variant of kitsch, a derivative and propagandistic form of art subject to ideological purposes and aimed at educating the masses. And, what is worse for the moral judgment it implies, the art produced during these years has been identified with a totalitarian regime responsible for liquidating (in the literal sense of the word in some cases) the avant-garde movement that socialist realism would come to replace in the 1920s and 1930s.

*Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969): An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat* is the first exhibition in Spain to present the work of such an outstanding figure of soviet socialist realism. The fourth of its kind following a groundbreaking exhibition in Düsseldorf, the 1990 show in Helsinki and a more recent exhibit held in Rome, this comprehensive retrospective—with over 80 works on view—is to date the largest exhibition devoted to Aleksandr Deineka outside Russia. His art work—and by extension the historical period from which it was borne—is presented here in a twofold context: the end of the avant-garde and the advent of socialist realism.

To this end, Deineka's straightforward painterly style coupled with the ambivalence—or ambiguity—of his art and persona serve as a representative example. The artist received his formal training at institutions traditionally influenced by avant-garde art and formed part of the last remaining constructivist groups (such as October and OST). Because of this, and in spite of his commitment to the revolution and the formation of a socialist state, he was accused of adhering to formalism. He was nonetheless granted permission to travel to America and Europe and was commissioned major works

by the Soviet state, whose utopian pretensions found their most notable expression in Deineka's depictions.

A broad yet detailed selection of magazines, posters, books, documents, objects, and works by other Russian avant-garde artists—with a special focus on their revolutionary output—mirror the "ambivalent" and "ambiguous" quality of Deineka's art and career. Presented together, these pieces expose a unique, coherent (and unexplored) set of relationships between socialist realism and the Russian avant-garde. Socialist realism viewed itself as a contemporary style, an artistic/political form of avant-garde art made for the proletariat, in sync with the political ideals of the Soviet state, unlike the artistic avant-garde which was dismissed as decorative, abstract, or, to be more precise, formalist. For this reason, *Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969): An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat* draws a timeline spanning the years between the onset of the avant-garde in 1913, marked by the premiere of the first futurist opera—*Victory over the Sun* by Aleksei Kruchenykh, stage design by Kazimir Malevich—, and the death of Stalin in 1953. The show explores the diverse forms of art that not only permeated all spheres of life during the period but also added to and revealed the intentions of a regime that represented itself in demiurgic terms in its effort to transform life in every way.

Given the intricacies of this subject, in addition to a broad selection of works by Deineka, the exhibition also features pieces by avant-garde and revolutionary artists such as Kazimir Malevich, Aleksei Kruchenykh, Vladimir Tatlin and El Lissitzky, as well as Liubov Popova, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Aleksandra Ekster, Gustavs Klucis, Valentina Kulaguina, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Natan Al'tman, Mechislav Dobrokovskii, Solomon Telingater and Aleksei Gan, and realist artists including, among others, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Iurii Pimenov, Dmitrii Moor and Aleksandr Samokhvalov.

*Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969): An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat* covers Deineka's entire body of work, from his early paintings of the 1920s to the twilight of his career in the 1950s. During the artist's final years, the futuristic quality of his first paintings gave way to the harsh materiality of everyday life, a life in which the utopian ideals of socialism had materialized. Deineka's graphic work, extraordinary posters and outstanding



contributions to illustrated magazines and books are presented here alongside his imposing, monumental paintings. The exhibition therefore displays a variety of subject matter—factories and enthusiastic masses, athletes and farmers, the ideal and idyllic image of soviet life. Not only were they outstanding ventures into painting and works of great formal beauty, but they were also symbolic of Soviet ideals and the conviction that social and material reality could be transformed by the revolutionary dialectic of capital and labor.

The majority of the nearly 250 works and documents on view form part of the State Tretyakov Gallery and the Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg; other pieces were granted on loan by regional museums in Russia and private and public collections in Spain, other countries in Europe, and the United States. Furthermore, by a great stroke of luck, the Fundación Juan March's interest in Deineka coincided with that of the Hamburger Kunsthalle—whose upcoming exhibition of Deineka and Ferdinand Hodler opens in 2012—giving us the opportunity to jointly conduct and oversee the loans of the artist's work.

The Fundación Juan March would like to thank all those who facilitated loans from their collections, especially the State Tretyakov Gallery and the Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg and those responsible for their holdings, Irina Lebedeva and Evgeniia Petrova, as well as the director of the Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery, Igor A. Pripachkin.

Without Merrill C. Berman's exceptional collection of modernist art, presenting Deineka's graphic work and gathering the material and literature needed to reliably reconstruct the artist's historical context would have been a difficult, if not insurmountable, task. For his support, we are truly grateful. Our sincere thanks also go to Vladimir Tsarenkov—a more than generous art collector who nonetheless prefers to discreetly remain in the background—, Fondation Beyeler in Basel, Fundación Azcona, Fundación José María Castañé, Juan Manuel and Monika Bonet, Archivo España-Rusia 1927–1937 and its director Carlos María Flores Pazos, Bibliothèque L'Heure joyeuse (Paris) and its conservator of Historical Holdings Françoise Lévêque, José María Lafuente and Maurizio Scudiero.

The numerous individuals and institutions that have supported our project require the extensive section that follows this introduction. Among them

Boris Groys (New York University) deserves special mention, as his groundbreaking essays on the arts and culture of modern Russia inspired this exhibition. Equally important was the expertise of special advisor to the project Christina Kiaer (Northwestern University), leading expert on Deineka outside the former Soviet Union. We are more than pleased to present Ekaterina Degot's insightful text on socialist realism as well as an essay by Professor Frederic Jameson, who supported the project in its earliest stages when we contemplated embarking on the risky task of presenting the work of Deineka and Charles Sheeler in a comparative perspective. Working alongside the Hamburger Kunsthalle and its director, Hubertus Gassner, has been an immensely gratifying experience. Furthermore, we want to thank Matteo Lafranconi (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome) for his timely help, as well as the Interros Publishing Program for providing us with essential graphic material. And, as usual, our gratitude goes to Banca March and to Corporación Financiera Alba for their support.

In addition to the exhibition catalogue, printed in English and Spanish, the show is accompanied by a facsimile edition of *Elektromonter* (The Electrician, 1930) by Boris Ural'skii, a children's book illustrated by Deineka.

Through image and text, this extensive catalogue presents an in-depth and varied account of Aleksandr Deineka's production and the historical circumstances that surrounded his work, unknown to the general public and experts alike. Given this general lack of knowledge, the volume brings together several essays by scholars of Soviet art, the Russian avant-garde, and Aleksandr Deineka in particular. The Fundación Juan March extends its gratitude to the following contributors: Alessandro De Magistris, Ekaterina Degot, Boris Groys, Fredric Jameson, Christina Kiaer and Irina Leytes.

The catalogue also features an exhaustive anthology of previously unpublished historical documents. Selected texts include writings by Deineka, texts on Deineka and several other documents written between 1913 and 1969 that are key in grasping the complexity of this historical period: from standardized writings by avant-garde artists to proclamations, manifestos and polemic accounts of revolutionary art, as well as socialist realism's foundational texts, and even passages of bio-cosmic writings or extracts by the early Soviet

utopians, whose ideas had a strong impact during these years.

The selection of texts for the present catalogue is grounded in our firm belief that lack of knowledge—or proper appraisal—of Deineka's art and historical context partly stems from the fact that Russian and Soviet sources are not easily accessed. A fact that is all the more obvious in the Spanish-speaking cultural milieu, as many of the texts selected for this critical edition were unavailable in this language. The result is a body of texts carefully translated from the Russian, some of which are accompanied by a detailed critical apparatus.

Coupled with Deineka's body of work, this selection of historical literature will provide the viewer with in-depth knowledge of the ideas that inspired the leading figures of the time. The volume would not have been possible without the advice and support of a number of experts including John Bowlt, Hubertus Gassner, Eckhart Gillen, Michael Hagemeister, Aage Hansen-Löve, Patricia Railing, Evgeny Steiner and Erika Wolf. Equally important was the difficult task undertaken by the translators of the texts in Russian, both those whose work had been published before—John Bowlt, Herbert Eagle, Xenia Glowacki-Prus, Anna Lawton, Christina Lodder, Arnold McMillin, Paul Schmidt and Rose Strunsky—and those who translated works exclusively for this book—Natasha Kurchanova, Evgeny Steiner and especially Erika Wolf, who in addition to translating did valuable research for this book—and the coordination work of Constanze Zawadzky; to them we are truly grateful. The present volume closes with a full critical apparatus including chronological, bibliographic and documental references. Under the title *Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969): An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat*, both the catalogue and the exhibition aim to expose the existing links between Deineka's art and his era: an unexplored, fascinating and controversial case study that exemplifies the always complex and unpredictable interface between politics and art in the twentieth century.

Fundación Juan March  
Madrid, October 2011

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# Acknowledgments

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The Fundación Juan March wishes to express its gratitude to the following individuals and institutions for their collaboration, assistance and the loan of works that have made this exhibition possible:

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RUSSIA:	State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow: Irina Lebedeva, Tatiana Gubanova, Anna Ashkinazi; State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg: Evgeniia Petrova, Elena Tiun; The Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery: Igor A. Pripachkin.
UNITED STATES:	Collection Merrill C. Berman: Merrill C. Berman, Jim Frank, Joelle Jensen; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Karen E. Haas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC: Charles Brock; John Bowl; Charlotte Douglas.
ENGLAND:	Vladimir Tsarenkov; Patricia Railing; Evgeny Steiner; Christina Lodder.
GERMANY:	Hubertus Gassner; Eckhart Gillen; Michael Hagemeister; Aage Hansen-Löve.
SPAIN:	Archivo España-Rusia 1927–1937, Madrid: Carlos María Flores Pazos; Colección Azcona, Madrid: Lalo Azcona, Ángela Riaza; Fundación José María Castañé, Madrid: José María Castañé, María Jesús Escribano, Eduardo Fort; Monika and Juan Manuel Bonet; María de Corral López-Dóriga; Carlos González-Barandiarán y de Muller; Masha Koval; José María Lafuente; Carlos Pérez; Iana Zabiaka.
ITALY:	Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome: Maria Vittoria Marini Clarelli, Barbara Tomassi; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome: Matteo Lafranconi, Flaminia Nardone; Maurizio Scudiero.
FRANCE:	Ville de Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse: Françoise Lévêque.
SWITZERLAND:	Fondation Beyeler, Riehen, Basel: Samuel Keller, Tanja Narr.

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As well as to those who wish to remain anonymous.

Our thanks also go to Elena Pavlovna Volkova-Deineka, widow of Aleksandr Deineka, to whom we wish to pay special homage on her recent demise.

Likewise, we wish to thank Marta Bernardes, Lara González Díaz-Aguado, Fani Koseva, Cayetana Martínez, Eduardo Moreno and Constanze Zawadsky for their assistance in research and administration; the library staff of the Fundación Juan March, Paz Fernández and José Luis Maire; and the IT department of the Fundación Juan March. Our gratitude also goes to Guillermo Nagore, for the catalogue design and layout; the editors and proofreaders Erica Witschey, Erika Wolf and Inés d'Ors; the translators Natasha Kurchanova, Evgeny Steiner and especially Erika Wolf (from the Russian), Ishbel Flett, Andrew Davison and Jonathan Blower (from the German), Simon Pleasance (from the Italian) and Vanesa Rodríguez Galindo (from the Spanish); the research assistant Frida Swerdloff; and the conservators Lourdes Rico and Celia Martínez. Finally, we express our appreciation to Alcoarte SA; José María Ballesteros (Decograf); and to Laura Lozano, Angelines del Puerto and Ana Tabuenca (SIT).

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# Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969) A Life in the Country of the Soviets

This chronology was drawn up by Iana Zabiaka and María Zozaya on the basis of the one prepared by Natalia Alexandrova, Elena Voronovich (State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow), Andrei Gubko, Anna Grigorieva and Tatiana Iudkevich (Interrosa publishing program) for *Deineka. Zhivopis'* [Deineka. Painting], eds. I. Ostarkova and I. Lebedeva (Moscow: Interrosa, 2010). It was revised by Christina Kiaer.

In the nineteenth century, the Julian calendar, used by Russia, was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar (by then used by most of the Western world) until March 1, 1900, when it became thirteen days behind. Russia continued to use the Julian calendar until January 31, 1918, when it adopted the Gregorian calendar, changing its date to February 14, 1918.

In this timeline, dates are in the Gregorian "New Style" followed by Julian "Old Style" dates in square brackets [XX] until the change on January 31, 1918. Thereafter, all dates are in the Gregorian.

## 1899

**May 20** [May 8 OS]. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka is born in Kursk to a family of railway workers. His father, Aleksandr Filaretovich Deineka (1872–1927), was responsible for overseeing the trains at Kursk II station.

Birth of the writers Andrei Platonov (September 1 [August 20 OS]) and Vladimir Nabokov (April 22 [April 10 OS]), and the third child of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra, Maria Nikolaevna Romanova, Grand Duchess of Russia (June 26 [June 14 OS]).

## 1900

**May 14 – October 28** [May 1 – October 15 OS]. In Paris, Russia participates for the first time in the modern era Olympic Games. The Russian team does not win any medals.

## 1903

**September 25** [September 12 OS]. The artist Mark Rothko (née Marcus Rothkowitz) is born in the city of Dvinsk, Russia.

## 1904

**February 8** [January 27 OS]. Outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, which ends in September 1905.  
**July 15** [July 2 OS]. The writer Anton Chekov dies in Badenweiler, Germany.



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## 1905

**January 22** [January 9 OS]. Bloody Sunday in Saint Petersburg. The Russian Revolution begins. Several parts of the country are in a state of political turmoil, leading to the establishment of a limited constitutional monarchy with an assembly of people's representatives called the State Duma.

## 1906

**May 6** [April 23 OS]. Russia's first constitution, known as the Fundamental Laws, is enacted on the eve of the opening of the First State Duma.

**September 25** [September 12 OS]. The composer Dmitrii Shostakovich is born in Saint Petersburg.

## 1907

**August 31** [August 18 OS]. The Anglo-Russian Entente is signed in Saint Petersburg, resolving the countries' colonial disputes over Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.

## 1909

**May 19** [May 6 OS]. The first Ballets Russes season opens at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.

## 1910

**November 20** [November 7 OS]. The writer Lev Tolstói dies in Astapovo, Russia.

## 1911

**July 21** [July 8 OS]. Mendel' Beilis is arrested for the murder of a Christian boy and is accused of blood libel and ritual murder. The trial proper is held in Kiev from September 28 to October 28, 1913, whereby Beilis is acquitted.

*Oborona Sevastopolia* (The Defense of Sevastopol), the first feature film made in Russia on the subject of the Crimean War of 1854, directed by Vasili

Goncharov and Aleksandr Khanzhonkov, premieres at Livadia, Tsar Nicholas II's palace in Yalta.

## 1912

**May 5** [April 22 OS]. *Pravda*, a newspaper aimed at Russian workers, is launched by the Bolsheviks. It would later become the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union/CPSU (KPSS) between 1918 and 1991.

**June 30** [June 17 OS]. The Russian national football team first takes part in the Olympic Games at Stockholm. It joins the FIFA later in the year.

## 1913

**December 16** [December 3 OS]. The cubo-futurist opera with libretto by Aleksei Kruchenykh and music by Mikhail Matiushin, *Pobeda nad solntsem* (Victory over the Sun) [cat. 2, 3], premieres at Luna Park Theatre in Saint Petersburg. Malevich designed the set and costumes for the opera, based on a prologue by Velimir Khlebnikov.

The founder of futurism, Marinetti, visits Moscow and is booed by the futurists, accused of being a bourgeois artist.

Kazimir Malevich develops suprematism, the foundations of which are presented in his 1915 manifesto *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism*.

## 1914

Deineka attends the N.1 high school in Kursk and pays frequent visits to the painting workshop managed by the artists V. Golikov, M. Iakimenko-Zabuga and A. Poletiko. "Looking back at my childhood, I was always drawing, trying to turn my impressions and observations into drawings . . . To me drawing was as important as swimming in the river, riding on a sled or playing with children my age" (A. Deineka, *On My Working Practice* [Moscow, 1961], 5).

**June 28** [June 15 OS]. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip precipitates Austria's declaration of war against Serbia and the subsequent outbreak of the First World War.

**July 28** [July 15 OS]. First World War begins

**August 31** [August 18 OS]. With Russia's entry into the war, Saint Petersburg is renamed Petrograd to remove the German cognate "burg" from the name of the city.

## 1915

**March.** *Tramway V: The First Futurist Painting Exhibition* takes place in Petrograd.

**September 18** [September 5 OS]. The political situation becomes critical in Russia when Tsar Nicholas II assumes supreme command of the Russian Army and leaves the government in the hands of his wife Alexandra.

**December.** At the *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10*, Malevich refers to his work, for the first time, as the "suprematism of painting."

## 1916

Deineka concludes his studies in Kursk. He receives a copy of *Don Quixote* as a reward for his academic merit and excellent behavior.

Following the advice of friends and artists, he enrolls at the School of Fine Arts of Kharkiv (Ukraine) in the fall. Among his teachers are Mikhail Pestrikov and Aleksandr Liubimov, former students of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts of Saint Petersburg.

**December 29** [December 16 OS]. Grigorii Rasputin is murdered in Saint Petersburg.

1. Tsar Nicholas II and his retinue receive welcome gifts upon their arrival to a town, 1904. Fundación José María Castañé
2. Prince Alexei, son of Tsar Nicholas II, ca. 1910. Fundación José María Castañé
3. Aleksandr Deineka, 1916
4. Vladimir Lenin, ca. 1917. Fundación José María Castañé

## 1917

**March 8–12** [February 23–27 OS]. The February Revolution begins with strikes, demonstrations and mutinies in Petrograd.

**March 15** [March 2 OS]. Tsar Nicholas II abdicates and is replaced by a provisional government.

**April 16** [April 3 OS]. Lenin returns from exile.

**November 7–8** [October 25–26 OS]. October Revolution. Following a coup d'état, the Bolsheviks—headed by Lenin—take control of the government. The Commission for Painting-Sculpture-Architecture Synthesis within Narkompros (Zhivskul'ptarkh) is founded in Moscow.

## 1918

Deineka returns to Kursk at the start of the year and works as a teacher at the Provincial Department of Public Education (Gubnarobraz), where he oversees the Fine Arts department. He also works as a set designer, as a forensic photographer at the Police Department of Criminal Investigation, and as a drawing teacher at a girls' school. He is sent on trips to Moscow to learn about the new art techniques of the capital, and later writes that in his decorations for the celebrations of the first anniversary of the Revolution, he was “stuffing the purest cubism into the potholes of Kursk.”

**January – February.** Outbreak of the Civil War between the Red Army and the White Army (1918–21).

**March 3.** Lenin signs the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, by which Russia withdraws from the First World War.

**March 8.** The Bolshevik Party changes its name to the Communist Party.

**March 11.** The government relocates from Petrograd to Moscow, Russia's new capital.

**May.** The Visual Arts Section (IZO) of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment (Narkompros) is founded.

## 1919

**September 20 – November 19.** The White Army—led by Anton Denikin—occupies Kursk. Deineka participates in the Red Army's battles in defense of Kursk during the occupation.

Deineka is awarded two prizes for his set designs for the opera *Groza* (The Tempest), based on the play by Aleksandr Ostrovskii, and the tale *Ole Lukøje* (The Sandman) by Hans Christian Andersen, staged at the Soviet Theater of Kursk.

He is mobilized into the Red Army where he coordinates agitation and propaganda, including the direction of the Kursk delegation at the Official Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) in producing what were known as the “ROSTA windows,” stencil-replicated propaganda posters that were displayed in telegraph offices and handed out at factories and in the trenches. His first designs consisted of illustrations for poems by Vladimir Mayakovsky, whose work had a great influence on Deineka.

**April.** Opening of the 10th State Exhibition *Non-Objective Art and Suprematism*.

**April 12.** The first communist *subbótnik* (work on Saturdays) is organized by workers of the Moscow-Sortirovochnaia railway station.

**June 28.** The Treaty of Versailles is signed, marking the end of the First World War.

New actions are taken by the Soviet of the People's Commissars, such as abolishing the Academy of Fine Arts and officially recognizing the Free State Art Studios, later called the State Higher Arts and Technical Studios.

The Society of Young Artists (OBMOKhU) and the Champions of the New Art (UNOVIS) are created.

## 1920

**January.** Deineka is employed as a teacher/instructor at the Proletarian Studio of Fine Arts for Adults. From April onwards, in addition to painting, he teaches sculpture.

**April – May.** As head of the workers and peasants theater division, Deineka oversees various productions.

**November 1.** Deineka is appointed director of the regional division of the Regional Department of Fine Arts (Kursk IZO).

In late 1920, Deineka travels by airplane for the first time, an experience he described as “a new feeling, that of a man rising in the air and seeing his hometown in an absolutely new light.”

**May.** With Wassily Kandinsky at the forefront, the Institute for Artistic Culture (INKhUK) is founded in Moscow.

**November.** The Russian Civil War ends.

**November.** Vladimir Tatlin exhibits his model for the Monument to the Third International in Petrograd and presents it in Moscow in December.

**December.** Approval of the GOELRO plan, the first-ever Soviet plan for national economic recovery and development. The program, drawn up and endorsed by Lenin, is meant to fulfill his slogan “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire country.”

**December 19.** The Higher Arts and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS) is founded in Moscow following a decree issued by Lenin. The school anticipated the educational program developed by the Bauhaus at Weimar two years later. The school eventually became the center of the three leading avant-garde movements in the country: constructivism, rationalism and suprematism.

## 1921

Following a governmental order from Kursk at the start of the year, Deineka is released from the Red Army and moves to Moscow. There he enrolls in the

department of Graphic Art at VKhUTEMAS, where Vladimir Favorskii and Ignatii Nivinskii are among his professors.

In the spring, he participates in the production of scenery for a play based on *Misteria-buff* by Mayakovsky.

Deineka spends the summer in Kursk, where he continues to direct the regional division of the Kursk IZO and prepares the decorative panels for the Workers' Palace, to be displayed at the 8th Regional Congress of Soviets.

**March 21.** The New Economic Policy (NEP, 1921–29), which partially permitted the return of private property and enterprise, is put forward at the 10th Congress of the Communist Party. The Gosplan State Planning Committee of the Russian Federation is created.

Severe famine strikes the Volga region, resulting in 5 million deaths.

The First Working Group of Constructivists is created. El Lissitzky (née Lazar Markovich Lisitskii) develops his own style of suprematism called *Proun* (Design for the Affirmation of the New).

## 1922

Deineka illustrates two fables by Ivan Krylov, “Kot i povar” (The Cat and the Cook) and “Krest'ianin i smert'” (Death and the Peasant). The latter is printed at the VKhUTEMAS graphic studio.

**Fall.** The Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) is created. The main purpose of the association is to depict the lives of workers in the new Russian state in a realistic style.

**October 15.** The *1st Russian Art Exhibition* opens at the Van Diemen gallery in Berlin. It includes works by Kazimir Malevich, Olga Rozanova, Liubov Popova, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, Naum Gabo and El Lissitzky, who designs the cover of the catalogue.

**December 29.** The Treaty of the Creation of the USSR and the Declaration of the Creation of the USSR are approved. The documents recognized the Soviet Union as a union of Soviet socialist republics.

## 1923

In the summer, Deineka takes part in the 1st All-Union Agricultural and Domestic Crafts Exhibition in Moscow, presenting his drawings at “The Parasites of the Countryside” Pavilion.

Deineka's drawings are featured in issue no. 9–10 of the magazine *Bezbozhnik u stanka*, marking the beginning of his career as an illustrator, which would span to the early 1930s.

**March.** The association Left Front of the Arts (LEF) is founded and launches a journal under the same name with Rodchenko as its main artistic contributor (the journal was known as *Novyi lef* from 1927 to 1928) [cat. 27–29, 66, 102–105]. The avant-garde movement of soviet photographers, Foto-LEF, owes its name to the journal.

**April 3.** Josef Stalin is appointed General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

The first national holiday of physical culture is celebrated.

The poem *Pro eto* (About This) by Mayakovsky is illustrated by Rodchenko's photomontages.

Rodchenko and Mayakovsky embark on a joint venture, working together as an advertising agency (Reklam-Konstruktor) for a number of Soviet enterprises.

The Petrograd State Institute of Artistic Culture (GINKhUK) is founded under the direction of Malevich.



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## 1924

**May 11.** The *1st Discussional Exhibition of the Active Revolutionary Art Associations* is inaugurated at the Moscow Palace of Youth; works by current and former students from VKhUTEMAS are showcased. The exhibition was a key event in the history of the Soviet avant-garde with artworks by various groups of constructivist, projectionist and concrete artists on display. Among the participants was the Group of Three formed by Andrei Goncharov, Iurii Pimenov and Deineka. Deineka's work is mentioned in the press for the first time.

**January 21.** Head of state Vladimir Lenin dies; Josef Stalin becomes his successor.

**January 26.** Petrograd is renamed Leningrad.

**March 8.** The *Russian Art Exhibition* comprising works from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries opens at the Grand Central Palace in New York and later travels throughout the United States.

**May.** The circular "The Immediate Tasks of the AKhRR" is issued (see D26).

**June 19.** The 14th edition of the Venice Biennale is inaugurated; 492 works by Soviet artists are displayed.

The Soviet film studio Mosfil'm is founded.

The first USSR football championship is held.

The Four Arts Society is founded, bringing together artists and architects from Moscow and Leningrad. One of its aims was to study the synthetic interaction between painting, graphic art, sculpture and architecture, hence its name.

## 1925

**April 26.** The first of four exhibitions organized by OST opens. Deineka presents the paintings *Before the Descent into the Mine* [cat. 115] and *In the Pit*, and illustrations from the journal *U stanka* [cat. 111, 112].

**August.** Deineka is sent on assignment to the Donets basin, Kiev and Ekaterinoslav (present-day Dnepropetrovsk) by the periodical *Bezbozhnik u stanka*. During his stay Deineka studies the lives of mine and factory workers and produces the series *In the Donbass*.

**October.** A letter sent by the magazine to the manager of the Trekhgornaia textile factory in Moscow requests that "the painter Deineka have access to the women's workshops and dormitories to produce drawings of your factory" for a special issue dedicated to "Women and Religion."

Deineka's work is showcased at an international exhibition for the first time, *The Soviet Caricature* at the 7th Salon de l'Araignée, organized by the Russian Academy of Science in Paris.

Deineka becomes a founding member of the Society of Easel Painters (OST), which included Nikolai Denisovskii, Petr Vil'iams, Konstantin Vialov, Andrei Goncharov, Ivan Kliun, Klavdiia Kozlova, Aleksandr Labas, Vladimir Liushin, Sergei Luchishkin, Iurii Pimenov and David Shterenberg. In opposition to the constructivists (who abandoned oil painting in 1921) and the traditional AKhRR, the OST aimed at representing scenes of Soviet life by means of a new figurative style of painting.

**July 10.** The Telegraph Agency of the USSR (TASS) is founded.

**December 21.** On the occasion of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Sergei Eisenstein's film *Bronenosets Potemkin* (Battleship Potemkin) opens at the Bolshoi Theater.

**December 27.** The poet Sergei Esenin commits suicide at the Hotel Angleterre in Leningrad.

## 1926

**May 3.** The second exhibition staged by OST opens at the State Historical Museum on Red Square. Deineka receives critical acclaim for his paintings

*Building New Factories* [cat. 116] and *The Boxer Gradopolov* (later destroyed by the artist) and a series of drawings dating from 1924–26.

Together with Iurii Pimenov, Deineka designs the set for a play based on the first Soviet industrial novel *Cement* by Fedor Gladkov, staged in the Fourth Studio (experimental section) at the Moscow Art Theater (MKhAT).

Deineka illustrates the children's book *Pervoe maia* (The First of May) by Agniia Barto [cat. 93].

## 1927

**March 2.** The USSR Revolutionary Council of War commissions a sketch for the *10th Anniversary Exhibition of the Red Army* on the subject of "The defense of Petrograd from Iudenich in 1919" [cat. 131]. If Deineka's sketch were to be approved, he would receive 500 rubles for the finished work. The artist wrote the following on the commission: "The sketch took me quite a long time but I finished the painting almost immediately. It was a matter of character . . . One morning I was exercising as usual, practically naked, in my underwear. A knock on the door. 'Come in!' A man in uniform walked in. 'Good morning, I am from the committee in charge of the exhibition dedicated to the Red Army. How is our commission coming along?' He sees the blank canvas on the easel . . . I'm standing there undressed, trying to think of something to say: 'You see, I don't usually work here, it's too cramped, I'm painting the picture somewhere else, this is not my studio . . .' He looks at me, then at the blank canvas . . . 'Alright, I'll telephone you in a few days.' And then he reported to the committee: 'I went to see Deineka, and there I found both a naked canvas, and Deineka himself standing naked in front of me. He's done nothing and I'm afraid he won't do a thing.' The old man was wrong! He did not know me at all. As soon as I got going, I finished *The*



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**1.** Catalogue of the 1st Exhibition of the Society of Easel Painters (OST), Museum of Pictorial Culture, Moscow, 1925

**2.** Catalogue of the 2nd Exhibition of the Society of Easel Painters (OST), State Historical Museum, Moscow, 1926

**3.** Catalogue of the 3rd Exhibition of the Society of Easel Painters (OST), Moscow, 1927

**4.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Autumn. Landscape*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 65 x 60.5 cm. Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery

**5.** Aleksandr Deineka with a group of artists, Moscow, ca. 1930

He illustrates *Pro loshadei* (About Horses) by V. Vladimirov [cat. 94].

**January.** Lev Trotsky is expelled from the Party and deported to Alma-Ata (present-day Almaty, Kazakhstan).

**August.** The first Spartakiada Games, conceived as a counterbalance to the Olympic Games, are held in Moscow.

The AKhRR is renamed Association of Artists of the Revolution (AKhR).

Stalin introduces the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32), an economic policy based on massive industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture, thus replacing the NEP.

The artist El Lissitzky returns to Russia.

After a triumphal trip to Moscow, Le Corbusier wins the international competition for the design of the Moscow headquarters of the Tsentrosoiuz, the central Union of Cooperative Societies, located on Miasnitskaia Street. Despite criticism of the design, construction finishes in 1936.

## 1929

Deineka begins to work for the recently created All-Russian Union of Cooperative Partnerships of Visual Art Workers (Vsekokhudozhnik), which purchased and sold the works of its members and also provided a monthly stipend. Under this type of contract, Deineka produced, among other works, *Ball Game* (1932) [cat. 194], *The Race* (1932–33) [cat. 196] and *The Goalkeeper* (1934) [cat. 199]. Deineka makes illustrations for the “social-political and literary-artistic” journal *Daesh’!* [cat. 117–120]. On both *Daesh’!* and *Smena* he works with revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. He would later recall: “In our work together on *Smena* and *Daesh’!*, his laconic comments more than once led me toward the right artistic decisions.”

**January 21.** Trotsky is expelled from the USSR.

**August 19.** Sergei Diaghilev, businessman, patron and founder of the Ballets Russes, dies in Venice.

**November 7.** *Pravda* publishes “The Year of Great Change,” an article by Stalin in which he justifies collectivization in theoretical terms and thereby demands it be promptly implemented.

Stalin puts an end to the NEP (1921–29) and nationalizes the economy.

With a workforce including thousands of penal laborers (especially “dekulakized” peasants), the construction of a mining and steel city named Magnitogorsk is initiated in the Urals under Stalin’s orders.

Release of the film *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (The Man with a Movie Camera) directed by Dziga Vertov (pseudonym of Denis Kaufman).

The Ossetian author Gaito Gazdanov writes his first novel, *Vecher u Kler* (An Evening with Claire), published in 1930.

Mikhail Bulgakov begins to write *Master i Margarita* (The Master and Margarita) (1929–40).

## 1930

**March 16.** Premiere of the comedy *Bania* (The Bathhouse) by Mayakovsky at the Meyerhold Theater; Deineka works on the visual design of the play.

**May 27.** Deineka takes part in the first exhibition of the October group at Gorky Park, Moscow.

**June.** The Roman newspaper *La Tribuna* publishes an article on the Soviet Pavilion at the 17th Venice Biennale and mentions three paintings by Deineka—*Before the Descent into the Mine* [cat. 115], *The Race* and *Children Bathing*.

As chair at the Moscow Polygraphic Institute, Deineka teaches drawing, composition and poster art. He illustrates the children’s books *Kuter’ma* (*Zimniaia skazka*) (Commotion [A Winter Tale]) by Nikolai Aseev [cat. 97], *Vstretim tretii!* (We Will

*Defense of Petrograd in a week. Just one week!*” (I. A. Rakhillo, “Deineka (Iz zapisey raznykh let)” (1972, repr. 1978) 479–80).

Together with Iurii Pimenov, Deineka becomes a member of the Art Council of MKhAT.

He illustrates the book *Kommuna im. Bela Kuna* (Bela Kuna Commune) by Nikolai Shestakov and works as an illustrator for the journals *Bezbozhnik u stanká* [cat. 87–89], *Krasnaia niva* [cat. 209] and *Prozhektor* [cat. 106], publications in which he develops his trademark satirical subject matter that juxtaposes the old and new Russia.

Deineka is invited by the Soviet All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) to submit works to the fourth edition of the international exhibition *The Art of the Book* in Leipzig.

**March 27.** The musician Mstislav Rostropovich is born in Baku, Azerbaijan.

**May 28.** The painter Boris Kustodiev dies in Leningrad.

**July 18.** The painter Vasilii Polenov dies in his estate in Borok (Tula). Renamed Polenovo, it now houses the Polenov State Museum, one of the most popular in Russia..

**December 26.** The future director and associate director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Alfred H. Barr Jr. and Jere Abbott, arrive in Moscow in what turns out to be a significant visit for their modernist education.

Sergei Eisenstein directs *October* (aka *Ten Days that Shook the World*) to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution.

VKhUTEMAS undergoes restructuring and becomes the Higher Arts and Technical Institute (VKhUTEIN).

## 1928

**January 8.** The painting *Female Textile Workers* [cat. 125] is presented at the exhibition *10 Years since October*, held at the VKhUTEIN building.

**February 24.** *The Defense of Petrograd* is shown at the 10th AKhRR Exhibition on the 10th Anniversary of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army. In April, the painting travels to the 16th Venice Biennale and is exhibited at the Russian Pavilion.

**March.** The Association of October Artists (Oktiabr’) is founded; the organization’s manifesto is published in the journal *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [cat. 132–136]. Founding members include Aleksandr Deineka, Aleksandr Gan, Gustavs Klucis, El Lissitzky, Aleksandr and Viktor Vesnin, and Sergei Eisenstein; Aleksandr Rodchenko joins later. On June 3, the newspaper *Pravda* publishes the manifesto, signaling its approval of the October platform: participating in the ideological class war of the proletariat through the “spatial arts,” including industrial arts, cinema, architecture and design, and a rejection of both the aesthetic industrialism of constructivism and the philistine realism of the AKhRR painters.

**April 22.** The 4th OST exhibition opens without works by Deineka, who had left the Society to join October.

**October 17.** Deineka concludes seven pieces for the VOKS exhibition department, produced for the show of Soviet arts and crafts held in New York in 1929.

He continues to make illustrations for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [cat. 90] and *Prozhektor* [cat. 106], and begins working for the children’s magazine *Iskorka* [cat. 95] and the journal *Smena*.

Deineka is employed as a design consultant for the state publishing houses GIZ and IZOGIZ and as a drawing teacher at the VKhUTEIN in Moscow and the Moscow Polygraphic Institute.



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Fulfill the Third! [the goals of the third year of the first five-year plan] by Semen Kirsanov [cat. 100], *Legkii bukvar'* (An Easy Primer) by Maria Teriaeva, and *Elektromonter* (The Electrician) by Boris Ural'skii [cat. 98], as well as the picture books *V oblakakh* (In the Clouds) [cat. 96] and *Parad Krasnoi Armii* (The Parade of the Red Army) [cat. 99]. Deineka becomes successful as a poster artist, producing five major works of this kind in this year, including *We are Mechanizing the Donbass!* [cat. 159] and *We will Build the Powerful Soviet Dirigible "Klim Voroshilov"* [cat. 205].

**April 14.** Vladimir Mayakovsky commits suicide.

**November 25 – December 7.** First trial against the Industrial Party, a group of engineers accused of "counter-revolution."

VKhUTEIN is permanently closed and divided into three art institutions: the Moscow Institute of Architecture, the School of Fine Arts (later called the Surikov) and the Moscow Polygraphic Institute.

## 1931

**March 25.** During a meeting, the members of VOKS select a series of works for the international exhibition *The Art of the Book* in Paris, including pieces by Pimenov, Lissitzky and Deineka.

**May 10.** The new militantly proletarian artists' group, the Russian Association of Proletarian Artists (RAPKh) is formed; Deineka leaves the October association to become a member of RAPKh.

**August 1.** The *Anti-Imperialist Exhibition* opens in Gorky Park in Moscow, and includes two war themed paintings by Deineka: *The Defense of Petrograd* and *The Interventionist Mercenary* (*Naemnik interventov*, 1931). Deineka's works receive positive reviews in the press.

**October.** Deineka's work is displayed at the international exhibitions *Frauen in Not* (Women and Poverty) in Berlin and at the *30th Carnegie*

*International* exhibition in Pittsburgh, which later traveled across the United States.

**January.** Dissolution of OST.

**March 11.** The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) declares that all forms of literature and art will be published and distributed under the supervision of the Party and the State.

*Iskusstvo v massy*, the AKhR's newspaper, becomes an organ of the RAPKh and is renamed *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*.

Several announcements and articles written by the members of October are published under the title *Izofront* (Front of the Visual Arts) on the occasion of the group's first exhibition held in 1930.

The first architectural contest for the Palace of the Soviets is announced, and the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow is demolished so the Palace can be constructed on its site. Following several rounds of competition, the project design is finally awarded to architect Boris Iofan in 1933; his final draft includes a 100-meter high statue of Lenin standing on the palace's rooftop at 415 meters. The foundation for the gigantic building is laid in 1939, but the Palace is never built.

## 1932

**April.** The exhibition *Posters in the Service of the Five-Year Plan* at the State Tretyakov Gallery includes several Deineka posters.

**June 19.** The Soviet Pavilion at the 18th Venice Biennale opens, including painting and graphics by Deineka. His work is well received by Italian critics and audiences.

**November 13.** The exhibition *15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR, 1917–1932* opens in Leningrad featuring six works by Deineka. The art critic Abram Efros writes a positive review of these works in the journal *Iskusstvo*.

Deineka continues working at the Polygraphic Institute, now as a professor, but effectively ends his work for the magazines.

He leads the brigade of RAPKh painters designing the factory kitchen at the airplane factory in the Fili section of suburban Moscow; he produces the mural *Civil Aviation* for the kitchen.

**April 23.** The decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations issued by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) states that all art and literary groups must be disbanded and replaced by "creative unions" formed by professionals of the same occupation. Most artists join the Union of Soviet Artists.

**May.** Maxim Gorky returns to the USSR to stay.

**July 25.** The Moscow Regional Union of Soviet Artists (MOSSKh) is founded; Deineka is a member.

**October 11.** The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) approves a resolution "Concerning the Creation of a Russian Academy of Arts." New rules are implemented and with them a purge of both teachers and students, after which the "realist artists" are appointed teachers.

Announcement that the Five-Year Plan has been accomplished in four years and three months.

A severe famine, commonly known as Golodomor, strikes the USSR and the Ukraine in particular. The magnitude of the famine was not disclosed for years.

## 1933

**January 29.** Deineka presents a lecture on his artistic method at the Club of Masters of the Arts in Moscow at an evening devoted to discussion of his work.

**June.** Deineka participates in two major Soviet exhibitions: the Moscow version of *15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR* (opens June 27) and *15 Years of*



**1.** Aleksandr Deineka. *We will Build the Powerful Soviet Dirigible "Klim Voroshilov"*, 1930. Collection Merrill C. Berman [cat. 205]

**2.** Red Army Field-Marsals Voroshilov and Budionny, 1921. Fundación José María Castañé

**3.** Aleksandr Deineka. *We Demand Universal Compulsory Education*, 1930. Poster. Lithography

**4.** Aleksandr Deineka, ca. 1930

**5.** Aleksandr Deineka in Crimea, early 1930s

**6.** Famine in the Volga region, ca. 1932–33. Fundación José María Castañé

**7.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Dinamo. Sevastopol*, 1934. Watercolor on paper, 44.2 x 59.8 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**8.** Aleksandr Deineka with his friend, the artist Fedor Bogorodskii during their official commission to visit the Soviet navy fleet in Sevastopol, 1934

**9.** Maxim Gorky and Stalin. Illustration in the book *Stalin*, 1939. Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 236]

**10.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Sevastopol. Night*, 1934. Tempera, watercolor and white lead on paper. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

the RKKA (Workers and Peasants Red Army) (opens June 30), with extensive discussion of his work in the press.

**September 1.** Deineka is appointed chair of the Poster Department of the Polygraphic Institute.

**Fall.** While on an officially commissioned trip to visit collective farms, Deineka creates a series of five atypically melancholy paintings known as the *Dry Leaves* cycle [cat. 213]. They are possibly connected to the death of his father at that time.

**January.** The Second Five-Year Plan begins (1933–38).

**21 March.** The Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) approves the project for the Moscow Metro.

**September 30.** Birth of the artist Ilya Kabakov in Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine).

**October.** Ivan Bunin becomes the first Russian author to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The article "Formalism in Painting" by Osip Beskin is published in the third issue of the newspaper *Iskusstv*. A booklet of the same name is also published later in the year. Shevchenko, Shterenberg, Istomin, Fonvizin, Drevin, Udaltsova, Goncharov, Tyshler, Labas, Punin, Filonov, Malevich, Kliun and other artists are identified as formalists.

## 1934

**February 11.** The newspaper *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* features a letter written by Henri Matisse recounting his impressions of photographs of works by Soviet artists sent to him by VOKS: "I believe Deineka is the most talented of them all and the most advanced in his artistic development."

**May 12.** The 19th Venice Biennale opens, including a number of paintings by Deineka. On May 17, the Italian Ministry of Education purchases Deineka's painting *Female Race* priced at 8,000 lire for a gallery in Rome.

**June 14.** He is appointed chair of Monumental Painting at the Polygraphic Institute, a position he holds until 1936.

**Summer.** In the summer, he meets Serafima Lycheva (1906–1992), his partner of many years.

**August 1.** He is awarded an official commission to visit the Soviet navy fleet in Sevastopol, where he gathers material for forthcoming state exhibitions. Together with his friend, the artist Fedor Bogorodskii, he sees navy ships and goes on training flights, drawing pencil sketches in the cockpit. In a letter to Serafima Lycheva, he writes: "I never leave Sevastopol . . . I wake up at six or seven in the morning and go for a swim. On my way there I usually buy fruit at a market. I paint a sketch with watercolors and redo it at home using oil painting. After lunch I take my sketchbook and spend some time at Dinamo [an ocean swimming pool]. Before the sun sets in the evening, I finish the work of the day—I polish it . . . I have a stack of sketches: the sea, Sevastopol, several hydroplanes, sports and, once again, the sea. If I could hang them in your room, the sun of Sevastopol would brighten your winter" (catalogue of the exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery, [Moscow, 2010], 210). The painting *Future Pilots* (1938) [cat. 233] would be the last of a series of works he completed from his sketches in Sevastopol.

**September 2.** Deineka is named a member of the exhibition committee for the show *The Art of Soviet Russia* scheduled to take place in Philadelphia, organized by VOKS, the Pennsylvania Museum of Art and the American-Russian Institute of Philadelphia (ARI). He serves on the jury to select works for the exhibition, and is chosen to travel to Philadelphia as an official Soviet representative of the exhibition. In preparation for his trip to the United States, he begins to study English in the fall. On October 22, he receives passport number 122769,

issued and signed by G. Iagoda, the person in charge of the VTSIK Presidium. The passport includes the following description: "Average height. Grey eyes. Ordinary nose. Brown hair" (the artist's family name is spelled Deineko).

**October 18.** The 33rd Carnegie International exhibition opens at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh; Deineka is awarded an Honorable Mention for his painting *On the Balcony* (1931) [cat. 212]. Salvador Dalí was also among those who received a prize for his painting *Eléments énigmatiques dans un paysage*.

**December 11.** A notice in the newspaper *Vechniaia Moskva* states that Deineka left for the United States the day before and would be staying there for three months. He arrives in New York on December 22. *The Art of Soviet Russia* opens at the Pennsylvania Museum on December 15, and travels to seventeen cities in the United States and Canada over the two following years.

Deineka works on a series of monumental panels depicting "The Revolution in the Village" for the assembly hall at the Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem) in Moscow. He produces four oil sketches: *Conversation of the Kolkhoz Brigade* [cat. 223], *Two Classes*, *Peasant's Revolt* and *The Harvest* (the location of the latter two is unknown). The commission falls through and the panels are never completed. As part of his work on this project, he is sent on an official commission to visit collective farms.

**January 8.** The symbolist writer Andrei Belyi dies in Moscow.

**March 9.** The first Russian cosmonaut Iurii Gagarin is born in Klushino, near Moscow.

**August 17.** During the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, Maxim Gorky declares socialist realism the official style of the Soviet Union, "realist in form, socialist in content."

**September 18.** The Soviet Union joins the League of Nations.

**November 24.** The composer Alfred Schnittke is born in Engels (Saratov Region).

**December 1.** The assassination of Politburo member Sergei Kirov in Leningrad inaugurates a period of political oppression and purges that lasts through 1938.

Isaak Brodskii is appointed director of the Russian Academy of Arts.

## 1935

**January 2–22.** Deineka travels from New York to Philadelphia, where he participates in receptions and lunches associated with the exhibition *The Art of Soviet Russia* and meetings with local artists and patrons.

**January 22 – February 7.** He stays in New York, making sketches and meeting artists.

**February 7.** He returns to Philadelphia to prepare for a solo exhibition of his watercolors at the Art Alliance, which opens on February 11. He shows forty-five works, both Russian watercolors that he had brought with him and recent works featuring American themes.

**February 14.** He writes to Serafima Lycheva from Philadelphia: "I must confess I dream of a holiday in some town near Moscow or Crimea. You can't imagine how hard I've had to work! I haven't written in so long because I was getting ready for the show. Even here that's fairly complicated, and then Troianovskii [the Soviet ambassador] came to the show . . . the opening went well. For two and a half hours I stood and shook hands with high and middle class ladies and gentlemen, pretty tiring, and then dinner, also standing around with a plate . . . This week I will stay in Philadelphia until the 20th. Then I will go to a small sports facility—an

**1.** Aleksandr Deineka.

*Roman Plaza*, 1935.

Watercolor and gouache on paper, 37.8 x 53.5 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**2.** Drawing of Paris executed during Deineka's trip in 1935. Illustration from Aleksandr Deineka's book, *On My Working Practice*, 1969 [cat. 248]

**3.** Drawings of Roman priests executed during Deineka's trip in 1935. Illustration from Aleksandr Deineka's book, *On My Working Practice*, 1969 [cat. 248]

**4.** Catalogue of the A. Deineka Exhibition, Vsekokhudozhnik, Moscow, 1935; Academy of Fine Arts of Leningrad, 1936

**5.** The director of the first metro line in Moscow, Lazar Kaganovich, ca. 1940. Fundación José María Castañé

**6.** Stalin at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, 1936

(Soyuzfoto). Fundación José María Castañé

**7.** Extraordinary 8th Congress of Soviets, 1936

(Soyuzfoto). Fundación José María Castañé



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American commission—where I will sketch some drawings for an upscale magazine . . ." (catalogue of the exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery, [Moscow, 2010], 212).

**February 20.** He travels to Lake Placid, New York, following an invitation by *Vanity Fair* magazine to sketch a series of drawings.

**March 4.** Deineka attends the opening of the continuation of the exhibition *The Art of Soviet Russia* at the Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland, accompanied by Ambassador Troianovskii and his wife.

**March 5.** Deineka attends a dinner given in his honor at the Soviet Embassy, where a small show of his works also takes place.

**March 9.** Deineka writes to Serafima Lycheva from New York: "I will say goodbye to America in three days and then head to Europe . . . I will be an ocean closer to Moscow... I have returned from Washington tonight where an exhibition of my works was held at the Embassy . . . The following day, I had to attend a fancy reception. I begged Troianovskii not to make me wear white tie, and in the end we both decided on a tuxedo. Look at what a dandy I've become, ha ha!" (catalogue of the exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery, [Moscow, 2010], 210). In total, three solo exhibitions of Deineka's works on paper—of which he sells twelve—take place in the United States, at the Art Alliance in Philadelphia and at the Soviet Embassy and Studio House gallery in Washington, DC. He returns with numerous sketches of American people, cities, and highways—material he uses in compositions for paintings later that year.

**March 13.** Deineka leaves New York by boat and arrives in France on March 21. In Paris, he goes to the Louvre on six different occasions and meets the artists Kliment Red'ko and Mikhail Larionov. An exhibition of his work is held at a gallery in Paris.

**April 12.** Deineka arrives in Italy and stays at the Hotel di Londra & Cargill, located near Villa Borghese in Rome. He writes an enthusiastic letter to Serafima Lycheva on Roman architecture. In regards to modern architecture, the Mussolini Stadium grasps his attention for its "amplitude and planimetry." Three-day sojourn in Florence.

**May 27.** During a lecture at the Club of Masters of the Arts in Moscow, he states that America and American art are far more interesting than France and French art; he discusses the Regionalists and the John Reed Club artists, and especially praises the work of Thomas Hart Benton.

**June 8.** The USSR attaché in Washington, Aleksei Neiman, notifies Deineka the drawings exhibited at Studio House will be returned except for three that were sold, two of which were purchased by Mrs. Ellis Longworth, President Theodore Roosevelt's daughter.

**July.** Deineka travels to the Donbass region on an official commission to collect material for paintings, resulting in such works as *Lunch Break in the Donbass* and *Collective Farm Woman on a Bicycle* [cat. 225].

**December 15.** Deineka's first solo exhibition in the USSR—featuring over one hundred works—opens at the All-Russian Union of Cooperative Partnerships of Visual Art Workers (Vsekokhudozhnik). The exhibition is widely and positively reviewed. On December 26, the State Art Acquisition Commission purchases nine works on view at the show. Deineka illustrates *Ogon'* (The Fire) [cat. 92], Russian translation of the novel *Le Feu* by the French writer Henri Barbusse.

**May 14.** The Gor'kovskaia line linking Sokolniki to the Gorky Central Park of Culture and Leisure, the first line of the Moscow Metro under the general design of Lazar Kaganovich, is inaugurated.

**May 15.** Kazimir Malevich dies in Leningrad.





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**August 31.** Aleksei Stakhanov, a miner from the Donbass, mines 102 tons of coal in 5 hours and 45 minutes (14 times his quota), founding what became known as the Stakhanovite movement: the drive for workers to exceed production targets to boost the success of the Five-Year Plans. Stakhanovites were rewarded with public accolades and rare consumer goods.

**November.** Moscow Regional Union of Soviet Artists conference "On the Problem of the Soviet Portrait." In their lectures, David Shterenberg, Aleksandr Deineka and Il'ia Erenburg condemn MOSSKh's authority and the political concessions and privileges given to a small and select group of artists.

## 1936

**January.** The cover of *Vanity Fair* features a drawing by Deineka, credited as: "Cover design: *Skiing at Lake Placid* by Deyneka."

**February 12.** Deineka's solo exhibition from Vsekokhudozhnik opens at the Academy of Arts in Leningrad.

**June.** Campaign against formalism. The sixth issue of the magazine *Pod znamenem marksizma* features an article by Polikarp Lebedev entitled "Against Formalism in Art," in which the author states: "The influence of formalism in Soviet painting sometimes reaches artists whose artwork is not formalist by definition. See, for example, the work of S. Gerasimov or A. Deineka . . . Signs of formalism in Soviet art are the remnants of capitalism, which is particularly hostile to the socialist cause." A number of unsigned editorial notes are published in *Pravda*, including "Chaos Instead of Music" (January 28), against the composer Dmitrii Shostakovich, "Falseness in Ballet" (February 8), "Cacophony in Architecture" (February 20) and "On Scribbling Artists" (March 1). The last in the series,

"The Formalist Condition of Painting," was signed by Vladimir Kemenov.

**Summer.** Deineka travels to Sevastopol with the painters Georgii Nisskii and Fedor Bogorodskii and draws sketches during his stay.

**October 27.** Deineka takes part in a meeting organized by the Tretyakov Gallery to address the problem of Soviet exhibitions. "In foreign countries, in New York for example . . . very competent people purchase works of art after conducting a rigorous selection process. But once paintings are hung in a museum, it is not with the concern that eventually they will be removed because an artist may be a genius today but a nobody tomorrow. This idea does not exist. The piece will undoubtedly become part of the history of art in two or three years. So why should I care about what is written about me or the *Defense of Petrograd* for example? It can be hung or removed, but it has already fulfilled its historical purpose. It may be called formalist, rationalist or heroic-realism, but no matter, it has entered history" (RGALI, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, F. 990, op. 2, d. 10, 23–24).

**November 17.** Deineka signs a contract with the Soviet section of the Paris International Exhibition (*Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*) planned for 1937 to produce designs for two monumental panels for the Soviet Pavilion, on "National Festivities" and "Leading Figures."

Also in 1936, Deineka is appointed director of the Monumental Painting Workshop at the Moscow Institute of Fine Arts, a position he holds until 1946.

**March 21.** Composer Aleksandr Glazunov dies in Neuilly-sur-Seine, near Paris.

**June 18.** Russian novelist and playwright Maxim Gorky dies in his country villa near Moscow.

**November.** Shostakovich composes the music score for the play *Hail Spain!*, written by former Proletkul't Theater literary manager and director, Aleksandr Afinogenov. It is a drama centered on the figure of Dolores Ibárruri, better known as "La Pasionaria." In August, the USSR had decided to intervene in the Spanish Civil War in support of the socialist Republicans.

**December 5.** A new constitution, known as the Stalin Constitution, is adopted at the 8th Extraordinary Soviet Congress.

Beginning of the Great Purge (Ezhovshchina or Great Terror), a campaign of repression and political persecution carried out in the USSR between 1936 and 1938. Members and ex-members of the Communist Party were arrested and tried in Moscow, accused of conspiring with Western countries to betray the Soviet Union and assassinate Stalin as well as other Soviet leaders. The purge also extended to peasants (the largest single group of those arrested and killed), Red Army officers, the intelligentsia, minority groups and others. Historians disagree on the exact numbers, but about 45% of those arrested were executed, while most others were sentenced to hard labor camps; estimates of total deaths range from approximately 950,000 to 1.2 million.

## 1937

**March 7.** Deineka signs another agreement with the Soviet section of the Paris International Exhibition to produce an enormous panel on the theme of "National Festivities." In a letter addressed to Serafima Lycheva, he writes: "I'm going to have to paint a 7 x 12 meter panel here. Not in Paris, nuh-uh . . ." He later wrote "[It] had to be 'visible' from all rooms, as determined by the architect, and should also conclude the exhibition . . . I never saw the entire work, not when painting it in the given conditions



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of light and perspective [Deineka had to paint it in cramped quarters under artificial light], nor when it was installed in Paris. Only some photographs from Paris have given me a vague impression of what it looked like" (A. Deineka, *On My Working Practice* [Moscow, 1961], 36–37). Entitled *Stakhanovites*, it was exhibited in the final room of the Soviet Pavilion, which was famously topped by Vera Mukhina's monumental sculpture *The Worker and Collective Farm Woman*. *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso was on display at the Spanish Pavilion. On June 15, 1938, Deineka's mural is awarded the gold medal in the painting category.

**March 28.** *A. Deineka*, a monograph on the artist by Boris Nikiforov, is published with a print run of 4,000 copies.

**July 8.** Deineka signs an agreement with the organizing committee of the exhibition *20 Years of the Workers and Peasants Red Army (RKKA) and the Navy* to produce the works *Lenin on an Outing with Children* and *Future Pilots* [cat. 233], for which he receives 10,000 rubles.

He begins the mural paintings *Running through the Field* and *The Sports Parade* for the Red Army House in Minsk.

He receives the commission to produce mosaics for the Maiakovskaia metro station.

**January.** The Second Moscow Trial of the Great Purge opens; seventeen members of the Party are charged. Thirteen are sentenced to death and executed while the remaining four are sent to concentration camps. In a secret military trial held on June 12, several Red Army generals are sentenced and executed, Mikhail Tukhachevskii among them.

**January 9.** Lev Trotsky arrives in Mexico, where he lives with his family at the home of the Kahlo family in Coyoacán until 1939.

**March 10.** The author of the antimilitarist novel *My We*, (1924), Evgenii Zamiatin, dies in Paris.

### 1938

**May 5.** The exhibition *20 Years of the Workers and Peasants Red Army (RKKA) and the Navy* opens in Moscow, including the two paintings Deineka was commissioned to produce.

**May 8.** According to the 66th issue of *Arkhitektturnaia gazeta*, Deineka is working on sketches for the main hall of the planned Palace of the Soviets (which is never built). One of the walls was to be dedicated to the Red Army and the Civil War.

**August 31.** Deineka agrees to draw a sketch for a mosaic panel on the subject of "On Stalin's Path" to be displayed in the main room of the Soviet Pavilion at the World's Fair exhibition in New York in 1939. As Deineka was behind schedule, the commission is eventually given to the painter Vasilii Efanov and a brigade of artists. (Deineka's sketch, also known as *Stakhanovites*, is in the collection of the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia, Moscow.)

**September 11.** Inauguration of the Maiakovskaia metro station, designed by the architect Aleksei Dushkin. The vaults of the platform are decorated with thirty-five mosaic panels by Deineka on the theme of "A Day and Night in the Land of Soviets," representing garden, factory, sport, aviation and construction scenes.

Deineka illustrates the children's book *Cherez polius v Ameriku* (*Across the North Pole to America*) by the pilot and Hero of the Soviet Union Georgii Baidukov.

**January 17.** Gustavs Klucis is arrested in Moscow. He is executed on Stalin's order several weeks later. Deineka's first spouse, the artist Pavla Freiburg, was also arrested that year and would die during her imprisonment a few months later.

**March.** During the Third Trial of the Great Purge, nearly twenty people are charged with allegedly belonging to a bloc of "Rightists and Trotskyites"

led by Nikolai Bukharin, former chairman of the Comintern, and ex-prime minister Aleksei Rykov. They are all found guilty and executed.

**March 17.** The ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev is born in Irkutsk (Siberia).

**September 17.** The Russian economist Nikolai Kondratiev, who had been a proponent of the New Economic Policy, is sentenced to death and executed in Siberia.

**December 27.** The poet Osip Mandel'shtam dies in a labor camp outside Vladivostok.

### 1939

**March 18.** Opening of the exhibition *The Industry of Socialism*, in which Deineka displays several works, including *At the Women's Meeting* and *Bomb-vozh* (Bomber). It was initially under the direction of Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Head of the People's Commissar for Heavy Industry, who committed suicide before the show opened. Featuring 1,015 works by 479 artists, the exhibition was the largest ever organized in the USSR.

**May 17.** Inauguration of the Soviet Pavilion at the World's Fair in New York, designed by the architects Boris Iofan and Karo Alabian. Two works by Deineka are featured in the exhibition, *Lenin on an Outing with Children* and *Future Pilots*, but it is the large-scale reproduction of a fragment of the vaults of the Maiakovskaia metro station with Deineka's mosaics that catches the audience's attention. The project wins a Grand Prize.

**August 1.** The *All-Union Agricultural Exhibition* is inaugurated in Moscow to commemorate the tenth anniversary of collectivization and to celebrate its achievements. The event was later renamed *Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy (VDNKh)*. Deineka works in collaboration with other artists on two wall paintings, *Quarrel over*

1. Aleksandr Deineka.

*Portrait of Irina Servinskaya*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 70.7 x 60.3 cm. Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery

2. Aleksandr Deineka in front of one of the no longer extant frescoes of the *1st All-Union Agricultural Exhibition* (later renamed *Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy* [VDNKh]), Moscow, 1939

3. Aleksandr Deineka, ca. 1940

4. Drawings of soldiers in the outskirts of Moscow during the Great Patriotic War of 1941. Illustration from Aleksandr Deineka's book, *On My Working Practice*, 1969 [cat. 248]

*Boundaries* and *The Peasant Revolt of 1905* (both no longer extant). Deineka takes up work as a sculptor and begins to work with ceramics, porcelain and majolica.

**August 23.** Germany and Russia sign a treaty of non-aggression, commonly referred to as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

**September 1.** Germany invades Poland. Outbreak of the Second World War.

**November 30.** The conflict between Russia and Finland known as the Winter War begins. A peace treaty is signed in March of the following year according to which parts of Finland and its industry are ceded to the Soviet Union.

## 1940

**January.** Deineka's memoirs of his encounters with Mayakovsky are published in the magazine *Iskusstvo* (issue no. 3).

**February.** Deineka is elected a member of the board of directors of the combined Moscow Painters and Sculptors Union.

**May 27.** Following the Vesnin brothers' invitation to work on mosaics for the Paveletskaya metro station in Moscow, Deineka signs an agreement with the Board of Construction of the Palace of the Soviets (USDS) according to which he will correct the cartoons made from his sketches at the Leningrad mosaic workshop. Of the sixteen mosaics that Deineka designed for the Paveletskaya station, seven were eventually installed, instead, in the Novokuznetskaya station that opened in 1943.

**June 29.** Deineka is given the title of "professor" of Monumental Painting at the Moscow State Institute of Fine Arts (MGKhI).

**September 18.** The construction company building the Red Army Theater informs Deineka that the government commission has not approved his ceiling mural and will therefore not pay him the 10,000

rubles agreed to on the condition he finish the project. (The circumstances surrounding Deineka's involvement in the project remain unclear, but his mural *The Cross-Country Race of Red Army Soldiers* continues to decorate the theater to this day). The State Literature Museum commissions a large-scale painting based on the poem *Levyi marsh* (Left March) by Mayakovsky.

Deineka illustrates the book *Nasha Aviatsia* (Our Aviation) by the pilot and Hero of the Soviet Union, Il'ia Mazuruk.

**March 10.** Mikhail Bulgakov dies in Moscow. His death brings to an end his most celebrated novel, *Master i Margarita* (The Master and Margarita), which he had begun to write ten years earlier and had rewritten several times. It is not published until 1966.

**April 3 – May 19.** Approximately 22,000 Polish nationals are executed by the Soviet Army in the Katyn massacre.

**August 21.** Lev Trotsky dies in Mexico one day after having been attacked by Ramón Mercader, a NKVD agent.

The six-day work week is implemented; those absent from work or responsible for defective manufacture are criminally liable.

## 1941

**January 1.** Deineka enters an agreement with the Economy and Art Department of the Board of Construction of the Palace of the Soviets by which he commits to advise the project's artists and architects forty-eight hours per month, at a salary of 2,000 rubles per month.

**October 10 – March 1942.** Deineka works for the Tass Windows Military Defense Poster Workshop (Okna TASS), producing political posters on defense themes and leading a group of poster artists.

**October 18.** Deineka is dismissed from the Moscow State Institute of Fine Arts on "a protracted leave of absence with the right of reinstatement."

**November 3.** The German Army captures Kursk, where Deineka's mother and sister live. He concludes *The Outskirts of Moscow. November 1941*, the first of a series of paintings that chronicle the war, *Sverdlov Square in December 1941*, *The Moscow Manezh 1941*, *Anxious Nights* (1942), *Burnt-Down Village* (1942) and others.

**June 22.** War breaks out in the Western Front. The German army invades the USSR, marking the beginning of the conflict between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany known as the Great Patriotic War, a name that first appeared in the newspaper *Pravda* on June 23.

**July 10.** Beginning of the blockade of Leningrad, which lasts 900 days.

**August 31.** The poet Marina Tsvetaeva commits suicide in Elabuga (Tatarstan).

**October 30.** Beginning of the heroic defense of Sevastopol, which lasts eight months.

## 1942

**February.** Deineka and the painter Georgii Nisskii are sent to the front line near Likhnov by the management of the RKKA. The sketches Deineka produces are presented at the exhibition *Moscow Artists in the Days of the Great Patriotic War*.

**Early July.** Following the defeat of the defense of Sevastopol, Deineka writes: "I saw a horrifying photo in a German newspaper. A beauty of a city was mutilated. It reminded me of my *Future Pilots* who also defended their hometown, the women and children who experienced the horrors of the siege. That moment, when I painted the picture of the defense of Sevastopol, has been erased from my consciousness. I lived with only one wish: to

paint a picture of something real . . ." (A. Deineka, *Life, Art, Time*, 161).

**October 16.** Deineka's mother, Marfa Pankratova, dies during the German occupation of Kursk and is interred at the Muscovite cemetery in Kursk.

**December.** Deineka signs a contract with the Arts Committee of the Council of People's Commissars to complete the enormous canvas the *Defense of Sevastopol* by February 1, 1943.

**February 7.** The painter and draughtsman Ivan Bilibin, creator of the distinctive "Bilibin style" in book illustration, dies during the Siege of Leningrad.

**Summer.** The German army launches an offensive in southern Leningrad, the outskirts of the city of Kharkiv and the Crimean peninsula.

**October 18.** The painter Mikhail Nesterov, the leading exponent of religious symbolism, dies in Moscow.

Mikhail Kalashnikov designs the AK-47 assault rifle, the first automatic firearm.

## 1943

**February 23.** Opening of the exhibition *The Battle of the Red Army against the German Fascist Invaders* at the Central House of the Red Army in Moscow; Deineka displays his *Defense of Sevastopol*.

**November 20.** The Novokuznetskaya metro station opens in Moscow featuring seven mosaic panels by Deineka.

**February 2.** The German army is defeated in the Battle of Stalingrad, the bloodiest battle of the Second World War.

**March 28.** The composer Sergei Rachmaninoff dies in the United States.

**July – August.** The Battle of Kursk, the greatest tank battle in history, marks the beginning of the Soviet advance.

## 1944

**February 10.** Deineka signs a contract with the Moscow Fellowship of Artists (MTKh) to produce a "synthetic project" combining sculpture, frescoes, mosaics and other media as a monument to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War.

**April 5.** Deineka is awarded the MTKh first prize for his 1943 painting *The Shot Down Ace*.

**July 28.** Opening of an exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery featuring six major Soviet artists: Deineka, Sergei Gerasimov, Pet'r Konchalovskii, Sara Lebedeva, Vera Mukhina and Dementii Shmarinov.

**August 23.** Deineka signs a contract with the Directorate of Art Exhibitions and Panoramas to produce a massive painting with the title *Parachute Jumpers* (6 x 4 meters) for the sum of 60,000 rubles.

**November 7.** On the 27th anniversary of the Revolution, Deineka is awarded a Prize of Honor by the leadership of the Moscow Union of Soviet Artists (MSSKh) for his social engagement during the Second World War.

**January 27.** The siege of Leningrad is finally ended.

**March 15.** The USSR officially adopts a new national anthem composed by Aleksandr Alexandrov with lyrics by Sergei Mikhalkov and Gabriel' El'-Registan, replacing *The Internationale* as the national anthem.

**June 22.** The Soviet army conducts Operation Bagration with the aim of expelling the Germans from the Belorussian SSR and eastern Poland.

**December 13.** Wassily Kandinsky dies in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France.

## 1945

**March 9.** Deineka is appointed director of the Moscow Institute of Applied and Decorative Arts (MIPIDI, founded the previous year) by decree



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number 112 of the Committee on the Arts of the Council of People's Commissars (SNK) of the USSR.

**March 27.** Deineka is awarded the title of "Honored Figure of the Arts" of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic.

**June 3.** The Committee on the Arts commissions Deineka to travel to Berlin with fellow Russian artists and writers. He paints a series of watercolors entitled *Berlin 1945* depicting the defeated city.

**February 4–11.** The "Big Three," Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, meet at the Yalta Conference to discuss their war plans.

**May 8.** Nazi Germany accepts unconditional surrender and signs the agreement before the Marshal of the Red Army Georgii Zhukov, marking the end of Great Patriotic War. The triumph of the Allies and the Soviet Union, known as Victory Day, is celebrated on May 9.

Premiere of the first part of the *Ivan the Terrible* trilogy of films, directed by Sergei Eisenstein.

## 1946

**January 19.** The *All-Union Art Exhibition* opens at the State Tretyakov Gallery, featuring Deineka's paintings *Parachute Jumpers*, *The Wide Expanse* and others.

**March 9.** He receives official confirmation of his title of "professor" of Monumental Painting at the MGKhI.

Deineka is commissioned by the Directorate of Art Exhibitions and Panoramas to produce two paintings, on the subjects of the reconstruction of the Donbass and sport, for the sum of 90,000 rubles.

**February 9.** Stalin delivers the speech "New Five-Year Plan for Russia" in Moscow and declares capitalism and communism "incompatible."

**March 24.** The chess player Aleksandr Alekhin (Alekhine) dies in Estoril, Portugal.

Central Committee secretary Andrei Zhdanov initiates a new period of cultural conformity and oppression known as the "Zhdanovshchina" with the persecution of magazines that published the "individualistic" and "apolitical" works of Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko; the two authors are banned from the Union of Writers.

## 1947

**March 10.** Deineka writes to Serafima Lycheva from Vienna, where he attends the exhibition *Works of Art by Soviet Masters* (Deineka, Sergei Gerasimov, Aleksandr Gerasimov and Arkadii Plastov): "The exhibition is going well. It seems everyone prefers surrealism here. We appear to be somewhat academic. There are many exhibitions here. An exhibition of French contemporary painting—mainly Picasso and Chagall—has just closed, it is one-eyed painting, all cubes and intestines" (catalogue of the exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery [Moscow, 2010], 222). In the meantime, the press in Vienna printed: "Aleksandr Deineka's art is the most similar to Western painting. Firstly, he is a landscape artist." He produces a series of watercolors representing Vienna.

**April 18.** Deineka is appointed chair of Decorative Sculpture at the MIPIDI, where he is also the director.

**August 5.** The USSR Council of Ministers appoints Deineka a member of the recently created Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR, which replaces the All-Russian Academy of Fine Arts.

During a commissioned trip to the Donbass, he paints *Donbass* [cat. 243]. This year he also paints

*Relay Race on the Garden Ring Road*, on the basis of a track race he witnesses near his house.

**February 15.** Marriage between Soviet citizens and foreigners is prohibited (until 1954).

**May 26.** The death penalty is abolished (until May 1950).

As part of the 800th anniversary celebration of Moscow, foundations are laid for eight skyscrapers. Seven of them, known as "Stalin's High-Rises" or the "Seven Sisters," are eventually erected over the next ten years.

## 1948

**February 11.** A resolution taken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party is published in the newspaper *Pravda* in an article entitled "On the opera *The Great Friendship* by V. I. Muradeli," marking the beginning of an ideological campaign against formalism in music. As described by Boris Nikiforov in his memoirs of Deineka: "The wave of pogroms against writers . . . musicians and composers . . . reached our Institute (MIPIDI) . . . All of a sudden, in the middle of the school day, the bell rang and we were assembled in the main hall . . . A speech on the influence of formalism in Soviet art began, the names were disclosed: the sculptor Zelenskii, Vladimir Favorskii, Andrei Goncharov. Deineka was not mentioned but it was implied . . ." (S. I. Nikiforov, "Vospominaniia o velikom mastere. 'To, chto ostalos v pamiatii,'" in *Problema sovetskogo iskusstva 1930–50* [Kursk, 1999], 151).

**March 24.** Deineka resigns as chair of the Monumental Painting Department of the Surikov Institute.

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1. Catalogue of the exhibition S. V. Guerasimov, A. A. Deineka, P. P. Konchalovski, S. D. Lebedev, V. I. Mukhina, D. A. Shmarinov. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1944

2. Aleksandr Deineka. *An Ace Shot Down*, 1943. Oil on canvas, 283 x 188 cm. Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg

3. *Victory Celebration*, May 9, 1945. Photograph by Dmitrii Bal'termants. Fundación José María Castañé

4. Andrei Zhdanov and his wife in their dacha in Leningrad, ca. 1962 (*Izvestia*). Fundación José María Castañé

5. Aleksandr Deineka. *Relay Race*, 1947. Bronze, 56 x 99 x 16 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

6. Stalin, Malenkov and Beria at Zhadov's funeral, 1948. Fundación José María Castañé

7. Aleksandr Deineka. *Sverdlov Square. December* (From the series *Moscow during the War*), 1946–47. Tempera, gouache and charcoal on paper, 62 x 75.5 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

8. Aleksandr Deineka. *Night. The Patriarch Ponds* (From the series *Moscow during the War*), 1946–47. Tempera, gouache and charcoal on paper, 61 x 75.5 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

9. Aleksandr Deineka. *Repair of Tanks on the Front Line* (From the series *Moscow during the War*), 1946–47. Tempera and gouache on paper, 67.5 x 83.5 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

10. Aleksandr Deineka. *Evacuation of Kolkhoz Animals* (From the series *Moscow during the War*), 1946–47. Tempera on paper, 65 x 74.5 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

11. Sketches of ballerinas for the panels of the Chelyabinsk Opera and Ballet Theater. Illustration from Aleksandr Deineka's book, *On My Working Practice*, 1969 [cat. 248]

**October.** He leaves his post as Director of MIPIDI, though he stays on as chair of the Decorative Sculpture Department.

**February 11.** The film director Sergei Eisenstein dies in Moscow.

**April 19–25.** The First Congress of the Union of Soviet Composers takes place in Moscow. Important composers, including Shostakovich and Prokofiev, are censored in accordance with the Zhdanov decree.

## 1949

Deineka and Serafima Lycheva separate.

The Soviet Union begins to launch suborbital missions designed to explore space (1949–59) in preparation for man's first flight into space.

## 1951

**January 19.** Lev Rudnev, the chief architect of the University of Moscow building in the Lenin Hills, puts Deineka in charge of the mosaic bas-reliefs of the main hall depicting sixty distinguished scholars of world history.

Deineka supervises students at MIPIDI working on the interior of the Dramatic Theater in Kalinin (present-day Tver).

Deineka purchases a dacha in the artists' village of Peski, located in the Kolomenskii district near Moscow.

**January 5.** The writer Andrei Platonov dies in Moscow.

**March 22.** Soviet Channel 1, the first television channel in the USSR, is launched and, to this day, continues to be the largest broadcasting network.

## 1952

**March 15.** The exhibition *N. V. Gogol in the Works of Soviet Artists. Dedicated to the Centenary of the Writer's Death, 1852–1952* opens at the exhibition hall of the Organizing Committee of the Union of Soviet Artists. Deineka is invited by the President of the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR, Aleksandr Gerasimov, and the head of the Commemoration Commission, Evgenii Kibrik, to participate in the show. He presents his recently completed painting *Ekh troika, ptitsa-troika . . .*, a line from Gogol's poem *Mertvye dushi* (Dead Souls, 1842).

Deineka takes on an additional teaching post as the head of the Composition Faculty at the Moscow Textile Institute.

He completes a commission to produce a large painting with the title *The Opening of the Kolkhoz Electric Station* [cat. 244] for the Central Pavilion of the USSR at the *All-Union Agricultural Exhibition*.

**November 4.** One of the largest earthquakes in history with a magnitude of 9 on the Richter scale occurs off the Kamchatka Peninsula.

The campaign against "cosmopolitanism" leads to a new wave of repression against the intelligentsia, particularly Jews.

## 1953

Deineka designs ceiling murals and other decorative details for the Chelyabinsk Opera and Ballet Theater, a commission he was offered through the intercession of a former student from MIPIDI. He is assisted in the project by several former students. He becomes professor and director of the Drawing Department at the Moscow Institute of Architecture, a position he holds until 1957.

**March 5.** Josef Stalin dies and is replaced by Nikita Khrushchev.

Deaths of the composer Sergei Prokofiev (March 5), the artist Vladimir Tatlin (May 31) and the writer Ivan Bunin (November 8).

## 1954

**July 6.** The First Secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, receives a report from the Department of Science and Culture of the CPSU Central Committee concerning "The State of Soviet Art." The report observed "a formalist and aesthetic spirit has been reignited among painters" and referred to Deineka, Sergei Gerasimov and Martiros Sarian as artists who "had not yet eliminated formalist remnants from their work."

**June 27.** The first nuclear power plant in the world for large-scale production of electricity opens in Obninsk, a city near Moscow.

Il'ia Erenburg publishes his novella *Ottepel'* (The Thaw), giving a name to the era of liberalization in Soviet politics after Stalin's death.

## 1956

**March 16.** Deineka writes a letter to the Presidium of the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR requesting permission to stage a solo exhibition which had been planned five years earlier but had been postponed by "circumstances beyond our control."

**July 19.** The 28th Venice Biennale opens. The Soviet Pavilion includes Deineka's 1953 painting of seaside leisure *In Sevastopol*.

**February 25.** Khrushchev delivers his "Secret Speech" to a closed session of the 20th Party Congress, condemning Stalin's purges of the military and Party officials, and his cult of personality.

1. Diego Rivera. *View of the Red Square*, 1956. Oil on canvas, 51 x 65.5 cm. Private collection
2. Aleksandr Deineka, 1957
3. 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union/CPSU. At center, Nikita Khrushchev, Moscow, 1959. Fundación José María Castañé
4. Aleksandr Deineka with a film camera, ca. 1960
5. Nikita Khrushchev in his dacha, ca. 1962 (*Izvestia*). Fundación José María Castañé



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**November 10.** The Hungarian Revolution is crushed by Soviet troops. In January 1957, the new government put in place by the Soviets and headed by János Kádár suppresses all public opposition.

**December 3.** Aleksandr Rodchenko dies in Moscow.

An exhibition of the works of Pablo Picasso takes place at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow.

## 1957

**February.** Deineka writes to his sister in Kursk: “Nothing has changed in Moscow: I teach, attend meetings, paint pictures, give advice. Each day there are more meetings and fewer results.”

**March 29.** Deineka is nominated for the title of People’s Artist of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic by the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR; the Artists’ Union confirms the nomination on July 8.

**May 8.** Deineka’s solo exhibition—his first since 1936—opens at the Academy of Fine Arts, displaying around 270 works. Reviews in the press are numerous and uniformly positive.

**October 1.** Deineka is appointed professor and director of his own workshop at the Moscow State Academic Artistic Institute commonly known as “The Surikov Institute” (MGAKhI).

**December.** Deineka’s sketches for two enormous panels on the subjects “For Peace throughout the World” and “Peaceful Construction” for the 1958 International Exhibition in Brussels are approved. He completes them with the assistance of a brigade of artists composed of his former students. He is elected a member of the board of the Artists Union (SKh) of the USSR.

Deineka meets his future wife, Elena Volkova (born 1921), who works at The Foreign Book, a bookstore on Kachalov street (present-day Malaia Nikitskaia) in Moscow. According to his wife, during the first

years of their life together, Deineka “was an unusually healthy and smart looking person. He liked to dress well. He had a barber and a tailor who made him very elegant suits. Often he gave me large baskets of flowers with a simple note: ‘To my dear friend’ or simply ‘Hello!’”

**September 29.** A tank of highly radioactive liquid waste explodes at the Maiak nuclear plant located in the Cheliabinsk region.

**October 4.** The USSR launches Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth.

With Alberto Sánchez—a sculptor in exile in the USSR—providing creative assistance, Grigori Kozintsev directs the film *Don Quixote*, recovering Cervantes’s work from obscurity following Stalin’s death.

## 1958

**April 17.** Expo’58, the first international exhibition after the Second World War (and the first in the conditions of Cold War), opens in Brussels. Deineka’s two commissioned panels are displayed in the Soviet Pavilion, while a number of his other paintings are put on show in the fine arts section of the International Pavilion, including *Defense of Petrograd*, *Outskirts of Moscow, 1941* and *Relay Race on the Garden Ring Road*. These three paintings, as well as his panel *For Peace*, are awarded gold medals.

**December 12.** Deineka is nominated for the Lenin Prize by the board of directors of the Moscow Union of Soviet Artists for his panel *For Peace*, executed for the Soviet Pavilion at the International Exhibition in Brussels, but it does not win enough votes to be awarded the prize.

He is elected member of the Presidium of the Academy of Fine Arts, vice-president of the Moscow Union of Soviet Artists, and a member of the Soviet Committee for the Defense of Peace.

**July 22.** The novelist and playwright Mikhail Zoshchenko dies in Leningrad.

**October.** Russian author Boris Pasternak wins the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novel *Doctor Zhivago*. The publication of this novel also caused him to be excluded from the Union of Soviet Writers.

## 1959

**March 6.** Deineka is named People’s Artist of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) by a decree issued by the board of directors of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet.

**May 21.** The Academy celebrates Deineka’s 60th birthday.

Deineka is named the chief artist of the Palace of Congresses under construction at the Kremlin. He begins to work on a series of mosaic panels entitled *People of the Land of the Soviets*, which are not concluded due to changes in the building project. In 1960 he completes, instead, a mosaic frieze depicting the coats of arms of the fifteen Soviet republics that is installed in the main hall of the Palace of Congresses at the Kremlin.

Painter P. F. Nikinov recalls what Deineka was like at the time: “He was robust, with a reddish neck, broad shoulders and short legs. The proportions of his heroines—robust, solid—reflect his own proportions . . . That is exactly what he looked like: broad, short and very strong. He was a boxer. His hair was very short, completely grey. He looked younger than his age . . . He was a solitary person, keeping everyone at a distance. He detested conspiracies . . . He was a well-rounded man” (catalogue of the exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery [Moscow, 2010], 230).

**July 24.** The *American National Exhibition* opens in Sokolniki Park, Moscow, displaying American consumer goods. Its model kitchen became the site



## 1962

**January 2.** Deineka is awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for his contribution to the construction of the Kremlin Palace of Congresses.

**December 1.** Leonid Rabichev recalls Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev's famous visit to the exhibition *30 Years of MOSSKh* at the Manezh gallery in Moscow. The visit started well when the secretary of the Artists' Union of the RSFSR, Valentin Serov, showed Khrushchev Deineka's painting *Mother*, saying: "Look, Nikita Sergeevich, this is how our Soviet painters portray our happy Soviet mothers . . . Nikita Sergeevich nodded . . ." Later in his tour of the exhibition, however, Khrushchev would make his expletive-ridden condemnation of the work of contemporary nonconformist artists.

Pavel Nikonov has described the meetings held by the Central Committee of the Party at Staraia Ploschad' in late December on the subject of the controversial exhibition. Nikonov was walking up the stairs with Deineka when they were joined by the Soviet Minister of Culture, Ekaterina Furtseva. She brought up Khrushchev's criticism of Nikonov's painting in the exhibition, *The Geologists*, to which Deineka responded by coming to the artist's defense: "He is a very nice fellow, you should not scold him. There was a time when I was brushed aside... and as my paintings were brushed aside, they were sold for one ruble, because they could not be thrown out." "I know you, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich," Furtseva retorted, "you always side with the youth!"

**December 4.** Deineka is elected vice-president of the Academy of Fine Arts, a position he holds until 1966.

Deineka visits Czechoslovakia.

**May.** Khrushchev places Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba, prompting what was known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the greatest conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.

**June 2.** Uprising of the workers of the industrial city of Novocherkassk.

**October 17.** The artist Natalia Goncharova dies in Paris.

## 1963

**April 12.** Deineka receives the honorary title granted by the position of People's Artist of the USSR.

**July 28.** Deineka writes a letter to the Surikov Art Institute requesting to be relieved of his position: "I have directed the monumental painting workshop for several years . . . The chair of Painting has recently taken a determined stance with regard to decorative-monumental art, defining it as formalist. This situation has made my work at the Institute difficult . . . I wish to be relieved of my assigned post."

**August 2.** The RSFSR Ministry of Culture refers the case to the Academy of Arts in a letter requesting they study the dispute between Deineka and the Surikov Institute.

**September 3.** The Presidium of the Academy of Fine Arts does not accept Deineka's resignation but, on account of the agitation the incident caused at the Institute, grants Deineka one year of unpaid leave.

**June 16.** On board Vostok 6, Valentina Tereshkova becomes the first woman to travel to space.

Artists Vitaly Komar and Aleksandr Melamid, both students at the Moscow Stroganov Institute of Art and Industry (MGKhpU), meet during an anatomy drawing class. From 1967 to 2003 they work together as Komar & Melamid.

of the famous "Kitchen Debate" between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev.

**August 11.** Sheremet'ovo Airport opens in Moscow, mainly serving international flights.

**September 12.** Launch of the Lunik 2, the first man-made object to reach the moon on September 14.

## 1960

**February 26.** Deineka is granted an honorary prize by the Soviet Committee for the Defense of Peace.

**March.** Deineka joins the Communist Party/CPSU (KPSS).

**May.** An exhibition of Russian and Soviet art in Paris includes three much earlier paintings by Deineka: *Defense of Petrograd*, *Mother* and *Lunch Break in the Donbass*.

**June.** The 30th Venice Biennale includes nine paintings by Deineka, ranging in date from 1935 to 1959.

**June.** Deineka participates in the Constituent Assembly of the Union of Artists of the USSR (SKh SSSR).

**August 27.** Deineka attends the opening of a major solo exhibition of about 100 pieces of his work at the Picture Gallery of Kursk.

According to Vladimir Galaiko, Deineka's personal chauffeur since 1962, the artist purchases a Volga Gas-2 automobile.

**February 5.** Foundation of the People's Friendship University in the South of Moscow, now called the People's Friendship University of Russia.

**May 7.** Leonid Brezhnev is promoted to the position of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

**May 30.** The poet and novelist Boris Pasternak dies in Peredelkino.

## 1961

**March 18.** According to the newspaper *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, Deineka will be in France for two weeks with a delegation of Russian artists, following an invitation from the French National Committee of the International Association of Fine Arts in Paris.

**June 10.** Deineka sends a postcard to his sister in Kursk in which he writes: "I was in Paris recently, I traveled half the country. I have not stopped traveling since my return: Moscow-Leningrad, Leningrad-Moscow."

**June 20.** Deineka is awarded the Presidium of the Academy of Fine Arts gold medal for his mosaic *A Good Morning*.

**December 4.** *Aleksandr Dejneka* by art critic Dushan Konechna is published in Prague. Deineka is invited to Prague by the Union of Czechoslovakian Artists, which informs him the Ministry of Finance will pay him 2,000 crowns in advance.

**December 12.** An extensive article by Deineka, "Sublime and Radiant Art – for the People," is published in the newspaper *Izvestiia*.

Deineka's book, *Learn to Draw*, and the autobiographical essay *On My Working Practice* [cat. 248], are published by the Academy of Arts.

**April 12.** On board the spacecraft Vostok 1, Yuri Gagarin becomes the first human to travel to space.

**October 31.** Stalin's body is removed from the mausoleum on Red Square, where it lay next to Lenin's, and placed in a tomb by the walls of the Kremlin, over which a monument was later raised. Andrei Tarkovsky directs his first film, *Ivanovo Detstvo* (Ivan's Childhood), which wins the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1962.

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## 1964

**April 22.** Nominated once again by the MOSSKh board of directors, Deineka receives the Lenin Prize for his mosaic panels produced between 1959 and 1962.

**May 19.** The short film *The Artist Aleksandr Deineka* is played during a reception held in his honor at the Central House of Art Workers.

**October 2.** Deineka travels to Berlin to attend an exhibition showcasing work by members of the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR. He is elected corresponding member of the Academy of Fine Arts of the German Democratic Republic.

**October 19.** Deineka is appointed member of the Fine Arts Council of the Ministry of Culture of the USSR and put in charge of the Monumental Painting Department.

He produces a new version of *The Defense of Petrograd*, originally painted in 1928.

The book *Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka* by M. N. Iablonskaia is published in Leningrad.

**May 10.** The artist Mikhail Larionov dies in Fontenay-aux-Roses, France.

**October 14.** The Central Committee votes to depose Nikita Khrushchev from his position as First Secretary of the Communist Party; he is replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who holds the position until his death in 1982.

**December 29.** The artist Vladimir Favorskii, Deineka's teacher at VKhUTEMAS, dies in Moscow. In Italy, Anna Akhmatova is awarded the Etna Taormina International Prize for Poetry. The progressive Taganka Drama and Comedy Theater opens under the direction of Iurii Liubimov.

## 1965

**March 8.** According to a postcard addressed to Deineka's family, on this date he embarks on a

three-week trip to Italy, a country he has not visited for thirty years.

Deineka produces a mosaic for the facade of the sanatorium for the USSR Council of Ministers in Sochi.

He sells his dacha in Podrezkovo. As Elena Volkova-Deineka recounts, Deineka moved from this "Paradise" (as Deineka called it) to Peredelkino due to the constant acts of vandalism carried out by "hooligans" from the surrounding working-class towns. "They did atrocious things to the paintings, slashing them with knives. After one of the pogroms, they ripped the surface of *The Bathers*, as well as a large canvas of a model and many other paintings. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich realized we could not continue to live in this dacha" (Elena Pavlova Deineka in *Problema sovetskogo iskusstva 1930–50* [Kursk, 1999], 129).

**March 18.** The Russian astronaut Aleksei Leonov becomes the first man to walk in space.

**April 20.** The artist Sergei Gerasimov dies in Moscow.

**October 2.** The Supreme Soviet adopts the reforms to the system of state economic planning known as the Liberman Plan.

## 1966

**March 11.** Deineka is elected academic-secretary of the Department of Decorative Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR.

**August.** A caricature of Deineka is published in the magazine *Krokodil* along with an epigram by the Kukryniksi caricaturists.

**October 19.** A solo exhibition of Deineka's work opens in Kursk. The following year, the show travels to the Museum of Russian Art in Kiev and the Art Museum of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic in Riga.

Deineka moves into an apartment in the Union of Artists of the USSR housing cooperative on 22 Bolshaya Bronnaia Street, in Moscow.

**March 1.** Venera 3 becomes the first space probe to land on another planet, Venus.

**March 5.** The poet Anna Akhmatova dies in Leningrad.

Andrei Tarkovsky concludes the film *Andrei Rublev* (aka *The Passion According to Andrei*). After a first failed screening, a cut version of the film was finally shown at the 1969 Cannes Film Festival.

## 1967

**December 19.** Deineka is awarded the Physical Culture Activist Medal by the council of the "Spartak" sports society for his "continuous propaganda of physical culture and sports in art."

The monograph *Deineka* by Aradi Nora is published in Budapest.

Elena Volkova-Deineka recalls: "My husband did not always tell me what he was up to . . . that is why I was not aware of how difficult his relationship with the Academy had become . . . In addition to being upset over the Academy, there were signs that he was terribly ill . . . He seemed to be losing strength. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich continued to work. He attended the Presidium meetings at the Academy each week, traveled to the mosaic and stained glass workshops in Leningrad, he lectured at the Leningrad Academy of Arts, visited artists in Riga, went to Czechoslovakia. But he worked less and less on new works of art . . . He was obviously deeply depressed . . . Sometimes he would say: 'I have seen it all, I know what is going on around me. I have had enough.' And he tried to 'drown' his emotions with his terrible medicine" (Elena Pavlova Deineka in *Problema sovetskogo iskusstva 1930–50* [Kursk, 1999], 129–30).





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1. Aleksandr Deineka (right) with Maya Plisetskaia, Nikolai Cherkasov and Vladimir Peskoven during the Lenin Prize Award Ceremony, Moscow, 1964
2. Aleksandr Deineka next to one of his sculptures, 1964
3. Aleksandr Deineka in his office, 1956
4. Catalogue of the Exhibition of Works by Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka. People's Artist, Lenin Prize Winner and Member of the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR, Kursk Regional Art Gallery, 1966; Museum of Russian Art in Kiev, 1967; Art Museum of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic in Riga, 1967

5. Catalogue of the exhibition Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka. People's Artist, Member of the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR, Lenin Prize Winner, Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR, Moscow; Budapest; Leningrad, 1969–70
6. Illustrated pages of the magazine *Ogonek*, no. 3, 1969. Fundación José María Castañé
7. Cover of the magazine *Ogonek*, no. 39, September 1969. Fundación José María Castañé

**January 15.** The artist David Burluk dies in Long Island, New York.

**April 24.** Vladimir Komarov becomes the first cosmonaut to die during a spaceflight when the Soyuz 1 spacecraft attempts to land. The USSR celebrates the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution.

**September 1.** Writer Il'ia Erenburg dies in Moscow.

## 1968

**April 17.** Deineka is commissioned by the USSR Ministry of Culture to create a work for an exhibition commemorating the centenary of Lenin's birth in 1970.

**May.** Deineka faints and loses consciousness. He is forced to stay in the hospital until July and, according to Elena Volkova-Deineka, acquires the reputation of being a "difficult patient," as he refuses to take his medication and requests incessantly to be discharged, although he cannot even walk. He does not acknowledge his illness or listen to the doctors. "For three months he followed his 'diet' but then he soon deteriorated again. He would lie in bed watching sports programs on television. His eyes often filled with tears. He suffered from his helplessness" (Elena Pavlova Deineka in *Problema sovetskogo iskusstva 1930–50* [Kursk, 1999], 133).

**August 3.** Deineka and Elena Volkova's marriage is registered.

Deineka works on a monumental panel entitled *All Countries Come to Visit Us* for a new addition being constructed at the Moscow airport.

**March 27.** The cosmonaut Iurii Gagarin dies during a training flight.

**August 20.** Russian tanks put an end to the Prague Spring.

## 1969

**March 5.** The USSR Ministry of Culture sends Deineka on a ten day trip to Hungary, where a solo exhibition of his work is on display in Budapest.

**May 20.** The artist T. T. Salakhov writes an article in the newspaper *Sovetskaia kul'tura* to celebrate Deineka's 70th birthday on May 21: "Deineka is considered by many to be a master. I saw a reproduction of the *Defense of Petrograd* in Renato Guttuso's studio. The Italian artist believes Deineka is one of the finest artists in contemporary painting."

**June 4.** Deineka's health deteriorates drastically. He is not able to attend the opening of his solo exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts in Moscow, held on June 5, in which 250 works are displayed. The show later travels to Leningrad.

**June 10.** Deineka is awarded the honorary title Hero of Socialist Labor and receives the Order of Lenin and the Hammer and Sickle gold medal. Elena Volkova-Deineka recalls that she received a call from the Department of Culture of the Central Committee, apologizing that "technical problems" prevented them from awarding the title sooner, when Deineka would have been well enough to appreciate it. "I ran to the hospital . . . he was very ill and although he recognized me, when I congratulated him on the honor, he looked at me with confusion in his eyes, and so I believe he never understood he had been awarded the title."

**June 12.** Aleksandr Deineka dies in the early morning.

**June 16.** Deineka is interred at Novodevichii cemetery in Moscow.

**June 17.** The article "Pokhorony A. A. Deineki" (A. A. Deineka's Funeral) published in *Sovetskaia kul'tura* recounts the following: "On June 16, Moscow said its final farewell to Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka, Hero of Socialist Labor, People's Artist of the USSR, recipient of the Order of Lenin. His

friends, pupils, admirers of his great talent, gathered at the USSR Academy of Arts where he was lying in state. His finest works are on display at the Academy as part of an exhibition that opened recently to celebrate his 70th birthday. The exhibition has turned into a commemorative event."

**November 3.** The State Art Gallery in Kursk is named after Deineka.

## 1976

A commemorative plaque is placed outside Deineka's former studio, located on 25/9 Gorky (present day Tverskaia) Street.

## 1989

**May 22.** A monument by sculptor A. I. Ruskavishnikov and architect I. N. Voskresenskii is erected at Deineka's grave as a memorial to the artist.





**Aleksandr Deineka:  
The Mimesis of  
a Utopia (1913–53)**

Manuel Fontán del Junco



In it is no *lacrimae rerum*.  
No art. Only the gift  
To see things as they are,  
Halved by a darkness  
From which they cannot shift.

Derek Walcott, *A Map of Europe*

**A**

Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969) turned eighteen when the Bolshevik revolution rose to power in Russia after the deposition in 1917 of Tsar Nicholas II. A contemporary of Lenin and Stalin, Deineka died at the age of seventy in Moscow, in 1969, at the height of the Khrushchev era and while he was still the distinguished president of the Fine Arts Academy of Moscow. Deineka thus embodied the true *homo sovieticus*, an artist from a generation instructed almost completely by and for Soviet power, whose life and work were determined by the political regime that overthrew the Tsar.

### Deineka between Two Tsars

As if the history of the Russian revolution had repeated and mockingly projected itself onto the history of art, the historical appraisal of Deineka's work and what is referred to as "socialist realism"<sup>1</sup> has been the object of a kind of posthumous revenge from a different "tsar": Clement Greenberg, regarded as the "art tsar" of Western art criticism during most of Deineka's career.<sup>2</sup>

Deineka, who was forty at the time, had recently completed the *komandirovka* for the frescoes for the Soviet pavilion at the 1937 "Arts et techniques dans la vie moderne" International Exhibition in Paris [fig. 29, p. 45] when Clement Greenberg's well-known essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" was published in the *Partisan Review*.<sup>3</sup> This influential article was a radical and energetic vindication of the concept of avant-garde and the formal analysis of the work of art, a view that exerted—and continues to exert—influence on our understanding of modern art. Greenberg famously outlined the differences between avant-garde and kitsch, which ultimately applied to high and low culture or art and popular culture. The main difference, he claimed, between avant-garde and kitsch lay in the fact that:

If the avant-garde imitates the processes of art, kitsch . . . imitates its effects. The neatness of this antithesis is more than contrived; it corresponds to and defines the tremendous interval that separates from each other two such simultaneous cultural phenomena . . .<sup>4</sup>

The disparity between avant-garde and kitsch has become a generalized notion linked to the discrepancy between abstract art and realism, by which the subject matter of realist art is reality itself (whatever this may mean) and therefore implies a straightforward and immediate experience of the work, while abstraction focuses on art and is thus experimental and difficult to grasp.

Applied to the Russian art scene of the first three decades of the 1900s, this rigid framework has spread various misnomers, and so the Russian avant-garde has been deemed worthy of such a

title, whereas the entire socialist realism painting is viewed as an academic form of kitsch at the service of political propaganda.<sup>5</sup> The sharp contrast between both styles—resembling to some extent a "cold war" waged between communists and their scapegoat—was validated by the Soviet regime's deeply flawed moral standards, as they annihilated—quite literally in the unfortunate cases of some individuals—the utopian ideas of the avant-garde in favor of a specifically socialist form of realism that would more effectively take their totalitarian message to the masses.

### The Formalist Unconscious: Formal and Political Analysis

Such formalism is inherent to the West's perception of art and has led to a correlation between abstract art movements and canonical art history. In turn, realism and its variants have been reduced to a network of secondary roads that are every so often rediscovered on account of art's various "returns to order" or "returns to reality."<sup>6</sup>

Two further aspects may have contributed to this lack of knowledge and concern regarding socialist realism: firstly, an effect of formalist analysis; and secondly, a shortcoming relating to the hermeneutics of socialist realism's underlying ideology: dialectic materialism or, more specifically, Marxism.

The first aspect presents a twofold misconception in the appreciation of the situation at hand: it must be borne in mind that to historicize and reflect on events we must approach and, at the same time, distance ourselves from the object; proximity encourages analysis while distance allows for the comparison and identification of differences. Hence, observing a work requires a forward and backward movement, forcing the viewer to adopt two viewpoints. In the case of art history and its related theory, it is as if the observer had two different pairs of glasses (one to treat myopia and a second one for hyperopia) and always put on the wrong pair to make up for his shortsightedness, and vice versa.

As a result of this misconception, a formalist framework has been applied to political matters and a political approach to formal issues. And if there is a paradigmatic example of a formalist viewpoint wrongly applied to a context in which artistic and political circumstances are inseparable, it is that of the Russian avant-garde; and vice versa: if there is a paradigmatic example of a political approach to inseparable political and artistic circumstances it is, without a doubt, socialist realism. Indeed, many analyses of the Russian avant-garde and socialist realism tend to focus on the formal (and politically positive) aspects of the avant-garde whereas realism is described in political (and pictorially negative) terms. As a result, the avant-garde is succinctly glorified as an innovative and daring utopian experiment of great formal value; socialist realism, on the other hand, is chastised and perceived as traditionalist and reactionary "bad painting," devoid of artistic value and at the service of political propaganda. In the absence of a political approach to avant-garde art and a formal analysis of socialist realism, the avant-garde movement continues to be seen as embodying the naive, spotless, positive qualities of a utopian future while socialist realism carries the guilty and negative burden of a cruel past.

This widespread understanding of Greenberg's influential essay, with its clean binary divide between



**FIG. 1.** Kazimir Malevich  
*Five Characters  
with the Hammer  
and Sickle*, ca. 1930  
Ink on paper, 7,6 x 12 cm  
Centre Georges  
Pompidou, Musée national  
d'art modern-CCI, Paris

avant-garde and kitsch, has defined an era, and while the author's claim has been nuanced by art historians and critics alike, curatorial practices and the public's perception of art prove differently.<sup>7</sup> That Greenberg's influence is especially felt in the latter two examples is understandable: exhibitions and audiences expose more clearly that the intricacies of the Western gaze—the gaze of the spectator and curator of the West—is rooted, though unconsciously, in formalism. Because the Western gaze encounters art in the formal context of either the art market or the museum, it has become structurally and unconsciously formalist and is therefore unable to apprehend the rationale behind a style of art that was not produced for either the art market or the museum (the formalist gaze is constructed at and by the museum and the market)<sup>8</sup>. Socialist realism, on the contrary, was not meant to be displayed in a museum but was produced to form part of real life.

This is the crux of the matter: the avant-garde also aimed to form part of real life and to transform the art and the world left by its predecessors. These extra-artistic claims made outside the museum bring the avant-garde closer to socialist realism and the third factor of this narrative: ideology or, more specifically, political praxis.<sup>9</sup>

#### Dialectic Materialism as Artistic Praxis

The second aspect of this certain lack of knowledge regarding the relation between the avant-garde and socialist realism (i.e. art and political power) derives from a reductive interpretation influenced by the absence of a very specific historical experience. Marxist dialectic materialism has, to some degree, been "underinterpreted," as has its effectiveness and long-lasting cultural influence in Russia, which spanned over nearly 70 years.

In effect, dialectic materialism—the ideology that inspired the Bolshevik revolution and the entire

political structure of the Soviet state—tends to be examined as an ethical *epos* or as the product of an ideology particularly gifted at galvanizing the masses into action, which is only partly true. Marxism is essentially and unequivocally a philosophy as well as an artistic praxis. Marx's well-known eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach—"the philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it"—is not as much a philosophical axiom as it is an invitation to radical revolutionary action from historical consciousness, a point of departure embedded in the Hegelian dialectic according to which all forms of consciousness and reality are fundamentally historical, that is, artificial and therefore transformable.

In short, the dominions of the compelling tsar of formalism, the study of socialist realism in exclusively political terms and that of the avant-garde in formalist terms, and the lack of attention paid to the aesthetic quality of Marxism<sup>10</sup> has resulted in the rigid framework on which the relationship between socialist realism and the avant-garde is based: The Russian avant-garde, with its astounding utopian potential, represented one of the most radical formal experiments in history, yet it was liquidated by a form of derivative art subject to a totalitarian ideology that had begun to show its darkest side by the 1930s.

#### Russian Avant-Garde and Socialist Realism

Aleksandr Deineka clearly exemplifies why the above-mentioned paradigmatic binary divide is inaccurate. Although fewer experts now support this premise, curators and critics continue to foster and spread such ideas, shaping the perception of the general public. With the publication of works by some Russian theorists and essayists such as Boris Groys (with his groundbreaking essay, "*The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond*")<sup>11</sup> and Ekaterina Degot<sup>12</sup> in the 1980s, as well as certain exhibitions and research conducted by European scholars such as John Bowlt, Matthew Cullerne Bown and Christina Kiaer,<sup>13</sup> it has been established that while opposing *tout court* the avant-garde to socialist realism remains a comforting assumption, it is

in fact false. Thus, an in-depth analysis is needed, a reading in line with the historical circumstances of the time and the rationale behind cultural events.

Simply contrasting the avant-garde to socialist realism does not truthfully reflect what occurred. Firstly, the political activism of several artists of the Russian avant-garde surpassed, in many cases, the Bolsheviks' commitment to the cause.<sup>14</sup> Not only do the avant-garde's statements, manifestos and belligerent group proclamations—of which a broad selection is featured in the documentary section of the present catalogue<sup>15</sup>—attest to their political commitment, but so do the works they produced, in which a "double obedience" can be perceived: Vladimir Tatlin authored counter reliefs [cat. 7] and also the Monument to the Third International [cat. 8];<sup>16</sup> Gustavs Klucis, the revolutionary graphic artist of the 1920s and 1930s [cat. 60], who designed the templates for revolutionary propaganda [cat. 12], also created the stylized "red man" dating from 1918 [cat. 11]; in a similar vein, his wife Valentina Kulagina designed abstract architectural structures in 1923 [cat. 13] as well as propaganda posters in 1930 [cat. 127].

We must also refer to Kazimir Malevich's seemingly striking return to figuration [cat. 22], from his suprematism [cat. 20] of the 1920s to the detailed figures completed around 1930 [fig. 1], and to Aleksandr Rodchenko's shift from pure constructivism [cat. 26] to the photomontages narrating the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [cat. 47–52], not to mention his collaboration with *Lef* [cat. 27–29]. There are a number of illustrative examples, including Rodchenko, Stepanova and Lissitzky's frequent contributions to the journal *SSSR na stroike*, Natan Al'tman's practice of suprematist-revolutionary techniques which he combined with figurative portraits of Lenin (compare cat. 23 to cat. 24), El Lissitzky's *Proun* and his use of suprematist elements in his celebrated poster of the Civil War [cat. 15, 14], Liubov Popova's painting of an abstract architectural structure from 1916 [cat. 9] followed by *Hail the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!* from 1921 [cat. 10], or Aleksandra Ekster's design of a pavilion for the 1st All-Union Agricultural and



▲ Liubov Popova  
*Hail the Dictatorship of the  
Proletariat!* 1921  
Private collection [cat. 10]  
◀ Liubov Popova  
*Painterly Architecture*  
no. 56, 1916  
Private collection [cat. 9]

Domestic Crafts Exhibition in Moscow in 1923 [cat. 32], an exhibition on which Deineka also worked.

The examples go on but what is perhaps more significant is the continuous use of constructivist and suprematist elements to illustrate political ideas, in many cases anonymous [cat. 16, 17], as seen in this graphic biography of Lenin [fig. 2], an eloquent example of how common this practice was.

**October 1917: When Political Power Imitates the Processes of Art**

This single authorship of dual iconography thus rebuts the widespread belief that avant-garde art and realism are contradictory terms. But its logic remains to be explained. This entails calling into question the radicalism of the pre-established dichotomy between avant-garde and kitsch and to examine the relationship between both styles beyond the simple framework according to which realism replaced avant-garde art and evolved into reactionary Soviet art.

To this end, we must agree on a basic definition of “avant-garde.” Given the commonplace use of the term, condensing its many meanings under one definition is a difficult task. However, one might take a chance and say—based on Greenberg’s premises—that in what refers to tradition—to which the avant-garde was opposed—rather than representing reality through pictorial mimesis (and the nuances this entailed) the avant-garde aimed at transforming it.

Indeed, there is not a single avant-garde manifesto that does not express the intention to radically transform all aspects of life by replacing the old with the new and the past with the future. Traditionally, the avant-garde put their aims into practice by challenging established methods in art (kitsch,



Natan Al'tman  
Krasnyi student  
[Red Student], 1923  
Private collection [cat. 24]

on the other hand, simply employs traditional techniques to imitate reality with the purpose of causing an effect on the spectator).

With this definition as a starting point, we may pose the following question regarding art, and avant-garde art in particular: What would happen if, at a specific time and place in history, political power decided to “imitate the processes of art” (in the words of Greenberg) to call into question—as the avant-garde radically did with artistic tradition—the processes of social reality?

In a political context the answer seems obvious: a revolution would occur, an uprising that may well be understood as a radical challenge to current socio-political processes and their subsequent elimination and replacement with others. In the past, revolution has been followed by totalitarianism, while art—and avant-garde art in particular—has taken different paths under the various faces of this sequence of revolution and totalitarianism, as has been the case of revolutionary Russia, fascist Italy, National Socialist Germany or Maoist China.<sup>17</sup>

In this sequence, avant-garde art and its own revolutionary and revolutionizing project tend to be overshadowed by a more radical, ambitious, biased contender; in short, an all-round competitor. In a brief passage, Greenberg seems to acknowledge this issue though he does not elaborate on it: “Whether or not the avant-garde could possibly flourish under a totalitarian regime is not pertinent to the question at this point.”<sup>18</sup>

But the question may well be pertinent to Deineka’s oeuvre. What holds true is that when politics behaves like art, art, in addition to realizing that it was behaving like politics,<sup>19</sup> could be pushed into the background and relegated to a supporting





role—that of illustrating the primary ideas of change in which political power now plays a major part. And the partial nature of art or its unsuccessful revolutionary intentions explains the usual accusations of “formalist” or “bourgeois” launched against art in those cases by the political power.

And this is exactly what occurred in the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s and 1930s, when a broader and more radical revolution than that suggested by the avant-garde took place. Once the political conditions of the tsarist regime and Kerenski’s parliamentary democracy were questioned and subsequently wiped out, a struggle broke out within the avant-garde movement, whose radical proposals had preceded those of the Revolution. From the 1920s to 1934, different factions of the avant-garde clashed with each other and also confronted the political regime.<sup>20</sup> The effervescence of these debates can be perceived, for example, in the surprising number of magazines that were launched between 1923 and the 1930s, among them *Pechat i revoliutsiia* [cat. 37–38], *Lef* [cat. 27], *Novyi lef* [cat. 66], *Krasnyi student* [cat. 24], *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* [cat. 42], *Prozhektor* [cat. 107–108], *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo* [cat. 145], *Iskusstvo v massy* [cat. 146] and *Tvorchestvo* [cat. 229].

The struggles ended in favor of the political power in 1934, when Stalin rose to total power. However, it must be noted that before, in the early days of the revolution, political power was synchronized with art and art with political power.

Because we are accustomed to confront art to political power, this connection between art and politics may seem foreign to us. However, one must remember that avant-garde movements in Europe shared these political, utopian and revo-

lutionary ideals with the hope of transforming life and a society entrenched in tradition. Oftentimes, the utopian force of their art could be summed up in the dictum “bring art to life.”

The antagonism between avant-garde art and established power has left us with the romantic image of the *artiste maudit* “suicided by society” (a phrase Artaud coined to describe Van Gogh), the primitive, antisocial genius; in short, traits that are now considered to be inherent in the demiurgic, Promethean character of the true artist. In spite of this muddled picture, the fact that the European avant-garde failed to transform society cannot be overlooked. The evidence of its failure has become institutionalized: museums are overcrowded with works of art that were initially intended to put an end to museums rather than to be displayed in them.<sup>21</sup>

Avant-garde works originally created for real life are now kept in museums, institutions where society safeguards the heroes of our past (which, by definition, are dead). If the avant-garde had succeeded in its purposes, society would have transmuted into a “living museum,” a massive work of art arranged according to an artistic master plan made for the whole of existence.<sup>22</sup>

Various aspects of power have been blamed for the avant-garde’s failure (frequently associated to a loss of freedom), including social and economic interests, standards of established taste, petit-bourgeois habits, the market or, quite simply, political coercion. In what refers to the Russian avant-garde and its “liquidation” at the hands of Stalin, Western criticism tends to follow the simple framework outlined above, according to which the Russian avant-garde was an innocent and groundbreaking

experiment exterminated by a totalitarian, “official,” academic and neo-traditionalist style of art that served the interests of the Party.

Because the political (and artistic) avant-garde has never truly succeeded in Europe, we do not have the sensibility needed to identify the existing links between political power and the avant-garde. Utopian ideals have never been fulfilled in Europe. What we lack is the experience of a complete rupture with the past and the ensuing creation of a radically new social and cultural order (and hence lifestyle). In the West, each attempt to transform life and society has been succeeded by an alternative attempt heralding its authenticity and claiming previous attempts were simply fleeting episodes. But all this occurs within an established tradition. In political terms, fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany were just as short-lived; hence the West has not experienced the victory of a revolution and the subsequent establishment of a long-lasting, totalitarian cultural program. Similarly, just as Western society has never witnessed the triumph of the artistic avant-garde over tradition, it has never seen its political victory or the totalitarian principles rendered culture. In Europe, political forces and artistic movements have been contenders in a stable environment—made possible by a market—underpinned by a common tradition (that of the modern museum and of parliamentary democracy) trying to expand its ideological aims. However, political and artistic discourses have not been able to permeate everyday life and carry a revolution through to the end.

Given the dearth of first-hand experience of revolutionary processes, an understanding of the aesthetic and artistic implications of revolutionary



**FIG. 2.** *Graphic Biography of Lenin*, after 1924  
Letterpress, 22.8 x 25.4 cm  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

ideologies and practices is uncommon. While there have been figures with extraordinary foresight such as Walter Benjamin—who described fascism as the “aestheticization of politics” and communism as the “politicization of art” (*Ästhetisierung der Politik, Politisierung der Kunst*)<sup>23</sup>—such visionary conclusions are not commonplace. (By the way, communism may be more accurately defined as an “artification” of politics.)

However, the radical changes described above *did* occur in revolutionary Russia and, on account of this experience, post-Soviet society is acutely aware of the close interface between artistic avant-garde and political power. As Boris Groys points out:

The world promised by the leaders of the October Revolution was not merely supposed to be a more just one or one that would provide greater economic security, but it was also and in perhaps even greater measure meant to be beautiful. The unordered, chaotic life of past ages was to be replaced by a life that was harmonious and organized according to a unitary artistic plan. When the entire economic, social and everyday life of the nation was totally subordinated to a single planning authority commissioned to regulate, harmonize and create a single whole out of even the most minute details, this authority—the Communist Party leadership—was transformed into a kind of artist whose material was the entire world and whose goal was to “overcome the resistance” of this material and make it pliant, malleable, capable of assuming any desired form.<sup>24</sup>

The 1917 Revolution and its turbulent yet subsequently homogenous development imitated the processes typically associated to avant-garde art. Furthermore, the political power applied these processes in a broader, more radical manner (it was more efficient, all-embracing, and in the end, totalitarian) than the avant-garde had previously attempted. And, as expected, the effects of its actions were felt by the avant-garde and what would come to be known as “socialist realism,” ultimately defining the logic articulating both phenomena.

#### Aleksandr Deineka or the *Bildungsroman* of Art between the Avant-Garde and the Stalin Era

In this context, the force of Aleksandr Deineka’s paintings coupled with the fascinating ambivalence—or ambiguity—of his work and career as a *homo sovieticus* (possibly the most intriguing of the figures of socialist realism) represents somewhat of a *Bildungsroman*, a “coming-of-age novel” narrating

the fate of the Russian avant-garde from its origins to its continuation under socialist realism. Deineka was a member of the last remaining groups of avant-garde constructivists (such as October) and actively participated in the revolution and construction of a new socialist state. In spite of his political commitment, he was accused of practicing formalism, which had been identified with avant-garde trends. He was nonetheless granted permission to travel to America and Europe and was commissioned major works by the Soviet state, whose utopian pretensions found their most notable expression in some of Deineka’s compositions. For all of these reasons, his body of work can be read as a novel recounting the life of socialist realism and its avant-garde roots: its childhood and adolescence in an avant-garde environment—Deineka attended the VKhUTEMAS [cat. 30]<sup>25</sup>; its revolutionary youth, as seen in the radical stance adopted by Deineka in drawings for the magazines *U stanka* and *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [cat. 78, 84]; its adulthood in the 1930s under Stalin’s rule; and, lastly, its ambiguous old age spanning the years between the 1940s and 1969, the year of his death, once the country had been “destalinized.”

This certain “ambivalence” of Deineka’s work is used here to explore the logic behind the relationship between avant-garde and socialist realism. It could be argued that in doing so we take the risk of paring two very different pictorial and ideological endeavors. But that is precisely the aim of the present essay, to provide an alternative view to the dominant narratives of formalism—exclusively formalist in their analysis of the avant-garde and political in

their analysis of realism (in formalism, when formal differences occur, all comparisons are inexorably inappropriate<sup>26</sup>). But socialist realism viewed itself as a contemporary artistic/political avant-garde made for the proletariat, more synchronized with the political construction of the Soviet utopia than the artistic avant-garde—consequently frequently dismissed as decorative, abstract and formalist. As Deineka noted:

1920. It is cold in the Moscow art studios . . . They [students] accept the most astounding “isms” on faith. In classes, they sprinkle sawdust and sand on colored canvases, paint squares and circles, bend shapes of rusty iron of various sizes, which convey nothing and are not good for anything . . . Artists also drew posters, designed stage sets and people’s festivals, and illustrated new books. *Art found a general language with the revolution.* This language gave it the feeling of modernity, of fresh originality. The tempo and forms found a unity. *The people wanted a new life. That is why in the most difficult periods of my life I tried to dream about better times, to paint pictures with the sun. There was never enough sun in those years.*<sup>27</sup>

So, in the case of Deineka, it is not a question of either avant-garde or kitsch. Instead, his work suggests there was a kind of alternative avant-garde that shared structural characteristics with both: like the avant-garde, it imitated the processes of art and, like kitsch, it was preoccupied with the effects it could cause, more specifically, the educational impact it would have on the masses.

In this sense, Deineka’s oeuvre presents an answer to Greenberg’s question, a question he posed but did not consider relevant: the answer is yes, avant-garde could flourish under a totalitarian regime. When a totalitarian system views itself in artistic terms it becomes an avant-garde *eo ipso* and, thus, adapts art to its own conception of an avant-garde for the masses, which brings us to the birth of socialist realism. This style is indeed proof of the regime’s preoccupation with the revolutionary transformation of life and its effect on the masses; nonetheless, it also constitutes a certain form of avant-garde art, because far from simply imitating reality, socialist realism was—like the avant-garde—a mimesis of mimesis. Of course, it did not imitate the processes of total art but the processes of total power, which are in essence artistic.

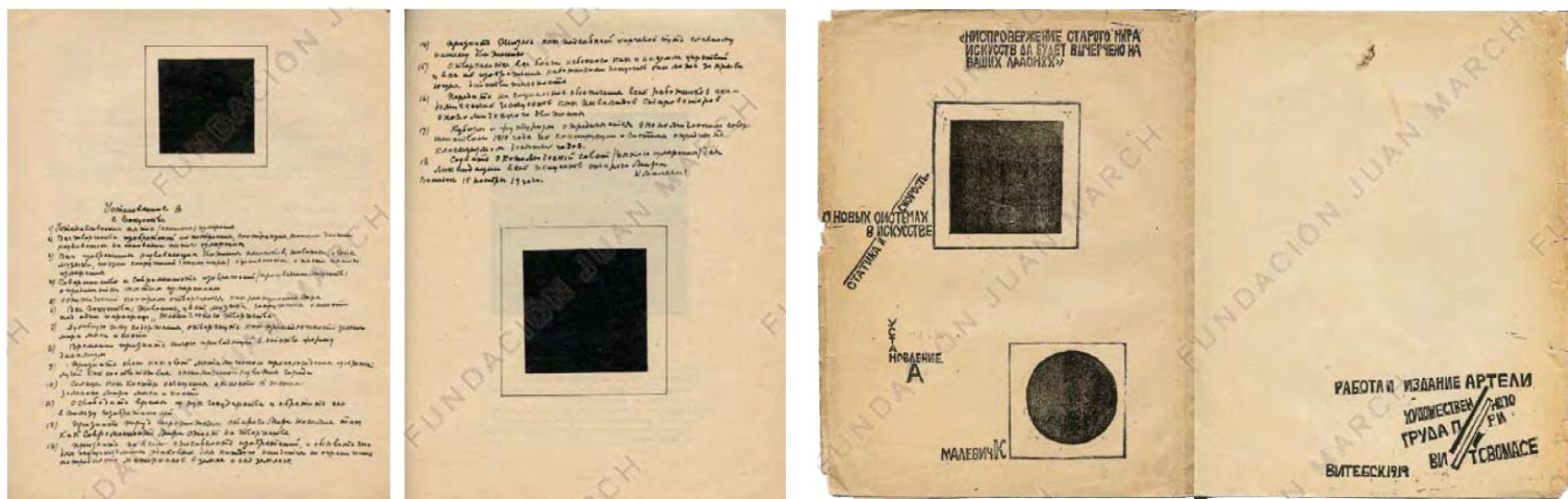
In what follows, Deineka’s work and historical context are described in detail by combining artistic, philosophic, and political analysis, underpinned by literature referred to in this essay and featured in the exhibition it accompanies. Foundational texts of the period are explored in conjunction with a close reading of some of Deineka’s works of art, together with a number of pieces and writings by the Russian avant-garde, revolutionary artists and leading figures of socialist realism, as well as Deineka’s own writings in which he reflected on his work. Furthermore, several illustrations featured in this essay come from an invaluable source of study, the magazine *SSSR na stroike*, which historians have long considered a reliable barometer of Soviet life and art.<sup>28</sup> This overview commences before 1917 and the first constructivist and productivist poetics, with the beginnings of the Russian avant-garde in its first cubo-futurist and suprematist manifestations—as well as bio-cosmic utopias<sup>29</sup>—and concludes with the death of Stalin in 1953. Between those dates, particular attention is

**FIG. 3.** Varvara Stepanova  
*The Future is Our Only Goal*, 1919  
Poster. Gouache on paper,  
26.5 x 22.5 cm  
Rodchenko Archive, Moscow



**FIG. 4.** Vladimir Tatlin  
*Neither toward the New, nor the Old, but the Necessary*, 1920  
Poster. Gouache on paper  
49.5 x 215 cm  
Bachruschin State Museum  
Moscow





paid to the works of art that permeated all spheres of life and accompanied and reflected a regime that represented itself in demiurgic terms in its effort to radically transform reality.

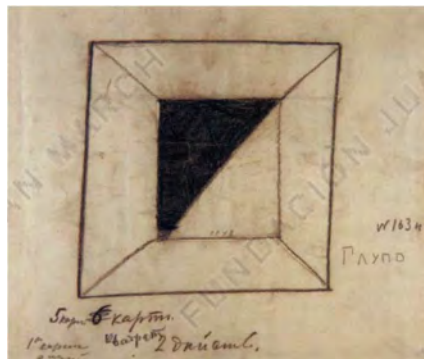
As an exhaustive study of the period would far exceed the purpose of this analysis, a metaphor is used as a common thread and argumentative guideline throughout the essay: light, the medium *par excellence* through which all reality is made visible. The analysis of light reveals how, in line with Marxist theory, the light radiated from the avant-garde grew into true matter, a condition needed for the utopian dream to materialize and take the shape of a new, Soviet reality.

### 1913–30: From Victory over the Sun to the Electrification of the Entire Country

One must look back at the avant-garde's main goal—transforming reality in its entirety—and at the artistic nature of revolutionary praxis in order to perceive the intrinsic logic that governs the relationship between the two, as well as to obtain a coherent view of Deineka's work. In the same way, the avant-garde must be examined beyond its most obvious antecedents and its interconnection with the revolution, in the first place, and with socialist realism, in the second.

These antecedents are Deineka's own life story—active only from the 1920s—and his relation with constructivism and productivism within the context of the polemics, manifestos and (sometimes violent) disputes that took place within revolutionary art groups prior to their unification in 1932, mainly those concerning constructivism and what is referred to as Proletkul't. Between 1928 and 1930, after abandoning OST—a platform including members of the like of Iurii Pimenov<sup>30</sup> [cat. 153] and others—Deineka joined October, one of the last remaining constructivist groups—that is, the avant-garde at the service of the revolution.<sup>31</sup> October's manifesto was published in the third issue (1928) of *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [cat. 134], a magazine directed by a leading theorist of constructivism, Aleksei Gan [cat. 132–136 and 33–35].

But the roots of the Russian avant-garde must be traced back a decade, to the time when Russian artists adopted elements from futurism and cubism, leading to the birth in the early 1920s of suprematism, from which constructivism derived and subsequently split, as it was already committed to the revolution. The general history of futurism is well known: Marinetti published his Futurist Manifesto "Tuons le Clair de Lune!" in 1909<sup>32</sup> and



**FIG. 5.** Kazimir Malevich Illustrations for his book *On New Systems in Art. Statics and Speed*, 1919 Collection José María Lafuente and private collection [cat. 18 and 19] **FIG. 6.** Kazimir Malevich Sketch for the set design of act 2, scene 5 of the opera *Victory over the Sun*, 1913 Pencil on paper, 21.5 x 27.5 cm State Museum of Theater and Music, Saint Petersburg

visited Russia in 1913. That same year, "the *annus mirabilis* of the Russian avant-garde,"<sup>33</sup> saw the premiere of the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun*, a milestone in the history of the Russian avant-garde. This essay suggests there is continuity between the futurist *Victory over the Sun* and socialist realism in the Soviet Union between the late 1920s and early 1930s; continuity in the form of a consummation. To some extent, futurism's poetic visions of the future were fulfilled in the everyday prose of the Soviet system—a historical chain of events in which Deineka was a fundamental link.

We have described the avant-garde from Greenberg's viewpoint, according to which the representation of reality is replaced by the transformation of reality, situating it on a par with revolutionary power. But it must be noted that the transformation of reality not only involves a constructive, creative force (to forge the future, the world anew) but also requires a destructive one (to destroy the past, tradition), in order to make way for the future.

If the avant-garde signifies transformation, then it can only aspire to the future, as read in constructivism's salutation to the revolution [fig. 3]. But its

primary goal is in fact the past, a past that needs to be erased. In the end, it does not target the past, present or future, but the necessary [fig. 4].

### Victory over the Sun of the Past

The most striking example of the Russian avant-garde's *pars destruens* is the futurist opera *Pobeda nad solntsem* [Victory over the Sun] [cat. 2, 3], dating from 1913. Four leading artists of the Russian avant-garde participated in the opera: Aleksei Kruchenykh wrote a text preceded by a prologue by Velimir Khlebnikov, Mikhail Matiushin composed the musical score, and Kazimir Malevich created the set design.<sup>34</sup>

"*Victory over the Sun* is possibly the best known and most discussed *tour de force* of the Russian avant-garde."<sup>35</sup> Today, we would describe it as a multimedia spectacle.<sup>36</sup> The opera premiered alongside the play *Mayakovskiy* (by Vladimir Mayakovsky) at the Luna Park Theatre in Saint Petersburg in December 16, 1913. A brief yet weighty work written in Kruchenykh's difficult "trans-rational" (*zaum*) language, *Victory over the Sun* epitomizes extreme radicalism of the early avant-garde. Furthermore, it marks the beginning of Malevich's suprematism, that the artist would develop in subsequent essays, including *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism*, dating from 1916 [cat. 5], and *On New Systems in Art*, published in 1919 [cat. 18, 19] [fig. 5], and especially in his famous *Black Square* (1917), which descends directly from a drawing featured on the front cover of the libretto and his set designs for the opera [fig. 6].<sup>37</sup>

The plot of the opera is the death of the Sun at the hands of the futurists; as observed by Aage Hansen-Löve the characters are "allegorical abbreviations emblematically condensed in their 'wardrobe,' designed by Malevich . . ." <sup>38</sup> This "death of the sun" is, of course, a literary *topos*. Evgeny Steiner notes that:

The sun and the moon have been key motifs for poets of all nations down the ages. Thus, for Kruchenykh and his fellow futurist subvertors, these two sources of inspiration for all other poets became the main object of dethronement.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, the death of the sun represented in this opera followed Marinetti's famous "Uccidiamo il chiaro di Luna" (included in the title of his Manifesto from 1909), a topic also present in the Russian literary repertoire. As Aleksei Kruchenykh wrote in his *Biography of the Moon*, dating from 1916:

The Moon, that antiquated enchantress, which illuminated Paris when he abducted Helen, and which made languorous our young grannies with a Turgenyev opus in hands—that moon the new idolaters just cannot forget.

One thousand centuries of poetry look at us from the moon!

...

The old liar, tricked them!

...

Its days are counted and lo—it is now accomplished.

...

The moon is pegged out—

And from now on it is rejected and scrapped from the poetic use as a useless thing, as a rubbed away toothbrush!<sup>40</sup>

In Russia, however, perhaps as a sign of Russian superior radicalism over Italian futurism, the King of the Sky had its turn before the Moon. Moreover, beyond a purely literary reading of the opera consisting in imagining “that *Victory over the Sun* is the victory over *the sun of Russian poetry*: Pushkin,<sup>41</sup> it is obvious that “this solarphobia was more than just the attempt to get even with Pushkin.”<sup>42</sup> Henceforth, broader understanding of the opera is not only possible but necessary: The victory over the sun represents the victory over the natural order of things, a victory that lies in the radical transformation of reality, as advocated by the futurist avant-garde.

In fact, there are hints throughout the libretto (which, as will be examined below, may even be interpreted as presages) that suggest the storyline is far more ambitious than a simple symbolic incursion into a commonplace literary theme, for instance: “The procession of the Sun Carriers appears . . . declaring that they have uprooted the sun” and announcing the new laws of construction of the world and time. From that moment on time stops, ceases existing: “Be advised that the earth is not revolving,” the Sun Carriers announce.<sup>43</sup>

And further into the text, we read the roots of the sun’s corpse “reek of arithmetic,” bringing to mind Nietzsche’s dictum—according to which God will not be killed so long as we continue to believe in grammar—which takes on a more radical tone. The sun’s death signifies the dawn of a newfound freedom, celebrated by the choir as a “liberation”: “We are loose / The crushed sun . . . / Hail darkness! / And black gods...”<sup>44</sup>

As Evgeny Steiner points out, “this Fifth scene, and the last, the Sixth, represent another world: the one of the dead sun and the accomplished victory of the futuristic world of dead nature and jubilant technology.”<sup>45</sup> A closer reading of the victory over the sun, over the energetic core the world revolves around, is not only viable but necessary: Does “crushing the sun” imply something other than overcoming the structure of time imposed by nature? The sun marks the day, the night and the seasons, thereby determining how human time is structured in the universe. Eradicating it is the first step towards the radical transformation of reality, to breaking nature’s connection to history and its power to determine human time. To crush the sun, to kill it—as represented at the end of the second scene—means to liquidate the natural order of things and bring on a new artificial era. A classic reading of dialectic materialism would suggest this victory inaugurates a time devoid of nature, in



**FIG. 7.** Gustavs Klucis  
*Electrification of the Entire Country, 1920*  
Photomontage, 46 x 27.5 cm  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

which everything is history and therefore changeable. A world without natural sunlight, where the only light possible is artificial.

Indeed, in the opera, staged at night, artificial lighting played a pivotal role:

The arch lights, similar to those used at the time at train stations, airports, warships . . . In *Victory over the Sun*, that cold and blinding light played a leading part in the development of the scene . . . The “solar cosmos” associated to the old world collapses, burns out, darkens; this is achieved thanks to the use of artificial stage lighting . . . The projector on the stage

replaced the overthrown sun, and with it died the defeated Platonic world of appearances, the projection of the parable of the cave; all that is left are cavemen stripped of their own shadows, their illusions, their theater of ideas.<sup>46</sup>

As Aage Hansen-Löve and Evgeny Steiner observe in their insightful commentaries to their edition of *Pobeda nad Solntsem*:

The symbolists’ fixation with the sun and the moon, as well as their threat of Apocalypses . . . of the end of the century, had to be eradicated once and for all . . . The myth, as classic as it was neo-mythological, of light—along with its inherent neo-Platonic theory of ideas and emanation—had to be emptied of meaning: aggressively with futurism and its electrical blinding, and, then, permanently with suprematism through a point zero, a *tabula rasa* (Malevich). Hence the, considerably effective, blinding spotlight’s provocation and projection . . . that not only outlined the tense movements of the biped decorative pieces against the black background, but also illuminated the audience, which is precisely what irritated and frightened them most.<sup>47</sup>

Room must be made for the future by freeing it from the past:

In order to clear a place under the sun for themselves, the young rebels of the future world had to denounce the authority of the old sun—personified in Pushkin . . . But shortly after the declaration of war, the re-appropriation of the fallen idol began.<sup>48</sup>

And, in effect, the Soviet system was there to claim the fallen idol. But, following their materialist mindset, Soviet power was forced first to reduce natural sunlight—which the futurists had symbolically and theatrically annihilated—before replacing it with the crassest form of artificial light known: electricity. This beam of light materialized in the politics of Soviet electrification and became socialism’s energetic basis. It lit the path from the symbolic victory over the sun of the *budgetlianes* to its ubiquitous presence in the construction of real socialism during the Stalin era and the forging of its iconography, which includes the work of Aleksandr Deineka.

### The Conquest of the Sun of the Future

In an illustrative example of how Deineka’s visual strategies approached composition and pictorial space—remarkably different from the straightforward style of other socialist realist artists—Christina Kiaer<sup>49</sup> makes use of a photomontage by Gustavs Klucis. The subject matter (and title) of Klucis’s composition was ubiquitous in Soviet phraseology and iconography throughout the 1920s and 1930s: “electrification of the entire country” [fig. 7].

The singular perspective and almost aerial arrangement of space used in the photomontage are already visible in Deineka’s first pieces, including *Football* and *Girl Sitting on a Chair*, both from 1924 [cat. 43, 44]. Moreover, one might say that the Lenin phrase which appears in Klucis’s composition shaped not only a large part of Deineka’s artistic practice but also a huge part of the cultural and ideological space of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>50</sup> It is as though the presages in *Victory over the Sun* had come true, taking the shape of a raw materiality that would have been all the cruder if not for the enthusiasm and the festive, lyrical *pathos* of Stalinism.

An antecedent of the October radical call to revolution, the futurists' victory over the sun seems to find continuity in Lenin's phrase: "Communism is Soviet power plus electrification."

The symbolic and artistic light radiated by the sun of symbolist poetry was put out by the avant-garde and later replaced by the cold, artificial electric light of the theater stage. However, it found continuity in electricity as the *conditio sine qua non* of the construction of a new post-revolutionary society and its ideological underpinning. Electricity was, in effect, considered to constitute "the energetic foundation of socialism" [cat. 61] and its presence in Soviet iconography became just as ubiquitous as the sun and moonlight had been in symbolist iconography and literature and its destruction in avant-garde poetry.

This continuity is underpinned by doctrinal and visual, as well as technical and symbolic-ideological principles. Electricity was *de facto* a condition required for the ideological transformation of the country and the great project of modernity set underway with the Five-Year Plans, which were aimed at extending industrialization and collectivization. For this reason, the ideological justification of electricity was not only a reminder of the foundations of Soviet leadership, but also reminiscent of its ideological forefathers, Marx and Engels [cat. 59]. Indeed, the project for electrification began with Lenin: there are numerous examples of the iconography of his persona coupled with electricity [cat. 72]; particularly noteworthy is the anonymous nature of some of these works, as the poster *Lenin i elektrifikatsiia* (Lenin and Electrification, cat. 64), dating from 1925.

Electric light embodied a kind of far-reaching precondition for everything: industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture were made possible [cat. 218],<sup>51</sup> as well as the conquest of air and the cosmos by aircrafts and space vehicles, and the safeguarding of space from the enemy. And, more importantly, as a result of electrification—and radio broadcasting in particular—Soviet ideology extended over a territory of millions of square kilometers permeating the everyday life of millions of citizens.

The Soviets aspired to a massive space lit by electricity, like an endless reproduction of Arkadii Shaikhet's photograph *Electrified Fields* [fig. 8]; a vast territory where towns and cities, industry and agriculture, were connected by train and the radio, which, in Lenin's words, was "the condition on which socialism is based."

The iconography of electrification was everywhere: in Mikhail Razulevich's photomontages incorporating human and industrial landscapes to Lenin's motto [cat. 62]; in Klucis's [cat. 60] and Dobrovskii's posters [cat. 67]; or in Roskin's [cat. 65] and Rodchenko's advertisements for electric light bulbs, the latter with an emphatic phrase coined by Mayakovsky [cat. 57]: "Have Sun at Night! Where to Find it? Buy it at GUM!"

Electricity also appeared in writing: from Mayakovsky's poetry [cat. 164] and Russian editions of the history of fire by Henri Barbusse [cat. 91–92] and Walter Hough [cat. 58]—featuring an illustrative photomontage by Klucis on the front cover—to propagandistic texts [cat. 63] and magazine covers, as appreciated in *Novyi Ief* [cat. 66] and the cover of *Krasnyi student* by Natan Al'tman [cat. 24].

The *Kremlevskaia lampka*, the Kremlin lamp [cat. 73], was one of the most significant metaphors for

URSS en construction  
no. 3, March 1934  
Collection MJM, Madrid  
[cat. 72]

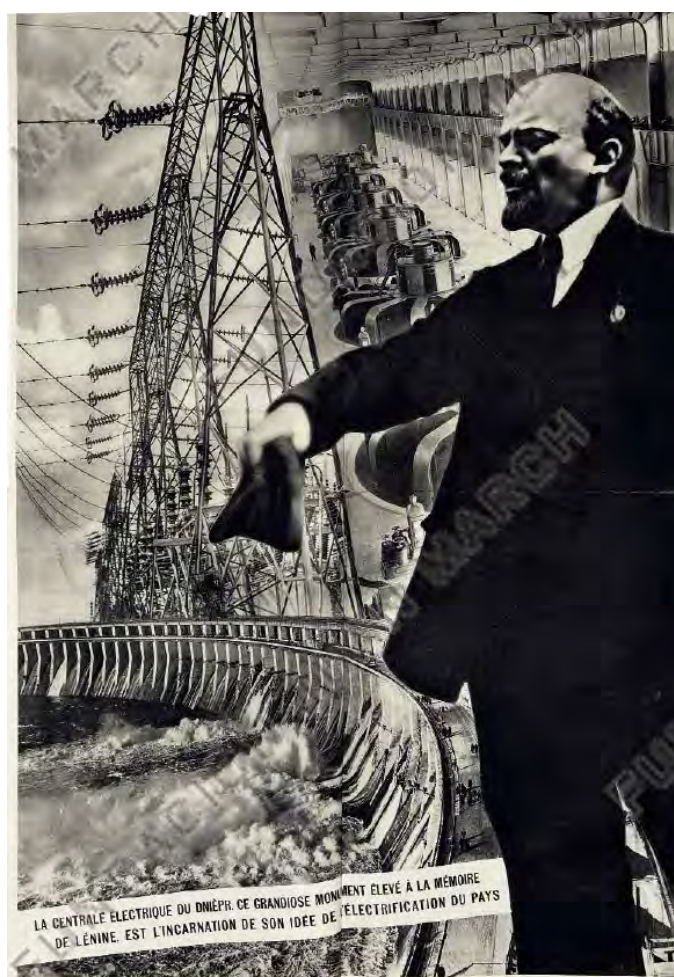


FIG.8 Arkadii Shaiket  
*Electrified Fields*, Moscow  
Region, 1936  
Courtesy of Edition  
Stemmle, Zurich-New York

*Kremlevskaia lampka*  
the Kremlin lamp, 1934  
Archivo España-Rusia  
[cat. 73]



Aleksandr Rodchenko and  
Vladimir Mayakovsky  
*Have Sun at Night! Where to  
Find it? Buy it at GUM!* 1923  
Private collection [cat. 57]



electrification. Initially created to assist Stalin and other Soviet leaders in reading their speeches [cat. 74], it became immensely popular and even played a leading role in paranormal scenes of Stalinist cinema [fig. 9].<sup>52</sup> The fact that the *Kremlevskaia lampa* always seemed to appear within range of Stalin and other authorities is not haphazard. The lamp is present in well-known works [fig. 10] and several photographs: with Molotov [fig. 11] and other Soviet leaders [fig. 12], or beside Stalin during radio broadcasts [fig. 13].

The iconographic and propagandistic display of images published in *SSSR na stroike*, as well as various monographic issues dedicated to electrification, deserve special attention. The magazine printed a detailed overview of the generating stations and electrical power plants in various Russian cities pinpointed across the empire [fig. 14], impressive illustrations of gigantic light bulbs [fig. 15], and remarkable portraits of Lenin whose profile was outlined in neon light [fig. 16].

The sixth issue of the 1936 edition is particularly noteworthy [cat. 59]. References to the GOELRO plan, implemented by Lenin in 1920 and later developed by Stalin, are mentioned throughout, along with illustrations of the new electrical power stations built across the Soviet Union. The magazine did not present the electric company as a mere hydroelectric project, but instead highlighted the mythological and theogonic aspects of electricity: electricity was represented as earth and water transmuting into fire [fig. 17]; as water transformed into air, leading to the conquest of the sky through aviation, as read in the rubrics in French and Russian featured in several impressive photomontages [fig. 18]; as the force that could turn “polar night into day and a wild area into urbanized space” [fig. 19]. Electricity was the *houille blanche* [white coal], the white star that penetrated the socialist fields [fig. 20] and increased their productivity as the “electrical stars” gradually lit the entire Land of the Soviets [fig. 21].

Electricity also enhanced the expansion of radio broadcasting [cat. 69], whose innovative and futuristic qualities were noted by none other than Velimir Khlebnikov in *Radio budushchego*<sup>53</sup> in 1921, nearly half a century before Marshall MacLuhan and one hundred years prior to the rise of an internet society.

The Radio of the Future—the central tree of our consciousness—will inaugurate new ways to cope with our endless undertakings and will unite all mankind. . . . From this point on Planet Earth, every day, like the flight of birds in springtime, a flock of news departs, news from the life of the spirit. In this stream of lightning birds the spirit will prevail over force, good counsel over threats.<sup>54</sup>

The radio, also linked to the iconography of Lenin and Stalin, made it possible “from the will of millions, to create a single will,” as seen in *Lenin and the Radio* (1925) by Iulian Shutskii [cat. 68]. Thanks to the radio, the time and space required for ideological instruction decreased dramatically. In this sense, a passage by Khlebnikov describing the radio of the future explicitly refers to the metaphor of continuity and light: “Radio is becoming the spiritual sun of the country, a great wizard and sorcerer.”<sup>55</sup>

The contours of the magician are outlined against the city’s horizon [fig. 22]; the recipient



**FIG. 9.** Stills from the film by Michail Tschiaureli *The Oath*, 1946  
Courtesy Archivo España-Rusia  
**FIG. 10.** Vasili Iefanov *An Unforgettable Encounter* 1936–37. Oil on canvas 270 x 391 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow



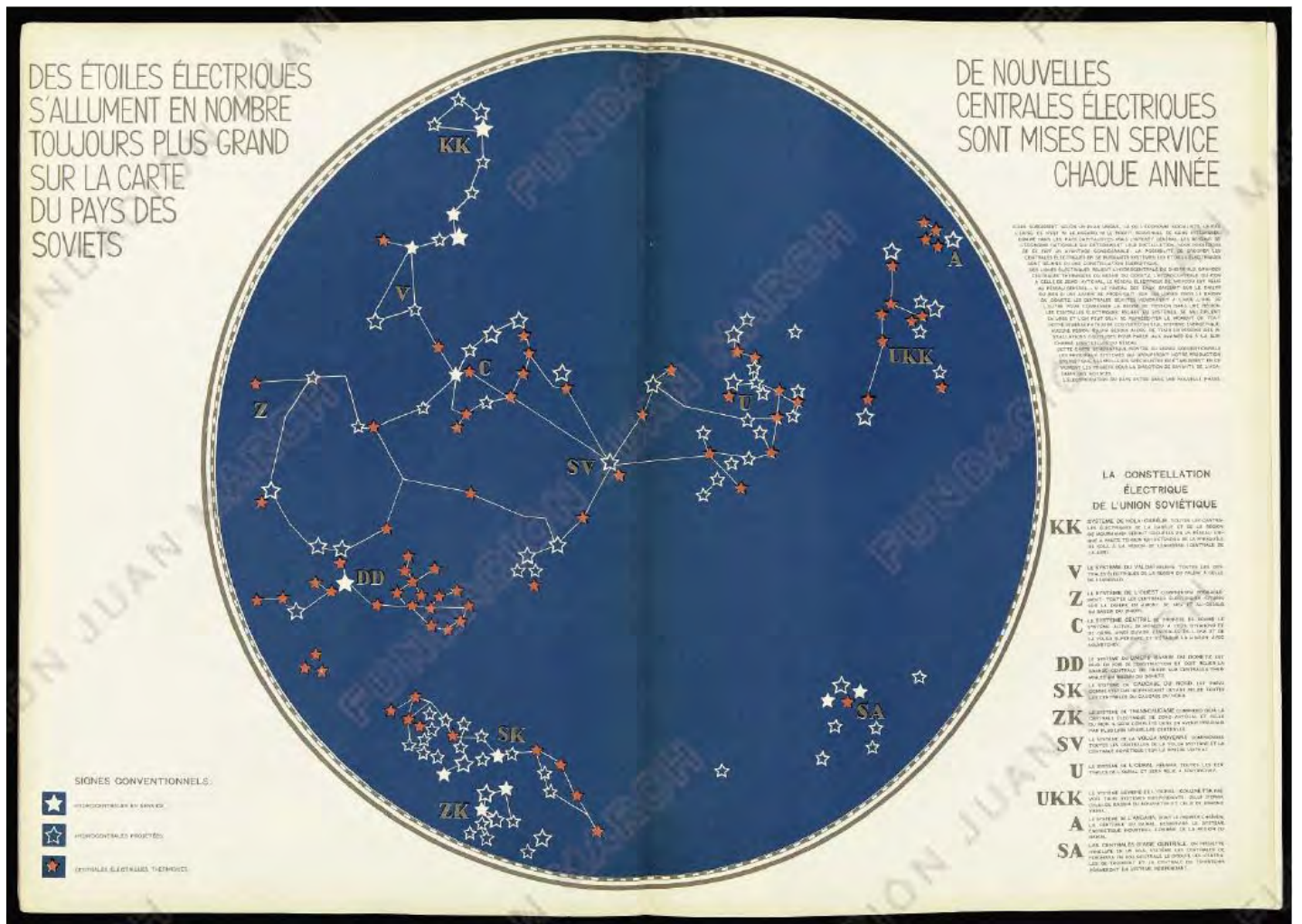
**FIG. 14.** Illustrated page in *L'URSS en construction* no. 8, August 1932  
Fundación José María Castañé



**FIG. 11, 12, 13.** Illustrated pages in the book *Stalin*, 1939  
Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 236]



**FIG. 16-21.** ▶  
 Double-page spreads in  
*URSS en construction*  
 no. 6, June 1936  
 Collection MJM, Madrid  
 [cat. 59] ▼



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**FIG. 15.** Double-page  
 spread in *USSR im Bau*  
 no. 3, 1930  
 Archivo España-Rusia  
 [cat. 61] ▼



**FIG. 22.** Double-page spread in *URSS in Construction* no. 9, September 1931  
Fundación José María Castañé



**FIG. 23.** Double-page spread in *SSSR na stroike* no. 7-8, 1934  
Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 201]

**FIG. 26.** Krushchev with an airplane model in his study, ca. 1960. Fundación José María Castañé



is a mass-produced primary product that is reinterpreted and reproduced as a handicraft in the homemade, unique style of Russian constructivism [cat. 70]. The radio was also an important ally of sport: the front cover of *SSSR na stroike* [fig. 23] shows a sportsman broadcasting the exercises for a collectivist-like pilates to the entire country, or a citizen performing these exercises as he listens to the broadcast at home [cat. 200].

### Aleksandr Deineka and Stalinist Visual Culture

The transformation of the avant-garde's light into the Soviet system's electricity is just one feature, albeit a fundamental one, of the logic behind the relation between avant-garde and socialist realism, which structurally defined both Stalinist visual culture and Deineka's oeuvre.

Although Deineka did not often deal with the theme of electrification explicitly—that is, as propaganda, i.e. as kitsch—there are several examples in his work. Deineka illustrated texts on the poetics of life and electricity, such as *Kuter'ma* (*Zimniaia skazka*) by Nikolai Aseev [cat. 97] on the subject of night lighting or *Elektromonter* by Boris Ural'skii [cat. 98]. (In the latter, there is an illustration that might as well have been an inverted cinematographic version of Malevich's *Black Square*, but is in fact a trivial scene of an audience sitting before a white screen in a dark cinema waiting for the electrician to restore electricity.<sup>56</sup>)

Electricity also finds its way into fragments of Deineka's paintings. In *Female Textile Workers* [cat. 125], a light bulb hangs over the figure on the far right. In a sketch of the left panel of a wall-painting Deineka was commissioned for the 1937 exhibition, electrical wiring dominates a picture of factory buildings, tractors and crowds dressed in red and white [fig. 24]. Using pale and somber colors in the second panel, Deineka portrayed the civil war, the impoverished soil of the *kulaks* and an old plow hauled by a starving draft animal [fig. 25]. And it is clearly explicit in the colossal painting that closes this exhibition, *The Opening of the Kolkhoz Electric Station* [cat. 244], completed in 1952.

However, Deineka's oil paintings and posters from the late 1920s and 1930s explicitly reproduce electricity's most dramatic effect: industrialization. Industrialization was more than just a guideline in Stalin's policy; in addition to being linked with his nickname ("Stalin," from "stal," meaning "steel" in Russian), industrialization was *the* policy during his rule: the transfiguration of Stalin himself, as Klucis's photomontage for the magazine *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo* [cat. 143, 144] suggests. This identification with industry was most visible in the implementation of the Five-Year Plans and the erection of the most emblematic structure of his time: the Moscow Metro, a project in which Deineka took part.<sup>57</sup>

Deineka's work illustrates the various sides of industrialization: the exploitation of natural resources, industrial work and the mechanization of work in all its variants. In his paintings, he depicts themes frequently linked to the Five-Year Plans; during the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) he produced some of his better-known paintings and posters devoted to industrialization [cat. 115, 116, 125] and the collectivization and modernization of agriculture [cat. 168, 223].

Aviation was also a common theme in Deineka's oeuvre. In the visual culture of the period, aviation—





the conquest of air and space—was closely linked to electrification and understood as a result of the conquest of earth and water and the spread of Soviet ideology. Aviation was, for many years, a recurrent subject [fig. 26] in both Stalinist visual culture [cat. 210, 211] and Deineka's body of work. The artist himself explained the impact aerial perspective and the experience of flying had on his output:

I have traveled widely across Russia, Europe, America, by boat and plane, and I have been enriched by the impressions of these trips. But the most vivid impression of all was flying over Kursk in 1920. I didn't recognize the city from the air, so unexpected was the panorama of houses, streets and gardens unfolding below me. It was a new feeling, that of a man rising in the air and seeing his hometown in an absolutely new light, but it would take me a long time to realize that all of this could be useful to my art. . . .<sup>58</sup>

He then continues:

We have seen the far side of the moon for the first time. Our cosmonauts have feasted their eyes upon the Earth from the cosmos and found it to be beautiful. That which was a dream has become reality. The brilliant artist Leonardo da Vinci could only dream about flight, but we dream and fly.<sup>59</sup>

Different aircrafts—airplanes, hydroplanes or airships [cat. 205]—are represented in his canvases [cat. 207, 208], posters and illustrations for books and magazines [cat. 96]. These *topoi* are not an innocent "mimesis" of reality: obvious and illustrious



**FIG. 24.** Aleksandr Deineka 1937, 1937  
Oil on canvas, 70 x 220 cm  
Perm State Museum

**FIG. 25.** Aleksandr Deineka 1917, 1937  
Oil on canvas, 71 x 222.5 cm  
Perm State Museum

**FIG. 27.** Illustrated page in the book *Rabochaia Krestianskaia Krasnaia Armiia* [Workers and Peasants Red Army], 1934  
Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 215]

forerunners are avant-garde artists Tatlin and Malevich. In addition to the plane crash in the last scene of *Pobeda nad solntsem*, the opera reveals an antecedent to the faint, light *pathos* of the new Stalinist world [fig. 27]:

. . . it is precisely this "lightness" that characterizes the New World, and Malevich, whose postulate of abstract nature fits in a world that has freed itself from the principle of the force of gravity.<sup>60</sup>

Malevich also refers to this subject in his writings, as witnessed by the last phrase in the following quotation, which belongs to "On the Museum":

Flying's magical appeal not only characterized the basic idea of suprematism concerning the "neutralization of the force of gravity," but also affected, on a broader scale, the liberating gesture of the era, the desire to escape three-dimensionality, an earthly prison, and contemplate a new global world from a bird-eye's view. In this sense, flying was at that time just as innovative as cinema . . . since both enabled, or even forced, an entirely new dynamization of perceptive perspective. "Do we need Rubens or the Cheops Pyramid? Is a depraved Venus necessary to the pilot in the heights of our new comprehension?"<sup>61</sup>

### The Pathos of an Era

That said, the balance between formal qualities (that is, "realist") and "content" (that is, "socialist") can reveal differences between Deineka's oeuvre and that of Isaak Brodskii or Aleksandr Gerasimov, for example,



**FIG. 28.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Lenin on a Walk with  
 Children, 1938*  
 Oil on canvas, 136 x 190 cm  
 Museum of Armed Forces,  
 Moscow

to mention two well-known representatives of socialist realism. Deineka mastered a wide range of themes and genres, and did not merely reproduce the prototypical iconography of socialist realism's "aesthetic arsenal."<sup>62</sup> His art possesses an ambivalent quality: Deineka worked simultaneously on political posters and canvases and combined oil painting with the realist equivalent to Tarabukin's "Machine Art" (the wall painting),<sup>63</sup> as appreciated in his large-scale frescoes, mosaic panels and murals commissioned by the Soviet regime.

Overall, he was a gifted painter and an exceptional draftsman, and all these qualities combined made him stand out among his fellow painters. One could argue Deineka was the only painter who truly practiced "socialist realism"—and at the same time partook in the unique, genuine *pathos* of socialist realism and Stalinism—whereas other artists practiced a motionless form of "realistic socialism."<sup>64</sup>

Deineka's body of work, for example, includes very few representations and portraits of the iconic figures of socialist realism (Marx, Lenin, Stalin or his entourage of Soviet leaders). Whether dead or alive, Lenin was, of course, at the core of Soviet life and its collective imaginary. Not even Stalin dared to question Lenin's status as the indisputable leader, and instead he chose to represent himself as a sort of duplicate, a new edition of the dead leader. (For a brief period, his body rested beside Lenin's and his name was inscribed on the mausoleum beneath Lenin's name.) Lenin was the exception in

Deineka's oeuvre, the only political figure he ever represented. In a radiant scene dating from 1938, Lenin is portrayed in an automobile surrounded by children—the future, the potential citizens of utopia—as they leave a dark, cloudy past behind and move towards a brighter future, like the weather conditions represented in the image [fig. 28].

But if Deineka's oeuvre is considered "socialist realism" it is not only because of the motifs of his work, but because he actively took part in the unique *pathos* of Stalin's Russia and conveyed it in his work. During the 1920s and 1930s, the USSR seemed to experience a period of optimistic, cheerful romanticism. For example, when confronted with discouraging news—such as the sad unemployed women depicted in a painting from 1932 [cat. 182]—the blame was placed on foreign actors (the title of this work was *Bezrabotnye v Berline* [The Unemployed in Berlin]).

It was a collective *pathos* of enthusiasm for all that was new and newly built, enhanced by urban planning, the bustle of work and production [cat. 175]. This sentiment was further underlined by recurrent imperatives, exclamation marks and numerous terms belonging to socialism's semantic field that made their way into book and magazine titles or posters dominating the streetscape: *The Reconstruction of Architecture, The Construction of Moscow, Build the Partnership of Craftsmen, We are Mechanizing the Donbass!, We Must Become Experts, The Metro is Here!*, phrases that were indicative of a happy collective consciousness working in unison towards a prosperous future.

Within this collective consciousness was an enthusiastic eagerness intrinsically linked to productivity: poetry appeared beside the grueling job of mining [cat. 159, 160] while the Stakhanovites were seen marching cheerfully in 1937 [fig. 29]. Through this type of imagery the prototypical "landscapes" and "scenes" of socialist realism were rendered visible [fig. 30].<sup>65</sup> What was conveyed was a fraternal feeling, a sense of joyful camaraderie that transcended all borders and races [fig. 31]. A springlike *pathos*, a celebration of May Day [cat. 161], a spirit of which the citizens of the Soviet Union felt part and one to which Deineka contributed through his art. As he observed:

Life is especially good in the spring, especially during May Day—the world workers' holiday . . . On Red





Square, we heard the powerful rumble of defense technology. We saw the measured tread of our soldiers. Sportsmen passed by with light steps. The merry hubbub of the Pioneers rang above the square. We saw an endless stream of people, walking by the Mausoleum in which lies the great Lenin . . . For us artists, the May holiday is doubly excellent . . . The profound humanity of the everlasting ideas of Lenin, his concern about monumental propaganda imparts to art a special democratic nature, it is realized in the grandeur of images, comprehensible to ordinary people far beyond the limits of the Soviet Union. Paintings, frescoes, the adornment of the cities and everyday life—all should be pierced through with a profound national spirit and with beauty.<sup>66</sup>

A spirit of sentimental lyricism imbued everything. In 1934, an excessive number of floral motifs appeared on the front cover of *SSSR na stroike* [cat. 214], while the inside pages featured a children's offering at a floral effigy of Stalin [fig. 32]. It was a spirit of bucolic lyricism, as appreciated in the issue devoted to Gorky Park which included an embarrassing inscription by George Bernard Shaw.<sup>67</sup> In short, Soviet citizens felt they were living in a paradise and, more importantly, a paradise effectively safeguarded [fig. 33] from its enemies.

#### “The Reality of Our Program is Real People, It's You and Me”

In this proletarian *chanson de geste*, revolutionary work ethic became attached to productivist and biological utopias, something of a Soviet take on Taylorism, Fordism and Eugenics that was evidenced in the ideas put forward by Aleksei Gastev [fig. 34] and the Central Institute of Labor, Aaron Zal'kind's *Psychology of the Communist of the Future*, Aleksandr Bogdanov's optimistic theories about vitality, and Valerian Murav'ev's pamphlets on the use of time as a means of organizing labor.<sup>68</sup> The regime's obsession with progress, comparative figures and visual graphics—as appreciated, for example, in a unique edition in Spanish of *Moscow Has a Plan* by M. Il'in [cat. 174] with a front cover designed by Mauricio

**FIG. 33.** Double-page spreads in *L'URSS en construction* no. 1, January 1937 Collection MJM, Madrid [cat. 231]



**FIG. 32.** Illustrated page in *URSS en construction* no. 3, March 1934 Collection MJM, Madrid [cat. 72]

Amster—went hand in hand with their centralized and demiurgic conception of political power. And while such high ideas were instrumental, in the end work methods and manpower are inseparably linked. In the following text, Deineka expressed a sentiment that characterized his entire body of work, a motto that may well be applied to Stalinist iconography: “At one time I was carried away by the lacework of factory constructions, *but they are only the background. I always portrayed man in close-up* . . .”<sup>69</sup>

In spite of the mammoth size of the factories and their beastly machinery—as seen in the aerial photograph of the Magnitogorsk complex [fig. 35] which was compared to the Ford River Rouge plant<sup>70</sup>—manpower and the physical effort of human beings continued to be the center of attention: Like Razulevich's photomontage [cat. 170] or Klucis's poster of Stalin marking the pace of workers and the militia [fig. 36], the leader's statement that “the reality of our program is real people, it's you and me” defined the era. An era epitomized by the slogan “Nothing is impossible for a Bolshevik” [cat. 216]. The emphatic words printed in Nikolai Sidel'nikov's photo collage [cat. 190]—“time, energy, will,” all Soviet, it is understood—could overcome anything. The sun's death left a void in which time ceased to exist allowing the Bolsheviks to not only shorten distance<sup>71</sup> but destroy it, and lead the way towards “the world behind the looking glass (‘all the tops facing downwards as if in a mirror’) where time either stops or goes randomly ‘against the clock’.”<sup>72</sup> In this mindset, the Five-Year Plan could be achieved in four, as Vasilii El'kin's poster suggests [cat. 178].

Fredric Jameson has pointed out that the processual logic of the Soviet system must be understood within this context. The subject matter of sport [cat. 192, 193] and fit, athletic bodies [cat. 195]—recurrent in Deineka's work—also responds to this concept, as observed by Boris Groys.<sup>73</sup> The productivity of the body was directly conveyed by Deineka in works like *Shockworker, Be a Physical Culturist!* [cat. 113] and *Collective Farmer, Be a Physical Culturist!* [cat. 191], both from 1930, or the outstanding *Work, Build and Don't Whine!* from 1933 [cat. 197], in which he articulated the productive, military and patriotic qualities of sport, understood as a matter of state, with striking and optimistic detail.

#### The Great Celebration of the Citizens of the Future

The general *pathos* of the Stalin era can be summarized (as Boris Groys and Christina Kiaer have done, among many others), in a phrase coined by Stalin in 1935: “Life has become better, comrades, life has become more joyous.” This remark applies to the different aspects of the Soviet life that socialist realism tried to represent in its “revolutionarily transformation” and also mirrors the festive atmosphere of the time. Deineka was part of and contributed to this celebratory spirit, present in some of his better-known compositions.

However, this general feeling, this atmosphere can only be understood as the almost psychotropic effect of a kind of ideological hard drug: the belief that they were already living in the future: the future they had dreamed of, their goal [see fig. 3], a future they already lived in because their “dreams had come true” [fig. 37].

This sentiment runs through the entire repertoire of choreographed motifs which, due to



FIG. 34. Illustrated page in the book by Aleksei Gastev, *Kak nado rabatat* [How to Work], 1922

FIG. 36. Gustavs Klucis  
*The Reality of our Program is Active People*  
Poster, 142.4 x 103.5 cm  
Collection Merrill C. Berman  
FIG. 35. Double-page spread in *URSS en construction* no. 1, 1933  
Collection MJM, Madrid [cat. 173]



FIG. 37. A. Lavrov  
*The People's Dreams Have Come True*, 1950  
Poster

restrictions of space, was examined in this essay through the structural metaphor of light and its artificial transformation. This repertoire signals to what extent socialist realism was a vehicle for the transmission of Soviet ideology in everyday life [cat. 35]. As Ekaterina Degot suggests, socialist realism followed the inexorable demands of an artistic economy targeted at consumers of ideology rather than market consumers.<sup>74</sup> From the Kremlin star [cat. 75], the buildings [cat. 158], the automobiles' brake lights [cat. 77], the New Year tree lights [cat. 76], or an image of one of the Seven Sisters on the back of a pack of cigarettes [cat. 71]; from work to death, as well as children's play [cat. 156], a "varied uniformity" seems to coherently run through everyday life: Stalinist culture could well be defined in theatrical and cinematographic (as well as museistic<sup>75</sup>) terms. In short, it was rendered through representation.

Soviet life was, to a certain degree, "performed," not only in a literary sense as entertainment for the masses—like the marching soldiers who spell out the leader's name (Kirov) with their colored uniforms [fig. 38]—but as a genuine, social choreography in which each person occupied his designated place within a larger machinery. The effigy of its motor and main actor, Stalin, can be interpreted—as in this photomontage—as a metaphor for this social structure [fig. 39].

### Socialist Realism as the Mimesis of a Dream

The images of socialist realism share a cinematographic quality that brings to mind a sequence of film frames. Nonetheless, together they do not make up a realist or neo-realist film depicting real life but a film narrating the rehearsal of a dreamlike reality Soviet life tried to fulfill for years: it was a dress rehearsal for utopia.<sup>76</sup> In the tradition of the *literaturnost'* typical of Russian-Soviet culture, this was a subtitled rehearsal: the revolutionary mottos and phraseology were present almost everywhere—on billboards, posters and flags [cat. 46], some of which were flooded with written information (see, for example, cat. 141).

Socialist realism was a long performance of the life that followed the victory over the sun, a mimesis of the *real* dress rehearsal for utopia: it was not an imitation of the world, but a mimesis of the world that should be. The former would have resulted in "realist socialism" or rather "dirty realism" (as has been proved) given the fact that the contrast between depictions of reality and reality itself was unquestionable. The idyllic images of agricultural collectivization and modernization contradict real facts of famine and poverty, political purges and mass deportation, the assassination of *kulaks* and forced labor.

No. Socialist realism had to "represent life in its revolutionary transformation."<sup>77</sup> It was not simply a matter of "performing" the life that was being



transformed. It was not a matter of changing its content, the “subject” of art and replacing the petit-bourgeois art scene—or petit-bourgeois taste—with a working-class, mechanized, proletariat scene. For instance, in defiance of the AKhRR, Boris Arvatov—the author of *Iskusstvo i klassi* [cat. 36] and one of the theorists of constructivism—stated that it was not a matter of going to the factories to paint [fig. 40]:

Recently a remarkable brochure was published, the author of which is one of the founders of AKhRR, the artist Katsman. The brochure tells how the AKhRR-ovtsy [members of AKhRR] decided for the first time “to enter the thick of life” and become “participants of revolutionary construction.” What did they do to achieve this? “We,” states Katsman, “went to the factory with painter’s cases and pencils,” word-for-word, like the Barbizon artists settled in the forests of Fontainebleau with easels . . . they went to this unknown lair, called a factory . . . in order to contemplate the genuine “proletarian” and to sketch him . . . It is disgusting, when such vulgarity is presented as revolutionary art . . . If you like the factory, the machine, production in general . . . for the practical connection of a person with the proletariat a single conclusion is in order: build such factories and machines, build together with the producers the objects of factory production, but do not sketch them . . .<sup>78</sup>

No, on the contrary, it was the “should be” of the utopian dream (the moralist touch of socialist realism) which socialist realist painters imitated. In this sense—far from the constraints of Greenbergian formalism—socialist realism can be considered not only an academic variant of kitsch imitating reality, but part of what Greenberg believed defined the avant-garde: “the imitation of imitating.”<sup>79</sup> Socialist realism is the artistic imitation of the real mimesis of the utopia which was the dream political power dreamed of and was set on achieving. Quoting Deineka:

A person lives by pictorial conceptions—by real fantasy. Without this it would be difficult to envisage our



**FIG. 38.** Illustrated page in *SSSR na stroike* no. 10, 1939  
Fundación José María Castañé

**FIG. 39.** Illustrated page in *URSS en construction* no. 3, March 1934  
Collection MJM, Madrid [cat. 72]

**FIG. 38.** Illustrated page in *SSSR na stroike* no. 10, 1939  
Fundación José María Castañé

**FIG. 39.** Illustrated page in *URSS en construction* no. 3, March 1934  
Collection MJM, Madrid [cat. 72]

**FIG. 40.** Construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal, 1937  
Photo: Fundación José María Castañé



tomorrow, time would become featureless. A miraculous property is granted to art—to resurrect the past, to foretell the future.<sup>80</sup>

This dreamlike quality explains socialist realism’s paradoxically failed credibility, its poor sense of “reality,” which gave it the appearance of a copy of a film about reality rather than reality itself.

Socialist realism, as witnessed also in the work of Aleksandr Deineka, was not a simple copy imitating reality but rather the representation of the leader’s dream and the will of the Party. In this sense, socialist realism’s “realism” is far from naturalist, history or genre painting. And, as usually occurs, Soviet concept and pop artists of the 1980s were more capable than historians and theorists at clarifying and exposing an understanding of socialist realism that reinterprets their assessment taking into account the avant-garde movement which socialist realism came to replace and articulates it within the history of art and in the museum. In this sense, there are few examples more illustrative than *The Origin of Socialist Realism* (1982–83) by Vitaly Komar and Aleksandr Melamid [fig. 41], in which both artists skillfully master this oneiric quality of socialist realism. This painting does not present the birth of the style in “realist” terms but through an allegory of mythological allusions in which the artist is seen outlining Stalin’s profile on the wall.

Thus, socialist realism is an unusual form of “historical futurism,” an oneiric realism, a political surrealism. A “magical realism” that is inhabited, not by the last specters of a past that existed, but by the unreal ghosts of a utopian future that never came to be. And for this reason, the visual experience that most resembles encountering a socialist realist work is watching an old science-fiction film, in which the modernity or futurism of its storyline, set design, production, wardrobe and technical inventions has been outdated. The avant-garde art to which socialist realism aspired for the proletariat was, in the end, something of an “art-fiction.”

It is this choreographic quality of Soviet life—and socialist realism—which explains the surpris-

ing similarities between not only its themes but also its compositions: compare, for example the photograph of an issue of *SSSR na stroike* [cat. 114] with Deineka's *Before the Descent into the Mine* of 1925 [cat. 115], or the oil painting by Deineka dating from 1935 [fig. 42] with a photograph printed in a French issue of *SSSR na stroike* from the year 1936 [fig. 43].

Of course, there is no point in trying to discover who was imitating whom, or who was influenced or inspired by whom. There were indeed several schools and lines of influence; some were given special names like the "Deinekovshchina" (drawings in the style of Deineka, as in cat. 101). But if these illustrations resemble one another, it is because, as Boris Groys notes, they imitate the same dream: Stalin's dream. The iconographic body of socialist realism configures a kind of filmed dream and, as Groys has pointed out in what is possibly the most accurate approach of socialist realism, it was searching for a dreamer to dream the dream: the Soviet people.<sup>81</sup> Socialist realism was surrounded by the aura of a futurist film, of what it strived to be, and not what it actually was, and, for this reason, cannot be defined as *cinema verité* (i.e., history painting à la Courbet or a branch of German New Objectivity).

**The Attack of the Present against the Remainder of Time: the Last Deineka**

A close reading of Deineka's late work reveals the effects the strange feeling of living in the future had on both socialist realism and the artist's output. Compared to his production from earlier decades, from the 1930s onwards Deineka's compositions attest to the difference between dreaming—a creative action of the future—and living in the present.



**FIG. 42.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Lunchbreak in the Donbass*, 1935  
Oil on canvas, 149.5 x 248.5 cm  
Latvian National Museum of Art  
in Riga

**FIG. 41.** Vitaly Komar and  
Aleksandr Melamid  
*The Origin of Socialist  
Realism*, 1982–83  
Part of the Nostalgic Socialist  
Realism series  
Oil on canvas, 183.5 x 122 cm  
The Dodge Collection of  
Nonconformist Art from  
the Soviet Union. Rutgers  
University Zimmerli Art  
Museum, New Jersey

**FIG. 43.** Illustrated page in  
*L'URSS en construction*  
no. 1, January 1937  
Collection MJM, Madrid  
[cat. 231]





**FIG. 44.** Gustavs Klucis  
*Untitled*, ca. 1933  
 Photomontage for the cover  
 of *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*  
 17.8 x 12.7 cm  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

Cover and back cover of  
*Sovetskii Soiuz*  
 no. 4, April 1953  
 Archivo España-Rusia  
 [cat. 247]



Although Stalin is absent from his body of work, Deineka fully experienced the age of the omnipresent leader. During the Stalin years, the Revolution aspired more than ever to realize the utopia; a utopia in which Stalin's persona and modernization, as pointed out earlier, were interwoven as in a dream. In this sense, Klucis's photomontages from 1932 [cat. 143, 144 and **fig. 44**] are particularly significant, especially if we compare them with the image of an ageing Stalin on the cover of the April 1953 issue of *Sovetskii Soiuz* [cat. 247]. Nothing feels dreamlike in this picture: the almost photographic portrayal of the elderly Stalin contrasts with the hyperrealist image of an industrial complex on the back cover. Both realities—the image of the leader who once embodied the utopia and the photograph of the factory—turn their backs on each other, as if they were about to accept the truth of Stalinist terror and the false image conveyed by utopian transformation. It is as though another prediction from *Victory over the Sun* had come true. As Steiner observes, in the final scene:

... the images of the future world ("life without the past") ... are rather ambiguous ... The last images of the brave new world give the impression of a gi-

gantc self-destructing machine acting haphazardly ("yesterday there was a telegraph pole here and there is a snack bar today, and tomorrow it will probably be bricks, it happens here every day and no one knows where it will stop ...")<sup>82</sup>

Deineka—or more precisely, his paintings—could not escape the weight of living in the present, a feeling that openly contradicted the utopian expectations in the 1940s and 1950s. Indeed, as the years passed, the dreamlike, lyrical aura of Deineka's early work was primed and his canvases acquired a thicker texture: comparing the smooth surfaces of *Female Textile Workers* from 1927 [cat. 125] with *Donbass* from 1947 [cat. 243] and particularly *The Opening of the Kolkhoz Electric Station* [cat. 244], completed one year before Stalin's death in 1952, is overwhelmingly significant. In the first, which retains cubist features and traces of futurist painting and abstract geometries, Deineka tried to make the pictorial elements rhyme with the content by smoothing the painting's surface in order to evoke the pace of a spinning mill.<sup>83</sup> The second work already resembles a photographic reproduction. Notwithstanding, certain connections and similarities can be established between

*Donbass* and, for instance, *Building New Factories* [cat. 116] or *Defense of Petrograd* [cat. 131], from 1927 and 1928: the metallic pontoon in the background marks the rhythm in both compositions, with the return of the injured in the first and the workers pushing the coal dump cars in the second. *Donbass* still reveals Deineka's continued concern with compositional, formal elements, elements he had selected, likened and used as appreciated in *Building New Factories* and the photo of *SSSR na stroike* [fig. 45].

Deineka's pictorial technique attests to his interest in form, a preoccupation that is not perceived, for example, in Gerasimov's focus on content. Deineka's paintings show traces of great formal beauty in works at the same time charged with obvious ideological connotations. Examples include the paintings *Women's Brigades to the State Farm!* from 1931 [cat. 168] and *Collective Farm Woman on a Bicycle* from 1935 [cat. 225], as well as posters and drawings for magazines such as the fascinating watercolor of female workers featured on the front cover of *Daesh!* [cat. 117]. *Noon* [cat. 180] is also an exceptional example of Deineka's mastery at assembling the themes of socialist realism in a harmonious picture of fit, athletic bodies under a radiant

**FIG. 45.** Double-page spread  
 in *URSS en construction*  
 no. 1, 1933  
 Collection MJM, Madrid  
 [cat. 173]







Aleksandr Deineka. *Donbass*, 1947. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow [cat. 243]



Aleksandr Deineka. *The Opening of the Kolkhoz Electric Station*, 1952. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow [cat. 244]



sun, while a train, electrical wiring, a *kolkhoz* and green landscape complete the picture. Compared to all these works, *The Opening of the Kolkhoz Electric Station* is a flat painting, a futile illustration with which Deineka himself was not pleased.

Notwithstanding, the turning point in Deineka's career may be found elsewhere, at a point in which the mimesis of the political project of the future succumbed to the pressure of what was real, of the present. Come this point, Deineka moved away from "the imagination without strings" (Marinetti) that derived from his spiritual affiliation to futurism—he profoundly admired Mayakovsky [cat. 162–164]—in order to "gain" leeway on the harshest side of socialist realism (which was, in dialectic terms, further from its avant-garde origins). It was perhaps in 1938, when Deineka was on the threshold of his fortieth birthday, that he painted *Future Pilots* [cat. 233], in which a group of children, the potential citizens of utopia, watch a plane flying in the air. But in this case the plane disappears from their attentive gaze, and ours, and the children seem to be firmly grounded in the present, the real here and now of Soviet life.

Aleksandr Deineka  
*Future Pilots*, 1938  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow [cat. 233]

### Utopia's Future and the Real Present

If history, as well as the history of art, and reflections on history are considered an interpretation of and about reality, then art and politics are their conjugation, the verbal action of words over reality. From this perspective, for instance, the two major subjective trends that have dominated human subjectivity and its cultural manifestations—classicism and romanticism—may be defined as an attempt to conjugate the past in the present tense, in the case of classicism, and the present in the past tense, in the case of romanticism.

The desire to conjugate the future in the present tense has defined the spirit of the revolution and the avant-garde, for this is the true meaning of transforming reality. This statement would be more accurate if we said that, rather than conjugating the future in the present, revolutionary policies and avant-garde practices have attempted to conjugate the present in the past perfect, that is, the past prior to the imperfect: a past devoid of imperfections of the utopia. For this reason, the idea of what didn't take place (*ou-topos*) has always been

**Fig. 46.** Kazimir Malevich  
*Strong Futurist*, 1913  
 Wardrobe design (sketch) for  
 the opera *Victory over the Sun*  
 Watercolor on paper  
 53.3 x 36.1 cm  
 State Russian Museum  
 Saint Petersburg

Kazimir Malevich  
*Sportsman*, ca. 1923  
 Private collection [cat. 22]



Aleksandr Deineka  
*Self-Portrait*, 1948  
 Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
 [cat. 1]



closely linked to the notion of paradise, of an untainted origin that existed prior to the corruptions of time and space. As a result, utopian theories are a common antecedent of both the revolutionary and the avant-garde spirit.<sup>84</sup>

But conjugating the past perfect in the present is an impossible task that has only led to the most imperfect tenses of all being restored, and for this reason utopian goals such as revolutions or avant-garde movements have frequently drifted towards totalitarian conceptions: As the imperfections of the past invade the present, “cleaning” the past to rebuild the future involves radical, cruel intervention in the present.

Futurism was perhaps the most radical of the avant-garde movements. And of all the revolutions, there is no doubt the Bolshevik revolution was the greatest political-artistic experiment in history. Aside from the USSR’s unique cultural conditions, in the end futurism was merely an artistic trend; or at least, the fleeting, weak “fellow traveler” of a short-lived totalitarianism, Italian fascism. In Russia, on the contrary, futurism’s unexpected heir was socialist

realism, the product of the complex conjunction described above between the avant-garde’s ambitions for the future and the construction of the present at the hands of the Soviet system. Russian futurism (that is, the futurism that found continuity in suprematism) was an exceptional case within the avant-garde because of the revolution that would soon follow and the political system it engendered. The future of Russian futurism became such a real part of Soviet life that it shut the door to any other remaining possibilities. Even a study of the Soviet system as a process cannot ignore the fact that when those responsible of achieving a utopian system realize they are already living in it, the future is *eo ipso* sealed. Once the future is achieved, all one can do is live it out in the motionlessness of present life, the motionlessness that characterizes totalitarian regimes.

“The great experiment” of twentieth-century Russia (the phrase, which refers to the avant-garde, is the title of Camilla Gray’s groundbreaking study<sup>85</sup>) went far beyond the avant-garde. In fact, it involved three interconnected actors: the avant-garde, the revolution and Stalinism, three differ-

ent realities that ran through Aleksandr Deineka’s oeuvre. Thus, his work was an example of potent, unquestionable beauty, as well as a novel narrating the interrelationship between these three realities and the lyrical and sometimes terrible dialectics of their coexistence.

The hypothesis that Aleksandr Deineka’s body of work is a *Bildungsroman* of this process requires that socialist realism be understood as the continuation of futurism and suprematism, albeit by different means. As Ekaterina Degot has pointed out, “without Malevich socialist realism is not possible,”<sup>86</sup> which allows us to see the futurist Malevich as a kind of ancestor of Deineka. This in spite of what Deineka thought of him:

In the 1920s, the artist Malevich quickly exhausted the possibilities of his method, having reached the representation of a black square on a canvas. Was suprematism something new in the practice of art? No, geometric décor is a phenomenon that is rather widespread among various peoples in various stages of their development. It is as though he reminded Le

Corbusier about the simplicity of possible architectural forms. The most modern searching in sculpture in the West cannot deny kinship with the ancient sculpture of Polynesia . . . *The Revolution was too contemporary and dynamic to use archaic statics and eclectic aesthetics.*<sup>87</sup>

In a reading that is as metaphoric as it is tempting, Malevich's "strong futurist" figure of 1913 (**fig. 46**)—a design created for *Victory over the Sun*—and the sportsman completed in 1923 [**cat. 22**] could be considered distant yet very real relatives of Deineka's self-portrait of 1948 [**cat. 1**]: To some extent, Deineka embodied Malevich's "strong futurist" figure in the same way socialist realism tried to fulfill futurism's dreams. As Groys observed:

The turn toward socialist realism was moreover part of the overall evolution of the European avant-garde in those years . . . Under Stalin the dream of the avant-garde was in fact fulfilled and the life of society was organized in monolithic artistic forms, though of course not those that the avant-garde itself had favored.<sup>88</sup>

To see this all that is required is that we recreate in our minds the film frames that made up socialist realism's collective imaginary, accompanied by a musical score reciting, for example, the eleventh paragraph of Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto:

We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.<sup>89</sup>

Socialist realism sang the lyrics of the avant-garde with its own works of art. For this reason, the music and lyrics of both styles resemble one another, although they are formally so different. Of course, when rather than comparing images to words—as in our example above—we compare, instead, the literary, illustrative lyrics of socialist realism painting with the musical, abstract form of avant-garde art their similarities are clearly less perceptible. However, all in all, the only absolute difference between the two lies in the fact that what was written by the former was later completed and performed in a different manner by the others. And Aleksandr Deineka was one of the most inspired voices of the latter.

1. In other words, the official method enforced on Soviet artists by the regime from 1932 to the fall of the USSR in 1985, as well as the forms of art that derived from it. See the documentary section in the present catalogue, numbers D53 and D54.  
2. Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Art Czar: The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg* (London: Lund Humphries, 2006).  
3. See Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* (Fall 1939), 34–49.  
4. *Ibid.*  
5. As Greenberg explicitly asserted, *ibid.*, 40.  
6. The expression coined by Hal Foster is the title of one of his essays, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996). Perhaps the most relevant exhibition on realisms continues to be that of Jean Clair at the Centre Pompidou,

Paris, in 1980; see *Les Realismes, 1919–1939* [exh. cat., Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1980; Staatliche Kunsthalle, Berlin, 1981] (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1980). More recently, see *Der kühle Blick. Realismus der zwanziger Jahre*, ed. Wieland Schmied [exh. cat. Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich] (Munich: Prestel Verlag and Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, 2001) and *Mimesis. Realismos modernos, 1918–1945*, ed. Tomàs Llorens [exh. cat. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; Fundación Caja Madrid, Madrid] (Madrid: Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2005). Neither of them featured paintings by Deineka and the presence of socialist realism works was scarce. Recently, three huge exhibitions were devoted to Deineka inside Russia: *Deineka: Transformations* (Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery, Kursk, 2008); *Aleksandr Deineka: Graphic Art from the Collection of the Kursk Picture Gallery named after A. A. Deineka* (State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, May 26–September 20, 2009) and *Aleksandr Deineka: "Work, Build and Don't Whine" – Paintings, Graphics, Sculpture* (State Tretyakov Gallery, March 17–May 23, 2010).

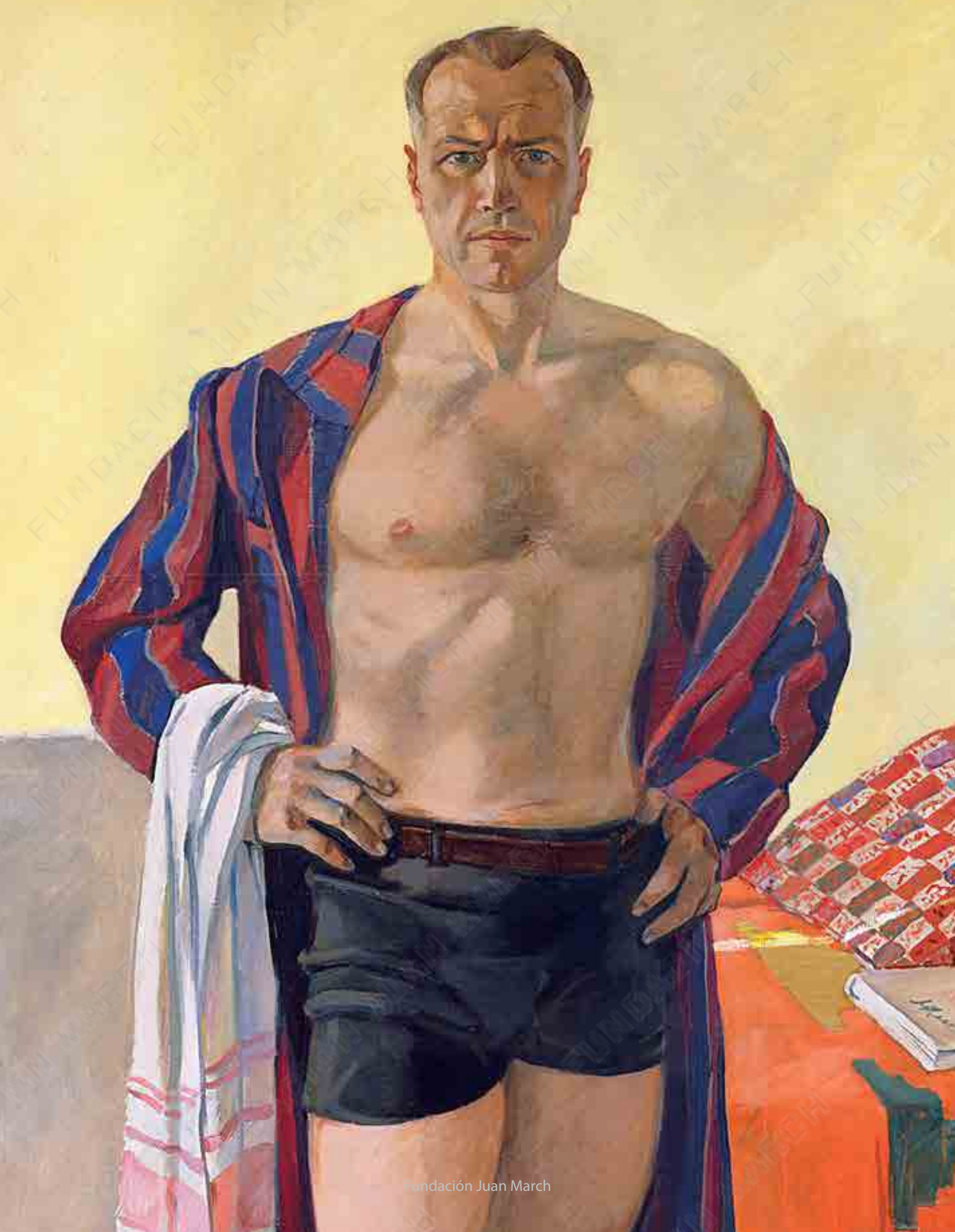
7. With some exceptions, most exhibitions of the Russian avant-garde tend to limit their analysis to the formal qualities of art and, barring shows also devoted to revolutionary art, are confined to the history of art and painting and frequently ignore the ideological implications of the avant-garde. In comparison to the exhibitions devoted to Russian avant-garde art in the last decades, there has only been a meager number of exhibitions dedicated to socialist realism or Stalin's "aesthetic arsenal." Among the most significant exhibitions of revolutionary art and socialist realism, see especially *Dream Factory Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalin Era*, ed. Boris Groys and Max Hollein [exh. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt] (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2003). Also *Russian and Soviet Painting* [exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and The Fine Arts Museums, San Francisco] (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977); *URSS anni '30-'50. Paesaggi dell'utopia staliniana* [exh. cat., Accademia Albertina delle Belle Arti, 1997] (Milan: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 1977); *Paris-Moscow 1900–1930* [exh. cat., Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris] (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1979); *Kunst und Revolution. Russische und Sowjetische Kunst 1910–1932* [exh. cat., Mücsarnok, Budapest and Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna] (Vienna: Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, 1988); *Arte Russa e Sovietica 1870–1930* [exh. cat., Torino, Lingotto] (Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, 1989); *The Aesthetic Arsenal: Socialist Realism Under Stalin*, ed. Miranda Banks (New York: The Institute for Contemporary Art, 1993); *Propaganda and Dreams: Photographing the 1930s in the USSR and the US*, ed. Leah Bendavid-Val (Thalwil/Zürich and New York: Stemmlé Publishers GmbH, 1999); *L'idéalisme soviétique: peinture et cinéma 1925–1939*, ed. Ekaterina Degot [exh. cat., Musée de l'Art wallon, Liège]; *The Avant-Garde: Before and After* [exh. cat., Europaia Museum of Visual Arts, Brussels 2005, and ROSIZO Museum and Exhibition Center, Moscow, 2006] (Saint Petersburg: Palace Editions - Europaia, 2006). Likewise, monographic exhibitions dedicated to leading artists of this period are virtually non-existent, especially outside the former USSR. Regarding Deineka and outside the former USSR, see the exhibition curated by Irina Vakar, Elena Voronovic and Matteo Lafranconi (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 2011) and the show held in Düsseldorf in 1982 (Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf).  
8. Greenberg's formalist stance is historically embedded in the foundations of the aesthetics of twentieth-century formalism, Kant's aesthetics of pure aesthetic judgment and genius, whose birth is parallel to the birth of the modern museum, which is its precondition. Thus, Greenberg can be considered as something of an American distant relative to Kant, whose take on formalism has transformed the West's perception of art, already formal to begin with, into a formalist gaze.  
9. There is an undeniable relationship between the underpinning of artistic will and that of power (or, in the words of Nietzsche, the "will to power"). The existing parallels between revolutionary Marxist theory and praxis and the theory and praxis of the avant-garde movements, with their determination to command and arrange media according to the artist's own interior necessities, are more than obvious.  
10. In addition to a substantial lack of knowledge regarding the historical sources of Russian and Soviet art, which in Spain is endemic. In English and in German, in addition to the pioneering compilation *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischem Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubert Gassner and Eckhart Gillen (Köln: DuMont, 1979), the following anthologies can be consulted: *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. John E. Bowlit (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988); *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemeyer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005); *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgarde*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005). In Spain, only Juan Manuel Bonet and Guillermo Solana have analysed the work of Deineka: see Juan Manuel Bonet, "Hopper y Deineka, pintores del silencio," *El Europeo* 15 (1989); Guillermo Solana, "Alexander Deineka," in *El realismo en el arte contemporáneo 1900–1950*, ed. Francisco Calvo Serraller (Madrid: Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, 1999), 287–300.  
11. This comparison began to break down seriously in 1988 with the publication of the German edition of Groys's *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*, see Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin: Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion*, trans. Gabriele Leupold (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1988); *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); *Obra de arte total Stalin*, trans. Desiderio Navarro (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2008). See also Boris Groys, *Die Erfindung Russlands* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1995).  
12. See Ekaterina Degot, *Russkoe iskusstvo XX veka* [Russian Art of the 20th century] (Moscow: Trilistnik, 2002), especially chapter III: The Synthetic Project.  
13. Much has been written and debated in academic circles concerning the topic: see, among others: *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917–1992*, ed. Mathew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993); *Socialist Realism without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997); *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, ed. Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006); Christina Kiaer, "Was Socialist Realism Forced Labor? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930's," *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2005), 321–45.  
14. The fact that the avant-garde did not achieve its political goals does not mean the movement did not have political aspirations.  
15. For the radical political content of avant-garde texts, see the documentary section in the present catalogue, especially numbers D4, D5, D6–8, D17, D22 and D23.  
16. Reproduced here as it appeared in El Lissitzky's book *Russland. Die Rekonstruktion der Architektur in der Sowjetunion* (Vienna: Anton Schroll & Co., 1930).

17. There are obvious differences: while in Italy the futurist avant-garde supported fascism, avant-garde art was banned by the Nazi regime and described as degenerate. For an overview of art produced under totalitarian regimes, see Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art: in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China* (London: Collins Harwill; New York: Icon Editions, 1990). Also: *Totalitarian Art and Modernity*, ed. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jacob Wamberg (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010).  
18. See Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (see note 3 above), 40.  
19. In this sense, British artist Wyndham Lewis's appraisal of the success of vorticism in his memoirs, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, published in 1937, is especially insightful: "At some point in the six months prior to the outbreak of the war, from a position of relative obscurity, I suddenly became well-known . . . by August 1914 a newspaper was not complete without a piece on "vorticism" and its leading figure, Lewis . . . All this organized disturbance was art behaving as if it were politics . . . But I was unaware of the fact: I thought artists were always treated this way; a somewhat tumultuous reception perhaps, but why not? I mistook the public's agitation for a sign of artistic sensibilities awakening." See Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering: Autobiography, 1914–1926* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1937); cited from the Spanish edition: *Estallidos y bombardeos*, trans. Yolanda Morató (Madrid: Impedimenta, 2008). The emphasis is mine.  
20. See the documentary section in the present catalogue, numbers D10, D17, D18, D22, D26, D31, D32 and D42.  
21. See Kazimir Malevich, "On the Museum," included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D9.  
22. See Nikolai Fedorov, "The Museum, its Meaning and Purpose," included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D2.  
23. Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 44. The text is included in the epilogue of the essay.  
24. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism* (see note 11 above), 3.  
25. For the educational program and mission of the VkhUTEMAS, see S. Khan-Magomedov, *Vjutemas. Moscow 1920–1930* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1990), 2 vols, and the texts included in the documentary section of this volume, especially "Our Task," by David Shterenberg, D15; "On the Reorganization of the Artistic Faculties of VkhUTEMAS," by Boris Arvatov, D35, and D24.  
26. What is lost here is art history's comparative or comparatist (iconographic and iconological) nature, which is wasted when historicizing art becomes a simple task of comparing formal similarities rather than contrasting formal disparities.  
27. Aleksandr Deineka, "About Modernity in Art" (1956), reprinted in *Aleksandr Deineka. Zhiz', iskusstvo, vremia: literaturno-izdzhestvennoye nasledie*, ed. and intro. V. P. Sysoev (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RFSFR, 1974), 274–77, included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D61. The emphasis is mine.  
28. See Katerina Romanenko, "Serving the Great Collective: USSR in Construction as a Cultural Barometer," *Zimmerli Journal* 3, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (Fall 2005), 78–91, and Erika Wolf, "USSR in Construction: From Avant-Garde to Socialist Realist Practice" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1999).  
29. See, for example, the texts by Velimir Khlebnikov, "The Radio of the Future," and Ivan Kliun, "A New Optimism," included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D16 and D19. See also the fragments of texts by the Russian utopists and biocosmists selected by Michael Hagemeyer in our anthology: D2, D27, D36 and D38.  
30. See "The Society of Easel Painters (OST)" in the documentary section of this catalogue, D30.  
31. See "October – Association of New Forms of Artistic Labor Declaration," in the documentary section of this catalogue, D42.  
32. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Manifeste du futurisme," published in *Le Figaro*, Paris, February 20, 1909. For a complete overview of Russian futurism, see: *Guro Brick Mayakovskiy. The Ardis Anthology of Russian Futurism*, ed. Ellendea Proffer and Carl R. Proffer (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, 1980). For more on the relations between the Russian futurists and revolutionary art, see D7, D8, D10 and D20 in the documentary section of this catalogue.  
33. See Felix Philipp Ingold, *Der grosse Bruch Russland im Epochenjahr 1913* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000), 12ff., 126ff. and 154ff. On the significance of 1913 for modern art, see L. Brion-Guerry, *L'Année 1913. Les formes esthétiques de l'œuvre d'art à la veille de la première guerre mondiale* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1971), 2 vols. For a general overview on Soviet theater, see *Theatre in Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design 1913–1935* [exh. cat., The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California Palace of the Legion of Honor; IBM Gallery of Science and Art, New York; and The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles] (Thames and Hudson / The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco / Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum, 1991).  
34. In what follows, I will refer in the notes to this essay to Evgeny Steiner's edition of *Victory over the Sun*, included in the documentary section of this catalogue, see D1. There is a first, facsimil edition of the play in Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Victory over the Sun*, comp. Patricia Railing, trans., commentary and notes Evgeny Steiner (Forest Row, East Sussex: Artists Bookworks, 2009). Several of the passages cited here are excerpts from the notes by Aage Hansen-Löve to the German edition of *Victory over the Sun* published in *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgarde*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), 63–89; Malevich's stage design has been extensively studied and reproduced. See for example *Steg über die Sonne. Aspekte russischer Kunst zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* [exh. cat., Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1983].  
35. See Evgeny Steiner in this volume, document D1.  
36. See Aage Hansen-Löve's notes on music, stage design, text, and light of *Victory over the Sun* in *Am Nullpunkt* (see note 34 above).  
37. For the relationship between Malevich's curtain design for *Pobeda nad solntsem* and *Black Square*, see Aage Hansen-Löve, *Am Nullpunkt* (see note 34 above). Also see Vladimir Poliaikov, *Knigi russkogo kubo-futurizma* [Books of Russian Cubo-Futurism] (Moscow, 1998), 173ff. As observed by Aage Hansen-Löve: "in hindsight, Malevich's set designs were decisive in anticipating pictorial suprematism, which reached its climax two years later with *Black Square* . . . Malevich's sketches for the set designs, as well as his curtain design and front cover of the printed version of *Pobeda nad solntsem*, contain in nuce the double square which, on the one hand, dissociated the classical definition of central perspective from the 'staging area' and, at the same time, anticipated the 'primitive' scene of the painting: the 'empty square' in the frame, a window facing a pitch black sky. Although the concept of 'suprematism' did not emerge until 1915 in Malevich's essay *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism* . . . his shift towards non-figuration is felt in his set designs," in Aage Hansen-Löve, *Am Nullpunkt* (see note 34 above). Translation by Vanesa Rodríguez.  
38. Aage Hansen-Löve, *Am Nullpunkt* (see note 34 above). Translation by Vanesa Rodríguez.

39. See Steiner, note 1 to Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Biography of the Moon*, 1916, see D3.
40. Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Biography of the Moon*, 1916, see D3.
41. Steiner points out: "It was Pushkin that they wanted to 'throw overboard' from the steamboat of modernity (as expressed in their Futurist Manifesto in *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* of December 1912, signed by D. Burluk, A. Kruchenykh, V. Mayakovsky and V. Khlebnikov)." see D1.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. As Steiner notes, "the second and the third lines are close inversions of the famous ending of Pushkin's 'Bacchic Song'—'Long live the sun, let darkness vanish!' (*Da zdravstvuet solntse! Da kroetsia t'ma*):" see D1.
45. Ibid.
46. Aage Hansen-Löve, *Am Nullpunkt* (see note 34 above), note 7. Translation by Vanesa Rodríguez.
47. Ibid.
48. See Steiner, D1.
49. See Christina Kiaer, "Was Socialist Realism Forced Labor? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s," *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2005), 321–45, 326.
50. Together, probably, with Lenin's "Plan for the Monumental Propaganda." On this, see Christina Lodder, "Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda," in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992* (see note 13 above), 16.
51. Because, as Lazar Kaganovich's phrase and Dimitrii Moor's poster stated [cat. 218], it made it possible for the USSR to pass from being a country of wooden ploughs (which shared the Soviet emblem with the sickle in the 1920s, see cat. 219) to being a country of tractors and combines.
52. On Stalinist cinema see Evgeny Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History. Museum of the Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).
53. Velimir Khlebnikov, "The Radio of the Future," included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D16.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., note 1.
56. See *El Electricista* (Madrid, Fundación Juan March, 2011).
57. On the literary significance of steel, see Rolf Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal: Soviet Literature & the Alchemy of Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003). On the topic of the Moscow Metro, see the essays by Boris Groys, "Underground as Utopia," and by Alessandro De Magistris, "Underground Explorations in the Synthesis of the Arts: Deineka in Moscow's Metro," included in this catalogue, pp. 249–52 and 239–45.
58. Aleksandr Deineka, *On My Working Practice* (Moscow: USSR Academy of Fine Arts, 1961), 6. Translation by Erica Witschey.
59. Aleksandr Deineka, "A Living Tradition," *Pravda*, May 4, 1964, 8. See D63 in this volume.
60. See Aage Hansen-Löve, *Am Nullpunkt* (see note 34 above), note 19. On the "struggle against the force of gravity" in Khlebnikov and Malevich, see Y. F. Kovtun, *Sangesi: die russische Avantgarde. Chlebnikov und seine Maler* (Zurich: Stemmler, 1993), 33ff (translation by Vanesa Rodríguez).
61. Quoted in F. Ph. Ingold, "Der Autor im Flug. Daedalus und Ikarus," in *Der Autor am Werk. Versuche über literarische Kreativität* (Munich, 1992), 43. The last sentence is an excerpt from Malevich's text "On the Museum," included in the documentary section of the catalogue, D9.
62. For an overview about socialist realism iconographic typologies, see Joseph Bakhstein, "Notes on the Iconography of Socialist Realism," in *The Aesthetic Arsenal. Socialist Realism Under Stalin*, ed. Miranda Banks (New York: The Institute for Contemporary Art, 1993), 47–61.
63. See Nikolai Tarabukin, "From the Easel to the Machine," included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D21.
64. In the cited essay, Greenberg uses the adjective "motionless" twice.
65. With the exception of war scenes, which convey patriotic heroism and portraits of leaders expressing authority, paternalism and feelings of veneration, fear and love.
66. Aleksandr Deineka, "A Living Tradition" (see note 59 above).
67. Representative of some Western intellectuals' ambiguous approach towards Stalinism.
68. For Zal'kind, see D38 and the note by Michael Hagemeister; the documentary section of this catalogue also features an excerpt of Aleksandr Bogdanov's text "The Struggle for Viability" with a note by Margarete Vöhringer for its publication in *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemeister (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), 482–83, 525–605. See also Valerian Murav'ev, "Mastering Time as the Fundamental Goal of the Organization of Labor," D27 of the documentary section.
69. Aleksandr Deineka, *On My Working Practice* (see note 58 above).
70. See Fredric Jameson's essay, "Aleksandr Deineka or the Processual Logic of the Soviet System," included in this catalogue, pp. 84–91. For a fascinating comparison between the mass utopias of the twentieth century, see Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000). A detailed chronicle of Soviet life and work culture is found in Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995).
71. See *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003). On the Soviet space race, there are also precedents in the Russian avant-garde: see *El cosmos de la vanguardia rusa. Arte y exploración espacial 1900–1930* [exh. cat., Fundación Botín, Santander] (Santander: Fundación Botín, 2010).
72. "All the tops facing downwards as if in a mirror," see See Evgeny Steiner's notes to the text by Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Victory over the Sun*, in the documentary section of this catalogue, D1.
73. See "Aleksandr Deineka: The Eternal Return of the Athletic Body" by Boris Groys, included in this catalogue, pp. 76–83. See also *Nackt für Stalin. Körperbilder in der russischen Fotografie der 20er und 30er Jahre* [exh. cat., Kommunale Galerie im Leinwandhaus, Frankfurt am Main] (Frankfurt am Main: Anabas-Verlag, 2003).
74. Anticipating, in something of a pre-future, the purported novelty of digital distribution and its new, symbolic economy. See Ekaterina Degot, "Socialist Realism or the Collectivization of Modernism," included in this catalogue, pp. 68–75.
75. See the aforementioned texts by Malevich and Fedorov on the museum, included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D9 and D2. On Fedorov, see Michael Hagemeister, "Passagiere der Erde," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 165, July 19, 2006, 7.
76. From this perspective, *SSSR na stroike* can be described as a film director's scrapbook compiling notes, ideas on film scenes and complete and cut sequences (which, of course, relate to cinema as a revolutionary art and developments in film editing, especially montage techniques). Interesting on the relations between mass education, film and painting is A. Mikhailov's "Cinema and Painting" from 1928 (see D45). See also *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984).
77. See D53 and D54 in the documentary section of this catalogue.
78. Boris Arvatov, "AJRR na zadove" [AKhRR at the Factory], *Zhiss iskusstva* 30 (1925), 5, included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D33.
79. Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (see note 3 above).
80. Aleksandr Deineka, "About Modernity in Art," included in the documentary section of this catalogue, D61. Translation by Erika Wolf.
81. "Socialist realism was an attempt to create dreamers who dreamt socialist dreams": Boris Groys, "Education of the Masses: The Art of Socialist Realism," in *Russia!* [exh. cat. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and Museo Guggenheim, Bilbao] (New York / Bilbao: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and FMGB Museo Guggenheim, 2006), 266–72, 271. See also the entire chapter two of Boris Groys *The Total Art of Stalinism* (see note 11 above).
82. See Evgeny Steiner's notes to the text by Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Victory over the Sun*, in the documentary section of this catalogue, D1.
83. Deineka described the brush strokes in the following way: "Rhythm and a certain ornamentality lie at the base of my painting *Female Textile Workers*: it is the rhythm of the ceaseless circular motion of the looms. I almost mechanically subordinated to this rhythm the weavers with their smooth, melodious movements. This had given the painting a certain abstract quality. The picture is silvery white, with patches of warm ochre on the faces and hands of the girls. At that time, I polished the surface of the canvas, making it extra smooth, wanting to find unity with the surface of the canvas and the texture of the polished, well-lit walls, non-existent as yet, but on which I dreamed that my pictures would eventually hang. . . ." See *On My Working Practice* (note 58 above).
84. See D2, D27, D36 and D38 in the documentary section of this catalogue.
85. Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863–1922* (1962); re-edited as *The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863–1922* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).
86. See Ekaterina Degot's essay included in this catalogue, pp. 68–75.
87. Aleksandr Deineka, "About Modernity in Art" (see note 27 above and D61).
88. See *The Total Art of Stalinism* (note 11 above), 9.
89. See *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*, ed. Vincent B. Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For those interested in recreating for Marinetti's text the film frames that made up socialist realism's collective imaginary with works of this exhibition, we suggest the following visual sequence of Deineka's works: cat. 82, 83, 85, 88, 106, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 125, 131, 152, 155, 159, 165, 169, 180, 183, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 207, 243, 244, 208. For highly graphic overviews on recent Soviet history, see: Steven Heller, *Iron Fists: Branding the 20th-Century Totalitarian State* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2010, 1st reimp.); David King, *Roter Stern über Russland, Eine visuelle Geschichte der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis zum Tode Stalins* (Essen: Mehring Verlag, 2010, 1st reimp.); and Brian Moy Nahan, *The Russian Century: A Photojournalistic History of Russia in the Twentieth Century* (London: Random House, 1994).

**Aleksandr Deineka:  
A One-Man Biography  
of Soviet Art**

Christina Kiaer



# W

hen we in the West think of Soviet art, we mostly think of the spectacular pictorial achievement and rousing political commitment of the modernist avant-garde of the early years of the Revolution. We are by now deeply familiar with figures such as the futurist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, the abstract suprematist painter Kazimir Malevich, and constructivists of various stripes such as Liubov Popova, El Lissitzky, Vladimir Tatlin, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova and Gustavs Klucis. Yet the avant-garde forms only part of the story of revolutionary Russian art and it ends by the 1930s—with Mayakovsky's 1930 suicide; with the deaths of Malevich in 1935, Popova already in 1924, and Lissitzky in 1941; and the marginalization of Tatlin, Rodchenko and Stepanova by the mid-1930s. Klucis is the most tragic of this group, murdered at the hands of the secret police in 1938 during Stalin's Great Terror.

Aleksandr Deineka began his career in the heroic revolutionary era of the avant-garde, but in contrast to these better-known figures, he survived the 1930s and stayed more or less successful within the Soviet art system all the way until his death in 1969. He is not as well known in the West as these avant-gardists because as a figurative artist his work was not to the taste of the modernist curators and scholars who first began the work of retrieving the lost Soviet avant-garde in the 1960s. More saliently, by the 1930s he embodied one model of socialist realism—always regarded in the West as kitsch—and he was an officially sanctioned artist within the Stalinist system, a status that made him and all such artists distasteful to many Westerners in the era of the Cold War. Yet he has always had fans, because his work is simply so striking—in 1934, Henri Matisse himself called Deineka “the most talented” and “the most advanced” of all the young Soviet artists.<sup>1</sup> Now that contemporary art has fully challenged modernist orthodoxies, embracing different models of figuration, and now that revisionist cultural histories of Soviet Russia are challenging the totalitarian model in which socialist realism must always be seen as repressive, coercive and fake, the moment has arrived for us to really see Deineka.

He is worth looking at not only for his vibrant, hard-edged images of modern life under socialism, but also for the way his career in and of itself tells the dramatic story of the sweep of Soviet art from start to (almost) finish, from the Revolution to the Brezhnev era. His particular story is intertwined with all the key, thorny moments of Soviet art and history: the early avant-garde of the Civil War years; the proliferation of traditional and avant-garde art groups during the New Economic Policy; the fierce infighting among artists during the First Five-Year Plan; the advent of socialist realism in the 1930s; the ruthless realignment of the art world during Stalin's Great Terror; the further shifts caused by the demands of the Second World War; the oppressive years of High Stalinism at the end of Stalin's rule; the swings in art policy during

Khrushchev's Thaw as the USSR negotiated the Cold War; and, finally, the position of artists during the era of “stagnation” under Brezhnev in the 1960s.

Deineka vocally embraced the socialist idea from the first moment of revolution, and never looked back. He literally turned eighteen in 1917, becoming an adult with the Revolution; younger by five to ten years than most of the main avant-gardists, he had no artistic career outside of Soviet structures. His work evolved within these structures, which would eventually, by the early 1930s, develop into a totally new system for producing modern art without the art market. This system and the art form that it generated, socialist realism, have always been understood as coercive and repressive, the convenient opposite of the freedom of art in the west. Seen in its most positive light, however, the Soviet system was the most advanced in the world: it provided state support for artists, delivering them from the vagaries of the market, and created a vast infrastructure of paid artistic research travel, commissions, exhibitions and mass distribution that was meant to make art an egalitarian, collective and participatory experience for producers and consumers alike. Although Deineka was unusually successful, his career is still representative of both the productive aspects of this innovative system and its stultifying and recklessly cruel effects.

Deineka can be fit into art historical categories—his work has been seen in relation to the fresco painting of the Italian primitives, Russian icons, German expressionism, and so on—but to focus too much on the nature of his artistic mastery and influences would be to miss the point that his work is shaped through and through by the “social command” and the individual Soviet commissions that were its basis. Neither a dissident nor an ideological dupe, Deineka produced an earnest and brilliant body of work that offers, for better or worse, a biography of the USSR in pictures. This essay will trace the contours of that biography, concentrating on the 1920s and 1930s and the passage from avant-garde to socialist realism, which is the main focus of the works assembled in this exhibition.

### Revolution and Civil War

The October Revolution of 1917 jump-started Deineka's career. In the beginning of 1917 he was just another young student at the School of Fine Arts in Kharkhiv, a Ukrainian city near his Russian home town of Kursk, where his teachers were traditional artists trained at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in Saint Petersburg. His own practice was largely realist, with post-impressionistic touches in his landscapes. By 1918, back in Kursk, he was already overseeing the fine arts section of the local department of education, and was sent on trips to Moscow by the new Soviet authorities to learn advanced techniques for creating street decorations for the celebrations of the first anniversary of the Revolution. He would later write about his gleeful discovery of the avant-garde on those trips, and claim that on his return to his provincial hometown, he was “stuffing the purest cubism into the potholes of Kursk.”<sup>2</sup> In 1919, he was mobilized into the Red Army where he coordinated agitation and propaganda, including the direction of the Kursk section of one of the classic projects of early Soviet avant-garde art: the famous “ROSTA windows,” stenciled Civil War propaganda posters produced by the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) that were displayed in the windows of telegraph offices and other sites; Vladimir Mayakovsky himself made posters for the Moscow ROSTA, and some of



the poster designs that Deineka made in Kursk were illustrations of Mayakovsky poems. In 1920, at the ripe old age of twenty-one, Deineka was appointed head of the workers and peasants theater division and director of the regional division of the Kursk IZO (Regional Department of Fine Arts), where he oversaw agitational projects such as the decoration of agit-trains and the design of revolutionary festivals. While it might seem surprising that a young and inexperienced artist would be given such positions of responsibility, Deineka was by all reports a brash and confident young man, and further, this situation was not unusual within the early Soviet government during the confusion of the Civil War—enthusiastic and ambitious supporters of the new regime were given such appointments when older, established artists refused them. In Moscow, for example, Rodchenko was appointed director of the Museum Bureau and Purchasing Fund in 1920 at the age of twenty-eight, with responsibility for reorganizing art schools and museums and purchasing new art for museums around the country.

What did it look like when Deineka, in all his official capacities, was “stuffing the purest cubism into the potholes of Kursk?” How did he unite cubist pictorial concerns with his very real, specific and local propaganda tasks? His 1919 image *Battle against Disruption* [cat. 39] shows him placing a perfectly realistic train locomotive (carefully labeled no. 36, no less) into an unreadable landscape of seemingly receding tracks, whirling spirals and red diagonals forming a triangle against a blank white ground. These curved and linear shapes might not represent the very purest cubism, but they call to mind the forms that appeared in cubist-influenced avant-garde paintings at this time, such as Rodchenko’s *Construction* of 1919 [cat. 26]—but unlike Rodchenko’s insistence on such painterly forms as themselves now the proper subject matter of art, Deineka uses them to evoke the chaos that resulted from the disruption of the centralized train system caused by the Civil War. In the background the phrase “battle against disruption” (*bor’ba s razrukhoi*) is hand lettered and non-linear, like the texts that appeared in many avant-garde works of this time, such as El Lisstizky’s famous Civil War propaganda poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, 1919–20 [cat. 14]. But messy lettering or no, the phrase is readable, and in combination with the picture of the locomotive, we immediately understand the purpose of the image: to remind us to support the Bolshevik campaign to keep the trains running on time.

Just as the Soviet train system was fully centralized and all trains famously ran on Moscow time, so the center of the new art lay in Moscow, and an ambitious—and by now unusually experienced—young artist like Deineka needed to get himself there. In early 1921, toward the very end of the Civil War, he received permission from the Kursk authorities to be relieved of his Red Army duties and to relocate to the capital to enroll in the new state school of art and industrial design, the Higher Arts and Technical Studios (*Vysshie khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskie masterskie*, VKhUTEMAS). At the very center of innovative art pedagogy in Soviet Russia, its painting faculty boasted teachers from the avant-garde such as Rodchenko, Popova and Aleksandr Vesnin.

Deineka opted to enroll in the graphics faculty because of his commitment to making art that could be mass distributed, such as posters and illustrations, and during his years at VKhUTEMAS he developed the foundations for his terse, stylized form of figura-

tion. The “cubist” squiggles and unidentifiable lines that we saw in *Battle against Disruption* drop out, but the cubist destruction of traditional pictorial space would define his work for many years to come in the form of blank white grounds, geometrically-blocked and often diagonal compositions, or figures that are stacked on top of each other rather than fitted into three-dimensional boxes of space. These kinds of compositional forms would lead later, in the 1930s, to accusations against him of “formalism” and “schematism”—but that gets us ahead of our story.

### The New Economic Policy

In 1921, in an attempt to save the economy from total collapse after the upheavals of world war, revolution and civil war, the Soviet government instituted a series of economic measures known as the New Economic Policy (NEP). These measures partially legalized private manufacture and trade, effectively reinstating a limited model of capitalism after the radical communist economic measures of the Civil War years known as War Communism. A semblance of the pre-revolutionary art market returned with the new patron class of rich “Nepmen”—the speculators, merchants and middlemen who could suddenly operate legally—who wanted attractive paintings, sculptures and other objects of display, in direct contrast to the various forms of art supported by the Bolshevik government, from constructivism to propaganda posters to figurative easel paintings of workers and red army soldiers. VKhUTEMAS, as the hotbed of the new revolutionary art, was a kind of bulwark against the return of philistinism (*meshchanstvo*) in art during NEP. Mayakovsky was a patron, and Vladimir Lenin and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, paid a visit to the students there on February 25, 1921. VKhUTEMAS students at that time had an acute sense of themselves as the generation that would produce an entirely new kind of socialist art.

Deineka fit right into this mindset, with his already extensive experiences of revolutionary art administration as well as art production in Kursk, and his self-assured personality. Repeatedly described as *svetlyi*, meaning light or blond; *bodryi*, meaning cheerful, or hale and hearty; and *zhizneradostnyi*, meaning literally “happy with life,” he was well known as an accomplished boxer in the VKhUTEMAS gym, one of the centers of school life. A photograph of him from the early 1920s, dressed in a tank top and gym shorts [fig. 1], conveys his identification with the “new Soviet person,” trim and fit from participation in wholesome sports as well as labor—the antithesis of the Nepman and his female counterpart the Nepmanka, who were usually depicted in Soviet visual culture, along with priests, rich peasants, and any bourgeois, as corpulent and debauched. While studying at VKhUTEMAS, Deineka was in fact learning to become one of the prime architects of precisely this graphic visual language of class difference that would define much of Soviet art.

Even before leaving the school, he published his satiric drawings nationally for the first time in the journal *Bezbozhnik u stanka* in 1923, and would continue as a prolific journal illustrator into the 1930s. Journals like *Bezbozhnik u stanka* used crude and virulent anti-religious satire in an attempt to convert workers—who were often recent transplants from the more religious countryside—into socially conscious atheists. Religion was associated with benighted peasant ways or, conversely, with bogus bourgeois propriety, and women were targeted as particularly backward and unwilling to give up their traditional faith. One of

FIG. 1. Deineka in the early 1920s



Deineka's illustrations from 1925 shows two women side by side with the coy title "Picture Puzzle" and the caption, "Which one is an atheist?" [cat. 80]. Is it the trim, strong young woman worker on the right, identifiable by her simple clothing and red worker's kerchief, striding confidently toward us with a factory in the background? Or is it the blowsy woman waddling toward us on the left, her fashionable dress clinging to her large, floppy breasts and soft belly, and framed by a room with a lampshade and curtains, the contemporary semaphores of a bourgeois interior?

This drawing demonstrates the extraordinary economy of means that would make Deineka such a popular illustrator. The worker's skirt, for example, is simply an unmodulated black shape, recognizable through a minimum of curving outlines. The extensive areas of white form both negative spaces (what we as viewers must supply as "background") and positive ones (such as the collar and belt of the bourgeois woman's dress). Spatial relations are suggested, rather than spelled out, through the simple positioning of the feet, or through a montage-like technique familiar from the photomontages of Rodchenko, such as the little square of fussy tiles that floats under the pointy shoes of the Nepmanka. Two elongated, openly suprematist or constructivist black and red quadrilaterals separate the two pictures. Deineka's mix of avant-garde techniques with a total commitment to readable, didactic figuration demonstrates that early Soviet art was more fluid and varied in its allegiances than suggested by the combative rhetoric of the avant-garde itself, which insisted, especially in the pages of the journal *Lef*, on the gulf between the traditional hand-drawn "picture," which would be inadequate for representing the new socialist life, and the abstract, industrial and technical objects produced by constructivism.<sup>3</sup> Although in the West our understanding of early Soviet art is dominated by the avant-garde, it actually formed only one modest, if vocal wing of the Soviet art world. Most artists, including young art students, rejected what they saw as the extremism of the *Lef* artists in favor of figurative art of various degrees of modernism and realism.

Deineka's graphic work for journals such as *Bezbozhnik u stanka* was not only formally innovative, but also represented a new model of artistic work that would eventually, by the 1930s, become standard practice in the Soviet art world: he was routinely sent to industrial sites on assignment in order to produce drawings of workers. In 1925, for example, he went on assignment to the Donbass to study the work and lives of miners, and also to the Trekhgornia (Triple Peaks) textile factory in Moscow to observe the lives of the predominantly female workers there in the workshops and dormitories for a special issue on "women and religion." Such assignments were known as *komandirovki*, from the verb *komandirovat'*, meaning to dispatch or send on a mission. Of course investigative journalists and documentary photographers had always been sent on assignments by the press, but these Soviet *komandirovki* represent a new and fundamental aspect of Soviet art: the conviction, especially in the face of NEP compromises, that the purpose of art was to document and express socialist labor and construction—and not just for artists producing illustrations for mass journals but for easel painters as well.

In spite of his graphic emphasis, Deineka had studied painting at Kharkiv and VKhUTEMAS, and in 1925 he became a founding member of the Society of Easel Painters (Obshchestvo stankovistov, known

as OST). Composed of a disparate group of mostly younger artists who had been heavily influenced by the avant-garde, its goal was to unite experimental, modernist painting techniques of various stripes with socialist subject matter and social purpose. The group's name deliberately invoked easel painting in order to reclaim it both from the constructivists, who had dismissed it as bourgeois and outmoded no matter how socialist the subject matter, and from the dominant Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (Assotsiatsiia khudozhnikov revoliutsionnoi Rossii, AKhRR) group which insisted that revolutionary subject matter had to be painted in a traditional realist style, preferably that of nineteenth-century Russian realists like Il'ia Repin, in order to respect the dignity of proletarian viewers. As an ambitious artist, Deineka wanted to make his mark in painting—a medium that received more critical attention than graphics, then as now—and the formally open-ended but politically committed platform of OST was ideally suited to his purposes. In the first OST exhibition in 1925, he exhibited his large canvas *Before the Descent into the Mine* [cat. 115] which was a literal, point by point transposition of a drawing he had made of miners preparing to start their shift for the cover of the third issue of the journal *U stanka* in 1924. Transposed from the small, newsprint graphic format to the much larger size and glossy surface of an oil painting, the rhythmic composition of the pairs of miners, the sparsely-delineated, almost silhouetted bodies, the near monochrome colors and the blank white and beige grounds take on a decidedly radical, modernist look, evoking the paintings of the Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany. Critics responded positively to the "severe graphic quality" of this painting, seeing in it a "monumental" style well suited to depicting the grandeur of labor.<sup>4</sup>

Deineka would go on to produce only three more major paintings as a member of OST, between 1926 and 1928, but all of them became instant classics of Soviet art: *Building New Factories* of 1926 [cat. 116], *Female Textile Workers* of 1927 [cat. 125] and the Civil War themed *Defense of Petrograd* of 1928 [cat. 131], commissioned for the 10th Anniversary Exhibition of the Red Army. They all share the graphic quality of his earliest OST painting, as well as origins in journal drawings, but they demonstrate his increased attention to the specificity of the medium of painting. In *Building New Factories*, one of the women is pushing an industrial trolley, just like the women workers in a textile factory in his 1926 illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*, "A Riddle for an Old Man" [cat. 85]. At the bottom right of this image a tiny, caricatured old priest peers into this picture of strong, purposefully working women, saying, "So many womenfolk, and not one of them is praying. What is this place I've come to?" Another drawing from the same journal later in 1926 gives an even more detailed account of the textile factory floor and its machinery, showing the women working barefoot in the heat and humidity.<sup>5</sup> Yet in the painting, placed onto the blank ground and montaged factory elements, the two female figures have taken on a muscular, Michelangelo-like painterly heft, at once lyrical and massive, with the flowing dress and laughing rosy-cheeked face of the woman in white, combined with the bare feet and the unexpectedly bright blue sky, suggesting a kind of industrial pastoral. The subject of the painting is now the charged mutual gaze between the two monumental women, one facing out, one facing in, one light, one dark. Much more than in *Before the Descent into the Mine* of the previous year, the shift from propaganda

drawing to stand-alone easel painting ups the ambition of the image: the question here is no longer "What does the factory floor look like?" or "What do atheist workers look like?" but "What will the joy of collective laboring bodies look like under socialism?"

### The First Five-Year Plan

Deineka's tenure with OST came to an end along with NEP itself. The policies of NEP were phased out in 1928 by the new industrialization and planned economy policies that would become known as the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32), and which spurred the onset of the period of renewed class antagonism known as the Cultural Revolution. It was in this context that Deineka decided to leave OST and join the radical new association *Oktiabr'* (October), which in many ways represented the last stand of the avant-garde, numbering Klucis, Lissitzky, Rodchenko, the Vesnin brothers, Aleksei Gan and Sergei Eisenstein among its members. It aimed to revive the "art into life" ideas of constructivism and productivism in different form, calling for waging proletarian class war through the "spatial arts": photography, graphics, monumental painting, industrial arts, cinema, architecture and design. Although Deineka had been experimenting with easel painting with great success, he would later state, "by nature I didn't feel a kindred spirit with OST. I painted very few easel paintings—two pictures a year. As a matter of fact I was doing completely different things so it was natural for me to want to leave OST . . . for October."<sup>6</sup> As a member of October, then, over the next couple of years he concentrated on his work as a graphic artist for mass publication.

His most innovative and widely visible work during the First Five-Year Plan was his successful entry into poster production. In the period from 1930 to 1933 Deineka published about fifteen posters, most of them deemed highly successful, on themes of socialist construction, physical culture and other Five-Year Plan propaganda topics. *We Are Mechanizing the Donbass!* of 1930 [cat. 159] captures the labor enthusiasm promoted by the rhetoric of the Plan in a visual language that—unusually among Deineka's posters—closely approximates the constructivist style of some of his October colleagues, in the way the figures of the miners are flattened and subsumed into the overall diagonal design. He was also heavily involved in the illustration of the short lived journal *Daesh'!* (pronounced "dayosh," and meaning "Let's Produce!," published only for the year 1929), a "social-political and literary-artistic" journal whose production was dominated by October members [see cat. 117–124]. *Daesh'* is well known to Western audiences of the avant-garde because of the participation of Mayakovsky and Rodchenko; Deineka's many drawings of Soviet workers and industry were consistently juxtaposed with Rodchenko's famous documentary photo essays on the same kinds of subjects, taken from unusual angles. Eventually, however, the journal began to insist on the superiority of the technologically-produced photograph over drawings, and Deineka stopped contributing. Similarly, when the October group finally, after many delays, held its first group exhibition in 1930, Deineka's graphic works were exhibited only "on the order of discussion," meaning that the organizers of the exhibition took their distance from them and presented them to viewers as debatable—a clear sign of the continuation of the old disagreements between the avant-garde and the "picture" artists. Deineka's hand-drawn figuration, however politically satirical and mass-

distributed, did not meet the productivist standards of the group.

Given his treatment by October, Deineka chose to leave the group and in 1931 submitted an application to be admitted to the powerful new Russian Association of Proletarian Artists (Rossiiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh khudozhnikov, RAPKh). This vituperative and combative group assumed a leading position in Soviet artistic life at this moment by embodying most fully the Cultural Revolution's rhetoric of class war. RAPKh artist and leader Lev Viazmenskii, for example, published an article in 1930 accusing the former OST artists of being anti-semitic, fascist and reactionary.<sup>7</sup> RAPKh divided all artists into three categories: fellow travelers; class enemies of the proletariat; and true proletarian artists. RAPKh immediately embraced Deineka, who was by now a well-known and highly regarded artist, for membership, but soon turned against him, accusing him of being apolitical and secretly reactionary, of "hiding his true political face behind the theme of sport."<sup>8</sup> They even questioned the purity of his proletarian class origins—a common Soviet practice in general at this time, during which class enemies were constantly being rooted out of workplaces and organizations.<sup>9</sup> Deineka rose above these denunciations and continued with his own work, and on April 23, 1932, a decree issued by the Central Committee of the Party disbanded all literary and artistic groups, including RAPKh, precisely in order to put a stop to the destructive and disruptive infighting. It instituted centralized professional unions, and Deineka soon joined the Moscow Division of the Union of Soviet Artists (Moskovskii Oblastnoi Soiuz Sovetskikh khudozhnikov, MOSSKh). This famous decree was one of the measures that signaled a shift in policy away from class war and Cultural Revolution as the First Five-Year Plan came to a close.

#### **"Life has become better, comrades, life has become more joyous – Stalin, 1935"**

The 1934 Party Congress was called the Congress of Victors, in celebration of the victory of socialism in the USSR through the successful industrialization drive accomplished under the First Five-Year Plan. A year later, at the first congress of Stakhanovites—workers who exceeded production targets, on the model of the miner Aleksei Stakhanov—Stalin famously declared "Life has become better, comrades, life has become more joyous" (*Zhit' stalo luchshe, tovarishchi, zhit' stalo veselee*), claiming that the worst travails of industrialization and collectivization were over, and Soviet citizens could now enjoy the fruits of their labor through consumption and cultured leisure. Proletarianization and class antagonism were out; promoting "culturedness" (*kul'turnost'*) among workers and the new Soviet elites was in. It was also this short period of the mid-1930s of relative calm, between the Cultural Revolution and the Great Terror that would follow, that saw the institution of socialist realism in 1934 as the art that would best express Soviet reality "in its revolutionary development"—meaning as it would become with the full advent of socialism. This period in many ways saw the peak of Deineka's status as a Soviet artist; although many successes would follow in his long career, they would always be interrupted and marred by the denunciations, demotions, and snubs orchestrated by the Soviet art bureaucracy. But at this time he was on the ascendant as one of the artists pointing the way toward what socialist realism



**FIG. 2.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Mother*, 1932  
Oil on canvas, 121 x 160.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow

might look like, whose images brimmed with the socialist confidence and pride that the country aimed to project.

In 1933, the huge exhibition *15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR* in Moscow, which was meant as both a summation and a decisive argument about the correct path forward for Soviet art, included a number of paintings by Deineka, both from his OST period and more recent works. Critics agreed with the curatorial framing of the exhibition, which clearly presented his work as one possible model for the future in opposition to the "dead end" of the avant-garde.<sup>10</sup> As one critic put it, "Deineka is above all an intelligent artist, with a great future."<sup>11</sup> This critical confidence in his future as a painter stemmed not only from his great OST canvases of the later 1920s, but also from the new, so-called "lyrical" painting style that he had begun to develop in a few canvases in 1931–32, alongside his poster work. Critics praised these paintings of young people in highly physical situations, usually of sport or play, as "joyful" (*radostnyi*) depictions of the "new person" or the "new woman" (*novyi chelovek, novaia zhenshchina*)<sup>12</sup>—precisely the new imagery of "cheerful" young people enjoying themselves that was meant to replace the stern workers of the First Five-Year Plan.

Deineka did not paint a lyrical picture like the *Ball Game* of 1932 [cat. 194] on a direct commission for an exhibition, a propaganda poster, a journal illustration, or on the basis of a paid *komandirovka* to a specific Soviet site. Rather, he seemed to sense, or even engineer, the changing ideal of the new Soviet person with his less overtly ideological subject matter and more painterly handling of sensuously charged bodies. Yet he was not operating like an artist in the West, inventing alone in his studio and hoping for a buyer. He was under contract with the organization Vsekhudozhnik, the central state commissioning agency, which entered into contracts with artists stipulating that a certain number of works be produced within a certain period of time in return for a monthly stipend (a system called *kontraktatsiia*)—



**FIGS. 3-5.** Photographs of Liudmilla (Liusia) Vtorova, 1930s. Courtesy of Evgeniia Vtorova

effectively supporting artists in good standing to produce independent works that would eventually be purchased by museums or distributed to the huge network of Soviet institutions.

But even with the freedom to work without direct commissions, what, we might ask, prompted Deineka to alter his pictorial form toward the painterly conjuring of sensuous bodies like those in the *Ball Game*? One obvious answer is that this was the moment when the concept of socialist realism was being formulated, as critics increasingly criticized any kind of “formalism” and the realist AKhRR artists dominated the painting section of the new Artists’ Union. In the usual top down understanding of the totalitarian model, we could assume that Deineka was coerced, either directly or indirectly, to modify his “severe graphic style”—or as Matthew Cullerne Bown put it, that he had “bent sufficiently in the prevailing wind.”<sup>13</sup> Given Deineka’s strong position as a widely employed and exhibited artist in the early 1930s, however, there is no evidence that he felt externally compelled to change his style. It is more likely that he understood, correctly, that the new system of socialist realism would promote not only more realist form, but also oil painting itself as the most valued medium, and that he therefore needed to retreat from his earlier statement that he did not

feel a “kindred spirit” with easel painting.<sup>14</sup> He chose to experiment with it to find different ways to pursue his long-standing interest in representing the new Soviet person, whose very body expressed his or her socialist being.

There is also a straightforward biographical explanation for the fascinated, close-up intimacy with the women’s bodies in the *Ball Game*: the model for the nude women in this painting, as well as for those in his paintings *Mother* (1932) [fig. 2] and *Bathing Girls* (1933), was the sixteen-year old champion long distance swimmer Liusia Vtorova, whom he met at the Dinamo sports complex in Moscow in 1932 and purportedly fell in love with [fig. 3-5].<sup>15</sup> Painting the broad-backed, muscular body of a specific, desired person rather than the anonymous workers or athletes of most of his previous works led him to tightly frame and crop the body in a dark, intimate space, as if leaning close to touch it, and even to replicate the body three times, in three positions, as if trying to grasp it. The stilled, dreamlike state of these bodies suggests erotic reverie more than sport, in spite of the painting’s title. Yet if we can identify a privatized intimacy in lyrical pictures like this, Deineka did not necessarily see them as separate from his other ways of working. This is evidenced by the fact that he also used Liusia’s image in two highly



**FIG. 6.** Photograph of Deineka taken at a photo studio in New York, 1935, with a dedication to his mother and sister: "Hello Marfa Nikitichna and An'ka from your prodigal son and brother. AD!"

public commissioned works from this time that more closely resemble his usual laconic, graphic style: for the central figure in his 1933 poster known as the *Fizkul'turnitsa* (Female physical culturist) [cat. 197] with the official title *Work, Build and Don't Whine!*, and for the young women on the right of his 1934 oil sketch for one of four murals for the National Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem), on the theme of the *Conversation of the Collective Farm Brigade* [cat. 223]. The beloved, athletic body of Liusia Vtorova stretched across the different genres of his work, as did his idealism about or even obsession with the new Soviet person—the leitmotif that explains his relatively seamless transition into becoming one model of a socialist realist artist.

The *Collective Farm Brigade* mural sketch is a work of socialist realism proper, for better or for worse. He painted it in 1934, when socialist realism was adopted as the official style of Soviet art. No one was certain what this style would actually look like, and it would be debated constantly in the meetings of MOSSKh over the next few years, but it was clear that it would mean some kind of substantial, resolved model of realist painting that would be adequate to the achievements of socialism. To argue the "better" side of this socialist realist work, we can see Deineka successfully struggling here formally to synthesize

his different painting and graphic styles to achieve this kind of adequacy. Like many of his graphics and graphic-inspired paintings, it shows a frieze of worker figures in an overtly political situation, occupying a flattened and highly short-hand pictorial space; yet more like his lyrical paintings, it brings us in close to the figures and places them into a jewel-colored setting in relaxed, almost dreamy interactive poses, evoking the beauty and "cheerfulness" of the better life to come under socialism. Structurally, Deineka did not choose the subject matter freely, but responded to a specific commission for four mural designs on the subject of "The Revolution in the Village"—a constraint that here was a productive one, resulting in a taut, inventive composition.

The argument for the "worse" side of this socialist realist painting usually trumps all, however: what makes this a picture of "reality in its revolutionary development" rather than actual Soviet reality is the fundamental untruthfulness of its representation of harmony and plenty on the collective farm. As is now well known, the Soviet collectivization of agriculture was brutal and ineffective, resulting in peasant protest and large-scale famine. The picture raises the primary ethical problem for us as viewers of socialist realism: do we follow the totalitarian model and reject it because it unavoidably forms part of a po-

litical system that wreaked unspeakable havoc on its own population in the name of socialism? Or do we accept it as an earnest pictorial fantasy of what collective political conversation might look like in the bright future, worked out within a complex set of artistic constraints that make for a compelling work of art? Unlike totalitarianism, this second model has the advantage of granting Deineka agency as an artist who actively produced socialist realist imagery. As an urban artist based in Moscow, Deineka would not have known of the worst abuses of collectivization, because they were not reported, and when he was sent to a collective farm on a *komandirovka* as part of the commission, it was to one of the better "model" farms. But even when faced with evidence of the worst abuses of the regime, many Soviet citizens in the 1930s believed the rhetoric that class enemies had sabotaged sincere government efforts, that sacrifice was necessary to achieve socialism, and that no matter what, life in the USSR was still better than the poverty and oppression endured by most people under capitalism. Someone like Deineka, whose entire adult artistic output had been shaped by Soviet socialism, would not hesitate to take on the subject matter assigned to him under the socialist realist system, whether or not he had any personal doubts. Neither a dupe nor a ruthless opportunist, he was finding a way to work successfully in his given circumstances and to pursue his chosen imagery, or fantasy, of the new Soviet person.

One of the most significant signs of Deineka's favor within the Soviet art system at this time was the decision to send him on the mother of all *komandirovkas*: all the way to the United States, as official representative of the exhibition *The Art of Soviet Russia* that would open in December 1934 at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art in Philadelphia. This was an extraordinary privilege at a time when travel to the West had largely ceased for Soviet citizens. As his letters and written accounts from the trip show, Deineka arrived in the United States confident that he was there to represent a vital new form of socialist art and culture, and to judge American art and culture by its standards—no matter that he spoke no English and had never traveled abroad before. Five of his paintings were in the *Art of Soviet Russia* exhibition, including his other three Narkomzem mural designs and his spectacular canvas *The Goalkeeper* of 1934 [cat. 199], in which a soccer goalie seen from behind hurtles horizontally across the elongated picture surface, suspended in mid-air. American audiences and critics were enthusiastic about his paintings, some comparing him to the American artist Thomas Hart Benton, and he held three small, well-reviewed solo shows of his works on paper while in the States.<sup>16</sup> He avidly sketched everything he saw, especially aspects of American technological modernity: not only the skyscrapers of New York and Philadelphia, but also the well kept roads and abundant automobiles [see cat. 220–221]. Yet in spite of his enthusiasm for American technology, architecture and art, and the warm receptions he experienced in almost three months spent in Philadelphia, New York, Washington and Baltimore from December 1934 to March 1935 [fig. 6], he longed to return home, and still came away with a sense of the superiority of the USSR and its art. In a 1935 speech at a MOSSKh debate, he praised the art of "our new country, our new people," which he contrasted positively to art in the West (his trip to the States was followed by shorter stays in Paris and Rome). "I told people that our artists travel around the country, they fly, they paint aviation themes . . .



**FIG. 7.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Stakhanovites*, 1937  
 Oil on canvas, 126 x 200 cm  
 Perm State Art Gallery

this was simply astonishing to them, because not a single artist outside of our borders addresses these questions. They just keep on painting still lifes and portraits of bourgeois ladies. In this sense we are pioneers and in this sense people will learn from us.”<sup>17</sup>

Deineka’s greatest triumph of this period was his solo exhibition in Moscow at the end of 1935, encompassing 119 of his works. He chose to exhibit only newer works, including many of his paintings based on subjects from his trip abroad, and major paintings based on his *komandirovka* to collective farms in the Donbass region in the summer of 1935, such as his great *Collective Farm Woman on a Bicycle* [cat. 225]. Characteristically innovative in composition, with the woman in her day-glo red dress pasted against a flat, bright green landscape, it also offered an idealistic, if not directly untruthful vision of life on the collective farm: few farms actually owned the kind of combine harvester visible in the distance, and the bicycle was a scarce and highly desired consumer item in the strapped Soviet 1930s, distributed as a prized reward to only the most over-achieving workers and collective farmers. A number of critics cautioned that some of the works in Deineka’s show, like this one, were overly “schematic”—a code word for “formalist”—but mostly they praised his inventiveness and originality. Over twenty-five notices and reviews of the show appeared in the newspapers, and it was hailed as one of the most important art events of the season. The exhibition moved on to Leningrad

in early 1936, and it seemed that Deineka was on top of the Soviet art world—his life, for one, had in fact become better and more joyous with the advent of the established Soviet art system.

#### The Great Terror

As for so many Soviet citizens, Deineka’s period of “joyousness” came to an abrupt end in 1936, with the advent of the period of denunciations and purges known as the *Ezhovshchina* or Great Terror, which lasted from 1936 to 1938. The 1934 Party Congress that had been called the Congress of Victors would come to be known as the Congress of the Condemned, because well over half of the party members present would be arrested during the Great Terror, and about two thirds of those executed. The first of the famous show trials was conducted in August 1936, resulting in the conviction and execution of former party leaders Grigorii Zinov’ev and Lev Kamenev. The art world was set on edge already in early 1936 by the campaign against formalism, initiated by a series of editorial attacks on artists in a variety of media (music, ballet and architecture as well as painting) published in the newspaper *Pravda*. Just a few months after the success of Deineka’s solo exhibition, the article “Against Formalism in Art” in the June 1936 issue of the journal *Pod znamenem marksizma* singled him out as an artist influenced by formalism, criticizing in particular his *Defense of Petrograd*—until then considered one of the undisputed master works of Soviet art. At a meeting at the Tretyakov

Gallery in October, Deineka spoke out against this unpredictable, witch hunt atmosphere, stating that in other countries “once paintings are hung in a museum, it is not with the concern that eventually they will be removed because an artist may be a genius today but a nobody tomorrow.”<sup>18</sup> Rendered vulnerable by these public attacks, Deineka would have been particularly anxious as the atmosphere in MOSSKh became really contentious in 1937, with accusations of being Trotskyites and Bukharinites slung back and forth between former members of the AKhRR and October groups, and with increasing numbers of arrests of artists, especially the administrators of the various art organizations.<sup>19</sup> Touching him personally, his colleague and sometime friend Gustavs Klucis, with whom he had worked closely in the poster section of MOSSKh, was arrested in early 1938 (it would later emerge that he was killed soon after his arrest), and Deineka’s first spouse, the artist Pavla Freiburg, was also arrested that year and would die during her imprisonment a few months later.<sup>20</sup>

Deineka would not, in fact, be purged or arrested during the Great Terror, and in the capricious atmosphere, in spite of the attacks against him, he was offered the high-profile commission of painting a giant mural for the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris International Exhibition, scheduled to open in May 1937. The mural itself is now lost, but an oil sketch, *Stakhanovites* [fig. 7], shows rows of handsome figures dressed mostly in white, striding toward the viewer—yet another celebration, this one destined for foreign



**FIG. 8.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Defense of Sevastopol*, 1942  
 Oil on canvas, 148 x 164 cm  
 State Russian Museum  
 Saint Petersburg

viewers, of the rewards of socialist labor. The work could easily be described as formalist, holding true to Deineka's usual practice in the lack of fussy narrative or painterly detail, intense color contrasts of red and dark brown against the shimmering white, and the overall blankness of the space and the figures. Although his production of a work at this time that could easily be accused of formalism might strike us as surprising, flatness and decorativeness were to a certain extent acceptable, even desirable, in the context of monumental wall paintings. Further, Deineka had proven himself popular with Western audiences, and therefore was an expedient choice for the commission. He was promised a *komandirovka* to the Paris Exhibition to install his mural, and a visa was even in preparation for him, but at the last minute it was voided and his trip was canceled. Other artists interpreted this as a sign of his vulnerability, as the artist Valentina Kulagina, wife of Klucis, reported in her diary.

Continuing the up and down cycle, shortly after the cancellation of his Paris trip, in July 1937, he was commissioned to produce two works for the major exhibition *20 Years of the Workers and Peasants Red Army (RKKA) and the Navy*, slated for 1938. One of them was his popular canvas *Future Pilots* [cat. 233], and in this work we can see, for one of the first times, Deineka bowing to the anti-formalist pressure by setting his figures firmly into a readable and detailed three-dimensional space—or as close to such a space as Deineka was capable of rendering. The boys

are sitting on a step at a measurable distance from the concrete breakwater barrier that curves around in front of them, the foreground space is carefully set up on a diagonal, and the sea is studded with frothing waves. As a whole the painting is still vintage Deineka, however, with its wide almost monochrome expanses and, most significantly, the tender bodies of the naked and partially naked boys, slim and suntanned, his Soviet people of the future. Idyllic as the picture appears to be, it also captures the anxiety in the country as it prepared for the coming war: the scene is the Crimea, the southern border from which an attack by sea would come, and the older boy on the right seems to be instructing the younger boys about the hydroplanes taking off and landing, which may represent coast guard planes, patrolling the border.<sup>21</sup> Deineka was also commissioned to produce thirty-five mosaic panels on the theme of *Days and Nights in the Land of the Soviets* for the vaults and platform of the Maiakovskaia Metro station, which was inaugurated in September 1938. The commission was a significant honor, and also represented Deineka's first foray into mosaics—a medium of the monumental-decorative art that would increasingly occupy his career, and which allowed him to escape from the constant indictment of his painting for formalism. As yet another example of this, three of his paintings were included in the massive *Industry of Socialism* exhibition that opened in 1939, but they were ominously passed over in complete silence in the critical reception, and were not included as

stops in the official tours of the exhibition. In the unseemly manner of Soviet exhibitions at that time, even the introductory essay to the catalogue—which illustrated Deineka’s pictures—accused Deineka once again of “schematism.”<sup>22</sup>

## Second World War

The war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, initiated by the German invasion on June 22, 1941, was called the Great Patriotic War. The effects on the Soviet Union were devastating, with a staggering total of over twenty million military and civilian deaths. Few families were untouched by the violence; the German army captured Kursk, where Deineka’s mother and sister lived, and his mother died during the long occupation, in October 1942. Yet the advent of the war would also prove perversely advantageous for Deineka: he was able to move out from under the cloud of accusations and snubs against him and work his way back into the fold of favored artists through the patriotism demanded by war. He stayed in Moscow for most of the war, rather than evacuating to a safer location, and traveled to the front lines to sketch the troops defending the city. In 1941–42 he participated, as he had during the Civil War, in producing military propaganda posters for the Okna TASS, leading a brigade of poster artists, and he painted a series of stark cityscapes and landscapes chronicling the war. Following the defeat of his beloved Crimean city of Sevastopol in the summer of 1942, he was commissioned by the Council of People’s Commissars to complete the enormous canvas *Defense of Sevastopol* [fig. 8], which was exhibited in Moscow in early 1943 and immediately became an icon of Soviet patriotism. By the summer of 1943 his strong position in the Soviet art world had clearly been cemented again, when thirty-two of his recent works were included in an exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery featuring six major Soviet artists. In 1945 he was sent to accompany Soviet troops into Berlin to document the fallen city, and that same year he was appointed director of the new Moscow Institute for Applied and Decorative Arts (Moskovskii institut prikladnogo i dekorativnogo iskusstvo, MIPIDI). His rehabilitation was seemingly complete.

## High Stalinism

The final years of Stalin’s rule, from the end of the Second World War to his death in 1953, are referred to as High Stalinism—a period marked by extreme conformity and conservatism in culture, and by the strong anti-westernism that defined the initial years of the Cold War. Cultural policies shifted radically, and Deineka again found himself under attack. He had been named director of MIPIDI, for example, during the brief period of 1945–46 that is known as the mini-thaw, when wartime contact with the West opened up discussion about the Soviet system, including the arts. Already in the fall of 1946, however, the Party issued three hard-line decrees defending an anti-modernist, anti-Western, and explicitly academic position in the arts, and Deineka and other “liberal” artists began to be criticized in the art press once again for schematism and formalism.

His 1947 painting *Donbass* [cat. 243], supposedly based on sketches he made that year on a *komandirovka* to the region, can be read as a concerted attempt to counter his critics by making the kind of academic and traditionally realistic *kartina*, or large scale picture, that was then most valued by the art establishment. Compared to his rendering of essentially the exact same subject of two women workers in

his much earlier *Building New Factories*, this painting is far more orderly in its depiction of the spatial coordinates of the factory setting and far more realistic, even prosaic, in its rendering of details of the young women’s costumes and poses. Deineka has tamed the charged fervor conveyed by his earlier terse, graphic style to get down to the workaday task of a more finished realism. And the workaday was precisely the subject matter: this is a picture not of the ecstatic fantasy of industrialization of the 1920s, but of a by-now long industrialized country exhausted from war, steadily going about the business of living up to its new status as a superpower. While Deineka had depicted women workers in his major canvases before, here the significance is pointed: the young women are working because a whole generation of young men was lost in the war. Glimpses of Deineka’s former style erupt from this more conventionally-structured picture, such as the flattened silhouettes of the workers up above on the bridge, the bright acid hues of the pink scarf and yellow dress, that triangular yellow breast knowingly fitted perfectly into the bridge. In fact the entire composition can’t help but form a tightly-ordered surface pattern of verticals, diagonals and the slicing horizontal of the bridge, giving it what we might call a proto-pop sensibility. The harsh constraints of the socialist realism of High Stalinism have made him dilute his former style, but an unexpectedly compelling form of modern realism takes its place.

We might recognize something modern and effective about this admittedly less than successful attempt at academic realism, but contemporary critics did not; this kind of picture did not head off the attacks on Deineka’s formalism. A February 1948 resolution taken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party itself against the formalism of an opera by Vano Muradeli initiated a renewed campaign against formalism in all the arts. The campaign reached MIPIDI, and by October 1948 Deineka was essentially forced into stepping down from his position as director (he would continue in his position as chair of the department of decorative sculpture). His ouster from the center of Soviet art was quite complete: over the next nine years, until 1957, Deineka would be given very few official commissions, he would be rarely exhibited, and he would receive little attention in the press. He had to take on additional teaching jobs, including one at the Moscow textile institute. In the absence of the official commissions for publicly-oriented works that had structured his artistic production throughout his career, his pictorial output would be increasingly dominated by landscapes, still lifes, portraits and domestic scenes—the traditional genres of the artist working for the market, but in this case there was none. His extraordinary *Self-Portrait* of 1948 [cat. 1] can be read as a defiant pictorial attempt to disavow the inadequacy he felt as a result of this cruel marginalization. Deineka had never been tall (he was about 1.70 meters), and at the age of forty-nine, as photographs attest, he in no way resembled the long, lean, muscular and movie-star handsome man depicted here, with his robe suggestively slipping off one massive shoulder.

In one of the rare commissions that he received during this period, for a painting on the theme of *The Opening of the Kolkhoz Electric Station* [cat. 244] for the *All-Union Agricultural Exhibition* in Moscow in 1952, we can observe him continuing to try to conform to the demands that would allow him back into the fold. He went against his own usual method of working, which involved making sketches in nature

and then painting in his studio, to instead attempt to paint from nature—in other words, he attempted to fundamentally transform his own method. The painting was well-received by critics, but he considered it a failure. “There is neither conviction nor simplicity in this picture,” he wrote, “and it’s too bad, because the theme is a good one. But I failed to find something important and essential. And the color is somehow harsh . . . the picture did not succeed.”<sup>23</sup> These plaintive words, in which he internalizes the usual criticism against him even in an instance when the critics themselves did not make it, offer a melancholy conclusion to this story of the dramatically shifting course of the history of Soviet art.

## Coda: The Thaw and the Cold War

Although the exhibition ends with the 1952 Kolkhoz Electric Station, painted in the moment of High Stalinism one year before Stalin’s death in 1953, Deineka’s story thankfully does not. By 1956 Nikita Khrushchev’s Thaw was well underway, and Deineka was slowly being rehabilitated. In 1957 he was nominated for the title of People’s Artist of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic, and he was given a solo exhibition—his first since 1936—with over 270 works. Reviews of his exhibition were numerous and uniformly positive: he was again anointed as one of the most important Soviet artists. He occupied a particular place in the Soviet imaginary during the Thaw as the artist who best mirrored the Soviet state’s fantasy of itself: the critic Nataliia Sokolova, writing in *Trudiashchikhsia SSSR*, entitled her review “The Artist of Modernity” (also the title of the review of his exhibition in *Literaturnaia gazeta* [Literary Newspaper]) and claimed that “It is as if the artist is saying with his works, How beautiful and harmonious is the Soviet person!” The univalent positive criticism of Deineka’s 1957 exhibition suggests that a decision had been made to “package” Deineka as an exemplary modern, Soviet artist. The fall of 1956 was a jittery time for Soviet authorities: anxiety followed the Hungarian uprising and the revelations of Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” revealing Stalin’s crimes, and within the art establishment in particular, the successful Picasso exhibition that had taken place in Moscow in the fall of 1956 led to a worry about the young Soviet artists who had responded so positively to it.<sup>24</sup> Deineka’s 1957 exhibition would help to defuse the unrest, at least in the art world. The repeated declaration of his “modernity” was a form of ideological cooptation: if Deineka represented contemporaneity, it was less threatening than Picasso, who represented the decadent West in the context of the Cold War. “Packaged” or not, however, the exhibition inaugurated Deineka’s return to the top of the Soviet art world: he would go on to hold many more exhibitions, garner many more prizes and honors, and travel abroad several times before his death in 1969. The positive response to his exhibition indicated that audiences once again were in a position to understand his goal of evoking the “beautiful and harmonious Soviet person,” however much that person, and Deineka’s fantasy of it, might have changed since the earliest moments of the Revolution.

1. Letter from Henri Matisse, published in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, February 11, 1934; cited in “Khronika zhizni Aleksandra Deineki. Opyt rekonstruktsii,” in *Deineka. Zhivopis* (Moscow: Interros, 2010), under 1934, 67.  
2. Vladimir Sysoev, ed., *A. Deineka, Zhizn’, iskusstvo, vremia* (Leningrad: 1974), 48.  
3. See for example Osip Brik, “From Picture to Calico-Print,” in *Art in Theory 1900–1990*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 324–28 (originally published in *Lef* 6 [1924]).



4. David Aranovich, "Sovremmenye khudozhestvennye gruppirovki," *Krasnaia nov' 6* (1925).
5. *Bezbozhnik u stanka* 10 (1928).
6. Aleksandr Deineka, in a lecture given about his work at the Club of Masters of the Arts, Moscow, January 29, 1933, cited in Boris Nikiforov, *A. Deineka* (Moscow: Izogiz, 1937), 42.
7. *Iskusstvo v massy* 2, 1930, cited in V. Kostin, *OST (Obshchestvo stankov-istov)* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1976), 137.
8. Deineka, lecture at the Club of Masters of the Arts 1933, cited in Nikiforov, 66 (see note 6).
9. For a discussion of RPKh's treatment of Deineka, see Vladimir Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1989) 85.
10. On the 15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR exhibitions, see Masha Chlenova, "On Display: Transformations of the Avant-Garde in Soviet Public Culture, 1928–33" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2010).
11. Boris Efimov, "Reshenie temy," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* (June 14, 1933).
12. See the critics S. Semenov and O. Bubnova, writing in 1933, cited in the *Khronika*, 63.
13. Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Art under Stalin* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1991), 119.
14. Susan Reid discusses the significance of the premium placed on oil painting under socialist realism in her essays "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57 (1998): 133–73, and "Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The Industry of Socialism Art Exhibition, 1935–41," *The Russian Review*, vol. 60, no. 2 (April 2001): 153–84.
15. On Liusia Vtorova and her relationship to Deineka see Christina Kiaer, "The Swimming Vtorova Sisters: The Representation and Experience of Soviet Sport in the 1930s," in *Euphoria and Exhaustion: Modern Sport in Soviet Culture and Society*, ed. Sandra Budy, Nikolaus Katzer, Alexandra Köhring and Manfred Zeller (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 2010), 89–109. The photographs of Liusia Vtorova reproduced here, with permission, are taken from the photo album of her sister Evgeniia Vtorova, another champion Soviet swimmer.
16. On Deineka's trip to the United States, see Christina Kiaer, "Modern Soviet Art Meets America, 1935," in *Totalitarian Art and Modernity*, co-ed. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jacob Wamberg, 241–82 (Århus, Denmark: Århus University Press, 2010).
17. Archive of the Moscow Artists' Union (MOSSKh), Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), f. 2943, op. 1, d. 41, 35.
18. RGALI, f. 990, op. 2, d. 10, 23–24, cited in the *Khronika*, 1936, 104.
19. On the purges in the art world, see Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 201–3.
20. Klucis and Freiburg were both victims of the persecution of Latvian nationals.
21. This reading of the painting in terms of military defense is offered by Mike O'Mahoney, *Sport in the USSR: Physical Culture-Visual Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 122–24.
22. Aleksandr Zotov and Petr Sysoev, "Vstupitel'naia stat'ia," *Industriia sotsializma* (Moscow, 1940), 18.
23. Aleksandr Deineka, "Iz moei rabochei praktiki" [1961], reprinted in Vladimir Petrovich Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1989), 63.
24. On the anxiety of the Soviet art authorities during the Thaw, see Susan E. Reid, "Masters of the Earth: Gender and Destalinisation in Soviet Reformist Painting of the Khrushchev Thaw," *Gender & History* vol. 11, no. 2 (July 1999), 276–312.

# **Socialist Realism or the Collectivization of Modernism**

Ekaterina Degot



“W

ithout Malevich socialist realism is not possible,”<sup>1</sup> asserted the employees of the Russian Museum in Leningrad when the threat of expulsion hung over Kazimir Malevich’s paintings. This phrase is now perceived as rhetorical subterfuge, but the people who wrote it were not only sincere, they were absolutely correct: not only was socialist realism impossible, but it would not have existed without Malevich.

The simple, if not to say naive, understanding of society as split between communists and their victims as formulated during the Cold War both inside and outside the USSR obscures the numerous instances when a transition from the avant-garde to socialist realism occurred within the framework of the creativity of a single artist. The avant-garde past of famous socialist realists (Georgii Riazhskii, Evgenii Kibrik, Fedor Bogorodskii) remains unnoticed, as do the later figurative objects of the classics of the avant-garde: Stalin’s portrait in the work of Pavel Filonov, the post-montage photographs of El Lissitzky and Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Malevich’s “realistic” portraits of the 1930s.

The aesthetic and institutional evolution of Soviet art from its Leninist period to the Stalinist period that began—approximately—with the “great rupture” of 1929 still awaits in-depth investigation. The predominant version remains that of the violent conversion of artists toward figurative representation and the forced unification into a single Union of Soviet Artists. This version absolutizes the differences between abstract and figurative art (transposing a Cold War antithesis to the Russian avant-garde, whose protagonists would never have thought in such terms) and idealizes the modern system of artistic institutions in which the artist ostensibly preserves complete critical freedom. In fact, in the USSR by the beginning of the 1930s, art—as well as the work of art and the

artist himself—had a completely different status than in the classical modernist system. However, this status is very familiar and comprehensible to anyone living in today’s global world.

Art is the industrial production of images of dreams; the artist is a collectivized artist who understands his activity not as individual self-expression, but as a service in a large corporate system; the network of institutions is rooted not in the sale of a single work to an individual consumer, but in the mass distribution of visual images.

#### From Project to Projection

The years 1913–15 are generally considered to be the revolutionary epoch in the history of the Russian avant-garde, years that engendered a few innovative theoretical artistic programs, such as the abstraction of Wassily Kandinsky, the counter reliefs of Vladimir Tatlin, the suprematism of Malevich. In all of these cases, what was discussed were the *projects*, that is, phenomena in which concept is no less important than implementation, and where implementation is never really finished, since the project automatically implies a potential for development.

However, this was only a prelude to another artistic revolution that has remained unnoticed to this day. In 1919, during the height of his white suprematist period, Malevich announced that he did not see the need to make paintings any more, and that he intended “only to preach.”<sup>2</sup> Although, as we know, Malevich did paintings after this, however it is worth taking his pronouncement seriously: he really did not create works of art any more, having reoriented himself toward the “sermon,” in other words the theory.

Around 1919 the total disappearance of a market for material goods in Soviet Russia radically challenged the necessity of producing objects of art and identified the artistic gesture with media distribution of aesthetic ideas. It was precisely at this moment

PAGE 69. Detail of CAT. 168

Aleksandra Ekster  
*Design for a Mechanical  
 Engineering Pavilion, 1923*  
 Private collection [cat. 32]



that Rodchenko announced that “it is not painting that is important, what is important is creativity . . . Neither canvases nor paint will be necessary, and future creativity, perhaps with the aid of that same radium, via some sort of invisible pulverizers, will burn their creations directly into the walls, and these—without paint, brushes, canvases—will burn with extraordinary, still unknown colors.”<sup>3</sup> Numerous radio—and now we would say tele—broadcasting projects have come to us from these years, the most famous of which was Tatlin’s Monument to the Third International (1919–20). In her stage sets, Liubov Popova moved from appellation to abstraction (*The Magnificent Cuckold*, 1912) and then to images projected on the stage (in particular, photographs of Trotsky; *Earth on End*, 1923). At that time Malevich was referring to his own activity as the projection of “images on the negative” (into the heads of his pupils).<sup>4</sup>

The identification of art with the gesture of projection, physical or metaphysical, cannot be understood outside of a connection with the key metaphor of the Russian avant-garde, which found its expression in the mystery play *Victory over the Sun* by Aleksei Kruchenykh and Kazimir Malevich (1913). If art defeats the sun, then it migrates into a different zone (for Kruchenykh, a country), a zone of artificial light. In classical aesthetics, art is engendered by light (typical metaphors for art are shadow or reflection), but in the modernist aesthetic, art itself is artificial light. Before us is not a two-part classical model of “reality + art as its reflection,” but rather a three-part one that includes the origin of light (emancipation of art), a certain image that is permeated with this light, and the projection of this image on a plane, a screen, that is physical (as in the sceneographs of Popova), mental (as by Malevich) or social (as by artists of the constructivist circle). The original is inserted into reality, being transformed at that moment into one or, more often, many projections or copies. This scheme differs from the early purely modernist project by the emergence of the visual image—although it has a completely different status than in classical art.

In 1919 Rodchenko identifies creativity with the light of a candle, a lamp, an electric light bulb, and, in the future, radium, and asserts that “what remains is only the essence—to illuminate.” The question about what image is projected with this light does not even arise at all. The original, like a negative, is transparent, invisible: it is merely an idea, the minimal form (as in abstract painting of light rays in the air that was planned





Mikhail Razulevich  
*Ten Years without Lenin*, 1933  
 Photomontage, 22.9 x 49.7 cm  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

in those years by Rodchenko's comrade-in-arms Olga Rozanova). In 1927 Malevich, having turned to figurative painting, asserts something that is already a bit different: the depiction is like the button or socket in relation to the current.<sup>5</sup> The only function accessible to the work of art is that of the manifestation of the substance of art—its inclusion or exclusion—via the use of a familiar code; images emerge finished, already existing in the consciousness of the artist, or in the history of his creativity. After 1920, the paintings of Malevich acquired the status of illustrations of his “prophesies” (theories), and as illustrations they are located outside the concepts of original and copy. Malevich replicated his *Black Square* several times, but for didactic not commercial goals. Malevich created a number of impressionist works as visual examples, and only recently has it become known that they were made not at the start of the century, but after suprematism, at the end of the 1920s.<sup>6</sup> Malevich took inspiration from motifs of his early paintings, and he would sometimes give the new works names such as *Motif of 1909*. We are not talking about copies or forgeries, but about new projections about copies or forgeries, but about new projections of old originals, about inserting them into a new social context. So the approbation of any style becomes possible, including the realism of the nineteenth century. During those same years, Malevich wrote a note about X-rays which said that they provide “the possibility of penetrating inside an object, while not destroying its external shell.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, the original through which the substance of art-light passes does not necessarily have to be transparent: if art is X-rays, then the work does not have to be pure and bare, like an abstract painting; it can represent a dense, massive (in terms of painting) “realistic” painting. This is precisely what Malevich’s paintings gradually become, as do the works of many other artists.

By “projection onto the negative” Malevich understood a certain speculative circulation of art. However, in the USSR since the beginning of the 1920s a generation of artists had already been maturing for whom projection meant circulation in the literal sense, mass distribution in social space. Such an understanding of projection was elaborated by the post-constructivist group of students in the Higher Arts and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS) who called themselves “projectionists” (the theorist of this group, Kliment Red’ko, signified this technique of realization of artistic concepts by the word *kino* in 1922–24).<sup>8</sup> What was discussed was the insertion of certain models into everyday life, on the basis of which the masses were supposed to organize their lives. The work of the artist was considered not to be these models themselves, but rather primarily the method of projection.

This definition of one’s art as a method, rather than as a collection or specific visual forms, literally coincides with the self-definition of socialist realism, whose theoreticians were always announcing that this was a method and not a style. In the 1930s, participants of the projectionists group—Kliment Red’ko, Solomon Nikritin, Sergei Luchishkin, Aleksandr Tyshler—became active (although criticized) adapters of socialist realism. Although socialist realism is usually perceived as a doctrine rigidly demanding a specific style from the artist, the external appearance of a work is secondary in relation to the work’s function—instantaneous mass dissemination. The technology of this dissemination was even defined by the avant-garde: in 1921 Velimir Khlebnikov foresaw letters and images “on dark canvases of enormous books, larger than buildings, that had sprouted up on village squares, slowly turning their

pages,” transmitted from the main “Radio Tower” via “light blows.”<sup>9</sup> Khlebnikov’s utopia rather precisely describes contemporary electronic advertising billboards; but it was precisely this role that was performed in the USSR by posters and paintings. One of the most important genres in the USSR, which was also pursued by the masters of the avant-garde (for example, Malevich’s pupil Nikolai Suetin) was the panorama and diorama. Today we would refer to them as multi-media installations utilizing light effects and images projected onto a concave surface. However, this system, which combined a discursive, ideological foundation with visual material, also drew in easel painting—namely as reproduction.

From the very beginning, Soviet art was formed as the art of mass distribution, indifferent to the original. Included in its system were the poster, design books, cinematography, photography. But easel painting was also integrated here—in the form of mass reproductions in postcards, magazines, textbooks. Precisely the reproduction, and not the original, is the classic work of socialist realism: stories about polar explorers (or milkmaids) asking the artist to give them a painting of their labor clearly attest to how the manual production of a canvas was viewed only as the preparation for reproduction. Publishing houses and magazines constituted the Soviet artistic system, just as galleries did in the Western system. A painting was exhibited in a museum as an original in the sense that was imparted to this word back in the eighteenth century: as a model for copying, by machine or by hand. The Academy of the Arts of the USSR was reconstituted in 1947 as an institute for creating such normative models. The state bought paintings for museums with precisely the same intentions as when selecting negatives from photographers working in the news agencies—in order to preserve the possibility of subsequent reproduction. A portion of the negatives, like a portion of the paintings, remained with the authors themselves in a kind of “creative kitchen,” and the state was not very interested in them at all (even if this was abstract painting or other experiments): this planted the seeds for the subsequent formation of unofficial art.

The bizarre mimicry of painting and photography, of original and copy, in this artistic system was captured in an anonymous magazine picture of the Stalinist period. A young soldier is finishing a painting that the reader of the magazine should recognize: this is the textbook Russian landscape of the nineteenth century, Aleksei Savrasov’s *The Rooks Have Landed*. The involuntary comical nature of this scene rests in the fact that the soldier has apparently executed the landscape from his imagination. The original from which he is copying is not to be seen, yet common sense suggests that the soldier’s original is not the painting in the State Tretyakov Gallery, but a reproduction thereof. This is the ideal work of art as conceptualized by Soviet aesthetics. The hand of the artist moves by a force that projects a finished image into his consciousness in such a way that any memory of the fact of copying is suppressed—it is as though he is painting over the reproduction with his own brush. In the actual photograph the fact of projection is erased by coarse retouching. From the painting a photo-reproduction has been made, from which the soldier has copied the painting. His painting was then in turn photographed along with its author, and then this photograph was retouched in such a way that it became almost a painting itself, and then it was reproduced again, this time on the page of a magazine, and subsequently, this photograph



Kazimir Malevich  
*Suprematist Composition*, 1915  
 Fondation Beyeler  
 Riehen, Basel [cat. 6]



Scarf printed with a portrait of Stalin, 1937  
Silk, 68.5 x 56.5 cm  
Fundación José María Castañé

Gustavs Klucis  
*We Will Transform the Five-Year Plan into a Four-Year Plan*, 1930  
Collection Merrill C. Berman  
[cat. 142]



Embroidered copy of the portrait of Stalin by Gerasimov, 1948  
Fabric, 81.5 x 71.3 cm  
Fundación José María Castañé

in turn could be hung on the wall in some soldiers' club, like a painting. This infinite chain equates the painting copied from a photograph with a photograph of a painting—and these were indeed the two most widespread genres in Soviet art.

#### Corporation USSR

By the end of the 1920s the USSR had developed a system that defined artists in a mass—rather than singular—system, as employees of a medial state apparatus to be sent out to the plants and factories. Such was the status of artists of the Left Front of the Arts (LEF) group, but the first to achieve this status was the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR). Immediately after the revolution this was a modest commercial enterprise founded by a group of young realist painters. In 1922, after their association suffered a financial crisis, they offered their services to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. They were told to go to the working masses, but at first misunderstood the request, and arranged an exhibition and sale of drawings made in factories (which was, of course, unsuccessful). After this experience the group's leader, Evgenii Katsman, changed course toward exhibitions of reproductions. Although members of AKhRR also managed to sell their works to representatives of power (for example, Kliment Voroshilov) personally, their main activity consisted of thematic exhibitions where they would display paintings along with documents (for the first time at the *Lenin's Corner* exhibition in 1923) and in active publishing work (AKhRR published postcards

in print runs of millions). AKhRR recognized that the role of the artist understood as a journalistic role, as an ideological designer, required above all corporate solidarity and loyalty. Unknown in the artistic world of classical modernism (in its idealized form), these qualities are, however, very well known today in our world of contemporary mass visual forms—advertising, design and television—that actively and even aggressively merge with gallery art. Admittedly, though, in the USSR artists had no choice but to pursue the production of mass visual forms.

On April 23, 1932, the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)—as the Party was renamed in 1925—published a resolution “On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations” (see D53), which is considered to mark the beginning of the Stalinist period of Soviet art. Liberal Russian art historians usually interpret this as the victory of the proletarian line over the intelligentsia, as a repression against artistic groups in Moscow and Leningrad that had preserved the pre-revolutionary traditions. However, the resolution itself actually calls for the dissolution of purely proletarian, class-oriented organizations (such as the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, RAPP) and the unification of artists and writers who “support the platform of Soviet power.” There is much evidence that the resolution was widely accepted with enthusiasm and a sense of liberation, because the artists felt that the larger umbrella of the Union of Artists would offer greater opportunities. Structurally, the Union of Artists united the various tendencies to which every artist had belonged until then.

Artistic groupings, uniting artists who would organize joint exhibitions, defined the Soviet scene during the 1920s. Some of them attempted to continue the pre-revolutionary practice aimed at the private market, and to sell paintings from exhibitions (Jack of Diamonds resurrected its pre-revolutionary commercial enterprise under the name of Moscow Painters from 1924 to 1926), while others attempted to operate as publishers. In 1921 a group of religious symbolists created the Makovets association around a private journal, and cooperated with the philosopher Pavel Florenskii. However, by the middle of the 1920s it had already become clear that the private market was not taking shape. The groups existed partially on the means of the participants, to a larger degree on state subsidies and the private or semi-government patronage of those in power. Four Arts (1925–32), where artists and architects of the neo-classical line had found refuge (Vladimir Favorskii, Vera Mukhina, Aleksei Shchusev), managed to gain the support of Anatolii Lunacharskii. This group held evening gatherings in private homes with music and literary readings, and subsequently the form of a musical salon was transferred directly to exhibitions. Artists of the avant-garde who assumed that the individual viewer, the picture and the market had been destroyed along with the bourgeois class, saw themselves either as a scholarly collective (Malevich and Mikhail Matiushin headed such collectives at the Leningrad Institute of Artistic Culture or INKhUK; Filonov led the group Masters of Analytical Art); or a party whose mouthpiece was the press, not the exhibition (the group associated with the journal *Lef*, 1923–25, and *Novyi lef*, 1927–28). The declarations of these organizations, despite their very diverse directions, draw one and the same picture: a demand for civic, “family” solidarity, a recognition of the need for a common line in each exhibition, where separate works were merely links in a common chain. In June 1930 the Federation of Associations of Soviet Artists (FOSKh) was created, with David Shterenberg—chairman of the art section of the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros)—as its president. FOSKh advocated the insertion of art into industry, a movement of art to the masses and a brigade method of creativity. It was precisely these slogans that were later realized in the Union of Artists.

The will coming “from below” for a unification of the various groupings was connected with the desire to eliminate a system of preferences in the distribution of state purchases and orders. After 1932, this system actually was, if not eliminated, then at least substantially corrected. In the Union of Artists, because of the way it was structured, not a single artist remained without government support. To lesser or greater degrees, everyone received orders (paid for in advance and not always actually fulfilled by the artist). An artist’s status in this system was defined not by the sale of his works, nor by their quality as established by the critics, but exclusively by his belonging to this society, this corporation, one that rather quickly applied strict rules for both membership applications and resignations. If one was not a member of the Union of Artists, it was necessary to find alternative sources of income (for example, semi-legal teaching) and to renounce public exhibitions. Official power in the USSR, contrary to widespread opinion, never repressed the production of art in private studios, but it controlled its distribution through exhibitions and reproductions. The equating of art with art that could be shared by the masses led to a division between those artists allowed access to the channels of distribution, and those denied access to

them (like Malevich, Matiushin, Filonov in the later years) and who had a more reflective attitude toward this system. It was this situation that brought forth the unofficial art of the 1960s, the status of which resembled that of experimental science—not being put into production.

In order to understand the specifics of Soviet art as a type of collectivized art that is structurally similar to the specifics of the USSR itself, it is necessary to recognize that artists of the Stalin period (but not those of the 1960s and 1970s) were in the country voluntarily. Those who had been categorically opposed to Bolshevik politics (such as the majority of artists of the old tsarist court circles, including Il’ia Repin), as well as those who had earlier been ori-

ented toward the international market (Naum Gabo, Wassily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, Aleksandra Ekster) had abandoned the country rather quickly, and that option remained open throughout the 1920s. Those who remained shared the notion of Soviet art and the idea that the principles of its organization should be different than those of bourgeois art. Rodchenko formulated it this way (in Paris in 1925): “. . . we need to stay together and build new relationships between workers of artistic labor. We will not succeed in organizing a new everyday life<sup>10</sup> if our relationships resemble those of the bohemians of the West. This is the crux of the matter. The first thing is our everyday life. The second is to pick ourselves up and stay firmly together and believe in one another.”<sup>11</sup> For Rodchenko,

Gustavs Klucis  
*Untitled*, 1933  
 Poster. Lithography  
 137.2 x 99 cm  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman





Cover of *Iskusstvo v massy* no. 2 (10), 1930  
 Archivo España-Rusia  
 [cat. 146]

"I. V. Stalin and A. M. Gorky. September 25, 1932, on the 40th anniversary of A. M. Gorky's literary and revolutionary activity." Illustrated page in *Stalin*, 1939  
 Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 236]

the actual works of the new art were less important than the relationships, relationships that did not simply summon a new art to life, but, and this was very important for him, that were generated by this new art: the language of friendship, intimacy, love.

Art understood as such requires not the critic as idler, but a participant, a member of a community who demonstrates loyalty to his own group. In 1937 Rodchenko wrote in his diary: ". . . something very warm must be done, human, for all humanity . . . Not to ridicule man, but to approach him intimately, closely, maternally tenderly . . . Motherhood. Spring. Love. Comrades. Children. Friends. Teacher. Dreams. Joy, etc."<sup>12</sup> This is a rather accurate description not only of the themes, but also of the aesthetics of socialist realism—an aesthetics of the positive.

#### The Language of Loyalty

Art that bases its aesthetics on the construction of medially manifested social relations, and is rather indifferent to the individual work, represents a socialist realism that is closer to the works of Joseph Kosuth than to realism. This is not easy to accept, since works of socialist realism usually appear very material—pastose painting in a heavy frame, far removed from the laconic aesthetics of conceptualism. Many of the prominent figures of socialist realism—Sergei Gerasimov, Fedor Bogorodskii, Aleksandr Deineka, Iurii Pimenov, Il'ia Mashkov, Petr Konchalovskii—began their careers either in the circles of abstract art, or at least while the memory of VKhUTEMAS was still alive. Between the 1930s and 1950s the evolution from naturalism to abstraction that is often identified with the history of modernism is reversed in the work of these and other artists. Lines and planes become ever less expressive, colors less bright, the structure of the composition less obvious. Socialist realism—in general and in the work of individual artists—became a method that was increasingly vague and blurred,



which could be understood as a unique form of laconicism, but aimed primarily at the viewer.

If the modernism of capitalism formulated a specific language of criticism (minimizing, reductionist), then the modernism of socialism—socialist realism—pursued a consciously constructed alternative, formulating a language of positivity. While modernism expresses distance and alienation exposing the method, this criticism of the medium is entirely absent in socialist realism, where a simplification of form is not permitted to any degree whatsoever. Socialist realism is recognized on the basis of this characteristic, and it could be presumed that this was in fact its aesthetic program. The typical Soviet criticism of the form of a given work related not to a flawed style, but to the very presence of that style. Painting with the slightest intimation to the “cube, cone and pyramid” of Cézanne (whose legacy was decisive for Russian painting after 1910) was persecuted because young communists were forbidden to draw so “lifelessly.” The overemphasizing of method, the relishing of color, the inflation of decorative quality and inordinate emphasis of any element whatsoever disqualified a work as inappropriate to socialist realism, the ideal work of which should, it seems, have no properties at all. This description applies to the aesthetics of a painting done from a photograph (as in Filonov’s Stalin portrait, but also in the painting of the academic Isaak Brodskii, who was a great admirer of Filonov), but it also covers art that had appropriated the classics, a conglomerate of trivialized historical styles. The evolution from cubism and strict post-constructivist style to realism with a nod toward the classics had been accomplished in the 1930s by Aleksandr Deineka in painting and Vera Mukhina in sculpture. The most widespread variation, however, was impressionism—the final frontier before the painting of Cézanne with whom the emphasis on medium began—but only impressionism with consciously “polluted” color and sluggish, non-expressive strokes. Although French impressionism was judged harshly in Soviet criticism, in practice such pillars of official painting as Aleksandr Gerasimov, Vasili Efanov, Boris Ioganson (not to mention the millions of less famous artists) painted precisely in this indeterminate manner, and it was in just this direction that the academic, smooth manner of the nineteenth century, that is rare in Soviet art, was transformed. This “style without style” turned out to be less vulnerable to criticism and, therefore, in the 1940s and 1950s acquired the status of being official art. Already during the late 1920s Anatolii Lunacharskii praised new paintings of village life by Petr Konchalovskii (one of the pioneers of this manner) for the fact that it was immediately obvious that his peasants were neither rich nor poor, but middling.

The social meaning of this kind of painting rests in the implication of the laconic nature of the viewer who is deprived of the opportunity of assuming a critical attitude toward a given work. As Clement Greenberg demonstrated in his classical works, modernism practices “self-criticism of art” in the forms of art, and therefore concretely emphasizes the foundations of such criticism, the criteria. It is precisely these criteria—color, form, line—that modernist painting demonstrates in more and more pure form, as though anticipating the work of the critic. However if these means are not identified explicitly—especially when this takes such a radical form as in socialist realism—then the work is principally “nothing at all,” invulnerable to criticism, there is nothing to be said about it. Whoever has tried to look attentively at a work of



V. Ivanov  
*Slaves Straighten their  
 Backs*, 1939  
 Postcard, 14.4 x 10 cm  
 Iskusstvo, Moscow  
 Fundación José María Castañé



socialist realism is very familiar with the feeling of profound frustration and temporary speechlessness.

The project of art as a means for paralyzing excessively individualistic action or judgment was well known in earlier Russian art too. Fedor Vasil'ev, a nineteenth-century Russian landscape artist from the Wanderer movement who died young, was extraordinarily interested in theory. He dreamed of drawing a landscape that would stop a criminal who had decided to commit some evil deed. Malevich the suprematist aspired to paint in such a way that "words would freeze on the lips of the prophet." Socialist realism aims to paralyze (not to mobilize and propagandize as is normally assumed) and, amounting to the same thing, collectivize, and as such it appears as the precursor to contemporary international advertising whose goal is not to persuade us to buy, but to ward off questions about quality and usefulness—to curtail critical judgment.

Perhaps this is the principal effect of mass distribution: it blurs, smoothes over any "self-criticism of the media" with its instantaneousness. Perhaps the notion of the critical potential of modernism as a whole is strongly exaggerated. Among the roots of modernism is the fanaticism of the artist, who concentrates on things he loves and is loyal to (about which he has no doubts). Perhaps the term most appropriate for defining the position of the artist between ecstatic apologia and criticism is "satire-heroics," which was made up by the projectionist Solomon Nikritin.

The attempt to avoid thematizing the media within a work of art could be connected with the fact that the work itself begins to be understood as a medium, as an integral image instantaneously fulfilling the task of "switching on/off" a specific discourse. In the contemporary world this is primarily a characteristic of advertising, which relates to modern art as its applied version. "Poetry and art cease to be goals, they become means (of advertising) . . ." pronounced André Breton in 1919, and his words turned out to be prophetic. By the 1930s the critical model of thinking in international modernism had already been replaced by the sug-

gestive model. That which had been articulated with grandiose intellectual effort in classical modernism from Cézanne to Malevich—the teleological vector of art and its means—was mixed together again with no less effort in the attempts to deconstruct the difference in the art of the 1930s—be it socialist realism or French surrealism. Line, paint, plane—all emancipated in abstract painting—turned out to be plunged into a new connectedness that was so grotesque that as "satire-heroics" it consumes itself.

Mass visual images of today's international, successfully collectivized, corporate world—photograph, advertisement, cinema, video—are generally heirs of this aesthetic. Without Malevich there would be no contemporary art, but without him there would be no socialist realism either, and without the latter there would be no contemporary visual propaganda—commercial, ideological, or any other kind—whose pragmatic goal gets lost in the labyrinth of the suggestive whole.

This article was originally published in English and German in a slightly different form in *Dream Factory Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalin Era*, ed. Boris Groys and Max Hellein (Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2003), 85–105. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publisher.

1. Quote from Elena Basner, "Zhivopis' Malevicha iz sobraniia Russkogo muzeia. Problemy tvorcheskoi evoliutsii," in Elena Basner, *Kazimir Malevich v Russkom muzeie* (Saint Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2000), 15.
2. Varvara Stepanova, *Chelovek ne mozhет zhit' bez chuda: Pis'ma, poeticheskie opyty, zapiski khudozhnitsy* (Moscow: Sfera, 1994), 62.
3. *Ibid.*, 78.
4. See Kazimir Malevich, *Sobrannyye sochineniia v 5 tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1998), 62.
5. Vasilii Rakitin, "Kazimir Malevich: Pis'ma iz Zapada," in *Russkii avangard v krugu evropeiskoi kultury* (Moscow: Radiks, 1994), 440.
6. Charlotte Douglas was the first to propose redating later works by Malevich. On this issue as a whole, see Basner 2000 (see note 1).
7. Kazimir Malevich, "Mir kak bespredmetnost'," in *Malevich 1998* (see note 4), vol. 2, 38.
8. Quote from Irina Lebedeva, "'Projectionism' and 'Electroorganism,'" in Paul Wood, Vasilii Rakitin, Hubertus Gassner et al., *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-garde 1915–1932*, exh. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (Berne: Bentelli; Moscow: Galart, 1993), 188.
9. Velimir Khlebnikov, "Radio," in *Collected Works of Velimir Khlebnikov*, ed. Charlotte Douglas, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), vol. 1, 392–6.
10. That is, a new social life [Ed.]
11. Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Opyty dlia budushchego: Dnevnik, statii, pis'ma, zapiski* (Moscow: Grant, 1996), 160.
12. *Ibid.*, 199.



Aleksandr Deineka  
*Conversation of the  
 Collective Farm Brigade*, 1934  
 State Russian Museum  
 Saint Petersburg [cat. 223]

**Aleksandr Deineka:  
The Eternal Return  
of the Athletic Body**

Boris Groys



Работать, строить  
и не ныть!  
Нам и новой жизни  
путь указан.  
Атлетом можешь  
ты не быть,  
Но физкультурником —  
обязан.



**T**

he work of Aleksandr Deineka is a part of the figurative turn that is a distinguishing feature of European art in the late 1920s and early 1930s. After two decades of artistic experimentation that culminated in the introduction of geometric abstraction through Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian, many European and Russian artists proclaimed a “return to order”—a revival of the figurative painterly tradition. The human body once again became central to art. While Deineka’s oeuvre celebrates the return of the body, his art—considered from an art historical perspective—also remains a singular phenomenon. This singularity has to do with Deineka’s specific conception of the human body. Unlike the French surrealists, he did not interpret the body as an object of desire; rather, it is a desexualized, expressionless, one can even say abstract body. Moreover, it does not function as a bearer of social distinctions—analogue to the German *Neue Sachlichkeit*—or as a symbol of neo-classicist nostalgia—as in the case of the Italian Novecento. Instead, Deineka was interested in the representation of the trained, “steered” professional body of a modern athlete. Thus, he became one of the very few artists of his time who turned sport into the main topic of his work and, in a certain sense, into a model for art in general. And yet this interest in the athletic body did not lead to a revival of the classicist ideal of the perfect human body, a trait of many artistic practices of his time, especially of art in Nazi Germany.

Indeed, the reintroduction of the classicist ideal of the human body was effectuated by sport earlier and to a much greater extent than by art. In fact, this revival of the classical humanist ideal by means of sport coincided with the abandonment of this paradigm in art at the beginning of the twentieth century. Modern sport became the renaissance of the masses. The Olympic Games took over the position that was earlier occupied by French salon painting. It was an attempt to realize the classical ideal of humanity on a mass scale at a moment in which the cultural elite rejected this model. Today, it is not art but sport that links our culture to its ancient roots. This connection was ingeniously thematized by Leni Riefenstahl in her film *Olympia*, in the first sequences of which the ancient Greek sculptures morph into the bodies of the modern athletes. Sport marked the rebirth not only of the classical body but also of the classical virtues—a healthy mind in a healthy body, the harmonious development of the human personality, balance between the physical and the spiritual, dedication to one’s goal, fairness in competition. At the same time, modern artistic sensibility tended and still tends to reject the classicist ideals of a beautiful body and a heroic pose as kitsch. That is why official Soviet art that appeared to stay in this classicist tradition and glorified mass sport enthusiasm is as a rule also regarded to be intimidating and crass. Deineka was one of the most successful, prominent and celebrated official Soviet artists during Stalin’s rule. However, an attentive spectator cannot overlook the singularity of Deineka’s art—in fact, it does not fit into the neo-classicist, neo-traditional paradigm of its time. Deineka’s treatment of the athletic body is different from the way in which it was interpreted and depicted by, say, Leni Riefenstahl or Arno Breker.

This divergence is mainly dictated by the specificity of the Soviet ideology and by the tradition of the Russian avant-garde that was continued by Deineka, even if in modified form.

This difference can be described in the following way: Deineka did not interpret the athletic body as a kind of aristocratic, socially and culturally privileged body. The already mentioned sequences from Riefenstahl’s *Olympia* celebrate the origin of the athletic body in the ancient Greek tradition. The modern athlete symbolizes here the transhistorical, immortal, eternal validity of the ancient Greek-Roman humanist ideal. And the body of the modern athlete is interpreted as the re-incarnation of this ideal. The national-socialist ideology looked for the origin, continuity, heredity and transhistorical racial, genetic substance of historically changing forms of civilization. On the contrary, the Soviet ideology believed in radical historical breaks, new beginnings and technological revolutions. It thought in terms of classes that emerge and disappear historically according to the “development of productive forces”—and not in terms of races that remain self-identical through technological, social and political transformations.

The athletic body represented by Deineka is clearly not an aristocratic body but a proletarian one. In a very obvious way, it has its origin not in the high culture of the pre-industrial Greek and Roman era but in the quasi-symbiotic relationship between human body and machine that is characteristic of the industrial age. Deineka’s athletic bodies are idealized and, so to say, formalized bodies. Looking at them the spectator cannot imagine them becoming ill or infirm, transforming themselves into the vehicles of obscure desires, decaying, dying. Rather, these formalized athletic bodies serve as allegories of corporeal immortality; not the aristocratic immortality of discipline and tradition but the technicized immortality of machinery—a machine that can be discarded but cannot die. Deineka understands sport as mimesis of industrial work and the athletic body as mimesis of a machine. At the end of this mimetic process the human body itself becomes a machine. And modern sport functions as a public celebration of this “becoming-machine” of the human body. Now this mechanization was an explicit goal of the Russian avant-garde—especially in its constructivist version, as exemplified by the work of Aleksandr Rodchenko. Thus, one can say that Deineka’s art is a continuation and radicalization of the avant-garde project and not its rejection, as was the case with Nazi art. Here it is important to understand that the mechanization of the human body was not the result of an “anti-humanist” attitude on the part of the avant-garde, as it was often described by the avant-garde’s critics. Rather, it was an answer to the mortality of the human body under the conditions of the radically modern, e.g. radically materialistic, worldview that rejected any escape from corporeal finitude into the imaginary kingdom of immateriality, spirituality and transcendence. The dream of corporeal immortality here substituted the traditional concept of spiritual immortality. To become immortal the “natural” human body had to become artificial, machine-like. Deineka’s athletic bodies are placed on the surface of his paintings and frescoes in a way not unlike the geometric forms on the surface of Malevich’s paintings. These bodies seem to be half-artificial, steered by industrial work and sport, and thus embody the promise of eternal life. Immortality is understood here not as the extension of an individual life-span but as the exchangeability of individual bodies owing

to the lack of “inner life” that would make them “personal,” irreplaceable and, by the same token, mortal. A good literary analogy to this post-constructivist attitude toward the human body can be found in Ernst Jünger’s seminal book from 1932, *The Worker: Domination and Form*.<sup>1</sup>

Ernst Jünger’s treatise has generally been treated by critics as a political text, a project aiming to contribute to the creation of a new type of totalitarian state based on the principles of modern technology and organization. But it seems to me that the main strategy of the text is dictated, rather, by Jünger’s interest in immortality, that is, in the potential of a single individual human being to transcend his own death after the death of the “old God” announced by Nietzsche. This strategy becomes particularly evident when we consider Jünger’s reference to the trope of technology in the course of his polemic against “unique” personal experience. According to Jünger, the notion of “personal experience” serves as the basis not only for the kind of bourgeois individualism which would confer “natural” human rights on each man, but also for the entire ideological trajectory of liberal democracy which reigned in the nineteenth century. Jünger engages the trope of technology essentially as evidence that the bourgeois, liberal notion of unique individual experience was rendered irrelevant in the twentieth century, as our social world

grew progressively more organized according to the rules of modern technological rationality.

Jünger employs the term “individuelles Erlebnis” to denote individual experience; this term recalls a general notion of life, since *Erlebnis* stems from the word *Leben*, or life. In his text, Jünger argues that traditional bourgeois ideology holds individual life to be precious precisely because of its supposed singularity. For this reason liberals consider the protection of individual life as the highest moral and legal obligation. Now, Jünger argues that the notion of such experience is neither valid nor valuable in the world of modern technology. However, Jünger does not

require the individual to submit to any state, nation, race or class. Neither does he proclaim the values of any particular collective to be more important than those of the individual. Instead Jünger strives to demonstrate that, since individual, particular experience can no longer be accessed in the world of modern technology, the individual as such no longer exists. In the technological era the subject has become the bearer of experiences which are impersonal, non-individual, serial and standardized; and his existence has also become impersonal, serial and replicable.

Thus, Jünger states that in modernity the general public prefers serial items over and against unique objects. The typical automobile consumer, for example, opts for standard-issue, serially reproduced cars with reputable brand names; he has little interest in possessing a one-of-a-kind model which is designed for him alone.<sup>2</sup> The modern individual appreciates only that which has been standardized and serialized. Such reproducible objects can always be substituted; in this sense they are charged with a certain indestructibility, a certain immortality. If a person wrecks a Mercedes he or she can always purchase another copy of the same model. Jünger aims to prove that we have similar preferences in the field of personal experience, such that we tend to privilege the standard and the serial. The best-received films are those that are formulaic, those which lend

**PAGE 77.** Detail of CAT. 197

Aleksandr Deineka  
*In the Shower*  
(*After the Battle*), 1937–42  
Oil on canvas, 170 x 233 cm  
Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery



themselves to the same experience no matter who their audience might be. Going to the cinema, unlike going to see live actors perform in the theater, no longer offers an experience of the singular, unique event. Modern technologies have something else to offer: the promise of immortality, a promise which is guaranteed through replicability and reproducibility and which is then internalized by the modern individual when he serializes his own inner life.

The technological and serial nature of modern experience has a certain effect on human subjectivity (which is itself a sum of those experiences); it renders the human subject exchangeable and replicable. Jünger insists that only such substitutable subjects conditioned by technology have any relevance or value in our time; the term he uses to denote this type of being is "Gestalt des Arbeiters," the figure of the worker. In order to survive in a technological civilization the individual human being must mimic the machine—even the war machine that destroys him. Indeed it is this technique of mimicry which functions as a technology of immortality. The machine actually exists between life and death; although it is dead, it moves and acts as if it were alive. As a result, the machine signifies immortality. It is highly symptomatic, for example, that Andy Warhol—much later than Jünger, of course—also desired to "become a machine," that he also chose the serial and the reproducible as routes to immortality. Although the prospect of becoming a machine might seem dys-

topic or even nightmarish to most, for Jünger, as for Warhol, this "becoming-a-machine" was the last and only chance to overcome individual death. In this respect, Jünger's relationship to institutions of cultural memory such as the museum and the library is especially relevant, since, in the context of modernity, these institutions are the traditional promises of corporeal immortality. But Jünger is prepared to destroy all museums and libraries, or at least to allow their destruction. Because of their role in preserving one-of-a-kind objects which exist beyond the limits of serial reproduction, these institutions have in his eyes no value for the technological world.<sup>3</sup> Instead of maintaining the museum as a space of private aesthetic experience, Jünger wants the public to reorient its gaze and contemplate the entire technological world as an artwork. Like the Russian constructivists of the 1920s, Jünger understands the new purpose of art as identical with that of technology, namely to aesthetically transform the whole world, the whole planet according to a single technical, aesthetic and political plan. The radical Russian avant-garde artists also required the elimination of the traditional museum as a privileged site of art contemplation; together with this demand they issued the imperative that the industrial be seen as the only relevant art form of the time. Jünger may well have been directly influenced by this radical aesthetic. In his treatise, he frequently makes affirmative references to the politics of the Soviet workers' state, but he seems at the same time

to have been influenced by Vladimir Tatlin's so-called *Maschinenkunst* (Machine Art), an artistic program that was introduced to Germany by both Berlin Dadaists and Russian constructivist avant-garde figures such as El Lissitzky and Il'ia Erenburg. The difference that distinguishes Jünger's aesthetic from that of the constructivists is really only perceptible at one point: Jünger combines constructivist slogans with admiration for all archaic and classical cultural forms, provided that they also demonstrate a high degree of seriality and regularity. He is fascinated not only by the world of the military uniform, but also by the symbolic universes of medieval Catholicism and Greek architecture, for all three of these traditions are characterized by their commitment to regularity and seriality.

Here the project of immortality is understood not as a plan of indefinitely prolonged survival or life after death. Rather, to be immortal means to experience in the middle of life something impersonal, something transcending the borders of one's own individual existence—something that has the status of eternal repetition of the same. Already Plato related the concept of immortality to the study of mathematics, especially geometry. Squares and triangles are immortal because they are repetitive—and our soul touches immortality when it contemplates them. However, these Platonic technologies of spiritual immortality can be easily replaced by the analogous technologies of corporeal immortality. Sport operates



Illustrated page in the book *Rabochoia Krestianskaia Krasnaia Armia* [Workers and Peasants Red Army], 1934  
Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 215]

Aleksandr Deineka  
*Sevastopol. 'Dinamo' Water Sports Complex*, 1934  
Tempera, 62.4 x 43.6 cm  
Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts  
Moscow





through the mathematization of the human body. Every movement of a professional athlete is mathematically simulated—and then literally repeated by his or her body. In this sense the athletic bodies on Deineka’s paintings can be seen as substitutes of the squares and triangles as they were seen on the paintings of the Russian avant-garde. In both cases the “personal experience” is erased and substituted by impersonal mathematics of forms and movements. Sport is interpreted by Deineka as a way to transcend the opposition between human body and machine. Of course, one can ask oneself—as Jünger already did—why one still needs art when sport has de facto substituted it. But the art museum can be seen not only as a place for the preservation of the historical past but also as a collection of projects for the future—of bodies and objects that were unique in the past and remain unique in the present but can and should be serialized in the future. Such an understanding of the museum as a collection of models for future serialization was developed in Russia already before the October Revolution and influenced many writers and artists of the late 1920s and early 1930s, by giving them the possibility of re-using the past to construct the future.

In this respect, the interpretation of the museum in the framework of the so-called “philosophy of the common task” that was developed by Nikolai Fedorov in the late nineteenth century is especially interesting. This philosophical project may have met with little public attention during Fedorov’s lifetime, but it had illustrious readers such as Lev Tolstoi, Fedor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solov’ev, who were fascinated and influenced by Fedorov’s ideas. After the philosopher’s death in 1903 his work gained ever increasing currency, although in essence it remained limited to a Russian readership. The project of the common task, in summary, consists in the creation of the technological, social and political conditions under which it would be possible to resurrect by technological, artificial means all the people who have ever lived. As Fedorov understood his project it represented a continuation of the Christian promise of resurrection of all the dead at the end of time. The only difference is that Fedorov no longer believed in the immortality of the soul independently of the body, or at least such a “bloodless,” “abstract” immortality was not sufficient for him. Moreover Fedorov no longer wanted to wait passively for the Second Coming of Christ. Despite his somewhat archaic language Fedorov was entirely

Double-page fold-out in *SSSR na stroike* no. 7–8, 1934 Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 201]



Illustrated pages in *Spartakiada URSS*, 1928 Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 189]



a child of his time, a product of the late nineteenth century. Accordingly, he did not believe in the soul but in the body. In his view, physical, material existence is the only possible form of existence. And Fedorov believed just as unshakably in technology: because everything is material, physical, everything is feasible, technically manipulable. Above all, however, Fedorov believed in the power of social organization: in that sense he was a socialist through and through. For Fedorov, immortality was also a matter of finding the right technology and the right social organization. All that was required, in his view, to commit oneself to the project of the artificial resurrection of the dead was simply the decision to do so. Once that goal had been established, the means would reveal themselves on their own, so to speak.

This project can all too easily be dismissed as utopian or even fantastic. But in this plan Fedorov explicitly articulates a question whose answer is still topical in our own day. The question is: How can one conceive and develop his or her own immortality if one knows with certainty that one is just one ephemeral body among other ephemeral bodies, and nothing more? Or to put it another way: How can one be immortal if there is no ontological guarantee of immortality? The simplest and most common answer to this question recommends that we simply abandon the pursuit of immortality, be content with the finiteness of our own existence and accept individual death. This answer has a fundamental flaw, however: namely, it leaves much about our civilization unexplained. For Fedorov, one such unexplained phenomenon is the institution of the museum. As Fedorov correctly writes, the very existence of the museum contradicts the universally utilitarian, pragmatic spirit of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> That is because the museum preserves with great care precisely the useless, superfluous things of the past that no longer have any

Illustrated page in *Spartakiada URSS, 1928* Fundación José María Castañe [cat. 189]



Aleksandr Deineka  
*Relay Race, 1947*  
Bronze, 56 x 99 x 16 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow



Aleksandr Deineka  
*The Race, 1932-33*  
State Russian Museum  
Saint Petersburg [cat. 196]

practical use "in real life." The museum does not accept the death and decline of these things as they are accepted "in real life." Thus the museum is fundamentally at odds with progress. Progress consists in replacing old things completely with new things. The museum, by contrast, is a machine for making things last, making them immortal. Because each human being is also one body among other bodies, one thing among other things, humans can also be blessed with the immortality of the museum. For Fedorov, immortality is not a paradise for human souls but a museum for living human bodies. The Christian immortality of the soul is replaced by the immortality of things or of the body in the museum. And Divine Grace is replaced by curatorial decisions and the technology of museum preservation.

The technical side of the museum played a crucial role for Fedorov, who saw nineteenth-century technology as internally divided. In his view modern technology served primarily fashion and war—that is, finite, mortal life. It is above all in relation to this technology that one can speak of progress, because it changes constantly with time. It also divides human generations: every generation has its own technology and despises that of its parents. But technology also functions as art. Fedorov understands art not as a matter of taste or aesthetics. The technology of art for Fedorov is the technology of the preservation or revival of the past. There is no progress in art. Art does not wait for a better society of the future—it immortalizes the here and now. Art consists in a different technology or rather a different use of technology that no longer serves finite life but infinite, immortal life. In doing so, however, art does not usually work with the things themselves but with images of things. The preserving, redemptive, reviving task of art thus ultimately remains unfulfilled. Hence art must be understood and used differently: it must be applied to human beings so that they achieve perfection. All of the people who have ever lived must rise from the dead as artworks and be preserved in museums. Technology as a whole must become the technology of art. And the state must become the museum of its population. Just as the museum's administration is responsible not only for the general holdings of the museum's collection but also for the intact state of every work of art, making certain that the individual artworks are subjected to conservation when they threaten to decay, the state should bear







Aleksandr Deineka  
*Football Players*, 1955  
 Copper, 225 x 175 cm  
 State Tretyakov Gallery  
 Moscow

Double-page fold-out in  
*SSSR na stroike*  
 no. 7–8, 1934  
 Fundación José María  
 Castañé [cat. 201]

responsibility for the resurrection and continued life of every individual person. The state can no longer afford to allow individuals to die privately or the dead to rest peacefully in their graves. Death's limits must be overcome by the state.

This totality is achieved by equating art and politics, life and technology, and state and museum. Fedorov, on the contrary, sought to unite living space with museum space, to overcome their heterogeneity, which he took to be ideologically motivated rather than anchored ontologically. This sort of overcoming of the boundaries between life and death is not a matter of introducing art into life but is rather a radical museumification of life—a life that can and should attain the privilege of immortality in a museum. By means of this unification of living space and museum space, biopower develops into infinity: it becomes the organized technology of eternal life, a technology that no longer admits individual death nor resigns itself to accept it as its “natural” limit. Such a power is, of course, no longer “democratic”: no one expects the artworks that are preserved in a museum collection to elect democratically the museum curator who will care for them. As soon as human beings become radically modern—that is, as soon as they are understood as a body among bodies, a thing among things—they have to accept that state-organized technology will treat them accordingly. This acceptance has a crucial precondition, however: the explicit goal for a new power must be eternal life here on Earth for everyone.

Naturally, Fedorov continued to describe his project in quasi-Christian terms. But it could be easily secularized—and that is precisely what happened to it after the October Revolution. The dream of a new, technologically based immortality attracted to the new Soviet power many theoreticians, writers and artists who, in fact, had not shown much sympathy for Marxism or socialism. Take, for example, Valerian Murav'ev, converted from being a fierce opponent of the Bolshevik revolution to being an advocate the moment he believed he had discovered in Soviet power a promise of the “power over time,” that is, of the artificial production of eternity. He too regarded art as a model for politics. He too saw art as the only technology that could overcome time. He too called for a departure from a purely “symbolic” art in favor of using art to turn the whole of society and indeed the entire space of the cosmos and all time into objects of design. A global, centralist, unified political leadership is an indispensable condition to solve such a task—and that is the kind of leadership he called for. But, far more radically than most other authors, Murav'ev was prepared to view the human being as an artwork. Murav'ev understood resurrection as following logically from the process of copying; and even earlier than Walter Benjamin,<sup>5</sup> Murav'ev observed that there could be no difference between the “original human being” and his or her copy under the conditions of technological reproducibility.<sup>6</sup> Murav'ev thus sought to purify the concept of the human by freeing it of the metaphysical and religious

remnants to which Fedorov and many of his followers still clung. For Murav'ev the human being was simply a specific mixture of particular chemical elements—just like every other thing in the world. For that reason Murav'ev hoped to eliminate the gender difference in the future and create a non-gendered, purely artificial method for producing human beings. The humans of the future would thus feel no guilt with respect to their dead ancestors: they would owe their existence to the same technologically organized state that guaranteed the duration of their existence, their immortality. The concept of the museum is united here with the promise of replication and serialization.

Of course, Deineka was not a theoretician and he never exposed himself as a follower of this or that specific teaching of secular immortality. He was obviously not interested in theoretical discourses—and he was also too cautious to get involved in theoretical arguments and polemics. That saved him from the role of victim of the ideologically motivated campaigns that repeatedly rolled over Soviet art during Stalin's time. However, his work manifests a certain analogy with the writings of, let say, Andrei Platonov—a famous Russian author of the 1920s and 1930s who was interested in the impersonal mystics of the proletarian body and deeply influenced by Fedorov. In any case, the athletic bodies on Deineka's paintings serve primarily as a promise of their further serialization in the communist future—through continuous work and training. Here art is seen as a project for future, transhistorical, eternal life—in the best traditions of the Russian avant-garde and Soviet socialist realism.

1. Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982).
2. *Ibid.*, 133.
3. *Ibid.*, 206ff.
4. See Nikolai Fedorov, “The Museum, its Meaning and Purpose,” in *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task: Selected Works*, transl. and abrid. Elisabeth Koutaissoff and Marilyn Minto (London: Honeyglen, 1990), reproduced on p. 321 of this volume. Originally published in Russian as “Muzei, ego smysl i naznachenie,” in *Filosofia obshchego dela. Stat'i, mysli i pis'ma N.F. Fedorova*, 2 vols., ed. Vladimir A. Kozhenikov and Nikolai P. Peterson (Moscow, 1913), 398–473.
5. See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) [Ed.].
6. See Valerian Murav'ev, “Die Beherrschung der Zeit als Grundaufgabe der Arbeitsorganisation” [Mastering Time as the Fundamental Goal of the Organization of Labor], in *Die Neue Menschheit, Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* [New Mankind, Biopolitical Utopias in Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century], ed. Michael Hagemeister and Boris Groys (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005), 425–81. The English version on p. 354 of this volume was translated from the original Russian published as *Ovladenie vremenem kak osnovaia zadacha organizatsii truda* (Moscow: izdanie avtora, 1924).



**Aleksandr Deineka  
or the Processual Logic  
of the Soviet System**

Fredric Jameson



**T**he purpose of these lines is to situate Aleksandr Deineka and his oeuvre within the cultural, political and ideological framework of his time: socialism in post-revolutionary Russia, and specifically that which developed during the 1920s and 1930s. Rather than

make a close reading of Deineka's work—sufficiently explored by the other authors contributing to this monograph—it is an attempt to place his output within the system that fostered it and from which it drew inspiration. To this end, from here on we shall be making reference, for comparative purposes, to what could be defined as the system model antithetical to the Soviet system model during those decades: North American industrial capitalism, as well as one of the artists working within the confines of the capitalist milieu.

#### **Utopias: Models vs Processes**

Naturally, we must be careful to distinguish the “pure” models of different modes of production, such as capitalism or socialism (or communism), from their daily life or their uneven development. The systems themselves, by virtue of the very fact that they are systems—that is to say, concepts of systems—seem to impose themselves with a massive homogeneity, as though each one tended imperiously to assimilate

everything to its own dominant logic, whether that be the reduction of everything to the accumulation of money (capital) or to the collective organization of production (work). But in either case, the subsumption of everything to the logic of the system is a slow process over time, and an uneven one in space; and in any case the lives of its individual subjects are only fitfully governed by it, even though a system tends in the very nature of things toward a total assimilation (as well as toward its own survival). This is not a judgment on either system (although such assessments are not only possible, they are necessary and indeed ultimately constitute what we call politics). Rather, the insistence on the totalizing drive of such systems (as Sartre termed it) is meant to underscore the existence within each one of unassimilated pockets which we may often call “utopian.”

“Utopia” in this sense is rather different from the stereotypical and representational usage according to which “utopia” is itself just such a system (and as its critics often maintain, an equally totalizing one). I will not now argue my own opinion that this idea of utopia involves a fundamental misunderstanding of something which is neither a political formation nor, indeed, a representation at all. What I want to argue, however, is that even if utopia is used in this way as a political program or a revolutionary structure, there is another possible use of the term—pioneered by Ernst Bloch—in which utopia is grasped as an impulse which, irresistible yet equally often stifled and repressed, attempts over and over again to break through a surface social life in isolated and ephemeral, discontinuous spots of time and space. Yet its



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Aleksandr Deineka  
*In the Donbass*, 1925  
Drawing for the cover  
of the magazine *U stanka*  
no. 2, 1925  
Tempera and India ink  
on paper, 29.7 x 28.8 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow

possibility of doing so is clearly enough related to the strengths and weaknesses of the system in question itself.

In what follows I shall sketch out a few utopian possibilities of a painter—Aleksandr Deineka—who worked under one of the two hegemonic systems I have just outlined, although, as mentioned above, I shall also make reference to an artist who could be regarded as his inverse equivalent or contrary parallel, his antithesis in the capitalist system, since both the capitalist system and the output of an artist who lived in its milieu will invariably be more familiar to us than the work of Aleksandr Deineka.

#### At the Imaginary of Capitalism

If the United States is taken to be the purest form of capitalism, owing to the absence of feudalism and aristocracy from its history, then in retrospect the climax of that capitalist development must be identified as the present day, with its immense monopolies, its radical immiseration and class divisions, and the virtual autonomy of capital as such in its financial stage. This means that the history of industrial capitalism in the United States (from the end of the Civil War to the end of the Cold War) must be seen as a transitional period, and that the concept of commodification and commodity production should not be allowed to distort our perception of the process of the accumulation of capital as such.

Commodity production implies markets and wage labor: it perpetuates an Imaginary of things and money, and of a relationship between them that in hindsight looks virtually natural. Objects seem to have a value in themselves (an equivalence strenuously disproven by Marx). From the standpoint of present-day finance capital—in which money of that seemingly natural appearance has long since been transformed into an abstract capital, with ebbs and flows across the former boundaries of the world system, in well-nigh inexplicable meteorological rhythms experienced in everyday life only in their consequences—this view of a market America, with its factories and big cities, its suburbs and their independent single-family dwellings, has become as nostalgic and mythological as Jeffersonian democracy was in the earlier period; and indeed the republic of individual farmers (already mythical and ideological with Jefferson) has known something of a synthesis with the later and more urban market image, such that their combination today constitutes a regressive mirage designed to conceal what capitalism really is (or to stimulate the belief that it is the essence hidden away behind the unpleasant “mere appearance” of late capitalism as such). This Imaginary is then both ideology and utopia all at once: real elements of capitalism’s past—small farms, factories, commodities as objects you buy and wages as money received from productive work—are then, in a time where none of this constitutes the dynamic of the system as such, isolated and endowed with a mesmerizing power and with an intensely ideological nostalgia. Some of the works by American precisionist artist Charles Sheeler (1883–1965) can be interpreted in this light, albeit with all the ambiguity to which I shall refer later. Such is the case of his photographs of Shaker interior architecture and farm view [figs. 1, 2], which he later drew in even more explicit degrees of abstraction [fig. 3] and, of course, of his 1927 photographs of the Ford Factory in River Rouge, Detroit [fig. 4], at that time the largest industrial complex in the world.

Now it should be observed that the utopian impulse takes many forms, finds many varied expres-



**FIG. 1.** Charles Sheeler  
*South Salem, Living Room  
with Easel, 1929*  
Gelatin silver print  
19.5 x 24.4 cm  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
The Lane Collection



**FIG. 2.** Charles Sheeler  
*Side of White Barn, 1915*  
Gelatin silver print  
18.6 x 23.8 cm  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
The Lane Collection

**FIG. 3.** Charles Sheeler  
*Barn Abstraction, 1918*  
Lithography, 50.2 x 64.8 cm  
The Lane Collection

**FIG. 4.** Charles Sheeler  
Photograph for the cover  
of *Ford News*  
vol. 8, no. 22 (October 1, 1928)





**FIG. 5.** Charles Sheeler  
*Classic Landscape*, 1931  
 Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 81.9 cm  
 National Gallery of Art  
 Washington, DC, Collection  
 of Barney A. Ebsworth

of the American landscape. Thus artists like Charles Sheeler isolated objects, factories, houses, equipment, and other kinds of *things* [figs. 5] which in a virtually Heideggerian manner—transcendentally purified—could suggest a utopian transcendence of what was otherwise a grimy and exploited world, and thereby forged a creative link to the nostalgic social ideologies I have already mentioned, while by their streamlined forms proclaiming an equally utopian American modernity and a kinship with the European avant-gardes of the period.

So much for references to Sheeler, the artist I sought to pit against Deineka, because it is obvious that this kind of transformation of the object world had little enough in common with the landscapes of a frantic Soviet modernization and its construction of socialism.

#### At the Imaginary of Socialism

To be sure, the quarrels about what the Soviet Union was, and what it should be called—communism, socialism, state capitalism, the “new class,” “revisionism”—have enormous significance for the future. In particular they turn on the question of whether another, a different, an alternate, mode of production is possible in the first place; and the more serious discussions turn on the possibility of an alternative economic structure. Meanwhile, even the most political and ideological versions of these debates—“totalitarianism” versus democracy—have not prevented the crucial social question from arising, namely whether new kinds of social and collective relations in fact came into existence in the Soviet period, which still persist and which are not attributable to pseudo-cultural explanations in terms of some hypothetical Russian or Slavic “character” or tradition.

But let us return to our artist: in reality, the utopian visual elements we wish to attribute to Aleksandr Deineka’s work do not require any definitive position on such questions, nor do they demand recourse to deeper metaphysical or essentialist causes. We

sions and outlets in any given society or mode of production. In Western capitalism, but also in the Soviet Cultural Revolution of the early 1920s, much that was utopian found its outlet in abstraction, but the utopian analysis of abstraction is too complex to be pursued any further here.

While figurative or representational art also survived in the West, even though marginalized by art historians and curators, in the Soviet Union it became something of a state aesthetic. Returning to the approach we outlined at the beginning, it is however important to grasp the ways in which these kinds of representation had differing utopian values in the two systems. One’s impression is, for example, that bodies in capitalism were most often grasped in their after-hours leisure postures, in crowds, bars, Coney Island, peep shows, beauty pageants, and other situations which purported to negate work or somehow to escape from it. This does not seem to have been the case in the Soviet Union, as we shall see.

Meanwhile other kinds of artists expressed the utopian negation of business society not through the human figure but rather by way of the object world, through salvaging utopian fragments of America’s ruined past (or of its ideological image): such arts selected carefully isolated bits and pieces





**FIG. 6.** Double-page spread in *URSS en construction*, no. 2 February 1936 (French edition of *SSSR na stroike*) Collection MJM, Madrid [cat. 128]

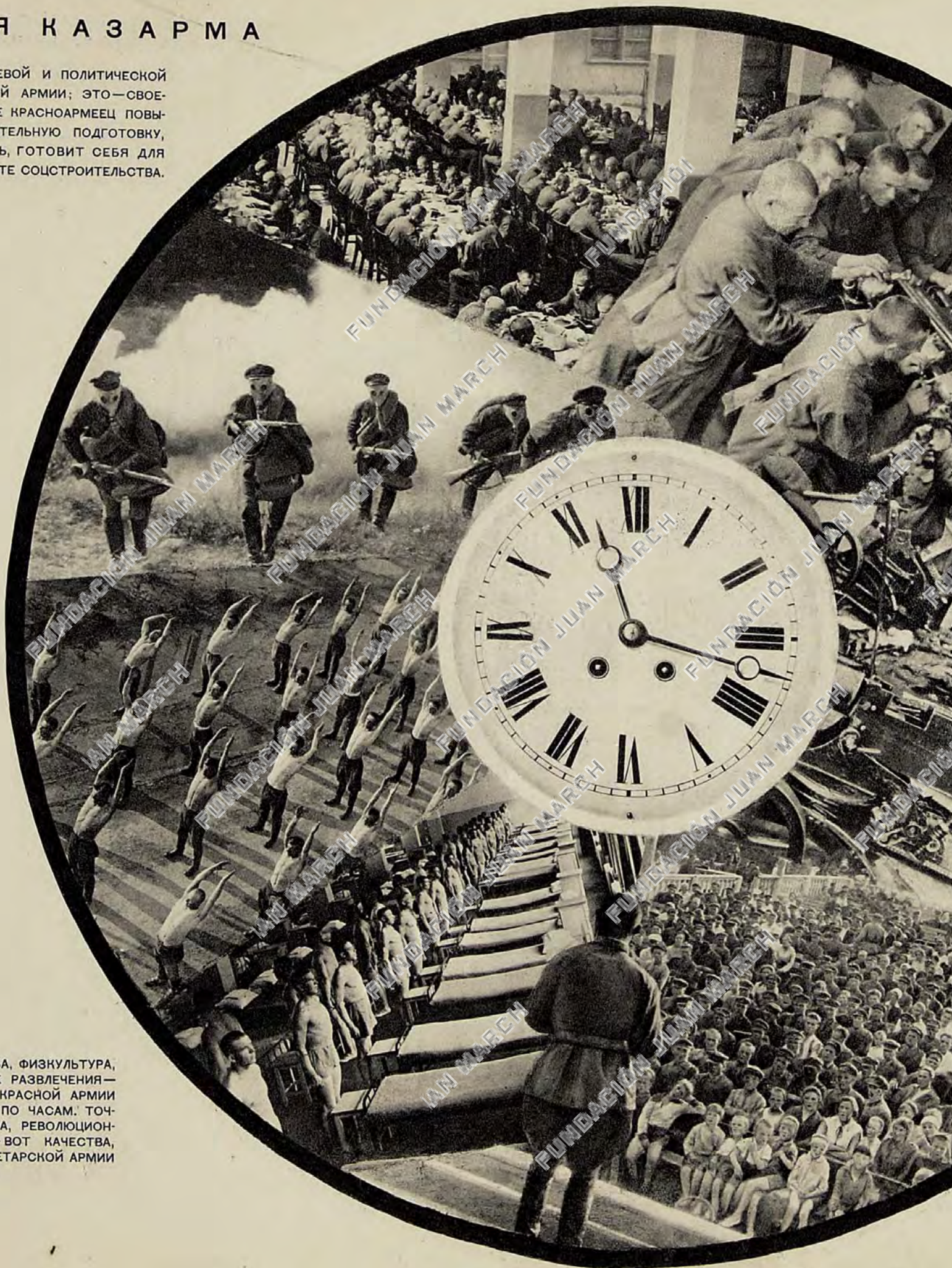
**FIG. 7.** Double-page spread in *SSSR na stroike* no. 7-8, 1934 Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 201]

**FIG. 8.** Double-page spread in *URSS in Construction*, no. 9 September 1931 (English edition of *SSSR na stroike*) Fundación José María Castañé

**FIG. 9.** Double-page spread in *USSR in Construction*, no. 5 1932 (English edition of *SSSR na stroike*) Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 114]

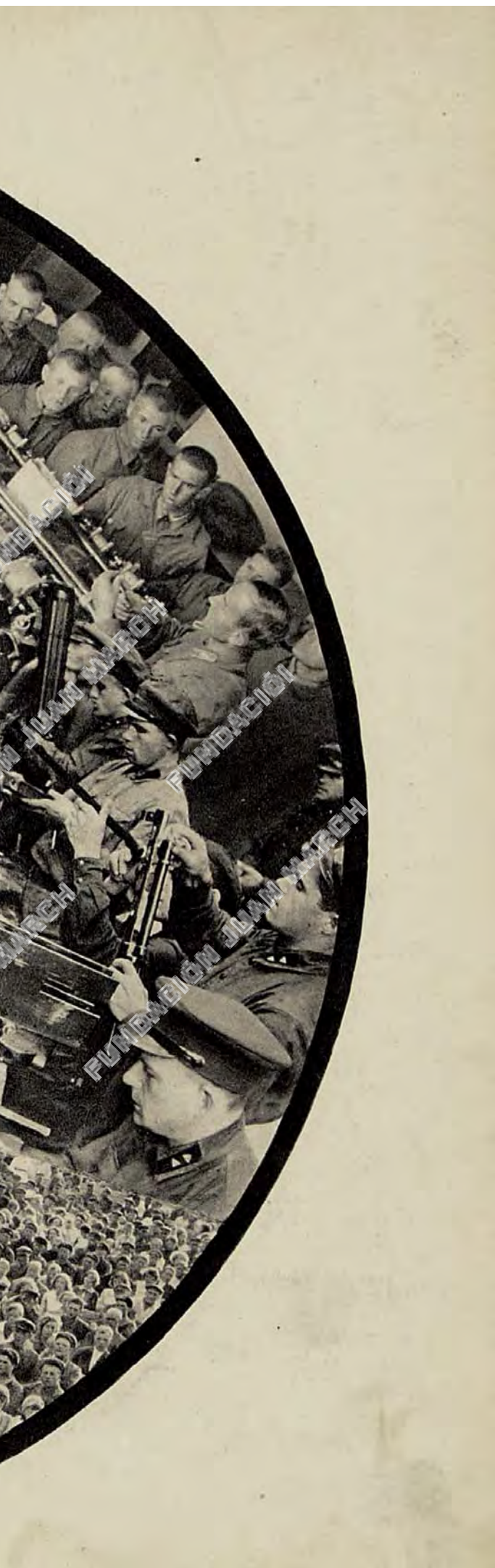
# РАСНАЯ КАЗАРМА

ЭТО НЕ ТОЛЬКО ШКОЛА БОЕВОЙ И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ПОДГОТОВКИ БОЙЦА КРАСНОЙ АРМИИ; ЭТО—СВОЕОБРАЗНЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ, ГДЕ КРАСНОАРМЕЕЦ ПОВЫШАЕТ СВОЮ ОБЩЕОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНУЮ ПОДГОТОВКУ, ПОВЫШАЕТ СВОЙ КУЛЬТУРНЫЙ УРОВЕНЬ, ГОТОВИТ СЕБЯ ДЛЯ АКТИВНОГО УЧАСТИЯ НА ФРОНТЕ СОЦСТРОИТЕЛЬСТВА.



БОЕВАЯ И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ УЧЕБА, ФИЗКУЛЬТУРА, ТРУДОВАЯ РАБОТА, КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ РАЗВЛЕЧЕНИЯ—ТАК ПРОХОДИТ ДЕНЬ БОЙЦА КРАСНОЙ АРМИИ В КАЗАРМЕ. ВСЕ РАСПИСАНО ПО ЧАСАМ. ТОЧНОСТЬ, ЧЕТКОСТЬ, ДИСЦИПЛИНА, РЕВОЛЮЦИОННАЯ ЦЕЛЕУСТРЕМЛЕННОСТЬ—ВОТ КАЧЕСТВА, НЕОБХОДИМЫЕ БОЙЦАМ ПРОЛЕТАРСКОЙ АРМИИ В СТРОИТЕЛЬСТВЕ СОЦИАЛИЗМА.





may here indeed remain at the level of a description which accommodates any of the various ideological options, namely the hypothesis that the fundamental reality of the Soviet Union was the process of modernization as such, and this on all levels, from “base” to “superstructure.” Education and agricultural technique [fig. 6-10], bureaucratization and industrialization, surveillance technologies and artistic experimentation, the “commanding heights” of political and economic control as well as the monopoly of violence and the never-ending search for internal and external enemies—such are some of the new possibilities, for good or ill, of the modernization process.

#### The Ambivalence of Modernization

Modernization is a reality, with its own complex history; and it is also a concept, or an ideology, with a history of its own, a slogan or a value—a goal which is set and celebrated (by both the United States and the Soviet Union) and a bogus ideal or mirage deplored by critical observers. In both these forms—reality and ideology—modernization is profoundly ambivalent, meriting the same kind of dialectical mixed feelings with which Marx and Engels greeted capitalism itself in the Communist Manifesto: at one and the same time the most productive and the most destructive force the world has ever seen. And indeed the relevance of their account is scarcely surprising, since modernization is virtually the same as capitalism itself: Schumpeter’s “creative destruction” at work imperceptibly through market mechanisms in the capitalist world, imposed by decision as a program and a goal in the socialist one.

This is not to revive the accusations cited above about the convergence of the two systems, but rather to take all this in another direction, namely the profoundly transitional nature of the process, which hurries us toward a future we cannot imagine except in the mutually exclusive modes of utopia or dystopia. (Meanwhile, the advent of postmodernity before the very term of modernity has itself been reached

complicates all this further in ways that are not particularly relevant for this painter of an earlier era.) For transition means that the heterogeneous elements of any moment of an on-going process can be isolated from each other and serve as the locus of a utopian investment. Thus one familiar way in which the ideology of modernization is staged and celebrated is that of production, and production can, in its turn, be packaged and projected in any number of ways. The utilization of the factory situation conveniently allows for a multiple investment by fantasies about technology, collectivity and even Stakhanovism: here the interests of the government and the utopian impulse overlap in a loose and sloppy fashion.

Aleksandr Deineka has however outlived that particular moment (which produced its own magnificent works in the late 1920s or 1930s, such as *Before the Descent into the Mine* (1925), *Building New Factories* (1926) and *Female Textile Workers* (1927) [cat. 115, 116, 125], as well as of sorrier standardized efforts): for him productivity can now be identified and interpellated in the no less institutionalized phenomena of sport, and it is the productivity of the body he is able to celebrate.

It has long been a commonplace of the students of “totalitarianism” that the Nazi appeal to collective sport “significantly” coincided with the Soviet one. But this is to misread the contextual meaning of these two utopian projections. For the Nazis clearly felt the idealized body to be the apotheosis of race itself, and athleticism—particularly in its contests and agon— to be the very space in which racial superiority was to be demonstrated. In the Soviet system, however, as we have argued here, it is the body’s productivity which is foregrounded: here the athletic body is not the expression of racial primacy but rather the proof of achieved modernity. Aleksandr Deineka perfects a kind of vitalism of modernization; in a period in which the body is once again of theoretical attention (along with vitalism itself), his achievement should not be without interest.

**FIG. 11.** Illustrated page in the book *Rabochaia Krestianskaia Krasnaia Armiia* [Workers and Peasants Red Army], 1934  
Fundación José María Castañé [cat. 215]





# **WORKS ON EXHIBITION**

## **(1913–53)**

The works in the exhibition are organized into three sections. The first (1913–34) traces a line between the origins of the Russian avant-garde and the double context—pioneering and revolutionary—of Deineka’s work and that of socialist realism. In the focused presentation of that artistic and ideological continuity of thought there is a series of works that play an important role and exemplify the parallels between the function of light in avant-garde poetics and of electricity in the praxis of the Soviet system. In addition, this section presents a series of monumental works by Deineka in the context that most befits the artist: the industrialization and technical modernization of the country.

The concentrated period of Deineka’s work as a graphic artist during the 1920s has led us to include in this section a text by Irina Leytes on his graphic output.

The second section (1935) is specifically given over to the commission Deineka received for the Moscow Metro. Given its particular interest, a text by Alessandro De Magistris on the construction of the Moscow subway system has been included here. It features details on the Deineka commission: the design for the ceiling mosaics for two of the stations, Maiakovskaia and Novokuznetskaia. This section closes with an essay by Boris Groys highlighting the symbolic aspects of this project, which was the most successful achievement of the Stalinist utopia.

The third and final section explores the dialectic between the intentions of that utopia and the reality of the Soviet system under Stalin and its impact on Deineka’s final works (1936–53).

The works follow a basically chronological order, from the first—the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* (1913)—to the last, dated 1953, the year of Stalin’s death. Nevertheless, given the marked contextual and comparative character of the exhibition, on occasion the strict chronological order has been disregarded—as can be seen, without excessive temporal leaps—to facilitate the perception of the evident visual relationships established between the works. Deineka’s production has been placed on a black background. Aside from Deineka’s autobiographical text [cat. 248], published in 1961, the first work by Deineka in the exhibition is dated 1919 and the last, 1952.



**1913-34**  
**From *Victory over the Sun***  
**to the Electrification of**  
**the Entire Country**

1. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Avtoportret*  
[Self-Portrait], 1948  
Oil on canvas  
175.2 x 110 cm  
Kursk Deineka  
Picture Gallery  
Inv. ZH-1277



**2 and 3. Kazimir Malevich and David Burliuk**

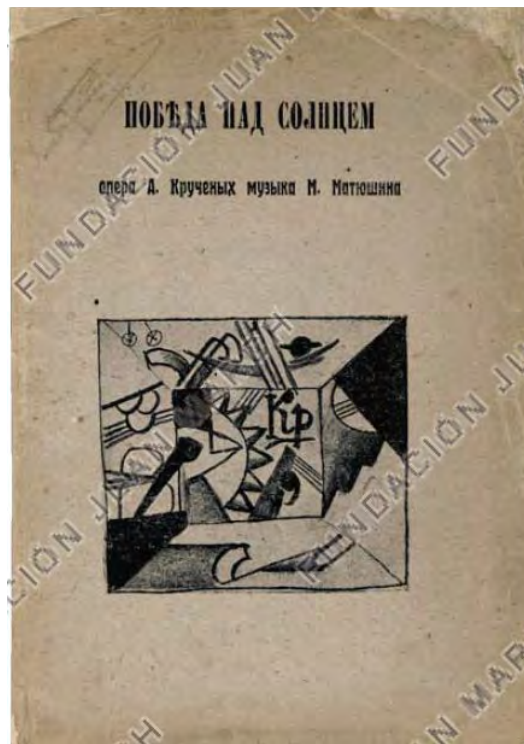
Cover (Malevich) and back cover (Burliuk) of Aleksei Kruchenykh's opera *Pobeda nad solntsem* [Victory over the Sun], 1913  
Book. Letterpress, 24.6 x 17 cm  
EUY, Saint Petersburg  
Libretto by Aleksei Kruchenykh and music by Mikhail Matiushin  
Collection Maurizio Scudiero and private collection

**4. El Lissitzky**

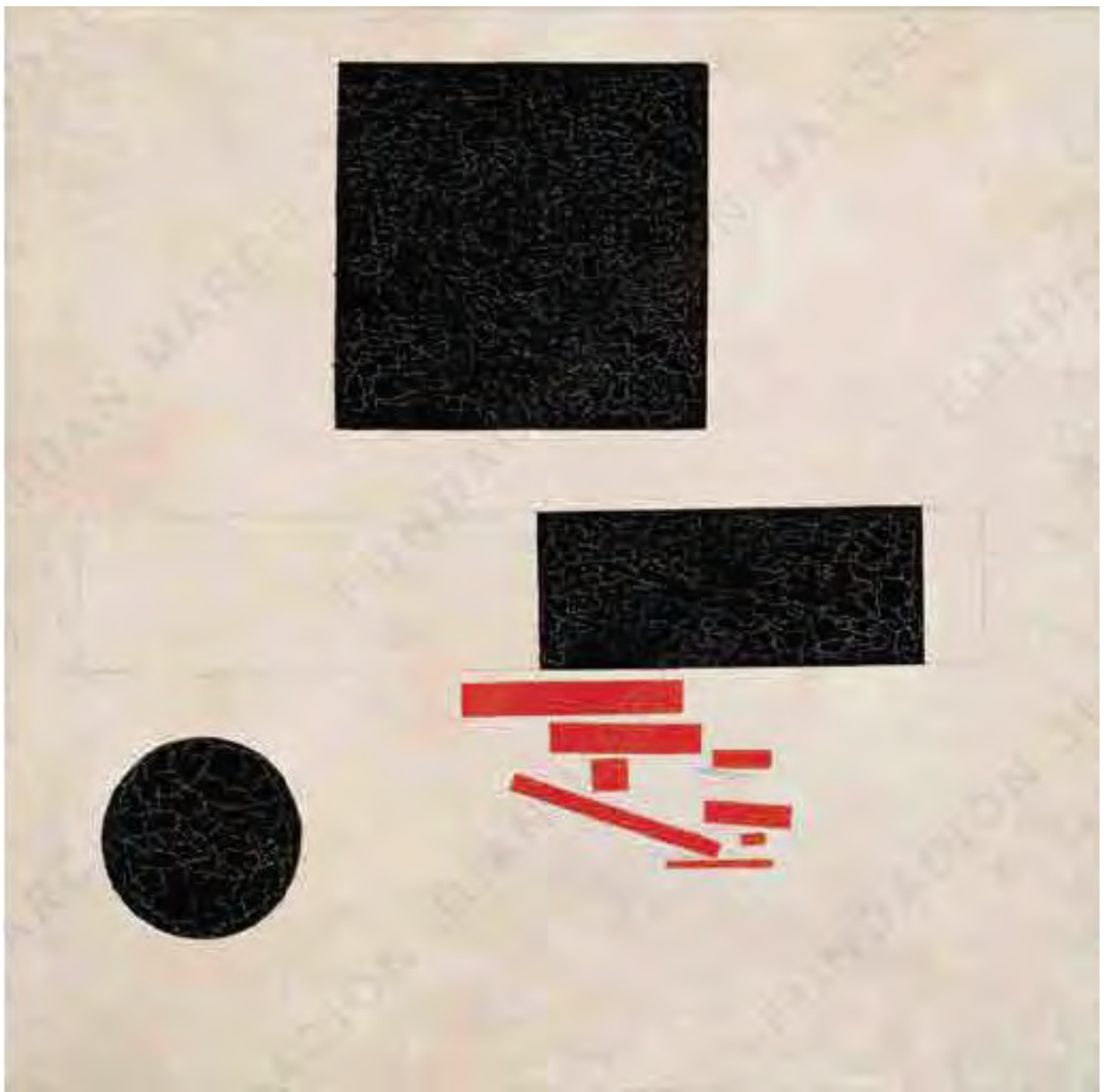
Cover of Konstantin Bol'shakov's book *Solntse naizlete. Vtorai kniga stikhov*, 1913–1916  
[The Sun in Decline: Second Book of Poetry, 1913–16], 1916  
Lithography, 23.4 x 19 cm  
Tsentrifuga, Moscow  
Private collection

**5. Kazimir Malevich**

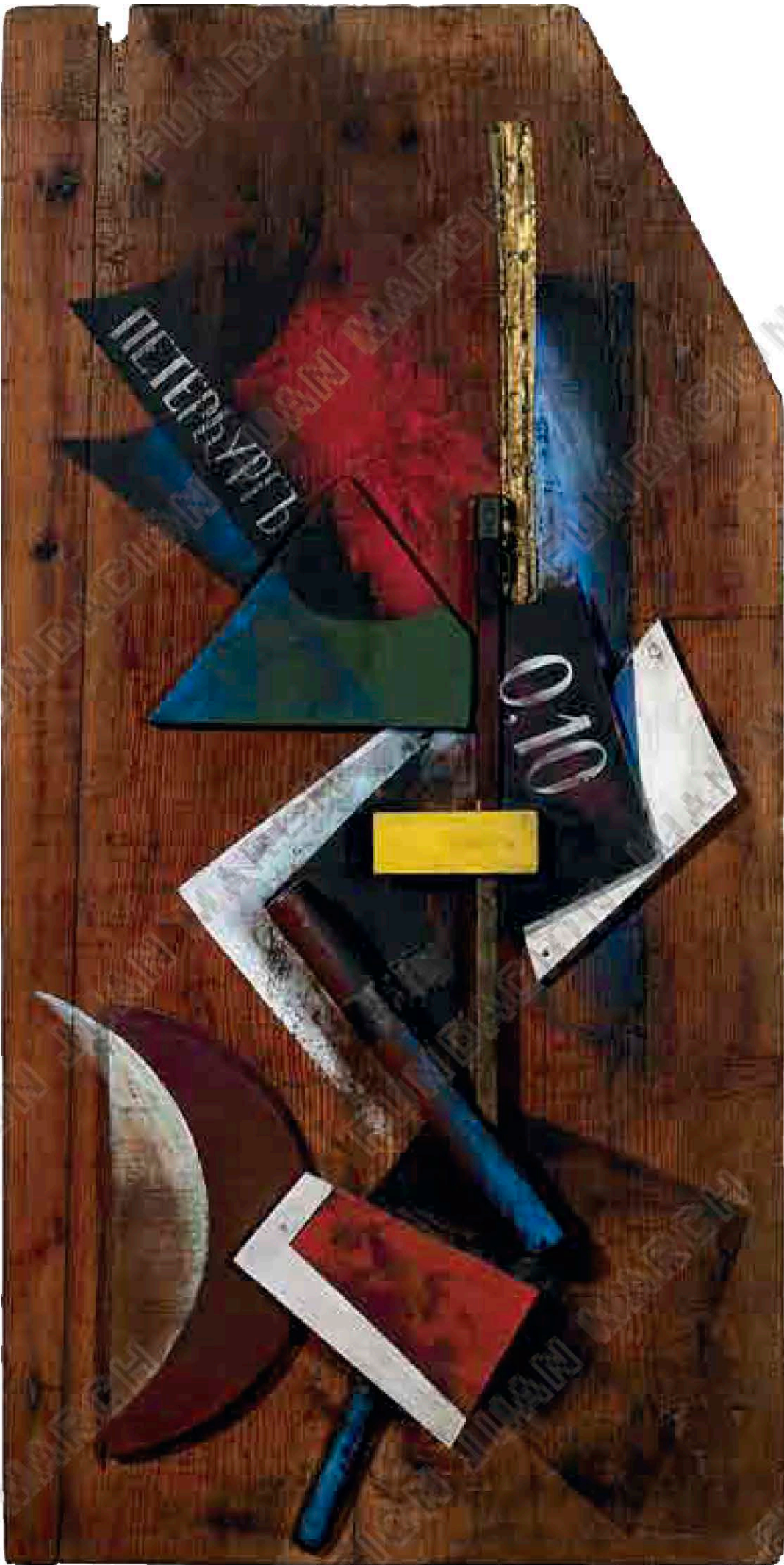
Cover of the book *Ot kubizma i futurizma k suprematizmu. Novyi zhivopisni realizm* [From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism], 1916  
Lithography, 18 x 13 cm  
Unknown publisher, Moscow, 3rd ed.  
Private collection



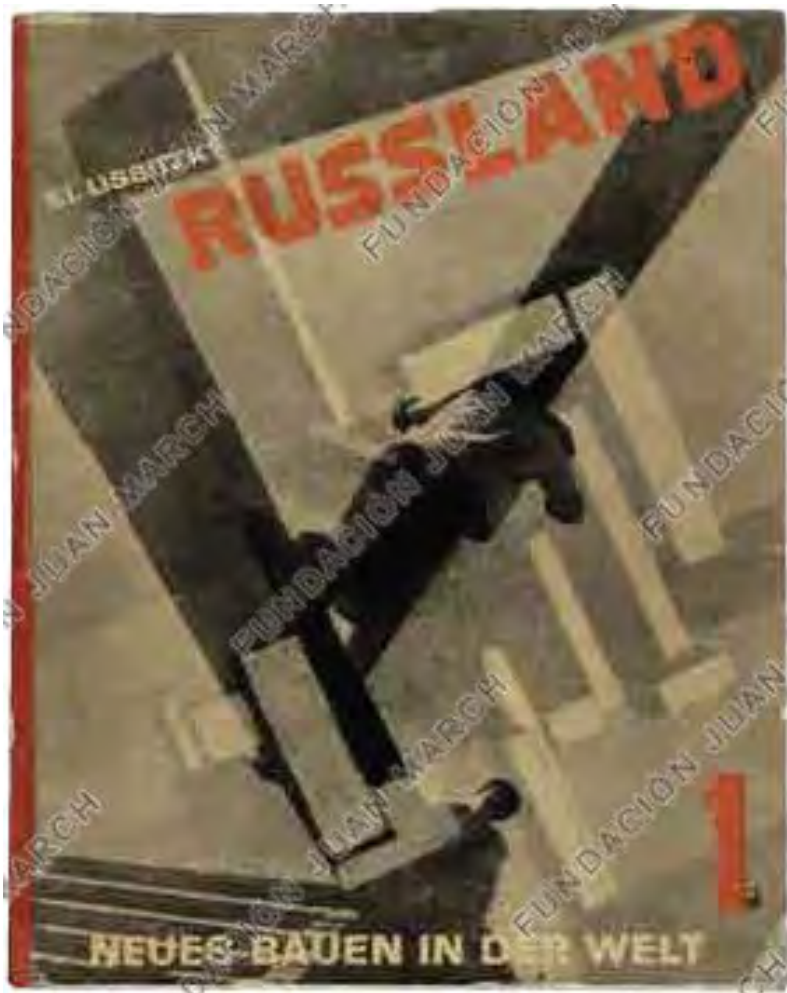




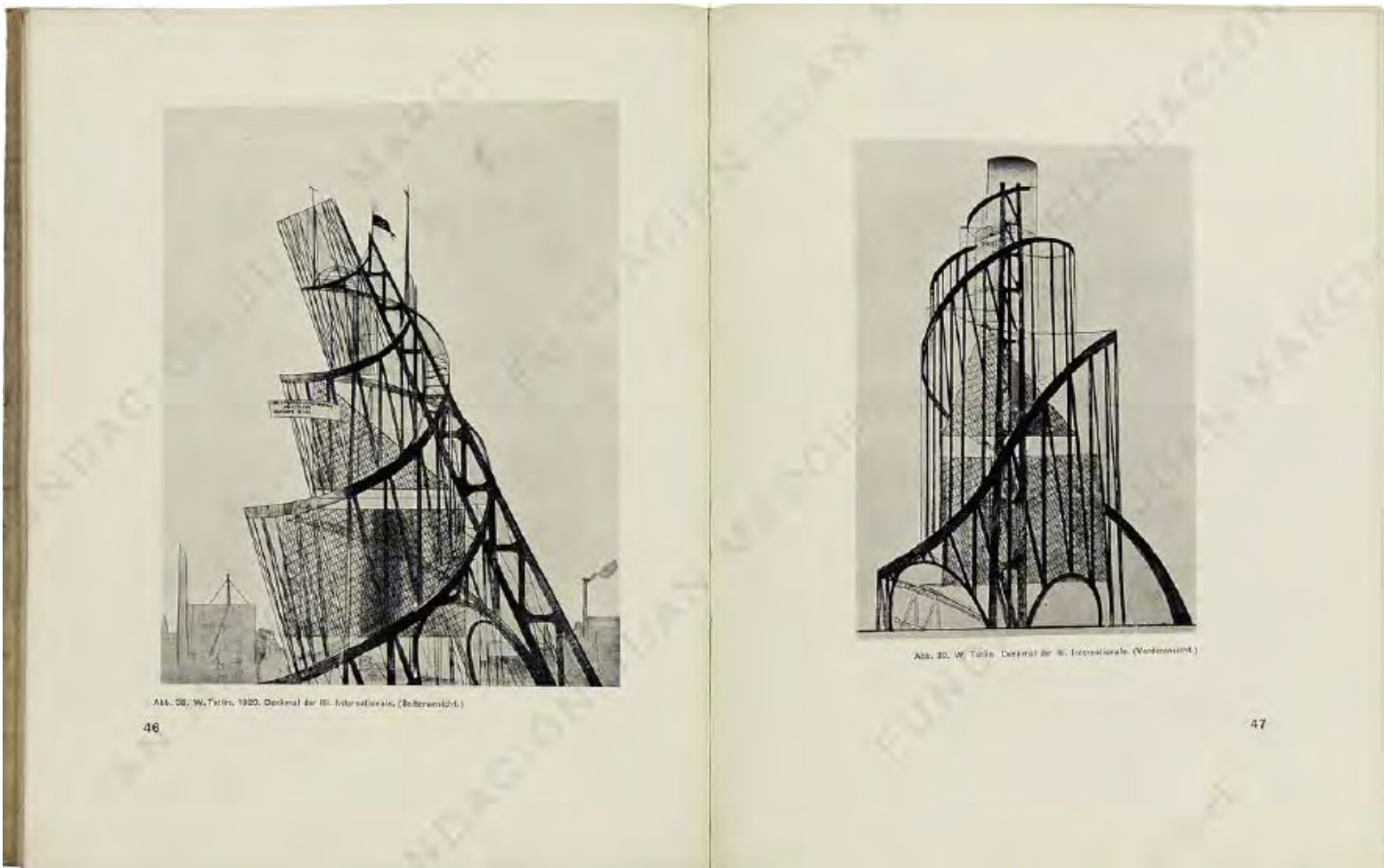
**6. Kazimir Malevich**  
*Suprematicheskaya kompozitsiya*  
[Suprematist Composition], 1915  
Oil on canvas, 80.4 x 80.6 cm  
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen  
Basel, Inv. 06.2



**7. Vladimir Tatlin**  
*Kontrrelief*  
[Counter Relief], ca. 1915–16  
Wood panel, brass and oil  
85 x 43 cm  
Private collection



**8. El Lissitzky**  
 Cover and layout of the book  
*Russland. Die Rekonstruktion der  
 Architektur in der Sowjetunion*  
 [Russland. The Reconstruction of  
 Architecture in the Soviet Union], 1930  
 Book. Letterpress, 28.8 x 22.7 cm  
 Verlag von Anton Schroll & Co., Vienna  
 Fundación José María Castañé  
 8b. Pages 46–47 illustrating  
 Tatlin's Monument to the  
 Third International, 1920





**9.** Liubov Popova  
*Painterly Architecture no. 56*, 1916  
 Oil on canvas, 67 x 48.5 cm  
 Private collection

**10.** Liubov Popova  
*Da zdravstvuet diktatura proletariata!*,  
 [Hail the Dictatorship of the  
 Proletariat!], 1921  
 Sketch for poster. Ink, watercolor,  
 pencil, cut paper, 20.1 x 24.9 cm  
 Private collection



**11. Gustavs Klucis**  
*Untitled (The Red Man)*, 1918  
Lithography, 25.4 x 15.2 cm  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**12. Gustavs Klucis**  
*Workers of the world unite*  
[Workers of the World, Unite!], 1922  
Linocut, 23.5 x 13.5 cm. Sketch for  
revolving stand for propaganda  
designed on the occasion of  
the 6th Komintern Congress  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**13. Valentina Kulagina**  
*Untitled*, 1923  
Lithography, 22.9 x 15.2 cm  
Text at top: 1923—V. Kulagina  
—Lithography/32/K.V. 1923  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



16. *Ustroite "Nedeliu krasnogo podarka" vezde i vsiudu*  
 [Establish a "Week of the Red Present." Here, There, and Everywhere], ca. 1920  
 Planographic print, 23.7 x 46 cm  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



17. *Organizatsiia proizvodstva-pobeda nad kapitalisticheskim stroem*  
 [The Organization of Production is a Victory over the Capitalist Order], ca. 1920  
 Planographic print, 23.7 x 46 cm  
 Text: Proletarians of all nations, unite!  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



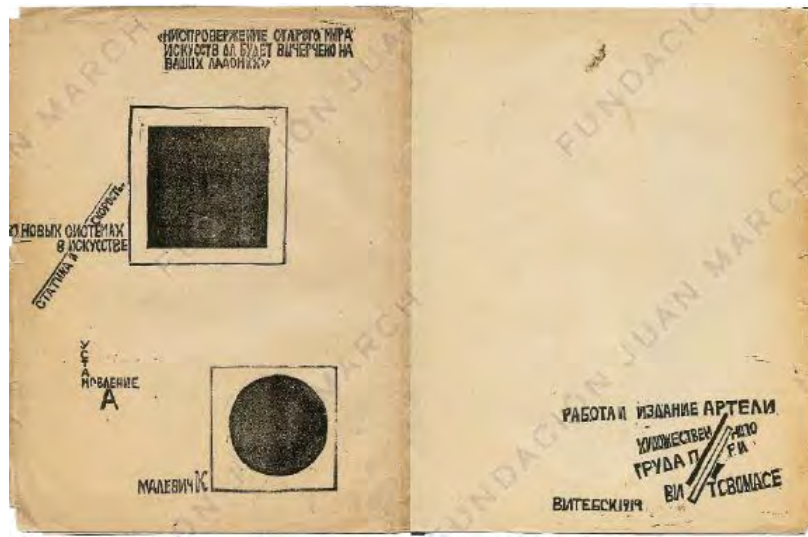
14. El Lissitzky  
*Klinom krasnym bei belykh*  
 [Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge], 1919  
 Lithography, 23 x 19 cm  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman





**15. El Lissitzky**  
*Proun*, ca. 1922  
Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 40.5 cm  
Collection Azcona, Madrid

**18 and 19.** Kazimir Malevich  
 Illustrations for his book *O novykh sistemakh v iskusstve. Statika i skorost'*  
 [On New Systems in Art. Statics and Speed], 1919.  
 Lithography, 22 x 18 cm  
 Artel' khudozhestvennogo truda pri Vitsvomas, Vitebsk  
 Cover by El Lissitzky  
 after woodcuts by Kazimir Malevich  
 Collection José María Lafuente  
 and private collection



**20.** Kazimir Malevich  
*Suprematistskaia kompositsiia*  
 [Suprematist Composition], ca. 1919  
 Pencil on paper, 22.5 x 14.5 cm  
 Private collection

**21.** Cigarette cases for man and woman, ca. 1920  
 Enameled steel (green) and enameled brass (black)  
 10 x 8 x 1 cm  
 Archivo España-Rusia





**22.** Kazimir Malevich  
*Sportsman*, ca. 1923  
Pencil and watercolor on paper  
25.2 x 15.2 cm  
Private collection



**23.** Natan Al'tman  
*Klub khudozhnikov*  
[Artists' Club], 1919  
Linocut, 15.9 x 23.8 cm  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**24.** Natan Al'tman  
*Krasnyi Student*  
[Red Student], 1923  
Design for magazine cover  
Ink and crayon, 39.2 x 29 cm  
Priboi, Petrograd  
Private collection



**25.** Natan Al'tman  
*Lenin. Risunki*  
[Lenin. Drawings], 1920  
Book. Letterpress, 23.5 x 19 cm  
IZO Narkompros, Petrograd  
Private collection



**26.** Aleksandr Rodchenko  
*Konstruktsiia* [Construction], 1919  
Oil on wood. 37.5 x 21.5 cm  
Private collection



**27. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
 Cover for *Lef* [Left Front of the Arts]  
 no. 3, June-July 1923. Magazine  
 Letterpress. 23.8 x 15.9 cm  
 GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



**28. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
 Cover for *Lef* [Left Front of the Arts]  
 no. 2, April-May 1923. Magazine  
 Letterpress. 24 x 16 cm  
 Editor: Vladimir Mayakovsky  
 GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



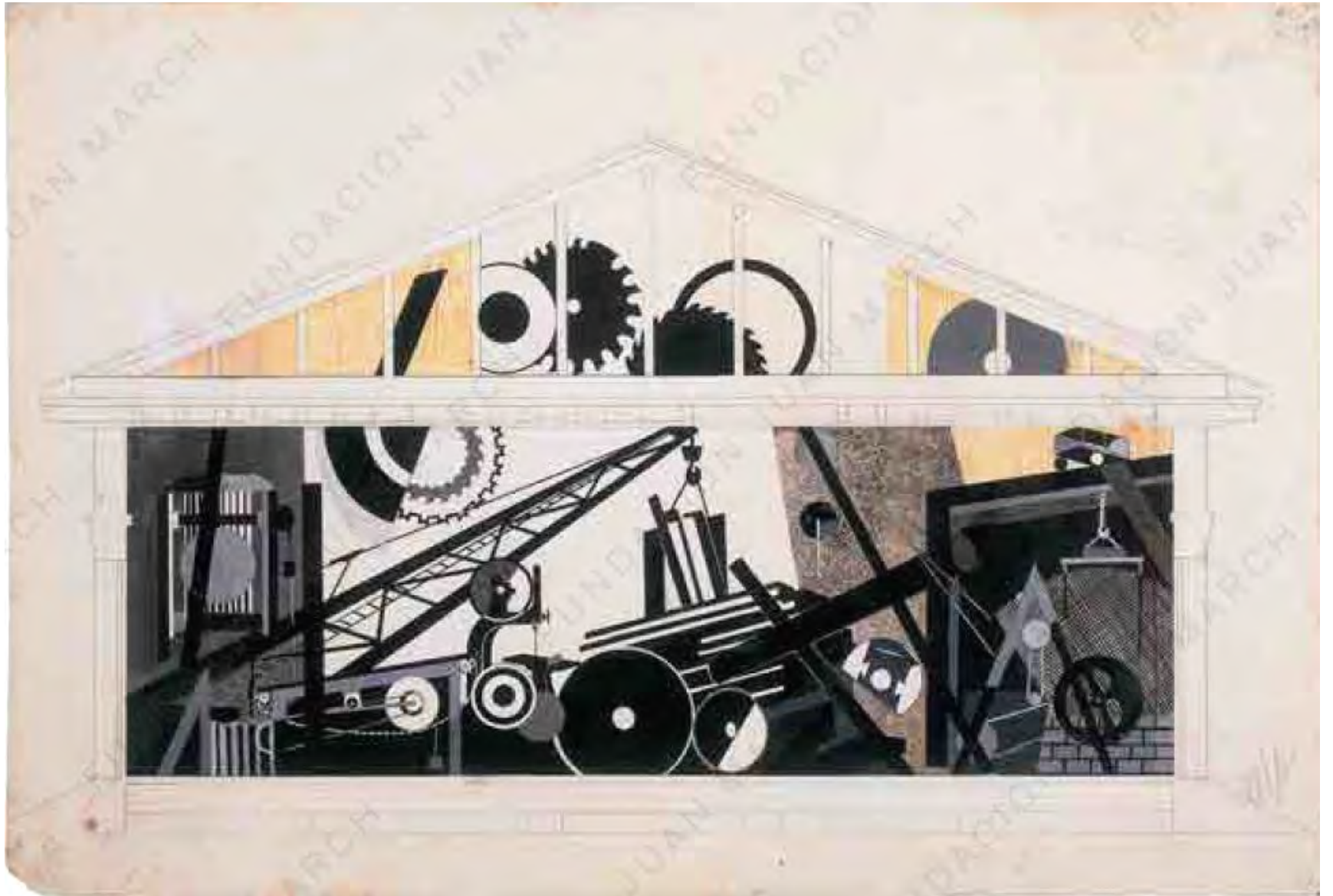
**29. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
*Otkryta podpiska na LEF*  
 [Open subscription to LEF], 1924  
 Poster. Lithography, 68.3 x 53 cm  
 OGIZ, Leningrad-Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



**30. Anastasiia Akhtyrko**  
*VKhUTEMAS distsipliny*  
[VKhUTEMAS. Disciplines], 1920  
Collage: gouache, ink and pencil  
23 x 18.7 cm  
Private collection

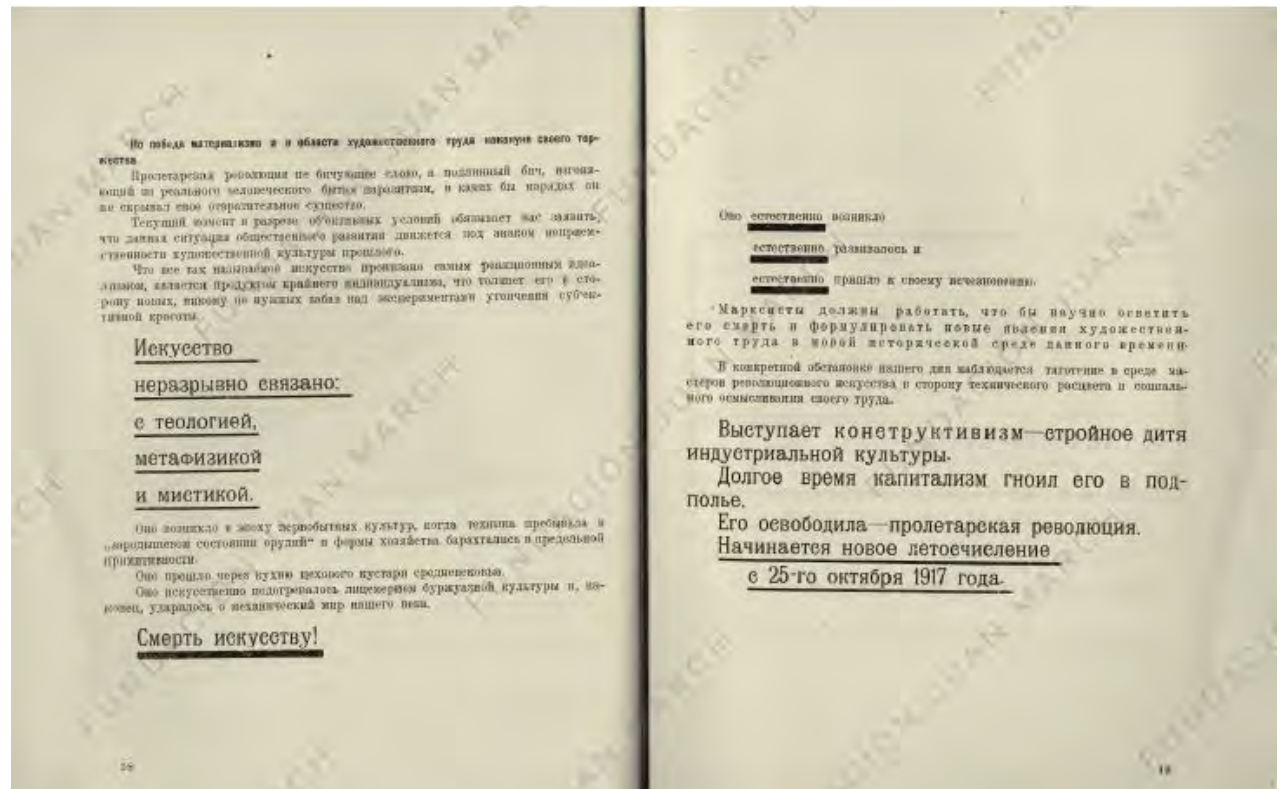
**31. Faik Tagirov**  
Cover of a VKhUTEIN publication, 1929  
Letterpress, 27.2 x 22.5 cm  
VKhUTEIN, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia





**32. Aleksandra Ekster**  
*Design for a Mechanical  
Engineering Pavilion, 1923*  
Collage: gouache, pencil and ink  
61 x 89.2 cm  
Pavilion for the 1st All-Union  
Agricultural and Domestic Crafts  
Exhibition in Moscow  
Private collection

**33 and 34.** Aleksei Gan  
*Konstruktivizm* [Constructivism], 1922  
 Book. Letterpress, 23.8 x 19.4 cm  
 Tverskoe izdatel'stvo, Tver  
 Archivo España-Rusia  
 Collection José María Lafuente



**35.** Aleksei Gan  
 Cover for *Da zdravstvuet demonstratsiia byta!*  
 [Hail the Demonstration of Everyday Life!], 1923  
 Book. Letterpress, 22.3 x 18.1 cm  
 Glavlit, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



**36. Boris Arvatov**  
*Iskusstvo i klassi*  
[Art and Classes], 1923  
Book. Lithography, 22.9 x 15.2 cm  
GOZISDAT, Moscow  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**37. Pechat i revoliutsiia**  
[Press and Revolution], no. 4, 1923  
Magazine. Letterpress, 25 x 17 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia



**38. Pechat i revoliutsiia**  
[Press and Revolution], no. 9, 1929  
Magazine. Letterpress, 25 x 17 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia



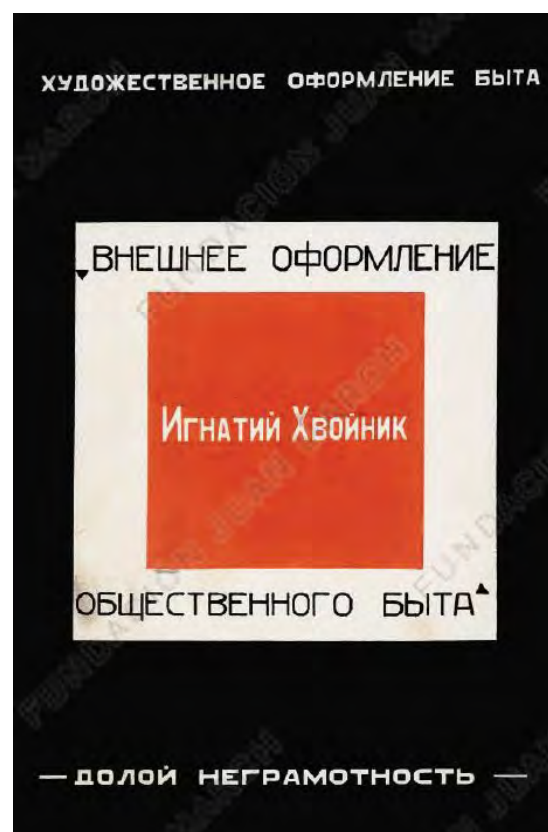


**39.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Bor'ba s razrukhoi*  
 [The Battle against Disruption], 1919  
 Ink, gouache and bronze on paper  
 25.7 x 31.7 cm  
 Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
 Inv. G-1586

**40.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Portret khudozhnika K. A. Vialova*  
 [Portrait of the Artist Konstantin  
 A. Vialov], 1923  
 Oil on canvas, 117 x 89 cm  
 Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
 Inv. Z-1406

**41.** Konstantin Vialov  
 Cover of Ignatii Khvoynik's book  
*Vneshnee oformlenie  
 obshchestvennogo byta*  
 [The Design of Social  
 Everyday Life], 1928–30  
 Gouache, 23.2 x 15.2 cm  
 Private collection

**42.** Konstantin Vialov  
 Dummy for *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*  
 [Soviet Art], no. 1, 1930  
 Collage: gouache, pencil, letterpress  
 and photography (gelatin silver)  
 26.7 x 18.7 cm  
 IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 Private collection







43. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Futbol* [Football], 1924  
Oil on canvas, 105 x 113.5 cm  
Collection Vladimir Tsarenkov, London







**44.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Devushka, sidiashchaia na stule*  
[Girl Sitting on a Chair], 1924  
Oil on canvas, 118 x 72.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow, Inv. ZHS-4327



**45.** Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin  
*Naturmort* [Still Life], 1925  
Oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm  
Private collection



**47. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
*Istoriia VKP(b) v plakatakh 15. 1917,*  
*Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*  
 [History of the VKP(b) in Posters 15. 1917,  
 the February Revolution], 1924  
 Poster. Lithography and letterpress  
 33 x 12.7 cm. Print run: 20,500  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**48. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
*Istoriia VKP(b) v plakatakh 16. 1917,*  
*Ot fevralia k oktiabriu*  
 [History of the VKP(b) in Posters 16. 1917,  
 from February to October], 1924  
 Poster. Lithography and letterpress  
 33 x 12.7 cm. Print run: 20,500  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**49. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
*Istoriia VKP(b) v plakatakh 17. 1917,*  
*Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia*  
 [History of the VKP(b) in Posters 17. 1917,  
 the October Revolution], 1924  
 Poster. Lithography and letterpress  
 33 x 12.7 cm. Print run: 20,000  
 Izdatel'stvo Kommunisticheskoi Akademii  
 i Muzeia Revoliutsii Soiuzia SSR, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**50. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
*Istoriia VKP(b) v plakatakh 23.*  
*1921-22, Nachalo NEPa*  
 [History of the VKP(b) in Posters 23.  
 1921-22, the Start of NEP], 1924  
 Poster. Lithography and letterpress  
 33 x 12.7 cm. Print run: 20,000  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**51. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
*Istoriia VKP(b) v plakatakh 24. 1923*  
 [History of the VKP(b) in  
 Posters 24. 1923], 1924. Poster.  
 Lithography and letterpress  
 33 x 12.7 cm. Print run: 500  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**52. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
*Istoriia VKP(b) v plakatakh 25. 1924,*  
*Smert Lenina*  
 [History of the VKP(b) in Posters 25.  
 1924, Lenin's Death], 1924  
 Poster. Lithography and letterpress  
 33 x 12.7 cm. Print run: 20,000  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman





**54.** Gustavs Klucis and Serguei Senkin

*Pamiati pogubshikh vozhdei*  
[In Memory of the Fallen  
Leaders], 1927-28

Design for book cover  
Lithography, 42.2 x 59.1 cm  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**55.** Flag of the second column  
on Bolshaia Serpukhovskaia street  
used in the funeral march in honor  
of Lenin on Red Square, 1924  
Painted wood and hand-painted  
cotton fabric, 89.5 x 53 x 3.5 cm  
Archivo España-Rusia

**56.** *Visit to Lenin's Tomb*, 1961  
Photography, 61.8 x 89 cm  
Private collection







**46.** Pod znamenem marksizma-leninizma, pod rukovodstvom Kommunisticheskoj Partii - vpered, k pobede kommunizma!  
[Under the Banner of Marxism-Leninism, under the Leadership of the Communist Party. Forward, to the Victory of Communism!], ca. 1920  
Flag. Hand-painted cotton fabric  
110.5 x 168 cm  
Fundación José María Castañé

**53.** Bust of Lenin, ca. 1930  
Painted plaster, 29 x 16.5 x 13.5 cm  
Made at Vsekokhudozhnik, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia



57. Aleksandr Rodchenko

(graphic design)

and Vladimir Mayakovsky (text)

*Dayte solntse nochyu! Gde naydiosh yego? Kupi v GUMe* [Have Sun at Night! Where to Find it? Buy it at GUM!], 1923

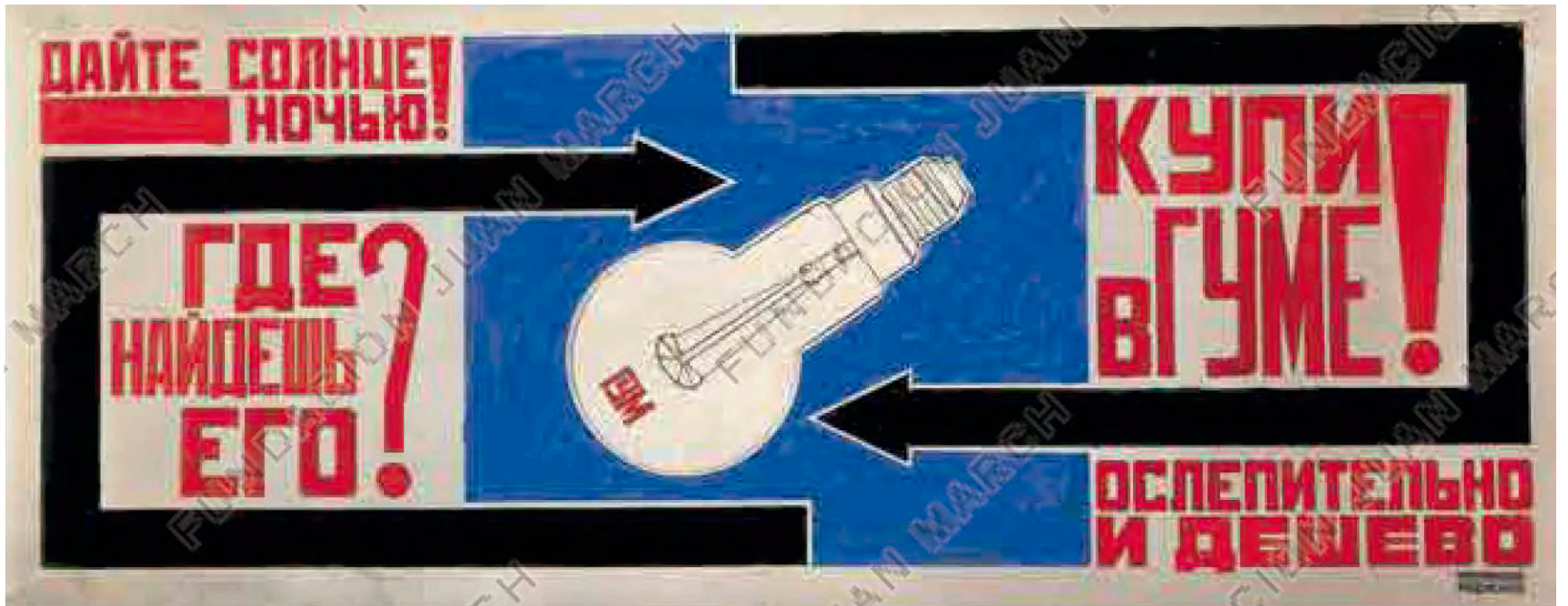
Sketch for poster

Illuminated photography: gelatin silver, gouache, ink and pencil, 11.1 x 28.4 cm

Text: Have sun at night! Where to find it?

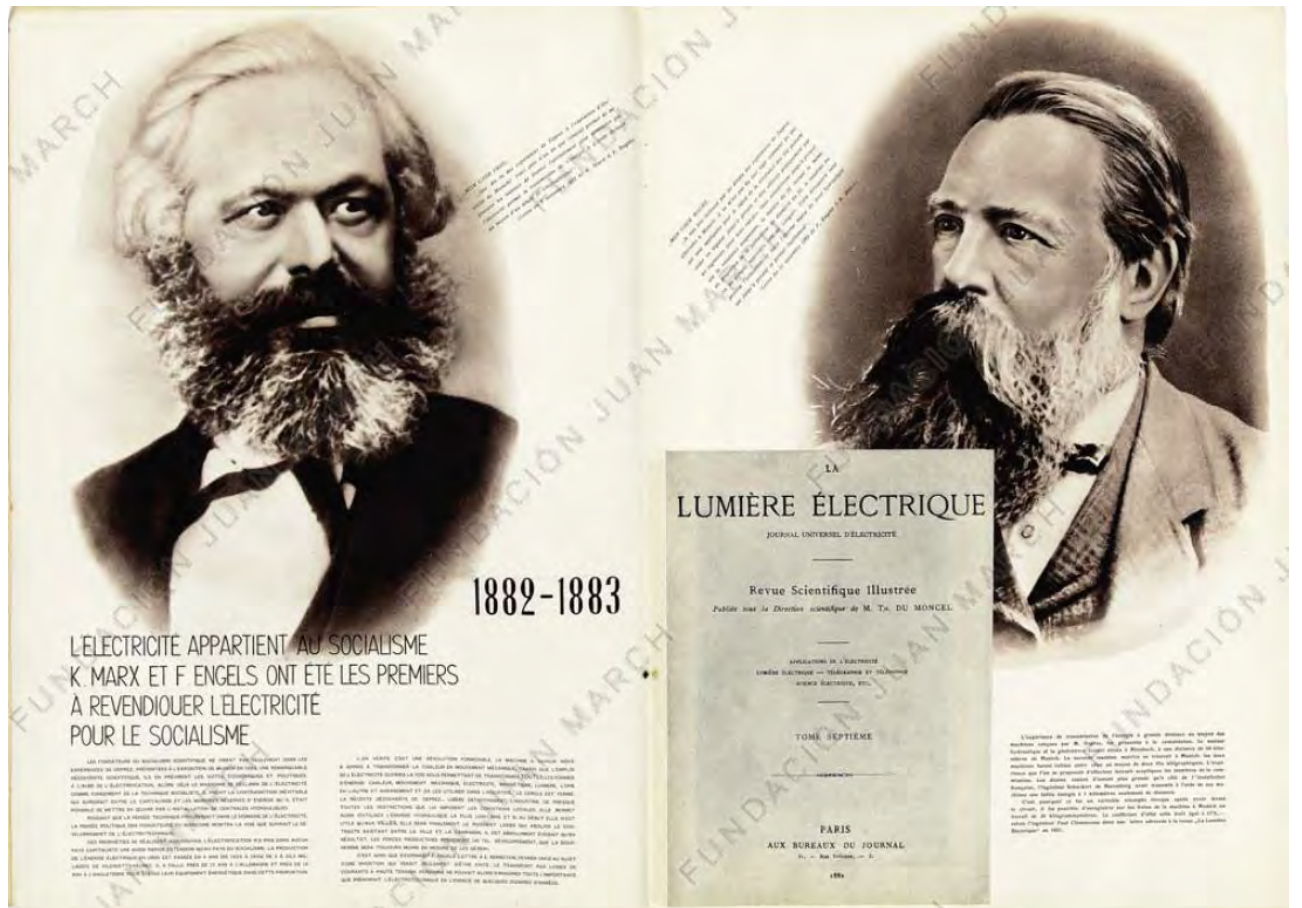
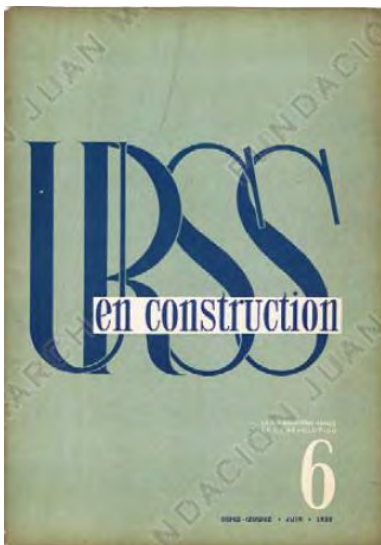
Buy it at GUM! Radiantly and cheaply

Private collection



**58. Gustavs Klucis**  
 Cover of Walter Hough's book, *Ogon'* [Fire], Russian translation of the English original *The Story of Fire* (1928), 1931  
 Letterpress and linocut, 19.5 x 13 cm  
 Molodaia Gvardiia, Moscow  
 Archivo España-Rusia

**59. Nikolai Troshin**  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 6, June 1936  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid



**60. Gustavs Klucis**

*Kommunizm - eto sovetskaia vlast' plus elektrifikatsiia*

[Communism is Soviet Power Plus Electrification], 1930

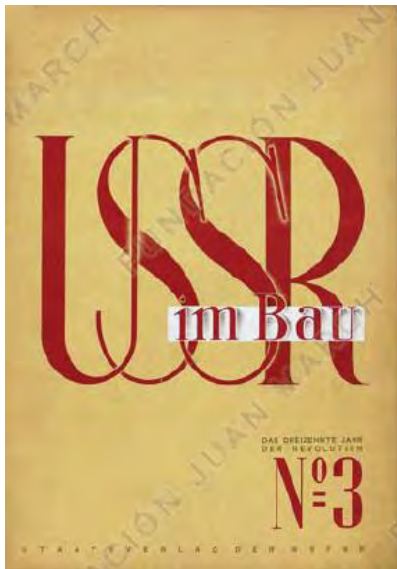
Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 72.7 x 51.3 cm

GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Print run: 30,000. Price: 20 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**61. USSR im Bau** [USSR in Construction], no. 3, 1930 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm GOSIZDAT, Moscow German edition of *SSSR na stroike* Archivo España-Rusia

**62. Mikhail Razulevich** *Sovetskaya vlast' plus elektrifikatsiia* [Soviet Power Plus Electrification], n. d. Photography. Gelatin silver print 16.6 x 58.4 cm Below on left: Stamp of Soiuzfoto Leningrad branch Private collection



64. *Lenin i elektrifikatsiia*  
[Lenin and Electrification], 1925  
Poster. Lithography and  
letterpress, 86.4 x 55.9 cm  
Text: Lenin and electrification  
Volkhovstroi is producing current!  
Communism is Soviet Power  
+ electrification  
Lenizdat, Leningrad. Reprint, 1969  
Print run: 75,000. Price: 10 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**63. Gustavs Klucis**  
Cover for G. Fel'dman's  
*Propaganda elektrifikatsii*  
[Propaganda for Electrification], 1924  
Letterpress, 22.9 x 12.7 cm  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**65. Vladimir Roskin**  
*GET*, 1926. Design for poster  
Gouache, ink and pencil, 21.6 x 28.4 cm  
Private collection

**66. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left  
Front of the Arts], no. 5, 1927  
Magazine. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



67. Mechislav Dobrokovskii  
*Elektrostitelnaia piatiletka v 4 goda*  
 [The Five-Year Plan of Electrical  
 Construction in 4 Years], ca. 1927–28  
 Poster. Lithography, 73.6 x 50.8 cm  
 From the series of posters  
 The Five-Year Plan in Four Years  
 Gosudarstvennoe Nauchno-  
 Tekhnicheskoe Izdatel'stvo, Moscow  
 Print run: 11,000  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman







**68.** Iulian Shutskiï  
*Radio. Iz voli millionov sozdadim edinuiu voliu* [Radio. From the Will of Millions, We Create a Single Will], 1925  
 Poster. Lithography and letterpress  
 93.5 x 62 cm. KUBUCH, Leningrad  
 Print run: 5,000.  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**69.** Soviet radio, 1953. Bakelite  
 27 x 25.5 x 11 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**70.** Homemade radio casing in imitation of a Stalinist skyscraper, 1954. Plywood  
 53 x 31 x 22 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**71.** Cigarette box "Novaia Moskva" [New Moscow], from the Moscow Dukat factory, with an image of a contemporary skyscraper, n. d.  
 Cardboard, printed paper, silk  
 22 x 23.5 x 2.5 cm  
 Archivo España-Rusia



72. Nikolai Troshin

*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 3, March 1934 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow French edition of *SSSR na stroike* Collection MJM, Madrid



**73. Kremlevskaia lampa**  
[Kremlin Lamp], 1934  
Metal and fabric, 50 x 30 x 30 cm  
Made by Elektrosvet, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia  
73b. Detail of hammer and sickle



**74. Stalin and Khrushchev in a session of the Soviet Presidium standing behind a Kremlevskaia lampa, first model, 1938**  
Photography, 17 x 23 cm  
Archive Kino Foto Dokumentov  
Archivo España-Rusia



**76. New Year tree decoration lights in the shapes of a dirigible and an automobile, ca. 1940**  
Painted glass, 3 x 9 x 2.5 cm  
Archivo España-Rusia



**77. Automobile bumper, model GAZ-12 ZIM (1950-59), 1950**  
Painted iron, stainless steel, glass  
10 x 47 x 10 cm  
Archivo España-Rusia



**75.** Aleksandr Rodchenko  
and Varvara Stepanova  
*URSS en Construcción*  
[USSR in Construction], no. 4, 1938  
Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
Spanish edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
Collection MJM, Madrid





МЫ ГОЛОСУЕМ ЗА ТВОРЦА НАШЕЙ СЧАСТЛИВОЙ  
 И РАДОСТНОЙ ЖИЗНИ, НАШЕГО РОДНОГО  
 И ЛЮБИМОГО ТОВАРИЩА **СТАЛИНА**.

Да здравствует великий вождь народов,  
 друг и отец тов. **СТАЛИН!**

ИЗБИРАТЕЛИ УЧАСТКОВ  
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**СТАЛИН** - ЦВЕТУЩАЯ МОЛОДОСТЬ  
 нашей жизни.



EN 1957 LA UNIÓN DE SUJETOS  
 GOBIERNO DEL PARTIDO. MUJERES SOVIÉTICAS DE VARIAS  
 QUARTALES HA TENIDO LA OPORTUNIDAD DE VER LA SEMBLANZA  
 EN PERSONA LA CANDIDATA QUE QUEREN NOMBRAR EN SU  
 ASISTENTE. ESTAS MUJERES Y AMIGAS DE SUJETA SE  
 HAN LA OPORTUNIDAD AL CONSEJO NACIONAL.

**ИОСИФ ВИССАРИОНОВИЧ  
 СТАЛИН**  
 ЧЛЕН ПЕРВОГО ЗАКОННОГО  
 ПЕРИОДИЧЕСКОГО СОВЕТА  
 ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОГО КОМИТЕТА  
 ЦК КПСР

MILLONES DE VOTOS  
 SE UNIERON A LA SUYA.

## The Graphic Work of Aleksandr Deineka (1929–40)

Irina Leytes

Aleksandr Deineka entered Soviet art history first and foremost as a creator of mosaic panels and large thematic paintings, as a keen admirer of every kind of technology, both terrestrial and spatial, and as an enthusiast and connoisseur of various types of physical culture and sport. From early on, Deineka placed his outstanding artistic genius and remarkable energy in the service of the triumphant communist ideology, which he sincerely believed to be the fairest and most humane. Like many other people of his generation, he made his own choice—at that time it was still not possible to impose it upon all as an obligation. Yet his talent went further and deeper than the ideological schemas, even in the 1920s, when he dedicated himself to direct propaganda. Perhaps it was precisely at this time of political agitation when Deineka's genius came to the fore most brightly, deeply and unexpectedly.

Like many other artists of his time, Deineka began his artistic career drawing magazine illustrations. This occupation turned out to be more than a mere source of income and means for acquiring experience, particularly since by the time of his arrival to Moscow and entrance into the Higher Arts and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS)—at the age of twenty and in the midst of a civil war—Deineka had already managed to familiarize himself with diverse kinds of work. Within the framework of the New Economic Policy (NEP), in the early 1920s his activities focused largely on the forefront positions of the *Izofront* (art front), to use the terminology of the era; that is, the application of the class war on the spatial arts front. As fate would have it, Deineka found himself working for the most militant and aggressive revolutionary magazines: *Bezbozhnik*, *Bezbozhnik u stanka* and then *Prozhektor*, *Daesh'!* and *Krasnaia niva*. He worked in peripatetic conditions and almost continuous all-out drives which to a certain degree resembled an atmosphere approximating combat. It is unlikely that all of this especially burdened the young artist. On the contrary, it appears to have stimulated

his imagination and induced maximal concentration of his creative powers.

Deineka's graphic work from the 1920s has become widely renowned. In his memoirs, he recognizes its decisive role in the formation of his artistic style. Indeed, it was influential in determining his creative path. All the same, the young artist's illustrations from the period of his sojourn at VKhUTEMAS, connected as they were with more traditional elements of the teaching program, were also of importance. His early drawings with their characteristic hatching, executed "in the manner of Favorskii," are well known. It will be recalled that Vladimir Favorskii—whom Deineka considered his main teacher—led the foundation course at the Higher Arts and Technical Studios, was associated with the art of composition, and in 1923–25 acted as rector of the institution.

Of special interest are those drawings where the young Deineka attempted to represent physical activity, since as the artist himself acknowledged, he considered movement his fundamental theme. In some cases they are instantaneous sketches, where the young artist used precise strokes—which he later called "sniper strokes"—to masterfully replicate the rhythm of physical movement and roughly convey the surface contours of objects and people. In others, they are studies of female models, where he splendidly defined plastic form with long, light and firm lines. Importantly, within this form the artist tried to reveal the barely visible movement that is stirred up by the interaction of the dense masses that make up the figure. The emergence of a special internal pulsation is especially manifest in his large volumes with marked segmentations. This is partly the reason why Deineka loved to draw large corpulent female models, now and then adding to a line drawing with an accented contour a detailed plastic elaboration. In these studies, the artist attentively reflects the stirring and heaving process of solid forms, a process that was transferred to the paper with the special sensual impression of an expansive and lazy rhythm.

At first glance, Deineka's magazine graphics appear to have little to do with his school drawings. But somehow, the echo of the VKhUTEMAS lessons, even if not directly present in them, springs up indirectly and rather unexpectedly. In subject matter and visual characteristics, Deineka's magazine illustrations in many ways resemble the output of numerous other artists working in the same field. In an emphatic manner and without any hesitation or reflection, he depicted without fail priests that were

fat and insolent; in real life, such priests were rarely encountered during the years of persecution of the church that began with the October Revolution and were still going strong during the NEP era. In contrast to other artists who successfully collaborated with antireligious publishers—such as Dmitrii Moor or Evgenii Evgan—Deineka was little interested in exposing to derision and overthrowing the Supreme Being, who appears in his drawings comparatively rarely. Compared with other magazine caricaturists, the young artist was clearly wanting in terms of experience and, especially, in terms of self-assured gloating sarcasm. The lack of this quality in his graphic work was compensated by Deineka in his literal and figurative representation of priests, oppressors and exploiters of all kinds, in whom he did not spare black paint. It should be remembered that this was the general “trend” of those violent and uncompromising times. And yet, as regards the rest of his characters, whether they turned out to be under the influence of the church and the bourgeoisie—still not liquidated “as a class”—or dominated by their own nasty habits or unhappy circumstances, Deineka clearly felt incapable of treating them with real derision. Rather than laugh at them, he felt for them; he even seems to have sympathized with them. The genre of quick magazine drawing, most often executed with a pen or brush and India ink, did not require the author to confer a given personality on his heroes, especially during this time of global upsets. This situation served Deineka’s purpose for, as the critics rightly observed, he usually preferred to represent a character as a type rather than as an individual. This might be the reason why he practically never shows the faces of his central figures, most often presenting them in profile or from behind—a device he continued to use in his creative work for a long time. Notwithstanding, he was distinguished by the ability to “get under the skin” of any character-type with considerable artistry and to present him in broad strokes but at the same time with astounding vitality as regards gestures and mannerisms, and with the same interest with which he deliberately depicted the rough and heavy bodies of the female models in his school studies. By the same token, having survived in the existential conditions of revolution, war, famine, cold, typhus and social chaos, this “collective-character,” by the very fact of his survival, already manifested something much greater than ordinary strength and natural vigor; and it is common knowledge that throughout his life, Deineka preferred to depict strong people. Under his

brush, a terrible picture of the life of these average people—in terms of statistics and prototypes—of the early Soviet epoch took form. Flogged or shot by the class enemy, they appear baffled by the events taking place around them and, once imbued with a firm conviction in a given ideology, obviously not very humane, they can vote as one person (*Resolved Unanimously*, 1925, The Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery). At times they make merry in a rollicking manner, while other times they remain as still and silent as a statue; they plod their way somewhere, stand in line for newspapers, sit at meetings, carry heavy loads from one place to another or wait to descend into a mine, from which not all are fated to return. The circumstances may lead some of them to a state of unbelievable, compulsive anguish (see the striking large ink drawing *It was Hot* in the State Tretyakov Gallery). Deineka’s scorching brush caught all of this generically but with surprising sympathy. In his late memoirs, he is by no means insincere when he states: “In my drawings and posters, I forgot about the figurative aspect; I was entirely absorbed by the subject—the inner state of a character.”<sup>1</sup>

Even when working in a permanent state of alarm on new spins of a theme and with the alacrity that is endemic to the media world, the artist never forgot to pay attention to expressive form. Graphic journalism at the beginning of the twentieth century employed expressionistic techniques, skewed perspectives and angular forms to deal with picture planes and contour lines. Aware of the fact that the form accompanying revolutionary content should be clear, effective and easily readable at a distance, Deineka elaborated on this array of resources, using a combination of different angles and diverse points of view on a single sheet. He often built form not only with the help of ink spots, but also with gaps in the white paper background. Remembering the lessons of Favorskii, Deineka imbued his black and white tones with a sensation of volume and even color, which add special expressiveness to his drawing. His later statements regarding the impact of the silhouette method of depiction that he often employed are well known: “The silhouette, being flat, is very responsive to plastically clear segmentation . . . A clear silhouette enjoys good visibility from a distance.”<sup>2</sup>

Throughout his entire life, Deineka chose to make only preliminary sketches from the life and to work further from memory, which allowed him to do away with all that was superfluous and to compose his works in such a way that they would be etched in the

memory of magazine readers. For entirely comprehensible reasons, he identified these readers with his own characters. Sympathizing with them, and entirely imbued in the spirit of that aggressive and simultaneously naïve epoch, he contrasted their unhappiness and delusions with images of constructive labor and sports competitions as an escape from seemingly fatal inevitability. This explains why toward the mid-1920s such sporting-labor motifs began to proliferate in Deineka’s work, and why he increasingly incorporated them into his magazine drawings next to representations of those negative phenomena which should be eradicated. The general tone of his drawings became brighter, and he frequently introduced into them one or more complementary sources of light.

Deineka was one of the first artists to represent sports competitions. This was unusual and difficult at the time. He recalls: “I wanted to compose a new plastic phenomenon and I was forced to work without historic references. I imagined and drew that which excited and interested the masses. Play and sport led me to find a language of my own.”<sup>3</sup> Movement, which had been one of his favorite subjects from the start, became the organizing force of his work. He also engaged in sport from an early age and was a highly energetic, dynamic and active person. Yet he only made up his mind to introduce sport (cross-country ski racing, football, boxing, diving, etc.) into his art toward the mid-1920s—and he seems to have made the right choice.

At that time, many influential people from the Soviet government’s ruling circles directed their attention toward mass sport. Physical culture and exercise were regarded not only as a means to train healthy and hardy people—which was extremely important for the application of those methods of construction of socialism that Soviet Russia had chosen—but also as an incipient tool of mass political and ideological influence that could channel the collective inclinations of people and to some extent replace that which the ruling circles perceived as a threat to the established order, namely the absence of civil liberties. Deineka’s creative work persistently features sporting motifs: soccer players, skiers or boxers who are either completely taken up by the sport they are practicing or whose activities are linked to other issues. The artist often compels his footballers, surrounded by a crowd of supporters, to chase a ball near a church, the premises of which are empty without fail. In different variations (they



Aleksandr Deineka  
*China on the Path to Liberation from Imperialism*, 1930  
 Design for poster  
 Watercolor, India ink and pen on paper  
 73 x 105.5 cm  
 Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery



Aleksandr Deineka  
*Full Speed Ahead!* 1930–31  
 Design for poster  
 Gouache, lead white and India ink on paper  
 Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery



Aleksandr Deineka  
*Which is Bigger? Which is Better?* 1930  
 Design for poster  
 Tempera on paper  
 73.2 x 103.5 cm  
 Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery



can be gymnasts drilling next to a crucifix or skiers gliding past a church), this motif continued to appear in his work until the late 1920s, while in the following decade he opted to represent sporting activities and practitioners outside any context.

The appearance of such motifs injects even greater dynamism into his pictures—and not only those where physical culture scenes are present. It is safe to say that sport motifs or, more accurately, the sporting spirit ultimately became the hallmark of Deineka's creative work. As mentioned earlier, from the very start of his artistic trajectory Deineka displayed an inclination to capture movement and rhythm in its many states in his compositions, both in the ones dealing explicitly with these themes and in others. Yet in the mid-1920s movement and rhythm acquired a special "ideological" meaning that responded not only to the development of the linear-plastic conception of the artist but also, to a degree, to the demands of the time, which became all the more rigid and less disposed toward compromise. The foundation of sport is its competitiveness, with the indispensable striving of participants in a competition toward a final victory, their confidence in it and their right to it. Yet at the same time sport is a spectacle that should be perceived easily and in a low-key manner. The combination of easiness, power and a certain proletarian coarseness is reflected in the appearance of the artist's characters. Their motion and their gait acquire confidence and special resiliency—it is not for nothing that Deineka often spoke about "the springing gait" of his figures. In a sense, their forms became more important and monumental; the rhythm and composition acquired a special inviting dynamics, and these traits marked and continued to define the artist's creative work.

At the time of the Society of Easel Painters (OST) and the October Association (Oktiabr'), various artists, including Deineka, began to saturate their work with purely constructivist details—meticulous representations of platforms on various levels, lacework factory constructions and various kinds of lathes and mechanisms—in order to emphasize this rhythmic foundation. And yet the specific image of an ultra-rhythmic and regulated space, dedicated to labor, sport and the collective celebrations of the Soviet people, only surfaced in Deineka's oeuvre (*Demonstration*, 1928, State Tretyakov Gallery). The artist used all these motifs and even images tied to the heavy trials of the Civil War (*Defense of Petrograd*, 1928, Central Museum of Armed Forces) [cat. 131] as

premises for the genesis of a series of paintings of an orderly, organized world in which each person, no matter how small or obscure, is perceived as an indispensable element of a finely tuned mechanism (*In the Mechanical Workshop*, 1925, State Tretyakov Gallery) [cat. 111].

Deineka's motives for joining the OST association in 1925 are understandable. According to his own account, he was "always drawn to large-scale canvases, in which human figures were bigger, more visible, grander."<sup>4</sup> As a person and artist interested in the social function of the visual arts, in his own practice he wanted to test and apply means and methods capable of adapting to modernity such an "archaic" attribute of the old world as easel painting was reckoned to be. Furthermore, in Deineka's view a painting was a kind of mouthpiece of the positive ideas that occupied an increasingly large place in his graphic work, although he was perfectly conscious that the degree and period of influence of drawings badly printed on magazine pages were entirely ephemeral.

While most of the members of the association shared Deineka's desire to find an artistic language capable of expressing contemporary themes precisely and in appropriate imagery through modern expressive means, they essentially differed from him in the valuation and interpretation of the position from which this modernity should be approached. In particular, the majority of his colleagues did not share his enthusiastic conviction that the ideal or imaginary need not necessarily materialize in the ecstatic vision of a city of the future (as did several of his colleagues in OST), but in the heavy and strained albeit outwardly calm work of "constructing new plants and factories."

Toward the end of the 1920s, reckoning that the creative work of his colleagues had become stuck in blatant "easelism" and that this did not conform to the "present situation," Deineka broke with OST. He seemed to intuit a radical turn in the life of the country that would lead to fundamental changes and to the liquidation of large masses of people regarded as "enemy classes." As he had done at the decade's onset, Deineka tried to position himself at the vanguard of the visual arts front. He thus became one of the organizers of the society Oktiabr', which would proclaim roughly the same things that the "productionist"<sup>5</sup> opponents of all kinds of easel art had once proclaimed, and in opposition to which OST had been established. The association Oktiabr' considered it its duty to support certain specifically

proletarian phenomena in the field of the visual arts. Any manifestation of Stankovism, or easel painting, fell under suspicion of being individualistic, while on the contrary, any reference to a general commission from a "collective of consumers," who allegedly were sharply in need of "industrial art," was welcome. It is no accident that architects and applied artists made up the majority of the group Oktiabr'. At that time, Deineka was busy working in the field of graphic arts—producing posters in which he demonstrated his ideological loyalty to authority and sharpened his compositional skills—while continuing to collaborate with journals and periodicals, for which he produced illustrations that went on developing the earlier themes of labor and sport, though at the turn of the decade these subjects at times found a new special realization. A number of "dark" drawings executed with fine white lines on a dark background come to mind, in which a series of original "negatives" of his characteristic motifs and models spring up. The dark background serves to "bring to light" some of these aspects about which, it appears, the artist was not fully aware. The theme of labor, for instance, found its expression not in the image of "scientifically organized" and entirely regulated production, but in the form of workers in the dark repairing an electrical network and literally extracting light from the darkness, as if accomplishing some sort of "miracle" (*Night Repair of the Tram Network*, 1929, State Tretyakov Gallery). The theme of sport and movement is expressed in swift and transparent white contours on a black ground (*At the Races*, 1930). The coarse sensuality of Deineka's early studies of female models is transformed into the beckoning and unattainable sexuality of *The Acrobats* (1930, State Tretyakov Gallery). Though Deineka only produced a small number of these "negative" drawings, he used this same method in the design of his illustrations for the children's book *Kuter'ma (Zimniaia skazka)* [Commotion (A Winter Tale)] [cat. 97] by Nikolai Aseev (incidentally, like Deineka, a native of Kursk province).

Deineka applied himself to the design of children's books and magazines—a new activity for him—in the late 1920s. He appears to have enjoyed working in this field, in which he displayed considerable ingenuity and inventiveness while using the devices and resources with which he was already familiar. Overall, these books and magazines are bright, striking, edifying and didactic. Yet Deineka's design for the children's book *Kuter'ma* was rather different. The artist's critics have unanimously commented on



Aleksandr Deineka  
*Skating*, 1927–28  
 Drawing for the magazine  
*Prozhektor*, no. 23 (117), 1927  
 Page 25  
 India ink and lead white  
 on paper, 47 x 40.2 cm  
 State Tretyakov Gallery  
 Moscow



Aleksandr Deineka  
*Skiers*, 1927  
 Drawing for the magazine  
*U stanka*, no. 2, 1928  
 Pages 12–13  
 Watercolor and India ink  
 on paper, 34.1 x 52.8 cm  
 State Tretyakov Gallery  
 Moscow

its severe black and white design, which could have been appropriate in view of the “productionist” content of this winter’s tale. It tells the story of how the lights went out in a town on a freezing cold winter, and how life came to a standstill until skillful electricians arrived at the scene and repaired the power supply system. Yet in illustrating Aseev’s little book, Deineka for some strange reason did not emphasize its didactic and edifying content, as was habitual in him. And the stories of the bubbling life in the city once the lights returned, with the Pioneers marching anew and Deineka’s trademark skiers racing across the snow, are also interpreted as a sort of addendum to something more important.

This “something more important” is materialized in a single illustration—*A Girl at the Window* (1930)—an episode which, incidentally, does not form part of Aseev’s original text. Present in this drawing is one of Deineka’s recurrent themes, that of oppositions: dark/warm, far away/near, black/white. In keeping with his highly personal style, the artist uses black and white shading to create a sensation of volume and even of temperature, of warmth or cold. However, in contrast to his former work, here, for the first time, he depicts a new heroine who is neither one of his habitual models, nor a woman liberated from “domestic slavery,” nor a female worker pushing a heavy cart. She is not a NEP storekeeper from his early magazine illustrations, nor an oppressed and intimidated peasant woman from that same time, nor a sportswoman, nor an adolescent Pioneer, but simply a girl who is endowed with the same nimble and athletic carriage of Deineka’s traditional characters, notwithstanding her short stature. As was his custom, the artist portrayed her with her back turned toward the viewer, submerging her—and this is something new in an artist passionate about action—in a state of contemplation on the cold but also extraordinarily attractive and melancholy spectacle unfolding before her through a “constructivist” window. It is possible to see this way only in childhood. The artist, who for the first time understood and experienced this miracle thanks to his heroine—who appeared out of the blue in the little book *Kuter’ma*—depicted her again the following year, 1931, in an easel painting which nonetheless used the same black and white tones (State Tretyakov Gallery, 1931). Two years later, he repeated this motif in a painted version to which he added restrained color (State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg). Already before this Deineka had repeated those motifs which had been successful. Here,

however, true to his principle of representing motion, he compelled his immobile heroine to “move” in the biological sense, i.e., to grow up in the real time in which the artist himself was living. Indeed, in the variant from 1931, the girl appears to have grown: she is roughly a year older than the one who appears in *Kuter'ma*; and in the 1933 painting she is even more “grown up.” One could say that this little heroine “existed” and developed as a temporal sketch alongside the artist who created her and turned her into his alter ego. This happened at a time when Deineka temporarily set aside those ideological themes, subjects and images which he had earlier pursued with such enthusiasm in his illustrations and paintings. Not that he renounced them entirely, but during this stage they coexisted in his oeuvre with works of an altogether different nature.

In particular, in 1930 Deineka created a series of works on a theme that had appealed to him for some time: the contemplation of something unusually striking and, hence, amazing. However, he no longer shows the scene that captivates his characters, portrayed, as always, with their back to the viewer. It is also significant that the brightest moments of Deineka's graphic work, hereto associated to his use of black and white—now and then illuminated with one or several colors, as was the case in the preceding decade—from that moment on were linked with large watercolor drawings complemented with touches of tempera or gouache. As if the artist had understood just then that, in order to save face and avoid any manifestation of insincerity and falsity, the time had come to move away from constructivism and the neatness of black and white. He thus switched to the less defined world of colors, shades and halftones, which helped him to reproduce the world in all its beauty like some veritable wonder. At the same time, the purely graphic means which helped him not only to transmit his impressions of this beautiful world but also to show the logic of its structures, and consequently the rationality and justification of its existence, continued to form part of his arsenal.

Entirely atypical for a representative of official Soviet art, he found beauty not only in the image of a peaceful Soviet sky or in the tranquil and confident Soviet people, but also in that which he saw during his trips to various hostile capitalist countries. Large sheets with wonderfully composed, beautifully drawn and colored Italian and French views by right belong to the best of Deineka's creations.

This seemingly beautiful and rational world suddenly collapsed with the onset of the Second World War. Many have noted that in this tragic time, the virtuoso draftsman seems to have lost the skill to wield the graphic resources so familiar to him. He produced an enormous amount of work, but he did so with short, heavy strokes that transmitted his shock at what he saw. In the 1920s he frequently depicted his figures raised from the ground, situated on some sort of platform. In the 1930s, they either hovered in the air in the cabins of aeronautic machines or stood firmly on the ground. During the war, the figures—whether people or military technology—in many Deineka drawings lay on the ground or crawl along it. It is as if the very strokes of his pencil cling with their entire strength and cannot tear themselves away from this bitter and terrible yet much loved earth. Toward the end of the war, Deineka's innate positive mood and faith in rationality and justice were gradually restored. In 1945, his dark watercolors of a demolished Berlin appear to be a righteous condemnation on the evil which had unleashed the world catastrophe. In the post-war series *Wartime Moscow* (1946–47) the severe spirit of those terrible times and the premonition of the approaching victory are present, at times springing up in everyday details. In 1947 he traveled to Vienna as part of a Soviet delegation. In the series of drawings and watercolors dedicated to this city a striking image of the world comes into existence, a world which, in spite of the recent catastrophe and its perceptible traces, all the same continues to be attractive, secure and even exudes a spirit of mercy, of quiet joy.

1. Aleksandr Deineka, *Iz moei rabochei praktiki* (From My Working Practice) (Moscow: USSR Academy of Arts, 1961), 7.
2. Cited in Galina L. Demosfenova, *Zhurnal'naia grafika Deineki. 1920-nachalo 1930-kh gg* (Deineka's Magazine Graphics in the 1920s and Early 1930s) (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1979), xxl.
3. Aleksandr Deineka 1961 (see note 1 above), 11.
4. *Ibid.*, 8.
5. “Productionism,” which conceived itself as a species of collective artistic labor whose leading theoretician was Boris Arvatov, was the precursor of Soviet constructivism [Ed.].

**78.** Aleksandr Deineka  
Cover for *U stanka* [At the Factory  
Workbench], no. 2, 1924  
Magazine. Lithography  
20.2 x 27.7 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**79.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the  
Factory Workbench], no. 7, 1925  
Pages 10–11. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text: The parson of our parish  
1. He smirks with the kulak:  
the fee is not shared  
2. Scare tactics are used on the poor  
3. A baby arrives, a calf departs  
4. The couple wed, a cow dies  
5. Such is the priest, but not the people!  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**81.** Aleksandr Deineka  
Illustration for the story by N. Dorofeev  
"The History of a Homeless Child"  
*Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the  
Factory Workbench], 1924, no. 10  
Page 4 of the back cover  
Magazine. Lithography, 33.1 x 25.4 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text at top: On Red Square  
Text at bottom: Be prepared,  
always prepared!  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**80.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the  
Factory Workbench], no. 8, 1925  
Magazine. Lithography  
35.5 x 25.4 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text: Picture Puzzle /  
Which one is an atheist?  
Collection Merrill C. Berman





Раба Бонин.



Кандидаты в партию.

ВЛАСТЬ СОВЕТОВ

Fig. 4. Konev



Под руководством рабочего класса

**82.** Aleksandr Deineka  
Illustration for N. Dorofeev's story  
"Pelageia Prokhorovka,"  
*Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory  
Workbench], no. 11, 1925  
Pages 12–13. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text bottom left: A slave to God  
Bottom right: A candidate admitted  
to the [Communist] Party  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**83.** Aleksandr Deineka  
Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory Workbench]  
no. 28, 1925. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text: The power of the Soviets under  
the leadership of the working class  
Top: Lenin. We are building socialism  
under the leadership of the proletariat  
in union with the poor and the average.  
Industrialization, cooperation.  
Lowering of prices!  
A regime of economics!  
Power to the Soviets  
The Red Army!  
To battle against bureaucracy,  
the kulak, the priest!  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**84.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Rokfeller. Risunok dlia zhurnala*  
*"Bezbozhnik u stanka"*  
[Rockefeller. Drawing for Atheist  
at the Factory Workbench], 1926  
India ink on paper, 32.6 x 38.7 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ArjGr-90



ЗАГАДНА СТАРИКУ.

Рис. А. Давидов



— Сколько баб и ни одна не мануток. Куда ого и конат?

ЗА ВЕРУ ЦАРЯ И ОТЕЧЕСТВО

Рис. А. Давидов



В БЕЛОМ ШТАСЕ... Держись, мужик, кто приближался сюда тошмак! Расстрелять этого большевика!



**85. Aleksandr Deineka**

Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory Workbench]  
no. 2, 1926, pages 12–13. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text at top: A riddle for an old man  
Text at bottom: So many womenfolk  
and not one of them is praying.  
What is this place I've come to?  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**86. Aleksandr Deineka**

Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory Workbench]  
no. 6, 1926, pages 12–13. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text at top: For faith  
in the Tsar and the fatherland  
At bottom: At the White Army  
Headquarters: Repent, vile  
creature, as the justice of  
Heaven is drawing near!  
Shoot this Bolshevik!  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**87. Aleksandr Deineka**

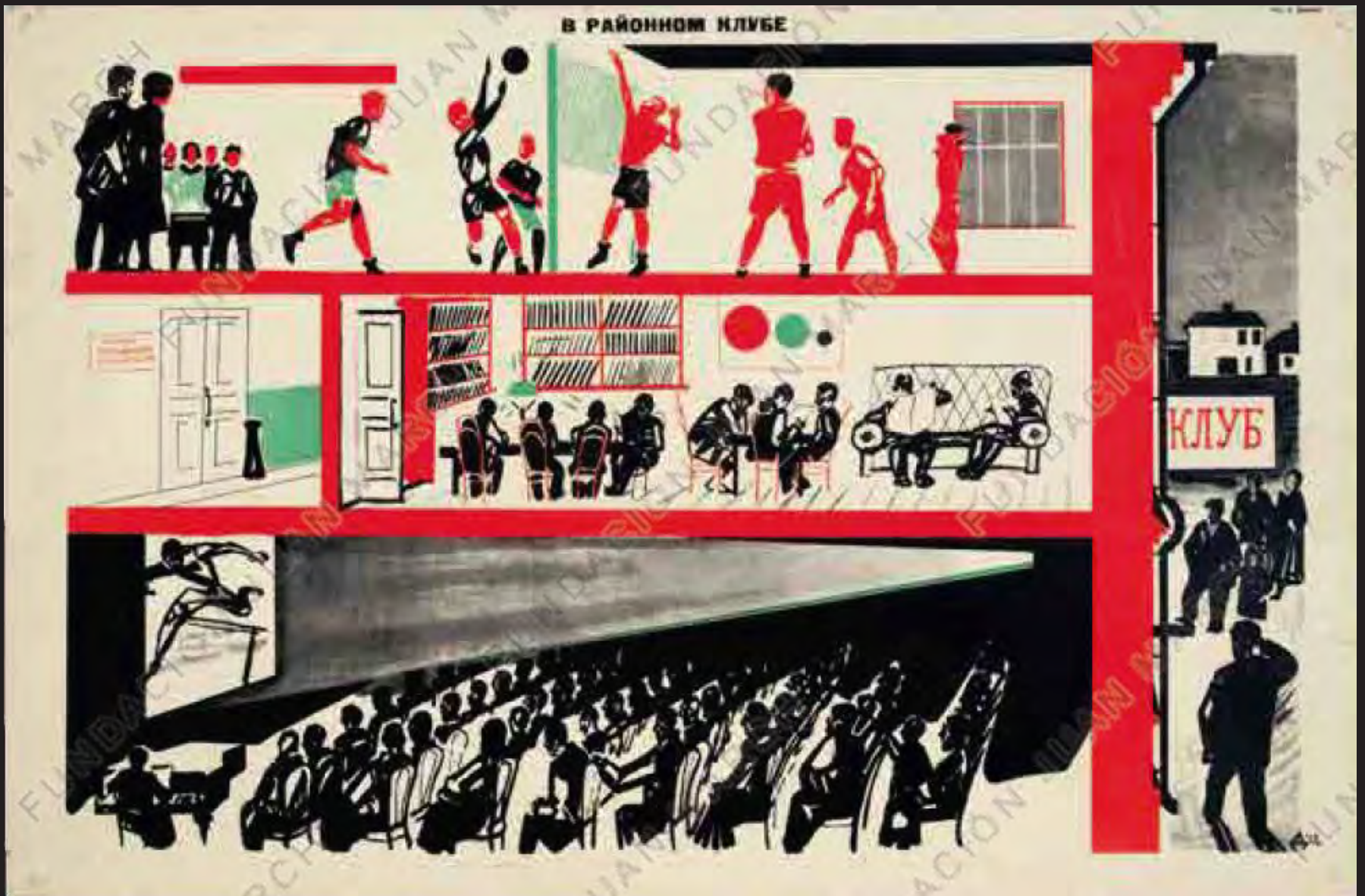
Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory Workbench]  
no. 2, 1927, page 21. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 25.4 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text: Everyone for himself,  
but God for all  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**90. Aleksandr Deineka**

Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory Workbench], ca. 1928  
Magazine. Lithography, 33.1 x 25.4 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text at top: At the Iberian  
Mother of God Icon in 1914  
Text at bottom: Oh Lord,  
save thy people . . .  
Victory for our most  
orthodox emperor . . .  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



88. Aleksandr Deineka  
Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory Workbench]  
no. 3, 1927, pages 12–13. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text at top: At the district club  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



89. Aleksandr Deineka  
Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka*  
[Atheist at the Factory Workbench]  
no. 9, 1927, back cover. Magazine  
Lithography, 35.5 x 25.4 cm  
MKRKP (b), Moscow  
Text at top: The sporting ground  
Text at bottom: At the finish  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

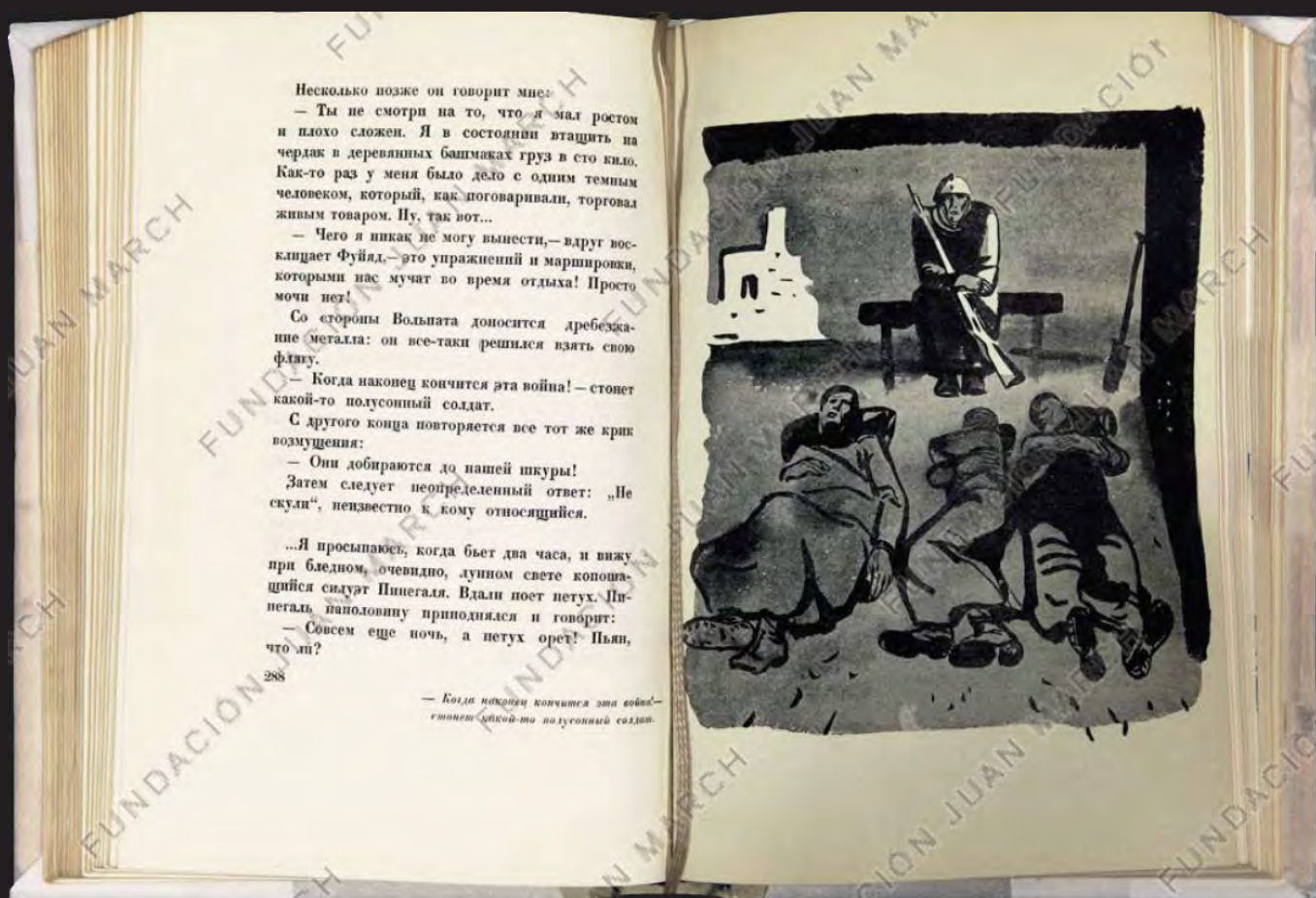


91. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Untitled*, 1927  
Drawing for the book by Henri Barbusse  
*Ogon'* [The Fire], Russian translation  
from the French original *Le feu* (1916)  
Ink on paper, 19.2 x 31.8 cm  
Akademiia, Moscow  
Private collection



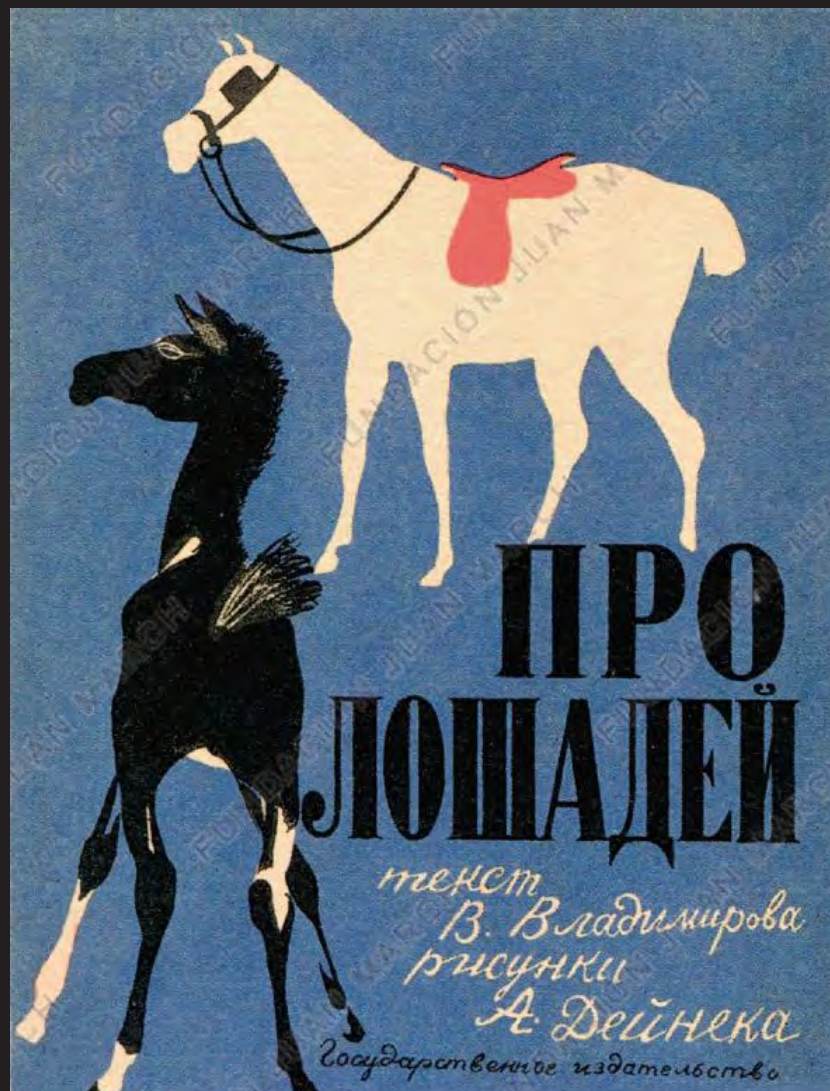


92. Aleksandr Deineka  
 Cover and illustrations for the book  
 by Henri Barbusse, *Ogon'* [The Fire]  
 Russian translation of the  
 French original  
*Le feu* (1916), 1935  
 Letterpress, 20 x 14 cm  
 Akademia, Moscow  
 Archivo España-Rusia



**93.** Aleksandr Deineka  
Cover and illustrations  
for the book by Agniia Barto,  
*Pervoe maia* [The First of May], 1926  
Book. Letterpress, 32 x 22 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**94.** Aleksandr Deineka  
Cover and illustrations  
for the book by V. Vladimirov,  
*Pro loshadei* [About Horses], 1928  
Book. Letterpress, 20 x 15 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse





95. Aleksandr Deineka  
Cover and illustrations for *Iskorka*  
[Spark], no. 8, 1929, pages 10–11  
Lithography, 25 x 19.7 cm  
Ville Paris, Bibliothèque  
l'Heure joyeuse



96. Aleksandr Deineka

Cover and illustrations for the picture book *V oblakakh* [In the Clouds], 1930

Lithography, 22.5 x 19 cm

GOSIZDAT, Moscow

Collection Merrill C. Berman







ПЕРЕД ПОЛЕТОМ



НА ПАРАШЮТАХ



ВЫСОКО, ПОД СИНИМ НЕБОМ



ПЛАНЕР ЗАПУСКАЮТ



ПОЛЕТ НОЧЬЮ



НАД МОРЕМ



ДИРЪИНАБЛЬ



НА ВОЙНЕ



БОРЬБА С ВРЕДИТЕЛЯМИ



ГИДРОПЛАН

97. Aleksandr Deineka  
Cover and illustrations  
for the book by Nikolai Aseev  
*Kuter'ma (Zimniaia skazka)*  
[Commotion (A Winter Tale)], 1930  
Book. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm  
OGIZ-Molodaia Gvardia, Moscow  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



1  
Такой мороз —  
такой мороз —  
берет за хвост,  
добрет до слез.  
Такой мороз  
трескучий,  
приста, пристыл,  
приокурил,  
Пар из двора,  
пар из коздрей,  
пар  
надо ртом  
людей и зверей.  
Настала беда —  
грязна и седа,  
звизг зашумел  
свои холода.  
Вдаль по улице  
сидимы скрипит,  
вдаль по улице  
гулы гудят,  
и совсем не слышно  
не видно ребят —  
только взрослые  
на шумбу иду.  
Еще, еще  
чай звет на кружицы.



По проводам бежит  
тих ток,  
ни видав его бег  
никто.  
По квартирам  
струит, тише капель,  
посылает его  
главная кабель.  
Если лампочка  
не зажжена  
в темной комнате —  
тишина:  
ни звонкого смеха,  
ни бодрого крика...  
Скучно... Печально...  
Темно и тихо.  
Зажигайся в три часа,  
в три часа,  
в три часа,  
зимнее веселое  
электричество!  
Соберем заранее  
им собрание,  
как нам быть  
с получением  
зимних тучами.  
Вдруг лампочка —  
клик-клик!  
Стал в комнате  
слет мрак,  
дети в кухню —  
зажечь газ.  
Газ перевернул:  
зашлила и слас!  
И приходится  
жить без света —  
невеселое  
дело это!



3  
Мороз  
зубами скрипнул,  
землю обалел  
и перегрыз  
электрической кабель.  
Эту улицу  
и всю ту  
погружает он  
в темноту.  
На углах остри —  
языки острей,  
не разбить никак  
морозный мрак.  
Город  
сумрачен стал  
и темен;  
сникло  
в фабриках  
пламя домен,  
трава не бонит,  
фонарь не горит.  
Какой несчастный  
у города вид!  
В улицах — тьма,  
в магазинах — свечки.  
Распоясалась зима:  
посиди у лещи.  
Завалила город  
тьма —  
словно в яме...  
Перепутались дома  
номерами!  
Закружилась  
кутерма  
по панели,



в студень  
туман  
от снега  
поседелые  
вошли  
по домам.  
И сразу загорелся —  
свет!  
Сверк!  
Трамвай  
по рельсам  
бежит  
вниз — вверх.  
Если с фонарями —  
гореть —  
уговор  
свети до самой ранки.  
Фонарь дуговой!  
Фонарь на дворе,  
и фонарь на пороге.  
Снова лампочки  
учат уроки,  
стоят и горят,  
фонари на стране,  
и нам с фонарями  
мороз не страшен.  
Пусть он щиплет,  
пусть он дерется,  
но проберется  
он сквозь ворота.  
Всюду его  
остановит  
свет:  
— Стой, мороз,  
входа  
нет!

Пioniеры  
крепко спят,  
сторожа  
вокруг скрипят,  
сторожи  
в кожухе до лат —  
видит  
снежный искропад.  
Небо  
нарколобое  
бром  
свело,  
стриживает  
хлопья  
с облачных возос.  
Ровно  
дыши,  
пioneerское племя,  
завтра  
уже  
будет  
потепленец!  
Выйдем  
утром,  
шен  
укутая,  
да  
заколышем  
легонько  
лыжи,  
да, половами,  
по снегу замскаив,  
вверх вытолза,  
поташим  
савьяки.



**98.** Aleksandr Deineka

Cover and illustrations for the book

by Boris Ural'skii, *Elektromonter*

[The Electrician], 1930

Book. Letterpress, 22.5 x 19.5 cm

GOSIZDAT, Moscow

Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

# ЭЛЕКТРОМОНТЕР

55 коп.



ТЕКСТ Б. УРАЛЬСКОГО, РИСУНКИ А. ДЕЙНЕКА

ОГИЗ — МОЛОДАЯ ГВАРДИЯ — 1981





**99.** Aleksandr Deineka

Cover for the book *Parad Krasnoj Armii*  
[The Parade of the Red Army], 1930  
Book. Letterpress, 22.5 x 19.5 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**100.** Aleksandr Deineka

Cover for the book by Semen Kirsanov  
*Vstretim tretii!* [We Will Fulfill the Third  
(the goals of the third year of the  
first five-year plan)], 1930  
Book. Letterpress, 22 x 14.7 cm  
Molodaia gvardiia, Moscow  
Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse







101. Cover and illustration for the book  
 by Aleksei Kharov,  
*Un ami sentimental*, 1930  
 Book. Letterpress, 21.8 x 17.5 cm  
 OGIZ, Moscow  
 Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse



**102. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
 Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left  
 Front of the Arts], no. 4, 1927  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 22 x 15 cm  
 GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

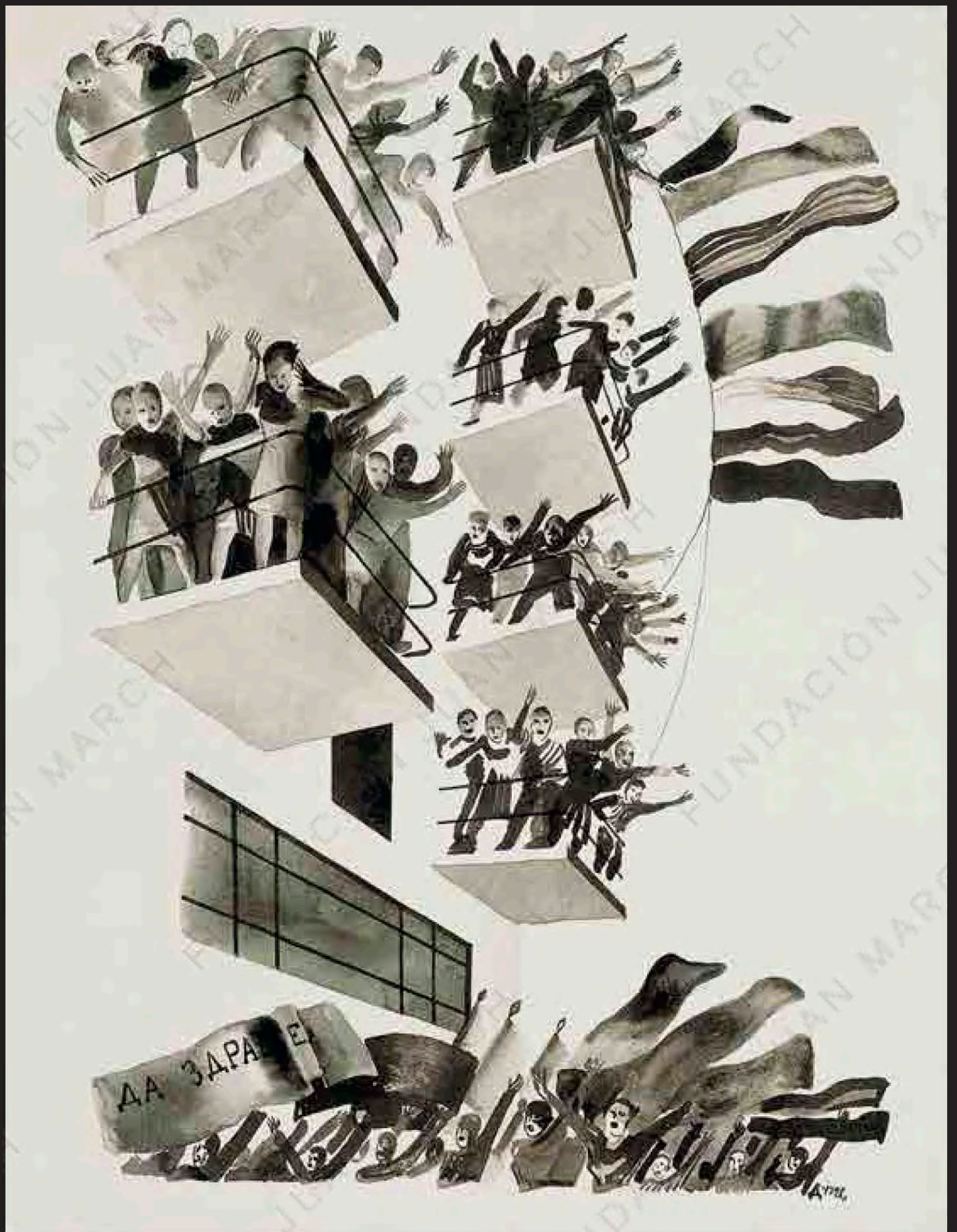
**103. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
 Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left  
 Front of the Arts], no. 11, 1928  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm  
 GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**104. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
 Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left  
 Front of the Arts], no. 12, 1928  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm  
 GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**105. Aleksandr Rodchenko**  
 Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left  
 Front of the Arts], no. 1, 1927  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 23 x 15 cm  
 GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
 Text: New Left. Magazine of LEF  
 Under the editorial direction  
 of V. V. Mayakovsky. No. 1  
 Moscow 1927. Gosizdat  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



**106. Aleksandr Deineka**  
*Demonstratsiia. Risunok dlia zhurnala*  
*"Prozhektor"*, no. 45 [Demonstration.  
 Drawing for *Prozhektor*], 1928, page 6  
 India ink on paper, 38.9 x 29.9 cm  
 Text at top: The entire world listens  
 in these days to the heavy tread  
 of the proletarian battalions.  
 State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
 Inv. ArjGr-264



**107.** Cover for *Prozhektor* [Searchlight], no. 8 (30), 1924 Magazine. Letterpress, 36 x 27 cm  
Izdatel'stvo Pravda, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia

**108.** John Heartfield  
Cover for *Prozhektor* [Searchlight], no. 48, 1931. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 33 x 25.4 cm  
Izdatel'stvo Pravda, Moscow  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**109.** Mechislav Dobrokovskii  
*Stroi promyslovuiu kooperatsiiu . . .*  
[Build Producers' Cooperatives], ca. 1925  
Poster. Lithography, 72.1 x 54 cm  
Text: Build producers' cooperatives  
for the common goal through the artel  
Handicraftsmen into artels  
Artels into unions  
VSEKOPROMSOIUZ, Moscow  
Print run: 5,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

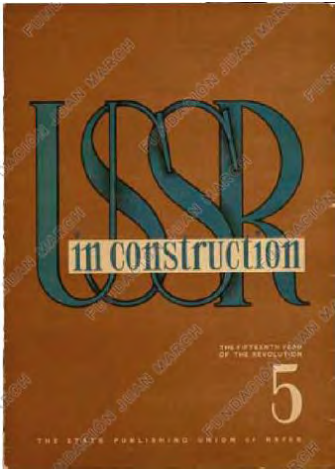


**110. Aleksandr Samokhvalov**  
*Da zdrávtvuyet komsomol!*  
[Hail the Komsomol!], 1924  
Poster. Lithography, 89.9 x 60 cm  
Text on banner and background:  
Hail to the Komsomol  
The young guard goes into battle  
to replace the old  
Text at bottom: For the seventh  
Anniversary of the October Revolution  
Priboi, Petrograd  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**114.** Nikolai Troshin

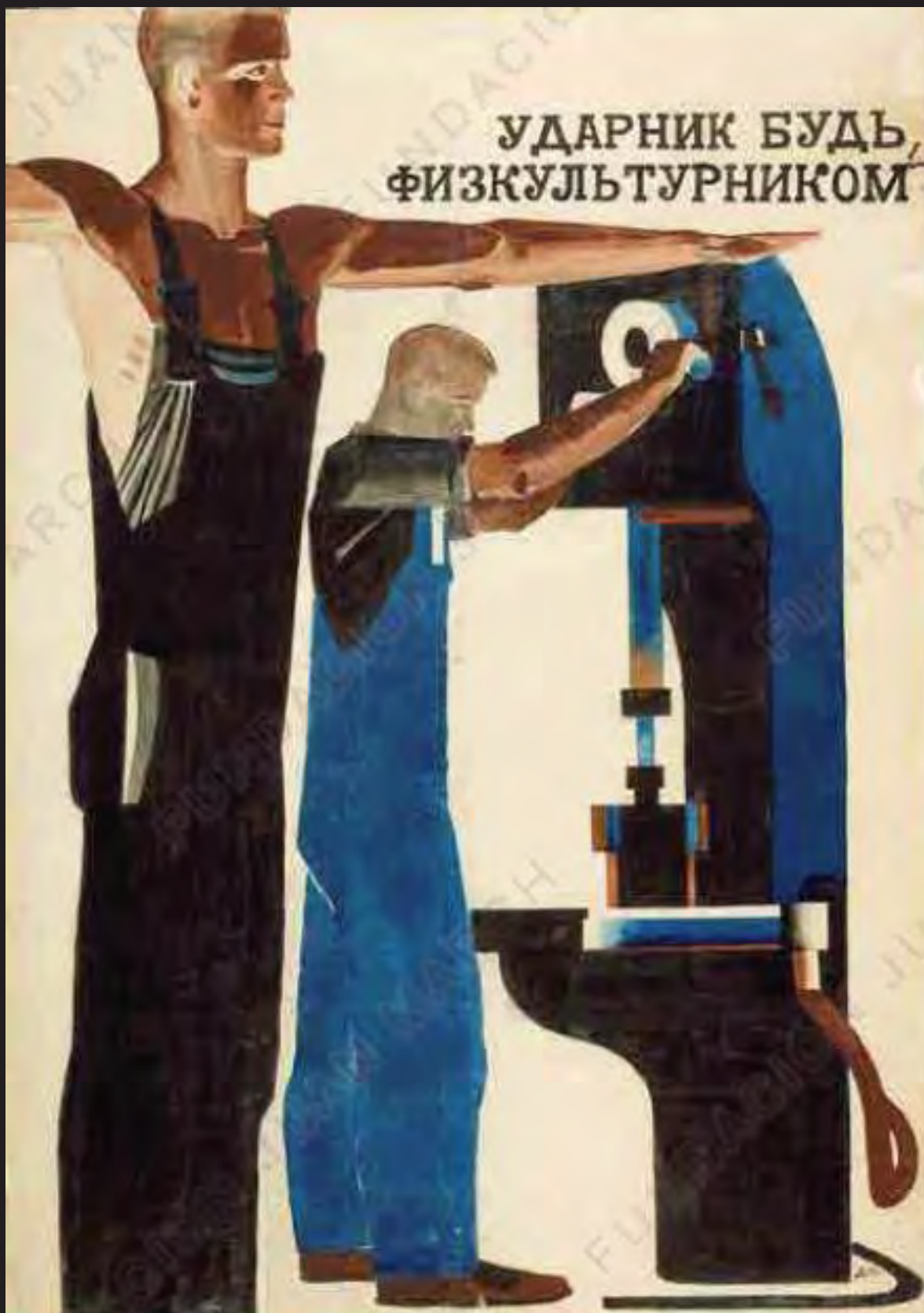
*USSR in Construction*, no. 5, 1932  
Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
Gosizdat, Moscow  
English version of *SSSR na stroike*  
Fundación José María Castañé



**111.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*V mekhanicheskom tsekhe.*  
*Risunok dlia zhurnala "U stanka"*  
[In the Mechanical Workshop  
Drawing for *U stanka*], 1925  
Ink, watercolor and wash on paper  
56.3 x 37.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. RS-9617

**112.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Parovoi molot na Kolomenskom zavode.* *Risunok dlia zhurnala "U stanka"*  
[Steam Hammer at the Kolomenskaia Factory.  
Drawing for *U stanka*], 1925, no. 3  
India ink, gouache and graphite  
on paper, 43.1 x 34.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ArJGr-2135

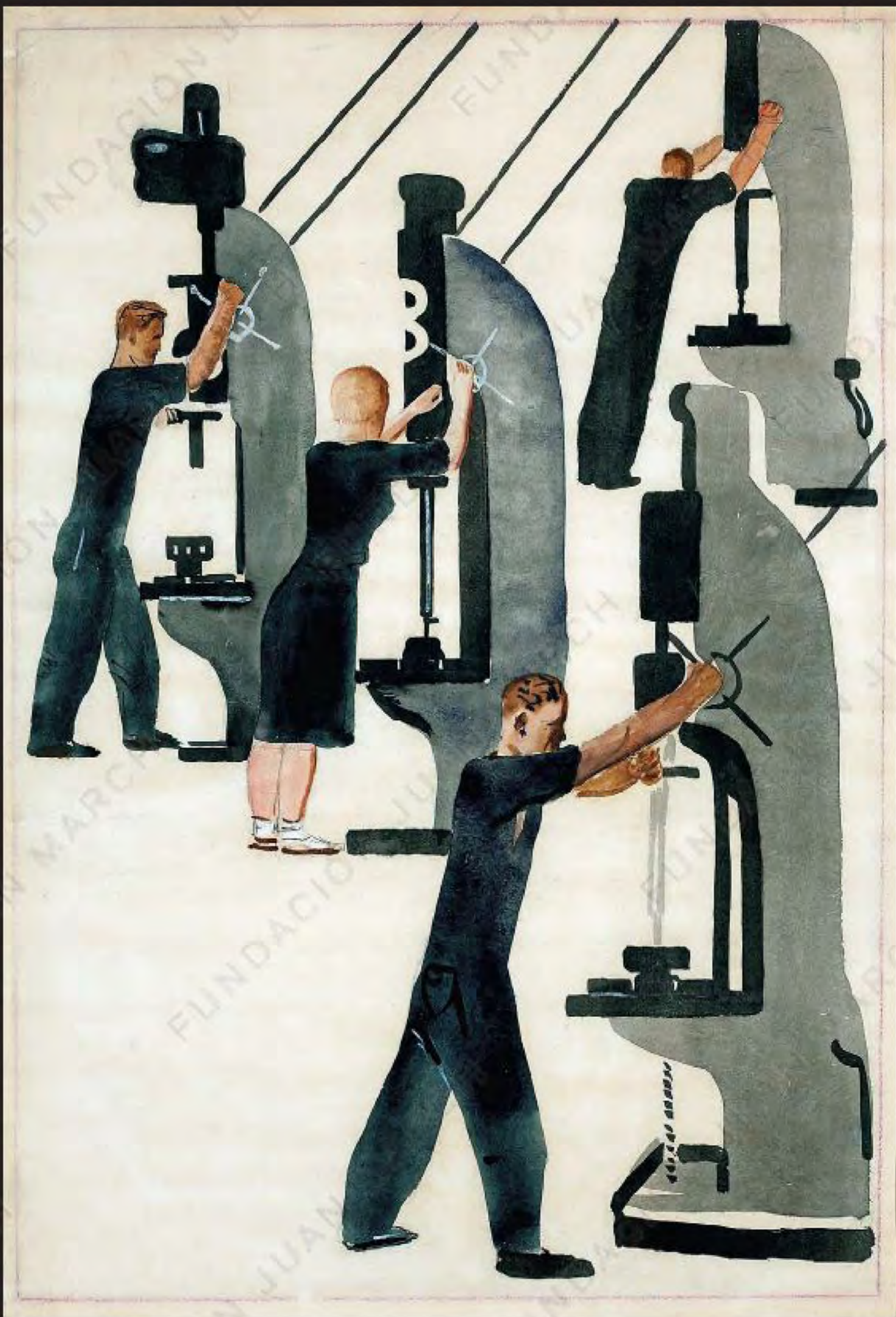




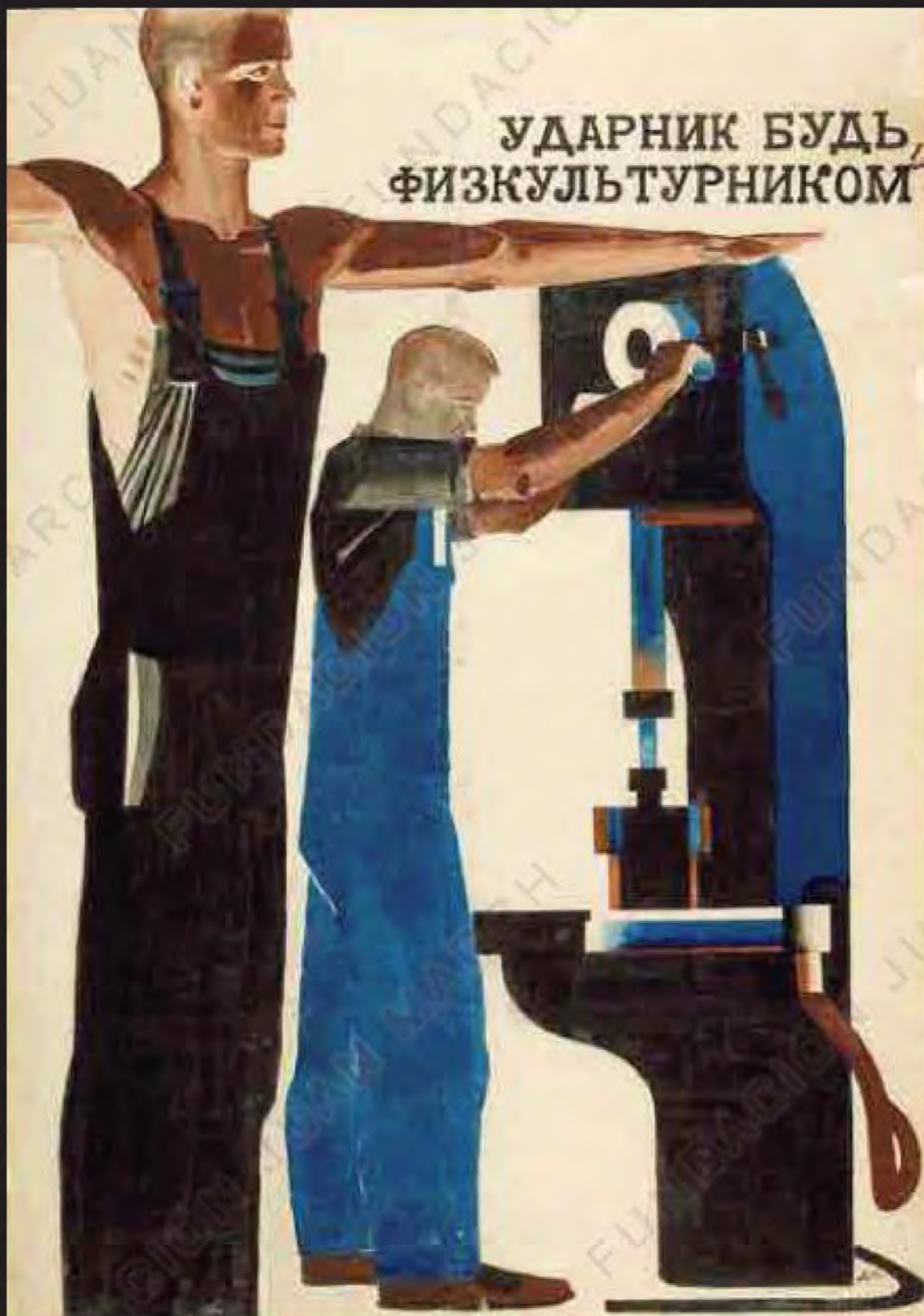
**113.** Aleksandr Deineka.  
*Udarnik, bud fizkulturnikom!*  
[Shockworker, Be a Physical  
Culturist!], 1930.  
Design for poster  
India ink and tempera on paper  
102.3 x 72.7 cm  
Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
Inv. G-2057

**115.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Pered spuskom v shakhtu*  
[Before the Descent  
into the Mine], 1925  
Oil on canvas, 248 x 210 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow, Inv. 20835

**116.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Na stroike novykh tsekhov*  
[Building New Factories], 1926  
Oil on canvas, 212.8 x 201.8 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow, Inv. 11977



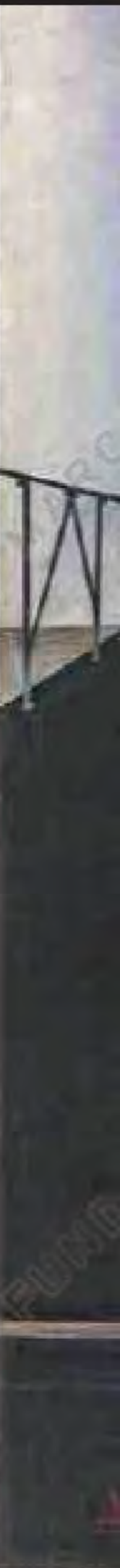


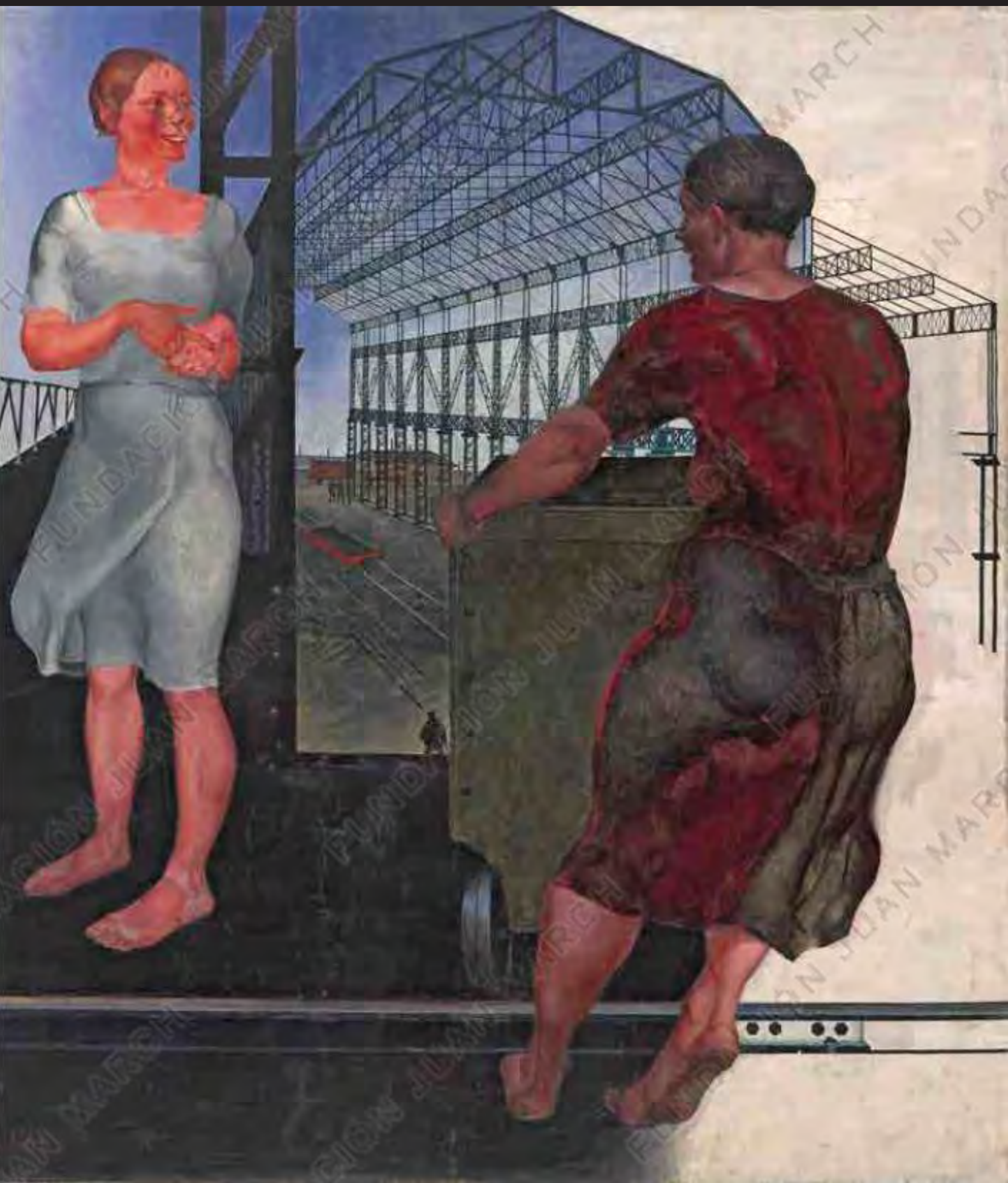


113. Aleksandr Deineka.  
*Udarnik, bud fizkulturnikom!*  
[Shockworker, Be a Physical  
Culturist!], 1930.  
Design for poster  
India ink and tempera on paper  
102.3 x 72.7 cm  
Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
Inv. G-2057

115. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Pered spuskom v shakhtu*  
[Before the Descent  
into the Mine], 1925  
Oil on canvas, 248 x 210 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow, Inv. 20835

116. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Na stroike novykh tsekhov*  
[Building New Factories], 1926  
Oil on canvas, 212.8 x 201.8 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery  
Moscow, Inv. 11977





117. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie*  
[Socialist Competition]  
Cover for *Daesh'*  
[Let's Produce!], no. 2, May 1929  
Magazine. Lithography and letterpress  
30.5 x 22.9 cm.  
Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow  
Print run: 20,000. Price: 25 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

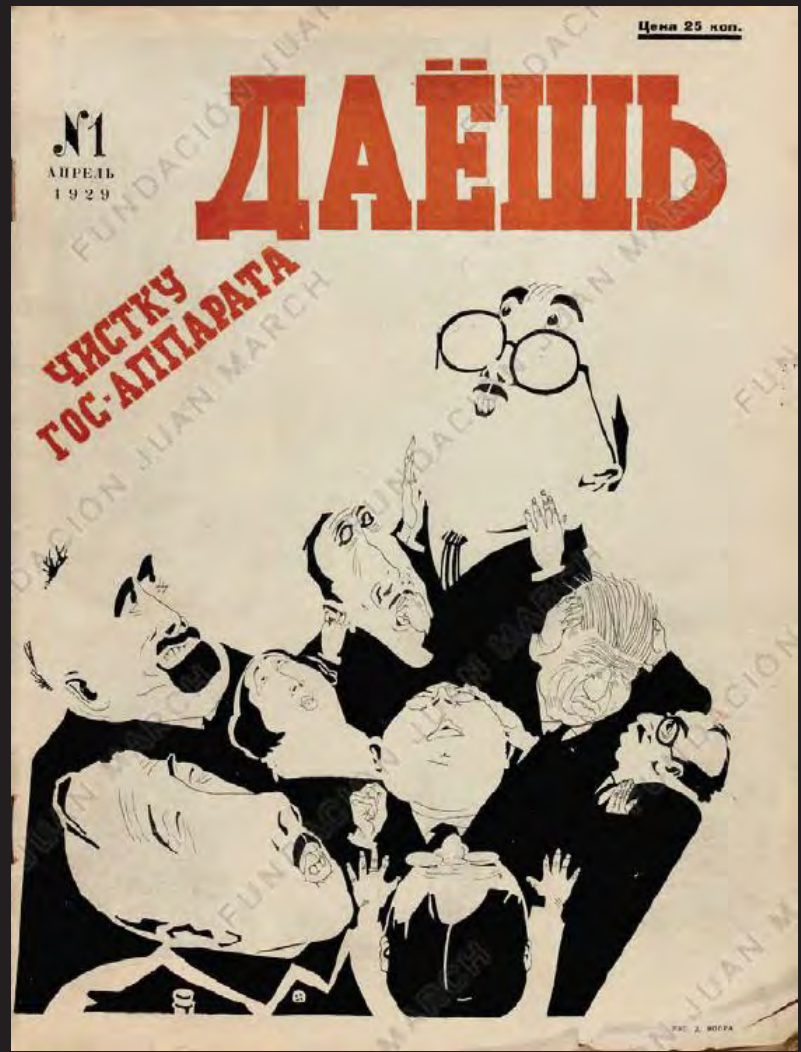


118. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Proizvodstvo produktov pitaniia*  
[The Production of Foodstuffs]  
Cover for *Daesh!* [Let's Produce!]  
no. 5, August 1929. Magazine  
Lithography, letterpress 30.5 x 22.9 cm  
Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow  
Price: 10 kopeks. Print run: 12,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

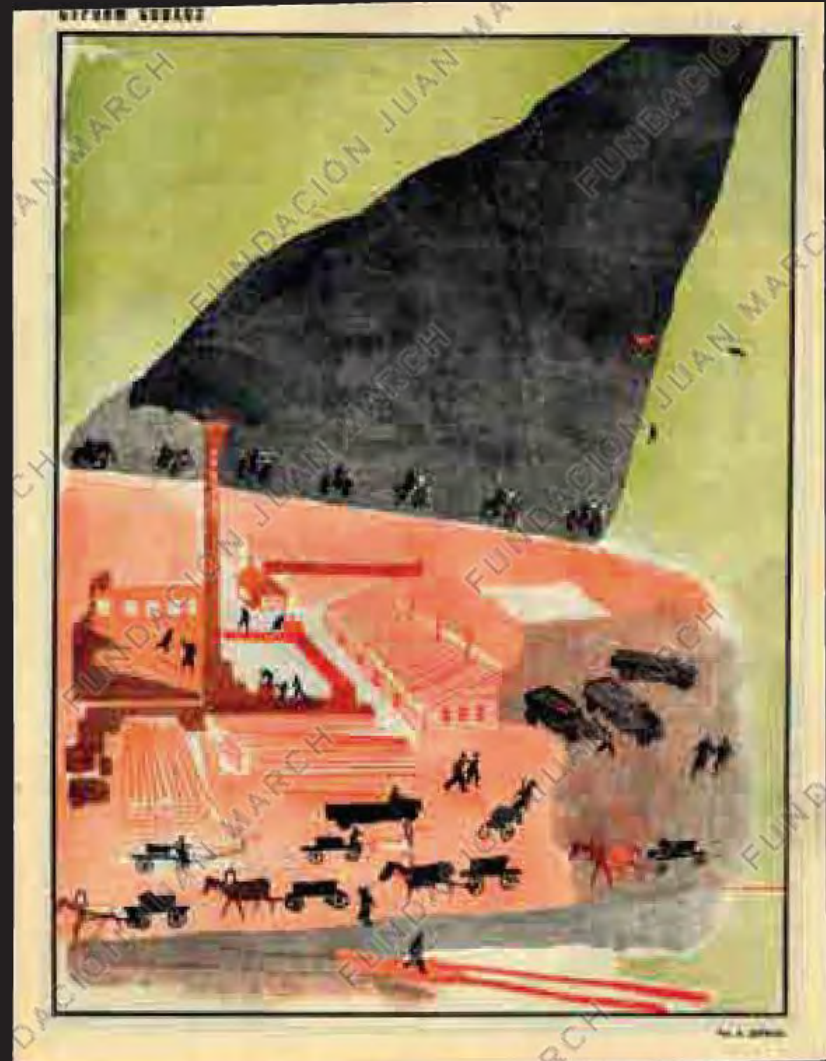




119. *Chistku gos-apparata*  
 [The Purge of the State Apparatus]  
 Cover of *Daesh'* [Let's Produce!]  
 no. 1, April 1929  
 Magazine. Lithography and  
 letterpress, 30.5 x 22.9 cm  
 Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman  
 119b and 119c. Illustrations for  
 inside pages by **Aleksandr Deineka**



120. *Piatiletku v massy*  
 [The Five-Year Plan to the Masses]  
 Cover for *Daesh'* [Let's Produce]  
 no. 3, June 1929  
 Magazine. Lithography and  
 letterpress, 30.5 x 22.9 cm  
 Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman  
 120b and 120c. Illustrations for  
 inside pages by **Aleksandr Deineka**



121. *Daesh'* [Let's Produce!], no. 11, 1929  
Magazine. Lithography, letterpress  
and rotogravure, 30.5 x 22.9 cm  
Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



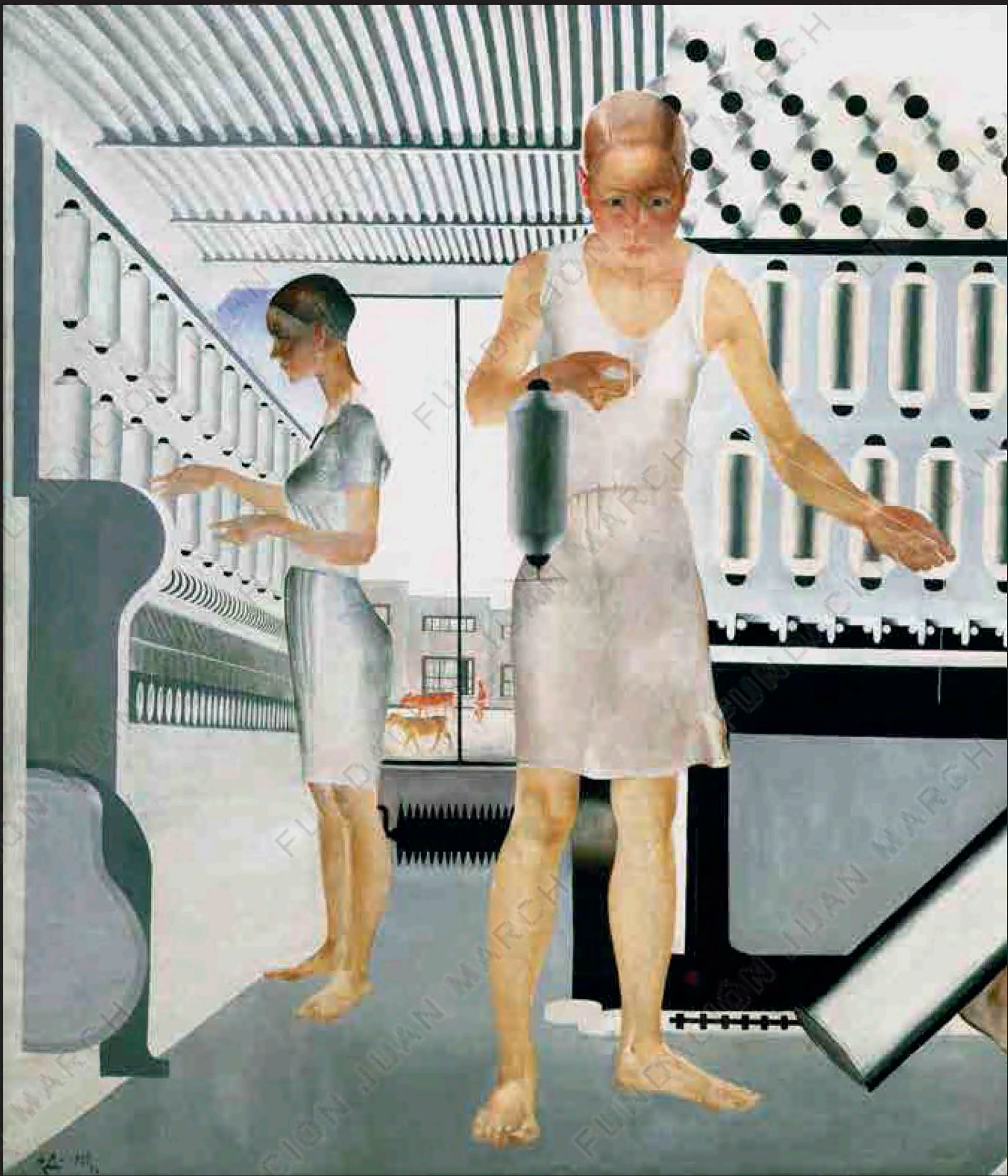


**122.** *Podnimai proizvoditelnost', snizhai brak* [Raise Productivity. Reduce Waste] Cover of *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!] no. 12, 1929. Magazine. Lithography letterpress, rotogravure, 30.5 x 22.9 cm Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow Collection Merrill C. Berman

**123.** Aleksandr Rodchenko *Polnyi khod* [Full Speed] Cover for *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!] no. 6, 1929. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 23 cm Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow Collection Merrill C. Berman

**124.** Aleksandr Rodchenko *Sovetskii avtomobil'* [The Soviet Automobile] Cover for *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 14, 1929 Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 23.2 cm Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow Collection Merrill C. Berman







**125.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Tekstilshchitsi*  
[Female Textile Workers], 1927  
Oil on canvas, 171 x 195 cm  
State Russian Museum  
Saint Petersburg, Inv. ZHB-988



Развернем строительство яслей, детских площадок и фабрик-кухонь.  
ТРУДЯЩИЕСЯ ЖЕНЩИНЫ—В РЯДЫ АКТИВНЫХ УЧАСТНИЦ ПРОИЗВОДСТВЕННОЙ И ОБЩЕСТВЕННОЙ ЖИЗНИ СТРАНЫ!

1947/48 1987 31

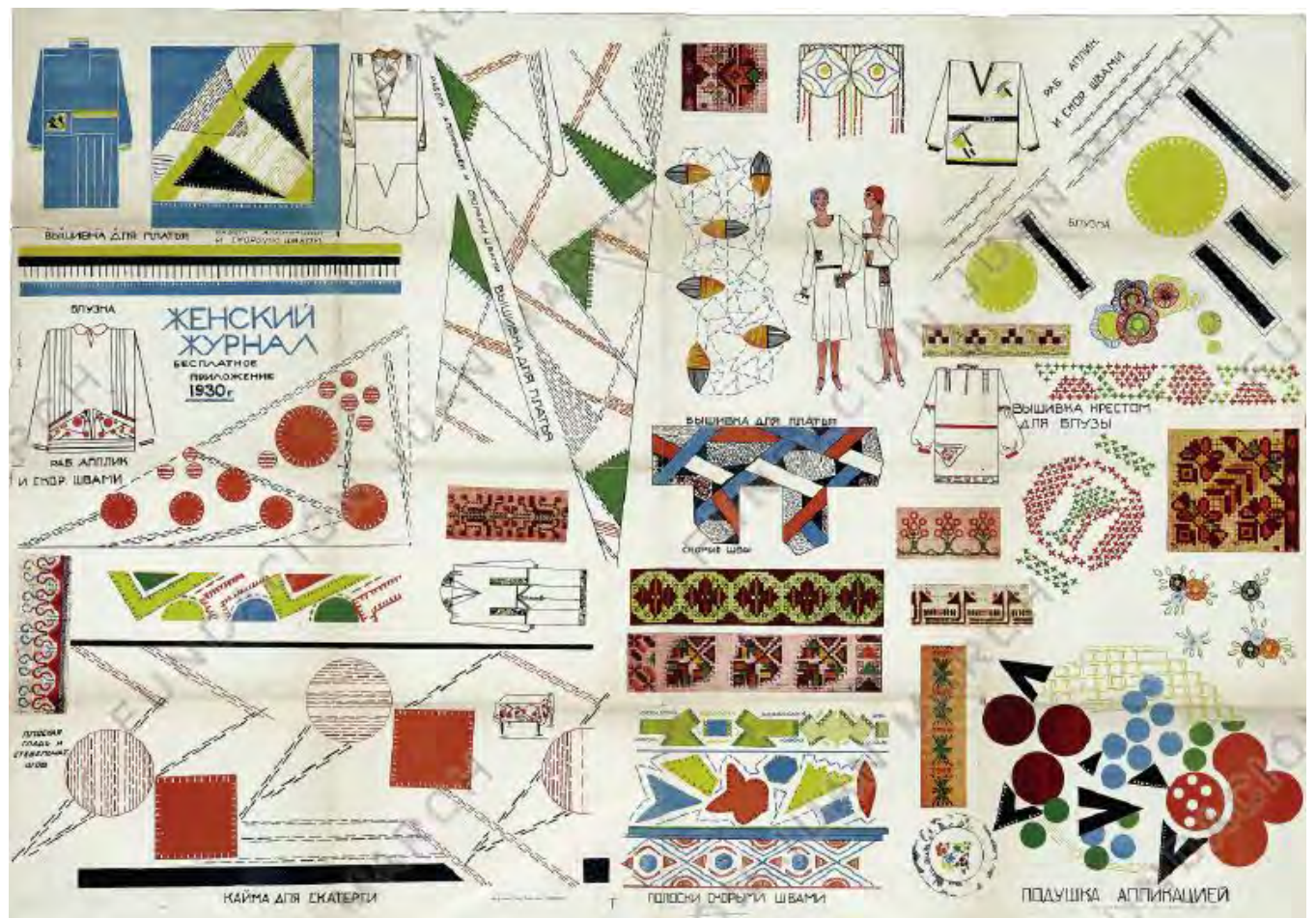
**126. Natalia Pinus**  
*Trudiashchiesia zhenshchiny-v  
riady aktivnykh uchastnits*  
[Working Women into the  
Ranks of Active Participants]  
1933. Poster. Lithography and  
letterpress, 96.2 x 72 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 20,000. Price: 90 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**127. Valentina Kulagina**  
*Mezhdunarodnyi den' robotnits*  
[The International Day of Working  
Women], 1930. Poster. Lithography  
and letterpress, 106.7 x 71.1 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 40,000.  
Collection Merrill C. Berman





130. Znenskiy zhurnal.  
 Besplatnoe prilozhenie  
 [Woman's Journal.  
 Free supplement], 1930  
 Magazine insert  
 Lithography, 74 x 104 cm  
 Patterns for various embroidery  
 and knitting techniques  
 Text at top: Embroidery for  
 clothing. Work with appliqué  
 and quick stitching  
 Ogonek, Moscow  
 Archivo España-Rusia

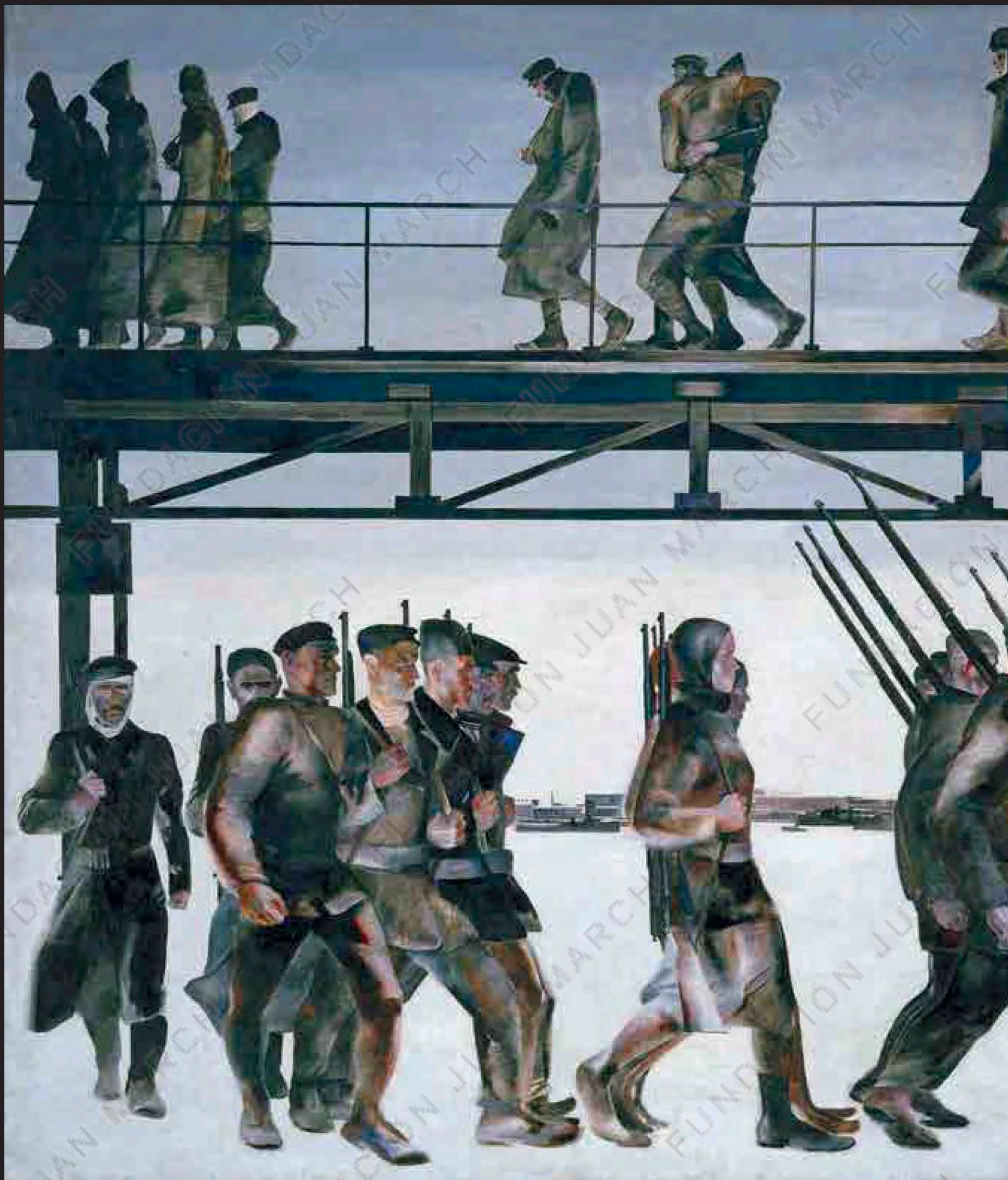


**128.** Nikolai Troshin  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 2, February 1936 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid



**129.** Nikolai Sidel'nikov  
*Rabitsnitsa, uluchshai kachestvo, snizhai sebestoimost' . . .*  
 [Woman Worker, Improve Quality, Reduce Cost . . .], ca. 1930  
 Design for soap wrapper  
 Collage: gouache, ink, letterpress and photography (gelatin silver, vintage copy) on board, 32.1 x 25.7 cm  
 Text: Woman worker / Improve quality / Reduce cost / Raise labor productivity / Increase knowledge  
 Woman worker soap / Facial soap  
 Weight 100 grams  
 State Trust Tezhe Moscow  
 Private collection







**131.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Oborona Petrograda*  
[Defense of Petrograd], 1928  
Oil on canvas, 209 x 247 cm  
Copy of the original  
painted by Deineka in 1928  
(today in the State Museum  
of Armed Forces, Moscow)  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-621



132. SA, *Sovremennaiia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture] no. 6, 1928. Magazine Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm GOSIZDAT, Moscow Archivo España-Rusia



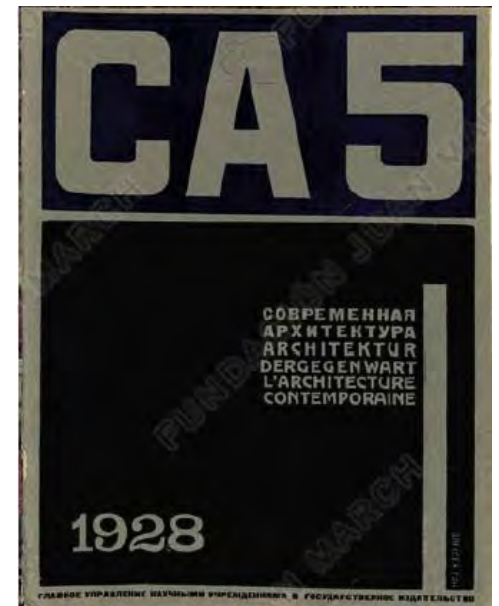
134. SA, *Sovremennaiia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture] no. 3, 1928. Magazine Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm GOSIZDAT, Moscow Archivo España-Rusia 134b and 134c. Interior pages with the October Group Manifesto



**133.** SA, *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture] no. 5-6, 1926. Magazine Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm GOSIZDAT, Moscow Archivo España-Rusia

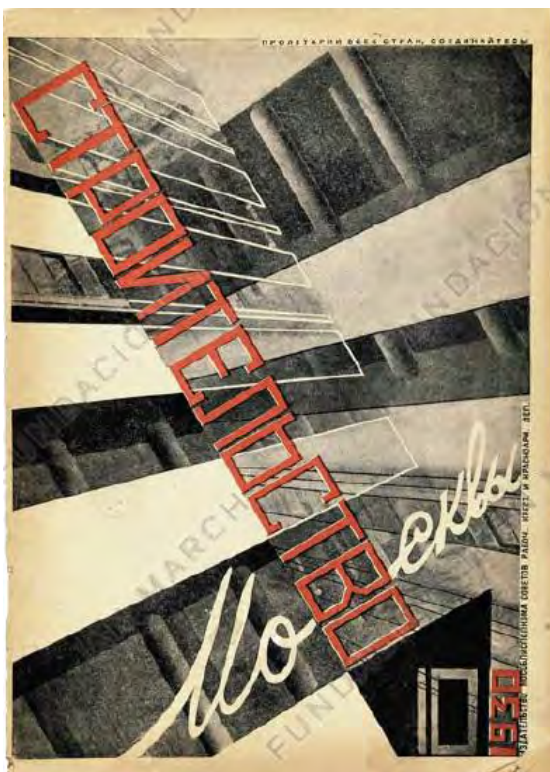
**135.** SA, *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture] no. 5, 1928. Magazine Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm GOSIZDAT, Moscow Archivo España-Rusia

**136.** Aleksei Gan  
SA, *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture], 1928  
Poster. Letterpress, 38.1 x 27.9 cm  
Advertising poster for subscription to SA magazine 1928  
Collection Merrill C. Berman





**137.** MAO Konkursy 1923-1926 [Moscow Architecture Society Competitions 1923-1926], 1926 Magazine. Letterpress, 32.5 x 25 cm MAO, Moscow Archivo España-Rusia 137b. Page illustrating the design for the Central Telegraph building in Moscow by Aleksandr and Viktor Vesnin (second prize)



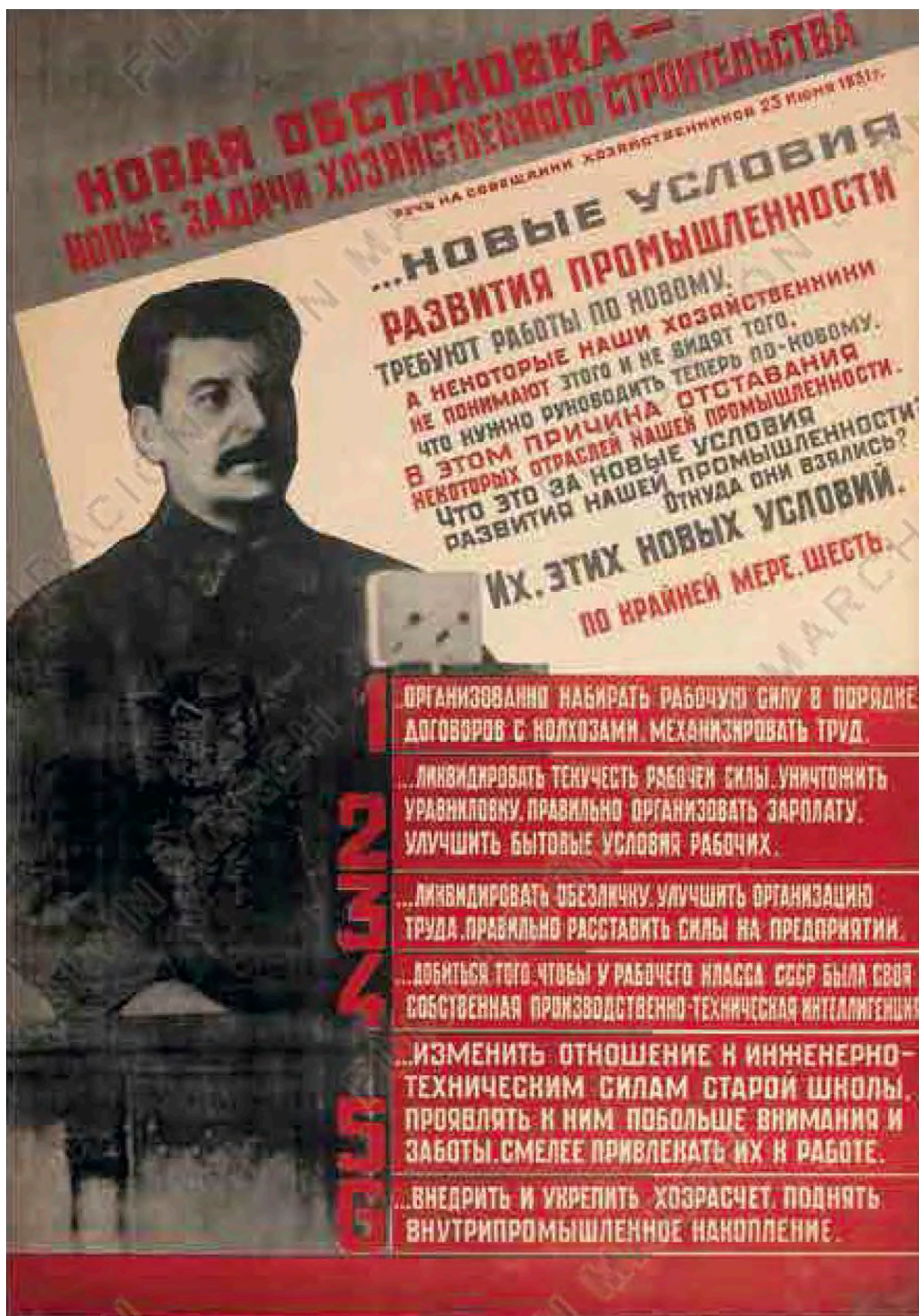
**140.** Piotr Galadshev Brochure for the film *Battleship Potemkin*, 1926 Letterpress, 15 x 11.5 cm Archivo España-Rusia

**138.** *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* [Construction of Moscow], no. 10, 1930 Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 21.5 cm Mossovet, Moscow Special issue devoted to the Narkomfin building by the architect Moisei Ginzburg, a prototype for communal building Archivo España-Rusia

139. Anton Lavinskii  
*Stachka* [Strike], 1925  
Poster for the film *Strike*  
by Sergei Eisenstein  
Letterpress and lithography  
106.7 x 70.8 cm  
GOSIZDAT, Moscow  
Print run: 9,500  
Collection Merrill C. Berman







**141.** *Novaia obstanovka – novye zadachi khoziastvennogo stroitel'stva* [A New Situation – New Tasks for Economic Construction], 1931. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 104 x 71.1 cm. Text on image: Citation of Stalin's speech at a meeting of industrial managers on June 23, 1931. ...The new conditions of the development of industry demand work in a new manner, but some of our managers do not understand this and do not see that it is now necessary to adopt new methods of management. This is the reason why several sectors of our industry are lagging behind. What are the new conditions for the development of our industry? From where did they arise? There are at least six such new conditions. 1) . . . to recruit a labor force in an organized way, by means of agreements with collective farms, to mechanize labor. 2.) . . . to liquidate the instability of the labor force, to abandon wage leveling, to organize wages correctly, to improve the everyday life conditions of workers. 3) . . . to liquidate the lack of personal responsibility, to improve the organization of labor, to arrange labor forces properly at enterprises. 4) . . . to assure that the working class of the USSR has its own industrial-technical intelligentsia. 5) . . . to change the treatment of the engineering and technical forces of the old school, to show to them greater attention and concern, to involve them more boldly in the work. 6) . . . to implement and strengthen economic accounting, to increase intra-industry savings. IZOGIZ, Moscow. Print run: 50,000. Price: 50 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**142.** *Gustavs Klucis*  
*Piatiletku prevratim v chetyrekhletku* [We Will Transform the Five-Year Plan into a Four-Year Plan], 1930. Poster. Lithography, letterpress, 101.5 x 73.7 cm. Text at top and bottom: With the efforts of millions of workers involved in socialist construction, we will transform the five-year plan into a four-year plan. Diagonal text: From shock brigades to shock workshops and factories! GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Print run: 30,000. Price: 35 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

ДОСТИЖЕНИЯ ПЕРВОГО ГОДА ПЯТИЛЕТКИ И КОНТРОЛЬНЫЕ ЦИФРЫ НА 1929/30 г.

СЗ-35-001

ТРУД

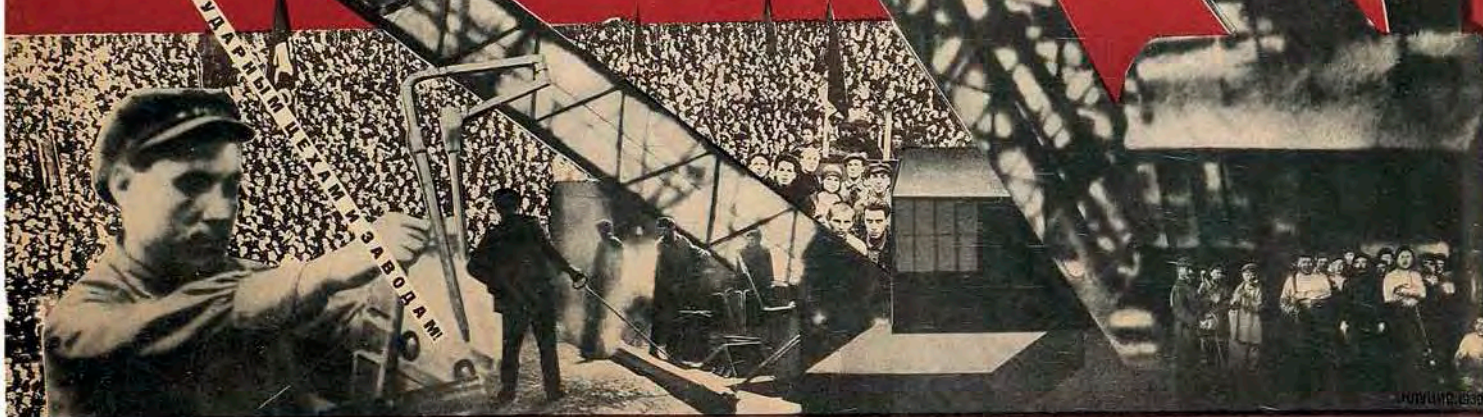
УСИЛИЯМИ  
МИЛЛИОНОВ РАБОЧИХ.  
ВОВЛЕЧЕННЫХ В СОЦИАЛИ-  
СТИЧЕСКОЕ СОРЕВНОВАНИЕ.

ПРОИЗВОДИТЕЛЬНОСТЬ  
ТРУДА ПОВЫСИТЬ НА 25%

ВСЕГО ЛИЦ НАЕМНОГО ТРУДА  
в 1928/29 12,2 млн. чел.  
в 1929/30 13,3 млн. чел.

СНИЗИТЬ СЕБЕСТОИМОСТЬ НА 11%

РЕАЛЬНО ЗАРПЛАТУ  
РАБОЧИХ ПОВЫСИТЬ В СРЕДНЕЙ НА 12%



ПЯТИЛЕТКУ ПРЕВРАТИМ В ЧЕТЫРЕХЛЕТКУ

Стиль: № А 6246. Из №2181 с.31 МЭТ. Тираж 30000

Государственное Издательство Массы в СССР - Ленинград

Общество «Ленинград Центросоюз» - Москва, Школьный садик, 25. Пр. 3-0-75



**143.** Gustavs Klucis  
*Untitled*  
 Dummy for the cover of  
*Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*  
 [For Proletarian Art], ca. 1932  
 Photography. Illuminated gelatin  
 silver, vintage copy, 21.3 x 16.2 cm  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**144.** Gustavs Klucis  
 Poster reproduced on the cover of  
*Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*  
 [For Proletarian Art], no. 5, 1932  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 29.8 x 21.3 cm  
 Text: The victory of socialism  
 in our country is guaranteed, the  
 foundation of the socialist economy  
 has been secured. "The reality of our  
 production plan is the millions of  
 workers creating the new life." I. Stalin  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman  
 144b and 144c. Details



ЖУРНАЛ

**РАПХ**  
российской  
ассоциации  
ролетарских  
художников

ролетарское

искусство

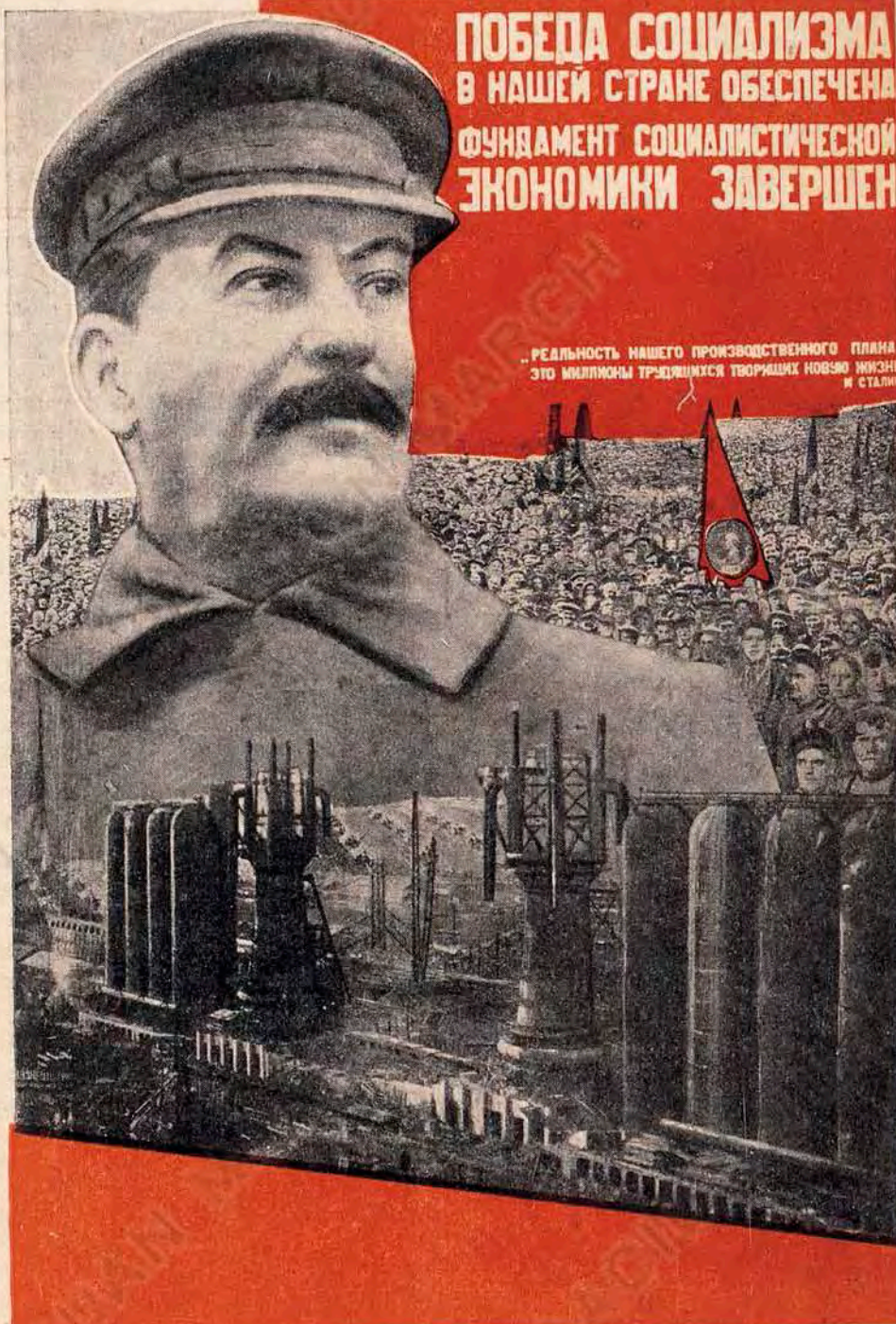


за

5

**ПОБЕДА СОЦИАЛИЗМА  
В НАШЕЙ СТРАНЕ ОБЕСПЕЧЕНА  
ФУНДАМЕНТ СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОЙ  
ЭКОНОМИКИ ЗАВЕРШЕН**

..РЕАЛЬНОСТЬ НАШЕГО ПРОИЗВОДСТВЕННОГО ПЛАНА  
ЭТО МИЛЛИОНЫ ТРУДЯЩИХСЯ ТВОРИЩИ НОВОЙ ЖИЗНИ  
И СТАЛИН



КЛУЦИС

ОГИЗ—ИЗОГИЗ  
МОСКВА—1932

**145.** *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*  
[For Proletarian Art], no. 9, 1931  
Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 21.5 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia

**146.** *Iskusstvo v massy*  
[Art to the Masses], no. 2 (10), 1930  
Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 23 cm  
AKhR, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia

**147.** *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*  
[For Proletarian Art], no. 3-4, 1931  
Magazine cover  
Letterpress, 30.5 x 21.5 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Archivo España-Rusia

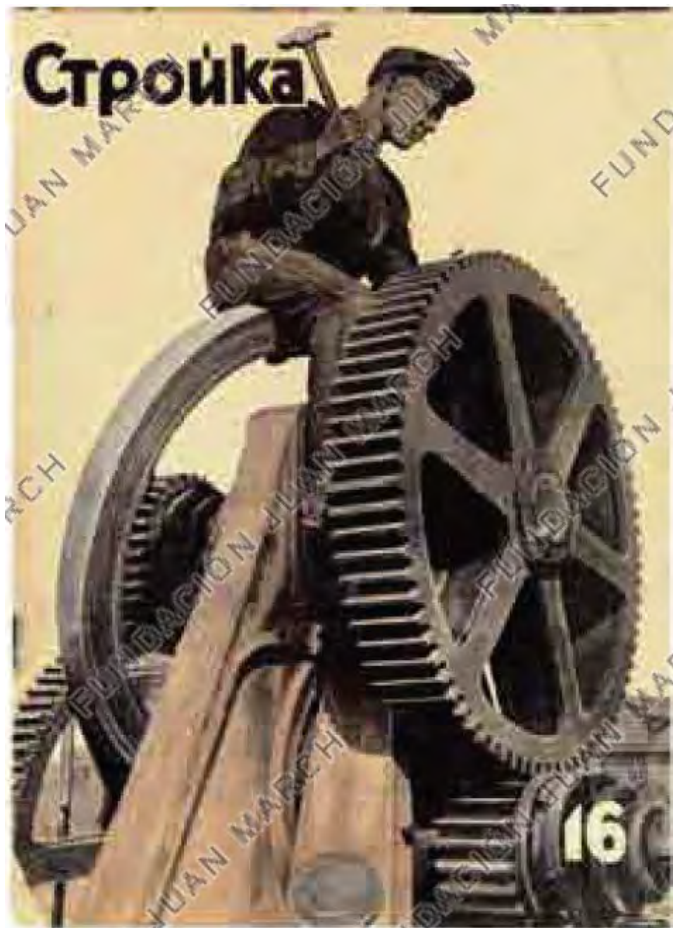


**148.** *Znanie-sila*  
[Knowledge is Power], no. 15, 1931  
Magazine cover  
Letterpress, 30 x 21 cm  
Molodaia Gvardiia, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia

**149.** *Stroika*  
[Construction], no. 16, August 5, 1930  
Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 22 cm  
Krasnaia Gazeta, Leningrad  
Archivo España-Rusia

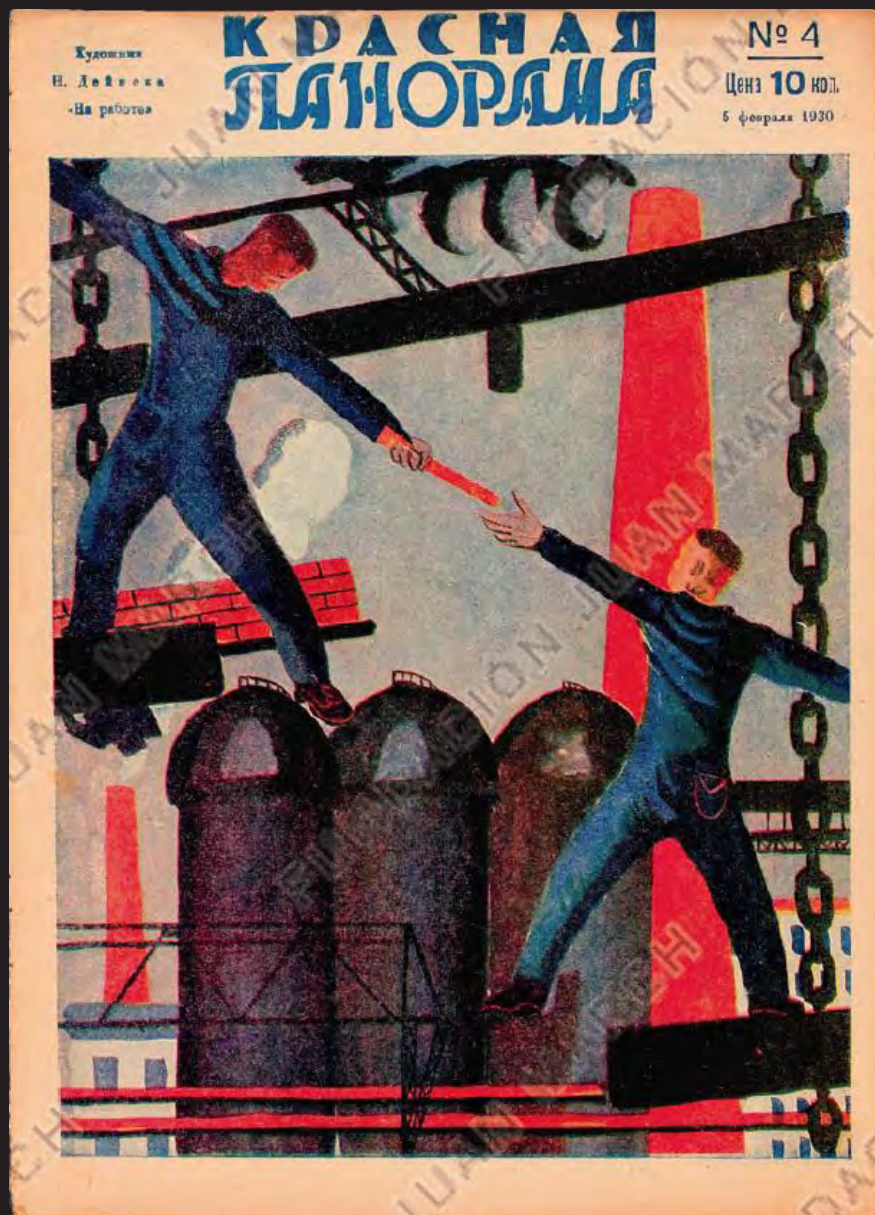
**150.** *Nauka i tekhnika*  
[Science and Technology], no. 2, 1930  
Magazine. Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm  
Izdatel'stvo Krasnaia Gazeta  
Leningrad  
Archivo España-Rusia



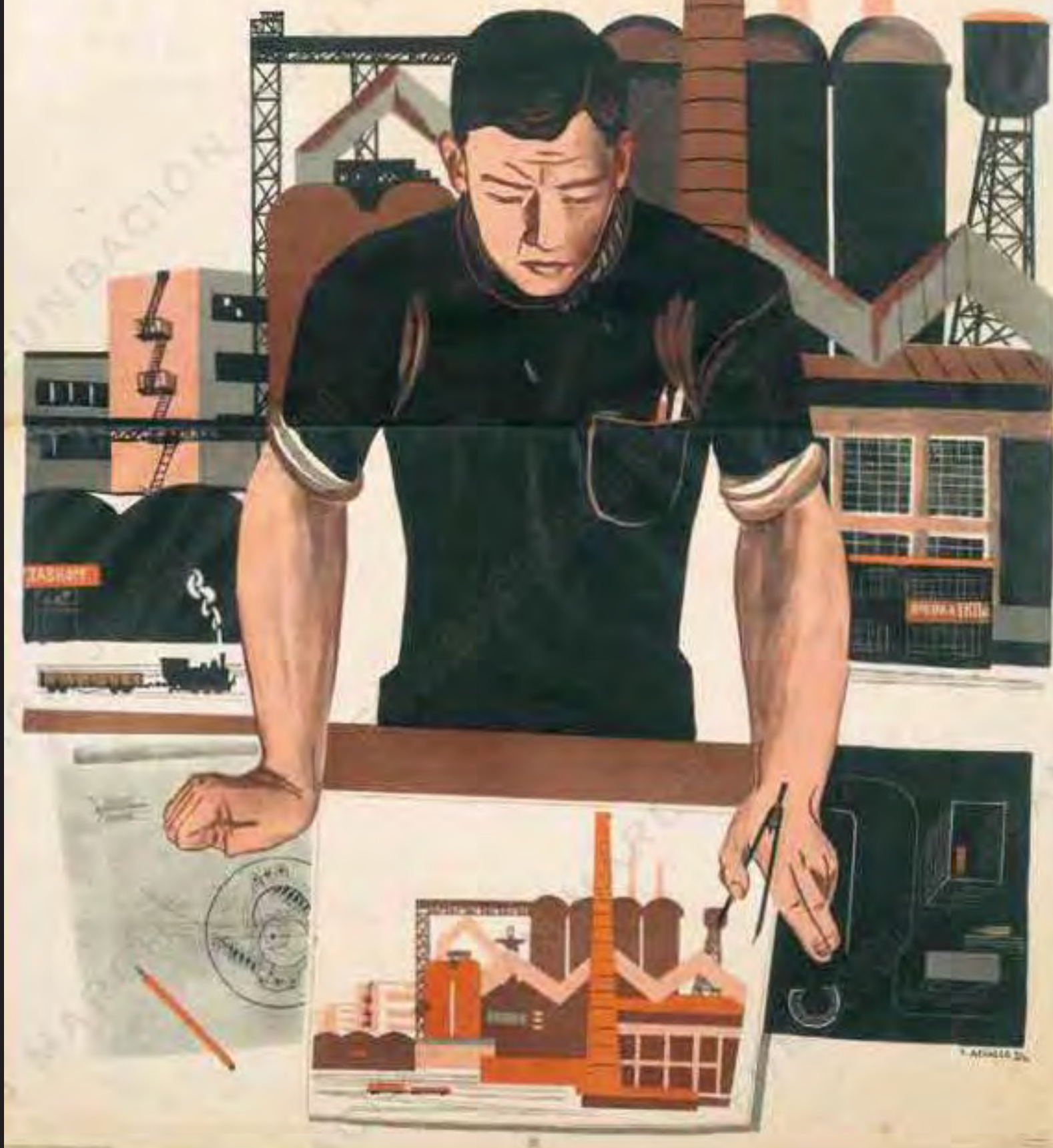


**151.** Aleksandr Deineka  
Cover for *Krasnaia panorama* [Red  
Panorama], no. 4, February 5, 1930  
Magazine. Offset, 27.9 x 20.3 cm  
Krasnaia Gazeta, Leningrad  
Price: 10 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**152.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Nado samim stat' spetsialistami . . .*  
[We Need to Become Specialists], 1931  
Poster. Lithography, 144 x 102 cm  
Text: "We need to become  
specialists, masters of affairs;  
we need to turn our faces  
to technical knowledge" (Stalin)  
IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 30,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**НАДО САМИМ СТАТЬ  
СПЕЦИАЛИСТАМИ,  
ХОЗЯЕВАМИ ДЕЛА, НАДО  
ПОВЕРНУТЬСЯ ЛИЦОМ  
К ТЕХНИЧЕСКИМ ЗНАНИЯМ**  
(СТАЛИН)





153. Iurii Pimenov

*My stroim sotsializm*

[We are Building Socialism], 1928

Poster. Lithography, 68.5 x 53.3 cm

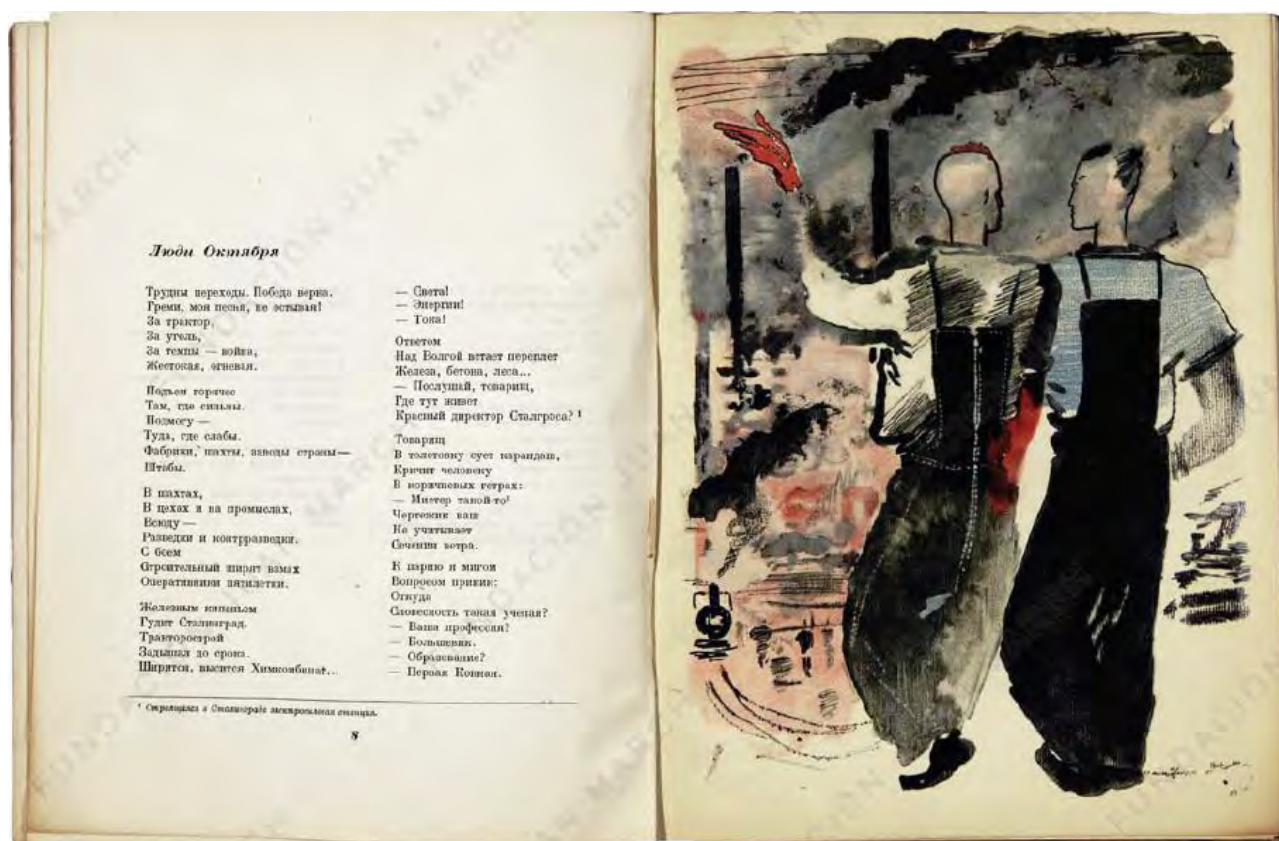
GOSIZDAT, Moscow-Leningrad

Print run: 35,000

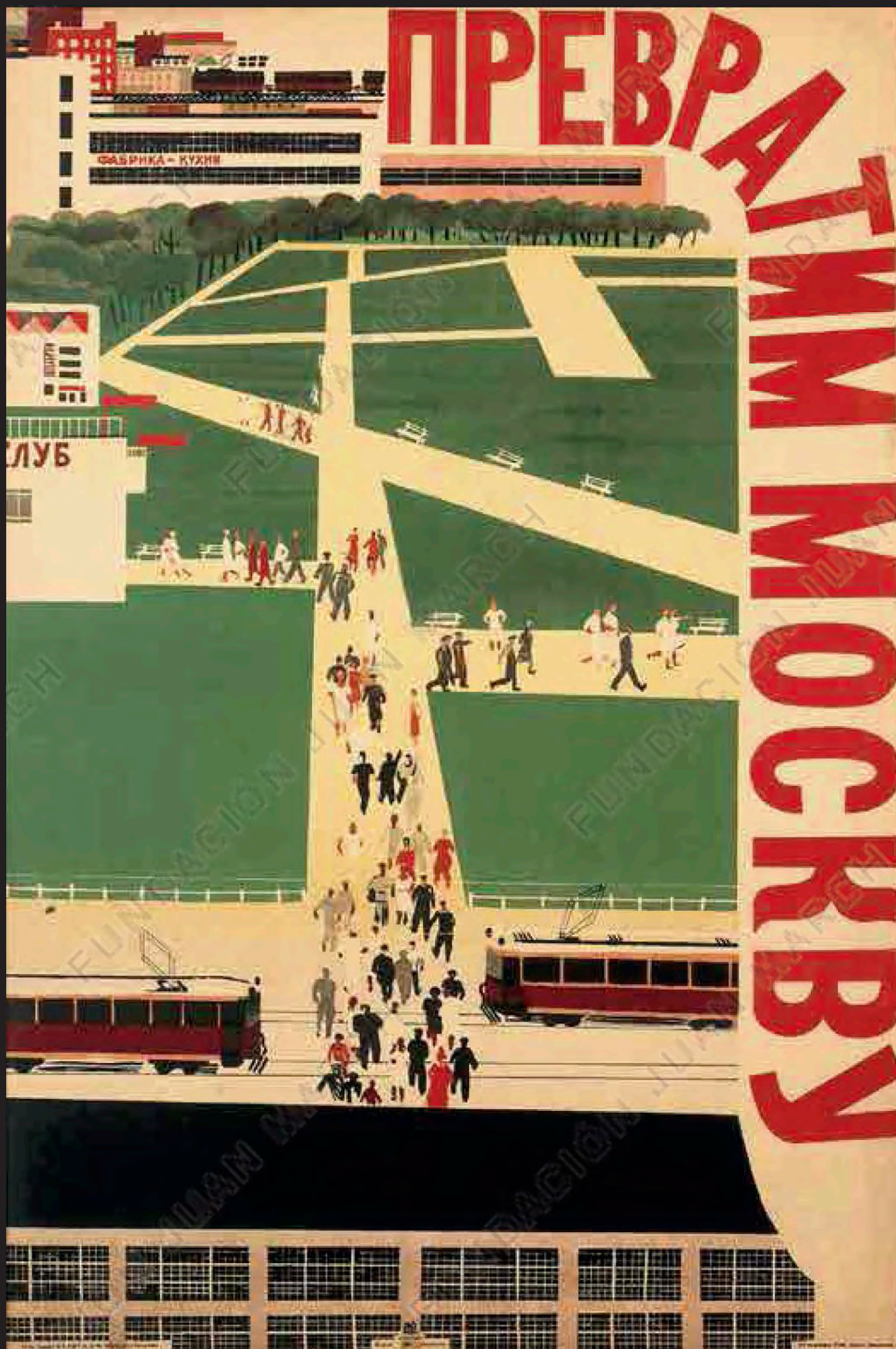
Collection Merrill C. Berman



154. Iurii Pimenov  
 Cover and illustrations  
 for the book of poems by  
 Aleksandr Zharov, *Osen' i vesna*  
 [Autumn and Spring], 1933  
 Book. Letterpress and  
 lithography, 30 x 23 cm  
 Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow  
 Archivo España-Rusia  
 154b. Illustration on page 8:  
 "October People"



155. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Prevratim Moskvu v obraztsovyi  
sotsialisticheskii gorod  
proletarskogo gosudarstva*  
[We Will Transform Moscow into an Exemplary Socialist City of the Proletarian State], 1931. Poster  
Lithography, 144. 8 x 208.3 cm  
IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 5,000. Price: 1 ruble  
Private collection

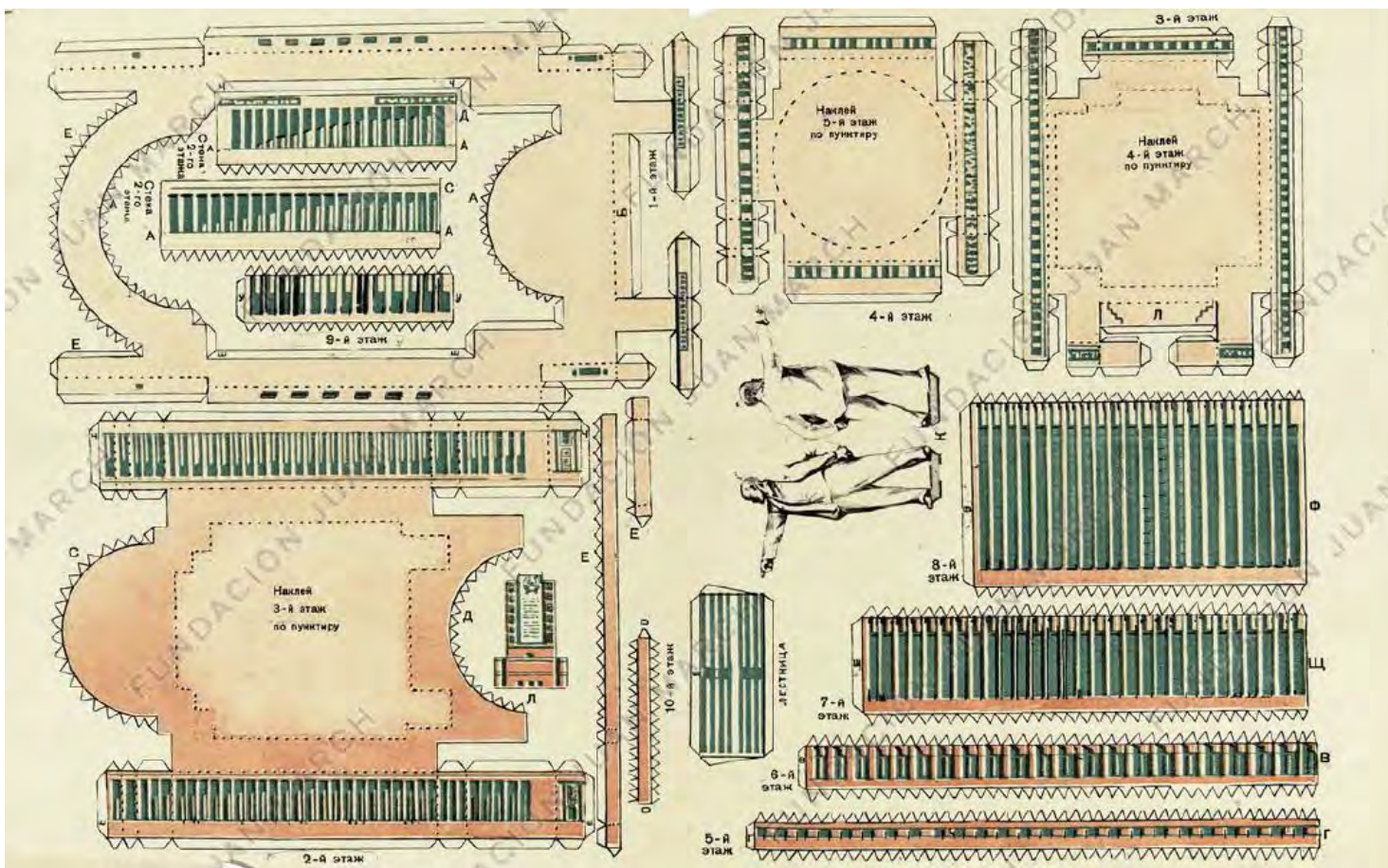




**В** ОБРАЗЦОВЫЙ СОЦИАЛИ-  
СТИЧЕСКИЙ ГОРОД ПРОЛЕ-  
ТАРСКОГО ГОСУДАРСТВА

**161.** *Da zdravstruet 1 maia!*  
 [Hail the First of May!], ca. 1930  
 Flag. Hand-painted cotton fabric  
 105 x 72.1 cm  
 Fundación José María Castañé

**156.** Supplement in the children's magazine *Murzilka*, no. 10, ca. 1930  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 29.5 x 24 cm  
 VLKSM Central Committee, Moscow  
 Archivo España-Rusia  
 156b. Cutout with model of the Palace of the Soviets by Boris Iofan



**157. Solomon Telingater**

Cover of *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* [The Construction of Moscow], no. 10, 1929 Magazine. Letterpress, 30.5 x 23 cm  
Mossovet, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia



**158. Detail of the facade of the Hotel Moscow** by architect Aleksei Shchusev  
Moscow 1932-38 (demolished in 2001)  
Plaster, 47 x 60 x 2 cm  
Archivo España-Rusia





159. Aleksandr Deineka  
*Mekhaniziruem Donbass!*  
[We are Mechanizing  
the Donbass!], 1930  
Poster. Lithography  
106.6 x 73.6 cm  
IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 25,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

160. Aleksandr Zharov  
*Stikhi i ugol* [Poems and Coal], 1931  
Book. Letterpress, 17 x 12.5 cm  
Molodaia Gvardiia, Moscow  
Blurb on back cover:  
The problem of coal becomes  
an important political and economic  
task: the rapid tempos of socialist  
construction are impossible without  
its solution (Resolution of the Central  
Committee of the VKP[b])  
Archivo España-Rusia







**ВЫСТАВКА**

**РАБОТ**

**ЛАДИМИРА**

**МАЯКОВСКОГО**

ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ МУЗЕЙ ПУБЛИЧН. БИБЛИОТЕКИ СССР им. В. И. ЛЕНИНА  
и ОБЩЕСТВО СОДЕЙСТВИЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРНОМУ МУЗЕЮ ● Ул. Маркса и  
Энгельса 18. Тел. 5-80, доб. 18. Трамвай: 3, 4, 10, 18, 24, 34, 36, А.

ВЫСТАВКА ОТКРЫТА ЕЖЕДНЕВНО КРОМЕ 2-х  
и 7-х ЧИСЕЛ ПО ЧЕТНЫМ С 4 ДО 10 ЧАС. ВЕЧ.  
ПО НЕЧЕТНЫМ С 10 ЧАС. ДО 4-х ЧАС. ДНЯ.

ПО ВЕЧЕРАМ НА ВЫСТАВКЕ УСТРАИВАЮТСЯ ДОКЛАДЫ,  
ДИСПУТЫ, ЧИТКИ СТИХОВ И ДЕМОНИСТРИРУЮТСЯ ОТ-  
РЫВКИ КИНО С УЧАСТИЕМ МАЯКОВСКОГО.  
ЭКСПУРСИИ ТОЛЬКО ПО ПРЕДВАРИТЕЛЬНОЙ ЗАПИСИ.

АЛЕНСЕЙ ГАН

**162. Aleksei Gan**

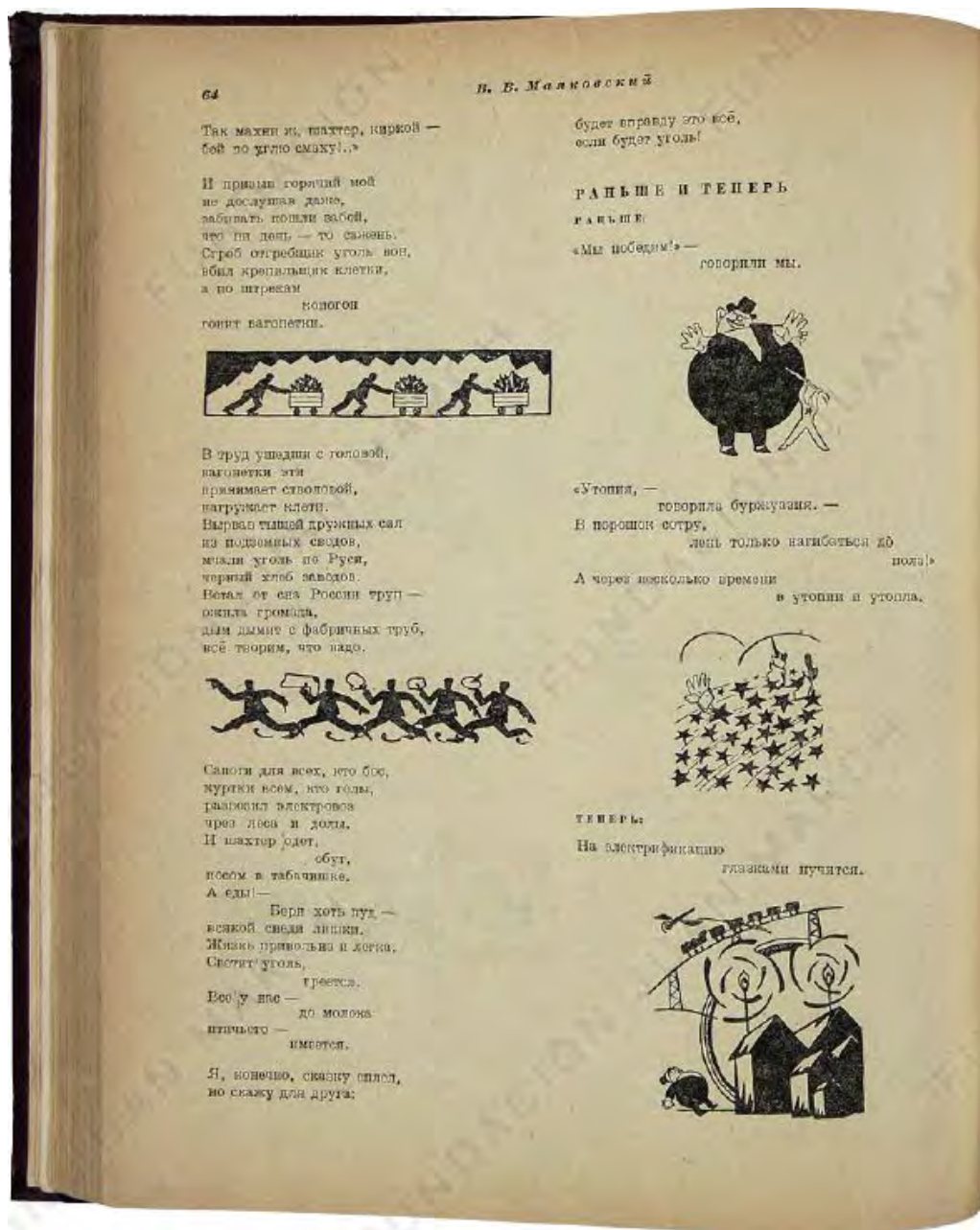
*Vystavka rabot Vladimira Maiakovskogo*  
[Exhibition of Mayakovsky's Work], 1931  
Poster for the exhibition that took place  
at the Literature Museum of the  
Lenin Public Library in 1931  
Lithography and letterpress, 64.8 x 46 cm  
Glavlit, Moscow  
Print run: 2,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**163. Vladimir Mayakovsky**

*Vo ves' golos*  
[At the Top of My Voice], 1931  
Book. Letterpress, 19 x 12.5 cm  
Khudozhestvennaia literatura  
Moscow-Leningrad  
Archivo España-Rusia



164. Vladimir Mayakovsky  
*Sochineniia v odnom tome*  
 [Collected Works in One Volume], 1940  
 Book. Letterpress, 26.1 x 20.6 cm  
 Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow  
 Fundación José María Castañé



Так махнул из шахтер, киркой —  
 бой по уголю смахнул!»

И признай горючий мой  
 не дослушая дама,  
 заблудить пошли забой,  
 что ни дашь — то сажень.  
 Стрел отребших уголь вон,  
 вбил крепальщик клетку,  
 а по шпирсам  
 ногогой  
 гонят вагонетки.



В труд ушами с головою,  
 лагунетки эти  
 принимает стволотой,  
 нагружает клетку.  
 Вырвал ташей дружных сал  
 из подземных сводов,  
 мчал уголь по Руси,  
 чернил хлеб заводов.  
 Велел от сна России труп —  
 ошля гнома,  
 дам дыме с фабричных труб,  
 всё творим, что надо.



Санюги для всех, кто бою,  
 куртки всем, кто голы,  
 разводит электровоск  
 чрез леса и доли.  
 И шахтер одет,  
 обут,  
 носки в табачнике.  
 А еды —  
 Беря хоть пух —  
 всякой сведи ланки.  
 Жизнь привольна и легка.  
 Светит уголь,  
 греется.  
 Все! у нас —  
 до молока  
 ничего —  
 имеется.  
 И, конечно, связку сплел,  
 но связку для друга:

будет вправду это всё,  
 если будет уголь!

РАНЬШЕ И ТЕПЕРЬ

раньше  
 «Мы победим!» —  
 говорили мы.



«Утопия, —  
 говорила буржуазия. —  
 В порошок остру,  
 лишь только нагиснется до  
 поля»  
 А через несколько времени  
 в утопии и уголя.



ТЕПЕРЬ:  
 На электрификацию  
 глазами изучается.



# В. В. МАЯКОВСКИЙ

## СОЧИНЕНИЯ В ОДНОМ ТОМЕ

*Под общей редакцией*  
Н. И. АСЕЕВА, Л. В. МАШКОВСКОЙ,  
В. О. ПЕРЦОВА и М. И. СЕРЕБРЯКОГО  
*Критико-биографический очерк*  
В. О. ПЕРЦОВА

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО «ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА»  
МОСКВА 1910



14) Товарищи ! бойтесь попасть  
в такую пасть  
чтобы с нами никогда  
не случилось это  
Сплотимся  
Власть укрепим советом !

ГЛАВПОЛИТПРОСВЕТ № 146.

ОКНА РОСТА. Рисунок и текст В. Маяковского



**ДАДИМ  
ПРОЛЕТ  
УРАЛО-Н**

Западная и Иваново-Вознесенск. область. →

Нижегородск  
Западно-сибирски

ИЗОГИЗ-ИЗОГИЗ  
Москва 1931

Графика Б-7580 ИЗОГИЗ № 2170 Р. 8. № 36 Тираж 10000

Цена 50 коп.



**165.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Dadim proletarskie kadry Uralo-Kuzbassu!*  
[We Will Provide Proletarian Cadres to Ural-Kuzbass!], 1931. Poster  
Lithograph on canvas, 68.5 x 101.6 cm  
Main text: We will provide proletarian cadres to Ural-Kuzbass  
Text with pointing arrow at top: To the Ural Province, to the Tatar Republic.  
Text with pointing arrow at bottom: To the Lower City and Western Siberian Territory  
IZOGIZ, Moscow  
Print run: 10,000. Price: 50 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**166.** Solomon Telingater,  
E. Gutnov, N. Spirov  
*Oktiabr'. Borba za proletarskie  
klassovie pozitsii na fronte  
prostranstvennykh iskusstv*  
[October. The Struggle for Proletarian  
Class Positions at the Spatial Arts  
Front], February 1931  
Book. Letterpress, 26.7 x 19 cm  
IZOGIZ, Moscow  
Private collection



**167.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Zheleznodorozhnoe depo*  
[Railroad Depot], ca. 1928  
Watercolor, ink, pen on paper  
29.9 x 44.8 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. RS-5413

**168.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Zhenskie brigady v sovkhoze*  
[Women's Brigades to the State  
Farm!], 1931  
Tempera on paper, 70.5 x 70.8 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. 28904







**169.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Kto kogo?*  
["Who Will Beat Whom?"], 1932  
Oil on canvas, 131 x 200 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-706





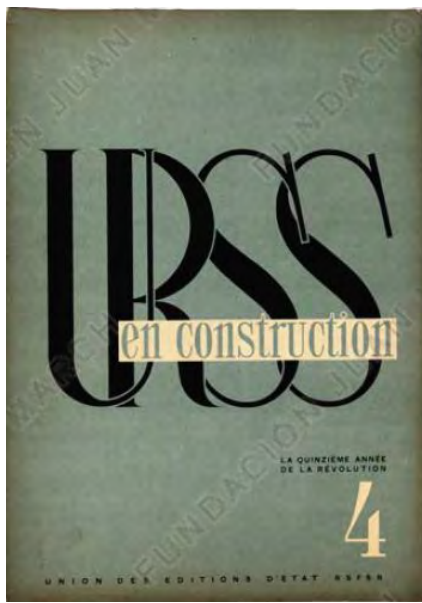


**170.** Mikhail Razulevich

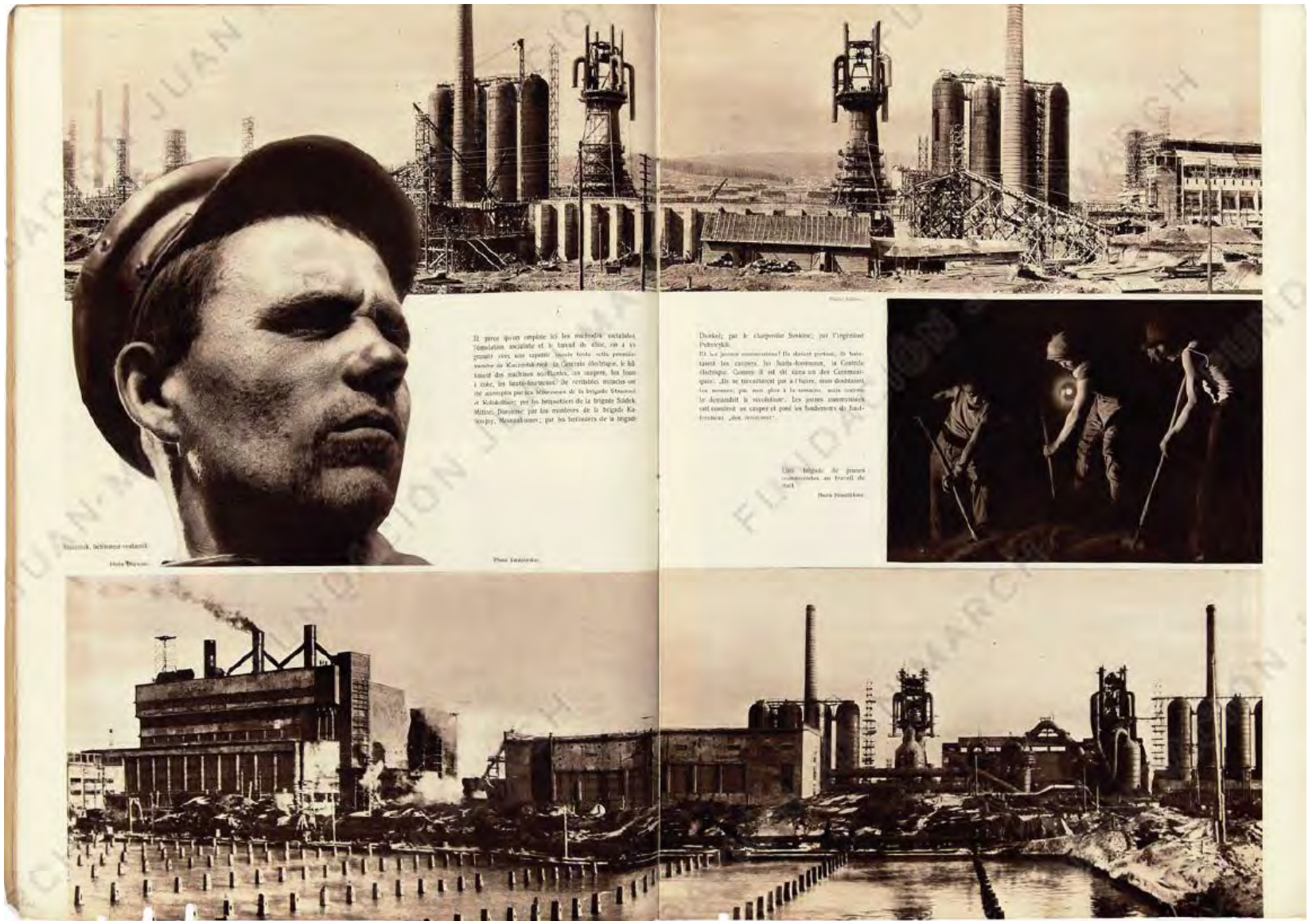
*Realnost' nashei programmy  
- eto zhivie liudi*

[The Reality of Our Program is  
Living People], 1932. Sketch for poster  
Letterpress, 38.3 x 25.4 cm

Text: "The reality of our program is  
living people, it is me and you,  
our will to work, our readiness to  
work for the new, our decisiveness  
to fulfill the plan." Stalin  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



171. P. Urban  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 4, 1932  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid

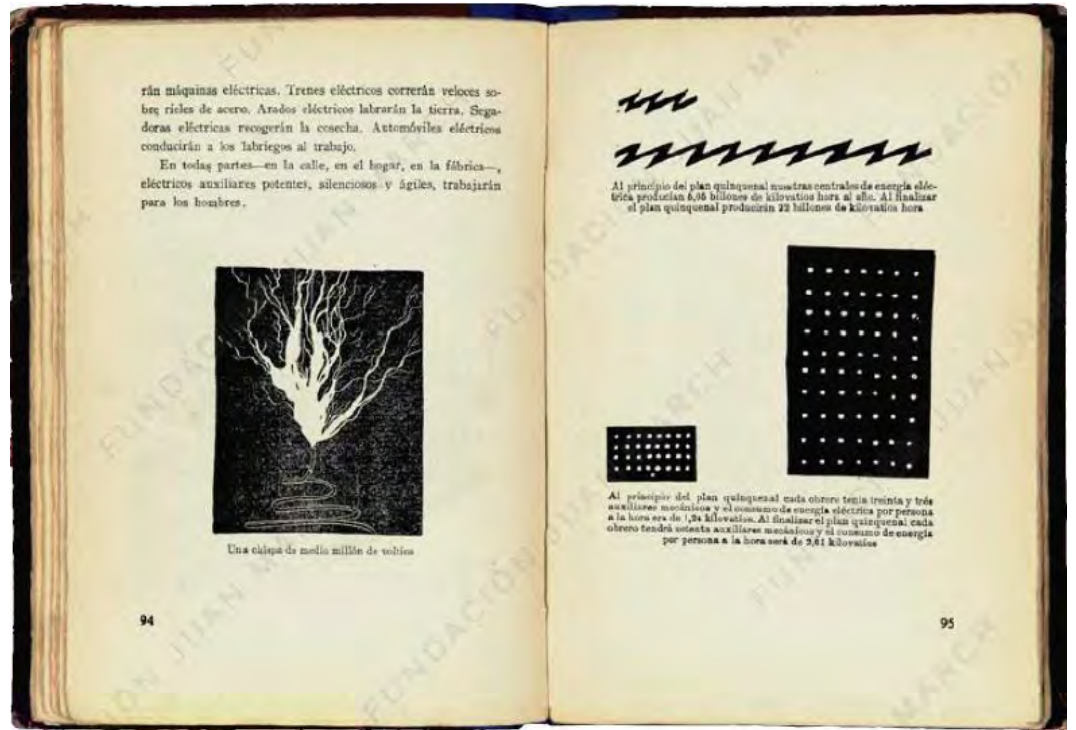


**173.** Nikolai Troshin  
*URSS en construction*  
 [USSR in Construction], no. 1, 1933  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid

**172.** *USSR in Construction*, no. 2, 1932  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 English edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Fundación José María Castañé

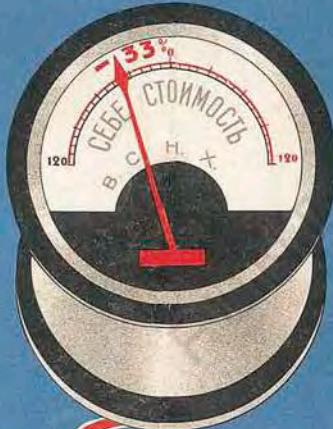


174. Mauricio Amster  
 Cover and layout of the book  
 by M. Ilyin, *Moscú tiene un plan*  
 [Moscow Has a Plan], 1932  
 Book. Letterpress and  
 linocut, 21 x 15 cm  
 Ediciones Oriente, Madrid  
 Archivo España-Rusia



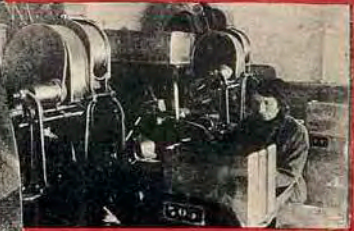
МЫ НЕ ИЗ ТЕХ, КОГО ИСПУГАЮТ ТРУДНОСТИ | СТАЛИН

# ПЯТИЛЕТНИЙ ПЛАН ПИЩЕВКУСОВОЙ ПРОМЫШЛЕННОСТИ СССР



ПОДНИМЕМ ПРОИЗВОДИТЕЛЬНОСТЬ  
ТРУДА

ОСУЩЕСТВИМ  
П Л А Н  
ВЕЛИКИХ  
Р А Б О Т



**ВЫРАБОТКА НА ОДНОГО СПИСОЧНОГО РАБОЧЕГО ЗА ОДИН ГОД В РУБЛЯХ**

ПРОИЗВОДИТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ТРУДА	1927/28 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год
	Удельн. производ. труда к концу пятилетия к 1927/28 г.	227,5	286	283,5	306,5	304,0	384,0	190,0	216,5	171,0	234,5

**СРЕДНИЙ МЕСЯЧНЫЙ ЗАРАБОТОК ОДНОГО РАБОЧЕГО В РУБЛЯХ**

ЗАРПЛАТА	1927/28 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год
	Зарплата к концу пятилетия к 1927/28 г.	124,4	121,4	153,0	128,1	122,0	118,1	123,8	120,3	120,9	122,0

**СРЕДНЕ-ВЗВЕШЕННАЯ ФАБРИЧНО-ЗАВОДСКАЯ СЕБЕСТОИМОСТЬ, ЕДИНИЦ ИЗДЕЛИЙ**

СЕБЕСТОИМОСТЬ	1927/28 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год	1932/33 год
	Средн. себестоимости к концу пятилетия к 1927/28 г.	21,5	19,2	35,3	44,0	26,5	27,0	29,6	3,6	47,8	18,2

ПИЩЕВКУСОВАЯ ПРОМЫШЛЕННОСТЬ: Мясобойная, Рыбная, Консервная, Крахмало-пат., Кондитерская, Макариная, Табачная, Мучочная, Мукомольная, Дрожжевая, Пивоваренная, Винокуренная

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО ЦДК ОБОЗР. ПИЩЕВН. ПРОМ.

**175.** *Piatiletanii plan pischevoi promyshlennosti . . .*  
[The Five-Year Plan of the Food Production Industry], ca. 1932  
Poster. Lithography and letterpress  
103.5 x 72.7 cm  
Text on white at top: "We are not of those who are frightened by difficulty." (Stalin)  
Black text at top: The five-year plan of the food production industry of the USSR  
Red text at center: We will raise the productivity of labor / We will realize the plan of great work  
Publishers of the Central Committee of the Food Industry Union, Leningrad  
Print run: 1,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**176.** Vasilii El'kin  
*Proizvodstvo* [Production], ca. 1932  
Design for poster. Collage: letterpress, cut paper and pencil, 55.8 x 41.9 cm  
Private collection





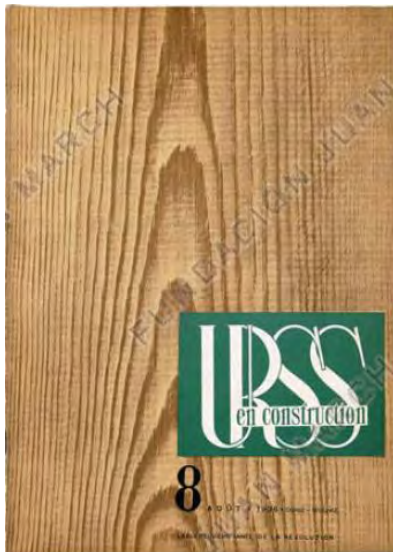


**177.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*V period pervoi piatiletki*  
[During the Period of the  
First Five-Year Plan], 1933  
Poster. Lithography  
101.6 x 71.1 cm

Text: "During the period of  
the First Five-Year Plan we  
were able to organize the  
enthusiasm and zeal of  
the new construction and  
achieved decisive success.  
Now we should supplement  
this matter with the  
enthusiasm and zeal for the  
mastery of new factories  
and new technique." Stalin  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-  
Leningrad  
Print run: 25,000  
Price: 70 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**178. Vasilii El'kin**  
*5 in 4 Jahre* [5 in 4 Years], 1933  
 Design for book cover  
 Letterpress, gouache, pencil  
 and cut paper, 19.5 x 27.8 cm  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman

**179. Aleksandr Rodchenko  
 and Varvara Stepanova**  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in  
 Construction], no. 8, August 1936  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid



**180.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Polden'* [Noon], 1932  
Oil on canvas, 59.5 x 80 cm  
State Russian Museum,  
Saint Petersburg, Inv. ZHB-1816





**181.** Georgii Petrusov  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in  
Construction], no. 1, January 1936  
Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
Collection MJM, Madrid



**182.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Bezrobotnye v Berline*  
[The Unemployed in Berlin], 1932  
Oil on canvas, 118.5 x 185 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-704



183. Aleksandr Deineka

*Da zdravstvuet pobeda sotsializma  
vo vsem mire!*

[Hail the Victory of Socialism  
the World Over!], 1933

Poster. Lithography, 68.6 x 200.7 cm

Bottom left: Down with capitalism, the

system of slavery, poverty, and hunger!

Bottom middle: Hail the USSR, the

shock brigade of the world proletariat!

Bottom right: Hail the Soviets and

heroic Red Army of China!

OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad

Print run: 15,050

Collection Merrill C. Berman



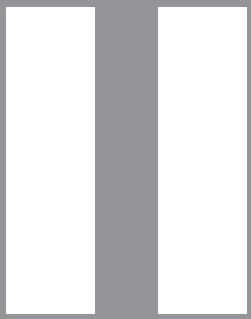
**СОЦИАЛИЗМА ВО ВСЕМ МИРЕ!**



**ударная бригада мирового пролетариата!**

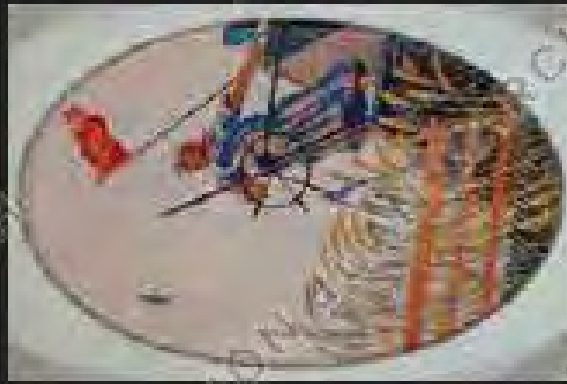
**Да здравствуют советы и героическая Красная армия Китая!**

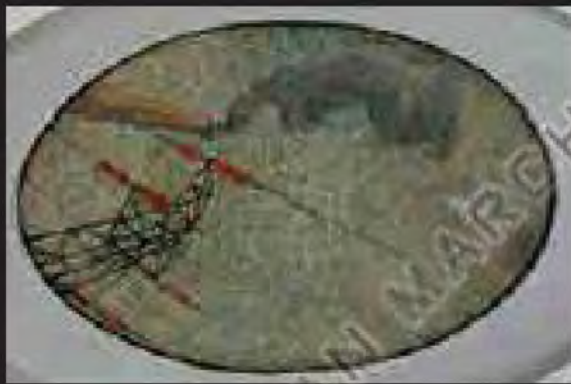




# **1935** **Deineka in** **Stalin's Metro**









The Maiakovskaia Station

"My head is brimming with ideas! Building sites across the country, tractors and farming machinery helping with work on vast kolkhoz fields, gardens in bloom, fruits ripening, airplanes Crossing the skies day and night, the young working heroically and resting blissfully. Life in the USSR pulses at full pace twenty-four hours a day. And thus we agreed on the theme 'A Day and Night in the Land of Soviets'." (Aleksandr Deineka)

# Underground Explorations in the Synthesis of the Arts: Deineka in Moscow's Metro

## Alessandro De Magistris

History of Architecture Professor  
at the Politecnico de Milano

*Forty meters below ground, a morning sky mosaic, clear and bright, meets people as they enter the platform. If they feel better as a result, if they feel chipper, the artist will have fulfilled his mission.*  
A. Deineka, "Mozaika metro," *Tvorchestvo* 11 (1939)

Aleksandr Deineka helped to embellish the Soviet capital's underground system by making an extremely significant contribution to two of its stations: Maiakovskaia and Novokuznetskaia (also called Dornetskaia for a time). The projects, which became operational a few years apart, were linked by an obvious thread of continuity: in their technical execution, in the dynamism of the overall design, and in the artist's unmistakable stylistic manner, whose figurative nature, seemingly far removed from abstraction, nevertheless continued to establish a dialogue with the avant-garde through its vividness and chromatic aggressiveness, as well as its narrative line aimed at celebrating fragments of "heroic" everyday life in the land of the Soviets in the phase of "achieved" socialism. When contextualized, however, these projects attained different outcomes. They reflect the diverse range of historical and creative situations as well as different approaches to the ideal of an integrally conceived artistic environment that represented one of the predominant themes in the line of thinking of academic institutions and in the creative commitment of the Soviet painters, sculptors and architects involved in giving form—in public buildings and factories alike—to the new face of "triumphant" socialism.<sup>1</sup>

While the decorative factor in Novokuznetskaia, a station designed by Ivan Taranov (1906–1979) and Nina Bykova (1907–1997)—authors of the underground hall and the entrance pavilion to the Sokolniki station—and opened at the height of the war, is effectively albeit conventionally incorporated in the compositional economy of the underground work,<sup>2</sup> in Maiakovskaia station, built at an earlier date, Deineka helped to write one of the most original and meaningful pages of monumental art in the 1930s—indeed of the entire Stalinist period—thanks to the intimate dialogue established between the mosaics and the architectonic setting, which is spacious and well-lit. It is an extremely lofty example of *Gesamtkunstwerk* or synthesis of the arts, fruit of an outstanding convergence of material circumstances, ideas, and people: a combination whose outcome is fortunately still on view—something not to be taken for granted in the building frenzy of contemporary Moscow—for the millions of people who consciously cross the magnificent underground hall that forms the structural backbone of the station named after the great Russian poet, Vladimir Mayakovsky.<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand its full value and historical repercussions, it is crucial to situate Deineka's creative contribution in the historical framework of what the Soviet regime's shrewd propaganda machine called "the world's most beautiful metropolitan,"<sup>4</sup> at the hub of a powerful mytho-poetic activity, and which—over and above any rhetorical emphasis—was the central work in the series of undertakings called upon to attest to the validity and ambitions of the regime, in one of the most tragic phases of Soviet history<sup>5</sup>—the period bridging a major crisis at the beginning of the decade which led to one of the most serious famines in Russian history, the heightening of the reign of terror during the Ezhovshchina [Ezhov regime], and the outbreak of the Second World War, the prospect of which had dictated the typological and constructive choices of the enterprise, opening the way to more demanding and hitherto untried design and planning solutions when compared to those previously singled out. Insofar as the urban milieu was concerned, the Metro was actually the Stalinian accomplishment *par excellence* in the pre-war period. As Lazar Kaganovich<sup>6</sup>—who at that time occupied a prominent position in the party Secretariat and was the main political figure, along with Nikita Khrushchev, behind the huge construction site<sup>7</sup>—declared in a speech delivered on the occasion of its

inauguration, Soviet workers would see their future taking shape in the subway: with this victory over underground problems, “the government of workers and peasants” showed its capacity to create in any place a “prosperous and culturally elevated environment.”<sup>8</sup>

The decision to start construction of the Moscow Metro was taken by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in June 1931. Inaugurated barely four years later, it was subsequently extended until the outbreak of the war which, as we have said, did not bring work to a halt, at least over more than twenty-five kilometers. It thus represented a key factor in the city’s “reconstruction” strategy, helping to consolidate its radio-centric layout, lending visibility to the new urban order, and heralding the new architectonic order that was making its way into the context of the “General Plan of Reconstruction,” whose approval and development periods overlapped, not haphazardly, with those of the Metro infrastructure.<sup>9</sup> The program was drawn up in detail, and with a great deal of lucidity, in a publication printed by the Academy of Architecture in 1936 to celebrate the end of the first phase of construction. Its stations were “elements of an original underground city” intended to represent “an inseparable component of the entire urban ensemble, the continuation of the street under the ground.”<sup>10</sup>

The explicit values, not just technological but also and above all political and ideological of the undertaking and its placement at the heart of the decisive cultural state of affairs that took shape in the early 1930s and led to the assertion of socialist realism as proclaimed in August 1934 at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, lent the operation a significance that went well beyond the scope of a simple transportation infrastructure conceived in a strictly functional and rationalistic vein, as with the main works being undertaken elsewhere at the time. Suffice it to compare it with the extensions of the underground systems in Berlin and London, taken, along with the Paris system, as references by Soviet technicians in the preliminary development phase, that led to an extremely pithy and concise project, with a strictly modernist hallmark, which was subsequently abandoned. Forming part of a pivotal wave of reconstruction of the Soviet capital, the Moscow Metro was called upon to be not only a technologically “ex-

emplary” achievement, as the slogan in a famous 1932 manifesto went (“A model underground for the proletarian capital”), but also a kind of ideal representation of the socialist city that was being built above ground. All of which goes to explain the amazing mobilization of material and human resources, as well as technical, design and creative intelligence, circles into which Deineka was summoned at a certain point, given his renown and fame, enhanced by recent experiences in interior decoration such as the mural titled *Civil Aviation* executed for the kitchen of the Fili airplane factory (1932) and the mural for the new People’s Commissariat of Agriculture designed by Aleksei Shchusev (1933),<sup>11</sup> a late and monumental expression of constructivism. Such experiences were part of the general context of reflection and mobilization of creative forces, one of whose important outcomes in 1935 was the Studio of Monumental Painting at the Institute of Architecture in Moscow run by Lev Bruni and Vladimir Favorskii, already Deineka’s tutor when he was studying at the VKhUTEMAS.<sup>12</sup>

The general plan approved by the Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) on March 21, 1933, originally provided for a network of about eighty kilometers set out in a ring-like layout made up of five radial lines and a circular line, the construction of which was staggered over five building phases. The first, the Gor’kovskaia line linking Sokolniki to the Gorky Central Park of Culture and Leisure in the city center, was inaugurated on May 14, 1935. The second phase of construction led to the extension of the line running from the Arbat to Kiev station in the west and Kursk station in the east, creating a radial line along the historic Tverskaia road (named Gorky Street from 1935 to 1990) that went as far as Dinamo stadium and then pushed on further to the garden town of Sokol in the north of the city: it went into service in September 1938. The third phase involved the eastward extension of the Arbatsko-Pokrovskaia line as far as Izmailovskii Park and the Gor’kovskaia line as far as Paveletskaiia station and the ZIS automobile works (Avtozavodskaiia station) to the south, guaranteeing service to the areas of maximum industrial concentration in the capital: planned for 1937–38, it was not actually built until the latter stages of the war.

It was precisely in the second and third construction phases that the great artist was involved.

He thus operated within a framework still exempt from the nationalistic and triumphalistic overtones that are a feature of the circle line, whose plan, reworked in relation to the development of the Garden Ring (Sadovoe kol'tso), would not be completed—with various modifications—until after the end of the war, between 1949 and 1953, smacking of the imperial climate of the late Stalinist period.<sup>13</sup>

The works of the second phase, which include the outstanding example of the Maiakovskaia station, had a whiff of the “transitional” atmosphere befitting a period that was still looking for an innovative style based on expressiveness and monumentality, and they benefited in particular from the fact that the organization of the works now came under the control of the People’s Commissariat of Heavy Industry (NKTP-Narkomtiashprom) headed by Sergo Ordzhonikidze,<sup>14</sup> who ensured the supply of materials, encouraged the rational organization of labor and promoted the use of the most advanced constructive solutions, introducing a visible caesura in the still perfectly comprehensible plans for and spatial organization of the Metro stations. It was probably this “patronage” which facilitated the provision of stainless steel, an essential element when it came to the finishing of the stations, by the aeronautical industry.

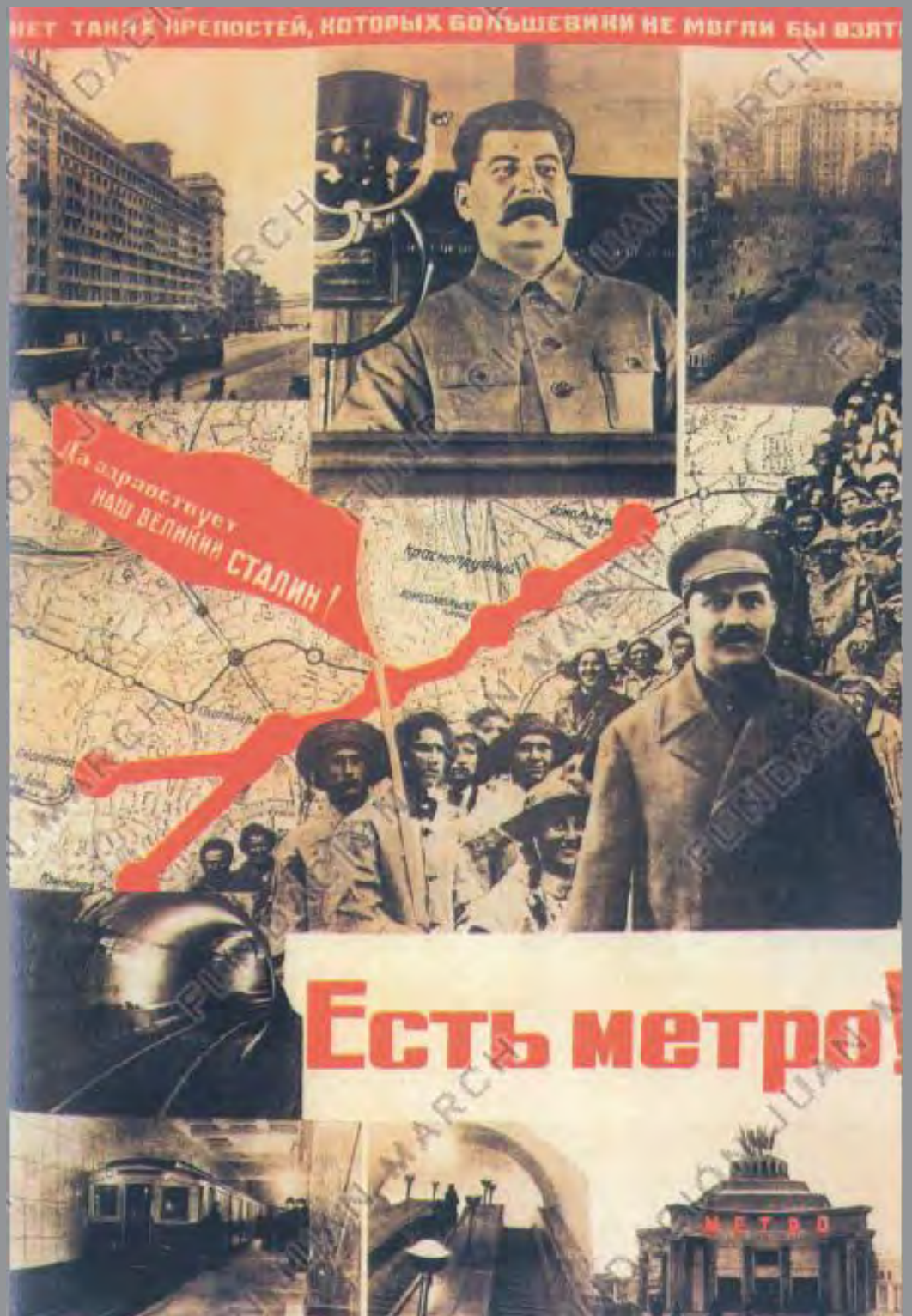
The decision to opt for deep-level tunneling and the specification of the station features, defined by a three-nave plan in which the central corridor leading to the platforms at the sides assumed a decisive structural salience, as well as the need to construct spaces that were not oppressive, but eloquent and educational, in which it was easy to find one’s way and move around—i.e., pleasant places, immediately practical to interpret but also ideologically readable by a population that included large numbers of recent immigrants, often fleeing from the violence and harshness of collectivization, and in many cases illiterate—all contributed to make the Metro a special field for experimentation and research in planning and design. This experimentation was inspired by a series of principles common to the design and planning solutions which, in a programmatic way, encompassed diverse areas: the rejection of the sense of claustrophobia, the need to break up monotony,<sup>15</sup> attention to the chromatic properties of materials, and the use of artificial lighting as a basic element in underground architectonic organization.<sup>16</sup>

V. Deni (Denisov)  
and N. Dolgorukov  
"The Metro is Here!"  
Lithography and letterpress  
photomontage over three  
panels. Manifesto. 1935  
(Casabella 679)

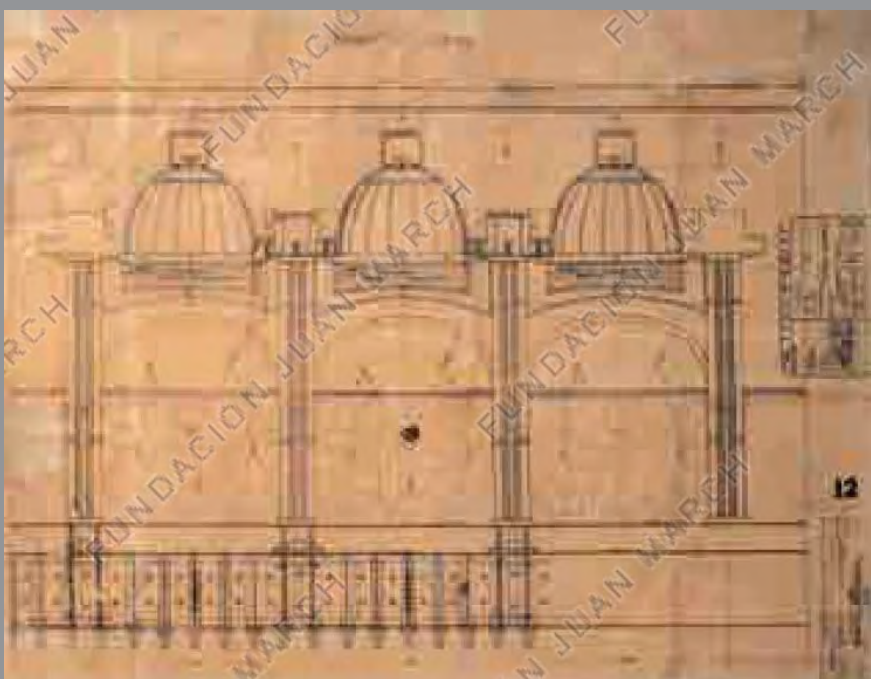
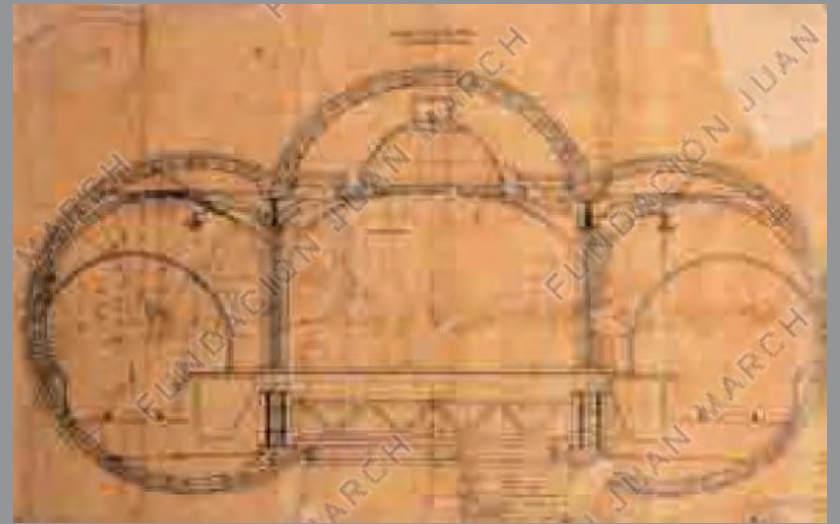
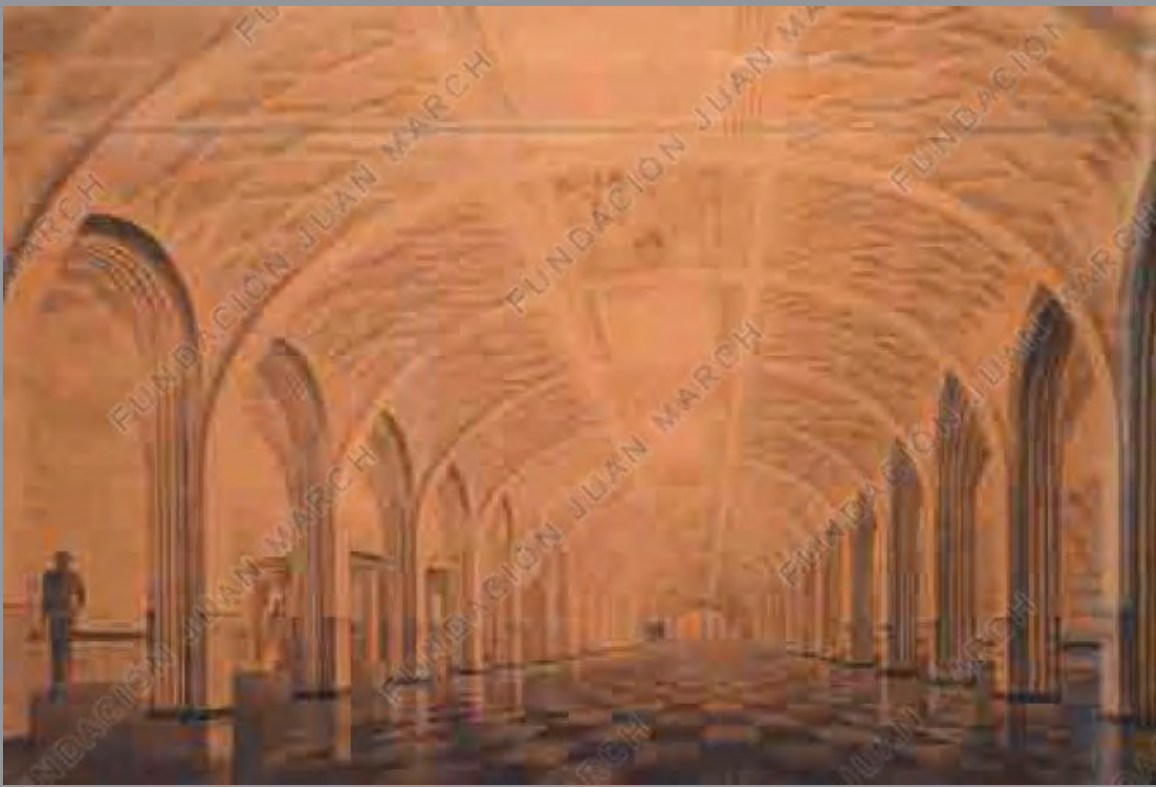
The result arrived at by some of the most important figures in Soviet architectural culture, summoned to take part in this fierce creative competition, was a complex of environments (pavilions above ground, connecting areas . . .) with different and highly distinctive monumental paces and rhythms. When observed in the rapid succession that the modern means of transport ushered in, these milieus reflected the unusual prospect of an architectural culture in search of the expression of modernity, incorporating and reformulating—a key term was “creative assimilation”—all the historical periods right up to contemporary developments: not only Egyptian architecture, the cryptoporticus<sup>17</sup> of Roman architecture and the many variations of classicism, but also recent tendencies, from the “rationalistic” interventions of Nikolai Ladovskii (Krasnye Vorota entrance pavilion and Dzerzhinskaia underground station) to what was subsequently known as the art deco style, evident in the design and the decorative features of many stations planned in the latter half of the 1930s, in comparison with current developments in North American architecture and reality, to which the USSR paid special heed by way of study missions and correspondence in magazines.

The timetables and typological options provide an essential key to understanding how the infrastructure, conceived from the outset as architectonic “ensembles” and characterized by wide-ranging environments intended as public places by definition—a framework for the transit of large masses of population—became a terrain particularly suitable for airing issues of monumental propaganda at the hub of the theoretical debates of the 1930s, precisely by being one of the keystones of socialist realism. Following the decorative example of the great restaurants in Kazan railroad station and in the Moskva Hotel, but also the avant-garde experiment carried out in the *oformlenie* [design] of certain industrial plants, such as the Stalingrad Tractor Factory (STZ), the dialogic input of the various artistic and planning disciplines found in the underground, and especially in the stations built during the second phase, an ideal test bench for decorative solutions with a powerful visual and propagandist impact.

It is safe to say that, in a more systematic and coherent way than any other planned intervention, the Moscow underground bears witness to the collaboration between artists of different disciplines oriented toward the creation of a total work of art: a







(Clockwise, from left to right):  
 A. Dushkin, R. Sheinfain and E. Grinzaid. Variant of the design for Maiakovskaia station, ca. 1936 (GNIMA)  
 A. Dushkin. Studies for Maiakovskaia station, 1937 (Family collection)  
 A. Dushkin, R. Sheinfain and E. Grinzaid. Design. Cross section, 1937 (Metropiotrans)  
 A. Dushkin, R. Sheinfain and E. Grinzaid. Design. Longitudinal section, 1937 (Metropiotrans)

monumental “synthesis” that was the fruit of an “organic” rather than a “mechanical” merger of architecture and painting, frescoes and mosaics, sculptural works and bas-reliefs. This approach was in fact only gradually achieved. Almost completely absent from the first phase, in which there was a predominance of pure comparison with the architectonic tendencies that survived the end of the “creative” groupings, this turn came across in a marked and characterizing way in the stations built during the second constructive phase,<sup>18</sup> where the architects involved, representing older and younger generations alike, started to be systematically accompanied by artists like Evgenii Lansere, Matvei Manizer and Nataliia Dan’ko, usually selected by the planners themselves for reasons of affinity.<sup>19</sup>

Aleksandr Deineka was one of the leading figures in this adventure. But if the Maiakovskaia station represents an absolute masterpiece, this is due to the fact that the uniqueness and extraordinariness of Deineka’s work cannot be dissociated from the contribution made by Aleksei Dushkin (1904–1977),<sup>20</sup> a relatively unknown architect in the West, but one who belonged to the group of highly talented proponents of Soviet culture, whose own name is linked (among others) to some of the most beautiful underground stations, such as Revolution Square and Palace of the Soviets (today called Kropotkinskaia).

In the Maiakovskaia station, every element finds its own organic place and mosaics made of glazed tessellae form the ornamentation of an environment conceived as a constructively and ideologically coherent whole, down to the tiniest details. The underground hall, 155 meters (over 500 feet) long and clearly inspired by the solution which John Soane came up with for the Bank of England in London, despite being located 34.5 meters (113 feet) below ground, is striking for its extraordinary sense of space, the glowing and luminous quality of its lighting, the fluid nature of its different parts, the dialogue between the decorative features and the other elements, and the dynamism of the forms that do away with any sense of oppression and claustrophobia. The floor, made of polished marble, whose design was intended to bring to mind an abstract composition of suprematist inspiration dominated by Malevich’s reds and blacks, seems to have been designed, as Nataliia Dushkina has put it, like a “runway” for the flying machine surmounting it, which takes on the theme of space and its symbolic transfiguration in

the kingdom of the sky as a unifying argument. In interpreting the opportunities offered by the use of load-bearing steel structures—with contributions from the engineers I. Gotsiridze, R. Sheinfain and E. Grinzaid—hidden in decorative domes and archways made of corrugated stainless steel separating the central hall from the platforms, Dushkin devised an environment that could be read in a crystalline, tectonic way, bolstered by the theme of the metal frame that denied the gravity of the wall masses which were so evident in the early works. Every detail was included in this design, whose far-reaching compositional key lay in the space theme and in the lightness and levity of an ensemble which found its culminating point and its decorative and narrative sublimation in the series of thirty-five ovoid mosaics by Aleksandr Deineka. These compositions, whose official theme was phrased as “A Day and Night in the Land of Soviets,” had the presence of the sky as their constant feature. From the architect’s<sup>21</sup> words we know that the solution which was finally implemented was the result of an arduous design process issuing from the meeting between architects and structural engineers, which led to the rejection of the conventional proposal put forward by Samuil Kravets and finally defined the splendid and carefully thought-out spatial apparatus that made the potential of the new structural arrangement obvious, underpinned as it was by the use of pilasters and steel beams. Thanks to this, Deineka’s work does not jump out at first glance. The mosaics in which the artist described a perfect day in the land of triumphant socialism, fitted inside the sequence of double vaults which Dushkin planned precisely to accommodate the features of the decoration, making it possible at the same time to disguise the sources of light, had and still have to be discovered and contemplated, one after the other, as one walks across the entire length of the hall.

Traversing this hall from end to end, anyone looking upward could admire, a little at a time, standing out against the illusorily depicted sky rendered vibrant by the glazed tessellae, almost as if they were part of the storyboard of a documentary film, the kolkhoz (collective farm) fields, the blast furnaces of the new industrial plants built under the forced industrialization program, the work and recreational activities of the communist youth, and the ideal life of the Soviet family which new laws were striving to strengthen after the collapse of the 1920s.<sup>22</sup> People could admire parachutists jumping and Red Army

airplanes streaking across the skies of the motherland, in some cases inspired by the sketches of the selfsame Dushkin;<sup>23</sup> and then the new methods of exploration, which had intrigued the avant-garde<sup>24</sup> culture and anticipated, in the quest for new stratospheric prizes, the conquest of the cosmos in the postwar years. The chromatic liveliness of the mosaics, which reflected the light emitted by various sources and which today still make Maiakovskaia one of the best-lit stations in the underground system, achieved its greatest intensity in the central areas portraying morning and afternoon scenes. Perhaps, for the first passengers, these really gave the impression of being close to the ground and the open sky.

From the outset, the Metro enjoyed great success. In the days following its inauguration, crowds ceaselessly thronged to admire the work. A life-size model based on the complete reconstruction of a module, from floor to ceiling, which, reflected by a pair of large mirrors, created the spatial effect of the thirty-five spans of the Muscovite original, was one of the main attractions in the Soviet Pavilion at the 1939 World’s Fair held in New York. The work was discussed in various articles in the specialized press, and even today certain passages, taken from those distant pages, make a perfect introduction for an emotional understanding of one of the indispensable chapters of Soviet artistic and design culture. In August 1938, in the authoritative pages of *Arkhitektura SSSR*, the central organ of the Architects’ Union, Sosferov described his own personal experience and anticipated the surprise of future visitors with words that still apply today. “Starting out from the small, modest entrance in the theatrical building on Mayakovsky Square, this station . . . consists in a short passage and a small ticket office directly linked, by escalator, to the underground part. The severe cladding of the grey marble walls and the total absence of clear and dazzling details prepare onlookers for their approach to the central part of the construction. The (well) known exiguity and suppression of size in the underground sections even better underscore the effect of extraordinary spatiality and levity that characterize the deep environment . . . The cadenced series of pilasters combined with wide arcades reveals the whole station to the eye . . . The sensation of freedom is even more pronounced thanks to the oval domes covering the succession of spans in the central area. Thanks to these, the emphatically lowered arches became even lighter



A. Dushkin, R. Sheinfain and E. Grinzaid  
Maiakovskaia station. Central Hall and view of the station from the train tunnel, and ceiling mosaic by Aleksandr Deineka, 1938 (GNIMA)

Aleksandr Deineka  
Ceiling mosaic at the entrance to Maiakovskaia station, 1938 (Casabella 679)

Aleksandr Deineka  
Sketch of mosaic for Maiakovskaia station. Gouache on paper, 76 x 52 cm. Family collection



still. The mosaic vaults, situated in the upper part of the domes, encourage the illusion of a perspectival 'trompe l'oeil' (*sfondato*).<sup>25</sup> A few months prior to the appearance of this magazine, offering a first-hand report in *Iskusstvo*, Deineka had written, in an article titled "Artists in the Metro": "Descend into the underground, citizen, and raise your head! You will see a brightly illuminated sky, in mosaic; and if you forget that above the dome lies a stratum of Moscow earth forty meters thick, and you feel bright and easy in that underground palace, as a powerful stream of cool air, cleansed of dust, envelops your face, then the architect and the artist have accomplished their task."<sup>26</sup>

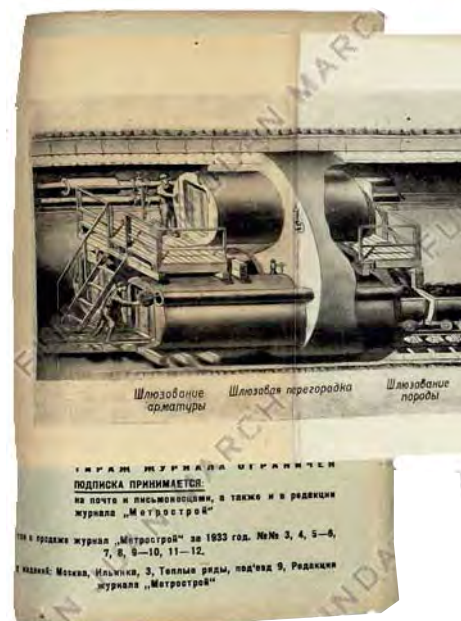
This essay was originally published in Italian, in a slightly different form, in *Aleksandr Deineka. Il maestro sovietico della modernità*, exh. cat. Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (Rome: Skira, 2011).

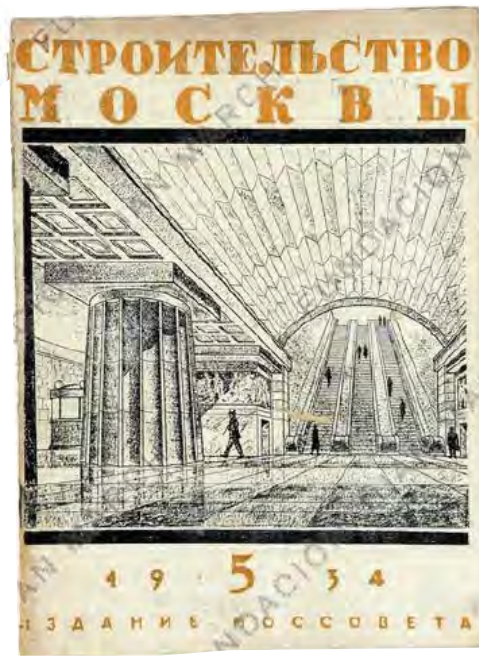
1. See, among others, the feature "Arkhitektura, zhivopis', skulptura" (Architecture, Painting, Sculpture), published in the journal *Arkhitektura SSSR*, and articles appearing in the magazine *Akademiia Arkhitektury*. For example, Mikhail V. Alpatov, "Problema sinteza v arkhitekture renessansa. Stancii Rafaelja" [The Problem of Synthesis in Renaissance Architecture. Raphael's Rooms/Stanze], *Akademiia Arkhitektury* 1–2 (1934): 19–22; Mikhail V. Alpatov, "Problema sinteza v isskustve Barokko" [The Problem of Synthesis in Baroque Art], *Akademiia Arkhitektury* 6 (1936): 3–11. Ivan Matsa et al., *Problemy Arkhitektury* [Problems of Architecture], vol. 1, t.1 (Moscow: Vsesoiuznaia Akademiia Arkhitektury [All-Union Academy of Architecture], 1936). A consideration of the experience of monumental painting is proposed by R. Kaufman, "Sovetskaia monumental'naia zhivopis'," *Arkhitektura SSSR* 7 (1939): 42–49.
2. In reality, such mosaics had been initially conceived for the Paveletskaya station: Josette Bouvard, *Le Métro de Moscou. La construction d'un mythe soviétique* (Paris: Éditions du Sextant, 2005), 236.
3. The Russian names of stations are in the feminine gender as they are adjectives that modify the feminine word for "station." While this station is named after Mayakovsky, it is referred to with the feminine variant of this name, Maiakovskaia [Trans.].
4. "Za luchshii metro v mire" [For the World's Best Metropolitan Railway], *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* 1 (1933): 12.
5. Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System. Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Andrea Graziosi, *L'URSS di Lenin e Stalin. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1914–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).
6. Loris Marcucci, *Il commissario di ferro di Stalin. Biografia politica di Lazar' M. Kaganovič* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997). Kaganovich's role in Moscow's "construction site" in the 1930s is described by Loris Marcucci, "Un politico e la costruzione del piano," in *URSS anni '30-'50. Paesaggi dell'utopia staliniana*, ed. Alessandro De Magistris (Milan: Mazzotta, 1997), 32–45; Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow. Governing The Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1995); Alessandro De Magistris, *La costruzione della città totalitaria* (Milan: Città Studi Edizioni, 1995); Harald Bodenschatz and Christiane Post, eds., *Städtebau im Schatten Stalins. Die internationale Suche nach der sozialistischen Stadt in der Sowjetunion 1929–1935* (Berlin: Braun, 2003).
7. Alessandro De Magistris, "La metropolitana di Mosca. Un laboratorio del realismo socialista," *Urbanistica* 100 (1990): 23–36; Alessandro De Magistris, "Mosca, la metropolitana rossa," *Casabella* 679, vol. 64 (June 2000): 8–29; Bouvard 2005 (see note 1 above). See also Dietmar Neutatz, "Arbeitschaft und Stalinismus am Beispiel der Moskauer Metro," in *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Neue Wege der Forschung*, ed. Manfred Hildermeier (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), 99–118; Dietmar Neutatz, *Die Moskauer Metro. Von den ersten Plänen bis zur Grossbaustelle des Stalinismus (1897–1935)* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2001).
8. Lazar M. Kaganovich, "Podeda metropolitana-podeda sotsializma" [The Victory of the Metropolitan is the Victory of Socialism], *Izvestiia* 117 (1935); *Metrostoi* 5/6: 4–9.
9. De Magistris 1995; Colton, 1995; De Magistris 1997; Bodenschatz and Post 2003 (for all, see note 7 above).
10. Nikolai Kolli and Samuil Kravets, eds., *Arkhitektura moskovskogo metro* [The Architecture of the Moscow Metropolitan] (Moscow: Izd-vo Vsesoiuznoi akademii arkhitektury, 1936).

11. Vladimir P. Sysoev, *Deineka. 1899–1969* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972).
12. Elena V. Shunkova, ed., *Masterskaia monumental'noi zhivopisi pri Akademii arkhitektury SSSR* [The Studio of Monumental Painting] (Moscow: Sovetskii Khudozhnik, 1978).
13. Alessandro De Magistris, "URSS. L'altra ricostruzione," *Rassegna* 54/2 (1993): 76–83; De Magistris 1997 (see note 7 above).
14. Bouvard 2005 (see note 1 above). On the figure of Ordzhonikidze, see Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *In Stalin's Shadow: The Career of "Sergo" Ordzhonikidze* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1995); Francesco Benvenuti, "A Stalinist Victim of Stalinism: 'Sergo' Ordzhonikidze," in *Soviet History, 1917–1953*, ed. Julian Cooper, Maureen Perrie, and E. A. Rees (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 135–57.
15. Kolli and Kravets 1936 (see note 1 above).
16. L. Brodskii, "Osveshchenie stantsii metro" [Station Lighting in the Metropolitan], *Arkhitektura SSSR* 9 (1938): 11–17.
17. From Greek *krypte* (underground chamber or vault) and Latin *porticus* (from *porta*, door), in ancient Roman architecture a semi-subterranean vaulted corridor that supports portico structures above ground [Ed.].
18. Vitalii Lavrov, "Arkhitektura moskovskogo metropolitana. Dve ocheredi metro" [The Architecture of the Moscow Metropolitan. Two Stretches of Railway], *Arkhitektura SSSR* 9 (1938): 2–5.
19. Bouvard 2005 (see note 1 above).
20. Natalia O. Dushkina and Irina V. Chepkunova, eds., *Aleksei Nikolaevich Dushkin. Arkhitektura 1930–1950* (Moscow: A-Fond, 2004).
21. Aleksei N. Dushkin, *Iz neopublikovannoi knigi o tvorchestvo deiatel'nosti. 1976–1977* (from the unpublished book on Creative Activity, 1976–1977), in Dushkina and Chepkunova 2004 (see note 20 above), 168–72.
22. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Vladimir Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
23. Dushkina and Chepkunova 2004 (see note 20 above).
24. Alessandro De Magistris and Irina Korob'ina, eds., *Ivan Leonidov 1902–1959* (Milan: Electa, 2009).
25. I. Sosferov, "Stantsii metro Gor'kovskogo radiusa" [Metro Stations. The Gorky Line], *Arkhitektura SSSR* 8 (1938): 25–39.
26. Aleksandr Deineka, "Khudozniki v metro" [Artists in the Metro], *Iskusstvo* 6 (1938): 75–80, quoted here from Egor Larichev, "Deineka in the Metro," *SoloMosaico* (2010): 104–5, <http://www.solo-mosaico.org/larichev.pdf>.



187. Viktor Deni (Denisov) and Nikolai Dolgorukov  
*Est' metro!* [The Metro is Here!], 1935  
 Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 99.1 x 69.7 cm  
 Text, top left: Hail our great Stalin  
 Text, top right: "There are no fortresses that the Bolsheviks cannot take." Stalin  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
 Print run: 10,000. Price: 60 kopeks  
 Collection Merrill C. Berman



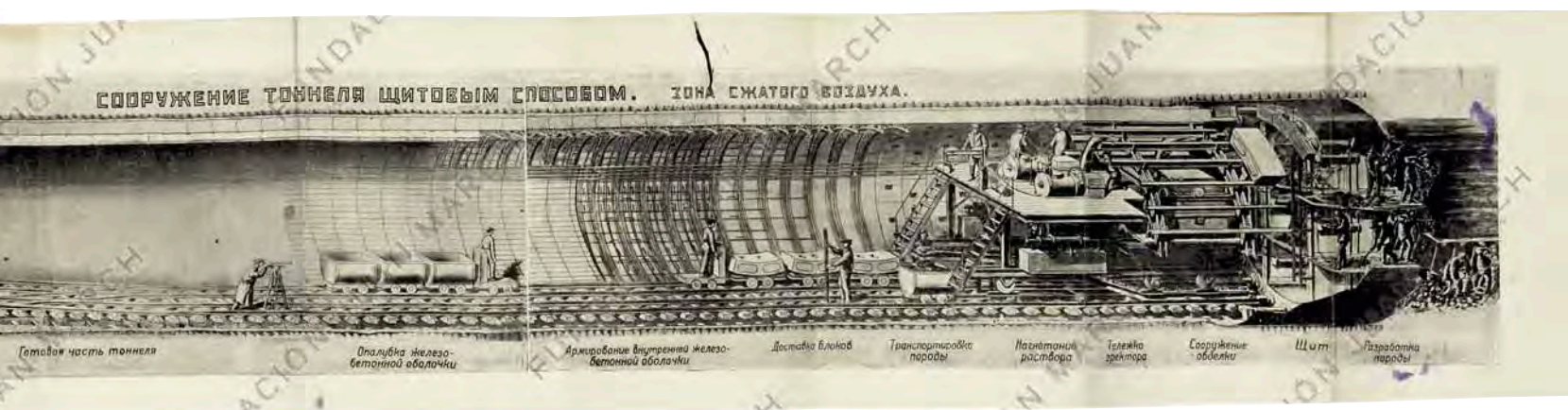


**184.** *Stroitel'stvo Moskvi*  
[The Construction of Moscow]  
no. 10-11, 1933. Magazine  
Letterpress, 30 x 22 cm  
Mossovet, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia

**186.** *Stroitel'stvo Moskvi*  
[The Construction of Moscow]  
no. 5, 1934. Magazine  
Letterpress, 30 x 22 cm  
Mossovet, Moscow  
Cover image: Krasnye Vorota  
metro station, architect I. Golosov  
Archivo España-Rusia



**185.** V. P. Volkov  
*Tunnelnyi shchit i rabota s nim*  
[The Tunnel Shield and Work  
with It], 1934. Book  
Letterpress, 22 x 16.5 cm  
Metrostroj, Moscow  
Archivo España-Rusia  
185b. Fold-out spread



188. General'nyi plan rekonstruktsii goroda Moskvi [General Plan for the Reconstruction of the City of Moscow] 1936. Book. Letterpress, 26.7 x 20 cm Izdatel'stvo Moskovski Rabochi, Moscow Fundaci3n Jos3 Maria Castañ3 188b. Fold-out with underground map



# Underground as Utopia

## Boris Groys

Utopia requires a certain physical isolation to protect its every carefully conceived and constructed detail from potential corruption by the rest of the imperfect world. It is no coincidence that reports of utopia invariably take the form of a travel description in which an individual has to undertake a difficult or fraught journey, in space or time, often involving some kind of sacrifice, only to discover, usually by chance, a utopian world on some island, some concealed high mountain plateau, another planet or another time. As a rule, when the traveler eventually leaves this utopian world, there is no going back. Something invariably happens to make it irrevocably inaccessible: an avalanche in the mountains, a shipwreck in which old sea charts are lost, or a fire in which the time machine explodes. And so, the first rule for anyone seeking to construct a utopia is to find some remote place where everything can actually be created anew according to a cohesive plan.

That, however, is no easy task. For the construction of a utopian world requires people, materials and certain infrastructure; a true desert or wilderness is ill suited to the purpose. On the other hand, if utopia is created in the midst of an inhabited area, it automatically and almost imperceptibly adapts to the existing living conditions. A piece of earth already developed for living makes things a little too easy for the creator of a utopia: by starting life there before the future emerges and the utopia is complete, the utopian dream will never come to fruition. That is why the proper strategy to build a utopia is to find an uninhabited, and preferably uninhabitable *ou-topos*, or non-place, in the midst of an inhabited world. This combines all the advantages of the topical and the utopian: the infrastructure required for its construction already exists, but cannot be deployed, leaving no other option but endless construction. Indeed, the construction period for a utopia must be infinite, for no finite period of time can suffice to weigh up all the details with

the requisite care. It should be borne in mind that since any utopia is built for eternity, its construction must needs take no less than an eternity.



The first attempt to build a utopian city in Russia was undertaken by Peter the Great in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. A pre-eminently suitable non-place was determined: the site chosen for the city of Saint Petersburg was a marsh. This marshland proved to be the perfect soil on which to nurture Western civilization in Russia. A more solid fundament would surely have tempted the Russians to indulge in a firmly grounded ideology. After all, when each attempt to gain a foothold inevitably ends with sinking into the swamp, the situation that creates is quite a different one. Here, the choice is between utopian survival and topical, place-bound, homeland-rooted demise. Indeed, thousands met their deaths in the swamps of Saint Petersburg. Those who survived, however, became impervious to all anti-utopian dreams of solid ground beneath their feet and set about building the real utopia on the only land available to them—the marshland.

Admittedly, Saint Petersburg was not entirely utopian. As the name itself suggests, all that Peter wanted to do was to transport Rome—the city of Saint Peter—to the banks of the Neva in order to replace, or rather continue, the Roman Empire through the Russian Empire. When the Soviet government ended the Petrine era of Russian statehood in the wake of the October Revolution and moved from Petrograd<sup>1</sup> to Moscow, the task it faced was more difficult by far: the creation of a utopian city that had no precedent in history, for there had never before been a communist city. The marshlands were no foundation for such a utopia, for even a marsh is still part of the surface of the earth. Ideally, the new city would take the form of a heavenly Moscow hovering over the old city of Moscow—as a meta-level of historical reflection.



With this in mind, some Soviet artists and architects actually began drawing up plans for the construction of Moscow as a city in the air. Kazimir Malevich proposed designing and building “planks” on which the people—now known as “earthlings”—could move around freely in all directions above the earth. Ideally, individual earthlings would have their own little



spaceships of simple suprematist design, and could choose their respective partners freely. Somewhat less radical projects of the 1920s, proposed by El Lissitzky and others, envisaged buildings standing on massive stilts high above the historical city. The people who lived there would fly from house to house in airplanes, but would spend the rest of the time in static accommodation, albeit beyond the reach of everyday Moscow life.

Another, less drastic variation on the theme of the desired social utopia involved avoiding any concrete *topos* by constantly changing location. The poet Velimir Khlebnikov had already previously proposed that every urban citizen should have a mobile dwelling made of glass which could migrate freely in all directions on the surface of the earth. That would solve the problem of finding a site for the planned *ou-topos*: the location of such a dwelling would be a non-place.

In the late 1920s, these ideas merged in a program of “disurbanism,” formulated by the renowned Soviet architect Mikhail Okhitovich, which found wide approval among progressive Soviet architectural circles. According to this program, Moscow, followed by other cities, was to be de-urbanized. Each individual would receive an apartment in which it would be possible to travel from place to place. Anyone wishing to spend a lengthy period of time in one place could dock his or her apartment into a block made up entirely of such mobile dwellings.

These projects never came to fruition. Their authors were persecuted under Stalin’s regime, some of them arrested and even executed. Nevertheless, the basic question of how to construct a utopia remained a topical issue in the Stalin era. In the end, the utopian city of Moscow was indeed built. Only after its completion did it become clear where the conceptual errors of the earlier projects lay: all of the avant-garde projects had lacked depth—whereby the word “depth” is to be taken quite literally.

The utopian projects of the 1920s focused either on the surface of the earth or the skies above. They ignored the depths of the underground or the inner earth. In other words, they looked at heaven and earth, but thought not of hell—the infernal realm of the underworld. The early avant-garde did not think dialectically enough and overlooked the possibility that a totally utopian project should also include the underworld in order to avoid being one-sided and, with that, too topical or place-bound. It was the Stalinist era that led heaven into hell and made the synthesis possible. The product of that synthesis is

the true utopian city of Moscow, the underground Moscow: the Moscow Metropolitan, that is, its famous Metro.

● The *topos* of the underground railway is certainly an *ou-topos*. People do not normally live beneath ground. For a place such as this to become inhabitable it has to be developed and formed. It is a space where there is no place for anything inherited, established, traditional, self-evident or unplanned. It is a place where people are entirely dependent on the will of those who have created the place. That gives the underground railway designer the opportunity of shaping the entire life of each individual as soon as he or she enters the system. It is particularly important that the entrances and exits linking the underground space to the conventional human environment are easily controlled: the only way to enter the underground system is to use the pre-determined gateways. Ordinary city-dwellers can barely even fathom how the underground railway tunnels run beneath the ground. The *ou-topos* of the underground remains hidden to them. The path to utopia can be cut off at any moment, the connections barred, the tunnels filled in. Although the underground railway is part and parcel of urban reality, it remains a phantasma that can only be imagined, but not fully grasped.

People in the cities of the Western world, of course, do not perceive the underground railway as a utopian space, but merely as a technical convenience. But the Moscow Metro of the Stalin era functioned in an entirely different way—and traces of its other, utopian function are still discernible today. The Moscow Metro of the Stalin era was not primarily a means of transport, but the design for a real city of the communist future. The sumptuously palatial magnificence of the Stalin-era metro stations can only be explained in terms of their peculiar function of mediating between the realms of the heavens and the underworld. No other building works of this time come anywhere close to the opulence of the metro stations. They are the most eloquent expression of the Stalin era.

The symbolic function of the Moscow Metro was expressly reflected in the culture of the Stalin era. The first metro line, and the one that set the standard, was opened in 1935. One year before that, the Soviet leaders had disbanded all existing artists’ organizations and had created a uniform system of administration for the arts. Socialist realism was declared the only permissible approach in every genre. However,

this approach was promoted in a purely ideological way—such as “showing the revolutionary development of life” or being “socialist in content and nationalist in form.” Translating this somewhat abstract demand into artistic practice was to be enabled by presenting certain artworks as role models. The Moscow Metro took on this role of universal model for the entire field of visual art. Admittedly, the metro stations could not show “the revolutionary development of life” any more than they could be “nationalist” or specifically “socialist.” But they did demonstrate to all what was meant by that: the impossible could be achieved, and something could be constructed out of nothing.

● The construction of the Metro was placed under the direct supervision of Lazar Kaganovich, one of the most powerful members of the Stalinist regime. Stalin himself, of course, had the last word. However, there are many witnesses to the fact that the architecture of the first metro stations, at least, was based on proposals drawn up by Kaganovich himself. In other instances, he reworked existing designs so completely that there was no trace left of their original form. The artistic individuality of the architects barely played a role at all—only their technical skills were required. The Stalinist leadership wanted the design of the metro stations to express its own collective taste, its own collective vision of the future. In this sense, too, the Metro is utopian—it was the work of cultural outsiders, of non-specialists, of non-artists, people who had no place in the conventional realm of culture and who could therefore find the opportunity of cultural “self-expression” only underground.

Accordingly, no expense was spared on the Metro: only the costliest, the finest and the most imposing would suffice. At the same time, the construction of the Moscow Metro was touted propagandistically as the prestige project *par excellence*. The so-called *metrostroevets*, that is, the workers involved in the construction of the Metro, became heroes of the new culture. Poems, novels and plays were written about the Metro and its builders. Films were made about them. Their progress was constantly reported in every newspaper throughout the land. Delegations of Metro builders were invited to all important political events. Honors and medals were bestowed on them. The Metro was ubiquitous in Stalinist culture, becoming the foremost metaphor of its civilization. Its role in society was to tangibly embody the utopian project of building a communist state.

Of course, it could be said that, in purely artistic terms, the Moscow Metro was not utopian at all, given that the artistic design of the stations was teeming with historical reminiscences. This is a criticism often leveled at Stalinist architecture: that it is too historical, too eclectic, that its break with the past is not radical enough, which is why it is not really utopian. This criticism, however, reveals the same misunderstanding of utopia that prevailed in the spatial concepts of the avant-garde, which took into account only the earth's surface and the heavens, but not the underground. Such spatially limited utopias cannot be truly utopian; they are instead topical—that is to say, they have a place in the sense that they exclude other spatial areas. The same is true in terms of time. The utopias of the avant-garde are not utopian for the simple reason that they have a place, or *topos*, in time—that is to say, the present and the future. Any utopia that delves deeper into the dimension of time incorporates the past. In that respect, it no longer has a specific place in time, and is therefore elevated above the concept of time.

The Moscow Metro stations evoke the image of a past that never existed, a utopian past. Some resemble the temples of Greco-Roman antiquity, some the magnificent palaces of old Russia at the time of the Russian Empire or the heyday of Russian baroque, and still others the exquisite architecture of the Islamic East. Everywhere there is marble, gold, silver and other precious materials that are associated with a past age of splendor. In the midst of all this grandeur there are countless frescoes, sculptures, mosaics and stained-glass panels that evoke an almost religious atmosphere. Yet these fine arts were not used to portray the heroes of classical Antiquity or Russian history, but for the most part Stalin and his inner circle, along with workers and peasants, revolutionaries and soldiers of the Soviet era. In this way, the entire past was appropriated by the utopian present. In the Moscow Metro, all traditional artistic styles were severed from their historic ties and used anew. The past was thus no longer distinct from the present and future—throughout the depths of time, down the centuries to Antiquity, all that could be seen was Stalin, Soviet flags and a people gazing optimistically toward the future.

● Stranger and more complex still is the relationship between people and architecture. A temple is a place of quiet contemplation. A palace, too, is a place to linger: to sit in a room, take it all in, have a long and

spirited conversation with the owner. Nothing like that happens in the Metro. At almost any given time, it is full of people constantly on the move in all directions. In such a throng, there is neither time nor opportunity to contemplate the magnificence of its architecture. Instead, the individual is swept along by the crowd, and prevented from lingering. Most are tired, stressed, rushed. They just want to get in there and out again. The trains arrive quickly, in rapid succession. And because the Metro is quite far beneath ground level, much time is spent on the escalators—without any opportunity of looking around.

These constantly teeming masses of people on the move seem to have no need of the splendor that the Metro offers them. They are neither willing nor able to enjoy the art, fully appreciate the precious materials or adequately decipher the ideological symbolism. Silent, unseeing and indifferent, the masses hurry past these countless treasures of art.

Indeed, the Metro is no paradise of quiet contemplation, but an infernal underworld in constant roiling motion. As such, it is the heir to the utopia of the Russian avant-garde, which was also a utopia of ceaseless movement. In the Moscow Metro, the dream of Malevich, Khlebnikov and the “Disurbanists” lives on: the dream of a utopia which has no fixed place, no *topos* on earth, but is always on the move. But now this dream has a fitting place for its realization: underground.

Right from the start, the dialectical materialist utopia of Russian communism had never been a classic, contemplative utopia as in earlier, more tranquil days. The dialectical citizen was supposed to keep moving, keep achieving, keep progressing, reaching ever greater heights—not just ideally, but also materially. That is why the underground utopian city of communism is a place of perpetual motion, forever arriving and leaving. The images in the Moscow Metro are not intended to be looked at, understood or admired. Instead, it is the images themselves that observe the teeming masses of passers-by. Stalin and the other guardians of this utopian underworld constantly watch over and judge the behavior of the people as they pass. And the people in the Metro constantly sense this watchful, judgmental gaze. Today, all the gods have fallen, but in earlier times—even until fairly recently—it was possible to see how Muscovites began behaving completely differently the moment they entered the hallowed halls of the Metro. Suddenly, every conversation was held in hushed tones, there was no more spitting on the ground or dropping litter. People “behaved culturally,” as the saying

went then. They were, after all, being watched. They were in utopia and could find no place in which to act “naturally” rather than “culturally.”

There is yet another aspect that links the Metro directly with the utopia of the avant-garde: daylight replaced by artificial lighting. The struggle against the sun and against the moon for the supremacy of artificial, electric light is perhaps the oldest theme of Russian futurism. It is no coincidence that the iconic work of the Russian avant-garde bears the title *Victory over the Sun* (an opera by Aleksei Kruchenykh, Kazimir Malevich and Mikhail Matiushin, 1913). Overcoming the sun was seen by the futurists as the ultimate defeat of the old order. The light of reason—be it a divine light or a human, natural light—was to be extinguished, because such a light determines the entire *topos* of our world. Instead, a new, man-made, utopian light was to shine, creating a whole new world.

This grand theme is foreshadowed in Lenin's famous saying that “communism is socialism plus electricity.” Electrification of the entire country meant “victory over the sun”—and, with that, creating a new utopia unconstrained by the cycle of day and night. The night lit up by electricity is the only possible utopian time, the true daytime of utopia (imperfectly portrayed by the “bright nights” of Saint Petersburg). The Moscow Metro is the logical embodiment of this eternal, electrified Moscow night.

● Today, the utopian communist synthesis of heaven and earth has crumbled. The demonic traits of the Metro have become more visible than the heavenly ones. In earlier times, it was rumored that there was an invisible Metro concealed behind the visible one—a mysterious network of underground connections that even included an underground Kremlin to be used by the Soviet leadership in times of war. The people above ground lived in fear of the underground city. They sensed the possibility of sabotage, the power of dark forces. Today, in Russian nationalist circles, it is said that on closer inspection, the layout of the Moscow Metro can be seen to form a six-pointed Star of David, signifying the dominion of the Jews over the Russian capital. This theory is allegedly supported by the historical fact that the person in charge of planning the Moscow Metro was, as already mentioned, Lazar Kaganovich, and that it was known in the Stalin era as the “Kaganovich Metro”; Kaganovich, however, was the only Jew in the inner circle of the Stalinist leadership. Given the overall symbolism

of the Metro, it is very fitting indeed that the project was overseen by a Jew—Stalin’s anti-Semitism, after all, was never a secret. And so, on the one hand, his appointment is reminiscent of the role allotted to the Jews in Egypt, while on the other hand, it represents a dialectical, utopian synthesis of expulsion and paradise-building. Above all, however, it refers to the ultimate prototype of all utopian cities: the heavenly Jerusalem that is a city built of stone, rather than a paradise of vegetation. It is also telling that the Metro features neither plants nor animals. Everything that might give any suggestion of the transience of life has been banished from the Metro—only the movement of the trains is eternal.

Fundamentalist Russian nationalism is focused, as it always has been—both in positive and negative terms—on the utopian dream of the Russian state. But what does the average Muscovite think of the Metro today? It seems it is no longer anything special. Many decades have passed since Stalin was in power. After his death, everything that stood as a reminder of his rule was removed, destroyed or fundamentally altered. The opulent Stalinist architecture was derided as undemocratic, unmodern and “ornamental.” Later metro station designs look simple, unpretentious and purely functional. The dark, metaphorical character of the Stalin-era Metro was lost. What is more, the new metro lines that run from the city center to the suburbs actually leave the subterranean realm and merge with the ordinary overground railway tracks. Such a blend of the utopian and the topical, of place and non-place, would have been unthinkable in Stalin’s day. It shatters the fundamental contradiction between the real and the imaginary—the utopian Moscow. Decades of post-totalitarian usage have rendered the Metro prosaic, banal and meaningless. Only a handful of Muscovites with an interest in history and its myths still seek the traces of their utopian past in the Metro. Some of them are young Moscow-based Sots-Art artists who like to use the halls of the Metro as a setting for their performances and, in doing so, refer to its all but forgotten symbolism.

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This essay was originally published in German as “U-Bahn als U-Topie” in *Kursbuch* 112 (Berlin, 1993): 1–9, and included with the same title in Boris Groys, *Die Erfindung Russlands* (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1995), 156–66. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publisher. It is impossible to translate into English the German play on words *U-Bahn* (‘underground’) – *U-topie* (‘utopia’ and also ‘underground place’) [Trans.].

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1. On August 31, 1914, with Russia’s entry into the war, Saint Petersburg was renamed Petrograd to remove the German cognate “burg” from the name of the city [Ed.].



The Novokuznetskaia Station

"Descend into the underground, citizen, and raise your head! You will see a brightly illuminated sky, in mosaic; and if you forget that above the dome lies a stratum of Moscow earth forty meters thick, and you feel bright and easy in that underground palace, as a powerful stream of cool air, cleansed of dust, envelops your face, then the architect and the artist have accomplished their task." (Aleksandr Deineka)



# **1936-53** **From Dream** **to Reality**





**190.** Nikolai Sidel'nikov  
*Vremia, energiia, volia*  
[Time, Energy, Will], ca. 1930  
Collage: gouache, letterpress, ink  
33.2 x 25.1 cm  
Private collection

**189.** *Spartakiada URSS*, 1928  
Book. Letterpress, 30.4 x 23.2 cm  
Izdatel'stvo Pravda, Moscow  
Fundación José María Castañé  
189b and 189c. Cover and back cover



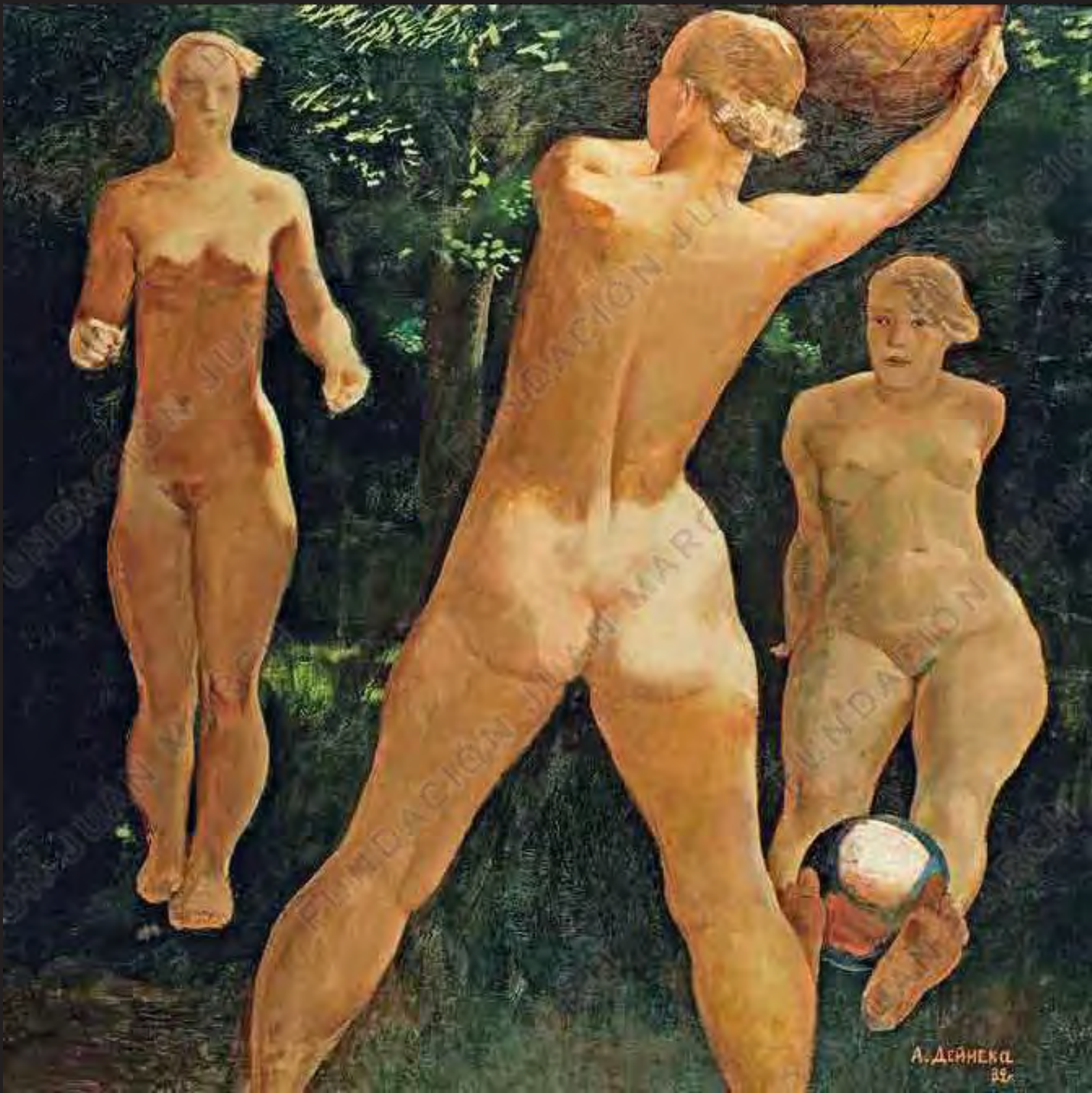


**191.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Kolkhoznik, bud fizkulturnikom!*  
[Collective Farmer, Be a Physical  
Culturist!], 1930. Sketch for poster  
Paper on cardboard, color pencil,  
watercolor, pastel, 71.5 x 160 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. RS-5204

**192.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Beg (Zhenskii kross)*  
[The Race (Women's Cross-  
Country)], 1931  
Oil on canvas, 176 x 177.4 cm  
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e  
Contemporanea, Rome, Inv. 310  
By permission of the Ministero  
per i Beni e le Attività Culturali





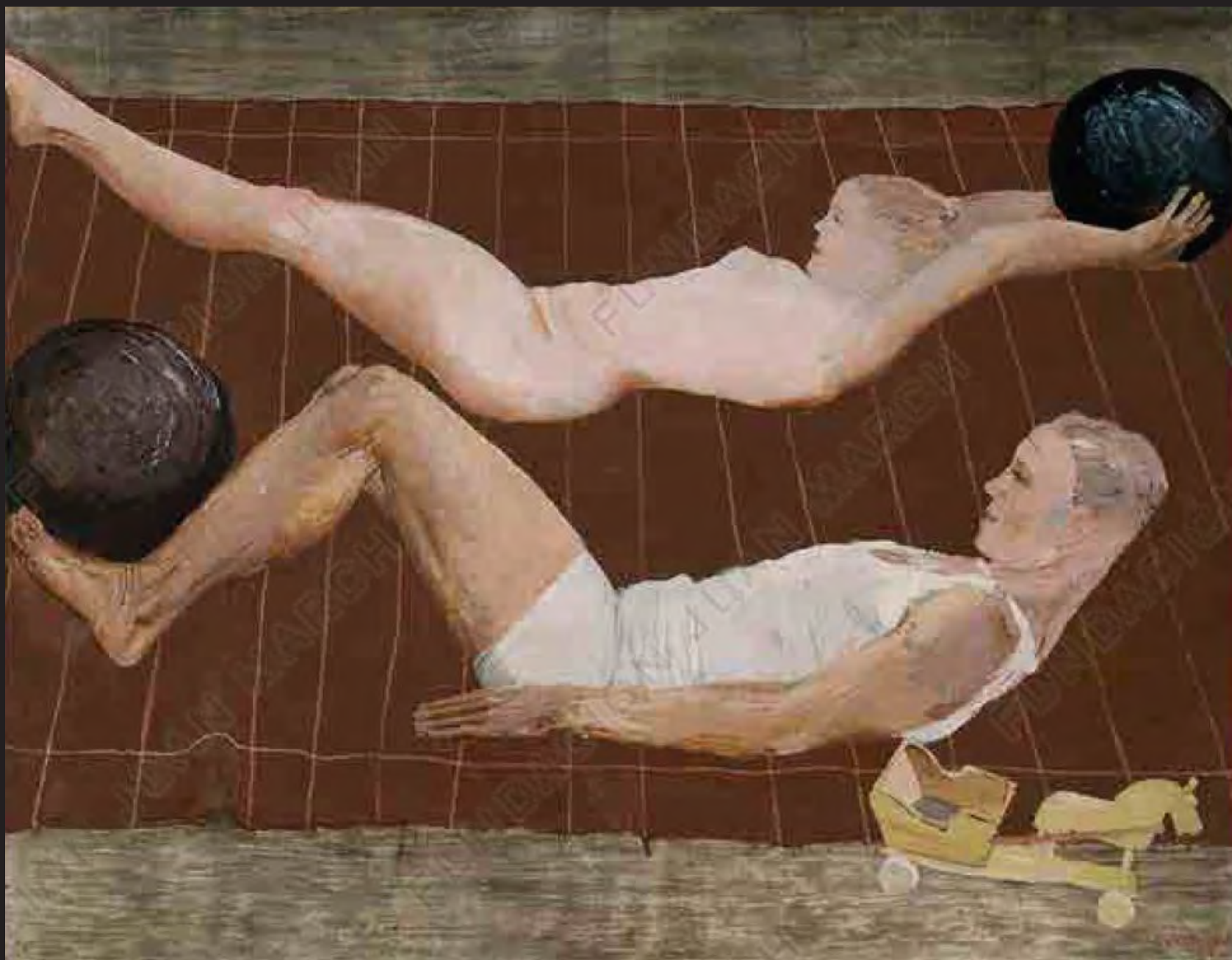


**194.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Igra v miach* [Ball Game], 1932  
Oil on canvas, 124.5 x 124.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. 22537

**193.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Lyzhniki* [Skiers], 1931  
Oil on canvas, 100 x 124 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-899



**195.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Utrenniaia zariadka*  
[Morning Exercises], 1932  
Oil on canvas, 91 x 116.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-881



**197.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Rabotat', stroit' i ne nyt'!*  
[Work, Build and Don't Whine!], 1933  
Poster. Lithography, 96.5 x 71.1 cm  
Text: Work, build and don't whine!  
The path to the new life  
has been shown to us.  
You don't have to be  
an athlete,  
But you must be  
a physical culturist  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 30,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman







**196.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Beg [The Race]*, 1932–33  
Oil on canvas, 229 x 259 cm  
State Russian Museum  
Saint Petersburg, Inv. ZH-7741

**198.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Swimmer*, ca. 1934  
Oil on canvas, 66 x 91 cm  
Private collection





**199.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Vratar'* [The Goalkeeper], 1934  
Oil on canvas, 119 x 352 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-915







**200.** Radio gym tables of the V. V. Nabokov method, 1937  
Cards. Letterpress, 11.5 x 15 cm  
Archivo España-Rusia

**201.** Nikolai Troshin  
*SSSR na stroike* [USSR in Construction], no. 7–8, 1934  
Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
Fundación José María Castañé

**202.** Official Soviet sports cups  
(*Kubok*), late 1940  
Enameled brass, 35 x 11 x 11 cm  
Archivo España-Rusia

**203.** El Lissitzky  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in  
Construction], no. 4-5, April-May 1936  
Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
Collection MJM, Madrid



**204.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Lyzhniki* [Skiers], 1950  
Mosaic, 70 x 100 cm  
Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
Inv. ZH-1295



**205.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Postroim moshchnyi sovetskii dirizhabl' "Klim Voroshilov"*  
[We will Build the Powerful Soviet Dirigible "Klim Voroshilov"], 1930  
Poster. Lithography, 109 x 77.3 cm  
Text: The dirigible is a powerful weapon of defense and cultural construction. We need to overtake and surpass the capitalist countries in the area of dirigible construction. Each worker should take an active part in the realization of this great matter. For the 50th birthday of the leader of the Red Army, the steel-hardened Bolshevik-Leninist K. E. Voroshilov, we will build a powerful soviet dirigible in his name. Contributions to the fund for the construction of the dirigible may be made at all savings banks of the Union. The current account of the dirigible "Klim Voroshilov" is no. 9327 in the Moscow Provincial office of the State Bank. IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 50,000  
Collection Merrill C. Berman



**209. Iurii Pimenov**

Cover of *Krasnaia niva*  
[Red Field], no. 18, 1935  
Magazine. Lithography, 30.4 x 22.8 cm  
Izvestiia, Moscow  
Text at bottom: Iu. Pimenov, Airplanes  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**207. Aleksandr Deineka**

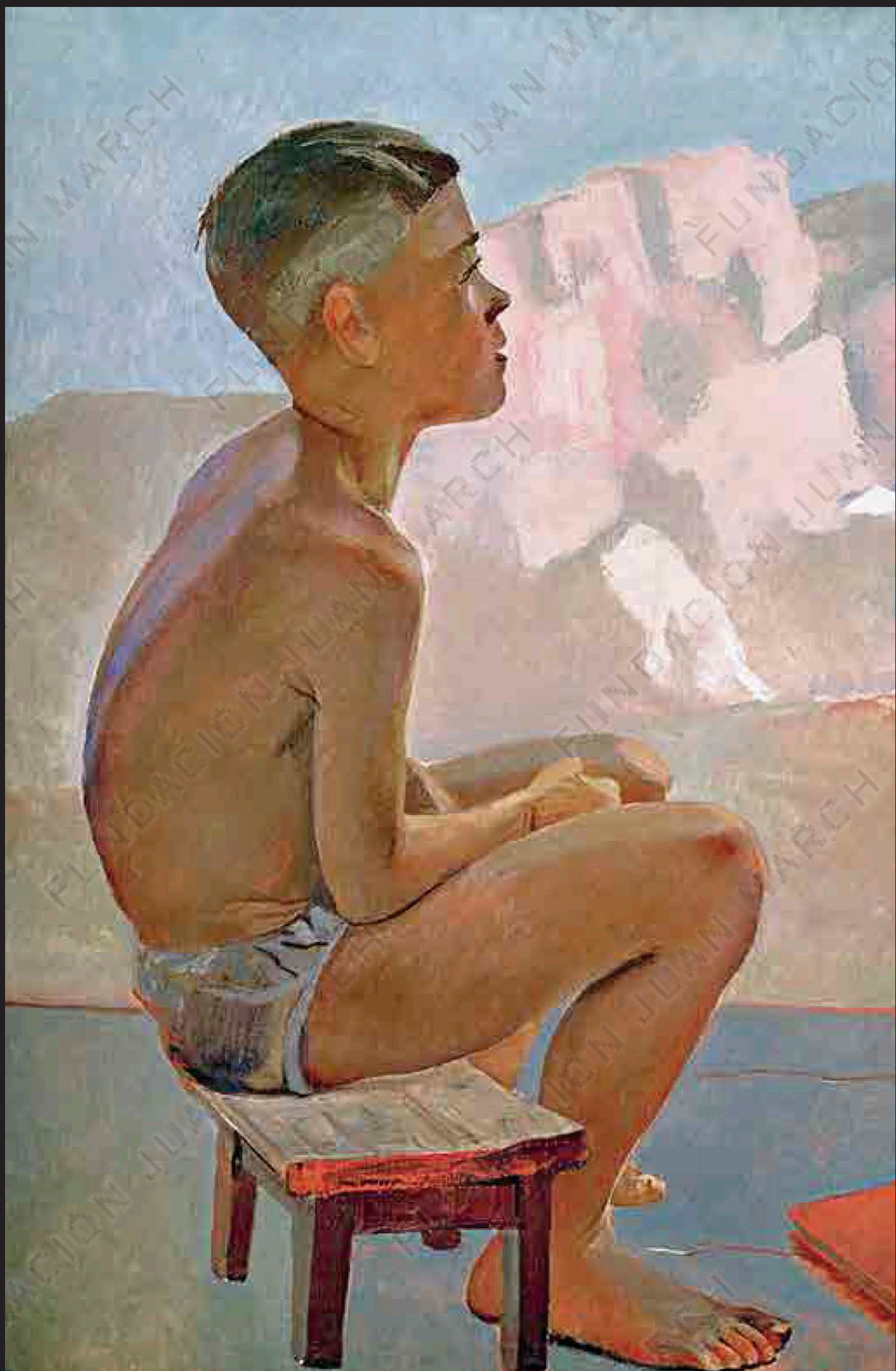
*V vozdukhe* [In the Air], 1932  
Oil on canvas, 80.5 x 101 cm  
Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
Inv. ZH-1406







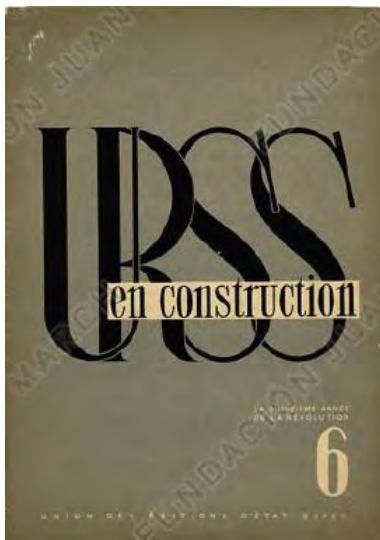
**208.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Pioner* [The Pioneer], 1934  
Oil on canvas, 90 x 100 cm  
Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery  
Inv. ZH-203





**206.** Elena Semenova  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 6, 1932  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Fundación José María Castañé

**210.** Nikolai Troshin  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 1, January 1935  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid





**214.** Nikolai Troshin

*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 9, September 1934 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
Collection MJM, Madrid

**211.** *Samolet* [Airplane], no. 4, 1938 Magazine. Letterpress, 26.5 x 20.5 cm  
OSOVIAKHIM, Moscow  
Aviation magazine of the Central Council of OSOVIAKHIM  
[Society for Facilitating Defense, Aviation and Chemical Construction]  
Archivo España-Rusia





**212.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Na balkone* [On the Balcony], 1931  
Oil on canvas, 99.5 x 105.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-4946

**213.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Sel'skii peizazh s korovami*  
[Country Landscape with Cows], 1933  
Oil on canvas, 131 x 151 cm  
Part of the Dry Leaves series  
State Russian Museum  
Saint Petersburg, Inv. ZH-8713



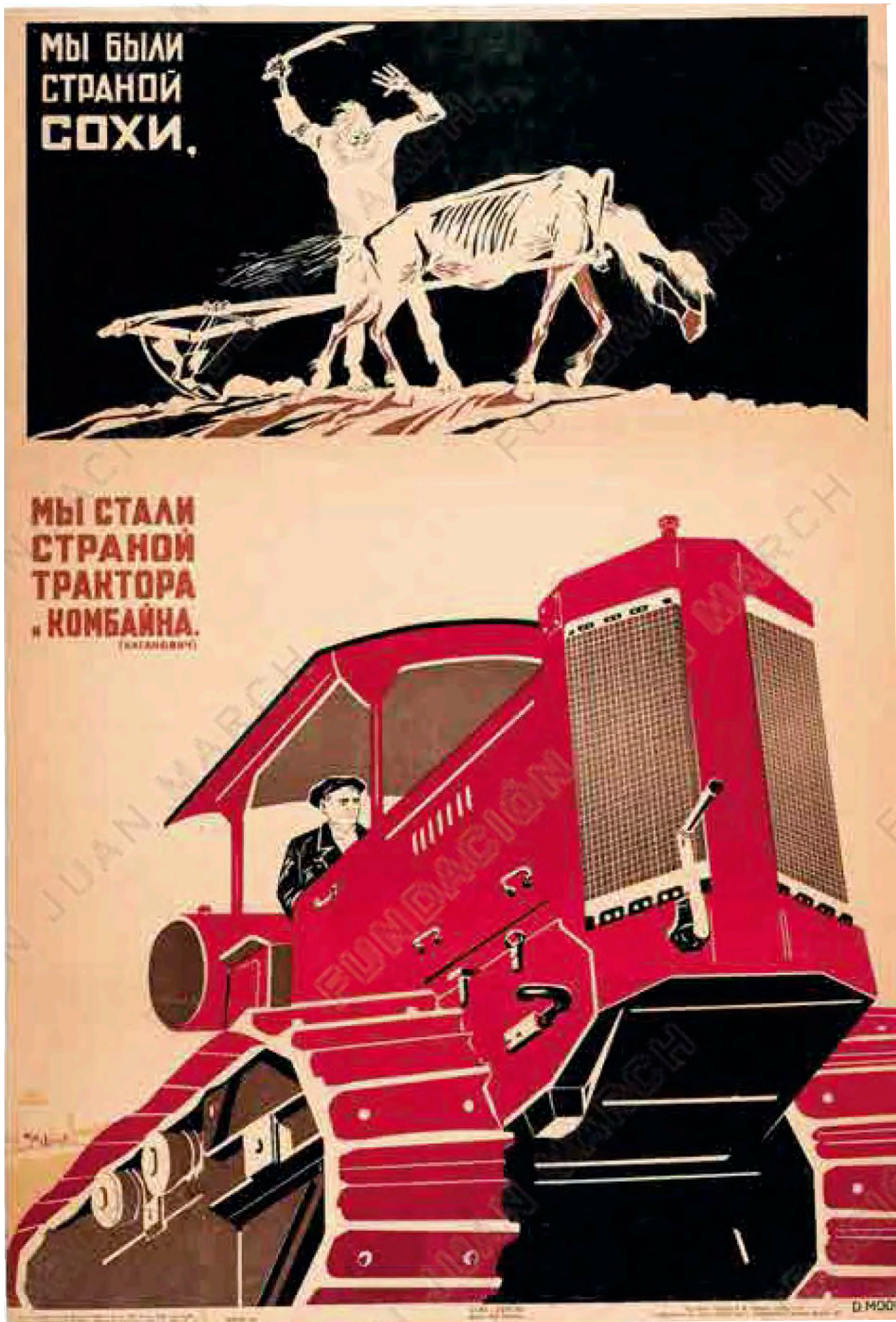
215. El Lissitzky  
 Illustrations for *Rabochaia  
 Krestianskaia Krasnaia Armiia*  
 [Workers and Peasants Red Army], 1934  
 Book. Letterpress, 30.7 x 36 cm  
 IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 Fundación José María Castañé



**216.** Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers  
and El Lissitzky  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in  
Construction], no. 2, February 1934  
Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ  
French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
Collection MJM, Madrid







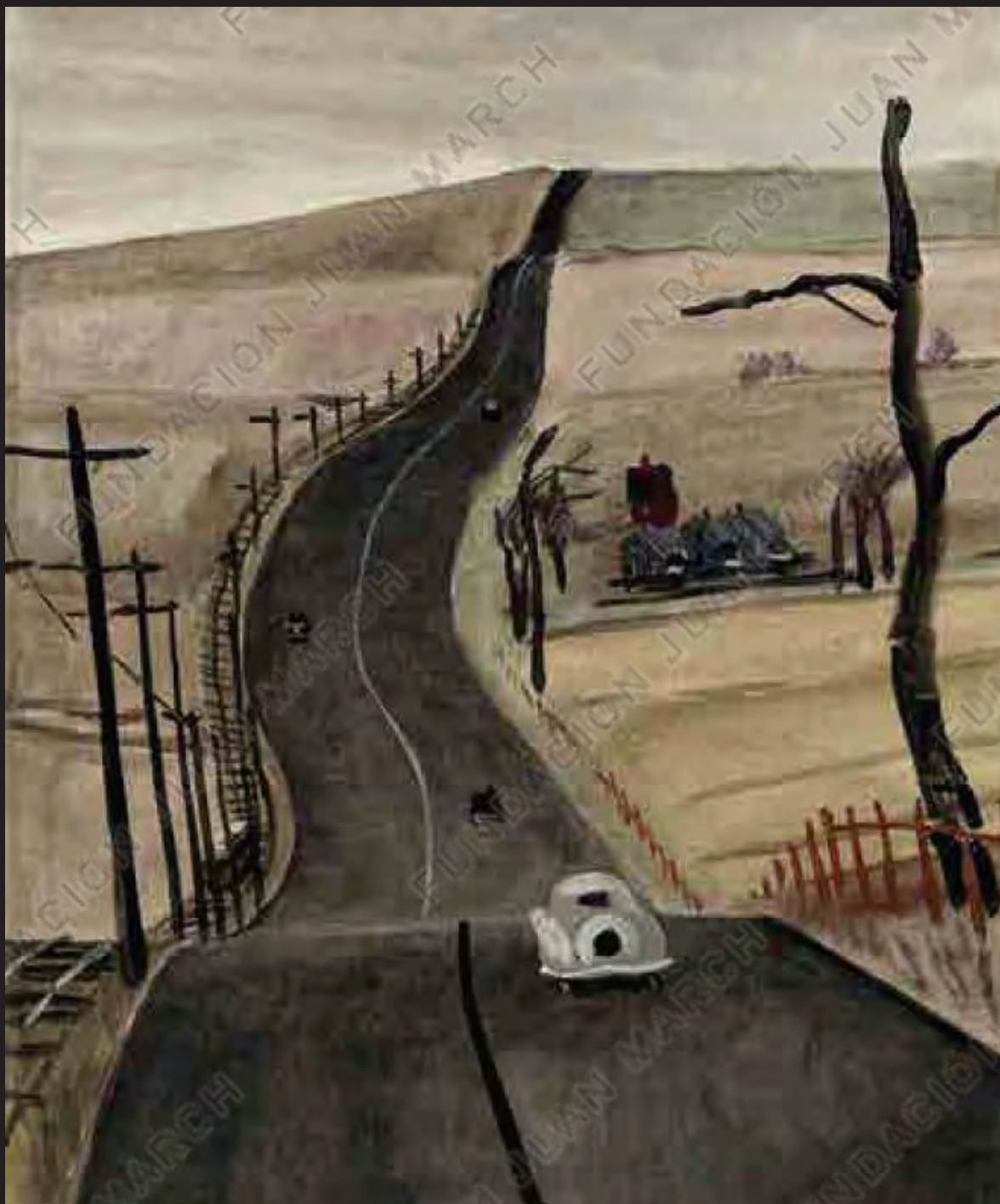
**218. Dmitrii Moor**  
*My byli stranoi sokhi. My stali stranoi traktora i kombaina. (Kaganovich)*  
[We Were a Country of Wooden Ploughs. We Have Become a Country of Tractors and Combines (Kaganovich)], 1934  
Poster. Lithography, 87.6 x 60 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad  
Print run: 40,000. Price: 60 kopeks  
Collection Merrill C. Berman

**217. Rezoliutsii po dokladam Molotova i Kuibysheva** [Resolutions to the Reports of Molotov and Kuibyshev], 1934  
 3 volumes. Letterpress, 11.6 x 5.3 cm  
 216b. Text, inside cover:  
 "Only our party knows how to direct affairs and is directing them successfully. To what is owed this advantage? That it is the Marxist party, the Leninist party. It is owed to its being led by the teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin in its work." Stalin  
 216c. Text, inside back cover:  
 "Now all recognize that our successes are great and exceptional. In a comparatively brief time, the country has been switched onto the rails of industrialization and collectivization. The First Five-Year Plan has been successfully realized . . . Before us stands the Second Five-Year Plan, which must also be fulfilled with the same success." Stalin  
 (Report on the Second Five-Year Plan presented at the 17th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (VKP[b]))  
 Fundación José María Castañé



**219. Budenovka military cap** (named after marshal Semen Budennyi)  
 Second model, 1922  
 Wool, cotton fabric, leather, enameled brass badge, 20 x 31 x 12 cm  
 Archivo España-Rusia  
 219b. Detail of the hammer and plough inside the red star





**220.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*The Highway (Mount Vernon)*, ca. 1934  
Oil on canvas, 55 x 47 cm  
Private collection

**221.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Vashington. Kapitoli*  
[Washington: The Capitol], 1935  
Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 76 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-884

**222.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Filadelfiia* [Philadelphia], 1935  
Oil on canvas, 49 x 73 cm  
State Russian Museum  
Saint Petersburg, Inv. ZHS-622

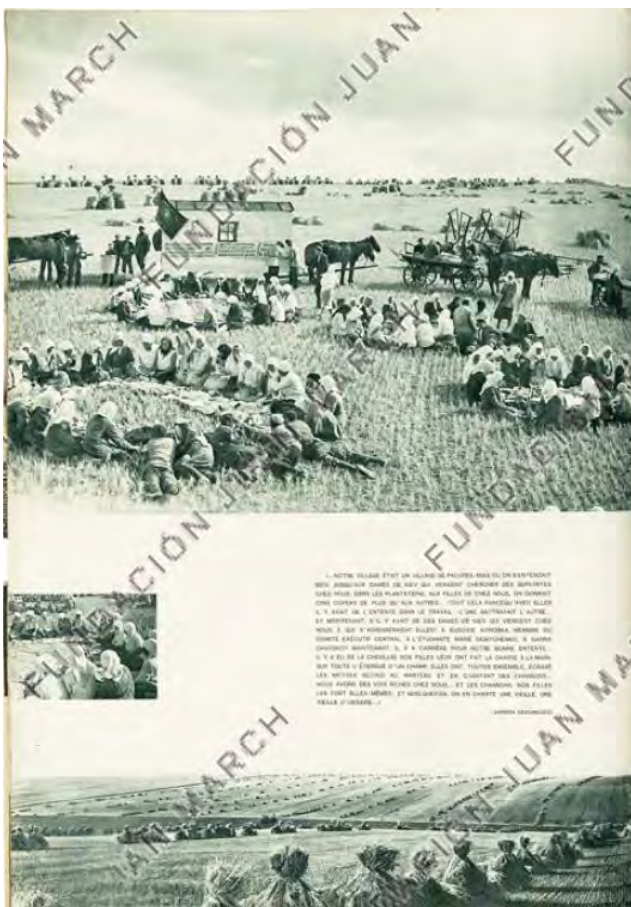


**223.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Beseda kolkhoznoj brigady*  
[Conversation of the Collective  
Farm Brigade], 1934  
Oil on canvas, 128 x 176 cm  
Sketch for panel at Narkomzem  
(Commissariat of Agriculture)  
State Russian Museum  
Saint Petersburg, Inv. ZH-4436





**224.** Vladimir Favorovskii  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 3, March 1936 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
Collection MJM, Madrid







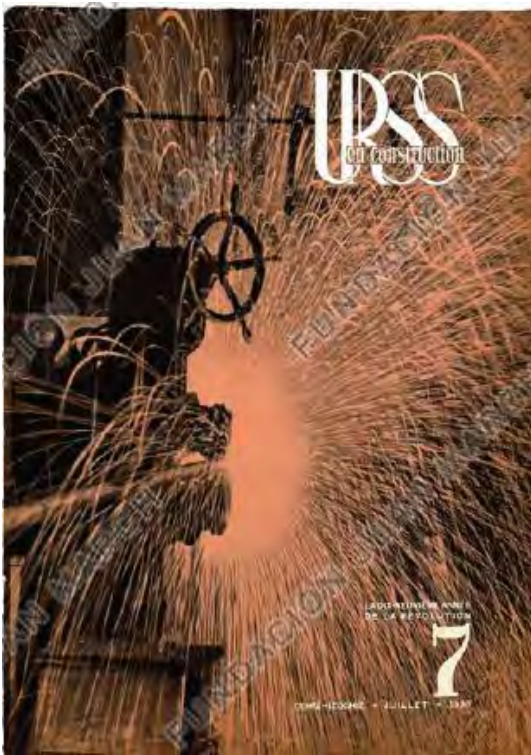
**225.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Kolkhoznitsa na velosipede*  
[Collective Farm Woman  
on a Bicycle] , 1935  
Oil on canvas, 120 x 220 cm  
State Russian Museum  
Saint Petersburg, Inv. Z-8715





**226.** Nikolai Troshin  
*SSSR na stroike* [USSR in  
Construction], no. 4, 1934  
Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
Fundación José María Castañé





**228.** Nikolai Troshin  
*URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 7, July 1936  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGI-ZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid

**229.** *Tvorchestvo* [Creativity]  
 no. 6, 1934. Magazine  
 Letterpress, 30 x 22.5 cm  
 Mouthpiece of the Painters' and  
 Sculptors' Unions of the USSR  
 SKh SSSR, Moscow  
 Archivo España-Rusia

**227.** T. Galiadkin  
 Honor badge, 1935  
 Enamelled silver, 5 x 3.5 x 2 cm  
 Archivo España-Rusia



**230. Literaturnaia gazeta**  
 no. 62 (625), November 6, 1936  
 Newspaper. Letterpress, 58 x 41 cm  
 Mouthpiece of the Writers' Union  
 of the USSR  
 Archivo España-Rusia

**231. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers  
 and El Lissitzky**  
*L'URSS en construction* [USSR in  
 Construction], no. 1, January 1937  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid

**232. Valentina Khodasevich**  
*L'URSS en construction* [USSR in  
 Construction], no. 4, April 1937  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid

*Да здравствует XIX годовщина Великой  
 социалистической революции в СССР!*

**Литературная газета**

№ 62 1936 6 ноября 1936 г.      ОГЛАВЛЕНИЕ СОСТАВЛЕНА ПИСАТЕЛЯМИ СССР      Цена 38 коп.

**ПРИВЕТ РАБОТНИКАМ НАУКИ И ТЕХНИКИ, ИСКУССТВА И ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ,  
 ЧЕСТНО ВЫПОЛНЯЮЩИМ СВОИ ДОЛГ ПЕРЕД СОВЕТСКОЙ РОДИНОЙ!**



**К НОВЫМ ПОБЕДАМ**

Великий Октябрь 1917 года — это величайшее событие в истории человечества. Это была победа пролетариата над буржуазией, победа социализма над капитализмом. Это была победа над империализмом, над империалистической войной. Это была победа над реакцией, над контрреволюцией. Это была победа над всем тем, что стояло на пути прогресса и справедливости.

С тех пор Советский Союз совершил великие подвиги. Он построил великую социалистическую родину. Он достиг великих успехов в науке, технике, искусстве и литературе. Он стал примером для всего человечества.

Сегодня мы отмечаем XIX годовщину Великой социалистической революции. Мы гордимся тем, что мы живем в великой стране, в великом государстве. Мы гордимся тем, что мы работаем на благо нашей Родины. Мы гордимся тем, что мы делаем великие дела.

Да здравствует Советский Союз! Да здравствует Великая социалистическая революция! Да здравствует мир и социализм во всем мире!

Великий Октябрь 1917 года — это величайшее событие в истории человечества. Это была победа пролетариата над буржуазией, победа социализма над капитализмом. Это была победа над империализмом, над империалистической войной. Это была победа над реакцией, над контрреволюцией. Это была победа над всем тем, что стояло на пути прогресса и справедливости.

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**Привет Сталину**  
 Макс ГОЛОДНИН

Великий Сталин — это величайший лидер нашего народа. Это величайший вождь нашего народа. Это величайший защитник нашего народа. Это величайший друг нашего народа. Это величайший герой нашего народа.

Спасибо тебе, Сталин! Спасибо тебе за твою мудрость, за твою доброту, за твою отвагу. Спасибо тебе за твою любовь к своему народу. Спасибо тебе за твою веру в будущее нашего народа. Спасибо тебе за твою веру в победу нашего народа.

Да здравствует Сталин! Да здравствует наш великий лидер! Да здравствует наш великий вождь! Да здравствует наш великий защитник! Да здравствует наш великий друг! Да здравствует наш великий герой!

**Знамена**  
 Гавриил ГАБРИЛОВ

Великие знамена — это символы великой славы. Это символы великой доблести. Это символы великой отваги. Это символы великой веры. Это символы великой любви. Это символы великой верности.

Да здравствуют знамена! Да здравствуют знамена нашей Родины! Да здравствуют знамена нашей партии! Да здравствуют знамена нашего народа!

**Ребята**  
 Сулейман СУЛЕЙМОВ

Ребята — это будущее нашей Родины. Это будущее нашей партии. Это будущее нашего народа. Это будущее нашего государства. Это будущее нашего мира.

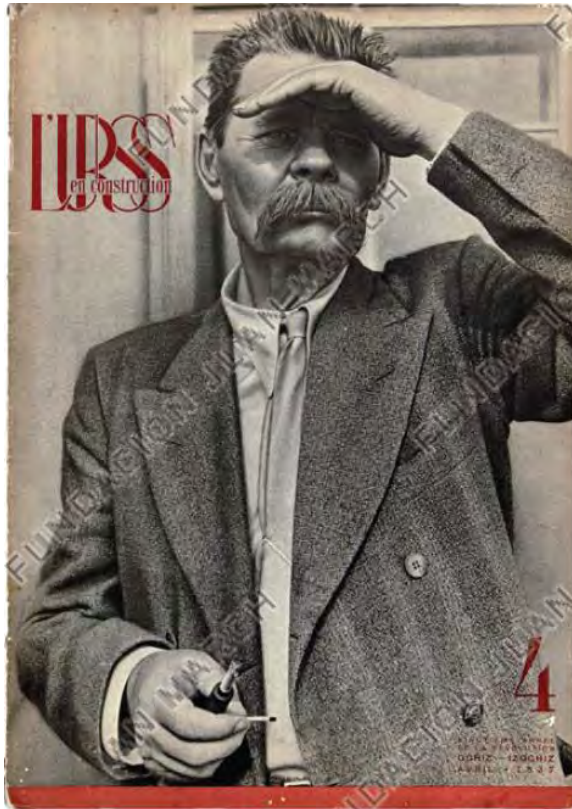
Да здравствуют ребята! Да здравствуют ребята нашей Родины! Да здравствуют ребята нашей партии! Да здравствуют ребята нашего народа! Да здравствуют ребята нашего государства! Да здравствуют ребята нашего мира!

**Привет Сталину**  
 Макс ГОЛОДНИН

Великий Сталин — это величайший лидер нашего народа. Это величайший вождь нашего народа. Это величайший защитник нашего народа. Это величайший друг нашего народа. Это величайший герой нашего народа.

Спасибо тебе, Сталин! Спасибо тебе за твою мудрость, за твою доброту, за твою отвагу. Спасибо тебе за твою любовь к своему народу. Спасибо тебе за твою веру в будущее нашего народа. Спасибо тебе за твою веру в победу нашего народа.

Да здравствует Сталин! Да здравствует наш великий лидер! Да здравствует наш великий вождь! Да здравствует наш великий защитник! Да здравствует наш великий друг! Да здравствует наш великий герой!







**233.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Budushchie letchiki*  
[Future Pilots], 1938  
Oil on canvas, 131.5 x 160 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. 27658

**234.** Solomon Telingater  
*L'URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 10, 1938 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 Iskustvo, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid

**235.** Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers and El Lissitzky  
*URSS en construcción* [USSR in Construction], no. 5-6, 1938 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 Iskustvo, Moscow  
 Spanish edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Archivo España-Rusia

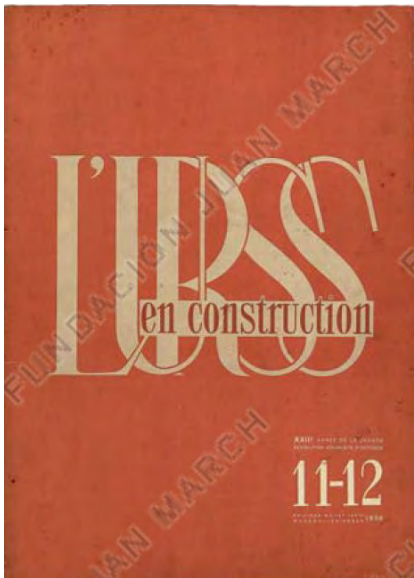
**237.** Dmitrii Moor and Sergei Sen'kin  
*L'URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 8, 1938 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 Iskustvo, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid



**236. Stalin, 1939**  
Book. Letterpress, 24.8 x 26.4 cm  
Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo  
politicheskoi literatury  
OGIZ, Moscow  
Fundación José María Castañé







**238.** Valentina Khodasevich  
*L'URSS en construction*  
 [USSR in Construction], no. 9, 1938  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 Iskusstvo, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid

**239.** Aleksandr Rodchenko  
 and Varvara Stepanova  
*L'URSS en construction* [USSR in  
 Construction], no. 11-12, 1938  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 Iskusstvo, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Collection MJM, Madrid



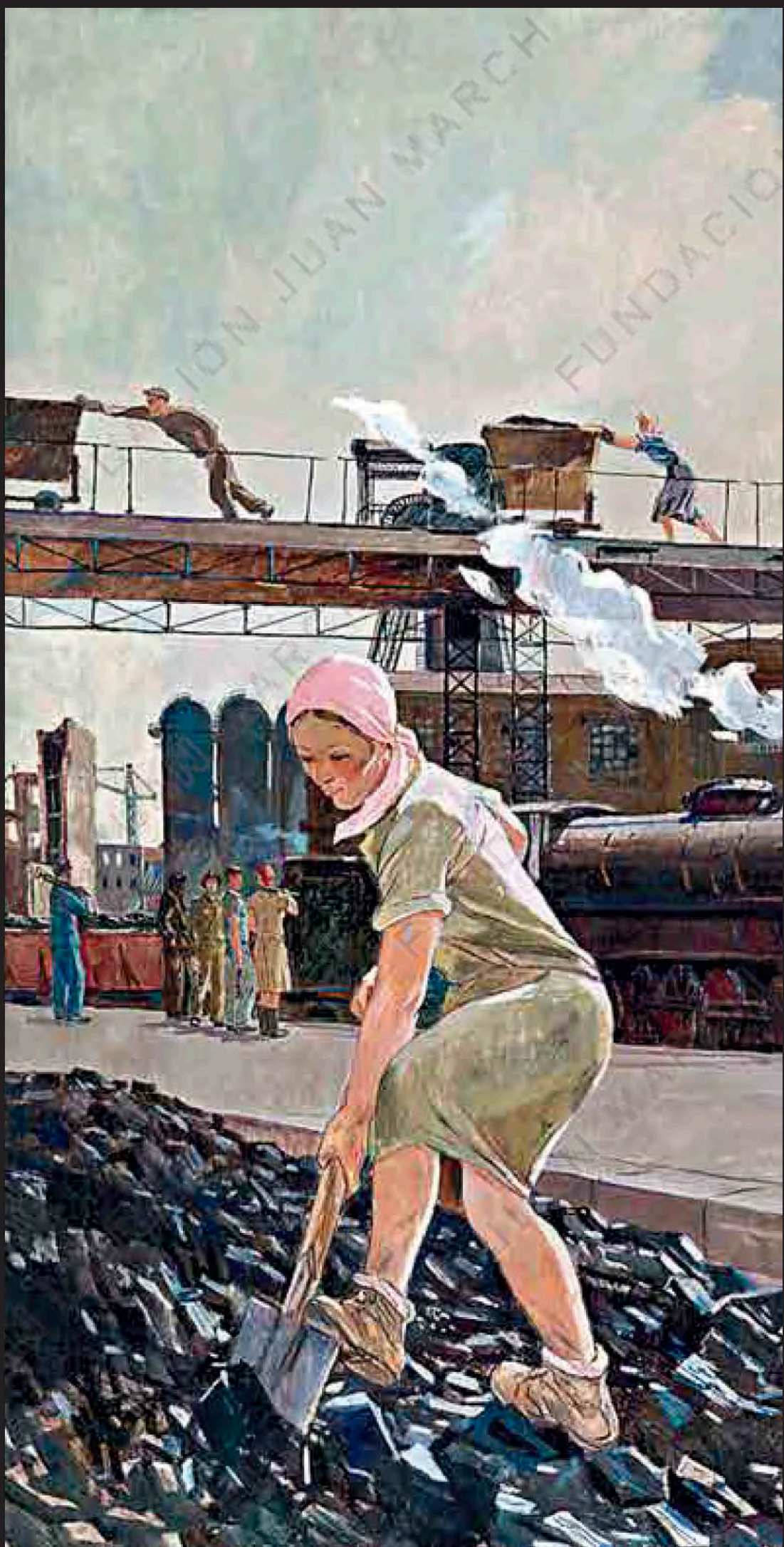
**240.** Solomon Telingater  
*L'URSS en construction* [USSR in  
 Construction], no. 4-5, 1939  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 Iskusstvo, Moscow  
 French edition of *SSSR na stroike*  
 Fundación José María Castañé

**241.** Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers  
 and El Lissitzky  
*SSSR na stroike* [USSR in  
 Construction], no. 2-3, 1940  
 Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm  
 Iskusstvo, Moscow  
 Fundación José María Castañé

**242.** Stalin medallion, 1945  
 Golden and enameled brass  
 12.5 cm in diameter  
 Producer: Soviet Mint, Moscow  
 Archivo España-Rusia



**243.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Donbass, 1947*  
Tempera on canvas, 180 x 199.5 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. 27658





**244.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Stroitel'stvo kolkhoznoi elektrostantsii*  
[The Opening of the Kolkhoz  
Electric Station], 1952  
Oil on canvas, 235 x 295 cm  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Inv. ZHS-2960

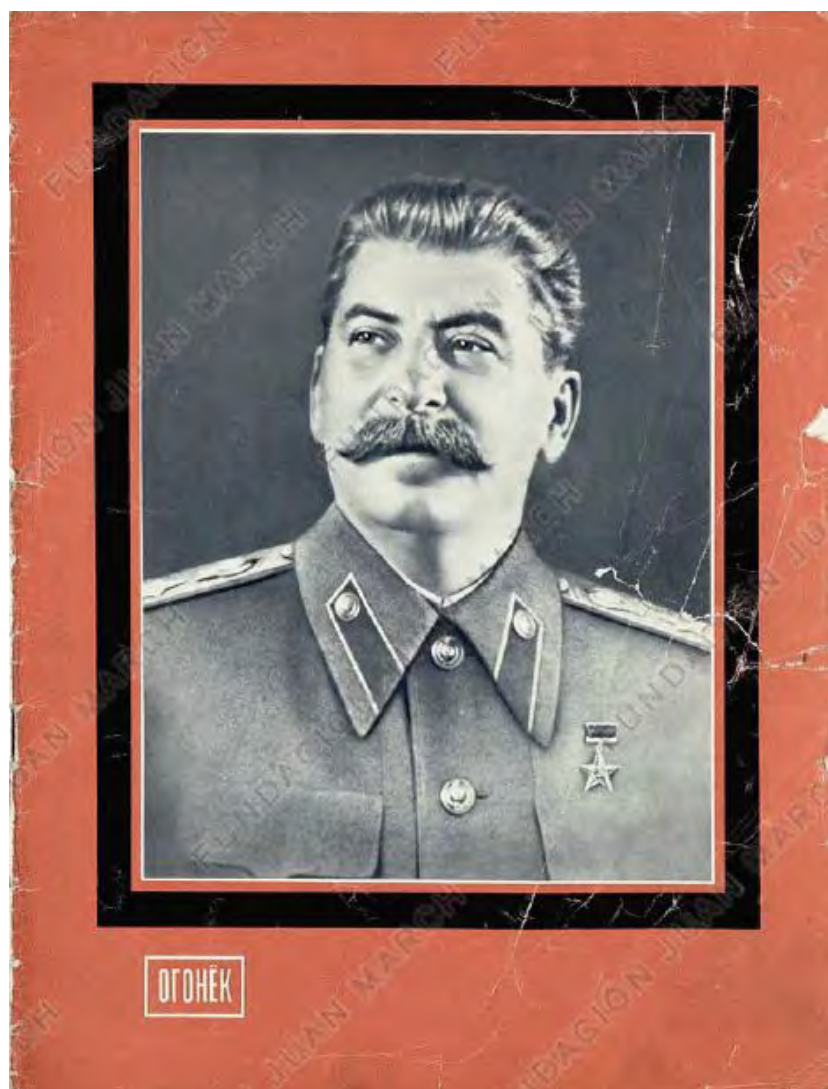




**245.** *Ogonek*, no. 10 (1343)  
March 8, 1953  
Magazine. Offset, 33.5 x 25.7 cm  
Ogonek, Moscow  
Fundación José María Castañé

**246.** *Ogonek*, no. 11 (1344)  
March 15, 1953  
Magazine. Offset, 33.5 x 25.7 cm  
Ogonek, Moscow  
Fundación José María Castañé

**247.** *Sovetskii Soiuz*  
[Soviet Union], no. 4, April 1953  
Magazine. Offset, 40 x 30.5 cm  
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Archivo España-Rusia









**248.** Aleksandr Deineka  
*Iz moei rabochei praktiki*  
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Academy of Arts of the USSR, Moscow  
Private collection







**Between the  
Avant-Garde and  
Socialist Realism  
(1913–64)**

# DOCUMENTS

Selection by  
Manuel Fontán del Junco



# I.

## **Russian Avant-Garde, Revolutionary Art and Socialist Realism: Texts, Manifestos and Documents, 1913–35**

# Victory over the Sun 1913

D1

## Aleksei Kruchenykh

### A Prologue from a Transferrer

Evgeny Steiner

The following text is what transpired from Patricia Railing's question about different principles of translation for Khlebnikov's prologue. My Angloid transfiguration of it was, thus, a sudden escapade, a daring challenge and a total pleasure for me—for all these I express my gratitude to Patricia.

My rules were simple:

First, to get to a non-Russian reader a sense that the text was written not in Russian but in Velimirian (or Khlebnikese).

Secondly, since Khlebnikov's idiolect can be defined as Russomorphic oldspeak, to paraphrase George Orwell, words of foreign origin had to be avoided whenever possible. One of the main tools Khlebnikov used to forge a new Russian language in his word smithery was his industrious amalgamation of unexpected suffixes (often folkloric and obsolete) with roots of predominantly archaic Slavonic and elevated style. Because of the more complicated origins and history of the English language (and my relative unfamiliarity with them), it was not feasible to maintain this principle rigorously. Thus in the text I used a selected number of morphemes that are originally from the Latin (*trans-*), Greek (*-logue* or *-gogue*) and French (*-ville*). And, *à propos*, Khlebnikov was not absolutely consistent himself. Instead of using 'Prologue' he could have said 'Nachaglagolovo', or at least, 'Predislovie'.

Thirdly, I tried to evoke Khlebnikov's sound whenever audibly plausible—and this is why I prefer to render his "sozertsavel" as "contemplaville" and not "contemplatown." His *-og* became *-logue* in cases like "veselog" ("merrylogue") or *-gogue* (*khudog*—"artagogue"). The same is the case for alliteration: "Sborishche mrachnykh vozhdet"—"An array of morbid foremen," etc.

The fourth and the last. I fully realize that this foray into Khlebnikov's wake (or Velimir's vigil) might have borne rather dubious results. More than that: I suspect that Khlebnikov himself would not approve of the whole endeavor to make him sound not-Russian (or not-Slavonic). Known in pre-war years for his ardent nationalism, he, as Aleksei Remizov attested, wanted to "make-Russian," "orusit' all the planet." Let me pacify his spirit with the solemn assertion that I did not try to "ob'anglichit" ("make-English") his prophesies, but merely wanted to "prepare the way" (Isaiah 40:3) in the non-Russian wilderness for an enchanted soul of the Russian self-proclaimed Chairman of the Globe.

And an epiprologue about the genre: this is the text of a barker at the fairground who, in front of the closed curtain, announces what the public will see in the show—plays, scenes and actors. His role is to attract and amuse. According to eyewitnesses, Khlebnikov rather inadvertently achieved his goal: the audience was roaring with laughter during the reading.

Kruchenykh's libretto warrants fewer explanations from the translator—quite recondite in itself, it makes much less use of neologisms than Khlebnikov's prologue. But several points can be made.

First, there are real new words like "letel'bishe"—made of "leteiaiusheche" + "chudovishche" (flying monster or leviathan)—which became "flyathane." When unclear from the context they are explained in the endnotes.

A second type of Kruchenykh's specific usage of words is his masculinization of the neutral ("ozer" instead of "ozero") or feminine genders ("bur" instead of "buria"). I translated these cases as "he-lake" and "he-storm" accordingly. Perhaps in English it sounds more ridiculous than bizarre but Kruchenykh could not expect that his *shiftology* ("sdivigologiia") would always provide comfortable shifts within other languages.

The third type of non-normative usage deals with grammar—like putting nouns in an inappropriate case (for example, "ekhal nalegke // proshlom chetverge"). With its lack of cases, this cannot be captured in English.

The fourth feature of Kruchenykh's innovation is grammatically and lexically correct sentences which are nonsensical. In this respect he may be called the precursor

of Dadaist and surrealist poetics. (Examples: "Pakhnet dozhdevym provalom"—"It smells of a rainy abyss" [or "rainy failure"]. Or "Verbliudy fabrik uzhe ugrozhaiut zharenym salom"—"The camels of factories already threaten with fried fat." It is a good alliteration, by the way: VRBL...FBR...UZHE...ROZHA...ZHARE...)

And the last, but probably the best known Kruchenykh device: so-called "zaum" or "trans-rational language." In these cases I just left his clusters of syllables and phonemes (transliterating only Cyrillic to Roman letters). About some of them, such as "kiuln surn der," a treatise can possibly be written—as about his "dyr bul shchy"—while others might well deserve a footnote in a philological article—as the line in the song of N. & C. which consists of three Cyrillic letters, Zh, Sh and Ch. Who knows, possibly Kruchenykh chose them out of the whole Russian alphabet because they, and only they, form the group of fricative hissing consonants.

But in my translation I was more interested to show another dimension of this text—not its break with the Russian cultural tradition but, on the contrary, its links with it. Thus I chose to say "rend the curtain" instead of "tear" or "rip," and the like, which evoke literary associations. Kruchenykh, as the New [People] say in Scene 5, "shot into the past." I tried to find these ostraca in his new brave text.

### Program Notes to *Victory over the Sun* "Throwing Pushkin Overboard"

Evgeny Steiner

*Victory over the Sun* is possibly the best known and most discussed *tour de force* of the Russian avant-garde. An academic monograph on *Victory over the Sun* would include hundreds of pages of conflicting interpretations, decorated with a morass of impenetrable footnotes. The genre of these Program Notes is different: to give the reader some hints as to what it is all about—to comment on what is going on, on-stage, in just a few pages.

Kruchenykh's text invites different hermeneutical approaches. The most tempting is to translate his transrational language into a rational one—whether it be Russian or English. Not wishing to go into detailed deliberations on this method, may I just remark that the interpretation usually relies heavily on the scope of the scholar's imagination and his familiarity with exotic tongues. It is very tempting indeed to find in "amda" (Scene 6) the name of a certain Ethiopian emperor of the fourteenth century (who could actually have been known to Kruchenykh through the translations of, and works on, the Abyssinian Orthodox Church by the Russian Orientalist, Boris Turaev, at the turn of the twentieth century), or else a word meaning "now" in several Turkish languages. Oh, why not just argue that the line, "k n k n lk m," in the song of A Young Man in the same scene holds the compressed names of **K**ruche**N**yk, **Kh**Lebni**K**ov and **M**alevich (or **M**atiushin?)—since by intoning these phonemes with a certain emphasis, it is quite possible to invoke something suggestive. This is actually pretty feasible because the next line ("ba ba ba ba") can refer to **Bal'mont**—and a possible allusion to Bal'mont immediately follows. But I shall not follow this path. Instead, I shall try to play with the intertextuality of Kruchenykh's libretto and to unravel only one thread. This Ariadne's thread will be *Pushkin*.

Not barring all other possible and impossible interpretations, I invite the reader to imagine that *Victory over the Sun* is the victory over *the sun of Russian poetry*: Pushkin. (This expression was coined by Prince Vladimir Odоеvskii in his obituary on Pushkin, killed in a duel, and published on January 30, 1837.) A close reading of Kruchenykh's text yields many allusions to this. First, however, a word should be said about the very special relation of the futurists to Pushkin.

It was Pushkin that they wanted to "throw overboard" from the steamboat of modernity (as expressed in their Futurist Manifesto in *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* of December 1912, signed by D. Burluk, A. Kruchenykh, V. Mayakovsky and V. Khlebnikov). Just one month before the performance of *Victory over the Sun*, Burluk delivered a paper, "Pushkin and Khlebnikov," at the Tenisheva School where he called Pushkin "the callus of Russian life." (Here Burluk evidently parodied Belinskii's formula: "Pushkin is the encyclopedia of Russian life.")

Burluk continued in the same speech: "We position ourselves as being at a right angle [i.e., 90°] to Pushkin." This may clarify the words of A Traveler Through All Centuries in Scene 1: "I am going to travel across all centuries. I was in the 35th where there is power without abuse and the rebels battle with the sun and, although there is no happiness there, everybody looks happy and immortal . . . It is no wonder that I am all dusty and t r a n s v e r s e." (The word "transverse" is emphasized by Kruchenykh.) Seemingly meaningless, "I am . . . transverse" takes on sense now.

The "35th" century in the quoted passage can also be linked to Pushkin. (The number 35 appears one more time at the end of the play—this is the door number in "the brain of the building" which A Fat Man wants to open.) The "35th" century can refer to the year 1835. For Pushkin, that year began with the attacks of critics in magazines who claimed that his talent was already spent. (Here we have "rebels battle with the sun.") And why is it that "everybody looks happy and immortal" in that age? Because the Pushkin age was the Golden Age of Russian poetry. But for Kruchenykh (and his fellow Traveler) it was only the "dust" of bygone days.



“Dust” (or something dusty) appears in *Victory over the Sun* several times and it usually relates to the sun. It first occurs in Scene 1 in the words of the Second Strongman:

Sun you kept giving birth to passions  
And burned with fiery rays  
We'll wrap you in a dusty veil

Pushkin's passionate (“African”) nature and his love poetry need no explanations. A “dusty veil” may allude to dusty old books covered by a black veil as in *Eugene Onegin*:

And hid the bookshelf's dusty stack  
in taffeta of mourning black.  
Ch. 1, XLIV (Translated by Charles Johnson)

Let's talk now about another veil (or curtain). After the prologue, two Futurian Strongmen rend the curtain (instead of raising it). It gives a premonition of a victory as death: “And the curtain of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom” (Matthew 27:51).<sup>1</sup>

Then there are the words of the First Strongman at the beginning of Scene 1:

We are organizing a slaughter of scaremen  
Oh, how much blood How many sabers  
And cannon bodies!

And they could be inspired by another classical verse:

The hands of fighters got tired of slaying  
And the cannon balls couldn't get through  
A mountain of bloody bodies.  
M. Lermontov, *Borodino*

Here for the first time the word “cannons”—“*pushki*” in Russian—appears in the text. The surname “Pushkin” derives from it.

The phrase from the same monologue, “We have no songs,” is reminiscent of the popular lines of a romance known to every Russian (words and music by Sasha Makarov, performed and recorded by Iurii Morfessi in 1913 (!): “You ask for songs—I don't have any.”

The polemics with Pushkin continue in the words of the Traveler: “Oh I am bold I will soot-screen my way and leave no trace . . .” This is exactly what is “transverse” to Pushkin's poem, “Monument”: “The people's path to my monument will not become overgrown,” “The rumor of myself will roll across great Russia,” writes the nineteenth century poet.

Immediately after that follow the motifs of death by shooting and of the monument. Kruchenykh's hero admits that he did not shoot himself out of shyness (not wanting to emulate Pushkin):

But I have put up a monument to myself—I am also not stupid!  
I am the first to get a monument—wonderful! . .

Here the word “also” acquires its meaning when we call to mind the real Pushkin's “Monument.” After that this personage dares his enemies to challenge him to a duel—as Pushkin had done.

Also in Scene 1 the strangest character in the play appears—Nero and Caligula in one. He begins to make sense when connected to Pushkin. Several times this character is referred to as N. and C. (in Russian, N. i K.). Several times he says, “Treating old people like that shouldn't be permitted . . .”; “It shouldn't be allowed to treat old people like that! they like the young [people].” Our suggestion is that this N. i K. could be Nikolai Karamzin, a renowned Russian writer and historian who was an older contemporary and friend of Pushkin. It was he who wrote about Nero and Caligula and compared them to Ivan the Terrible;<sup>2</sup> it was also his wife the young Pushkin was infatuated with—and was duly reprimanded by the husband.

At the end of Scene 2 the death of the sun is announced. After the very short Scene 3 (which consists of the procession of the Funerarians), the procession of the Sun Carriers appears. Upon declaring that they have uprooted the sun, they add: “They [the roots] reek of arithmetic.” Why arithmetic? Perhaps because Pushkin's verses were rhythmical and metrical—and now the time had come to be liberated from these elaborate calculations. And this freedom is paeanned by the Chorus:

We are loose  
The crushed sun . . .  
Hail darkness!

And black gods  
Their favorite is a pig!

The first line here can also be translated as, “We are free,” but “loose” is more appropriate contextually. The second and the third lines are close inversions of the famous ending of Pushkin's “Bacchic Song”—“Long live the sun, let darkness vanish!” (*Da zdravstvuet solntse! Da skroetsia t'ma*).<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after that One of the crowd says: “The sun of the iron age has died! The cannons have fallen broken . . .” The sun of the iron age clearly alludes to the words of Prince Odoevsky already mentioned (“The sun of Russian poetry fell”). “Cannons” (*pushki*) refers almost verbatim to Pushkin.<sup>4</sup>

The expression “iron age” is also of great interest. Meaning the nineteenth century, it first appeared in a Pushkin verse, “Conversation of a Bookseller with a Poet” (1824). He used it again in a short poem of 1835 (1835 again!) addressed to his friend, Petr Pletnev, and in the same year of 1835 it was penned by Evgenii Baratynskii in his famous formula: “The century proceeds by its iron path” (“The Last Poet”).<sup>5</sup>

The whole of Scene 4 can actually be seen, thinly veiled, through various polemics with Pushkin. Just after the “iron age,” the Talker on the Telephone says: “Anyone hoping for cannon fire will be cooked with the kasha today!” This sentence is not as meaningless as it seems. The “cannon fire” (*ogon' pushki*) together with the cooking of kasha (*svaren s kashei*) alludes to Pushkin's poem, “Poet and Crowd” (1828). In it he talks about poetic inspiration fuelled by the holy fire of the Solar god Apollo (who appears in the text as *Bel'vederskii*—of Belvedere). “*Ogon' pushki*” is thus Pushkin's poetic flame. Two lines below the reference to Apollo he says, addressing the crowd, “A stove pot is more valuable to you [than Apollo Belvedere] for you use it to cook your meal.” (In quoting these lines, people in Russia often say “kasha” instead of “meal.”) In other words, after the death of the sun of Russian poetry, the protection of cannons (i.e. Pushkin) vanished, and the party of the utilitarian pot-lovers prevailed.

After the interjection of the Talker, One (of the crowd) continues with the description of their new monument:

To more solid steps  
Forged not from fire  
neither from iron nor marble

Here, through Pushkin, Kruchenykh goes back to the original idea of the poetical monument of Horatio:

Exegi monumentum aere perennius  
Regalique situ pyramidum altius . . .  
(*Carmina*, III, 30, 1–2)

And immediately after that follows the powerful, menacing finale of the first Act (or “Doing”—*Deimo*) with the laudatory song for the new sunless world:

In the smoke and fumes  
And greasy dust  
Blows energize  
We are growing healthy as pigs.  
Our look is dark  
Our light is inside us  
We are warmed by  
The dead udder of the red dawn

The first three lines look like the description of Karl Briullov's painting *The Last Day of Pompeii* (1830–33) (about which Pushkin wrote: “And ‘the last day of Pompeii’ became the first day for the Russian brush”).

“The light inside” is more than just a last resort for those who are concerned by their lack of attractiveness from the outside.<sup>6</sup> It is another indicator of subterranean volcanic activity. (The volcano—“transposing things upside down”—is mentioned in the next scene.) The dark look (Russian *lik*—“a face” in the elevated style) refers to Malevich's major visual revelation: the *Black Square*. In terms of *Victory over the Sun*, the *Black Square* appears to be a total eclipse of the sun—and the subjects of this Regal Infant (if we use the words of Malevich himself in 1916) are proud to be dark-faced to oppose themselves to the brightly lit faces of the sun people.

Why are the dark-faced warmed by the dead udder? First, because of the utter repulsion this image should produce in their enemies. But more than that. “*Dokhloe vymia*” refers directly to “*Dokhaia Luna*” (*The Croaked [Dead] Moon*)—the futurist book published collectively in 1912. The off-white color of the udder (the sickly color—and this meaning is present in the Russian, *dokhlyi*) resembles the sickly pale countenance of the moon. The light udder appears again at the beginning of the next, Scene 5.

This Fifth scene, and the last, the Sixth, represent another world: the one of the dead sun and the accomplished victory of the futuristic world of dead nature and jubilant technology. (Let's recall Malevich's "Machine for devouring the sun with the help of electricity.") This solarophobia was more than just the attempt to get even with Pushkin. And it was not only Pushkin who got his due from the futurists. In their rebellion against the sun they could spare none of the *dii minores* of the Russian Parnassus. Their older contemporary, the famous symbolist poet, Konstantin Bal'mont, published a book of poetry in 1902 entitled *Let Us Be as the Sun*, with an epigraph from Anaxagoras: "I came to this world to see the sun." In *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, Bal'mont's verse was highlighted as "parfumerie's lechery." I have already mentioned the possible references to Bal'mont (as "ba ba ba ba" versus "kn kn lk m"). Now another point can be added. In the last scene, the frightened Young Man enters running and sings a petty bourgeois song in which, after his "ba ba ba ba," he sings:

the motherland is dying  
from dragonflies  
the lilies are drawn  
by locomotive

Dragonflies and lilies were recurring images in Bal'mont's poetry. For example in his poem "The Smoke" he wrote: "Under the sky so close and so native . . . // Swarms of dragonflies fly // Under the sun . . ." (In Russian the same root is used for what we rendered as "motherland" and "native.") And the locomotive (the steam engine, to be precise) appeared in Kruchenykh's text to reflect Bal'mont's image of the smoke in which everything may perish.

But the images of the future world ("life without the past") that are shown through the eyes of A Fat Man or a Coward, are rather ambiguous.

First, it's not for weaklings—"That was too much of a burden for them."

Secondly, the new kingdom of freedom turned out to be sheer confinement: in the very beginning of Scene 6, A Fat Man says "These 10th lands, gee! I didn't know I would have to sit locked up." Living in the "10th lands" (faraway lands in Russian fairy tales) happened to be less exciting than dreaming of them. In this respect, Kruchenykh's text sounds unexpectedly prophetic.

Thirdly, this world is the world behind the looking glass ("all the tops facing downwards as if in a mirror") where time either stops or goes randomly "against the clock." That is possibly why A Fat Man wants to get rid of his now-useless watch.

But An Attentive Workman says that, either watched or watchless, a representative of the enemy class (to be fat means to be a bourgeois) will be closely watched and hardly spared: "don't dream, they won't take pity on you!"

The last images of the brave new world give the impression of a gigantic self-destructing machine acting haphazardly ("yesterday there was a telegraph pole here and there is a snackbar today, and tomorrow it will probably be bricks, it happens here every day and no one knows where it will stop").

At the end, a falling (but not crushed) airplane killed a woman—a procreative biological force.<sup>7</sup> The Aviator laughs and the Futurian Strongmen declare: "the world will perish but to us there is no end!" This finale is possibly a parody on the words in the Symbol of Faith: "A *nam net kontsa*" (Kruchenykh)—"Ego zhe tsarstviiu *nest' kontsa*" (the Old Believers' rendering of the Orthodox Symbol of Faith—as in the Nicene Creed, "whose kingdom shall have no end").

To sum up. In order to clear a place under the sun for themselves, the young rebels of the future world had to denounce the authority of the old sun—personified in Pushkin (who, as the poet Apollon Grigor'ev put it in the middle of the nineteenth century, is "our everything"). But shortly after the declaration of war, the re-appropriation of the fallen idol began. In 1915 Khlebnikov wrote: "The Futurian [poet] is a Pushkin depicting the world war; [a Pushkin] in the cloak of the new century; the one who teaches that this century has the right to make fun of the Pushkin of the nineteenth century. It was Pushkin himself who was throwing Pushkin overboard from the steamboat of modernity, but disguised in the dramatic words of the new century. And the dead Pushkin was championed in 1913 by D'Antes—the one who killed Pushkin in 18\*\* . The murderer who had painted the winter snow with the blood of the real live Pushkin, hypocritically put on the mask of a protector of his (the corpse's—VKh) fame in order to repeat his shooting of the upcoming herd of new Pushkins of the new century."<sup>8</sup>

1. Comically enough, the Strongmen could not tear the (paper) curtain at the dress rehearsal, as K. Tomashevskii, who played the part of the Certain Person with Bad Intentions recalled. See K. Tomashevskii, "Victory over the Sun," *The Drama Review*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1971), 98.  
2. "... The character of Ivan . . . mystifies the mind, and we could have doubted the truthfulness of even the most reliable accounts about him had the chronicles of other people not revealed examples similarly surprising—if Caligula, the paragon of a ruler and a monster, if Nero, a disciple of wise Seneca and subject to love and repulsion, had not reigned in Rome." Nikolai Karamzin, *The History of the State of Russia*, ch. VII: "The Continuation of the Reign of Ivan the Terrible, 1582–1584" (Moscow, 1964), 403.  
3. It should be noted here that an additional source for Kruchenykh's inspiration could be found in *The Song of the Triumphant Pig*, known in two versions: Anna P. Barykova (1839–1893) and the satirical poet Faleev (1873–after 1930) who published it under the pseudonym Chuzh-Chuzhenin in the leftist magazine *Zritel'* in 1906. Here are the relevant words of his poem: "We begin the new progress! / We do not care about the stars and the skies, / We

do not respect them . . ." Kruchenykh himself published the whole book under the title *Piglets (Porosiata)*, 1913). His porky predilection was duly noticed by the critic Kornei Chukovskii shortly before the premiere of *Victory over the Sun*: "Pigs and manure—this is the brutal perfumery of this porkophile, Mr. Kruchenykh." ("A Report on the Lecture about the Futurists," published in the newspaper *Den'*, October 6, 1913). Cited by "Ob opere Pobeda nad solntsem" in Nina Gourianova, *Pamiat' tep'er' mnogo razvorachivaet: Iz literaturnogo nasledia Kruchenykh* (Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1999), 408 (note 20). Many years later Kruchenykh proudly wrote: "Piggery—this is my theme" (*Ibid.*, 246) [Translations from the Russian by E. Steiner].

4. It also makes a pun in English: one can hear "canon" instead of "cannon"—which suggests that a person of a high ecclesiastic rank has fallen. And Pushkin, for the Russian mainstream of that time, was more than just a canon-clergyman: he was a canon of Russian poetry.
5. It is relevant to mention that in the place where I am writing this (Manchester) the first railroad (Manchester - Liverpool) was opened around this time, in the early 1830s—and its first fatal accident was caused by the very first celebratory train. Possibly the news of this could reverberate with Baratynskii's imagery.
6. The same Tomashevskii observed: "Kruchenykh, at that time an excessively restless and meddlesome young man, took Mayakovskiy's place at the table. I had the immediate feeling that he was being meddlesome in an effort to bring some color to his hopelessly grey appearance. He reminded one of a telegraph office clerk, or a salesman who secretly wrote love poems behind the counter." In *The Drama Review* [1], 95. We added it here *cum grano salis*.
7. The falling airplane and the death caused by it was a recurring motif of Kruchenykh and Malevich.
8. An entry in the album of Levkii Zheverzheev. First published by N. Khardzhiev, "Novoe o Velimere Khlebnikove," *Russian Literature* 9 (Amsterdam: Menton, 1975), 17.

## Victory over the Sun 1913

Libretto by Aleksei Kruchenykh

Music by Mikhail Matiushin

Scenography and Costume Design by Kazimir Malevich

### Prologue

Viktor Khlebnikov<sup>1</sup>

Black-craft News-drops.

People! Those who have been born, but are not yet dead. Hasten to go to the contemple<sup>2</sup> or contemplaville<sup>3</sup>

Futurian.<sup>4</sup>

The contemplaville will lead you,

The contemplayer is forayer,<sup>5</sup>

An array of morbid foremen

From tormenties and horribles to amusicals and outlandish laughfies and merrilogues—all will pass before the eyes of attentive spectors<sup>6</sup> and contemplars<sup>7</sup> and oglers: pastades, occurades, ballades, actualades, callades, evocades,<sup>8</sup> fate-challengers and mal-lullabies.<sup>9</sup>

Callades will call you as will the celestoid outthereers.

Pastades will tell you who you once were.

Actualades—who you are; occurades—who you could be.

Mal-lullabies, mornagogues and mornades,<sup>10</sup> will tell you who you will be.

Nevervilles will pass like a quiet dream.

Short ushers will usher you pushily.

Here there will be once-in-a-whilies and imaginables.

And with them will be a snorer and a snoozer.<sup>11</sup>

Whistlogues and singagogues<sup>12</sup> will wipe away tears.

Warrior, merchant and ploughman. The dream-ruling song master has thought for you—and so did the dreamcraftsman.

The conversators<sup>13</sup> and duo cantors<sup>14</sup> will captivate you.

The vigorous will replace the weakling.

The 1st contemplants<sup>15</sup>—that's when the contemple is a transfigurator.<sup>16</sup>

Awe-inspiring, fast-propheying troopers<sup>17</sup> will shake [you].

The look-switchers<sup>18</sup> of the deed will pass by in full drag-dress,<sup>19</sup>

led by the magus-the-orderer<sup>20</sup> of plays, wearing wonderful drags, showing the morning and the evening in the acts according to the design of the imaginator,<sup>21</sup> this heaven dweller of acts and the doer of deeds.

In the donjon<sup>22</sup> of the "Futureville" contemple<sup>23</sup> there is a promptor.

He will take care that orations<sup>24</sup> and chants<sup>25</sup> would go smoothly and not drag in disarray, but upon gaining the reign over listen-workers,<sup>26</sup> [they] would deliver<sup>27</sup> the contemplars from the wrath of the sizzlers.<sup>28</sup>

The look-ats by an artagogue<sup>29</sup> will create the trans-dressing<sup>30</sup> of nature.

Take your seats in the cloudbanks and treetops, and the leviathanic sandbanks before the bell.

Sounds reaching from the trumpetry<sup>31</sup> will fly to you.

The profit-smart<sup>32</sup> will meet you.

The daze warbling<sup>33</sup> of a song-foam stirrer<sup>34</sup> will fill the contemplayer.

The sounders<sup>35</sup> will obey the play-willer.<sup>36</sup>

The spores of "Futureville" will fly into life.

The contemplayer is an estuary!<sup>37</sup>

Be a hearer (big eared), you, contemplor!

And be a watcher.

- 1 The layout of the text (italics, periods and commas, or absence thereof, indentation, interlineage, etc.) follows the typesetting of the original edition.
- 2 *sozertsog*; *sozerts* – contempra; *-og* – from *chertog*, archaic poetic style for palace or temple. Similarly constructed neologisms: *sonog* – bedroom; *vyzog* – upper floor room.
- 3 *-avel* in *sozertsavel* is a long form for *-avl* (the common ending of towns in ancient Rus': Yaroslavl', Pereslavl', Lihoslavl', etc.). Although etymologically there is no connection, the last two Russian consonants *-vl* correspond acoustically with *vile*. Because of this it seems more poetically appropriate here than the Anglo-Saxon *-ton*, *-town*, or *-land*.
- 4 *Budetliatin*. According to its position in the originally printed text, the word would be the proper name of the theater.
- 5 Khlebnikov's *sozertseben* and *vohzdeben* both have the ending *-eben*, from *moleben* – a collective prayer in a church.
- 6 'Spector' is a cross between 'spectator' and 'specter' – which is a counterpart for *vidukhi* (*vid* – to look, image; *dukhi* – ghosts, spirits).
- 7 A contraction of contemplators and Knights Templar who are evoked here by the sound of *sozertsaliami* – *rytsariami*.
- 8 All *-ades* are taken from ballades, of course; they correspond to Khlebnikov's *-avy* (*minavy* – of the past, *byvavy* – of those that occurred or happened, *pevavy* – of songs, *bytavy* – of the present, *zovavy* – of those that call you, *velichavy* – and those that evoke/glorify).
- 9 This is my attempt to follow Khlebnikov's meaning and sounds – *malyuty* – all in one: *malen'kii*, *malutka* – baby, *liutyi*, *Maliuta* Skuratov. So I tried to give an aura of bad (*mal*) and cute at the same time.
- 10 Khlebnikov's *utrogi* can be both morning song (mornalogue) and morning singer (mornagogue). *Mornades* (for *utravy*) is a halfway Anglo-Saxonized aubades (vs. serenades, evening songs).
- 11 It is impossible to render Khlebnikov's predilection for the middle/neutral gender (*sno* and *zno*), but it is still possible to get the idea of certain abstract dreamers and mavens by the imitation of his sounds. If it were not for his nationalism, the best correspondence could probably be Hypnos and Gnosis.
- 12 Possibly Khlebnikov himself (who just a week before the opening of *Victory over the Sun* publicly called for Mandel'shtam to be sent back to his [Jewish] uncle in Riga) wouldn't like this almost Judeo-Grecian construct. But, alas, this is very close to his *pesnogi*.
- 13 I think it's not about an action (drama) but actor (*beseđen* – the one who conducts talks).
- 14 *Dvoiry peviry* – have the roots with the meaning 'two' and 'sing'. The suffix *-ir* (pl. *-iry*) Khlebnikov borrowed from "komandir," "povodyr," etc. and many names ending with *-mir*.
- 15 "Sozertsiny" – evidently should be *plurale tantum* which Khlebnikov formed using the model of "smotriny," "noviny," etc. "Acts" in the plural adds that scriptural aura which is invoked by Khlebnikov's archaic style with numerous Old Slavonic forms.
- 16 "Transfigurator" is chosen because it continues the religious overtones (with which the Russian word is heavily soaked).
- 17 *lduty* – a neologism for those who walk. It sounds close to *soldaty* (soldiers). As in some other cases, Khlebnikov talks here about actors, not plays/dramas.
- 18 *Oblikmeny* – neologism which literally means "those who change their looks/appearance."
- 19 *Riazhebno* – an abstract noun that Khlebnikov made from "riazhenye" – carnival trans-dressers. Although it traditionally involved gender cross-dressing, no connotations with contemporary transvestite gay subculture are implied. The reconstruction of this neologism as *riazheben* ("trans-dressed communal prayer") offered in *Slovar' neologismov Khlebnikova*, I believe to be incorrect.
- 20 "Orderer" stands for *ukazui* – the one who makes "ukaz" (in old Russian the Czar's order or law).
- 21 Khlebnikov's "mechtakhar" is one of his best neologisms: a contraction of "mechta" (dream), "znakhar" (magus, sorcerer) and "pakhar" (ploughman). Can be also said "dream-loughman."
- 22 Khlebnikov used *detinets* – old Russian for inner tower of a castle, a core or embryo. For Khlebnikov such a "children's tower" might be the little box of a prompter. The identification of "detinets" as troupe by N. Pertsova is not convincing.
- 23 *Budslavl'* – town of the Future. Khlebnikov enjoyed this suffix: *Nikogdavl'*, *Uletavl'*, etc.
- 24 Khlebnikov has here his neologism *govorov'ia* – something like "long serious talks."
- 25 For his *pevavy* I could possibly have said "songsies" but "chants," though not a neologism, is closer euphonicallly and stylistically. Earlier I rendered it as ballades.
- 26 Could have been said simply "listeners" but he rendered this concept in such a convoluted way that . . .
- 27 "Deliver" directly corresponds to "izbavi" in Church Slavonic, Matthew 6:13: "and deliver us from evil."
- 28 Khlebnikov was prompted to call critics "suzdal'" by the false etymology *suzdal'*, *suzhdenie* (judgment). Possibly he also thought that, since the town folks of Suzdal' fought with the Novgorodians and even shot arrows into the icon of the Virgin, they were pretty nasty. To match the sound and those overtones I coined "sizzlers."
- 29 For *khudog*.
- 30 For *pereodeia* – a neologism for "changing the clothes." "Trans" here should evoke Transfiguration, not transvestism.
- 31 The suffix *-ry* stands for the Russian suffix *-nia* (*kuznia*, *psarnia*, *priadil'nia*) which Khlebnikov used for his "trubarnia".
- 32 Khlebnikov's "pol'zumen" was welded from "pol'za" (profit) and "umen" (clever, smart) – looks awkward but the idea of the admission collector is discernible.
- 33 Can also be said as "dreams/fantasy whistling."
- 34 Khlebnikov's "penistvor" includes "peni-" (sing), "penist-" (foamy) and "tvor" (of "tvoret" – creator). If I were to belong to "Gender theory" (or how do they call themselves?), I could have made Khlebnikov a phallus-builder too (*penis-tvor*) – but even if he were interested, a zealous nationalist, he would rather use a home-grown expressive word.
- 35 This "sounders" literally follows Khlebnikov's "zvuchare." Actually, the word with this suffix *boiare* (nobles, aristocracy) can suggest another possible rendering: soundocracy.
- 36 For a conductor Khlebnikov has here *guliar-voliar* – someone who moves (strolls) at his leisure and because of his own will.
- 37 Khlebnikov used here *usta* – not a neologism but a Slavonic archaism for "lips." "Estuary" has the same root and has a broad opening – to fan out the message of the theatre of the future.

–ES

## VICTORY OVER THE SUN

Opera in 2 doings, 6 scenes

### 1st Doing

1st scene: White with black—the walls are white the floor is black

(Two futurian strongmen rend the curtain)

First

All is well that begins well!

Second

And ends?

1st

There will be no end!

We are striking the universe

We are arming the world against ourselves

We are organizing a slaughter of scaremen

Oh, how much blood How many sabers

And cannon bodies!

We are toppling mountains!

(They sing)

We have locked up

The fat beauties in the house

Let all those drunkards wander

Around there stark naked

We have no songs

Nor sighs nor rewards

Which used to please the mildew of

Rotten naiads! . . .

(The 1st strongman slowly leaves)

2nd strongman

Sun you kept giving birth to passions

And burned with fiery rays

We'll wrap you in a dusty veil

And encase you in a concrete house!

(Nero and Caligula in one person appears. He has only a left arm, raised and bent at a right angle.)

N. and C. (Menacingly.)

Kyuln sum der

Traveled lightly

Last Thursday

Roast and rip up what I have not finished cooking.

(He stands motionless in a noble pose, then sings. While he is singing the 2nd strongman leaves.)

– I eat dog

And whitefeet

Fried cutlets

And dead potatoes

Space is limited

The seal to be silent

Zh Sh Ch

(The Traveler through All Centuries enters in airplane wheels—he is wearing pieces of paper with the inscriptions Stone Age, Middle Ages, and so on . . . Nero into space.)

Nero and C. — It shouldn't be allowed to treat old people like that . . .

Not tolerating those flyathanes<sup>1</sup> . . .

Traveler

— Uddenly<sup>2</sup> everything has stopped

Suddenly cannons

He sings.

— The he-lake<sup>3</sup> sleeps

There is much dust

Flood . . . Look

Everything has become masculine

The he-lake is harder than iron

Do not weigh upon the old measure

(Nero furtively casts glances through a lorgnette at the wheels of iron.)

Traveler

(Sings) — The he-storm has blown up  
The he-shroud billows  
More quickly a stormometer  
Do not believe old scales  
They will seat you on the calf  
If you don't reach empty heels

Nero and C. It shouldn't be allowed to treat old people like that! they like the young

Ah, I was looking for a little singing bird<sup>4</sup>  
I was looking for a tiny sliver of glass—they have eaten everything and haven't even left any bones . . .

But what can I do I'll have to go sideways into the 16th century in inverted commas here.

(He exits half-turned towards the audience.)

They have smirched everything even the vomit of bones

(He takes off his boots and leaves.)

Traveler

— I am going to travel across all centuries. I was in the 35th where there is power without abuse and the rebels battle with the sun and, although there is no happiness there, everybody looks happy and immortal . . . It is no wonder that I am all dusty and t r a n s v e r s e . . . Phantom kingdom . . . I am going to travel across all the centuries, until I find myself a place, even if I have lost two baskets.

(A Certain Person with Bad Intentions crawls in and listens.)

In afiba<sup>5</sup> there is not enough room for me and it's dark underground . . . A he-sun . . . But I have traveled everywhere (to the audience): It smells of a rainy abyss.<sup>6</sup>

The eyes of lunatics are overgrown with tea and they blink at skyscrapers and peddler women occupied the place on the spiral staircases . . . The camels of factories already threaten with fried fat, and I haven't yet been through one side yet. Something is wailing at the station.

(Sings.)

— Not more not less  
How to slay the fearers<sup>7</sup>  
Catch catch  
Shoot the pill  
Of the spinning top

Oh I am bold, I will soot-screen my way and leave no trace . . .

The New...

(A Certain Person with Bad Intentions.)

— Come on, you are not really going to fly are you?

Traveler

— Why not? Or my wheels will not find their nails?

(The Certain Person shoots, Traveler drives off and shouts.)

— Garizon! Catch the snoyu  
The Spnees . . . Z. Z. Zi<sup>8</sup> —

(Certain Person falls down and covers himself with his rifle.)

— I might not have shot myself—out of shyness —  
But I have put up a monument to myself—I am also not stupid!  
I am the first to get a monument—wonderful! . . .  
The black double-barrel is aiming straight at me.

(A futuristic machine gun appears and stops by the telegraph pole.)

— Oh, lamentation! What does this sight mean, to have caught our enemy off-guard—pensive . . .

I am without continuation and imitation

(Bully enters, rambles around and sings.)

— Cust locust  
Pik pit'  
Pit' pik

Don't leave your arms for dinner at dinner  
Nor at buckwheat kasha

You can't cut it? Chase each other

(The Certain Person attacks and silently shoots his rifle a few times.)

— To battle!

Ha ha ha! Enemies, are you tired or don't you recognize me?

Enemies, advance from your crevices and crenellations and challenge me to a duel. I have broken my throat myself, I shall turn into gun powder, cotton wool, hooks and loops . . . Or do you think a hook is more dangerous than cotton?

(runs away and comes back in a minute.)

Noses in the cabbage! . . .<sup>9</sup>

Ah . . . behind the fence! Drag him away, this blue-nosed cadaver

(The Enemy drags himself away by the hair and crawls off on his knees.)

Gee such a coward giving yourself up and ushering yourself away!

(The Bully laughs aside.)

Bully — You despicable creature how much grave dust and chips there are in you, go and shake yourself off and get washed, otherwise . . .

(The Enemy cries)

Certain Person with Bad Intentions: Ah, the sinciput of the enemy! You consider me a fork and laugh at my meditations but I lingered and didn't advance on you with my sword.

I am the continuation of my ways.

I was waiting . . . I buried my sword in the ground carefully. I took a new ball and threw it.

(Shows a footballer's technique.)<sup>10</sup>

Into your herd . . . Now you are embarrassed . . . You are duped, you cannot distinguish your glabrous heads from the ball; you are confused and are clinging to the bench and the swords are crawling in fear themselves into the earth the ball frightens them:

if you are an infidel run to strike your lord's head and he will run after it in a flower sale . . .

2nd scene: Green walls and floor.

(The enemy troops march in Turkish costumes—one in every hundred is lame<sup>11</sup>—with lowered flags. Some of them are very fat.)

(One of the warriors steps forward and gives the Certain Person with Bad Intentions flowers—he tramples them.)

Certain Person with Bad Intentions.—Coming out to meet myself with a piebald horse, rifle under my arm . . . Oh!

I have looked for you for a long time you sweaty mushroom. Finally . . .

(Starts a fight with himself. Singers enter in sportsmen's costumes and strongmen. One of the sportsmen sings):

There is no more light of flowers  
Skies cover yourselves with the rot  
(I'm talking not for the enemies  
but to you friends)

All offspring of autumnal days  
And the scabrous fruit of summer  
It's not you that the newest bard  
Will extol

1st strongman

— Go the millions of the streets —  
Or the jillions will be in Russian —  
The gnashing of cart runners  
And—should I say?—Narrow heads

Unexpected for themselves  
The sleepy ones have started a brawl  
And have raised such dust  
As though they were taking Port Arthur

(Chorus).

The chariot of victory goes forth  
Drawn by the two horses of victory  
How exalting it is to fall  
Under its wheels

1st strongman.

— Stamped with sealing wax  
It is a ripened victory  
Now everything is trifling to us  
The sun lies slain at our feet!

Start a fight with machine guns  
Squash them with your nail  
Then I shall say: here you are  
Big strongmen!

(Chorus).

Let the burning horses  
Trample  
And hair will curl up  
In the smell of skin! . .

2nd strongman.

Salt crawls towards the shepherd  
The horse has built a bridge in the ear  
Who keeps you at your posts  
Run across black ribs

Through steam and smoke  
And the jets from taps  
The people have come out onto the porch  
Of the tea room waving switches

1st strongman.

— Do not go out beyond the line of fire  
An iron bird is flying  
The wood goblin waggles his beard  
Beneath the hoof of someone buried

The violets moan  
Under the heavy heel  
And the stick falls silent  
In the puddle of the grave

Both strongmen (singing).

The sun has hidden  
Darkness has begun  
Let us all take knives  
And wait locked up

C u r t a i n .

3rd scene: Black walls and floor.

(The Funerarians enter. Their upper half is white with red, the lower is black.)

(Singing).

To smash the turtle<sup>12</sup>  
To fall on the cradle

Bloodthirsty turnip's  
Greet the cage

The fat bedbug smells of the coffin . . .  
A little black foot . . .  
The squashed coffin rocks  
A lace of shavings curls.

4th scene.

(Talker on the telephone):

— What? They have taken the sun in captivity?!  
Thanks for letting me know.—

(The Sun Carriers enter—they are so crammed that the sun is not visible):

One:

— We have come from the 10th lands<sup>13</sup>  
Intimidating! . .

Be advised that the earth is not revolving.

Many:

— We have pulled up the sun with its fresh roots  
They reek of arithmetic, greasy them  
Here it is, look

One:

— A holiday should be established: The Day of the victory over the sun.

Singing:  
(Chorus).

— We are loose<sup>14</sup>  
The crushed sun . . .  
Hail darkness!  
And black gods  
Their favorite is a pig!

One:

The sun of the iron age has died! The cannons have fallen broken and the tires yield like wax before [people's] gazes!

Talker: what? . . Anyone hoping for cannon fire will be cooked with the kasha today!

Listen!

One.

— To more solid steps  
Forged not from fire  
neither from iron nor marble  
Nor ethereal slabs

In the smoke and fumes  
And greasy dust  
Blows energize  
We are growing healthy as pigs  
Our look is dark  
Our light is inside us  
We are warmed by  
The dead udder of the red dawn<sup>15</sup>

BRN BRN<sup>16</sup>

(CURTAIN).

THE TENTH LAND.

2nd doing 5th scene.

the external walls of houses are depicted but their windows strangely look inside, like drilled pipes there are many windows, arranged in irregular rows, and it seems as if they are moving suspiciously.

(The “Mottled Eye”<sup>17</sup> appears):

the former leaves  
as a fast steam  
and shoots the bolt  
and the skull like a bench has galloped into the door

(he runs off as if watching the skull.)

(the new enter from one side  
and the cowards from another):

the new: we have shot into the past

cowards: and is anything left?  
— not a trace  
— is the emptiness deep?  
— it airs the whole city. It became easier to breathe for everybody and many people don’t know what to do with themselves now that they feel such lightness. Some have tried to drown themselves, the weak have gone mad saying: we can now become intimidating and strong. That was too much of a burden for them.

Cowards. They shouldn’t have been shown the new trails,  
hold back the crowd.

The New. One person brought his sadness saying, take it, I don’t need it any-  
more! he also imagined that inside him everything was lighter than an udder.  
let him swirl!<sup>18</sup>  
(shouting).

(Reader)<sup>19</sup>:

how extraordinary life is without the past  
With risk but without remorse and memories . . .

Mistakes and failures that were tediously droning into one’s ear like a pest are forgotten and you are now similar to a spotless mirror or rich reservoir where in a spotless grotto carefree goldfish flex their tails like thanking Turks (disturbed—as he was sleeping—the fat man enters)  
fat man:  
my head is 2 steps behind—it’s obligatory!  
always behind!  
Grrr a nuisance!

where is the sunset? I would rather get away . . . it’s shining . . . I can see ev-  
erything from my home . . . I should get away quickly . . .  
(he lifts something): A piece of airplane or samovar  
(he bites into it)  
hydrogen sulphide!  
obviously a hell machine<sup>20</sup> I will take it just in case . . . (he hides it).

(reader hurrying):  
I want to say everything—recollect the past  
full of the sorrows of mistakes . . .  
the breaking and bending of knees . . . let us remember it and compare it  
with the present . . . so joyous:  
liberated from the heaviness of universal gravity we can imaginatively  
arrange our belongings as if a rich kingdom were being moved<sup>21</sup>

(fat man, singing):  
the shyness to shoot oneself  
it is difficult on the road  
the scaregun and the gallows  
hold the calf . . .<sup>22</sup>

(Reader interrupting): or you cannot feel how the two balls live: one is corked sour  
and warm and the other springing from underground like a volcano  
transposing things upside down . . .

(music)

they are incompatible . . . (music of strength)  
just the gnawed-at skulls run on their only four legs—probably they are  
the skulls of the basics . . . (leaves).

6th scene.

Fat Man:

The 10th lands . . . the windows all face inside the house is fenced in; live here  
as you can

These 10th lands, gee! I didn’t know I would have to sit locked up I cannot  
move my head or my arm or they will become unscrewed or move and look at  
how the axe is doing here damned thing it has fleeced us all we walk around bald  
and it’s not hot only steamy such a pernicious climate even cabbages and leeks  
won’t grow and the market—where is it then?—they say on the islands . . .  
oh if I could climb the stairs into the brain of this building and open door No. 35  
that would be a wonder yeah, nothing is simple here although it looks like a plain  
chest of drawers—and that’s it! yet you ramble around and around  
(he climbs up somewhere)  
no, it’s not here all the paths have got mixed up and go up to the earth while there  
are no sideways . . . hey, if there is anybody of ours there, throw me some rope or  
say something . . . fire a shot . . . shshsh! cannons made from birch trees—so what!

the old resident:

here is the entrance, you will go right back . . . there is not any other otherwise  
straight up to the earth  
— but it’s a bit frightening  
— well it’s up to you  
fat man: how about winding up the clock.  
hey you stupid shaft where do you turn the clock? the hand?

attentive workman:

they both go backwards immediately before dinner but now only the tower, the  
wheels—do you see? (the old resident leaves)  
fat man: gee, I can fall (looks at the section of the clock: the tower the sky the  
streets—all the tops facing downwards as if in a mirror)

where can I pawn my watch?

Attentive Workman:

don’t dream they won’t take pity on you! Well, work it out —speed reveals itself. if  
you put a railcar load of old crates on each of two molars and sprinkle them with  
yellow sand then let it start rolling off you can imagine what will happen well the  
simplest thing is that they will run into some pipe in an armchair and if not? the  
people there have got somewhere so high after all that they can’t be bothered  
with how locomotives and their hooves and so on feel, it’s only natural!

the stove searches for scythes  
as antelope would run after  
but that’s the point  
that no one will yield his forehead

anyway I am leaving everything as it was (leaves)

(Fat Man from the window):

yes yes you are welcome yesterday there was a telegraph pole here and there  
is a snackbar today, and tomorrow it will probably be bricks.  
it happens here every day and no one  
knows where it will stop and where they will have dinner  
hey you take your feet off—(leaves through the top window)  
(noise of a propeller offstage, a young man enters running: frightened he sings a  
petty bourgeois song):

yu yu yuk  
yu yu yuk  
gr gr gr  
pm  
pm  
dr dr rd rd  
u u u

k n k n lk m  
ba ba ba ba

the motherland is dying  
from dragonflies  
the lilies are drawn  
by locomotive  
(the noise of a propeller is heard)

I won't get caught in chains  
in coils of beauty  
silks are bizarre  
tricks are crude

I will make my way stealthily  
along the dark road  
along the narrow path  
a cow under my arm

black cows  
the sign of mystery  
behind the silk saddle  
hidden treasure is buried

I secretly  
admire it  
in the silence a thin needle  
hides in the neck

(sportsmen walk marching parallel with the buildings):  
this way . . . everything runs without resistance  
roads from all directions converge here  
a hundred hooves steamroller along  
outrunning and conning the clumsy  
or just crushing them  
beware of the monsters  
with mottled eyes . . .

there will be futurian countries  
those who are bothered by these wires can turn their backs

(they sing):

from the height of skyscrapers  
oh how unstoppably  
carriages stream forth  
even shrapnel does not hit so hard

automobiles from everywhere produce ice  
glasses and posters perish with deadly demise  
Footsteps are hung  
on signboards  
people run with bowler hats  
upside down

(music and the sound of engines)

and awry curtains  
knock over window panes  
gr zhm  
km  
odgn sire vrzl  
gl . . .

(an extraordinary noise — an airplane crashes — a broken wing is  
visible on the stage)

(shouts)

z . . . z . . . it's knocking it's knocking a woman has been crushed a bridge  
has been knocked over

(after the crash some rush over to the plane while other watchers say):

1st: by the view by the siew<sup>23</sup>

began somersaulting began scratching himself

2nd—

sprenkurezal stor dvan entel ti te<sup>24</sup>

3rd—amda<sup>25</sup> kurlo tu ti it grabbed it sucked in

(aviator laughs offstage, enters and is still laughing)

Ha—ha—ha I am alive

(and everyone else laughs)

I am alive only the wings are just a bit ruffled and a shoe too!

(sings a military song):

l l l  
kr kr  
tlp  
tlmt  
kr vd t r  
kr vubr  
du du  
ra l  
k b i  
  
zhr  
vida  
diba<sup>26</sup>

the strongmen enter:

all is well that  
begins well  
and has no end  
the world will perish but to us there is no  
end!

(Curtain).

- 1 Rus. *letel'bishche* – *letaiushchee chudovishche* (flying monster or leviathan).
- 2 Rus. *drug* looks like “friend” but seems to be rather a truncated *vdrug* (“suddenly”).
- 3 Rus. *ozero* (“lake”) appears here and one more time below as *ozer* which transfers it from the neutral gender to the masculine.
- 4 Rus. *pennochka* (normative spelling *penochka*) – little singing bird (Chiffchaff or *Phylloscopus collybitus*).
- 5 Rus. *afiba* does not match any known word but is similar to too many. First, it might have something to do with ephebes – Athenian youth between 18–20 known *inter alia* for their participation in Apollo, the Sun god, cult. Second, it might resemble Ethiopia (in Rus. *Aefiopia*).
- 6 Rus. *proval* can mean either abyss or failure. Both are hardly usable with the adjective “*dozhdevo*” (“rainy”). But it is possible to say “rainy failure.”
- 7 Rus. *pugati* – neologism for those who are fearful or scared.
- 8 The words of the Traveler (except for the *lovi* – “catch”) belong to Kruchenykh’s transrational neologisms. *Snoi* and *spnye* relate to dreaming and sleeping – as well as Z.Z.Z. – which might be a sound of snoozing. On the other hand, we are hesitant to call them real *zaum*’ because many of these words are quite rationally built. Thus *garizon* may be Ukrainian or Bulgarian for “horizon,” or corrupted “*garnizon*” (Rus. for “garrison”). *Snoi* and *spnye* can be truncated Russian words *sTEnoi* and *sTEpnye*. In this case the outcry of the Traveler could mean “Harrison! Catch the steppe [invaders] by the wall.” Letters Z. Z. Z. can be in this context the next command: “Zalp, Zalp, Zalp” (“Fire, Fire, Fire”).
- 9 Rus. *kichka* – dialectal for the beak (or nose, prow) of a ship.
- 10 The above passages about the sword and the ball are based on the Russian omonyms *mechom* (“with a sword”) and *miachom* (“with a ball”).
- 11 Evidently a recollection of Tamerlane, or Timur the Lame.
- 12 Possibly Kruchenykh is invoking here a popular expression, “smash the skull” (*razmozhit' cherep*) in the disguise of *razmozhit' cherepakhu*.
- 13 Rus. *desiatykh stran* goes back to *tridesiatoe tsarstvo* from fairy tales and means faraway lands.
- 14 Rus. *vol'nye* more often is translated as “free” but here “loose” has more appropriate overtones.
- 15 In 1913 “the udder of the red dawn” (*vymia krasnoi zari*) sounds prophetically apocalyptic which almost tempted me to render it as “red aurora.” But in the English “dawn” we can discern the reminiscence of old Russian “*den-nitsa*” – 1) a dawn; 2) a fallen angel turned infernal.
- 16 As one of the principles for creating *zaum*’ was to use only parts of words (sometimes only vowels or consonants), “BRN BRN,” which appears here at the end of a rather aggressive song, can be a contraction of BRaN repeated twice. This Russian word has a double meaning: 1) swearing or vituperation, and 2) war, fight, skirmish. So we can possibly say “WR WR.”
- 17 The word combination *pestryi glaz* (which can be translated not only as “mottled” but as “dappled eye” as well) is not common for the Russian language. Kruchenykh could have borrowed it from Alagez – the name of an extinct volcano and the highest mountain in the Erevan province in Armenia, which in Turkish means literally “mottled eye” (now it is known under its Armenian name: Aragatz). If this suggestion is correct, it explains his words “the former leaves as a fast steam.” The “former” might refer to the extinct volcano. Another context to the Mottled Eye brings the expression “mottled people,” which became popular in Russia after the prominent writer Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin coined it in the satirical tale *Vialenaiia vobla* (“The Dried Caspian Roach,” 1884). When, a few lines later, Kruchenykh’s Cowards say: “It became easier to breathe for everybody and many people don’t know what to do with themselves now that they feel such lightness,” it can correspond to the following text from this tale: “The resolute people tried hard, in torments, this way or that; they questioned the situation but instead of any answers they only saw the locked door. Mottled people looked in bewilderment at their efforts and at the same time they sniffed what was in the air. The air was heavy, there was felt an iron ring, which became stiffer and stiffer every day. ‘Who will help us, who will say the right word?’ longed the mottled people . . . [The word was pronounced]. The society became sober. This picture of everyone’s liberation from superfluous thoughts, superfluous feelings and superfluous conscience was so touching.” Saltykov-Shchedrin gave an additional characteristic to mottled people in his *Mottled Letters* (1884–86). See Mikhail E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Sobranie sochinenii v 20 tomakh*, vol. 16, part 1, 376.
- 18 The reference to the “weak,” turned crazy, and the “strong,” and the order to swirl to one of the weaklings might bear an allusion to Leonid Andreev’s play *Anatema*, staged and published in late 1909. The devil Anatema says: “I kill the strong, and as for the weak, I force them to swirl in a drunk dance – in a crazy dance – in a devilish dance.”
- 19 Rus. *chtets* literally means “a reader.” Because the monologues this character pronounces are full of parody of symbolist theatre with its pretentiously bombastic rhetoric, it is stylistically better to say “Declamator.” The book titled *Chetets-Deklamator*, a chrestomathy of poetry and prosaic pieces for reciting from the stage, was widely popular in Russia from the time it was published in 1907.
- 20 Rus. *adskaiia shuka* makes one think of *adskaiia mashina* – what the bombs widely used by political radicals around that time were called. A perfect match of sulfuric infernality and new technology.
- 21 Rus. *perebiraetsia* can mean not only “being moved” but “being rearranged.” The latter reading is totally in accord with “imaginatively arrange” earlier in the same sentence.
- 22 Rus. *ikra* may mean either caviar or roe or a calf. I believe that this fleshy part of a leg is more feasible here because it’s known that calves might tremble after being on the road for a long time as well as out of fear – invoked here by the scaregun and the gallows.
- 23 Rus. *s vidu na sidu*. *Vid* – “view”; *sid* – meaningless (or possibly relates to sitting).
- 24 *Zaum* language in which certain Russian words can be traced using considerable imagination: “*Sprenku* (genitive of feminine name *Sprenka*) *rezal*” (“[Somebody named] *Sprenka* was cutting”) *stor[ozh]* (*guar[d]*) *dvan* (*divan*) *entel ti te* (can be an emotional exclamation “entel”). More likely is that the highly improbable *Sprenka*, “a hen” (*kur*), is hidden there. This *kur* appears in the next line as well in the word *kurlo* which is formed the same way as

*murlo* (a fat mug), *khamlo* (a cad), etc. So *kurlo* could have been a fat chicken or a smoking fat mug. But we should bear in mind that the translation of *zaum'* is as precarious as sometimes it is meaningless.

- 25 *Amda* could be an overheard word used in a number of Turkish languages (meaning “now”). Also it was the name of a certain Ethiopian emperor (fourteenth century) known through *The Abyssinian Chronicles* for his battles. With the pervasive undercurrent of the Pushkin theme, the Ethiopian association cannot be excluded. Besides, an interest in African subjects in Russian avant-garde circles around that time was quite strong – see the work of Vladimir Markov (Voldemar Matvei), a member of the Union of the Youth, in *The Art of the Negroes* written in the early 1910s (although published only in 1919) and possibly known to Kruchenykh. And, of course, Gumilev’s *Abyssinian Songs* (published in 1911 and 1912) add a valuable context for Kruchenykh’s Abyssinian trail.
- 26 The “military song” of the Aviator might not be totally meaningless. If we suggest that the consonants are usually the beginnings of words, we might have something like this (Kruchenykh’s letters are emphasized):

Letel Letel Letel	[!] Flew Flew Flew
KRuzhil KRuzhil	CiRcled CiRcled
ToLPa CRoWd	
Tak puLeMeT	Thus MachiNeGuN
otKRyl VDaril T-Rr	oPeNed HiT BaNG
KRov' Vsekh UBRal	BLood aLI KILLED
DUraki DUraki	JErks JErks
RAd Likuiu	REjoice Glad
and so on . . .	and so on . . .

— ES

The original libretto was published . . . in an edition of 1000 copies during the last week of December 1913 (Book Registry/Knizhnaia letopis' No. 193, Dec. 20, 1913 – Jan. 1, 1914). It was printed on ordinary paper stock and was 24 pages in length, sewn, with the buff-colored paper cover drawn on; the size was 24 x 17 cm. A drawing by David Burliuk was letterpressed on the back cover, and a version of the backdrop for Scene 4 by Kazimir Malevich was reproduced on the cover.

This new version of the libretto tries to follow the original layout of the Russian publication. However, margins of the libretto in the English translation vary somewhat from the original. This is due to a natural variation in length of words / sentences when translated.

Originally published in Russian as Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Pobeda nad solntsem*, prol. Velimir Khlebnikov, music Mikhail V. Matiushin, decoration Kazimir S. Malevich (Saint Petersburg: EUY, 1913). For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 63–89. For a French translation see *La victoire sur le soleil*, trans. J. C. et V. Marcadé, postface J. C. Marcadé (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'homme, 1976).

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Victory over the Sun*, 2 vols., comp. Patricia Railing, trans. Evgeny Steiner (Forest Row, East Sussex: Artists Bookworks, 2009), 7–9, 33–40, 44–101, 150–56.

## The Museum, its Meaning and Purpose 1913

D2

### Nikolai Fedorov

Our century, proud and egotistical (that is, “civilized” and “cultured”), when wishing to express disdain towards a work of art does not know another, more contemptuous expression than “send it to the archive, to the museum . . .”

. . . If archiving for storage merits contempt and if deathly renewal does not satisfy the living, then life should remain as it is, not honorable: quiet and death, eternal discord and struggle are identical evils. So long as the museum is only a storehouse, thus only a deathly renewal, and life is only struggle, hypocrisy is inevitable.

Meanwhile, the larger the storage grows, the more energetic the struggle becomes, and this increase is beyond all doubt. It is understood that a century that calls itself progressive will be all the more abundant, all the richer with “deposits” to the museum, so that it can be true to its name as a century of progress. Progress, more correctly, the struggle that delivers so many victims to the museum, robbing the items put into it of unfraternal activity, could be considered as carrying pain and death, as if every work of art does not have its own author-creator and as if progress does not supplant the living. Yet progress is in fact the creation of inanimate objects, accompanied by the replacement of living people. If progress could be called a real, actual hell, then the museum, if it is a paradise, is still only in the planning stages, since it is a collection in the guise of old things (junk) of the souls of the departed, the dead. But these souls are open only to those who have souls. For a museum, the person is undoubtedly a higher thing, but for industrial civilization and culture, the thing is higher than the person. The museum is the last remnant of the cult of ancestors; it is a very special cult, which, having been banished from religion (as we see among the protestants), is reestablished in the form of the museum. Beyond the junk that is preserved in museums, there is only dust itself, the very remains of the dead, and in the same way beyond the museum there is only the grave, if the museum itself will not transfer the dust into the town or transform the cemetery into the museum.

Our century profoundly venerates progress and its full expression in the exhibition, in other words, the struggle and displacement, and, of course, it wishes the eternal existence of the displacement that it calls progress. This existence, of course, never becomes sufficiently real to abolish the pain that accompanies the existence of every struggle. Our century could not dare to imagine that progress itself will become at some point the property of history and that this grave, the museum, will become the renewal of the victims of progress at that time when struggle is replaced by agreement. In this century, united by the spirit of renewal, the parties of progressives and conservatives, who have struggled from the start of history, may reconcile.

The second contradiction of the contemporary museum consists in the fact that the century, which values only the useful, gathers and stores the useless. Museums function as justification for the nineteenth century; their very existence in this iron age proves that conscience has not yet entirely disappeared. Otherwise, it is just as difficult to comprehend the preservation in the current materialistic, coarsely utilitarian age, as it is to comprehend the high-value of useless, obsolete things. In preserving things despite their lack of utility, our century, in contradiction to itself, still serves an unknown deity . . .

. . . The museum is a collection of all that is obsolete, dead, and useless; but this is the very reason why it is the hope of the century, because its very existence shows that there are no finished matters. This is why the museum consoles all sufferers. The museum is the highest authority for juridical-economic society. For the museum, death is not the end but only the beginning; the underground kingdom, which was considered hell, is even a special department of the museum. For the museum there is nothing hopeless, irreparable, i.e., nothing that is impossible to revive and resurrect. The deceased have even been brought to the museum from cemeteries, even from pre-historic ones; but it not only sings and prays like a church, it also works for all that struggle, not just for the dead! Only for those seeking revenge is there no consolation in a museum, as it is not an authority with the power of resurrection it is powerless to punish—because only life may be resurrected, not death, not taking someone’s life, not murder! The museum is the highest authority that should and may give life back, but not take it away . . .



. . . it is not enough to confine oneself only to inward remembrance, to the cult of dead. It is necessary that all the living, fraternally united in the ancestral temple or in the museum, turn the blind force of nature into one governed by thought. The living, who are not only the agents of observation, are also an astronomic regular. Only then the unfeeling will not reign, the feeling ones will not be deprived of life, then everything that is felt will be restored. These resurrected generations will reunite all the worlds and will open an unlimited field for their allied work, and only it will render the inner dissonance needless and impossible . . .

The museum is not a collection of things, but a temple of people, whose function is not to gather dead things but to bring life back to the remnants of the past, to resurrect the dead through their works and to serve living agents.

Nikolai Fedorov (1829–1903) sought to obliterate any traces of his own biography, so very little is known about his origins and the first decades of his life. He was probably born in a village to the north of Tambov province in May 1829 (the exact date is unknown) as the extra-marital son of a certain Count Gagarin. When he was christened he was given a paternal name and a family name based on his father's forename ('Fedor').

Fedorov went to primary school in Shack and secondary school in Tambov. He then studied business at the renowned Richelieu Lyceum in Odessa. He abandoned his studies in 1852 and lived an ascetic, modest life from that point onwards. From 1854 to 1868 he taught history and geography at provincial schools in central Russia. It was supposedly during this period that he developed the basic ideas of his philosophy.

In 1868 Fedorov went to Moscow, where he initially survived on occasional employment until he found a post as an assistant at the Chertkov library in 1869. From 1874 to 1898 he served as duty clerk in the reading room and catalogue room at the library of the public Rumiantsev Museum, the largest library in Moscow. He came to be admired there as the "ideal librarian" and "the Socrates of Moscow," and met a number of leading intellectual figures. Lev Tolstoj, Vladimir Solov'ev, Afanasii Fet and later also Valerii Briusov all took part in Fedorov's philosophical symposia, which were held regularly at his place of work in the library. After his retirement Fedorov worked at the library of the foreign office archives in Moscow. He died in Moscow on December 15, 1903.

Fedorov was a believing and entirely selfless Christian. Since he rejected the idea of property—both material and intellectual—he only owned the most basic necessities. He despised money and gave anything he did not need of his modest salary to the poor. Lev Tolstoj, being a frequent visitor to the Rumiantsev library in the 1880s and 1890s, was an ardent admirer, though Fedorov held the rich and vain count for a hypocrite; he preached brotherly love and the virtues of the simple life while wearing silk underwear beneath his peasants' garb. Fedorov often changed his place of residence but usually lived in tiny, unfurnished box rooms that were like monks' cells. His clothing and eating habits were similarly ascetic: he rarely took hot meals. He suppressed his sexual urges and even shunned sleep. If he got tired he would lie down on a chest or a wooden bed with a stack of newspapers for a pillow. He noted down his thoughts in the margins of newspapers and on scraps of paper.

The majority of Fedorov's philosophical writings can probably be dated to the 1890s. Particularly productive periods were spent on a number of long visits to Ashgabat in Turkmenistan, where one of his close confidants, Nikolai Peterson, worked as the district judge. Fedorov published very little of any significance while he was alive, and even then anonymously or under a pseudonym. It was only after his death that Peterson and the philosopher Vladimir Kozhevnikov gathered together and deciphered his dispersed and partly fragmentary manuscripts, publishing them under the title *Filosofiiia obshchego dela* (The Philosophy of Communal Work) in 1906 and 1913 as a short print run of two extensive volumes that were given to interested parties free of charge.

In the 1920s and 1930s a small group of dedicated admirers sought to introduce Fedorov's ideas into public discourse, initially in Moscow, then from Manchurian Harbin. Among those who came to know and study Fedorov's work were Maxim Gorky, Andrei Platonov and Boris Pasternak. The émigré religious philosophers Nikolai Berdiaev and Sergei Bulgakov took interest in Fedorov's work, but so too did the leftist "Eurasians." Fedorov was rediscovered in the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s. Though initially considered a materialist, he is now projected as the representative of an "active evolutionary, non-spheric Christianity" (Svetlana Semenova) and the founder of "Russian cosmism." His works are available in an annotated five-volume edition (Moscow, 1995–2000).

— MH

Originally published in Russian as Nikolai Fedorov, "Muzei, ego smyl i naznacheniiie," in *Filosofiiia obshchego dela. Stat'i, mysli, i pis'ma N.F. Fedorova* [The Philosophy of the Common Task. The Essays, Ideas, and Letters of N. F. Fedorov] (Moscow: N.P. Peterson, 1913), vol. 2, pp. 398–473. For a German translation see *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 68–69, 127–232.

The version here has been translated by Erika Wolf from Nikolai Fedorov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* [Collected Works in Four Volumes] (Moscow: Progress, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 370–430, 491–493. Fragments selected by Michael Hagemester.

The biographical note has been translated by Jonathan Blower from *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 68–69.

## The Biography of the Moon 1916

D3

### Aleksei Kruchenykh

The Moon,<sup>1</sup> that antiquated enchantress, which illuminated Paris when he abducted Helen, and which made languorous our young grannies with a Turgenev opus in hands—that moon the new idolaters just cannot forget.

One thousand centuries of poetry look at us from the moon!<sup>2</sup>

Here it is—an age-old subject for dreamers, pining loners and those hopelessly in love. Here is their blue bare rose.<sup>3</sup>

The old liar, tricked them!

And she laughed at them as never before!

Because there never had been so languorous and drooping a people.

Because there appeared decadents<sup>4</sup> with watery legs; people who are world germs<sup>5</sup> from the bottom of the sea and from Petrograd's morasses—cold incubi and mermaids, lonely virgins and eternal cadavers with fixed, recumbent and laughing stares on their cold faces.

And they all together began to yearn after the moon—yes, of course—up to a sore throat, a frog-in-the-throat, catarrh and tears, and up to losing consciousness.

Brothers! Sisters!  
Howl and bay at the moon!..  
(F. Sologub)<sup>6</sup>

Or, in another place:

. . . You will not understand that I live not in vain,  
That my doggy exploit is worth something.  
Since at midnight no one else will bay at the moon  
So dolefully and passionately as me.  
March 1914  
(F. Sologub)<sup>7</sup>

Not without reason, in some provinces the verb *sologubit'* means exactly to be engaged in self-fornication.<sup>8</sup>

Love and longing—up to mental anguish, to agonizing canine howling, to sadism—this is all in order to stop yearning. He grabs a shoe or a hat (Hamsun<sup>9</sup> or Kuzmin)—and begins chewing and kissing it and howling. And then something unusual and unprecedented happened: the immaculate milky visage of Diana<sup>10</sup>—so round and luminous, so kind and clear—wincing, went sour and turned black!

Swaddled, I lie submissively  
For a very long time.  
And a crescent—pitch black—  
Looks at me through the window.  
(Z. Gippius)<sup>11</sup>

Of course—it turned black and shriveled because of illness.

Young and beautiful  
And hopelessly ill  
The moon looks down on earth  
Clearly and nonchalantly.  
(F. Sologub)<sup>12</sup>

Its days are counted and lo—it is now accomplished.

*The Sickly Moon*, the book of the futurians, has been published.<sup>13</sup>

There are songs in it about a miserable bloodless louse crawling through the worn-out lining of skies. But even this was for the last time!

The moon is pegged out—<sup>14</sup>

And from now on it is rejected and scrapped from the poetic use as a useless thing, as a rubbed away toothbrush!

Le-liun', sliun', pliun'.<sup>15</sup>

1. The sun and the moon have been key motifs for poets of all nations down the ages. Thus, for Kruchenykh and his fellow futurist subvertors, these two sources of inspiration for all other poets became the main object of dethronement. He had done with the sun in 1913 in *The Victory over the Sun*, and now it was the moon's turn. He was not the first: Marinetti titled his first manifesto (1909) in this fashion: "Uccidiamo il chiaro di Luna" (Let's Kill the Moonlight!). Even earlier Jules Laforgue compared the moon with the bladder. The Russian futurists pitched in with the book *Dokhlaia Luna* [The Sickly Moon] (Moscow: Gileia, 1913). The following year, in the book *The Roaring Parnassus* (Saint Petersburg: Zhuravl', 1914) David Burliuk used such poetic expressions as "The moon begs like an old woman" and "The moon scrawls like a louse through the lining of the skies," or "Selena, your corpse is floating in the blue." The gist of the futurists' attitude to the moon was well expressed by Victor Shklovskii in the book about Mayakovsky: "He saw the moon not as a shining path on the surface of the sea. He saw the lunar herring and thought that it would be good to have some bread with this moon." Thus the moon was supposed to be thrown overboard from the steamship of modernity alongside the sun and Pushkin ("the sun of Russian poetry") [ES].
2. An allusion to Napoleon's words before the battle in Egypt (July 21, 1798): "Soldats, du haut de ces pyramides, quarante siecles vous contemplant" (Soldiers, from the summit of yonder pyramids forty centuries look down upon you) [ES].
3. The Blue Rose (Golubaia Rosa) was the name of the group of the symbolist artists and sculptors (P. Kuznetsov, N. Sapunov, N. Krymov, M. Sar'ian, A. Matveev et al.) who organized an exhibition under this name in 1907 in Moscow. The group dissolved in 1910. By using "blue bare" (or "bluish naked"—*golubaia golaia*) Kruchenykh tried to make fun of the refined symbolist aesthetes [ES].
4. This refers to Russian early symbolists of the 1890s (particularly V. Briusov, Z. Gippius, F. Sologub, D. Merezhkovskii and others) who shaped the early modern period in Russia under the label of "Decadents," an epithet that they connoted positively (see A. H.-L., *Der Russische Symbolismus*, vol. 1) [AH-L].
5. This alludes to Pavel Filonov's book *Propeven' o prorasli mirovoi* [Cantata of the World Germs] (Petrograd: Zhuravl', 1915) [ES].
6. From the poem "Vysoka Luna Gospodnia" [The God's Moon is High] in F. Sologub's *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 145 [AH-L].
7. Kruchenykh united the sado-masochism so important to the symbolists—especially Sologub—with the ever-returning motif of the dog. For more on the "dog" theme, see also Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (Vienna, Leipzig 1903); Russian translation 1909; and by the same author, *On Last Things* (1904, Vienna 1980). On "authorship and a dog's life," see the explanations by F. Ph. Ingold in *Im Namen des Autors* [In the Name of the Author], 39–82; on the dog as the preferred subject of animal experiments in early Soviet times see Torsten Rüting, *Pavlov und der neuen Mensch. Diskurse über Disziplinierung in Sowjetrussland* [Pavlov and the New Human. Discourses on Discipline in Soviet Russia], Munich 2002, 207ff.: Pavlov's dog was famously parodied in Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *Heart of a Dog* (written 1925; German translation by Neuwied 1971) [AH-L].
8. Here Kruchenykh evidently knows better than all Russian lexicographers: the word *sologubit'* is not present in most detailed Russian vocabularies. Not a single mention is found in the internet either [ES].
9. An allusion to Hamsun's Lieutenant Glahn from *Pan* (1894) where the protagonist killed his beloved dog [ES].
10. "The visage of Diana" (or "Dian's visage" in Ch. Johnston's translation—Rus. *lik Diany*) metonymically refers to the moon in Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin* (I, XLVII) [ES].
11. From the poem "Cherny serp" [The Black Crescent], 1908. In Z. Gippius, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 175 [AH-L].
12. See Fedor Sologub, *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 7, 14 [AH-L].
13. *Dokhlaia luna* [The Sickly Moon. The Collected Works of the Only Futurists in the World] (Moscow: Gileia, 1913) [AH-L].
14. "Luna podokhla," i.e. "The Moon Shrank"—also to be found in the title of the futurist collection *Dokhlaia luna* [AH-L].
15. Here Kruchenykh uses his trans-rational language that looks like a mocking (and corrupted) French *la lune* (possibly he was not good in French genders) and its rhyming counterpart *sliun'* (resembles Rus. *sliuni*, 'saliva')—which is cogently followed by *pliun'* ('spit!' in the imperative mode) [ES].

Originally published in Russian as Aleksei Kruchenykh, "Biografiia lunny" in Aleksei Kruchenykh and Ivan Kliun, *Tainnye poroki akademikov* [The Secret Vices of Academics] (Moscow: n. p., 1916). Reprinted in *Apokalipsis v russkoi literature* (Moscow: MAF, 1923), 29–30. For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 111–12, 140.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Evgeny Steiner.

The notes have been translated by Andrew Davison from *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 140.

# The Union "Freedom for Art," An Appeal 1917

D4

To Arts Workers

To artists, poets, writers, musicians, actors, architects, sculptors, critics, archeologists and art historians.

AN APPEAL

Comrade-citizens.

The great Russian revolution calls us to the cause. Join together. Fight for a free art. Do battle for the right to self-determination and self-government.

The revolution creates freedom. Without freedom, there is no art. Only in a free democratic republic is democratic art possible.

Battle for the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly, which will establish a democratic republic.

Reject the plans to place fetters on freedom.

Demand the convocation of an All-Russian Constituent Assembly of Arts Workers based upon universal, equal, direct, secret and proportional voting, without distinction as to sex. The Constituent Assembly of Arts Workers will decide questions about the organization of the artistic life of Russia. The meeting of the Constituent Assembly of Arts Workers is possible only after peace: the majority of comrades are in the trenches.

Protest against the establishment of a ministry of arts or another agency, against the seizure of power by individual groups before the convocation of the Constituent Assembly of Arts Workers.

Come to an organizational meeting on March 11 at 5:00 (Kazanskii 33, studio), or on Sunday, March 12 at 2:00 in the afternoon, at the Mikhailovskii Theater, to the meeting of workers of the arts.

The Union of artistic, theatrical, musical, and poetic societies, exhibitions, publishers, magazines, and newspapers "Freedom for Art."

Information and secretary: V. M. Ermolaeva, Baskov Lane, tel. 54–78.

Originally published in Russian as Soiuz 'Svoboda iskusstva,' "Vozzvanie," *Pravda*, March 11, 1917. Reprinted in B. Suris, "Einige Seiten aus dem künstlerischen Leben Russlands im Jahre 1917," *Iskusstvo 4* (Moscow, 1972), 62–67. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 40.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# For Revolution. An Appeal

## 1917

D5

Comrades!

The Petrograd art workers—artists, poets, writers, actors and musicians—have organized the society “For Revolution” with a view to helping revolutionary parties and organizations in the propagation of revolutionary ideas by means of art.

Comrades, if you want your manifestations, posters and banners to be noticed, get the assistance of artists.

If you want your proclamations and appeals to be louder and more persuasive, get the assistance of poets and writers.

Apply for assistance to the society “For Revolution.”

The society is divided into party sections. More requests and orders! Work free of charge! Questions and orders by telephone 54–78 (address yourself to comrade Ermolaeva) or 47–41 (comrade Zdanevich, from 11 am to 1 pm).

Organizational bureau: O. Brik, L. Bruni, V. Ermolaeva, Il. Zdanevich, Z. Lasson-Sprioiva, M. Le-Dantiu, A. Lur’e, N. Liobavina, V. Mayakovsky, Vs. Meierkhol’d, V. Tatlin, S. Tolstaia, V. Shklovskii

Originally published in Russian as “Na revoliutsiiu,” *Russkaia volia*, March 28, 1917. Reprinted in B. Suris, “Einige Seiten aus dem künstlerischen Leben Rußlands im Jahre 1917,” *Iskusstvo* 4 (Moscow, 1972), 62–67. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 40–41.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# The Artist-Proletarian

## 1918

D6

Osip Brik

The art of the future is proletarian art. Art will either be proletarian or will not be.

But who will create it?

Those people who understand proletarian art as “art for proletarians” will not hesitate to reply that this art, just like any other, will be created by artists, those who have “talent.” In their opinion, talent is universal. It can adjust easily to any consumerist environment. Today, this environment may be bourgeois, tomorrow proletarian, what difference does it make? Such people cannot get rid of their bourgeois, consumerist attitude to things. They are trying to place the proletariat in the strange position of an art patron who lets himself be entertained with curious inventions. From here stem constant concerns about the ease of understanding, accessibility, as if this were the point. We have known for a long time that the more accessible the art, the more boring it is. However, the “talents” are quite afraid to anger their new consumers by a careless escapade and instead are boring them to death.

They are not the ones to build the art of the future. Soulless hacks, philistines, lacking live revolutionary proletarian consciousness, they are doomed to peril, along with the out-of-control bourgeois element that gave them birth.

Who then?

“Proletarians themselves.” This will be the answer of those people who understand proletarian art as “art by proletarians.” They think that it would be enough to take any proletarian, teach him art, and everything that he creates will be proletarian art. However, experience tells us that in these cases, instead of proletarian art, we would have a feeble parody of the long gone art of the past. It could not be otherwise: art, like any production, does not tolerate amateurism. Proletkul’t forgot about this.

Proletarian art is not “art for proletarians” and not “art by proletarians,” but art by artists-proletarians. Only they will create this art of the future.

An artist-proletarian is a person who combines creativity and proletarian consciousness. They are combined not temporarily, but permanently, in one undivided whole.

An artist-proletarian is distinguished from an artist-bourgeois not because he creates for a different consumer, nor because he comes from a different social background, but because of his attitude toward himself and his work.

An artist-bourgeois thinks that creating is his personal affair, but an artist-proletarian knows that he and his talent belong to a collective.

An artist-bourgeois creates in order to realize his ego; an artist-proletarian creates in order to complete a socially important business.

An artist-bourgeois juxtaposes himself to the crowd as a foreign element; an artist-proletarian sees his own people in front of him.

In his chase for glory and profit, an artist-bourgeois tries to cater to the tastes of the crowd. An artist-proletarian does not know personal gain. He struggles against its sluggishness and is led by art, incessantly moving forward.

An artist-bourgeois repeats clichés of past art for the thousandth time; an artist-proletarian always creates something new, because herein lies the call of his social duty.

These are the basic principles of the art of the future. Those who are aware of them are proletarians, artists-proletarians, builders of the art of the future.

Originally published in Russian as Osip Brik, “Khudozhnik-Proletarii,” *Iskusstvo kommuny* 2 (Petrograd, December 15, 1918): 1. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 45–47.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Natasha Kurchanova.

# “Futurism” and Proletarian Art 1918

D7

## Natan Al'tman

Certain art circles and private individuals who not so long ago abused us in various “cultural publications” for working with the Soviet government and who knew no other name for us than “bureaucrats” and “perfunctory artists” would now rather like to take our place.

And so a campaign has begun against futurism, which, they say, is a millstone around the worker's neck and whose claims to “being the art of the proletariat” are “ridiculous,” etc. . .

But are they so ridiculous?

Why did it need a whole year of proletarian government and a revolution that encompassed half the world for the “silent to speak up”?

Why did only revolutionary futurism march in step with the October Revolution?

Is it just a question of outward revolutionary fervor, just a mutual aversion to the old forms, which joins futurism with the proletariat?

Not even they deny that futurism is a revolutionary art that is breaking all the old bonds and in this sense is bringing art closer to the proletariat.

We maintain that there is a deeper link between futurism and proletarian creation.

People naive in matters of art are inclined to regard any sketch done by a worker, any poster on which a worker is depicted, as a work of proletarian art.

A worker's figure in heroic pose with a red flag and an appropriate slogan—how temptingly intelligible that is to a person unversed in art and how terribly we need to fight against this pernicious intelligibility.

Art that depicts the proletariat is as much proletarian art as the *Chernosotenets*<sup>1</sup> who has gotten into the Party and can show his membership card is a communist.

Just like anything the proletariat creates, proletarian art will be collective: the principle that distinguishes the proletariat as a class from all other classes.

We understand this, not in the sense that one work of art will be made by many artists, but in the sense that while executed by one creator, the work itself will be constructed on collectivist bases.

Take any work of revolutionary, futurist art. People who are used to seeing a depiction of individual objects or phenomena in a picture are bewildered. You cannot make anything out. And indeed, if you take out any one part from a futurist picture, it then represents an absurdity. Because each part of a futurist picture acquires meaning only through the interaction of all the other parts; only in conjunction with them does it acquire the meaning with which the artist imbued it.

A futurist picture lives a *collective life*: by the same principle on which the proletariat's whole creation is constructed.

Try to distinguish an individual face in a proletarian procession.

Try to understand it as individual persons—absurd.

Only in conjunction do they acquire all their strength, all their meaning.

How is a work of the old art constructed—the art depicting reality around us?

Does every object exist in its own right? They are united only by extrinsic literary content or some other such content. And so cut out any part of an old picture, and it won't change at all as a result. A cup remains the same cup; a figure will be dancing or sitting pensively, just as it was doing before it was cut out.

The link between the individual parts of a work of the old art is the same as between people on Nevsky Prospekt. They have come together by chance, prompted by an external cause, only to go their own ways as soon as possible. Each one for himself, each one wants to be distinguished.

Like the old world, the capitalist world, works of the old art live an individualistic life.

Only futurist art is constructed on collective bases.

Only futurist art is right now the art of the proletariat.

Natan Al'tman: born Vinnitsa, Ukraine, 1889; died Leningrad, 1970. 1901–7: studied painting and sculpture at the Odessa Art School; 1910–12: attended Vasileva's Académie Russe in Paris; 1912–16: contributed to the *Union of Youth, Exhibition of Painting, 1915, 0.10, Knave of Diamonds*, and other exhibitions; 1912–17: contributed to the satirical journal *Riab'* in Saint Petersburg; 1918: professor at Pegoskhum/Petrograd Svomas; member of the Visual Arts Section of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (IZO Narkompros); designed decoration for Uritskii Square, Petrograd; 1919: leading member of Komfut; 1921: designed decor for Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Misteriia-buff*; 1922: member of the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK); 1929–35: lived in Paris; 1935: returned to Russia; 1936: settled in Leningrad.

The text of this piece, “‘Futurizm’ i proletarskoe iskusstvo,” is from the journal *Iskusstvo kommuny*.<sup>2</sup> *Iskusstvo kommuny* was the weekly newspaper of IZO Narkompros, and during its short life from December 1918 to April 1919 it published many radical articles by such artists and critics as Natan Al'tman, Osip Brik, Boris Kushner and Nikolai Punin.<sup>3</sup> The futurists—and, as Al'tman indicates in his note to the title: “I am using ‘futurism’ in its everyday meaning, i.e., all leftist tendencies in art,” the term is a general one here—considered themselves to be at one with the revolutionary government. Like many other avant-garde artists at this time, Al'tman believed, albeit briefly, that individual easel painting was outmoded and that art should have a collective basis; essentially this meant that the artist was to turn to mass art forms such as monuments and bas-reliefs, to social and cultural heroes, street decoration, and book, postage-stamp and stage design. Apart from Al'tman's futurist panels and his decorations for Uritskii Square, perhaps the finest example of his mass art was his album of sketches of Lenin published in Petrograd in 1920.

— JB

1. The *Chernosotenetsy*, or Black Hundreds, were members of a secret-police and monarchist organization set up to counteract the revolutionary movement in 1905–7. *Chernosotenetsy* soon became identified with the more general concepts of “rightist” and “extreme conservative.”
2. *Iskusstvo kommuny* 2 (Petrograd, December 15, 1918): 3; the text is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let* (Soviet Art of the Last Fifteen Years), ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 167–68.
3. See Ivan Matsa, *Iz istorii sovetskoi esteticheskoi mysli* (Moscow, 1967), 509, for some bibliographical details

Originally published in Russian as Natan Al'tman, “‘Futurizm’ i proletarskoe iskusstvo,” *Iskusstvo kommuny* 2 (Petrograd, December 15, 1918): 3. It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa et al. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 167–68. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 47, 48.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from “‘Futurism’ and Proletarian Art,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 161–64.

# Communism and Futurism

## 1919

D8

Viktor Shklovskii / Nikolai Punin

“The people of the past were no wiser than themselves, assuming that the sails of state could be built for the mast of space alone.” *The Trumpet of the Martians*

Below we feature the article of Viktor Shklovskii “About Art and Revolution.” This article at the end is sufficiently strong in the accusations contained in it, and interesting, if not in thought then in the arguments that accompany this thought.

### About Art and Revolution

Viktor Shklovskii

“ULLIA, ULLIA, MARTIANS!” (*The Trumpet of the Martians*)

That which I now write, I write in the spirit of the greatest friendship with the people with whom I argue.

Yet the mistakes that have been made are not just obvious to me but will be burdensome for all art, so that it is impossible to remain silent.

I consider that the most severe mistake of contemporary writers about art is the equation between social revolution and the revolutionary forms of art, which they now demonstrate. The Scythians, the futurist-communists, Proletkul't—all proclaim and hammer one and the same: a new art should correspond to the new world, the new class ideology. The second premise is common: our art, particularly the new, expresses revolution, the will of the new class and the new world-view. Proof of this is usually quite naive: Proletkul't argues for its own conformity to the given moment, as its poets and even their parents were proletarians. The Scythians display a purely literary method in the use of the “people’s language” in poetry, produced by the merging of old literary language with urban speech, and deriving their history from Leskov through Remizov, as an indicator of the earthiness of their writers. While the futurists produce as evidence of their organic hostility to the capitalist order that hatred which the bourgeoisie expressed from the day we appeared in this world.

Not a very dense argument, a weak foundation for soliciting a place in the history of social revolution, for a place which we perhaps do not need any more than sunlight needs an apartment on Nevskii Prospekt with three rooms and a bath.

All these proofs have one thing in common: All of their authors suppose that new forms of everyday life create new forms of art. That is, they suppose that art is one of the functions of life. This is the way it works: let’s assume that the facts of life are a sequence of numbers, then art will appear like logarithms of these numbers.

Yet we futurists entered with a new banner: “*New form gives birth to new content.*” We liberated art from everyday life, which in creation plays a role only in filling in forms, and may even be banished entirely, as Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh did, when they did not want to fill, à la Guyau, “the distance between rhymes with poetry” and filled it with willful marks that sounded thoughtful. But the futurists were only aware of the work of centuries. Art was always free from life, and it has never been reflected in the color of a flag over the fortress of a city.

If everyday life and production relations influence art, would not the subjects be bound to that place, where they correspond to these relations? Yet subjects are homeless.

If only everyday life were conveyed in stories, then European science would not puzzle over where in Egypt, India or Persia and when the stories of “One Thousand and One Nights” were created.

If social and class factors were expressed in art, would it be possible that the well-known Russian tales about the master would also include the tales about the priest?

If ethnographic features were expressed in art, then tales about non-Russians would not be reversed, and any given people would not tell tales about their neighbors.

If art was so flexible that it could depict changes in everyday life conditions, then the subject of abduction, which we see in the words of Menander’s slave in the comedy *Epipetreponte* would be a strictly literary tradition and would not have survived to Ostrovskii and would not have filled literature, like ants fill the forest.

New forms in art are not only those that appear in order to express new content, but also in order to replace old forms, which have ceased to be artistic.

Tolstoy had already stated that now it was impossible to create in the forms of Gogol and Pushkin because these forms had already been found.

Aleksandr Veselovskii had already assumed the start of a free history of literature, as a history of literary form.

Yet we futurists bind our creativity with the Third International.

Comrades, after all this is a surrender of all positions, this is Belinskii-Vengerov and the “History” of the Russian intelligentsia.

Futurism was one of the purest achievements of human genius. It was the benchmark—how high it raised our understanding of the laws of freedom of creation.

Does it not offend the eye that we now attempt to attach to it this rustling tail from a newspaper article?

### An answer

Nikolai Punin

The author’s basic proposition—the independence of artistic forms, art for art’s sake (idealism)—is rather widespread, particularly among a certain known part of our intelligentsia. Yet this is not the intelligentsia of Belinskii-Vengerov, to which comrade Shklovskii referred and who are undoubtedly already over and done with (not even a corpse, simply ashes). This is the intelligentsia of Briusov-Aikhenvald that truly still stinks like a corpse. The fact that such a person as dear to us as V. Shklovskii could, even for a minute, come near to this intelligentsia saddens us, especially considering our friendly feelings towards comrade Shklovskii. Based on this article, we, of course, think that this convergence is the fruit of misunderstanding, nothing more.

In reality, comrade Shklovskii accuses us for that which we did not do and did not think to do, and reproaches us for that which essentially does not contradict his own argument.

Speaking about the evidence of our closeness to the communist revolution, Shklovskii writes: “While the futurists produce as evidence of their organic hostility to the capitalist order that hatred which the bourgeoisie expressed from the day we appeared in this world.”

Never and nowhere did we advance this fact as evidence of our proximity to communism. At best we pointed to it as a well-known affirmation of our general creative preconditions. At present, the words of comrade Shklovskii sound even ironic. I am not sure whether he is familiar with the persecutions being carried out against futurism by several Moscow communists—they are known to us, and we are used to this. We were exiled and will be exiled, not because we are anti-bourgeois or, on the contrary, bourgeois, but because we possess the gift of creativity, and no mediocrity, even a super-communist one, may tolerate us. Concerning our “proofs,” they are of an entirely different order and stem directly from of our world view; they are innumerable, they are our life, our hands, our work.

Above all, we are materialists and in this regard comrade Shklovskii is correct, accusing us of hostility towards idealism. Yes, we do not recognize art beyond life, and equally we do not recognize art as one of the functions of life. We do not believe that in the beginning the Earth was created, and art in the form of God sped around the Earth, separating light from darkness and begetting terrestrial creatures, to create the world. Art is form (existence), just as socialist theory and communist revolution are forms. Furthermore, art is the most synthetic form and therefore, perhaps the most mighty. Speaking of futurism, we always spoke of might; moreover, we already indicated that futurism is an amendment to communism, as futurism is not only an artistic movement but also an entire system of form (see *Art of the Commune*). Now we are even ready to assert that communism as a theory of culture could not exist without futurism, just as yesterday’s evening does not exist without our remembrance of it today.

If it is necessary to search for some sort of objective evidence of our kinship with communism, then it is precisely in this materialist viewpoint with all its possible conclusions: the mechanization of life, collectivism, determinism, systematic organization of culture and, most importantly, creativity—as we believe that creativity is the most essential foundation that currently binds futurism together with communism.

At present there are no other movements, aside from the socialist and futurist ones, which have in mind the future, and there are no other methods, besides communism and futurism, which approach this future with full creative effort.

This creativity, this unity of materialist approach, this collectivism, the very methods of invention—they essentially bring us closer to the communist revolution, exactly to revolution, I emphasize this, and not closer to the existing Soviet everyday life.

Concerning the latter (everyday life, not existence), we also have little to do with it as—according to the excellent expression of Shklovskii—sunlight has nothing to do with an apartment on Nevskii Prospect, and in this is our sharpest difference from the Scythians and Proletkul't. The Scythians and Proletkul't—I'm not sure who does it more—are typical intelligentsia and thus everyday life organizations. The former first appeared as the belching of the obsolete intelligentsia of everyday life of the nineteenth century. The latter are present day intelligentsia who have already managed to forget that their parents are proletarians.

Our battle boils down basically to a battle about everyday life. Did we not shout at and abuse the content-driven nature and passeism of several of our contemporaries? Did we not battle with various sorts of supposedly professional unions of artists, considering them—and we do not renounce this—typical counter-revolutionary organizations? Isn't it for this that they now hate us, that we ridiculed Soviet everyday life and battled against it, just as we have always battled against all everyday life? For everyday life in its essence is diametrically opposed to art. Everyday life is a putrid poison, everyday life is dross, everyday life is a corpse that has left behind life, everyday life is that stagnant mortified fabric, which, like a footprint, lies across humanity and with thousands of hands pulls us towards yesterday. After this, how is it possible for us to think that “new forms of everyday life create new forms of art?” Not only we—how can any genuine communist think this? Despite everything, if such a person comes across our creative path, we will shout at him: “Comrades, after all this is a surrender of all positions, this is Belinskii-Vengerov and the “History” of the Russian intelligentsia.” It is all the same for us, communists as well as futurists: “New form gives birth to new content.” For form, existence determines consciousness and not the other way around (K. Marx). Hence, comrade, Shklovskii's argument does not contradict our position. Why, however, does Shklovskii mobilize this argument against us? Here is why.

Comrade Shklovskii writes: “But we futurists unite our art with the Third International”—and Comrade Shklovskii sees a crime in this. A crime, as the International, in comrade Shklovskii's opinion, is a form of everyday life, as is the revolution and in general the whole of socialism. As regards to socialism and revolution, we are ready to agree that in the hands of the Kerenskii, Scheidemanns and Kautskys they probably really became everyday events, but only in these dead hands. In the hands of the communists and in the form of the International at present, while the features of everyday life are not yet evident, they already begin to take form in the communist consciousness. Being horrified before the act of the union of art with the International, Comrade Shklovskii only displays an ignorance of the International.

The International is the same *futurist form* as any other creatively established new form . . . The workers movement is characteristic in that it strives towards the establishment of a classless culture, but it is this very striving that is least typical from the viewpoint of everyday life. All these examples of “subjects” that comrade Shklovskii cites convince us that all previous political movements were to a greater or lesser degree movements of everyday life that stood in opposition to the nature of artistic creativity. However, the workers movement is the first political movement that has bypassed nationalism and along with it everyday life, and because of this is therefore not opposed to artistic creativity.

Homeless subjects, but is not the proletariat homeless as well? Does not the communist Third International have that form which will also produce its own content? I ask, what is the difference between the Third International and Tatlin's *Relief* or Khlebnikov's *The Trumpets of the Martians*? For me, there is none. The first, second and third are new forms, which are enjoyed, played and employed by humanity. The future belongs to them, the future belongs to everyone who is with them—this is futurism . . .

Moreover, the Third International, developing in the direction of the Second and especially of the First International, takes us away from those “masts of space,” upon which people of the past built their governments. Spatial-nationalist territories are being destroyed, territories of time under an integrated unified space arise, spread by the international proletariat. Is this not the new, *our* futurist form.

At the same time, exactly this form, not apprehended by comrade Shklovskii, led him to attack us for a surrender of position. This accusation would be no joke if we really felt ourselves to be in difficulty, if this accusation was not argued by propositions that in any way contradicted us. This last circumstance hints that the matter was a misunderstanding. Comrade Shklovskii was poorly informed about those arguments which we have concerning governance. He did not clearly conceive of the meaning of the words “everyday life” and “form” (existence) and did not know what the Third International is. With this, I hope, all has been settled.

Originally published in Russian as “Kommunizm i futurizm,” *Iskusstvo kommuny* 17 (March 30, 1919), a spread consisting of two texts: Viktor Shklovskii's “Ob iskusstve i revoliutsii” (p. 2) and Nikolai Punin's response (p. 2–3). For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 52–56.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## On the Museum 1919

D9

### Kazimir Malevich

The center of political life has moved to Russia.

Here has been formed the breast against which the entire power of the old-established states smashes itself.<sup>1</sup>

Hence goes forth and shines in all corners of the earth the new comprehension of the essence of things, and hither to the center representatives of old culture crawl out of their cracks and come with their worn out old teeth to gnaw themselves a piece from the hem of the new coat.

A similar center must be formed for art and creativity.<sup>2</sup>

Here is the rotating creative axis and race, and it is here that a new contemporary culture must arise, with no room for alms from the old one.

Hitherto to the new pole of life and excitement all innovators must surely stream in order to take part in creation on a world scale.

The innovators in contemporary life must create a new epoch—such that not one rib of it will touch the old one.

We must recognize “short duration” as being the sharp distinction between our epoch and the past—the moment of creative impetus, the speedy displacement in forms; there is no stagnation—only tempestuous movement.

As a result, treasures do not exist in our epoch and nothing is created on the foundations of an age-old fortress.

The stronger the hoop, the more hopeless the position of our will, which in conjunction with time strives to destroy what reason has for years kept in chains.

We still cannot overcome the Egyptian pyramids. The baggage of antiquity sticks out in every one like a splinter of old wisdom, and our anxiety to preserve it is a waste of time and laughable for those that float in the vortex of winds beyond the clouds in the blue lampshade of the sky.

Our wisdom hastens and strives towards the uncharted abysses of space, seeking a shelter for the night in its gulfs.

The flexible body of the propellor with difficulty tears itself from the old earth's embraces, and the weight of our grandmothers' and grandfathers' luggage weighs down the shoulders of its wings.

Do we need Rubens or the Cheops Pyramid? Is a depraved Venus<sup>3</sup> necessary to the pilot in the heights of our new comprehension?

Do we need old copies of clay towns, supported on the crutches of Greek columns?

Do we need the confirmatory signature of the dead old woman of Greco-Roman architecture, in order to turn contemporary metals and concretes into squat almshouses?

Do we need temples to Christ,<sup>4</sup> when life has long since left the droning of vaults and candle soot, and when the church dome is insignificant by comparison with any depot with millions of ferro-concrete beams?

Does he who will break through the blue lampshade<sup>5</sup> and remain hidden for ever on the eternally new path, does he need the wisdom of our contemporary life?

Is the Roman pope's cap necessary to a two-six-four engine racing like lightning over the globe and trying to take off from its back?

Do we need the wardrobe of braids from the clothes of ancient times, when new tailors sew contemporary clothes from metals?

Do we need the wax tapers of the past when on my head I wear electric lamps and telescopes?

Contemporary life needs nothing other than what belongs to it; and only that which grows on its shoulders belongs to it.

Art, both great and wise, representing the episodes and faces of the wisest now lies buried by contemporary life.

Our contemporary life needs only living and life-giving energy, it needs flying iron beams and colored signals along the new path.

It is essential that creative work be built on these foundations, burning the path behind it.

Enough of crawling about the corridors of time past, enough squandering time in drawing up lists of its possessions, enough pawing the graveyards of Vagan'kovo, enough singing requiems—none of this will rise again.

Life knows what it is doing, and if it is striving to destroy one must not interfere, since by hindering we are blocking the path to a new conception of the life that is born within us.

Contemporary life has invented crematoria for the dead,<sup>6</sup> but each dead man is more alive than a weakly painted portrait.

In burning a corpse we obtain one gram of powder: accordingly thousands of graveyards could be accommodated on one chemist's shelf.

We can make a concession to the conservatives by offering that they burn all past epochs, since they are dead, and set up one pharmacy.

The aim will be the same, even if people will examine the powder from Rubens and all his art—a mass of ideas arise in people, and are often more alive than actual representation (and take up less room).

Our contemporary life should have as its slogan: "All that we have made is made for the crematorium."

The setting up of a contemporary museum is a collection of contemporaries' projects and nothing more; only those projects which can be adapted to the skeleton of life, or which will lead to the skeleton of new forms of it, can be preserved for a time.

If we take tractors or motor cars to the backward villages, and set up corresponding schools, then teaching about carts will hardly be necessary.

If with contemporary techniques we can in the space of three weeks set up and equip a three-storey house, then we will hardly need to use the old form of building.

The villages will prefer to go for ready-made houses rather than into the forest for wood.

Accordingly, it is essential that what is living is inseparably linked with life and with a museum of this sort of art.

A living form of life, when it becomes worn out reincarnates itself in another; or else its worn out part is replaced by a living one.

We could not preserve the old structure of Moscow, under a glass cap; they drew sketches but life did not wish things to be that way and continues to build more and more new skyscrapers, and will continue to build until the roof joins up with the moon.

What are Godunov's hut or Marfa's chambers, by comparison?

One could feel more sorry about a screw breaking off than about the destruction of St. Basil's Cathedral.

Is it worth worrying about what is dead?

In our contemporary life there are people who are alive and there are conservatives. Two opposite poles: but although in nature unlike poles attract, this is not a law for us.

The living must break up this friendship and do what is best for our creative life; they must be as merciless as time and life itself.

Life has torn life and what they were not conserving from the hands of the museum keepers. We can collect it while it is alive and link it directly to life, without giving it to be conserved.

What do we need with the Baranovs' manufactory<sup>7</sup> when we have textile, which swallows up, like a crematorium, all the services and qualities of the old manufactories?

And I am not sure that this generation will lament the old manufactory.

The path of the arts' section<sup>8</sup> lies through volume and color, through the material and the non-material, and both combinations will compose the life of form.

In the street and in the house, in oneself and on oneself—this is where the living comes from, and where our living museum lies.

I see no point in setting up sarcophagi of treasures or Meccas for worship.<sup>9</sup>

What we need is creativity and the factory to produce the parts to carry it over the world as rails.

Any hoarding of old things brings harm. I am convinced that if the Russian style had been done away with in good time, instead of the almshouse of Kazan station that has been put up, there would have arisen a truly contemporary structure.<sup>10</sup>

The conservatives worry about what is old, and are not averse to adapting some old rag to contemporary life, or, in other words to adapt the back of today to what is alien.

We must not allow our backs to be platforms for the old days.

Our job is to always move towards what is new, not to live in museums. Our path lies in space, and not in the suitcase of what has been outlived.

And if we do not have collections it will be easier to fly away with the whirlwind of life.

Our job is not to photograph remains—that is what photographs are for.

Instead of collecting all sorts of old stuff we must form laboratories of a worldwide creative building apparatus, and from its axes will come forth artists of living forms rather than dead representations of objectivity.

Let the conservatives go to the provinces with their dead baggage—the depraved cupids of the former debauched houses of Rubens and the Greeks.

We will bring I-beams, electricity and the lights of colors.

1. The re-translations of Malevich's works also help reproduce as faithfully as possible his succinct style, which even in Russian—not his native tongue—was edgy and frequently unwieldy. For detailed information about Malevich's writing style and its linguistic-cultural background, see also A. Hansen-Löve, "Vom Pinsel zur Feder und zurück. Malevichs suprematistische Schriften" [From the Paint Brush to the Pen and Back. Malevich's Suprematist Writings], in K. Malevich, *Gott ist nicht gestürzt!* [God Is Not Overthrown!], 7–40.
2. The question regarding the handling of the cultural and artistic inheritance of the pre-revolutionary period was inseparable from the problem regarding the organization of (new) museums. In June 1918, Malevich was already appointed member of the Museum Commission of the Art Council of the Department of Fine Arts at Narkompros (together with Vladimir E. Tatlin and the sculptor Boris D. Korolev). In February 1919, Malevich participated in the organization's first conference on museum affairs in Petrograd. (Refer also to the short comment in K. Malevich, *Gesammelte Werke* [Collected Works], vol. 1, 351, which, notably, includes the coy, unexplained remark that Malevich's contribution was written from a "futuristic-nihilistic position.") This illustrates clearly that the radical anarchism of the period (which might have only lasted a few months) represented but one—albeit characteristic—episode in Malevich's thinking about art and changed significantly over the next years. Malevich's fundamental criticism of the party's or cultural bureaucracy's increasingly conservative approach to art and its open anti-avant-garde position (which also reflected Lenin's attitude) remained until the end. On Lenin's approach to art and criticism of futurism, see *Dokumente* [Documents], ed. K. Eimermacher, 22ff, 95ff. Boris Groys, in contrast, cited this museum pamphlet by Malevich in particular as the main compurgator for this; Malevich and the avant-garde as a whole had demanded, and in fact practiced, the physical destruction of art and culture as well as their institutions (Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin – Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion* [The Total Art of Stalinism—Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond], Munich, Vienna 1988, 20–25; *ibid.* "Der Kampf gegen das Museum oder die Präsentation der Kunst im totalitären Raum" [The Fight Against the Museum or the Presentation of Art in the Totalitarian Space], in *ibid.*, *Die Erfindung Russlands* [The Invention of Russia], Munich 1995, 120–42). In Malevich's conception, tradition should be consigned to oblivion in order that the "vanguard of the modern age" be able to enter into their "contest of ideas" unfettered and through a "great leap forward create new forms that bear no relationship to the old ways whatsoever" (cited according to Felix Philipp Ingold, "Der Autor im Flug. Daedalus und Ikarus" [The Author in Flight. Daedalus and Ikarus], in *Der Autor am Werk. Versuche über literarische Kreativität* [The Author at Work. Experiments in Literary Creativity], Munich 1992, 43). Notwithstanding the differences between him and Marinetti, the two avant-gardists shared their criticism of museums; see F. T. Marinetti "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" 1909, in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. U. Apollonio: "We will destroy the museums, libraries and academies of every kind . . ."
3. What is notable is Malevich's criticism not just of the obsolescence of the old art but also of its obscene, even pornographic character, when he talks of the "shameless Venus." "Society had not even had the time to abandon its love of the horse-drawn carriage when the inventor produced a new plan: the plane, the zeppelin. Society had not yet had enough of the Venus depictions, empire pieces and the Russian style renaissance when the inventor of art gave the moribund bourgeoisie a shove from behind with the new reality" (K. Malevich, "Die zeitgenössische Kunst" [Contemporary Art], 1923, in *Gott ist nicht gestürzt!* [God Is Not Overthrown!], 159; see also *ibid.*, 171ff.). The fact that Malevich's ambivalent attitude towards religion and especially towards Christendom was not in line with the atheist propaganda of the time is shown in particular by his writings from those years—especially his brochure *Bog ne k'inut. Iskusstvo, tserkov', fabrika* [God Is Not Overthrown. Art. Church, Factory] which was published in Vitebsk (1922; German translation in K. Malevich, *Gott ist nicht gestürzt!*, 64–106). The following lines from the same context show how carefully Malevich approached the question of God: "A new world is coming; its organisms are soulless and mindless, with no will of their own, but powerful and strong. They are strangers to God and the church and all religions; they live and breathe, but their chest does not move and their heart does not beat, and the brain implanted into their head moves them and itself with a new power; for I think the force that is replacing the spirit is a dynamism . . ." (Malevich letter to Mikhail O. Gershenzon, *ibid.*, 336).
5. Space is the non-place of the white, which beyond the blue of the sky (and the green of the flesh-earth-nature) appears invisible/indescrivable and absolutely alien. This is not Malevich's first use of the window motif for making the absoluteness of the other side visible in the picture window: "First and foremost, the screen analysis lets us see a window through which we apprehend life. The suprematist screen depicts the white space but not the blue space. The reason is clear—the blueness does not give a real idea of the infinite. Rays of vision basically hit a dome and cannot penetrate into the infinite. The suprematist infinite white lets the ray of vision continue without hitting a boundary" (K. Malevich, *Gesammelte Werke* [Collected Works], vol. 1, 186f., cited in Hans-Peter Riese, *Kasimir Malewitsch*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1999, 86). Andrei Belyi's mythopoetics also depict the natural sphere as a "green world" that radically contrasts the cosmos with its metaphysical color symbolism (azure, purple and others) (on this note, see M. Mayi, *Ut p'icatura descriptio?*, 352ff., and A. Hansen-Löve, *Der russische Symbolismus* [Russian Symbolism], vol. II, 614 (on nature's color "Green").
6. The motif of the "liveliness of the dead" in the 1910s and 1920s was closely related to the most radical of utopias—that of the "immortalists," who were looking for a scientifically founded method for reviving all the dead. All this followed Nikolai Fedorov, whose ideas about reworking nature and overcoming gravity and mortality had left a deep impression on the biocosmism of the 1920s and on Malevich. On this subject, see M. Hagemester, *Nikolaj Fedorov*; A. Hansen-Löve, "Die Kunst ist nicht gestürzt" [Art Has Not Been Overthrown], 329ff, 380ff.; Irene Masing-Delich, *Abolishing Death. A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth-Century Literature*, Stanford 1992; *ibid.*, "The Transfiguration of Cannibals. Fedorov and the Avant-Garde," in *Laboratory of Dreams. The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment*, ed. John E. Bowlit/Olga Match, Stanford 1996, 17–36.
7. The Baranov manufactories—like Russian art nouveau in general—were not insignificant; neither were the subsequent efforts of the Russian avant-garde to combine arts and crafts, technology and mass production. See I. Jassinskaja, *Russische Textildrucke der 20er und 30er Jahre* (Russian Textile Prints of the 1920s and 1930s), Tübingen 1983.
8. The "IZO," i.e. "fine arts" department of the Commission for National Enlightenment, was managed by Malevich and others. See also *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischem Realismus* [Between Revolutionary Art and Socialist Realism], ed. H. Gassner/E. Gillen, 41ff.
9. We also find comparable criticism of the cult of the dead some years later (1924) with regard to Malevich's approach to the death and personality cult surrounding Lenin.

10. For the avant-garde, the Kazan Train Station in Moscow by A. Shchusev with its historicizing ornamentation was an oft-cited spectre of an artistic restoration that was regaining strength. On this subject, see I. A. Azizian, I. A. Dobritsyna, G. S. Lebedeva, *Teoriia kompozitsii kak poetika arkhitektury* [Theory of Composition as the Poetry of Architecture], Moscow 2002, 130.

— AH-L

Originally published in Russian as Kazimir Malevich, "O muzee," *Iskusstvo kommuny* 13 (Petrograd, 1919). It is reprinted in Kazimir Malevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 1: *Stat'i manifesty, teoreticheskie sochinenija i dr. raboty. 1913–1929*, 5 vols., ed. Aleksandra Shatskikh (Moscow: Gileia, 1995), 132–35. For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 203–10. For a Spanish translation, see *Escritos Kazimir Malévich*, ed. André Nakov, trans. Miguel Etayo (Madrid: Sintesis, 2008), 305–13.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "On the Museum," in K. S. Malevich: *Essays on Art, 1915–1933*, The Documents of Modern Art, vol. 16, ed. Troels Andersen, trans. Xenia Glowacki-Prus and Arnold McMillin (New York: George Wittenborn, 1971), 68–72.

The notes have been translated by Andrew Davison from *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 207–10.

## Komfut Program Declaration 1919

D10

A communist regime demands a communist consciousness. All forms of life, morality, philosophy, and art must be re-created according to communist principles. Without this, the subsequent development of the communist revolution is impossible.

In their activities the cultural-educational organs of the Soviet government show a complete misunderstanding of the revolutionary task entrusted to them. The social-democratic ideology so hastily knocked together is incapable of resisting the century-old experience of the bourgeois ideologists, who, in their own interests, are exploiting the proletarian cultural-educational organs.

Under the guise of immutable truths, the masses are being presented with the pseudo teachings of the gentry.

Under the guise of universal truth—the morality of the exploiters.

Under the guise of the eternal laws of beauty—the depraved taste of the oppressors.

It is essential to start creating our own communist ideology.

It is essential to wage merciless war against all the false ideologies of the bourgeois past.

It is essential to subordinate the Soviet cultural-educational organs to the guidance of a new cultural communist ideology—an ideology that is only now being formulated.

It is essential—in all cultural fields, as well as in art—to reject emphatically all the democratic illusions that pervade the vestiges and prejudices of the bourgeoisie.

It is essential to summon the masses to creative activity.

Komfut (an abbreviation of *communism* and *futurism*, *Kommunisticheski futurizm*) was organized formally in Petrograd in January 1919 as an act of opposition to the Italian futurists, who were associating themselves increasingly with fascism. According to the code of the organization,<sup>1</sup> would-be members had to belong to the Bolshevik Party and had to master the principles of the "cultural communist ideology" elucidated at the society's own school. Prominent members of Komfut were Boris Kushner (chairman), Osip Brik (head of the cultural ideology school), Natan Al'tman, Vladimir Mayakovsky and David Shtenberg. Komfut prepared for publication several brochures including "The Culture of Communism," "Futurism and Communism," "Inspiration," and "Beauty," but none, apparently, was published.

The text of this piece, "Programmnaia deklaratsiia," is from *Iskusstvo kommuny*.<sup>2</sup> A second Komfut statement giving details of proposed lectures and publications was also issued in *Iskusstvo kommuny*.<sup>3</sup> The destructive, even anarchical intentions of Komfut, while supported just after 1917 by many of the leftist artists, including Kazimir Malevich, were not, of course, shared by Lenin or Anatolii Lunacharskii, who believed, for the most part, that the pre-Revolutionary cultural heritage should be preserved. In its rejection of bourgeois art, Komfut was close to Proletkul't, although the latter's totally proletarian policy excluded the idea of any ultimate ideological consolidation of the two groups. Al'tman's, Kushner's and Nikolai Punin's articles of 1918–19 can, in many cases, be viewed as Komfut statements.

— JB

1. See *Iskusstvo kommuny* 8 (Petrograd, January 26, 1919): 3.

2. Ibid.

3. *Iskusstvo kommuny* 9 (Petrograd, February 2, 1919): 3.

Originally published in Russian as "Komfut (Kommunisty – Futuristy), Programmnaia deklaratsiia," *Iskusstvo kommuny* 8 (Petrograd, January 26, 1919): 3. It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 159–60.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "Komfut Program Declaration," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlit, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 164–66.



# "The Divine Work of Art" Polemics 1919

D11

## Boris Kushner

They used to think that art was beauty.

They defined art as divination.

Revelation, incarnation, transubstantiation.

Art ensconced itself like a great, unshakable god in their heads, empty and bemused.

It was served by the trivial godlings of ecstasy, intuition, and inspiration.

During the whole historical process endured by mankind, when the power of violence and oppression was being transferred constantly from one kind of democracy, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie to another, nobody dreamed of assuming that art was simply work: know-how, craft and skill.

To King Solomon, art appeared in the guise of his regal wisdom.

To the iron feudal lord, art served as a kind of Roland's trumpet of victory. Or it frightened him in the form of the black monk armed mightily with his weapon—but a weapon not made with iron.

To the romantics and theoreticians of the young, contemplative bourgeoisies—sentimental and afraid of the devil and brimstone—to create works of art seemed to be an affair of mystery like medieval alchemy.

In the bloom of its strength the bourgeoisie scorned wisdom, victory and mystery.

Amid the glitter of power and glory it was tormented by an insatiable greed, by an eternal mania for acquisition and accumulation.

The merchant and the industrialist entwined themselves greedily around the whole earthly globe like boa constrictors bloated with the whole brilliant visible world of objects.

The bourgeoisie acquired.

Everything that became its property bowed to it.

But suddenly on its fabulous path of advance, it came across a certain obstacle.

It could not buy nature, the invisible world, the world in its immensity, the sky, the stars, eternity.

They are not available for personal possession; they are nontransferable into private property.

And a feeling of dissatisfaction, of a cold vacuum, stole into the sensitive heart of the bourgeoisie. It was consumed by a feeling of insatiable hunger.

Tormented by the grief of the property owner who has been unjustly insulted, tortured by the bitter disappointment of the industrialist who has realized that his business cannot encompass everything, the bourgeoisie sought ways to oblivion.

Narcotics became a must.

Refreshing illusion was required.

They thought of a surrogate, of their own creation of genius, of their favorite *Wunderkind* of industrial ingenuity. They examined the world from all sides. Nowhere did they find the protective label, "made in eternity." So fakes were not prohibited and were not prosecuted by the law. They decided to prepare a surrogate for the universe.

And so, to this end, a very chic and remarkable theory was made and elaborated that saw the real and the unreal worlds, the visible and the invisible worlds, as incarnated in the divine work of art.

Aesthetes and poets (those who could not mind their own business) vied with each other in their endeavors to dramatize the mystery of this incarnation.

They dressed up the artist in the dunce's cap of the medieval magician, wizard and alchemist. They forced him to perform a kind of sorcery, a supernatural divination, a magic transubstantiation.

And an ulterior force was ascribed to all the things that were made by this kind of duped artist.

They asserted and professed conscientiously: "The eternal harmony of the builder of the universe is reflected in the eternal beauty of artistic forms. Works of art reflect the world, the outer, material, inner, spiritual, and ideal nature of things, the essence and latent meaning of things."

This splendid theory was elaborated beautifully by the great experts. The ends were carefully concealed. All contradictions were hidden. It did not occur to anybody that this was not the genuine product, but merely a surrogate, and a jolly good fake.

The highest goal of bourgeois aspirations had been attained.

The philosopher's stone had been found.

The right of private property had been extended to the extreme limits of eternity. It crawled all over the planets, all over the stars near and far. It flowed throughout the Milky Way. Like sugar icing, it glossed all over the belly of eternity.

An unprecedented, world-wide achievement had been wrought.

The bourgeoisie had colonized the "ulterior world."

The ecstatic triumph of world imperialism had been achieved. Henceforth everyone who acquired a work of art prepared by the firm of the appropriately patented artist would acknowledge and feel himself the happy and assured possessor of a solid piece of the universe—moreover, in a pocket edition, very convenient and portable.

And the bourgeoisie coddled and warmed itself in the soft and gentle pillows of its consciousness of total power.

Such, briefly, is the history of the prostitution of art, solicited to serve all the incorporeal forces of religion and mythology.

Step by step we are depriving the imperialist bourgeoisie of its global annexations. Only so far the proletariat has not lifted its hand against this most wonderful annexation of the spirit.

Because the bourgeoisie had put this valuable and prosperous colony under the lock and key of mysterious, mystical forces, and even the revolutionary spirit of our time retreats before them.

It is time to shake off this shameful yoke.

Are we going to endure the interference of heavens and hells in our internal, earthly affairs?

I think it is time to tell the gods and devils: Take your hands off what is ours, what belongs to mankind.

Socialism must destroy the black and white magic of the industrialists and merchants.

Socialism will not examine things exclusively from the point of view of the right to ownership.

It can afford the luxury of leaving nature and the world in peace, can be content with them the way they are, and will not drag them by the scruff of the neck into its storerooms and elevators.

To the socialist consciousness, a work of art is no more than an object, a thing.

Boris Kushner: born Minsk, 1888; died 1937. 1914: made his literary debut with a book of verse, *Semafor* [Semaphores]; 1917–18: wrote several articles and futurist prose; 1919: leading member of Komfut; 1923: on the editorial board of *Lef*; close to constructivists and formalists; mid- and late 1920s: wrote a series of sketches on Western Europe, America, and the northern Caucasus; died in a prison camp.

The text of this piece, "'Bozhestvennoe proizvedenie,'" is from *Iskusstvo kommuny*. Kushner's anarchical tone betrays his keen support of the general ideas of Komfut (see p. 329) and his ideological proximity to Natan Al'tman, Osip Brik, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Nikolai Punin at this time. Kushner's rejection of the subjective and idealist interpretation of art was shared by many critics and artists just after the Revolution and was an attitude identifiable particularly with *Iskusstvo kommuny*; moreover, Kushner's conclusion (reiterated in many articles in that journal) that the work of art was no more than an object produced by a rational process prepared the ground for the formal advocacy of industrial constructivism in 1921/22.

— JB

Originally published in Russian as Boris Kushner, "'Bozhestvennoe proizvedenie,'" *Iskusstvo kommuny* 9 (Petrograd, February 2, 1919): 1. It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 169–71. The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "The Divine Work of Art" (Polemics)," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 166–70.

## Theses on Art Policy 1920

D12

### Anatolii Lunacharskii

- 1) The preservation of true artistic treasures of the past.
- 2) The critical mastery of them by the proletarian masses.
- 3) The utmost assistance in the creation of experimental forms of revolutionary art.
- 4) The use of every kind of art for the propaganda and implementation of the idea of communism, and also assistance in the penetration of communist ideas into the mass of art workers.
- 5) An unbiased attitude toward all artistic currents.
- 6) The democratization of all artistic institutions and the broadening of their accessibility to the masses.

Lunacharskii presented these theses on October 29, 1920, at a meeting of the Visual Arts Section of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (IZO Narkompros) on the subject of popular illustration, together with the Presidium and the Central Committee of the Union of Art Workers (Vserabis) communist faction, understanding these to be the guidelines for the artistic policy of the People's Commissariat.

—HG / EG

Originally published in Russian as an excerpt in the column "V Tsentral'noi Komitete Vserabisa" [In the Central Committee of Vserabis] *Vestnik robotnikov iskusstv* 1 (Moscow, 1920): 34. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 61.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Basic Policy in the Field of Art 1920

D13

### Anatolii Lunacharskii and Iuvenal Slavinskii

While recognizing that the time for establishing indisputable principles of a proletarian aesthetics has not yet come, the Art Section of Narkompros and the Central Committee of Vserabis [All-Russian Union of Art Workers] consider it essential, nevertheless, to elucidate adequately and accurately the basic principles by which they are guided in their activities.

1. We acknowledge the proletariat's absolute right to make a careful re-examination of all those elements of world art that it has inherited and to affirm the truism that the new proletarian and socialist art can be built only on the foundation of all our acquisitions from the past. At the same time we acknowledge that the preservation and utilization of the genuine artistic values that we have acquired from the old culture is an indisputable task of the Soviet government. In this respect the legacy of the past must be cleared ruthlessly of all those admixtures of bourgeois degeneration and corruption; cheap pornography, philistine vulgarity, intellectual boredom, antirevolutionary<sup>1</sup> and religious prejudices—insofar as such admixtures are contained in our legacy from the past—must be removed. In those cases where dubious elements are linked indissolubly with genuine artistic achievements, it is essential to take steps to ensure that the new young mass proletarian public evaluates critically the spiritual nourishment provided it. In general, the proletariat must assimilate the legacy of the old culture not as a pupil, but as a powerful, conscious and incisive critic.

2. Besides this, our Soviet and professional cultural and artistic activities must be directed toward creating purely proletarian art forms and institutions; these would, in every way, assist the existing and emergent workers' and peasants' studios, which are seeking new paths within the visual arts, music, the theater and literature.

3. In the same way all fields of art must be utilized in order to elevate and illustrate clearly our political and revolutionary agitational/propaganda work; this must be done in connection with both shock work demonstrated during certain weeks, days and campaigns, and normal, everyday work. Art is a powerful means of infecting those around us with ideas, feelings and moods. Agitation and propaganda acquire particular acuity and effectiveness when they are clothed in the attractive and mighty forms of art.

However, this political art, this artistic judgment on the ideal aspirations of the revolution can emerge only when the artist himself is sincere in surrendering his strength to this cause, only when he is really imbued with revolutionary consciousness and is full of revolutionary feeling. Hence, communist propaganda among the actual votaries of art is also an urgent task both of the Art Section and of Vserabis.

4. Art is divided up into a large number of directions. The proletariat is only just working out its own artistic criteria and therefore no state authority or any professional union should regard any one of them as belonging to the state; at the same time, however, they should render every assistance to the new searches in art.

5. Institutions of art education must be proletarianized. One way of doing this would be to open workers' departments in all higher institutions concerned with the plastic, musical and theatrical arts.

At the same time particular attention must be given to the development of mass taste and artistic creativity by introducing art into everyday life and into industrial production at large, i.e., by assisting in the evolution of an artistic industry and in the extensive development of choral singing and mass activities.

In basing themselves on these principles—on the one hand, under the general control of Glavpolitprosvet<sup>2</sup> and through it of the Communist Party and, on the other, linked indissolubly with the professionally organized proletariat and the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions—the Art Section of Narkompros and the All-Russian Trade Union of Art Workers will carry out in sympathy and in concord its work of art education and artistic industrialism throughout the country.

Anatolii Lunacharskii: born Poltava, 1875; died France, 1933. 1892: joined a Marxist group; entered Zurich University; 1898: returned to Russia; joined the Social Democrats; 1899: arrested for political activities; 1904: in Geneva; met Lenin; joined the Bolsheviks; 1905: in Saint Petersburg; 1906: arrested, again on political grounds; 1908: with Maxim Gorky, on Capri; 1909: with Aleksandr Bogdanov and Gorky organized the Vpered' group; 1911–15: in

Paris; 1917: returned to Russia; 1917–29: People's Commissar for Enlightenment; 1933: appointed Soviet ambassador to Spain but died en route to the post.

Iuvenal Slavinskii: born 1887, died 1936. 1911–18: conductor of the Moscow Grand Opera; 1916: founded the Society of Orchestral Musicians; 1917: member of the Bolsheviks; 1919: president of the All-Russian Union of Art Workers (Vserabis); 1929: founded the All-Russian Union of Cooperative Partnerships of Visual Art Workers (Vsekokhudozhnik); 1930s: active as an administrator and critic.

The text of this piece, "Tezisy khudozhestvennogo sektora NKP i TsK Rabis ob osnovakh politiki v oblasti iskusstva," is from *Vestnik teatra*.<sup>3</sup> Rabis, founded in May 1919, acted as a trade union for "workers connected with the arts, concerning itself with such problems as social security, education courses, accessibility of libraries, etc."<sup>4</sup> The significance of the "Theses" was twofold: on the one hand, they stated very clearly certain basic principles of artistic policy, and on the other, they constituted an attempt to find common agreement on such matters between the various organizations within the cultural hierarchy, in this case between Narkompros and Rabis. The program advanced here shares certain ideas with Proletkul't (e.g., the desire to create "purely proletarian art forms" and to "open workers' departments in all higher institutions"), of which Lunacharskii was an active member, although a dissident one, especially after 1920. If anything, the text betrays Lunacharskii's attempt to steer a middle course between the extreme right and the extreme left, between, broadly speaking, preservation and destruction—a course difficult to maintain in view of the inordinate number of radicals in the Visual Arts Section of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (IZO Narkompros). Certain sections of this policy, therefore, appear to be formulated in a deliberately rhetorical and imprecise fashion: the ambiguities of the first stipulation, for example, found their tangible result in the slow and unsuccessful implementation of Lenin's famous plan of monumental propaganda (1918 onwards); furthermore, the definition of a proletarian art is sufficiently vague as to allow a very free interpretation. Of course, it was thanks to the flexible and eclectic policies of IZO Narkompros that, paradoxically, the dictatorship of leftist art could exist in the early years and that even in the mid-1920s a large number of conflicting tendencies and groups could still dominate the artistic arena. Lunacharskii was convinced that the "Theses" constituted an important document and regretted that they had not been publicized more widely.<sup>5</sup>

— JB

1. The actual word is *chernosotennye*, adjective from *Chernosotenets*. The *Chernosotenetsy*, or Black Hundreds, were members of a secret-police and monarchist organization set up to counteract the revolutionary movement in 1905–7. *Chernosotenets* soon became identified with the more general concepts of "rightist" and "extreme conservative."
2. Central Committee of Political Enlightenment.
3. "Tezisy khudozhestvennogo sektora NKP i TsK Rabis ob osnovakh politiki v oblasti iskusstva," in *Vestnik teatra* 75 (Moscow, November 30, 1920): 9. The text appears also in *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstva (Rabis)* 2/3, (Moscow, 1920): 65–66; *Iskusstvo* 1 (Vitbesk, 1921): 20; and *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa et al. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 57–58.
4. For details, see *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstva (Rabis)* (Moscow, 1920–34), especially no. 4/5, 1921.
5. For his own comments, see Anatolii Lunacharskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, ed. I. Anisimov et al. (Moscow, 1963–67), vol. 7, 501.

Originally published in Russian as Anatolii Lunacharskii and Iuvenal Slavinskii, "Tezisy khudozhestvennogo sektora NKP i TsK Rabis ob osnovakh politiki v oblasti iskusstva," *Vestnik teatra* 75 (Moscow, November 30, 1920): 9. It is reprinted in *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstva (Rabis)* 2/3, (Moscow, 1920): 65–66; *Iskusstvo* 1 (Vitbesk, 1921): 20; and *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 57–58. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 62, 63.

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## Revolution and Art 1920

D14

### Anatolii Lunacharskii

1.

For a revolutionary state, such as the Soviet Union, the whole question of art is this: can revolution give anything to art, and can art give anything to revolution? It goes without saying that the state does not intend to impose revolutionary ideas and tastes on artists. From a coercive imposition of this kind only counterfeit revolutionary art can emerge, because the prime quality of true art is the artist's sincerity.

But there are other ways besides those of coercion: persuasion, encouragement and appropriate education of new artists. All these measures should be used for working, as it were, toward the revolutionary inspiration of art.

Complete absence of content has been very characteristic of bourgeois art of recent times. If we still did have some sort of art then, it was, so to say, the last progeny of the old art. Pure formalism was exuberant everywhere: in music, painting, sculpture and literature. Of course, style suffered as a result. In fact, the last epoch of the bourgeoisie was unable to advance any style at all—including a life style or a style of architecture—and advanced merely a whimsical and absurd eclecticism. Formal searches degenerated into eccentricities and tricks or into a peculiar, rather elementary pedantry tinged with various, puzzling sophistications, because true perfection of form is determined, obviously, not by pure formal search but by the presence of an appropriate form common to the whole age, to all the masses, by a characteristic sensation and by ideas.

Bourgeois society of the last decades has seen no such sensations and ideas worthy of artistic expression.

The revolution is bringing ideas of remarkable breadth and depth. Everywhere it kindles feelings—tense, heroic, and complex.

Of course, the old artists have not the slightest understanding of this content and stand quite helplessly before it. They even interpret it as a kind of barbaric torrent of primitive passions and small ideas, but they think that only because of their own myopia. To many of them, especially the talented ones, this can be explained, and they can be, so to say, disenchanted; their eyes can be opened. But in particular, we must count on the young people, who are much more receptive and who can be, so to speak, nurtured in the very waves of the revolution's fiery torrent. Hence I anticipate a great deal from the influence of the revolution on art; to put it simply, I expect art to be saved from the worst forms of decadence and from pure formalism by its aspiration toward the real objective and by its infectious expression of great ideas and great experiences.

But in addition to this the state has another continuous task within its cultural activity, namely, to diffuse the revolutionary image of ideas, sensations, and actions throughout the country. From this standpoint the state asks itself: can art be of use to it in this? And the answer inevitably suggests itself: if revolution can give art its soul, then art can give revolution its mouthpiece.

Who is not aware of the full force of agitation? But what is agitation, how is it distinguished from clear, cold, objective propaganda in the sense of elucidating facts and logical constructions germane to our world view? Agitation can be distinguished from propaganda by the fact that it excites the feelings of the audience and readers and has a direct influence on their will. It, so to say, brings the whole content of propaganda to white heat and makes it glow in all colors. Yes, propagators—we, of course, are all propagators. Propaganda and agitation are simply the ceaseless propagation of a new faith, a propagation springing from profound knowledge.

Can it be doubted that the more artistic such propagation, the more powerful its effect? Don't we know that the artistic public speaker or journalist finds his way to the people's hearts more quickly than those lacking in artistic strength? But the collective propagandist is the collective propagator of our age; the Communist Party, from this point of view, should arm itself with all the organs of art, which in this way will prove itself to be of great use to agitation. Not only the poster, but also the picture, the statue—in less volatile forms and with more profound ideas, stronger feelings—can emerge as graphic aids to the assimilation of communist truth.

The theater has so often been called a great tribune, a great rostrum for propagation, that it is not worth dwelling on this. Music has always played an enormous role in mass movements: hymns, marches, form an indispensable attribute of them. We have only to unfurl this magic strength of music above the hearts of the masses and to bring it to the utmost degree of definition and direction.

For the moment we are not in a position to make use of architecture on a wide scale for propaganda purposes, but the creation of temples was, so to say, an ultimate, maximum and extremely powerful way of influencing the social soul—and perhaps, in the near future, when creating the houses of our great people, we will contrast them with the people's houses of the past—the churches of all denominations.

Those art forms that have arisen only recently as, for example, the cinema or rhythms, can be used with very great effect. It is ridiculous to enlarge upon the propaganda and agitational strength of the cinema—it is obvious to anyone. And just think what character our festive occasions will take on when, by means of General Military Instruction,<sup>1</sup> we create rhythmically moving masses embracing thousands and tens of thousands of people—and not just a crowd, but a strictly regulated, collective, peaceful army sincerely possessed by one definite idea.

Against the background of the masses trained by General Military Instruction, other small groups of pupils from our rhythm schools will advance and will restore the dance to its rightful place. The popular holiday will adorn itself with all the arts, it will resound with music and choirs and that will express the sensations and ideas of the holiday by spectacles on several stages, by songs, and by poetry reading at different points in the rejoicing crowd: it will unite everything in a common act.

This is what the French Revolution dreamed of, what it aspired to; this is what passed by the finest people of that most cultured of democracies—Athens; this is what we are approaching already.

Yes, during the Moscow workers' procession past our friends of the Third International, during the General Military Instruction holiday declared after this,<sup>2</sup> during the great mass action at the Stock Exchange colonnade in Petrograd,<sup>3</sup> one could sense the approach of the moment when art, in no way debasing itself and only profiting from this, would become the expression of national ideas and feelings—ideas and feelings that are revolutionary and communist.

## 2.

The revolution, a phenomenon of vast and many-sided significance, is connected with art in many ways.

If we take a general look at their interrelation before the revolution and now, in the fifth year of its existence, we will notice its extraordinary influence in many directions. First and foremost, the revolution has completely altered the artist's way of life and his relation to the market. In this respect, certainly, artists can complain about, rather than bless, the revolution.

At a time when war and the blockade were summoning the intense force of military communism, the private art market was utterly destroyed for artists. This placed those who had a name and who could easily sell their works in such a market in a difficult position and made them, along with the bourgeoisie, antagonistic toward the revolution.

The ruin of the rich Maecenases and patrons was felt less, of course, by the young, unrecognized artists, especially the artists of the left who had not been successful in the market. The revolutionary government tried immediately, as far as possible, to replace the failing art market with state commissions and purchases. These commissions and purchases fell, in particular, to those artists who agreed willingly to work for the revolution in the theater, in poster design, in decorations for public celebrations, in making monuments to the Revolution, concerts for the proletariat, and so forth.

Of course, the first years of the Revolution, with their difficult economic situation, made the artist's way of life more arduous, but they provided a great stimulus to the development of art among the young.

More important, perhaps, than these economic interrelationships were the psychological results of the revolution.

Here two lines of observation can be made. On the one hand, the revolution as a grand, social event, as a boundless and multicolored drama, could, of itself, provide art with vast material and to a great extent could formulate a new artistic soul.

However, during the first years of the revolution, its influence on art in this respect was not very noticeable. True, Blok's *The Twelve*<sup>4</sup> was written and other things such as, say, Mayakovsky's *Misteria-buff*,<sup>5</sup> many fine posters, a certain quantity of quite

good monuments, were produced, but all this in no way corresponded to the revolution itself. Perhaps to a great extent this can be explained by the fact that the revolution, with its vast ideological and emotional content, requires a more or less realistic, self-evident expression saturated with ideas and feelings. Whereas the realist artists and those following similar trends—as I observed above—were less willing to greet the revolution than those following new trends, the latter—whose non-representational methods were very suitable for artistic industry and ornament—proved to be powerless to give psychological expression to the new content of the revolution. Hence we cannot boast that the Revolution—and, I repeat, in the first years when its effect was strongest and its manifestation most striking—created for itself a sufficiently expressive and artistic form.

On the other hand, the revolution not only was able to influence art, but also *needed* art. Art is a powerful weapon of agitation, and the Revolution aspired to adapt art to its agitational objectives. However, such combinations of agitational forces and genuine artistic depth were achieved comparatively rarely. The agitational theater, to a certain extent music, in particular the poster, undoubtedly had, during the first years of the revolution, a great success in the sense that they were disseminated among the masses. But of this only very little can be singled out as being entirely satisfactory artistically.

Nevertheless, in principle, the thesis had remained correct: the revolution had a great deal to *give* artists—a new content—and the revolution *needed* art. Sooner or later a union had to come about between it and the artists. If we now turn to the present moment, we will notice a significant difference in a comparison of 1922 with 1918 and 1919. First of all, the private market appears again. The state, compelled to finance art on a niggardly, systematic budget, has virtually ceased buying and ordering for about the next two years. From this point of view, because of NEP,<sup>6</sup> the wheel appears to have turned full circle; and in fact, we can see, almost side by side with the complete disappearance of the agitational theater, the emergence of a corruptive theater, the emergence of the obscene drinking place, which is one of the poisons of the bourgeois world and which has broken out like a pestilential rash on the face of Russia's cities together with the New Economic Policy. In other fields of art, albeit to a lesser degree, this same return to the sad past is noticeable.

However, there is no need to be pessimistic, and we should turn our attention to something else. Indeed, together with this, the improvement in living conditions, which has come about during the calm time of late, reveals how powerfully the revolution has affected the artist's soul. The revolution advanced, as we now see, a whole phalanx of writers who, in part, call themselves apolitical, but who nonetheless celebrate and proclaim precisely the revolution in its revolutionary spirit. Naturally the ideological and emotional element of the revolution is reflected primarily in the most intellectual of the arts—in literature—but it does, of course, aspire to spread to other arts. It is characteristic that it is precisely now that magazines and anthologies are being created, that societies of painters and sculptors are being organized, and that work of architectural conception is being undertaken in the area where previously we had only demand and almost no supply.

Similarly, the second thesis, that the revolution needs art, will not force us to wait long for its manifestation. Right now we are being told about an all-Russian subscription to the building of a grand monument to the victims of the revolution on the Field of Mars<sup>7</sup> and about the desire to erect a grand Palace of Labor in Moscow.<sup>8</sup> The Republic, still beggarly and unclothed, is, however, recovering economically, and there is no doubt that soon one of the manifestations of its recovery will be the new and increasing beauty of its appearance. Finally, the last thing—what I began with—the artists' living conditions and economic position. Of course, with the rise of NEP, the artist is again pushed into the private market. But for how long? If our calculations are correct, and they are, then will the state, like a capitalist, with its heavy industry and vast trusts in other branches of industry, with its tax support, with its power over issue of currency, and above all, with its vast ideological content—will the state not prove ultimately to be far stronger than any private capitalists, big or small? Will it not draw unto itself all that is vital in art, like a grand Maecenas, truly cultured and truly noble?

In this short article I could sketch only with a couple of strokes the peculiar zigzag line of the relationships between revolution and art that we have hitherto observed. It has not been broken off. It continues even further.

As for the government, it will endeavor as before, as far as possible, to preserve the best of the old art, because recognition of it is essential to the further development of our renewed art. Besides this, it will endeavor to give active support to any innovation that is obviously of benefit to the masses, and it will never prevent the new—albeit dubious—from developing so as to avoid making a mistake in this respect by killing off something worthy of life while it is still young and weak. In the very near future, art in revolutionary Russia will have to live through a few more very bitter moments because the state's resources are still small and are growing slowly.

We cannot allow ourselves the luxury of widespread artistic plenitude, but these difficult times are coming to an end. My predictions in this article of the revolution's increased influence on art, the revolution's increased demands on artists, and the increased coordination between the two will shortly begin to be justified.

For biography see p. 331.

The first half of this text, "Revoliutsiia i iskusstvo," was written in October 1920 and published in *Kommunisticheskoe prosveshchenie*; the second half was the result of an interview given in Petrograd on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the October Revolution and was published in *Krasnaia gazeta*. The text, of course, reflects certain topical events, not least the enactment of Lenin's Plan of Monumental Propaganda (based substantially on the measures of the revolutionary government in France in the early 1790s—hence the reference to the French Revolution) and the renewal of the private art market in 1921. Lunacharskii's personal artistic tastes are also evident in the text, e.g., his love of music and the theater.

— JB

1. General Military Instruction (Vsevobuch) was an inclusive title for all bodies concerned with military training of workers. By a decree of 1918, all Soviet citizens, from schoolchildren to the middle-aged, were to receive military instruction.
2. The Second Congress of the Third International opened in Petrograd on June 19, 1920, and June 27 was declared a public holiday in honor of it; a parade and procession with representatives of Vsevobuch took place in Moscow.
3. On June 19, 1920, a mass dramatization, *Toward the World Commune*, took place at the former Stock Exchange in Petrograd; Natan Al'tman was the artistic designer.
4. *The Twelve*, written in 1918, was perhaps Aleksandr Blok's greatest poetic achievement. Ostensibly it was a description of the revolutionary force represented by twelve Red Guards.
5. Lunacharskii was present at Vladimir Mayakovsky's first private reading of the play *Misteriia-buff* on September 27, 1918. He was impressed with the work and promoted its production at the Theater of Musical Drama in November of that year. It was taken off after three days and was revived only with Vselovod Meierkhol'd's production of it in May 1921.
6. The New Economic Policy (NEP) period (1921–28) was marked by a partial return to a capitalist economic system.
7. This simple yet spacious monument in Petrograd to the victims of the February Revolution was designed by Lev Rudnev in 1917–19 and was landscaped later by Ivan Fomin.
8. In the early 1920s several designs were submitted for a Moscow Palace of Labor—among them one by the Vesnin brothers—but none was executed.

First part originally published in Russian as "Revoliutsiia i iskusstvo," *Kommunisticheskoe prosveshchenie* 1 (Moscow, 1920): 9; second part in *Krasnaia gazeta* 252 (Moscow, November 5, 1922). Both pieces appeared in a collection of Lunacharskii's articles on art, *Iskusstvo i revoliutsiia* (Moscow, 1924), 33–40, from which this translation is made. They are reprinted in Anatolii Lunacharskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, ed. I. Anisimov et al. (Moscow, 1963–67), vol. 7, 294–99.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "Revolution and Art," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlit, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 190–96.

## Our Task 1920

D15

### David Shterenberg

The artistic culture of Soviet Russia is developing in breadth and depth despite the difficult conditions of the present time. The dead Academy of Art, which both during tsarism and in the subsequent Kerenskii<sup>1</sup> period consisted of talentless art officials, remained apart from artistic life and neither reflected nor influenced our country's art. Despite the vast reserves of creative strength inherent in the Russian people, art education in Russia and the connected development of artistic industry were benumbed by this handful of individuals who took advantage of the Academy's celebrated name. And for Russian art to be emancipated, it required only the removal of prestige and power from this group of people. This was done by the decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars at the beginning of the revolution, and the business of art education rapidly moved forward.<sup>2</sup> In the field of art, the slogan of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment was equality of all artistic trends. The elimination of all forms of coercion in art at the time of the revolution was the best possible decision, and now we can already see a definite result. Western art had experienced this process long ago and, despite the existence there of official and dead academies, had embarked on a new life, thanks to public support. It is characteristic that the official museums of Paris do not have such valuable collections of Western art as our Shchukin and Morozov museums<sup>3</sup> or similar collections in Germany. The same thing happened with us: the best young artists and the young Russian art were valued abroad, whereas our museum workers recognized them only after their death, living artists not being represented in museums.

New ideas in the field of school teaching also remained outside the official academic schools and found refuge in the private schools of certain young artists. Paris owes its extremely rich development in the arts mainly to such schools, a development that made it the only city in Europe that virtually dictates new laws to the whole of Europe and exerts an immense influence on the art of all nations. England, Germany and America, despite the high standard of their material culture, hardly possess their own art in the broad sense of the word. But Russia, thanks to the peculiar position it occupies in relation to the East and thanks to all the untapped resources of its culture, as yet in an embryonic state, has its own definite path on which it has only just embarked. That is why the new art schools, the state free studios and the art institutes that draw most of their students from among the workers and peasants, have developed with extraordinary speed. The new artistic forces that introduced new methods of teaching into schools have yielded quite distinctive results that will now—at the end of the civil war and at the beginning of our life of labor and communist construction—provide us with new instructors and new artists for our artistic-industry schools and enterprises.

Of the fifty schools in our section, almost half are working very well, despite the cold and hunger and neediness of the students; if our transport and Russia's general economic situation can right themselves even just for a while, then our schools will very shortly be in a splendid position. At the same time the new body of Russian artists will differ significantly from the old one because—and there is no use hiding it—nowhere is competition so developed as among artists; there are substantial grounds to assume that the state free studios will provide us with new artists linked together by greater solidarity—which significantly lightens the task of the cultural construction of the arts. The students' trying position during the civil war cleared their ranks of untalented groups. Only those remained who live for art and who cannot exist without it, such as the students of the First and Second State Free Studios in Moscow: during the present fuel crisis they used to go on foot into the woods, chop down firewood, and bring it back themselves on sledges so as to heat the studios where they could devote themselves to artistic work. These hardened workers are already serving the provinces now—in fact, the demands of various local Soviets and cultural organizations are growing, and we are having to take the best students out of our schools in order to send them to different places as instructors. At present the section's task consists mainly of putting the social security of our schools on a proper footing. From towns everywhere we receive letters from young artists, almost always talented (judging by models and drawings), with requests to be sent to our art schools, but not being able to provide for their subsistence, the section has to advise them to wait a little longer. I think that our present task is to give food allowances to all students, not only of art schools, but also of all schools of higher education throughout the Republic. This is essential, as essential as it was to create the Red Army. It must not be postponed because it will be the same Red

Army—of Culture. Similarly, specialists who work with them in schools of higher education should be given food allowances; only in this way will we rehabilitate our industry by enriching it with the cultural element of the workers and peasants.

These new forces will give us the chance to carry out those mass art creations that the state now needs. Objectives of an agitational and decorative nature (it is essential to transform the whole face of our cities and the furnishings of our buildings) are creating that basis without which no art can exist.

The old art (museum art) is dying. The new art is being born from the new forms of our social reality.

We must create it and will create it.

David Shterenberg: Born Zhitomir, 1881; died Moscow, 1948. 1903: entered the Bundist Party; 1906: went to Paris; 1912: began to exhibit regularly at the Salon d'Automne; contact with Guillaume Apollinaire and many others of the French avant-garde, especially of the Café Rotonde; 1917: returned to Russia; 1918–21: head of the Visual Arts Section of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (IZO Narkompros); held special responsibility for the preservation and restoration of works of art in Moscow and Petrograd; 1919: leading member of Komfut; 1920: professor at the Higher Arts and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS); 1921: head of the Art Department in the Chief Administration for Professional Education (Glavprofobr) within Narkompros; 1922: helped to organize the Russian art exhibition in Berlin at the Van Diemen Gallery;<sup>4</sup> 1925: founding member of the Society of Easel Painters (OST); 1927: one-man show in Moscow;<sup>5</sup> 1930 and after: active as a book illustrator, especially of children's literature.

The text of this piece, "Nasha zadacha," is from *Khudozhestvennaia zhizn'*. This journal was published by the Art Section of Narkompros. Like many other expatriates who returned from Western Europe to Russia in 1917, Shterenberg welcomed the revolution enthusiastically and felt that, among other things, it would make art education universally accessible. As an artist and an art teacher in his own right, Shterenberg was particularly interested in the problems of art instruction and was closely involved in the reorganization of the country's art schools. His conception of the "new art" was, however, a very indefinite one, and like many of his colleagues he failed to determine what a "proletarian art" should stand for or even whether it should exist.

Shterenberg's own painting was representational, although influenced by cubism—a fact that did not detract from its originality—and his agit-decorations for Petrograd in 1918 were highly successful. In the 1920s Shterenberg was particularly interested in "objectness," or the essential matter of each separate object, and hence painted isolated objects on a single plane, often resorting to primitive forms and emphatic colors. But there was, of course, little sociopolitical significance in such aesthetic works. Lunacharskii thought very highly of Shterenberg both as an artist and as an administrator, and their friendship, which had begun in the Paris days, ended only with Lunacharskii's death.

— JB

1. Aleksandr Kerenskii was head of the provisional government during the revolutionary period from July to November 1917. His moderate socialism did not satisfy the demands of the Bolsheviks, and he emigrated when they came to power.
2. In the summer of 1918, the Petrograd Academy was abolished, and its teaching faculty was dismissed; on October 10, Pegoskhum was opened and was replaced in turn by Svomas in 1919; on February 2, 1921, the Academy was reinstated.
3. In 1918, both collections were nationalized and became the First and Second Museums of New Western Painting; in 1923 both were amalgamated into a single Museum of New Western Painting; in the early 1930s many of the museum's works were transferred to the Hermitage in Leningrad, and in 1948 all the holdings were distributed between the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. The idea of establishing a museum of modern painting was not new in Russia: as early as 1909, a group of artists and critics including Ivan Bilibin, Nikolai Rerikh and Vselovod Meierkhol'd had favored such a proposal. See Filippov, "Galleriia sovremennykh russkikh khudozhnikov" [A Gallery of Modern Russian Artists] in *V mire iskusstv* no. 4/6 (Kiev, 1909): 45; the Union of Youth had also supported the idea—see Shkolnik, "Muzei sovremennoi russkoi zhivopisi" [A Museum of Modern Russian Painting] in *Soiuz molodezhi* (Union of Youth) exh. cat. no. 1 (Saint Petersburg, Riga and Moscow, 1912), 18–20.
4. See *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung*, with an introduction by David Shterenberg (Berlin: Galerie van Diemen, 1922); David Shterenberg, "Die künstlerischen Situation im Russland," *Das Kunstblatt* 11 (Berlin, November 1922): 485–92.
5. *D.P. Shterenberg. Vystavka kartin*, exh. cat. (Moscow, 1927).

Originally published in Russian as David Shterenberg, "Nasha zadacha," *Khudozhestvennaia zhizn'* 2 (January-February 1920): 5–6.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "Our Task," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 186–90.

## The Radio of the Future 1921

D16

### Velimir Khlebnikov<sup>1</sup>

The Radio of the Future—the central tree of our consciousness—will inaugurate new ways to cope with our endless undertakings and will unite all mankind.<sup>2</sup>

The main Radio station, that stronghold of steel, where clouds of wires cluster like strands of hair, will surely be protected by a sign with a skull and crossbones and the familiar word "Danger," since the least disruption of Radio operations would produce a mental blackout over the entire country, a temporary loss of consciousness.

Radio is becoming the spiritual sun of the country, a great wizard and sorcerer.

Let us try to imagine Radio's main station: in the air a spider's web of lines, a storm cloud of lightning bolts, some subsiding, some flaring up anew, crisscrossing the building from one end to the other. A bright blue ball of spherical lightning hanging in midair like a timid bird, guy wires stretched out at a slant.

From this point on Planet Earth, every day, like the flight of birds in springtime, a flock of news departs, news from the life of the spirit.

In this stream of lightning birds the spirit will prevail over force, good counsel over threats.

The activities of artists who work with the pen and brush, the discoveries of artists who work with ideas (Mechnikov, Einstein) will instantly transport mankind to unknown shores.

Advice on day-to-day matters will alternate with lectures by those who dwell upon the snowy heights of the human spirit. The crests of waves in the sea of human knowledge will roll across the entire country into each local Radio station, to be projected that very day as letters onto the dark pages of enormous books, higher than houses, that stand in the center of each town, slowly turning their own pages.

### Radio Reading-Walls

These books of the streets will be known as Radio Reading-Walls! Their giant dimensions frame the settlements and carry out the tasks of all mankind.

Radio has solved a problem that the church itself was unable to solve and has thus become as necessary to each settlement as a school is, or a library.

The problem of celebrating the communion of humanity's one soul, one daily spiritual wave that washes over the entire country every twenty-four hours, saturating it with a flood of scientific and artistic news—that problem has been solved by Radio using lightning as its tool. On the great illuminated books in each town Radio today has printed a story by a favorite writer, an essay on the fractional exponents of space, a description of airplane flights, and news about neighboring countries. Everyone can read whatever he chooses. This one book, identical across the entire country, stands in the center of every small town, always surrounded by a ring of readers, a carefully composed silent Reading-Wall in every settlement.

But now in black type, news of an enormous scientific discovery appears on the screens; a certain chemist, famous within the narrow circle of his followers, has discovered a method for producing meat and bread out of widely available types of clay.

A crowd gathers, wondering what will happen next.

Earthquakes, fires, disasters, the events of each twenty-four-hour period will be printed out on the Radio books. The whole country will be covered with Radio stations.

### Radioauditoriums

Surges of lightning are picked up and transmitted to the metal mouth of an auto-speaker, which converts them into amplified sound, into singing and human speech.

The entire settlement has gathered around to listen. The metal trumpet mouth loudly carries the news of the day, the activities of the government, weather information, events from the exciting life of the capital cities.

The effect will be like a giant of some kind reading a gigantic journal out loud. But it is only this metal town crier, only the metal mouth of the auto-speaker; gravely and distinctly it announces the morning news, beamed to this settlement from the signal tower of the main Radio station.

But now what follows? Where has this great stream of sound come from, this inundation of the whole country in supernatural singing, in the sound of beating wings, this broad silver stream full of whistlings and clangor and marvelous mad bells surging from somewhere we are not, mingling with children's voices singing and the sound of wings?

Over the center of every town in the country these voices pour down, a silver shower of sound. Amazing silver bells mixed with whistlings surge down from above. Are these perhaps the voices of heaven, spirits flying low over the farmhouse roof?

No . . .

The Mussorgsky of the future is giving a coast-to-coast concert of his work, using the Radio apparatus to create a vast concert hall stretching from Vladivostok to the Baltic, beneath the blue dome of the heavens.

On this one evening he bewitches the people, sharing with them the communion of his soul, and on the following day he is only an ordinary mortal again. The artist has cast a spell over his land; he has given his country the singing of the sea and the whistling of the wind. The poorest house in the smallest town is filled with divine whistlings and all the sweet delights of sound.

### Radio and Art Exhibits

In a small town far away, a crowd of people gathers today in front of the great illuminated Radio screens, which rise up like giant books. Why? Because today Radio is using its apparatus to transmit images in color, to allow every little town in the entire country to take part in an exhibit of paintings being held in the capital city. This exhibit is transmitted by means of light impulses repeated in thousands of mirrors at every Radio station. If Radio previously acted as the universal ear, now it has become a pair of eyes that annihilate distance. The main Radio signal tower emits its rays, and from Moscow an exhibit of the best painters bursts into flower on the reading walls of every small town in this enormous country, on loan to every inhabited spot on the map.

### Radio Clubs

Let's move up closer. Majestic skyscrapers wrapped in clouds, a game of chess between two people located at opposite ends of Planet Earth, an animated conversation between someone in America and someone in Europe. Now the reading-walls grow dark; suddenly the sound of a distant voice is heard singing, the metallic throat of Radio beams the rays of the song to its many metallic singers: metal sings! And its words, brought forth in silence and solitude, and their welling springs, become a communion shared by the entire country.

More obedient than strings beneath the violinist's hand, the metallic apparatus of Radio will talk and sing, obeying every marked pulse of the song.

Every settlement will have listening devices and metallic voices to serve one sense, metallic eyes to serve the other.

### The Great Sorcerer

Finally we will have learned to transmit the sense of taste—and every simple, plain but healthful meal can be transformed by means of taste-dreams carried by Radio rays, creating the illusion of a totally different taste sensation.

People will drink water, and imagine it to be wine. A simple, ample meal will wear the guise of a luxurious feast. And thus will Radio acquire an even greater power over the minds of the nation.

In the future, even odors will obey the will of Radio: in the dead of winter the honey scent of linden trees will mingle with the odor of snow, a true gift of Radio to the nation.

Doctors today can treat patients long-distance, through hypnotic suggestion. Radio in the future will be able to act also as a doctor, healing patients without medicine.

And even more:

It is a known fact that certain notes like "la" and "ti" are able to increase muscular capacity, sometimes as much as sixty-four times, since they thicken the muscle for a certain length of time. During periods of intense hard work like summer harvest

time, or during the construction of great buildings, these sounds can be broadcast by Radio over the entire country, increasing its collective strength enormously.

And, finally, the organization of popular education will pass into the hands of Radio. The Supreme Soviet of Sciences will broadcast lessons and lectures to all the schools of the country—higher institutions as well as lower.

The teacher will become merely a monitor while these lectures are in progress. The daily transmission of lessons and textbooks through the sky into the country schools of the nation, the unification of its consciousness into a single will.

Thus will Radio forge continuous links in the universal soul and mold mankind into a single entity.

1. In 1921, Khlebnikov worked for ROSTA, the "Russian Telegraph Agency" in Piatigorsk. See Khlebnikov's exclamation at the time: ". . . that Astrakhan is the window to India. This was referring to the time when the institutional school journal for the whole globe broadcast by radio the same lessons that are heard over loudspeakers, and which are composed by a collection of the best human minds—by the Supreme Soviet, the Intellectual Warrior" (V. Khlebnikov "Eröffnung einer Volksuniversität" [The Opening of a People's University] in *Works*, vol. 2, 268). Mayakovsky's contribution to the medium of propaganda posters for ROSTA is also famed (see Viktor Duvakin, *Rostafenster. Majakowski als Dichter und bildender Künstler* [Rosta Window. Mayakovsky as a Poet and Educational Artist], Dresden, 1980). On the topic of Mayakovsky and radio, see Yuri Murashov "Radio in the Soviet Literature and Culture of the 20s and 30s," in *Musen der Macht, Medien in der sowjetischen Kultur der 20er und 30er Jahre* [Muses of Power, Media in the Soviet Culture of the 20s and 30s], ed. Yuri Murashov and Georg Witte, Munich 2003, 81–112, here 90ff.).
2. Typical of Khlebnikov's "logocentrism," his fixation on the written medium of the book, associated on his part with the pansemiotic idea of world text, is his archaic reinstatement of the new medium of an omnipresent performance in the Gutenberg era (see A. Hansen-Löve, "The Development of the 'World Text' Paradigm in Velimir Khlebnikov's Poetry," 27–88). While Mayakovsky completely integrated the medium of radio in his preference for spontaneous spoken language (of literature) (J. Murashov, "The Radio," 92), Khlebnikov was more interested in an archaizing mythification of the new medium: ". . . as [Khlebnikov's] radio manifesto is spun open, both in its motive, narrative and logical thought structure as part of and under the conditions of the book/typography . . . Radio is not primarily thought of as those possible phonetic, vocal and acoustic effects, but initially as an enhancement and reorganization of the influence of the book in order to finally be able to interpret radiofication as the recovery and revival of the community-founding influence of the spoken word which is locked in books. The radio manifesto's structure is organized accordingly, covering a range from the radiofied book to the renaissance of the magic of the spoken word: 'radio halls' . . . 'Radio clubs'—'The great magician' (J. Murashov, "The Radio," 89).
3. As well as the archetype *arbor mundi* growing in the center of Khlebnikov's archaic utopia, it is also the mystic motif of the world soul already developed in Vladimir Solov'ev's religious philosophy that is picked up on again in Khlebnikov's technology myth (ibid., 87). The religio-philosophical totality fantasies (such as in the *idée russe* as an all-inclusive unity symbol for Solov'ev and his followers) are secularized in the avant-garde or—particularly with Khlebnikov—"mythified" to be earthy and natural. The omnipresence of the new medium also provoked technological omnipotence fantasies, although Khlebnikov, as so many of his contemporaries, liked to mix the latest technological and scientific findings with hermetic-occult or archaic-magic concepts. The naïve enthusiasm in view of the seemingly unlimited possibilities of a universal national education ("radio as an electrical acoustic lecture") is connected with the utopias of biocosmism. For more on radio as part of the media revolution after 1917 and particularly after 1923, see also Stefan Plaggenborg, *Revolutionskultur: Menschenbilder und kulturelle Praxis in der Sowjetunion zwischen Oktoberrevolution und Stalinismus* [Revolution Culture: Images of Humans and Cultural Practice in the Soviet Union from the October Revolution to Stalinism], Cologne, 1996.

— AH-L

Originally published in Russian as Velimir Khlebnikov, "Radio budushchego" (1921) in *Sobranie proizvedenij*, vol. 4., ed. Iu. Tynianov and N. Sepanov (Leningrad, 1930), 290–95. For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 181–87.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "The Radio of the Future," in *The King of Time: Selected Writings of the Russian Futurian*, ed. Charlotte Douglas, trans. Paul Schmidt (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1985).

The notes have been translated by Andrew Davison from *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 186–87.

# Constructivism

## 1922

D17

Aleksei Gan

### From "Revolutionary Marxist Thought in Words and Podagrism in Practice"

Year in year out, like a soap bubble, Narkompros fills out and bursts after overloading its heart with the spirits of all ages and peoples, with all systems and with all the "sinful" and "sinless" values (!) of the living and the dead.

...

And under the auspices of the quasi Marxists work the black thousands of votaries of art, and in our revolutionary age the "spiritual" culture of the past still stands firmly on the stilts of reactionary idealism.

...

Artistic culture—as one of the formal exponents of the "spiritual"—does not break with the values of utopian and fanciful visions, and its fabricators do not reject the priestly functions of formalized hysterics.

...

The communists of Narkompros in charge of art affairs are hardly distinguishable from the non-communists outside Narkompros. They are just as fascinated by the beautiful as the latter are captivated by the divine.

...

Seduced by priestliness, the transmitters and popularizers reverently serve the past, while promising the future by word of mouth. This impels them toward the most reactionary, déclassé maniacal artists: of painting, sculpture, and architecture. On the one hand, they are Communists ready to fall in open battle with capitalism at the slightest attempt at restoration; on the other hand, like conservatives, they fall voluntarily, without striking a blow, and liturgically revere the art of those very cultures that they regard so severely when mentioning the theory of historical materialism.

Our responsible, very authoritative leaders are unfortunately dealing confusedly and unscrupulously with the art not only of yesterday, but also of today; and they are creating conditions in which there can be no possibility of putting the problems of intellectual-material production on the rails of practical activity in a collective and organized fashion.

And no wonder; they are of one flesh with those same putrid aesthetics against which the materialist innovators of leftist art rebelled.

That is why a campaign is being waged both in the open and in secret against the "nonidealists" and the "nonobjectivists." And the more thematic the latter, the more graphically reality supports them, the less stringently the priests of the old art carry on the struggle with them.

Now officially they are everything; they set the tone and, like clever actors, paint themselves up to resemble Marx.

It is only the proletariat with its sound Marxist materialism that does not follow them, but for all that, the vast masses do: the intellectuals, agnostics, spiritualists, mystics, empiriocritics, eclectics and other podagrists and paralytics.

That is who is now the defender  
of artistic values  
in the name of communism.

The priest-producers of these "artistic values" understand this situation and take it into account. It is they who are weaving the threads of falsehood and deception. Like the rotten heritage of the past, they continue to parasitize and ventriloquize, using the resources of that same proletariat that, writhing in agony, heroically, implements the slogans, the promises of mankind's liberation from every supernatural force encroaching on his freedom.

The priest-hireling  
—that is who might become an aesthetic depicter and produce a lot of  
palliative forms of the intellectual-material culture of communism.

The proletariat and the proletarianized peasantry take absolutely no part in art.

The character and forms in which art was expressed and the "social" meaning that it possessed affected them in no way whatsoever.

The proletariat developed and cultivated itself independently as a class within the concrete conditions of the struggle. Its ideology was formulated precisely and clearly. It tightened the lower ranks of its class not by playacting, not by the artificial means of abstraction, not by abstruse fetishism, but by the concrete means of revolutionary action, by thematic propaganda and factual agitation.

Art did not consolidate the fighting qualities of the proletarian revolutionary class; rather it decomposed the individual members of its vanguard. On the whole it was alien and useless to a class that had its own and only its own cultural perspective.

...

The more vividly the artistic-reactionary wave of restoration manifests itself—the more distinctly will the sound, authentic elements of the proletariat dissociate themselves from this sphere of activity.

...

During the whole time of the proletarian revolution, neither the department in charge of art affairs, nor organizations, nor groups have justified their promises in practice.

From the broadcast of revolutionary calls to the future, they turned off into the reactionary bosom of the past and built their practice on the theory of "spiritual" continuity.

But practice showed that "spiritual" continuity is hostile to the tasks of a proletarian revolution by which we advance toward communism.

The counterrevolutionism of the bourgeois votaries of art who have wandered casually from art to revolution has created an incredible confusion in its vain attempts to "revolutionize" the flabby spirit of the past by aesthetics.

But the sentimental devotion to the revolution of the ideologists of the petit-bourgeois tendency has produced a sharp crack in the attempts to decapitate the materialism of revolutionary reality by the old forms of art.

But the victory of materialism in the field of artistic labor is also on the eve of its triumph.

The proletarian revolution is not a word of flagellation but a real whip, which expels parasitism from man's practical reality in whatever guise it hides its repulsive being.

The present moment within the framework of objective conditions obliges us to declare that the current position of social development is advancing with the omen that the artistic culture of the past is unacceptable.

The fact that all so-called art is permeated with the most reactionary idealism is the product of extreme individualism; this individualism shoves it in the direction of new, unnecessary amusements with experiments in refining subjective beauty.

Art  
is indissolubly linked:  
with theology,  
metaphysics,  
and mysticism.

It emerged during the epoch of primeval cultures, when technique existed in "the embryonic state of tools," and forms of economy floundered in utter primitiveness.

It passed through the forge of the guild craftsmen of the Middle Ages.

It was artificially reheated by the hypocrisy of bourgeois culture and, finally, crashed against the mechanical world of our age.

Death to art!

It arose naturally  
developed naturally  
and disappeared naturally.

Marxists must work in order to elucidate its death scientifically and to formulate new phenomena of artistic labor within the new historic environment of our time.

In the specific situation of our day, a gravitation toward the technical acme and social interpretation can be observed in the work of the masters of revolutionary art.

Constructivism is advancing—the slender child of an industrial culture.

For a long time capitalism has let it rot underground.

It has been liberated by—the Proletarian Revolution.

A new chronology begins  
with October 25, 1917.



## From “From Speculative Activity of Art to Socially Meaningful Artistic Labor”

. . . When we talk about social technology, this should imply not just one kind of tool, and not a number of different tools, but a system of these tools, their sum total in the whole of society.

It is essential to picture that in this society, lathes and motors, instruments and apparatuses, simple and complex tools are scattered in various places, but in a definite order.

In some places they stand like huge sockets (e.g., in centers of large-scale industry), in other places other tools are scattered about. But at any given moment, if people are linked by the bond of labor, if we have a society, then all the tools of labor will also be interlocked; all, so to say, “technologies” of individual branches of production will form something whole, a united social technology, and not just in our minds, but objectively and concretely.

The technological system of society, the structure of its tools, creates the structure of human relationships, as well.

The economic structure of society is created from the aggregate of its production relationships.

The sociopolitical structure of society is determined directly by its economic structure.

But in times of revolution peculiar contradictions arise.

We live in the world’s first proletarian republic. The rule of the workers is realizing its objectives and is fighting not only for the retention of this rule, but also for absolute supremacy, for the assertion of new, historically necessary forms of social reality.

In the territory of labor and intellect, there is no room for speculative activity.

In the sphere of cultural construction, only that has concrete value which is indissolubly linked with the general tasks of reactionary actuality.

Bourgeois encirclement can compel us to carry out a whole series of strategic retreats in the field of economic norms and relationships, but in no way must it distort the process of our intellectual work.

The proletarian revolution has bestirred human thought and has struck home at the holy relics and idols of bourgeois spirituality. Not only the ecclesiastical priests have caught it in the neck, the priests of aesthetics have had it too.

Art is finished! It has no place in the human labor apparatus.

Labor, technology, organization!

The revaluation of the functions of human activity, the linking of every effort with the general range of social objectives—

that is the ideology of our time.

. . .

And the more distinctly the motive forces of social reality confront our consciousness, the more saliently its sociopolitical forms take shape—the more the masters of artistic labor are confronted with the task of:

Breaking with their speculative activity (of art) and of finding the paths to concrete action by employing their knowledge and skill for the sake of true living and purposeful labor.

Intellectual-material production establishes labor interrelations and a production link with science and technology by arising in the place of art—art, which by its very nature cannot break with religion and philosophy and which is powerless to leap from the exclusive circle of abstract, speculative activity.

## From “Tectonics, Texture, Construction”

A productive series of successful and unsuccessful experiments, discoveries, and defeats followed in the wake of the leftist artists. By the second decade of the twentieth century, their innovational efforts were already known. Among these, precise analysis can establish vague, but nevertheless persistent tendencies toward the principles of industrial production: texture as a form of supply, as a form of pictorial display for visual perception, and the search for constructional laws as a form of surface resolution. Leftist painting revolved around these two principles of industrial production and persistently repulsed the old traditions of art. The suprematists, abstractionists and “nonideists” came nearer and nearer to the pure mastery of the artistic labor of intellectual-material production, but they

did not manage to sever the umbilical cord that still held and joined them to the traditional art of the Old Believers.

Constructivism has played the role of midwife.

Apart from the material-formal principles of industrial production, i.e., of texture and of constructional laws, constructivism has given us a third principle and the first discipline, namely, tectonics.

We have already mentioned that the leftist artists, developing within the conditions of bourgeois culture, refused to serve the tastes and needs of the bourgeoisie. In this respect they were the first revolutionary nucleus in the sphere of cultural establishments and canons and violated their own sluggish well-being. Even then they had begun to approach the problems of production in the field of artistic labor. But those new social conditions had not yet arisen that would have allowed for their social interpretation and thematic expression in the products of their craft.

The Proletarian Revolution did this.

Over the four years of its triumphant advance the ideological and intellectual representatives of leftist art have been assimilating the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat. Their formal achievements have been joined by a new ally—the materialism of the working class. Laboratory work on texture and constructions—within the narrow framework of painting, sculpture and senseless architecture unconnected with the reconstruction of the whole of the social organism—has, for them, the true specialists in artistic production, become insignificant and absurd.

And while the philistines and aesthetes, together with a choir of like-minded intellectuals, dreamed that they would “harmonically deafen” the whole world with their musical art and tune its mercantile soul to the Soviet pitch,

would reveal with their symbolic-realistic pictures of illiterate and ignorant Russia the significance of social revolution, and would immediately dramatize communism in their professional theaters throughout the land—

The positive nucleus of the bearers of leftist art began to line up along the front of the revolution itself.

From laboratory work the constructivists have passed to practical activity.

### Tectonics

#### Texture and Construction

—these are the disciplines through whose help we can emerge from the dead end of traditional art’s aestheticizing professionalism onto the path of purposeful realization of the new tasks of artistic activity in the field of the emergent communist culture.

Without art, by means of intellectual-material production, the constructivist joins the proletarian order for the struggle with the past, for the conquest of the future.

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Aleksei Gan: born 1893; died 1942. 1918–20: attached to the Theater Section of the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment (TEO Narkompros) as head of the Section of Mass Presentations and Spectacles; end of 1920: dismissed from Narkompros by Anatolii Lunacharskii because of his extreme ideological position; close association with the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK); cofounder of the First Working Group of Constructivists; early 1920s: turned to designing architectural and typographical projects, movie posters, bookplates; 1922–23: editor of the journal *Kino-foto*; 1926–30: member of the Association of Contemporary Architects (OSA) and artistic director of its journal, *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* (Moscow, 1926–30); 1928: member of the October Association (Oktiabr’); during the 1920s: wrote articles on art and architecture; died in a prison camp.

The translation is of extracts from Gan’s book *Konstruktivizm*.<sup>1</sup> The first extract, “Revolutionary Marxist Thought,” is from pp. 13–19; the second, “From Speculative Activity,” is from pp. 48–49; and the third, “Tectonics, Texture, Construction,” is from pp. 55–56.<sup>2</sup> The book acted as a declaration of the industrial constructivists and marked the rapid transition from a purist conception of a constructive art to an applied, mechanical one; further, it has striking affinities with the enigmatic “Productivist” manifesto published in Naum Gabo.<sup>3</sup> It is logical to assume that the book’s appearance was stimulated by the many debates on construction and production that occurred in INKhUK during 1921 and in which Boris Arvatov, Osip Brik, El Lissitzky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Nikolai Tarabukin, et al., took an active part, and also by the publication of the influential collection of articles *Iskusstvo v proizvodstve* in the same year.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the First Working Group of Constructivists, of which Gan was a member, had been founded in 1920. However, the book, like Gan himself, was disdained by many contemporary constructivists, and the significance of the book within the context of Russian constructivism has, perhaps, been overrated by modern observers.

In keeping with its tenets, the book’s textual organization and imagery are highly “industrial”: the elaborate typographical layout designed by Gan and the book’s cover (designed

allegedly by Gan but suggested probably by Rodchenko<sup>5</sup> were intended, of course, to support the basic ideas of the text itself. Such terms as *tektonika* (tectonics), *faktura* (texture), and *konstruktivnaia* (construction) were vogue words during the later avant-garde period, especially just after the Revolution, and implied rather more than their direct English translations. The concepts of texture and construction had been widely discussed as early as 1912–14, stimulating David Burluk and Vladimir Markov, for example, to devote separate essays to the question of texture;<sup>6</sup> and the concept of construction was, of course, fundamental to Markov's "The Principles of the New Art." The term "texture" was also used by futurist poets, and Aleksei Kruchenykh published a booklet entitled *Faktura slova* [Texture of the Word] in 1923.<sup>7</sup> The term "tectonics" was, however, favored particularly by the constructivists and, as the so-called "Productivist" manifesto explained, "is derived from the structure of communism and the effective exploitation of industrial matter."<sup>8</sup> But nonconstructivists also used the term; to Aleksandr Shevchenko, for example, a tectonic composition meant the "continual displacement and modification of tangible forms of objects until the attainment of total equilibrium on the picture's surface."<sup>9</sup> To confuse matters further, Gan's own explanation of tectonics, texture, and construction was not at all clear: "Tectonics is synonymous with the organicness of thrust from the intrinsic substance. . . . Texture is the organic state of the processed material. . . . Construction should be understood as the collective function of constructivism. . . ."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, despite Gan's rhetoric and obscurity, the value of his book lies in the fact that it crystallized, as it were, certain potential ideas in evidence since at least 1920 and presented them as what can be regarded as the first attempt to formulate the constructivist ideology. The inconsistencies and pretentiousness of Gan's style of writing leave much to be desired.

— JB

#### NOTES

1. For explanation of Old Believers, see no. 5.
1. Aleksei Gan, *Konstruktivizm* (Moscow: Tver, October-December 1922). According to KL, advertised as appearing in May in *Vestnik iskusstv* 5, 26.
2. Part of the text has been translated into English in Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment. Russian Art 1863-1922* (London: Thames and Hudson; New York: Abrams, 1962, 1970), 284–87.
3. Naum Gabo, *Gabo: Constructions, Sculpture, Paintings, Drawings, Engravings* (London: Lund Humphries; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 153.
4. *Iskusstvo v proizvodstve* [Art in Production], P. Aleksandrov, *Ivan Leonidov* (Moscow, 1971), includes bibliography.
5. See the definitive cover with the project by Rodchenko illustrated in *Lef* 1 (1923): 106.
6. See David Burluk, "Faktura"—*Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu* (Moscow, 1912), 102–10; Vladimir Markov, *Printsipy tvorchestva v plasticheskikh iskusstvakh. Faktura* (Saint Petersburg, 1914).
7. See Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968; London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1969), 341, for details.
8. Gabo 1957 (see note 3 above), 153.
9. Ivan Matsa et al., eds., *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 119.
10. Gan 1922 (see note 1 above), 61–62.

Originally published in Russian as Aleksei Gan, *Konstruktivizm* (Moscow: Tver, 1922). For extracts in French see *Art et poésie russes 1910–1930*, ed. Troels Andersen and Ksenia Grigorieva (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1979), 205–11.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from Aleksei Gan "Constructivism [Extracts]," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlit, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 214–25.

## Declaration of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia 1922

D18

### AKhRR

The Great October Revolution, in liberating the creative forces of the people, has aroused the consciousness of the masses and the artists—the spokesmen of the people's spiritual life.

Our civic duty before mankind is to set down, artistically and documentarily, the revolutionary impulse of this great moment of history.

We will depict the present day: the life of the Red Army, the workers, the peasants, the revolutionaries and the heroes of labor.

We will provide a true picture of events and not abstract concoctions discrediting our revolution in the face of the international proletariat.

The old art groups existing before the revolution have lost their meaning, the boundaries between them have been erased in regard to both ideology and form—and they continue to exist merely as circles of people linked together by personal connections but devoid of any ideological basis or content.

It is this content in art that we consider a sign of truth in a work of art, and the desire to express this content induces us, the artists of revolutionary Russia, to join forces; the tasks before us are strictly defined.

The day of revolution, the moment of revolution, is the day of heroism, the moment of heroism—and now we must reveal our artistic experiences in the monumental forms of the style of heroic realism.

By acknowledging continuity in art and by basing ourselves on the contemporary world view, we create this style of heroic realism and lay the foundation of the universal building of future art, the art of a classless society.

Shortly after the forty-seventh exhibition of the Wanderers, in January 1922, a group of artists, among them Aleksandr Grigor'ev, Evgenii Katsman, Sergei Maliutin and Pavel Radimov, organized the Association of Artists Studying Revolutionary Life, which was shortly rechristened Society of Artists of Revolutionary Russia. After their first group show, *Exhibition of Pictures by Artists of the Realist Direction in Aid of the Starving*, in Moscow (opened May 1), the Society was renamed Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR). The primary aim of its members was to present revolutionary Russia in a realistic manner by depicting the everyday life of the proletariat, the peasantry, the Red Army, etc. In restoring tendentious theme to the picture, they returned to the traditions of the nineteenth-century realists and declared their opposition to the leftists. In addition to older realists, such as Abram Arkhipov, Nikolai Kasatkin and Konstantin Luon, AKhRR attracted many young artists, such as Isaak Brodskii, Aleksandr Gerasimov and Boris Ioganson. In order to acquaint themselves with proletarian reality, many of the AKhRR members visited factories, iron foundries, railroad depots, shipyards, etc. By the mid-1920s AKhRR was the most influential single body of artists in Russia, having affiliates throughout the country, including a special young artists' section called Association of AKhR Youth (OMAKhR), its own publishing house,<sup>1</sup> and of course, enjoying direct government support. In 1928 AKhRR changed its name to Association of Artists of the Revolution (AKhR), and in 1929 it established its own journal *Iskusstvo v massy*. In 1932, together with all other formal art and literary groups, AKhR was dissolved by the resolution "On the Reconstruction" (see pp. 387).

— JB

<sup>1</sup> See N. Shchekotov, *Iskusstvo SSSR. Novaya Rossiia v iskusstve* (Moscow, 1926).

Originally published in Russian as "Deklaratsiia Assotsiatsii khudozhnikov revoliutsionnoi Rossii," in *Vystavka etjudov, eskizov, risunkov i grafiki iz zhizni i byta raboche-krest'ianskoi Krasnoi armii*, the catalogue of the AKhRR *Exhibition of Studies, Sketches, Drawings, and Graphics from the Life and Customs of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army* held in Moscow in June and July 1922 (Moscow, 1922), 120. It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 345, from which this translation is made, and also in *Assotsiatsiia Khudozhnikov Revoliutsionnoi Rossii*, comp. I. Gronskii and V. Perel'man (Moscow, 1973), 289. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 269, 270.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "Declaration of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlit, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 265–67.

# A New Optimism

## 1923

D19

Ivan Kliun

I am not challenging anyone's theories; I believe that every serious work is valuable, because it has significance, albeit to a greater or lesser extent.

Atoms possess different properties; when they connect, they form new units. When atoms move, the units undergo constant change. This we call life.

Atoms connect either through a simple conflation with each other or through appropriation of one by the other.

Organic life is built on appropriation. Man organizes elements: he helps them unite.

What we call death is just another birth.

There is no death in the life of nature or of man, because life itself is the process of constant dying.

We talk about flourishing and the energy of life when the process of decomposition<sup>1</sup> is in full force; we are talking about death and dying when new life is being born.

Death and birth are inseparable in a time in constant flow.

The old world is leaving us; this means that the new one is being born.

Decomposition of an old culture means a variety of opportunities for a renaissance. Contemporaneity will also become history.

The new culture, which replaces the perishing one, is determined by the old. The law of development through appropriation is also the law of incessant decomposition; therefore at the highest stage of decomposition, creative decomposing of the very process of decomposition must take place.

This is the turning point of the historical process.

Every body aims at creating a unified organism; afterward, it loses its unity and decays in order to begin forming a new organism immediately.

Contrary to Spengler's assertion, a culture has never died without a trace. Quite the opposite, the victors appropriated it, added it to their own culture—a process, from which their culture gained.

In fact, we see that despite catastrophes, culture always expands, always grows: we are already swimming under the sea and flying in the air; we talk across vast expanses of space, and see and even hear the conversation of people who died a long time ago.

It is quite possible that the emotional culture of Europe is ending and that the mechanical (technical) culture of America is beginning to develop.

Destructions also proceed according to laws. In order to destruct, the hard work of many talented people is necessary.

We are decomposing life and the arts with great care.

Sometimes, it seems as if we are synthesizing it, but we are simply decomposing and analyzing it. At the moment, we are living through an extraordinary flowering of precision knowledge: archeology and philology are reaching the end of time. Microscopes and telescopes are discerning minuscule details. Every day brings new inventions and discoveries.

However, even this knowledge breeds dissolution: multiplicity without unity; wealth belonging to no one; non-objectivity without spirit.

Today's man knows a lot: his bible is the newspaper and the cinema. It is extremely difficult to surprise him with anything. He can orient himself in the most difficult schema and plans.

Man is like a reference book (of the latest edition, a knowledgeable reference book).

Everything he knows serves a useful purpose—he is a specialist.

...

Culture is attempting to bring to consciousness the immediate psychic occurrences that are common to all organic beings, beginning with infusoria and ending with humans, such as the feeling of pleasure or the feeling of fright. This is why in the process of cultural work we often observe a return to the immediate, the primeval.

One culture will replace another until the fate of time is realized.

Overburdened with mundane tasks, we do not understand our situation.

There is a lot of talk about the decline of European culture. This kind of talk is heard from people who are seeing the world as something relative.

Therefore, their opinion is also relative.

I am an optimist and do not see any decline or death. On the contrary, in my opinion, worldwide culture is always progressing and this forward march has accelerated lately.

It can't be otherwise today, with our state-of-the-art communication lines and other means of interaction.

Even animals are becoming more cultured.

In the past, we attempted to comprehend life with the help of immediate perception and not through analysis; as a result, a synthetic culture grew on the basis of religion and power.

Man is not content with the world created before him and is building his own.

This world cannot be for him the final one.

This world is the one of mechanical links.

Esperanto is the language of all humans.

Love and hate, which lead the entirety of humanity, are the mathematics of the cosmos.

All new discoveries change former architecture at its root (in the sense of new concepts) and can only compose a new style, which reaches far out with its free lines—not only beyond the confines of the old world but also beyond the basic forms of our thinking (for example, Khvol'son's *Principles of Relativity* and Umov's *Characteristic Traits and Tasks of Contemporary Thought in Natural Sciences*).<sup>2</sup>

Until recently, all culture was synthetic; our view of the world was built on our ability to synthesize. In the Middle Ages, attempts by men of science to analyze certain occurrences in life, which were considered true, were deemed blasphemous and led to disastrous consequences for the offenders.

Only when they gained relative freedom, people dedicated themselves fully to analysis. Man wants to know and explain everything accessible to his understanding. Culture moves from synthesis to analysis.

Man breaks everything down to its constituent elements and will continue in his analysis until he reaches the fundamental constituent parts and learns the precise laws of life and all its elements and the properties of these elements.

When he learns all the properties of the elements accessible to human understanding, he will begin to create life (both physical and psychic) from these elements through mechanical and chemical means.

Then, a new centuries-old culture will begin to develop: from the analysis of the elements to their synthesis.

This culture, this work, has already begun.

There cannot be any sharp divide between cultures—in any case, they are absolutely invisible for onlookers and resurface only after decades have passed.

When, following the path of scientific analysis, man understands why things happen in this world—that is, he understands the properties of matter, the characteristics of all its fundamental atoms and elements—then man will begin to create his own world. That is, he will organize matter, arrange its elements, and create his own mechanical world. Even though this mechanical world is considered a dead one, man will be able to create an organic world once he learns the properties of matter—because there is no [dead] matter, every atom lives.

It is wrong to think that mechanics deals with dead matter; mechanics deals with live matter—it is an organized and living force. It is possible in mechanics for us to miss a property.

However, this new life consciously organized by man will not look like the life governed by the unconscious, which we observe now. For example, when we construct a sound today, we are not trying to imitate a nightingale, but we are trying to create more interesting sounds . . .

Here is a garden surrounded by an iron fence, made according to a drawing, on a stone foundation.

What is better, a growing tree or this fence?

The fence, of course.

The fence also belongs to nature. It has all the constituent elements of a growing tree, but these elements are organized by man; they are arranged to suit his needs. This is what we call improved nature, made using all the possibilities given to us by nature for the benefit of nature itself.

A man listens to a concert on the radio.

V[ladimir] Mayakovsky appeals in his verse “The First of May”: “Down with the moodiness of spring, long live the calculation of world forces!”<sup>3</sup>

A nightingale’s song is beautiful, but the future belongs to a gramophone.

See “The Steel Nightingale” by Aseev.<sup>4</sup>

An artist’s eye is like a spectrum.

Decomposition of elements in art is not to everyone’s liking, but it cannot be helped, because it is necessary.

New times demand new art.

There is no reason to feel saddened at the thought that our second or third generations will be experiencing decline. On the other hand, the fifteenth or thirtieth generations will be flourishing. It is all the same to me, since I will not witness either the third or the fifteenth generations. Perhaps the closer it is to someone, the more immanent it feels.

<sup>1</sup> *Razlozhenie* can be translated as both “decomposition” and “decay.” [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> Kliun mentions the books of two renowned Russian physicists: *Printsipy otnositel’nosti* by Orest Khvol’son (1852–1934), which was first published in Saint Petersburg in 1912 and reprinted in 1914, and *Kharakternye cherty i zadachi sovremennoi estestvennonauchnoi mysli* by Nikolai Umov (1846–1915), also published in Saint Petersburg in 1912, with a second edition in 1914.

<sup>3</sup> A line from a verse by Vladimir Mayakovsky, “*1-oe maia*,” published in the second issue of the journal *Lef* in 1923.

<sup>4</sup> Kliun mentions a book of verse by Nikolai Aseev, *Stal’noi solovei*, published in 1922 by VKhUTEMAS in Moscow.

Originally published in Russian as Ivan Kliun, “Novyi optimizm,” in *Moi put’ v iskusstve. Vospominaniia, stat’i, dnevniki*, ed. I. Kliun (Moscow: Izd-vo RA, 1999). For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 256–61.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Natasha Kurchanova.

## From Where to Where? Futurism’s Perspectives 1923

D20

### Sergei Tret’iakov

All those who wish to define futurism (in particular, literary futurism) as a school, as a literary current unified by common devices for the treatment of material and a common style, find themselves in an extremely difficult position. Usually they have to wander helplessly between different groups—classify the ego- and cubo-futurists, look for intuitions established once and for all and the aesthetic canons related to them, and hesitate in confusion between the “singer-archaist” Khlebnikov, the “tribune-urbanist” Mayakovsky, the “aesthete-agitator” Burliuk, the “transrationalist-grumbler” Kruchenykh. And if to this we add “the specialist in room navigation in the airplane of syntax,” Pasternak, then the landscape will be complete. Still more confusion is caused by those who “fell off” futurism: Severianin, Shershenevich and others. It was so easy to define futurism in 1913 as a publicity-hungry board of charlatan-acrobats who preached the autonomous word and the eccentric image, but it is rather difficult to recognize that very same Mayakovsky in his transition from “the street, the faces of the Great Danes of years” to the Mystery and the “International.”<sup>1</sup>

Of course, it’s simplest to shout that the futurists during the past ten years have come to their senses, that they have stopped being futurists and do not want to abandon their name only out of stubbornness. It was even simpler to state that futurism never existed: that there were and are talented individuals, very good, of course, and accepted regardless of the “labels” with which they have covered themselves. The most temperamental commentators even got into a white heat and yelled: “Look, they are all different from each other! What kind of a school is this? This is a bluff!” And now? The futurists conduct their research in the most opposite directions: Meierkhol’d is heading toward a replacement of illusionistic theater with the demonstration of its working processes; Mayakovsky, realistically simplifying things, tends toward a dynamic plot, detective stories, the boulevard novel of intrigue; on the other hand, there are the extremely complicated phono-constructions of Kamenskii and Kruchenykh. Don’t these facts constitute grounds for those joyous charges about the movement’s disintegration? But, alas, all these heterogeneous lines get along fine together under the common roof of futurism, firmly holding on to each other! And at the same time, those who look more futurist than the futurists in their techniques—the imaginists, the Severianinists, the Nichevoki—are to these very futurists more alien even than Friche.<sup>2</sup>

This is how the critics and the average citizen go astray, either mixing up futurism with all things “left” and incomprehensible, or the opposite, trying to demonstrate the nonexistence of this troublesome fact. But what’s the problem?

The problem is that futurism was never a school, and the mutual cohesion of heterogeneous people into one group was not based, of course, on a factional label. Futurism would not be what it is if it finally settled on some given aesthetic clichés, and ceased to be the revolutionary ferment that without respite impels us toward creativity, toward the search for ever newer forms. Schools may branch out of futurism, and they do. One can talk about the Mayakovsky school, the Khlebnikov school, the Pasternak school. But, here, one has to be cautious, because the abnormal calm that the popular dead-end concept of “school” carries in itself would be harmful to futurism, if it does not have an educational purpose.

Dead-end and distorted groups and groupings, having acquired for themselves a kopeck’s worth of futurism, are trying to at least refresh their trash and old rubbish with futurist varnish, in order to turn it into popular goods, not alien to some kind of “moderne.”

It is important to keep in mind that imitation is useful only for learning. One has to assimilate a poet, go beyond his work, and then reject him in the name of independent training, in order to arrive at autonomous devices of work, as is necessary for a class which is creating its own epoch.

We need Mayakovsky and Khlebnikov as emery boards for sharpening linguistic weapons, but certainly not as new Nadsons<sup>3</sup> for mass production of “rot-literature” popular with contemporary misses, nor as objects of the new domestic coziness.

Futurism was never a school. It was a socioaesthetic tendency, the strivings of a group of people whose common point of tangency was not even positive tasks, not even a precise understanding of their “tomorrow,” but rather a hatred for their “yesterday and today,” a relentless and merciless hatred. Fat-assed petit-bourgeois daily life, into which the art of the past and the present (symbolism) entered as kindred parts, shaping the stable taste of a peaceful, serene, and secure existence, was the fundamental stronghold that futurism rejected and attacked. The blow to aesthetic taste was just a detail of the more general blow that left a mark on everyday life. Not one of the ultraprovocative stanzas or manifestoes of the futurists generated as much uproar and shrieking as did their clownishly made up faces, the famous yellow blouse, and the asymmetric suits. The bourgeois mind could bear all sorts of gibes at Pushkin, but it was beyond its strength to bear mockery of pants style, ties, or flowers in the lapel. Of course, futurism did not succeed in smashing the citadel of bourgeois taste, the social moment was too unsuitable for that, even then; the revolutionary energy that was accumulating began to speak through futurism, the energy of that class which in five years, no longer through words but by decree, by civil war, by its own merciless dictatorship would proceed to extirpate the channels of petit-bourgeois sensibilities.

From the very first futurist performances, from the very nature of this work, it was already clear that futurism aims not so much at the establishment of an aesthetic dogma that would replace symbolism, as at exciting the human psyche in its entirety, at pushing the psyche toward the greatest possible creative flexibility and toward rejection of all possible canons and concepts of absolute values. Here, futurism revealed itself as a new world-sense.

The work on this world-sense was conducted gropingly, in the dark, with all sorts of failures and deviations. The driving force behind this work was not a precise notion of the future (we even sensed and announced the revolution already in the air, without an idea of its true nature), but that fat roachfish of everyday life which pressed us from behind.

The poetry of the futurists, not only agitating for a new idea, was criss-crossed from the very beginning by agit-explosions about the human being sensing the world anew.

Poetry is a worn-out wench  
And beauty is blasphemous trash  
(Burluiuk)

The world must fit one's consciousness tightly,  
like a blacked boot.  
Dyr-Bul-Shchyl  
(Kruchenych)

A barefooted diamond cutter of faceted verse lines  
Fluffing up the feather beds in other people's homes,  
Today, I'll set fire to the universal feast  
Of the rich and the motley poor.  
(Mayakovsky)

The creators are set apart from the consumers.  
(Khlebnikov)

The steady betrayal of one's own past . . .  
(Khlebnikov)

These are brief excerpts from early futurist works, but Mayakovsky went on with “A Cloud in Trousers,” “War and the World,” “Man”; Khlebnikov with “Ladimir,” and others<sup>4</sup>—on the whole these works were preachings about the new human being.

Propaganda about forging the new human being is essentially the only content of the works of the futurists, who without this leading idea invariably turn into verbal acrobats; and to this day they still look like jugglers to all those for whom the fundamental preaching of the new world-sense is alien.

The term world-sense—unlike the terms world view or Weltanschauung, which are based on knowledge, on a logical system—denotes the sum of emotional (sensual) judgments that arise in the human being. Since these judgments move along the lines of sympathy and repulsion, friendship and enmity, joy and sadness, fear and courage, it is often difficult to define logically the entire complex fabric of causes and motives that generate these sensations.

No Weltanschauung could be vital if it was not alloyed to a world-sense, if it had not become the living driving force which determines all actions of the human being, his everyday physiognomy.

The level of energy in the individual, the joy in involvement, of fierce persistence devoted to his production collective, the degree of his infectious enthusiasm for work—this is the practical significance of the world-sense.

Futurism as world-sense was born in an extremely difficult and gradual way. It began with sharply individualistic self-assertion, with aimless passion, purely sportive motivations; but little by little it started recognizing its own social value. In connection with the tasks of the proletariat rising on the horizon of history, it snapped off its unnecessary branches of revolt for revolt's sake, and began to grow through the tensions of the battle alongside the rebellious producers of social values, tensions which only during the revolution acquired tangible forms.

And so, what guided futurism from the days of its infancy was not the creation of new paintings, verses, and prose, but the production of a new human being through art, which is one of the tools of such production.

The baby was born with teeth.

From the very beginning futurism already opposed:

The immutability of everyday life and public taste  
and all patents on durability,  
starting with bronze monuments—  
with a protest against all sympathies for the  
petit-bourgeois way of life, putting them up  
for reevaluation.

The veneration of the fetishes  
of beauty, art, and inspiration—  
with art as a true production process,  
defined by rational organization  
of the material, according to a plan based on  
social requirements.

Metaphysics, symbolism, and mysticism—  
with the utilitarianism of our constructions.  
The construction of real and useful things.

Wasn't the urbanism of the futurists a blow to the Russia of the provincial landowners—that urbanism so hateful to the enemies of Americanism, those followers of the latest peasant-clad version of Slavophilism who are now trying to resurrect themselves psychologically in the form of all sorts of new-folk-country poems!

And our jeering at the idols: Pushkin, Lermontov, etc.—this was a direct blow to the brains of those who, having absorbed from their school days the spirit of passive submission to authority, never made an effort to understand the true role of futurism, a role that the now obsolete Pushkin played at his time, introducing into the Francophile salons what were in essence the most ordinary “chastushki”;<sup>5</sup> but now, trite and familiar after a hundred years, he has become the measure of refined taste and has ceased to be dynamite! Not the dead Pushkin of the academic volumes and of the Tverskoi Boulevard,<sup>6</sup> but a live contemporary Pushkin lives with us a hundred years later in the verbal and conceptual explosions of the futurists, who today are carrying forward the work that he performed on the language the day before yesterday. Nobody, of course, even took the chance of thinking about this.

The present must be alive—this is the first point of the futurists' demands. Never encumber the flight of creativity with a fossilized stratum (no matter how highly respected)—this is our second slogan. The futurist would cease to be a futurist if he started rehashing even his own things, if he started living on the interest from his creative capital. The futurist would risk becoming a petit-bourgeois passeist, and would lose flexibility and force in his formulation of the problems of method and device in the struggle for a creative, well-conditioned, class-serving human personality.

As Mayakovsky stated in especially sharp terms:

“If there is a people—  
Art will join it”

These words first arose at the time of the revolution, when for the first time futurism was able to recognize in their entirety both its tasks and the significance of the ideas it fostered. If there had been no revolution, futurism could have easily degenerated into a plaything for the consumption of the sated salons. Without the revolution, futurism, in forging the human personality, would never have gone beyond the anarchic attacks of the loners and the aimless terrorism of words and paint. It would have been too harmless.

The revolution brought forth practical tasks: action on mass psychology, organization of the class will. The tournaments in the arena of aesthetics came to

an end, it was necessary to deal with living life. Futurism put its mind to the “applied” minor arts which are avoided with such disdain by all “the priests of pure, inspired art,” who are neither able nor willing to work “on order.” Working on the agit-chastushka, the newspaper feuilleton, the agit-play, and the march song, the futurists’ calling was strengthened: art in life, toward its complete integration into life! The good-for-nothing who would like to see in all this only hackwork would be making a big mistake—true mastery did not disappear, although the work is now designed to fit today’s needs. Here were the first roots of the theory of productivist art as put forth by the futurists.

In essence, the theory of productivist art holds that the artist’s creativity must not have as its aim all manner of embellishment, but rather must be applied to all production processes. A masterfully made object of practical and expedient use—this is the calling of the artist, who thereby drops from the cast of “creators” into the corresponding workers’ union.

The movement toward a more organized form of human society—the commune—demands the concentration of all types of energy (including here even aesthetic organizing energy) in the shock-brigade direction. The expediency of every effort and the need for the product these efforts engender must be taken into account. Up to now, all arts, and especially literature, have developed more for showing than for service.

The artists contrived to treat even the revolution as a merely narrative plot, without reflecting on the fact that the revolution must reorganize the very construction of speech, of human emotions. As already said, the agitational moment in art was from its youth related to futurism. The futurist has always been an instigator-agitator. And revolutionary agitation turned out to be for him not an alien appendage, but the only possible means of applying art in its genuine form to the practical tasks of life. The revolution, for the futurist, did not become a plot, or an episode, but the only reality, the atmosphere for the daily, continuous reorganization of the human psyche toward the achievement of the commune.

The theory of productivist art dealt primarily with the fine arts, and in fact was marked by a shift of focus from material and volume (cubism, futurism) to a compositional assemblage of materials, justified by its practical end (constructivism), which already represents a big step forward toward “making a useful thing.”<sup>7</sup>

In literature, the theory of productivist art has been merely outlined. Agit-art is only a semisolution to this problem, because agit-art uses “the artistic suspension of disbelief,” i.e., a method from the old art, in order to alienate consciousness from the real environment and lead it through the back streets of fiction so as to place it in front of this or that agit-statement. The latter is thus invested with a great force of impact.

Here, we need to step forward.

The old art is, to a certain extent, a means of mass hypnosis. The sect of creators-producers of aesthetic products is juxtaposed to the inarticulate mass of consumers. The people feel that they are the organizers and managers of this material only when they are in the illusory world. The reader lives with fictitious characters on fictitious roads, performs fictitious deeds and misdeeds, only to return after all that to the state of an inarticulate and blind atom of a chaotic, unorganized society. And there, in his everyday life, where he really needs the word, he does not find it.

The poet works out words and word combinations, but attributes them to fictitious characters. He is forced to justify his research in the field of speech construction by fiction, while the only justification for the use of speech should be dialectical reality itself, at present equipped with inarticulate, inexpressive speech which fails to keep up with the aspirations of this era. Practical life must be colored by art. Not narratives about people, but living words in living interaction among people—this is the domain for the new application of verbal art. The task of the poet is to produce the living, concretely useful language of his time. This task may seem utopian, since it says: art for everybody—not as a consumer product, but as a production skill. And this task is being accomplished, in the final analysis, through the victory of the organizational forces of the revolution, transforming mankind into a harmonious productivist collective where labor will not be a forced activity as in capitalist society, but will be one’s favorite activity, and where art will not call the people into its magic lantern chamber of entertainment, but will color every word, movement, and thing created by the human being, and will become a joyful energy which permeates production processes, even though the price will be the death of those special art products we have today, such as the poem, the painting, the novel, the sonata, etc.

The theoretical task. As a direct consequence, the task of building a new aesthetics and of establishing the correct view on art arises. Metaphysical aesthetics,

as well as formalist aesthetics, which talk about art as an activity that generates a particular kind of feelings (the aesthetic suspension of disbelief), must be replaced by the study of art as a means of emotion-organizing action on the psyche, in connection with the problem of class struggle. The separation and opposition of the concepts “form” and “content” must be reduced to a study of the methods for working up the material into a useful object, of the function of this object, and of the means of its employment.

The very term “function” instead of “content” has already appeared in futurist literature. The understanding of art as a process of production and use of emotion-organizing objects leads to the following definition: form is a task realized on stable material, and content is that socially useful action performed by an object of collective use. The conscious calculation of the useful action of work as opposed to its purely intuitive spontaneous growth and the calculation of the mass of consumer demand, instead of sending the literary work off “into the world for universal consumption” as was done before—these are the new means of organized action of the art workers.

Of course, as long as art exists in its previous form and remains one of the sharpest class tools for action on the psyche, the futurists must lead the struggle within this art front, taking advantage of the mass demand for the products of aesthetic production—the struggle for taste—and placing their materialistic viewpoint in opposition to idealism and passeism. On the spine of every literary work, even if it is aesthetically built, there must be in the perception of the consumer a maximum of contraband in the guise of new devices for the treatment of verbal material, in the guise of agitational ferments, in the guise of new militant sympathies and joys which are hostile to the old, slobbering taste which retired from life or is crawling after life on its belly. We will fight from within art, using its own means, for art’s destruction, so that verses which were supposed “to give smooth and gentle relief”<sup>8</sup> will explode like a wad of gun cotton in the reader’s stomach.

Thus, these are the two basic tasks which futurism is carrying out:

1. Having mastered to perfection the weapon of aesthetic expressiveness and persuasiveness, to force the Pegasus<sup>9</sup> to carry the heavy pack load of practical obligations in agitation and propaganda work. Within art, to carry on a work that will break down art’s self-sufficient posture.

2. By analyzing and realizing the driving possibilities of art as a social force, to throw the energy which it generates into the service of reality, and not of reflected life; to color every human production movement with the mastery and joy of art.<sup>10</sup>

In both the first and the second task, what stands out is the struggle for an original system of human experiences, feelings and characteristic human actions, for the sake of psychological structuring of the human being. Here, an inescapable struggle against banal everyday life is developing.<sup>11</sup>

What we subjectively call everyday life, or more precisely vulgarity (in the etymological sense this word means “vulgarity is,” i.e., “established itself”),<sup>12</sup> is the system of feelings and actions which have become automatized by repetition in conformity with a particular socioeconomic basis, which have become a habit, and which are extraordinarily durable. Even the most powerful revolutionary blows are not capable of tangibly smashing this inner life routine, which is an exceptional obstacle to the people’s acceptance of the tasks dictated by the shift to productivist mutual relationships. Objectively, we term everyday life that unchangeable order and character of things with which the human being surrounds himself, to which, regardless of their utility, he turns as fetishes of his sympathies and memories, and of which, ultimately, he becomes a slave.

In this sense, everyday life is a deeply reactionary force, a force which during the crucial moments of social upheavals hinders the organization of class will for delivering the decisive blow. Comfort for comfort’s sake; coziness as an end in itself; a whole chain of traditions and a respect for things which are losing their practical significance, from neckties to religious fetishes—this is the everyday-life quagmire which tenaciously grips not only the petty bourgeoisie, but a good part of the proletariat—especially in the West and in America. There, the establishment of an uncritical way of life has become an instrument of the ruling classes to pressure the proletary psyche. One need only mention the activities of those emotionally opportunistic organizations, such as the notorious YMCA<sup>13</sup> in the Anglo-Saxon countries!

Not everyday life in its stagnation and dependence on a stereotyped system of things, but life as reality sensed dialectically,<sup>14</sup> in a process of continuous formation. Reality is the path to the commune which we cannot forget for even a minute. This is the task of futurism. One has to create the person-worker, energetic, ingenious, solidarity disciplined, who feels the call of duty as a class-creator, and who, without hesitation, puts all his production at the disposal of the collective. In

this sense, the futurist must be, least of all, the owner of his production. He must struggle against the hypnosis of the name, and the patent of priority connected with the name. Petit-bourgeois self-importance, beginning with a name tag on the door and ending with a stone name tag on the grave, is alien to the futurist; his sense of worth comes from awareness of himself as an essential gear of his production collective. His true immortality lies not in the possible preservation of his own verbal composition, but in the larger and more complete assimilation of his production by the people. It does not matter whether his name is forgotten. What matters is that his achievements enter the life process and there generate new improvements and new training. Not the politics of locked skulls of patented protection against all thoughts, all discoveries and designs, but the politics of skulls open to all those who want, jointly, side by side, to search for a form overcoming both stagnation and chaos in the name of the maximal organization of life. And, at the same time, attacking with sharpness and decisiveness, maneuvering with the greatest flexibility, in the struggle for a new individuality. Where, if not from the RKP<sup>15</sup> must one learn these brilliant practical dialectics which are shaping the new ethics—the prize and the victory at any cost, in the name of the utmost of achievements, as durable as the North Star!

Now, in the period of the NEP<sup>16</sup> one must conduct the struggle for class consciousness more sharply than ever. NEP from the socioeconomic point of view is a silent fight for mastery between proletarian and bourgeois production. NEP from the cultural point of view is the smelting of the primordial pathos of the first years of the revolution into a trained practical effort that will succeed not by dint of emotions and flights of the imagination, but because of organization and self-control. “Bookkeeper’s pathos,” strict control and assessment of every penny of constructive action, the “Americanization” of the personality, parallel with the electrification of industry, demand the smelting of the passionate tribune, who was able to tear through the elemental fault line with a sharp explosion, into a deliberate and businesslike control-mechanic of the new period of the revolution. And this new type of worker must feel a fundamental hatred toward all things unorganized, inert, chaotic, sedentary, and provincially backward. He finds it difficult to love nature the way the landscape painter, the tourist or the pantheist once did. He is repelled by thick pine forests, untilled steppes, unutilized waterfalls which tumble not according to our order, rain and snow, avalanches, caves and mountains. He finds beauty in those things upon which one can see the mark of the organizing human hand; he finds greatness in every object of human production designed to overcome, subject and master the elements and inert matter.

Alongside the man of science, the art worker must become a psychoengineer, a psychoconstructor. NEP, and with it the entire today’s reality within the RSFSR,<sup>17</sup> is frightening not only because of the onslaught of idealistic belching, the tendency toward the good old way of life, and mysticism (the hallmark of organizational helplessness). Every movement, every step of the people, their inability to achieve harmony in work, even their inability to walk in the street in a sensible way, to get on a streetcar, to get out of an auditorium without crushing each other, is a sign of the counterrevolutionary action of tongue-tiedness, blindness and lack of training. These are all frightening factors requiring large-scale efforts. And it’s a pleasure to feel that even in the ranks of the proletarian poets there is at least a Gastev<sup>18</sup> whose propaganda for production training is worth a brilliant poem. People do not know how to talk, they waste an endless amount of time grunting out simple things, but ask them about language as a phenomenon subject to conscious organized action and at once they let out a cry about “the great, the free, the beautiful,” etc., Russian language (mostly smoke-dried, we might add). And the question of a rational suit—is it possible to encroach upon the fashion magazine which dictates to the masses the will of the capitalist manufacturers! We are not going to go any further—the question of the form of sociopsychological inertia is a rather broad theme not only for the encyclopedia and the system, but also for a good declaration.

Recognizing this fact precisely, and taking up a sharply tendentious orientation toward the communist task, futurism must delineate the objects of its sympathy and its antipathy, the materials to be processed and those to be discarded.

And if the maximal program of the futurists is the integration of art and life, the conscious reorganization of language according to the new forms of life, and the struggle for the emotional training of the producer-consumer’s psyche, then the minimal program of futurist-speech-producers is to place their linguistic mastery at the service of the practical tasks of the day. Until art is dethroned from its self-made pedestal, futurism must use it, opposing it in its own arena: agit-action as opposed to daily-life representation; energetic work treatment as opposed to lyric poetry; the inventive adventure novella as opposed to the psychologism of belles lettres; the newspaper feuilleton and the agitka as opposed to pure art; the oratorical tribune as opposed to poetic declamation; tragedy and farce as

opposed to petit-bourgeois drama; productivist movement as opposed to emotional experiences.

The task of the futurists must remain agit-work against the old, enervated aesthetics, to the same degree as before, since for the futurists art can be effective only within a militant movement. Where is the foundation of this work? Where is that society of new consumers which could replace the obtuse clay wall on which futurism knocked in the year 1913? Such a society exists—it is the workers’ audience which is swiftly growing in its self-awareness, and especially the working youth who, to a greater degree than the middle-aged worker, are not afflicted by that bourgeois-daily-life scab of lazy, cautious habitualness characteristic of the older worker, who has been under the petit-bourgeois influence of the village and the urban tradesmanship and handicraft. And for sure, it is to this youth—and not to intellectual audiences—that the semaphores of futurism are leading.

Only in everyday work with the working masses and with youth is it possible to propel futurism forward as the world-sense of inextinguishable youth, mocking courage, and stubborn persistence. futurism has proved to be just such movement by each one of its stone-cutting lines, leaving its imprint on all the other (not entirely poorhouse) literature of its decade.

The work of futurism is parallel with and identical to the work of communism; futurism is fighting for that dynamic organization of the personality without which movement toward the commune is impossible. And since communism, in its gigantic superhuman effort of rooting out the old socioeconomic system, has not yet established and defined its line on the issue of the organization of the individual and the social world-sense to a satisfactory degree, futurism remains a separate movement with a separate name. Only one other name may in the final analysis replace the name “futurism”—that is: “communist world-sense, communist art.” Dialectical materialism applied to the problem of organization of the human psyche through the emotions must inevitably lead to that moment when futurism as a movement, as one of the sociorevolutionary fighting divisions, will be absorbed and assimilated into the world-organizing communist front; it will become a communist world-sense.

Setting up the mileposts of each advancement, futurism will very shortly feel that it has become something more than a working group which is replacing—continually replacing—the old aesthetic tastes by its new constructions. Futurism, in its fight against everyday life, cannot limit itself to words, wishes, and slogans. It must feel itself in the midst of everyday life as a demolition squad, indefatigable and joyful.

The new human being in reality, in his everyday actions, in the construction of his material and mental life—this is what futurism must be able to demonstrate. And, if it does not get swamped by the waves of the literary establishment, futurism will do that, because futurism is the religion of eternal youth and renewal in persistent work on the appointed task.

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Sergei Tret’iakov (1892–1939) was one of the key members of *Left’s* editorial staff alongside Mayakovsky, Boris Arvatov, Osip Brik, Boris Kushner, Nikolai Chuzak and Viktor Shklovskii. Further articles by Tret’iakov appear as German translations: Sergei Tret’yakov, *Die Arbeit des Schrifstellers, Aufsätze, Reportage, Porträts* [A Writer’s Work, Essays, Reports, Portraits], published by Heiner Boehncke, trans. Karla Hielscher (Reinbek nr. Hamburg, 1972) (see also the instructive afterword by Heiner Boehncke, 188–219); for the literary work also see Sergei M. Tret’yakov, *Lyrik, Dramatik, Prosa* [Verse, Dramatic Art, Prose] (Leipzig, 1972); Sergei Tret’yakov, *Gesichter der Avantgarde. Porträts - Essays - Briefe* [Faces of the Avantgarde. Portraits - Essays - Letters] (Berlin, Weimar, 1985).

A clearly structured overview of the literary political and aesthetic positions of the early Soviet era continues to be available in the collection of annotated texts by Hubertus Gasner/Eckart Gillen, *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischem Realismus. Dokumente und Kommentare: Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917–1934* [Between Revolutionary Art and Socialist Realism. Documents and Comments: Art Debates in the Soviet Union from 1917–1934] (Cologne, 1979); see also *Von der Revolution zum Schriftstellerkongress* [From the Revolution to the Writers’ Congress], ed. G. Erler et al.; an extensive discussion of the constructivist program is also given in: R. G. Grübel, *Russischer Konstruktivismus* [Russian Constructivism]; and finally, S. O. Chan-Magomedov, *Konstruktivism* (comprehensive representation of constructivism while simultaneously almost completely fading out suprematism).

Despite Sergei Tret’iakov being one of the most radical representatives of an “applied avant-garde” or “production art,” and even wanting to allow creative work in “production” to emanate from basic commodities and factories, he continued to see himself as a consistent representative of avant-garde art. He therefore focused his polemics—as did most of the other constructivists and productionists—on the one hand against an atavistic distinction between “form” and “content,” which could be found in ideologically-embellished realism in the same way as one of the Proletkul’t verses which followed neo-romantic and symbolist patterns. On the other hand, Tret’iakov and the Left Front of the Arts wanted to distance themselves from the representatives of “pure art,” which they suspected of the

Russian formalists as well as the suprematists (particularly Malevich and his followers) and the advocates of “panel painting” with oil and canvas.

Instead of the former aesthetics, separated from social and technical production life, Tret'iakov called for a left avant-garde art that offset the contradiction between aesthetic subject and practical object in a type of utopian anticipation (for more details on the discussion between Tret'iakov or the production art followers and the Russian formalists, see A. Hansen-Löve, *Der russische Formalismus* [Russian Formalism], 478–509).

— AH-L

1. Quotation from the poem “From Street to Street” (1913); *Mystery-Bouffe* (1918), a parody of a medieval mystery play; “*Ill International*” (1912) [Trans.].
2. Imaginism was born in Moscow in 1919, its leader the former futurist Vadim Shershenevich. Among its members were S. Esenin, A. Mariengof, R. Innev, A. Kusikov and I. Gruzinov. The Severianinists were not a group; here, Tret'iakov refers to the epigones of ego-futurism. The Nichevoki was a group; originally from Rostov-on-the-Don, they published their first manifesto in the collection of poetry *To You* (Moscow, 1920). Their most prominent figure was the poet Riurik Rok. Vladimir Friche (1870–1929), a literature and art critic, was the editor of the journals *Literature and Marxism* (1928–29) and *Press and Revolution* (1929) [Trans.].
3. Semen Nadson (1862–1887) was the idol of a frustrated generation of young idealists. His sentimental verses full of pathos, melancholy and foreboding had a populist slant fashionable in those years. His tragic fate and untimely death contributed to his popularity [Trans.].
4. *A Cloud in Trousers* (1915), *War and the World* (1915–16), *Man* (1916–17). *Ladomir* (1912) was a manuscript book [Trans.].
5. The “*chastushka*” is a two-line or four-line folk verse, usually humorous and topical, sung in a lively manner [Trans.].
6. A monument to Pushkin stands in Pushkin Square, formerly Tverskoi Boulevard [Trans.].
7. Not a literary quotation, this is probably a reference to the common popular suggestion that one “should do something useful” [Trans.].
8. This appears to be a sarcastic reference to some laxative advertisement (“*slabii' legko i nezhuo*”) [Trans.].
9. Allusion to the imaginists; see “Whom does *Lef* Wrangle With?” n. 3 [Trans.].
10. This refers to the “production art” movement or the “productionists” (*proizvodstvenniki*) [note from Groys and Hansen-Löve.].
11. The term *byt* translates to mean “everyday life”; for the Russian avant-garde, this was generally a negatively-viewed conventionality, the automated, demised life and art forms of the old world which are overcome in the authentic, technical and practical social life of the society of cultural revolution (for the analysis of the literary “everyday life” as the subject of a new literary sociology as part of Russian formalism see A. Hansen-Löve, *Der russische Formalismus* [Russian Formalism], 397ff.) [note from AH-L].
12. The word *poshlost'* denotes a life devoid of spiritual values, a state of self-satisfied mediocrity, pettiness and bigotry. The etymology of the word suggested by Tret'iakov is “*poshlo est'*,” literally “the vulgar is” [Trans.].
13. YMCA = Abbreviation of Young Men's Christian Association, a global association for young Christian men [note from Groys and Hansen-Löve.].
14. In contrast to *byt*, i.e. to mundane everyday life and its static nature, *bytie*, meaning “being,” belongs to the sphere of “becoming” and an authentic life dynamic. Exactly in this way, Mikhail Bakhtin—just like the representatives of Russian formalism—understood the artistic as becoming (conscious), as a process directed against everything that has become and is fossilized. See Rainer Grübel, “On the Aesthetics of the Word for Michail Bachtin,” in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Die Ästhetik des Wortes* [The Aesthetics of the Word] (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), 59ff [note from Groys and Hansen-Löve.].
15. RKP = Russian Communist Party [note from Groys and Hansen-Löve.].
16. During the period of “New Economic Policy” (NEP), the early communist society and economy were recapitalized and partially privatized on Lenin's orders, something much criticized by LEF. This was to make it possible for the Soviet system to survive at all. The mechanization and economization of work processes were also seen to be huge “Americanizations,” which in those times were considered to be positive for all intents and purposes. In any case, for all ideological perspectives, the American or capitalist economism and the enthusiasm for technology of the “modern times” fitted very well into the early Soviet image of a fully-rationalized factory culture. Positive indicators of “Taylorism” (see A. Ebbingshaus, “Taylor in Russia,” in *Autonomie: Materialien gegen die Fabrikgesellschaft* [Autonomy: Materials against Factory Society] (Munich, Edition 1, n.d.) and the enthusiasm for a formalization of work processes were effective as far as Meierkhol'd's theatrical art (one thinks of his “biomechanics,” i.e. the mechanization of the actor's body) [note from Groys and Hansen-Löve.].
17. Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic [Trans.].
18. Aleksei Gastev (1882–1941) was one of the main representatives of Proletkul't symbolism in verse. His technical verse was a huge success; nonetheless, he turned away from art and worked intensively with labor organizations (for example, the Institute for the Scientific Organization of Labor, NOT). As a postulate, on the paper of the manifestos and declarations, this conscious leveling of the differences between the terms of making and generating and those of establishing and creating, between engineer and genius, developed a completely metaphoric potential. In any case, the avant-garde effect of this reduction aimed to result in freeing art from the superstructure existence and its being brought down to earth as a work and production technology. The individual artist ego was replaced by the commune collective, instead of self demonstration there was the “objective demonstration of things, the mechanized masses” (Alexander Bogdanov, “Puti proletarskogo tvorchestva” [Methods of Proletarian Creation], in *Literaturnye manifesty* [Literary Manifestos], Munich, Edition 1, 1969), 136; finally, on Gastev's machine cult and early Soviet context: Rolf Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal, Soviet Literature & the Alchemy of Revolution* (Ithaca, London, 2003, 32ff.). The “trust in the machine, the equipment, the instruments . . .” (Aleksei Gastev, “O tendentsiakh proletarskoi kul'tury” [On Tendencies of Proletarian Culture], in N. L. Brodskii, *Literaturnye manifesty*, 130–35; here 132) went so far that he saw an act of liberation and not of alienation in the “mechanization” of everyday life, of gestures, in the standardization of the proletarian's psyche and its supranational “social construct.” For productionists and proletarian cult alike, human omnipotence peaked in a technical omni-productability. Malevich's concept of the “factory” originated from these omnipotent fantasies of “factory assembly” as production plants and the producers as “social machines,” which Gastev praised as mechanics of a life technical center (Gastev, *ibid.*, 134). The equalization of technical and artistic, mechanical-physical and poetic-verbal or textual “assembly” is one of the most productive concept fields of the left art utopias. If everything is assembly, everything else is the raw material and the passive available mass of a universal feasibility, a permanent “reworking” (*pererabotka*). For all mechanical world views, the matter, the material is always a passive object for processing: The more activist the producer is, the more passive the recipient, the more complete the procedural technique, the more complete the mastery of the material as “massa confuse,” organizing, standardizing and regulating it. Elias Canetti's totalitarianism-critical formula, “Mass and power” here achieves a literal dimension as empowerment of the (feminine-creative) “*materia prima*” by a masculine-macho regime of technical organizational violence. This but all too close consequence of constructionism and productionism—its one-dimensional reduction to feasibility and the totalitarianism of utility—in the development phase of suprematism increasingly did not fit in with a world view, which, in Malevich's case never had been based on authority and possession, on affinity with objects and incorporation. The monism present in all left utopias, i.e. the reduction of complex functions of culture, episteme and society into identical monofunctions may have had an avant-garde alienation effect in the early stages, but with the increasing self-organization of these concepts into schools and institutions their maximalism did not seem any less threatening than the minimalism of real socialism which exhibited the old bourgeois view of humanity and the world shamelessly and enormously augmented in an orchestration of the state. [note from Groys and Hansen-Löve.].

Originally published in Russian as Sergei Tret'iakov, “Otkuda i kuda? (Perspektivy futurizma),” *Lef* 1 (1923), 192–203. It is reprinted in *Literaturnye manifesty ot simvolizma do nashikh dnei* [Literary Manifestos from Symbolism to the Present Day], comp. Stanislav Dzhibbinov (Moscow, 2000), 383–91. For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 267–76.

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The notes credited to Groys and Hansen-Löve have been translated by Andrew Davison from the original German in *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 273–76.

## From the Easel to the Machine 1923

D21

### Nikolai Tarabukin

#### I. The Diagnosis

The entire artistic life of Europe for the past ten years has unfolded in an atmosphere of “a crisis of art.” The first stone was removed from the foundation of painting when Manet's canvases first appeared about sixty years ago at exhibitions in Paris and inspired a complete revolution in the Parisian art world of the time. Until recently, we were still inclined to see the whole subsequent development of painterly forms as a progressive process towards the perfection of those forms. In the light of most recent developments, we now regard it, on the one hand, as the steady disintegration of the integrity of the painterly organism into its constituent elements, and, on the other, as the gradual degeneration of painting as a distinctive art form.

#### II. The Emancipation of Painting from Literariness and Illusionism

The French impressionists were the first revolutionaries in painting, liberating it from the paralyzing paths of naturalistic trends and pointing it in new directions. They were the first to give pre-eminence to work on form, among the artist's skills. At the same time, their work was directed towards freeing painting from a content that was dependent upon ideology or subject matter, and from the “literary story” which usually prevailed over form in traditional canvases. For modern painters, the nature morte, which, as a subject, is devoid of this “literariness,” replaced the complex ideology of the classicists and the alluring anecdote of the naturalists. One might say that the focus on painterly content in a canvas was in inverse proportion to the presence of subject matter.

This trend is not only characteristic of the visual arts, but it is also true for other forms of contemporary artistic creativity. Hence poetry, moving from the word as meaning to the word as sound, has replaced ideology and mood with an emphasis on the external structure of the poem, beginning first with symbolism, then futurism, acmeism and imaginism. The theater has abandoned attempts at realistic and psychological interpretations of real life and concentrates its experiments on the formal laws of the stage. Music, which has essentially never been completely enthralled to naturalism or the dominance of subject matter (a program) goes further in exploring the laws of rhythm and composition.

But the formal tasks, henceforth undertaken by art, were only partially intended to liberate the work of art from subject matter. They were directed towards the purely professional exploration of the material elements integral to the forms of every artistic genre, in which the contemporary artist saw the incontestable basis for the work of art, subject to creative organization. As well as the gradual disappearance of subject matter and all those attendant elements in painting, which do not arise from the material structure of the work of art, the painter's struggle against every kind of illusionistic element in the construction of planar forms was already clearly manifest. Even during the flowering of impressionism, which was an essentially illusionistic trend, a reaction against it formed within its central core in the person of Cézanne, who gave more importance to color than to the illusionism of light, which was the basic aim of impressionism. And from Cézanne onwards, the painter begins to focus his attention on the material and real structure of the canvas, i.e., on color, texture, construction and the material itself.

And so illusionistic elements such as light, perspective, movement and space begin to disappear, or are treated in a completely new way in the canvases of contemporary young artists, who have decisively broken away from naturalistic, symbolic, eclectic and similar trends, and who are working primarily on the professional and technical aspects of painting. Hence, for example, the problem of space, which in naturalistic painting the artist solved by means of illusionistic perspective and light, for the modern artist leads to material and real problems of color, line, composition and volume, which are not resolved in an illusionistic way but by means of the planar structuring of the surfaces of large and small bodies.



### III. The Path to Realism

Having moved from illusionistic representation towards realistic constructiveness, and gradually liberating itself from all external elements, not conditioned by the distinctive qualities of the plane as a point of departure for the form of a painterly object, Russian painting has gone through a whole series of stages, which have been entirely original and often completely independent of Western European influences. Passing quickly from Cézanne to figurative cubism,<sup>1</sup> Russian painting split into a number of trends, united by a common direction. Among these, non-objective cubism,<sup>2</sup> suprematism<sup>3</sup> and constructivism<sup>4</sup> should be mentioned. The basic stimulus for the creative aspirations of these trends was realism, which in the period of an upsurge in creative life has always been a healthy core, fertilizing the life of art, which has been littered with eclectic tendencies.

I am using the concept of “realism” in its widest sense and do not identify it in any way with naturalism, which is one of the forms of realism, and the most primitive and naive in its expression at that. Contemporary aesthetic thinking has transferred the idea of realism from the subject to the form of a work of art. Henceforth, the aim of realistic aspirations was not to copy reality (as it had been for the naturalists), but, on the contrary, actual reality in any aspect ceased to be the stimulus for creative work. In the forms of his art, the artist creates its actuality, and for him, realism is the creation of a genuine object, which is self-contained in form and content, an object that does not reproduce the objects of the real world, but is constructed by the artist from beginning to end, outside any projected lines extending towards it from reality.<sup>5</sup> If we look at the works of contemporary non-objective artists<sup>6</sup> from the point of view of this genuine realism, then we will see that in form and material they are just as remote from utilitarian objects as are the works of traditional art. In these, the materials (the pigments) and the form (the two-dimensional plane of the canvas) inevitably create convention and artificiality i.e., not authenticity, but merely projections of the forms of a work of art. Therefore, the painter’s move from the plane of the canvas to the counter-relief was quite logically based on the search for realistic forms in art.

### IV. Leaving the Plane

The artist abandons the brush and palette of artificial colors and begins to work with genuine materials (glass, wood and metal). As far as I know, the counter-relief as an artistic form first appeared in Russian art. Although Braque and Picasso were the first to use labels, papers and letters, as well as sawdust and plaster, etc., as a means of varying texture and intensifying its expressivity, Tatlin went further and created his counter-reliefs from genuine materials. But, even in the counter-reliefs, the artist was not free from conventional form or the artificiality of composition. In the corner counter-reliefs, which like painting can also only be viewed from one position, i.e., frontally, the composition is basically structured according to the same principles as it would be on the plane of the canvas. In this way, the problem of space is not really solved, because the forms in it are not three-dimensional in volume.

The next stage in the evolution of artistic forms, in this general direction, was the central counter-relief, which was also created by Tatlin, and which broke not only with the plane, but also with the wall to which the corner counter-relief had been attached. Works of this type include the spatially constructive works by the OBMOKhU [Society of Young Artists],<sup>7</sup> the volumetric, non-planar constructions of Rodchenko and the “spatial paintings” of Miturich. The term “spatial painting” can hardly be called apt or descriptive; I would have rather called it “volumetric,” because a painting on a flat surface is as spatial as any other form.

If traditional visual art was sharply differentiated into three typical forms—painting, sculpture and architecture—then in the central counter-relief, volumetric constructions and “spatial paintings,” we have an attempt to synthesize these forms. In these works, the artist combines the architectonics of the construction of material masses (architecture) with the volumetric constructiveness of these masses (sculpture) and their color, textural and compositional expressivity (painting). In these constructions, it seems as though the artist considered himself completely liberated from the illusionism of representation, because he is not reproducing reality, but affirming the object as a completely self-contained value. In the spatial and volumetric constructions, the artist, working with wood, iron, glass, etc., is dealing with genuine and not artificial materials. In these, the problem of space is given a three-dimensional construction and consequently a real, and not a conventional, solution as on the two-dimensional plane. In a word, in its forms, as in its construction and material, the artist creates a genuinely real object.

### V. The Crisis of Pure Form

But here the most bitter disillusionment and the most hopeless dead-end awaited the artist, and that fatal word for modern art, “crisis,” has never perhaps sounded as tragically as it does now. If a contemporary aesthetic consciousness is profoundly dissatisfied with naturalism and its anecdotes in paint, impressionism with its attempts to create the illusion of an airy atmosphere, light and shade using color, futurism with its fruitless striving, a *contradictio in adjecto*, to convey a cinematic impression of life’s dynamic forms on the static canvas, then no more satisfying for that consciousness are the suprematists with their impenetrable black square on a white ground,<sup>8</sup> the non-figurative texturists with their endless laboratory experiments on the surface of the canvas, the constructivists naively imitating technical constructions without that utilitarian efficiency that justifies them, and finally all those working on materials for the sake of the material itself, creating aimless forms divorced from a life of creativity. Contemporary art, in its extreme “leftist” manifestation, has reached an impasse from which there is no way out. The artist working on “pure” form, and on form alone, has ultimately deprived his creation of all meaning, because an unadorned empty form can never satisfy us, who are always looking for a content in it. A work created by a traditional artist had its meaning in its aesthetic effect, on which its author relied. A construction made by a contemporary artist has lost this final meaning because the “aesthetic” was consciously banished, from the very first step that determined the path of the new art.

### VI. The Contradictions of Constructivism

Shunning aesthetics, the constructivists had to adopt a new aim, which logically arose from the very idea of constructivism, i.e., a utilitarian aim. By construction we normally understand a specific type of structure having some sort of utilitarian character, deprived of which it loses its meaning.

But consciously ignoring their identity as painters, the Russian constructivists declared their approach to be “against art” in its usual museum form and entered into a collaboration with technology, engineering and industry, without, however, possessing any specialist knowledge for this and remaining artists par excellence in all their essential characteristics. Hence the idea of constructivism took the form of imitating technical and engineering structures, which was dilettante and naive, infused with our age’s exaggeratedly pious attitude towards industrialism.

These types of construction should never have been called models, because they do not represent projects for buildings—they are merely self-contained objects, to which only artistic criteria can be applied. Their creators are quintessentially “aesthetes” and champions of “pure” art, however fastidiously they wriggle away from such epithets.

Talking of constructivism, in this instance I am referring to constructions that are made from materials and are three-dimensional in volume. The planar realization of constructivist ideas took an even more absurd form. Fighting against representation, the constructivists remained figurative artists to a far greater degree, for example, than their predecessors—the suprematists—because their structure of a construction on the plane of the canvas was nothing other than the representation of a constructive system or a building that could actually be built. Every painterly form is essentially figurative, whether it is objective as it is for the naturalists and the impressionists, or non-objective, as it is for the cubists and futurists. Consequently, when we draw a decisive distinction between “old” and “new” art, it is not representation that is the defining feature, but the non-objectivity or objectivity of this representation. In this respect, the suprematists, who mainly posed and solved problems of color, moved further away from representation than all the other artistic movements, because the basic element with which they were working—color—by itself is not enclosed in any representational form and, like sound, is formless. The structures of sound and color (light) have much in common.

### VII. The Last Picture

And so the constructivists, working with the surface plane, despite their intentions, affirmed the representational, of which their constructions were an element. And when the artist really wanted to abandon representation, he achieved this only at the cost of destroying painting and himself as a painter. I am referring to the canvas that Rodchenko offered to the attention of an astonished public at one of this season’s exhibitions.<sup>9</sup> This was a smallish, almost square canvas, painted entirely in a single red color. This canvas is extremely significant for the evolution of artistic forms, which art has effected during the past ten years. It is not a stage that can be followed by new ones, but represents the last and final step in a long journey, the last word, after which painting must become silent, the

last "picture" made by an artist. This canvas eloquently demonstrates that painting as a figurative art—which it has always been—is obsolete. If Malevich's black square on a white ground, despite the poverty of its artistic meaning, contained some painterly idea, which the author called "economy" and the "fifth dimension,"<sup>10</sup> then Rodchenko's canvas, which is devoid of any content, is a meaningless, dumb and blind wall.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, as a link in the chain of development, and considered not as a self-contained value (which it isn't) but as a stage in art's evolution, it is historically significant and "heralds a new era."

This, once again, is confirmation that historical importance is usually given to works that at the same time do not possess any great "specific weight" artistically. Yet it is precisely on these that art historians base their conclusions. An objection, which could be raised by a zealous adherent of historical chronology (for which art historians have a weakness), is that Malevich had exhibited a similar canvas several years before. I do not, however, consider this relevant to my argument, because my task is not to determine the historical and chronological landmarks of Russian art, but to establish the theoretical foundation of a logically unfolding process. Even if Malevich's canvas is an earlier work chronologically, Rodchenko's similar canvas is logically more symptomatic and historically more opportune. The Tretyakov Gallery, which jealously takes care that there should be no gaps in the historical course of painterly trends displayed on its walls, must definitely acquire this canvas. And it will acquire it (or a similar work—this is not so important), when "through the pressure of events" art critics come to see it as occupying a specific place in the "historical perspective." Similarly, "with time" (when they were recognized by the newspapers), the gallery acquired canvases by Larionov, Tatlin and others, about whom "at the time" they did not want to hear, considering these canvases to be "profanations" of art. Suffering from a sight disability in their approach to art, which could be described as "historicism," these eclectics in charge of the gallery (and those who aren't) are completely unable to reach any understanding of the phenomena of current artistic life and its immediate effect. They only begin to see, although even then not very clearly, when an unambiguous "touch of time," "a patina," appears on the work of art (it is not by chance that the eclectics so adore green mould). The "historical perspective" and a, more or less, prolonged period of time are the invariable accompaniments to their aesthetic appreciation and "recognition."

This example of Rodchenko's canvas convinces us that painting was, and remains, a representational art, and that it cannot escape from the limits of the representational. In traditional art, the representation was its content. When painting ceased to be representational, it lost its inner meaning. Laboratory work on naked form has enclosed art in a narrow circle, halted its progress and caused it to become impoverished.

### **VIII. The Painterly Meaning of the Concept of Construction**

But in planar and spatial-volumetric painting, the idea of constructivism found a solution, which arose from the precise meaning of the very idea, understood not technically, but in a painterly way, as it has to be understood in painting. The painter could only borrow the general structure of the concept from technology, and not all its elements by any means. The concept of construction in painting consists of entirely different elements than the same concept in technology. By the general concept of construction, independent of its form and purpose, we mean the whole complex of elements that are united into a single entity by a certain kind of principle, and which, in its unity represents a system. When applying this general definition to painting, we should consider the elements of a painterly construction to be the material and real elements of the canvas, i.e., the pigments or other material, the surface texture, the structure of the color, the technique used for working the material, etc., united by the composition (the principle) and, as a whole, forming the work of art (the system).

Clearly, these elements are not dependent on the representational aspect of the work of art, but constitute a category *sui generis*, inherent in the artistic object, as the product of a specific kind of professional skill.

The problem of constructivism as a purely painterly concept was first explored consciously by Cézanne in his works. Before Cézanne, this idea only existed in a, so to speak, potential state in the painter's consciousness. But we are now discovering it even in old art. A prophetic master in many respects, in this instance, as in many others, he anticipated an idea, which he realized empirically and sowed the seed for the future. In Cézanne's canvases, we see the well-knit surface, the paint applied with a firm hand, the beautifully worked texture, the strict structuring of the colored whole, the absence of dilettantism, and, on the contrary, the highest professional skill, behind which we perceive a substantial culture. All these factors provide grounds for considering his canvases to be painterly and construc-

tive, i.e., they are well structured from the point of view of the organization of the material elements within them.

From this point of view, in old Russian painting, I find several constructively made works by Levitskii and Antropov, and perceive a complete lack of constructiveness in the canvases of both Russian and French impressionists.

In their textured canvases, the Russian cubists, suprematists, objectivists and constructivists, whom I have already mentioned, worked with the same elements that I have included as the constituents of painterly construction. Consequently, they worked, and worked a lot, on the constructive aspect of painting, in the sense in which I have tried to clarify this concept. Their work on the professional and technical aspect of painting represents the great service that Russian artists have rendered to art. We can confidently assert that in stating and solving many artistic problems, we have, with our purely professional approach, outstripped Western European art, in both theory and practice.

One only needs to mention the influence that the Russian painters Kandinsky and Chagall are exerting in Germany, in order to understand how far removed German artistic circles still are from those tasks that Russian avant-garde art has been confronting for a long time. For us, avant-garde Russian artists and critics, the interest shown in painters whom we consider at best to be "literary" in painting, in whom we do not recognize any value, and who we do not regard as masters, is completely incomprehensible. Without exaggeration, one can say that at present the young Russian art of the non-objectivist is not "lagging behind" the West, but, on the contrary, represents the progressive element in European artistic culture.

### **IX. The Social Basis of the Crisis of Art**

But the problem of the crisis of art, which I have presented in this essay, does not reside only in this professional and narrowly technical and painterly aspect of the question. It embraces broader issues and has roots, which are not only formal in character but also ideological and social.

Abstracted from all content, "pure" form, around which art has evolved during the past decade, has finally revealed its insubstantiality; it has exposed the sterility of an art divorced from life and the inability of the usual forms of creativity, fit only for the graveyards of the museums, to survive in contemporary conditions. In the past, "the picture" was figurative and possessed meaning within the milieu of a particular class or social group, as an individualistic expression of the aesthetic consciousness of that class or group. Now, when class and related divisions are losing their foundation in all essential characteristics, making aesthetic connoisseurship futile, "the picture," as the usual form of visual art is also losing its meaning as a social phenomenon. Confirmation of this idea can be found in the presence of facts, which cannot be denied. The exhibitions of last winter's season (1921-22), even after the quiet of the past four or five years, did not enjoy what is called "success." They passed completely unnoticed. From being "events" in artistic life, they are becoming occasions that no longer arouse any interest, are badly attended, are rarely talked about, and to which people are indifferent.

The democratization of the social structure and social relationships in Russia has had a fatal effect on the forms of creativity and the masses who appreciate art. We are seeing a radical structural change in the psychology of aesthetic perception. In a period of class groupings, the form of easel painting is natural; it tolerates limitless variations, fragmentations and individualization, responding to those varied requirements of a differentiated social milieu. In contrast, during a period of social democratization, the mass viewer, who demands from art forms that will express the idea of the masses, society and the people as a whole, replaces the class consumer and patron of aesthetic values. Influenced by the requirements of this new viewer, art has adopted a democratic form.

### **X. Easel Painting is Inevitably a Museum Art Form**

Easel painting and sculpture, whether its representation is naturalistic as in the work of Courbet and Repin, allegorical and symbolic as in Böcklin, Stück and Rikh, or breaking with the objectivity of the concrete image and acquiring a non-objective character as in the work of the majority of contemporary young Russian artists, are, all the same, museum arts, and the museum remains the formative influence (which dictates the form) and is the foundation for the creation's meaning and special purpose. Within the category of museum objects, I also include spatial painting and the counter relief, which have no vital or practical purpose. All contemporary art, created by the "left" wing, finds its only justification on museum walls, just as the entire revolutionary storm that it stirred up finds its final repose in the silence of the museum graveyard.

Museum staff confront the enormous task of sorting this material, which was revolutionary in its time, into historical order and burying it “beneath numbers” on the inventory lists of “artistic storehouses.” And for “art historians,” those indefatigable grave-diggers, there awaits the new chore of writing explanatory texts for these sepulchral crypts, so that future generations, if they don’t forget the way to them, will be able to correctly evaluate the past and not confuse the landmarks of the “historical perspective.” So, despite their futurism, the artists themselves are not forgetting to occupy their proper place in the cemeteries of passeism.<sup>12</sup>

## XI. The Demand Presented by Contemporary Reality

Contemporary reality is making completely new demands on the artist. It does not want museum “pictures” and “sculptures” from him, but objects that are socially justified in form and purpose. The museums are sufficiently full not to require stocking up with new variations on old themes. Life no longer justifies art objects that are self-sufficient in form and content. The new democratic art is social in essence, while individualist art is anarchic and finds its justification in isolated individuals or groups. If the teleological art of the past found its meaning in recognition by the individual, then the art of the future will find such meaning in recognition by society. In democratic art, all forms must be socially justified. So, looking at contemporary art from a sociological standpoint, we have come to the conclusion that easel painting as a museum art form is obsolete, socially as well as creatively. Both analyses have led to one and the same result.

## XII. The Rejection of Easel Painting and the Orientation towards Production

The funeral bell has tolled for easel painting and sculpture, and young artists themselves have helped to ring it.

All opponents of left art should take this actual situation into consideration, and be aware that leftist artists themselves abandoned painting, not because of any emerging reaction or return “to the past,” but because of the further evolution of creative orientations in the real world.

Here one should not forget the momentous meeting of the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK) which took place on November 24, 1921, at which O. M. Brik delivered a speech concerning INKhUK’s transfer from the Commissariat of Enlightenment to the Supreme Council of the National Economy. Twenty-five masters of left art, having rejected easel painting as an aim in itself, and having adopted the productivist platform, recognized that this transfer was not only necessary but also inevitable. For the first time in the annals of artistic life, a painter consciously renounced the ground that had reared him, and having changed his orientation, turned out to be the most sensitive seismographer, registering the direction in which the future points.

But the death of painting, the death of easel painting as an art form, does not mean the death of art in general. Art continues to live, not as a specific form, but as a creative substance. Moreover, unusually wide vistas are now beginning to open up for the visual arts, at the very moment when its typical forms are being buried; we have witnessed the wake in the course of the preceding account. On the following pages, I invite the reader to attend the “christening” of art’s new form and new content. These new forms bear the name “production skills.”

In “production skills,” “the content” is the utility and expediency of the object, its tectonism, which conditions its form and construction, and justifies its social purpose and function.

1. Al’tman (I have in mind his early works, because he subsequently abandoned figuration), Shevchenko, Grishchenko, N. Goncharova (in several works), Udal’tsova, M. Sokolov (1916).
2. L. Popova (1914–16), Vesnin and Morgunov.
3. Malevich, Rozanova and Lissitzky.
4. Tatlin, Medunetskii, G. and V. Stenberg, Rodchenko, Stepanova, Lavinskii, L. Popova, Ioganson, M. Sokolov and others.  
The names of Shterenberg, Bruni, Bubnova, Babichev, M. Larionov, Ekster, Pal’mov, Karev, M. Sokolov, A. Sofronova and others who do not fit into specific trends, should always be mentioned when we talk about the “left wing” of Russian art.  
All the aforementioned artists have gone through a series of phases, making it impossible for us to define their place precisely within the whole range of constantly changing groups. The work of contemporary painters (and not only painters) is characterized by the enormous amplitude of the oscillations in their creative pendulum. While the character of an artist in the past was usually revealed even in his early work and only became more defined in its features with time (this is true of all painters until the impressionists), contemporary artists astound us with the sharp fluctuations and leaps in their creative work. I cite Picasso as the most famous and characteristic example of this; he began with impressionism, moved through cubism and non-objectivity, and now works as a neo-classicist.
5. It is typical that just as we are abandoning these ideas, in the camp of the aesthetic art critics they are beginning to talk about objects as the substance of an art work, and the very term “object,” which is disappearing from our vocabulary, is now becoming established in their terminology.
6. I am calling abstract artists all those artists listed above, i.e. the cubists, suprematists, constructivists and others, for they have all abandoned the representation of objects.
7. I. Medunetskii and G. and V. Stenberg.
8. A canvas by Malevich.
9. The exhibition 5 x 5 = 25 (1921).

10. See Malevich’s brochures, *O novykh sistemakh v iskusstve* [On New Systems in Art], *Ot Sezanna do suprematizma* [From Cézanne to Suprematism] and others. [There is no published brochure with the latter title. Tarabukin seems to be referring to *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism* of 1916—Trans.].
11. I consider this canvas to be an easel painting and refuse to regard it as a “sample” for a decorative wall painting.
12. The collection of “leftist” painting in the Museums of Pictorial Culture in Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

Originally published in Russian as Nikolai Tarabukin, *Ot mol’berta k mashine* (Moscow: Izd.-vo Rabotnik Prosveshcheniia, 1923), ch. 1–12. For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve, eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 416–74.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from “From the Easel to the Machine,” in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison, trans. Christina Lodder (London: Thames & Hudson; New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 135–42.

# Declaration: Comrades, Organizers of Life! 1923

D22

## LEF

Today, the First of May, the workers of the world will demonstrate in their millions with song and festivity.

Five years of attainments, ever increasing.

Five years of slogans renewed and realized daily.

Five years of victory.

And—

Five years of monotonous designs for celebrations.

Five years of languishing art.

So-called Stage Managers!

How much longer will you and other rats continue to gnaw at this theatrical sham?

Organize according to real life!

Plan the victorious procession of the Revolution!

So-called Poets!

When will you throw away your sickly lyrics?

Will you ever understand that to sing praises of a tempest according to newspaper information is not to sing praises about a tempest?

Give us a new Marseillaise and let the Internationale thunder the march of the victorious Revolution!

So-called Artists!

Stop making patches of color on moth-eaten canvases.

Stop decorating the easy life of the bourgeoisie.

Exercise your artistic strength to engirdle cities until you are able to take part in the whole of global construction!

Give the world new colors and outlines!

We know that the “priests of art” have neither strength nor desire to meet these tasks: they keep to the aesthetic confines of their studios.

On this day of demonstration, the First of May, when proletarians are gathered on a united front, we summon you, organizers of the world:

Break down the barriers of “beauty for beauty’s sake”; break down the barriers of those nice little artistic schools!

Add your strength to the united energy of the collective!

We know that the aesthetics of the old artists, whom we have branded “rightists,” revive monasticism and await the holy spirit of inspiration, but they will not respond to our call.

We summon the “leftists” the revolutionary futurists, who have given the streets and squares their art; the productivists, who have squared accounts with inspiration by relying on the inspiration of factory dynamos; the constructivists, who have substituted the processing of material for the mysticism of creation.

Leftists of the world!

We know few of your names, or the names of your schools, but this we do know—wherever revolution is beginning, there you are advancing.

We summon you to establish a single front of leftist art—the “Red Art International.”

Comrades!

Split leftist art from rightist everywhere!

With leftist art prepare the European Revolution; in the USSR strengthen it.

Keep in contact with your staff in Moscow (Journal *Lef*, 8 Nikitskii Boulevard, Moscow).

Not by accident did we choose the First of May as the day of our call.

Only in conjunction with the Workers’ Revolution can we see the dawn of future art.

We, who have worked for five years in a land of revolution, know:

That only October has given us new, tremendous ideas that demand new artistic organization.

That the October Revolution, which liberated art from bourgeois enslavement, has given real freedom to art.

Down with the boundaries of countries and of studios!

Down with the monks of rightist art!

Long live the single front of the leftists!

Long live the art of the Proletarian Revolution!

The journal of the Left Front of the Arts, *Lef*, existed from 1923 until 1925 and then resumed as *Novyi lef* in 1927 and continued as such until the end of 1928. Among the founders of the Left Front of the Arts (LEF) were Boris Arvatov, Osip Brik, Nikolai Chuzhak, Boris Kushner, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Sergei Tret’iakov. Its editorial office was in Moscow. In 1929 the group changed its name to Revolutionary Front (of the Arts) (REF). In 1930 the group disintegrated with Mayakovsky’s entry into the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP; see p. 387) and with the general change in the political and cultural atmosphere. LEF was especially active during its early years and had affiliates throughout the country, including Southern Left Front of the Arts (Iugolef) in the Ukraine. As a revolutionary platform, LEF was particularly close to the constructivists and formalists; *Novyi lef* devoted much space to aspects of photography and cinematography, Aleksandr Rodchenko playing a leading part.<sup>1</sup>

The text of this piece, “Tovarishchi, formovshchiki zhizni!” appeared in *Lef* in Russian, German and English. This was the fourth declaration by LEF, the first three appearing in the first number of the journal: “Za chto boretsia *Lef*?” [“What Is *Lef* Fighting for?” pp. 1–7], “V kogo vgryaetsia *Lef*?” [“What Is *Lef* Getting Its Teeth into?” pp. 8–9] and “Kogo predosteregaet *Lef*?” [“Whom Is *Lef* Warning?” pp. 10–11].<sup>2</sup> However, they were concerned chiefly with literature and with history and had only limited relevance to the visual arts. This declaration sets forth the utilitarian, organizational conception of art that *Lef/Novyi lef* attempted to support throughout its short but influential life.

— JB

1. For comments and translations see *Form* (Cambridge, Eng., 1969), no. 10, 27–36, and *Screen* (London, 1971–72), vol. 12, no. 4, 25–100.
2. The first and fourth declarations are reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 291–95, and all of them are translated into French in *Manifestes futuristes russes*, transl. León Robel (Paris: Editeurs Français Réunis, 1972), 61–78.

Originally published in Russian, German and English as “Tovarishchi, formovshchiki zhizni!” *Lef* 2 (April-May 1923): 3–8. This text is based on the English version (pp. 7–8). It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 291–95. For a French translation see *Manifestes futuristes russes*, transl. León Robel (Paris: Editeurs Français Réunis, 1972), 61–78.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from “Declaration: Comrades, Organizers of Life!” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 199–202.

# Revolutionary and Socialist Art 1923

D23

## Lev Trotsky

There is no doubt that, in the future—and the farther we go, the more true it will be—such monumental tasks as the planning of city gardens, of model houses, of railroads and of ports, will interest vitally not only engineering architects, participants in competitions, but the large popular masses as well. The imperceptible, ant-like piling up of quarters and streets, brick by brick, from generation to generation, will give way to titanic constructions of city-villages, with map and compass in hand. Around this compass will be formed true peoples' parties, the parties of the future for special technology and construction, which will agitate passionately, hold meetings and vote. In this struggle, architecture will again be filled with the spirit of mass feelings and moods, only on a much higher plane, and mankind will educate itself plastically, it will become accustomed to look at the world as submissive clay for sculpting the most perfect forms of life. The wall between art and industry will come down. The great style of the future will be formative, not ornamental. Here the futurists are right. But it would be wrong to look at this as a liquidating of art, as a voluntary giving way to technique.

Take the penknife as an example. The combination of art and technique can proceed along two fundamental lines; either art embellishes the knife and pictures an elephant, a prize beauty or the Eiffel Tower on its handle; or art helps technique to find an "ideal" form for the knife, that is, such a form which will correspond most adequately to the material of a knife and its purpose. To think that this task can be solved by purely technical means is incorrect, because purpose and material allow for an innumerable number of variations. To make an "ideal" knife, one must have, besides the knowledge of the properties of the material and the methods of its use, both imagination and taste. In accord with the entire tendency of industrial culture, we think that the artistic imagination in creating material objects will be directed toward working out the ideal form of a thing, as a thing, and not toward the embellishment of the thing as an aesthetic premium to itself. If this is true for penknives, it will be truer still for wearing apparel, furniture, theaters and cities. This does not mean the doing away with "machine-made" art, not even in the most distant future. But it seems that the direct cooperation between art and all branches of technique will become of paramount importance.

Does this mean that industry will absorb art, or that art will lift industry up to itself on Olympus? This question can be answered either way, depending on whether the problem is approached from the side of industry, or from the side of art. But in the object attained, there is no difference between either answer. Both answers signify a gigantic expansion of the scope and artistic quality of industry, and we understand here, under industry, the entire field without excepting the industrial activity of man; mechanical and electrified agriculture will also become part of industry.

The wall will fall not only between art and industry, but simultaneously between art and nature also. This is not meant in the sense of Jean Jacques Rousseau, that art will come nearer to a state of nature, but that nature will become more "artificial." The present distribution of mountains and rivers, of fields, of meadows, of steppes, of forests and of seashores, cannot be considered final. Man has already made changes in the map of nature that are not few or insignificant. But they are mere pupils' practice in comparison with what is coming. Faith merely promises to move mountains; but technology, which takes nothing "on faith," is actually able to cut down mountains and move them. Up to now this was done for industrial purposes (mines) or for railroads (tunnels); in the future this will be done on an immeasurably larger scale, according to a general industrial and artistic plan. Man will occupy himself with re-registering mountains and rivers, and will earnestly and repeatedly make improvements in nature. In the end, he will have rebuilt the Earth, if not in his own image, at least according to his own taste. We have not the slightest fear that this taste will be bad.

...

Mankind will come out of the period of civil wars much poorer from terrific destructions, even without the earthquakes of the kind that occurred in Japan. The effort to conquer poverty, hunger, want in all its forms, that is, to conquer nature, will be the dominant tendency for decades to come. The passion for mechanical improvements, as in America, will accompany the first stage of every new social-

ist society. The passive enjoyment of nature will disappear from art. Technique will become a more powerful inspiration for artistic work, and later on the contradiction itself between technique and nature will be solved in a higher synthesis.

The personal dreams of a few enthusiasts today for making life more dramatic and for educating man himself rhythmically, find a proper and real place in this outlook. Having rationalized his economic system, that is, having saturated it with consciousness and planfulness, man will not leave a trace of the present stagnant and worm-eaten domestic life. The care for food and education, which lies like a millstone on the present-day family, will be removed, and will become the subject of social initiative and of an endless collective creativeness. Woman will at last free herself from her semi-servile condition. Side by side with technique, education, in the broad sense of the psycho-physical molding of new generations, will take its place as the crown of social thinking. Powerful "parties" will form themselves around pedagogical systems. Experiments in social education and an emulation of different methods will take place to a degree which has not been dreamed of before. Communist life will not be formed blindly, like coral islands, but will be built consciously, will be tested by thought, will be directed and corrected. Life will cease to be elemental, and for this reason stagnant. Man, who will learn how to move rivers and mountains, how to build peoples' palaces on the peaks of Mont Blanc and at the bottom of the Atlantic, will not only be able to add to his own life richness, brilliancy and intensity, but also a dynamic quality of the highest degree. The shell of life will hardly have time to form before it will burst open again under the pressure of new technical and cultural inventions and achievements. Life in the future will not be monotonous.

More than that. Man at last will begin to harmonize himself in earnest. He will make it his business to achieve beauty by giving the movement of his own limbs the utmost precision, purposefulness and economy in his work, his walk and his play. He will try to master first the semi-conscious and then the subconscious processes in his own organism, such as breathing, the circulation of the blood, digestion, reproduction, and, within necessary limits, he will try to subordinate them to the control of reason and will. Even purely physiological life will become subject to collective experiments. The human species, the coagulated homo sapiens, will once more enter into a state of radical transformation, and, in his own hands, will become an object of the most complicated methods of artificial selection and psycho-physical training.

...

Man will make it his purpose to master his own feelings, to raise his instincts to the heights of consciousness, to make them transparent, to extend the wires of his will into hidden recesses, and thereby to raise himself to a new plane, to create a higher social biological type, or, if you please, a superman.

It is difficult to predict the extent of self-government which the man of the future may reach or the heights to which he may carry his technique. Social construction and psycho-physical self-education will become two aspects of one and the same process. All the arts—literature, drama, painting, music and architecture—will lend this process a beautiful form. More correctly, the shell in which the cultural construction and self-education of communist man will be enclosed, will develop all the vital elements of contemporary art to the highest point. Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonized, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical. The forms of life will become dynamically dramatic. The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise.

Lev Davidovich Bronshtein (1879–1940), who later took the name Trotsky, was born the son of an illiterate Jewish farmer in Ianovka, Ukraine, on October 26, 1879. Trotsky had originally wanted to become a writer—his first publications were works of literary criticism—but instead he became a professional revolutionary. He came into contact with revolutionary circles in his late school years. Around the turn of the century he became a Marxist and thus a criminal. By 1905 he was chairman of the Petersburg Soviet and in October 1917 he led the armed uprising in Petrograd. Trotsky continued to publish on art and literature throughout his life, even after he was appointed People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and, in March 1918, Commander in Chief of the Red Army.

This essay was probably written in the summer of 1922 or 1923, i.e. after he had brought the civil war to a victorious end and shortly after the introduction of the New Economic Policy, which he rejected. It was first published in *Pravda* in 1923 and later included in a collection of Trotsky's essays on literary criticism and cultural theory, which was published under the title *Literatura i revoliutsiia* [Literature and Revolution] in Moscow in 1923, though it received little attention at the time.

Having been gradually deprived of power, isolated, ostracized and ultimately expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929, Trotsky spent the rest of his life as a writer in exile; initially in Turkey, then in France, Norway and finally Mexico, where he was attacked by one of Stalin's agents on August 20, 1940. He died the following day.

— MH

Originally published in Russian as Lev Trotsky, "Iskusstvo revoliutsii i socialisticheskoe iskusstvo" in *Literatura i revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Gozisdat, 1923), 169–90. For a German translation see *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemeister (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 415–21.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "Revolutionary and Socialist Art," in *Literature and Revolution*, trans. Rose Strunsky (1925; London: RedWords, 1991), 277–84.

The biographical note has been translated by Jonathan Blower from *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemeister (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 415.

# On the Question of the Organization of a Production Workshop at VKhUTEMAS 1923

D24

Aleksandr Vesnin, Anton Lavinskii, Liubov Popova, Aleksandr Rodchenko

## Synopsis of the Program of the Productivist Training Workshop at VKhUTEMAS

### Introduction to the Program

§ I. The tasks posed by modern life have clearly demolished the existing societal principles of artistic specialization and, at the same time, demand the knowledge and professional skills that have developed in the masters' individual specializations.

§ II. The specialization that society expects of the artist has led to the concept of art for its own sake, which does not take the practical demands of everyday life into consideration. At the present moment we do not need "pictures" or "projects" for their own sake.

§ III. The task of the present-day production workshop is therefore to combine, through labor, the specialist knowledge of the artists in order to fulfill actual tasks in the individual and collective consumer goods sectors.

### Program

§ I. The overall program of the workshop course is subdivided methodologically into two sections:

1. The scientific-technical section, or the acquisition of master's skills.
2. The productivist section, which consists of dealing with the things that are required of each profession with the help of the craft learnt.

§ III. The two-year master class.

§ IV. The two program sections will be run in parallel, bearing in mind that each actual production study is produced by and substantiates the parallel scientific-technical section.

### I. The Scientific-Technical Section

§ I. The task of the scientific-technical section of the course is to provide students with an education in abstract and concrete materials which will prepare them for the branch of production they then move into.

§ II. Students will be introduced to the scientific-technical subject areas in the foundation department. The subjects are: mathematics, illustrative geometry, physics, chemistry, basic political science, etc. (they will also be familiarized with the general section of the basic course in artistic disciplines.)

§ III. Other more specific subjects will be dealt with in the workshop as and when necessary, in the form of episodic courses. These episodic courses within the workshop program might include, for example: "Technology of various working materials," "Production technology," "The dialectics of material culture in art," etc., but there will also be an extended course on the foundational artistic disciplines along with the tasks that are peculiar to each of the proposed branches of production (see the foundation department programs for the disciplines of graphics, color and volume).

§ IV. The need to introduce one or another of the episodic courses into the workshop program will be confirmed by the workshop council.

§ V. Students will be obliged to take tests in all the theoretical subjects (see semester plan).

## II. Production Section

§ 1. The section that actually carries out production has five departments:

1. Performance; 2. Clothing; 3. Publicity; 4. Interiors; 5. Small Industry.

### 1. Performance Department

a. This department will carry out case studies and presentations of the following: theater, circus, cabaret and music hall.

b. Cinema presentation projects (scenery projects and their assembly).

c. Projected and realized decoration for streets and interiors.

d. Display cases, shop windows, etc.

e. Processions.

f. Projected and realized signage.

### 2. Clothing Department

a. This department will produce drawings and models for the following assignments and orders: 1. Professional and specialist clothing; 2. Custom-made clothing; 3. Stage costumes; 4. Private clothing.

b. Projects for clothing materials and fabrics.

### 3. Publicity department

a. The publicity department carries out designs and commissions for:

1. posters; 2. notices; 3. inscriptions and other possible types of publicity.

b. It carries out commissions for book publishing (covers, layouts) and for magazines (covers, composition and arrangement of material).

### 4. Interiors Department

a. This department will work on the design and production of furnishings for: 1. trade and industry; 2. private spaces; 3. special workshops, laboratories, theaters, restaurants, etc.; 4. educational institutions.

### 5. Small Industry Department

Design and production of everyday objects for: 1. the household; 2. streets; 3. schools; 4. travel; 5. public institutions (offices, hospitals, reading rooms, etc.).

§ II. Students will work in a workshop or specifically selected departments, or move from one department to the next after having submitted their study projects to the corresponding department.

§ III. The production study may be carried out merely as a design or as an actually produced thing if there is a suitable opportunity or commission for its realization.

§ IV. The details for each task in each department will be elaborated by the respective tutor and according to actual requirements.

§ V. The workshop production department has an office that accepts commissions and distributes them to the departments.

## The Status of the Workshop

§ I. The workshop is located in the foundation department as a laboratory for experiment and tuition.

§ II. The workshop is run on the same level as the special and individual workshops; students who complete the workshop receive the title of a VKhUTEMAS graduate.

§ III. A universally accessible laboratory for special research could exist alongside the workshop.

§ IV. Students who have already taken the course in the artistic disciplines (foundation department) will be admitted to the workshop if they want to move to

other faculties, have taken an intermediate exam in the artistic disciplines, and have submitted a test piece for examination. The test piece is to be examined by the workshop leader.

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Original in Russian by Aleksandr Vesnin, Anton Lavinskii, Liubov Popova and Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Po voprosu organizatsii proizvodstvennoi masterskoi pri VKhUTEMASe," private archive, typewritten manuscript (Moscow 1923). For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 140-42.

The version here has been translated by Jonathan Blower from the German in *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979).

# The Workshop of Revolution 1924

D25

Sergei Sen'kin and Gustavs Klucis

...

The first and fundamental goal of the workshop is to answer all the artistic demands put forth by the revolution.

The workshop should become a loudspeaker for artistic-revolutionary and communist thought. Its aim is to prepare cadres of young socially-aware artists, organizers of the struggle for the revolutionary conquests of the working class through the influence of visual means . . .

This cadre of artists, armed to the teeth with the latest scientific and technological achievements of our day . . .

## SOME FACTS

...

1. The left professoriate already presented a project for a constructive decorative workshop, but in our opinion it is somewhat half-baked and not fully conceptualized in terms of orientation towards a constructivist style; however, at the same time it has turned out not to be suitable in terms of governance.

2. At a meeting of cells in August 1923, Favorskii in a report on the general program of VKhUTEMAS "already" considered timely the reform of the decorative section, for example with the introduction of construction work on film, as it is inspired by life.

3. The monumental section of the painting department, under the direction of P. Kuznetsov (evidently under ideological direction, as Kuznetsov is an easel painter), executed themes about rich and poor Lazarus, but as soon as Kuznetsov went abroad the student initiative introduced revolutionary themes, and the students set about their elaboration with great enthusiasm . . .

## CONCLUSIONS

700 people attending the painting department of VKhUTEMAS are training to become "genius-artists"; nobody tolerates anything less. However, statistics show that at most five of them will work in the specialty of artist-painter; the remainder, minus drawing teachers, will be seat warmers, since they are not taught what is needed, and the only thing they can do is paint the back sides of models, if that . . .

We are certain that in a few years, on the ruins of the present VKhUTEMAS there will be three fundamental departments: The agitational department will arise from the Workshop of Revolution and will absorb the present painting and sculpture departments, after that the architectural and industrial faculties, thus uniting all of the production faculties . . .

The Communist Collective of Organizers of the Workshop of Revolution

February 8, 1924

Originally published in Russian as Sergei Sen'kin and Gustavs Klucis, "Masterskaia revoliutsii," *Lef 4* (1924): 155-59. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 142-43.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# The Immediate Tasks of AKhRR<sup>1</sup> 1924

D26

AKhRR

The presidium of AKhRR and its Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) faction consider it essential—on the second anniversary of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (May 1, 1924)—to sum up its artistic and social activities and to define its ideological policy in its subsequent practical work, once the immediate tasks facing AKhRR have been solved.

From the very beginning of AKhRR's existence, when it proclaimed in its declaration the need for a creative response to the October Revolution and for a new reality in visual art, it has been quite clear that AKhRR should take the organization of the new elements of social art organically linked to our revolutionary epoch as the basis of its artistic work, and that it should do this by regenerating art on the foundation of a high and authentic level of painterly skill.

The creation of the elements of a social art in the Russian school acted, by the very fact of its existence, as a logical balance to the development of, and enthusiasm for, the extreme, so-called leftist trends in art; it displayed their petty-bourgeois, pre-revolutionary, decadent substance, which was expressed in their attempt to transfer the fractured forms of Western art—mainly French (Cézanne, Derain, Picasso)—to a soil alien both economically and psychologically.

In no way does this signify that we should ignore all the formal achievements of French art in the second half of the nineteenth century and to a certain extent in the first quarter of the twentieth within the general treasury of world art (the careful, serious study and assimilation of the painterly and formal achievements of modern art is an essential obligation of every serious artist who aspires to become a master). AKhRR objects only to the aspiration to reduce the whole development of art to the imitation and repetition of models of the French school, a school that is nurtured, in turn, on the sources of old traditions in art.

After their two years of work in factories and plants, after the many exhibitions they organized—which laid the foundation for the Museum of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and for the Red Army and Navy Museum—the main group of AKhRR members felt convinced that subject matter, thematic method in the study and conversion of reality, was the main element in organizing form.

It became clear to the AKhRR artists that the factory, the plant, the production worker, electrification, the heroes of labor, the leaders of the revolution, the new life of the peasants, the Red Army, the Komsomol and Pioneers, the death and funeral of the revolution's leader—all this contained a new color of unprecedented power and severe fascination, a new interpretation of synthetic form, a new compositional structure; in a word, contained the aggregate of those conditions whose execution would regenerate easel and monumental painting.

For the expression of these new forms created by the revolution, the frayed, lost forms and lacerated color hired from the masters of the French school are absolutely useless.

For the expression of these new forms created by the revolution a new style is essential, a strong, precise, invigorating style that organizes thought and feeling, the style that in our short declaration is called heroic realism.

The difficulty of solving and realizing the above tasks lies in the fact that, while aspiring toward content in art, it is very easy to lapse into feeble, simple imitation of a host of outdated art schools and trends.

Those artists, those young artists who wish first and foremost to be sincere, who wish to shake off the yoke of vacuous philosophizing and inversion of the bases of visual art decomposed through the process of analysis, fully realize the necessity to regenerate the unity of form and content in art; and they direct all their strength, all their creative potential, to the ceaseless scientific and completely professional study of the new model, giving it the acutely realistic treatment that our epoch dictates.

The so-called indifference to politics of certain contemporary groups of artists is a well or badly concealed aversion to the revolution and a longing for a political and moral restoration.



The harsh material conditions that surround the present-day artist on the one hand deprive the artist of the protection of his professional interests and the safeguarding of his work and on the other hand determine his view of art as a weapon for the ideological struggle and clearly aggravate the difficulty of this path; but if the revolution has triumphed, in spite of the innumerable obstacles, then the will to express the revolution creatively will help the contemporary realist artist to overcome all the difficulties he encounters on his path.

It is essential to remember that a creative artistic expression of the revolution is not a fruitless and driving sentimentality toward it but a real service, because the creation of a revolutionary art is first and foremost the creation of an art that will have the honor of shaping and organizing the psychology of the generations to come.

Only now, after two years of AKhRR, after the already evident collapse of the so-called leftist tendencies in art, is it becoming clear that the artist of today must be both a master of the brush and a revolutionary fighting for the better future of mankind. Let the tragic figure of Courbet serve as the best prototype and reminder of the aims and tasks that contemporary art is called on to resolve.

The reproaches of formal weakness and dilettantism that were cast at the Wanderers by other art groups can by rights be repaid to those who made them, for if we remember the formal achievements of the best Wanderers (Perov, Surikov, Repin), we can see how much more profound, sincere, and serious they were than their descendants poisoned by the vacuous decorativism, retrospectivism and brittle decadence of the pre-revolutionary era.

Kramskoi's prediction that the ideas of a social art would triumph under a different political regime is beginning to be brilliantly justified; it is confirmed by the mass withdrawal from all positions of the so-called leftist front observable in contemporary art.

Give particular attention to the young artists, organize them, turn all your efforts to giving polish to those natural artists from among the workers and peasants who are beginning to prove their worth in wall newspapers; and the hour is not far off when, perhaps, the Soviet art school will be destined to become the most original and most important factor in the renaissance of world art.

Ceaseless artistic self-discipline, ceaseless artistic self-perfection, unremitting effort in the preparations for the next AKhRR exhibition—this is the only path that will lead to the creation of a genuine, new art on whose heights form will fuse with content. And the presidium of AKhRR and its Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) faction appeal to all artists who hold near and dear the behests and aims set before AKhRR to rally around the association in a powerful, united, artistic, and revolutionary organization.

The text of this piece, "Ocherednye zadachi AKhRRa," was issued as a circular letter in May 1924, after the February exhibition *Revolution, Life, and Labor*, and was then published in a collection of articles edited by an AKhRR member, Aleksandr Grigor'ev, *Chetyre goda AKhRRa* [Four Years of AKhRR].

— JB

1. Partly as a result of this propaganda measure, several of the old Knave of Diamonds group, including Robert Fal'k, Aristarkh Lentulov, Il'ia Mashkov and Vasilii Rozhdestvenskii, joined AKhRR.

Originally issued in Russian as a circular letter (May 1924) and subsequently published as "Ocherednye zadachi AKhRRa," in *Chetyre goda AKhRRa*, ed. Aleksandr Grigor'ev (Moscow, 1926), 10–13. It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 345–48, from which this translation is made, and in *Assotsiatsiia Khudozhnikov Revoliutsionnoi Rossii*, comp. I. Gronskii and V. Perel'man (Moscow, 1973), 300–2.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "The Immediate Tasks of AKhRR: A Circular to All Branches of AKhRR—An Appeal to All the Artists of the USSR," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 268–71.

## Mastering Time as the Fundamental Goal of the Organization of Labor 1924

D27

Valerian Murav'ev

Without doubt, mastering time is one of the main rational goals of a person. His activity creates phenomena with this or that duration and thus overcomes the instantaneous disappearance of transient, unreal, ghostly matters. A person creates phenomena and therefore is to a certain extent the ruler of his time . . .

. . . What general understanding can express the results of a person's transformation of the world? Such understanding has been elaborated by historical thought many centuries-old, but nowadays its meaning has not been sufficiently realized. This understanding is culture . . .

Culture is the result of the creation of time, because every act that changes the world is an act of creation. This is possible to understand if we take into account that the creation of time is proof of the continuity of values, which resist the corrosive force of time. These values also comprise the values of culture. Their life is a sort of victory over the river of Heraclitus that makes away with all, even though at the end all things are carried off by it. Everything resists up to the moment of its annihilation, like heavy sand in the current. This ability to overcome time, even at a small scale, is evidently an indicator of their potential ability [of values] to create their own continuity at a larger scale. Hence, we often see how a once vanished culture rises from the dead in new forms, renewing old phenomena. It was thus, for example, in the era of the Renaissance, the name of which contains an indication of such a recovery process. Generally, separate cultural achievements always appear as islands in the changeable ocean of time. The growing frequency of their appearance signifies the retreat of this fatal element and its replacement with organized time, consciously created by man.

Yet here lies a very important question: is it really true that cultural achievements in some way overcome time? If 99% of values evidently perish irretrievably, not changing the world or returning works made by them to the leveling and destroying force of the blind torrent, what significance does a small elongation of their life and a revival of a part of them have? What that survives the centuries is not doomed at the end to disappear?

The contrary argument is that, first of all, it is not possible to speak about the irreversible loss of something that once was. Once something has existed, that means that there is a mathematical possibility that this thing is present in nature, in the form of a certain combination of elements. The creative force that gave rise to this phenomenon and even its very form and individuality, therefore, may be repeated within the potential of nature and under conditions identical to those which existed previously. For example, we know from geology about the recurrence of similar periods with identical climates and similar manifestations of life. In chemistry, with mathematical precision identical phenomena appear under the same conditions, which points to the immutability of known combinations, expressed in numbers or formulas. The rule of these combinations has an indisputable character and serves as a counterbalance to the transient character of the manifestation of these numbers and forms in life. This explains why the meaning of the successive transfer of cultural revelations is not so much the transfer of things as recipes for action, which enable active elements of the new cultural period to call into being valuable past combinations. By means of memory and history, a record of such formulas in the form of an inventory of known arrangements and movements is transmitted . . .

Thus, the organization of culture demands the appropriate organization and direction of the general affairs of all people by providing it with a collectively cosmic goal—the transformation of the world. Human action, when not connected to such a goal, may only be disorderly and individually egoistical. When it sets for itself this higher goal and as a result crosses the borders of individual systems, it becomes a collective and organized whole. Unity, giving rise to the concept of wholeness in the language of the mind and love in the language of the heart, is a necessary requisite for the realization of this cosmic goal. Unity appears as a condition of power and of the ability to overcome time. Any evil or weakness is nothing other than a form of discord. Discord is the first and main enemy of true and fruitful action, of mastering time. The elimination of discord, the transformation

of individual action into a mutual one—that is the first requirement for overcoming time . . .

. . . There will be a time when perhaps the process of birth will be rationalized and transferred to the laboratory. Eugenics and the science of the production of people will know the formulas of each being and accordingly will create and bring them up. What is created is important, not how it is created. It is unquestionable that as a result of the cultural-industrial activity of humankind over the course of centuries, not only objects but also living beings will be created in the form of the defined types of a given historical period. The main question is to define the goal of the processes of conscious creativity and production for the improvement of these living products of culture. Just as an experienced gardener substitutes the natural growing process of plants by cultivating with specified methods certain known sorts of plants, organized and self-aware humankind should move from the random production of valuable along with inferior types of people to the creation exclusively of the former. If a culture nurtures one genius or talent for centuries, it is necessary to produce the latter by mass means, in order to gradually turn the whole of humankind into a sort of super-humankind, not in the sense of Nietzsche's "blond beast," but in the sense of a future complete and powerful being with a cosmic mental outlook and similar cosmic power . . .

The creation of a person is the real overcoming of time by affirmation of the permanency of the continuity of the individual against its corroding force. The development of this process can be seen in the extension of existence of this individual (medicine, hygiene, rejuvenation), and could perhaps in the future include renewal or resurrection by means of the laboratory creation of life. People should become accustomed to the idea, that the latter is possible, not just in the form of the immortality of a soul as exists in mysticism, but in the form of the mathematically and scientifically based renewal in the same circumstances of any prior combination of elements.

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Valerian Nikolaevich Murav'ev (1885–1930/31 or 1932) was born in Moscow on February 28, 1885. He descended from an old Russian noble family. His father, a renowned jurist, was the minister of justice from 1894 to 1905 and thereafter ambassador in Rome. Murav'ev spent his childhood in England. In 1905 he completed his school years in Saint Petersburg, earning a distinction from Russia's elite imperial Alexander Lyceum. Having studied law and economics in Paris he served as secretary to the diplomatic corps in Paris, The Hague and Belgrade. During the war he directed the Balkan section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the February Revolution he became director of the political committee within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the provisional administration.

As a pan-Russian nationalist Murav'ev was initially ill-disposed towards the October Revolution. In a number of contributions to the national-liberal press he argued for a "patriotic and national maximalism" and spoke out against the peace of Brest-Litovsk. In the summer of 1918 he was one of the contributing authors to the famous *De Profundis (Iz glubiny)*, an anthology organized by Petr Struve in which leading representatives of the intelligentsia interpreted the revolution as "an unprecedented moral and political collapse," but also as the chance for a "spiritual, cultural and political rebirth" (Petr Struve).

Murav'ev's contacts with national Bolshevik circles and above all his personal acquaintance with Lev Trotsky resulted in a rapprochement with the Soviet power, in which he saw the guarantor of Russian statehood and which he fancied as being on the path of national evolution. Murav'ev was of one mind with the Bolsheviks in their rejection of parliamentary democracy. He greeted the Third International as a timely project for the realization of the old Russian dream of a "third Rome"—a world order established on a theoretical basis.

At the beginning of 1920 Murav'ev was appointed director of the department of information and commercial law of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on Trotsky's recommendation. But by February 1920 he had been arrested on account of his former membership in a secret anti-Bolshevik association called the National Centre, and in August 1920 he was sentenced to death in a spectacular trial at the highest revolutionary tribunal. Thanks to Trotsky's personal intervention the sentence was commuted to four years imprisonment, which was then waived soon after in an amnesty.

After his release Murav'ev worked as a translator and employee in various offices. In 1926 he found a position as scientific secretary at Aleksei Gastev's Central Institute for Labor (TsIT). In the TsIT journal Murav'ev published reviews and translations of foreign publications on the theory and organization of labor.

While studying and working in Paris Murav'ev had socialized with groups of freemasons and occultists and had begun to engage with Eastern religions and esoteric doctrines. After the revolution he maintained close contact with religious and philosophical circles and associations of Moscow intelligentsia, including Nikolai Berdiaev's Free Academy for Spiritual Culture (Vol'naia Akademiia Duchovnoi Kul'tury), the Free Philosophical Association (Vol'naia filosofskaia assotsiatsiia), the so-called "Worshippers of the Name" who gathered around the philosopher Aleksei Losev and the followers of the philosopher Nikolai Fedorov. The only philosophical work that Murav'ev published in his lifetime (under his own imprint) was heavily influenced by Fedorov: *Ovladenie vremenem kak osnovaia zadacha organizatsii truda* (Mastering Time as the Fundamental Goal of the Organization of Labor).

Having been dismissed from the TsIT in May 1929, Murav'ev applied in vain for a position at the University of Tashkent. He was arrested on October 26, 1929—possibly because of his association with Trotsky—and sentenced to three years in the Gulag for "anti-Soviet agitation" on November 10, 1929. According to unverified information he was taken to the

notorious camp on the Solovki Islands on the White Sea, where he apparently died in 1930 or 1931. Other sources suggest that he was exiled to Narym in Siberia and died of typhus there. His extensive unpublished philosophical and literary estate is held at the Russian State Library in Moscow. It contains works on the culture and art of the future, on a "Philosophy of Action"; on the "Mastery of History;" and the dramatized religious-philosophical dialogue, *Sof'ia i Kitovras* (Sophia and Kitovras).

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Originally published in Russian as Valerian Murav'ev, *Ovladenie vremenem kak osnovaia zadacha organizatsii truda* [Mastering Time as the Fundamental Goal of the Organization of Labor] (Moscow: Publication of the author, 1924). For a German translation see *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemeyer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 422–81.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf. Fragments selected by Michael Hagemeyer.

The biographical note has been translated by Jonathan Blower from the German translation in *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemeyer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 422–24.

# Statements from the Catalogue of the "First Discussional Exhibition of the Active Revolutionary Art Associations" 1924

D28

## CONCRETISTS

- I. CONCRETENESS IS THE OBJECT IN ITSELF.
- II. CONCRETENESS IS THE SUM OF EXPERIENCE.
- III. CONCRETENESS IS FORM.

Preconditions for objects:

1. Contemporaneity
2. Clarity of objective
3. Accuracy of execution

Participants in the group: Petr Vil'iams, Boris Volkov, Konstantin Vialov, Vladimir Lushin, Iurii Merkulov (18 different items exhibited)

## METHOD (The Projectionists)

### OUR PRIMARY SLOGANS

1.  
Industrial production regulates social attitudes.
2.  
1, 2, or 100 artists cannot organize the environment—ONLY INDUSTRIAL production can.
3.  
The artist is the inventor of new systems of objects and works with objective meaning.
4.  
Painting and volumetrical constructions are the most convincing means of expressing the (PROJECTION) METHOD of organizing materials.
  - 4a.  
It is essential and quite opportune to be actively engaged in art.
5.  
The artist is not the producer of consumer objects (cupboard, picture), but the (PROJECTION) METHOD of organizing materials.
  - 5a.  
MILLIONS OF PRODUCERS WILL BE MAKING NORMALIZED OBJECTS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE.
6.  
Art is the science of an objective system of organizing materials.
7.  
Every organization is materialized through METHOD.

Participants in the group: S. Luchishkin, S. B. Nikritin, M. Plaksin, Kliment Red'ko, N. Triaskin, A. Tyshler (90 various works exhibited: Luchishkin's "analytical painting," Nikritin's "tectonic researches" ["drafts"], painting, maquettes, models, drawings)

## THE FIRST WORKING GROUP OF CONSTRUCTIVISTS

### ON THE EXHIBITED WORKS

1. By taking part in this exhibition, the Constructivists are not rejecting the basic tenets of revolutionary constructivism, which defends the FACTUAL RATIONALIZATION OF ARTISTIC LABOR as opposed to the now dominant cultivation of the artistic creation of idealistic art.

By appearing in this instance beneath the slogan "ASSOCIATIONS OF ACTIVE REVOLUTIONARY ART," the Constructivists are pursuing only agitational aims: to contribute objects they have made and thereby to participate in the demonstrative discussion between the new groups and associations that have arisen within a proletarian society.

This does not mean that we are turning back to art, or that we are retreating from those positions that the First Working Group of Constructivists occupied when, as early as 1920, they shouted forth the slogan "WE DECLARE IMPLACABLE WAR ON ART."

2. The Constructivists' rationalization of artistic labor has nothing in common with the travails of art makers who are striving, as it were, to "socialize" the flowering branches of art and to compel the latter to APPLY ITSELF to contemporary social reality.

In rationalizing artistic labor, the Constructivists put into practice—not in verbal, but in concrete terms—the real qualifications of the OBJECT: they are raising its quality, establishing its social role, and organizing its forms in an organic relationship with its utilitarian meaning and objective.

The Constructivists are putting into practice this rationalization of artistic labor by means of material labor—that labor in which the workers themselves are directly involved.

The Constructivists are convinced that, with the growing influence of the materialist world view, the so-called "spiritual" life of society, the emotional qualities of people can no longer be cemented by abstract categories of metaphysical beauty and by the mystical intrigues of a spirit soaring above society.

The Constructivists assert that all art makers without exception are engaged in these intrigues, and no matter what vestments of realistic or naturalistic art they are invested in, they cannot escape essentially from the magic circle of aesthetic conjuring tricks.

But by applying conscious reason to life, our new young proletarian society lives also by the only concrete values of social construction and by clear objectives.

While constructing, while pursuing these aims NOT ONLY FOR ITSELF, BUT ALSO THROUGH ITSELF, our society can advance only by concretizing, only by realizing the vital acts of our modern day.

And this is our reality, our life. Ideologically, as it were, consciously, we have extirpated yesterday, but in practical and formal terms we have not yet mastered today's reality.

We do not sentimentalize objects; that is why we do not sing about objects in poetry. But we have the will to construct objects; that is why we are developing and training our ability to make objects.

3. At the "First Discussional Exhibition of Associations of New Groups of Artistic Labor," the Constructivists are showing only certain aspects of their production:

- I. Typographical construction of the printed surface
- II. Volumetrical objects (the construction of an armature for everyday life)
- III. Industrial and special clothing
- IV. Children's books

The First Working Group of Constructivists consists of a number of productional cells.

Of those not represented, mention should be made of the productional cell "Kino-fot" (cinematography and photography), the productional cell of material constructions, and the productional cell "Mass Action."

The First Working Group of Constructivists states that all other groups that call themselves constructivists, such as the "Constructivist Poets,"<sup>5</sup> the "Constructivists of the Chamber Theater,"<sup>6</sup> the "Constructivists of the Meierhol'd Theater,"<sup>7</sup>

the “Lef Constructivists,” the “TsIT Constructivists,”<sup>6</sup> etc., are, from this group’s point of view, PSEUDO-CONSTRUCTIVISTS and are engaged in merely making art.

#### The First Working Group of Constructivists

- a. The FWGC productional cell for an armature for everyday life:  
Grigorii Miller, L. Sanina and Aleksei Gan
- b. The FWGC productional cell for children’s books:  
Olga and Galina Chichagova and N. G. Smirnov
- c. The FWGC productional cell for industrial and special clothing:  
A. Mirolubova, L. Sanina and Grigorii Miller
- d. The FWGC productional cell for typographical production:  
Aleksei Gan and Gr. Miller

#### THE FIRST WORKING ORGANIZATION OF ARTISTS

##### BASIC TENETS

##### WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

1. The First Working Organization of Artists is striving to make the artist a socially indispensable element of modern life.
2. By organizing our personal and professional qualities, we organize the production of artistic values as part of the normal relationship between the artist and life.
3. By personal qualities we mean that spiritual, cultural level of consciousness that is oriented toward the development of new social forms.
4. By professional qualities we mean that level of artistic culture and artistic consciousness that, while being closely bound up with contemporaneity, is oriented toward the development of new forms in art.
5. Through our practical and cultural activity we are organizing our psychology in accordance with the basic principles of our organization

Participants in the group: Grigorii Aleksandrov, Petr Zhukov, Aram Vanetsian, Mikhail Sapegin, Ivan Korolev, Konstantin Loginov, Nikolai Men’shutin, Aleksei Rudnev, Aleksandr Stepanov, Ivan Iakovlev, N. Prusakov (models, maquettes of architectural constructions and monuments, montages, and paintings)

The exhibition opened in the Higher Arts and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS), Moscow, on May 11, 1924 and comprised eight sections, of which four advanced independent declarations. Those without declarations were: the Byt (Everyday Life) group, consisting of the artists Ivan Pankov and Konstantin Parkhomenko; the Association of Three—Aleksandr Deineka, Andrei Goncharov, and Iurii Pimenov; a group called the Constructivists—including Konstantin Medunetskii and the Stenberg brothers; and a small one-man show of the sculptor Iosif Chaikov. Most of the contributors were young and had recently graduated from the new art schools, and some of them, e.g., Deineka, Goncharov, Pimenov, Konstantin Vialov and Pet’r Vil’iams, became founding members of the Society of Easel Painters (OST, see p. 359) at the beginning of 1925.

Despite their specific titles, there was little difference between the concretists and the projectionists, both of whom favored easel painting and not, as their declarations would imply, applied art. The canvases that they presented were, however, highly imaginative and subjective, betraying the influence of German expressionism and even surrealistic tendencies—particularly in the work of Goncharov, Sergei Luchishkin, Aleksandr Tyshler and Vil’iams. Most members of the seventh section, the First Working Organization of Artists, shortly disappeared from the art scene, although Nikolai Prusakov (formerly a member of the Society of Young Artists, OBMOkHU) later achieved a reputation as a book and poster designer.

The First Working Group of Constructivists was founded in December 1920,<sup>1</sup> and its declaration quoted here repeated some of the ideas in its initial so-called “Productivist” manifesto<sup>2</sup> and in Gan’s book.

According to one source,<sup>3</sup> Lissitzky took the program of the First Working Group with him when he went to Germany in 1921, thus disseminating constructivist ideas in the West; some Western observers, including Hans Richter, even acknowledged that constructivism had first arisen in Russia.<sup>4</sup> The First Working Group was not fully represented at this exhibition, which did not include the group’s productional cell Mass Action and the Kinofot (cinematography and photography) cell. Of the First Working Group represented at this exhibition, the Chichagova sisters, Grigorii Miller and Aleksandra Mirolubova achieved some recognition in later years, contributing bookplate and other small graphic designs to exhibitions.

Essentially, the exhibition acted as a junction of artistic interests: easel art versus industrial art. The exhibition’s title indicated also the quandary in which many artists were finding themselves: the word “discussional” (*diskussionnyi*) has the meaning in Russian not only of “concerned with discussion or debate,” but also of “open to question, debatable.”

The texts of these pieces are from the catalogue of *I-aia Diskussionaia vystavka ob’edinenii aktivnogo revoliutsionnogo iskusstva* (Moscow, 1924). The whole catalogue is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*. The catalogue name list is reprinted in *Vystavki sovetskogo izobrazitel’nogo iskusstva*,<sup>9</sup> and extracts from the Constructivist declaration together with some comments are in “Iz istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury, 1926–1932.”<sup>10</sup> A detailed review of the exhibition is in *Pechat’ i revoliutsiia 4* (Moscow, 1924): 120–29.

— JB

1. Judging by Gan’s *Konstruktivizm*, p. 3; by an announcement in *Ermitazh 13* (Moscow, 1922), 3; and by the group’s own statement in the catalogue to this exhibition, 14.
2. See Naum Gabo, *Gabo: Constructions, Sculpture, Paintings, Drawings, Engravings* (London: Lund Humphries; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 153.
3. V. Khazanova, “Sovetskaia arkhitektura pervykh let Oktiabria 1917–1925 gg.” (Moscow, 1970), 196.
4. *Ibid.*
5. The constructivist poets such as Vera Inber, Il’ia Sel’vinskii and Kornelii Zelinskii were members of the so-called Literary Center of the Constructivists (LTsK), founded in Moscow in 1924; see K. Zelinskii and I. Sel’vinskii, eds., *Gosplan literatury. Sbornik Literaturnogo tsentra konstruktivistov (L.Ts.K.)* (Moscow, 1924). A translation of their manifesto appears in Stephen Bann, ed., *The Constructivist Tradition* (New York: Viking, 1974), 123–27.
6. Constructivists of the Chamber Theater (Aleksandr Tairov’s Kamernyi teatr) included Aleksandra Ekster, the Stenberg brothers, Aleksandr Vesnin, and Georgii Iakovlev; see A. Efros, *Kamernyi teatr i ego khudozhniki. 1914–1934* (Moscow, 1934).
7. Constructivists who worked for Vsevelod Meierkhol’d’s State Higher Theater Workshop in Moscow included Liubov Popova and Varvara Stepanova; as director of the Workshop, Meierkhol’d developed his constructivist theory of so-called biomechanics. For details see Edward Braun, trans. and ed., *Meyerhold on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang; London: Methuen, 1969), 183–204; Huntly Carter, *The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre, 1917–1928* (London: Brentano’s, 1929), 70; V. Meierkhol’d, *Stat’i, pis’ma, rechi, besedy*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1968), vol. 2, 486–89.
8. The Central Institute of Labor (TsIT), run by Aleksei Gastev in Moscow, acted as a laboratory for the analysis of the “rhythmic rotation of work” and aspired to create a machine man, an artist of labor. Among the institute’s members were the critic Viktor Pertsov and the artist Aleksandr Tyshler; see René Fuegoep-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An Examination of Cultural Life in Soviet Russia* (London and New York: Putnam, 1928; rev. ed. New York: Harper, 1965), 206–14.
9. *Vystavki sovetskogo izobrazitel’nogo iskusstva*, vol. 1, 1917–32 (Moscow, 1965), 132.
10. V. Khazanova, comp., “Iz istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury, 1926–1932,” *Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 1970), 66.

Originally published in Russian as *I-aia Diskussionaia vystavka ob’edinenii aktivnogo revoliutsionnogo iskusstva*, exh. cat. (Moscow, 1924). The whole catalogue is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 313–18, from which this translation is made. For a partial translation into German see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 143–45.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from “Statements from the Catalogue of the ‘First Discussional Exhibition of Associations of Active Revolutionary Art,’” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlit, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 237–43.

# The Artistic Life of Moscow 1924

D29

## Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov

... Following this brief overview, we can now set about examining the two recent exhibitions, one under the "cultural patronage of the VKhUTEMAS" and the "First Discussional Exhibition," which from our viewpoint are the most interesting. All the exhibitions that we wrote about in the last review and at the start of this one consist essentially of yesterday's art and have lived out their days. In contrast, these exhibitions that feature the artistic youth of VKhUTEMAS are for us the first flashes of what, like it or not, will be the art of tomorrow. This forces them to be treated very seriously and requires some predictions about the future based upon analysis of the present works. We always imagine this future, on the one hand, as the close connection of art with production, as the entry of art into production and the creation there of new aesthetic values and, on the other hand, as the elaboration of some sort of new art, an art of the new post-revolutionary Russia. Both tendencies are displayed in startling definition in these two exhibitions of the VKhUTEMAS students . . .

Let's proceed to the First Discussional Exhibition. It really was discussional, not only because eight completely separate groups participated, but also because assessment of its works as seedlings of the future art can be and is quite different . . .

On the other hand, if we take not the constructivists but genuine painters, then in general they are a joyous phenomenon and allow us to consider the possibilities of an entirely new future art. These are the groups "Everyday Life," "The Association of Three" and in part "The Concretivists." Their painting has the following characteristics: realism, subject matter, a distinctive "urban expressionism," and a depth of formal explorations . . . Even more of this expressionism, together with the most authentic realism, appears in the work of the "Group of Three." It really is a quite homogenous group, so it is possible to discuss all its members at the same time. Their paintings are full of movement, not a single figure rests, each form is shown unfolding. This is a very characteristic trait of urbanism.

At a cursive glance, every three-dimensional object appears to unfold, displaying all its sides in a single view and at the same time remaining a definite flat silhouette in the fleetingness of existence. The artists achieved this by juxtaposition, often in a single figure and sometimes in several, placing side-by-side silhouettes and three-dimensional forms modeled with chiaroscuro, which is especially evident in the works of Pimenov. Goncharov, in turn, provides other features of expressionist urbanism: an instantaneous grasp of the nature of a thing through the omission of details. In a painting representing a girl, he omitted one hand from her entirely, and despite this yet truly because of it, the realistic dynamism of the scene is extraordinarily convincing.

The third one of them, Deineka, exhibited the etching *Two Figures*, which is, in fact, their painterly treatise. It is a study of the unfolding of spatial forms on a plane. Deineka's oils in general have the same characteristics of the other two. In all of them is present the tangible influence of Favorskii, which could frighten some, just as their expressionism could frighten. However, it would be highly undialectical to think that this or that influence could be only negative and that aspects of the new art could not arise from such influences. Without insisting that these three young artists are prophets of the future, we just want to say that in their work it is possible to glimpse the characteristics of the future. And we could call it expressionist realism. It is unquestionable that the new painting will inevitably be realistic, simple, clear, and void of all mysticism. Without doubt, it will also be deeply urban in its character, and it will stem from the positive side of expressionism. Dispensing with mysticism, it takes its dynamism, its maximum of impression with a minimum of means—for example, as it is now expressed in the work of [George] Grosz. The other positive feature of these artists we consider the intensification of their formal explorations. No matter that it came from Favorskii.

We think negatively about the formalism of the leftists, because these explorations are purely formal, free of all ideology, all philosophy of exploration. This is not what we see among the youth. Their formal explorations originate from a new understanding of the object and its spatial functions. When they paint pictures, their first thought is to interpret that surrounding the person in a new way. In addition, this interpretation contains its own philosophy and a great artistic task.

The revolutionary character of the artist is not in his unflinching wish to represent the worker with his hammer and scorn for non-revolutionary subjects, but in that he sees these old subjects in a new way, perceives and communicates them in a new way.

Our proletarian youth are seized by an irrepressible passion for learning. The thirst for knowledge, for positivism, seems to never have been as great as it is now. The materialism of thinking is expressed in the striving to rationalize everything. Sometimes this runs to extremes, as in the "Projectionists" at this same exhibition, whose paintings resemble more geometric drafts, but in the catalogue is written: "art is the science of an objective system of organizing materials."

But in the best of their manifestations these conceptual-formal explorations deserve the most serious attention and suggest an interesting historical analogy with the Italian Quattrocento, the artists of which expressed the new ideology of the new class namely in their formal explorations (perspective, foreshortening, etc.) but not in the subject, which in essence remained old.

The new artistic youth is just beginning to learn the new perception of the world—a realist, materialist perception. Therefore, it is entirely natural that for the present they are interested only in individual objects, only, so to speak, with still life (in the broad sense of the word). But when they overcome this, when they learn anew how to perceive and interpret objects, they, undoubtedly, will also switch over to more difficult social and psychological subject matter.<sup>1</sup> No matter how desirable it is today for us to have a painting that would reflect the revolution, we need to display significant caution in these demands, otherwise we risk obtaining, so to speak, a surrogate of revolution. In fact, this exhibition confirms this assertion. In it were not bad works, so to speak, of a painterly "productive" character, serving the tasks of the moment. For instance, the poster-like character of P. Vil'iams' *Montage O.D.V.F.* and Merkulov's *Signboard for the First Cavalry School* and the badge for the same. But it is interesting that when that same Merkulov tried to serve the revolution not in a "productive" way, he reflects it in grand art creating such a thoroughly false work as *Red Army Cavalry*. Similarly false is Vialov's painting *The Militiaman*. They are false, as while they are hurrah-patriotic, to what extent are they "revolutionary"? Judge for yourself.

Of course, all of these are highly debatable questions, and only the true reality of the future will decide them. For the present, we may only state this pleasant fact, that the work of our artistic youth in the area of both production art and in the area of pure painting gives definite hope for a happy departure from the crisis of the art of our days . . .

1. These formal searches, of course, are in principle not those of formalism in its old understanding. Back then, it developed breaking away from life, whereas here the striving to acquire a new language is for the expression of the new ideology.

Originally published in Russian as Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov, "Khudozhestvennaia zhizn' Moskvy," *Pechat' i revoliutsiia* 4 (July-August, 1924): 120–29. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 339–42.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

### OST

#### The Society of Easel Painters (OST) and the Artists' Brigade (IZOBRIGADA) (1925–32). An Introduction

Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen

The *1st Discussional Exhibition of the Active Revolutionary Art Associations*, which opened on May 11, 1924, gave the competing groups among graduates and students of the Higher Arts and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS) the opportunity to discuss for the first time their theses—as the exhibition's title suggests—and to document their artistic practice. Contemporary criticism saw the importance of the exhibition in its “return to panel painting, something which has long been boycotted . . . The exhibition represents an important moment of development and is to be welcomed because painting is showing a deviating tendency from a baseless abstraction towards representative qualities, to contemporary genres.”

Two main groups stood in opposition: The followers of constructivism belonged to one of three groups, called, respectively The Constructivists (V. Stenberg, Medunetskii, G. Stenberg); The First Working Group of Constructivists (A. Gan, G. Miller, L. Sanina, O. Chichigova, G. Chichigova, N. Smirnov, A. Miroljubov) and The First Working Organization of Artists (G. Aleksandrov, P. Zhukov). The proponents of a new movement of panel painting were also organized into three groups: Method (Projectionists) (S. Luchishkin, S. Nikritin, M. Plaskin, K. Red'ko, N. Triaskin, A. Tyshler); The Concretists (P. Vil'iams, B. Volkov, K. Vyalov, V. Liushin, I. Merkulov) and The Association of Three (A. Goncharov, A. Deineka, I. Pimenov). These three groups came together at the end of 1924 to form the Society of Easel Painters (OST). The name the society chose for itself was a programmatic avowal of panel painting and was aimed at the apodictic anti-art position of the constructivists.

“The Last Picture Has Been Painted,” was the title of a lecture given by Nikolai Tarabukin in August 1921<sup>1</sup> at the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK). How did this absolute negation of traditional panel painting come about?

Around 1919, the Russian avant-garde was dominated by two basic tendencies:

1. Malevich's suprematism, which did not deal with things or objects, but rather wished to “release color from a mixture of paints to become an independent unit.”<sup>2</sup>
2. Tatlin's development of three-dimensional reliefs made up of various materials (from 1913 onwards) and counter-reliefs into his theory of a “culture of materials” with which he wished to prove “that the highest aesthetic forms are also the highest economic forms. Art is working on designing materials to this end.”<sup>3</sup>

While the group of Moscow suprematists, out of which Malevich, Udal'tsova and Kliun arose as teachers of some of the later OST artists, remained true to “easilism” (*stankovizm*),<sup>5</sup> the constructivism propagated by Tatlin and Rodchenko demanded that artists “must move towards creating a new life; or in concrete terms, to producing new items of material culture.”<sup>6</sup>

During the “laboratory phase” of Soviet art, until the beginning of 1921, the theory of *veshchism* (literally “thingism”) was at the centre of debate at INKhUK, and traces of it can still be seen in the manifesto of the concretists of 1924. Every work of art was, in an analogy of material production, declared to be a “thing,” and the artist was referred to as an artist-craftsman.

In accordance with their revolutionary intent to overcome the division between art and life and to take away art's elitist class character by merging it with material production, the constructivists went a step further in 1921: The artist-craftsman was to become an “artist-engineer” who would take the “healthy basics of painting, such as color, line and surface . . . away from the sphere of a speculative activity (the painting) into the area of real action and practical building.” Panel painting was deemed to be a product of the old society, “pervaded by the most reactionary idealism.”<sup>7</sup> Aleksei Gan (writer of the manifesto of the First Working Group of Constructivists) wrote in the catalogue of the *1st Discussional Exhibition* (1924): “Art is irreversibly connected with theology, metaphysics and mysticism. Death to art!”

The constructivists subjected themselves strictly to the commandment of the hour “to find the way to real actions.” “Do not reflect, illustrate or interpret reality,

but build real things and express the planned tasks of the new active class, the proletariat.” Lenin's formula “Soviet power . . . + American technology and organization of the trusts = socialism”<sup>8</sup> and the saying of Aleksei Gastev (founder of the Central Institute of Labor in Moscow in 1920): “Let us take the storm of revolution in Russia, unite it with the pulse of American life and do our work in the manner of a chronometer”<sup>9</sup> document the meaning that was attached to technology in those days as a material lever towards social progress.

A social theory influenced by Aleksandr Bogdanov (creator of a universal theory of organization called “tektology” and the most important theorist of Proletkul't) and adopted by the constructivists contributed to this fetishization of technology. Thus, technology is released from the dialectic of productive forces and production conditions and becomes the independent and sole force behind social progress.

Nikolai Bukharin, a pupil of Bogdanov's, also reduces social productive forces to technology in his *Theory of Historical Materialism* published at the start of the 1920s.<sup>10</sup>

Gan's demand for “Death to art!” is based on Bogdanov's thesis that art is compensation for insufficient technology and has thus been made superfluous by modern technological development. This view of the constructivists resulted in an absolutization of the technical aspects of the artistic production process and ultimately to an equation of artistic production with material work. “Functional constructiveness” was to be an important criterion of future production-oriented artistic practice. The artist was to apply his specific abilities to “building life”: “The need to draw a forest beautifully is replaced by the planting of a beautiful real forest: the desire to sculpt a human figure beautifully is superseded by the social creation of a beautiful body.”<sup>11</sup>

Both the underdeveloped level of industry and the dogmatic posturing of the constructivists, now calling themselves “production workers” (*proizvodstvenniki*) triggered a countermovement back to easel painting, which, in 1925—the year of the first OST exhibition—meant that the constructivists were not able to enforce their demand that the VKhUTEMAS be turned into a simple polytechnic. The controversial reorganization of the VKhUTEMAS and its renaming to VKhUTEIN led in 1926 to an upgrading of the painting faculty, which now had the “social task” of educating the class of “specialists” in the disciplines of monumental painting, journalistic graphics, panel painting, etc. The great degree of attention given to the pupils of certain exponents of pure *stankovizm* (who later became OST members) at the *1st Discussional Exhibition* by both the public and within VKhUTEMAS led the constructivists organized within the Left Front of the Arts (LEF) to rethink their maximum demands. Arvatov now claimed that the critics of constructivism were the victims of a misunderstanding if they thought that the “merciless struggle of production artists against easel painting, i.e. against the bourgeois form of representative art, against the self-sufficient and contemplative form, was a struggle against representative art in general.”<sup>12</sup> Instead of directly shaping the material environment, the new tactic was to replace technology with psychotechnology. The artist-engineer ultimately became a “psycho-constructor,”<sup>13</sup> who used utilitarian figurative agitation art to affect the viewer in a manner that stimulated his actions. Moderate forces recognized in time that one cannot, unlike certain groups of artists, who “suffer from the childhood illness of leftist radicalism, close one's eyes before every appearance of panel painting and pretend it doesn't exist.” You have to be dialectic and recognize facts . . . Elements of easel-based art, not ‘pictorial’ or ‘illusory’ art, not art that was created in the bubble of a studio, but constructive, constitutive and monumental-propagandistic art will undoubtedly be included in new artistic aims, and for that reason it cannot be excluded from the school.”

In this point, the program of the OST artists met that of the left avant-garde. They stood for modern, constructive painting. They distanced themselves firmly from the psychologizing genre painting of AKhRR. Artists such as Deineka and Pimenov dedicated a large part of their work to agitational journalistic graphics for magazines and posters. Deineka and Dobrokovskii joined the constructivist October group founded in 1928. Luchishkin, a founding member of OST, acknowledged that OST was very close to the constructivists in LEF. Their ideologue was said to have been Mayakovsky.

“We always fought with the AKhRR.”<sup>14</sup>

All the same, OST, which at one time had more than forty members, was a particularly heterogeneous group, both artistically and ideologically. There follow a few remarks to the three groupings that appeared at the *1st Discussional Exhibition* in 1924, which went on to form the OST at the end of 1924.

The members of the Method group (S. Luchishkin, S. Nikritin, M. Plaskin, K. Red'ko, N. Tyaskin, A. Tyshler; at the edge of the group but joined by friendship: A. Labas)

formed for the first time in 1922 as an informal circle of VKhUTEMAS students and graduates around the group's initiator and theoretician, Solomon Nikritin. In the same year, Nikritin had founded what he called a "projection theatre" (*Moskovskii proekzionnii Teatr*) with students interested in theater, including the later OST members Sergei Luchishkin and Petr Vil'iams. The name was derived from the theory of "projectionism" that was gaining currency at the time and on whose development Nikritin was working theoretically and experimentally with friends. The most important theses are to be found as abbreviated watchwords in the group's declaration (probably written by Nikritin) in the catalogue for the *1st Discussional Exhibition*. "According to this theory, the artist is not the producer of the objects of everyday life and of art, but only the creator of their projections, i.e. the ideas, concepts, plans and experiments; he is merely the creator of the methods themselves on whose basis the objects of millions of people are created." The parallels between this declaration and the programs of the constructivists and production artists are astounding: "Industrial production regulates social attitudes." (see "Statements from the Catalogue of the '1st Discussional Exhibition of the Active Revolutionary Art Associations'," p. 354, first thesis of the projectionist group). The artist is, for them, however "not the producer of consumer objects (cupboard, picture), but (of projections) of the method of organizing materials." (fifth thesis). The speculative moment rejected by the functionalist production artists retains its meaning: The artist is "the inventor of new systems of objects and works with objective meaning." (third thesis). The emphasis is placed, depending on the current belief in science, on system, method, scholarship. It is telling that the projectionists referred to themselves as the 'Method' group in the catalogue for the *1st Discussional Exhibition*.

Even Malevich, whose lectures at the VKhUTEMAS in the Club Cézanne had been heard by some projectionists, considered himself to be "an inventor, similar to engineers and scientists, who develop the newest devices and machines and build systems that have no counterpart in nature."<sup>15</sup> In the time of technology and science, of automobiles and aviation, he too declared bitter war on "aesthetics, this false feeling" with his "new art."<sup>16</sup> K. Red'ko wrote in his diary entry for November 18, 1920: "Yesterday, Malevich gave a lecture at the Club Cézanne about the new purpose of the artist who must deal with the invention of new forms that change and complete our lives and not, like yesterday and today, merely copy and pass on forms taken from the engineering sciences . . ."<sup>17</sup> The projectionists did not escape this risk of naively and pseudo-scientifically analogizing art and technology. The art critic A. Fedorov-Davydov wrote on the subject in the catalogue of an exhibition dedicated to Kliment Red'ko: "Within the area of easel painting, 'engineering-ism' could only be a stylization of machine forms. Attempts to represent abstract formulae and energetic phenomena in visual forms led to abstract and utopian compositions. It was natural that artists would start working as amateurs on the problems of mechanics and optics and were anxious to represent the human and his interrelation with the outside world in the form of complicated mechanisms and machines."<sup>18</sup>

Proletkul't's imaginings of the worker being merged with the rhythm, organization and strict regularity of the machine are included in Nikritin's projectionist theater work. It can be assumed that there were fruitful contacts with the Meierkhol'd Theater.<sup>19</sup> There, at the same time (1921/22), Meierkhol'd developed biomechanics. In his lecture "The Actor of the Future and Biomechanics" (1922), Meierkhol'd uses almost the same formulations as the projectionists' manifesto of 1924: "Art is always about organizing material" [see thesis 6]. Constructivism demanded of the artist that he also be an engineer. Art should be based on scientific principles . . .<sup>20</sup> Organizing material means, for an actor, meant organizing his body in accordance with the scientific laws of biomechanics. "The Taylor system belongs as closely to the actor's work as it does to any other work that aims to be maximally productive."<sup>21</sup>

Nikritin and his friends, in their projection theaters were even more radical than the Meierkhol'd troupe in forgoing any "representation" of reality through words, gestures or plot.

They called their first theatre production in 1922 in the House of the Press *Tragedy A.O.U.* as, instead of words or even whole sentences, only vowels such as a, o, u, e and i were intoned and accompanied with abstract gestures.<sup>22</sup> The constructivist costumes and the background came from N. Triaskin (Tatlin's pupil), whose "material designs" were on show at the *1st Discussional Exhibition*.

The synthesis of onomatopoeia, costumes and set design demonstrated on the stage was intended to act as a model, if at first only on the abstract level of art, of the future unity of work, art and theater. The abstract beauty of organized, rhythmic work was intended to be understood by the workers as representing the beauty of movement. After the failed second performance of a futuristic spectacle by Mariengof, Nikritin was invited by A. Gastev (Director of the Central Institute of Labor in Moscow) to try out his theory in the form of a theatrical illustration of

the principles of the "scientific organization of labor" (NOT) propagated by Gastev. Under S. Luchishkin's direction at first, some of the former projectionists went on to produce "production gymnastics" for the introduction of NOT until about 1930.<sup>23</sup> The ambivalence of this task, which tended to turn "the proletariat into a social automaton,"<sup>24</sup> marks the whole abstract laboratory phase of the later OST members; their fluctuation between geometric plan drawings in the service of a totally scientificizing art and the social task of creating utilitarian representative easel pictures that affected the viewer in a manner that stimulated his actions.

Kliment Red'ko was the most radical in formulating and realizing art's subjugation at the hands of science. His diaries document the reflection of the conditions for producing art, which had been changed utterly by the modern scientific world view: "Physics, mechanics and chemistry rule; one hears of Einstein's theory of relativity. In the West, the mechanical rhythms of technology swallow up all old forms and subjugate them."<sup>25</sup> Painters saw themselves as standing before an absolutely new start for art. The subjects of their theoretical and artistic investigations were "space and time as a physical-mental perception" that could be ascribed to "the power of electricity" (Red'ko 1921). Artists "are moving towards science,"<sup>26</sup> and the methods of science were held to be the only binding basis for recognizing an analyzable, finite world that was capable of being mastered by technology. Art was no longer to be the production of ideology with a utopian perspective and compensation for unsatisfactory living conditions, but rather, as formulated in the projectionists' manifesto, "the science of an objective system of organizing materials" (sixth thesis). In this, they agreed with the constructivists.

By analyzing its representative elements, line, materiality of color, mathematics of surface distribution etc., the artist was able to gain "exact knowledge" (Red'ko) about the essence and "economy" of form. Painting quasi came into its own when it began to reflect its own materials. The artist, however, did not want to get stuck in the self-sufficient analysis of form. On November 9, 1920, Red'ko wrote in his diary: "Those elements of my work that to others may seem to be dissection in accordance with the researched principles of cubism, etc., I consider to be the synthetic principle of an organic compound using a constructed form."<sup>27</sup> Instead of making an illusory representation of individual phenomena, the artist wanted to create a figurative "synthesis" in which the rules of the universe would reveal themselves. As a "scientist," the artist was no longer happy to take on the role of an outsider in this new society. He laid claim to being able to explain the scientific laws that he saw as determining the life of society. "Progressivity in painting" meant for Red'ko, for example, artistic handling of light, which "fills space with shapes based on electricity, x-rays and other forms of excitation."<sup>28</sup>

Red'ko adopts the term excitation from Malevich and Kandinsky, but uses it not as a reduction to intuition (Malevich) or emotional vibrations (Kandinsky) but as a term of the positive sciences.

Red'ko's paintings (*Dynamite, Light and Shadow in Symmetry, Electro-Organism* [series], *Speed, Time, Dynamics of Form and Color, Dynamics of a Focal Point, Suprematism, Design of Sloped Surfaces, Color and Movement in Monumental Design*, etc.) of this period do not, however, come up to his standard of universal science. The painter as a scientist that wants to make the material and social laws of motion accessible to "mental understanding" misses the fact that this claim brings him into the contradiction between a conceptual theory and a sensual view. His failure to achieve this moved him completely to give up the concept of his non-representative pictures. After 1923, he painted lyrical landscapes, portraits and still-lives.

Aleksandr Labas, who, despite personal contacts, did not feel directly part of the projectionist group, also tried to give his painting a scientific basis. In the VKhUTEMAS physics laboratory, where Toot, Klucis and others also worked, Labas was employed as the assistant of Professor Fedorov in tackling problems of chromatics.

One of the aims of the research group was to discover objective laws of optical and mechanical color-mixing.<sup>29</sup> As part of this analytical task, abstract color compositions were created around 1921/22. In the sense in which Malevich had once formulated it, Labas' paintings contrasted the "representativeness of old" art with the representation of "perceptions."<sup>30</sup> That is to say, Labas was not interested in painting an airplane, a railway or a car in traffic, but rather in reproducing the sensations of people in an airplane or on a train. Labas does not show the external appearance of a plane's fuselage or a railway carriage, but rather, imagined through an extremely subtle application of color, picks out tiny particles thereof for a moment and leaves traces of them in the memory, be it the feeling of floating in a transparent aeroplane cabin or the impression of a train racing across the landscape. Labas: "I am interested in the dynamics, rhythm and motion of contemporary life, which is why I use subjects such as the city, aviation . . . On the whole, we represented what we felt."<sup>31</sup> The reality of objects, the things that

surround us, did not interest Labas. He was excited by composing the dissociated perception of a city dweller. Reality itself is, for him, a complex of sensual impressions, perceptions of speed, space, etc. This attitude places Labas not far from E. Mach's definition of reality as a "complex of perceptions."<sup>32</sup> In the rejection of the strict principle of the recognizability of an objective reality that exists independently of the subject, art criticism at the end of the 1920s saw a heresy of subjectivism and formalism (among other pictures, even the "surreal" pictures of Aleksandr Tyshler, also a member of the projectionist group, were attacked). Another artist, who later joined the OST, should be placed in this context, even if he did not belong to the inner circle of the projectionists: Ivan Kudriashev, a pupil of Malevich. In a text by him that remind one of Red'ko, he writes: "Painting as it appears in my works is no longer an abstract light-formal construction, it is the realistic expression of today's perception of space. Space, the circumference of the earth, density and light are materialist realities that have become that new thing that spatial art can today bring to fruition." Starting with scientific and physical models of space, Kudriashev attempted to produce cosmic color and spatial effects with pictures such as *Construction of Linear Motion*, *Construction of Curved Motion*, *Luminescence*, *The Earth's Orbit around the Sun*, etc. It is also known that he was interested in Konstantin Tsiolkovskii's research on the cosmos and in rocket science, for which his father produced wooden models. Vladimir Liushin, member of the concretivists and later of the OST, created in 1922 the model of a "Station for interplanetary travel."

Nikritin, Red'ko, Labas and Vialov belonged to Kandinsky's workshop, which was taken over by D. Shterenberg, later director of the OST, after Kandinsky was called to the Bauhaus in Weimar. In addition to Malevich (Kliun, Kudriashev), Ekster (Tyshler) and Udaltsova (Luchishkin), certain proponents of "Moscow Cézannism," who considered themselves agents of the newest French painting school, played a role among the teachers of the later OST members at VKhUTEMAS. In addition to Shterenberg, these included Konchalovskii (Vil'iams), Mashkov (Merkulov) and Lentulov (Vialov). In addition to his influence on his direct pupils (Deineka, Goncharov, Pimenov; appearing at the *1st Discussional Exhibition* as the Association of Three), the woodcut artist V. Favorskii also exerted an influence that can hardly be underestimated on almost all later OST members through his theoretical lectures ("Introduction to the Theory of Spatial Arts" and "Compositional Theory and Theory of Graphics") that he held from 1924 onwards at the VKhUTEMAS. The "photographic" nature, the "kinetic perspective" that is highlighted by art critics as a feature of many works of the OST members can be traced back to Favorskii's compositional theory: "The principle of composition . . . consists of comprehending motion and time as a simultaneity. Without this ability . . . representing space is impossible."<sup>33</sup> Opposing the composition of the traditional easel painting (to which the conservative painters of AKhRR continued to adhere), which he deemed to tend to static insularity, he proposed a compositional theory that viewed the painting as an "open montage" of formal structures. "An extreme form of constructive representation is the film or the photomontage where the rhythmic motion of the recording device can model the figure and sketch the space."<sup>34</sup> In an easel painting, the union of opposing view points by means of the simultaneous representation of various phases of motion "almost pulls time together in a knot." Konstantin Vialov's picture *Cinema, Eisenstein and Tisse at Work* shows just how directly the OST painters sometimes attempted to translate the motion of film into the medium of oil painting. Production (Eisenstein and his cameraman Tisse filming), reception (the audience in the cinema) and the work itself (a scene from *Battleship Potemkin*) are simultaneously united in the painting.

Deineka, Goncharov and Pimenov, pupils of the graphic artist Favorskii, formed the core of a new journalistic direction within the OST that was both famed and criticized in the debates about style and method. Their significance in Soviet agitation art (posters, graphics for satirical magazines, etc.) cannot be overlooked.

In this context, note the effect of the *1st General German Art Exhibition* in Moscow and Leningrad in 1924–25 at which, in addition to expressionists, the exponents of Neue Sachlichkeit in particular (including O. Griebel, G. Grosz, O. Dix, R. Schlichter) caused a sensation among Soviet artists. Anatolii Lunacharskii wrote in a review of the exhibition: "These German Neue Sachlichkeit artists do not leave it at a simple copying of reality . . . They combine the elements of reality in such a way that the painting makes a striking statement about expressing that which the artist considers his duty . . . There can be no doubt that Russian artists can learn something at this exhibition . . . The German artist, in his way of mentally capturing the revolution and creating revolutionary art, outstrips almost all our artists . . ." Traces of this encounter with Neue Sachlichkeit are found, in addition to Pimenov's work, among the artists that appeared at the *1st Discussional Exhibition* as Concretivists (these included Vil'iams, Vialov, Liushin, Merkulov).

The "pictorial" movement schooled in French colorism and cubism within OST, formed by, among others, its teacher D. Shterenberg—who was director of the

society until the split in OST in 1931—differed from the journalistic group in that it dealt with intrinsic image-related problems of texture, color, etc.<sup>36</sup> In a situation report on the occasion of the Soviet art exhibition in Berlin in 1922, Shterenberg writes in P. Westheim's *Kunstblatt* publication about his work methodology: "In my easel painting, I was the first to build the surface upon contrasts in texture by carefully shaping objects using the materials that suited them."<sup>37</sup> With these "contrasts in surface" working, the "structure of the image is determined by pictorial principles"<sup>38</sup> that do not define the paint as a mere coloring of linear constructions, but as a sensory haptic material in its own right. Fedorov-Davydov on the occasion of a Shterenberg retrospective in 1927 wrote: "Space is not represented, but interpreted. Paint became a coloring material. The artist works with it like any tradesman works with his material . . . The artist, in painting his still life, abandons himself to reproducing the shine on the oilcloth, the crumbliness of the baking, the fibre of the wood . . . But, because the artist does not represent things visually illusorily, but rather logically and cognitively, and because the material is not just a means, but also has a certain reality that must be organized, the texture involves both work on the properties of the material itself and the 'representation' of the texture of real objects."

This retreat to problems of "pure" painting, this preference for still lifes over Soviet subjects, came under attack more and more during the 1920s from art critics. Ultimately the critics, with pressure from Narkompros and the communist fraction of AKhR were able to isolate the group of so-called "right-wing fellow travelers" around Shterenberg from the artistic journalists around Pimenov, Luchishkin and others, who were deemed to be "sympathizers" or so-called "left-wing fellow travelers". An exemplary conflict with AKhR preceded the final split in OST in February 1931. The group of 20 (the old OST) under the directorship of Shterenberg and the group of 14 under the directorship of Luchishkin, who gave themselves the name IZOBIGADA (Art Brigade), with the aim of carrying out artistic work on the production basis became members of the Federation of Associations of Soviet Artists (FOSKh) as two separate artists' societies.

The exemplary conflicts with "mysticism," "sickly gloom" and "decadent eroticism" (Tyshler), "romanticism," "foxtrotism" of OST in Soviet art criticism at the end of the 1920s point to the general reckoning with formalism and the canonization of socialist realism at the beginning of the 1930s that would ultimately lead to a tribunal of artists upon one of their colleagues (see "Discussion by the Art Commission of the Cooperative 'The Artist' about the Painting *Old and New* by Solomon Nikritin, April 10, 1935" on p. 388).

- 1 See "Informatsionnyi Otdel' INKhUKA" [Information Department of INKhUK], *Russkoe iskusstvo* 1 (1923); reprinted in Matsa 1933, 142.
- 2 K. Malevich, *Gegenstandslose Kunst und Suprematismus* [Subjectless Art and Suprematism], cited in L. Zhadova, *Suche und Experiment* [Search and Experiment] (Dresden, 1978), 282.
- 3 V. Tatlin, *Kunst mündet aus in Technik* [Art Leads to Technology], 1932, cited in the *Vladimir Tatlin 1885–1953* catalogue published by Kunstverein München, 63.
- 4 Stankovism is derived from *stanok* = tool machine, lathe.
- 5 In 1921, the artists and art theoreticians at INKhUK split into two camps: *proizvodstvenniki* (production workers) and *stankovisti* (easel painters). Some easel painters left the Institute (including Drevin, Kliun, Korolev, Shterenberg, Udaltsova); Malevich distanced himself from the Institute. (See Zhadova, note 249, and Kostin, 14). An article on the split appeared under the initials I. M. and the title "Khudozhniki i proizvodstvo" [Artists and Production] in *Vestnik iskusstva* 5 (1922): 25.
- 6 I. Puni, "Tvorchestvo zhizni" [Creation of Life], *Iskusstvo kommuny* 5 (1919), 1.
- 7 B. Kushner, cited in Matsa 1933, 297f.
- 8 *Leninskii sbornik* XXXVI, 37f., cited in G. Erler, *Die Leninsche Kulturrevolution und die NEP* [The Leninist Counter-Revolution and the NEP], unpublished manuscript, 1974, 10.
- 9 Cited in R. Fülöp-Miller, *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus* [Spirit and the Face of Bolshevism] (Zürich - Leipzig - Vienna 1926), 24.
- 10 See N. Bukharin, *Theorie des Historischen Materialismus* [Theory of Historical Materialism] (Hamburg, 1922). For Bukharin, "every given system of social technology also determines the system of working relationships between people" (p. 150). As working relationships also determine the position of people in the production process and therefore the class structure of society, the form of technology is constitutive in forming the overall society. The determination of the form of the state, norms of behaviour and the overarching structure of the class society thus appears to be a direct product of the development of technology.
- 11 B. Arvatov, review of the magazine *Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo in Pechat' i revoliutsiia* 2 [Press and Revolution] (1921): 217.
- 12 B. Arvatov, *Utopie oder Wissenschaft* [Utopia or Science], in *Kunst und Produktion* (Munich, 1972): 46.
- 13 S. Tret'iakov, "Otkuda i kuda? (Perspektivy futurizma)" [From Where to Where? (Perspectives of Futurism)] in *Leif* (1923): 202.
- 14 S. Luchishkin in an interview with A. Sidorov on October 18, 1975, in Moscow. This dismissive attitude is confirmed by the other living OST members Labas, Pimenov, Goncharov. "The AKhRR artists were our enemies. We despised them because of their anecdotalism, their mercenariness, their epigonism, their documentarism." (Interview on February 8, 1975, with Sidorov in Moscow).
- 15 L. Zhadova, as above, 54.
- 16 K. Malevich, *Suprematistisches Manifest UNOVIS* [Suprematist Manifest UNOVIS], cited in K. Malevich, *Die gegenstandslose Welt* [The Subjectless World] (Cologne, 1962), 284.
- 17 A. Fedorov-Davydov, foreword to the exhibition catalogue *Vystavka kartin i risunkov K. N. Red'ko. 1914–1926* [Exhibition of Pictures and Drawings by K. N. Red'ko] (Moscow, 1926), 6.
- 18 K. Red'ko, diary entry from November 18, 1920, cited in V. Kostin, *K. Red'ko* (Moscow, 1974), 63.
- 19 For example, an actress from the Meierkhol'd Theater, A. Amkhanitskaia, performed with the projectionists).
- 20 V. Meyerhold, "Aktev budushchego i biomekhanika" [The Actor of the Future and Biomechanics], lecture from June 12, 1922, received as a resumé by his employee V. Fedorov, cited in V. Meyerhold, *Theaterarbeit 1917–1930*, ed. R. Tietze (Munich, 1974), 73.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 74.
- 22 In the satirical journal *Messenger of the Executive Committee of the Moscow Higher Arts and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS)* 1 (October 3, 1922), it states: "The Circus AEIOAU by Nikritin opened at the House of the Press. I bought some copper bowls." This satirical notice is intended to refer to the deafening noise during the performance that is reported to have driven the viewers away from the theatre.
- 23 In 1924, Gastev saw a performance of the projection theater (Mariengof's tragedy *The Conspiracy of Dunces*). He then suggested to the troupe that they join his Central Institute of Labor in order to use the principles of the abstract scenic plot for NOT propaganda (see V. Kostin, 20). Elsewhere, Gastev wrote: "The theater director and the engineer with a second-timer in his hand will together create a system of new production gymnastics in accordance with the laws of work processes." (From *Organizatsiia*, a magazine of NOT propaganda, cited in F.



- Baumgarten, *Arbeitswissenschaft und Psychotechnik in Russland* [Industrial Science and Psychotechnology in Russia] [Munich and Berlin, 1924]: 45. Cited here in Meyerhold, ed. Tietze, as above, 214). "NOT was understood as a universal instrument for redesigning the backward country into a modern industrial state. NOT was supposed to be the basic method of a new culture." (K. Hielscher, "Futurismus und Kulturmontage," in *Alternative* 122/23 [1978]: 230). This new social movement of a comprehensive culture of work "also views man as a machine and, indeed, as the best machine on earth." (A. Gastev, *Poeziia rabochego udara* [Poetry of the Worker's Blow] [Moscow, 1964 & 1971], cited in K. Hielscher, as above, 231).
- 24 A. Gastev, "O tendentsiakh proletarskoi kul'tury" [On the Tendencies in Proletarian Culture], cited in *Proletarische Kulturrevolution in Sowjetrußland 1917–1921* [Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Soviet Russia 1917–21], ed. R. Lorenz (Munich, 1969), 63.
- 25 K. Red'ko, diary entry from November 5, 1921, cited in V. Kostin, *K. Red'ko* (Moscow, 1974), 65.
- 26 K. Red'ko, diary entry from October 14, 1921, cited in V. Kostin, as above, 64.
- 27 K. Red'ko, diary entry from November 9, 1920, unpublished manuscript from his estate.
- 28 K. Red'ko, diary entry from June 14, 1924, cited in V. Kostin, as above, 67.
- 29 See E. Butorina, A. Labas (Moscow, 1979), 8–9. Fedorov's research was based on the work of the Vienna scientist W. Ostwald, some of which he translated into Russian. Ostwald developed a procedure by which the elements white, black and full color could be measured, and on this he based a theory of quantitative chromatics. His "Color Atlas" gave every color shading a number. A distinction was made between an analytical and a psychological color arrangement.
- 30 L. Zhadova, as above, p. 54.
- 31 Interview with Labas from October 20, 1975, conducted by A. Sidorov in Moscow.
- 32 G. Berkeley wrote about the complex of sensory impressions. Their "existence is that they are perceived" ("Esse is percipi"). Cited in M. Diersch, *Empirio-kritizismus und Impressionismus* (Berlin [GDR], 1973), 25. According to Mach's teaching, reality exists only in subjective experience. Objective reality is not open to detection. All objects exist only as impressions of colors, tones, prints, spaces, times, etc. Lenin, who in exile had recognized the influence of Mach and Avaniarius on Bolshevik intellectuals such as Bogdanov, countered Mach's supposed "idealism" with the "ABC of materialism" in his work "Materialism and Empirio-criticism" (1908).
- 33 V. Favorskii, cited in N. Rosanova, *Favorskii* (L., 1970), 54.
- 34 V. Favorskii, "Über die Komposition" [About Composition], *Iskusstvo* 1–2 (1933): 3, cited in J. Martynenko, "'Raum-Zeit' in der Malerei und in der Filmkunst" [Space-Time in Painting and in Film Art], *Kunst und Literatur* 6 (Berlin, 1969): 626.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 See N. Tarabukin's theoretical investigations of texture, color, material and dynamic design of painting at the INKhUK with which Red'ko, Shterenberg and others were probably also concerned. See N. Tarabukin, *Opyt teorii zhivopisi* [Experimental Theory of Painting] (Moscow, 1923); *Ot mol'berta k mashine* [From the Easel to the Machine] (Moscow: Izd.-vo Rabotnik Prosveshcheniia, 1923).
- 37 D. Shterenberg, "Die künstlerische Situation in Russland" [The Artistic Situation in Russia], *Das Kunstblatt* (1922): 492.
- 38 D. Shterenberg, "Brief aus Russland" (Letter from Russia), *Das Kunstblatt* 4 (1923): 332.

## OST Platform 1924

On the basis of the following program, the Society of Easel Painters aims to unite artists who are doing practical work in the field of the visual arts:

1. In the epoch of socialist construction the active forces of art must be participants in this construction; in addition, they must be one of the factors in the Cultural Revolution affecting the reconstruction and design of our new way of life and the creation of the new socialist culture.
2. Bearing in mind that only art of high quality can envisage such tasks, we consider it essential, within the conditions of the contemporary development of art, to advocate the basic lines along which our work in the visual arts must advance. These lines are:
  - a) The rejection of abstraction and *peredvizhnichestvo*<sup>1</sup> in subject matter
  - b) The rejection of sketchiness as a phenomenon of latent dilettantism
  - c) The rejection of pseudo Cézannism as a disintegrating force in the discipline of form, drawing, and color
  - d) Revolutionary contemporaneity and clarity of subject matter
  - e) Aspiration to absolute technical mastery in the field of thematic easel painting, drawing, and sculpture as the formal attainments of the last few years are developed further
  - f) Aspiration to make the picture a finished article
  - g) Orientation toward young artists

### On the OST Platform

John Bowlt

The Society of Easel Painters (OST) arose as an untitled group just after the *1st Discussional* (see p. 354), in late 1924, and was established formally in 1925. Founding members included Iurii Annenkov, Aleksandr Deineka, Iurii Pimenov, David Shterenberg (chairman) and Pet'r Vil'iams, and its membership soon came to encompass many leading figures of young Soviet art. OST had four exhibitions from 1925 to 1928, all in Moscow (Deineka contributed only to the first two, leaving the society early in 1927) before it closed in 1931. Although OST supported easel painting as opposed to industrial design (one reason that Deineka left), it did not reject the achievements of the old avant-garde; Ivan Kliun, for instance, was invited to contribute to the first OST exhibition.

The text of this piece, "Platforma OSTa" (part of the society's code), was formulated in 1929 but not published until 1933 in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*.<sup>2</sup> It was based probably on Shterenberg's lecture at the Communist Academy in Moscow in May 1928, entitled "Teoreticheskaia platforma i khudozhestvennaia praktika OSTa" [The Theoretical Platform and Artistic Practice of OST]. OST contributed a great deal to the renewal of easel activity and achieved very interesting results, particularly in the initial work of Pimenov, Aleksandr Tyshler and Vil'iams. In some cases, as in Pimenov's war pictures, the influence of German expressionists such as Otto Dix and George Grosz was especially noticeable, although this angular, skeletal quality was also effective in the young Soviet artists' depictions of industrial and mechanical scenes. OST members displayed a technical competence and an intellectual energy lacking in the "sketchy" studies of Four Arts or the academic work of AKhRR.

— JB

- 1 A derogatory reference to the art of the *Peredvizhniki* (Wanderers). The word might be translated as "hack realism." For details on the Wanderers see the Introduction in John E. Bowlt, ed. and trans., *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988).
- 2 *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 575.

Introduction originally published in German as "Die ‚Gesellschaft der Staffealmaler‘ (OST) und die ‚Künstlerbrigade‘ (IZOBRIGADA) 1925–1932," in *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: Dumont, 1979), pp. 324–33.

The version of the introduction here has been translated from the German original by Andrew Davison.

Platform originally formulated in Russian as "Platforma OSTa" (1924) and subsequently published in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 575. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare* (see above), pp. 342, 343.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "OST [Society of Easel Artists] Platform," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 280–81.

# Again about the Easel, the Painting, the Chair and VKhUTEMAS 1925

D31

E. Beskin

(In the form of a discussion)

In our arguments about fine art, easel painting and VKhUTEMAS, extensive confusion has created the unstable interpretation of the formula “art is production,” “art as production.” Furthermore, this has led to disagreement even between like-minded persons. It is necessary to come to an agreement here and bring about clarity, in order to oppose as a united front those phenomena of artistic life which we identify as reactionary and which in essence truly are reactionary.

Many assume that the productivist understanding of art implies to sit down at once and “learn how to make chairs.”

This is an obvious mistake.

The productivist understanding of art is in essence a Marxist, dialectical-materialist and objective understanding of it. It is in contrast to the religious, aesthetic, subjective-idealist reception of art.

For us there is no psycho-physical parallel, no interaction between the soul and the body, there are only various degrees and forms of organization of unified matter, beginning with so-called inorganic nature and finishing with the entirely difficult phenomena of human society, the entire sum of contemporary human culture. Hence, as one of the disciplines of our consciousness, art is a manifestation (a quite complicated manifestation) of highly organized matter in one of the forms of human production, of human mastery, called art.

This is the productivist understanding of art.

Not the metaphysics of otherworldly “beauty in itself,” not the romanticism of “the godly word” and “aroused souls,” not the abstract creation of an idea, but the organized mastery of the production of things. Therefore, each work of art is always and invariably a thing (and not a “spiritual phenomenon”), a product determined by the entire sum of biological and social factors influencing the artist.

We get to know the ideology, the idea of art only through production, only through the fabricated thing, by working through a material. “But questions of form,” said N. Bukharin in one of his speeches, “are they not the sphere of ideology?” Correct. Beyond forms in art, beyond the artistic thing, there is also no ideology.

Yet are those “productivists” correct, who under such a notion of the thing suggest an exclusively industrial foundation and say that the artist should immediately drop everything and “learn how to make chairs”?

In the concrete conditions of the present, this means to repudiate art. However, the question should not be posed this way.

It is impossible to close your eyes tight and persuade yourself that easel painting has vanished.

After all, it exists . . .

It is possible to live with illusions and to decide that the easel painting department of VKhUTEMAS generally no longer exists—“the patient, ill according to the laws of medicine, died”—and that the woodworking department should operate only on laboratory experiments on the chair.

Yet, allow me, the painting department lives—it is impossible to bury it alive. That’s my first point. Secondly, concerning the woodworking [department]: if it is to be occupied only with the repair of furniture and the hackneyed construction of chairs, then why should it be in VKhUTEMAS? In order to shut down the painting department? See for yourself, this doesn’t help the matter—they will move the easels somewhere else. And chairs will not become better for this.

There is another path; it leads instead to utilitarian, technical art, the coming of which is inevitable due to a number of objective reasons. It is impossible to give birth to this mechanically, but to help it be born and to have an impact on the process of birth is possible. For this, it is necessary to bring the artist-painter, the easel painter, closer to the woodworker of VKhUTEMAS, as well as the reverse. For

the easel painter this will be simply advantageous, since in good time it will lead him from the bounds of the diminished market of easel painting and will provide an appropriate outlet for artistic energy. For the production departments of VKhUTEMAS this would be the start of a utilitarian art and a divergence from stark industrialism. For VKhUTEMAS as a whole it would mean the realization of an artistic-production complex in which the so-called “pure” departments, the easel painting ones, grow into productive ones and establish what comrade Arvatov quite correctly defines in issue 32 of *Zhizn’ iskusstva* [Life of Art] as “the invention of industrial things, the norms of everyday life, agit-forms, the design of temporary campaigns and festivals, posters, advertising, illustration, various cultural activities, models, plans, projects of blueprints, etc.”

Yet the maximalist path is the path of ecstasy, and not the concrete, real, living dialectic. It is necessary to take the existing culture of art and rationally to exert influence, to direct, and to remake it. The deceased should be buried (there are such phenomena that have already died, but to the present have not been buried), the necessary should be retained, the unnecessary should be eliminated . . .

. . . Does not that inventory of productions of utilitarian art, which I cited above, demand exactly such a remade easel painting (the design of campaigns, posters, advertising, illustrations, etc.)? At least for the present. Later, this will be dictated by the new everyday life, the new consciousness, and the new technology, which, of course, will depart from the intimate easel work, from the chamber easel “picture.”

It is possible, of course, to smash the painting on the chair, but it is naive to think that this will forever destroy all “pictures” and, in exchange for them an artistic chair will be created to the glory of utilitarian art. It is necessary 1) for the sum of objective conditions to go from the “picture” to the “chair,” 2) for the artist’s consciousness to be educated in the direction of a productive understanding of art and, finally, 3) for instruction in technical know-how in schools to be oriented towards the utilitarian remaking of easel painting (and not the affirmation of it) and towards the use of artistic creativity in building the utilitarian object. The elimination of easel painting is a process. It is necessary to master this process, and not to shut oneself off from it. Then we will more easily and more painlessly arrive at the goal—a utilitarian art.

In connection with the reform of VKhUTEMAS, it is impossible to be limited to a few production departments and to ignore painting. This is a manifest error. It is necessary to bring together there the woodworkers with the artists. In the process of their convergence, we will obtain an artist-woodworker, an artist-inventor, an artist-builder. This is the single path for the organic reconstruction of VKhUTEMAS.

Originally published in Russian as E. Beskin, “Eshche o mol’berte, kartinke, stule i VKhUTEMASe,” *Zhizn’ iskusstva* 36 (September 8, 1925): 4–5. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 151–54.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Reaction in Painting 1925

D32

### Boris Arvatov

. . . Exactly this inventiveness may serve as a peculiar proof of the reverse, that nothing remains for easel painting, other than to last out a little longer (as long as the market will allow) and to leave the stage forever.

The participants of OST are young artists, recently graduating from VKhUTEMAS and passing through the fire and storm of revolutionary artistic searches, but falling back to easel forms. As a result of such a retreat, their easel painting refutes itself. The overwhelming majority of pictures show the complete inability of the authors to make an easel painting composition; nearly everything is done in the manner of posters, advertisements or signboards—I will name: Barsch's *Motion Study* [Khronometrazh], Vil'iams's *Portrait of Meierkhol'd*, Vialov's *Automobile Race*, Deineka's *In the Mine* [V Shtreke], all the works of Dobrokovskii and Kudriashev, Pimenov's *Skiers*, and many others. These pictures should be hung on the streets, in the vestibules of sports clubs, professional clubs and so forth. While the poster once learned from painting, now painting attempts to save itself by copying the poster. Yet in this it stops being painting. The utilitarian demands of our epoch provide the possibility to develop only utilitarian forms. Not for nothing are the themes of OST entirely productional: *Motion Study*, *Poster*, *Motorcycle Race*, *Radio* and again *Radio*, *Circus*, *Before the Descent into the Mine*, *In the Mine*, drawings from the magazine *At the Factory Workbench*, *Factory Drawings and Placards*, *Construction of Straight and Curvilinear Movement*, *The Factory*, etc., etc.

The hopelessness of the attempts of easel painting to make its way along the path of independent development is especially evident in OST. Even grasping what they are fighting for—for the machine, for the poster—the easel artists suffer defeat. Only in one respect are their performances extremely dangerous: they create an illusion of the triumph of at one time overthrown art forms. It is necessary to fight mercilessly against this. Using the respite to catch their breath, the enemy will climb onto the pedestal. It is necessary to cast him off. It is necessary to ring the tocsin, to raise the alarm and to mobilize the actual revolutionaries of art. Artistic reaction attempts to raise its head too freely and unceremoniously.

Originally published in Russian as Boris Arvatov, "Reaktsiia v zhivopisi," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* 4-5 (July-August 1925): 70-74. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 345-46.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## AKhRR at the Factory 1925

D33

### Boris Arvatov

Recently a remarkable brochure was published, the author of which is one of the founders of AKhRR, the artist Katsman. The brochure tells how the AKhRRovtsy [members of AKhRR] decided for the first time "to enter the thick of life" and become "participants of revolutionary construction."<sup>1</sup> What did they do to achieve this? "We," states Katsman, "went to the factory with painter's cases and pencils," word-for-word, like the Barbizon artists settled in the forests of Fontainebleau with easels, like Levitan went to the Volga, like the Dutch spending days and nights in peasant taverns—they went to this unknown lair, called a factory, with what? ". . . with painter's cases and pencils," with the antediluvian implements of easel aesthetics, in the white gloves of bourgeois art, in order to contemplate the genuine "proletarian" and to sketch him; literally some salon ladies from the artistic dachas, recording profiles of the landscape in their albums.

Listen further to Katsman: "In the tearoom near the factory we had lunch merrily and noisily. We ate with cabbies, workers, and village muzhiks [peasant men] . . .<sup>2</sup> 'To hell with the abstractionists,' we said, 'look at these splendid faces, backs of heads, short sheepskin coats, look at how they sit, chat, eat, all of this is picturesque and splendid.'" The words of the AKhRRovtsy cited here appear to be copied to the letter from thousands of similar expressions of gourmand delight, embraced by bourgeois aesthetes from the Renaissance to the modernists at the sight of the exotic for them (only, it seems, for them and not for the objects of delight), pictures, that is "of the simple people."

What kind of inveterate bourgeois aesthetes and refined intelligentsia they must be, how far apart they must stand socially and practically from the workers, in order to perceive from a "painterly" position the backs of their heads, even their food . . . Furthermore, at the sight of a short sheepskin coat, instead of thinking about efficient clothing for proletarians, the enraptured admirers took it as a class marker of the workers (the worker is dirty, ragged, often sullen—oh, how all of this is "picturesque and splendid!"), and that is why it at once was made into a pearl of creation

I continue the excerpt: "They led us into the foundry, which I personally (i.e., the "proletarian" artist Katsman. B. A.) had never seen before. We passed through several rooms (!), where a group of worker-metalsmiths were doing something (!!). All in semi-darkness, dark colors (bluntly speaking, damn nothing was visible. B. A.). The faces business-like and masculine (who are these AKhRRovtsy, if something special like "masculine" faces amaze and delight them? B. A.). Finally, we arrive in the foundry. Wonderfully beautiful. An enormous building. Above, a wagon moves. Below, in the middle, from a tap pours blinding yellow-red cast iron. As water pours . . . I painted portraits of the foundry master and the chairman of the communist cell." Unfortunately, Katsman does not tell what distinguishes the portraits of the master and the representative from the millions of portraits of other people in the sense of "proletarian quality" . . . Indeed, is this not passive contemplation, admiration, an approach from without? . . . But we, sinners, thought that it would be better without semi-darkness, that the absence of electricity is technological backwardness . . .

. . . It is disgusting, when such vulgarity is presented as revolutionary art, when obviously bourgeois concoctions and obviously bourgeois relations to production are imposed upon the working class.

If you like the factory, the machine, production in general . . . for the practical connection of a person with the proletariat a single conclusion is in order: build such factories and machines, build together with the producers the objects of factory production, but do not sketch them . . .

1. E. A. Katsman, *Kak sozdalsia AKhRR* [How AKhRR was Created] (Moscow, 1925).
2. Suspension points in the original [Trans.].

Originally published in Russian as Boris Arvatov, "AKhRR na zavode," *Zhizn' iskusstva* 30 (July 28, 1925): 5. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 416-18.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# Inventiveness in the Poster

## 1925

D34

Nikolai Tarabukin

### I. Features of the Theme

The theme of the poster is not a theme of “pure” art.

You will not treat this theme with the old arsenal of art historical medications. Not only are the old methods of psychological aesthetics not suited for it, but neither is the updated theory of the “formal” method. Speaking of the poster, it is necessary to forget discussion of some form of “pure” art in the usual understanding of this word, and to start treating the theme in a special manner from start to finish.

The art of painting and mastery of the poster do not coincide due to their distinct social roles. Hence, the distinct technical methods of processing an essentially similar material and with similar tools of production. Speaking in art historical language, this is the source of their different forms.

### II. The Poster is a Weapon

The poster is not only a product of social consumption. Above all, it is a  
WEAPON OF MASS INFLUENCE.

The easel painting is an object. Of course, it also has unique influence and is a consumer product. Yet, there is no need to mince words. A painting acquires a certain social significance namely as an object. Yet the poster functions like a weapon, as a means to achieve a goal that is located beyond its formal side.

In the poster, there is not a single self-contained moment. The poster is “thickened,” condensed

ENERGY,

a charge, sent into the depths of a mass of people, the goal of which is by its explosion to create in the mass that effect intended by the munitions factory.

### III. The “Eternal” Painting and the Short-Term Poster

Easel art always counts upon a sustained effect of influence. Therefore, the construction of easel painting forms is done as if it will last for centuries.

The poster does not aim for sham “eternity,” hence it has a special attitude towards its appearance.

For the poster it is necessary to use material not in light of its durability, but in light of its maximum impact. The poster does not raise a constructive structure; it gathers energy in order TO PRODUCE A ONE-TIME MAXIMALLY POWERFUL IMPACT ON THE VIEWER’S PSYCHE, to disturb him, to remove from balance, from apathetic indifference and to call attention to itself.

### IV. Impertinence

The poster is a surprisingly restless object against the backdrop of society. It digs itself in most often where it is not asked, where it is not expected, and it begins to shout at the top of its voice. You drive it out the door; it flies back at you through the window. It is impossible to run away from the poster—it will catch up with you and scream its slogan all the same.

This insolence or, if you want something “softer,” this impertinence, is a typical method that helps the poster fulfill its social function.

### V. Milestones

The question arises: from which milestones should our judgments proceed concerning poster production? From those milestones that determine the social role of the poster. This role is conditioned by two basic factors:

- 1) THE AIM OF THE POSTER
- 2) THE ENVIRONMENT FOR WHICH A GIVEN POSTER IS DESIGNED

### VI. The Poster Has No Pre-Conceived Forms

THE POSTER IS THE PRODUCT OF STRUGGLE.

The struggle on the market, the struggle on fronts: political, military, ideological. The poster begins to live especially intensively in sharp moments of struggle. The intensification of a commodity crisis, an election campaign for parliament, war, revolution—they push onto the city streets a motley, goggle-eyed, clamorous battle of posters.

AN OFFSPRING OF STRUGGLE—THE POSTER IS DYNAMIC.

Dynamic in its ideology, formal structure, conditions of production, and social role. The dynamism of the poster makes it an especially inventive art.

THE POSTER IS THE MOST EXPRESSIVE FORM OF INDUSTRIAL INVENTION AND MASTERY.

As a product of production (and mass production), the poster does not have (and should not have) any sort of ultimate established form.

THE FORM OF THE POSTER IS NEW EVERY TIME.

It appears not in a preconceived manner, but rather it is worked out in each new instance based upon experience. It is the result of three conditions:

- 1) Of the purpose of the poster (the social-targeted moment);
- 2) Of the technical resources, material, means of creativity and so forth (the production moment);
- 3) Of the conditions of perception of the environment and the conditions of influence upon it (the social-psychological moment).

Reflecting on poster mastery, it is impossible to speak about impressionist, expressionist, constructivist and other posters. This is because a naked abstract-conceptual form of poster, into which you can “pour” any given content, cannot exist.

### VII. Design of the Poster

How does the process of the invention of a poster form occur (when a master is consciously aware during all stages of work) or how should it occur (when a master is not able to display the demanded consciousness)?

In order to answer such a question, it is necessary to look not at the artist-easel painter, but at the engineer-producer. Creating and evaluating the poster’s form as a product of mass production may be done by means of its comparison with the more typical products of mass industry. Practically any product made for the market is an instrument or a means towards a defined end. Any weapon or means is a social object, not having an independent existence.

THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND FORMAL-PRODUCTIVE CONTENT OF THE PRODUCT OF MASS INDUSTRY SERVES THE PURPOSE OF THE OBJECT.

The form of such an object is dictated by its purpose and material. It should be expedient and utilitarian. The purpose of the object takes into account the sphere of its social distribution. For example, printed textile, of varying color and design, takes into account the social composition of the consumers and the place for which it is intended.

Consequently, the engineer, designing a thing of mass consumption, has in mind:

- 1) THE DESTINATION of the thing, its CONSUMER FUNCTION;
- 2) THE ENVIRONMENT of its social DISTRIBUTION;
- 3) THE MATERIAL, subjected to processing;
- 4) THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES, which may be available during the processing of a thing;

These four moments, in their turn, exert an influence upon:

- a) The labor cost of the product, i.e., the normal or average quantity of labor which in given social, economic and technical conditions is required for the manufacture of a product;
- b) The consumer value of the product or its social utility in the process of consumption;

The actual cost of a product is not of importance to us here, because posters are not sold.

The role of the master-poster artist is pretty much identical to the role of the engineer-creator. Both of them are inventors of the form of things, of form

not having an independent existence but serving the purpose of a product. Consequently, setting about the construction of a poster, a master should take into account all of the aforementioned conditions. Only by adhering to the results of these conditions may an original form of poster be created for each given instance and only for that given instance. The production position, which the master-poster artist obtains, truly understanding his role, derives from the very essence of the production of a given type of product.

### VIII. Impact

The master-producer, receiving an order for a poster, takes into account while creating a form:

THE CONSUMER FUNCTION OF THE POSTER AND ITS PURPOSE TO PRODUCE A ONE-TIME MAXIMALLY POWERFUL EFFECT AND SHARP BLOW ON THE VIEWER'S PSYCHE.

In musical terminology, there is the expression *accord plaque*, which means an even, one-time blow of all the notes of a chord. The poster form in a similar manner gathers together maximum expressivity in a single focus. The consumer function of the poster, due to this striking effect, is distinguished from the function of things of mass consumption by the sharp predominance of the psychological moment over the material. Large-scale industry in manufacturing the form of objects of mass consumption strives towards the standardization of these forms (electrical fixtures, telephones, etc). This uniformity of form brings about an ease of replacement of something that has become worn out by another similar thing, and mass manufacturing methods also become identical. In contrast, the master poster artist, taking into consideration his shock task—maximal effect on the psyche of the viewer by means of the visual creation of the most catchy expression—is obliged to strive not towards a standard, but towards

#### ORIGINALITY.

An established form, quickly familiar to viewers, stops having an effect on them, it becomes unnoticed, i.e., the poster loses its meaning—to be appealing.

The demand for a striking effect, flowing from the purpose of the poster, entails two conditions, necessary for inventiveness of poster form:  
ORIGINALITY AND WIT.

Like a deadly sin, the poster should avoid clichés: of subject, creativity, emblems, text, etc.

From the demand that the blow be short and powerful follows the condition of  
LACONISM AND ECCENTRICITY.

The poster is grasped in a flash. It must talk not in a speech, for passersby seldom stop before it, but yell out a short slogan-appeal. A poster should yell out its slogan in the most eccentric manner, so that its voice will be audible amid the numerous urban impressions.

The notion of the eccentricity of poster form is entirely conditional and relative. Each time and every place imposes on human activity its "varnish." Of course, even posters cannot escape it. In their general "style" we distinguish the American poster from the German, the French from the English, and the poster of the 1900s from the contemporary.

THIS GENERAL STYLE OF POSTERS OBLITERATES THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF EACH OF THEM.

The first appearance in Moscow of the so-called "constructive" theater posters had great effect. Subsequently, when practically all posters became "constructive" (whether for good or for bad), the same individual poster stopped drawing particular notice to itself. No matter how the poster shouted, for if the posters surrounding it all shouted, then its shout was submerged. Hence, in the practice of the American advertising poster such methods are encountered: amid the most persistent posters appears a blank sheet. This white patch, like an eyesore, draws attention to itself, and the interested viewer finds in the corner of this sheet the text of an advertisement, composed in small typeface.<sup>1</sup>

### IX. Inventiveness

These circumstances bring us back once again to the main principle of poster art—to inventiveness. The master poster artist does not have the right to be an exclusive "ascetic" or an "Olympian" artist. He should study the condition and characteristics of the poster market in each given moment of invention. The originality itself and the wit of the poster are conditioned by the poster market. It could be said that INVENTIVENESS IS INHERENT TO THE NATURE OF THE POSTER.

Without inventiveness the poster dies. If in the course of a number of years, for example, the shape of shoes ceased changing, they still would find consumers; but should inventiveness cease in the poster, it would die, losing its meaning.

The inventiveness of the poster artist carries an utterly different character from the inventiveness of the artist-easel painter. In the presentation of the easel painter inventiveness acquires, like many other things, an "absolute" meaning. The artist in his art usually aspires to "immortality" and to acquiring "eternal" meaning. The artist-easel painter understands inventiveness as the self-disclosure of his personal "originality," as the discovery of some sort of "method," never before used by other painters, which now "takes shape in form" and is canonized in the form of a defined "style."

The master poster-artist is a dialectician. He understands his inventiveness not absolutely, but relatively, conforming to the conditions of the poster market and its demands on the present day.

### X. "Creation" and Work

The artist-easel painter "creates" in his cell-studio, often being a recluse, like an ascetic. The master poster-artist cooks in the juice of contemporary social work-day life, breathes its air, and moves according to the rhythm and tempo of his day.

The artist-easel painter from the cell-studio carries his "creations" to the museums, where they are judged by artistic archivists from the viewpoint of "formal" achievements. The master poster-artist throws his product onto the market, into the living mass of his contemporaries, pinches them for a short instance on the nerves, and obtains the same appreciation not according to the laws of the "formal method" but according to the degree of having touched "a live wire."

The artist-easel painter is studied in universities, academies and institutes. Exalted monographs are written about him. His works are protected in museums and sometimes the rehangings from one nail to another raises the "question" of social significance. The master poster-artist is seldom known by name, except to the enterprise that ordered the poster from him. His posters are cruelly torn down and destroyed, for they pass as a short term "topic of the day." Certainly, no one thinks about monographs on poster-artists, and if they write, then it is about "the poster in general." Because the easel painter creates a "thing" ("please don't touch"), but the poster artist produces "energy," which beats upon the nerves and reaches the brain.

The laconism and eccentricity of the expressive means of the poster apply to the drawing, color and text. Detailed drawing, nuanced color, and lengthy text lose sense in the poster, for they remain unnoticed, as the viewer usually perceives the poster at some distance and commonly more or less in a flash.

The poster requires sufficient space for the viewer's orientation to its graphic means. The poster's graphics should not be cumbersome and congested.

Yet the demand for the lack of detail in drawing is ignored, quite legitimately, in film advertising posters. Here photographs, representing individual fragments from the advertised cinema picture, are shown directly. However, these cinema showcases usually combine a catchy part of a poster, perceived from a distance, and a detailed part of advertisement, which demands deliberate close examination.

The purpose of a poster determines its classification:

- 1) THE COMMERCIAL POSTER (trade, industrial);
- 2) THE IDEOLOGICAL POSTER (political, military, educational, etc.).

### XI. The Sphere of Social Distribution

The sphere of social distribution of the poster, just like its purpose, determines in turn the form of the poster. As a general rule, the poster should be accessible. This is why the need for accessibility is always necessary for the poster.

Yet the intelligibility of the poster is relative. Studying the social sphere for which the poster is intended for distribution, the master makes his forms more complex or more simple. The poster intended for the village should be clearer than that for the city. Its visual and textual side may be more extensive, because the villager, of course, does not look at the poster in passing, but arrests attention upon it several times. General understandability may be requisite for a poster of broad distribution. Yet in the poster for a special purpose, calculated for the specific, limited sphere of this or that profession, the understandability may be interpreted in a much more limited manner.

The inventor of a poster's form must also take into account the place where the poster will hang. The city square, always full a movement, demands a maximally

flashy poster. An enterprise (a factory), visited by the same staff of workers, who view the poster everyday, may have more modest demands concerning the poster's expressiveness. It is possible to encounter situations when the sharp expressivity of the poster will be a minus for the inventor. For example, in a poster for school premises, something irritating to sight and obtrusively flashy is unnecessary, when a quiet and calm voice could be heard.

## XII. Material

The word root *plaqu*, common to quite a few words, indicates a close connection with the flatness of the poster form: *plaque* means plate, *plaquer*—to lay over, *plaqueur*—a wallpaper hanger. Experience shows that the poster form is mainly flat.

## XIII. The Method of Visual Interpretation

The question of a purely flat solution to the visual aspect of a poster does not have a straightforward solution. True, we call such a form connected with flatness a poster, contrasting it to advertisement, which possesses in this sense great freedom in the choice of means for expression. However, the visual side of the poster should not necessarily be solved in a flat style. The demand for flat graphics, put forth in a categorical form, reveals an easel painting approach to the poster. The poster in this given instance is equal to the decorative fresco. Yet decorative painting is an art of ornamentation, whereas the poster is an art of agitation. In posters, which have a purely decorative meaning, the question about the flat solution of the visual elements has more of a foundation than in agitational posters.

The agitational poster does not decorate but summons. Therefore, if this summons achieve a greater effect when presented in an illusionistic form, then, of course, the master should give preference precisely to this illusionistic representation. Perhaps, with the successfully found method of "breaking through" the plane deep down the poster may be singled out from a number of other forms, which employ a flat graphic form. In such an instance, the poster artist will not be correct to disregard this means of expression. Straightforward defense of the flat graphic form in the poster is inconsistent with that tendency, which we briefly designated as inventiveness.

If we take the basic thesis of poster mastery—a maximum of effect by all means available to the master—and set forth from the proposition that there are not and cannot be any sort of normative conditions in poster art, then there will be no straightforward resolution concerning the necessity of upholding principles of flat graphic design in the poster.

## XIV. The Poster and Advertising

The opinion exists that figuration (understood as objective figuration) is inalienably inherent to the poster, and that the purely textual poster belongs to advertising. The difference between the advertising and the text poster is not in the text as such, but in the character of the connection of this text with flatness. When this text does not only have a conceptual influence, but also arrests attention on the visual-expressive side, and when it is organically connected with the flat sheet, as a separate form—then we call this a poster form. The text of such a poster is usually minimal.

On the contrary, when the text plays an exclusively conceptual role and acts only upon consciousness, then the text itself loses its visual effect, that is, the painterly function in the poster ceases and only the literary acts. Such a form is not a poster, but an advertisement. Usually the text for an advertisement is extensive. Newspaper announcements, press releases of factories, trade and industrial enterprises, etc., should be put in this category. If it is a matter not of commercial agitation but of political propaganda, then such sheets abundant with text are called either proclamations, when they are exclusively textual, or *lubki*,<sup>4</sup> when furnished with a picture.

It is possible to draw the distinction between an advertisement and a poster by also studying the degree of activity of the psychological effect which both these forms of art attempt to create. The poster is always obtrusive, persistent. It acts forcibly. It asserts its truth, demands submission to it. The advertisement often only announces, only states fact.

There are examples in practice of advertisement in its pure form, where elements of the poster creep in. From this it gains in its qualitative effectiveness. On the contrary, when features of the advertisement penetrate the poster, its actual power is diluted.

## XV. Forms of Expression

In outward form of expression the poster may be: a) objective-figural (posters about the famine); b) figural-textual (the majority of the revolutionary posters of Moor, Deni, etc.); c) abstract-textual (suprematist forms and slogans); d) only textual.

## XVI. Technical Resources

The technical resources available to the poster artist are reflected in the form of the poster in a decisive way.

The master of the poster, drafting his project, like an engineer building a model of an object, should keep in mind that he is not creating something unique but an object of mass production, which reaches the consumer not in that form in which it was created by the hands of the inventor (as an easel painting), but in a mechanically reproduced form, going through the stages of machine production. The master should take into account this circumstance. He should know the technical resources of the client and the extent of possible execution.

Capitalists spend large sums of money on commercial advertisement. A different relation towards the cost of the poster arises with the creation of an ideological poster. The monetary sums spent on the production of the ideological poster do not provide return on an investment even in an indirect way, as occurs with the commercial advertisement. Therefore, the cost for such a poster should be put entirely to the debit of the organization, party, enterprise, publishing the ideological poster. The ideological poster seldom has long lasting significance. Most often, it is a poster of temporary import, calculated for a short period of effect. This already forces us to treat more economically the expenditure of labor and material on its production. Furthermore, sometimes the time of production of such a poster is also limited. In the history of the revolutionary poster there were instances when, in a sharp moment of struggle, a poster prepared within 48 hours arrived late.<sup>5</sup> The events had superseded it.

More often than not, the time for the production of the commercial poster-advertisement is also limited. For example, the theater poster. It should not be complex, in order to avoid dragging out the time to its release. Printed text must be limited, as there is no time to set type and it is expensive. It cannot be multi-colored, for each separate color requires another rolling of the machine, and consequently it delays the time of production. Thus, sometimes even if there are technical possibilities, circumstances impose on the poster artist a number of limitations.

Bearing in mind the production conditions for the design and manufacture of the poster, we will determine its labor cost. Studying the degree of its psychological action on that social environment for which it was calculated, we will weigh up its consumer value. The correlation of these two quantities gives us the possibility to calculate the exchange value of the poster, expressed not in money but in the quantity and the quality of the psychological effect achieved by the appearance of the poster in the social environment.

THE DEGREE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POSTER IS THE MOST ESSENTIAL CRITERION FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF ITS SPECIFIC SOCIAL WEIGHT.

## XVII. Assessment

The mastery of the poster is not assessed according to the degree of purely technical perfection of its execution. Carrying out the aesthetic assessment of the poster, people usually compare it with works of easel art, entirely forgetting that the poster is not self-sufficient in value, like a painting, that its function is social-utilitarian and that in the final reckoning the goal, for the sake of which the poster was created, determines its social meaning and its production aim. This role of the poster, utterly distinct from easel art, is usually forgotten by the aesthete-appraisers and even the master. Posters collected in an exhibition, in an album, or in a book may be interesting from the viewpoint of their form. However, they are posters, which have already lost immediate social-topical meaning. Just as dishes, furniture, suits, toys and the like, collected in the art museum, lose their original sense and become, owing to the loss of their immediate social function, purely aesthetic things, so it is for posters which, reproduced in books or journals, change the quality of their psychological effect.

In reproduced form and in an environment not suitable for the poster, the center of attention stops at its visual form. This is why reproduction posters may appear more perfect, but they lose that which is demanded for their specific conditions of perception and that has the greatest impact. This example once again draws together the poster not with the painting (which in reproduction loses significantly less than any utilitarian object), but with the material objects of common use.

The artist-easel painters of both the “right” and “left” camps forget the significance of the poster’s social role. Their habit to look at a thing from the viewpoint of its self-sufficient form, entirely justified in easel art, they transfer to poster production, of an utterly non-easel type. The realist poster, excellently done from the viewpoint of drawing, perspective construction and so forth, more often than not turns out to be unfit for impact. The constructive poster of the contemporary “left” master is frequently visually appealing, but often does not take into account the environment and place for which it was meant, thus creating a false effect.

The poster master should not be a constructivist, expressionist, realist, that is, an easel painter of this or that type, but a PRODUCTIONIST.

Therefore the aesthetic approach to the poster, as well as the “constructivist,” in the sense of a special “style,” will be false, as it is false in the application to the manufacturing of, for example, automobile tires.

### XVIII. Production

THE ART OF THE POSTER IS PRODUCTIONAL BY ITS STRUCTURE, SOCIAL BY ITS FUNCTION AND AGITATIONAL BY ITS IDEOLOGY.

In counterbalance to the commercial poster, cultivated by the bourgeoisie, the proletariat develops the form of the ideological poster—political and revolutionary.

The process of the production of the poster is collective. In it, as in the production of objects of mass consumption, quite a number of people participate—from the inventor of its form to the machinist, who stands at the printing press. Although the inventor of the poster strives for the originality of its form, bearing in mind first of all the social function of the poster, he strives not towards the subjectivization of form, but towards its objective accessibility. In the forms of the well-made poster the subjective world of the author is not reflected (as in the easel painting), but, on the contrary, the inventive, constructive and textual side of a given poster speaks to that social environment that gave birth to it.

THE POSTER IS NOT AN ART OF EXPRESSION BUT “INFECTION.”

It is interesting to mention also the psychological aspect of the perception of the poster by the viewer: the viewer usually is not interested in the name of the author of the poster, whereas, contemplating an easel painting, he endeavors above all to establish its author. Not without reason an entire science of attributions arose and an entire practical art of “connoisseurship,” occupied with the definition of the authorship of paintings. We can be sure that when it comes to the poster, such theoretical and practical disciplines will never arise, as they cannot arise about the determination of authorship for things of practical common use.

THE HISTORY OF THE POSTER IS MAINLY AN ANONYMOUS HISTORY.

1. In the magazines *Das Plakat* and *Die Reklam* it is possible to find examples of German advertisements which use this method.
2. Muscovites will remember the time (before the war), when I. Grabar’ was almost accused of being an “enemy of the fatherland” for his undertaking, after the death of Tretyakov, the rehanging of the pictures in the Tretyakov Gallery.
3. There is an error in the typesetting of this segment of the original publication, which includes repetition of text and a nonsensical fragment. The roots that Tarabukin provides here are in French [Trans.].
4. A *lubok* (plural *lubki*) is an inexpensive popular woodcut. Associated with folk traditions, *lubki* were the vehicle for diverse types of imagery, including political commentary and propaganda [Trans.].
5. According to the report of V. Polonskii in his article about the poster, printed in the journal *Pechat’ i revoliutsii*.

Originally published in Russian as Nikolai Tarabukin, “Izobretatel’nost’ v placate,” *Iskusstva dnia* (Moscow: Vseorossiiskii proletkul’t, 1925): 9–23. For a German translation see Am Nullpunkt. *Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 398–415; *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 430–31.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## On the Reorganization of the Artistic Faculties of VKhUTEMAS 1926

D35

### Boris Arvatov

In Narkompros at the present time, Glavnauk<sup>1</sup> and Okhobro<sup>2</sup> are working out the question concerning the reorganization of the production departments of VKhUTEMAS, which are in a lamentable condition in terms of programs, teaching resources and technical equipment. Any reorganization must eliminate the stated defects. It needs to bring closer the artistic-industrial departments of the institution with the demands of production in terms of output quality, in terms of identifying qualified labor forces, and in terms of building material culture—in the first place, housing, clothing and so forth for the working class (beginning, for now, with the palaces of labor, clubs, etc.).

To date, the production departments of VKhUTEMAS have been neglected as an aesthetic “luxury”; funding was laughably small; the organizational leadership was careless and unsystematic, despite the fact that within these departments new revolutionary values emerged, but, unfortunately, they emerged in an individual manner dependent upon the initiative and abilities of individual workers, and therefore little came of this.

The contemplated changes boil down to the following: increased funding, planning for instruction and production, the connection of the institution with production and with primary and secondary schools, technical equipment, selection of strictly technical workers in order to establish the contact of art with production—this contact not being mechanical but organizational.

These proposals seem rational to the highest degree, if only old aesthetic sentiment was not hiding behind the new form in this blurry project.

The organizers and leaders of the proposed lower education assign excessively low value to higher education when applied to artistic-industrial education in general for the following reasons: due to the fact that current production could not be reconstructed at a large scale, but it does not minimize the need of artists, especially artists of a well-established type, for example masters of technique and draftsmen. They believe that attention must be directed to placing into production graduates from the primary and secondary learning institutions and to prepare students of higher education institutions to become instructors.

While there is no denying that the industrial demand for immediate reinforcement with traditional “applied” artists must be satisfied and that sufficiently qualified instructors should consequently be graduated, we must protest in the most decisive manner against using higher education institutions for an applied working role, even if it qualitatively strengthens this role.

The fact is that the entire Narkompros project is constructed on a characteristic bourgeois conception of art—including so-called productive art. This conception recognizes a self-sufficient “aesthetic” function for art, which requires it as a technical supplement for work in industry.

Meanwhile, art is a profession, as it is inseparably tied—in the process of creation—with some kind or another goal-oriented social activity. Art itself contains nothing except for pure form; therefore, the social meaning of art is clarified by the purpose of this formal creation, its aim, its social application, its methods.

The so-called “decorative” function of applied art is an expression of this or that social goal: the class identification of a thing in the “classic” bourgeois art of the nineteenth century; the traditional symbolism of the appearance of a thing in moribund styles (i.e., stylization); ideological association (for example, empire and others); finally, the individualistic expression of the thing in the revolt against philistinism (modernism, etc.). The current applied art tendencies take into account all four methods “to decorate” a thing. Yet the matter at hand is not to decorate but to reconstruct. The working class needs neither demonstration, nor tradition, nor ideology, nor the impressionist expression of the thing. It needs reform, not of form but of art as a functional thing in society.

If the higher education institute is required by force of circumstance to graduate educators, they should create appropriate sections in the departments. Yet only full and general transformation of VKhUTEMAS into a polytechnic can produce revolutionary masters of production. In other words, it is necessary for

VKhUTEMAS to graduate the same engineers as other higher education institutes do, plus high artistic-production qualification. Graduates of VKhUTEMAS must be able to work in industry, irrespective of their abilities as artists. Not a single trust may manage without constructor-engineers, but technical colleges do not offer such training, except for machine constructors and constructor-builders. Engineer-technologists, engineer-mechanics, engineer-chemists within industry barely learn how to build industrial products, especially useable ones.

Quality production, standards, models, projects, competitions and inventions that expand the market—these are the professions and no others that should be the goal for VKhUTEMAS.

This is why the division of departments according to materials should be reconsidered. It needs to be oriented towards technical endeavors (chemists, builders and so forth) and not towards materials, which fall into handicraft specialties and thus is so-called applied art.

VKhUTEMAS can either be a creative technical college in the literal sense (even if this requires an increase in the number of course years) or get stuck in the new decorative arts. The government has sufficient funds for a single learning institution, if it can show significant results after its reorganization.

1. Glavnauk is the acronym for Glavnoe upravlenie nauchnymi, nauchno-khudozhestvennymi i muzeinymi uchrezhdenii mi (The Chief Administration for Scientific, Scientific-Artistic and Museum Institutions), the branch of Narkompros with oversight of scientific research and propaganda for science and culture in the Russian Soviet Republic [Trans.].
2. Okhobro is the acronym for Otdel khudozhestvennogo obrazovaniia (Department of Artistic Education), the branch of Narkompros that provided oversight to art education [Trans.].

Originally published in Russian as Boris Arvatov, "O reorganizatsii khudozhestvennykh fakul'tetov VKhUTEMAS," *Zhizn' iskusstva* 29 (July 20, 1926): 17. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 154–55.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## The Struggle for Viability 1927

D36

### Aleksandr Bogdanov

Our theory does not yet enable us to solve the question about the fundamental irrecoverability or eliminability of senile deterioration and "natural" death. Instead, it outlines a path for systematic research of the question of how to struggle against this process in practice, i.e. methods of slowing and weakening it. This means increasing the length of life in general, strengthening its intensity and making it more harmonious in those stages where such decline becomes apparent . . .

We have observed that a quantitative degree of viability already plays an important role among the crucial moments of old age. In particular, the cessation of growth and accumulation of vital activities guarantees the ascendance of systemic contradictions, since the expenditure produced by them is no longer covered by an abundance of resources. This presents a clear organizational analogy with society, especially a capitalist society, in which inner contradictions develop. While society can grow and widen its field of production and exchange—by taking over new markets and increasing the capacities of old ones—all these contradictions of anarchic competition with its crises, exploitation and class struggle, do not completely undermine its vitality. Their "minuses" are compensated by the "pluses" of economic achievements. Yet with the exhaustion of these possibilities, the further growth of contradictions unavoidably leads to the complete collapse of a given social formation. Of course, the essential difference between the fate of individuals and that of the "cells" of society—businesses, farms, or at least individuals—is that they can survive the crush of one of their forms and regroup into another one. In contrast, the cells of an individual organism are entirely unable to do this due to their broad differentiation and simultaneously their immeasurably narrower life base . . .

. . . Let us suppose we have two such cells, A and B, with different genetic pasts, which led to their relative maladjustment. There is every reason to expect that their vital inadequacies do not match—one has one type, the other has another. Both merge into one: the shortcomings of one are covered by the other and vice versa. The new cell already possesses all the primary elements of viability characteristic to its given species; it means that it is capable of starting a new line of generations. Using a crude comparison, it is as if we had a blind person and a limbless person which beyond supporting each other, fuse into a single creature with the legs of the blind and the eyes of the limbless.

Before us is the embodiment of the greatest organizational principle, which immediately reveals its omnipotence: the old and dying become young and life-giving. All the dialectic triads of Hegel and his followers, both old and new, are nothing before this living, creative and organizational dialectics!

A question thus unintentionally arises: in what way could an unfortunate age-weakened cell turn out to be more ingenious than all the Hegels of the world? After stubbornly struggling in the past for an independent existence, how could it come to the brave, revolutionary rejection of its individuality, to the fusion of its life with another, with the life of a more or less strange and alien being? . . .

Let us examine, from an organizational viewpoint, what this copulation can and must give to the viability of single cell organisms.

Firstly, we evidently see a qualitative increase of viability: the sum of life form elements grows by merging, therefore, so does the sum of those activities that it opposes to the environment. Thus, after copulation the new cell of doubled mass and volume is much "stronger" than either of the original two cells when in conflict with a possible enemy. For example, if a small amount of toxic substance enters the cell, its chances of being poisoned are lower. The same applies to the toxins accumulated in both cells before copulation, because they differ for each: being distributed in the doubled mass, they appear to be half as concentrated, which should decrease their effect in half.

Secondly, there is a structural rise of viability of a so-called "qualitative" character: the variety of elements and combinations increases as the two sides complement each other mutually and the life of the whole becomes richer.

This is obvious in itself, however it is difficult to illustrate with the little we know about the physiological organization of protozoa. Yet it is easy to clarify by analogy with the crossbreeding in higher animals—after all, the fusion of sexual cells



is also an example of copulation. Thus, for instance, a mule has the height and strength of its horse mother combined with the endurance and nervous stability of its donkey father.

Yet all of this characterizes the results of copulation only statistically. What is much more important is the dynamic rise in viability that results from this. Life as a struggle and development takes place upon a wider base and draws from richer material, becoming at the same time more “plastic” or malleable in its variations and its changeable relations to the environment. It makes more significant and more complex achievements attainable . . .

All of this is important to us because it characterizes blood as the truly universal tissue, in which there is something from every other tissue, and which, in turn, structurally impacts all other tissues. If various qualities that are useful for an organism may be transmitted by blood, even by means of another link—germ plasma—then it is natural to conclude that even more qualities may be transmitted by it directly, when the blood is transferred from one organism to another. That means that blood exchange and transfusion in general may play a role in the struggle for viability through the application of an integral-conjugation method, though not as complete and radical as natural copulation and conjugation . . .

Many years ago, I began to research into the general regularity of all sorts of organizational processes, which become the main pursuit of my life. In particular, the comparison of different types of living combinations led me to the idea that “conjugation” is also possible in higher organisms, not just sexual but of another kind—“conjugation” for the increase in individual viability, particularly in the form of the exchange of the universal tissue of organisms, blood . . .

For nineteen years, I have attempted to attract the interest and attention of scientists, who have technical means of research at their disposal, to the possibilities and potentials of “physiological collectivism” contained in the blood exchange method. I hope that this will now finally succeed.

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Aleksander Bogdanov (1873–1928) was, for his time, a virtually exemplary Russian intellectual with a corresponding breadth of multi-disciplinary interests. Born Aleksander Aleksandrovich Bogdanov on August 10, 1873 in Sokolka, in the Grodno administrative district, he studied natural sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology) in Moscow and medicine in Kharkiv, became involved with revolutionary left-wing circles, took up the concerns of the simple worker, was exiled, got to know the most important political figures of his age, from Anatolii Lunacharskii to Lev Trotsky and from Maxim Gorky to Lenin, and played a significant role in the first Russian revolution of 1905.

From 1894 he dealt with questions of political economy and natural philosophy in lectures and publications and under various pseudonyms, such as Maksimov, Rjadovoj, Verner and above all his wife’s paternal maiden name, Bogdanov. He published the Russian translation of Marx’s *Kapital*, wrote two science-fiction novels—*Krasnaia zvezda* [The Red Star, 1908] and *Inzhener Menni* [Engineer Menni, 1912]—and then finally developed “tectology,” a monistic organizational theory which aimed at nothing less than bringing everything into relation with everything else.

Tectology, derived from the Greek *tekton* (constructor), was an attempt to establish a universally valid organizational structure for all things, organic and inorganic, as well as all phenomena in the material and immaterial world. Bogdanov understood “organization” as an open-ended process that was common to all of life’s various manifestations and capable of mediating between ideas and experiences as well as things and people. His aim was to produce a system of rules that would bring about the greatest possible degree of organization for every thing and idea in every process and discipline—whether it be a balanced state of health or a just society.

In 1909 and 1911 Bogdanov, together with Gorky and Lunacharskii, organized political schools to train proletarian propagandists on Capri and in Bologna, and formed the group Forwards (Vpered’) with them. After the revolution of 1917 he became one of the founding members of the socialist (later communist) Academy of Sciences, taught at Moscow University and was a vocal critic of Taylorism. Bogdanov provided the theoretical basis for the mass movement of the Proletkul’t (acronym for “Proletarian Culture”), which declared that lasting political and economic change would depend on the cultural education of the proletariat. An old argument with Lenin, who accused Bogdanov of machismo and idealism and published a rebuttal of his philosophy entitled *Materializm i empiriokriticizm* [Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, 1909], was a contributing factor in the Proletkul’t organization being brought under Party control in 1920, at which point Bogdanov turned to the creation of “physiological collectivism.”

In 1926 he established the world’s first Institute for Blood Transfusions in Moscow, where he took up the “struggle for vitality” by means of circular blood transfusions. Over a period of two years he successfully carried out eleven transfusions on himself in the firm belief that the constant addition of new elements would contribute to the stability of his organism. Here it was important that donors and recipients be of different ages. Older organisms, according to Bogdanov, were immune to certain illnesses, while younger organisms still possessed elements that had already died out in older specimens. Thus both organisms were to complement each other; “uneven manifestations of deficiency and surplus will be balanced out, the living milieu made more harmonious, by the admixture of blood types” (*Bor’ba za zhiznesposobnost* [The Struggle for Vitality, 1927]). A year after the foundation of the Institute for Blood Transfusions it still seemed as though Bogdanov’s hopes might be fulfilled. By October 1927 his institute had carried out 213 transfusions on

158 patients. The circular technique he developed was disseminated by the foundation of transfusion centers in every republic of the Soviet Union. On April 7, 1928 though, Bogdanov—to his colleagues’ surprise—died from the shock of his own twelfth blood transfusion.

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Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Bogdanov, *Bor’ba za zhiznesposobnost* (Moscow, 1927). For a German translation see *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 482–83 (introductory note), 525–605.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf. Fragments selected by Michael Hagemester.

The notes have been translated by Jonathan Blower from *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 482–83.

# How to Celebrate the Tenth 1927

D37

## Sergei Tret'iakov

What should the 10th Anniversary of October be like?

An unprecedented stirring of emotion, to the greatest extent possible, of all the strata of the population.

A socially deployed large scale charging of the millions of builders of socialism, with knowledge, confidence and fervor . . .

In order to differentiate it from our usual holidays, in which the evening before there is a commemoration with a concert that functions as a peculiar all-night vigil and a demonstration from the regions to the central square and back, analogous to a religious procession, the days of the 10th Anniversary need to be built on the foundations of productivism and utility.

Productivism has two sides. On the one side, it is the use of highly industrial, centralized forms of influence. The newspaper, cinema and radio are the three basic modes for communication in a centralized manner with millions of people—they should be the basic pivots upon which the now already secondary, local and accompanying happenings will be elaborated by such supporting modes of influence as theater, concerts, orchestras, speeches and so forth.

On this day the newspaper is also a guide to the past ten years, a report sheet, a holiday placard, a prediction sheet, notes held in the hands of a singing and declaiming crowd, and a demonstration of exemplary Soviet layout.

In every corner of the country, radio should carry the words of the participants of the October battles and of the foremen of the post-October construction. Radio should also inform the marching columns and the sick in hospital beds. Through radio-acoustic channels, any citizen of the Soviet Union isolated in a room could be included for the duration of the holiday on a minute-by-minute basis, surrounded by the best that we have in the realm of word and sound.

Film, projected on the walls of buildings, will substitute the difficult (and poorly accepted in our daily life) street dramatizations of events with the display of either some genuine facts, realized in a film chronicle, or moments of the revolution, dramatized with entire precision and efficacy.

Much more substantial is the other meaning of productivism.

On these days every person going out into the streets or in places of communal celebration should feel himself to be a master of Soviet construction, a master who looks over what he has done, filled with construction ardor and certain in his views.

The thriving competition of the production collectives, beginning with individual enterprises and finishing with entire branches of our industry and government, should be placed at the foundation of the holiday.

A contest in the form of production, in the volume of manufacture and its speed, should be carried out before the holiday, so that during the holiday itself a competition of the best, whether they be athletes or typesetters, metal workers or machinists or food industry workers, can take place . . .

Through the evaluation of special juries, entire industries may be declared heroes of construction; disputes at enterprises with statements for and against may be organized.

On the facades of factories and trusts, people's commissariats and administrations, rows of red fabric instead of bunting could create columns for statistical diagrams on the street, which demonstrate the stages of growth in fundamental areas or issues over the last ten years.

In shop and cooperative windows, in place of AKhRR paintings, visual announcements could appear—with whom we trade, how we trade, how much we trade—arranged from the objects which fill the window . . .

Plastered walls, ventilated rooms, conflicts reconciled for the holiday, these are more valuable than the most splendid words, written on the facade of a building.

The industrial reconstruction of the window is one example of the utilitarian organization of windows for the day of festivities. Instead of rough and ready slapped together chorus rehearsals, it would not be a bad idea to already set in motion the development of a choral movement in order to create choral groups that will not become extinct after the holiday.

Introducing a moment of labor competition, the demonstration of "the best" would be desirable for this form, to transform [such competitions] into one of the standard methods of struggle against hackwork, haphazardness and truancy.

Installing loudspeakers in cities—to count on them for long service to the populace.

Entrusting cinema with a major role during the days of the October festivities, in order to stimulate the production of traveling films and put into distribution films not only for the festive days.

This does not mean that we exclude from the holiday purely aesthetic means of emotional influence—fireworks, illumination, music, spectacles. We only say that there where one can utilize an aesthetic moment, it should be utilized.

On the contrary, speaking about means of aesthetic influence, we consider it quite necessary to widen their use so that even in the most socially backward strata of the population the holiday will cut into the memory of the population with a strong emotional mark.

We consider it correct to deploy widely the principles of people's outdoor festivals during the October holidays . . .

Originally published in Russian as Sergei Tret'iakov, "Kak desiatiletit'," *Novyi Ief* 3 (1927): 35–37. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 458–60. The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# Notebook. Assessment of the Artistic Design of the 10th Anniversary of October 1927

## Sergei Tret'iakov

\* We leftists said: "let's produce improvement." Our opponents said: "let's produce decoration." A specimen of this struggle can be found at the corner of Tverskaia Street and Strastnoi Boulevard. The corner of the KUTV [Communist University of the Toilers of the East] is splashed with "realist" posters—punched out figures in the "pathetic style." On the other corner is the store of the State Publishing House, which organized a new way of arranging books in the window. The system of movable vitrine shelves designed by the constructors E. Semenova and L. Lavinskii is new, cozy, neat and as a result decorative.

\* Two principles fought one another—utilitarian and aesthetic. The utilitarians wanted to raise the mood through the demonstration of achievements, the aesthetes by means of so-called artistic techniques. The extreme manifestation of the first—the renunciation of red bunting in the name of a repaired streetlight, a cleaned up courtyard and a refurbished communal nursery. The extreme manifestation of the second—the "heroic" painterly poster hanging like a curtain across the clock of the Central Telegraph office, which makes it impossible to check the time; or pin wheels in dried crusts: in the window of a confectioner's shop they pinned together dried crusts into the jubilee emblem . . .

1. The Communist University of the Toilers of the East (1921–38) was established to provide both theoretical and practical training for party activists from the Eastern areas of the former Russian empire and the broader colonial world [Trans.].

Originally published in Russian as "Zapisnaia knizhka. Otsenka khudozhestvennogo oformleniia desiatikiabriia," *Novyi Ief* 10 (1927): 7. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 458–60.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# The Psychology of the Person of the Future

## 1928

D38

Aaron Zal'kind

... This, in general, is the situation of mature communism. What will be its psyche? What will the person of this epoch experience?

A feeling of everyday stability, of biological well-being, of confidence. Fears related to elementary biological needs will have disappeared. Nutritional conditions, the sanitary environment adjusted to perfection, and biological preoccupation will move away further into the shadows.

No feverishness in mental processes, because their main cause—economic crises and unpredictability—will have disappeared.

A feeling of freedom, of naturalness. No sensation of restraint either internally or in the environment. The lengthy inherited inner collective organization that gave ancestors (of the first centuries of communism) so much happiness and health will turn into an unconditioned reflex, into a newly inborn instinct, which will exist side by side with the instinct of self-preservation. The personal instinct of self-preservation will be transformed into the collective-personal instinct of socio-ego-preservation, in the presence of which one is drawn to protect the collective as irresistibly as to protect oneself: protection of the hands ("I") is inseparable from protection of the entire body ("the collective"). Inseparability of the feeling "I" from the feeling of "collective." Organic co-existence.

Perfect rationalization of behavior, of all physiological functions, of all psychological processes. Planning of actions, of creative work, carried to the highest levels.

Industrial everyday life universality. Amicable mutual sharing and mutual assistance in all areas of industrial and everyday life activity. A feeling of universality from the first months and years of life. Children are not the children of families, but the children of all of humankind.

Rapidity of decisions, rapidity of actions.

Work according to one's taste and talents. Deep satisfaction derived by all from their industrial and social functions.

Deepening, unceasing blossoming of mass mental capabilities. General rationalization of production and everyday life leads to perfect order in mental processes . . .

Pointless conflicts in mental processes, conditioned by past technical and physiological disorganization of brain activity, will be brought to a minimum. Maximal flexibility will be achieved in the cohesion of the most different areas of the central nervous system.

The possibilities of switching energy from one area to another will become immensely rich: the organism will display great sensitivity to new environmental influences, since the brakes of that part of the old experience will become useless and be quickly destroyed, so that the body will become warmly open to all those organized by the universal commune of creative influences . . .

Bygone greed, the sharpness of the hunger instinct, and the instinct of animal self-preservation will switch over to other presently more important functions due to the liquidation of the elementary struggle for survival. The hunger energy will be poured into a sharp hunger for research, into the passionate thirst for knowledge. In its sharpness and insatiability, this impulse will from the first months and years of life more than replace the past "belly" hunger, extinct from the bio-psychological custom of the universal commune . . .

Mysticism will also disappear, like the tail of the pre-human ancestor, the monkey. All senses will be intensified, finely differentiated, organized by the richest, deepest connections, and will provide the exhaustive, full-blooded contact of a person with reality.

Completely "deprived" from god and belief in an afterlife, the person will feel saturated with such joy of life as was never experienced in the mystical pre-historical period of their existence. The universe will open before the person previously unknown areas, providing unexplored sensations, opening a source of completely new experiences and aspirations. If life is finite, it is so joyful, so saturated, that

one needs to learn all of it faster, to enter it with all of one's substance, to inculcate all of it into oneself, to leave in it one's deep distant footprint, to impress oneself in today's, tomorrow's, the faraway life of humanity and the entire universe. "An aggressive researching impulse." An impulse to social immortality. As we can see, all this is far from the angry fears of Dostoevsky, from his atheist "naked person on the naked earth," melancholic, frightened and monstrously immoral . . .

### Sexual Life. Sexual Love

... In a mature communist regime . . . all of the circumstances that once diligently occupied humankind with sexual disorganization will disappear. Sufficiently serious reasons for the perverted "disproportionate" allocation and switching of human energy will not be found, so the sexual nature of a person will also be rebuilt, will also be "re-planned," as the entire person will be reformed in all areas of his bio-psychological existence.

Marriage as an economic union will disappear—and along with it the nagging sexual cohesion of spouses. The raising of children will be completely social, and the family as the center of education will also be liquidated. Matrimony will be liberated, and sexual life will be free from the artificial conditions of its development. The demand and supply of prostitution will disappear, as will parasitic idleness and unhealthy overexcitement, a source of early and excessive swelling of the sexual drive. Sexual life will succeed in being brought to those norms which are dictated by the interests of humankind, of the communal collective and of a given individual . . .

A communist person will mould a huge new joyful foundation, much more powerful than the one even the most rich and bright sexuality gives to our contemporary person. He will have many times more efficient and fruitful stimuli for creativity than those produced nowadays by even the best sexuality.

The process of the growing creative development of a person of the commune, in the course of decades and centuries, will be fed to a great extent by the reverse switching to creativity and the qualitative rebirth of those energetic resources that under the conditions of pre-socialistic chaos were once wrongfully abducted by sexuality . . .

### Woman

The "humanized woman" will play a decisive role in the communist health improvement of sexuality. By that time the physiological nature of woman basically will have lost the ancient burden which she dragged upon herself to the detriment of her creative universal human qualities.

Firstly, a woman will give birth more rarely,<sup>1</sup> because abundant childbearing—this "defensive birthing reflex"—will disappear in the era of the commune. Secondly, pregnancy will become immeasurably easier; it will be accompanied by far fewer psycho-physiological complications than it is now, in an era of the ugliest socio-biological chaos.

These deep reforms in the area of "woman's obligation" will appear as a source of the richest mental blossoming of woman: the enormous part of her energy resources, once spent almost continuously throughout her life on the preliminary, present, and subsequent troubles bound up with childbearing, will finally be released for its creative utilization . . .

### Death

How will the person of the commune die?

The communist person will be long-lived. Decreased fatigability, morbidity due to infectious and other diseases (conditioned in our present life by socio-hygienic imperfections) will be minimized to the utmost degree—all this will unfold an era of unprecedented longevity . . .

Dying will consist in that an organism will gradually, as a whole, deplete all its resources, will limit its abilities and will gradually fall asleep, part by part. Death will come in the course of years, decades; it will come without pain, without suffering, without inner bodily imbalances. It will grow as a deepening overall rest, as a harmonious fading away, as a widening and increasingly deep sleep.

Of course, humankind will never love death and will always feel spite towards it, and with each century, growing repugnance (not fear!). First and foremost, it will throw all its creative resources at the problem of the maximal prolongation of life. Here is where collectivism of research creativity has the prospect of an absolutely unique future. However, humankind obviously will not succeed in obtaining immortality, and for us it is important to state that for a person of the future death will not seem like that monstrous torment that it appears to all of us.

This is how the person of the era of mature communism will live and die . . .

The biographical information on Aaron Borisovich Zal'kind (1889?–1936) is inconsistent. He supposedly came from a bourgeois Jewish family in Saint Petersburg and studied at the Institute for Psycho-Neurology under its founder and head, Vladimir Bekhterev (though according to other accounts he was born in Kharkov in 1888 and graduated from the medical faculty at Moscow University in 1911). Around 1910—as he himself reported—he became familiar with psychoanalysis, which he attempted to combine with Pavlov's theory of the reflexes. He was especially interested in the dynamic relationship between the individual's internal impulses and their capacity for consciously shaping the external environment. Zal'kind became a Freudian and a Marxist. He greeted the revolution with enthusiasm.

In the 1920s Zal'kind taught at the communist Sverdlov University in Moscow, where he was the recognized authority on the education of neglected children and on sex education. In the anthology *Revoliutsiia i molodezh* [Revolution and Youth, 1925] he heavily condemned the results of the “sexual revolution” and the concept of free love. Under capitalism, he argued, a hypertrophied sexuality had replaced religion as the opium of the people and was sapping the strength of the proletariat like a parasite. In place of “pan-sexualism” Zal'kind posited the demand for “revolutionary sublimation,” i.e. the channeling of libidinal energies into the class struggle and the construction of communism. In *Polovoi vopros v usloviakh sovetskoi obshchestvennosti* [The Sexual Question under the Conditions of Soviet Society, 1926] he formulated twelve “commandments for the sexual life of the revolutionary proletariat” in which he called for premarital abstention, class-conscious partner choice, monogamy and moderate, controlled sexual intercourse for the purpose of procreation. Sexuality, according to Zal'kind, had to be subordinate to class interests. The Party was therefore entitled to get involved in the sexual lives of its members. One of his statements became quite famous: sexual attraction to a class enemy was supposedly just as perverse as sexual attraction to a crocodile or an orangutan.

In the second half of the 1920s Zal'kind distanced himself from the Freudianism of his past and became one of the leading representatives of Soviet paedology, editing the journal *Padiologiya* from 1928 to 1932. Paedology was understood as a “synthetic” science combining children, medicine, psychology and pedagogy. It was based on a “monistic view of the child as a psycho-physical entity” and saw its task in investigating the biological and psychological “laws of development” in childhood and adolescence. Zal'kind represented the “socio-genetic” tendency, whose proponents, in contrast to the “biological materialists,” emphasized the exceptional significance of societal factors for the virtually unlimited physical and psychical “plasticity” of mankind. This was the source of their “revolutionary paedological optimism”; the belief that the new socialist environment would produce the new man. In a decree of July 4, 1936 paedology was condemned as an “anti-Marxist pseudo-science” and forbidden by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. When Zal'kind received this news he suffered a heart attack and died as a result.

— MH

1. I do not dare to fantasize of the time when “extra-uterine conception” will appear. Let this be done by my opponents, who have persuasive data for this.

Originally published in Russian as Aaron Zal'kind, “Psikhologiya cheloveka budushchego,” in *Zhizn' i tekhnika budushchego (sotsial'nye i nauchno-tekhnicheskie utopii)* [Life and Technology of the Future (Social and Scientific-Technical Utopias)], ed. Ark. A-n and E. Kol'man (Moscow, Leningrad: Moskovskii rabochii, 1928), 432–503. For a German translation see *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 606–89.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf. Fragments selected by Michael Hagemester.

The biographical note has been translated by Jonathan Blower from *Die Neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 606–7.

## A Caution! 1928

D39

### Aleksandr Rodchenko

By regarding “what” is photographed rather than “how” it is photographed as the most important aspect of photography, certain comrades in LEF are issuing a caution against turning photography into an easel art, against experimentation, and against formalism. In so doing, they themselves succumb to the aesthetics of asceticism and philistinism. It should be pointed out to our comrades that the fetishism of fact<sup>1</sup> is not only not needed, it is also pernicious for photography. We are fighting against easel painting not because it is aesthetic, but because it is out of step with modern times, weak in its reproductive technique, unwieldy, introverted, and cannot serve the masses. Strictly speaking we are fighting not against painting (it is dying anyway) but against photography “à la painting,” “inspired by painting,” “à la etching,” “à la engraving,” “à la drawing,” “à la sepia,” “à la watercolor.”

There is absolutely no point in fighting over “what” to depict; one only need indicate it. Which is what everyone is doing. A fact badly or simply recorded is not a cultural event or a thing of value in painting. There is no revolution if, instead of making a general's portrait, photographers have started to photograph proletarian leaders—but are still using the same photographic approach that was employed under the old regime or under the influence of Western art.

A revolution in photography takes place when a factual photograph acts so strongly and so unexpectedly with its photographic elements (because of its quality, because of “how” it was taken) that it not only can compete with painting, but can make clear to any viewer that this is a new and complete means of revealing the world of science, technology, and the everyday life of modern man. As the avant-garde of communist culture, LEF is obliged to show what must be photographed, and how. Any photo-circle knows what to take, but very few know how. When a worker is photographed looking like Christ or a lord, when a woman worker is photographed posing as a Madonna, these images indicate what is valued, what is regarded as important. Stated simply, we must find—we are seeking and we will find—a new (do not be afraid) aesthetic, a new impulse, and a pathos for expressing our new socialist facts through photography.

A photograph of a newly built factory is, for us, not simply the snapshot of a building. The new factory in the photograph is not simply a fact, it is the embodiment of the pride and joy felt in the industrialization of the country by the Soviets. And we have to find “how to take it.”

We are obliged to experiment. Photographing mere facts, like just describing them, is not a very novel affair. But the trouble is that painting can obscure a fact that has merely been photographed, a novel can obscure a fact that is merely described. You who love actuality—you do not find it so easy to write down the facts either.

If you do not look out, comrades, you will soon lose your sense of right and left.

Not the LEF member who photographs facts, but the one who can fight against “à la art” with high-quality examples of photography, this is the person who needs to experiment, even to the point of turning the craft of photography into an easel art.

What is easel photography? Actually, there is no such term, but we might understand it to mean experimental photography. Do not teach only theoretically, without consulting those who have practical experience; and do not be friends who are worse than enemies. Abstract theories dictating to those who practice their profession, theories invented for the sake of an aesthetics of asceticism—they constitute a very great danger.

(In publishing Rodchenko's remarks, the editors [of *Novyi lef*] maintain their disagreement with the author's basic idea: to substitute a campaign for a “new aesthetics” in place of those utilitarian and productional functions of modern photography that interest LEF above all. The editors provide a detailed response to “A Caution” in the twelfth number of *Novyi lef*).

In "A Caution" Rodchenko responds to those in the *Novyi lef* group who proclaimed the documentary "fixing of facts" to be the sole basis of the contemporary literary and visual arts. Rodchenko advances his own argument that in a post-revolutionary society, new social "facts" can only be portrayed by means of equally new aesthetic forms. Hence, he concludes, "we are obliged to experiment."

— CP

In actual fact, this once again tackles the core question of the discrepancy between experiment (estranged camera perspective) and the reproduction of "facts," which, from the point of view of Rodchenko's angry troop of enemies, was nothing but formalistic experimentation or deformation of an objective reality or its authentic ideological interpretation.

Rodchenko summarized the core theses of the "belly-button perspective" and its alienation in an article titled "The Paths of Modern Photography" (*Novyi lef* 9 [1928], English translation by John Bowlit in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings*, ed. C. Phillips, 256–63): "Photography—the new, rapid, concrete reflector of the world—should surely undertake to show the world from all vantage points, and to develop people's capacity to see from all sides. It has the capacity to do this. But it's at this juncture that the psychology of the 'pictorial belly button,' with its authority of the ages, comes down on the modern photographer . . . providing him with such models as oil paintings of madonnas and countesses" (*ibid.*, 257–58).

— AH-L

1. The "fetishism of fact" alludes to the demand of some *Novyi lef* members for an entirely fact-based art and literature, or "factography."
2. By 1928 around three thousand amateur photography organizations or "photo-circles" organized in schools, factories and army units had sprung up in the USSR, with a total membership of nearly fifty thousand. In the late 1920s these groups were encouraged by the Soviet government to provide reportage photographs to the growing illustrated press, and to concentrate on themes that glorified the achievements of the first Five Year Plan. Rodchenko led one Moscow photo-circle and took part in its exhibitions.

## Fulfilling a Request 1928

### Boris Kushner

My comrades in *Novyi lef* have asked me to respond to A. Rodchenko's "A Caution," published in the eleventh issue.

Comrade Rodchenko's mistakes are very elementary and quite obvious. Their appearance here can only be explained by their having been written under the influence of his stupefying theory about fighting against the aesthetics of painting with the methods of easel photography.

I can't understand a thing in Rodchenko's complicated aesthetic philosophy, and I must thus restrain myself from passing judgment on it. I have never had the opportunity to see easel photography, and I am inclined to think that it does not exist anywhere in the whole wide world. However, maybe I am mistaken as a result of my extreme ignorance. Still, I feel that Rodchenko is obviously in error when he asserts that "There is no revolution if, instead of making a general's portrait, photographers have started to photograph proletarian leaders." But this is what the revolution is all about. A. Rodchenko thinks that it is only "how" our leaders are photographed that is revolutionary. He quite forgets that for him to formulate the question like that, a revolution first had to take place. Before the revolution, proletarian leaders were impossible. There were only supposed to be generals. After the revolution the generals are impossible, but the leaders are needed, and they exist. How can anyone assert that there is no revolution in this change? Therein lies the essence of the revolution that, from the standpoint of any revolutionary proletarian photographer, has taken place.

This is what determines the subsequent development of the photographic art or technique (I am not sure how Rodchenko prefers to describe his profession).

The author of "A Caution" repeats exactly the same mistake in his arguments about photographing a new factory. Here too he imagines that the crux of the matter is "how" to take the factory. Once again, he overlooks the revolution in the very fact that the factory was built, that its construction was possible and necessary, and that it was constructed within the system of a socialist planned economy. Therein lies its revolutionary quality and the remarkable feature that distinguishes it from all other factories being built beyond the frontiers of our country.

The questions of "how to build" and "how to photograph" are secondary.

In this respect we have not yet managed to produce anything that has not already been seen and talked about in the bourgeois, capitalist countries. We have simply set ourselves the aim of catching up with the technology of the capitalist coun-

tries and of overtaking it, but we still have a long way to go in this. In the matter of "how" we are still very much behind Western Europe and America. On this basis would Rodchenko assert that we did not make a revolution?

In accordance with the meaning and character of our epoch, the revolution is precisely a revolution of facts—not of how we perceive them, or how we depict, transmit, render or pinpoint them. In such a simple affair as a revolution, facts play not only a persistent role, but also a decisive one.

Rodchenko's statement that "we must find—we are seeking and we will find—a new aesthetic, a new impulse and pathos for expressing our new socialist facts through photography" is all very fine and merits praise.

Still, why all this pathos about facts if they themselves are devoid of meaning?

An obvious "misunderstanding."

One must certainly agree with Rodchenko: abstract theories constitute a very great danger.

A clear example is Rodchenko's theory of facts which leads him to a quite undialectical statement: the revolution is to be found not in the fact that the proletariat seized power, but in what occurred after this.

A second example is the theory about fighting the aesthetics of painting with the medium of easel photography.

As this reply by Boris Kushner to the previous selection demonstrates, Rodchenko's description of experimental photography as "easel photography" only provided fresh ammunition to critics who saw him as obsessively concerned with formal issues.

— CP

It is not so much the arguments in Kushner's polemics that are shocking, but more the threatening tone which searches out the opposition within their own ranks and downright inquisitorially unearths their "errors." Rodchenko's main criticism is decking out current figures and scenes with atavistic costumes ("A worker . . . photographed looking like Christ or a lord"), as was almost all too often the case in those years at that time of state realism. Exactly this criticism of the hollow emotionalism of current monumentalism and Neoclassicism pervades Malevich's polemic argument with the dominant "feeding through realism" (from as early as the 1920s) (see A. Hansen-Löve, "Die Kunst ist nicht gestürzt" [Art Has Not Fallen], 420ff.; also 222ff.).

Kushner reduces Rodchenko's extreme perspective to a simple trick which cannot be entitled to clarify a "circumstance" more than the standard "belly-button perspective." However, with this, the relevance of the estranged perspective for the aesthetic poetic of a revolutionary world view lapses at an all-important point. Kushner's "Otkrytoe pis'mo" was published in *Novyi lef* 8 in 1928. An English translation by John Bowlit is available in *Photography in the Modern Era*, ed. C. Phillips, 249–51.

Kushner twists this criticism, not only of Rodchenko's old wine in new bottles in a completely manipulative way to the contrary, when he acts as though the socialist or revolutionary "content" was becoming completely unimportant due to a mere "how" in the presentation. For in this way it was possible to prove that Rodchenko—as all other "formalists"—violates, or in any case misjudges the revolution and communism as "content."

The explanation published in the same edition of *Novyi lef* with the title "From the editor" by Sergei Tret'iakov documents, in a shocking manner, the crumbling solidarity within the left avant-gardes or LEF constructivists. His proposal of resolving the dilemma of "what" and "how" or "content" and "form" is by introducing the question of "why," i.e. of function. This apparently conciliatory third method was not really able to convince, but instead exposes—now already towards the end of the real development opportunities of the left avant-garde in the Soviet Union—their end dilemma. An English translation by John Bowlit is available in *Photography in the Modern Era*, ed. C. Phillips, 270–72.

The polemics were started by a rather spiteful accusation of plagiarism addressed to Rodchenko in the form of an anonymous reader's letter sent to the *Sovetskoe foto* magazine, 4/25 (1928). An English translation by John Bowlit is available in *Photography in the Modern Era*, ed. C. Phillips, 243–44. The letter is supposed to document the accusation, including photos, that the typical Rodchenko trick—a photo taken from a viewpoint far below or above—had in reality already been published in Western photo publications. The reader's letter thereby implicitly suggests that Rodchenko's own trademark was nothing more than a copy of a procedure that is standard in capitalist countries of all places. At the same time, however, this combines with the accusation that Rodchenko proved to actually be a (capitalist?) formalist since his photography focused on the "how" and not on the "what."

Rodchenko had been attacked for his supposed "formalism" since 1926 (J. E. Bowlit, "Das fotografische Werk" [Photographic Work], pp. 15ff.); criticism increased in the late 1920s not only—as in this concrete case—by the *Sovetskoe foto* magazine and the Association of Proletarian Photojournalists, but also from his editorial colleagues in the LEF group. The attacks by the group October, with whom Rodchenko and other constructivists initially cooperated completely, were particularly irreconcilable (see the declaration by the October group in 1928 on p. 374). In around 1930, the October group's anti-formalism campaign increased and Rodchenko was finally excluded in 1931.

Everything therefore revolves around the navel of the photographic world, more specifically, around Rodchenko's famed fight against the "belly-button perspective"—an expression which on the one hand metonymically describes the conventional camera position, from which the perspective is for "normal" photos, but on the other hand also meta-

phorically targets the term “navel-gazing,” which can mean nothing other than solitude, isolation and ignorance (see A. Rodchenko, “Krupnaia bezgramotnost’ ili melkaia gadost’?” [Downright Ignorance or a Mean Trick?] *Novyi Ief* 6 (1928). English translation by John Bowlt in *Photography in the Modern Era*, pp. 245–48.

This contrasts with Rodchenko’s extreme estranged perspectives, often composed diagonally into the picture, from which, completely in keeping with the formalistic aesthetics of estrangement, the usual seems unusual and the familiar unfamiliar. However, it was exactly this estrangement principle on which advocates of the norm(ality) and a generally human and broadly socialist realism pounced (see J. E. Bowlt, “Das fotografische Werk,” p. 20).

The formalism accusation applied only insofar as that the Russian formalists’ theory of estrangement exactly matched Rodchenko’s perspectival eccentricity and extremity. However, this was not what was meant; instead it was always about the general accusation of being more concerned with the “how” than the “what.” Of course, a view like this implied a clear separation between “form” and “content,” “composition” and “message” or “ideology” as was expatiated again and again in prevalent art teaching. It was, however, exactly this that was to be overcome in the overall aesthetic project of modernity, particularly in the avant-garde (and its theory in formalism). It is in any case to be assumed that Rodchenko was familiar with the basic ideas of formalism. The closeness of Rodchenko’s ideas to those of Viktor Shklovskii or Osip Brik was by all means guaranteed as part of the LEF movement. How difficult their positions were as part of *Novyi Ief* and in the context of a sharpened theory of *Literatura fakta* or factual art can be seen by Tret’iakov’s rather ambivalent and not very helpful reaction to the polemics between Rodchenko and his rather lacking in solidarity colleague Boris Kushner.

The eternal problem of an authentic “reproduction” of reality (in art), which had weighed on Russian art and literature like a millstone since the realism of the nineteenth century—especially since the great critic Belinskii—was lifted in the period of social realism and the establishment of a state art ideology to become a brutal weapon against all formalists. The discussions of “the literature of fact” which filled the pages of *Novyi Ief* in 1927 and 1928 were still on a high level in comparison.

— AH-L

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Rodchenko, “Predosterezhenie,” *Novyi Ief* 11 (1928): 36–37, and in response, Boris Kushner, “Ispolnenie prosby” *Novyi Ief* 12 (1928): 40–41. For a German translation see *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 373–80; the complete texts of the Rodchenko/Kushner exchange in German also appear in *Sowjetische Fotografie 1928–1932*, ed. Rosalind Sartori and Henning Rogge (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1975).

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from Aleksandr Rodchenko, “A Caution,” in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings*, ed. Christopher Phillips, trans. John Bowlt (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Aperture, 1989), 264–66.

The notes by Groys and Hansen-Löve have been translated by Andrew Davison from *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgard*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 375, 378–80.

## Declaration of the Association of Artists of the Revolution 1928

D40

### AKhR

The Great October Revolution, having emancipated the forces of the worker and peasant masses, has summoned artists to participate in the class struggle and socialist construction in the ranks of the proletariat and toiling peasantry.

“Art belongs to the people. With its deepest roots it should penetrate into the very thick of the toiling masses. It should be understood by these masses and loved by them” (Lenin).

As artists of the proletarian revolution, we have the duty of transforming the authentic revolutionary reality into realistic forms comprehensible to the broad masses of the workers and of participating actively in socialist construction by our socioartistic work.

The tasks of artistically designing everyday life (architecture, clubs, leisure, mass celebrations) and also of artistically finishing articles of mass consumption (duplicating designs, textiles, ceramics, the processing of wood, metal, etc.) confront the artists of the proletarian revolution as urgent, present-day tasks.

The heroic class struggle, the great workdays of construction, should be the mainsprings of the content of our art. The subjects of our immediate work are not only the past and present of the struggle, but also the prospects created by the proletarian revolution. We consider this profound content—invested in an artistically perfect, realistic form organically engendered by it—a sign of truth in a contemporary work of visual art.

In actively realizing the slogans of the cultural revolution on the visual-arts front, in organizing the feelings, thoughts and will of the toiling masses by our artistic and social work, we set as our primary objective: to assist the proletariat in the realization of its class objectives.

In national cultures, October is creating a diverse but united current of revolutionary, realistic art of all republics and autonomous provinces of the USSR. This is also true of the art of revolutionary artists of other countries;<sup>1</sup> and in setting as our task the development of keen artistic interaction between peoples liberated and those being liberated, we aspire to unite the revolutionary artists of all countries in a single organization—INTERNAKhr.

“Proletarian culture is not something that has come out of the blue; it is not the invention of people who call themselves specialists in proletarian culture . . . Proletarian culture should be the legitimate development of the reserves of knowledge that mankind produced under the yoke of capitalist society, landowner society and bureaucratic society.”

With these words of V. I. Lenin in mind, and on the basis of continuity and critical assimilation of world artistic culture, we will come to the creation of a proletarian art.

Advancing along this path, perfecting the forms of our language with persistent work and labor, we will come, by means of a new content, to the creation of a monumental style—the expression of our epoch, the style of heroic realism.

Art—to the masses.

For details on AKhR, see p. 339.

The text of this piece, “Deklaratsiia Assotsiatsii khudozhnikov revoliutsii (AKhR),” was published in the *Bulletin* of the AKhR Information Office dedicated to the First All-Union Convention of AKhR. This convention was held just after the tenth exhibition of AKhRR/AKhR in Moscow, in February 1928, which was devoted to ten years of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army.

— JB

1. In 1928 a German affiliation was established in Berlin.

Originally published in Russian as “Deklaratsiia Assotsiatsii khudozhnikov revoliutsii (AKhR)” in the *Bulletin* of the AKhR Information Office dedicated to the First All-Union Convention of AKhR (1928). It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 356, from which this translation is made, and in *Assotsiatsiia Khudozhnikov Revoliutsionnoi Rossii*, ed. I. Gronskii and V. Perel’man (Moscow, 1973), 320–21. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), pp. 305, 306.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from “Declaration of the Association of Artists of the Revolution,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 271–72.

# A New Association of Artistic Labor in Moscow 1928

D41

Boris Arvatov

In Moscow a new artistic association has been established under the name “October.” The new association differs from previously existing societies on quite a number of points. The platform of the association “October” has a rigorously principled character. The first point of its charter reads as follows:

“The artistic association ‘October’ sets for itself the goal to assist in the further development in the USSR and the world over of truly revolutionary, that is proletarian, currents in the area of the spatial arts. In the fields of architecture, industrial arts, cinematography, photography, painting, graphics and sculpture, it unites leading artist-productivists, who are ready to subordinate their creative activity to the concrete demands of the proletariat in the area of ideological propaganda, production and the design of collective everyday life with the aim of raising the cultural-ideological level of the working masses to the level of an avant-garde of the conscious industrial proletariat.”

The following artist-productionists, art historians and critics have joined as founding members:

A. Alekseev, A. A. Vesnin, V. A. Vesnin, E. G. Veis, Aleksei Gan, M. Ia. Ginzburg, A. I. Gutnov, A. I. Damskii, A. Deineka, Dobrokovskii, V. Elkin, P. Ia. Irbit, Klutsis, Kreichik, A. I. Kurella, Lapin, I. I. Matsa, A. I. Mikhailov, D. Moor, P. I. Novitskii, A. Ia. Ostretsov, D. D. Rivera, N. Sedel’nikov, Sen’kin, Spirov, N. G. Talaktsev, S. B. Telingater, V. Toot, V. Uits, Freiberg, E. Shub, N. S. Shneider, Eisenstein.

Originally published in Russian as “Novoe ob’edinenie khudozhestvennogo truda v Moskve,” *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* 3 (1928): 73. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 179–80.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# October — Association of New Forms of Artistic Labor Declaration 1928

D42

## October An Introduction

Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen

The Oktiabr’ (October) group of artists, joined under the programmatic name “Association of New Forms of Artistic Labor,” was founded in the first half of 1928.

In spite of the proliferation of different schools of painting at that time, constructivism had, to some extent, solidified its role and produced advances in various production areas such as typography, poster and exhibition design, photography and architecture, as well as in the VKhUTEIN projects for traffic and interior design, everyday items and textiles, which enjoyed considerable public acclaim.

Hence, the time seemed ripe for consolidating all these forces which were active in the new types of art—new compared to the traditional genres of painting, graphics and sculpture. The political and social climate, which had experienced a significant shift to the left after the termination of the New Economic Policies and the start of the so-called reconstruction period during the First Five-Year Plan, also helped the offensive of left-wing artists through their consolidation.

On September 30, 1927, Alfred Kurella, who was the head of the Glaviskusstvo (The Chief Administration of Affairs of Artistic Literature and the Arts within Narkompros) in VKhUTEIN, gave a speech in front of students where he strongly criticized the AKhR paintings and called on the artistic youth to form a new assembly: “The time has come for proletarian artists, sculptors and graphic artists who concern themselves with applied arts, with theoretical, practical and programmatic questions, and most of all with paintbrushes, chisels and pencils, to come together and create the basis for proletarian fine arts.” At this point in time, the painting faculty was undergoing a process of restructuring and reorientation, in which easel painting was supposed to play only a minor role; instead, the focus was on training educators, monument artists, decorators, club instructors and restorers. In VKhUTEIN, a reorientation of the artists’ role had commenced which Kurella perceived as necessary also for artistic organizations outside of the university. Kurella, the son of a German doctor’s family and a painter and graphic artist trained at the Munich College of Applied Arts, joined forces with A. I. Gutnov, who had completed the same training in Berlin after the war, to unite those active in the various artistic areas and like-minded people. First they contacted Pavel Novitskii, who had been the director of VKhUTEMAS/VKhUTEIN since 1926 and had harshly criticized AKhR in numerous articles and speeches, calling for a new type of artistic production practice. Novitskii became one of the chief theorists of the association. However, other important theorists of the new Marxist aesthetics were also recruited to the cause: Ivan Matsa, A. Mikhailov, Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov, with the effect that almost all belonged to the communist academy of the October association. They were joined by important representatives of functionalist architecture: M. Ginzburg and the Vesnin brothers as well as the film-makers S. Eisenstein and E. Shub, graphic designers A. Gan, El Lissitzky, V. Elkin, S. Telingater, N. Sedel’nikov and Tagirov, photographers and photomontage artists G. Klucis, V. Kulagina, N. Pinus, A. Rodchenko, B. Ignatovich, E. Langman and S. Sen’kin, as well as painters and graphic artists A. Deineka, M. Dobrokovskii, A. Samokhvalov, Diego Rivera, Bela Uitz and the exponent of the political and satirical poster, D. Moor. These artists already working in practice were joined by a group of students from VKhUTEIN who called themselves Molodoi Oktiabr’ (Young October). They also incorporated the worker illustrators of the *Komsomol’skaia Pravda* as well as the Leningrad Art of the Working Youth (IZORAM). In 1930, October had 246 members, but their numbers increased significantly (approx. 500), especially since branches were founded in Leningrad and Ukraine.

The speakers at the conference “Art in the USSR and the Role of Artists,” which was held at the Communist Academy in March 1928 and at which the most important working perspectives for artistic work over the coming years were determined, consisted exclusively of members of the October group. Hence the conference was essentially a manifesto of the ideas of this association. These ideas were set forth in the first declaration of October, which was developed collectively but formulated mainly by Kurella, Matsa and Mikhailov.

The concept of the program was unique for its time: it was not at all limited to traditional forms of art but included all the creative ideas of “mass art” (from graphic design and photography to everyday objects, interior furnishing and architectural designs, city decoration and parade design). It was aimed at art produced by the masses, which was supposed to replace art produced for the masses. Approaches for this existed in the worker illustrator-correspondent movements for the daily press, of which V. I. Kostin as an October member looked after 15,000, as well as in the art groups of the working youth (IZORAM) and the Agitprop theater movements of the working youth (TRAM). They were all supposed to collaborate with professional artists as equals rather than in a student-teacher relationship. The professional artists also introduced art groups in the workers’ clubs. The photographers did the same within their medium and the graphic artists tried to establish an ongoing collaborative relationship with the print shop workers. The goal was to achieve a synthesis of art not only between the individual genres of art but also between the different groupings of art practitioners (professionals and lay people).

The practical results of their work were presented in several smaller traveling exhibitions in factories and workers' clubs; these always related to the area of activity that was closest to the target audience (textile, typography, photography, etc.). The first large accountability exhibition opened after a considerable delay in the Moscow Park of Culture and Recreation on May 27, 1930, having been postponed twice, once in December 1929 and then in February 1930. Such delays also occurred in the publication of a collection of works with declarations by October and papers on textile work, photomontage, photography, ceramics and packaging and advertising. It was supposed to come out at the time of the exhibition but could only be published in September 1931, more than one year later. In the preface, the editors felt compelled to criticize their own positions represented in the brochure because the "situation at the front of spatial arts had changed," that is, October's scope of action was already significantly limited due to pressure from RAPKh. The attacks from AKhr and RAPKh on the constructivists had already started when the exhibition was first discussed, even though they also contained real points of criticism, as shown by a comparison with the review of the same exhibition by a member of the German Bauhaus; they ended with the coerced self-critiques and denunciations of the second half of 1931.

The exhibition list provides an idea of the variety of the "new forms of artistic labor" that were united in this association. October and its youth organization were not the only ones who participated in the "demonstration exhibition" in the Park of Culture and Recreation. They were joined by the Leningrad branch, the Association of Contemporary Architects (OSA), the Leningrad and Moscow TRAM Theater, the Meyerhold Theater, workers' photo groups and employees of the papers *Komomolskaia Pravda* and *Rabochii i iskusstvo* [Workers and Art].

In September 1930, a large scale October exhibition organized by A. Gutnov, who had contact with Berlin due to his apprenticeship and his collaboration with Heartfield for the presidential elections of the German Reich, opened in Berlin. After substantial public interest in and attendance of the exhibition, it was also shown in Krefeld, Düsseldorf and Cologne. The increasingly harsh polemics and open reprisals from RAPKh ultimately forced the members of October to abandon their positions. At first, a group of seven poster artists sought to be accepted into RAPKh (Deineka, Klucis, Freiberg, Sen'kin, Pinus, Kulagina and Elkin), since they would have been labeled bourgeois left sectarians and robbed of further opportunities to work in the poster publishing house (IZOGIZ) had they not done so. Despite the ritualistic self-criticism, they held on to their basic positions, which distinguished them from AKhIL and RAPKh, just like the entire *Molodoi Oktiabr'*, who were compelled to collectively join RAPKh together with other members of the association. Novitskii and Kostin were forced to repent publicly; the latter was dictated the formulations of his self-denunciation by RAPKh chief Tsirel'son. Hence October disintegrated in the second half of 1931 due to political pressure. The chance to establish an operational constructivism that included all forms of spatial arts in its concept of the synthesis of art and life had been in vain.

## October — Association of New Forms of Artistic Labor Declaration 1928

At the present time all art forms must define their positions at the front of the socialist Cultural Revolution.

We are profoundly convinced that the spatial arts (architecture, painting, sculpture, graphics, the industrial arts, photography, cinematography, etc.) can escape their current crisis only when they are subordinated to the task of serving the concrete needs of the proletariat, the leaders of the peasantry, and the backward national groups.

In participating consciously in the proletariat's ideological class struggle against hostile forces and in supporting the rapprochement of the peasantry and the nationalities with the proletariat, the spatial arts must serve the proletariat and the working masses in two interconnected fields:

— in the field of ideological propaganda (by means of pictures, frescoes, printing, sculpture, photography, cinematography, etc.);

— in the field of production and direct organization of the collective way of life (by means of architecture, the industrial arts, the designing of mass festivals, etc.).

The main task of this artistic service to the proletarian needs of the revolution is to raise the ideological, cultural and domestic level of the backward strata of the working class and of those workers who are undergoing an alien class influence; their level would be raised to that of the avant-garde, revolutionary industrial proletariat, which is consciously building the socialist economy and culture on the bases of organization, planning and highly developed industrial technology.

These principles have already been stipulated as the basis of the whole socio-economic structure of our government, and only art has remained behind in this respect, because of the narrow, professional artisan traditions it has preserved.

The most pressing task today is to eliminate this disproportion between the development of art and the socioeconomic development of our country.

For those artists who are fully aware of these principles, the following immediate tasks await:

1. The artist who belongs to the epoch of the proletarian dictatorship regards himself not as an isolated figure passively reflecting reality, but as an active fighter at the ideological front of the proletarian revolution; this is the front that, by its actions, is organizing mass psychology and is helping to design the new way of life. This orientation compels the proletarian artist to take stock of himself continually in order to stand with the revolutionary proletarian avant-garde at the same high ideological level.

2. He must submit to critical examination all formal and technical artistic achievements of the past. Of especial value to proletarian art are the achievements of the last decades, when the methods of the rational and constructive approaches to artistic creation, which had been lost by the artists of the petty bourgeoisie, were restored and developed considerably. It was at this time that artists began to penetrate the creation of dialectical and materialist methodology, of which artists had not been aware previously, and of the methods of mechanical and laboratory scientific technology; this has provided a great deal that can and must serve as material for the development of proletarian art. However, the fundamental task of the proletarian artist is not to make an eclectic collection of old devices for their own sake, but with their aid, and on new technological ground, to create new types and a new style of the spatial arts.

3. The ultimate orientation of the artist who would express the cultural interests of the revolutionary proletariat should be to propagate the world view of dialectical materialism by the maximum means of expression within the spatial arts, and to design materially the mass, collective forms of the new life. In the light of this, we reject the philistine realism of epigones; the realism of a stagnant, individualistic way of life; passively contemplative, static, naturalistic realism with its fruitless copying of reality, embellishing and canonizing the old way of life, sapping the energy and enervating the will of the culturally underdeveloped proletariat.

We recognize and will build proletarian realism that expresses the will of the active revolutionary class; a dynamic realism that reveals life in movement and in action and that discloses systematically the potentials of life; a realism that makes things, that rebuilds rationally the old way of life and that, in the very thick of the mass struggle and construction, exerts its influence through all its artistic means. But we simultaneously reject aesthetic, abstract industrialism and unadulterated technicism that passes itself off as revolutionary art. For art to affect life creatively, we emphasize that all means of expression and design must be utilized in order to organize the consciousness, will and emotions of the proletariat and of the working masses with maximum force. To this end, the organic cooperation of all spatial art forms must be established.

4. Proletarian art must overcome individualistic and commercial relationships, which have dominated art up until now. While we reject the bureaucratic concepts of the "social commission," which has gained ground over recent years, we do seek social commissions from consumer collectives; these order works of art for concrete objectives and participate collectively in the preparation of artistic objects. In this respect the industrial arts are assuming more importance, since they are proving to be durable and effective in collective production and consumption.

5. In order to obtain maximum results we are attempting to concentrate our efforts on the following vital points:

- a) rational construction, problems of new residential accommodation, social buildings, etc.

- b) artistic design of objects for mass consumption manufactured by industry

- c) artistic design of centers for the new collective way of life: workers' clubs, reading rooms, canteens, tearooms, etc.

- d) organization of mass festivals

- e) art education

We are firmly convinced that the paths we have indicated will lead to the intensive development of creative strength among the masses. We support this development of mass creative aspiration, since we know that the basic process or the development of the spatial arts in the USSR is advancing because of the proximity of the independent art of proletarian art circles, workers' clubs and peasants to highly qualified professional art, and is maintaining the level of artistic technology identifiable with the industrial epoch.



In advancing along these paths, proletarian art leaves behind the slogan of the transitional period—"Art to the Masses"—and prepares the ground for the art of the masses.

In acknowledging organization, rationality and collectivism as the basic principles of the new artistic and cultural construction in the country of the proletarian dictatorship, the October Association establishes a definite working discipline for bringing together its members on the basis of the above principles. These principles will need a more thorough elaboration in the association's subsequent creative, ideological, and social activity.

In issuing the present declaration, we disassociate ourselves from all existing art groups active in the field of the spatial arts. We are prepared to join forces with some of them as long as they acknowledge the basic principles of our platform in practical terms. We greet the idea of a federation of art societies' and will support any serious organizational steps in this direction.

We are embarking at a time of transition for the development of the spatial arts in the USSR. With regard to the basic forces active in modern Soviet art, the natural process of artistic and ideological self-determination is being hampered by a number of unhealthy phenomena. We consider it our duty to declare that we reject the system of personal and group patronage and protection for individual artistic trends and individual artists. We support wholly the unrestricted, healthy competition of artistic directions and schools within the areas of technical competence, higher quality of artistic and ideological production and stylistic researches. But we reject unhealthy competition between artistic groups for commissions and patronage of influential individuals and institutions. We reject any claim by any one association of artists to ideological monopoly or exclusive representation of the artistic interests of the working and peasant masses. We reject the system that can allow an artificially created and privileged position (moral and material) for any one artistic group at the expense of other associations or groups; this is a radical contradiction of the Party's and the government's artistic policy. We reject speculation on "social commissions," which occurs beneath the mask of revolutionary theme and everyday realism, and which replaces any serious effort to formulate a revolutionary world view and world perception with a simplified interpretation of a hurriedly invented revolutionary subject.

We are against the dictatorship of philistine elements in the Soviet spatial arts and for the cultural maturity, artistic craftsmanship, and ideological consistence of the new proletarian artists, who are quickly gaining strength and advancing to the fore.

The ranks of the proletariat, progressive, active, and artistically concerned, are growing before our very eyes. Mass art summons the vast masses to artistic involvement. This involvement is linked to the class struggle, to the development of industry and to the transformation of life. This work demands sincerity, high qualifications, cultural maturity, revolutionary awareness. We will dedicate all our strength to this work.

#### The October Association

John Bowlt

The October Association of New Forms of Artistic Labor ("Oktiabr") was founded in 1928, but its one exhibition did not open until June 1930, in Moscow. October encompassed various artistic activities, although it concentrated on the industrial and applied arts—and this, together with its emphasis on the proletariat and on contemporaneity, recalled the ideas of Proletkul't and constructivism. This is confirmed by the association's list of members and by the cosignatories of this declaration, who included: representing poster art and book design—Aleksandr Alekseev, Mecheslav Dobrokovskii, Vasilii Elkin, Paula Freiberg, Paul Irbitt, Gustavs Klucis, Alois Kreichik, Nikolai Lapin, El Lissitzky, Dmitrii Moor, Diego Rivera (in Moscow 1927–28), Nikolai Sedelnikov, Sergei Sen'kin, Solomon Telingater, Béla Uitz, Viktor Toot and, temporarily, Aleksandr Deineka; representing architecture—Aleksei Gan, Moisei Ginzburg, Pavel Novitskii, and two of the Vesnin brothers, Aleksandr and Viktor; representing film and photography—Sergei Eisenstein, Aleksandr Rodchenko and Esfir Shub; and Alfred Kurella, Ivan Matsu and Aleksei Mikhailov—theorists of the group.

Deineka, Klucis, Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Sen'kin and Varvara Stepanova were represented at its sole exhibition.<sup>2</sup> A collection of October declarations and articles by members entitled *Izofront. Klassovaia bor'ba na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv*,<sup>3</sup> was scheduled to appear at the same time as the exhibition, but the adverse political and artistic climate dictated a number of prepublication changes. When the collection finally appeared in late 1931, the publishers were careful to emphasize in their separate insert and apologetic preface that the collection was being published as "material for creative discussion" despite its numerous "vulgar, materialistic mistakes." In 1932 October was accused of "abolishing art";<sup>4</sup> in the same year October was, in any case, dissolved as a result of the above decree.

The text of this piece, "Oktiabr'. Ob'edinenie khudozhestvennogo truda. Deklaratsiia," was first published in *Sovremennaia arkhitektura*.<sup>5</sup> In 1931 a second general declaration, entitled *Bor'ba za proletarskie pozitsii na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv* [The Struggle for Proletarian Class Positions on the Spatial Arts Front], was published as a separate pam-

phlet in Moscow. Apart from this, there were three other specific declarations: one by the National Sector of October (dated 1929), which rejected the idealization of pre-revolutionary art forms and cultures, thereby opposing AKhR's support of nineteenth-century realist traditions; the Program of the Photo Section of October (dated 1930), which rejected the "abstract" photography of such artists as László Moholy-Nagy and saw the value of photography to lie in its "actuality," stipulating, moreover, that all members should be linked with industrial production or with collective farms; and an Open Letter (dated 1930) from the young artists' section of October (Molodoi Oktiabr') to the central presidium of the Association of AKhR Youth (OMAKhR, see p. 339) criticizing the latter's passive, documentary interpretation of proletarian reality.

— JB

1. The reference is to the Federation of Associations of Soviet Artists (FOSKh), founded in June 1930. This was an organization that sought to unite the many, often contradictory, art groups still active, and it managed to encompass AKhR, OST and RAPKh, as well as two architectural societies, the Association of Contemporary Architects (OSA) and the All-Union Association of Proletarian Architects (VOPRA). FOSKh issued its own journal—*Brigada khudozhnikov* (Moscow, 1931–32).
2. For review, see *Iskusstvo v massy* 7 (Moscow, 1930): 9–16.
3. P. Novitskii, ed., *Izofront. Klassovaia bor'ba na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1931).
4. See responses of the Russian Association of Proletarian Artists (Rossiiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh khudozhnikov, RAPKh) to the resolution "On the Reconstruction" (pp. 383) in *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo* 9/10 (Moscow 1932); reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsu (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 650.
5. *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* 3 (Moscow, March 1928): 73–74.

Declaration originally published in Russian as "Deklaratsiia ob'edineniia Oktiabr'," *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* 3 (Moscow, March 1928): 73–74. The four declarations were published in P. Novitskii, ed., *Izofront. Klassovaia bor'ba na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv*, 135–60, and are reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsu (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 608–16, 619–23; the first declaration and that of the National Sector are reprinted in V. Khazanova, comp., "Iz istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury, 1926–1932," *Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 1970), 117–18, 121–22. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 172–74.

The version of the declaration here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "October—Association of Artistic Labor Declaration," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 273–79.

Introduction originally published in German as "Oktjabr' – Vereinigung der Arbeiter in neuen Arten der Kunsttätigkeit," in *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis* (see above), 172–74.

The version of the introduction here has been translated from the German original by Andrew Davison.

# The Reconstruction of Artistic Life in the USSR 1928

D43

Alfred Kurella

. . . Two preconditions are necessary for developing the question of the reconstruction of artistic life in the Soviet land:

- 1) Critical analysis of the structures of the artistic life of capitalism.
- 2) Indication of the new quantitative and qualitative factors, determinative of the new purpose and new consumer basis of art following the October revolution.

In the present article, we will attempt to provide the one and the other in broad general terms . . .

With the appearance of the bourgeoisie on the scene of history we witness the unprecedented blossoming of numerous branches of the spatial arts. Bourgeois art develops, which we almost were accustomed to regard as "art in general." . . .

In these conditions the main interest of "the world of art" centers on those forms of the spatial arts which correspond most closely to the conditions of the market, that is, easel painting, sculpture and graphics. Because they make "valuable unique objects," which may easily be moved and collected . . .

After all, the type of artist is changing. The entire growing preponderance of genres intended for the individualistic emotion of a private bourgeois consumer summons to the forefront artists who perceive the surrounding world with special delicacy (a person, nature, things) and are able to express these individualistic feelings in the best manner. The type of artist who wants only to "portray" or "express his inward nature" prevails. Receding into the background is the artist who wants to organize things, to create something new, to lead his consumers. Big "personalities," creators, head up the world of art. They are almost idolized by the average person who understands art, who still barely dares to raise his gaze to the icy summits of creativity.

With such artistic baggage, we crossed from pre-October Russia to the Soviet Union. When we look back, we notice that practically all of this has been invariably preserved: the commodity production of artistic goods; the proportion of various types of art and within them their various genres; the reliance upon a private consumer; the types of artists. In other words, the entire structure of the artistic life of capitalism. Only the art dealer has disappeared, and the old private client-patron has partially gone off duty.

In the course of the first ten years an entire generation of young artists has grown up, closely tied with the new socialist construction and wishing to participate actively in it. Yet they cannot find a place for themselves. Instinctively, they do not want to walk down the old paths. However, they cannot find new paths. The majority of them desert art and disappear from combat at this sector of the cultural revolution . . .

The new consumers differ from the old in the numeric sense. Here we talk about millions, while the old consumers of art numbered in the thousands. To serve them as the old were served is utterly impossible. Where would we get millions of "unique objects," paintings, statuettes, etc., able to "adorn" the private apartments of these millions? The mass consumer requires mass provision. Individualism is replaced by collectivism. Already this contradicts the entire practice of bourgeois artistic life.

Yet, more important are the qualitative differences of the needs of the new consumer. This new consumer represents classes, which are only slowly being elevated after centuries-old political oppression and cultural hunger. This new consumer does not have organs for the perception of those delicate emotions which were the main subject of art, which served the cultural stratum of the old ruling class.

The new consumer must first build the material basis of his new life. He transforms his everyday environment, or he supplements it, beginning with calico for a new dress and finishing with an entirely new *izba* [log house]. Exactly in these areas he puts forth new demands on art. He has been accustomed to art being part of everyday life. As it was for his forebears, he saw this among the old masters of the land. Every year the concrete demand for new houses, furniture, shoes,

dishes, materials, etc., etc. increases. *This is the main sector of artistic demand of our days.*

However, there is one important qualitative difference for the new consumer of art. These millions are not a shapeless sum of individuals, but rather they are organized and form collectives. In these collectives and around them an entirely new life is unfolding. It is the collectives, which at the present time very often are still rather disconnected and drab, yet which become more and more animated, that in some respects replace the old individual consumers. Yet only in some respects. The life of the new collectives is impossible to compare with the life of the old merchants, entrepreneurs and individual collectors. Their needs concerning art are essentially different. It is impossible, for example, to expect some club, some social organization or some living cooperative to purchase a prepared "market" painting, made for an unknown consumer. Yet in practice, this does happen in some places. However, experience shows that such pictures do not "grow" on their consumers. After a brief period of time, they usually no longer attract attention and grow tiresome. The needs and artistic interests of the new collective consumer are more defined, concrete, and at the same time more complex than the needs of the collector-aesthetes of olden times. The new collective consumer himself desires to participate in the work on the object, which will bring the consumer closer to the new collective life.

The existing needs of a private, personal character of individual workers and peasants retreat into the background before these qualitatively new needs. The taste of the masses is raised on art that is collectively consumed. In the end, the visitor to the new clubs and other communal buildings and the participant in the newly created and artistically designed celebrations will, when organizing his own private environment, emulate the new art that is concentrated in the centers of the new collective everyday life . . .

. . . We cannot allow in an industrial country based on socialist principles and utilizing the newest technique to design objects for everyday use in a style characteristic of the philistine of the latter half of the last century.

Here we need to clarify something mentioned above, about the disintegration of the spatial arts in the period when the capitalist market ruled over art.

Yes, in the huge majority the spatial arts disintegrated along the line of adaptation to the artistic market of bourgeois society. They aimed at the gratification of the needs of a very delicate stratum of consumers from the ruling class, access to which lay through the art market.

The distinctive structure of artistic life under capitalism arose under these conditions.

Yet this new mass consumer of art, who has come to the fore among us thanks to the October Revolution, did not fall suddenly from the sky. This multi-million mass that already existed under capitalism already had specific needs.

While it constituted not even one-hundredth part of those needs that we are faced with today and while it completely lacked the needs of the new qualitative moments that only opened to us after October, it made itself felt in its own way.

The concentration of people in large cities, advances in the area of social legislation and public health won by the workers' movement, the rise of the general cultural needs of the masses, the necessity of implementing a "regime of economy" and, lastly, the progress of technology—all have pushed the ruling class towards exploring new methods in work and in the spatial arts. As a consequence of this, we already have the beginnings of new development in various areas of the spatial arts under capitalism. These beginnings, which appeared not only in individual arts (in architecture, furniture, textiles, the ceramic industry, etc.) but also in the "ideological" arts (painting, graphics, posters, cinema), represent significantly valuable material for the new proletarian art.

Originally published in Russian as Alfred Kurella, "Rekonstruktsiia khudozhestvennoi zhizni v SSSR," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* 7 (June 1928): 18–23. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 174–77.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

### Iakov Tugenkhol'd

. . . OST's dynamic orientation has been expressed in a sequence of instances. It is evident in the influence of the newest achievements of snapshot photography, which destroys the usual perspective, gives unexpected viewpoints, and fixes the fortuitous poses and turns of the human figure in motion (as in the reverse perspective that appears in Luchiskhin's work *The Ballon Flew Away*; Shirin and Labas's landscapes depicted from above, and Pimenov and Deineka's instantaneously captured poses of athletes). Further on is the influence of the Swiss artist Hodler with his dynamic (sometimes even choreographed) unfolding compositions and rhythms of bodily movement—an influence that imposes upon several OST works an impression not only of monumentality but also the affectation intrinsic to this Swiss master. Finally, there is also the influence of our master—of Favorskii, with his beloved method of the superimposition upon one surface of three-dimensional moments (protuberances) with planar moments (silhouettes)—a method that OST artists transfer from graphics to painting, using it as a means to display movement, the flight of seized and “unfolding” form. We see this method in Pimenov, Deineka and at the fourth OST exhibition in Goncharov, in his *Tennis Court Oath*,<sup>1</sup> where the artist strives to depict different moments in time carried out by one and the same human group on a single canvas. Of course, this is all rather debatable, but all the same here there is a wish to take a step forward in comparison with the impressionists, who showed the movement of the object only by means of vibration and its dispersion in space. The OST artists strive to find a different, sharper formula for translation of the moving form . . .

. . . OST should be credited for this entire pursuit of dynamism, all these attempts to depart from a passive understanding of the world as inert material and to pass on above all the functional side of a thing.

And then there is one more characteristic: the desire for production accuracy, for good craftsmanship of product, for a high quality of facture, which comes essentially from Shterenberg.<sup>2</sup> It would be incorrect to look at Shterenberg's still lives as purely “aesthetic” exercises, as just sheer gourmandize. Besides this purely gustatory voluptuousness of color, peculiar to Shterenberg is a purely rational, original objective approach to the object. With the help of his varied facture (smooth, shining and rough), he wants to suggest to us the sensation of the materiality and structure of the things represented—wood, marble, table cloths, fruit, meat. Equally, in order to show the “objective” form of objects, he destroys illusionistic perspective and shows them as if from two perspectives (for example, the roundness of a table—from above) . . .

Such is the complex amalgamation, which presents itself as the “face” of OST, and which in its very complexity is the source of some of its weakness, eclecticism and wackiness.

One of the most “whimsical” phenomena in OST is Tyshler, who of late has become a sort of talk of the town.<sup>3</sup> Opponents of OST select him in particular as the target for their blows . . .

. . . In another series, which appeared in the exhibition for the 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution, Tyshler showed the Makhnovists,<sup>4</sup> in their mutinous element, yet with a special tinge, also characteristic of German expressionism and Babel—with an emphasis on the erotic side of mutiny: the Makhnovists carry off the living and drag along dead women.

This peculiar inclination of Tyshler and this specific keenness of his eye are also evident in “Crimea” (watercolor), his third series at the fourth OST exhibition. A sandy shore and rocks, covered with the naked “meat” of male and female bathers, wicker cabins filled with them as well . . . The Crimea of an unrestrained resort life and, along with that, a semi-fantastic Crimea, which resembles Indian miniatures, satire and erotica, sinister grotesque and exotic beauty. Yet there is another Crimea—a health resort, healthy youth, happy children: Tyshler does not notice this Crimea. Finally, in the most recent “lyrical” cycle the young artist has once and for all departed from reality, and that same braided cabin becomes for him a symbolic receptacle of the human and animal world. Baskets of the most diverse forms, a whole sea of baskets. Here, we are on the other side of consciousness, in the sphere of the delirious and subconscious. Is Tyshler insane? Fortunately, no. Tyshler is a theater person, a decorator, a property man, and here is one of the

keys to the solution of the Tyshler “question.” . . . These drawings by Tyshler are some dreams about theatrical productions. Here in this theatricality of Tyshler, in his inclination to make faces, perhaps this guarantees that all of Tyshler's extravagance is not so serious, as it seems, that this is a theatrical blend of the tragic with the comic, and that the artist will be able “to make a complete recovery” from all of his “childish illness of leftism.”

But we may and should say that Tyshler threatens decadence,<sup>5</sup> that he is shoved in one direction, that he knows only half of contemporary life, that is still unable to be inspired by other, optimistic feeling, he knows only the horrors and grotesques of our fraught era. Specifically here a line must be drawn to separate the Soviet artist from the German expressionist, who could not see leaving the world of anguish and chaos. George Grosz, in fact, changed from his nihilistic Dadaism and individualism to the camp of militant communist art.

The opponents of OST accuse it, essentially, of “formalism.” Formalist searches are necessary for the development of our artistic culture and to demand from our art only a single understanding is equivalent to demand from science only popularity. Being deeply utilitarian in its final goal, science all the same progresses not thanks to popular brochures but due to advanced work and discoveries. Formalism is harmful and anti-social, when it is self-contained and non-objective. Yet even the thematically narrow, still-life paintings of Shterenberg, which are inspired purely by colorful joy, are only inevitable preliminary steps towards that utilitarian, decorative painting of social walls (clubs, cafeterias, etc.), for which the decorative talent of Shterenberg was born and which we still do not possess. Socialist culture may not exist without a love for the craft of painting, without a joyful attitude towards labor . . .

. . . Here it is necessary to refer to Pimenov's general sympathy for the depiction of taverns, cafes, actor's dressing rooms, etc., motifs of a foreign-bohemian genre, utterly alien to us ideologically. Here “Europeanization” goes too far; this is not the “urbanism” that is needed . . .

Sport, radio, motoring, we need all these new technical preoccupations and their depiction in art is, of course, a step forward. We need even more the demonstration of socialist construction, the demonstration of the new contemporary “living person.” For the western European artist technical preoccupation is an end in itself, a fetish, but for us it is a means for the socialist reconstruction of society.

OST approaches the solution of this problem only now. Here, in the first place, is Deineka (until just recently he belonged to OST), who in his artworks of labor themes (*Building New Factories* and *Female Textile Workers*) strove to show the new, Soviet, proletarian “types,” images of new, already unforgettable, courageous and cheerful women workers, and in his recent *Defense of Petrograd* he was able to show the firm collective step of worker-fighters in place of Hodleresque choreography. This is already the start of something new and truly healthy. Let me remind you, that even the “formalist” Shterenberg in *Meeting in the Countryside* (in the exhibition for the 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution) was a disinterested attempt to juxtapose the mottled crowd of peasants to an urban worker orator, an example of energy and commitment. In the 4th exhibition of OST we see new steps in the direction of great psychological insight, great emotionality, for example in a number of portraits by Goncharov, where the artist finds for each model their own form, their own color range.

From the one-sided cult of external technical preoccupation towards deeper, more emotionally rich realism—this is the desired path for OST.

1. The subject of this painting is probably the Tennis Court Oath of 1789, a key early event of the French Revolution [Trans.].
2. Works by the students of Shterenberg at the exhibition of Vkhutein provide evidence of this; it is precisely in the workshop of Shterenberg that they most seriously study problems of color and facture.
3. The editors believe that comrade Tugenkhol'd has failed to sufficiently accentuate the evolution of Tyshler's creative work and reveal the roots of the sickly one-sided depressive character of his latest works.
4. Nestor Makhno was a Ukrainian anarchist of peasant origin. During the Civil War that followed the October Revolution, he led a guerilla anarchist army in Ukraine that sought to establish an anarchist order that was in opposition to the Bolsheviks, who he saw as oppressive dictators [Trans.].
5. A new Chagallism of his own sort. But in this is also the issue that the artist Marc Chagall with all of his mysticism grew upon a definite objective ground—the former Jewish ghetto with its pogrom fears. Tyshler works in a different time, when there is already no room for Chagall-like elements.

Originally published in Russian as Iakov Tugenkhol'd, “Iskusstvo i sovremennost',” *Revolutsiia i kul'tura* 11 (June 15, 1928): 66–69. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 356–61.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

#### A. Mikhailov

. . . This question is posed only theoretically and only in relationship to painting and film. However, on the larger scale we should take into consideration the question of production art as the organizer of collective everyday life and photography as documentation and so forth, and, finally, practically about those transitional forms, which are conceivable in our time, for example, about fresco. Yet in the broad theoretical plan of analysis of the progressive development of types of art, the question about these other forms is of no importance. It is raised only practically, as we have shown in the past.

It is important for us to reach a conclusion here, that painting, like cinema, is an art of organization and display of visible images (which is usually called a "visual" art), and as such it is the highest step, a new type of development for this art, which destroys the need for the reproduction of old forms.<sup>1</sup> In this case, progressive artists and artistic groups should draw practical conclusions from all of this. Besides the principles of visual art, cinema includes the principles of theater, music, and so forth. This circumstance speaks to the fact that from the synthesis of a single type of art—"visual"—it has crossed over to the synthesis of all types of art.

Analysis of cinema shows, as we have seen, its entire adequacy (according to its possibilities) for the psycho-ideological aspirations of the proletariat. It is "materialistic" and "dialectic." It is therefore the most progressive art of socialist society; and it is not by accident that initially its importance was understood not by bourgeois art specialists or theoreticians but by the leader of the proletariat and the greatest dialectician, V. I. Lenin, who said to A. B. Lunacharskii: "You have a reputation among us as a protector of art, so you should remember that of all the arts cinema is the most important for us." . . .

#### Concluding Discussion

. . . As I already noted in my presentation, we are not saying that easel painting should now die off. We insist that it will die off as we approach socialist society, and it will die slowly, and this process of dying will have its justification not just in that easel painting was and is an individual endeavor, that it is a handicraft, but also because this easel painting does not satisfy us based on its content. In other words, by the possible inclusion of a known psychological complex, a known emotional state . . . We state that one cannot provide a dialectical image of contemporary life and its dynamics within the construct of easel painting. It is impossible to activate through such an art form any sense of the contemporary. No one here has disproved this assertion, and it cannot be disproved.

Why do we turn from easel painting to fresco? We turn to fresco because, we think—and we cannot always prove this—that fresco, as a definite principle, a definite type of art (and not only as a technical method), has certain rather progressive points in contrast with easel painting, especially in our time. What are these points? First of all, fresco allows a plot to be unfolded by means of narrative. It answers approximately our desire to present not just a single moment or fact of an event, but rather to depict the facts in their development. At the same time, the very form of fresco is completely different compared to the form of easel painting. I already showed that the tasks of easel painting were a reflection of only one fact, one moment, one exclusive phenomenon, and that this phenomenon was not perceived in its logical and dialectical connection with others, but as something exclusive and self-referential. Yet for us right now, the most important thing (our materialist worldview suggests it) is to capture all the complexities of what is happening in reality. Yet once the content becomes more complex, entirely different forms are needed, forms that are more laconic, more rational, more concentrated in order to enable the greatest number of people to be more powerfully affected by these images. In our times, it is already impossible to imagine that a person, who would actively approach art, could look at a still-life for five hours. It really is necessary to give him diversity, a known connection. Fresco may provide this more immediately than easel painting.

The second argument is that fresco, to a certain extent, solves the question about the use of art by the masses. If you take easel painting, then aside from the fact that it is a single moment, it represents private property. In the museum, these easel paintings are not coordinated with each other, they do not provide any completeness of emotion nor do they offer any sort of useful image. On the other

hand, if you take a fresco, this fresco will decorate the walls of some club, a building, and thus will provide the opportunity to explore in sequence many moments of development of a known event, and to provide a known connection. Here the images will be much closer, much more intelligible. Of course, it is not necessary to think, as some restorers believe, that we want to shift to the ready clichés of a long forgotten fresco and conserve these clichés.

Finally, I want to introduce one additional argument, which may play a decisive role. We speak all the time about art in this auditorium. Yet in Moscow, every year there are dozens of exhibitions, but how many people visit them? Well, AKhRR had good luck. About 100,000 passed through there, yet all the same, this is few for a multi-million population. Right now there is a burning question about connection, union with the countryside. If we apply this to the art front, then it turns out that . . .

Kiselis: It is necessary to paint frescos.

Kurella: Correct.

Mikhailov: In the countryside, there isn't any sort of art, with the exception of murals in churches. The ruling groups of the feudal epoch used these murals in order to organize collective consciousness in a direction desirable to them. They knew very well that the collective needs forms and images that can be understood by the collective. That's right, what do we have in every village? We have only murals in churches. You think that peasants do not look at these images? Wrong, they look at these murals a lot. Art also fulfills its role there, as a conduit for some ideas, it also infects the peasant, yet it infects him with images alien to us. Perhaps, instead of all the conversations it would be better to put forth the sharper and deeper question about the advancement of art in the countryside, because I maintain that the village mural possibly means much more than some of the exhibitions that are taking place here in Moscow. We now plan this work for several decades; work on the economic cultural reconstruction of the countryside—we have a fundamental slogan, which will be valid for ten, twenty years. If you artists paint some club or a church transformed into a club—and I hope that soon all churches will be transformed into clubs—if you paint this club and provide meaningful content in the images, then the peasant who goes to this club will see these images all the time. I say that this will be a truly great thing, because in due time, perhaps in a few years, these images will have an influence on the peasant masses. This is the work which we need to begin. We are not saying that fresco should be dragged on for thousands of years, but we take into account our concrete abilities, the factual content of our era and we say that in the course of ten to fifteen years fresco will perhaps become more progressive than easel painting and that in this fresco it is necessary to present images, the fundamental slogans of our time, about which I spoke and which are not at all transient, but intended for a long time.

In fresco, we are able to present more meaningfully the images, content and ideas which we want to share with our peasants, with our workers. However, this will be impossible if the entire process remains as it was before. To date it has only consisted of various artistic directions with a narrow professional point of view fighting between each other, when they speak in the majority of cases in disputes with each other, like vendors of pictures. When any of the leading critics points out some inadequacy, it is treated like damage to the asking price of their paintings and they begin to protest against this from the viewpoint of their narrow professional interests. This is entirely unnecessary. What is needed is the organization of all artists around some sort of nucleus, around some sort of major center, which will provide an organizational line, which will provide specific directives for collaboration between artists on drawing art closer to the masses, but in reality and not only in words.

This, I believe, was the goal of this dispute, and if this has been achieved to some extent, then this already represents a valuable positive fact.

1. However, of course, petit-bourgeois groups will continue for a long time to reproduce easel forms. Therefore, it is also necessary to talk about them and it is necessary to guide their development, directing it towards more progressive forms.

Originally published in Russian as A. Mikhailov, "Kino i zhivopis'," *Iskusstvo SSSR i zadachi khudozhnikov. Disput*. (Moscow, 1928): 70–71, 107–10. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 468–70.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Why do We Need Fresco? 1929

D46

### A. Mikhailov

... In our time painting is gradually giving way to other forms of art, which better organize collective consciousness (cinema), fixate life (photography) and organize mass everyday life (production art) . . .

But all of this, of course, is in the future. In order to arrive at this a certain transitional period is necessary, during which there will be both easel art and along with it transitional forms. We place fresco among the latter . . .

... According to their principles, [easel painting] provides commensurate with its abilities, not the combination of events but discrete unrelated facts with all their insignificant and unimportant specifics. It uses formal approaches that are both broken and exclusively externally descriptive. It is designed for sustained viewing. On the contrary, fresco is more laconic, its forms are more rational and concentrated.

Originally published in Russian as A. Mikhailov, "Pochemy nam nuzhna freska?" *Vecherniaia Moskva* 12 (May 30, 1929). For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 473–74.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Soviet Monumental Painting 1929

D47

### F. Nevezhin and D. Mirlas

... We insist that while designing a club, housing or communal buildings, the Soviet architect, while mindful of costs and the economy of materials should not forget the artistic design of the building. He should employ for this purpose elements and artistic architectural forms that organically grow on the soil of Soviet reality, as well as the achievements of our fine arts—fresco, easel painting, sculpture. Here, of course, we are not talking about the mechanical "allotment of a place" for decoration, but the organic artistic design, considered during the planning and construction of a building . . .

Recently in the pages of *Vecherniaia Moskva* [Moscow Evening Paper] comrade Mikhailov attempted to defend Soviet fresco, of course, as a temporary transitional form of Soviet fine art. We are amazed by the instantaneous changes of opinion of Mikhailov and like-minded persons, the temporary and "transitive" nature of their own principles. For goodness sake, not so long ago they were singing a requiem over unburied paintings, and suddenly such an unexpected change: "Agreed, let there be fresco for the time being!" It turns out they did not notice that young Soviet artists were falling in love and fell in love with monumental painting, so as this is the case and it can't be helped, now it's time to grant a stay of execution for fresco painting.

In the opinion of Mikhailov and his associates, the future art of the proletariat will be laconic, will not demand great time for viewing, will be quickly produced—in sum it will be similar to cinema or photography. We cannot achieve this presently due to technical conditions, and thus we make do with an old "crutch," i.e. easel painting and fresco. Looking at the fluid views of Mikhailov, we must agree that only cinema may keep pace with such changes in world-view. If this is true, and we all changed with such speed, then what would remain of "Marxism" according to Mikhailov and his colleagues? Of course, his beloved monumental painting, in his words, contains a foundation for its existence in the future, with the exception of a few elements incompatible with the coming culture. For example, to Mikhailov's displeasure, art cannot shift and cannot represent random discrete moments of life. We think the opposite—his is not a minus but a plus for fresco. The fact is that fresco is able to encompass broadly the synthetic artistic image and therefore can remain topical for many years. The fact that it is not portable is also in its favor, since it has its own specific place, and does not serve both yours and ours, as does your photography, comrade Mikhailov, which is "one size fits all."

Let the reader, if he so desires, familiarize himself with the "latest" opinions of Mikhailov, but for the present we will try to explain what has inspired young artists to "take a great interest" in fresco . . . We fell in love not with the ecstatic eyes of saints, gazing down from the old church walls, but rather with monumental painting itself, with its means and possibilities.

The difference between our proletarian everyday life and bourgeois everyday life is, of course, collectivism. The changed form of communal life, the construction of enormous clubs, of parks of culture, etc., the presence of an organized viewer, who is living with collective social aspirations, of course, all of this presents the artist with specific tasks, and monumental painting, as one of the forms of fine art, can and should address these needs . . .

The most important thing is that the work the AKhR youth, which was completed in the club of VKhUTEIN and the Dzerzhinskii club, is without a doubt a phenomenon of great social and cultural significance. This is due to the very fact that at the moment of the greatest infatuation of youth with formalist aestheticism and easel painting, a group of young artists left behind easelism and took up wall painting, which has no living tradition in the recent past upon which it could be based. Despite the sneers of all lovers of "pure art," this group with their social aim and productivity conquers a specific place and succeeds in bringing art towards laborers. They gain attention not by talking but by doing, even if initially in a timid manner and with big mistakes.

Let this be a dream of cultural revolution, but the AKhR dream is a thousand times better than the reality of immaterial formalism or "your," comrade Mikhailov, current "Octoberite" infatuation with "photo-cinema-ism." . . .

Using the language of the masses and artistic images, the monumental artist may force the walls to speak about the difficult past and unfold upon them a heroic tale about the recent achievements of the masses.

The artist will unfold grandiose synthetic images of socialist construction, images of the international solidarity of the working class. Finally, one cannot exclude from the scope of attempts of monumental painting to provide enthusiastic images of the future, of the best future, for which we cannot cease to fight persistently and selflessly.

Thus, the tasks of monumental painting, in line with a number of other arts, fall within the general scope of worldwide socialist construction.

Originally published in Russian as F. Nevezhin and D. Mirlas, "Sovetskaia monumental'naia zhivopis'," *Iskusstvo v massy* 1-2 (April-May 1929): 11-15. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 474-75.

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## At the Factory 1929

D48

D. Mirlas

In Dnepropetrovsk

For a long time I knew, understood and felt that one needs to know and to represent workers, but what would this look like in reality? My first sensation was awkwardness. I did not know how to behave, what to look at, what to draw. All the instructions from Moscow, poorly remembered anyway, were completely forgotten. A typical incident. In the tube-rolling workshop, I started to draw the rolling mill with a feeding mechanism. Near it stood a worker, and he inserted a bar of iron into the mill. This was the only person tending the machine, and he was very involved with it. I began to draw this. One of the workers, who displayed interest in what I was drawing, on the spot observed that this feeding mechanism was obsolete and, according to the regulations, a worker should not feed bars of iron. He asked that this not be sketched "for the newspaper." Quite embarrassed by this valid observation, I chucked out this drawing and again set out to roam about the workshops . . .

We still have very few images of working reality, when objects are manufactured. This theme is no less majestic than the ancient biblical creation of the world . . .

Even a short period of recuperation at a factory has a curative effect on the psyche of the artist, who still suffers from all sorts of illnesses of a bourgeois influence in his art.

Originally published in Russian as D. Mirlas, "Na zavode," *Iskusstvo v massy* 5-6 (September 1929): 16-17. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 420-21.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## The Shock Brigade of AKhR (Grain State Farm no. 2) Rogov, Merkulov, Tsamaia, Vysotskii, Meretskii

The experience of work of the shock brigade of the OMAKhR at State Grain Farm no. 2 merits great attention. Each brigade of artists and each individual artist, engaging in the struggle for socialist construction, for the industrial and financial plan, needs to go from the position of an observer and “depicter” to the position of an active builder of life.

Precisely here lies the path of the most fruitful creative search for elements of proletarian style in art.

To date the plan of great works—the Five-Year Plan—does not apply to the artist. Stirred up by casual inspiration “from order to order,” he “creates” in isolation from life.

Exhibitions are full of irrelevant things. Seldom does one encounter canvases that represent our construction, and even then in comparison with the stormy movement of reality they seem like extracts from an archive and are illustrations of the shameful tempos in the visual arts.

Obviously, this cannot continue . . .

The fundamental points in the plan of work established by the shock brigade were the following:

The desire to represent the state farm not in individual finished canvases, but rather to create a full series of canvases in the manner of studies and sketches, executed in a pre-conceived manner, breaking down the theme of the state farm into basic moments. In short, not individual easel things, but a complex of works, fulfilled by the collective on one general theme.

Taking the state farm under our patronage in the area of artistic design and artistic influence in the plan of tasks, being carried out by the state farm . . .

The bureau of shock brigades of AKhR under the direct participation of cells of the VLKSM of the Grain Trust entered into an agreement with the Grain Trust.

A plan of work for the brigade was worked out and approved, according to which within a five month period it should complete an exhibition of one hundred canvases in a sketch manner and as many studies, according to the following conditions:

All production, completed by the brigade, will belong to the Grain Trust.

The authors will not receive remuneration for individual works.

For the course of all five months, the brigade will receive the minimum necessary for life at the state farm.

The brigade will consist of five persons, receiving all materials for work at the expense of the Grain Trust and AKhR.

Entering the agreement and receiving the assignment from the Bureau of Shock Brigades of AKhR, on May 8 the brigade left for its place of work at the State Grain Farm no. 2 in the Northern Caucasus.

On arrival to the state farm, the brigade experienced suspicious treatment from the administration. However, this is easily explained by the large quantity of “inspectors,” “researchers” and observers who have inundated the state farm.

Immediately upon arrival they put together a working plan for each day of the first month. The workday was set at eight hours, of which two hours were for communal work. They started with sketches and examination of the state farm and instantly came into close contact with the worker’s committee and the Komsomol [Communist Youth League] cell. The first production conference, designed by the brigade, introduced it into the tempo and life of state farm production . . . The work of the artist was silent, but decisively acknowledged as equivalent to all other types of work at the state farm. Tractor driver – tractor – field; artist – easel – wall newspaper—all of this was tied together and valued all the more when our artistic youth willingly gave up their brushes for the usual state farm work. All together—the merging into the life of the state farm, the battle by artistic means

for the production plan, active participation in production work, work on the wall newspaper—this turned out to be the best creative raid, the truest method for the disclosure of relevant artistic images . . .

Originally published in Russian as “Za novye metody raboty,” *Iskusstvo v massy* 7 (July 1930): 36–37. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 422–24.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# On the Upcoming Soviet Exhibition of the October Group in Berlin 1930

D50

Durus, A. I. Gutnov and F. Tagirov

## A New Kind of Artist: From the Studio to the Factory

Two Russian artists, October group members Gutnov and Tagirov, happen to be in Berlin. Our colleague D(urus) managed to speak to them on the occasion of the upcoming exhibition.

The artist is joining the working class. Among other things, they remarked: in the Soviet Union, a whole new kind of artist has emerged. Many of our artists have already stopped working as detached “intellectual” workers in the vacuum of their “studios.” For the artist, the studio is being replaced by the industrial plant, the factory. The artist is becoming an industrial worker, working with other industrial workers in the factory.

Instead of the old, manual principles, art has taken on the economic, technical and psychological basis of the socialist factory. And as for the individualistic artist? The petit bourgeois artist-anarchist, with his bumptious notions about some supposedly “pure” art drifting up in the clouds somewhere, is dying out. Through his participation in material production he stops being a petit bourgeois individualist, a petit bourgeois anarchist. He takes on the collective psychology of the revolutionary proletariat. His factory collective collaborates on his art works, in the putting together of a design plan for a club with the critical involvement of the workers, for example. The artist’s client is no longer the patron but the factory. The workers revise the artist’s initial designs. The artist’s collaborative work with the masses of the industrial proletariat has had cataclysmic results on the greater part of Soviet art.

An important principle of October, the most progressive revolutionary group of proletarian artists in the USSR, is that the artist must serve the socialist way of life, the building of socialism, and the struggle of the Russian proletariat on economic, political and cultural fronts. The artist must work either as part of collective industry or as an agitator and propagandist. In the October group only six artists are still producing work in studios, while a further 240 are already affiliated with factories and production plants.

The artist should concern himself, not with the development of his own artistic personality, but rather with playing his part in improving the circumstances of the working classes. Art that fails to challenge class enemies or to bring about a change in ways of life (as an ideological and industrial-collective means of production) is useless and socially pointless art. In the age of industrialization and collectivization the artist must shed his personal “aesthetic” idiosyncrasies and devote himself instead to the collective duties of the new society and of industrial works and factories in particular.

## The Masses as Artist

As opposed to current approaches to painting?!

We believe that painting can no longer fulfill the considerable demands made of us by the five-year plans. The idea of the masses as artist is increasingly replacing that of the individual artist in the plan.<sup>1</sup>

Our art is primarily geared, not towards the backward strata of the “peasantry,” but rather towards the most progressive sectors of the industrial proletariat as it advances the realization of the Five-Year Plan. (We obviously take the special requirements of villages into consideration as far as possible. We’re not dreamers.)

The struggle for a new life and for a new mankind are the main aims of the Soviet Union’s most forward-looking artists, cultural revolutionaries in the truest sense of the word. Proletarian culture, however, emerges not from a group of artists but rather from the ideological struggle among all groups and above all through the artistically self-reliant strata of the proletariat itself. Through the work of the worker-draughtsmen and the worker-photographers, through the impact of the agit-prop groups (TRAM), etc.

A. I. Gutnov, secretary of October, curated the Berlin exhibition and gave lectures as part of the show. At the time he was working on the presidential campaign with John Heartfield. —AH-L

1. The first signs of this were already to be seen in pre-Nazi Germany: worker/artist correspondents; collective movements to decorate entire streets with placards, banners and red flags for revolutionary mass celebrations; agit-prop groups; the typographic and pictorial lay-out of factory newspapers by anonymous comrades [Ed.]

Originally published in German as Durus, A. I. Gutnov, and F. Tagirov, “Zur bevorstehenden Sowjetrussischen Ausstellung der Gruppe Oktjabr,” *Rote Fahne* (Berlin, September 19, 1930); reprinted in *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 189–90.

The version here has been translated from the German original by Andrew Davison.



# It is Necessary to Study Poster Design

## 1931

D51

Dmitrii Moor

... A reproduction of Titian's *Venus* was hung in the exhibition of posters at KOR. I have several of the questionnaires completed by visitors to this exhibition. Here is one of them: "Why has this woman found nothing better to do than to strip naked and look at herself in a mirror?" This was completed by a woman worker. Here is another: "A naked dame looks in a mirror. They print this thing here in the USSR and hang it in exhibitions, where teenagers can look at it." These two documents expose to criticism the reality of Titian. The protest of a woman against the act of gazing at herself, as if at bedding accessories, is the protest of a woman who does not want to go about in the world of the mother of God or the prostitute Mary Magdalene, it is the protest of a woman builder who is equal in rights. The person who thinks that there is a moral here does not understand anything—it is a *thoughtful, reasonable real protest*. This thing is unreal for contemporary women in the present life that is being built. But Titian, as you know, was realistic in his time and even very much so. We will attempt to draw some conclusions from this.

Artistic-figurative realism is one of the methods of class struggle that purposefully organizes class emotion, and the perception of the class knowledge of the artist, which by the selection of means (linear, volume-spatial and color) is compacted into the pictorial expression intrinsic to the artist. It actively establishes a single visual surface, accessible for understanding and reaction by his class.

Every time has its own class dictate, its own selection of means, its own composition and color, its own emotion. Reality is different for each time.

...

### Content-Theme-Subject

Content is the movement of the struggling class, the movement of the part towards the whole, the process of actual life. Content is class struggle, and this must be clearly envisioned. Class influence is the mandate for the artist to use the means of art to call forth, sharpen and direct emotion and the will of the viewer in a particular direction . . .

... For the poster, the content is the class struggle, and hence when determining the theme for a poster it is necessary to clarify specifics of the processes that give rise to an image. The editor must clearly understand all of these processes and provide their details to the artist. Unfortunately, often editors do not furnish this to the artists, because they themselves do not understand the definition of content for the poster. Often when receiving an assignment for a poster, I in no way can understand what the editors understood by the word "content," while these processes should be clearly established by the editors.

Theme is the political task for today, hence the precise knowledge of these political tasks.

Subject is the slogan, hence the precise establishment of the limits of action of a slogan and its placement according to theme.

### What is the Poster Form?

The most complete definition of the poster form is: The most purposeful mass thematic and maximally laconic form, having the aim to organize the emotion of the masses, like a will, towards action according to the dictates of class. This is delivered through background unity, thematic color, color laconism, graphic quality of execution, made with accountability to printing materials, and printed on paper.

Originally published in Russian as Dmitrii Moor, "Oforneniiu plakata nado učit'sia," *Brigada khudozhnikov* 4 (1931): 10–16. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 438–40.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) about Poster-Picture Agitation and Propaganda

## 1931

D52

§ 1. The Central Committee recognizes the intolerably scandalous attitude towards poster and picture affairs on the part of a variety of publishers . . . this has found its expression in the publication of a significant percentage of anti-Soviet posters and pictures.

[Commentary]: Recognizing the scandalous state of poster affairs, the resolution of the TsK VKP(b) about poster and mass pictures in essence pronounces a sentence upon the entire front of the spatial arts . . .

... The poster and the mass printed picture penetrate into all nooks of communal life and are an irreplaceable visual means for the ideological re-education of the broad masses. The party cannot ignore this mighty weapon of influence, especially when this weapon rather often turns up in the neutral or enemy hands of opportunists and philistines . . .

Each poster should be a strike against the enemy, it should be able to expose and evaluate reality, it should intervene in life and truly change it in the interests of the proletarian revolution. It should not be a neutral, apolitical, abstract, self-absorbed art . . .

§ 3. It is resolved to ask the TsKK-RKI (Central Control Commission and the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection) to investigate the matter of the publication of ideologically harmful posters and pictures and to call to account the concrete culprits . . .

§ 6. It is resolved to require the periodical press to arrange the systematic review of published picture-poster production . . .

§ 7. It is resolved to involve the fine arts section of the communist Academy, the Central Committee of Rabis and Glaviskusstvo for practical assistance in poster-picture affairs. It is resolved to organize a special society of poster artists in order to improve the ideological-artistic quality of posters and pictures, and also to employ the Institute of Red Professors for political consultation hearings.

§ 8. It is resolved to organize within IZOGIZ a workers' council of representatives from the largest industrial enterprises of Moscow, to establish the order for preliminary discussion of IZOGIZ's publishing plans at enterprises, with the enlistment of male and female workers for comment upon them and discussion of sketches, and also for the review of completed picture-poster production by means of the organization of traveling exhibitions and so forth.

[Commentary] On April 5 the first session of the workers artistic-political council within IZOGIZ took place . . .

Twenty-two posters were presented . . .

As a result, the workers editorial council rejected 50% of the viewed production (eleven posters). Two posters were accepted without changes, and eight posters received suggestions for reworking . . .

The council noted as known achievements two posters published by IZOGIZ: *We are Mastering Technology* by the artist Deineka and *The USSR is the Shock Brigade [of the World Proletariat]* by the artist Klucis.

§ 9. It is resolved to unite within IZOGIZ the publication of all mass picture-poster production.

Originally published in Russian as "Shto znamenuet i kak vpolnetsia reshenie leninskogo shtaba? Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) o plakatno-kartinoi agitatsii i propaganda," *Brigada khudozhnikov* 203 (1931): 1–3. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 434–35.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

# Resolution on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations 1932

D53

## Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)

The Central Committee states that over recent years literature and art have made considerable advances, both quantitative and qualitative, on the basis of the significant progress of socialist construction.

A few years ago the influence of alien elements, especially those revived by the first years of NEP,<sup>1</sup> was still apparent and marked. At this time, when the cadres of proletarian literature were still weak, the Party helped in every possible way to create and consolidate special proletarian organs in the field of literature and art in order to maintain the position of proletarian writers and art workers.

At the present time the cadres of proletarian literature and art have managed to expand, new writers and artists have come forward from the factories, plants and collective farms, but the confines of the existing proletarian literature and art organizations (VOAPP, RAPP, RAPM,<sup>2</sup> etc.) are becoming too narrow and are hampering the serious development of artistic creation. This factor creates a danger: these organizations might change from being an instrument for the maximum mobilization of Soviet writers and artists for the tasks of socialist construction to being an instrument for cultivating elitist withdrawal and loss of contact with the political tasks of contemporaneity and with the important groups of writers and artists who sympathize with socialist construction.

Hence the need for the appropriate reconstruction of literary and artistic organizations and the extension of the basis of their activity.

Following from this, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) resolves:

1. To liquidate the Association of Proletarian Writers (VOAPP, RAPP).
2. To unite all writers who support the platform of the Soviet government and who aspire to participate in socialist construction in a single Union of Soviet Writers with a communist faction therein.
3. To carry out analogous changes with regard to the other arts.
4. To charge the Organizational Bureau with working out practical measures for the fulfillment of this resolution.

This resolution, passed on April 23, 1932, marked the culmination of a series of measures that had been curtailing the artist's independence (e.g. the decrees "On the Party's Policy in the Field of Artistic Literature," 1925, and "On the Production of Poster Pictures," 1931). Before the 1932 decree there had been attempts to consolidate artistic forces by establishing umbrella societies, such as the All-Russian Union of Cooperative Partnerships of Visual Art Workers (Vsekokhudozhnik) in 1929, the Federation of Associations of Soviet Artists (FOSKh) in 1930 and the Russian Association of Proletarian Artists (RAPKh) in 1931, but such organizations had retained a certain independence of the political machine. The direct result of the 1932 decree was to dissolve all official art groups immediately; and although the proposed single Union of Artists of the USSR (SKh SSSR) was not convoked until 1957, a special committee was organized in 1936 to take charge of all art affairs except those involving architecture and the cinema—the Committee for Art Affairs Attached to the Council of USSR Ministers; in turn, the decree prepared the ground for the conclusive advocacy of socialist realism at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 (see pp. 388). For reactions to the decree see *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), pp. 645–51.

The text of this piece, *O Perestroike literaturno-khudozhestvennykh organizatsii*, appeared as a separate pamphlet in 1932; it is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, from which this translation is made; it has also been reprinted several times since Matsa.<sup>3</sup>

— JB

1. The period of the New Economic Policy (1921–28) was marked by a partial return to a capitalist economic system.  
2. All-Union Federation of Associations of Proletarian Writers (Vsesoiuznoe ob'edinenie assotsiatsii proletarskikh pisatelei, VOAPP); Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (Rossiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh pisatelei, RAPP); Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (Rossiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh muzykantov, RAPM).  
3. For instance, in *Assotsiatsiia Khudozhnikov Revoliutsionnoi Rossii*, comp. I. Gronskii and V. Perel'man (Moscow, 1973).

Originally published in Russian as "O perestroike literaturno-khudozhestvennykh organizatsii. Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) ot 23 apreliia 1932 goda," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo* 9 (1932):62. It is reprinted in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let*, ed. Ivan Matsa (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), 644–45, from which this translation is made. It has also been reprinted several times since Matsa, e.g., in *Assotsiatsiia Khudozhnikov Revoliutsionnoi Rossii*, comp. I. Gronskii and V. Perel'man (Moscow, 1973).

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "Decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 288–90.

# Contributions to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers 1934

D54

## From Andrei Zhdanov's Speech

Comrades, in the name of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Soviet of People's Commissars of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, allow me to present our warmest greetings to the first congress of Soviet writers and thereby to all the writers of our Soviet Union—headed by the great proletarian writer Aleksei Maksimovich Gorky [*Loud applause*].

Comrades, your congress is meeting at a time when the basic difficulties confronting us on the path of socialist construction have already been overcome, when our country has laid the foundation of a socialist economy—something that is bound closely to the victorious policy of industrialization and the construction of state and collective farms.

Your congress is meeting at a time when the socialist way of life has gained final and complete victory in our country—under the leadership of the Communist Party and under our leader of genius, Comrade Stalin [*Loud applause*]. Consequently, advancing from milestone to milestone, from victory to victory, from the time of the civil war to the reconstruction period, and from the reconstruction period to the socialist reconstruction of the entire national economy, our Party has led the country to victory over capitalist elements, ousting them from all spheres of the national economy. . . .

In our hands we hold a sure weapon, thanks to which we can overcome all the difficulties besetting our path. This weapon is the great and invincible doctrine of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, a doctrine that has been put into practice by our Party and by our Soviets.

The great banner of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin is victorious. It is thanks precisely to this victorious banner that the first congress of Soviet writers has met together here. If there had been no such victory, then there would have been no congress. Only we Bolsheviks, no one else, could have convoked such a congress as this. . . .

Comrade Stalin has called our writers "engineers of human souls."<sup>1</sup> What does this mean? What obligations does this title impose on you?

First of all, it means that you must know life so as to depict it truthfully in your works of art—and not to depict it scholastically, lifelessly, or merely as "objective reality"; you must depict reality in its revolutionary development.

In this respect, truth and historical concreteness of the artistic depiction must be combined with the task of the ideological transformation and education of the working people in the spirit of socialism. This method of artistic literature and literary criticism is what we call socialist realism. . . .

To be an engineer of human souls means to stand with both feet on the ground of real life. And this, in turn, denotes a break with the old-style romanticism that depicted a nonexistent life with nonexistent heroes and that spirited the reader away from the contradictions and oppression of life to an unreal world, to a world of utopias. Romanticism cannot be alien to our literature, which stands with both feet on the firm basis of materialism; but it must be a romanticism of a new kind, a revolutionary romanticism. We say that socialist realism is the basic method of Soviet artistic literature and literary criticism, and this presupposes that revolutionary romanticism must enter literary creation as an integral part, because the whole life of our Party, of our working class and its struggle consists of a combination of the most severe, most sober practical work with supreme heroism and grand prospects. Our Party has always derived its strength from the fact that it united—and continues to unite—particular activity and practicality with grand prospects, with a ceaseless aspiration onward, with the struggle for the construction of a communist society. Soviet literature must be able to show our heroes, must be able to catch a glimpse of our tomorrow. This will not be a utopia, because our tomorrow is being prepared today by our systematic and conscious work. . . .

Create works with a high level of craftsmanship, with high ideological and artistic content!

Be as active as you can in organizing the transformation of the human consciousness in the spirit of socialism!

Be in the vanguard of the fighters for a classless socialist society! [*Loud applause*].

## From Maxim Gorky's Speech on Soviet Literature

. . . All of us—writers, factory workers, collective-farm workers—still work badly and do not even grasp *in toto* everything created by us, for us. Our working masses still do not fully comprehend that they are working for themselves and in their own interests. This realization is slowly awakening everywhere, but it has still not burst into a powerful and joyful incandescence. But nothing can burst into flame until it has reached a certain temperature, and nothing has ever raised the temperature of working energy so splendidly as the Party—organized by the genius of Vladimir Lenin—and the present leader of this Party.

We must choose labor as the central hero of our books, i.e., man organized by the processes of labor, who in our country is armed with all the might of modern technology, man who, in turn, is making labor easier, more productive, raising it to the level of art. We must learn to understand labor as creativity. Creativity is a term that we writers use too often—while scarcely having the right to do so. Creativity comes about at that degree of intense mental work when the mind, in its rapidity of work, extracts the more salient and characteristic facts, images and details from the reserves of knowledge and transposes them into very precise, vivid, and intelligible words. Our young literature cannot boast of this quality. Our writers' reserves of impressions, their depths of knowledge are not great, and one does not feel that they care much about expanding and deepening their reserves. . . .

## From Igor Grabar's Speech

Comrades, we, visual arts workers, have come here to give the congress our warmest proletarian greetings in the name of the entire army of the visual arts front.

Comrades, there are no realms more closely linked than those of Soviet literature and Soviet art. Comrade writers, you depict life as you see it, understand it and feel it, and we depict it in the same way. You use the method of socialist realism, and we too use this well-tested method—the best of all existing ones.

I don't have to remind you that we are not merely the illustrators of your books; we are also your comrades in arms. We together have fought, are fighting, and will fight our common class enemy [*Applause*]. We both have the same class aspiration. We both have a common past, a common present and a common future.

It is not worth dwelling on the distant past. It is dismal enough. In those days there did not exist the socialist direction that emerged only with the revolution and that alone rouses us to perform real, heroic deeds.

But even in the recent past, in the first years of the revolution, not everything went smoothly from the start. Our ranks were thin. Slowly but surely they began to expand as decisive progress was made on the front of socialist construction, and with this gradual expansion these ranks came to assume an impressive force.

Comrade writers, we share with you one very important date—April 23, 1932—the day when the fact of our inclusion in the great edifice erected by the Party was recognized, an inclusion unconditional and unreserved. In this the Party displayed its trust in us and rendered us a great honor.

Comrades, hitherto we have not fully justified this trust and honor, but we have come here to take a solemn oath that we will justify this trust and honor in the very near future.

Comrades, we have paid great heed to everything that has gone on within these walls over the past weeks. We have listened to so many of you state that this congress has taught you much. Comrades, this congress has taught us a great deal too. We hope to make good use of your experience and of the ideas that you have expressed here at our own congress, which will take place in the near future—a congress of visual arts workers [*Applause*].<sup>2</sup>

For the moment, allow me to state that your congress has already redoubled our belief in the proximity of the final victory of socialism, that this congress has trebled our conviction and our will to give over our pencil and our chisel to the great creator of socialism and a classless society—to the mighty Party of Lenin and to its leader, Comrade Stalin [*Applause*].

Comrades, as a sign of our strength of will, allow me to present this congress with a portrait of our leader—done by one of the representatives of our younger generation, Comrade Malkov [*Long applause*].<sup>3</sup>

### From the First Section of the Charter of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR

The great victories of the working class in the struggle for socialism have assured literature, art, science, and cultural growth as a whole of exceptional prospects for their development.

The fact that non-Party writers have turned toward the Soviet regime and that proletarian artistic literature has achieved gigantic growth has, with urgent insistence, demonstrated the need to unite writers' forces—both Party and non-Party—in a single writers' organization.

The historic resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on April 23, 1932, indicated that the organizational form of this unification would be the creation of a single Union of Soviet Writers. At the same time, it pointed to the ideological and creative paths along which Soviet artistic literature would advance.

A decisive condition for literary growth, for its artistic craftsmanship, its ideological and political saturation, is the close and direct link of the literary movement with the topical issues of the Party's policies and the Soviet regime, the inclusion of writers in active socialist construction, and their careful and profound study of concrete reality.

During the years of proletarian dictatorship, Soviet artistic literature and Soviet literary criticism, hand in hand with the working class and guided by the Communist Party, have worked out their own new creative principles. These creative principles have been formulated on the one hand as a result of critical assimilation of the literary heritage of the past and, on the other, on the basis of a study of the experience gained from the triumphant construction of socialism and the development of socialist culture. These creative bases have found their chief expression in the principles of socialist realism.

Socialist realism, as the basic method of Soviet artistic literature and literary criticism, requires of the artist a true, historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. In this respect, truth and historical concreteness of the artistic depiction of reality must be combined with the task of the ideological transformation and education of the workers in the spirit of socialism.

Socialist realism assures artistic creation of exceptional prospects for manifesting creative initiative, of a choice of diverse forms, styles and genres. The victory of socialism, the intense growth of production forces unprecedented in the history of mankind, the growing process of class liquidation, the abolition of any possibility of man exploiting man and the abolition of the opposition between town and country, and finally the unprecedented progress in the growth of science, technology and culture—all these factors create limitless opportunities for the qualitative and quantitative growth of creative forces and the flowering of all species of art and literature . . .

The Union of Soviet Writers, founded in 1932, held its first congress in Moscow from August 17 to September 2, 1934. The minutes were published as *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934. Stenograficheskii otchet*.<sup>4</sup> This congress, under the chairmanship of Maxim Gorky, played a major role in the history of Soviet culture not only because it constituted an impressive symbol of solidarity (almost six hundred delegates from almost fifty Soviet nationalities were present), but also because it advocated socialist realism as the only viable artistic medium for Soviet literature and art. Throughout the 1920s, the ideas of realism and, more specifically, heroic realism had been supported by Party officials as well as by a number of Soviet writers and artists (the latter especially in the context of AKhRR). Although the term socialist realism was coined in the spring of 1932, its meaning remained imprecise as Lunacharskii, for example, indicated: "Socialist realism is an extensive program; it includes many different methods—those we already possess and those we are still acquiring."<sup>5</sup> The 1934 congress, particularly in the persons of Gorky and Andrei Zhdanov, attempted to explain the concept of socialist realism and to advance principles such as typicality, optimism, "revolutionary romanticism," "reality in its revolutionary development," as fundamental to the understanding the new doctrine. In literature, in fact, Gorky was regarded as the founder of socialist realism since these qualities could be identified with much of his work, particularly with his plays and with his famous novel *Mat'* (Mother, 1906). Within the framework of the visual arts, there was no precursor of Gorky's stature, although the very strong realist movement of the second half of the nineteenth century provided a firm traditional basis, and later realists such as Abram Arkhipov and Nikolai Kasatkin acted as vital links between the pre-and post-revolutionary periods. While the emphasis of the congress was, of course, on literature, its general tenets were applicable to all the Soviet arts, especially to the visual arts. Igor Grabar, once a peripheral member of the world of art but never a radical artist, made this quite clear in his speech:

not only did he accept the Party's jurisdiction in matters of art, but also his description of the "distant past" as "dismal" echoed Gorky's condemnation of the period 1907–17 as the "most disgraceful and shameful decade in the history of the Russian intelligentsia."<sup>6</sup> Grabar, already an Honored Art Worker and famous for his several pictures of Lenin, was the only professional artist who spoke at the congress. However, some of the literary speakers had been in contact with the more progressive forces of Russian and Soviet art. Viktor Shklovskii and Sergei Tret'iakov, for example, once associated with LEF and with the constructivists, made substantial contributions to the congress, although Shklovskii was quick to criticize his former artistic sympathies: "we, former members of LEF, took what was useful from life, thinking that this was aesthetic; we constructivists created a construction that proved to be nonconstructive . . ."<sup>7</sup> Such artists as Filonov, Malevich and Tatlin were not, of course, present at the congress. What became patently clear there was the degree to which artistic policy in the Soviet Union relied on the political machine, a fact expressed explicitly and implicitly in one of the opening speeches, by Andrei Zhdanov, then secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. Although Stalin himself did not speak at the congress, the numerous references to his leadership strewed throughout the speeches, and the formal addresses to Stalin and Marshal Voroshilov that concluded the congress, indicated the power that the governmental hierarchy already exerted in the field of art and literature. The effect of the congress on the evolution of Soviet art was decisive. The ratification of socialist realism as the only artistic style acceptable to a socialist society and, hence, as an international style, together with the several subsequent decrees that attempted to abolish "formalism" in the arts, led directly to its exclusive application in the USSR; and although this led, in turn, to a standardization of form and content, there is no doubt that the portraits of official celebrities, the industrial and collective farm landscapes, the scenes of the Red Army and Navy were immediately intelligible and achieved a lasting popularity among the masses. A parallel is drawn sometimes between Soviet socialist realism and American social realism of the 1930s and 1940s. While there are similarities in method, it should be remembered that the city scenes of Philip Evergood or Louis Lozowick, for example, were much more "actual" than their Soviet counterparts, i.e., they were concerned with a given scene at a given time and not with the potential of reality, with what Zhdanov called "revolutionary romanticism." It was precisely this quality that lent a certain vigor and imaginative-ness to the Soviet work of the 1930s, evident, for example, in the scenes of factories under construction, of harvesting, of shipyards, i.e., optimistic scenes that contained a "glimpse of tomorrow" (Zhdanov). Unfortunately, the postwar period has witnessed an adulteration of the original socialist realist principles—revolutionary romanticism has been replaced often by sentimentalism, optimism by overt fantasy—and few modern works in this idiom still maintain the intensity and single-mindedness of the initial socialist realist work.

There were twenty-six separate sessions at the congress, dedicated to various areas of interest, and there were almost three hundred spoken contributions. Among the Soviet speakers, many famous names figured, such as Isaak Babel, Dem'ian Bednyi, Kornei Chukovskii, Il'ia Erenburg, Konstantin Fedin, Fedor Gladkov, Vera Inber, Boris Pasternak, Marietta Shaginian and Aleksandr Tairov. In addition, there were also forty-one non-Soviet participants, including Louis Aragon, Robert Gessner, André Malraux, Klaus Mann, Karl Radek, Ernst Toller and Amabel Williams-Ellis.

The full texts of the above pieces were published in the collection of reports, speeches and resolutions entitled *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934. Stenograficheskii otchet* (see note 4 below), and the translations are from pp. 2–5, 13–14, 545–46, and 716 respectively. A version of the proceedings appeared in an English translation as *Problems of Soviet Literature* (New York, 1935); although much abridged it contains the full texts of the Zhdanov and Gorky speeches as well as of Karl Radek's "Contemporary World Literature and the Tasks of Proletarian Art" and Nikolai Bukharin's "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR."

— JB

1. Stalin called Soviet writers "engineers of human souls" in conversation with Gorky and other writers on October 26, 1932. See I. V. Stalin, *Sobranie sochinenii* [Collected Works], vol. 13 (Moscow, 1951), 410.
2. Such a congress did not, in fact, take place until 1957, although an All-Union Congress of Architects was held in 1937.
3. Pavel Vasilevich Malkov, a former pupil of Dmitrii Kardovskii, achieved a certain reputation during the 1930s and 1940s for his paintings and graphics on themes such as Soviet industry and the Red Army. The present whereabouts of the portrait in question is not known.
4. First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers 1934. Stenographic Report, see *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934. Stenograficheskii otchet*, ed. I. Luppel, M. Rozental' and S. Tret'iakov (Moscow, November 1934); English version in Andrei Zhdanov, *Problems of Soviet Literature. Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress*, ed. H. G. Scott (New York: International Publishers, 1935).
5. From "Sotsialisticheskii realizm," in A. Lunacharskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, vol. 8, ed. I. Anisimov et al. (Moscow, 1963–67), 501.
6. Luppel, Rozental' and Tret'iakov 1934 (see note 4 above), 12.
7. *Ibid.*, 155.
8. For details on the general artistic climate of the 1930s, including commentary on the congress, see John E. Bowlit, "The Virtues of Soviet Realism," *Art in America* (New York), vol. 60, no. 6 (November 1972), 100–7; Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art under a Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University, 1964); L. Zinger and M. Orlova, eds., "Iskusstvo narodov SSSR ot Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii do 1941 g.," in *Istoriiia iskusstv narodov SSSR*, vol. 7 (Moscow, 1972); N. Leizerov, "V poiskakh i bor'be," *Iz istorii esteticeskikh vozzrenii i esteticeskogo vospitaniia v sovetskoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1971); O. Sopotsinskii et al., *Stanovlenie sotsialisticheskogo realizma v sovetskom izobrazitel'nom iskusstve* (Moscow, 1960).

Originally published in Russian as *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934. Stenograficheskii otchet*, ed. Ivan Luppel et al. (Moscow, November 1934): 2–5, 13–14, 545–46, 716.

The version here has been reproduced by permission, with minor changes, from "Contributions to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers [Extracts]," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, ed. and trans. John E. Bowlit, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 290–97.

# Discussion by the Art Commission of the Cooperative “The Artist” about the Painting *Old and New* by Solomon Nikritin 1935

D55

At the session of the Art Commission of the Co-operative “The Artist” (Vsekokhudozhnik) on April 10, 1935, the picture *Old and New* by the artist Nikritin was under debate.

All the participants in the discussion, with the exception of the art critic Beskin, were themselves painters. The director of the Vsekokhudozhnik, Slavinskii, was in the chair.

The artist was summoned to the bar for the “disputation” on his work. I now cite the text of proceedings translated word for word:

Nikritin: The picture is entitled *Old and New*. It is a group-portrait. Please permit me to read out my further explanations. (*Reads.*) I wish to tell you how this picture originated, and how I worked on it.

All the figures and the situation are based on personal observation, on subjects which I myself saw. The old man was painted at the Iaroslavskii Market. The young man and the young girl are friends of mine, workers from the Metro Building. The Venus is well known. The situation was caught and observed at popular festivities, on the Lenin Hills, in the Park of Culture and Rest, on the Metro building-sites and on Moscow stations.

What I have painted here is fact, reality and truth. The attitude of each figure was made from the sketch of a concrete person, caught in the moment of a concrete, real situation. Thus, for example, I sketched the figure of the girl at the Vozdvizhenka. She stood on the top of a sand pile in the very pose in which she appears in the picture. She was directing the drawers of sand, looked along the street from top to bottom, at the people, the cars—looking at the city like a beautiful elegant lady who wanted to invite this city to a banquet . . .

This is fact; here my invention has added nothing, exaggerated nothing, lessened nothing, symbolized nothing: all this I myself saw, and so it was, so all the figures on the picture had their origin—the young man, the girl, the old man, the Venus, the stormy sky and the earth. I desired to catch the historical situation of their calling to one another as I saw it, and that is why I have called it a group-portrait, an historical portrait . . . The whole group is united by the uniformity of the scenery and its relation to its environment.

The world of the old and the new is seen from within. The old is apprehended not by its external features, but by its deepest innermost social-ethical idea of non-union, of detachment from the world. And here the old turned out to be small, helpless, simple and tedious . . . Thus there grew up within me the Venus and the old man, against whom life has set the new Venus, just as she is reproduced here, and the young man full of endeavor, energy, discipline and general intuition.

So much for the description of the so-called “literary” aspect. One word more about the painting. I wanted and had to proceed from the pictorial characteristics of the persons. The conflict of the theme I have solved by a conflict of the pictorial form.

That is my picture *Old and New*. Here are drawings and studies taken from the cycle of my preliminary sketches. I have nothing further to say.

Slavinskii: Any questions to the artist?

Lekht: You think that this picture is realistic? Then explain the figure of the young man. What is he doing and on what is he leaning? Is this movement justified or are there other laws making such an attitude possible?

Nikritin: I understand the reality in my composition and believe that it is objective. This youth—

Lekht: He is falling, from my viewpoint!

Nikritin: This youth and his comrades often visited me. And once, in the course of a long and interesting conversation, he quickly turned and began to look for a town on the globe. I felt that in this gesture there lay a genuine expression of the character of contemporary youth. That is how the figure of the young man came into being. I wanted to make him “flying.” I did not want him to be standing, but entirely in motion.

Deineka: How is it that the ball is in such an odd position?

Nikritin: Many questions have been put to me about this ball. I must say that I first heard that the ball was in an “odd” position when Ol’ga Nikolaevna [Bubnova] questioned me. I freely admit that I had not given it a thought. I had not imagined that these associations of an erotic character would arise. The impressions garnered when the picture was displayed in my room show that this association certainly did not occur to every one. From the standpoint of composition the ball is put here in so far as it is linked with the figure. It was important, in my view, to give the figure a start, to enhance its dynamics, the movement from one corner over the entire picture. After all, these two figures occupy the dominating central position in the picture, and it followed spontaneously that the ball and hands were put here and nowhere else.

Bogorodskii: When you were painting this picture did you think of the people for whom you were doing it, who would look at your work?

Nikritin: I may say that I not only thought of them, but decided on the present form together with the comrades whom I painted. Only after these reflections did I go to work with a will. Fedia (to Bogorodskii), I am convinced that this picture will some day be very easy to look at, if perhaps not yet. As a proof I may cite the fact that my comrades to whom I showed the picture shared my opinion. They felt age as well as youth as some very interesting complex of thoughts. I believe that these ideas will reach the great majority of onlookers.

Grigor’ev: Comrades, I shall not waste time on this matter.

If the artist says that here we have a presentation of our times, then it seems to me defamation. When I was still a student, we had a companion whose name was Savichev. Sometimes he would concoct something entirely unintelligible and describe it playfully as “Seven Graves, or a Troubled Eye.” I consider that this picture here is “Seven Graves, or a Troubled Eye.”

A. Gerasimov: While the artist was speaking of this picture two things became clear in my mind. The first was that this painter, judging by the tone of his speech and the appearance of this picture, is a martyr to his work, who desired to create something with all his heart and soul. I had a feeling of sincere pity for him, because the result of such a harrowing process does not even merit attention this time. But then, when he spoke on, I established something else. This type of artist was once very common. He is one of those people who want to talk at all costs about themselves. We are to believe his word that he had not for a moment thought that anyone would question him about this ball! You see, all the comrades who visited him were such angels of innocence, none over five years old . . .

Here is an undesirable type of artist. The time is past when a Mark Voloshin was allowed to protect a man who had destroyed a Repin painting . . . In my opinion, the picture ought to be taken away. No further discussions about it ought to be heard. Just look at this drawing of the young man’s head! Here you have a gladiator who is a bad copy of an antique model . . .

Sokolov-Skalia: When Nikritin was speaking, he did indeed give the impression that he is sincere, that he is suffering for art’s sake. Such a peculiar man! And so terribly individualistic! Comrades, we sometimes read catalogues of foreign exhibitions, especially from Italy; there there are things as this. I do not believe that the picture was conceived with sweat and travail, as the work of a true artist should be. I regard it as an eclectic work derived from other sources, namely, it is adopted from the eclectic Italian fascists.

As regards the ball, perhaps some one will recollect the behavior of Comrade Nikritin about three years ago, when he took a simple ball-bearing out of his pocket and asserted that here in this ball lay art, this was the center of the universe, it reflected everything, it absorbed everything within itself, and so the artist had to be a ball to absorb the world within himself. And it is of all things this “center of the world” which Nikritin places in this particular position before the girl who is building the Metro . . .

Beskin: I have had the opportunity of seeing very many pictures, not with the same subject, but of the same kind. These pictures follow the realistic tendency that is absolutely flooding Europe and which is found with particular frequency in America. They cannot be taunted with cubism. They display absolute realism; everything is derived from reality. Yet this realism has been brought to such a pass

that we should really be pleased with the cube: at least it is an honest geometric figure.

This is a deeply pathological, erotic picture . . . Look at the composition as a whole. Why is your attention arrested by the ball? It is the most vulgar form of expression. Just look at the way in which the Metro workman is calling across to Venus and the modern treatment of the hand! Here every detail, even to the working-dress of the Metro work girl, is erotically treated. No one will persuade me that a ball is the whole problem. Just look at this "young man of our country." He will make you sick. That is nothing but physiology. There is an eros in which there is tension and health. This eros, however, wallows in filth and needs the old man . . . I have a feeling that a man who comes to such a pass must feel lonely in the present age. What a dreadful nightmare! Such a thing can only be endured by a lonely being who does not perceive the young man of the present, does not perceive anything at all, and only lives in his own ideas. If we here had to vote for the old or new, I should plump for the old, for the Venus, if need be. She has flesh and blood, and is genuine and healthy . . . This picture should not only not be accepted; we should protest against it. After looking at such a work one finds it dreadful to be alive for a month, in spite of all the gaiety of our life. (*Applause.*)

Mashkovtsev: I believe that we should not only speak about this production. For us mutual assistance is very essential. We should rather seek to influence the painter who created this work and talk more about him, just because he defends it.

Comrade Nikritin seems more important to me than the picture itself. We have today considered quite a number of painters and felt fairly clear in our minds, through the productions, about the authors themselves, as human beings and Soviet artists . . . Productions we can break to pieces, but there remains the man, his loves and hates and his beliefs. We must therefore influence and persuade.

Just imagine that this work had been painted by a simple and true Komsomol (young communist). Could he have done it? Could a party man and a communist create such a picture and would he do it? I cannot recollect that a single shadow of this tendency would ever have occurred in the case of comrades of the party, for, however temperament and passions may express themselves, after all there is such a thing as thinking and willing . . . It would be desirable if the artists, party-members, communists, Marxists, here present, were to talk a little of the tremendously great significance this artists' world possesses, because usually we do not talk about it, but confine our attention to the picture. In my opinion we have here a catastrophe . . . There is not the slightest doubt that the erotic element in socialism will be grandiose in its health and genuineness. We cannot after all pretend not to be men of flesh and blood . . . But this is a terrible picture . . .

Lekht: Comrades, we have here a sample of the works about which *Pravda* has warned us. This piece must be unmasked as inadmissible. If the artist were uneducated we might think that he had become such an introvert that he could make this picture outside the world. Yet he reads a lot—unfortunately not what is necessary . . . What we see here is a calumny . . . It is a class-attack, inimical to the Soviet power. The picture must be removed and the appropriate organizational measures be taken.

Bubnova: I am not anxious about the picture, which can be destroyed. What is terrible is that the Metro workpeople, his friends, have come under his influence. They like it . . .

Slavinskii: Does the author wish to say anything?

Nikritin: If the jury is willing to listen.

Shchekotov: Pardon me, I should like to ask if you have understood the impression your picture has made? Here not a single voice has been raised in your favor, no one who would like to soften the verdict. Have you any regard for the attitude which has here been manifested by a large assembly of very prominent leaders of our painting profession? . . .

Nikritin: Nikolai Mikhailovich has made a very proper suggestion. This was the only sense in which I intended to make a reply.

I am dismayed at the (I hardly know how else to describe it) invective which I have here heard from the mouth of Olga Nikolaevna and of Fridrich Karlovich [Lekht]. In my view these are irresponsible, outrageous outbursts. So I feel, and as far as I am permitted to speak, so I say. How do I take this criticism? Just as I took the valuation of the other productions which have been here shown. I have the feeling, and I say so candidly and honestly, that everything shown here today and last time stands in no relation whatever to Soviet painting. These works follow the line of least intellectual resistance. (I confess what I think—perhaps I am today speaking for the last time.)

What I am looking for is a great socialist style, versatile, philosophical. I am convinced that I am on the right track. Time will be our judge. I believe that after only two or three years have passed men will talk differently and demand very complicated things, actually realistic and contemporary, and not photography like those which you assessed yesterday.

Slavinskii: Do you agree that we should consider the picture as rejected? The description which has here been given by all the members of the commission is to be regarded as the opinion of our artistic public. I should like to express the deepest regret that these views have not penetrated the consciousness of the stubborn painter.

I have taken pains to reproduce as naturally as possible the original tone of this record and have only omitted repetitions. I thought I had to present this highly dramatic scene here in all its details, because it is enormously illustrative of the political one-sidedness with which art is at present judged in the USSR.

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Minutes of a discussion at the Art Commission of the All-Union Co-operative Association "The Artist" held on April 10, 1935 regarding the painting *Old and New* by S. Nikritin, cited in K. London, *The Seven Soviet Arts*, London 1937.

At the beginning of the 1920s, Nikritin belonged to the "Method" (Projectionists) group. In 1931 he joined the "Art Brigade" (IZOBRIGADA).

—HG/EG

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Originally published in English as Kurt London, "The Beaux Arts," in *The Seven Soviet Arts*, rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1937; repr., Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1988), 223–30. For a German translation see *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 508–12.

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The explanatory note has been translated by Andrew Davison from the German in *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare. Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917 bis 1934*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhardt Gillen (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 512.

# **II.**

## **Texts by Aleksandr Deineka, 1918–64**

## The Art of Our Days 1918

D56

Today we want to speak freely and about freedom, on this day of the Union of Art Workers, on the holiday of art. We will dress our souls up in holiday clothing and spend this day in festive joy. Today we will not curse and maliciously snigger at old folks in embroidered uniforms with the mighty rank of professor. We will mentally give them a hand and a shake, because these old rough dreams are the dead pages of past books. Best to forget about them. We, the dreams of future days within the mutinous time of the present, we are not afraid of these rough dreams, because we are young, like spring, like our freedom. Now we are free in art, but not free superficially and affectedly, without the false protests of past days, without painted faces, grimacing like clowns and gloating in art.<sup>1</sup> No, we see freedom, it is ours, and that is why I deeply believe in the great art of our days. The beautiful art of the present day—it is the most youthful, pure, and splendid that we incarnate in it.

Who is not fascinated by our days? Who remains ambivalent towards them? The bright bursts, titanic swings of the proletariat—that is the sun—we want to sketch it colorfully with thousands of semi-precious stones, we want to depict this heroic struggle of the proletarian masses.

How pathetic was the artist of gray days, of humdrum life! What could he embody, how could he show his people? I speak about the people, because the artist is only one of the people. How happy the artist of our people must be today, engaged in great constructive work! We want to speak brightly about art—about beauty, about that side of our life that drifts with the gaze in a dream of lines and colors beneath the rumbling of work, under the clanging and whistling of machines.

The artist-collective should express itself absolutely clearly with paints, incarnate its feelings in temples of the contemporary.

Our thoughts should be clean, clean and beautiful.

They should be bright and cheerful, sunny, like freedom. Don't let the petit bourgeois taste with its photographs of life, gray and contrary, like ancient ruminations, be found in them. Let them be daring, unfinished, superficially unintelligible. Let the shouts of songs, colors and lines freely clamor from the canvas and preposterously show the blockheaded petty bourgeois. Perhaps he will notice this holiday dance of colors on canvas, this well-composed succession of lines, which speak about the beauty of factories, about the work of collective creations. Paintings of the contemporary—a dream, a bright childlike dream, which cannot confine itself within the scope of reality . . . For these are fairytales—fairytales of the proletariat, creating its bright life. Look deeply into the souls of paintings and you will see how clearly, how powerfully they reflect all that the proletariat makes, all that it creates. We have fallen in love with our days and our art. This is our life, and the great powerful constructive beginning of our laboring people . . .

Before us is a huge task. Amicably, hand in hand, we will boldly undertake it and will weave a great previously unseen tapestry from our works on the red background of our days. Big, loud, bright, like the sun, and beautiful, like a living emblem of the revolutionary struggle.

Hail to the creators of the past, those artists who, like the bright phases in the long gray road of art, gave us great images of beauty. To those visionaries, living in the gray flat environment of their milieu and seeing diamond dreams of the future. They will not be forgotten, and we kindle their faith still more brightly in the one bright enormous light of freedom. Their faith is our days. We will forgive all and will brightly serve our art—for what can be brighter than freedom and free art?

1. Deineka is referring to the antics of the Russian futurists, who painted their faces and adorned themselves with outlandish clown-like attire [Trans.].

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, "Iskusstvo nashikh dnei," *Nash den'* (August 19, 1918), 12. The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## On the Question of Monumental Art 1934

D57

In the initial stages of construction, one can almost never observe that color, facture, and images have a place in architecture. The tasks of the Cultural Revolution placed before architects the question of the use of images as an architectural element. Yet this phenomenon is still quite new. As a result, Soviet monumental painting has still not managed to discover all of its possibilities. With the exception of the work of Favorskii and Bruni (the Museum for Maternity and Child Care), and a youth brigade (the club "Proletarian"), there is practically no Soviet fresco art. Even then, those works that exist bear the unconcealed stamp of haphazardness, of lack of practice. Thus, the images of the frescoes of the youth brigade display an obvious conflict with the architecture, while the frescoes of Favorskii and Bruni were painted in a "happenstance" place.

Of course, there were experiments on the creation of panels intended for a given architecture. I have in mind the design for the factory kitchen in Fili, the work of a brigade under my direction. Yet these panels were also executed as a supplementary design element after the construction had been completed, without the architect's participation.

The fundamental principle acquired from the study of the frescoes of the Renaissance and Russian church murals is the organic nature of the relationship of the image to the architecture. In all cases, planar or volumetric images help to reveal the ideological complex of the architectural surroundings. Hence, architecture placed before itself also artistic tasks, which helped to clarify its ideological and functional aspects.

The artists helped to expand the scale of architecture (in depth, in height) by means of images paralleling the architecture. Through the artist, the architect solved his problem, for example, achieving splendor and pomposity through color (palaces).

If we turn to the Russian icon or church fresco, then besides a purely religious impact they also asserted the monumentality of the very architecture—the intensity of the fresco is identical to the thickness of the wall. How the brilliant colorist achievements of the Novgorod frescoes strengthen the richness and reverberation of the architecture!

In bygone days, our architecture was characterized by abstractness of color design. Quite naturally, our public has begun to protest against the attempts to establish rationalism in color.

In the past two years, the most serious tasks have been placed before architecture: Moscow is becoming an exemplary proletarian capitol, and all newly constructed buildings should be first and foremost beautiful. This has compelled architects to address the cultural heritage, to understand that architecture bears a rather significant aesthetic origin. Architects have understood the entire necessity to approach the question of fresco and sculpture. In this respect, the most prominent master architects will serve as a praiseworthy example. The architect academic I. A. Fomin works very seriously in his studio on experiments with wall painting, the new offices of Narkomzem (by the academic A. V. Shchusev) is being built with artistic panels, and so forth. An entire group of artists has earnestly approached the question. In short, images in architecture have become a burning issue of the day.

The impending collaborative work of artists with architects should flow forth organically. At any rate, the artists should be at their best for architectural tasks, while on the other hand, the architects, when working out a design, should study all possibilities for the solution of general complex tasks and all the possibilities concealed in painting and in three-dimensional images.

All of this, of course, gives rise to a single necessary condition: the painter and sculptor should be architecturally literate and, on the other hand, the architect should seriously study the laws of planar representation. In my practice I personally often have recourse to the advice of architects; the tasks that stand before me and my comrades in the brigade impel us to have close working contact with architectural studios. In line with the consideration of the spatial and social purpose of architecture, during the elaboration of a project the architect should decide with the artist the concrete possibilities for a greater effective solution of the entire architectural ensemble.



Frescoes, panels, the color and texture treatment of walls—all of this provides enormous possibilities for work. I am convinced that (once we overcome the technical difficulties) here it will be possible and, without doubt, it will be necessary to make use of outdoor frescoes. Large planes of walls in worker communities, firewalls, and so forth should be utilized. Clubs, libraries, sports halls are all in need of images, which will register our economic and cultural achievements for posterity. All these newly emergent moments place before artists the serious task of experimental laboratory exploration for new fresco materials—the most convenient, flexible, and suitable for the constructive possibilities of architecture. The task stands not only to master the technique of classical fresco, but also to explore and master new materials—colored stone, graphite, majolica, and so forth—, which should be resolved most freely and with great confidence in the artist on the part of the architect.

With the mastery of technique, especially external technique, quite broad horizons will open up for fresco painting. Thus, for example, in the design of our festivals we could in some places carry out capital work. The money that is presently wasted on painting a short-lived panel on cotton could be used more rationally and seriously, being directed towards the execution of outdoor frescoes in durable materials. This would also increase the responsibility of the artist.

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, "K voprosu o monumental'nom iskusstve," *Iskusstvo* 4 (1934), 2-5.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Autobiographical Sketch 1936

D58

I was born in Kursk in 1899. I grew up outside the town, in the garden, by the river, in market gardens. My parents had no time to busy themselves with my upbringing—father and mother went to work early. I remember childhood: a meadow with flowers, a river where I began to swim from the age of three, the smell of apples, horses, doves. School. After lessons again the river, children, forays into gardens, scuffles, the everyday life outside of town, artisan folk, direct and strict laws. We bummed around the countryside, angled for fish, hunted; in town we got into scuffles with "white collars," with lordling-high school students. At school, I loved mathematics, I did metalwork and drew. I wanted to become an engineer but could not afford it. At the age of sixteen, I went to the School of Fine Arts of Kharkiv. From that moment, I started to lead an independent life. Father, a worker, had a disliking for artists and consequently did not help. In Kharkiv, early in high school, I went through a period of infatuation with the "isms"—vaguely with impressionism, considerably with symbolism in the provincial manner, right up to Čiurlionis.<sup>1</sup> For a long time I wandered through these "isms." I am grateful to Professor Pestrikov for consistent drilling in classical drawing.

In Khar'kov, in February 1917 we merrily disarmed the municipal police. Schools to some extent discontinued lessons. I began to wander around towns and their outskirts. Acquaintance with political literature, party programs, with soldiers, officers. My works from this period contain the last echoes of my pre-revolutionary "isms." 1918 in Kursk. Preparation for the first anniversary of the October Revolution. First experiments on monumental works. I worked for Narobraz<sup>2</sup> as an instructor; I traveled around the provinces. Germans in the Ukraine, a front-line mood. In Kursk an enthusiasm for Leningrad "leftist" tendencies. I propagated a bright cubism.

The offensive of Denikin. I worked in the Kursk ROSTA; I energetically conducted shock campaigns in the city and at the front. The years 1919–20 on the whole were years of the most intensive and furious pursuit of work. We toiled 24 hours a day and absolutely without meetings, which became the scourge of artists with the blossoming of RAPKh.<sup>3</sup>

In 1920 I was demobilized from the army and ordered to Moscow to study at VKhUTEMAS—the graphic arts faculty. There I became a test subject for trials of different programs. The program mess was one thing, the instruction was entirely different—we learned largely without supervision. We studied in the library, in museums, in exhibitions, at disputes, at Mayakovsky's, at Cheremnykh's. I studied with V. A. Favorskii. Despite the somewhat wild character of the institution in the period of my studies, despite the accursed hunger and cold, serious work was carried out there on form, composition.

At the same time I applied myself to production—at printing shops and at the magazine *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], where I began to work in earnest as a magazine artist.

In 1924 we organized a big discussional exhibition. The participants were students of VKhUTEMAS, pupils of the revolutionary educational institute. I exhibited the oil *Football* and a number of magazine drawings.

In 1925 a group of painters and graphic artists from the discussional exhibition (where there were easel artists, decorators and textile artists) founded the society OST, which included a few artists of the older generation—Al'tman, Annenkov, Shterenberg. With the exception of Shterenberg, the chairperson, the remaining older artists did not remain attached to the society. OST was a youth organization, and it was truly opposed by AKhRR, but then during NEP the private practical artistic training united artists into AKhRR and into OST. AKhRR was based on pre-revolutionary practice.

We the young began to work on virgin soil. I worked for the magazines *Prozhektor* [Searchlight], *U stanka* [At the Factory Workbench], and in newspapers. I went to Donbass and brought material. At the first exhibition of OST, I displayed major works: *Miners*, then the following year *Building New Factories* (State Tretyakov Gallery). In 1927–28—*Female Textile Workers* (State Russian Museum). The *Defense of Petrograd* (Central Museum of Armed Forces of the USSR). In 1928 I left OST, breaking with the leadership on questions regarding the role of production art (a hypertrophy of easel painting occurred in OST: the poster, magazine drawing,

and their role amounted to nothing). Later OST split apart into the so-called productivists and purists. We organized the society "October." At the society's single exhibition I showed posters, graphics and the monumental canvas *The Shower*. I continued to work in the press. I illustrated Barbusse's *The Fire*, made a number of children's books (*The First of May*, *Commotion*, *In the Clouds*, *The Parade of the Red Army*, and others). I completed a number of posters. I participated in exhibitions of paintings, drawings and posters in Moscow and a number of shows that toured the USSR.

I exhibited posters, drawings, and oils abroad—in Germany, Greece, Austria, Sweden, France, Switzerland, Italy and America.

In 1930–31, I worked at Izogiz as a consultant for posters. I regarded this as social work. I was the head of drawing at the Polygraphic Institute. It is somewhat sad, that in recent years I have spent so much time in meetings about hundreds of questions, so that it is difficult to work as less and less time remains for it.

The period after April 23, 1932, became for me a critical one in the sense that I am not as self-confident as before; I started to make polished works, but I began to test, to check myself.

A trip abroad in 1935 to France, Italy and America showed me that I am less of a Westernizer than a number of artists of the so-called Moscow persuasion.

To conclude, I add that art is a difficult battlefield, all the more difficult as one needs to battle with oneself, to brush aside the admonitions and sermons of juror critics. To struggle against the requirements of clients, who by their taste substitute mass art in the place of healthy demands.

To work is difficult, but I never looked at work as an easy thing—everyday wellbeing, a cozy studio and elementary exercises on canvas still do not give one the right to be called an artist.

1. Mikalojus Konstanantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911), a Lithuanian symbolist artist and composer [Trans.].
2. This is an alternate acronym for Narkompros, the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment [Trans.].
3. RAPKh = Russian Association of Proletarian Artists [Trans.].

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, "Avtobiograficheskii ocherk" (1936), reprinted in V. P. Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka. Zhizn', iskusstvo, vremia: literaturno-khudozhestvennoe nasledie* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1974) 48–51, and in V. P. Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka* (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1989).

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Vladimir Vladimirovich 1940

D59

For you,  
    who are now  
                    healthy and agile,  
the poet,  
    with the rough tongue  
                                    of his posters,  
    has licked away consumptives' spittle.<sup>1</sup>

By a snowdrift in hard frost and wearing a nasty sheepskin coat and enormous soldier's boots, I, like many others, tramped across Ukraine and then the RSFSR to Mayakovsky's "Left March." By hearsay and without seeing examples, we still-green cubs in the provinces made—both well and badly—drawings for the ROSTA Windows to the captions of Mayakovsky. Almost unconsciously, but with great fighting fervor, in the work on the Windows in 1919–20 we reconsidered our small but already cluttered aesthetic baggage. The form of the catchy verses, on target and brief, demanded a similar laconism in representation. Thus a new aesthetic was born. This was the first influence of Mayakovsky on our provincial artistic formation.

Mayakovsky's influence on me was so striking that I was emboldened, for the first time in my life, to read his poetry from a tribune before an audience of Red Army soldiers. Due to excitement, my throat seized up and I lost my voice. All the same, I mastered myself and finished "Left March" to friendly applause. Mayakovsky thus forced me to be an orator, as his verses incited debate among the masses. I saw Mayakovsky for the first time on Sverdlov Square in Moscow. Tall and skinny, in a rather threadbare suit, he stood, leaning with his elbows on the square's fencing, standing in a "classical" pose that was typical to him. He seemed to me to be quite nervous and tensed, like an athlete after a workout.

Later on he became warmer, more expansive, well dressed, pointedly calm, feeling himself at home on the tribune, but to this day I am certain that his inner condition, despite his external calmness, always remained as nervous and tensed as it was in 1920. Seeing him before a presentation, not once did I notice his nervousness. Only the enormous will and faith in the righteousness of his cause made him so strong, so steadfast at the tribune. Many years later, when working on the design of his play, I showed him a variant of the painting of a construction that stood on the stage from the fourth tier of the theater balcony. I asked him to follow my example, to come closer and lean across the barrier. He answered simply: "I won't come close to the edge of the barrier, because I am afraid of heights. Yet when flying, I forget about this feeling."

When it was necessary, he overcame his human weaknesses by force of will. It seems to me that this will was not only his individual quality; it was also a class will, which demanded from him this or that decision.

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My recollections of first encounters with Vladimir Vladimirovich are closely tied with the VKhUTEMAS, where I went to study. He was often in the workshops. Evidently, friendship with young people and an interest in visual form drew him there. During the 1920s he did a lot of drawing himself.

In those years, the Higher Arts Studios were a very distinctive phenomenon. They were packed with youth in paramilitary uniforms, having come back from the fronts, arriving to the VKhUTEMAS directly from troop transport vehicles and taking up paintbrushes and clay. They were people without artistic traditions, quite disposed to oppose academic and old painting. Worldly-wise people, contemporary in manner of thinking and greedily thirsting for education. Despite the cold and malnutrition, this audience was lively, buoyant and persistent in its desire to see and learn as much as possible.

The professors were casual, the majority of a formalist persuasion ("leftists"). They were apolitical, experimented with abstraction, and often had no authority among the students.

During these years, it was quite often possible to see crowds of VKhUTEMAS students tramping to the Polytechnic Museum, to Moscow University, to the theater—to literary and other lectures and to debates. Student evenings took place in the

splendid sports hall of VKhUTEMAS. Writers and actors came to these evenings, Lunacharskii came.

I remember one evening, when a broad front of “left” poets performed. One after another, they left the tribune to the whistling of the audience. Mayakovsky stood up last, with less sureness than usual, and was received stormily, actively and enthusiastically. Among the leftists and the “leftists,” Vladimir Vladimirovich was a counterbalance to those who made a show of the extravagance of inherently empty form; he told us of the vital and necessary.

He was a person with a surprisingly accurate grasp of the most typical and the necessary. He found the form of a word just for today, and years later, it unremittingly resounds, and how it resounds! The orientation to class, to the masses helped him and gave power even to his experimental quests to fill [his works] with living and fighting content.

Mayakovsky is difficult to illustrate. The failure of the majority of illustrations is probably explained by our primitive understanding of illustration: snatch a chunk of text and try to retell it completely in images. It seems that the illustration of Mayakovsky should rest upon the entire mass of images that saturate his poetry. Disappointingly, few have illustrated him. This rests upon the conscience of artists like an unpaid debt.

It is wild to expect a special tenderness towards courteous museum art from a person who repeats:

I abhor  
every kind of deathliness!  
I adore  
every kind of life!<sup>2</sup>

From a person, creating a new literary epoch, which

with the rough tongue  
of his posters,  
has licked away consumptives’ spittle<sup>3</sup>

He looked at me and the artist Nisskii with such unconcealed disgust and with such compassion, when we decorated with roses a silk armchair in the style of “Loius XIV” in the theater prop workshop.

However, it is unfortunate that the “leftists” who came out against fine art did so with reference to Mayakovsky. Even if his direct utterances about the “Amnesty of Rembrandt” were forgotten, knowing how he loved art, the plastic taste he possessed, how realistically he represented life, you see the illegitimate nature of these references.

Mayakovsky understood better than all that you cannot replace painting with photography, and he fought for the poster, for the sharp magazine drawing. An enemy of eclecticism, always finding new solutions, he was a leader in the establishment of a new, Soviet revolutionary form of poster, of the satirical drawing, of the art of new things. The opposition of other leftists and their disparaging treatment of “handicraft forms of figuration”—of drawing and caricature—were alien to Vladimir Vladimirovich. In our joint work on the magazines *Smena* and *Daesh*, he with his laconic comments did not once suggest to me a correct figurative solution.

Mayakovsky felt the coming day especially sharply. It is no coincidence that he supported me in an argument with one of the leftists who had become attached to him, who insisted upon the hegemony of the photo, when I stated that it is only possible to photograph an already completed building, but that it is impossible to represent a future quarter with a Leica.

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In 1921 at the circus on Tsvetnoi Boulevard, preparations were made for the production of *Mystery-Bouffe*, conceived for a broad public with the participation of the audience itself. Along with other comrades, I hung out posters in the foyer and corridors according to the plan of Mayakovsky. As far back as then he spoke with us, with students, about future art, about such forms of spectacle wherein all forms of art—from acting to architecture to painting—would create an effective, organic, solid spectacle.

Later he wrote short advertising quatrains for posters on commercial kiosks, dreaming of the creation of an ensemble of architecture with the powerful “ornament” of slogans. Mayakovsky was inseparable from the city. He loved the lively workers’ city. He affirmed the first beginnings of the new socialist everyday life, the birth of new things, their connections and synthesis.

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He pursued his aims with wonderful persistence. At a single mention of his name, many literally became bitchy. At the opening of his anniversary exhibition *20 Years of Work*, the galaxy of leading literary figures was brightly absent. In the first hour this somewhat dismayed the modest, in essence, poetic tribune, but it was compensated for a hundredfold that same evening, when he appeared before the youth, arriving to stormily honor their beloved poet. In opposition to Parnassus, Mayakovsky himself built a magazine, thoroughly investigated the technicalities of book production to the fine points, sat in the print shop and set type. He was one of the great artist-printers. His collected works *13 Years of Work* was printed in the VKhUTEMAS print shop.

I made a cover for him. It turned out as an ordinary cover in a red border with marginal scenes. Vladimir Vladimirovich examined and rejected it. He said that he needed a cover that was possible to see and clearly read from far away. He made it himself. Three words stood laconically on a bright smooth ground. The strong type, composition and scale created the desired effect. This was a lesson for me, from which visually flowed that the beauty of a cover should be contained in the very type, and not in the frilly bits surrounding it. I sought to use this lesson in my paintings, I strove to leave in them only the most essential; I sought a simple and clear form, rejecting a heap of details.

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Mayakovsky passed through Europe and America like a person of a new formation, like a representative of the Land of the Soviets. Everywhere he was the same as in Moscow. Wandering along the streets of New York he met people, who remembered and loved him. Listening to the poetry of an American worker, who recited under a loud pseudonym with the prefix *de*, he advised him in a comradely way to recite under his own last name and not to forget that he was first and foremost a worker.<sup>4</sup>

Mayakovsky was a harmonically whole person of exceptional integrity and the most charming modesty and sensitivity. Not once did I witness him embarrassed by human tactlessness.

A humble acting extra told me with excitement about how on the day of his birthday, awkward and clearing his throat, Vladimir Vladimirovich delivered flowers and congratulated him. To our shame, in the midst of our affairs we seldom find time for such personal displays of attention.

Although for him, his affairs were not small. He was able to organize his work and distinguished himself with purely American efficiency. He was the master of his word. When he said he would—that meant he would, when he said he would do something—that meant he did it precisely and at the appointed time.

It was very good to work with him. His preciseness and discipline helped, he allotted much attention to the organization of matters. Appointing someone to a designated area of work, he trusted them to complete it. Often he showed the most sensitivity to and faith in the most inconspicuous member of a collective.

Debating and sharply arguing, he, like few others, considered criticism from outside, amplifying it with nagging self-criticism. He honestly confessed to his mistakes.

I remember a happy incident. Students in the balconied dormitory at Miasnitskaia Street 21 made plans to wait for Vladimir Vladimirovich, who often dropped in to visit his friend Aseev.

Just as the large figure of Mayakovsky stooped to pass through the gate and started walking on the asphalt, from a dozen balconies [the following] burst forth to the tune of “lablochka”:<sup>5</sup>

A hundred and forty suns in one sunset blazed,  
and summer rolled into July . . .<sup>6</sup>

The flabbergasted Mayakovsky dove into Aseev’s apartment: the day before he had maintained that his things were impossible to set to a catchy tune. He himself merrily remembered this occasion.

I saw Mayakovsky for the first time in 1920—twenty years ago. Now this is already history. Young people learn about these years in books and museums.

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As if it were now, I remember the dormitory, the cold, the works of abstractionists on the walls and suddenly the news: “Lenin has arrived.”

We could not all fit into the room with Vladimir Il’ich. Even I wasn’t able to elbow my way through, but the discussion was passed from one to the other in the neighboring corridors. To Vladimir Il’ich’s question “What do you read?” we declaimed the poetry of Mayakovsky, we proved how splendid a poet he was.

1. This is an excerpt from Mayakovsky's poem "At the Top of My Voice," which was written shortly before his suicide in 1930. This translation is by George Reavey from Vladimir Mayakovsky, *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry*, ed. Patirica Blake (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960): 233.
2. These are the final lines of Mayakovsky's poem "Jubilee" (1924), which marked the 125th anniversary of the birth of the Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin. This translation is by Herbert Marshall from *Mayakovsky* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965): 247 [Trans.].
3. This repeats part of the excerpt from Mayakovsky's poem "At the Top of My Voice" that appears at the very start of this essay [Trans.].
4. The poet had evidently adopted a French aristocratic pseudonym that went against his working class identity [Trans.].
5. "Iablochka" [The Little Apple] is a lively Russian folk tune from the period of the Russian civil war that is often performed with balalaika and to which popular verses were commonly adapted [Trans.].
6. These are the opening lines from the poem "An Extraordinary Adventure which Befell Vladimir Mayakovsky in a Summer Cottage" (1920). Translation here by George Reavey, *ibid*, 137 [Trans.].

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, "Vladimir Vladimirovich," *Iskusstvo* 3 (1940), 50–52.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Art and Sport 1946

D60

In the spring, when grass begins to sprout in the thawed meadows of parks, the trees become heavy from end to end, covering themselves with lacquered leaves, and angled formations of geese stretch northward in the heavenly expanses, I once again see the Earth young and new.

I love the new landscapes with green rectangular football grounds, with black and red running tracks, with the semicircular and stately majesty of the facades of our stadiums. I love the bright colors of t-shirts, which have strict antique simplicity and very contemporary plasticity.

My work in art is quite broad in form and subject, but at every stage I discover in it a craving for sport, health, plasticity. This little note is a meditation on sport in art.

Sport is an enthralling spectacle. The word "indifferent" is inapplicable to it. I take pleasure in the beauty of free movement, the impetuosity of runners, the elasticity of divers, the picturesque nature of the blue sky and the green field . . .

How ringing and noisy the quiet forest becomes as a pack of runners jogs through a glade! I love the spaces of winter with cold snows, wintry expanses, and the figures of gliding skiers. When divers are spread above it, water begins to boil, throwing high into the air thousands of rainbow sprinkles. The Moscow streets become absolutely extraordinary on the day of a relay race. Sport contains within itself all shades of sensation. It is lyrical, in the major key. In it there is much optimism. In it is the start of the heroic. In 1942 I saw love for life and youth, when kids played hockey on a small Moscow pond, amid the bombed out buildings. This love was among my friends when they prowled on skis at the enemy's rear.

Sport has one fabulous ability; it fits into the diverse framework of art. It is inexhaustible as a theme, because it is democratic and popular. Sport fits into the monumental forms of fresco as easily as into the page of a magazine.

Park sculptures on the theme of sport are the most plastic. But even a small tabletop statuette gladdens us. The other day I fired in a kiln the sculpture of a boxer in majolica. The luster of the glaze unexpectedly gave a deep sweaty effect to the body tone, and I once again saw that for my art, sport harbors heaps of success, beautiful possibilities, just as it reveals in each new match, competitions for millions of participants and viewers of all ages. I am happy that I live in a time when the novelty of things and events gives birth to new forms, entirely necessary for the artist.

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, "Iskusstvo i sport," *Ogonek* 28 (1946).

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## About Modernity in Art 1956

D61

The civil war, mud trenches, transports with those dying of typhus could not kill the love for art in the people. On the blizzard-stricken squares a wind blew the first panels set up as monuments to the workers, scientists, to the ideas of labor and freedom. Famine. People under horrible stress fight for their rights and for their lives.

1920. It is cold in the Moscow art studios. They [students] eat millet and dried fish. Youth debates over the destiny of the art of tomorrow. They accept the most astounding "isms" on faith. In classes, they sprinkle sawdust and sand on colored canvases, paint squares and circles, bend shapes of rusty iron of various sizes, which convey nothing and are not good for anything. A paradox? The painted portraits of ladies in ball gowns, the lyric poetry of lordly mansions were the paradox of that time. Artists also drew posters, designed spectacles and people's festivals, and illustrated new books. Art found a general language with the revolution. This language gave it the feeling of modernity, of fresh originality. The tempo and forms found a unity. The people wanted a new life. That is why in the most difficult periods of my life I tried to dream about better times, to paint pictures with the sun. There was never enough sun in those years. Even then we understood that real art is not a pleasure but a necessity. I remember those far away years, thinking about the connection of art with the history of the land that gave birth to it, because art does not exist outside of its time, even if it interprets an event of the past. A number of great pictures were born in Soviet reality, but it is impossible to feel them without a connection to this reality. Soviet painting has traversed a great path. This was the path in the struggle for the realist picture. A number of pictures became persuasive landmarks in the establishment of this method. For the artists with group convictions, the meaning of such pictures could be contentious, but in the plan of art of our time we could not manage without them, just as French art could not expunge Courbet, Manet and Matisse. Traditions are very steadfast, therefore several of our artists stayed, perhaps more than necessary, with the painting traditions of Konstantin Korovin, Vladimir Makovskii, just as in the West several still dwell in the captivity of cubism and the influence of Cézanne. On the other hand, the great painters Ivanov and Surikov, unfortunately, did not sufficiently inspire the new generation of painters. Realism by its very nature is social. It is not necessary to reflect for long in order to understand with whom Repin sympathized when he created his *Zaporozhian Cossacks Writing a Letter to the Turkish Sultan*. We see the sympathies of the artist Ioganson when we see his picture *At an Old Urals Factory*. Are there not similar examples among the Americans Thomas Hart Benton and Jack London? Realism defines an active attitude towards art.

Struggle for a socialist theme is typical for Soviet artists. During the Great Patriotic War painting acquired a special emphasis in this struggle. In the post-war period, especially in the first years, tendencies that did not seem to conduct to the development of socialist realism were emphasized, and today it is possible to speak about them as being minor. The tendency to parade pomposity, in its base eliminated in painting of monumental grandeur and democratic simplicity, did not create canvases that were great in spirit, as neither did the lessons of morally edifying everyday life-ism of other artists. Not revealing the deep nature of phenomena, such paintings remained under the rubric of the documentation of an individual case . . .

It is difficult but still necessary to prove that the paths to realist painting were not easy. In the 1920s, the artist Malevich quickly exhausted the possibilities of his method, having reached the representation of a black square on a canvas. Was suprematism something new in the practice of art? No, geometric décor is a phenomenon that is rather widespread among various peoples in various stages of their development. It is as though he reminded Le Corbusier about the simplicity of possible architectural forms. The most modern searching in sculpture in the West cannot deny kinship with the ancient sculpture of Polynesia . . . The revolution was too contemporary and dynamic to use archaic statics and eclectic aesthetics. Hence in these years the fighting poster was effective in the most varied forms; it was established by the artists Moor, Cheremnykh and Mayakovsky. The first attempts on the path to the creation of monumental propaganda appeared, the first sculptures in this plan. During these years the artist Grekov made a number of pictures that asserted the truth about the Red Army, the heroics of

the First Cavalry army. With these pictures, painting found its rightful place in the young proletarian-peasant government. Petrov-Vodkin achieved a highpoint in painting with his picture *The Death of the Commissar*. Artists persistently seek the figurative plasticity of the revolution. In the nation, even old words acquire different meaning. Art acquires a different significance. The pre-revolutionary theme in Ioganson's *At an Old Urals Factory* begins to resonate with our time. In Iablonskaia's *Bread*, the essence of labor finds painterly expression at an enormous scale. New landscapes have appeared, in terms of painterly quality and compositional exploration, but also in terms of the novelty of the Rybinsk Sea's very existence.<sup>1</sup> Artists strive for painterly simplicity and compositional expressiveness in portraits of Soviet people—in Riazhskii's *Woman Representative*, Nesterov's *The Academic I. P. Pavlov* and Korin's *Father and Son*. These portraits are enough to see the difference of painterly searches in each instance, the particular methods of disclosing the spiritual essence of a person, their relation to complex class conflict. Art in various painting forms interprets contemporary social problems, the new and progressive in everyday life. S. Gerasimov shows the typical and comprehensible in a free painterly manner in his *Collective Farm Festival*, Pimenov does so in his women-workers, the wonderful artist Konchalovskii does it in his magnificent still-lives and flowers. My painting *Mother* appeared as the result of broad compositional generalization. Despite the individual style of different artists, they are linked by something general, which always accompanies a singular goal.

Contemporary Soviet painting is not only pictures in frames. Soviet society invests much labor into building cities, social buildings and schools. Everywhere frescoes and mosaics are being created in conjunction with architecture. Many theaters, train stations and metro stations have been painted, the work of Korin, myself and many other predominantly young artists, enthusiasts for monumental types of painting. As on the paths in search of painterly problems everywhere and always, there is much that is weak, but there are genuine successes and it is comforting that these successes are being experienced as great art and not fashion.

A person gets to know the world through what is new and through new qualities. But in all stages of knowledge he is accompanied by art—the area of human activity that answers our demand for the beautiful. And when this beautiful thing is accessible to many, then it will be more and more dear to people. A person lives by pictorial conceptions—by real fantasy. Without this it would be difficult to envisage our tomorrow, time would become featureless.

A miraculous property is granted to art—to resurrect the past, to foretell the future. Pictures give a new meaning to our existence, enriching our cultural world. Fine art is not only an area of vision. The visible leads us to the area of reflection. Something is built in the person, which forces him to respect all that is human in art. When surrounded by reflections of his existence, he appears more majestic and noble. The fanaticism of the Puritans and Muslims, with which they persecuted images, displays precisely their deep esteem of the power of art. Just as a book that is never read, the art that is not seen has no value. One of the most frightful catastrophes for a person is social uselessness. One of the tragedies of abstract art is that it is carried beyond the frame of human need. It is difficult to argue about art, although quarrels go on continuously. Entire discussions sprang up at my exhibition. The comment book showed diverse opinions. Alongside words of great cordiality was the laconic note: "A horrible artist, a horrible person." An inquisitiveness and interest in the nature of the Soviet person. Once in Paris I had the chance to confirm the fact that we know French art very well, but that they don't know ours. Yet we are not easily offended. In the Museum of Modern Art in New York, I was witness to the bewilderment of simple viewers before the paintings of the surrealists. The majority of quarrels about "left" painting do not grow beyond the limits of professional circles, but the art of Veronese, Velazquez, Surikov and Manet has outgrown the borders of its motherland and become an international treasure. They contain the beauty that does not require geographic understanding. The persuasiveness of this art is proved by time. The mechanism of non-objective art does not have contact even with the closest artists. One can and should think in real abstractions, but abstract art is far too individual a pursuit. Remote from the bounds of the human psyche, it is impossible to understand, to feel. It denies all thought, there is no real necessity in it. In America, I saw apartments built in the constructivist style, which were remodeled from old ruins. Here style became a fashion. Yet we agree that it is impossible to build belief according to a fashion magazine. Commercial artists make fashion, but artists who consider themselves pure also make it. Fashion is too ephemeral a phenomenon on which to build life foundations. It was never the basis of our art and of the spiritual life of the people. Once the futurists walked around in yellow knitted women's jackets. They and their painting, as it seemed to them, shocked the petty bourgeois. Now the futurists walk around in elegant suits, they live in trendy apartments, read the *New York Times*, only they don't know what their painting will be like in a month or who will buy it. I felt this especially when a young American woman asked me

to paint her portrait. Pointing to a Braque hanging on the wall, I asked her “Something in this manner?” She answered, “No, simply my face.”

It is difficult to indicate ultimate boundaries—how an artwork is conceived and where it ends its existence. It is hard to explain why one picture becomes great and another does not, because the conception of a work is entirely mysterious, like the fate of an individual; otherwise it would be possible to create talents and masterpieces according to plan, according to precise regulations. The person is a social being, and this defines in him a communal sense of rhythm. If he is not by all means born for happiness, all the same he has the right to his harmonious development, and if he is not flexible, then this feeling is clear to him. If he justifies bad deeds with reason, this does not mean that his conscience will stay in harmony.

Great art is born as a result of great human feeling—it could be joy but it could also be anger.

For the feeling of cowardice cannot become the stimulus for a great form. A person has natural immunity to all that is abnormal, sick; however, sometimes he not only succumbs to it but even cultivates it.

Understandably, it is possible to exist throughout life without art, but this would be a blind life.

Life comes with prosperity, but the songs of the simple people are more beautiful than those of the rich. If a person refuses food, then why should he refuse himself art? It is possible to paint a fabric in a dull color for technical reasons, but it is impossible to say that this fabric is beautiful. The feeling of color is democratic in its nature, for that reason a person loves art in many forms, in great and small forms, which touch the best parts of his nature, through which it is easier for him to understand both the near and the distant.

1. The Rybinsk “Sea” is a manmade reservoir on the Volga River. It was the largest artificial body of water in the world at the time of its construction during the 1930s and 1940s [Trans.].

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, “O sovremennosti v iskusstve,” *Zhizn’, iskusstvo, vremia* (1956), reprinted in V. P. Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka. Zhizn’, iskusstvo, vremia: literaturno-khudozhestvennoe nasledie* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1974) 274–77.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## Conversation about a Beloved Matter 1957

D62

Art is labor, creative work. In this labor, the human need for the beautiful becomes apparent.

I was always drawn to big canvases, so that the person in them would be large-scale, visible, majestic.

To speak about art is just as difficult as to argue about differences in the scent of apples—Antonovka versus rennet apples on paper. It is necessary to look at a painting, to listen to music, to read a book. In the mind of a person, thought is formed through words. And the more a person develops, the more diverse and rich his vocabulary, the richer the life experience of the artist, the higher his cultural form and colors. With each day a person accumulates experience, becomes courageous in actions and wiser towards old age. A good painting lasts tens if not hundreds of years. Yet if a picture has a minor, self-seeking theme, then its life comes to an end with the closing of an exhibition. Those works survive which follow the old and the new roads, which lead to excellent and heartfelt conversation with both the first and the second.

It is possible to lead heartfelt conversations about what is near, well understood. Therefore, pictures should be intelligible, and that means real. They achieve reality by the visual reconstitution of our life. And our life advances by leaps and bounds. The look of cities and collective farms changes. Hundreds of new words are born. Old words acquire different meanings—“friendship,” “brigade,” “master,” “worker,” “state,” “speed.” The conception of space has varied: in Moscow we listen to a concert in Vladivostok, in Peking. Students travel thousands of kilometers to help at collective farms—to gather a fertile harvest. Sometimes we reach a dead end before the impossibility of rendering this in a picture, but there where it is possible to find images, we deeply feel that they demand other aesthetic measures, other compositional or painterly qualities.

We artists find ourselves in great debt before the people when we think little about this, when we do not represent the novelties that have come into being over the last forty years, and chiefly when we work little on images of our Soviet people, who have begun to think more widely, to see further afield.

Art possesses an amazing quality: to reconstitute the past. Art loves to look into the future, visually showing it. Yet this is not only the privilege of art, but also of the very person [who practices art]. If he does not dream, does not build plans for tomorrow, then he does not build life. The young dream most of all, perhaps because they deeply feel and keenly react to all that is new—the good and the bad. Hence, every artist fawns upon the words of youth. Through the young he verifies power of his mastery. Yet youth should always remember what it wants—but that does not mean that it can. It is necessary to love, and to know affairs, in order to have one’s own opinion about it. Because precisely affairs and actions, not words, are the criteria of our possibilities. Thinking about a future picture, I often dream about how well it should turn out. Yet in the working process it can happen that the idea does not achieve convincing expression, does not become a “living word,” and what was necessary does not appear. I am for experience, therefore, all the time and in everything.

It is fascinating to carry out conversations and discussions with youth, but it is also very difficult. Today’s eighteen year old was two when the war started, but we saw with our own eyes what a calamity that was. When I painted *Defense of Moscow* and *Defense of Sevastopol*, I was a conscious participant in these events. I lived through them myself. The great and honorable role of the artist is to correctly show in art the heroics of those days. Few witnesses and participants of the October battles of 1917 remain. I managed to paint the picture *Defense of Petrograd*, where I executed several portraits of its participants, and I am thrilled with this. All of this became history, but a living history that gave us all the possibility to be contemporaries of the great constructions, to fight for peace, for world records, for a strong family, to paint pictures of our new life.

From an early age, I loved to wander about the neighboring forests and countryside, to see how people lived and how the grain ripened. I traveled much in cities, sailed on steamships and yachts, worked in mines and factories. I was drawn in the direction of the healthy work and leisure of people. Within me there was always a desire to remember all of this, to draw. That is how the themes of the

paintings were born. During the Civil War, I had to wander for some time in the heat and in the severe cold along Russian country roads and to see much sorrow. Yet I never regretted it, as I learned something new, even if it was bad. This helped me to earn my bread and to stand strongly on my feet, but mainly to accumulate the life experience from which I drew and still draw the subjects of my pictures. I am depressed by [today's] young, who are afraid to tear themselves away from mama and papa. I always tried to understand everything, in order then to convey my impressions in artistic images. But now, in my old age, I am most of all afraid to be a moralist and to rest on my laurels. Sincerely speaking, each day yields so much that is new that the "eyes wander." One does not know what and how to select from our surroundings, in order to start a new drawing. Visually speaking, the trouble of many artists of the older generation is that on the roads of art they prefer signs that restrict but do not indicate. True, one cannot manage without the first, but the second are even more necessary.

When, if not during one's youth is the time to test, to search for expressive bold words and images, the most heartfelt and experienced? Our country needs many artists, "good and varied," as Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky once said. It needs poems and paintings that stick in the memory; music that you want to listen to again; books that will be read to tatters. The people deserve this.

Regardless, I like a person in a broad gesture, a person in athletic or working movement, breathing deeply. In landscapes, I love spaciousness, high skies, clear distant horizons. As a painter, I crave for halftones in contrast with local color. The novelty of unexpected color attracts me, it is more memorable. I try to capture abrupt movement and color contrasts with compositional rhythm. Yet most importantly, I find the themes of my pictures in life. I expend much of my energy on this. There is a different kind of painting, built upon conversions to halftones of the peaceful poses of people. I recognize the right of such painting to exist; many like it. I therefore conclude that not everyone likes my art.

I have always had a taste for big canvases, just as some of my comrades are drawn to intimate ones. I reckon that art is meant to decorate our life, to enrich it spiritually, in the same way that painting makes architecture more majestic and beautiful. This is probably why I painted theaters, panels for exhibitions, and created mosaics for the metro with special enthusiasm. With great trepidation, I approached the mosaic portraits of the great scholars of the world for the main entrance of the university building at Lenin Hills. I made sixty such portraits, among them Newton, Lomonosov, Darwin, Mendeleev, Sechenov, Leibnitz, Leonardo da Vinci, the Chinese scholar Li Shizhen and others.

Recently there was an exhibition of my work in Moscow.

Picture after picture, hall after hall showed what excited me, what I loved, at what I intently gazed. Thus I painted my motherland and her sons, and so I like to think that the exhibition showed not only my personal work, but also a bit of the great things that were and are managed by my fathers and brothers—the sons of the great fatherland.

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, "Razgovor pro liubimoe delo," *Iunost* 8 (1957).  
The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## A Living Tradition 1964

D63

... It seems that not long ago I wandered along the side streets of Old Arbat, observing an exclusive life, grand mansions. Yet today, traveling by car in the new regions of the capitol, I can't manage to see everything, to remember a great deal. The old Kaluga road has changed from a series of villages into a magnificent motorway, along the sides of which have risen up new enormous buildings. It is like that all the way to Vnukovo airport and much, much further. Along the Leningrad road in All Saints [Boulevard] chickens wandered around where cars now roar along, where institutes, schools and the metro have risen up.

Thus, they stretch out in every direction; the network of roads goes to the ring road and further, to the new outskirts of the capital. Powerful trucks haul the panels of future buildings and components for bridges; they haul technical equipment to state farms. I want to rise up high, in order to see a little more, to perceive the new horizons, the new forms and the new life.

The limits of the real are becoming broader, we get to know and win the secrets of nature. We have seen the far side of the moon for the first time. Our cosmonauts have feasted their eyes upon the Earth from the cosmos and found it to be beautiful. That which was a dream has become reality. The brilliant artist Leonardo da Vinci could only dream about flight, but we dream and fly.

Life is especially good in the spring, especially during May Day—the world workers' holiday. This holiday, fighting in spirit, peaceful in aspiration, is a day when there is special faith in great friendship and happiness. On Red Square, we heard the powerful rumble of defense technology. We saw the measured tread of our soldiers. Sportsmen passed by with light steps. The merry hubbub of the Pioneers rang above the square. We saw an endless stream of people, walking by the Mausoleum in which lies the great Lenin. How much each of us on this day pondered, wished for success and good fortune for our scientists, builders, students, our factory and field workers, and for the people of multiform Soviet art.

For us artists, the May holiday is doubly excellent—as persons marching in step with the people and as masters beautifying this holiday. Artists adorned the squares and prospects; they dressed the columns of marchers in beautiful clothing. Everyone loves spring, but artists love it even more strongly, so in their paintings they preserve this splendid May Day for a long time.

Attentively, patiently, lovingly, the broadest circle of people follows our creativity and helps Soviet art ceaselessly to accumulate successes. The profound humanity of the everlasting ideas of Lenin, his concern about monumental propaganda imparts to art a special democratic nature, it is realized in the grandeur of images, comprehensible to ordinary people far beyond the limits of the Soviet Union. Paintings, frescoes, the adornment of the cities and everyday life—all should be pierced through with a profound national spirit and with beauty. In these days, I received many telegrams and letters from acquaintances and strangers, from near and far, from Kamchatka and Paris, from Chelyabinsk and Rome, from Murmansk and Tbilisi, Kursk and Berlin. These were congratulations in connection with my being awarded a Lenin Prize.

Perhaps for the first time, I, like many of us artists, perceptibly felt how many people among us love the monumental art which adorns our new cities and expresses the broad humanism and greatness of communist ideas.

I, like all of us, love my Motherland with her fields, forests, noisy cities and roads, upon which people go to the future. As an artist, I see very sharply the birth of new cities with parks, kindergartens, educational institutes and stadiums. I see how youth mature, how upon the faces of the youth appear traits of character, will, responsibility for their own affairs and for the common cause before their friends, fathers and the Motherland.

Yet I do not only see, I want to convey what is seen in paintings and mosaics. I am gladdened when my works bring joy to young and old. In this is a living tradition of the unity and friendship of generations, which helps the art of socialist realism.

Originally published in Russian as Aleksandr Deineka, "Zhivaia traditsiia," *Pravda* (May 4, 1964).  
The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.





# **III.**

## **Texts about Aleksandr Deineka, 1957**

# The Artist of Modernity

## 1957

D64

### Evgenii Kibrik

Rarely does it pass that one is able to admire another's creativity as much as when one attends an exhibition of works by A. Deineka.

It seems to me that the viewer cannot help but be captured by an art so manly and bravely forward looking, an art created by the very breath of our epoch.

This is the breath of a builder, an athlete, a warrior, whose mighty heart tensely beats in the process of labor, of struggle to overcome obstacles.

Deineka is a Soviet artist. His creativity cannot be separated from the Soviet system. His worldview, perspective on life, themes and artistic language, which as a whole determine an artist's creation, were birthed by the years of revolution, the years of the formation and development of the Soviet state, by [this state's] inimitable originality. Nothing comparable could occur in pre-revolutionary art. He is a new Russian Soviet artist, our talented contemporary, [as reflected] in each of his creations. The interests and emotions of the Soviet people, their labor and struggle—all of these form the content of this exhibition.

Already at the start of the 1920s, Deineka was one of the first Soviet artists to create a large series of works devoted to the working class.

In these highly interesting works there is the rhythm of labor, a revolutionary poetry that is close to the poetic voice of Mayakovsky.

It was the epoch of industrialization, enamored with technology, and the struggle for mastery that decided the destiny of our country and shaped the art of Deineka.

The years of the Great Patriotic War and the subsequent period clearly gave rise to new stages in his art.

Everything that Soviet people aim and fight for appears wonderful to him. He uses his art to ardently protest and fight against all that is hostile to the ideas of communism, to the peaceful work of our people. New ideals give birth to a new aesthetics, which is what makes the art of Deineka so original. He loves the coarse folds of workers' overalls, the industrial landscape, the clean walls of modern apartments with large windows, which let in so much air and light. He especially loves the beauty of the athletically developed bodies of working lads and lasses, who represent a new type of hero, unknown in the art of the past.

Deineka's heroes are people healthy in body and soul, full of courage and energy, sure of themselves and their place on earth. They know with certainty what they are living for; they are full of the strength and joy of existence.

Deineka's art is modern to the highest degree. It is an art of the time of the powerful development of technology, of cultural living conditions and rapid changes.

It is characterized above all by two main traits—broad generalization and dynamism, the intense rhythm and tempos in which the characters of Deineka's paintings live and function.

Deineka's artistic generalization is a sure and independent view on life, a view which broadly embraces the subject and decisively notes the main idea, directly striving towards its goal—towards artistic knowledge. This is why his works are so directly expressive.

Deineka's art possesses a rare quality: it has style, in other words it has that original integral aesthetic conception which allows one to artistically solve any problem in fine art.

This is why the creative practice of Deineka is so aesthetically universal. Remaining true to itself, it easily works in such areas as easel painting, monumental painting, illustration, poster, mosaic, sculpture, and easel drawing.

His art has a firm foundation; it contains its own laws and logic. This is obviously connected to the exceptional wholeness of the artist's creative nature.

Deineka's art, like every progressive art, is based on form—on plastic qualities and drawing.

It transmits not an impression of a subject, but rather almost instantaneous knowledge of it, striving to achieve expressiveness by the shortest route. This is

where the energy, the courage with which he meets his challenges comes from. Specifically, he meets these challenges artistically, instead of simply representing the life around him.

In Deineka's art a volitional basis predominates. He is never passive, never copies nature. He always retains the initiative of design, which comprises his understanding of nature, his relationship with it. The artist through his creative efforts expresses his clear opinion about things that attract his attention. What Deineka wants to say in this or that work is always clear to the viewer. Deineka's work leaves one with a feeling of forcefulness and activity that remains with one after viewing the exhibition.

This exhibition, despite the fact that it fills many halls of the Academy of Art, shows only a certain part of what this master has created.

The enormous number of works by his hand which are sadly absent from the exhibition come to mind. A great number of anti-religious drawings done for the magazines *Bezbozhnik* [Atheist] and *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], illustrations for various books, a large series of works brought from his visit to America and Europe, and, in the first place, his wonderful painting *Boredom*, his frescoes, mosaics, paintings and sculptures.

An artist of enormous scope, [Deineka is] a great and surprising artist of whom Soviet art may be proud.

Originally published in Russian as Evgenii Kibrik, "Khudozhnik sovremenosti," *Literaturnaia gazeta* [The Literary Newspaper], May 18, 1957.

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.

## The Artist's Path (1957)

D65

Iurii Pimenov

When we see before us the works of an artist who spends his whole life living with a true, passionate interest in his topic, a topic which is interesting to all those around him, then we do not want to speak in narrow artistic terms and meanings, we want to think and live with a deep feeling of art.

This is the feeling that the paintings of Aleksandr Deineka inspire.

When we look at Deineka's early works, the youth of the Soviet state, the youth of our generation stands before our eyes. The country had just begun building its heavy industry, the hot breath of creation wafted through life. A young artist drew transparent constructions of new factories, figures of strong workers from the many building projects of the First Five-Year Plan with unabashed passion. New feelings and new understandings entered everyday life, previously unseen technical inventions directly entered reality. Moscow was under construction; new floors renovated its great old buildings. In this asphalt cauldron, the street urchins of F. Bogorodskii could not hide; the construction noise resounded through the streets of Moscow.

It was through this Moscow, torn up and littered with bricks, that the gaunt runners of Deineka, new to life and art, ran. They ran from the new life into the new art, against a background of bright buildings, towards the newly appearing stadiums, towards the wide water reservoirs of tomorrow, whose waters the yachts of G. Nisskii<sup>1</sup> would later crisscross at sharp angles.

The multifaceted, strong life of our country, with all its achievements and mistakes, joys and disappointments, continued to move forward, and in step with her marched this talented, brilliant artist, always passionate about his time. The art of Deineka is an energetic, effective and manly art.

All great ideas require in their time a new space, a new form of expression, not because the old form is simply not needed, but because it is insufficient to express new feelings. As life evolves, so does art.

If some craftsman, struggling to be contemporary, begins in a drawing of an ornament or a mural to include jackhammers, open-hearth furnaces, oil derricks, and, neither understanding nor loving them, decorates them with ribbons and laurels, with flowing fabrics and wreaths, then, without a doubt, he feels neither life nor art.

You cannot fake the feeling of modernity. Deineka has it in spades. As is the case for any genuine artist, his creative path is full of searches, which contain both victories and mistakes, even when his works are fussy or sometimes excessively dry. Even in the weak works of this artist, real interest in life shines through without fail.

In works of art the dearest qualities, first and foremost, are thought and feeling. It is impossible to compare the joy of impact of real figurative art to small and narrow professional amusements.

The new reality found its true figurative expression in Deineka's art. This art is always interested in ongoing, developing life—it forms the guarantee of success for artists of this living type, it contains the character of their talent.

Strong miners ascend from a mineshaft, the motley figures of skiers are drawn on the forest snow with new silhouettes, the bright powerful figures of participants in a holiday demonstration emerge onto the large panel of the international exhibition in Paris, sad black men gaze up from the artist's foreign canvases, the raw days of the brutal conflicts of war appear before the viewer, and behind all of this are the artist's thoughts and feelings.

In mosaic and bronze, in paintings and watercolors, in the ornamentation of a lattice and in stage decoration, Deineka always remains a modern artist.

Many years of great life have passed and many new, real, deep art works have been created. The full-blooded paintings of A. Plastov and cast forms of P. Korin, the delicate art of S. Gerasimov and S. Chuinov, from B. Ioganson to M. Sar'ian, from V. Favorskii to D. Shmarinov, from S. Konenkov to S. Lebedeva, all have formed into mature phenomena and blossomed in the diversity of Soviet art. Deineka's place is always in the front row of those marching forward; his art is always interesting and new. From *Defense of Petrograd* to *Defense of Sevastopol*, from the

swimming lads of the Donbass region to the young *Tractor Driver*, he follows the good path of the real Soviet artist.

1. Grigorii Nisskii (1903–1987) was a painter and leading Moscow yachtsman, who worked closely with Deineka in the 1930s.

Originally published in Russian as Iurii Pimenov, "Put' khudoznika," *Ogonek* 32 (1957).

The version here has been translated from the Russian original by Erika Wolf.







# Exhibitions

# Solo Exhibitions

## 1935

Solo Exhibition of Watercolors, Art Alliance Gallery, Philadelphia, February 11

Solo Exhibition, Soviet Embassy, Washington, DC, March 5

Solo Exhibition, Studio House Gallery, Washington, DC, March 16 – April 7

Solo Exhibition, Paris, March

A. Deineka, Vsekokhudozhnik, Moscow, December 15–30; Academy of Arts, Leningrad, February 12, 1936

## 1957

Works by A. A. Deineka, Honored Art Worker of the RSFSR, Full Member of the USSR Academy of Arts, Academy of Arts, Moscow, May 8; Leningrad

## 1960

Works by Aleksandr Deineka, Kursk Regional Picture Gallery, August 27; Rostov-on-Don; Krasnodar

## 1966

Works by Aleksandr Deineka, People's Artist of the USSR, Lenin Prize Winner and Full Member of the USSR Academy of Arts, Kursk Regional Picture Gallery, October 19, 1966; Museum of Russian Art in Kiev, February 18, 1967 – March 25, 1967; Art Museum of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic in Riga, April 7, 1967

## 1969

Aleksandr Deineka, People's Artist of the USSR, Full Member of the USSR Academy of Arts, Lenin Prize Winner, Academy of Arts, Moscow, June 5; Budapest; Leningrad, 1969–70

Works by A. A. Deineka, Lviv Picture Gallery, Lviv

## 1972

Works by A. A. Deineka: on the 50th Anniversary of the USSR, Warsaw; Szczecin, 1973

## 1974

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka on the 75th Anniversary of His Birth, Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery, 1974–75

## 1980

Works by the Hero of Socialist Labor, Member of the USSR Academy of Arts, Honored Art Worker of the RSFSR Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka (1899–1969). Exhibition of His Works on the 80th Anniversary of His Birth: Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Work, Moscow; Leningrad

## 1982

Aleksandr Deineka: Malerei, Graphik, Plakat, Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, October 29, 1982 – January 5, 1983

## 1988

Works by A. Deineka (from the Collection of the Kursk Picture Gallery), Kaliningrad; Ordzhonikidze

## 1989

Works by A. A. Deineka on the 90th Anniversary of His Birth, Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery

Works by the Hero of Socialist Labor, Full Member of the USSR Academy of Arts, Honored Art Worker of the RSFSR Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Deineka (1899–1969). Exhibition of His Works on the 90th Anniversary of His Birth: Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Work, Moscow, 1989–90

## 1990

Aleksandr Deineka, 1899–1969, Helsingin Taidehalli, Helsinki

## 1999

On the 100th Anniversary of His Birth, A. A. Deineka, Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery

## 2001

Aleksandr Deineka: Kursk Picture Gallery, "Gold Russian Map" Project, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow  
Works by A. Deineka from the Collection of the Kursk Picture Gallery, Belgorod

## 2008

Deineka: Transformations, Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery, Kursk

## 2009

Aleksandr Deineka: Graphic Art from the Collection of the Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, May 26 – September 20  
"The Artist that Dreamt with a Perfect World" One Painting Exhibition, on the 110th Anniversary of Aleksandr Deineka's Birth, Chelyabinsk  
Works by A. A. Deineka on the 110th Anniversary of His Birth, Almaty; Kursk

## 2010

Aleksandr Deineka: "Work, Build and Don't Whine" – Paintings, Graphic Art, Sculpture, State Tretyakov Gallery, March 17 – May 23

## 2011

Aleksandr Deineka: il maestro sovietico della modernità, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, February 9 – May 11  
Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969): An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, October 7, 2011 – January 15, 2012

# Group Exhibitions

## 1921

Decorative Panels for the Workers' Palace, 8th Regional Congress of Soviets, Kursk

## 1923

1st All-Union Agricultural and Domestic Crafts Exhibition, Moscow, August 19

## 1924

1st Discussional Exhibition of the Active Revolutionary Art Associations, Palace of Youth, Moscow, May 11

## 1925

1st Exhibition of the Society of Easel Painters (OST), Institute of Artistic Culture, Moscow, April 26

1st State Traveling Exhibition, Moscow; Saratov; Tsaritsyn (now Volgograd); Kazan; Nizhny Novgorod

La caricature soviétique, 7th Salon de l'Araignée, Paris

## 1926

2nd Exhibition of the Society of Easel Painters (OST), State Historical Museum, Moscow, May 3  
Internationale Kunstausstellung, Dresden  
1st Exhibition of Graphic Art, Moscow

## 1927

4th International Exhibition "The Art of the Book," Leipzig; Nuremberg  
Exhibition of Contemporary Art, Simferopol; Feodosiya

Achievements of Soviet Power in the Space of 10 Years, traveling exhibition organized by VOKS, Berlin; Vienna; Prague; Stockholm; Oslo; Copenhagen, 1927–28

## 1928

10 Years since October, VKhUTEIN, Moscow, January 8  
10th AKhRR Exhibition on the 10th Anniversary of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, Moscow, February 24  
16th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, April 23  
PRESSA. Internationale Presse-Ausstellung, Cologne, May – October

Moscow Works of Art Acquired by the State Purchasing Commission in 1927–28, Moscow

Moscow Theaters in the Course of the First Decade of Soviet Power (1917–1927), Moscow

## 1929

Contemporary Art in Soviet Russia: Painting, Graphic Art, Sculpture, Grand Central Palace, New York, February 1 – March; Philadelphia; Boston; Detroit

Le livre d'enfant en URSS, Librairie Bonaparte, Paris, April 27 – May 22

The Daily Life of Soviet Children. Children in Works of Art: Paintings, Drawings, Printing Productions, Documentary Photographs and Sculptures, Moscow

1st Traveling Exhibition of Painting and Drawing, Moscow

Soviet Drawing, Samara

Graphic Art and Book Art in the USSR, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

USSR – Russische Ausstellung, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zurich; Winterthur  
Russian Graphic Art, Central Gallery, Riga, November – December

## 1930

1st Exhibition of the October Association of Artists, Gorky Park, Moscow, May 27

17th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, June 23; Zurich: Bern

Moderne russische Kunst, Berlin, July

Art Works Dedicated to the Revolution and the Post-revolutionary Period, Moscow

2nd Traveling Exhibition of Painting and Drawing, Moscow; Nizhny Novgorod; Kazan; Sverdlovsk; Perm; Ufa; Samara; Saratov; Penza

The Worker and the Peasant in Pre-revolutionary and Soviet Painting, traveling exhibition, Samara

Socialist Art Today, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Russische Kunst von Heute, Vienna  
Graphic Arts, Drawings, Posters and Books, Riga; Danzig

## 1931

Anti-Imperialist International Art Exhibition, Gorky Park, Moscow, August 1 – September 15

Internationale Ausstellung "Frauen in Not," Berlin, October 9

30th Carnegie International, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, October 15; Baltimore, 1932; Saint Louis, 1932

3rd Traveling Exhibition of Painting and Drawing Organized by the Arts Department of the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR, Sverdlovsk; Magnitogorsk; Omsk; Novosibirsk; Kuzbas; Semipalatinsk; Almaty; Tashkent; Samarkand; Rostov-on-Don; Krasnodar; Grozny; Novorossiisk; Minsk; Smolensk

Kunstausstellung der Sowjetunion, Zurich; Bern; Geneva; Basel; Saint-Galen  
International Exhibition "The Art of the Book," Paris, 1931; Lyon, 1932

## 1932

18th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, June 19  
15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR, 1917–1932. Painting, Graphic Art, Sculpture, Russian Museum, Leningrad, November 13; State Historical Museum and State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, June 27, 1933

Posters in the Service of the Five-Year Plan (1st All-Union Exhibition of Posters), State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Monumental Panels, Moscow

Traveling Exhibition of Moscow Artists, Kharkiv

People's Education in the USSR, London  
Exposition internationale des affiches, Société Royale des Beaux-Arts, Liège; Verviers



*Soviet Drawings: Posters, Book Illustrations and Photographs*, Chicago; San Francisco; New York, 1932–33

### 1933

*OSOAVIAKHIM War Exhibition on the 15th Anniversary of the Red Army*, Moscow, February 24

*Soviet Art*, Warsaw, March; Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, May 13  
*15 Years of the RKKA (Workers and Peasants Red Army)*, Vsekhudozhnik, Moscow, June 30; Leningrad, 1933–34; Kiev, 1934; Kharkiv, 1935

*Arte gráfico soviético: libros de arte, carteles, fotografía*, Madrid; Marseilles

*International Exhibition of Contemporary Posters*, Milan

*International Traveling Exhibition of Painting*, New York; Chicago

*Exhibition of Soviet Posters*, New York

*Soviet Graphic Arts: Posters, Children and Art Books, Photographs*, Paris; Lyon; Bordeaux

*Contemporary Art in the USSR*, San Francisco; Chicago; Philadelphia; New York

*Soviet Humour and Satire*, Stockholm; Oslo

### 1934

*Ten Years without Lenin along Lenin's Path*, poster exhibition on the occasion of the 17th Congress of the Bolshevik Party, Moscow, January 28

*19th Biennale di Venezia*, Venice, May 12  
*Soviet Engravings and Drawings*, Copenhagen

*International Poster Exhibition*, London  
*Soviet Graphics*, London; Glasgow and other cities

*33rd Carnegie International*, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, October 18

*Soviet Art*, Istanbul; Ankara, 1934–35

*The Art of Soviet Russia*, Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Philadelphia, December 15, 1934 – January 21, 1935; Worcester, MA, February 4–24, 1935; Baltimore, March 4–27; Toledo, OH, April 7–21; Montreal, May 17 – June 1; San Francisco, July 15 – August 15; Santa Barbara, CA, August 26 – September 14; Milwaukee, October 1–20; Kalamazoo, MI, November; Cleveland, December 20–29; Kansas, January 5–26, 1936; Denton, TX, February 10–20; Dallas, March 9–29; Los Angeles, April 12 – May 3; Williamstown, MA, June 8–27; Springfield, MA, September; New York, November 12–28

### 1935

*Autumn Works by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Traveling Exhibition*, Nizhny Novgorod; Baku; Tbilisi; Rostov-on-Don, Donetsk  
*October Exhibition in Shop Windows on Kuznetskii Most Street*, Moscow

### 1936

*1st Exhibition of Monumental Painting*, Moscow  
*Soviet Book Illustration in the Course of Five Years, 1931–36*, Moscow  
*Works by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Pictures by Moscow Artists*, Orekhovo-Zuevo

*Painting and Graphic Art*, Kislovodsk

*Soviet Graphics*, Copenhagen; Haugesund; Stavanger; Bergen; Oslo; Trondheim; Nanking; Kwangchow; Hangchow; Shanghai

*Watercolors and Drawings by Soviet Artists*, Oslo

*Soviet Drawings, Watercolors and Lithographs*, Sofia

*Summer Works by Moscow Artists*, Kuznetski Most, Moscow

### 1937

*Exposition Internationale "Arts et techniques dans la vie moderne"*, Paris, May 25

*Works by the Artists of Moscow and Leningrad*, Kislovodsk

*Moscow Graphic Artists*, Kharkiv

### 1938

*All-Union Exhibition of Children's Books and Book Illustrations*, Moscow

*20 Years of the Workers and Peasants Red Army (RKKA) and the Navy*, Moscow, May 5; Leningrad, 1939

*Political Posters and Art for the Masses*, Leningrad

*Soviet Graphic Works and Watercolors*, Oslo; Bergen; Stavanger

### 1939

*The Industry of Socialism: Exhibition of USSR Artists*, Moscow, March 18; Leningrad

*New York World's Fair "The World of Tomorrow"*, New York, April 30 – October 31

*All-Union Agricultural Exhibition* (later renamed *Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy [VDNKh]*), Moscow, August 1

### 1940

*Works by Moscow and Leningrad Artists*, Lviv

*Soviet Art*, traveling exhibition, Bialystok

### 1941

*1st Exhibition of the Moscow Association of Artists*, Moscow

*Best Works by Soviet Artists*, Moscow  
*Soviet Art*, traveling exhibition, Donetsk

### 1942

*Moscow Artists in the Days of the Great Patriotic War*, Moscow, February

*Pavilion of Moscow Artists*, Moscow

### 1943

*The Great Patriotic War: Exhibition of USSR Painting, Graphic Work, Sculpture and Architecture*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

*The Battle of the Red Army against the German Fascist Invaders*, Central House of the Red Army, Moscow, February 23

*Best Works by Soviet Artists from the Tretyakov Gallery Reserve*, Novosibirsk

### 1944

S. V. Gerasimov, A. A. Deineka, P. P. Konchalovskii, S. D. Lebedeva, V. I. Mukhina, D. A. Shmarinov, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, July 28

*The Heroic Defense of Moscow in 1941–42*, Moscow

### 1945

*Exhibition of Russian Paintings*, Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach, Florida, February 16

*Moscow Theatrical Artists 1941–45*, Moscow

*Soviet Painting and Drawing*, Riga; Tallinn

*Physical Training and Sport in the Fine Arts*, Moscow

### 1946

*All-Union Art Exhibition, 1946: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, January 19

*Works by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Soviet Painting and Graphics*, traveling exhibition, Nizhny Novgorod; Kuibyshev (Samara); Tbilisi; Vilnius; Kishinev; Yerevan; Baku; Ashgabat

*Works by Moscow Artists*, Yalta

### 1947

*Ausstellung Sowjetischer Malerei: Alexander Gerassimow, Sergei Gerassimow, Alexander Deineka, Arkadij Plastow*, Staatliches Kunstgewerbemuseum (now MAK), Vienna, February 20; Prague; Belgrade; Sofia

*Moscow in Works by Soviet Artists* (exhibition dedicated to the 800th anniversary of Moscow), Moscow

*All-Union Art Exhibition, 1947: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work*, Moscow; Leningrad

*Works by Moscow Painters and Sculptors*, Spring Exhibition, Moscow

*Graphic Works by the Artists of Moscow and Leningrad*, Moscow; Orel; Smolensk

*Soviet Graphics*, Vilnius; Kaliningrad; Kaunas; Riga; Lepaya; Ventspils; Tallinn; Tartu

*Works by Soviet Artists*, Vienna, Prague, Belgrade

*Paintings and Drawings by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Saratov; Astrakhan

*Traveling Exhibition Organized by the USSR Art Reserve*, Sochi

### 1948

*Soviet Painting and Graphic Art*, Moscow

*30 Years of the Soviet Armed Forces, 1918–48*, Moscow

*Soviet Poster*, Moscow

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Almaty; Tashkent; Ashgabat; Dushanbe

*Paintings and Drawings by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Baltiisk; Lepaya; Riga; Perm; Nizhnii Tagil; Sverdlovsk; Chelyabinsk

*Russian Pre-revolutionary and Soviet Art*, Riga

*Permanent Exhibition of Works by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Drawings by Soviet Artists*, Moscow

### 1949

*All-Union Art Exhibition, 1949: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, November 6

*Works by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Works by the Artists of Moscow and Leningrad*, Kazan

*Soviet Paintings and Drawings*, traveling exhibition, Orel; Yelets

*Works by Moscow Artists on the Navy*, traveling exhibition, Sevastopol; Nikolaev; Batumi; Poti

*Soviet Painting*, Berlin; Dresden; Budapest

*Soviet Posters*, traveling exhibition, Leningrad, 1949; Tbilisi; Baku; Yerevan; Kiev; Kharkiv; Donetsk; Dnepropetrovsk, 1950

### 1950

*Soviet Painting, Sculpture and Graphics*, El Cairo

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Nizhny Novgorod; Saransk; Saratov; Kuibyshev

*Soviet Graphics*, Irkutsk

### 1951

*All-Union Art Exhibition, 1950: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1951–52

### 1952

*N. V. Gogol in the Works of Soviet Artists, Dedicated to the Centenary of the Writer's Death, 1852–1952*, Organizing Committee of the Union of Soviet Artists Exhibition Hall, Moscow, March 15  
*Exhibition of Works by Members of the Academy of Arts of the USSR*, USSR Academy of Arts, Moscow

### 1953

*Soviet Art in the Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow)*, Leningrad

### 1954

*Russian Pre-revolutionary and Soviet Art*, traveling exhibition, Sverdlovsk; Chelyabinsk

*Soviet Art*, Beijing; Shanghai; Kwangchow; Hangchow

### 1955

*Soviet Drawing*, traveling exhibition, Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowetische Freundschaft, Berlin, January 5; Leipzig; Rostock

*All-Union Art Exhibition of the Soviet Republic, 1955: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work, Posters and Decorative Arts*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Dom Khudozhnika (Central House of the Artist) and Painters Union Exhibition Hall, Moscow, January 20

*Soviet Drawings from Private Collections*, Almaty

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Astrakhan; Makhachkala; Grozny; Ordzhonikidze; Nalchik; Stavropol; Piatigorsk

*Works of Russian Pre-revolutionary and Soviet Art from the Tretyakov Gallery Reserve*, Dnepropetrovsk; Sumy; Uzhgorod; Petrozavodsk; Kalinin, 1955–56

## 1956

*28th Biennale di Venezia*, Venice, July 19

*Works by Soviet Artists, 1917–56*, Moscow

*2nd Exhibition of Watercolors by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Soviet Art*, Jakarta

*Soviet Art*, Sofia; Plovdiv; Bucharest

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Volgograd; Astrakhan; Krasnovodsk; Ashgabat; Mary; Bukhara; Samarkand; Dushanbe; Leninabad; Yaroslavl; Vologda; Perm

*Handicraft and Decorative Art in the Russian Socialist Republic*, Moscow, 1956–57

## 1957

*4th Exhibition of Works by Members of the Academy of Arts of the USSR*, USSR Academy of Arts, Moscow, January 16

*Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings on the Occasion of the 1st All-Union Congress of Soviet Artists*, USSR Artists Union, Moscow

*All-Union Art Exhibition of the Soviet Republic, 1957: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work, Posters and Decorative Arts*, Moscow

*Works by Moscow Artists*, traveling exhibition, Zlatoust

*Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings by Soviet Artists*, Perm

*200 Years of the Academy of Arts of the USSR*, USSR Academy of Arts, Leningrad; Moscow

## 1958

*Exposition Universelle et Internationale, Expo'58*, Brussels, April 17 – October 19

*40 Years of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union (VLKSM)*, Moscow

*Soviet Art*, Pyongyang

*Soviet Art*, Budapest

*40 Years of the Poster and the Satirical Drawing*, Moscow

*40 Years of the Soviet Armed Forces*, Moscow

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Kishinev; Murmansk; Novgorod

*Art in Socialist Countries*, Manezh Gallery, Moscow, 1958–59

## 1959

*5th Exhibition of Works by Members of the Academy of Arts of the USSR: Our Contemporary Art*, USSR Academy of Arts, Moscow

*Works by Moscow Artists*, traveling exhibition, Tashkent

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Tbilisi; Sukhumi

*Contemporary Art in the USSR*, Belgrade

*Soviet Art*, Colombo

*Works by Russian and Soviet Artists*, London

*Soviet Art*, Ljubljana

*Achievements of the USSR in the Fields of Science, Engineering and Culture*, New York

*Soviet Art*, Sofia

*Soviet Painting and Sculpture*, Tirana  
*Works by Theatrical Artists*, Prague

## 1960

*30th Biennale di Venezia*, Venice, June  
*Soviet Russia: Art Exhibition of the Republics, Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Works, Posters, Monumental Decorative Arts, Stage Set Designs*, Moscow

*Soviet Painting*, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal; Ottawa; The Art Gallery of Toronto, Toronto

*La peinture russe et soviétique*, Paris  
*Soviet Art in the GDR*, Dresden

*Soviet Russia*, traveling exhibition, Leningrad; Riga; Kiev; Baku; Kuibyshev; Sverdlovsk; Omsk; Irkutsk

*France in the Works of Russian and Soviet Artists*, Leningrad

*Works by Artists from Soviet Republics (Kazakh SSR Picture Gallery Reserve)*, Almaty

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Rustavi; Yerevan; Echmiadzin; Qajaran; Kapan; Kirovakan; Alaty; Khosta; Sochi; Rostov-on-Don  
*Soviet Art*, Prague

## 1961

*Works of Art Submitted for the 1960 Lenin Prize Competition*, Moscow

*Works by Moscow Artists Dedicated to the 20th Anniversary of the Defeat of Nazi Invaders near Moscow*, Moscow

*All-Union Art Exhibition of the Soviet Republic, 1961: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work, Posters and Decorative Arts*, Moscow

*Art in the USSR*, London

*Achievements of the Soviet Economy*, Paris

## 1962

*6th Exhibition of Works by the Full Members and Corresponding Members of the USSR Academy of Arts*, USSR Academy of Arts, Moscow

*Monumental Art*, Moscow

*Physical Training and Sport in the Fine Arts*, Moscow

*Russian and Soviet Art*, Budapest

*Soviet Art*, Dresden; Berlin; Leipzig; Copenhagen; Stockholm

*30 Years of MOSSKh*, Manezh Gallery, Moscow, 1962–63

## 1963

*Sowjetische Künstler. Akademie der Künste der UdSSR: Malerei, Graphik, Plastik. Ausstellung*, Berlin, May–June

*7th Bienal Internacional de Arte de São Paulo*, São Paulo, September 1963; Mexico City, 1964

*Painting and Sculpture by Soviet Masters*, Warsaw

*Works by Several Members of the USSR Academy of Arts: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Art*, traveling exhibition, Moscow, 1963; Kazan; Nizhny Novgorod; Sverdlovsk; Yerevan, Baku

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Almaty

*Esposizione sovietica commerciale e industriale*, Genoa

## 1964

*Artists for the People: 1964 All-Union Art Lottery*, Moscow

*Soviet Graphic Works from the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow: 1917–45*, Moscow

*Works by Several Members of the USSR Academy of Arts*, traveling exhibition, Yerevan; Baku

*Soviet and Russian Art*, Malmö

*Pintura y escultura soviética*, Mexico City

## 1965

*Arte e resistenza in Europa. Ventesimo anniversario della resistenza*, Museo Civico, Bologna, April 26 – May 30; Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Turin, June 8 – July 18  
*Soviet Graphic Works from the State Tretyakov Gallery*, Moscow: 1917–30, Moscow

*7th Exhibition of Works by the Full Members and Corresponding Members of the USSR Academy of Arts*, USSR Academy of Arts, Moscow

*Pintura y obra gráfica soviética*, Havana

## 1966

*8th Exhibition of Works by the Full Members and Corresponding Members of the USSR Academy of Arts*, USSR Academy of Arts, Moscow

*Masterpieces of Modern Painting from the USSR: The Hermitage, the Pushkin, the Russian and the Tretyakov Museums in Leningrad and Moscow*, Tokyo, 1966; Kyoto, 1967

*To the Defenders of Moscow* (exhibition dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi invaders near Moscow), Moscow, 1966–67

## 1967

*Russian Pre-revolutionary and Soviet Art from the State Tretyakov Gallery* (Moscow), Sofia

*“Man and his World,” Montreal International Fine Arts Exhibition, Expo-67*, Montreal

*RSFSR Fine Arts Exhibition*, Riga

*A Decade of Russian Art and Literature in Latvia*, Riga

*Soviet Art, Painting and Sculpture*, Daugavpils

*50 Years of Painting in the USSR*, Tokyo

*50 Years of Soviet Power (Art Exhibition Dedicated to the Anniversary of the USSR)*, Moscow

*L'Art russe des Scythes à nos jours. Trésors des musées soviétiques*, Paris, 1967–68

*Retrospective Exhibition on the 50th Anniversary of the October Revolution*, Almaty, 1967–68

## 1968

*Guarding the Mother Country: Moscow Soviet Art. Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Art, Monumental Decorative Art*, Moscow

*Arte soviético*, Havana

*50 Years of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union (VLKSM)*, Moscow, 1968–69

## 1969

*9th Exhibition of Works by Members of the USSR Academy of Arts*, USSR Academy of Arts Moscow

*Soviet Painting and Sculpture from the State Russian Museum Reserve (Leningrad)*, Kharkiv

*Russian Art from the 13th Century to the Present Day: Painting and Sculpture*, Warsaw

## 1970

*35th Biennale di Venezia*, Venice

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Kalinin; Vladimir; Arkhangelsk

*The New Man – Master of the New World*, Berlin

*Russia*, Malmö

*New Tendencies in Art*, Paris

## 1971

*Art in Revolution: Soviet Art and Design since 1917*, Hayward Gallery, London, February 26 – April 18

*Labor in the Works of Soviet Artists: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

*People from the Soviet Village*, State Russian Museum, Leningrad; Yaroslavl

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Vologda; Kineshma; Ivanovo; Yaroslavl; Krasnoyarsk

*Vladimir Mayakovsky*, Prague

*Physical Culture and Sport in Art*, Moscow, 1971; Munich, 1972

## 1972

*Works from the Hermitage, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts and the State Tretyakov Gallery*, Vienna

*Soviet Art*, New Delhi, 1972–73

## 1973

*Works by Soviet Artists*, Baku; Leninabad  
*Soviet Art: Sculpture, Painting, Drawing, Decorative and Applied Arts*, Dortmund; Rotterdam

*Modern Soviet Graphics, Sculpture, Decorative Art and Handicrafts*, Budapest

*Exhibition of Works by Members of the USSR Academy of Arts on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Transformation of the Academy of Arts of Russia into the Academy of Arts of the USSR*, Moscow; Leningrad; Warsaw, 1973–75

## 1974

*Le Salon 1974. Grandes œuvres russes et maîtres de la peinture contemporaine soviétique. “Paris d’hier et d’aujourd’hui,”* 187th Exhibition, Société des Artistes Français, Paris, April 18 – May 10

*Works by Soviet Artists*, Zaporizhzhia; Dnepropetrovsk; Nova Kakhovka; Bălți; Kaliningrad; Pskov; Tula; Orel; Briansk

*Spring Exhibition of Works by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Our Homeland the USSR: Political Posters*, Budapest

*Soviet Political Posters*, Bucharest

*Pittura russa e sovietica dal secolo XIV ad oggi*, Rome; Florence, Forte di Belvedere, May 3 – June 30

*Soviet Landscapes from the State Tretyakov Gallery*, Sofia

## 1975

*30 Years after the Victory of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45*, Moscow; Berlin

*Exhibition on the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Soviet People's Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45*, Leningrad

*Exhibition of Works by Soviet Artists Devoted to the 30th Anniversary of the Victory in the War of 1941–45*, Almaty

*Works by Soviet Artists*, Almaty

*Still-life*, Tallinn

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Briansk; Smolensk; Minsk; Grodno; Druskininkai; Palanga; Klaipeda; Kaunas; Joniskis

*Russian and Soviet Portraits from the Museums of the USSR*, Warsaw

*Masterpieces of Russian and Soviet Painting*, Tokyo

*Works by Soviet Artists*, Joniskis; Pan-evezis 1975–76

*Soviet Art (Seminar on Soviet Culture in the GDR)*, Berlin

*Masterpieces from the State Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts*, Tokyo; Osaka; Nagoya; 1975; Fujimiya; Kitakyushu, 1975–76

## 1976

*Artists for the Party: Exhibition on the Occasion of the 25th Congress of the CPSU*, Moscow

*Works by Artists from the Soviet Republics (Kazakh SSR Picture Gallery Reserve)*, Almaty

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Kyzylorda, Shymkent, Karatau

## 1977

*Kunst aus der Revolution. Sowjetische Kunst während der Phase der Kollektivierung und Industrialisierung, 1927–1933*. Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK) in collaboration with the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, Berlin, February

*Soviet Portrait*, Moscow

*Along Lenin's Path (on the 60th Anniversary of the October Revolution)*, Moscow

*Wege des Kampfes. Ausstellung anlässlich des 60. Jahrestages der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution*, USSR Academy of Arts, Moscow; Academy of Arts of the GDR, Berlin, November 10 – December 26

*Works by Artists from the Soviet Republics*, Almaty

*Works by Soviet Artists*, traveling exhibition, Dzhambul; Karaganda; Temirtau; Tselinograd; Petropavlovsk; Semipalatinsk; Pavlodar

*Russian and Soviet Painting: An Exhibition from the Museums of the USSR*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco

*60 Years of Soviet Art*, Paris

*Art Born of the October Revolution*, Tokyo

*Works of Soviet Art from the State Russian Museum Reserve*, Helsinki

*Self-Portrait in the Works of Russian and Soviet Artists*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; Leningrad; Kiev; Minsk; Sofia; Warsaw; Poznan; Wrocław, 1977–78

*Russian Graphics of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Berlin, 1977–78

## 1978

*60 Heroic Years: Exhibition Dedicated to the 60th Anniversary of the USSR Armed Forces: Painting, Monumental Art, Sculpture, Graphic Works, Posters, Applied and Decorative Arts*, Moscow

*The Young Guard of the Soviet Country. Exhibition of Art of the USSR: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Works, Posters, Applied and Decorative Arts*, Manezh Gallery Central Exhibition Hall, Moscow

*Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Work by RSFSR Artists*, Rosizopropaganda, Moscow

*Exhibition Dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of the City of Magnitogorsk*, Moscow

*Fifty Masterpieces from Soviet Museums and Picture Galleries*, Prague; Bratislava

*Revolution und Realismus: Revolutionäre Kunst in Deutschland 1917 bis 1933*, Altes Museum, Berlin, November 8, 1978 – February 25, 1979

## 1979

*Paris–Moscou: 1900–1930. Arts plastiques, arts appliqués et objets utilitaires, architecture-urbanisme, agit-prop, affiche, théâtre-ballet, littérature, musique, cinéma, photo créative*, Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, May 31 – November 5; Moscow, 1980

*Art of the First Five-Year Plan: Painting, Sculpture*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

*Together Forever: Ukraine Socialist Soviet Republic Exhibition of USSR and RSFSR Museum Holdings on the 325th Anniversary of the Reunification of Ukraine and Russia*, Kiev; Moscow

*Sport in the USSR*, Moscow

*La pittura russa dal XV al XX secolo*, Turin

*Arte figurativa della Russia sovietica*, Turin, 1979–80

## 1980

*All-Union Exhibition Marking the 110th Anniversary of Lenin's Birth*, Moscow

*Sport as Ambassador of Peace: USSR Exhibition Celebrating the XXII Olympics of Moscow*, Moscow

*Moscow in Russian and Soviet Painting*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

*Monumental Art in the USSR*, Leningrad; Czechoslovakia; Sweden

*Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad in the Works of Russian and Soviet Artists*, Leningrad

*1st All-Union Exhibition of Book Illustrations*, Moscow

*Soviet Art in the Sixties*, Poland

## 1981

*Exhibition of Works by Soviet Artists on the Occasion of the 26th Congress of the USSR Communist Party*, Chelyabinsk

*60 años de pintura soviética*, Galería del Auditorio Nacional, Mexico City; Asa de la Cultura Benjamin Carrion, Quito; San Luis Potosí, Mexico

*40 Years of the Defeat of Fascist German Troops in the Suburbs of Moscow, 1981–1982*

*Soviet Art: Painting and Sculpture from the State Tretyakov Gallery*, Kolomna, 1981–82

## 1982

*50 Years of MOSKh: 1932–1982: Exhibition of Works by Moscow Artists*, Moscow

*Exhibition of Soviet Art Marking the 60th Anniversary of the USSR from the Collection of the Art Museum of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic in Riga*, Art Museum of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic, Riga

*Art and Revolution*, Tokyo

*Art from October Times*, Poland, Hungary

*Sowjetische Malerei und Plastik, 1917–1982. Ausstellung anlässlich des 60. Jahrestages der Bildung der UdSSR*, Altes Museum, Berlin, 1982–83

*Multinational Art from the Country of the Soviets: On the 60th Anniversary of the USSR*, Chelyabinsk, 1982–83

## 1983

*100 œuvres du Musée Tretyakov de Moscou*, Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva, June 15 – September 15

*Soviet Portrait 1920–1930*, Tyumen

*225 Years of the Academy of Arts of the USSR: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Graphic Art, Decorative and Applied Arts, Documents, Publications*, Moscow, 1983–84

*Soviet Art from 1917–1980: Analysis of the Collection of the Chelyabinsk Regional Picture Gallery*, Chelyabinsk, 1983–84

## 1984

*Sport in Art: USSR Exhibition Dedicated to the International Championship "Drúzhba-84": Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Art, Applied and Decorative Arts, Documents and Publications*, Moscow

*Traditions et Recherches. Chefs-d'œuvre des musées de l'URSS. Jeunes artistes soviétiques. Art contemporain français*, Grand Palais, Paris

*Soviet Painting*, Beijing

*USSR Conference in West Berlin*, Berlin

*History of Soviet Art*, Poland

*Russische und Sowjetische Kunst. Tradition und Gegenwart. Werke aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen und Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf; Stuttgart, 1984; Hannover, 1985

*Shostakovich and His Time: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Art, Posters and Landscape (1906–1983)*, Budapest; Duisburg, 1985

## 1985

*Sowjetische Malerei und Plastik von 1917 bis zur Gegenwart*, Altes Museum, Berlin, May 14 – June 23

*We have Defended Peace, We Will Keep It*, New Manezh, Moscow

*The Youth of the Country: Painting, Graphic Work, Sculpture*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

*40 Years of the Victory over Fascism*, Moscow

*Exhibition of Russian and Soviet Artists Marking the 40th Anniversary of the Victory*, Perm State Art Gallery

*Soviet Painting from 1919 to 1980*, Mannheim

*Soviet Art 1940–1960*, Romania

*Art Born in October: Soviet Painting and Sculpture 1917–1982*, National Gallery, Prague; Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, 1986

## 1986

*Work and Creation*, State Russian Museum, Leningrad

*Arte contemporanea sovietica, 1918–1985*, Genoa

*Stages on the Long Path: Exhibition of Works by Soviet Artists in the State Tretyakov Gallery and the USSR State Art Gallery Marking the 27th Congress of the USSR Communist Party*, Moscow, 1986–87

## 1987

*Schrecken und Hoffnung. Künstler sehen Frieden und Krieg*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, October 1 – November 15; Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; Hermitage, Leningrad

*The Days of RSFSR Culture in Armenia*, Yerevan

*Soviet Painting in the 1920s and 1930s*, Tula

*70 Years since October*, Perm State Art Gallery, Perm

*The Painter and His Time: USSR Art Exhibition*, Moscow, 1987–88

*Soviet Art*, Copenhagen, 1987–88

*Kunst und Revolution: russische und sowjetische Kunst 1910–1932 = Art and Revolution: Russian and Soviet Art, 1910–1932*, Palace of Exhibitions, Budapest, November 5, 1987 – January 17, 1988; Austrian Museum of Applied Arts (MAK), Vienna, March 11 – May 15, 1988

*Soviet Art from the 1920s and 1930s*, Tula; Briansk; Kaluga; Leningrad, 1988

## 1988

*In Defense of Socialist Achievements: Exhibition Marking the 70th Anniversary of the USSR Armed Forces*, Moscow

*Old, New, Eternal*, Ukrainian State Art Gallery, Kiev

## 1989

*Exhibition of Paintings and Graphic Art from the S. N. Gorshin Collection*, Moscow

*Arte russa e sovietica, 1870–1930*, Lingotto, Turin

*Da Repin a Malevich*, Turin

*Exhibition of Works from the Provincial Picture Gallery of Kalinin*, Museum of the Academy of Arts of the USSR, Leningrad

*The World of Pasternak*, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

*Still-life in Russian and Soviet Art in the Collections of the Museum of Russian Art and Private Collections in Kiev*, Kiev  
*Arte russo*, Rome

## 1990

*Russian Faces, Soviet Lives, 1910–45: Paintings from the State Russian Museum, Leningrad*, Manchester, June–July  
*Moscow: Treasures and Traditions*, Seattle Art Museum, June–September; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, October 1990 – February 1991

*Soviet Art of 1920–30 in the Collection of the Chelyabinsk Regional Picture Gallery*, Chelyabinsk

*Soviet Art in Malta*, La Valetta, Malta

*The 1930s: Painting, Sculpture, Catalogue of the State Tretyakov Gallery*, Moscow, 1990–92

## 1992

*The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915–1932*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, March 1 – May 10; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, June 5 – August 23; Salomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, September 25 – December 15

## 1993

*Agitation zum Glück: Sowjetische Kunst der Stalinzeit*, Saint Petersburg; dokumenta-Halle, Kassel, 1993 – 94; Prague, 1994; Turku, 1995; Stockholm, 1996

## 1994

*Kunst und Diktatur. Architektur, Bildhauerei und Malerei in Österreich, Deutschland, Italien und der Sowjetunion 1922–1956*, Künstlerhaus, Vienna, March 28 – August 15

*Exhibition of Contemporary Art on the 75th Anniversary of the Museum of Fine Arts in Tula*, Tula

*Stalin's Choice: Soviet Socialist Realism, 1932–1956*, P.S. 1 Museum, New York

## 1995

*Staatliches Russisches Museum, St. Petersburg: Die grossen Sammlungen III. Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Rußlands in Werk und Bild*, Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, April 7 – August 3

*46th Biennale di Venezia*, Venice

*Il tempo delle illusioni. Arte russa degli anni venti*, Palazzo Ducale, Genoa, June 6 – July 30

*Exhibition Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Victory in the Second World War*, Moscow; Arkhangelsk

*The Beauty of Russian Women from the 15th to the 20th Centuries*, Sapporo  
*Berlin-Moskau/Moskau-Berlin, 1900–1950*, Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, September 3, 1995 – January 7, 1996; The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, March 1 – July 1, 1996

*Art and Power: Europe under Dictators 1930–1945: the XXIII Council of Europe Exhibition*, Hayward Gallery, London, October 26, 1995 – January 21, 1996; Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Barcelona, February 27 – May 5; Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, June 11 – August 20

## 1996

*Painters from Russia in the Nizhny Novgorod Fair Celebrating the 100 Anniversary of the Russian Art and Industry Fair: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Art, Photography, Applied and Decorative Arts, Popular Art*, Nizhny Novgorod  
*Homage to Shostakovich on the 90th Anniversary of the Composer's Birth*, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

*Divided Beauty: 150th Anniversary of the Creation of the Finnish Society of Fine Arts*, Helsinki; Stockholm; Saint Petersburg, 1997

*Art of 1930–50*, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

## 1997

*Années 30 en Europe: le temps menaçant, 1929–1939*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, February 20 – May 25

*The Age of Modernism: Art in the 20th Century*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, May 7 – July 27

## 1999

*Pioneros del arte moderno. Arte ruso y soviético, 1900–1930*, Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, Bogota, February 17–May 2  
*The Academy of Arts, 20th Century, 1999–2001*, Russian Academy of Arts, Moscow, 1999–2001

## 2000

*Exhibition on the 55th Anniversary of the Victory*, Central Museum of the Great War 1941–1945, Moscow  
*Art of the Last Century*, Kharkiv, 2000–1

## 2001

*Russische Avantgarde 1910–1934, Mit voller Kraft*, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, February 23 – June 10  
*Nothing Happens, Only Life*, Perm State Art Gallery, Perm

*20th Century Portraiture in Russia*, State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, November 5, 2001 – March 18, 2002

## 2002

*Russian Utopia 1914–1931*, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, April 24 – June 29

*500 Anos de Arte Russa*, Oca do Parque do Ibirapuera, Sao Paulo, June 11 – September 8

*Die Zweite Schöpfung. Bilder der industriellen Welt vom 18 Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, July 31 – October 21

*Socialist Realism Yesterday and Today: Actual Realists*, Central House of the Artist, Moscow

*The Art of Vladimir's Land: Icons, Painting, Decorative and Applied Arts, Manuscripts and Old Printed Material*, "Gold Russian Map" Project, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

*Art and Sport*, Moscow

*Back to the USSR*, Helsinki

*The Portrait of the Artist's Wife*, Moscow; Saint Petersburg, 2002–3

## 2003

*La Russie et les avant-gardes*, Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, July 2 – November 5

*Traumfabrik Kommunismus: die visuelle Kultur der Stalinzeit*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, September 24, 2003 – January 4, 2004

*Berlin-Moskau/Moskau-Berlin, 1950–2000*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, September 28, 2003 – January 5, 2004; State Historical Museum, Moscow, April 3 – June 15, 2004

*Russian Art: Commemorative Exhibition at the Russian Embassy in Tallinn*, Tallinn, 2003–4

*The Woman of My Dreams*, Ivanovo  
*Dreams and Illusions, 1910–1930*, Akurey

## 2004

*Domestic and Wild Animal Painting in the Russian Art of the 18th–20th Centuries from the Collection of the State Russian Museum*, The State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, March 4 – May 31

*En guerra*, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB), Barcelona, May 17 – September 26

*Russian Art of the 20th Century from the Collection of the State Museum of Art of Azerbaijan*, Baku

*Russia-Norway: Through Centuries and Borders*, Norsk Folkemuseum, Oslo

*Three Centuries of Russian Art*, Republic of Karelia Museum of Fine Arts, Petrozavodsk, October 1 – December 1; Murmansk Regional Museum of Art, Murmansk, December 17, 2004 – February 28, 2005

*Warszawa-Moskwa/Moskwa-Warszawa, 1900–2000*, Zakhenta National Gallery, Warsaw, November 20, 2004 – January 30, 2005; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, March 25 – June 12, 2005

*Kandinsky e l'anima russa*, Galleria d'Arte Moderna Palazzo Forti, Verona, 2004–5

*In the Russian Tradition: A Historic Collection of 20th Century Russian Painting*, Ripley Center, Smithsonian International Gallery, Washington, December 15, 2004 – April 10, 2005; The Museum of Russian Art, Minneapolis, 2005

## 2005

*Il lavoro negli anni delle avanguardie russe: arte e lavoro*, Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome, April 28 – May 24, 2005

*Road to Victory on the 60th Anniversary of the Victory Day*, The State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, April 28 – August 1

*Aspects of Russian Art, 1915–1935: Selections from the Merrill C. Berman Collection*, Ubu Gallery, New York, May 3 – July 22

*Russia!* Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, September 16, 2005

– January 11, 2006; Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, March 29 – September 3, 2006

*Avant-Garde: Before and After*, Europalia Museum of Visual Arts, Brussels, October 4, 2005 – January 22, 2006

*Peasantry in Russian Art*, The State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, October 12, 2005 – February 20, 2006

*L'idéalisme soviétique: peinture et cinéma (1925–1939)*, Musée de l'Art wallon, Liège, October 14, 2005 – February 5, 2006; Perm State Art Gallery, 2006

*Art Treasures from Kharkiv*, Kharkiv, 2005–6

## 2006

*Soviet Idealistic Realism: 1920–1939*, Perm State Art Gallery, March 22 – April 23

*Russian Museums Congratulate the State Tretyakov Gallery*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, May 24 – August 6

*The City of the Sun: The Triumph of Socialist Realism*, Shanghai; Beijing; Chungtsing, 2006–7

## 2007

*Kunst und Propaganda: Im Streit der Nationen 1930–1940*, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, January 26 – April 27

*Poésie de l'eau dans l'art russe*, Palais Lumière, Evian, June 23 – September 23

*Russia: People, Years, Life*, Perm State Art Gallery, July–September

*Verità e bellezza: realismo russo – dipinti dal Museo Nazionale d'Arte Lettone di Riga*, Galleria Civica di Palazzo Loffredo, Potenza, October 2007 – February 2008; Riga; Vilnius, 2009  
*Venus Sovietica*, The State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, November 1 – April 7, 2008

## 2008

*The Battle for the Banner: Soviet Art between Stalin and Trotsky, 1926–1936*, New Manezh, Moscow, May 30–August 6

*The Power of Water*, The State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, August 14 – November 11

*Neoclassicism in Russia*, The State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, October 23, 2008 – January 15, 2009

*The 1930s: The Making of "The New Man"*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

## 2009

*The Poster: The Artist and Time*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, June 3 – August 30

*The Faculty of the VKhUTEMAS-VKhUTEIN: Teachers and Pupils*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, June 19 – October 18

*Around the World with an Easel*, State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, October 7, 2009 – February 15, 2010

*Sport in Art*, New Manezh, Moscow, October 20–31

## 2010

*Promesas de futuro. Blaise Cendrars y el libro para niños en la URSS, 1926–1929*, Museo Picasso, Malaga, October 4, 2010 – January 30, 2011

# Bibliography

Without aspiring to be exhaustive, this bibliography is meant to provide readers, and especially those less familiar with Russian culture, with full bibliographical information on the subject of the exhibition.

Part I features texts written by Aleksandr Deineka. Many of the painter's writings were later republished elsewhere, notably by V. P. Sysoev. In order to avoid repeatedly reproducing the same information, these later editions are indicated here simply by the name of the author and, in brackets, the place and year of publication.

Part II includes publications (books or articles in edited volumes or journals) on the life and work of Aleksandr Deineka.

Part III has information on exhibition catalogues. Given the complexity of, and many contradictions in, the information available on some of these original sources, we opted to include exhibition titles exclusively in English for shows which were originally in languages other than English, German, French, Italian and Spanish.

The selected bibliography listed in Part IV is devoted to the Russian avant-garde, and more particularly, socialist realism. It includes a selection of books and articles as well as exhibition catalogues. Although—above all in the case of the avant-garde—the latter includes publications on single artist shows, we considered it more important to include here catalogues produced to accompany collective or thematic exhibitions.

- I. Texts by Aleksandr Deineka (1918–66)
- II. Texts on Aleksandr Deineka (1924–2010)
  - II.1. Monographs
  - II.2. Articles
- III. Exhibition Catalogues
  - III.1. Solo Exhibitions
  - III.2. Group Exhibitions
- IV. Selected Bibliography
  - IV.1. Books
  - IV.2. Articles in collective works and periodical publications
  - IV.3. Catalogues

## I. Texts by Aleksandr Deineka (1918–66)

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## III. Exhibition Catalogues

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*4th International Exhibition "The Art of the Book."* Leipzig; Nuremberg, 1927.

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*XVII Biennale di Venezia*. Venice, 1928.

*Catalogue of the Moscow Works of Art Acquired by the State Purchasing Commission in 1927-28 Exhibition*. Moscow, 1928.

*Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Soviet Russia: Painting, Graphic, Sculpture* [Grand Central Palace, New York, 1928; Philadelphia; Boston; Detroit, 1929]. New York, 1929.

*Le livre d'enfant en URSS*. Paris: Éditions Bonaparte, 1929.

*1st Exhibition of the October Association of Artists* [Gorky Park, TsPKiO, Moscow]. Moscow, 1930.

*XVII Biennale di Venezia*. Venice, 1930.

*Internationale Ausstellung "Frauen in Not"*. Berlin, 1931.

*Anti-Imperialist International Art Exhibition* [Gorky Park, TsPKiO, Moscow]. Moscow, 1931.

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*15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR, 1917-1932. Painting, Graphic Art, Sculpture* [State Russian Museum, Leningrad, 1932; State Historical Museum and State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1933]. Leningrad, 1932.

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*XIX Biennale di Venezia*. Venice, 1934.

*33rd Carnegie International*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1934.

*The Art of Soviet Russia* [Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Philadelphia; travels to various cities in the United States and Canada]. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum of Art; American Russian Institute, 1934.

*Exhibition of Summer Works by Moscow Artists* [Kuznetski Most, Moscow]. Moscow, 1936.

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*Works by Moscow and Leningrad Artists*. Lviv, 1940.

*The Great Patriotic War: Exhibition of USSR Painting, Graphic Work, Sculpture and Architecture* [State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow]. Moscow, 1943.

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- All-Union Art Exhibition, 1949: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work* [State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow]. Moscow, 1949.
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- All-Union Art Exhibition, 1951: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work* [State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1951–52]. Moscow, 1951.
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- All-Union Art Exhibition of the Soviet Republic, 1955: Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Work, Posters and Decorative Arts* [State Tretyakov Gallery; Dom Khudozhnika (Central House of the Artist); Painters Union Exhibition Hall, Moscow]. Moscow, 1955.
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- Art in Socialist Countries* [Manezh Gallery, Moscow]. Moscow, 1958.
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- Biennale di Venezia*. Venice, 1960.
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# Glossary of Acronyms

**AKhR:** Assotsiatsiia khudozhnikov revoliutsii (Association of Artists of the Revolution), 1928–32, formerly AKhRR

**AKhRR:** Assotsiatsiia khudozhnikov revoliutsionnoi Rossii (Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia), 1922–28

**FOSKh:** Federatsiia ob"edineniia sovet-skikh khudozhnikov (Federation of Associations of Soviet Artists)

**GAKhN:** Gosudarstvennaya Akademiia khudozhestvennykh nauk (State Academy of Artistic Sciences), 1925–31, previously RAKhN

**GIII:** Gosudarstvennyi Institut Istorii Iskusstv (State Institute of Art History)

**GINKhUK:** Gosudarstvennyi Institut khudozhestvennoi kul'tury (State Institute of Artistic Culture [Leningrad])

**GIZ / Gosizdat:** Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo (State Publishing House), established on May 21, 1919, via the fusion of large department and cooperative publishing houses to coordinate administrative and political literature state publications; from 1930, OGIZ

**Glaviskusstvo:** Glavnoe upravlenie po delam khudozhestvennoi literatury i iskusstva (Chief Directorate on Matters of Artistic Literature and Art), the department of Narkompros that provided oversight for literature and art

**GLAVLIT:** Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i izdatel'stv (Chief Directorate for Literary and Publishing Affairs)

**GLAVNAUK:** Glavnoe upravlenie nauchnymi, nauchno-khudozhestvennymi i muzeinymi uchrezhdenii mi (Chief Administration for Scientific, Scientific-Artistic and Museum Institutions)

**Glavpolitprosvet:** Glavnyi politiko-prosvetitel'nyi komitet Respubliki (Central Political Enlightenment Committee of the Republic)

**Glavprofobr:** Glavnoe upravlenie professional'nogo obrazovaniia (Chief Administration for Professional Education)

**GOELRO:** Gosudarstvennaia Komissii po Elektrifikatsii Rossii (State Commission for the Electrification of Russia), state organ created on February 21, 1921, to elaborate the electrification plan for Russia after the October Revolution

**GOSKOMIZDAT:** Gosudarstvennyi Komitet po Delam Izdatel'stv, Poligrafii i Knizhnoi Torgovli (State Committee on Matters of Publishing, Printing and the Book Trade)

**GOSTRUDIZDAT:** Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Voprosy Truda (State Publisher on Questions of Labor)

**Gubnarobraz:** Gubernskii otdel narodnogo obrazovaniia (Provincial Department of Public Education)

**INKhUK:** Institut khudozhestvennoi kul'tury (Institute of Artistic Culture [Moscow])

**INTERNAKhR:** Internatsional AKhR (International wing of the Association of Artists of the Revolution)

**Iugolef:** Iuzhnyi levyi front iskusstv (Southern Left Front of the Arts)

**IZO Narkompros:** Otdel izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv (Visual Arts Section of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment)

**IZOBRIGADA:** Brigada Khudozhnikov (Art Brigade), group of artists who split from OST in 1931.

**IZOGIZ:** Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo izobrazitel'nykh Iskusstv (State Publishing House of the Fine Arts), 1930–38

**IZORAM:** Izobrazitel'noe Iskusstvo Rabochei Molodezhi (the artistic circle Fine Art of Working Youth)

**Komfut:** Kommunisticheskii futurizm (Communist Futurism)

**Komintern:** Kommunisticheskii Internatsional (The Communist International).

**Komsomol:** Kommunisticheskii soiuz molodezhi (Communist Union of Youth), a nickname for the All-Union Leninist Communist Union of Youth (VLKSM)

**KPSS:** Kommunisticheskaiia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuz (Communist Party of the Soviet Union/CPSU), 1952–91

**KUTV:** Kommunisticheskii universitet trudiashchikhsia Vostoka (Communist University of the Laborers of the East)

**LEF:** Levyy front iskusstv (Left Front of the Arts), Russian association of writers linked to the journal of the same name (later *Novyi lef* [Novyi levyy front iskusstv — New Left Front of the Arts]); the group continued as REF from 1929

**LENINIZOGIZ:** Leningradskoye Gosudarstvennoye Izdatel'stvo Izobrazitel'nykh Iskusstv (Leningrad State Publishing House of the Fine Arts)

**LOSSKh:** Leningradskoe otdelenie Soiuz Sovetskikh khudozhnikov (Leningrad branch of the Union of Soviet Writers), created in 1932, almost concurrently with that of Moscow (MOSSKh)

**LTsK:** Literaturnyi tsentr konstruktivistov (Literary Center of Constructivists)

**MARKhI:** Moskovskii Arkhitekturnyi Institut (Moscow Institute of Architecture), established in 1933

**MGAKhI:** Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii khudozhestvennyi institut im. Surikova (Moscow State Academic Artistic Institute named for V.I. Surikov, commonly known as "The Surikov Institute"), 1948–92.

**MIPIDI:** Moskovskii institut prikladnogo i dekorativnogo iskusstva (Moscow Institute of Applied and Decorative Arts), 1930–45

**MKhat:** Moskovskii khudozhestvennyi Akademicheskii Teatr (Moscow Art Theater)

**MKRKP(b):** Moskovskii komitet Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bolshevik) (Moscow Committee of the Russian Communist Party)

**MOSSKh:** Moskovskii Oblastnoi Soiuz sovet-skikh khudozhnikov (Moscow Regional Union of Soviet Artists), 1932–38. From 1938, MSSKh

**MPI:** Moskovskii poligraficheskii institut (Moscow Polygraphic Institute), 1930–93

**MSSKh:** Moskovskii Soiuz Sovetskikh khudozhnikov (Moscow Union of Soviet Artists), 1938–59

**MTKh:** Moskovskoe tovarichestvo khudozhnikov (Moscow Fellowship of Artists)

**MVKhPU:** Moskovskoe vysshee khudozhesvenno-promyshlennoe uchilishche (byvshee Stroganovskoe) (Moscow Higher Artistic-Industrial School (formerly Stroganov), 1948–92

**MVTU im. Baumana:** Moskovskoe Vysshee Tekhnicheskoe Uchilishche imeni Baumana (Moscow Higher Technical School named for Bauman), established in 1830 and renamed in 1930 in honor of Nikolai Bauman, a revolutionary executed in 1905

**Narkompros:** Narodnyi kommissariat prosveshcheniia (People's Commissariat of Enlightenment), Petrograd, 1918–21; Moscow, 1918–22

**Narkomzem:** Narodnyi kommissariat zemledeliia SSSR (People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR)

**NEP:** Novaia ekonomicheskaiia politika (New Economic Policy), 1921–28

**NK RKI:** Narodnyi Kommissariat Raboche-Krest'ianskoi Inspektsii (People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection)

**NKTP:** (Narkomtiazhprom): Narodnyi kommissariat tiazheloi promyshlennosti (People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry)

**NKVD:** Narodnyi kommissariat Vnutrennikh del SSSR (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR)

**NOT:** Nauchnaia organizatsiia truda (Scientific Organization of Labor)

**OBMOKhU:** Obshchestvo molodykh khudozhnikov (Society of Young Artists), Moscow, 1919–22

**ODVF:** Obshchestvo družei vozdušnogo flota (Society of Friends of the Air Force)

**OGIZ:** Ob"edinenie gosudarstvennykh knizhno-zhurnalnykh izdatel'stv (Association of State Book and Magazine Publishing Houses)

**Okhobro:** Otdel khudozhestvennogo obrazovaniia (Department of Artistic Education)

**OKhR:** Ob"edinennoi khudozhnikov-realistov (Association of Artist-Realists)

**OMAKhR:** Ob"edinenie molodezhi AKhR (Association of AKhR Youth)

**OMKh:** Obschestvo Moskovskikh Khudozhnikov (Society of Moscow Artists)

**OSA:** Ob"edinenie sovremennykh arkhitekto-rov (Association of Contemporary Architects)

**OSOVIAKhIM:** Obshchestvo sodeistviya oborone, aviastii i khimicheskomu stroitel'stvu (Society for Facilitating Defense, Aviation and Chemical Construction), 1927–48, later DOSAAF

**OST:** Obshchestvo khudozhnikov-stankovistov (Society of Easel Painters), 1925–31

**PGSKhUM:** Petrogradskie Gosudarstvennye svobodnye khudozhestvennye uchebnye masterskie (Petrograd State Free Artistic Education Workshops), created in 1918 from the Higher School of Art, Sculpture and Architecture, VKhU

**Rabis:** Vserossiiskii soiuz rabotnikov iskusstv (All-Russian Union of Art Workers), 1919–24; from 1924, VSERABIS

**RAKhN:** Rossiiskaia Akademiia khudozhestvennykh nauk (Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences), created on the initiative of Lunacharskii, it was given over to the "synthetic study of the arts," Moscow 1921–25, called GAKhN in 1925

**RAPKh:** Rossiiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh khudozhnikov (Russian Association of Proletarian Artists), 1931–32

**RAPM:** Rossiiskaya assotsiatsiia proletarskikh muzykantov (Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians)

**RAPP:** Rossiiskaya assotsiatsiia proletarskikh pisatelei (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers)

**REF:** Revoliutsionnyi front (iskusstv) (Revolutionary Front [of the Arts]), previously called LEF

**RKI:** Raboche-Krest'ianskaia Inspektsiia (Workers' and Peasants' Inspection). DUPLICA NK RKI

**RKKA:** Raboche-Krestianskaia Krasnaia Armiia (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army).

**RKP(b):** Rossiiskaia Kommunisticheskaiia Partii (bolshevikov) (Russian Communist Party [Bolsheviks]), 1918–25, later VKP(b)

**ROSTA:** Rossiiskoe Telegrafnoe Agentstvo (Russian Telegraph Agency), the state news agency in Soviet Russia, 1918–25, later called TASS and, from 1992, ITAR-TASS (Russian Telegraph Information Agency)

**RSFSR:** Rossiiskaia Sovetskaia Federativnaia Sotsialisticheskaiia Respublika (Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Socialist Republic)

**SELKhozGIZ:** Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Selskokhoziaistvennoi literatury (State Publishing House for Agricultural Literature)



**SGKhM:** Svobodnye Gosudarstvennye Khudozhestvennye Masterskie (Free State Art Workshops), created in the autumn of 1918 with a view to moving away from academic methods of teaching art and introducing a new system of organization of individual workshops. They were formed from existing educational institutions: the former Stroganov School of Art and Industry, which was the First Workshop; and the School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (the future Surikov), the Second Workshop. After the fusion of both workshops, the VKhUTEMAS was established in Moscow in 1920

**SKh SSSR:** Soiuz khudozhnikov SSSR (Union of Artists of the USSR), 1957–91

**Sovnarkom:** Sovet narodnykh komissarov (Council of People's Commissars)

**SP SSSR:** Soiuz Pisatelei SSSR (Writers' Union of the USSR)

**Svomas:** see SGKhM

**TASS:** Telegrafnoe agentstvo Sovetskogo Soiuza (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union), formerly called ROSTA

**TEO Narkompros:** Teatral'nyi otdel Narkomprosa (Theater Section of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment)

**TRAM:** Teatr Rabochei Molodezhi (Theater of Working Youth), semi-professional theater for propaganda plays, in vogue in Russia in the late 1920s and early 1930s

**TsIT:** Tsentralnyi institut truda (Central Institute of Labor)

**TsK RKP(b):** Tsentralnyi Komitet Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (bolshevikov) (Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party [Bolsheviks]), 1918–25

**TsK VKP(b):** Tsentralnyi Komitet Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (bolshevikov) (Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party [Bolsheviks]), 1925–52

**TsKK:** Tsentral'naia Kontrol'naia Komissia (Central Control Commission)

**TsPKiO:** Tsentral'nyi Park Kul'tury i Otdykha imeni Gor'kogo (Central Park of Rest and Culture named for Gorky).

**UNOVIS:** Utverditeli novogo iskusstva (Champions of the New Art), 1920–22, group of artists from Vitebsk

**USDS:** Upravlenie stroitel'stva Dvortsia Sovetov (Board of Construction of the Palace of the Soviets)

**VDNKh:** Vystavka Dostizhenii Narodnogo Khoziaistva SSSR (Exhibition of Economic Achievements of the USSR)

**VKhUTEIN:** Vysshie khudozhestvenno-tekhnikheskie institut (Higher Arts and Technical Institute), Petrograd-Leningrad, 1923–30, called VKhUTEMAS until 1927

**VKhUTEMAS:** Vysshie khudozhestvenno-tekhnikheskie masterskie (Higher

Arts and Technical Studios), Petrograd, 1920–26, called VKhUTEIN from 1927

**VKP(b):** Vsesoiuznaia Kommunisticheskaiia Partii (bolshevikov) (All-Union Communist Party [Bolsheviks]), 1925–52, formerly RKP(b)

**VLKSM:** Vsesoiuznyi Leninskii Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodezhi (All-Union Leninist Communist Youth Organization)

**VOAPP:** Vsesoiuznoe ob'edinenie asotsiatsii proletarskikh pisatelei (All-Union Federation of Associations of Proletarian Writers)

**VOKS:** Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnykh sviazei s zagranitsei (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries)

**VOPRA:** Vsesoiuznoe ob'edinenie proletarskikh arkhitektorov (All-Union Association of Proletarian Architects)

**Vsekokhudozhnik:** Vserossiiskii soiuz kooperativnykh tovarishestv rabotnikov izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva (All-Russian Union of Cooperative Partnerships of Visual Art Workers)

**Vsekopromsoiuz:** Vserossiiskii Soiuz Promyslovoi Kooperatsii (All-Russian Union of Producers' Cooperatives)

**Vserabis:** Vsesoiuznyi professional'nyi soiuz rabotnikov iskusstv (All-Union Professional Union of Art Workers), 1924–53

**VSNKh:** Vysshii Sovet Narodnogo Khoziaistva (Supreme Soviet of the National Economy)

**VTsIK:** Vserossiiskii Tsentral'nyi Ispolnitel'nyi Komitet (All-Russian Central Executive Committee), the largest state legislative, executive and control organ of RSFSR between 1917 and 1937

**VTsSPS:** Vsesoiuznyi Tsentral'nyi Sovet Professionalnikh Soiuzov (All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions)

**Zhivskul'ptarkh:** Komissia zhivopisno-skul'pturno-arkhitekturnogo sinteza pri Narkomprose (Commission for Painting-Sculpture-Architecture Synthesis within Narkompros)



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**58.** Gustavs Klucis. Cover of the book by Walter Hough, *Ogon'* [Fire], Russian translation of the English original *The Story of Fire* (1928), 1931. Letterpress and linocut, 19.5 x 13 cm. Molodaia Gvardiia, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**59.** Nikolai Troshin. *URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 6, June 1936. Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow. French edition of *SSSR na stroike*. Collection MJM, Madrid

**60.** Gustavs Klucis. *Kommunizm - eto sovetskaia vlast' plius elektrifikatsiia* [Communism is Soviet Power Plus Electrification], 1930. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 72.7 x 51.3 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Print run: 30,000. Price: 20 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**61.** *USSR im Bau* [USSR in Construction], no. 3, 1930. Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. German edition of *SSSR na stroike*. Archivo España-Rusia

**62.** Mikhail Razulevich. *Sovetskaya vlast' plius elektrifikatsiia* [Soviet Power Plus Electrification], n.d. Photography. Gelatin silver print, 16.6 x 58.4 cm. Private collection

**63.** Gustavs Klucis. Cover for G. Fel'dman's *Propaganda elektrifikatsii* [Propaganda for Electrification], 1924. Letterpress, 22.9 x 12.7 cm. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**64.** *Lenin i elektrifikatsiia* [Lenin and Electrification], 1925. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 86.4 x 55.9 cm. Lenizdat, Leningrad. Reprint, 1969. Print run: 75,000. Price: 10 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**65.** Vladimir Roskin. *GET*, 1926. Design for poster. Gouache, ink and pencil, 21.6 x 28.4 cm. Private collection

**66.** Aleksandr Rodchenko. Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left Front of the Arts], no. 5, 1927. Magazine. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**67.** Mechislav Dobrokovskii. *Elektrostraitelnaia piatiletka v 4 goda* [The Five-Year Plan of Electrical Construction in 4 Years], ca. 1927–28. Poster. Lithography, 73.6 x 50.8 cm. From the series of posters The Five-Year Plan in Four Years. Gosudarstvennoe Nauchno-Tekhnicheskoe Izdatel'stvo, Moscow. Print run: 11,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**68.** Iulian Shuts'kii. *Radio. Iz voli millionov sozdadim edinuiu voliu* [Radio. From the Will of Millions, We Create a Single Will], 1925. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 93.5 x 62 cm. KUBUCH,

Leningrad. Print run: 5,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**69.** Soviet radio, 1953. Bakelite, 27 x 25.5 x 11 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**70.** Homemade radio casing in imitation of a Stalinist skyscraper, 1954. Plywood, 53 x 31 x 22 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**71.** Cigarette box "Novaia Moskva" [New Moscow], from the Moscow Dukat factory, with an image of a contemporary skyscraper, n. d. Cardboard, printed paper, silk, 22 x 23.5 x 2.5 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**72.** Nikolai Troshin. *URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 3, March 1934. Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow. French edition of *SSSR na stroike*. Collection MJM, Madrid

**73.** *Kremlevskaia lampa* [Kremlin Lamp], 1934. Metal and fabric, 50 x 30 x 30 cm. Made by Elektrosvet, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**74.** Stalin and Khrushchev in a session of the Soviet Presidium standing behind a *Kremlevskaia lampa*, first model, 1938. Photography, 17 x 23 cm. Archive Kino Foto Dokumentov. Archivo España-Rusia

**75.** Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova. *URSS en Construcción* [USSR in Construction], no. 4, 1938. Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow. Spanish edition of *SSSR na stroike*. Collection MJM, Madrid

**76.** New Year tree decoration lights in the shapes of a dirigible and an automobile, ca. 1940. Painted glass, 3 x 9 x 2.5 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**77.** Automobile bumper, model GAZ-12 ZIM (1950–59), 1950. Painted iron, stainless steel, glass, 10 x 47 x 10 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**78.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover for *U stanka* [At the Factory Workbench], no. 2, 1924. Magazine. Lithography, 20.2 x 27.7 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**79.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 7, 1925, pages 10–11. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**80.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 8, 1925. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 25.4 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**81.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for the story by N. Dorofeev, "The History of a Homeless Child." *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], 1924, no. 10, page 4 of the back cover. Magazine. Lithography, 33.1 x 25.4 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**82.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for N. Dorofeev's story "Pelageia Prokho-

rovka," *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 11, 1925, pages 12–13. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**83.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 28, 1925. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**84.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Rokfeller. Risunok dlia zhurnala "Bezbozhnik u stanka"* [Rockefeller. Drawing for *Atheist at the Factory Workbench*], 1926. India ink on paper, 32.6 x 38.7 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**85.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 2, 1926, pages 12–13. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**86.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 6, 1926, pages 12–13. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**87.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 2, 1927, page 21. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 25.4 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**88.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 3, 1927, pages 12–13. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 53.3 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**89.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], no. 9, 1927, back cover. Magazine. Lithography, 35.5 x 25.4 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**90.** Aleksandr Deineka. Illustration for *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Factory Workbench], ca. 1928. Magazine. Lithography, 33.1 x 25.4 cm. MKRKP (b), Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**91.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Untitled*, 1927. Drawing for the book by Henri Barbusse *Ogon'* [The Fire], Russian translation from the French original *Le feu* (1916). Ink on paper, 19.2 x 31.8 cm. Akademiia, Moscow. Private collection

**92.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover and illustrations for the book by Henri Barbusse, *Ogon'* [The Fire], Russian translation of the French original *Le feu* (1916), 1935. Letterpress, 20 x 14 cm. Akademiia, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**93.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover and illustrations for the book by Agniia Barto, *Pervoe maia* [The First of May], 1926. Book. Letterpress, 32 x 22 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**94.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover and illustrations for the book by V. Vladimirov, *Pro loshadei* [About Horses], 1928. Book. Letterpress, 20 x 15 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**95.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover and illustrations for *Iskorka* [Spark], no. 8, 1929, pages 10–11. Lithography, 25 x 19.7 cm. Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**96.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover and illustrations for the picture book *V oblakakh* [In the Clouds], 1930. Lithography, 22.5 x 19 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**97.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover and illustrations for the book by Nikolai Aseev *Kuter'ma (Zimniia skazka)* [Commotion (A Winter Tale)], 1930. Book. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm. OGIZ-Molodaia Gvardia, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**98.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover and illustrations for the book by Boris Ural'skii, *Elektromonter* [The Electrician], 1930. Book. Letterpress, 22.5 x 19.5 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**99.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover for the book *Parad Krasnoi Armii* [The Parade of the Red Army], 1930. Book. Letterpress, 22.5 x 19.5 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**100.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover for the book by Semen Kirsanov *Vstretim tretii!* [We Will Fulfill the Third (the goals of the third year of the first five-year plan)], 1930. Book. Letterpress, 22 x 14.7 cm. Molodaia gvardiia, Moscow. Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**101.** Cover and illustration for the book by Aleksei Kharov, *Un ami sentimental*, 1930. Book. Letterpress, 21.8 x 17.5 cm. OGIZ, Moscow. Ville Paris, Bibliothèque l'Heure joyeuse

**102.** Aleksandr Rodchenko. Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left Front of the Arts], no. 4, 1927. Magazine. Letterpress, 22 x 15 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**103.** Aleksandr Rodchenko. Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left Front of the Arts], no. 11, 1928. Magazine. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**104.** Aleksandr Rodchenko. Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left Front of the Arts], no. 12, 1928. Magazine. Letterpress, 20.3 x 15.2 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**105.** Aleksandr Rodchenko. Cover for *Novyi lef* [New Left Front of the Arts], no. 1, 1927. Magazine. Letterpress, 23 x 15 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**106.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Demonstratsiia. Risunok dlia zhurnala "Prozhektor"*, no. 45 [Demonstration. Drawing for *Prozhektor*], 1928, page 6. India ink on

paper, 38.9 x 29.9 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**107.** Cover for *Prozhektor* [Searchlight], no. 8 (30), 1924. Magazine. Letterpress, 36 x 27 cm. Izdatel'stvo Pravda, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**108.** John Heartfield. Cover for *Prozhektor* [Searchlight], no. 48, 1931. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 33 x 25.4 cm. Izdatel'stvo Pravda, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**109.** Mechislav Dobrokovskii. *Stroi promyslovuiu kooperatsiiu . . .* [Build Producers' Cooperatives], ca. 1925. Poster. Lithography, 72.1 x 54 cm. VSEKOPROM-SOIUZ, Moscow. Print run: 5,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**110.** Aleksandr Samokhvalov. *Da zdравstvuyet komsomol!* [Hail the Komsomol!], 1924. Poster. Lithography, 89.9 x 60 cm. Priboi, Petrograd. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**111.** Aleksandr Deineka. *V mekhanicheskoy tsekhke. Risunok dlia zhurnala "U stanka"* [In the Mechanical Workshop. Drawing for *U stanka*], 1925. Ink, watercolor and wash on paper, 56.3 x 37.5 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**112.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Parovoi molot na Kolomenskom zavode. Risunok dlia zhurnala "U stanka"* [Steam Hammer at the Kolomenskaia Factory. Drawing for *U stanka*], 1925, no. 3. India ink, gouache and graphite on paper, 43.1 x 34.5 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**113.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Udarnik, bud fizkulturnikom!* [Shockworker, Be a Physical Culturist!], 1930. Design for poster. India ink and tempera on paper, 102.3 x 72.7 cm. Kursk Deineka Picture Gallery

**114.** Nikolai Troshin. *USSR in Construction*, no. 5, 1932. Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm. Gosizdat, Moscow. English edition of *SSSR na stroike*. Fundación José María Castañé

**115.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Pered spuskom v shakhtu* [Before the Descent into the Mine], 1925. Oil on canvas, 248 x 210 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**116.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Na stroike novykh tsekhov* [Building New Factories], 1926. Oil on canvas, 212.8 x 201.8 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**117.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie* [Socialist Competition] Cover for *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 2, May 1929. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 22.9 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. Print run: 20,000. Price: 25 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**118.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Proizvodstvo produktov pitaniia* [The Production of Foodstuffs]. Cover for *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 5, August 1929. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 22.9 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. Price: 10 kopeks. Print run: 12,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**119.** *Chistku gos-apparata* [The Purge of the State Apparatus]. Cover of *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 1, April 1929. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 22.9 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. 119b and 119c. Illustrations for inside pages by Aleksandr Deineka. Collection Merrill C. Berman.

**120.** *Piatiletku v massy* [The Five-Year Plan to the Masses]. Cover for *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce], no. 3, June 1929. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 22.9 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. 120b and 120c. Illustrations for inside pages by Aleksandr Deineka. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**121.** *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 11, 1929. Magazine. Lithography, letterpress and rotogravure, 30.5 x 22.9 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**122.** *Podnimai proizvoditelnost', snizhai brak* [Raise Productivity. Reduce Waste]. Cover of *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 12, 1929. Magazine. Lithography letterpress and rotogravure, 30.5 x 22.9 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**123.** Aleksandr Rodchenko. *Polnyi khod* [Full Speed]. Cover for *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 6, 1929. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 23 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**124.** Aleksandr Rodchenko. *Sovetskii avtomobil'* [The Soviet Automobile] Cover for *Daesh'!* [Let's Produce!], no. 14, 1929. Magazine. Lithography and letterpress, 30.5 x 23.2 cm. Rabochaia Moskva, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**125.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Tekstilshchitsi* [Female Textile Workers], 1927. Oil on canvas, 171 x 195 cm. State Russian Museum. Saint Petersburg

**126.** Nataliia Pinus. *Trudiashchiesia zhenshchiny-v riady aktivnykh uchastnits* [Working Women into the Ranks of Active Participants], 1933. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 96.2 x 72 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad. Print run: 20,000. Price: 90 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**127.** Valentina Kulagina. *Mezhdunarodnyi den' rabotnits* [The International Day of Working Women], 1930. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 106.7 x 71.1 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow-Leningrad. Print run: 40,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**128.** Nikolai Troshin. *URSS en construction* [USSR in Construction], no. 2, February 1936. Magazine. Letterpress, 42 x 30 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow. French edition of *SSSR na stroike*. Collection MJM, Madrid

**129.** Nikolai Sidel'nikov. *Rabitsnia, uluchshai kachestvo, snizhai sebe-stoimost' . . .* [Woman Worker, Improve Quality, Reduce Cost], ca. 1930. Design for soap wrapper. Collage: gouache, ink, letterpress and photography

(gelatin silver, vintage copy) on board, 32.1 x 25.7 cm. State Trust Tezhe Moscow. Private collection

**130.** *Znenskii zhurnal. Besplatnoe prilozhenie* [Woman's Journal. Free supplement], 1930. Magazine insert. Lithography, 74 x 104 cm. Patterns for various embroidery and knitting techniques. Ogonek, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**131.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Oborona Petrograda* [Defense of Petrograd], 1928. Oil on canvas, 209 x 247 cm. Copy of the original painted by Deineka in 1928 (today in the State Museum of Armed Forces, Moscow). State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**132.** SA. *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture], no. 6, 1928. Magazine. Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**133.** SA. *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture], no. 5-6, 1926. Magazine. Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**134.** SA. *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture], no. 3, 1928. Magazine. Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. 134b and 134c. Interior pages with the October Group Manifesto. Archivo España-Rusia

**135.** SA. *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture], no. 5, 1928. Magazine. Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**136.** Aleksei Gan. SA. *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [SA, Contemporary Architecture], 1928. Poster. Letterpress, 38.1 x 27.9 cm. Advertising poster for subscription to SA magazine 1928. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**137.** MAO *Konkursy 1923-1926* [Moscow Architecture Society Competitions 1923-1926], 1926. Magazine. Letterpress, 32.5 x 25 cm. MAO, Moscow. 137b. Page illustrating the design for the Central Telegraph building in Moscow by Aleksandr and Viktor Vesnin (second prize). Archivo España-Rusia

**138.** *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* [Construction of Moscow], no. 10, 1930. Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 21.5 cm. Mossovet, Moscow. Special issue devoted to the Narkomfin building by the architect Moisei Ginzburg, a prototype for communal building. Archivo España-Rusia

**139.** Anton Lavinskii. *Stachka* [Strike], 1925. Poster for the film *Strike* by Sergei Eisenstein. Letterpress and lithography, 106.7 x 70.8 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Print run: 9,500. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**140.** Piotr Galadshv. Brochure for the film. *Battleship Potemkin*, 1926. Letterpress, 15 x 11.5 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**141.** *Novaia obstanovka - novye zadachi khoziastvennogo stroitel'stva* [A New Situation - New Tasks for Economic

Construction], 1931. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 104 x 71.1 cm. IZOGIZ, Moscow. Print run: 50,000. Price: 50 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**142.** Gustavs Klucis. *Piatiletku prevratim v chetyrekhetku* [We Will Transform the Five-Year Plan into a Four-Year Plan], 1930. Poster. Lithography and letterpress, 101.5 x 73.7 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow. Print run: 30,000. Price: 35 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**143.** Gustavs Klucis. *Untitled*. Dummy for the cover of *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo* [For Proletarian Art], ca. 1932. Photography. Illuminated gelatin silver, vintage copy, 21.3 x 16.2 cm. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**144.** Gustavs Klucis. Poster reproduced on the cover of *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo* [For Proletarian Art], no. 5, 1932. Magazine. Letterpress, 29.8 x 21.3 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**145.** *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo* [For Proletarian Art], no. 9, 1931. Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 21.5 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**146.** *Iskusstvo v massy* [Art to the Masses], no. 2 (10), 1930. Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 23 cm. AKhR, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**147.** *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo* [For Proletarian Art], no. 3-4, 1931. Magazine cover. Letterpress, 30.5 x 21.5 cm. OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad. Archivo España-Rusia

**148.** *Znanie-sila* [Knowledge is Power], no. 15, 1931. Magazine cover. Letterpress, 30 x 21 cm. Molodaia Gvardiia, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**149.** *Stroika* [Construction], no. 16, August 5, 1930. Magazine. Letterpress, 30 x 22 cm. Krasnaia Gazeta, Leningrad. Archivo España-Rusia

**150.** *Nauka i tekhnika* [Science and Technology], no. 2, 1930. Magazine. Letterpress, 31 x 23 cm. Izdatel'stvo Krasnaia Gazeta, Leningrad. Archivo España-Rusia

**151.** Aleksandr Deineka. Cover for *Krasnaia panorama* [Red Panorama], no. 4, February 5, 1930. Magazine. Offset, 27.9 x 20.3 cm. Krasnaia Gazeta, Leningrad. Price: 10 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**152.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Nado samim stat' spetsialistami* [We Need to Become Specialists], 1931. Poster. Lithography, 144 x 102 cm. IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad. Print run: 30,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**153.** Iurii Pimenov. *My stroim sotsializm* [We are Building Socialism], 1928. Poster. Lithography, 68.5 x 53.3 cm. GOSIZDAT, Moscow-Leningrad. Print run: 35,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**154.** Iurii Pimenov. Cover and illustrations for the book of poems by Aleksandr Zharov, *Osen' i vesna* [Autumn and



Spring], 1933. Book. Letterpress and lithography, 30 x 23 cm. Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow. 154b. Illustration on page 8: "October People." Archivo España-Rusia

**155.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Prevratim Moskvu v obraztsovyi sotsialisticheskii gorod proletarskogo gosudarstva* [We Will Transform Moscow into an Exemplary Socialist City of the Proletarian State], 1931. Poster. Lithography, 144. 8 x 208.3 cm. IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad. Print run: 5,000. Price: 1 ruble. Private collection

**156.** Supplement in the children's magazine *Murzilka*, no. 10, ca. 1930. Magazine. Letterpress, 29.5 x 24 cm. VLKSM Central Committee, Moscow. 156b. Cutout with model of the Palace of the Soviets by Boris Iofan. Archivo España-Rusia

**157.** Solomon Telingater. Cover of *Stroitel'stvo Moskvvy* [The Construction of Moscow], no. 10, 1929. Magazine. Letterpress, 30.5 x 23 cm. Mossovet, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**158.** Detail of the facade of the Hotel Moscow by architect Aleksei Shchusev, Moscow 1932–38 (demolished in 2001). Plaster, 47 x 60 x 2 cm. Archivo España-Rusia

**159.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Mekhaniziruem Donbass!* [We are Mechanizing the Donbass!], 1930. Poster. Lithography, 106.6 x 73.6 cm. IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad. Print run: 25,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**160.** Aleksandr Zharov. *Stikhi i ugol* [Poems and Coal], 1931. Book. Letterpress, 17 x 12.5 cm. Molodaia Gvardiia, Moscow. Archivo España-Rusia

**161.** *Da zdravstruet 1 maia!* [Hail the First of May!], ca. 1930. Flag. Hand-painted cotton fabric, 105 x 72.1 cm. Fundación José María Castañé

**162.** Aleksei Gan. *Vystavka rabot Vladimira Maiakovskogo* [Exhibition of Mayakovsky's Work], 1931. Poster for the exhibition that took place at the Literature Museum of the Lenin Public Library in 1931. Lithography and letterpress, 64.8 x 46 cm. Glavlit, Moscow. Print run: 2,000. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**163.** Vladimir Mayakovsky. *Vo ves' golos* [At the Top of My Voice], 1931. Book. Letterpress, 19 x 12.5 cm. Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow-Leningrad. Archivo España-Rusia

**164.** Vladimir Mayakovsky. *Sochineniia v odnom tome* [Collected Works in One Volume], 1940. Book. Letterpress, 26.1 x 20.6 cm. Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow. Fundación José María Castañé

**165.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Dadim proletarskie kadry Uralo-Kuzbassu!* [We Will Provide Proletarian Cadres to Ural-Kuzbass!], 1931. Poster. Lithograph on canvas, 68.5 x 101.6 cm. IZOGIZ, Moscow. Print run: 10,000. Price: 50 kopeks. Collection Merrill C. Berman

**166.** Solomon Telingater, E. Gutnov, N. Spirov. *Oktiabr'. Borba za proletarskie klassovie pozitsii na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv* [October. The Struggle for Proletarian Class Positions at the Spatial Arts Front], February 1931. Book. Letterpress, 26.7 x 19 cm. IZOGIZ, Moscow. Private collection

**167.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Zheleznodorozhnoe depo* [Railroad Depot], ca. 1928. Watercolor, ink, pen on paper. 29.9 x 44.8 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**168.** Aleksandr Deineka. *Zhenskie brigady v sovkhoeze* [Women's Brigades to the State Farm!], 1931. Tempera on paper, 70.5 x 70.8 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**169.** Aleksandr Deineka. "Kto kogo?" ["Who Will Beat Whom?"], 1932. Oil on canvas, 131 x 200 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**170.** Mikhail Razulevich. *Realnost' nashei programmy – eto zhivie liudi* [The Reality of Our Program is Living People], 1932. Sketch for poster. Letterpress, 38.3 x 25.4 cm. Collection Merrill C. Berman

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This catalogue and its Spanish edition are published on the occasion of the exhibition

## ALEKSANDR DEINEKA [1899-1969] AN AVANT-GARDE FOR THE PROLETARIAT

October 7, 2011 – January 15, 2012

### CONCEPT AND ORGANIZATION

Curator: Manuel Fontán del Junco, Director of Exhibitions  
María Zozaya, Exhibition Coordinator  
Department of Exhibitions, Fundación Juan March

With the collaboration of Christina Kiaer

### CATALOGUE

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### TEXTS

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California; Greenwood Press, Westport, Ct.; Harper & Row, New York; Honeyglen, London; Redwords, London; Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt; Thames and Hudson, London; Xlibris, Philadelphia; ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie) Publications, Karlsruhe.

It was not possible to locate or contact all authors and their representatives; if necessary, please contact [direxpo@expo.march.es](mailto:direxpo@expo.march.es)

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Erica Witschey, Erika Wolf and Department of Exhibitions, Fundación Juan March

### EDITORIAL COORDINATION AND PRODUCTION

María Zozaya and Jordi Sanguino, Department of Exhibitions, Fundación Juan March

### TRANSLATIONS

#### Russian/English:

John Bowlit (D7, D10, D11, D13, D14, D15, D17, D18, D22, D26, D28, D30, D39, D40, D42, D53, D54)  
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#### Italian/English:

Simon Pleasance (ADeM essay, "Underground Explorations in the Synthesis of the Arts: Deineka in Moscow's Metro")

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CATALOGUE DESIGN  
Guillermo Nagore

TYPOGRAPHY  
Graphik (Christian Schwartz)

PAPER  
Cyclus Silk 90 gr. and Gardapat 115 gr.

PREPRESS AND PRINTING  
Estudios Gráficos Europeos S.A., Madrid

BINDING  
Ramos S.A., Madrid

English edition (hardcover):  
ISBN Fundación Juan March: 978-84-70-75-592-7

Spanish edition (hardcover):  
ISBN Fundación Juan March: 978-84-70-75-590-3

Spanish edition (softcover):  
ISBN Fundación Juan March: 978-84-70-75-591-0

#### Legal Deposit

English edition (hardcover): M-26840-2011  
Spanish edition (hardcover): M-26841-2011  
Spanish edition (softcover): M-26839-2011

Fundación Juan March  
Castelló, 77  
28006 Madrid  
www.march.es

Cover and back cover: composition by Guillermo Nagore based on Aleksandr Deineka, *Tekstilshchitsi* [Female Textile Workers], 1927 [Cat. 125] and the cover for *Kuter'ma (Zimniaia skazka)* [Commotion (A Winter Tale)], 1930 [Cat. 97]

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Pages dividing book sections: Soviet textile print (ca. 1930) by an anonymous designer



# Exhibition Catalogues and other Publications by the Fundación Juan March

## 1966

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA [Catalogue-Guide]. Text by Fernando Zóbel. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English). Published by the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca

## 1969

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA [Catalogue-Guide]. Texts by Gustavo Torner, Gerardo Rueda and Fernando Zóbel. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English). Published by the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)

## 1973

ARTE'73. Multilingual ed. (Spanish, English, French, Italian and German)

## 1974

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA [Catalogue-Guide]. Texts by Gustavo Torner, Gerardo Rueda and Fernando Zóbel. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English). Published by the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. and exp.)

## 1975

OSKAR KOKOSCHKA. Óleos y acuarelas. Dibujos, grabados, mosaicos. Obra literaria. Text by Heinz Spielmann

EXPOSICIÓN ANTOLÓGICA DE LA CALCOGRAFÍA NACIONAL.

Texts by Enrique Lafuente Ferrari and Antonio Gallego

### I EXPOSICIÓN DE BECARIOS DE ARTES PLÁSTICAS

## 1976

JEAN DUBUFFET. Text by Jean Dubuffet

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI. Colección de la Fundación Maeght. Texts by Jean Genêt, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Dupin and Alberto Giacometti

### II EXPOSICIÓN DE BECARIOS DE ARTES PLÁSTICAS

## 1977

ARTE USA. Text by Harold Rosenberg

ARTE DE NUEVA GUINEA Y PAPÚA. Colección A. Folch y E. Serra. Texts by B. A. L. Cranstone and Christian Kaufmann

PICASSO. Texts by Rafael Alberti, Gerardo Diego, Vicente Aleixandre, Eugenio d'Ors, Juan Antonio Gaya Nuño, Ricardo Gullón, José Camón Aznar, Guillermo de Torre and Enrique Lafuente Ferrari

MARC CHAGALL. 18 pinturas y 40 grabados. Texts by André Malraux and Louis Aragon (in French) **P**

ARTE ESPAÑOL CONTEMPORÁNEO. COLECCIÓN DE LA FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH. [This catalogue accompanied the exhibition of the same name that traveled to 67 Spanish venues between 1975 and

1996; at many venues, independent catalogues were published.]

### III EXPOSICIÓN DE BECARIOS DE ARTES PLÁSTICAS

## 1978

ARS MEDICA. Text by Carl Zigrosser

FRANCIS BACON. Text by Antonio Bonet Correa

BAUHAUS. Texts by Hans M. Wingler, Will Grohmann, Jürgen Joedicke, Nikolaus Pevsner, Hans Eckstein, Oskar Schlemmer, László Moholy-Nagy, Otto Stelzer and Heinz Winfried Sabais. Published by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, 1976

KANDINSKY: 1923-1944. Texts by Werner Haftmann, Gaëtan Picon and Wassily Kandinsky

### ARTE ESPAÑOL CONTEMPORÁNEO. COLECCIÓN DE LA FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH

### IV EXPOSICIÓN DE BECARIOS DE ARTES PLÁSTICAS

## 1979

WILLEM DE KOONING. Obras recientes. Text by Diane Waldman

MAESTROS DEL SIGLO XX. NATURALEZA MUERTA. Text by Reinhold Hohl

GEORGES BRAQUE. Óleos, gouaches, relieves, dibujos y grabados. Texts by Jean Paulhan, Jacques Prévert, Christian Zervos,

Georges Salles, André Chastel, Pierre Reverdy and Georges Braque

GOYA. CAPRICHOS, DESASTRES, TAUROMAQUIA, DISPARATES. Text by Alfonso E. Pérez-Sánchez (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)

### V EXPOSICIÓN DE BECARIOS DE ARTES PLÁSTICAS

## 1980

JULIO GONZÁLEZ. Esculturas y dibujos. Text by Germain Viatte

ROBERT MOTHERWELL. Text by Barbaralee Diamonstein and Robert Motherwell

HENRI MATISSE. Óleos, dibujos, gouaches, découpées, esculturas y libros. Text by Henri Matisse

### VI EXPOSICIÓN DE BECARIOS DE ARTES PLÁSTICAS

## 1981

MINIMAL ART. Text by Phyllis Tuchman

PAUL KLEE. Óleos, acuarelas, dibujos y grabados. Text by Paul Klee

MIRRORS AND WINDOWS. AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY SINCE 1960. Text by John Szarkowski. English ed. (Offprint: Spanish translation of text by John Szarkowski). Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1980

MEDIO SIGLO DE ESCULTURA: 1900-1945. Text by Jean-Louis Prat

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA. FUNDACIÓN

KEY: Sold-out publications | **P** Exhibition at the Museu Fundación Juan March, Palma | **C** Exhibition at the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca

JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide].  
Texts by Gustavo Torner, Gerardo Rueda and Fernando Zóbel

## 1982

PIET MONDRIAN. Óleos, acuarelas y dibujos. Texts by Herbert Henkels and Piet Mondrian

ROBERT Y SONIA DELAUNAY. Texts by Juan Manuel Bonet, Jacques Damase, Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Isaac del Vando Villar, Vicente Huidobro and Guillermo de Torre

PINTURA ABSTRACTA ESPAÑOLA: 1960-1970. Text by Rafael Santos Torroella

KURT SCHWITTERS. Texts by Werner Schmalenbach, Ernst Schwitters and Kurt Schwitters

VII EXPOSICIÓN DE BECARIOS DE ARTES PLÁSTICAS

## 1983

ROY LICHTENSTEIN: 1970-1980. Text by Jack Cowart. English ed. Published by Hudson Hill Press, New York, 1981

FERNAND LÉGER. Text by Antonio Bonet Correa and Fernand Léger

PIERRE BONNARD. Text by Ángel González García

ALMADA NEGREIROS. Texts by Margarida Acciaiuoli, Antonio Espina, Ramón Gómez de la Serna, José Augusto França, Jorge de Sena, Lima de Freitas and Almada Negreiros. Published by the Ministério da Cultura de Portugal, Lisbon, 1983


ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL EN LA COLECCIÓN DE LA FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH. Text by Julián Gállego

GRABADO ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. COLECCIÓN DE LA FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH. Text by Julián Gállego. [This catalogue accompanied the exhibition of the same name that traveled to 44 Spanish venues between 1983 and 1999.]

## 1984

EL ARTE DEL SIGLO XX EN UN MUSEO HOLANDÉS: EINDHOVEN. Texts by Jaap Bremer, Jan Debbaut, R. H. Fuchs, Piet de Jonge and Margriet Suren

JOSEPH CORNELL. Text by Fernando Huici

FERNANDO ZÓBEL. Text by Francisco Calvo Serraller. Madrid and 

JULIA MARGARET CAMERON: 1815-1879. Texts by Mike Weaver and Julia Margaret Cameron. English ed. (Offprint: Spanish translation of text by Mike Weaver). Published by John Hansard Gallery & The Herbert Press Ltd., Southampton, 1984

JULIUS BISSIER. Text by Werner Schmalenbach

## 1985

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG. Text by Lawrence Alloway

VANGUARDIA RUSA: 1910-1930. Museo y Colección Ludwig. Text by Evelyn Weiss

DER DEUTSCHE HOLZSCHNITT IM 20. Text by Gunther Thiem. German ed. (Offprint: Spanish translations of texts). Published by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, 1984

ESTRUCTURAS REPETITIVAS. Text by Simón Marchán Fiz

## 1986

MAX ERNST. Texts by Werner Spies and Max Ernst

ARTE, PAISAJE Y ARQUITECTURA. El arte referido a la arquitectura en la República Federal de Alemania. Texts by Dieter Honisch and Manfred Sack. German ed. (Offprint: Spanish translation of introductory texts). Published by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, 1983

ARTE ESPAÑOL EN NUEVA YORK: 1950-1970. Colección Amos Cahan. Text by Juan Manuel Bonet

OBRAS MAESTRAS DEL MUSEO DE WUPPERTAL. De Marées a Picasso. Texts by Sabine Fehleemann and Hans Günter Wachtmann

## 1987

BEN NICHOLSON. Texts by Jeremy Lewison and Ben Nicholson

IRVING PENN. Text by John Szarkowski. English ed. published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984 (repr. 1986)

MARK ROTHKO. Texts by Michael Compton and Mark Rothko

## 1988

EL PASO DESPUÉS DE EL PASO EN LA COLECCIÓN DE LA FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH. Text by Juan Manuel Bonet

ZERO, A EUROPEAN MOVEMENT. The Lenz Schönberg Collection. Texts by Dieter Honisch and Hannah Weitemeier. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English)

COLECCIÓN LEO CASTELLI. Texts by Calvin Tomkins, Judith Goldman, Gabriele Henkel, Leo Castelli, Jim Palette, Barbara Rose and John Cage

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA. FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Text by Juan Manuel Bonet (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)

## 1989

RENÉ MAGRITTE. Texts by Camille Goemans, Martine Jacquet, Catherine de Croës, François Daulte, Paul Lebeer and René Magritte

EDWARD HOPPER. Text by Gail Levin

ARTE ESPAÑOL CONTEMPORÁNEO. FONDOS DE LA FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH. Text by Miguel Fernández-Cid

## 1990

ODILON REDON. Colección Ian Woodner. Texts by Lawrence Gowing, Odilon Redon and Nuria Rivero

CUBISMO EN PRAGA. Obras de la Galería Nacional. Texts by Jiří Kotalík, Ivan Neumann and Jiří Šetlík

ANDY WARHOL. COCHES. Texts by Werner Spies, Christoph Becker and Andy Warhol

COL-LECCIÓ MARCH. ART ESPANYOL CONTEMPORANI. PALMA. FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Text by Juan Manuel Bonet. Multilingual ed. (Spanish, Catalan and English)

## 1991

PICASSO. RETRATOS DE JACQUELINE. Texts by Hélène Parmelin, María Teresa Ocaña, Nuria Rivero, Werner Spies and Rosa Vives

VIEIRA DA SILVA. Texts by Fernando Pernes, Julián Gállego, M<sup>a</sup> João Fernandes, René Char (in French), António Ramos Rosa (in Portuguese) and Joham de Castro

MONET EN GIVERNY. Colección del Museo Marmottan de París. Texts by Arnaud d'Hauterives, Gustave Geffroy and Claude Monet

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA. FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Text by Juan Manuel Bonet (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

## 1992

RICHARD DIEBENKORN. Text by John Elderfield

ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY. Text by Angelica Jawlensky

DAVID HOCKNEY. Text by Marco Livingstone

COL-LECCIÓ MARCH. ART ESPANYOL CONTEMPORANI. PALMA. FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Text by Juan Manuel Bonet (German ed.)

## 1993

MALEVICH. Colección del Museo Estatal Ruso, San Petersburgo. Texts by Evgenija N. Petrova, Elena V. Basner and Kasimir Malevich

PICASSO. EL SOMBRERO DE TRES PICOS. Dibujos para los decorados y el vestuario del ballet de Manuel de Falla. Texts by Vicente García-Márquez, Brigitte Léal and Laurence Berthon

MUSEO BRÜCKE BERLÍN. ARTE EXPRESIONISTA ALEMÁN. Text by Magdalena M. Moeller

## 1994

GOYA GRABADOR. Texts by Alfonso E. Pérez-Sánchez and Julián Gállego

ISAMU NOGUCHI. Texts by Shoji Sadao, Bruce Altshuler and Isamu Noguchi

TESOROS DEL ARTE JAPONÉS. Período Edo: 1615-1868. Colección del Museo Fuji, Tokio. Texts by Tatsuo Takakura, Shin-ichi Miura, Akira Gokita, Seiji Nagata, Yoshiaki Yabe, Hirokazu Arakawa and Yoshihiko Sasama

FERNANDO ZÓBEL. RÍO JÚCAR. Texts by Fernando Zóbel and Rafael Pérez-Madero 

## 1995

KLIMT, KOKOSCHKA, SCHIELE. UN SUEÑO VIENÉS: 1898-1918. Texts by Gerbert Frodl and Stephan Koja

ROUAULT. Texts by Stephan Koja, Jacques Maritain and Marcel Arland

MOTHERWELL. Obra gráfica: 1975–1991. Colección Kenneth Tyler. Text by Robert Motherwell **P** **C**

## 1996

TOM WESSELMANN. Texts by Marco Livingstone, Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Tilman Osterwold and Meinrad Maria Grewenig. Published by Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 1996

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC. De Albi y de otras colecciones. Texts by Danièle Devynck and Valeriano Bozal

MILLARES. Pinturas y dibujos sobre papel: 1963–1971. Text by Manuel Millares **P** **C**

MUSEU D'ART ESPANYOL CONTEMPORANI. PALMA. FUNDACION JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Texts by Juan Manuel Bonet and Javier Maderuelo. Bilingual eds. (Spanish/Catalan and English/German, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.)

PICASSO. SUITE VOLLARD. Text by Julián Gállego. Spanish ed., bilingual ed. (Spanish/German) and trilingual ed. (Spanish/German/English). [This catalogue accompanied the exhibition of the same name that, since 1996, has traveled to seven Spanish and foreign venues.]

## 1997

MAX BECKMANN. Texts by Klaus Gallwitz and Max Beckmann

EMIL NOLDE. NATURALEZA Y RELIGIÓN. Text by Manfred Reuther

FRANK STELLA. Obra gráfica: 1982–1996. Colección Tyler Graphics. Texts by Sidney Guberman, Dorine Mignot and Frank Stella **P** **C**

EL OBJETO DEL ARTE. Text by Javier Maderuelo **P** **C**

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA. FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Texts by Juan Manuel Bonet and Javier Maderuelo. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.)

## 1998

AMADEO DE SOUZA-CARDOSO. Texts by Javier Maderuelo, Antonio Cardoso and Joana Cunha Leal

PAUL DELVAUX. Text by Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque

RICHARD LINDNER. Text by Werner Spies

## 1999

MARC CHAGALL. TRADICIONES JUDÍAS. Texts by Sylvie Forestier, Benjamin Harshav, Meret Meyer and Marc Chagall

KURT SCHWITTERS Y EL ESPÍRITU DE LA UTOPIA. Colección Ernst Schwitters. Texts by Javier Maderuelo, Markus Heinzmann, Lola and Bengt Schwitters

LOVIS CORINTH. Texts by Thomas Deecke, Sabine Fehleemann, Jürgen H. Meyer and Antje Birthälmer

MIQUEL BARCELÓ. Ceràmiques: 1995–1998. Text by Enrique Juncosa. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/Catalan) **P**

FERNANDO ZÓBEL. Obra gráfica completa. Text by Rafael Pérez-Madero. Published by Departamento de Cultura, Diputación Provincial de Cuenca, Cuenca, 1999 **P** **C**

## 2000

VASARELY. Texts by Werner Spies and Michèle-Catherine Vasarely

EXPRESIONISMO ABSTRACTO. OBRA SOBRE PAPEL. Colección de The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Nueva York. Text by Lisa M. Messinger

SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF. Colección Brücke-Museum Berlin. Text by Magdalena M. Moeller

NOLDE. VISIONES. Acuarelas. Colección de la Fundación Nolde-Seebüll. Text by Manfred Reuther **P** **C**

LUCIO MUÑOZ. ÍNTIMO. Text by Rodrigo Muñoz Avía **C**

EUSEBIO SEMPERE. PAISAJES. Text by Pablo Ramírez **P** **C**

## 2001

DE CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH A PICASSO. Obras maestras sobre papel del Museo Von der Heydt, de Wuppertal. Text by Sabine Fehleemann

ADOLPH GOTTLIEB. Text by Sanford Hirsch

MATISSE. ESPÍRITU Y SENTIDO. Obra sobre papel. Texts by Guillermo Solana, Marie-Thérèse Pulvenis de Séligny and Henri Matisse

RÓDCHENKO. GEOMETRÍAS. Texts by Alexandr Lavrentiev and Alexandr Ródchenko **P** **C**

## 2002

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE. NATURALEZAS ÍNTIMAS. Texts by Lisa M. Messinger and Georgia O'Keeffe

TURNER Y EL MAR. Acuarelas de la Tate. Texts by José Jiménez, Ian Warrell, Nicola Cole, Nicola Moorby and Sarah Taft

MOMPÓ. Obra sobre papel. Texts by Dolores Durán Ucar **C**

RIVERA. REFLEJOS. Texts by Jaime Brihuega, Marisa Rivera, Elena Rivera, Rafael Alberti and Luis Rosales **C**

SAURA. DAMAS. Texts by Francisco Calvo Serraller and Antonio Saura **P** **C**

## 2003

ESPÍRITU DE MODERNIDAD. DE GOYA A GIACOMETTI. Obra sobre papel de la Colección Kornfeld. Text by Werner Spies

KANDINSKY. ORIGEN DE LA ABSTRACCIÓN. Texts by Valeriano Bozal, Marion Ackermann and Wassily Kandinsky

CHILLIDA. ELOGIO DE LA MANO. Text by Javier Maderuelo **P** **C**

GERARDO RUEDA. CONSTRUCCIONES. Text by Barbara Rose **C**

ESTEBAN VICENTE. Collages. Texts by José María Parreño and Elaine de Kooning **C**

LUCIO MUÑOZ. ÍNTIMO. Texts by Rodrigo Muñoz Avía and Lucio Muñoz **P**

MUSEU D'ART ESPANYOL CONTEMPORANI. PALMA. FUNDACION JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Texts by Juan Manuel Bonet and Javier Maderuelo. Bilingual eds. (Catalan/Spanish and English/German, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. and exp.)

## 2004

MAESTROS DE LA INVENCION DE LA COLECCION E. DE ROTHSCHILD DEL MUSEO DEL LOUVRE. Texts by Pascal Torres Guardiola, Catherine Loisel, Christel Winling, Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, George A. Wanklyn and Louis Antoine Prat

FIGURAS DE LA FRANCIA MODERNA. De Ingres a Toulouse-Lautrec del Petit Palais de París. Texts by Delfín Rodríguez, Isabelle Collet, Amélie Simier, Maryline Assante

di Panzillo and José de los Llanos. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/French)

LIUBOV POPOVA. Text by Anna María Guasch **P** **C**

ESTEBAN VICENTE. GESTO Y COLOR. Text by Guillermo Solana **P**

LUIS GORDILLO. DUPLEX. Texts by Miguel Cereceda and Jaime González de Aledo. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) **P** **C**

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW ICONOGRAPHY, NEW PHOTOGRAPHY. Photography of the 80's and 90's in the Collection of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Texts by Catherine Coleman, Pablo Llorca and María Toledo. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) **P** **C**

KANDINSKY. Acuarelas. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich. Texts by Helmut Friedel and Wassily Kandinsky. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/German) **P** **C**

## 2005

CONTEMPORANEA. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg. Texts by Gijs van Tuyl, Rudi Fuchs, Holger Broecker, Alberto Ruiz de Samaniego and Susanne Köhler. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English)

ANTONIO SAURA. DAMAS. Texts by Francisco Calvo Serraller and Antonio Saura. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English)

CELEBRATION OF ART: A Half Century of the Fundación Juan March. Texts by Juan Manuel Bonet, Juan Pablo Fusi, Antonio Muñoz Molina, Juan Navarro Baldeweg and Javier Fuentes. Spanish and English eds.

BECKMANN. Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal. Text by Sabine Fehleemann. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/German) **P** **C**

EGON SCHIELE: IN BODY AND SOUL. Text by Miguel Sáenz. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) **P** **C**

LICHTENSTEIN: IN PROCESS. Texts by Juan Antonio Ramírez and Clare Bell. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) **P** **C**

FACES AND MASKS: Photographs from the Ordóñez-Falcón Collection. Text by Francisco Caja. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) **P** **C**

MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL. CUENCA. FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH [Catalogue-Guide]. Texts by Juan Manuel Bonet and Javier Maderuelo. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

KEY: Sold-out publications | **P** Exhibition at the Museu Fundación Juan March, Palma | **C** Exhibition at the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca

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## 2006

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OTTO DIX. Text by Ulrike Lorenz. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English)

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CREATIVE DESTRUCTION: Gustav Klimt, the Beethoven Frieze and the Controversy about the Freedom of Art. Texts by Stephan Kojka, Carl E. Schorske, Alice Strobl, Franz A. J. Szabo, Manfred Koller, Verena Perhelfter and Rosa Sala Rose, Hermann Bahr, Ludwig Hevesi and Berta Zuckerkandl. Spanish, English and German eds. Published by Prestel, Munich/Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 2006

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Supplementary publication: Hermann Bahr. CONTRA KLIMT (1903). Additional texts by Christian Huemer, Verena Perhelfter, Rosa Sala Rose and Dietrun Otten. Spanish semi-facsimile ed., translation by Alejandro Martín Navarro

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LA CIUDAD ABSTRACTA: 1966. El nacimiento del Museo de Arte Abstracto Español. Texts by Santos Juliá, María Bolaños, Ángeles Villalba, Juan Manuel Bonet, Gustavo Torner, Antonio Lorenzo, Rafael Pérez Madero, Pedro Miguel Ibáñez and Alfonso de la Torre

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GARY HILL: IMAGES OF LIGHT. Works from the Collection of the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg. Text by Holger Broeker. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) P C

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GOYA. CAPRICIOS, DESASTRES, TAUROMAQUIA, DISPARATES. Texts by Alfonso E. Pérez-Sánchez (11<sup>th</sup> ed., 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1979). [This catalogue accompanied the exhibition of the same name that, since 1979, has traveled to 173 Spanish and foreign venues. The catalogue has been translated into more than seven languages.]

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## 2007

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ROY LICHTENSTEIN: BEGINNING TO END. Texts by Jack Cowart, Juan Antonio Ramírez, Ruth Fine, Cassandra Lozano, James de Pasquale, Avis Berman and Clare Bell. Spanish, French and English eds.

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Supplementary publication: Roy Fox Lichtenstein. PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS AND PASTELS, A THESIS. Original text by Roy Fox Lichtenstein (1949). Additional texts by Jack Cowart and Clare Bell. Bilingual ed. (English [facsimile]/Spanish), translation by Paloma Farré

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THE ABSTRACTION OF LANDSCAPE: From Northern Romanticism to Abstract Expressionism. Texts by Werner Hofmann, Hein-Th. Schulze

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Altcappenberg, Barbara Dayer Gallati, Robert Rosenblum, Miguel López-Remiro, Mark Rothko, Cordula Meier, Dietmar Elger, Bernhard Teuber, Olaf Mörke and Víctor Andrés Ferretti. Spanish and English eds.

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Supplementary publication: Sean Scully. BODIES OF LIGHT (1998). Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English)

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EQUIPO CRÓNICA. CRÓNICAS REALES. Texts by Michèle Dalmace, Fernando Marías and Tomás Llorens. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) P C

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BEFORE AND AFTER MINIMALISM: A Century of Abstract Tendencies in the Daimler Chrysler Collection. Virtual guide: [www.march.es/arte/palma/anteriores/CatalogoMinimal/index.asp](http://www.march.es/arte/palma/anteriores/CatalogoMinimal/index.asp). Spanish, Catalan, English and German eds. P

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## 2008

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MAXImin: Maximum Minimization in Contemporary Art. Texts by Renate Wiehager, John M. Armleder, Ilya Bolotowsky, Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven, Adolf Hölzel, Norbert Kricke, Heinz Mack and Friederich Vordemberge-Gildewart. Spanish and English eds.

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TOTAL ENLIGHTENMENT: Conceptual Art in Moscow 1960–1990. Texts by Boris Groys, Ekaterina Bobrinskaya, Martina Weinhart, Dorothea Zwirner, Manuel Fontán del Junco, Andrei Monastyrski and Ilya Kabakov. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English). Published by Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern/Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 2008

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ANDREAS FEININGER: 1906–1999. Texts by Andreas Feininger, Thomas Buchsteiner, Jean-François Chevrier, Juan Manuel Bonet and John Loengard. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) P C

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JOAN HERNÁNDEZ PIJUAN: THE DISTANCE OF DRAWING. Texts by Valentín Roma, Peter Dittmar and Narcís Comadira. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) P C

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Supplementary publication: IRIS DE PASCUA. JOAN HERNÁNDEZ PIJUAN. Text by Elvira Maluquer. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English)

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## 2009

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TARSILA DO AMARAL. Texts by Aracy Amaral, Juan Manuel Bonet, Jorge Schwartz, Regina Teixeira de Barros, Tarsila do Amaral, Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Haroldo de Campos, Emiliano di Cavalcanti, Ribeiro Couto, Carlos Drummond de Andrade,

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António Ferro, Jorge de Lima and Sérgio Milliet. Spanish and English eds.

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Supplementary publication: Blaise Cendrars. HOJAS DE RUTA (1924). Spanish semi-facsimile ed., translation and notes by José Antonio Millán Alba

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Supplementary publication: Oswald de Andrade. PAU BRASIL (1925). Spanish semi-facsimile ed., translation by Andrés Sánchez Robayna

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CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ: COLOR HAPPENS. Texts by Osbel Suárez, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Gloria Carnevali and Ariel Jiménez. Spanish and English eds. P C

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Supplementary publication: Carlos Cruz-Diez. REFLECTION ON COLOR (1989), rev. and exp. Spanish and English eds.

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CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH: THE ART OF DRAWING. Texts by Christina Grummt, Helmut Börsch-Supan and Werner Busch. Spanish and English eds.

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MUSEU FUNDACIÓN JUAN MARCH, PALMA [Catalogue-Guide]. Texts by Miquel Seguí Aznar and Elvira González Gozalo, Juan Manuel Bonet and Javier Maderuelo. Catalan, Spanish, English and German eds. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. rev. and exp.)

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## 2010

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WYNDHAM LEWIS (1882–1957). Texts by Paul Edwards, Richard Humphreys, Yolanda Morató, Juan Bonilla, Manuel Fontán del Junco, Andrzej Gasiorek and Alan Munton. Spanish and English eds.

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Supplementary publication: William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton. TIMON OF ATHENS (1623). With illustrations by Wyndham Lewis and additional text by Paul Edwards, translation and notes by Ángel-Luis Pujante and Salvador Oliva. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English)

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Supplementary publication: Wyndham Lewis. BLAST. *Revista del gran vórtice inglés* (1914). Additional texts by Paul Edwards and Kevin Power. Spanish semi-facsimile ed., translation and notes by Yolanda Morató

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PALAZUELO, PARIS, 13 RUE SAINT-JACQUES (1948–1968). Texts by Alfonso de la Torre and Christine Jouishomme. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) P C

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THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPES OF ASHER B. DURAND (1796–1886). Texts by Linda S. Ferber, Barbara Deyer Gallati, Barbara Novak, Marilyn S. Kushner, Roberta J. M. Olson, Rebecca

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Bedell, Kimberly Orcutt and Sarah Barr Snook. Spanish and English eds.

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Supplementary publication: Asher B. Durand. LETTERS ON LANDSCAPE PAINTING (1855). Spanish semi-facsimile ed. and English facsimile ed.

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PICASSO. Suite Vollard. Text by Julián Gállego. Bilingual ed. (Spanish/English) (Rev. ed, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1996)

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## 2011

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COLD AMERICA: Geometric Abstraction in Latin America (1934–1973). Texts by Osbel Suárez, César Paternosto, María Amalia García, Ferreira Gullar, Luis Pérez-Oramas, Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro and Michael Nungesser. Spanish and English eds.

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ALEKSANDR DEINEKA (1899–1969). AN AVANT-GARDE FOR THE PROLETARIAT. Texts by Manuel Fontán del Junco, Christina Kiaer, Boris Groys, Fredric Jameson, Ekaterina Degot, Irina Leytes and Alessandro de Magistris. Spanish and English eds.

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Supplementary edition: Boris Ural'skii. EL ELECTRICISTA (1930). Cover and illustrations by Aleksandr Deineka. Spanish semi-facsimile ed., translation by Iana Zabiaka

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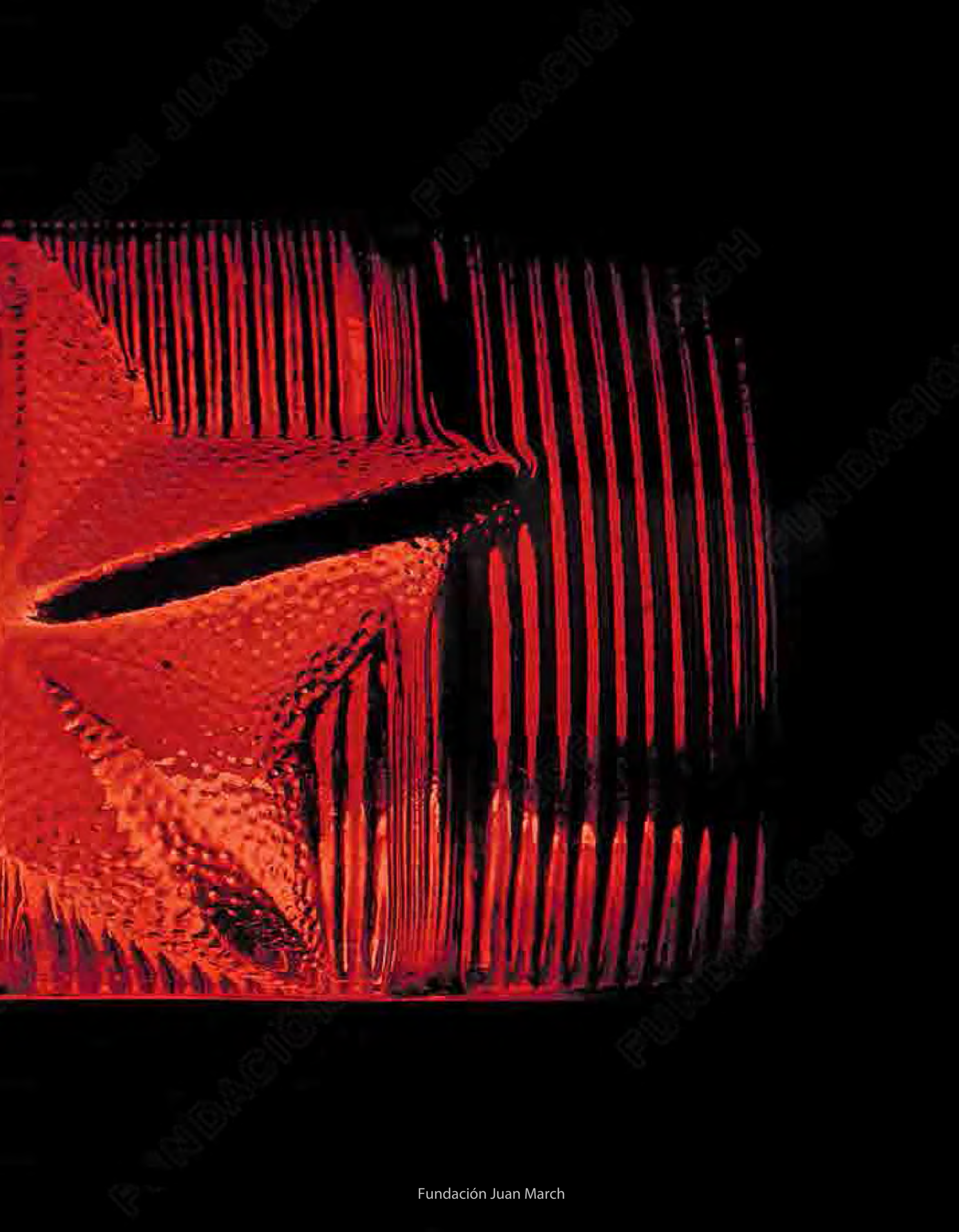
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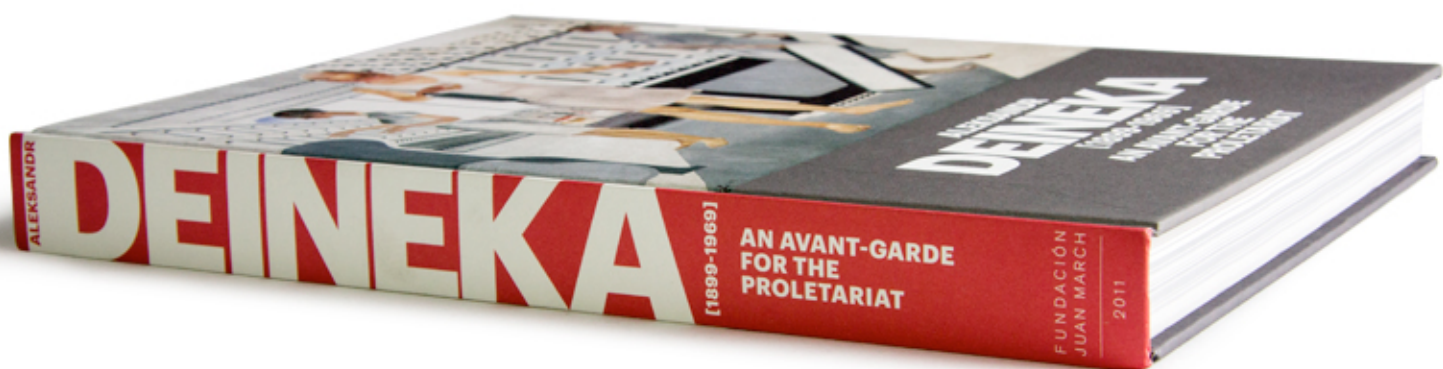












ALEKSANDR

# DEINEKA

[1899-1969]

AN AVANT-GARDE  
FOR THE  
PROLETARIAT

FUNDACIÓN  
JUAN MARCH

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