

CONSTRUCTIVISM



Compiled and designed by Ariadna Medvedeva

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CONSTRUCTIVISM

GRAPHICS AND POSTERS

“Let’s split open our figures and place the environment inside them.”

- Vladimir Tatlin

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism is an early twentieth-century art movement founded in 1915 by Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchenko. Abstract and austere, constructivist art aimed to reflect modern industrial society and urban space. The movement rejected decorative stylization in favour of the industrial assemblage of materials. Constructivists were in favour of art for propaganda and social purposes, and were associated with Soviet socialism, the Bolsheviks, and the Russian avant-garde.

Constructivism combines simplicity bordering on minimalism with innovative solutions. Constructivist posters feature certain techniques: diagonals, geometric shapes, and a limited color palette. Constructivists experimented and gradually began to use photomontage in posters, thereby abandoning hand-drawn illustrations. Red, black, and white were common colors, but over

COMPOSITION

time, the color palette became richer.

A well-composed composition, bold, grotesque typefaces, compelling, often provocative text, and color contrast call viewers to immediate action. The first constructivist posters primarily use red, black, and white. The white background creates a sense of

weightlessness, which encompasses text, geometric objects, and graphic images. The works feature numerous horizontal lines and guides, which the viewer's eye follows. Objects vary in size, creating a

juxtaposition between large and small, filled and empty space. In graphic design, constructivist demands for functionality are somewhat subordinate to the visual component. These projects are characterized by maximum geometrization, a contrasting palette, accent fonts, and all elements arranged within a precise and dynamic structure. One of the important techniques of constructivist graphic design is photomontage and collage.

TYPOGRAPHY



El Lissitzky. Cover of "Vesh" magazine. 1922

Constructivists used accent sans-serif typefaces. This was another way to move away from bourgeois sophistication and excessive aesthetics toward concreteness, clarity, and rationality. Constructivist text conveys information clearly and effectively.

Text in such projects is often set entirely in capital letters, emphasizing a straightforward statement. Designers can disrupt the classical grid by giving letters different proportions and directions, thereby creating a more dynamic composition.

KEY FIGURES

Vladimir Tatlin (1885 - 1953)

Aleksei Gan (1887 - 1942)

Alexander Rodchenko (1891 - 1956)

Gustav Klutssis (1895 - 1938)

Liubov Popova (1889 - 1924)

Varvara Stepanova (1894 - 1958)

El Lissitzky (1890 - 1941)

Georgii
Stenberg
(1899 - 1982)

Vladimir
Stenberg
(1900 - 1933)

"Our constructivism is a way of thinking"

- Varvara Stepanova

REMEMBER Vladimir TATLIN



Vladimir Tatlin, "The Streltsy," a sketch for Glinka's opera "A Life for the Tsar," 1913

Vladimir Tatlin was a Russian and Soviet painter, architect, and stage-designer. Tatlin achieved fame as the architect who designed The Monument to the Third International, which he began in 1919. He was one of the two most important figures in the Soviet avant-garde art movement of the 1920s, and he later became an important artist in the constructivist movement.



Vladimir Tatlin. The Fish Seller, 1911

Tatlin's
Tower, or the
project for the
Monument
to the Third
International
(1919–20)

TATLIN'S TOWER

The Monument to the Third International was a grand un-built monumental building. It was planned to be erected in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg) after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, as the headquarters and monument of the Comintern (the third international).

Nikolay Punin, a contemporary critic of Tatlin, provides an excellent description of the Monument:

“The monument consists of three great rooms of glass, erected with the help of a complicated system of vertical pillars and spirals. These rooms are placed on top of each other and have different, harmonically corresponding forms. They are able to move at different speeds by means of a special

mechanism. The lower storey, which is in the form of a cube, rotates on its axis at the speed of one revolution per year. This is intended for legislative assemblies. The next storey, which is in the form of a pyramid, rotates on its axis at the rate of one revolution per month. Here the executive bodies are to meet (the International Executive Committee, the Secretariat and other executive administrative bodies). Finally, the uppermost cylinder which rotates at the speed of one revolution per day is reserved for information services: an information office, a newspaper, the issuing of proclamations, pamphlets and manifestos – in short, all the means for informing the international proletariat; it will also have a telegraphic office and an apparatus that can project slogans on to a large screen. These can be fitted around the axes of the hemisphere. Radio masts will rise up over the monument. It should be emphasised that Tatlin's proposal provides for walls with a vacuum which will help to keep the temperature in the various rooms constant.”

АЛЕКСЕЙ ГАН

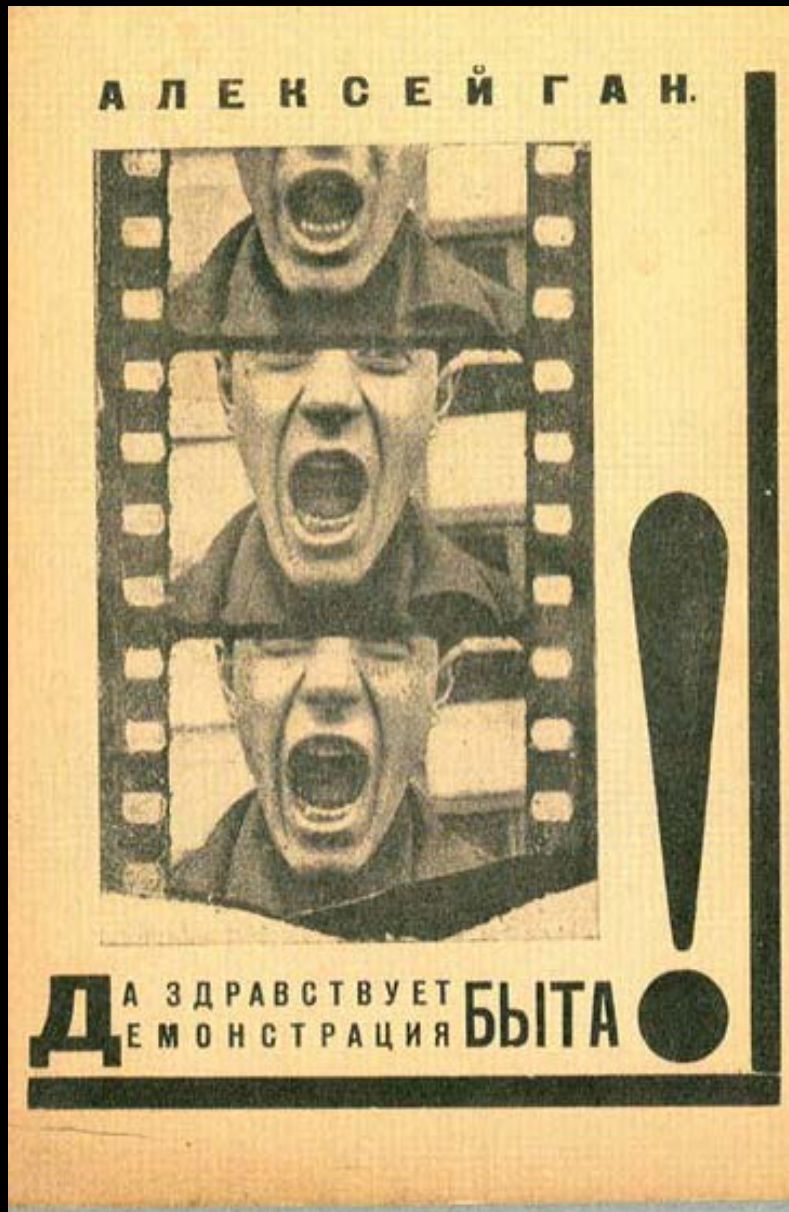
Cover of the Soviet constructivist magazine "Kino-fot" No. 2, published in September 1922 under the editorship of Alexei Gan.



Aleksei Mikhailovich Gan was a Russian anarchist and later Marxist avant-garde artist, art theorist and graphic designer. Gan was a key figure in the development of Constructivism after the Russian Revolution.



The cover of the Soviet avant-garde magazine "Kino-fot", published in 1922-1923, under the editorship of Alexei Gan



Aleksei Gan
Da zdravst-
vuet demon-
stratsiia byta!
(Long Live
the Demon-
stration of
Everyday
Life!) 1923



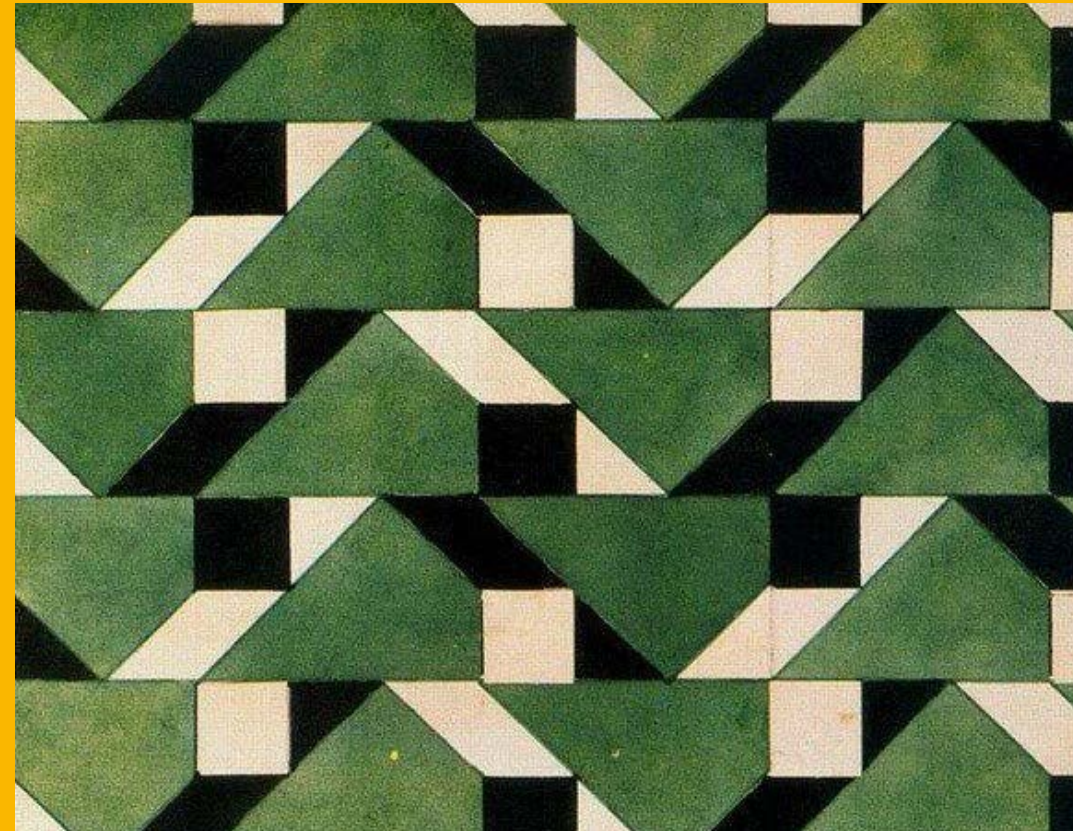
Aleksei Gan
Cover of
the book "A
Handbook for
the Amateur
Radio
Designer"

LIBOV POPOVA



Liubov Popova 1923-24

Liubov Popova's experimentation in abstract painting produced some of Cubism's most innovative works. Popova's overlapping planes of painterly architectonics, as she called them (stemming from Kasimir Malevich's "architectonics"), created dynamic interactions between shapes and colors in both abstract and semi-figurative paintings, often to three-dimensional effect.

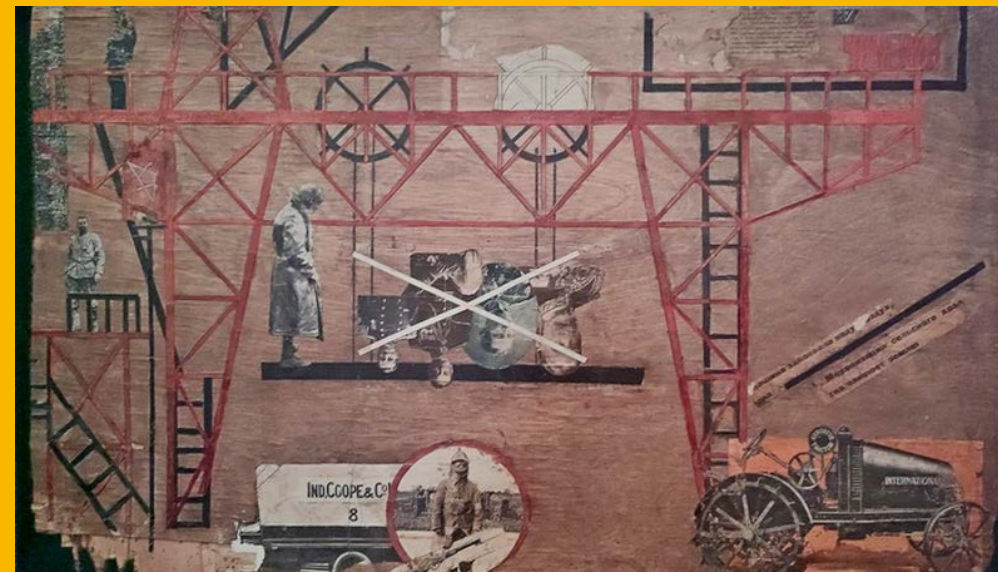


Liubov Popova, Textile Design 1923

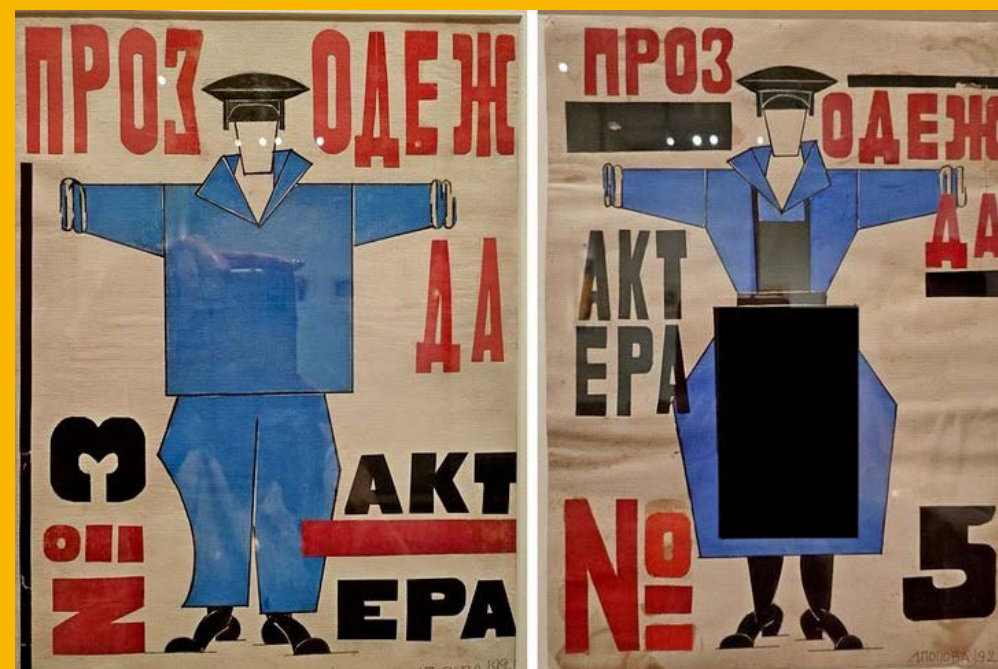
Liubov Popova. Cover sketch for the fashion magazine "Summer 1924"



Liubov Popova. Part of a set design sketch. 1923. Plywood, collage, photomontage.



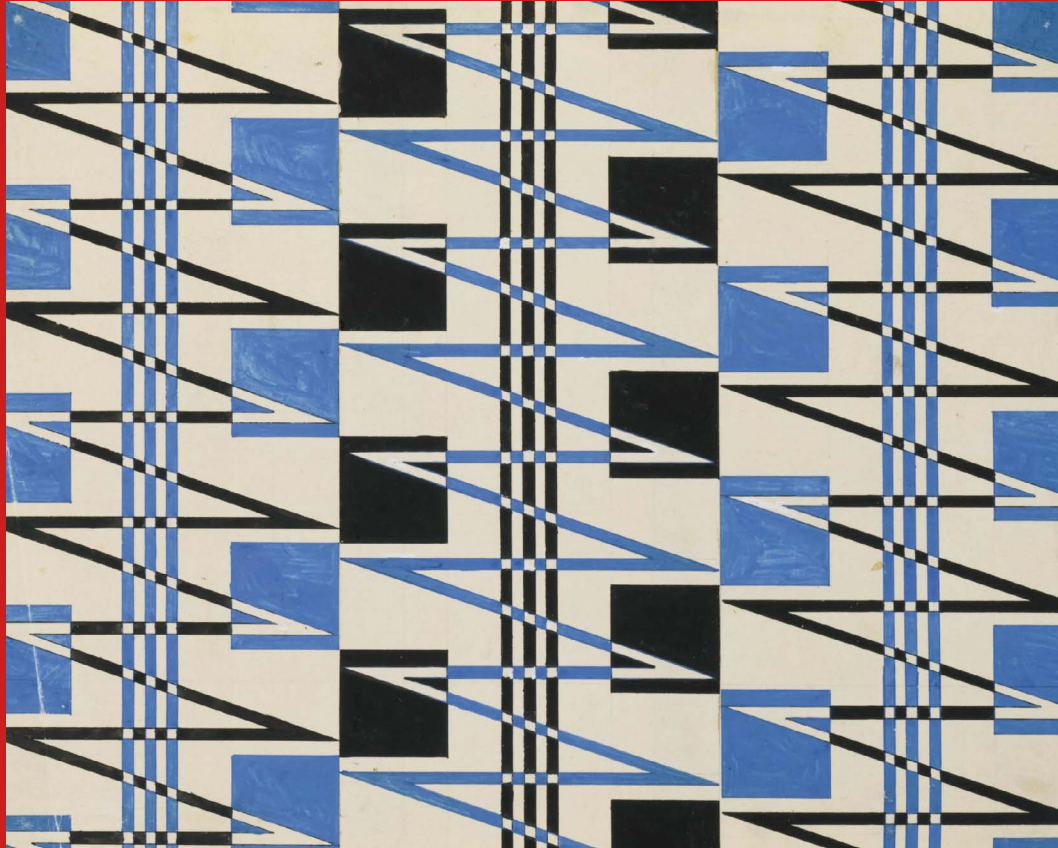
Unrealized sketches by Liubov Popova. Sketch of a men's suit. 1920



Liubov Popova. Costume design: Actor's uniform. 1921

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STEPANOVA



Textile Design by Varvara Stepanova

Varvara Fyodorovna Stepanova and Alexander Rodchenko, she was associated with the Constructivist branch of the Russian avant-garde, which rejected aesthetic values in favour of revolutionary ones. Her activities extended into propaganda, poetry, stage scenery and textile designs.



Textile Design by Varvara Stepanova

RODCHENKO



Alexander Rodchenko. Poster "Lengiz: Books on All Branches of Knowledge." 1924

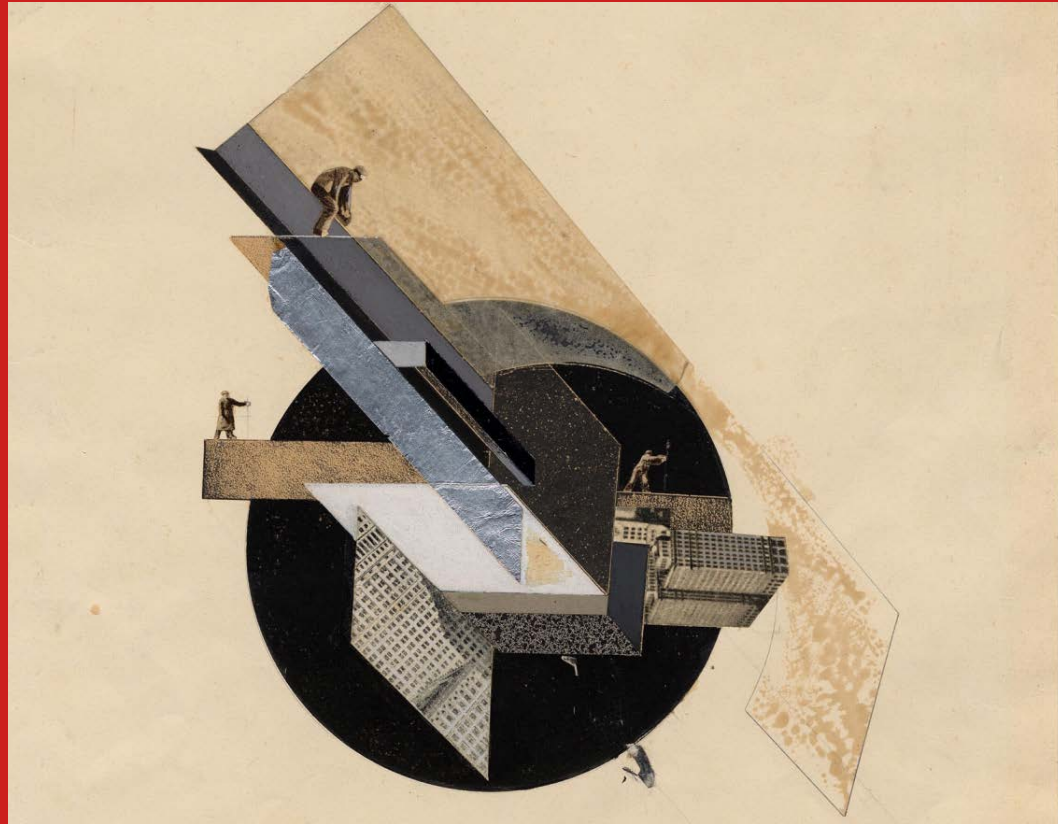
Aleksander Rodchenko was a Russian and Soviet artist, sculptor, photographer, and graphic designer. He was one of the founders of constructivism and Russian design; he was married to the artist Varvara Stepanova. Rodchenko was one of the most versatile constructivist and productivist artists to emerge after the Russian Revolution.



Aleksandr Rodchenko Rechevik. Stikhi (Orator. Verse) 1929

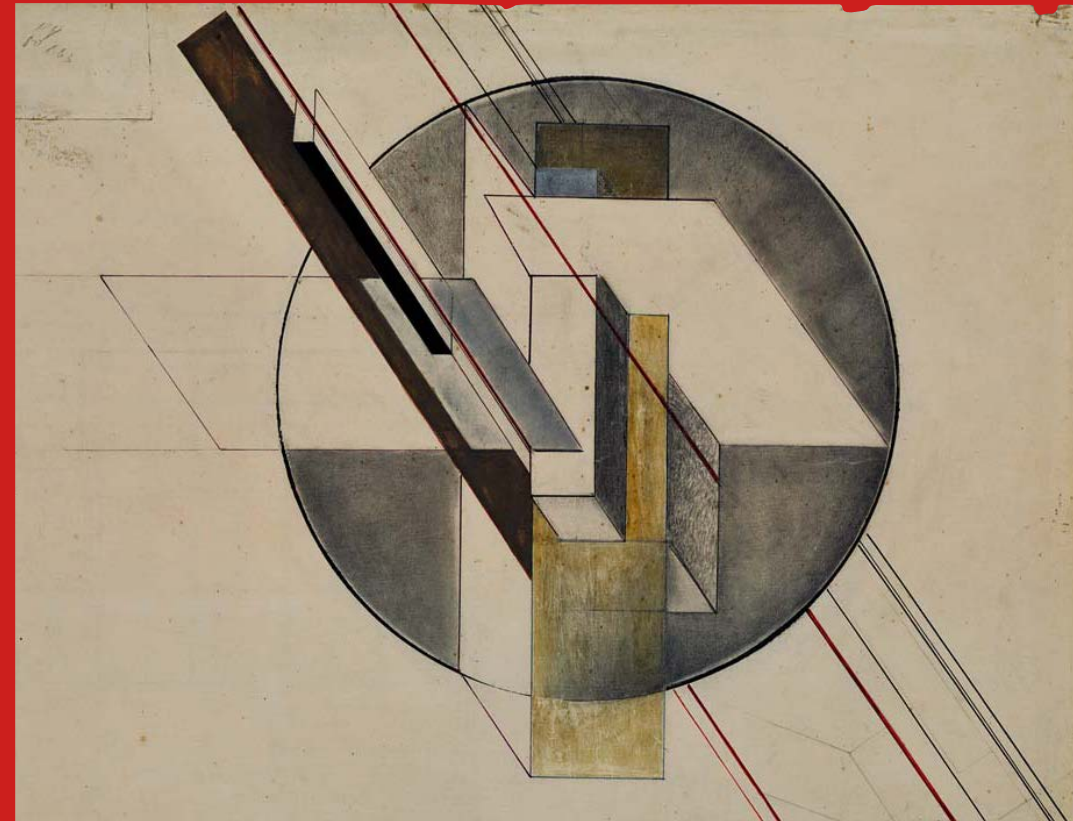


KLUTSIS



Gustav Klutis. Construction - Dynamic City. 1919

Gustav Gustavovich Klutis was a pioneering Latvian photographer and major member of the Constructivist avant-garde in the early 20th century. He is known for the Soviet revolutionary and Stalinist propaganda he produced with his wife Valentina Kulagina and for the development of photomontage techniques.



Gustav Klutis. Construction - Dynamic City. 1921

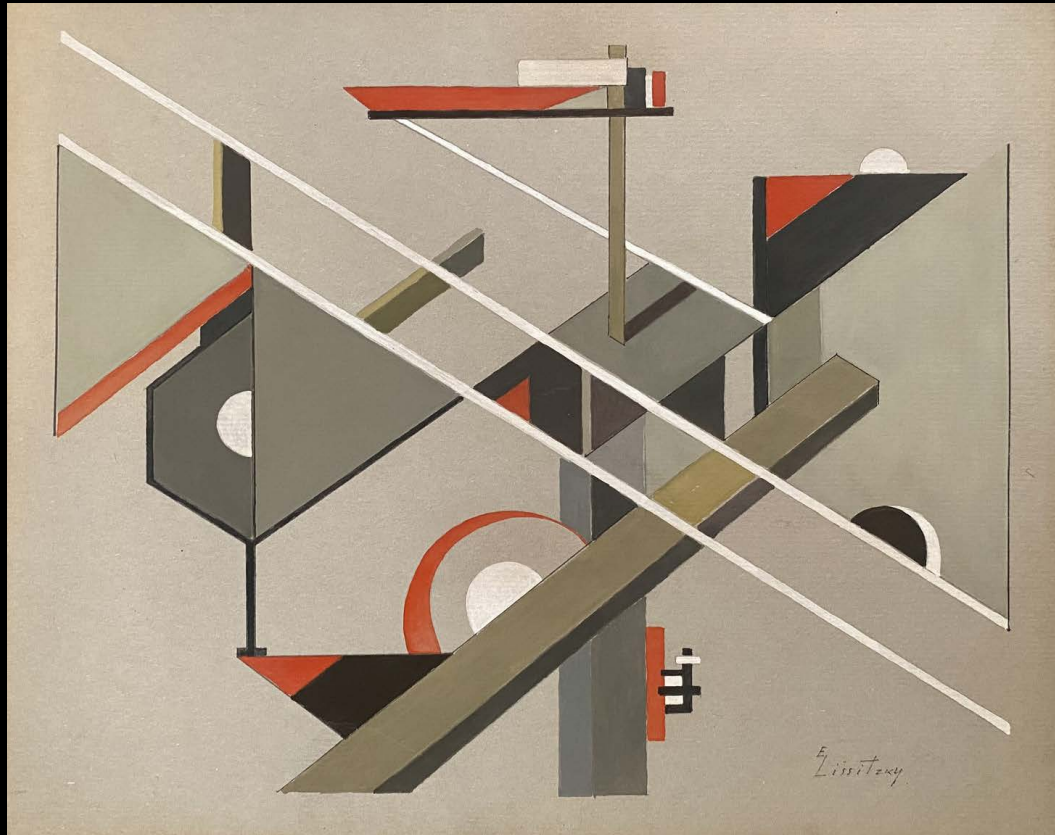


Oppressed Peoples of the Whole World by Gustav Klutis - 1924



Gustav Klutis Let's Fulfill the Plan of Great Works. 1930

E L LISSITZKY

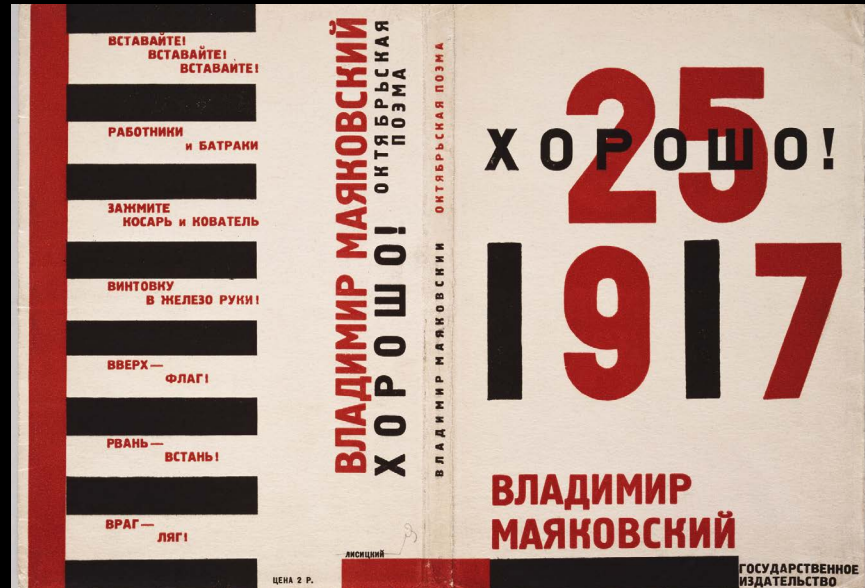


Batch 36 - El Lissitzky

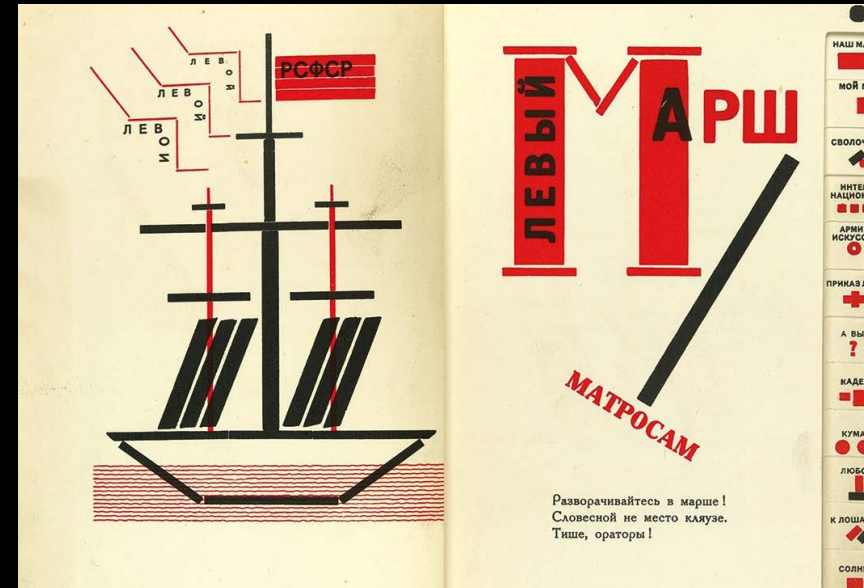
El Lissitzky was a Russian and Soviet artist, active as a painter, illustrator, designer, printmaker, photographer, and architect. He was an important figure of the avant-garde, helping develop suprematism with his mentor, Kazimir Malevich, and designing numerous exhibition displays and propaganda works for the Soviet Union.



El Lissitzky, "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge", c.1919-20



El Lissitzky.
"Khorosho!
Oktyabrskaya
poema" by
Vladimir
Mayakovsky
1927



El Lissitzky
Dlia
golosa (For
the Voice)
1923



El Lissitzky.
Illustration to
'For the voice'
by Vladimir
Mayakovsky



El Lissitzky
Dlia
golosa (For
the Voice)
1923

BROTHERS

Stenberg Brothers
This poster, advertises the Soviet film The Last Flight. 1929



Vladimir Stenberg and Georgii Stenberg were Russian avant-garde Soviet artists and designers, best known for designing film posters for Sergei Eisenstein's movies, Dziga Vertov's documentaries and numerous imported films. The pair worked in a constructivist and, later, productivist styles, in a range of media, initially sculpture, subsequently theater design, architecture, and drafting.



Stenberg Brothers, Russian movie poster, 'Battleship Potemkin', 1925

OLD

Constructivist images are abstract or schematic: workers, technicians, and factories are presented more as symbols of the industrial era. Faces are presented succinctly, sometimes fragmentarily, and figures are subordinated to the graphic task of creating rhythm and movement. Socialist realist images are concrete and personalized. The heroes—peasants, workers, soldiers—are depicted realistically, with emotional expressiveness and emphasized heroism. They are not symbols, but ideal representatives of Soviet society, embodying valor, labor optimism, and political fortitude.

The Constructivist poster aimed to stimulate activity, education, and production processes. Its mechanisms of influence: the rhythm and dynamism of the composition vis-

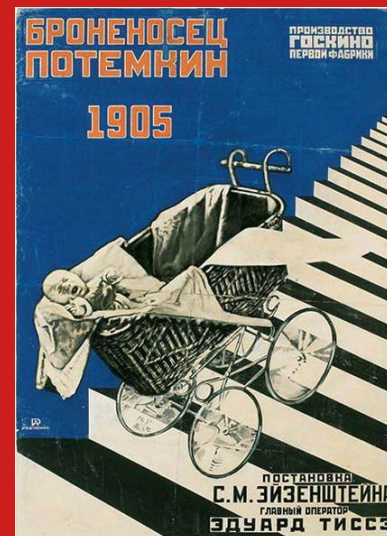
ually prompted the viewer to action, reflecting industrial progress and forward movement. Functionality of form—every detail had practical significance, facilitated the perception of the message, and motivated participation in collective tasks such as labor, education, and sanitation. Modern visual aesthetics—innovative style, photomontage, and the integration of text and graphics—created the image of a progressive, technologically advanced society.

Thus, the constructivist poster became a tool for mobilizing society and visually expressing the processes of modernization.



Gustav Klutss
Postcard for the All
Union Spartakiada Sporting
Event. 1928

Gustav Klutss, Postcard for
the Spartakiada (All-Union
Olympiad), Moscow, 1928



Alexander Rodchenko.
Soviet poster created for
Sergei Eisenstein's film "Bat-
tleship Potemkin". 1925

Stenberg Brothers. For the
Soviet film "SEP"
1929.

Stenberg Brothers, The Eleventh, 1928.

Stenberg, Vladimir and Gyorgy
Fragment of an Empire, 1929



Vladimir and Georgii Stenberg, Movie poster for Countess Shirvanskaya's Crime, 1926

El Lissitzky, Dlia Golosa (For the Voice), a book of poetry, 1923.



Varvara Stepanova, Costume Design, 1922

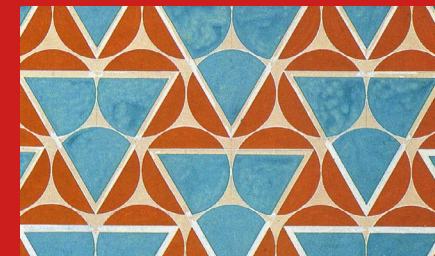
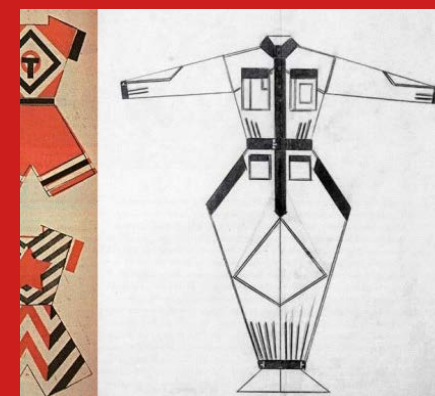
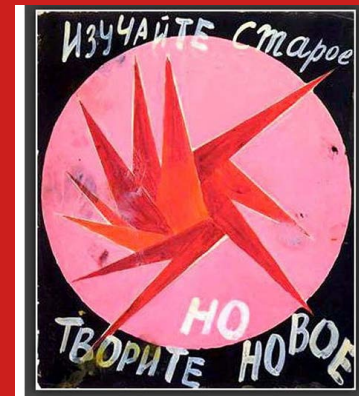
Varvara Stepanova, Untitled, 1920,

Varvara Stepanova. "Study the old, but create the new." 1919

Left – sports clothing designs by Varvara Stepanova, right – workwear design by Alexander Rodchenko

Varvara Stepanova. Pattern for fabric, 1924

Varvara Stepanova, The geometric pattern "Circle Points", 1923



MODERN

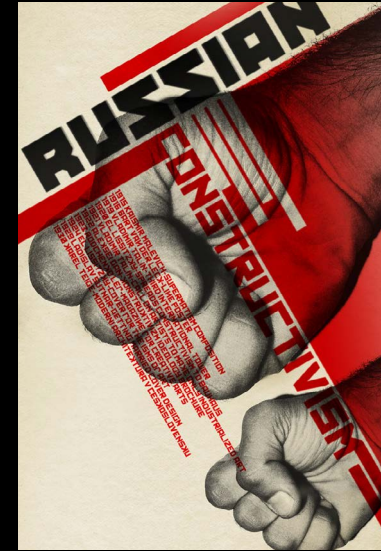
Today, constructivism hasn't disappeared—it has transformed and continues to live on in contemporary visual language. Its principles are actively used in graphic design, advertising, web design, and branding, creating clear and expressive images.

Contemporary designers retain the movement's key ideas: clear structure, modular grids, contrasting typography, and a commitment to minimalism. At the same time, they adapt them to the modern era—expanding the color palette, using digital effects, and freely combining constructivism with other styles.

Thus, constructivism became the foundation of modern design, influencing such movements as Swiss style and minimalism. Constructivist techniques are particularly no-

ticeable in contemporary posters and digital art, where composition is built through form, rhythm, and contrast. Diagonals, geometric elements, and expressive typography continue to create a sense of movement and tension, making images dynamic and visually powerful.

In the digital environment, these ideas are further developed: designers use animation, scale, overlays, and interactive elements while maintaining clarity and structure. Constructivism is no longer just a historical style; today, it is a universal visual tool that continues to shape contemporary graphics and communication language.



By Dog On Fire Design, 2009

Oscar Pecher, Kruder&Dorfmeister - 30 Years Anniversary Tour, 2026



100 years of Russian Constructivism. RT Creative Lab / Moscow, Bankov Posters / Prague

The visual identity for CAE. Francisco Branco, Laura Pais, João Ventura, Paulo Teixeira 2026

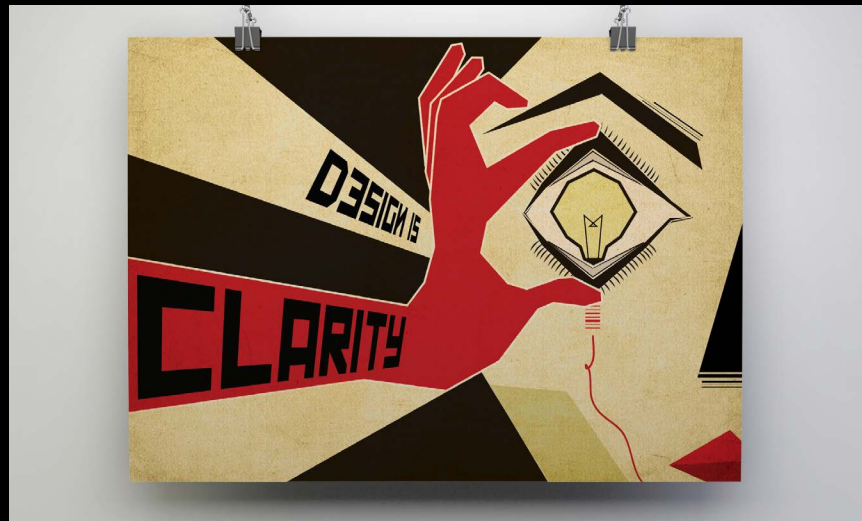
Alexander Shimanov,
ST-KOSMOLET,
2025



Matthew Cooper, The new
Franz Ferdinand album
cover 'You can have it so
much better'. 2005

Catalina Paez,
Bingo, 2025

Latifah Al-Ghamdi,
Code of Ethics Poster,
2018



Soul Stamina,
Mayakovsky.
Set of posters, 2022

QUOTES

“In reinforced concrete we have not only a new material but, of far greater consequence, new constructions and a new method for designing buildings. Therefore, in using [reinforced concrete], we have to renounce the old traditions and concern ourselves with meeting new tasks.”

-Vladimir Tatlin (1920)

“[The task of material culture is] to shed light on the tasks of production in our country, and also to discover the place of the artist-constructor in production, in relation to improving the quality both of the manufactured product and of the organization of the new way of life in general.”

-Vladimir Tatlin (1924)

“We declare uncompromising war on art.”

-Aleksei Gan (1922)

“[In design] there should be nothing random, uncontrolled, nothing based only on blind taste and aesthetic voluntarism. everything should be thought through, both technically and functionally.”

-Aleksei Gan (1922)

“Our new aim is the organisation of the material environment, i. e. of contemporary industrial production, and all active artistic creativity must be directed towards this.”

-Liubov Popova (1921)

“We are breaking with the past, because we cannot accept its hypotheses. We ourselves are creating our own hypotheses anew and only upon them ... can we build our new life and new world view.”

-Liubov Popova (1921)

QUOTES

“Study the old, but create the new.”

-Varvara Stepanova (1919)

“One has to take several different shots of a subject, from different points of view and in different situations, as if one examined it in the round rather than looked through the same key-hole again and again.”

-Alexander Rodchenko (1920)

“The line is the first and last element, both in painting and any construction in general. A line is a path, a passage, a movement, a collision, a facet, a bond, a connection, a cut.”

-Alexander Rodchenko (1923)

“My task is to put art at the service of the revolution”

-Gustav Klutsis (1920)

“The artist constructs a new symbol with his brush. This symbol is not a recognizable form of anything which is already finished, already made, already existing in the world - it is a symbol of a new world, which is being built upon and which exists by way of people.”

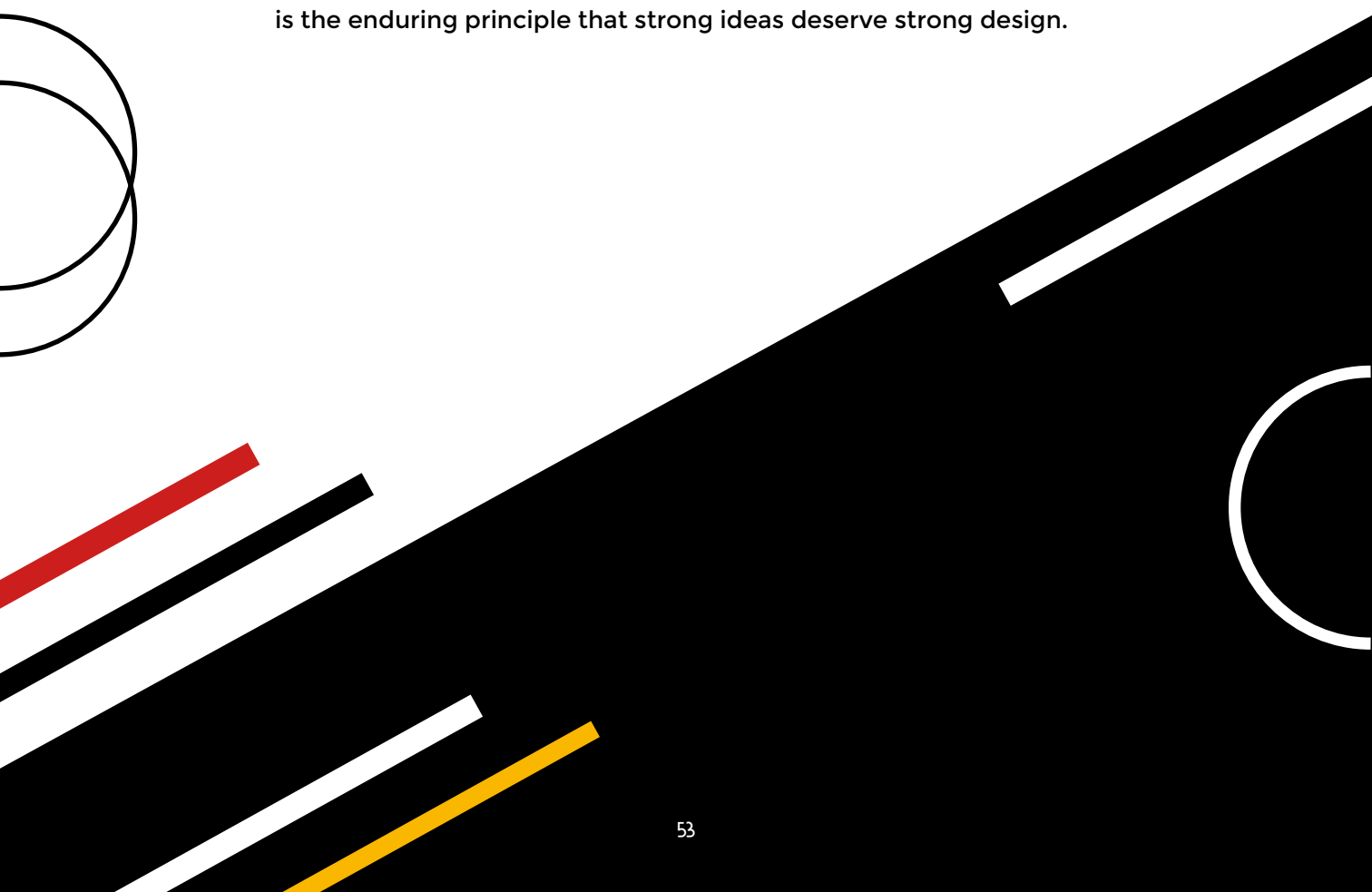
-El Lissitzky (1921)

“Our primary device is montage . . . [but] we do not neglect Construction. Ours are eye-catching posters which, one might say, are designed to shock. We deal with the material in a free manner . . . disregarding actual proportions . . . turning figures upside-down; in short, we employ everything that can make a busy passerby stop in their tracks.”

-Vladimir Stenberg (1928)

OUTCOME

Constructivism was a radical moment when designers reimagined their role in society. It proved that graphic design could be more than just decoration; it could be a powerful tool for communication, persuasion, and social change. Its legacy is the enduring principle that strong ideas deserve strong design.



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RESOURCES

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