

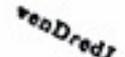
THE NEW  
LANGUAGE OF  
FORM



## **Suprematism and Constructivism**

Was a brief era of creative art that emerged in Holland and Russia following WWI, the Russian Revolution, and emergence of the socialist state.

TH<sup>é</sup>âtre  MICHEL 40 rue des Mathurins

S  venDredi 6 et saMedi 7  
JUILLET  
1923  
I R é  
O E U

la grande semaine  
a été prolongée  
jusqu'au 7 juillet

ORGANISÉE PAR ! TCHÉREZ  A B A R B E  
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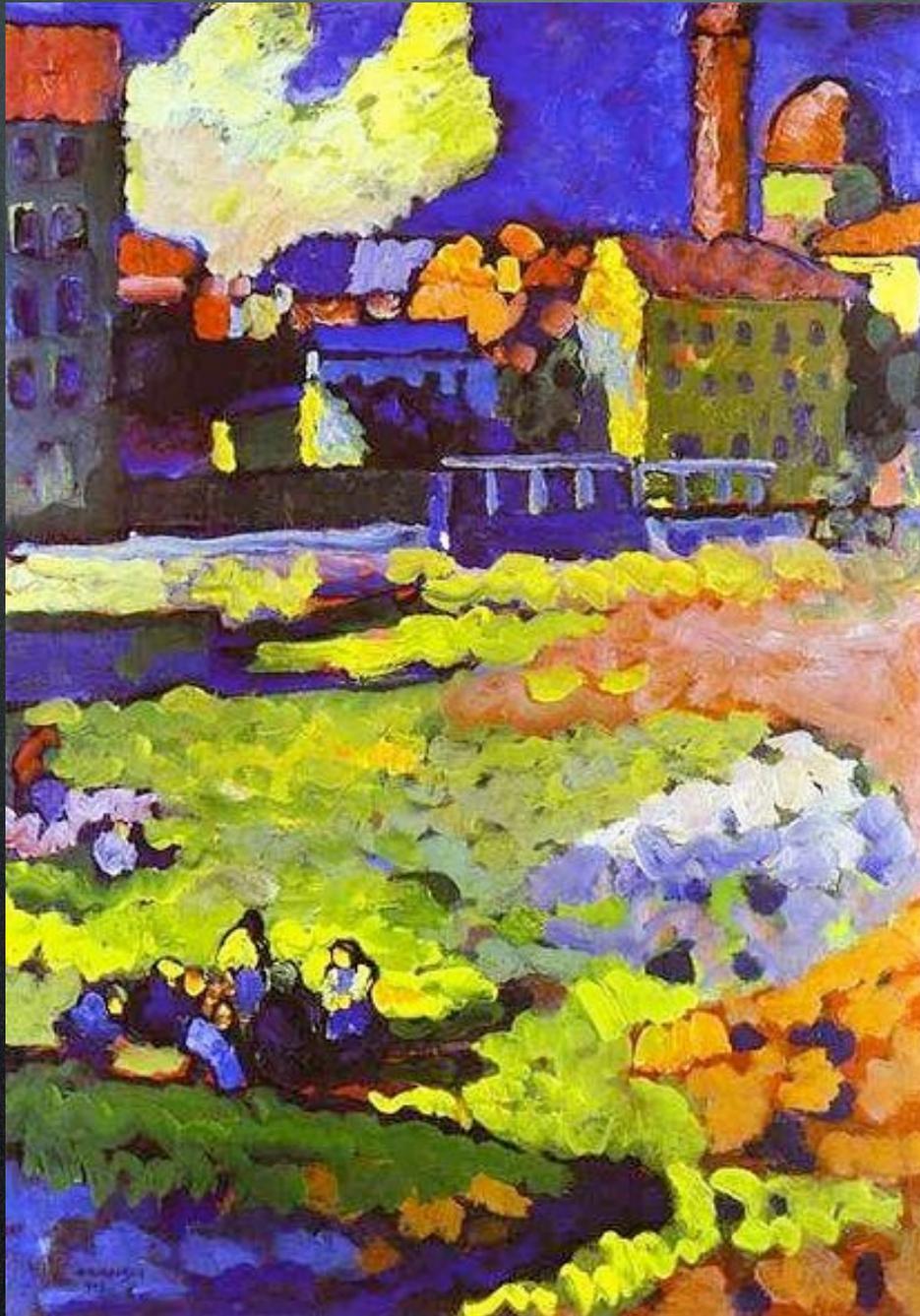
P } Une place de loge ..... 30 fr.  
r } Fauteuil d'orchestre..... 25 fr.  
i } Fauteuil de balcon  
X } 1<sup>er</sup> rang..... 15 fr.  
Fauteuil de balcon ..... 12 fr.

Bernheim Jeune, 25, Bd de la Madeleine  
Durand, 4, Place de la Madeleine  
Povolsky, 13, Rue Bonaparte  
Au Sans Pareil, 37, Avenue Kléber  
Six, 5, Avenue Lovendal  
Paul Guillaume, 59, Rue la Boétie  
Librairie Mornay, 37, Bd Montparnasse  
Paul Rosenberg, 21, Rue la Boétie  
et au Théâtre Michel, Tél. Gut. 63-50.

### Suprematism and Constructivism

Carried the influences of *cubism* and *futurism* and was characterized by the experimentation of avant-garde artists.

Ilya Zdanevich,  
“Soirée du Coeur à  
Barbe” (Evening of the  
Bearded Heart), 1923



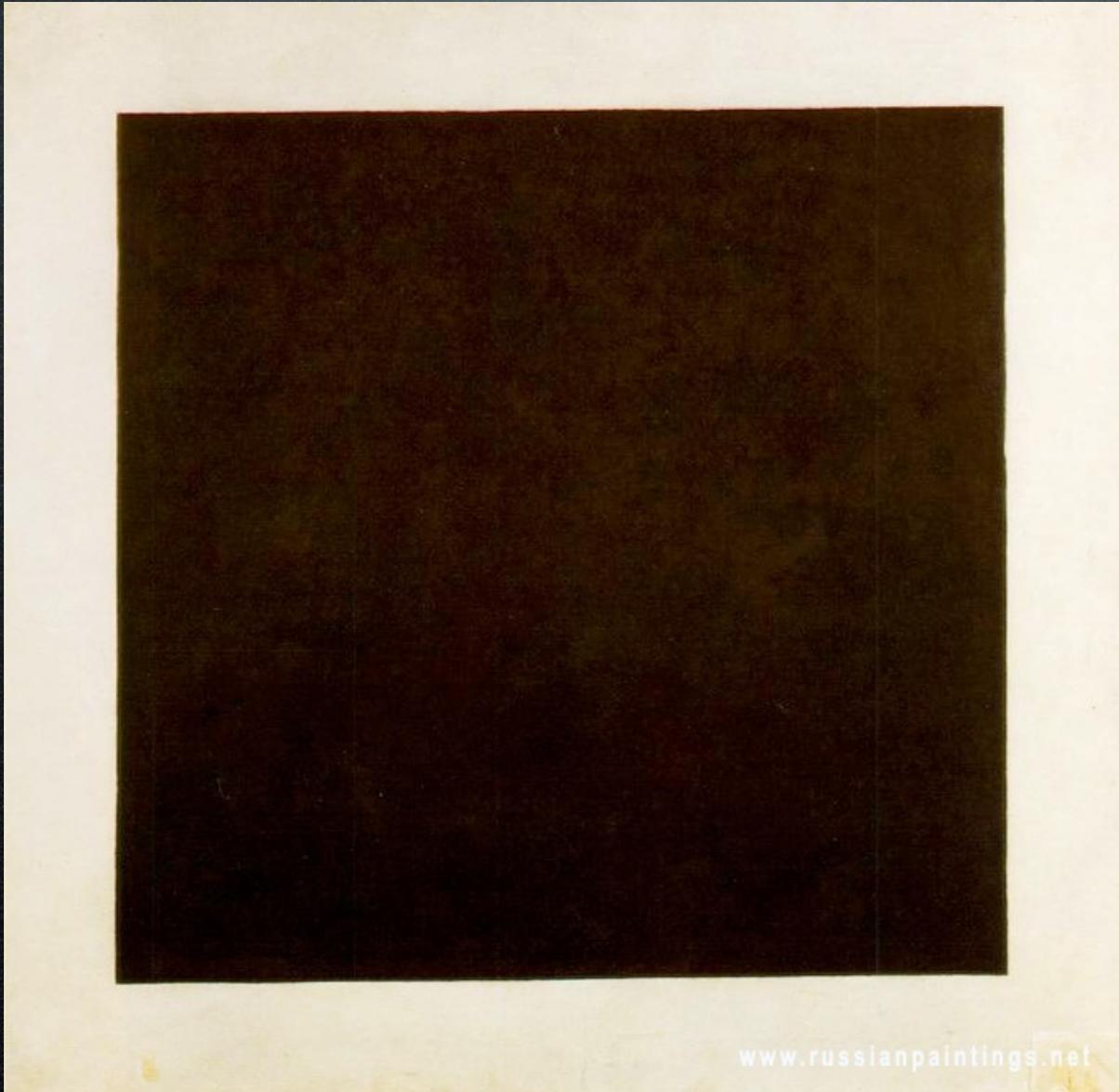
Russian painters, Wassily Kandinsky and Kasimir Malevich were inspired by *cubism* and *futurism* and rushed toward expressive and colorful painting styles.

Wassily Kandinsky  
*Munich-Schwabing with  
the Church of St. Ursula,*  
1908



Kasimir Malevich  
Soon surpassed  
his *expressionist*  
painting style in  
favor of basic  
forms and pure  
color he called  
**suprematism.**

Kasimir Malevich  
Self portrait, 1908  
(Expressionism)



## Suprematism

This style was the ultimate reductivist style of basic geometric forms which he felt evoked the very essence of art.

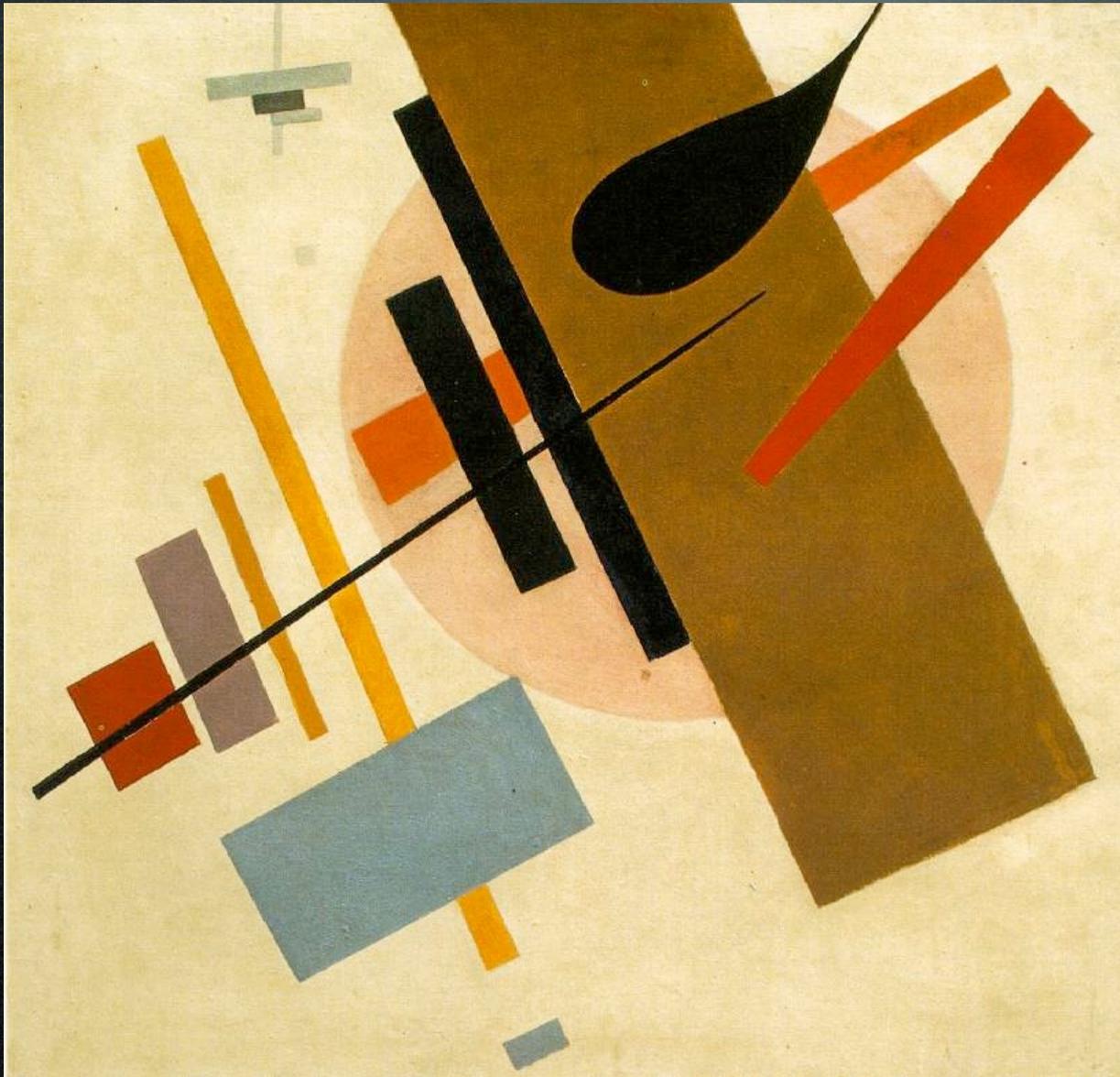
Kasimir Malevich  
*Black Square*, c. 1913



## **Suprematism**

Malevich created total geometric abstraction that was new and totally nonobjective.

Kasimir Malevich  
*Suprematist*  
*Composition, 1915*



## Suprematism

rejected utilitarian and pictorial art, instead sought the “*supreme expression of feeling, seeking no practical values, no ideas, no promised land.*”

Kasimir Malevich  
*Suprematism, 1922*

ЦИКЛ



ЛЕКЦИЙ  
ИМ. ПУШКИНА.

## Suprematism

Malevich rejected any social or political role and argued that art must remain essentially a spiritual activity apart from the utilitarian needs of society.

Kasimir Malevich  
*Pervyi tsikl lektsii*  
(*First Circle of Lectures*),  
1920



**Wassily Kandinsky** – formerly a Moscow lawyer who studied painting in Munich, returned to Moscow after WWI but never could accept the changing Russian political ideology.



Wassily Kandinsky was offered a teaching position at the newly formed Bauhaus School in Germany and thus picked up his brushes and left Russia to become a leading color theorist and *abstract expressionist* painter.



Wassily Kandinsky  
Many of his abstract paintings carry the influence from his studies with Kasimir Malevich in Russia.

Wassily Kandinsky  
*White*, 1925



## Constructivism

Led by **Vladimir Tatlin**, *constructivism* rejected the idea of “art for art’s sake” and instead focused on industrial design.

Vladimir Tatlin,  
Design for Monument to the  
Third International  
Exhibition, 1920



### **Constructivism**

Russian artist *Alexander Rodchenko* joined Tatlin and felt social responsibility superceded all personal expression in art.



## Constructivism

Rodchenko quit painting and devoted his works to graphic design and photojournalism.

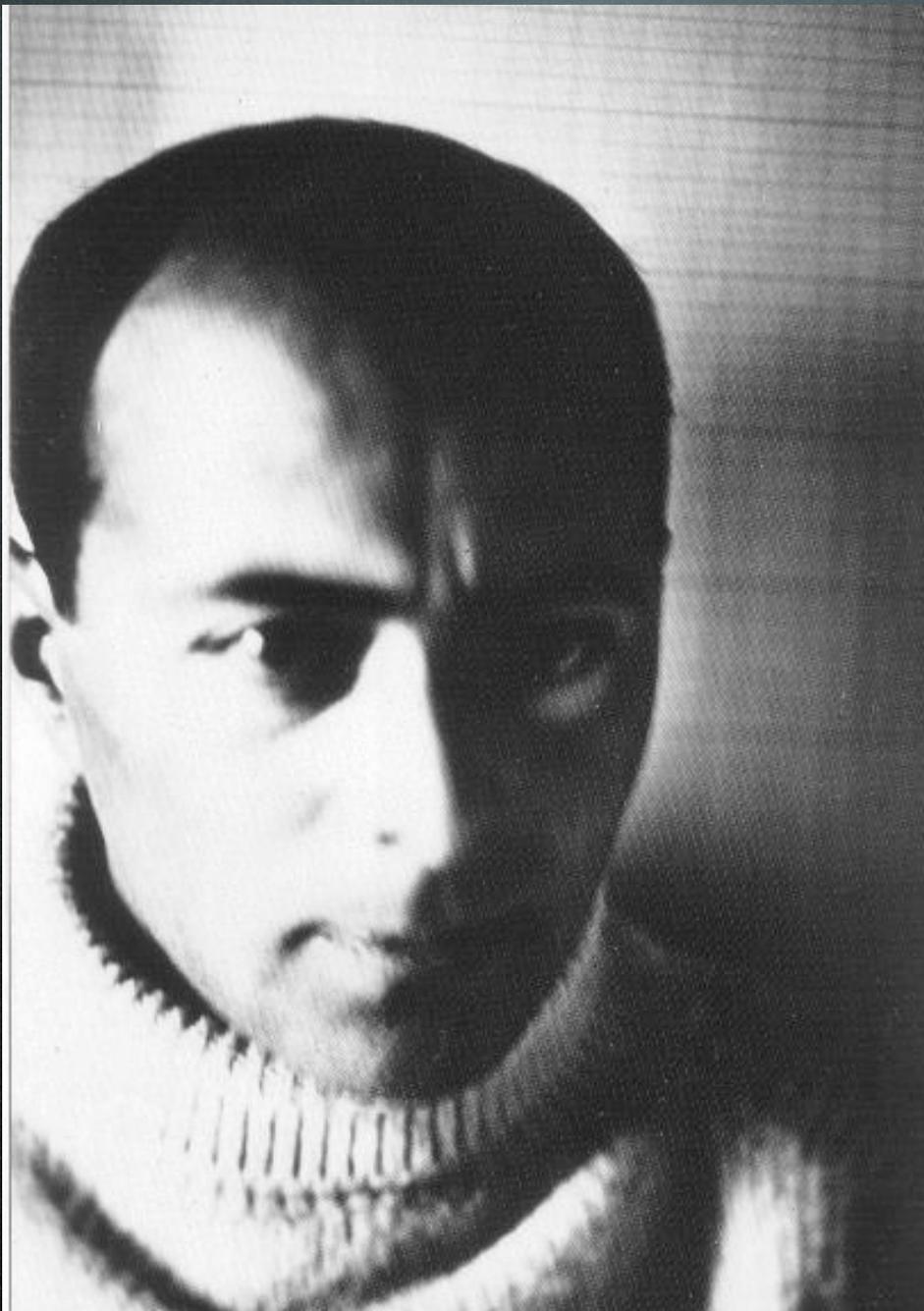
Alexander Rodchenko,  
cover for *Lef* magazine, 1923



### Constructivism

This poster was political propaganda depicting baby sucking on bullets and grenade pins for pacifiers – a reflection of *Dadaist* influences.

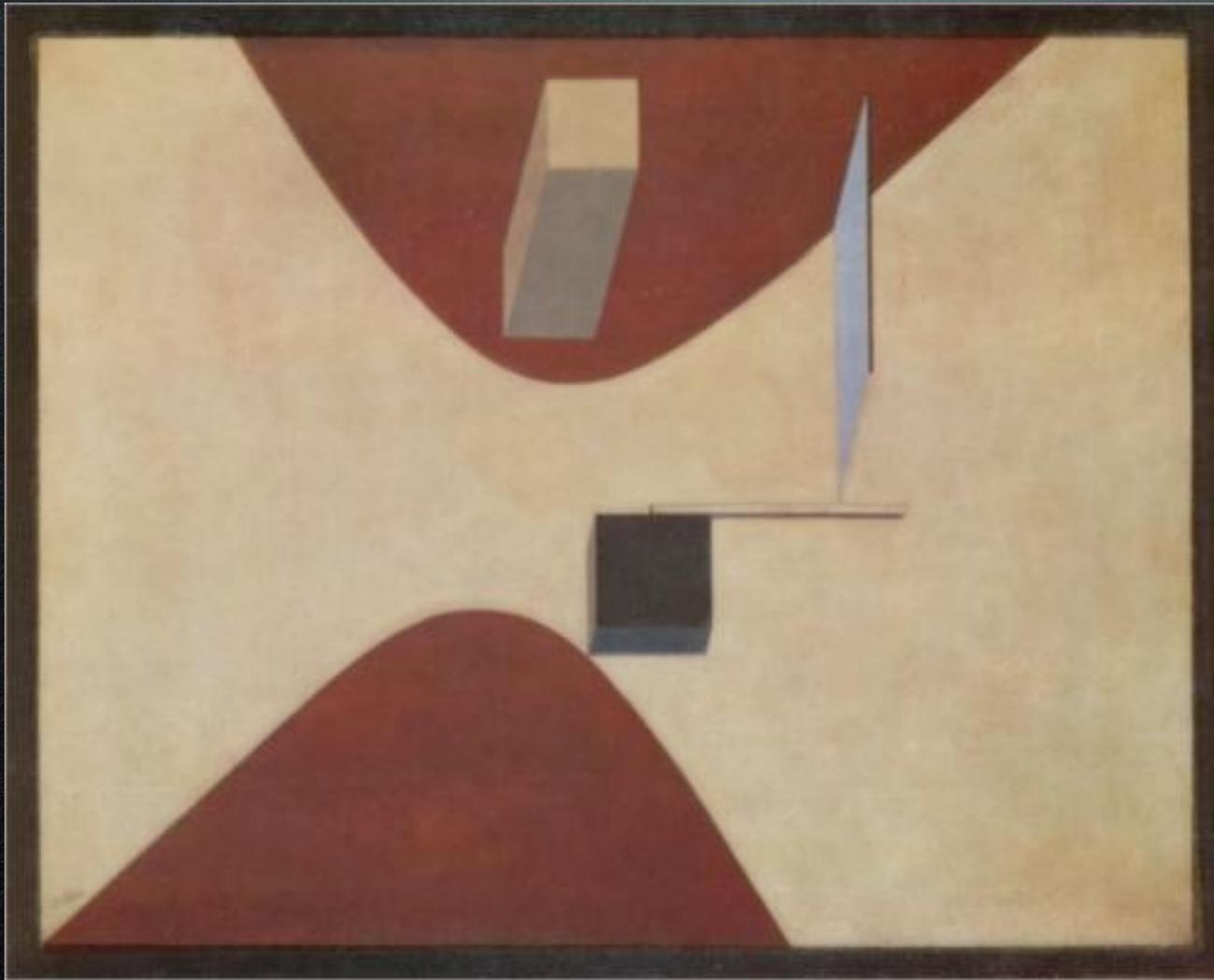
Alexander Rodchenko,  
*There are no better dummies  
than old suckers*, 1923



## **Constructivism**

The constructivist ideal was best realized by painter, architect, graphic designer and photographer **El (Lazar Markovich) Lissitzky**.

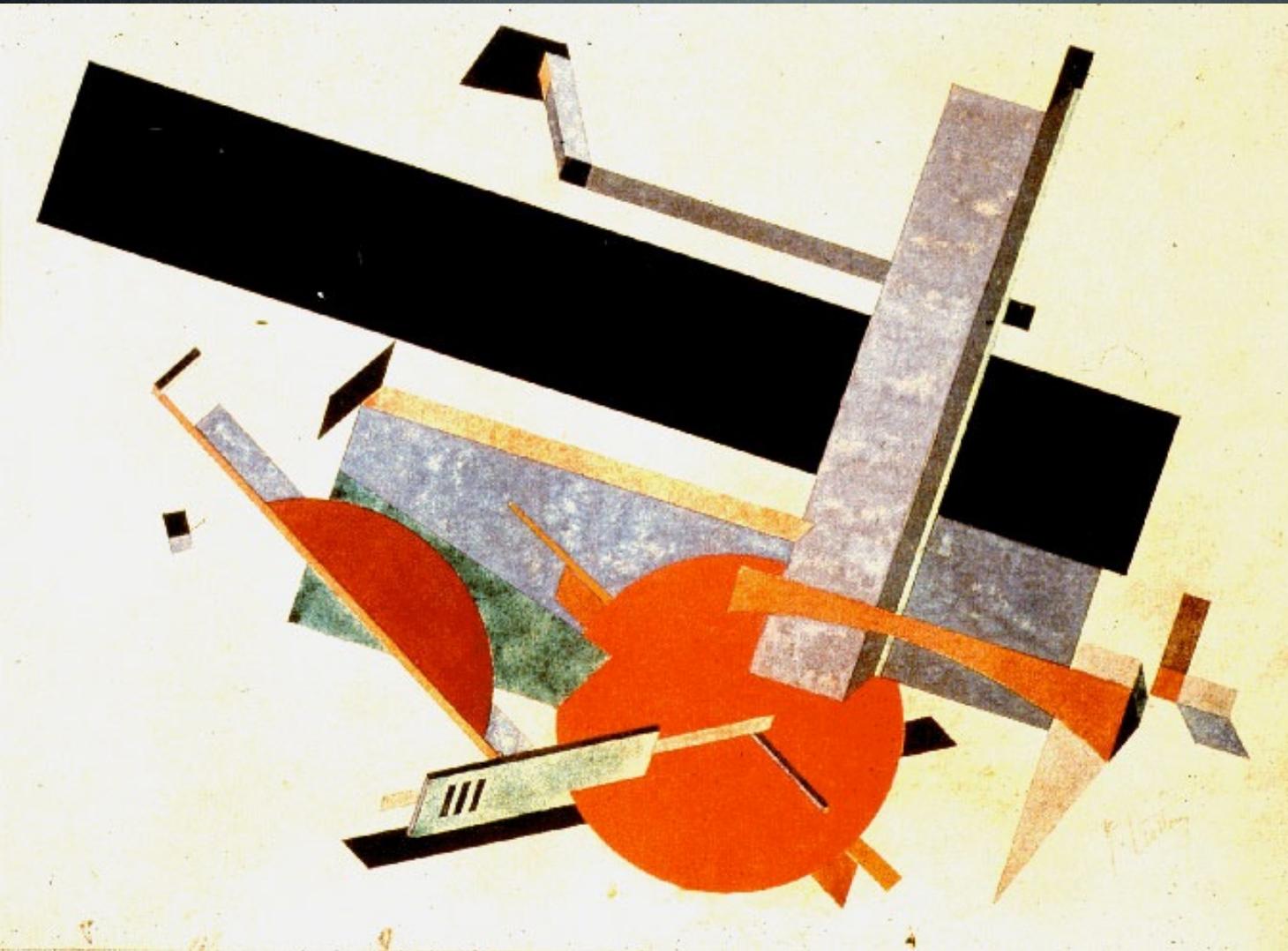
El Lissitzky  
Self portrait, 1914



## **Constructivism**

In 1919 Marc Chagall invited Lissitzky to join the faculty of the art school near Moscow where he was undoubtedly influenced by Kasimir Malevich.

El Lissitzky  
*PROUN 23 No. 6*  
oil painting, 1919



## Constructivism

Lissitzky believed that the artist should be an agent for change. He saw the Russian Revolution as a new beginning for mankind.

El Lissitzky

*PROUNS (projects for the establishment of new art) oil painting, 1926*



El Lissitzky  
*Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, 1926*



## Constructivism

By 1921, El Lissitzky traveled to Berlin, Germany as an ambassador of Russian culture, particularly suprematist and constructivist design.

*Vesche* magazine cover, 1922



## Constructivism

Lissitzky worked as a graphic designer and lectured abroad, including at the Bauhaus School.

El Lissitzky  
and Hans Arp,  
*The Isms of Art, 1924*

Das neue Kubismus von den ersten Malern unterschieden ist, dass er sich nicht um die Kunst der Nachahmung, sondern eine Malerei, welche selbst sich zur Schöpfung herauszubekannt, ausdrückt.

### RUBISMUS

Das neue Kubismus von den ersten Malern unterschieden ist, dass er sich nicht um die Kunst der Nachahmung, sondern eine Malerei, welche selbst sich zur Schöpfung herauszubekannt, ausdrückt.

Stärker impressionistischen Reaktionen, die sich auf Gegenstände und Farben, Naturalismus grundiert, gibt der Kubismus Geschichte, geometrischen Formen in klarer Messung, und Maßverhältnissen zueinander. **ALLGEMEIN**

### FUTURISMUS

Die Futuristen haben die Ruhe und Stille gemindert und das Braugeläusche dynamisch gezeigt. Sie haben die neue Raumfassung durch die Gegenüberstellung der Innen- und Außenraum bewirkt.

Die Kunst, die für uns nicht mehr ein festgestelltes Ergebnis der unersättlichen Bewegung der geschichtlichen Dynamik, sondern ein dynamischer Prozess ist, und als solche verstanden.

### EXPRESSIONISMUS

Als Kubismus und Futurismus wurde der Mensch als dynamischer Prozess der Existenz und des Handelns.

Das neue Kubismus von den ersten Malern unterschieden ist, dass er sich nicht um die Kunst der Nachahmung, sondern eine Malerei, welche selbst sich zur Schöpfung herauszubekannt, ausdrückt.

### CUBISME

Ce qui distingue le cubisme de la peinture précédente, c'est qu'il n'est pas un art de imitation mais une conception qui tend à s'élever au-dessus d'elle-même.

Au lieu de l'impressionnisme et de l'espace basé sur la perspective de l'air et le naturalisme des couleurs, le cubisme donne les formes simplifiées abstraites en leurs relations précises de caractéristiques mesurées. **ALLGEMEIN**

### FUTURISME

Les futuristes ont démonté la quiétude et la stase et dynamisé le mouvement, le dynamique ils ont documenté la nouvelle conception de l'espace par la confrontation des intérieurs et extérieurs.

Un geste pour nous ne sera plus un moment fixe du dynamisme universel, il sera décidément la sensation dynamique alternante, comme l'été.

### EXPRESSIONISME

C'est du cubisme et du futurisme que fut fabriqué le mystère artistique des futuristes et l'expressionnisme.

Das neue Kubismus von den ersten Malern unterschieden ist, dass er sich nicht um die Kunst der Nachahmung, sondern eine Malerei, welche selbst sich zur Schöpfung herauszubekannt, ausdrückt.

### CUBISM

What distinguishes cubism from precedent painting is that, not in imitation but a conception that tends to rise above itself.

Instead of the impressionist notion of space based on the perspective of air and the naturalism of color, cubism offers the simple and abstracted forms in their precise relations of character and measure. **ALLGEMEIN**

### FUTURISM

Futurists have abolished quietness and stasis and have dynamized movement. They have documented the new conception of space by confronting interiors and exterior.

For us gesture will not any more be a fixed moment of universal dynamism, it will decidedly be the dynamic sensation alternated as such.

### EXPRESSIONISM

From cubism and futurism has been chopped the material that the mystic genius has fashioned as expressionism.

### ABSTRAKTE KUNST

Die abstrakten Künstler gestalten das Ungegründete ohne Bezug auf irgendein Problem, nicht einmal verbunden zu sein. Die abstrakte Kunst ist die Kunst der reinen Form.

### METAPHYSIKER

Das Unmetaphysische durch das Metaphysische darzustellen, ist das Problem der Metaphysiker. Die Futuristen wollten die Museen in Brand setzen, die Metaphysiker sind stehen die Museen stillere existieren zu können. Das ist die Straße dafür, dass die Unendlichkeit mit der Kunstschöpfung messen wollen.

### SUPRÉMATISME

Die Mitternacht der Kunst schlägt. Die schönen Kunst werden in Acht und Bann getan. Der Augen Künstler ist ein Vorurteil der Vergangenheit. Der Suprematismus greift die reine Materie in ein schwarzes Quadrat auf einer weißen Leinwand zusammen.

Ich habe nichts erfunden, nur die Nacht habe ich in mir empfunden, und in ihr habe ich das Neue erblickt, das ich Suprematismus nannte. Durch die schwarze Fläche die ein Quadrat bildet, hat es sich ausgedrückt.

Die Kunstschöpfung hat durch die Infektion des Quadrates jedem die Mittel gegeben, Kunst zu lieben. Die Herstellung von Kunstwerken ist nun einseitig geworden, so einfach und vereinfacht, dass

### ART ABSTRAIT

Les artistes abstraits ne veulent pas résoudre un problème, ni même être liés à un problème quelconque. L'abstraction est la seule des arts multiples.

### MÉTAPHYSICIENS

Représenter l'immatériel par le matériel, voilà le problème des métaphysiciens. Futuristes, ils voulaient brûler les musées métaphysiciens, ils sont contents de pouvoir se tenir des musées comme de maisons pour ne rien laisser à la justice pour avoir leur mesure l'immatériel au moyen de faits concrets de choses.

### SUPRÉMATISME

Mieux de fait, seule. Les beaux arts sont mis au ban. L'artiste isole est un préjugé du passé. Le suprématisme presse toute peinture dans un carré noir sur une toile blanche.

Je n'ai rien inventé, j'ai seulement senti le nuit en moi, et c'est en elle que j'ai entrevu le nouveau que j'ai nommé le suprématisme. Il s'est exprimé par la surface noire en forme de carré.

Par l'infection du carré les sources de l'art ont été produites à tous les degrés de l'art, et présent la production d'œuvre d'art est tellement facilitée et simplifiée qu'on ne saurait

### ABSTRACT ART

The abstract artists give form to the imponderable without being bound by a common problem. Abstraction offers multiple sources.

### METAPHYSICIANS

To represent the immaterial by the material is the problem of the metaphysicians. As futurists they would burn the metaphysicians' museums, they are happy to use museums as homes for the old age. This is the punishment for having wished to measure eternity with three cowards.

### SUPREMATISM

Midnight of art is ringing. Fine arts is banished. The artist is a prejudice of the past. Suprematism presses the entire painting into a black square on a white canvas.

I did not invent anything, it's only the night I felt in me, and it is there I perceived the new, which I called suprematism. It has expressed itself by the black grain that formed a square.

By the infection of the square the art changes have produced the means to deal in art to everybody. Now the production of works of art is judiciously facilitated and simplified so nobody

## Constructivism

Inside pages of *Isms of Art* are organized with geometric spatial divisions.

# 8MERZ9

DIESES DOPPELHEFT IST ERSCHEINEN UNTER DER REDAKTION VON  
EL LISSITZKY UND KURT SCHWITTERS

REDAKTION DES MERZVERLAGES  
KURT SCHWITTERS, HANNOVER, WALDHAUSENSTR. 31



TYPOGRAPHIE ANGELEHRT VON EL LISSITZKY  
HERAUSGEBEN VON K. SCHWITTERS

NATUR VON LAT. **NASCI**

D. I. WERDEN ODER ENT-

STEHEN HEISST ALLES,

WAS SICH AUS SICH

SELBST DURCH EIGENE

KRAFT ENTWICKELT

GESTALTET UND BEWEGT

KLEINER BROSCHHAUS

BAND 2, Nr. 89

APRIL

JULI

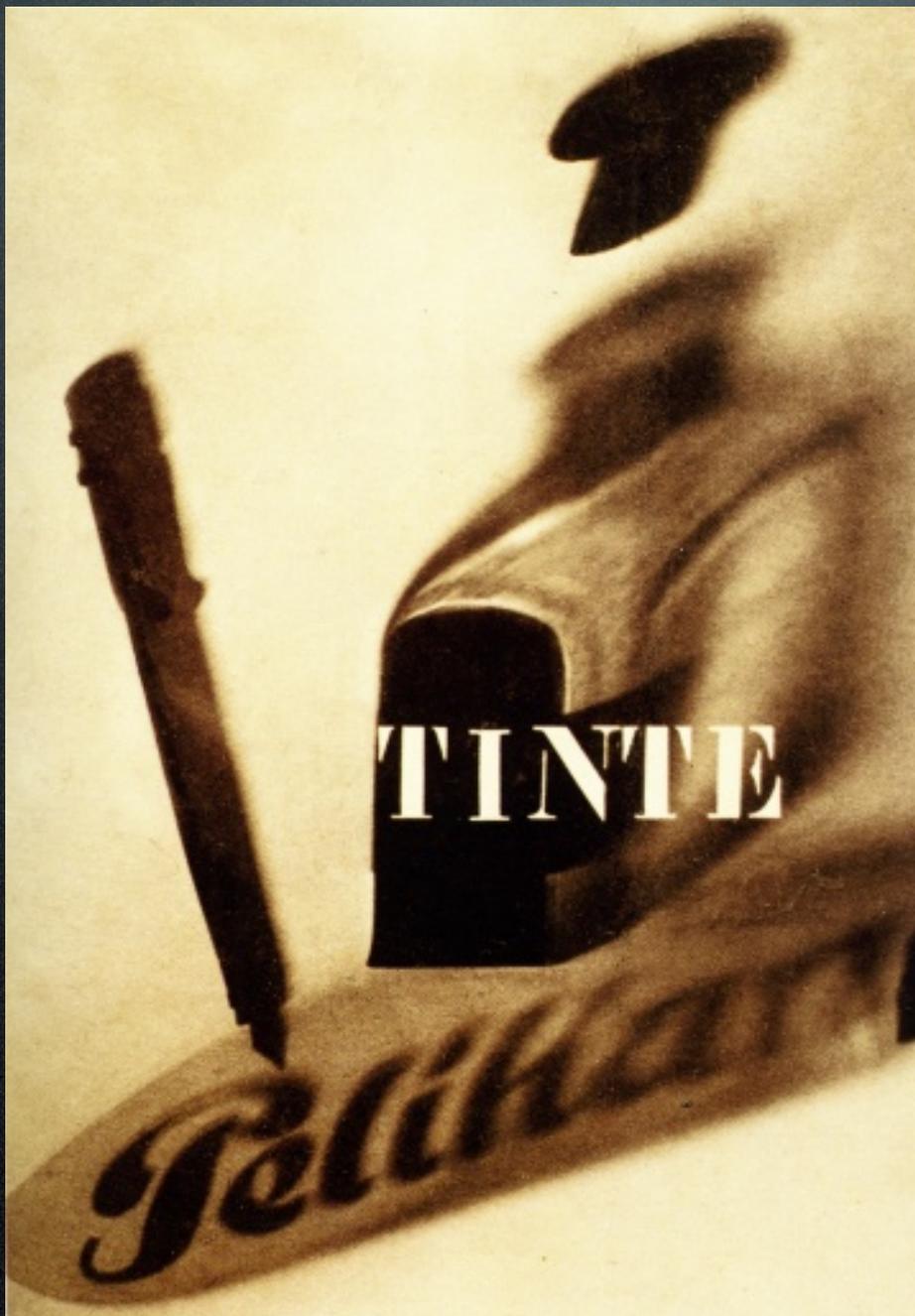
1924

**NASCI**

Nature, de rien signifie devenir, progresser, c'est à dire tout ce qui est  
sa propre force, se développe, se forme, se meut.

**Constructivism**

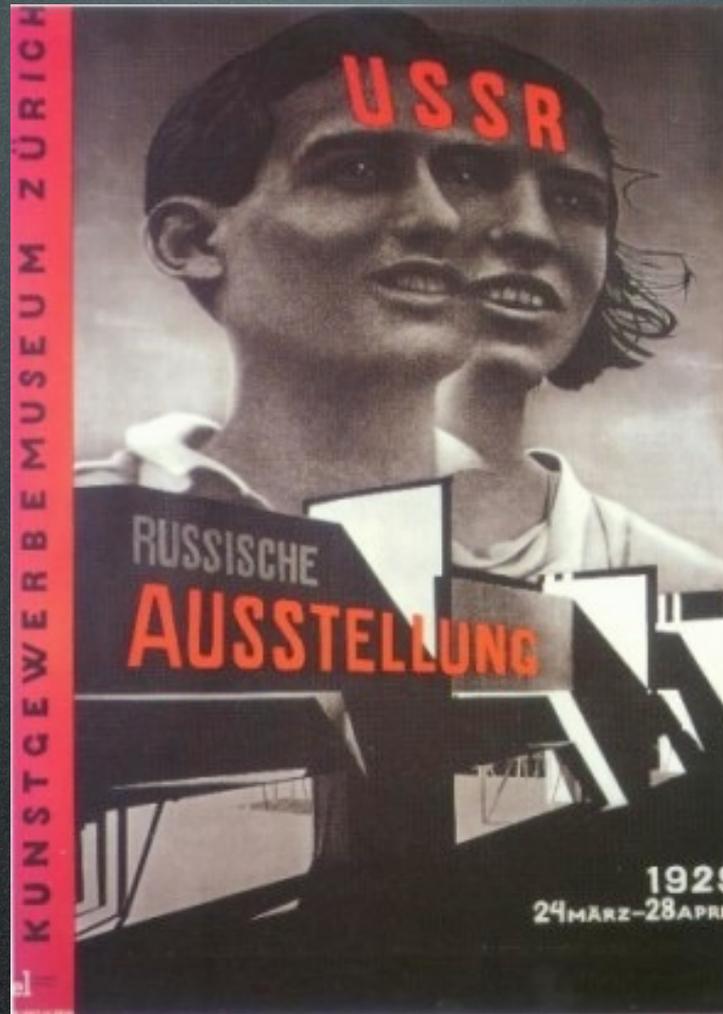
El Lissitzky  
Merz magazine  
cover, 1924



## Constructivism

Lissitzky  
experimented with  
photography and  
type.

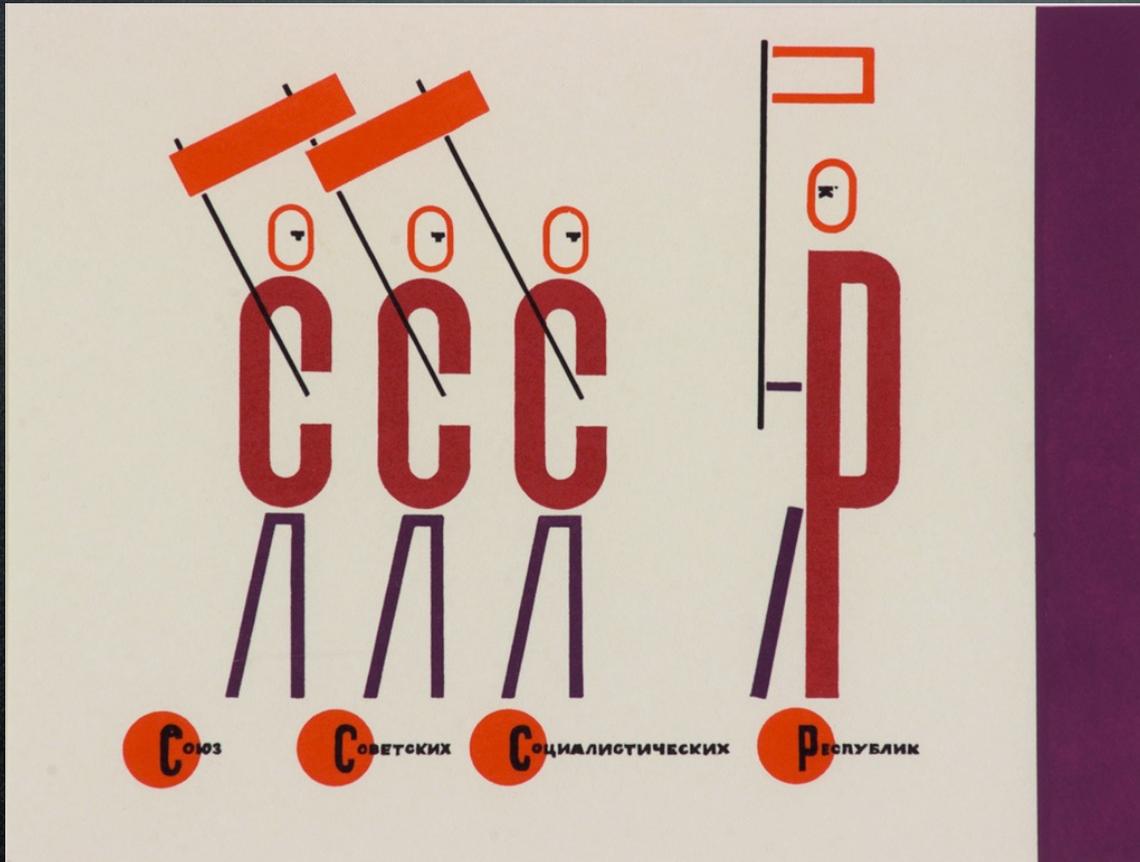
El Lissitzky  
*Pelikan Ink*, 1924



## Constructivism

El Lissitzky returned to Russia and continued to work on propaganda and exhibitions promoting communist ideals.

El Lissitzky  
Exhibition poster,  
1929



## Constructivism

Lissitzky devoted his career to print and book design which he felt could transmit ideas and knowledge to the people in ways that art could not.

El Lissitzky  
*Basic Calculus*,  
textbook cover, 1928



**Constructivism**  
A master of the  
propaganda poster,  
**Gustav Klutsis** used  
his work to extol  
Soviet  
accomplishments .

Gustav Klutsis  
Spartacada, 1928



## Constructivism

Gustav Klutsis considered photomontage the ideal medium for constructing socialism.

Gustav Klutsis,  
*Worker Men and Women:  
Everyone Vote in the  
Soviet Elections, 1930*



## Constructivism

Gustav Klutsis believed photomontage was the only medium of the future, replacing all other forms of art.

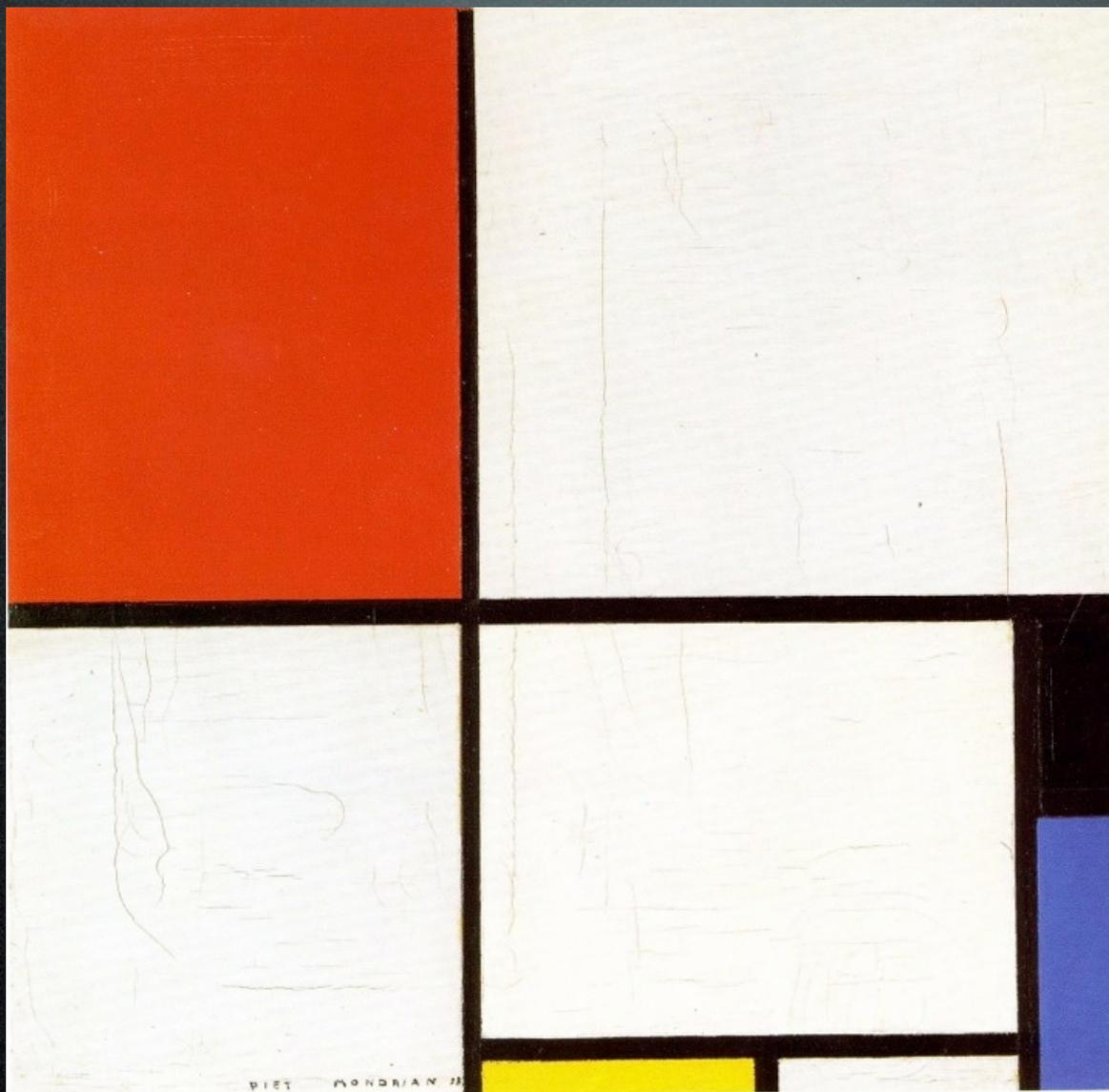
Gustav Klutsis,  
*USSR: Shock Brigade Total Proletariat*, 1930



## De Stijl

Was formed by a group of Dutch architects and artists in the early 1920s influenced by *Dada*.

Theo van Doesberg, Poster 1922



## De Stijl

Formed by a group of Dutch architects and artists in the early 1920s which included Piet Mondrian and Gerrit Reitveld among its advocates.

Piet Mondrian,  
*Red, Yellow, and Blue*,  
1927



## De Stijl

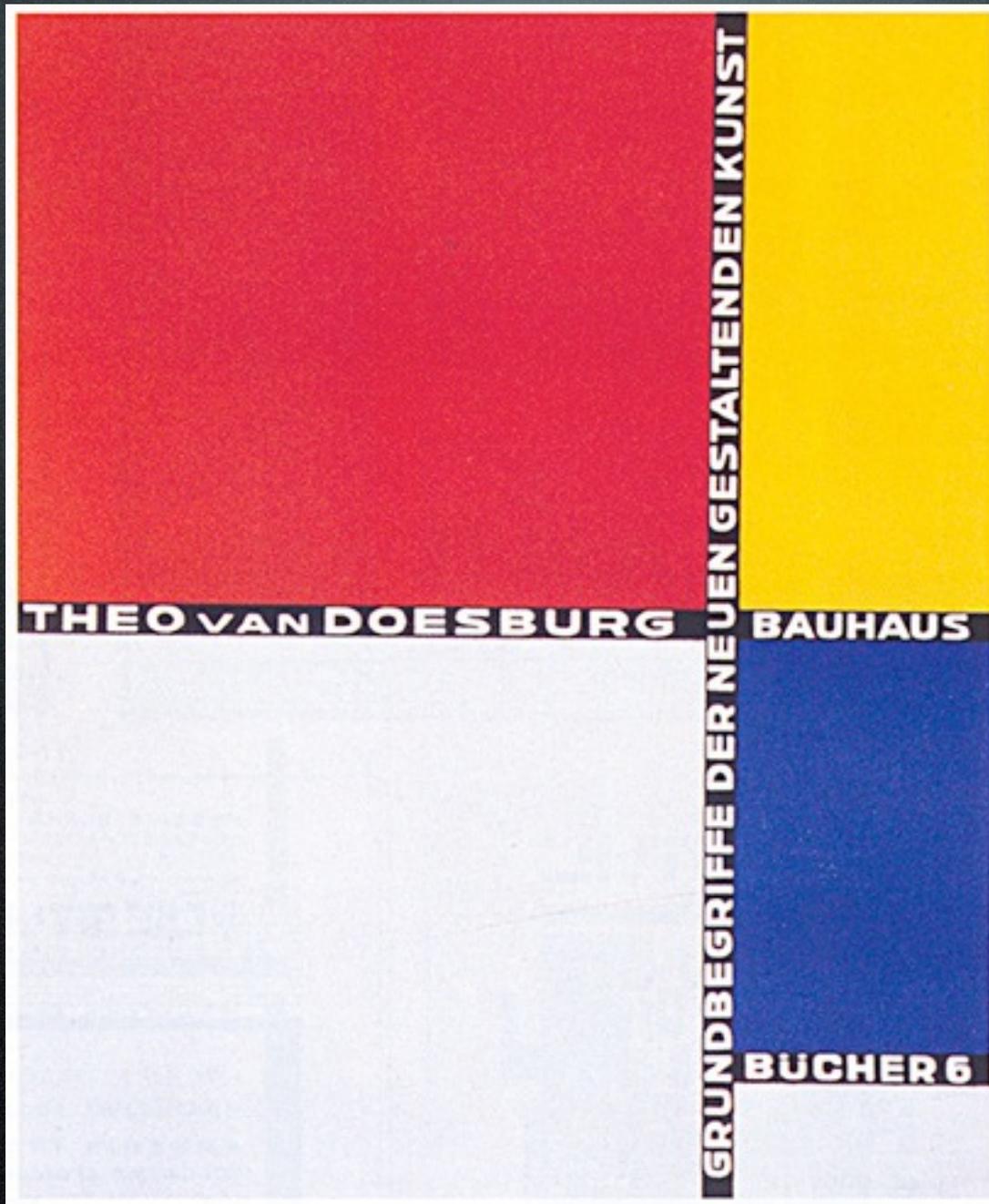
Working in an abstract geometric style, *De Stijl* artists sought universal laws of balance and harmony for art, which could then be a prototype for a new social order.

Gerrit Reitveld,  
*Schröder House*, 1924



## De Stijl

Gerrit Rietveld,  
*Red and Blue Chair*,  
1917



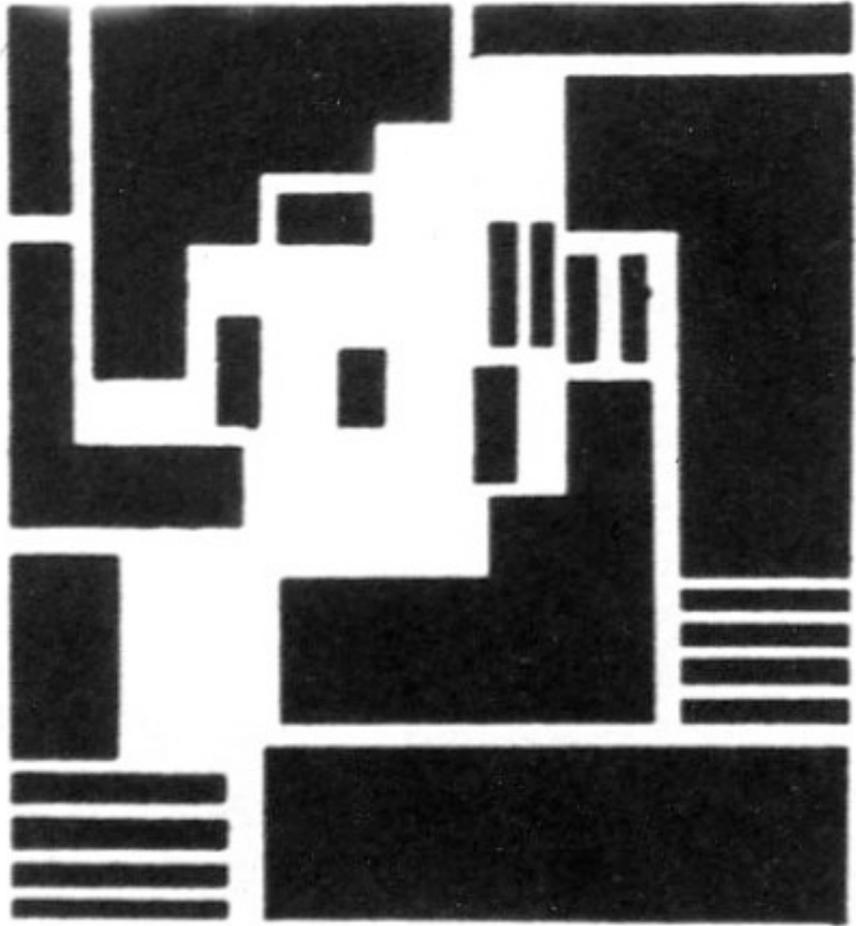
## De Stijl

Theo van Doesberg founded *De Stijl* magazine and launched a movement based on rectilinear planes absent all decoration except color, and only in primary hues.

Theo van Doesburg and László Moholy-Nagy,

*Principles of Modern Design*, 1925

DE STIJL



MAANDBLAD VOOR DE MO-  
DERNE BEELDENE VAKKEN  
REDACTIE THEO VAN DOES-  
BURG MET MEDEWERKING  
VAN VOORNAME BINNEN- EN

**De Stijl** graphic design was strictly functional and tightly organized into rectangles and negative spaces.



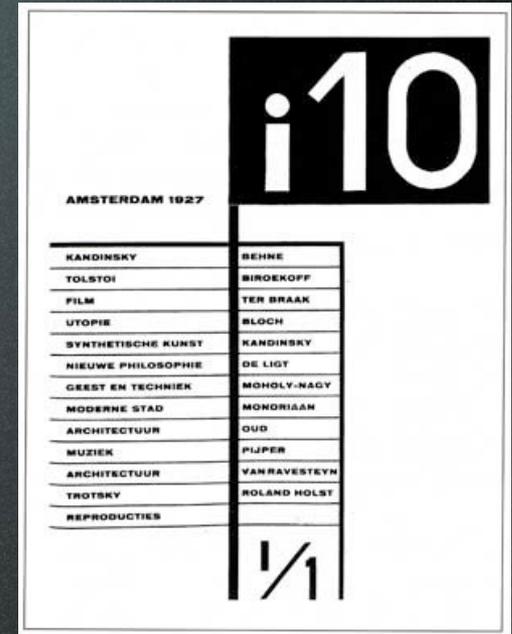
**De Stijl** design insisted on using only geometric sans serif type.



Henryk Berlewi  
Poland

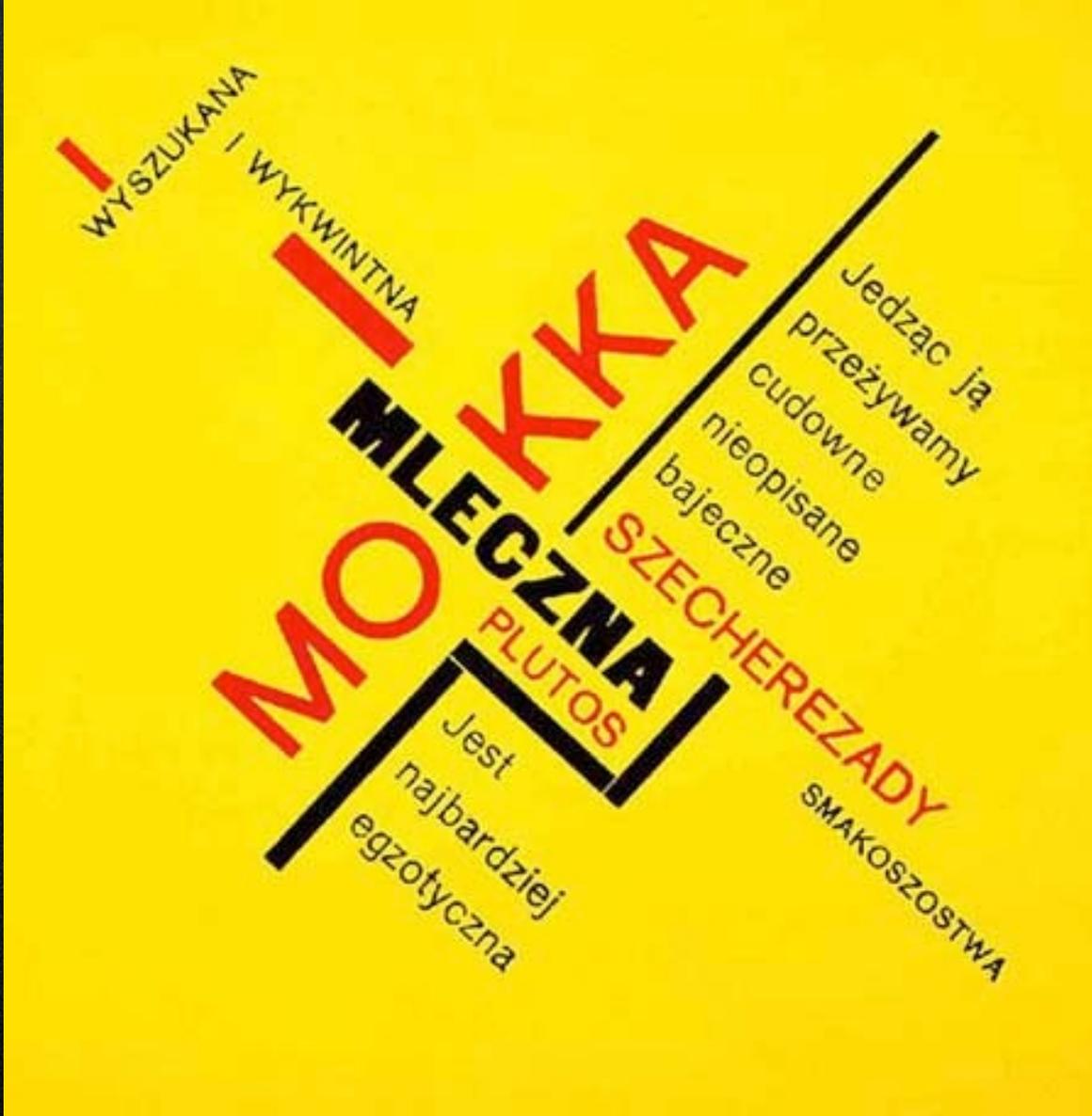


Ladislav Sutnar  
Czechoslovakia



László Moholy-Nagy  
Hungary

**Suprematism** and **De Stijl** spread to Eastern Europe where artists in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary applied the avant-garde ideas of *cubism* and *futurism* in their designs.



## Henryk Berlewi

His *Mechano-faktura* theory determined that modern art was filled with illusionist pitfalls, so he mechanized painting and design.

Henryk Berlewi, Poland  
Plutos Chocolates brochure, 1925



### **Ladislav Sutnar**

Sutnar used strong geometric juxtapositioning to create a focal point and unify disparate images in his compositions.

Ladislav Sutnar, Czechoslovakia  
*Getting Married*, 1929



## László Moholy-Nagy

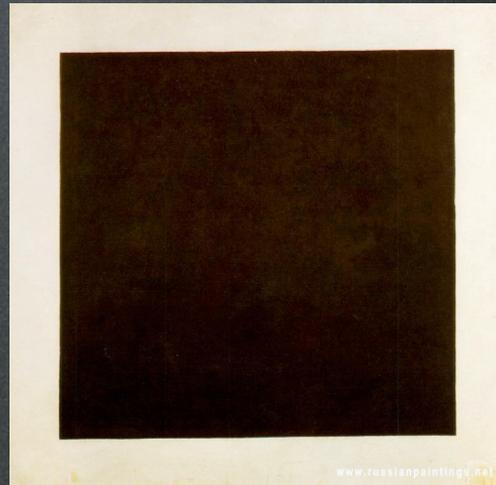
Moholy-Nagy saw type as form and texture composed of rectangles, lines and spatial intervals.

László Moholy-Nagy, Hungary  
Avant-garde publication *i10*, 1929



## What happened to the revolutionary modernists in Russia?

The founder of Suprematism and an abstract painter, Kasimir Malevich was resigned to accept the change in political attitudes under Joseph Stalin's new regime which detested modern art. As a consequence, many of his works were confiscated and he was banned from creating and exhibiting similar art.



Kasimir Malevich  
*Black Square*, c. 1913

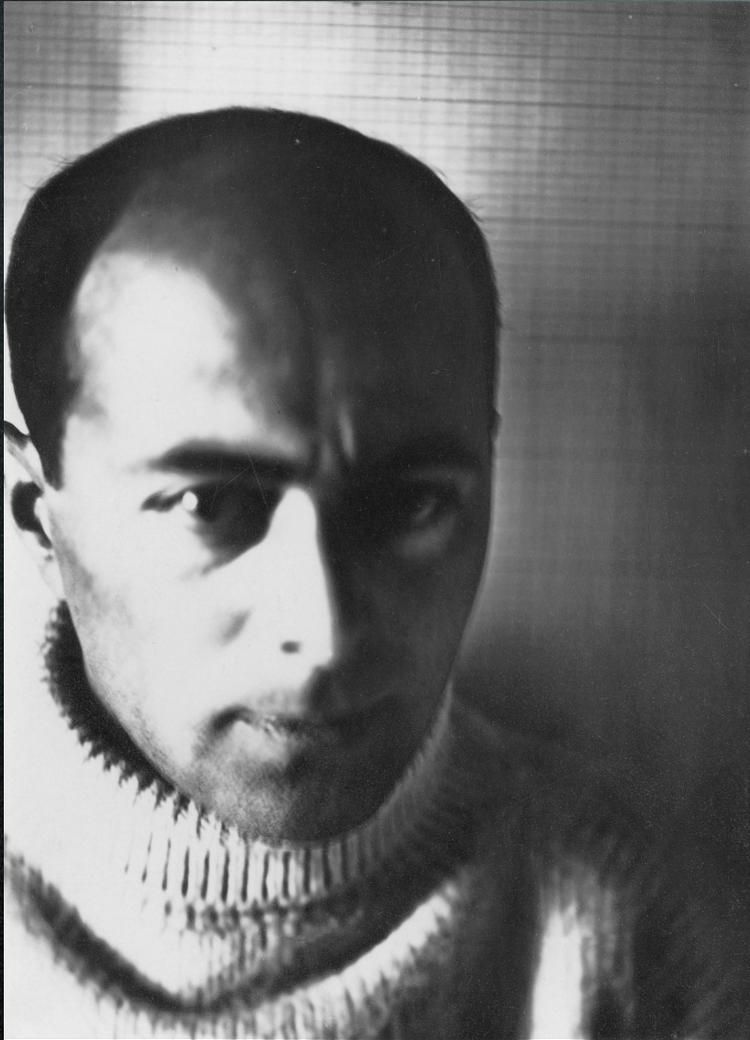


## What happened to the constructivists?

Throughout the 1920s, Alexander Rodchenko's work was very abstract. In the 1930s, with the changing Party guidelines, he gave up painting and concentrated on sports photography and images of parades, and organized photography exhibits for the government.

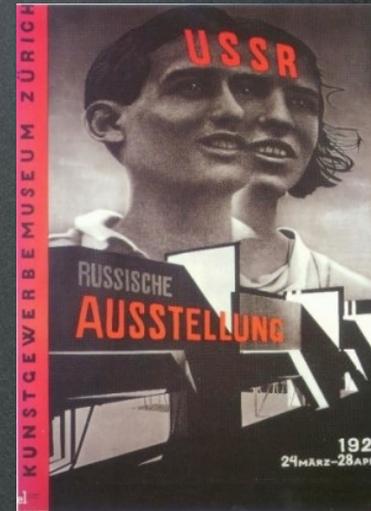


Alexander Rodchenko,  
*There are no better dummies  
than old suckers, 1923*



## What became of constructivism?

Joseph Stalin closed down the artists' unions and avant-garde artists had to adapt to the new climate or risk being blacklisted. El Lissitzky's work gave in to Soviet Realism. He continued creating exhibition art for the government. Yet in 1938, the commission rejected his proposal for the Soviet exhibition at the New York World's Fair.



El Lissitzky  
Exhibition poster,  
1929



## Where did they go?

A loyal Communist, Gustav Klutsis was nonetheless arrested in Moscow on January 17, 1938, as he prepared to leave for the New York World's Fair. Then he disappeared and was believed to have been executed by Joseph Stalin's order soon after his arrest.



Gustav Klutsis,  
*Worker Men and Women:  
Everyone Vote in the  
Soviet Elections, 1930*

