

Present Perfect or Present Progressive? Temporality in Early Soviet Avant-Garde Visual Arts

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I want the future today.
Mayakovsky

In life, mankind is an experiment for the future.
Rodchenko

The words of everyday language that make their way into academic discourse are usually the ones that provoke the most heated debates. The problem seems to depend not on the layers of supplementary meanings, covering some 'hidden core,' but on the inapplicability of the univalent term in the situation where both the context and the purpose of the analysis make the author tailor the existing vocabulary to particular purposes. To avoid possible terminological misunderstandings, I shall begin by defining the notion of the avant-garde as employed throughout this text, which slightly restricts the immediate scale of associations generally invoked by the term (Poggioli 12-15).

The term 'avant-garde' could be equally applied to the interpretation of form, as well as to the content of some artistic creation. In the former case the attention is mostly concentrated on the manifested stylistic innovations (in the case of visual arts, this would be an elaboration of a new pictorial language), while the latter emphasizes a certain radical ideology behind the project and is necessarily more self-reflexive (Bürger 22).¹ In other words, in my interpretation avant-garde is itself an ideology that implies particular temporal relations with the world. Briefly speaking, it postulates a linear development of the world that is encoded in the avant-gardists' positive self-evaluation: in the teleologically unfolding historical process they see their role not only as the prophets of a dawning future, but as active demiurges who, with the help of works of art, making this future happen. Making art a part of the public sphere necessitates the development of an artistic language that can influence, cause, and direct certain societal changes, ensuring that art and life progress in the same direction.

Russian avant-garde artists appear to claim their rights to the future approximately at the same time as their Western counterparts (Krusanov 20-25). It would be incorrect to think that the 1917 revolution was a radical break in the avant-garde worldview. Rather, being often more radical than politicians, avant-garde artists saw a unique opportunity to implement their ideas in practice – one of the major reasons that Soviet Russia is a perfect

case study for analyzing artistic utopias. Active participation in agitation and propaganda during the Civil War shaped revolutionary ideology, but certainly did not create it anew (Lodder 47). Nevertheless, the Marxist canon was important as a strong teleological referential framework for avant-garde artists.² As I try to show, however, there was no uniform interpretation of the ideal future.

These preliminary remarks already make clear the primacy of the questions of temporality in the avant-garde movement. Practically, the old/new dimension acquires an ontological status with a clear value judgment:

After long centuries marking the destruction of the bearers of youth the day has come for the clash between youth and age. Today a desperate struggle is being carried on with the old man who is trying to stifle youth. <...> We wish to form ourselves according to a new pattern, plan and system; we wish to build in such a way that all the elements of nature will unite with man and create a single, all-powerful image. (Malevich, 1920, 167)

If we accept the distinction of "activism vs. expectation" as two opposite attitudes towards the future in the age of modernity (Kern 89-90),³ the avant-garde would definitely qualify as the epitome of an active mode of life and thought. Considering the evolution of the inherent potentials of avant-garde ideology, I aim to show how it ultimately withdrew from its original activist stance and turned into the mode of expectation. Such an evolution was stimulated by changes in the environment (cultural, social, political), but was not merely imposed on the artists.

Starting from shared premises, the most uncompromising artists of the 1920s gradually diverged in creating opposing visions of the future (to which I refer as ideal types): provisionally, these two could be called "Constructivist" and "Organicist" canons. The visual and ideological languages of both were conceived before the revolution, but their development was finalized, and their ways finally parted, during the 1920s. Before turning to a detailed analysis of the development of these canons in painting, architecture, and cinema, I would like to give a brief explanation of the introduced concepts.

The origins of both constructivist and organicist visual languages are traceable to Cubism and Futurism, with their special emphasis on the plurality of perspectives, an analytical approach to form, an interplay between materials and attempts to reproduce speed and movement on the two-dimensional canvas, as well as in the architectural models. The lessons learned by artists in Russia from these experiments were diverse: "ideal-typical

Constructivism" emphasized the utilitarian functions of the construction, created by and for a 'standard' individual who is the result, as well as the creator, of this process. Being mobile, rational, and pragmatic, this individual takes the best from the present for building the ideal future. Organicity, on the other hand, aimed at a unity that was close to the conservative Slavophile utopia or a monistic collectivism of God-builders (Williams 38-40): a group not reducible to the mere sum of its individual representatives, united by a common spirit and higher, almost metaphysical interests, communally working to create the apocalyptic future. My examination of the evolution of constructivism and organicism in the 1920s and their impact on the modalities of time perception argues — through analyzing both the works and the manifestoes of the artists — that the activist attitude towards the future gradually ceded to a modality of mere expectation and, ultimately, an abrogation of the active stance in relation to the future in both canons.

I. Kazimir Malevich: the Lonely Cosmic Rider

Long before the revolution, painting was probably the primary sphere of art for experimenting with a new visual language. Borrowing ideas from Western trends, particularly French Cubism and post-Impressionism, and, at the same time, influenced by a European fascination with primitive arts, such Russian artists as Larionov, Goncharova, Lentulov, Filonov, and Malevich discovered the world of peasantry, Russian orthodoxy, and traditions of *lubok* (Khardzhiev 59-60). The world created in their works attempted to recover a lost paradise. Receptive to these ideas, yet modifying them in order to align them with his Futuristic world view,

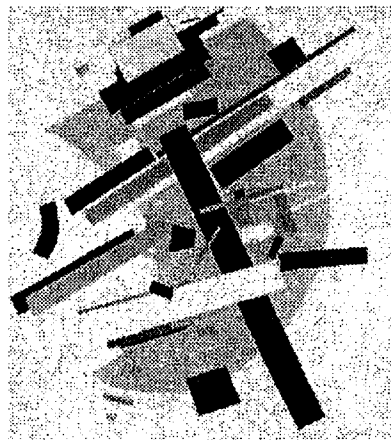


Figure 1.

Malevich elaborated new ways of expressing the unity of the world and showing the route to the collective paradise that he refused to acknowledge as lost forever (Khardzhiev 117-18).⁴ Behind the language of Suprematism is the impetus to a radical break with the past, a "complete zero" necessary for creating a new reality rather than evoking associations with one already existing (Sharp 39).⁵ In other words, this new reality was envisioned as a synthesis of the organic communal utopia with the characteristic features of modernity (Douglas, 8).⁶ The new

language was developed as a symbolism of forms and colors: the main shapes — square, circle and triangle — stood for such complex entities as the world, the earth's movement, and a "higher force," as well as their interaction, while the main colors — black, white and red — represented universal evil, good, and revolutionary forces (Khan-Magomedov 101). It is important to emphasize the "direction" of Malevich's nonfigurative language: unlike abstract painters, such as Kandinsky, he created his world "top-to-bottom," moving from general to particular (Kovtun 321). Aiming at no less than the creation of the perfect New World, Malevich did not refine existing models, but searched for new principles (Figure 1). Since he saw no necessary unity in the elements of the present, Malevich projected his ideals up in space and ahead in time, occupying the whole cosmos with his utopian visions:

[T]he keys of Suprematism led me to discover what had not yet been realized. My new painting does not belong to the Earth exclusively. The Earth has been abandoned like a house infested with termites. And in fact in man, in his consciousness, there is a striving towards space, an urge to take off from Earth. (Douglas 26)⁷

The October revolution seemed a chance for the realization of the most daring projects. In 1919 Malevich moved to Vitebsk with a group of followers and started interesting experiments by creating an artistic commune, UNOVIS (*Utverditeli Novogo Iskusstva*), based on the utilization of collective creativity to translate his ideals into practice (Statskih 53):

Today the man has awoken who shouts for all the world to hear and calls all humanity to unity. Our unity is essential for his being: not to obtain rights and liberty or to build an economic, utilitarian life, but in order that, by safeguarding of our bodily needs, our being may advance to the single unity and wholeness on the path of universal movement, as our main, and, indeed, only goal. ... We wish to form ourselves according to a new pattern, plan and system; we wish to build in such a way that all the elements of nature will unite with man and create a single, all-powerful image. (Malevich, 1920, 167)

Suprematism's goal of transforming the world was based on a distinction between "reality" and "actuality" that viewed reality as concealed by the "objectified" surface of the world, and recoverable only by loss of the chains of the figurative present (Khardzhiev 123). Thus, reality was perceived as the future and no longer understood in spatial terms. Such ideas were close

to the vision of *bogostroitel'stvo* (God building), based on the mystical, religious unity of the proletariat, elevated by the revolution to the full realization of its potential and thus truly become "like God" (Williams 57). Yet, the further development of the outlined ideas soon led to a parting of the ways of the originally coherent UNOVIS group.

Bringing the future into the present meant a search for practical solutions to the numerous problems forcing artists to confront the present. Already in 1921 Malevich mentions a need to adopt "a more Constructive approach to the present requirements of reorganizing the world" (Lodder 160). As artists plunged into work, along with paintings and non-figurative constructions, they created decorations for the revolutionary holidays in the city (flags, placards, decorations for buildings), worked out the design for public places (stages, tribunes), as well as for objects of everyday use (porcelain, other household facilities), and sketched out a number of Suprematist architectural complexes (Khan-Magomedov 63).⁸ However, while tailoring their artistic language to the needs of everyday reality, artists quickly realized that Suprematism was impossible to apply without taking functional needs into account:

Despite its good intentions, in reality it amounted to little more than what the Constructivists attacked as applied art. Keeping to the pictorial language of Suprematism, the artists kept the sphere and the cube as the major forms without regard to their functional requirement. (Lodder 163)

The dilemma appeared as follows: either to keep and further develop the language of Suprematism, while sacrificing immediate utilitarian feedback, or to compromise that language by allowing the logic of the particular problem to define the means employed. In the second half of the 1920s, after UNOVIS was already dissolved,⁹ Malevich authored a number of theoretical works defending his visual language and ideology from multiplying attacks. In answering accusations against the uselessness of his art, Malevich was unable to subordinate his views to reality, and in his works *God is not Cast Down* (1922) and *The Suprematist Mirror* (1923) he chose to deny the existence of reality itself by dissolving it into holistic nothingness:

1. Science and art have no boundaries because what is comprehended infinitely is innumerable, and infinity and innumerability are equal to nothing.
2. If the world's creations are God's paths and if "His ways are inscrutable," then both He and His path are equal to nothing.

3. If the world is the creation of science, knowledge and labor, and if their creation is infinite, then it is equal to nothing.
4. If religion has comprehended God, it has comprehended nothing.
5. If science has comprehended nature, it has comprehended nothing.
6. If art has comprehended harmony, rhythm and beauty, it has comprehended nothing.
7. If anyone has comprehended the absolute, he has comprehended nothing.
8. There is no existence either within or outside me; nothing can change anything, since nothing exists that could change itself or be changed. <...> (Malevich 1923, 224-25)

In folding the present into the futuristic utopia, he targeted the future and thus lost touch with reality. This dissociation, in its turn, made him finally abandon Suprematism, but only after he had fully developed its potential.¹⁰

Opting for the alternate strategy — to serve the “visible today” instead of the “remote tomorrow” — led Malevich’s most talented colleagues, such as Lissitzky, Klutis, and Tatlin, to adopt the ideas of Constructivism and associate themselves with adherents of a utilitarian and productive approach to art. Yet the attempt to project the present into the future was not free from contradictions, either, and eventually led to another blind alley.

II. From the Temple to the Factory: the Story of Constructivism

Suprematism did not remain supreme on the avant-garde cultural scene for long. In the best traditions of Futurism, already during its heyday it was pronounced by its “successors” a phenomenon of the past:

Suprematism bloomed all over Moscow. The shop windows, exhibitions, cafes — all suprematism. And this is very telling. One can surely say that the day of suprematism is coming. And it is exactly at this very moment that suprematism should lose its creative meaning. What was suprematism? Clearly a creative expression, but a purely artistic one. (Lodder 112)

New artists came to develop a new language, combining the revolutionary ideology, their vision of the Soviet future, and the expressive force of their material to achieve the necessary synthesis of form and function (Taylor 77-43). One of the first attempts to answer the demand of the state was implemented by Tatlin, a friend and colleague of Malevich who later searched for

a practical application of his creativity, drifting away from Suprematism, while accepting certain elements of its visual language. Enthusiastically reacting to Lenin's plan of monumental propaganda,¹¹ Tatlin nevertheless despised the figurative monuments created by other sculptors. He offered the alternative of a synthesis of modern art and life, pregnant with a symbolic meaning of the universal order, fused with futuristic dynamism:

As a principle it is necessary to stress that first of all the elements of the monument should be *modern technical apparatuses promoting agitation and propaganda*, and secondly that the monument should be a place of the most *intense movement*; least of all should one stand or sit down on it, you must be *mechanically* taken up, down, carried away *against your will*, in front of you must flash the powerful laconic phrase of the orator-agitator, and further on the latest news, decrees, decisions, the latest inventions, an explosion of simple and clear thoughts, *creativity, only creativity*. (Lodder 56)¹²

The monument to the III International (originally conceived as a monument to the Proletarian Revolution) was a talented implementation of these ideas: it combined the Suprematist emphasis on geometrical forms (cube, pyramid, and cylinder, located one on top of another) with the dynamism of a diagonal and two spirals that together made up a light modern structure simultaneously evoking the Eiffel tower, oil derricks, skeleton masts of ships, and various Futurist sculptural works (see Figure 2). The tower was to be made of steel and glass, perceived as the epitomes of modernity, as well as a symbol of the steel will of the proletariat, combined with its clear consciousness. The monument was to be invested with multiple functions, containing a number of conference halls, an information center, and a telegraph. Moreover, the emphasis on the dynamism of the structure was taken almost literally, for its various parts were supposed to rotate at different speeds (the cube — once



Figure 2.

a year, the pyramid — once a month, the cylinder — once a day, and the radio station on top — once an hour), thus representing a microcosm aligned with the harmony of the whole universe (Lodder 62; Khan-Magomedov 101-102)

This project attempt aimed to unite the past, present, and future by a particular logic and a certain direction of development. Tatlin, however, never bothered to provide relevant engineering calculations on the feasibility of the project,¹³ which came under strong criticism from other avant-garde artists, who saw the monument as uselessly complicated by symbolism at the expense of practicality. At a time of general concern with productiveness and the utility of art, one of the most serious accusations, leveled by the colleagues was the 'aestheticism' of the project, which caused others to abandon the tactics proposed by Tatlin and to search for other solutions to current needs. And the needs of the present were various. An urge to build, create, and construct united an otherwise diverse group of artists, who developed the ideology of Constructivism, which focused on the present, abandoned metaphysics and irrational spirituality, and spoke of a New Realism:

We do not look for justifications either in the past, or in the future.
<...>

We assert that the shouts about the future are for us the same as the tears about the past: a renovated day-dream of the romantics.<...>

Today is the deed.

We will account for it tomorrow.

The past we are leaving behind as carrion.

The future we leave to the fortune-tellers.

We take the present day. (Gabo, Pevsner 214)

The first Constructivists declared the primacy of form over texture, line over surface, structure over color, and three dimensions over two. They saw their major achievement in paying attention to the combination of elements in space, to the balance of lines in a construction, as opposed to the assemblage of elements into a composition. Their works did not imply any global vision of the future, but, rather, concentrated on the present, making its forms clear, precise, and laconic. The visual language of such artists as Sergei and Vladimir Sternberg, K. Medunetskii, and N. Gabo marked another step in the direction of utilitarianism, while the works themselves, despite the artists' declarations, remained purely abstract. Clearly, the strongest criticism of the current uselessness of such artistic experiments came from the defendants of the principle of functional construction.

The Institute of Artistic Culture in Moscow (INKhUK), established in

1920, subsequently became an institutional incarnation of Constructivist ideas (Nakov 98).¹⁴ The core of the first Constructivist working group within INKhUK — A. Rodchenko, B. Ioganson, V. Stepanova, A. Gan — gradually developed a coherent Constructivist ideology. It advocated the subordination of art to the practical needs of the moment, rejection of easel painting as bourgeois aestheticism, development of the functional language of form, and providing artists with an engineering or other technical background. Ioganson's description of the evolution of his own formation is presented as a normative history of the movement: "From painting to sculpture, from sculpture to construction, from construction to technology and invention — such is my path and such is and will be the final aim of every revolutionary artist" (Lodder 96).

Exclusivist and aggressive in relation to all other forms and languages of art, Constructivism declared the present its sphere of interest, and renounced both past and future as either outdated or idealistic. Diametrically opposed to Malevich's holistic visions and Tatlin's romantic ideas, Constructivist logic taken to its extremes was no less contradictory. It denied the artists' authority, subordinating it to the technical problems of the present. The freedom to develop a new formal language became greatly restricted by the prescribed function of the object that theoretically permits one the "best" realization of any particular problem (see Figure 3). The artist's task thus was formulated as a search for this best option rather than as experimentation with a range of alternative possibilities.

The priority of the functional side of every artistic work was most uncompromisingly formulated by O. Brik in his work *From Picture to Calico-Print*, in which the only credible artistic attitude implied the estab-

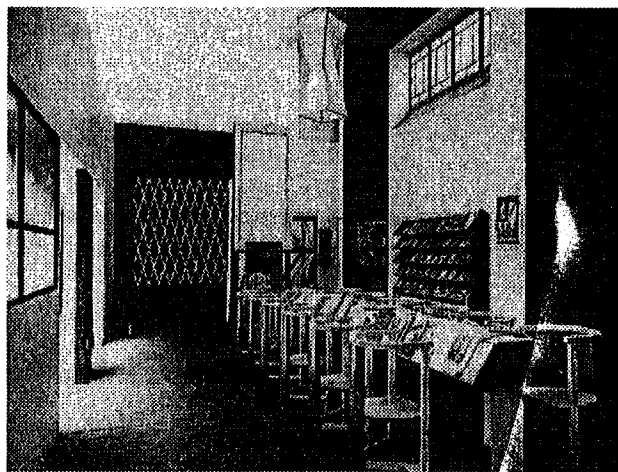


Figure 3.

ishment of close links with factories, elimination of easel painting (as alien to the Soviet State [sic!]), and rejection of cooperation with other groups of left-wing artists. While Brik's position cannot represent the views of all Constructivists, and was criticized by Rodchenko, among other artists, for its rigidity, it nevertheless stands as a logical outcome of the Constructivist line of thinking. The later split of the INKhUK theoreticians into Constructivists (concerned with the material formation of the object) and Productivists (oriented towards industry while negating the autonomy of aesthetic considerations) demonstrated the incompatibility of the ideas of the two groups.

This brief outline of the evolution of Constructivism aims not to provide a value judgment, but to support my argument of changing attitude towards the future from activity to expectation, which follows from the logic of the avant-garde artists. An attempt to build the future from the present led to a rejection of art's independence, thereby annihilating its creativity. While Constructivism succeeded in developing its unique visual language, that language was possible only while its ideology remained flexible. Political changes, which put an end to artistic experiments by treating them as harmful formalism, occurred after artists' verdict of "uselessness" upon their colleagues. Appropriating the interests of the state and adopting them as an artistic credo led to the elimination of creativity regarding the future.

III. Between Earth and Sky: Building the Future

While the revolution in architectural style within this period, inspired by opportunities to create a New World, seemed to surpass the wildest utopian dreams, most of the projects did not go beyond a provisional stage or theoretical discussions. Nevertheless, the abundant literature on the development of Soviet architecture never questions the utopian nature of its conceptions (Khan-Magomedov 1983; Papernyi 1985; Kopp 1985; Brumfield 1990). The two main architectural groups were formed in the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK) only a short time after the Institute opened, and they developed two opposite perspectives on architecture and urban problems, as well as on the environment in broader terms. In 1923 the Association of the New Architects (ASNOVA) was formed under the leadership of Ladovskii (Khan-Magomedov 592),¹⁵ and in 1925 M. Ginzburg, the Vesnin brothers, and those sharing their understanding of the social approach to urban planning together founded the Union of Contemporary Architects (OSA) (Khan-Magomedov 594).¹⁶ Both groups might be said to have symbolically "grown out" of Tatlin's monument, elaborating its potential; however, if the former aimed at a new syn-

thesis of plastic forms, the latter took a more functionalist approach (Frampton 171).

While the organizations' names reveal a similar determination to win a symbolic competition for authority, the ways the two groups perceived and constructed new architecture contrasted dramatically. The visual language adopted by these schools often was composed of the same "avant-garde" ingredients (as opposed to that of more traditional architects), but it was their understanding of the immediate tasks of architecture that made the two groups follow alternative paths of development. The theoretical works and architectural projects of OSA reveal how its permanent concern with communal aspects of housing and social aspects of regional and town planning follow an organicist paradigm, whereas Ladovskii and his followers' interest in human psychology, psychoanalysis, and the laws of aesthetic perception resemble rationalistic and individualistic Constructivism.¹⁷

A starting point for OSA was the presumption that the environment above all molds people. In order to shape a new person one has to provide him/her with a completely new type of environment, aimed at eliminating conflicts, inequality, and alienation. Thus, OSA advocated not a gradual transformation of existing conditions, but a complete abandonment of the old for the sake of building the new:

Architectural methods should resemble those of the 'inventor' (*изобретатель*), which means abandoning any recourse to borrowing from the past, whether in the field of architectural forms, or spatio-functional solutions. Research in architecture, as in any other field, should aim at organizing and formulating practical tasks which are dictated by the age and *valid for the future*.¹⁸ (Kopp 24, emphasis added)

Similarly to the attempts of UNOVIS, the architect-inventors planned to create the future from scratch, which meant changing the immediate environment from the outdated bourgeois type of dwelling into communal housing (*dom-komunna*). Started in 1927, the project received strong governmental encouragement, owing to severe housing shortages in urban areas. The creation of a new community was to result from a radical restructuring of space within each building, not only by creating public spaces (communal kitchens, corridors, and study/leisure rooms), but also by providing such services as public laundries, cafeterias, so called 'meal-factories' to free women from time-consuming household occupations. The goal pursued was a "cultural revolution" in life-style through creating a new, communal (wo)man (see Figure 4).¹⁹ The influence of the utopian thinkers clearly man-

ifests itself in the elaboration of the rules of communal life intended to change traditional modes of life:

[T]he family in the normal sense of the word no longer exists. Children live independently, although they obviously still have necessary contacts with their parents via heated corridors... Adult commune members sleep in groups of six (men and women separately), or two by two, the former 'husband' and 'wife.' (Kopp 81)²⁰

While never fully implemented in practice, such theories played an important role in the discussions of communal housing, an appreciation for which was gradually growing. Such community-building reached its extreme in a gigantic, yet very detailed project worked out by Borshch and Vladimirov in 1929, which was never implemented: it aimed to incorporate 1,680 inhabitants in the living area, functionally divided into six sectors: rest, food, married life, children's education, culture, hygiene, and health.

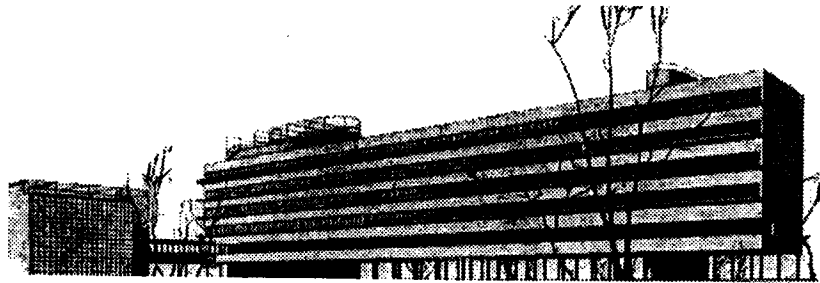


Figure 4.

Reconstruction of the residential buildings, however, was only a halfway solution on route to the creation of a new environment. As new social relations were supposed to penetrate all human activities, the OSA's attention turned to the reconstruction of both work and leisure places, often making the two coexist in one space (see Figure 5). In this vein various attempts were made to turn factories into "new architectural organisms" (Kopp 103):²¹ the factory was supposed to become a true center of "social engineering," simultaneously fulfilling professional, educational, and leisure functions.

The factory has become the true home of education — the university of the new socialist man. Our largest meetings take place in the factories. Plays and concerts are given there during rest periods. Thus, the factory itself has become the melting pot of the socializa-



Figure 5.

tion of the urban population; its architecture is not merely the wrapping for a group of machines but something completely different and new. (Kopp 103)²²

The working clubs, which were gaining popularity among the architects, were endowed with similar functions, in order to structure rest time. They offered a range of educational and propaganda activities, including theater, cinema, exhibitions, meetings of interest groups (for example, astronomy was a subject of increasing interest), lectures, and debates. Gradually the focus shifted to more participatory kinds of activities, such as athletics, for example, so that the structures, as Lissitzky put it, would become "the real workshops for the transformation of men" (Frampton 175).²³ Everybody was encouraged to participate, and to invite and involve others. But a few years later even such sporadic cultural and educational centers came to be seen as too limited for an ideal person of the future. By the end of the 1920s the focus of OSA expanded, to incorporate planning whole districts, for which a new term first used in 1928 was coined: "social condensers." These were the mechanisms for transforming habits, and referred to any "building, complex district, or even city which, in addition to its immediate functions, would firstly foreshadow the architecture and town planning of the future so that the users would grow accustomed to both; and secondly influence users through its use of space so as to introduce a new way of life into their social habits" (Kopp 70) (see Figure 6).

The main priorities and directions of OSA's further development are already quite visible at this point. The idea of radically transforming the

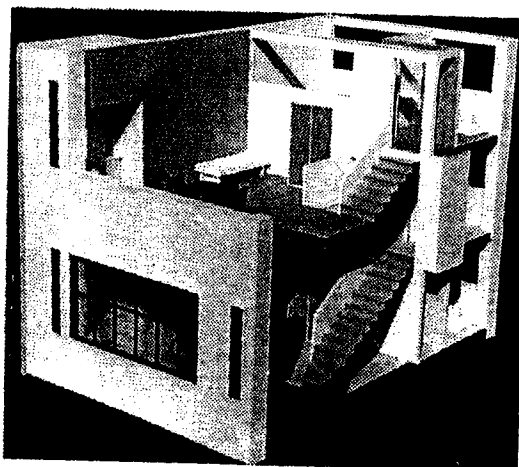


Figure 6.

by shaping him/her in the present and refusing to adjust to the already existing modes and practices of life. Starting from communal housing and moving to the planning of city districts, industrial centers, and rest areas, OSA needed to take just one more step to undertake city and regional planning. This step was made at the very end of the 1920s, when OSA declared architecture out of date and proclaimed the importance of creating ideal "green cities" *ex nihilo*.²⁴ Pursuing this goal, Ginzburg and Okhitovich headed a group of disurbanists, basing their ideas on the plan of electrification that provided a necessary infrastructure for regional planning. From this point of view communal houses already seemed to be an outdated vision of the future:

We have now arrived at a moment of disenchantment with the so-called 'commune' that deprives the worker of living space in favor of corridors and heated passages. The pseudo-commune that allows the worker to do no more than sleep at home, the pseudo-commune that deprives him of both living space and personal convenience (the lines that form outside bathrooms and in the canteen) is beginning to provoke mass unrest. (Frampton 176)²⁵

The new concept was maximally communal and organic, as it called for a unity that includes nature and makes it a part of everyday life: "green cities" envisioned a zone structure separating various activities by green areas (Frampton, 176).²⁶ Disurbanization implied decentralization and the creation of small organic communities evenly spread throughout the country. Ginzburg's final housing project retains nothing of the original urge for

change, but, rather, emphasizes peaceful and harmonious coexistence with nature:

The housing unit has two facades... Sunrise and sunset, nature on all sides, all that is not luxury but the satisfaction of undeniable needs. The sun traverses the whole housing unit. When the windows are swung back, the unit is transformed into a terrace surrounded by greenery. The bedroom loses its specific "bedroom" character almost completely. It dissolves into nature...(Kopp 150)²⁷

OSA architects started with a very active attitude towards the future, but came to hold a position close to the expectation pole (using S. Kern's terminology) when dissolution in nature (in space) became more important to them than its radical transformation in order to fulfill an existent plan (in time). The 'ahead-to-the-future' vision of time initially provided a strong ideological impetus, which ultimately was replaced by more "down-to-earth" concerns.

The itinerary of ASNOVA both resembled and differed from OSA's. Similarities emerge in the official statements and declarations of the two, where each organization claims to incarnate the vanguard of contemporary architectural thought and to pursue the most rational and most socialist type of urban planning.²⁸ The significance of these claims, however, was different. ASNOVA was much more concerned with the individual than the collective: thus, the visual language developed by ASNOVA architects was focused on the laws of perception, both physiological and psychological.

The activity of this group mostly entailed teaching at the Higher Artistic and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS), whereas OSA's members were actively involved in all of the housing projects of the era. The laboratory of Ladovskii, the main ideologue of this rationalist architectural movement, closely concentrated on space and spatial aspects of mass, weight, and volume, claiming that "space was the basic material of architecture rather than the structural elements"(Khan-Magomedov 108). Searching for the "laws of perception," he implemented various psychoanalytical methods and tested his models in the specially created psycho-technical laboratory called the "black room," which allowed him to concentrate on the perception of "pure forms."

The visual language of Ladovskii is marked by pure, distinguishable geometrical forms, carefully balanced, but at the same time very dynamic and directed into open space. The architect never took into account the practical, utilitarian aspects of such structures, but concentrated on the aesthetic features of the model. These models appear to have no relationship to the

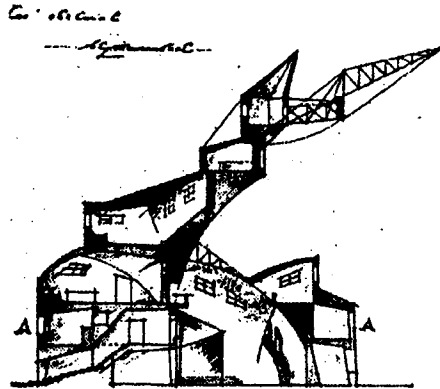


Figure 7.

environment, and remain uprooted, ungrounded, designed for being placed on cliffs, built into mountainous landscapes or given the shape of a skyscraper (see Figure 7). Ladovskii's students at VKhUTEMAS went even further, creating "flying houses" (*domolety*), which were supposed to comprise whole cities in the sky (Bliznakov 149). ASNOVA's ideas were shaped under the strong influence of the German sculptor A.

Hildebrandt, whose ideas found their visual incarnation in Ladovskii's models: "[Architecture] arouses a special sense of space, and so structures space that our visual impressions free us from the effort necessary to find our bearings in nature" (Kopp 126).²⁹

The individuality and originality of the model was valued over its social or political functions. Accordingly, ASNOVA's slogans emphasized the creativity of the individual, as well as his/her independence: "long live individuality, away with individualism" and "measure architecture with the help of architecture" (*arkhitekturu mer' te arkhitekturoi*) (Kopp 128). For Ladovskii, Mel'nikov and other ASNOVA architects, it was the present that determined and encouraged modern architecture. This point of view almost excluded the future from its perspective, not denying its significance, but, rather, considering it a logical outgrowth of the present.

The development of this group's interests paralleled that of OSA architects'. However, Ladovskii's communal houses and Mel'nikov's working club projects differed significantly in both their visual language and the meaning with which they were invested. They viewed the person of the present but not the community as the main target, and their architecture had a strong individual touch; their language was functional and expressive. By the end of the 1920s interest in city and regional planning was affecting Ladovskii and his followers, who quit ASNOVA to establish the Union of Architect-Planners (ARU³⁰) (Khan-Magomedov 598), also called Urbanists. The urbanists, however, interpreted the idea of developing new town settlements, based on Marx's concept of dissolving the border between the city and the village, differently:

ARU regards as incorrect attempts to define the development of a city in terms of the application and implementation of a single organizational form of settlement, since a solution of the problem of socialist settlements cannot be based exclusively on a single particular principle. (Khan-Magomedov 599-600)

The urbanists hoped to create middle-sized towns (40,000-60,000 inhabitants) of an agro-industrial character. They simplified the visual language of housing, which ultimately became similar to the one developed by OSA, and they accepted zoning that separated work and leisure areas. Paradoxically, by the early 1930s the visual language of the urbanists and disurbanists largely converged, which is remarkable, given their opposite original stances. The creation of the town network (no matter how big or small the planned units) practically eliminated temporal considerations from their thinking. While replacing temporality with spatial concepts, the architects put an end to what originally had been an active attitude towards the future. Ironically, in the early 1930s their projects were considered "untimely," for the main problem was perceived as "how to redistribute mankind" (Miliutin 62). Since most of these projects, including 'Green City,' were never implemented, the development of the ideas presented here features a kind of mental trip, one that culminated in a reversal.

IV. Building the Future on the Screen: Birth of the Soviet Nation

Usually referred to as the youngest child in the family of arts, cinema became accepted into "the family" only after years of intensive work at developing its own language, which eventually raised its status from a mere technical amusement to an independent branch of art (Tsivian 30-32). Increasing narrative abilities, together with an illusory realism and the technical capacity to travel through space, as well as to be preserved in time, endowed cinema with a power inaccessible to most of the other arts. The development of montage techniques, experiments with flashback, dream sequence playback and other ways of manipulating recorded material greatly enriched possible modalities of temporality within the framework of film. Cinema thus had the chance not only to become the most avant-garde of the new Soviet arts, but to make avant-garde principles its very essence. In this respect it challenged the traditional style of film making, which had been strongly influenced by theatrical canons of representation. Soviet avant-garde films of the 1920s represent an attempt to fuse entertain-

ment with propaganda by testing the existent visual canon on the screen and seeking the best ways of organizing its components.

While film is probably the most 'collective' of the visual arts, the story of cine-avant-garde language is best revealed through an analysis not of group or studio trends, but of works by particular artists. I therefore examine here the films of two masters, both of whom greatly, however differently, influenced the development of film language. Dziga Vertov, originally the most consistent in denying the "fictional" character of the cinema, devoted his career to creating a new type of "Constructivist documentary," while Aleksandr Dovzhenko tried throughout his life and works to reconcile organicism and rationalism.

When Denis Kaufman started a cinema career, he plunged into a completely new world. This new life began with a change of name: by baptizing himself Dziga Vertov he created a pseudonym that combined the motion of the film-reel in the projector (from Russian *vertet'*) with the audible associations produced by it. This new life, marked by such a Futuristic gesture, immediately challenged the traditional approach to the cinema. In line with other avant-garde authors of manifestos, Vertov published his own version, *We*, declaring a need for a new language in cinematography:

WE call ourselves *kinoks* — as opposed to 'cinematographers' — a herd of junkmen doing rather well peddling their rags.

We see no connection between true *kinochestvo* and the cunning and calculation of the profiteers. <... >

We are cleansing *kinochestvo* of foreign matter — of music, literature and theater; we seek our own rhythm, one lifted from nowhere else, and we find it in the movement of things. <...>

For his inability to control his movements, WE temporarily exclude man as a subject for film.

Our path leads through the poetry of machines, from the bungling citizen to the perfect electric man. (Vertov 5-8)

The new aesthetics of the machine age saw the movie-camera as a part of the New World, existing to achieve cine-truth. The mechanical perfection of the camera was to guarantee this truth, supported by the photographic precision of the image and secured by the absence of artificial settings, costumes, and actors.

Such enthusiasm for "raw reality" notwithstanding, the avant-garde notion of truth receives a very specific interpretation. In brief, before being represented on the screen, reality should pass through multiple sets of filters in order to reflect a final vision of society: "It is necessary to get out of the

limited circle of ordinary human vision; reality must be recorded not by imitating it, but by broadening the range ordinarily encompassed by the human eye" (Leyda 178). The fact that such a broadening ultimately leads to distortion not only did not bother the artists, but was a reason for their enthusiasm — Vertov's words served as a slogan for the whole epoch:

I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it. Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility. ... Now I, a camera, ... [am] maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations. ... My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you. (Vertov 17-18)

In this statement it is already possible to see the controversy that later would lead to the reversal of Vertov's original position: reality "as it is," which is assumed to have the highest value, should be carefully constructed in order not to dissolve into chaos. Thus, the "correct" reality as such does not exist yet, and should be created following the rules of constructivism as "a higher form of engineering for our whole life" (Kopp 8).³¹ A futuristic vision of reality was believed to be created on the screen from the elements of the present.

Dziga Vertov's first films were documentaries on the civil war (often composed from a number of chronicles that made up one film) and the film-magazine *Kino-Truth* (*Kinopravda*) — a newsreel composed of material recorded without a preliminary scenario, but later organized into a narrative by the director. The films *Lenin's Kino-Truth* (1924), *March, Soviet!* and *The Sixth Part of the World* (both released in 1926), as well as *The Eleventh* (1928), were made according to the rules of the new genre and can hardly be characterized as documentaries (Fledelius 53-80).³²

Spatial representation of material dominates these films: the immense diversity of the Soviet land constitutes a micro-universe, containing the snowy territories of the north, the fertile fields of the south, as well as people from various nationalities and cultures. Nevertheless, the temporal aspect is no less important for Vertov. The presented diversity possesses not only a spatial unity, but also a strong temporal vector of development: every step, every movement of the machine, every building built, every harvest collected, every book read — is a step toward the socialist future. At this stage, however, the future was still only anticipated, worked for and dreamt about. Vertov's next film, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) was the first for which he filmed the material according to a preliminary prepared plan. One

of the highlights of Constructivist aesthetics, the film sought to develop a specifically cinematographic language, which could abandon inserts by encoding meanings within the film material itself.

If the previous films, especially *One Sixth of the World*, focused on the spatial unity of various eras, *Man with a Movie Camera* created a temporal unity of various places. Filmed in different locations in Russia and Ukraine, it was later assembled in such a way as to represent a modern universe. Beginning as an anthropomorphic account of city life, it later emphasizes its most modern (by definition, urban) elements: mechanisms set in motion, shops opened up, trams, trains and cars, factories, telephones, switchboards, typewriters as main chords in a dynamic "urban symphony." The man with a movie camera constructs this life and its heroes from a mosaic of elements: the montage sequence of hands and faces creates new people, the people of the future: "reconstruction of the whole from the parts is replaced by the construction of the new entity from these parts — something that Kuleshov in another experiment called 'a constructed person' and what Vertov (in his manifesto) named 'a perfect man'" (Tsivian 365).

The film not only contained a concept of the future, but also targeted future viewers. The complexity of the language, which refused to adjust to viewers' expectations, accords with Vertov's general ideas of the transformation of the world with the help of cine-truth:

Vertov's ideal recipient not only could not have, but should not have existed in the empirical world — it was assumed that such a viewer does not exist prior to the film, but is induced by it. The drama of not understanding, even if it was not planned while conceiving the film (and here lies its main difference from the mainstream West European avant-garde), was nevertheless programmed, encoded in its structure." (Tsivian 358)

Predictably, the language of Vertov's films (particularly *Man with a Movie Camera*) remained unappreciated and often ignored. Even the positive evaluations of the film emphasized its consciously incomprehensible language (Youngblood 207).

The constructivist logic, while emphasizing the future direction of the film, nevertheless built it from elements of the present. The main actor responsible for creating the New World is an individual, the man with the camera himself. He often dominates reality (standing on top of the roof, being two or more times bigger than the pedestrians below), is omnipresent and records everything (sitting in the glass of beer in the pub, accompanying the firemen to the fire, and the ambulance to the place of an accident,

going down to the mines and up to the factory chimneys). He has the right to manipulate spatial, as well as temporal, reality. In creating his future, he splits the image, multiplies and distorts it, reverses the movement, slows down or speeds up the action at will (see Figure 8). The viewers are situated within at least three temporal zones (not mentioning the time of actual viewing): the time of the audience watching the film in the cinema, the time of the actual filming that is on the screen, and the intermediate time of the montage of the film, during which the viewers are introduced to the possible manipulation of the cinematographic material.

While intent on creating the future from elements of the present, Vertov at the same time strongly opposed the idea of a gradual and linear temporal development of past-present-future. Like other avant-garde artists, he perceived reality as an eschatological break with the past — a vision that



Figure 8.

explains why for him reality had to be organized in a specific way: elements that do not belong to the future do not deserve to exist in the present:

At the present time we are experiencing a transitional period, which already contains the elements of future life but at the same time is overburdened with useless and outdated moments which should be ousted and in no way shown on the screen. ... the most important is not the bad boots and old jacket of the worker, but his energy and his work, and such inconvenient shoes, clothes and flats we will have to replace with the very best ones. To use these unchanged objects of our life is inappropriate: new energy must have a new form. (Belenson 26-28)

The acceptance of the present as an ultimate source for the construction of the future made Constructivism particularly vulnerable to upcoming changes. The films made by Vertov in the 1930s represent a sincere, though doomed, attempt to catch up with time. *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934) combines the avant-garde fascination with modernity with totalitarian elements of Stalinist aesthetics, of which *Lullaby* (1937) offers a perfect example. The fact that Vertov came to adopt totalitarian ideas in the 1930s seems a paradox, but his readiness to see the future in the present and the urge to create it at any price illuminate the contradiction.

The turbulent changes of the late 1920s left no one untouched. The life and works of another prominent film director, Aleksander Dovzhenko, demonstrate how his organic view of the world, radically different from that of Constructivism, evolved both visually and thematically, resulting within a decade in an interpretation similar to Vertov's. Though Dovzhenko's career started in the mid-1920s, his first success and acknowledgment as an original director came only after his film *Zvenigora* (1927). Its language, still schematic and sometimes overly pathetic, nonetheless radically differed from that of Constructivism: it not only organically absorbed a legendary, magical past, but also created a link between the past and present, mapping alternative paths to the future.

The two main characters searching for a legendary treasure buried in some mountain represented two optional paradigms of the future. Divided along political lines ("white" vs. "red"), for Dovzhenko they image two alternative directions of further development. Schematically, one offered a return to traditions in the narrow sense — seclusion from modernity, a retreat into the past. The other opted for the incorporation of modernity and change by its acceptance of socialist ideology (Trimbach, 109).³³ Dovzhenko clearly stated his priorities: the former was a dead-end, whereas

he latter meant the right solution. The image of an ideal future informed all his films, determining the portrayal of the present. Envisioning this future as a new, perfected collectivism of the masses, as an organic symbiosis of nature and technology, Dovzhenko tried to create his vision of socialism on the screen. His universe, similar to that of Malevich, Tatlin, and Ginzburg, was consciously futuristic and utopian, but not perceived by him as unrealistic. In the changing atmosphere of the early 1930s, however, an attempt to reconcile organic elements with triumphant modernity made the author vulnerable to totalitarian ideas, mirroring the fate of Constructivism in cinema.

Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930) represents his most vivid and coherent attempt to bring together old and new, nature and mechanism, circular and linear, present and future. The film, originally conceived as propaganda for collectivization, de facto addressed more general questions of two different modes of life, where collectivization itself came to be interpreted as a future unity. The film is sometimes interpreted as "a search for the traces of eternity in the constantly changing world" (Margolit 109). This eternity, however, portrayed as the circular traditional world of the peasantry, came to be modified by the linear changes of history, resurrected as a new, improved, and expanded totality (see Figure 9).

Dovzhenko made the earth itself the focus of the film. It organizes and structures human life, gives it meaning, and determines its tempo. The death of the old grandfather in the beginning of the film is a very "natural" event, accepted and anticipated by everybody. There is a time to be born and a time



Figure 9.

to die — an axiom confirmed by logic and nature. *Earth* recognizes no tragedy in this process; on the contrary, talking to his old friend, the grandfather promises to “report how one feels up there — be it heaven or hell.” A pregnant woman, children at play, and the lavish, bountiful apple-trees in this sequence stand for a promise of eternal rebirth and continuity. Patriarchal harmony, however, is disturbed by intrusive novelties: a tractor as an iron symbol of modern times signals the redistribution of space that will break up the borders of the old in order to create a new unity of equals.

Such radical changes necessarily meet stubborn resistance. Another death in the film, this time of an enthusiastic young hero (Vasil) who supports collectivization, while seemingly meaningless, symbolizes a necessary sacrifice for the birth of the new collectivity. Being killed at the peak of his physical and emotional development, this spokesman for the future helps to create a collective memory, bridging the old and the new order. His funeral becomes the first collective action of the village, set in the familiar environment of abundant nature. Vasil's death, while a tragedy for his family, his lover, his friends, and the village in general, neither stops nor impedes the advent of the future. Already created, this new life establishes its own rhythm: Vasil's mother gives birth to a new child, Vasil's lover “[finds] happiness with another man, consoling herself with work and children” (Dovzhenko 69), and the earth blossoms and bears fruit, feeding and unifying all the men and women of the community. While this ideal unity was achieved on the screen, the inherent controversy of Dovzhenko's approach nevertheless remained: the original organicity of the world was shaken to the core and could no longer be rebuilt.

The 1930s failed to unite the people, and Dovzhenko's ideal of creating the future in the present was later modified, never again embracing the harmony depicted in *Earth*. His film *Aerograd* (1935) takes the idea of creating the future in the present almost literally: the whole film is about a new city to be built at the “end of the world,” naturally, *ex nihilo*. The idea recalls the architectural projects of the early 1930s and still belongs to the avant-garde way of thinking about time and space. The construction of the city, however, is absent from the film. Moreover, as the end reveals, the city has not been founded yet, the process being postponed until a remote future, while the present consists largely of a passionate battle against enemies. Although the future is anticipated, the film lacks an active stance toward it.

The language of the film belongs not to the avant-garde visual canon, but to socialist realism. Interestingly enough, the visual language of Vertov's *Lullaby*, made two years after *Aerograd*, closely resembles the latter, being a glorification of the pseudo-unity of the Soviet people. The inherent potential for such an evolution was contained within avant-garde ideology and

was brought to life by the emerging totalitarian regime, combined with the consistency of an artist unwilling to modify his avant-garde fascination with the future.

Dovzhenko preserved his creative attitude toward the future and even intensified it. His later ideas, however, sooner evoke a daydreaming romantic than a pragmatist — an identity avant-garde artists always passionately rejected. In his speech at the artists' meeting held in 1935, Dovzhenko outlined two alternative types of relationship between the state and the artist, neither of which engaged an avant-garde mode of thinking:

I don't want to say that we should not illustrate with our work the activities of the party and the government. ... What I say is that it is not enough to be mere illustrators. I dream about an artist who could write a novel. This novel is later to be read by the *Politburo*, who would then decide: "Starting tomorrow, this novel should be implemented in life, exactly following the scenario." For what reason, how, by which workers and under whose supervision and what all that would mean — all that should be written in the novel. We still don't have such artists, comrades, but our ideal should be to try to become them. (Yurenev 64)

Thus, the evolution of the cinema directors' views demonstrates a similar turn from activity to expectation, from the avant-garde urge to transform reality to an almost complete subordination to it. While possessing a built-in contradiction, the avant-garde as an ideology neither created nor fell victim to Bolshevik ideology and totalitarianism. Rather, the actualization of such an inherent potential depended on the context in which the avant-garde artists lived and worked.

The plurality of the individually unpluralistic ideologies of the 1920s made life potentially rich in alternatives for further development. Various constructions of the future were competing for the best representation of the present. By conceptualizing reality as the locus of aesthetic activity, however, artists came to adjust to changes in the political and social environment. With the gradual supremacy of Stalinism as one of the political alternatives, the inherent potential for exclusivity became activated both in political and cultural spheres, leading to the formation of a single monolithic canon. During NEP the avant-gardists constructed their visions of the future as strategies in artists' competition for state support. Their creative activism sought to shape the future either by building it from the elements of the present, or by constructing it anew. During the 1930s, however, the state emerged as the ultimate and sole source of symbolic normativity. It froze

temporality by expressing an eternal present, which made both past and future fixed according to the iconology of totalitarian power. Avant-garde artists, aligning themselves with the external definition of reality, contributed not only to the annihilation of the plurality of artistic canons, but, of their own creative individuality, as well.

Figures

1. Kazimir Malevich. *Suprematism: Yellow and Black*, 1916. Oil on Canvas 79.5x70.5 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Reproduced from *The Great Utopia*, 70, illustration 9.
2. Vladimir Tatlin. *Monument for the Third Communist International*, model on display, 1920. Reproduced from: Kopp, 21.
3. Rodchenko, Aleksandr. Model layout of a Workers' Club in the Soviet Pavilion. Paris, International Exhibition, 1925. Reproduced from: Khan-Magomedov, 162, illustration 415.
4. M. Ginzburg, I. Milinis: First of the experimental housing complexes using elements devised during OSA's work for Stroikom RSFSR, a building for the employees of Narkomfin, 1928-1930. Perspective drawing of the garden side showing the block of communal facilities connected by a bridge on the left. Reproduced from: Kopp, 71.
5. I. Golosov, Zuev Club, Moscow, 1920. Reproduced from Khan-Magomedov, 446, illustration 1201.
6. F-unit split-level housing unit devised by OSA members in the Stroikom RSFSR Housing Research Section. Reproduced from: Kopp, 66.
7. Ladovskii, Experimental design for a communal house, Zhivskultarch, 1920. Reproduced from Khan-Magomedov, 349, illustration 892.
8. D. Vertov, still from *Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929. MoMA film stills archive.
9. A. Dovzhenko, still from *Earth*, 1930, MoMA film stills archive.

Notes

¹I do not suggest that the development of an artistic language is by definition not a conscious process or that the two parts - form and content - could exist separately anywhere but in the process of analysis. The idea behind separating the two was to explain my choice of the selected object: visual arts with a clearly pronounced teleological standing, which led its authors to work out a new, avant-garde pictorial language. Such a definition narrows down an otherwise much greater area of experimental artistic works. For comparing various possible approaches to defining the avant-garde see: Poggioli, Renato, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968 and Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

²Generally being much more radical than the political leadership of the Soviet state, the artists originally viewed proletarian dictatorship and the rule of the Bolsheviks as a transitional stage on the way to the next cultural revolution, bringing freedom and anarchy. In this respect Bogdanov and his ideas of three independent paths towards communism (political, economic and cultural) played a large role. Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution became another source of inspiration for the avant-garde artists.

³"In 1918 Eugene Minkowski in his work 'How We Live the Future (and not what we know of it)' distinguished two modes of experiencing the immediate future - activity and expectation. The essential difference is the orientation of subject in time: in the mode of activity the individual goes towards the future, driving into the surroundings in control of events; in the mode of expectation the future comes towards the individual who contracts against an overpowering environment. Every individual is a mixture of both modes, which makes it possible for him to act in the world and maintain an identity amidst a barrage of threatening external forces." Kern, 89-90.

⁴In 1913 Malevich was working on the stage design for a cubo-futurist opera, "Victory over the Sun."

⁵This metaphysical concept was first demonstrated at the '0.10' exhibition in 1915 in Petrograd. The exhibition is of great importance as a starting point for the development of the organicist visions of the future. For the reception of the exhibition see Sharp, 39-52.

⁶Malevich's personal childhood experience played a great role in his later views on the individual and community. In his autobiography he would later write about his early years: "All my life the peasantry attracted me strongly. I resolved that I would never live and work in the factories. I would never study. I thought that the peasants lived well, that they had everything, that they didn't need any factories or any learning. They made everything themselves, including paint..." Douglas, 8

⁷Malevich was greatly influenced by Tsiolkovsky's works as well as by the philosophy of cosmism. Such a "cosmic theme" was not at all marginal at the time which is demonstrated by the explosion of interest in science fiction. Most of which consisted in spatial travelling to other planets and temporal visits to the future. The both were often combined in the utopian or anti-utopian stories such as: N. Fedorov's "Evening in 2217," V. Bryusov's "Republic of the Southern Cross," A. Bogdanov's "Red Star," Ya. Okunev's "Coming world." See: *Утопия и антиутопия XX века*, Suvin.

⁸On account of economic hardships these architectural designs were never implemented and remained models and drawings. See Khan-Magomedov, El Lissitzky, 1890-1941, Harvard University Art Museums, catalogue for an exhibition of selected works from North American collections, the Sprengel Museum Hanover and the Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Halle, 1987; Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*. Translated by Helene Aldwinckle and Mary Whittall, 2nd rev. ed., New York, 1980.

⁹UNOVIS was dissolved in 1922, after which Malevich moved to Petrograd where he headed the Petrograd branch of the State Art Committee (INKhUK) during 1922-1926, developing the ideas originally conceived in UNOVIS. Nakov, Andrei B. (Andrei Boris), *L'avant-garde russe*. Paris: Fernand Hazan, 1984.

¹⁰Coming for the second time in his life to the "zero point," Malevich later returned to the figurative painting of the peasant subjects, while nevertheless remaining loyal to the influence of his Suprematist period.

¹¹Lenin's idea of 1918 was to create a revolutionary pantheon (originally 66 names were proposed) and to commemorate the most important fighters and thinkers from the history of humanity in stone and metal, thus creating a certain pre-history of the Soviet state and supporting its legitimacy. Among others there were Marx, Engels, Spartacus, Danton, Robespierre, Bakunin, Scriabin, Uspenskii, Dostoevskii, Rublev, Vrubel', Ouen, and others. Lodder.

¹²N. Punin "О памятниках" (On Monuments), 1919. Quoted in Lodder, 56. Emphasis added to the principal elements of synthesis of modern art and its political function.

¹³A wooden simplified model reproduced in all the studies of early Soviet art was built in 1920 and demonstrated at the exhibition in Moscow. Milner, Nakov, A., *Tatlin's dream: Russian suprematist and constructivist art 1910-1923*, November 1973-January 1974 [catalogue written by Andrei B. Nakov] London, Fischer Fine Art Limited, 1974.

¹⁴Originally headed by Kandinsky, INKhUK radically changed its ideology, with the Constructivists coming to prominence and Kandinsky leaving in 1923. Nakov, A., *L'avant-garde russe*, Paris: Fernand Hazan, 1984.

¹⁵ASNOVA gradually came together in the course of the development of Zhivskulptarch (1919-1920), Obmas (1920-23) and the Working Group of Architects in INKhUK (1921-1923). Its constitution was registered in July 1923 and its founders were Ladovskii, Krinskii, Dokuchaev, Rukhlyaev, and others. The first and only issue of *Izvestiya ASNOVA*, edited by Lissitzkii and Ladovskii appeared in 1926. Ladovskii left ASNOVA with a group of his followers in 1928, when Balikhin became its leader. ... ASNOVA was dissolved in 1932 along with all other groupings." Khan-Magomedov, 592.

¹⁶OSA was founded at the end of 1925, with Aleksandr Vesnin as chairman, Ginzburg and Viktor Vesnin as deputy chairmen, and Orlov as secretary. The membership of OSA included Barshch, Andrei Burov, Leonid Vesnin, Vladimirov, Aleksei Gan, Il'ia Golosov, Nikolai Krasil'nikov, Leonidov, and others. The periodical *Современная архитектура* (Contemporary Architecture) was published by OSA from 1926 to 1930, with Aleksandr Vesnin and Ginzburg

as editors. In 1930 OSA was reorganized as SASS (Sektor Arhitektorov Sotsialisticheskogo Stroitel'stva) - and was dissolved in 1932." Khan-Magomedov, 594.

17 There is a potential for misunderstanding coming from the self-definition of the term "constructivists" used by the OSA group. The literature on architecture kept this term for the OSA group while naming ASNOVA "rationalists". For example, in A. Kopp's book *Constructivist Architecture in the USSR* the lion's share of attention (9 chapters out of 10) is devoted to the OSA, which is described as a "Constructivist" group, as opposed to the "rationalist" school of Ladovskii. I chose not to implement such a classification for keeping to the terms employed throughout the paper. It is the ideas behind the titles, however, which I consider to be much more important than the nominal self-definition.

18 M. Ginzburg "The New Method of Architectural Thinking," 1926. Quoted in: Kopp, 24. Emphasis added. For more information on OSA and Ginzburg see "Советская архитектура," *Сборник союза архитекторов СССР* 18. Москва: Издательство литературы по строительству, 1969.

19 One of the characteristic and, importantly, realized projects was the communal housing for the Commissariat of Finance (Narkomfin) in Moscow, which represented a so-called 'house of a transitional type.' Along with the family apartments it included a number of collective facilities partially located in an adjusted building (such as laundry, cleaning services, kindergarten, library, rooms for 'intellectual work' and a summer dining room in the roof). The project also put an emphasis on maximizing the access of air, sunlight and greenery as important elements in the formation of the harmonious collective.

20 Kuzmin, 1928, quoted in Kopp, 81. For more on Kuzmin see: Khazanova, 177-180.

21 Ginzburg quoted in Kopp, 103. Also see Khazanova, 163-72, 234-47.

22 Lissitzky, 1930. Quoted in: Kopp, 103. Also see Lissitzky.

23 Lissitzky. One of the characteristic examples would be Leonidov's concept of the club as suprematist megastructure (!). The project of the Palace of Culture (1930) carried Tatlin's synthetic approach carried to an extreme, creating the "enactment of a continual process of education and recreation: athletics, scientific demonstrations, political meetings, films, botanical displays, manifestations, flying, gliding, car racing and military exercises." Frampton, 175

24 The influence comes partially from Western scholars, such as Alfred Weber and his idea of the placement of industries next to raw materials, as well as Ebenezer Howard and his cities of the future (published in 1911).

25 Okhitovich 1930. Quoted in: Frampton, 176. For more on Okhitovich see Khazanova, 53-70, 108-112, 150-55.

26 One of the most theoretically consistent propositions of this type was advanced by Miliutin in 1930, who tried to unify the industrial and agricultural functions, interpreting Marx's idea of the dissolution of difference between the city and the village by fusing the two into one unit. The zones were supposed to be arranged in the following way: 1) a railway zone; 2) an industrial zone containing within itself, in addition to production, centers for education and research; 3) a green zone accommodating the highway; 4) a residential zone subdivided into communal institutions, dwellings, and a juvenile area containing schools and kindergartens; 5) a park zone with sport facilities; and finally 6) an agricultural zone. Frampton, 176.

27 Ginzburg, 1930, quoted in Kopp, 150. See also Ginzburg, M. I. *Style and epoch*, introduction and translation by Anatole Senkevitch, Jr., Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts Chicago, Ill. and the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies New York, N.Y. by MIT Press, 1982.

28 See, for example, slogans and statements published in *Izvestia ASNOVA* and *Sovremenniaia Arkhitektura*. A representative collection of these documents is included in Khan-Magomedov.

29 Hilderbrandt's ideas were developed in: "Les problèmes de la forme dans les arts plastiques," 1914.

30 The first organizational meeting of ARU, at which it adopted its First Declaration, was held on 7 November 1928, with Ladovskii as chairman, plus Fridman, Grinberg, and Glushenko and others. The Second Declaration of ARU was adopted and published in 1931. There was also an ARU group in Leningrad. Along with all other groupings, ARU was dissolved in 1932. Khan-Magomedov, 598.

31 An extract from A. Gan "Constructivism," quoted in A. Kopp, 8. Both Gan's and Vertov's

manifestos were written the same year - 1922.

³²The built-in contradiction of representing life "as it is" through a careful selection of images advocates the replacement of the notion "documentary film" by the term "thematic film," introduced by K. Fiedelius. Thematic films are understood as opposite to "narrative" ones, since the subject matter itself (and not the chronological order) forms the overruling constitutive element. Fiedelius and Short, 53-80.

³³For a more detailed analysis of Dovzhenko's ideas in the context of the discussions on national renaissance in the 1920s, see Trimbach, 109.

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