

Engineering Humanity:
An Analysis of the Theory and History of the
Russian Avant-Garde
By Matthew Rowe

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The Russian avant-garde had three main goals, which remained consistent throughout its various incarnations from Futurism to Socialist Realism. The Russian avant-garde strove to establish a unified aesthetic based on logical principles, to embrace Russian culture while rejecting the influence of the West, and to integrate life and art for the purpose of creating a utopic modern society. Contrary to popular understanding, it was a formal, academic, and strict movement. The Russian avant-garde did not reject artistic institutions, only those promoting a traditional doctrine. They were also absolutists and did not leave room in their theories for other modes of expression. This absolutism was an extension of their rejection of individuality. A collective expression was unified, and did not submit to the creative whims of the individual. They valued academic training, just not the aesthetic values it promoted. To this end, many of these artists helped to develop state-sponsored institutions for revolutionary art.

There were five distinct movements in the Russian avant-garde art of the early 20th century. These movements mirrored developments in the West; however, in Russia, the radical nature of modern art was emphasized and enhanced due to the political revolutions that occurred during the same period. Unlike in Europe and America, Russian modernist art was developed during the rise and implementation of a completely new social system. Although its significance is downplayed in most Western nations, developing a new social structure based on modern ideals was of fundamental importance in the Russian psyche. They not only thought the world could be better, but they saw fundamental changes occurring in their society that had no parallel in the West. It should be remembered that this was also a time of industrialization. This alone had a significant impact on humanity. In Russia, the rise of industry was paralleled with social upheaval and innovation—every aspect of their society was undergoing change. Artists saw themselves as participating in the design of the future of human civilization. This was not a

fantasy, for many of these avant-garde artists were supported by the government for a time and helped shape society after the 1917 Revolution. This essay begins with a brief overview of the significant art movements, terms, and historic events that shaped this period.

In the most general terms, the concept of modernism is composed of many different aesthetic theories that originated in the second half of the 19th century. Although never a unified theory, modernism had developed a loose consistency by the onset of the First World War. Fundamentally, modernism opposed the dominant universal, positivistic, and humanist ideals of the 19th century. In the most general terms and despite internal contradictions, the aesthetics of modernism opposed the aesthetics of classical realism and representation. It did this by denying techniques that strove to imitate life and supported those that favored irrationalism, alogism, and absurdity.¹ In a sense, this irrationality was a reflection of the chaos of the modern world and its capacity for unprecedented brutality and social upheaval.² Modern art became the art of the new; the creation of a new reality. During this time, the most radical proponents of modern art became associated with movements for social change and political reform:³

The central principles of modernist culture heralded a fundamental revision of most of the major philosophical doctrines that had dominated nineteenth-century culture and its aesthetics. Therefore, within Post-Impressionism, Symbolism, Cubism, Imagism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism there is a shared sense that the unprecedented chain of events of recent times had significantly altered mankind's universal values and humanistic belief.⁴

Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism are some of the more commonly known and easily recognizable modern art movements. However, the earliest form of modernism in Russia

¹ Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White, "An Introduction to the Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism," in *Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism an Introductory Reader*, ed. by Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 10.

² Ioffe and White, "An Introduction to the Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism," 11.

³ Ioffe and White, 10-11.

⁴ Ioffe and White, 11.

was Symbolism. The core aspiration of this movement was the discovery of hidden spiritual realities. There was a hidden reality more real than the physical world that could not be experienced with the senses. As these artists moved away from the visible world in their spiritual explorations, they also moved away from mimetic representations of the world in their art. From the Symbolists arose alogical and irrational art—works that were intended to challenge the laws of conventional rationality. This is significant because alogical art lies at the core of the deconstructive enterprise of the early modernists like the Futurists, Cubo-Futurists, and Dadaists.⁵ Additionally, Symbolism was an expression of the alienation and isolation characteristic of the modern world—this sense of feeling alone in a crowd is something that permeates much modern art to a greater or lesser degree. Despite the significance of Symbolism as an expression of early modernism, it was not part of the avant-garde movement and therefore falls outside of the scope of this paper.⁶ However, it is important to keep in mind when considering the early avant-garde, especially the work of Wassily Kandinsky.

The second modern art movement in Russia, and the first to be considered in this paper, was Cubo-Futurism, which included writers and visual artists. In regards to the Russian avant-garde, the terms ‘Futurism’ and ‘Cubo-Futurism’ can be used interchangeably, and are used as such in this paper. Cubo-Futurism was a blending of Cubism with International Futurism. The Russian Futurists were often at odds with Italian Futurism, especially in the Italian’s support of fascism. What the two groups shared was an enthusiasm for technology, machines, industrial manufacturing, speed, and dynamism. As mentioned before, their ideals were similar to those of the Dadaists. Their central goal was to undermine conventional logic and rationality. In terms of

⁵ There were no Russian Dadaists; the Cubo-Futurists can be seen as the Russian equivalent to the Dadaists.

⁶ Ioffe and White, 12.

art, their goal was to change the way society related to art and what objects could be considered art. This core tenant can be considered the most significant aspect of the Cubo-Futurists because it was carried on by all subsequent Russian modernist movements. The Jack (Knave) of Diamonds and the Hylaea group were central to this movement. Some its main figures were Alexander Archipenko, the brothers Burliuk, Aleksandra Ekster, Natalia Goncharova, Ivan Klyun, Mikhail Larionov, Lyubov Popova, and Olga Rozanova. They jointly published a manifesto in 1912 called “A Slap in the Face of Public Taste.” These Futurists incorporated radical social and political change into their artistic activities.⁷

Although not as distinct as other movements, Primitivism (also referred to as Neoprimitivism) and Rayonism were significant transitional styles. Both are identified with Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov. They represent the first steps towards reconstructing new creative values after the deconstruction of the Futurists. Primitivism sought to excise all traces of Western individualism in art, and to embrace Russian culture, specifically the Eastern aspects of Russian Culture, as valid forms of art. This specifically included Russian icon painting and folk art. Rayonism was concerned with the difference between sense perception and scientific perception. It took the optical phenomenon of reflecting light and developed one of the first fully abstract styles of art. Rayonism was composed of the imaginary intersection of reflected light rays, represented through colored lines—the only variables in these works were the texture and color of the rays.

Suprematism was established by Kazimir Malevich in 1914-15. It was among the first movements in art whose formal language was completely removed from representations of the

⁷ Ioffe and White, 13.

physical world—it was an objectless-geometric abstraction; it was nonobjective painting. Malevich was also influenced by industrial production methods and explored the concepts of economy and energy in his work. Showing the influence of Cubo-Futurism, Malevich sought to replace the traditions of realistic art with an artistic language based on simple geometric forms; one consisting of crosses, circles, and squares.⁸ Suprematism is generally associated with Malevich, but its visual vocabulary was adopted by many of his peers; including Olga Rosanova, El Lissitzky, and Aleksandr Rodchenko.⁹

Constructivism was the extension of the Suprematist visual vocabulary into physical space and time. It was an attempt to fully incorporate the new art of the modern era into the daily lives of modern people. To this end, it sought to eliminate the concept of art as something distinct from everyday items and experiences. The term Constructivist was first used in 1921. The concept of constructing art was meant to associate it with utilitarian forms and mechanized mass production. This was seen as a way to rectify art in terms of modernity. These artists admired mass production and machine products; they endeavored to become engineers of art.¹⁰ Art was meant to provide a blueprint for a utopic future society. It had a significant influence on the Bauhaus and De Stijl movements. Its members included Naum Gabo, El Lissitzky, Ivan Leonidov, Konstantin Melnikov, Antoine Pevsner, Lyubov Popova, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Vladimir Shukhov, Varvara Stepanova, Vladimir Tatlin, and Alexander Vesnin.¹¹

Soviet Socialist Realism began between the 1920s and 1930s. It was the final recasting of artist as laborer. The artist became both a product and producer of culture. Although it was

⁸ Ioffe and White, 16.

⁹ Ioffe and White, 16.

¹⁰ Ioffe and White, 13.

¹¹ Ioffe and White, 16.

superficially similar to 19th century Realism, it was, in fact, a completely new expression of compositional and formal values expressing an unprecedented social, cultural, and political environment. It was the manifestation of the initial aim of the Futurists to integrate art into life.¹²

In general, Russian modernism lasted from the 1890s to the 1930s. This coincided with a period of great social and political turmoil. The old ways were being challenged in every sector of Russian society; artists challenging classical methods of artistic representation was a part of much larger trend. Political turmoil provided artists with more opportunities to challenge tradition. The following is a selection of significant historic events that impacted the development of Russian society—it was within this historic framework that the avant-garde developed their new art; and, it was during this period of political upheaval that the Russian avant-garde flourished.¹³

In 1881, Russian Terrorists assassinated Tsar Alexander II. This led to 25 years of political stagnation and conservatism. During this time, Russia’s Golden Age of literature ended with the silencing of Tolstoy and deaths of Dostoyevsky and Turgenev.¹⁴

In 1894, Nicholas II ascended to the throne. This was not a period of optimism despite its rapid industrialization. Mining and oil production increased dramatically, but low-class wages and working conditions were dismal. The middle class rapidly expanded during this period and Russia began to look like Western Europe. Literacy and access to education became widespread

¹² Boris Groys, “The Birth of Socialist Realism from the Spirit of the Russian Avant-Garde,” in *Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 250–75.

¹³ Ioffe and White, 15.

¹⁴ Ioffe and White, 14.

and many Russians studied abroad. Despite all this growth, the period leading up to the end of the century was characterized by pessimism and apocalyptic doom.¹⁵

In 1905, a failed revolt led to the Tsar's cavalry killing peaceful protesters, mostly women and children. Nicholas II retained power for a time, but after a few months was replaced by a semi-constitutional monarchy and parliament. Despite this, the political climate remained divided and volatile. However, it was stable enough for Russia to continue to industrialize.¹⁶

In 1914, important social and economic changes were taking place and a class of independent farmers was established. However, the old nobility still guarded their privileges and the clergy blocked all attempts at religious reform. While still in the process of restructuring and rebuilding their military, Russia entered World War I. This briefly united its rival factions, but its instability soon resurfaced.¹⁷

In November of 1917, a Bolshevik faction led by Lenin seized control of the government. The Bolsheviks realized the fundamental goal of modernism by destroying the old economic, political, and social systems. Russian avant-garde artists played an important role in advocating for such a radical change. Unfortunately, the Bolshevik's control was tenuous and they were unable to maintain their initial idealism.¹⁸

In 1924, the death of Lenin led to four years of political conflict. This ended when Stalin assumed power in 1928. Stalin promoted his own central authority rather than Lenin's collective

¹⁵ Ioffe and White, 14-15.

¹⁶ Ioffe and White, 15.

¹⁷ Ioffe and White, 16.

¹⁸ Ioffe and White, 16.

leadership. He did not tolerate any opposition and, after consolidating most of the government and industry, he eliminated any remaining Bolsheviks in the Great Purge of 1936-38.¹⁹

Stalin established Socialist Realism as the state art in 1932. Modernism was associated with the West and was labeled as decadent bourgeoisie art. Social Realism was characterized as a pure Communist-Russian art. Many avant-garde artists attempted to conform to this new restriction, but it soon became clear that the era of the Russian avant-garde had ended.²⁰

Section 1 – Cubo-Futurism, Hylaea, and the Jack of Diamonds.

The history of the Russian avant-garde is not linear nor direct. Only through the lens of history does a clear progression of ideas and styles come into focus. In reality, these styles and artists overlapped. For example, Kazimir Malevich is most commonly associated with Suprematism, but he was also active during earlier phases of Symbolism, Cubo-Futurism, and Primitivism. Just because one style succeeded another, does not mean that those other styles ceased. Futurism continued to exert an influence well into the period of Constructivism in the 1920s. What follows is a discussion of the styles of Russian avant-garde art in the order in which they achieved prominence—the succession of one style does not imply a cessation of its predecessor.

David Burliuk's life embodied the Cubo-Futurist movement. He was not necessarily the most talented or well-remembered figure, but he was considered by those in the group, 'the Father of Russian Futurism,' and 'the Futurist of Futurists.'²¹ He had a powerful charm,

¹⁹ Ioffe and White, 17.

²⁰ Ioffe and White, 17.

²¹ Elena Basner and Kenneth MacInnes, "The Phenomenon of David Burliuk in the History of the Russian Avant-Garde Movement," in *Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 150-51.

enthusiasm, and the ability to gather like-minded people around him. He was not afraid of any scandal and expressed a potent love of life. David Burliuk was, in short, a personality.²²

Including his parents, there were eight people in David Burliuk's household; three brothers and three sisters. They were all creative and likeminded, so he always had an audience and a core of supporters around him.²³ His life and art were fairly conventional before 1907, when he became friends with Mikhail Larionov.²⁴ In 1908, he and his brothers organized the *Link* exhibition with Alexandra Ekster. This show brought together Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova, Aristarkh Lentulov and Alexander Bogomazov. Also in 1908, he met Nikolai Ivanovich Kulbin at his exhibition *Modern Tendencies in Art* in St. Petersburg. At that same exhibition he met Vasily Kamensky and Velimir Khlebnikov. Kamensky brought the Burliuks to the house of Mikhail Matiushin and his wife, Elena Guro. This was the first meeting of the artists of Russian Futurism. It was David Burliuk that served as the gravity, holding together these artists in a new movement, and "a new literary-artistic circle was formed in February 1910 in Matiushin and Guro's house on Litseiskaya Street."²⁵ This group later took the name Hylaea, based on the Ancient Greek name for the Burliuk's estate. This name was meant to connect to the antiquity of their inspiration and their specifically Eurasian character.²⁶ In 1911, Burliuk became friends with Mayakovsky, who later stated that it was Burliuk who taught him poetry.²⁷ The two met at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. They were both expelled in 1914; afterwards, the two became inseparable. In 1913, Burliuk, Mayakovsky, and

²² Basner and MacInnes, "The Phenomenon of David Burliuk in the History of the Russian Avant-Garde Movement," 150-51.

²³ Basner and MacInnes, 152.

²⁴ Several years later they would become enemies.

²⁵ Basner and MacInnes, 156.

²⁶ Basner and MacInnes, 156.

²⁷ Basner and MacInnes, 156.

Kamensky began a tour of Russian towns—they travelled throughout the countryside giving lectures on modern art, reading poetry, and engaging in heated debates, which often ended in physical altercations. They left a trail of scandal across rural Russia.²⁸

Hylaea was one of the most important groups during this early period. It was founded by the three Burliuk brothers and benedict Livshits. It also included Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Alexei Kruchenykh. They used this name for two years before calling themselves Futurists. As mentioned above, Burliuk's father managed an estate in Chernyanka that embodied pastoral simplicity and abundance. Livshits felt something Homeric in this place and so he referred to it by its ancient Greek name, *Hylaea*.²⁹ This place aroused in him ideas of animalistic power and provided a fresh vision of the world. A renovated vision based on prehistory; a synthesis of Cubist and Primitivist ideals. This synthesis was a fundamental theme for these Futurists in both their art and writing; they sought to create a new vision of the world. To this end, they experimented with multiple perspectives, flatness, dislocated planes, dissonant colors, and even throwing works in the mud before reworking them. They wanted loud surfaces that disrupted traditional harmony.³⁰ David Burliuk's painting *The Dream* (figure 1) is an expression of this disruption. Its overall 'C' shaped composition and waterside setting are fairly traditional. However, its subject matter is depicted in a variety of styles and its surface employs multiple textures. This composition denies the viewer any sense of normal reality, while presenting a new vision of the world.

²⁸ Basner and MacInnes, 156.

²⁹ Vladimir Markov, "Hylaea," in *The Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, eds. Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White (Boston, MA: Academic studies, 2012), 21–25.

³⁰ Markov, "Hylaea," 25.

The Jack of Diamonds group was closely allied with Hylaea and included many of the same artists. Most importantly, it included David Burliuk, Natalya Goncharova, and Mikhail Larionov. The group was founded in 1910 by several former students of the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. At the time, this collection of artists was seen as deriving their radicalism from the imitation of Western European modern art. Many critics noted the influence of Gauguin and Van Gogh on the art of Larionov. While the Western artists' novel expressions were praised in Russia, their local imitators were seen as lacking.³¹

From the beginning, The Jack of Diamonds employed imagery typically associated with mass culture. They also used mass media and public debates to promote their work. The imagery of the Jack of Diamonds and Jack of Hearts was known in both Russia and France through playing cards and popular novels. The Jack of Hearts symbolized the lover and encompassed motifs of gallantry. The Jack of Diamonds symbolized rogues, swindlers, and criminals. This also included political criminals. Larionov specifically wanted this group of marginal artists to be perceived as criminal outcasts.³²

A clear expression of their confrontational attitude came in the form of the Futurist text *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, published in Moscow in 1912. The text did not mention Hylaea, but the group of Futurist artists who comprised Hylaea wrote and published it. The first essay in this publication was also titled "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" and served as the group's manifesto. Overall, it sought to subvert traditional values and assert a new version of rationality and taste that was consistent with the coming of the new world.³³ Also included in this

³¹ Jane A. Sharp, "The Revolutionary Art of Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov," in *Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, eds. Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 185–86.

³² Sharp, "The Revolutionary Art of Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov," 187.

³³ Markov, 35.

publication was an essay by Burliuk titled “Cubism (Surface-Plane).” This essay was a clear reflection of the various intentions of the group. It rejected traditional aesthetic values and historic artists. It sought to create a new relationship between art and the natural world, one that was not based on imitation. It advocated for the redefinition of painting in terms of those qualities that were unique to the medium itself. These principals anticipated the visual vocabulary and aesthetic theory of Suprematism:

Painting is colored space.
 Point, line, and surface are elements
 of spatial forms.
 the order in which they are placed arises
 from their genetic connection.
 the simplest element of space is the point.
 its consequence is line.
 the consequence of line is surface.
 all spatial forms are reduced to these three
 elements.
 the direct consequence of line is plane.³⁴

A significant nuance in the theory of the Russian avant-garde was that while dismissing the institutions of the past, they were not dismissing institutions in general. They did not call for total anarchy, but for new order. The destructive and deconstructive tendencies of the Futurists were seen as a necessary cleaning of the slate—they did not want their new values built upon the foundations of the old; they wanted entirely new foundations. This was evidenced in Burliuk’s proposal of a *Canon of Displaced Construction*:

Disharmony is the opposite of harmony,
 dissymmetry is the opposite of symmetry,
 deconstruction is the opposite of construction,
 a canon can be constructive,
 a canon can be deconstructive,
 construction can be shifted or displaced

³⁴ David Burliuk, “Cubism (Surface-Plane), 1912,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 70.

*The canon of displaced construction.*³⁵

This canon presented a challenge to traditional canons of proportion and beauty that had defined European art of the past. Again, it did not reject canons, only those based on traditional values. It suggested that symmetry and harmony were not the only qualities that should be valued. This was not claiming that disharmony was better than harmony, only that the old values should not be blindly accepted as true.

This challenge to tradition was echoed in Larionov and Zdanevich's 1913 essay, "Why We Paint Ourselves: A Futurist Manifesto." Here, the point of rebelling from traditional values was to accept the unknown, to upset life, and to elevate the soul of humanity.³⁶ They rejected both traditional art and gold as being valuable. All of the old ways were challenged—but they were not merely deconstructing—they offered new ideals instead. The old idea of nature defining beauty was no longer accepted—classical beauty would be painted over. These artists changed the painting on their faces every hour; with every new experience the painting changed—the painting became like the news, "We have joined art to life."³⁷ Their art was not limited to traditional forms, but also included mass media, decoration, and design. They themselves were both artist and canvas. They allowed every facet of their lives to become permeated with their artistic expression. They decorated life. This idea came from a painting in which Larionov continued the pattern of the wallpaper onto the figure standing before it.³⁸ Their goal was not to deconstruct, but to glorify construction. Their painted faces were not an absurdity, but an active

³⁵ Burliuk, "Cubism (Surface-Plane), 1912," 76.

³⁶ Ilya Zdanevich and Mikhail Larionov, "Why We Paint Ourselves: A Futurist Manifesto, 1913," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 79–83.

³⁷ Zdanevich and Larionov, "Why We Paint Ourselves: A Futurist Manifesto, 1913," 81-82.

³⁸ Zdanevich and Larionov, 81.

expression of their values as artists. This was an attempt at reshaping community and communication. This novel form of communication and expression was unknown, and was therefore of value. They believed it was their job to develop new forms of communication.³⁹

Section 2 – Primitivism, Rayonism, and the Donkey’s Tail.

There was very little theoretical unity among the Russian avant-garde. In fact, disharmony was one of their defining characteristics. In 1912, there occurred a major schism between the Jack of Diamonds and the Donkey’s Tail (a new group formed by Goncharova and Larionov). Although both groups had fundamentally the same goals, they differed as to the relationship of Russian art with the West. As was evidenced by the choice of the name *Hylaea*, these futurists related to that which was historically Western in Russian culture; whereas, Goncharova specifically associated Russia with the East and sought to reclaim traditions and artforms that predated Westernization and were derived from Russia’s Byzantine heritage.

The infamous schism between the Jack of Diamonds and the Donkey’s Tail occurred on the 12th of February, 1912. This debate, *On Contemporary Art*, took place in the auditorium of the Moscow Polytechnical Museum. The hall was sold out with at least 1000 people in attendance. Most significantly, Burliuk, speaking from the position of the Jack of Diamonds, gave a lecture that attempted to redefine art history and applauded many of the developments of the West. Goncharova, who was not invited to speak, got up and refuted earlier comments about her art and announced she was no longer part of the Jack of Diamonds. Larionov, who was also not invited to speak, got up and accused the Jack of Diamonds of copying the French. People found Larionov intolerable and he was booed off stage. The entire event received much attention

³⁹ Zdanevich and Larionov, 80-81.

and was considered a resounding success; it was attempted again later that year, but was far less effective.⁴⁰ Goncharova was so concerned with the misrepresentation of her art that she sent written statements to many newspapers. She herself thought highly of the French modernists and admired their style, but she had no tolerance for copyists such as Ekster and Lentulov.⁴¹

The address she gave that evening at the Jack of Diamonds expressed her belief that the aesthetics of modern art had their origins in primitive art. It is important to note that she considered art of the Middle Ages as primitive:

Cubism is a positive phenomenon, but it is not altogether a new one. The Scythian stone images, the painted wooden dolls sold at fairs are those same cubist works. True, they are sculpture and not painting, but in France, too, the home of cubism, it was the monuments of Gothic sculpture that served as the point of departure for this movement. For a long time I have been working in the manner of cubism, but I condemn without hesitation the position of the Knave of Diamonds, which has replaced creative activity with theorizing. The creative genius of art has never outstripped practice with theory and has built theory on the basis of earlier works.⁴²

For Goncharova, there was strength in primitive methods of construction. What was significant about earlier forms of artistic creation was that they did not rely on individual genius or imagination—they were not bogged down by theory. The patron (usually a political or religious institution) had an idea, and all the artist needed to do was determine an efficient and economic method to express that idea. There was never the question of why, only how. This attitude was the foundation for later Constructivist principles.⁴³

⁴⁰ Sharp, 190-91.

⁴¹ Sharp, 191

⁴² Natalya Goncharova, "Cubism, 1912," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 78.

⁴³ Goncharova, "Cubism, 1912," 78.

As Burliuk exemplified the first phase of the Russian avant-garde, Natalya Goncharova embodied its second phase. She is most commonly associated with Primitivism. She was a catalyst in provoking the Russian avant-garde to recognize the dialogue between East and West.⁴⁴ She had learned from the Western models of modernist art; however, she rejected the classification of Russian modernism as a failed mimesis of the West. It was its own independent art with equal value to that of the West. In fact, because of its history and placement in the East, it could draw from its own traditions in producing a new art form superior to that of the West. The plurality of Russian culture made it inherently avant-garde. According to Goncharova, the West was on the periphery, and Russia was in the center. This turn to the East was not limited to Goncharova, but was part of a larger Primitivist movement in Russia that had begun with the Symbolists. This recontextualization of historical art challenged the European conception of a master artist—the individual genius and sole author of his/her style. She resisted the belief that originality and individual style were important features in modern art.⁴⁵

Goncharova's work defies easy classification because it simultaneously drew on Eastern and Western traditions—she drew on the individual styles of European painters and the traditional practices of Byzantine and Orthodox icon painting. Icons were created as multiples of the same image; by using the copying techniques of icon painting, she was undermining the ideal of individual creativity valued in the West—the works were both originals and copies. Her art was a synthesis of past and present, East and West. She consciously changed her style to challenge peoples' conceptions about art—she sought to undermine the centrality of French modernists while enhancing the appreciation in Russia for their own folk traditions. There were

⁴⁴ Sharp, 174.

⁴⁵ Sharp, 170-71

many different cultural threads running through her paintings. She would selectively activate stereotypes to evoke different meaning in her work—stereotypes of Russia as the East and the decorative as feminine.⁴⁶ Goncharova exposed the arbitrary nature of these formal standards in art by blending them together as she pleased. She expressed her autonomy as an artist by painting rural life and field workers in the style of Cezanne (figure 2), and icons with a Futurist dynamism (Figure 3). In 1913, she and Picasso were considered equals. Her call for artists in the East to reclaim modernism was sparked when she heard that Picasso had turned to Africa for inspiration, Matisse to Asia, and Gauguin to the Pacific Islands.

She clearly expressed her intentions in the preface to the catalog of her solo-exhibition in 1913. This was her second individual exhibition in Moscow and included 768 of her works painted from 1900-1913:

And the objectives that I am carrying out and that I intend to carry out are the following:
 To set myself no confines or limitations in the sense of artistic achievements.
 To make continuous use of contemporary achievements and discoveries in art.
 To attempt to introduce a durable legality and a precise definition of what is attained—for myself and for others.
 To fight against the debased and decomposing doctrine of individualism, which is now in a period of agony.
 To draw my artistic inspiration from my country and from the East, so close to us.
 To put into practice M. F. Larionov's theory of rayonism, which I have elaborated (painting based only on painterly laws).
 To reduce my individual moments of inspiration to a common, objective, painterly form.⁴⁷

This quotation reveals much about the state of the avant-garde at that time. Despite the very public and dramatic split with the Jack of Diamonds, both groups sought to undermine traditional artistic standards and to create paintings based solely on pure painterly laws. They had more in

⁴⁶ Sharp, 172-73

⁴⁷ Natalya Goncharova, "Preface to Catalog of One-Man exhibition, 1913," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlit (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 57-58.

common with one another than with academic art. However, one of the characteristics of the avant-garde was a stubborn and strict adherence to one's principles. Within all of these manifestos was the call for a unified style based on fundamental truth—as though their aesthetics were scientific fact. Although idealistic and optimistic, they were essentially totalitarian. This theme would come to full maturation in Soviet Socialist Realism.

After their split with the Jack of Diamonds, Larionov continued to prioritize Goncharova's career over his own. The two undermined their primitivist ideology in 1915, when they moved to Paris. By that time, the onset of World War I had so altered the public consciousness that the East vs. West debate in art had become irrelevant.⁴⁸ Additionally, the two had been developing Rayonism, which was one of the first fully abstract styles of painting and an important precursor to Suprematism. Their text, "Rayonists and Futurists: A Manifesto," shows the blending of the two artists' theories and a more mature-constructive attitude. They continued to associate with the East, and valued national pride. Rayonism was the future of style—it was an art free of concrete form and derived from pure painterly laws. They accepted all styles, past and present, as suitable for their artistic expression. The West was still viewed as a negative and vulgarizing influence that should be ignored. Importantly, they valued technical knowledge of painting—painterly craftsmanship. They did not reject the training of the academy, only its aesthetics. Intense and uplifting emotions in art were held as the highest ideal. They believed that pure painterly form could express every thought or emotion. They also understood that their work was everchanging and would be edited through practical application. Above all, they believed art should always grow, so they opposed stagnation of any sort. Another dramatic shift was in their relation to the public—they claimed to no longer want public attention nor to have

⁴⁸ Sharp, 174-75

the public demand their attention.⁴⁹ This marks the transition from deconstructing the old ways, to constructing the new, “We, rayonists and futurists, do not wish to speak about new or old art, and even less about modern Western art. We leave the old art to die and leave the ‘new’ art to do battle with it.”⁵⁰

Larionov’s writing about Rayonism reflected his shift towards a more constructive philosophy. These writings were precise and focused. There was no sense of the bombast that had been central to his Futurist-public persona—he was no longer painting his face. He lucidly discussed the formal qualities of his new art and the theory behind it. With Rayonism, the focus shifted to painting itself. They were no longer concerned with debating against old art or Western art. The past was done and there was not a conflict between modernism and past tradition—there were no dusty old men championing the past with whom to do battle. The Rayonist and Futurist manifesto was a challenge to false modernists who created a straw man of the past. These people made their art seem more dramatic and meaningful by imagining it was being oppressed. Rather, it was trivial art and that was why it did not receive support. The antagonist, the false modernists, were the Jack of Diamonds; the time of slapping the face of public taste had ended. Radicalism could no longer disguise mediocrity.⁵¹ With radicalism behind him, he focused his attention towards the nature of painting:

Painting is self-sufficient;
it has its own forms, color,
and timbre.
Rayonism is concerned with
spatial forms that can
arise from the intersection
of the reflected rays of

⁴⁹ Mikhail Larionov and Natalya Goncharova, “Rayonists and Futurists. A Manifesto, 1913,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 90.

⁵⁰ Larionov and Goncharova, “Rayonists and Futurists. A Manifesto, 1913,” 87.

⁵¹ Larionov and Goncharova, 87-89.

different objects, forms
chosen by the artist's
will.⁵²

In his essays “Rayonist Painting” and “Pictorial Rayonism,” Larionov defined the logic behind Rayonism and the theory of its practice. One of the most important aspects of this conversation is its rationality—Larionov and the other avant-garde artists believed that their innovations were logical extensions of those principles that preceded them. In ‘Rayonist Painting,’ Larionov provided a summary of the modernist styles that led to Rayonism. Impressionism was concerned with the colored surface. Rondism constructed compositions according to the circle. Cubism focused on exposing the third dimension, decomposing form, and effects of chiaroscuro. Futurism made dynamics a style. Post-Cubism was concerned with synthesizing form. Neofuturism rejected painting altogether and adopted a screen, glass, and projected forms. Orphism was based on the orchestration of color. The flaw with this approach was applying musical laws to painting; painting needed to be constructed according to painterly laws.⁵³ The call for the construction of art based solely on pure painterly laws recalls Burliuk’s description of Cubism as fundamentally point, line, and plane. Throughout the avant-garde existed an inquiry into those characteristics that were exclusive to painting. Mostly, people were concerned with how objects were depicted in paintings, but if one removes the objects, one is still left with color and the texture of the painted surface—the fundamental aspects of painting. In fact, there never were any objects in painting, only color and surface. The object only ever existed visually. For all its abstract qualities, Rayonism was not non-objective. This is because it sought to depict the intangible forms created from the intersection of light reflecting off of

⁵² Mikhail Larionov, “Rayonist Painting, 1913,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlit (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 93.

⁵³ Larionov, “Rayonist Painting, 1913,” 95-96.

adjacent objects. The painting was still an imagined-intellectual reality based off of physical reality.⁵⁴ Larionov believed Rayonism was hyperrealism because it expressed an intellectual reality that he believed to be more real than physical reality. In expressing this, he only used colored lines, which he referred to as rays (figure 4). Despite this innovation in pictorial space, it did not reach complete liberation from objective reality and its painted forms had yet to achieve independent existence.⁵⁵ This next step would be realized by Kazimir Malevich, who was, for a time, closely allied with Larionov and Goncharova.

Larionov made a very important distinction in *Pictorial Rayonism*, stating that, “Rayonism might appear to be a form of spiritualist painting, even mystical, but it is, on the contrary, essentially plastic.”⁵⁶ The Futurists were more concerned with temporal rather than spiritual matters. Throughout the writing of Larionov, Goncharova, and Burliuk there was an absence of spiritual discourse. Even Goncharova’s admiration of icons did not focus on their spiritual potency; they were appreciated for their cultural and historic value. This did not mean that the avant-garde was spiritually vacuous. The spiritual influence of Symbolism continued within a subsection of the avant-garde; most notably in Wassily Kandinsky. Although mostly recognized for his time spent with the Bauhaus and Der Blaue Reiter, Kandinsky was included in *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* (although the authors claimed this was an accident) and was closely allied with the Russian avant-garde.

His essay “Content and Form,” from 1910, had much in common with the other Futurist manifestos and essays of the time; for example, Kandinsky stated that the vocabulary of painting

⁵⁴ Mikhail Larionov, “Pictorial Rayonism, 1914,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 100–101.

⁵⁵ Larionov, “Rayonist Painting, 1913,” 100

⁵⁶ Larionov, “Pictorial Rayonism, 1914,” 101.

consisted of color and line—the essential characteristics of paint as a medium.⁵⁷ This essay foreshadowed much of what he would later express in *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* and *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Here, he introduced the idea of *inner content* in art. He believed the form of a work of art derived from its inner content. For Kandinsky, the modern era was not so much defined by conflicting social and political ideologies, such as the avant-garde vs the traditional mainstream, or the European bourgeoisie versus the proletariat. For him, the modern era was defined by a conflict between the spiritual and the material. Inner content was connected to spirituality; the inner necessity of a work derived from its inner content and resulted in its form—the physical manifestation of a work of art was its inner content being translated through a particular medium. In this way, he created a unified aesthetic system in which all forms of art could be reduced to a single spiritual principal. For this reason, art had the capacity to purify mankind for the coming Great Spiritual Epoch.⁵⁸ Kandinsky's perceived conflict between the material and spiritual was further elaborated in the *Preface to Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, from 1912. Here Kandinsky and Franz Marc associated external form with death, “They are hollow, loitering lies that pollute the spiritual air and lead wavering spirits astray. Their deception leads the spirit not to life but to death. With all means available we want to try to unmask the hollowness of this deception.”⁵⁹ Here, the goal was to express the inner truth of the world through paint. External forms, or objects, were a negative influence. The movement towards abstraction in art was a movement away from the deceptive qualities of material reality. Artists could help actualize the spiritual awakening of the world by rejecting the external qualities of

⁵⁷ Vasilii Kandinsky, “Content and Form, 1910,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 22.

⁵⁸ Kandinsky, “Content and Form, 1910,” 22.

⁵⁹ Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, “Preface to Der Blaue Reiter Almanac (1912),” in *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, ed. Alex Danchev (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 77.

material reality and painting the inner-spiritual truth of the world. As with Goncharova and Larionov, this led him to explore Russian folk art before arriving at complete abstraction.⁶⁰ Kandinsky's spiritual focus set him apart from the rest of the Russian avant-garde. He was less concerned with the creation of an ideal Socialist Russia and more interested in the spiritual redemption of all humankind. He also spent more time in Europe than his Russian peers. He had much in common with later Constructivist artists Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner. While expressing fundamentally the same ideas as Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich's writing had a much more confrontational and revolutionary tone. Despite their differences, Malevich was seeking much the same artistic expression as Kandinsky had described.

Section 3 – Suprematism and Kazimir Malevich

Kazimir Malevich originally wrote the essay "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism" in 1915. Here he outlined his theoretical framework for Suprematism. As is implied by the title, Suprematism was based off of the core concepts of Futurism and Cubism. Although he did not equate external form with death, as had Kandinsky, he still rejected representation in art—viewing objects as obstacles to achieving a "purely painterly work of art."⁶¹ In opposition to Goncharova and the Primitivists, he blamed prehistoric man for establishing the ideal of Naturalism in art. For Malevich, ever since humans attempted to depict people and animals on cave walls, the goal in art had been to develop more and more accurate methods for imitating reality. He also did not believe that imitation was truly creative—it existed on the path to creation, but was not its destination. True art needed to create life, "The

⁶⁰ Marc and Kandinsky, "Preface to *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* (1912)," 76-77.

⁶¹ Kazimir Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism, 1915," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 118.

artist can be a creator only when the forms in his picture have nothing in common with nature.”⁶² In the creation of pure painterly form, color and texture were the primary tools—the most basic vocabulary. The surface of a Renaissance painting was an illusory surface. The surface of a modern painting was a painterly surface. Pure painterly form was superior to representations of the Madonna or Venus.⁶³ This was not to say that the art of the past was unimportant. Malevich was trying to emphasize that in the modern world, people engage in modern activities like riding in cars and flying in airplanes. They should not be evaluating art according to premodern principals. Futurism was the first challenge to the old authority in its presentation of the idea of the new—of speed and dynamism. However, it failed to destroy objectivism. Cubism was a challenge to the wholeness of form and expressed the power of dissonance. But again, its expression was tethered to objective reality.⁶⁴ Suprematism was the expression of the beauty of the modern world. Malevich described its formal vocabulary as “the forms of utilitarian reason.”⁶⁵ These forms were alive and arose from the artist’s intuition, “such forms will not be repetitions of living things in life, but will themselves be a living thing. A painted surface is a real, living form.”⁶⁶ Despite the advances in other forms of modern art, they never achieved liberation from representation; they never reduced reality to zero. Suprematism was the zero of form—the first truly non-objective art and pure painterly realism.⁶⁷ In being the end of form, Suprematism was the beginning of the new. The symbol of Suprematism was the square. *The Black Square* (figure 5) was first true art creation, it represented the zero of form—a symbol of

⁶² Malevich, “From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism, 1915,” 122.

⁶³ Malevich, 123.

⁶⁴ Malevich, 125-30.

⁶⁵ Malevich, 128.

⁶⁶ Malevich, 129-30.

⁶⁷ Malevich, 133.

reality reduced to zero. It was real because it did not copy nature.⁶⁸ As the zero-point,

Suprematism was the release from the bonds of academism and nature:

I say to all: Abandon love, abandon aestheticism, abandon the baggage of wisdom, for in the new culture, your wisdom is ridiculous and insignificant. I have untied the knots of wisdom and liberated the consciousness of color! Hurry up and shed the hardened skin of centuries, so that you can catch up with us more easily. I have overcome the impossible and made guild with no breath. You are caught in the nets of the horizon, like fish! We, Suprematists, throw open the way to you. Hurry! For tomorrow you will not recognize us.⁶⁹

One of the most fascinating aspects of *The Black Square*, the symbol of Suprematism, is that Malevich did not initially notice what he had created. In 1913, Malevich met the members of Hylaea at the All-Russian Congress of Futurists. There, they began work on the first Futurist opera, *Victory over the Sun*, “Kruchenykh wrote the libretto, Matiushin the music, and Malevich sketched the costume and set design. They combined their theoretical approaches to enhance one another—it was a collective effort that combined words, music, and the artist’s image of space.”⁷⁰ It was performed on December 5th, 1913 in St. Petersburg’s Luna Park where it provoked outrage in most of the audience, while a small group cheered and applauded.⁷¹ Malevich’s designs for the opera proved to be crucial to his development of Suprematism. Mostly, they were Cubist and non-objective. The main drama of the performance unfolded before a backdrop that was a black and white square. It was not until 1915, with the second staging of the opera, that Malevich recognized his drawing of a black square for a backdrop could have significance as a painting. It was in designing this opera that he took his first step

⁶⁸ Malevich, 133-34.

⁶⁹ Malevich, 135.

⁷⁰ Evgenii Kovtun and John E. Bowl, “Kazimir Malevich: His Creative Path,” in *The Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, eds. Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White (Boston, MA: Academic studies, 2012), 208.

⁷¹ Kovtun and Bowl, “Kazimir Malevich: His Creative Path,” 208.

towards Suprematism.⁷² *The Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0,10 (Zero Ten)* in 1915 was Malevich's first unveiling of Suprematism. He had secluded himself for months before the exhibition, completing around thirty canvases. The other artists in the exhibition refused to label his works as Suprematist, but he had already prepared a brochure to hand out at the exhibition that contained his manifesto "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism." Additionally, he hung up a sign reading, "Suprematism of Painting, K. Malevich."⁷³ 0.10 (Zero-Ten) was an indication that they had discovered the zero-point (*The Black Square*) and were moving beyond it, into actual creation. Artistically, they had reduced natural form to nothing, to zero, and this exhibition represented the first step beyond that.⁷⁴ This was one of the most significant moments in the history of the Russian avant-garde. This exhibition marked the transition from deconstruction to construction. What is more interesting is that these artists seem to have been fully aware of what they were doing and the significance it held. The title of the exhibition indicates that they clearly understood Futurism had ended and they were making the first step into something new. They had deconstructed the old ways and were now ready to construct the new. Suprematism was first step towards a truly modern artistic expression based on pure painterly creation.

Despite its pure artistic intentions, Suprematism also carried with it all the idealism of the Futurists and Primitivists. It still strove to establish a unified aesthetic based on scientific principles, to embrace Russian culture while rejecting the influence of the West, and to integrate life and art for the purpose of creating a utopic modern society. Until 1925, these values were supported by the government, especially after the Revolution in 1917. Malevich was put in

⁷² Kovtun and Bowlt, 208-9.

⁷³ Kovtun and Bowlt, 209.

⁷⁴ Kovtun and Bowlt, 209.

charge of the Department of Formal Theory of INKhUK (Institut khudozhvennoi kultury—The Institute of Artistic Culture) in 1924.⁷⁵ Here, he worked with a number of assistants and graduate students to study the five major systems of new art: Impressionism, Cezannism, Futurism, Cubism, and Suprematism. They sought to uncover the causes for these developments and their logical evolution.⁷⁶ Malevich believed that there was a logical progression in art from one plastic form to another. This progression was, “governed by indisputable and concrete laws, even if they remain unknown.”⁷⁷ This led to his development of the theory of the supplementary or additional element, which was a structural principal that could change the pitch of a painterly plastic system—it could reorganize the scheme of a painting’s composition by influencing its fundamental formal vocabulary.⁷⁸ Cezanne was a fibrous line. Cubism was a crescent line. Suprematism was a straight line. This investigation had much in common with Larionov’s earlier identification of the strands of modernism that led to Rayonism.

Despite his place at the core of Suprematism, Malevich was far from the only Suprematist. He actually considered Olga Rozanova to be the only true Suprematist. Her 1917 essay echoed many of the core ideas of Malevich’s manifesto; however, she placed more emphasis on color. Any imitation of reality lessened the impact of color. So, she used planes to transmit color. Color was handled in terms of depth and intensity. For Rozanova, the dynamism of pure color liberated painting from utilitarian considerations—they had their own existence. She saw this work as a “selfless aspiration to reveal a new beauty.”⁷⁹ Aleksandr Rodchenko was

⁷⁵ Christina Lodder, “Constructivism and Productivism in the 1920s,” in *The Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, eds. Denis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White (Boston, MA: Academic studies, 2012), 229.

⁷⁶ Kovtun and Bowlt, 216.

⁷⁷ Kovtun and Bowlt, 217.

⁷⁸ Kovtun and Bowlt, 218.

⁷⁹ Olga Rozanova, “Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism (1917),” in *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, ed. Alex Danchev (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 187.

also a Suprematist before becoming a Constructivist. His 1919 “Manifesto of Suprematists and Non-Objective Painters” foreshadowed the shift from Suprematism to Constructivism,

Don’t look back, always move ahead.
The world will be enriched by the innovators of painting.
Objects died yesterday. We live in an abstract spiritual creativity.
We are creators of non-objectivity.”⁸⁰

El Lissitzky was one of the first artists to infuse the visual vocabulary of Suprematism with utilitarian goals. He spent time with Malevich from 1918-19, while he was working as a professor at the Vitebsk Art School. Lissitzky saw in Suprematism the nascent architecture of the future. Like many other young artists, he saw the future of Suprematism expressed in real space. In a sense, Suprematism was never meant to exist within the picture plane. When Malevich hung his Suprematist works at *0.10*, they were not framed and they were not arranged to be viewed as individual works. The entire wall could be considered a Suprematist painting, with the *Black Square* overseeing it all from the icon corner (figure 6). Whether or not this was Malevich’s intention, those that were inspired by his work felt the need to move beyond the picture plane, and beyond painting entirely (figure 7). El Lissitzky’s essay “Suprematism in World Reconstruction,” from 1920, showed the transition from Suprematism to Constructivism. It also showed a revival of the Futurists’ desire to build a new world. For Lissitzky, Suprematism was not revealed as part of a completed system. The revelation of Suprematism was the revelation of a plan for a new world—one which had never been experienced and arose from the inner being of the artists and revolutionaries involved. The square became the symbol of the nascent art. Pictures were no longer anecdotes, poems, or lectures on morality. They became the sign and

⁸⁰ Aleksandr Rodchenko et al. “Manifesto of Suprematists and Non-Objective Painters (1919),” in *100 Artists’ Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, ed. Alex Danchev (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 214.

symbol of the new world. Suprematism was the first step on the road to construction.⁸¹ The Futurists understood at the beginning that in order to create a foundation for the new art, the old one needed to be deconstructed and a new space created. This occurred during a revolutionary time, when the old concepts of life were being challenged by the new. Technology rebuilt towns and cities, and cast aside old concepts of nationality and patriotism. WWI shifted the focus from technology of construction to that of destruction. This only added to the chaos of the time. Suprematism was born of this chaos. It presented the square as the “source of all creative expression.”⁸² He believed that by applying the principles of Suprematism to architecture they would reshape the world. A new architecture defined by “the rhythmic arrangement of space and time.”⁸³ The path forward in art was a combination of the paintbrush, ruler, and compass; but these only pointed to the future. The path forward in art was not that of mathematics, science, or sentimental sunsets. The path forward was using one’s creativity for practical purposes, like inventing ways to increase food production.⁸⁴ Lissitzky saw Suprematism as much more than a style of painting or black square. For him it was the realization of a new era:

AFTER THE OLD TESTAMENT THERE CAME THE NEW—AFTER THE NEW
THE COMMUNIST—AND AFTER THE COMMUNIST THERE FOLLOWS
FINALLY THE TESTAMENT OF SUPREMATISM.⁸⁵

Section 4 – Constructivism, Gan, and Gabo

The Constructivist movement in Russian art was framed by two significant historic events. The first was the Revolution of 1917 in which Lenin and the Bolshevik party gained

⁸¹ El Lissitzky, “Suprematism in World Reconstruction, 1920,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 153.

⁸² Lissitzky, “Suprematism in World Reconstruction, 1920,” 154.

⁸³ Lissitzky, 155.

⁸⁴ Lissitzky, 157.

⁸⁵ Lissitzky, 158.

control of Russia. The second was the death of Lenin in 1924 and subsequent political infighting before Stalin assumed power in 1928. As was previously mentioned, the seeds of Constructivism existed within the Russian avant-garde well before the Working Group of Constructivists was established within INKhUK (Institut khudozhvennoi kultury—The Institute of Artistic Culture) in Moscow, 1921. Its members consisted of the three founders Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, and Aleksei Gan, as well as Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg, Konstantin Medunetskii, and Karl Ioganson.⁸⁶ This group represented the consolidation of many aspects of avant-garde theory. Lenin's Communism was defined by the modernization of Russia and Soviet power. Within this environment, Russian artists sought the unification of art and industrial manufacturing.⁸⁷ It was believed that integrating art into production would increase the quality of manufactured goods. Their goal was to transform their artistic explorations into *laboratory work*. Responding to Vladimir Tatlin, the first Constructivist, they explored ways of constructing three dimensional abstract objects in real space. The intent being insight into the industrial production of utilitarian objects. These abstract non-utilitarian constructions were called *intellectual productions*. Their ideals were founded on the concept of *scientific communism*. Their goal was a communist expression of material structure. Art needed to be an intellectual production. They were meant to combine the experience of abstract construction, with Marxism, and the modes of industrial production.⁸⁸ The formal vocabulary of Constructivism was based on the Suprematist non-utilitarian constructions from before the Revolution. There were three main organizing principles in their art: tektonika or tectonics (the social and politically appropriate use of

⁸⁶ Lodder, "Constructivism and Productivism in the 1920s," 229.

⁸⁷ Lodder, "Constructivism and Productivism in the 1920s," 227.

⁸⁸ Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 3.

industrial material), construction (the organization of this material for a given purpose), and faktura (the conscious handling and manipulation of material).⁸⁹

By 1922, the Constructivists had begun fragmenting into smaller groups. As was the case with other avant-garde movements, there was no middle ground for various interpretations of artistic style. Aesthetic principles were an ‘all or nothing’ affair and had significant social implications. The main point of contention was utility. Some artists were more interested in non-utilitarian, theoretical explorations in paint. Others believed that painting was a thing of the past, a vestige of bourgeois Western decadence, and all art must be created with utilitarian concerns in mind. For this more extreme faction, life was now the medium of art—artists were shaping the texture of life in their new society. Their goal was the end of ‘art,’ as it was understood in the West. Artists were to become engineers of life and equal members of the proletariat. Aleksi Gan and Rodchenko represented this social approach to Constructivism. Gabo and Pevsner represented a more classically artistic approach to Constructivism. Importantly, Gabo and Pevsner did not consider themselves Constructivists, rather it was their reception in the West that associated them with Constructivism.⁹⁰

The central aim of Constructivism was to unite the proletariat of art and the proletariat of factories and integrate art into life. This idea was not new to avant-garde, but before the Revolution it was expressed in more abstract terms. After 1917, artists saw the potential for a concrete expression of this goal—for all aspects of labor to become unified within the proletariat; to combine factory work and art work, creating a communist art form that did away with all vestiges of its Western bourgeois past.⁹¹ The organization known as KOMFUT (Communist

⁸⁹ Lodder, “Constructivism and Productivism in the 1920s,” 230.

⁹⁰ Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, 34-38

⁹¹ This ideal would find its full expression in Socialist Realism.

Futurists) clearly expressed the post-Revolution political aims of the avant-garde in their *Program Declaration* of 1919. Although this manifesto was published before the formation of the first Constructivist groups, it reveals the social and political goals upon which the movement was founded. Despite claims of the end of Futurism at *0.10*, this organization showed that agitational, anarchic, revolutionary zeal was still very much an active component of the avant-garde. They called for a truly Communist art and culture to go along with the new Communist consciousness. The art of the Soviet government was not properly appreciating and fulfilling their revolutionary obligations. The social-democratic ideology of the Soviet government was promoting the same bourgeois ideologies of the past in a new guise. KOMFUT wanted a Communism that was truly free of the bourgeoisie. The masses needed to become involved in subordinating the Soviet cultural and educational systems to the creation of a truly revolutionary society, free from the vestiges of the bourgeoisie past.⁹² This same sentiment was expressed by Mayakovsky in his 1918 *Manifesto of the Flying Federation of Futurists*. He saw the old regime as oppressing the Russian people through political, social, and spiritual slavery. The February Revolution upended political slavery, while the October Revolution dealt with social slavery. He believed that creating a union between the proletariat of art and the proletariat of factories, they could spark, “the Spiritual Revolution.”⁹³

Vavara Stepanova, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Aleksii Gan formed the core of Russian Constructivism.⁹⁴ Overall, Constructivism was defined by social and political idealism; it emphasized the need for a truly Communist art distinct from the bourgeois individualism of the

⁹² KOMFUT, “Program Declaration, 1919” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 165–66.

⁹³ Vladimir Mayakovsky, “Manifesto of the Flying Federation of Futurists (1918),” in *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, ed. Alex Danchev (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 189.

⁹⁴ Gan went his own direction in 1924.

West. One of the main reasons for this focus was the development of the New Economic Policy in 1921. This policy was a compromise with capitalism and left Russia with a mixed economy. In addition, the New Economy created an entrepreneurial class whose taste was more decorative than Constructivist designs. The working class was also uninterested in the simplistic designs of the avant-garde.⁹⁵ In general, the currents of Russian culture were moving away from the radical idealism of the avant-garde. The book *Konstruktivizm*, written by Gan in 1922, expressed their frustrations. It was a condemnation of the supposedly Communist governmental organizations who actually supported the artistic styles of the bourgeoisie West. Throughout, it shows that Gan was now thinking of people and society and an artistic medium. The principles of art needed to be understood not for painterly ends, but for the purpose of creating an ideal society. He envisioned all of society as a tool. Society was a machine with all sorts of different parts. All of those parts were people; connected through the bond of labor.⁹⁶ The structure of society determined the structure of human relationships. This applied to all of society; the economic structure was determined by its productional relationships; the sociopolitical structure was determined by its economic structure.⁹⁷ Communist Russia was the first proletarian republic and its structure therefore determined new relationships. This also applied to art and culture:

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!⁹⁸

This call for the end of art and a shift in focus towards the mechanisms of society is what defined Constructivism. Their aesthetic principles were based on tectonics, texture, and construction, but

⁹⁵ Lodder, "Constructivism and Productivism in the 1920s," 243.

⁹⁶ Aleksei Gan, "Constructivism [Extracts], 1922," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlit (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 222.

⁹⁷ Gan, "Constructivism [Extracts], 1922," 222.

⁹⁸ Gan, 223.

they were no longer the focus of the artist's attention—the focus was on world building. The new world would be built according to the visual vocabulary of Suprematism. Their concern was how to construct that vision in real space. To that end, Rodchenko's *Spatial Construction No. 12* (Figure 8), from 1920 can be understood as an exploration of three-dimensional space and industrial materials. The *Manifesto of the Constructivist Group* stated that the line, the grid, and the square existed in the past, but it was Malevich and Rodchenko who pointed them out to people—it was they who announced them.⁹⁹ Constructivism was not the creation of imagined realities, but the construction of the new world in the present. In the studio, they experimented with square to understand how to make better mugs and boots:¹⁰⁰

We didn't create technology.
 We didn't create man.
 BUT WE,
 Artists yesterday
 CONSTRUCTORS today,
 1. WE PROCESSED
 the human being
 2. WE ORGANIZE
 technology
 1. WE DISCOVERED
 2. PROPAGATE
 3. CLEAN OUT
 4. MERGE
 PREVIOUSLY – Engineers relaxed with art
 NOW – Artists relax with technology
 WHAT'S NEEDED – IS NO REST.”¹⁰¹

Constructivism was not an artistic movement, but one whose goal was the construction of a new reality. One based on the principles of art and technology. To this end, many Constructivists,

⁹⁹ Aleksandr Rodchenko et al., “Manifesto of the Constructivist Group (c. 1922),” in *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, ed. Alex Danchev (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 291–292.

¹⁰⁰ Rodchenko et al., “Manifesto of the Constructivist Group (c. 1922),” 291.

¹⁰¹ Rodchenko et al., 291.

including Rodchenko, gave up painting in favor of designing kiosks, newspaper stands, and workers clubs.¹⁰²

Liubov Popova was a Constructivist who began as Cubo-Futurist and Suprematist. She was less agitational than Gan or Rodchenko, and represented a more restrained approach to Constructivism. In her 1921 essay, “On Organizing Anew,” she expressed pride in having lived in the Great Epoch of Great Organizations. The new era was a break from the past and allowed for the creation of a new world view. This was especially pertinent for artists. Revolutionary art was always concerned with destroying the old public consciousness—the old rationality—and providing something new. The Revolution provided the opportunity to discard old ways of thinking—old customs. This led to her questioning if the concept of art was a vestige of the old way of thinking—perhaps the concept of art needed to be discarded in the new consciousness. She perceived the future of art as too grand to be limited by the term *art*.¹⁰³ Her essay emphasized two points. First, every consciousness arose from unique circumstances and “its experience of its own past, present and future will also be singular and unique.”¹⁰⁴ Second, the creation of the new was based on the traditional structures of the past because people only know one physical reality. Through abstracted reality the artist becomes liberated from all other worldviews, “In the absolute freedom of non-objectivity and under the precise dictation of its consciousness (which helps the expediency and necessity of the new artistic organization to manifest themselves), [the artist] is now constructing [his] own art, with total conviction.”¹⁰⁵ She

¹⁰² Rodchenko et al., “Manifesto of Suprematists and Non-Objective Painters (1919),” 212.

¹⁰³ Liubov Popova, “On Organizing Anew (c.1921),” in *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, ed. Alex Danchev (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 262.

¹⁰⁴ Popova, “On Organizing Anew (c.1921),” 262.

¹⁰⁵ Popova, 263

summarized constructivism in the following formula: “(Form + colour + texture + rhythm + material + etc.) × ideology (the need to organize) = our art.”¹⁰⁶

The brothers Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner represented an even more moderate approach to Constructivism. Their *Realistic Manifesto* of 1920 showed that they shared in the goal of creating a better world. They also believed that WWI and the Communist Revolution had ushered in a new unified era for humanity. What they rejected was the collectivist and purely utilitarian approach to art. They did not abandon the individual artist, and they did not abandon art: “The realization of our perceptions of the world in the forms of space and time is the only aim of our pictorial and plastic art.”¹⁰⁷ For them, there was no standard of beauty, only the sentiment of the artist. The work was constructed according to the same principles as the universe—those of mathematics and engineering. All things had an essential image—chair, dog, or table. Their art removed these labels and focused on the internal rhythm of things. What made their art realistic was not any connection to objective reality, but that they sought to express the inner truth of the world in their paintings. In this way, they had much in common with Kandinsky and the Symbolists. They could be considered non-utilitarian Constructivists. They believed that wherever there existed life, there should also exist art. Art was the equivalent expression to a person’s word or deed—it was a personal and individual statement of inner truth. Gabo and Pevsner were only in Russia from 1917-1923. They had also spent much of their childhood studying in Europe. Their particular brand of Constructivism gained them recognition in the West, but they were never truly accepted in Russia. Their ideals were far too expressive of

¹⁰⁶ Popova, 263

¹⁰⁷ Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner, “The Realistic Manifesto (1920),” in *100 Artists’ Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, ed. Alex Danchev (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 257.

Western principles to gain ground with the Russian avant-garde—who were opposing the same Westernizing forces in their government and mainstream art establishments.

Despite their ideological differences, the artistic forms of Pevsner and Gabo's Constructivism were very similar to those of Rodchenko. Pevsner's *World, Maquette (Maquette pour la construction Monde)* (figure 9) and Gabo's *Translucent Variation on Spheric Theme* (figure 10) reveal a similar exploration of physical space and industrial materials as Rodchenko's *Spatial Construction No. 12*. Creatively, these artists had much in common; but ideologically, they disagreed over the artist's role in society. Gabo and Pevsner went on to promote their brand of non-utilitarian constructivism in the West, while Rodchenko and the other Russian Constructivists continued to apply their theories to the shaping of society. Due to the social focus of Russian constructivism, it was very short-lived. These artists moved away from Constructivist art entirely as they found more suitable materials and means to enact their social and political agenda.

Proletarian creation, rather than art, became the central goal of the Russian avant-garde in the 1920s. The philosopher Aleksandr Bogdanov expressed this in his essay "The Paths of Proletarian Creation," from 1920. Here, he stated that all creation was a form of labor. That there was no difference between creation and ordinary labor. Human labor was a collective endeavor, "Creation is the highest, most complex form of labor. Hence its methods derive from the methods of labor."¹⁰⁸ Labor itself was moving towards collectivism. Art, now understood as creative or artistic labor, was also becoming a collective endeavor. The techniques of the old art were isolated from other aspects of life; whereas, proletarian art used the methods of every-day

¹⁰⁸ Aleksandr Bogdanov, "The Paths of Proletarian Creation, 1920," in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlt (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 179.

labor and industry for its creation. All work was considered practical work. The old art resulted in individual success, the new art came from and gave rise to collectivism. There was no expression of the independent value of the “I.” The new art was the expression of and active participation in collective life.¹⁰⁹ This sentiment was given revolutionary overtones in 1923 when Lef (Levyi front iskusstv—Left Front of the Arts), a journal that was closely allied with Gan and represented utilitarian-Constructivism, published “Declaration: Comrades, Organizers of Life!”

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...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!¹¹⁰

This statement is a summary of the Russian avant-garde. It is a rejection of traditional artistic standards and styles derived from the West; it rejects individuality; it seeks to integrate art into life; and it seeks to unify all labor within the concept of the proletariat and thus defines art as labor. However, these values that were central to the avant-garde were not central to non-objective art. Although the Constructivists chose to use the visual vocabulary of Suprematism, there was no necessary connection between a collectivist art and non-objective painting. Representational art could just as easily, if not more easily, express the collectivist ideals of the new Soviet state. Indeed, this new art form was called Soviet Socialist Realism.

¹⁰⁹ Bogdanov, “The Paths of Proletarian Creation, 1920,” 179.

¹¹⁰ Lef, “Declaration: Comrades, Organizers of Life!, 1923,” in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934*, translated by John E. Bowlit (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 201.

Section 5 – Socialist Realism

Soviet art transitioned to Socialist Realism between the 1920s and 1930s. The pervading opinion is that the *true* art of the Revolution was crushed by the despotic and conservative policies of Stalin's regime that promoted a backwards artform imitative of nineteenth century Realism. This change being readily accepted by the low level of cultural sophistication of the party leadership and Soviet masses. However, this common interpretation is inaccurate. In fact, overcoming the aesthetic of the avant-garde was not the defeat of the avant-garde, but represented its continuation and completion—rejecting the aesthetic of the avant-garde was the final stage in rejecting an aestheticized and intellectualized search for individual style.¹¹¹

The art of Socialist Realism was not synonymous with 19th century Realism. The essential difference being that Socialist Realism attempted to positively portray its subjects—it was intended to be celebration of a Socialist Reality that was neither objective nor realistic.¹¹² It was an expression of both the exemplary and the mundane, showing both as worthy of admiration. It was not simply a new version of classicism, but did include classical elements. It took as its premise that the civilization of the Soviet Union was the highest achievement in all of human history. It accepted the style of antiquity because it was also used to depict a utopia, albeit one of the past.¹¹³ Despite its visual similarities, the forms expressed in Socialist Realism were based on specific and purposeful content distinct from traditional Realism and it therefore cannot be judged according to the same standards. This misreading is similar to what happened with early Russian avant-garde painting, which is often falsely interpreted as purely aesthetic. In reality, its

¹¹¹ Groys, "The Birth of Socialist Realism from the Spirit of the Russian Avant-Garde," 250, 275.

¹¹² Groys, 251.

¹¹³ Groys, 251.

pure form and color were meant to undermine the concept of art; their objects were not aesthetic but expressive of principles they believed could restructure the whole world. They strove to destroy the bourgeoisie associations with art, and to destroy museums and artists. Everything was to become communal, so there would be no difference between “consumer and producer, artist and spectator, work of art and object of utility.”¹¹⁴ The fact that this art ended up being bought and sold in capitalist economies, and exhibited in museums evidences the historical defeat of the Russian avant-garde.¹¹⁵ Socialist Realism shared in the avant-garde’s quest to transcend the museum and become a motivating force for artistic experimentation. It was intended to create new relationships between artist, artwork, and viewer. It continued with the goal of removing the artist’s individual manner and personal expression as primary objectives to be valued in artistic creation. It rejected traditional realistic art, especially that of the Wanderers. Due to its rejection of traditional realism, it is often seen as being of low quality. This stems from a misunderstanding of the goals of this art, which were to overcome the limitations of traditional realism and remove the boundary between fine art and utilitarian product. It was an artistic product whose function was to express the vitality and significance of Soviet Russia, to inspire in viewers the values of Communism; they were instruments of Soviet education.¹¹⁶ They were not depictions of life but portrayals of the artistic shaping of life (figure 11).¹¹⁷ Both Socialist Realism and the avant-garde sought to construct a new world according to the principles of Socialism. In this world, the creative and utilitarian were unified. Their ideal reality was not being portrayed, but revealed through this art. It was not mimetic, nor realistic. It was a

¹¹⁴ Groys, 252.

¹¹⁵ Groys, 252.

¹¹⁶ *Exemplum Virtutis*, propaganda, or both?

¹¹⁷ Groys, 253.

projection of the world as it should be. In this way it was distinct from 19th century mimesis, and was a distinctly 20th century artistic movement.¹¹⁸

The reason the visual vocabulary of the avant-garde differs so dramatically from that of socialist Realism was due to the changed role of the artist in Soviet society. The avant-garde was based on the principle of the new—its visual vocabulary grew from the zero-point of the *Black Square*; a complete rejection of the world as it appeared. In the 1930s, artists were faced with a new reality; one in which political leaders, not avant-garde artists, were the engineers of society. These political leaders did not allow for dissenting viewpoints. All this arose from the values that the avant-garde themselves had promoted. The goal of art and philosophy was to change the world, not simply to know it. Those who believed in the superiority of transformation over representation could not argue against the authority of political leadership in aesthetic matters, as it was a result of their own logic. In advocating that art become linked to politics, they undermined their own autonomy and individuality, and subordinated themselves to the new political reality. Since these politicians were actually recreating society, artists and philosophers were forced to acknowledge that politicians were superior artists and philosophers. Art was given a new role in this society. It served to form the consciousness of Soviet citizens, who became both the creators and products of art. In this environment, beauty was understood as the harmonious organization and structuring of life; every part fit into the overall system. Beauty resulted from systematic practical activity.¹¹⁹ The beauty of Soviet art was a result of its depiction of the ideal dream of Socialism—practical depictions of practical activities. Depicting the truth was not the literal depiction of their reality, but the reality towards which it strove.

¹¹⁸ Groys, 254.

¹¹⁹ Groys, 265.

Stalin was the architect of the future of Soviet Russia and therefore also the architect of truth.¹²⁰ Stalin became the ideal for which that avant-garde had strove—he transformed rather than represented life. He actually restructured their reality according to a unified plan. He embodied the philosophy of the avant-garde—he became an artist of reality. His demand to “paint life” takes on different meaning when one understands that he sought to shape life into a work of art. In a sense, he became the only artist.¹²¹

All Russian artists at that time could be considered followers of Stalin; working in the Stalinist style. Artists in this period sought to free themselves from any elements of individual style. There was a constant movement towards *normal* depictions of *normal* things. During Stalin’s late rule, individuality was further undermined by having multiple artists make a single work. Socialist Realist artists did not represent reality, but the ultimate goal of Soviet reconstruction. The artist was actively creating this future and being shaped by it.¹²² The Lef artists were concerned with creating the material reality of the new world. Socialist Realist painters sought to “form the psychology of the new Soviet person.”¹²³ The main difference between the avant-garde and Socialist Realism was a focus on restructuring the basis of society versus the superstructure—working on the technical and material organization of society versus the engineering of man. People became the material of art.¹²⁴ Socialist Realism can be understood as a rejection of the visual vocabulary of the avant-garde, but an implementation of its philosophical and theoretical program. Freed from any aesthetic associations, it could change

¹²⁰ Groys, 265.

¹²¹ Groys, 266.

¹²² Groys, 267.

¹²³ Groys, 267.

¹²⁴ Groys, 273

its form to suit any political or ideological necessity. At the center was the leader, the principal creator and main subject of Soviet Socialist Realism (figures 12-13).¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Groys, 273-74.

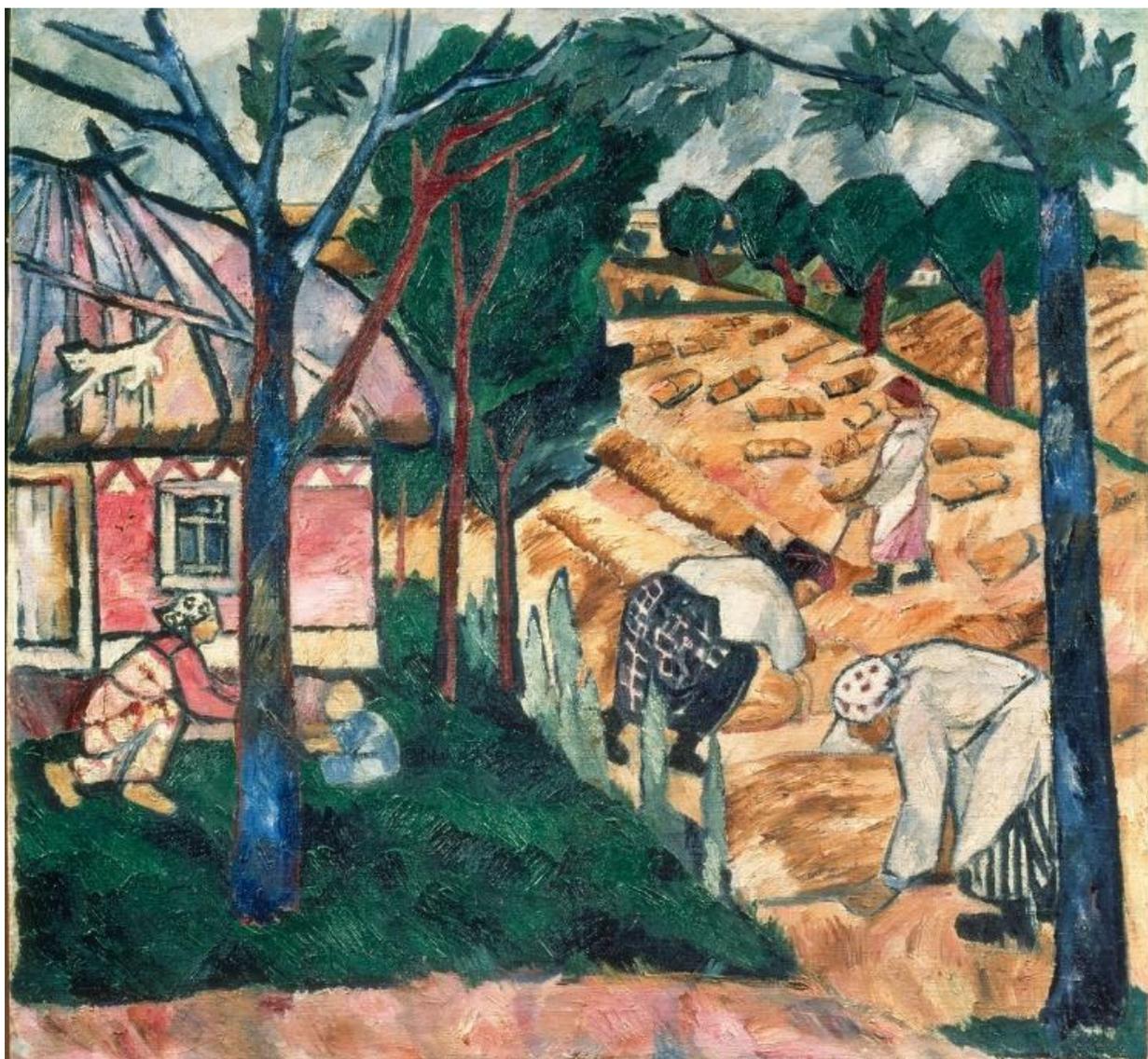
Illustrations

Figure 1



Burliuk, David. *The Dream*. Oil on canvas. 8 1/2 x 11 1/2 in. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 2



Goncharova, Natalia. *Grain Harvest*, 1908. Oil on canvas. 37 3/4 x 40 1/2 inches. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 3



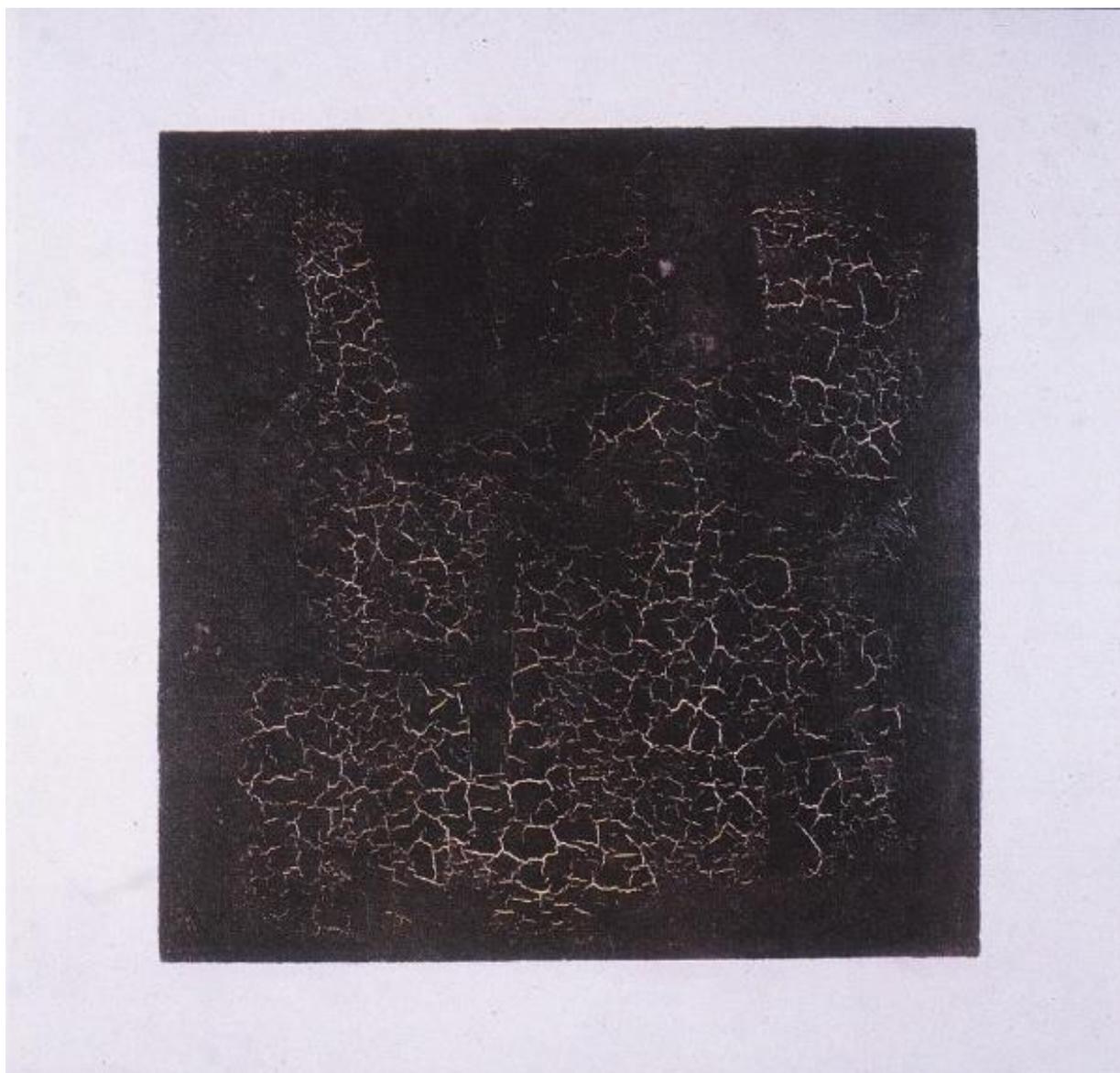
Goncharova, Natalia. *Saint Andrew*, costume design for the ballet *"Liturgy"*, 1915. Watercolor on paper. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 4



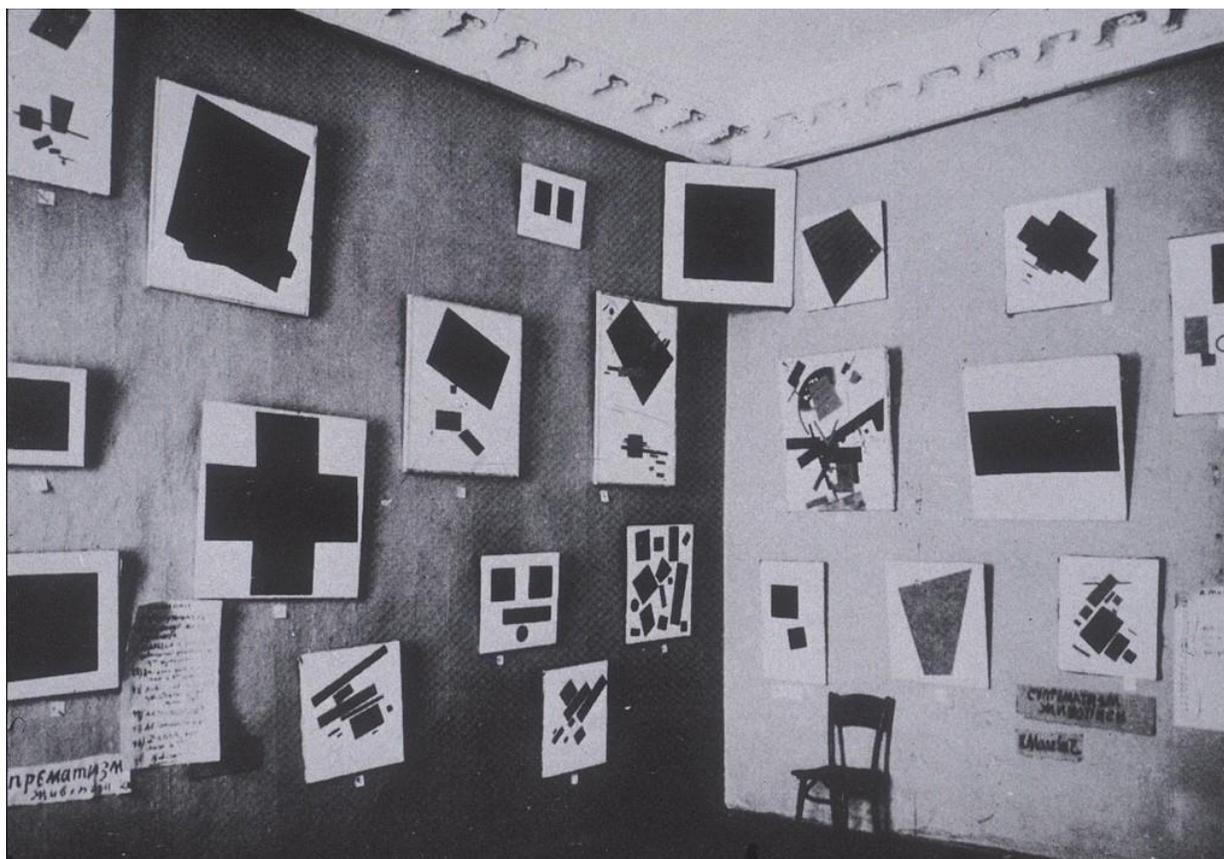
Larionov, Mikhail. *Glass*, 1912 (dated 1909 by the artist). Oil on canvas. 41 x 38 1/4 inches. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 5



Malevich, Kazimir Severinovich. *Black Square*, 1915. Oil on canvas. 31 3/16 x 31 5/16 in. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 6



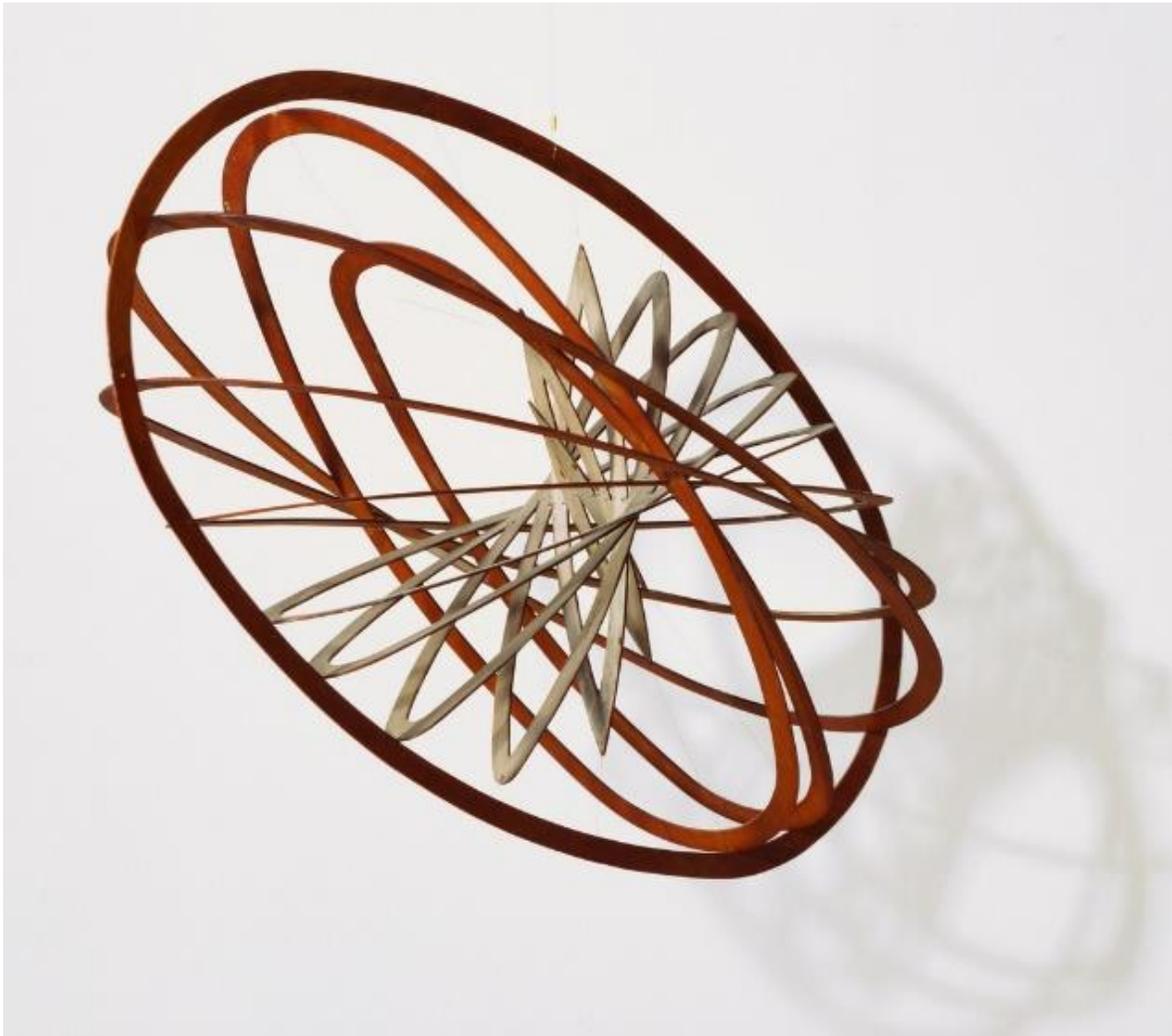
Malevich, Kazimir Severinovich. *Installation: Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10*, 1915-16. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 7



Lissitzky, El. *Proun Room*, 1923. Mixed media installation. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 8



Rodchenko, Aleksandr. *Spatial Construction no. 12.*, c. 1920. Sculpture. Plywood, open construction partially painted with aluminum paint, and wire. 24 x 33 x 18 ½ in. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 9



Pevsner, Antoine. *World, Maquette (Maquette pour la construction Monde)*, 1946. oxidized brass wire. 16.5 x 14 x 12 in. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 10



Gabo, Naum. *Translucent Variation on Spheric Theme*, 1937 (reconstructed 1951). Perspex. 22 3/8 x 17 5/8 x 17 5/8 in. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 11



Gerasimov, Sergei. *Collective-Farm Holiday*, 1937. Oil painting. 92 x 146.5 in. Artstor. Accessed July 3, 2022.

Figure 12



Shegal, Grigory Mikhailovich. *Leader, Teacher and Friend*, 1937. Oil on canvas. 134 x 102 inches. Artstor. Accessed July 5, 2022.

Figure 13



Shurpin, Fedor Savvich. *The Dawn of our Fatherland (The Morning of our Fatherland)*, 1948. Oil on canvas. Artstor. Accessed July 5, 2022.

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