



Large
Print

Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

1

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Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



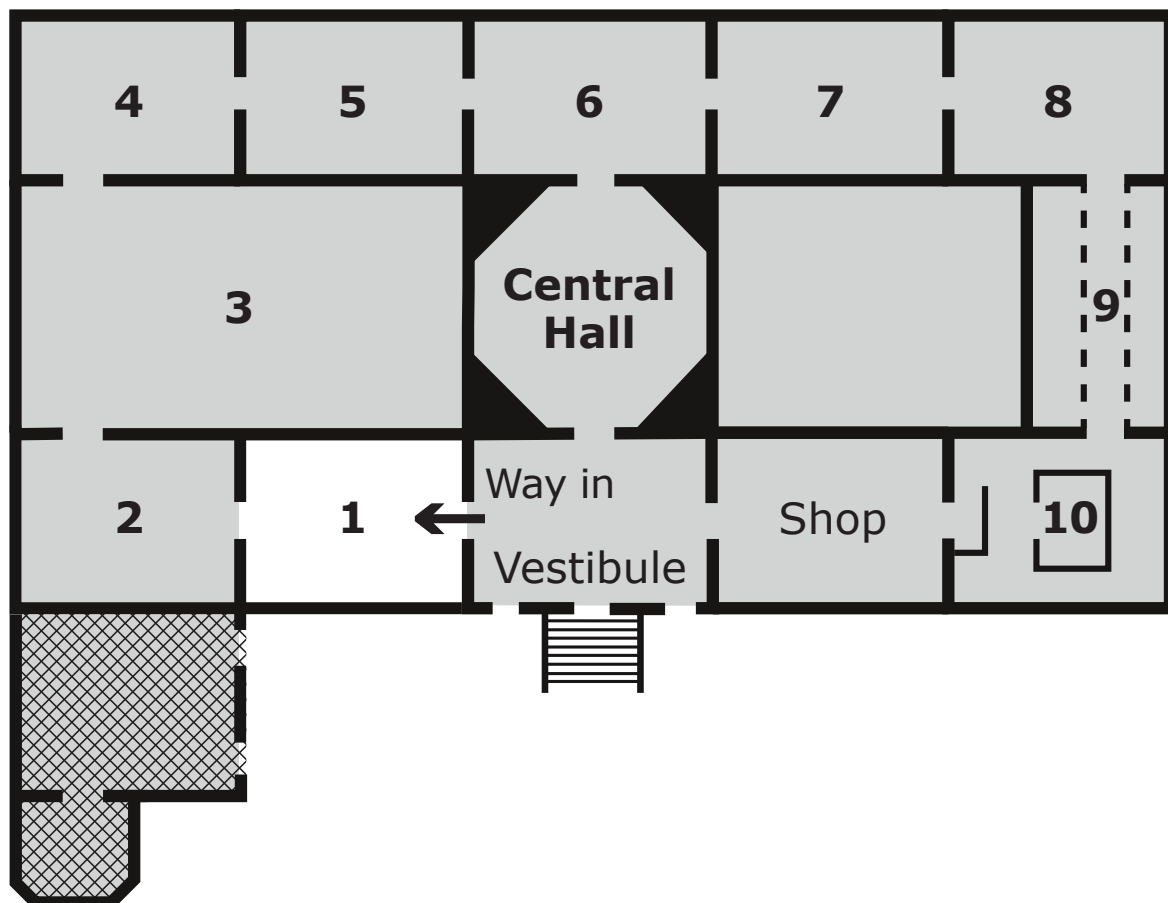
Revolution: Russian Art 1917 – 1932.
Introduction to the exhibition



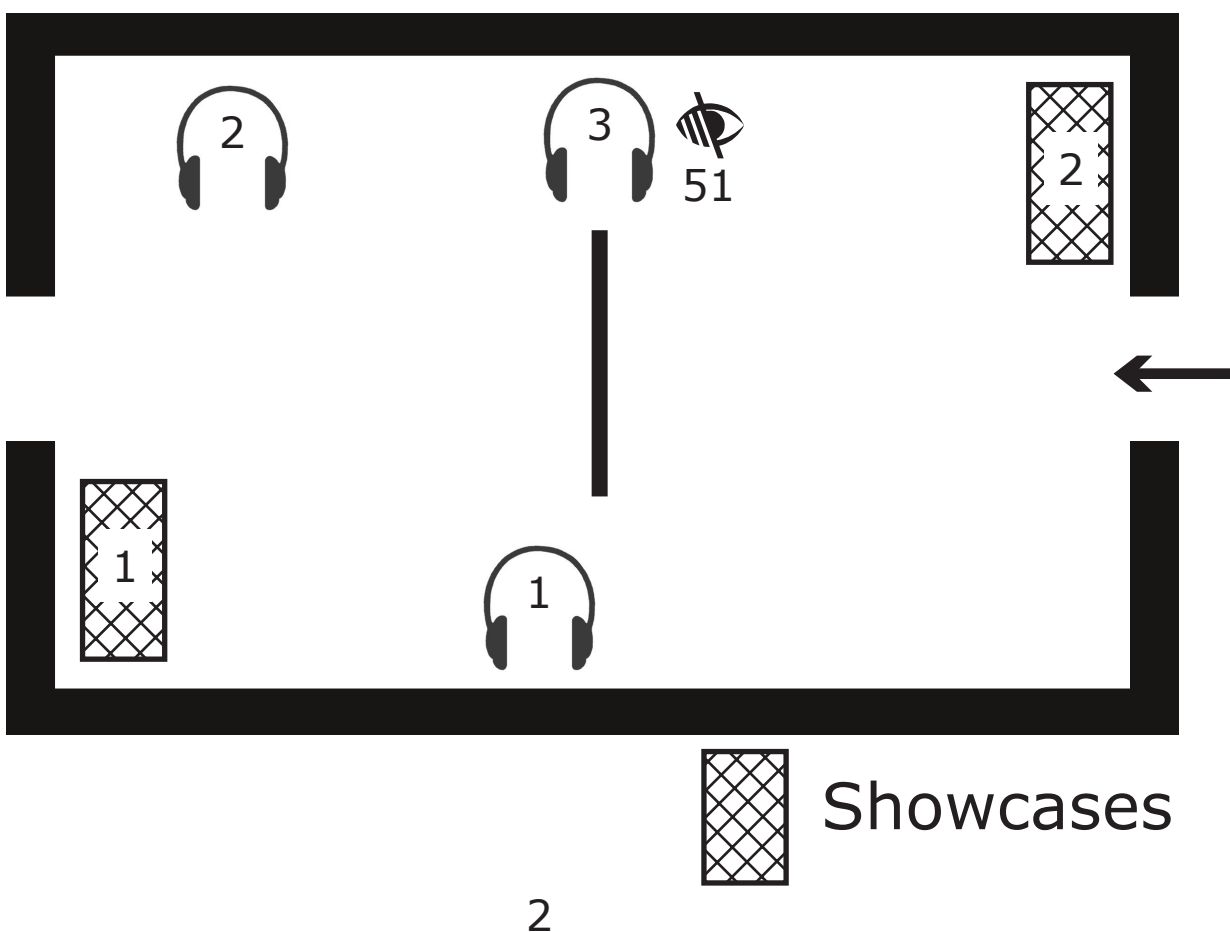
Isaak Brodsky, Vladimir Lenin and a
Demonstration, 1919



51 Boris Kustodiev, Demonstration
on Uritsky Square, 1921



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Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

Main Galleries:

11 February – 17 April 2017

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List of works

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Revolution:

Russian Art 1917–1932

One hundred years after the Revolution, this exhibition explores the rich diversity of art made in Russia during one of the most turbulent periods in modern history.

In October 1917 Vladimir Lenin and the socialist Bolshevik Party swept to power and ended centuries of autocratic rule under the Tsars. Shortly afterwards, civil war broke out as the Reds (Communists) and Whites (Tsarist Russians) fought for control.

After Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin rose to power. Under his dictatorship the Soviet Union, as the republic was now known, became increasingly repressive. Freedom of the individual was crushed in favour of a collective ideology.

At first, avant-garde artists embraced the Revolution and the promise of a new art for a new world. But by the late 1920s they were condemned by the Soviet authorities, who promoted what became known as Socialist Realism, a style that was easy for the masses to understand.

For a few years these different approaches co-existed, a plurality celebrated in the landmark exhibition 'Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic' in 1932, the inspiration for the present exhibition.

Like that show, 'Revolution' places avant-garde artists together with Socialist Realists in the context of the revolutionary times in which they worked.

Alongside such well-known painters as Kazimir Malevich, Vasily Kandinsky and Marc Chagall, figures less familiar in the West are introduced, such as Pavel Filonov, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin and Alexander Deineka.

This exhibition celebrates the vitality and variety of art in the fifteen years after the Revolution. In line with Communist ideals, artists were encouraged to make art for everyday life that would reach a wide audience.

In addition to painting and sculpture, they created innovative work in photography, film and the graphic arts, as well as ceramics and textiles.

But, in 1932 Stalin decreed that Socialist Realism was the only acceptable style for the Soviet Union, ending an era of dazzling creativity that flourished in desperate times.



Salute the Leader

In October 1917 Lenin and his Bolshevik Party seized power from the provisional government that had deposed Nicholas II in March of that year, a coup that had brought the Russian Empire to an end.

Overnight the Bolsheviks became the ruling party, but with 350,000 followers they were a significant minority in a country of 140 million people. Mass propaganda was, therefore, a vital tool in spreading Bolshevik ideology to an overwhelmingly rural and largely illiterate population.

In April 1918 Lenin announced his Plan for Monumental Propaganda. Painting and sculpture, and even such everyday items as fabrics and ceramics, promoted Bolshevik ideology and glorified the leader.

Palaces were festooned with posters and slogans, and grandiose plaster-cast monuments were temporarily erected to honour the Party and its luminaries. Regular festivals and street parades were organised, at which red revolutionary banners, commissioned by factories, were proudly carried aloft by workers.

Russia was a profoundly Christian country but soon the Russian Orthodox Church was banned. 'Icons' of Lenin replaced those of Christ.

When Lenin died in 1924, he was revered like a religious saint and his body was permanently enshrined in a mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square. Petrograd (formerly St Petersburg) was renamed Leningrad.

Although Lenin had personally opposed Stalin as his successor, the cult status that Lenin acquired after his death legitimised Bolshevik power and, eventually, Stalin's autocratic rule.

List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Moisey Nappelbaum

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

1922

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Isaak Brodsky

Vladimir Lenin and a
Demonstration

1919

Oil on canvas

The State Historical Museum, Moscow



Kliment Redko

Insurrection

1925

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

A diamond of fire burns the city, turning it into a prison that reflects the artist's increasingly negative view of the Bolshevik regime.

Redko, who was trained as an icon painter, adopts the composition of a traditional Christ in Majesty icon, but replaces Christ with the figure of Lenin, surrounded by his disciples.

Because these figures include Trotsky and others who would soon be denounced by Stalin, the painting was hidden until the reform of the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

Adolf Strakhov

Lenin 1870–1924

1924

Poster reproduction

© Communist propaganda poster/Universal History

Archive/uig/Bridgeman Images

Georgy Rublev

Portrait of Joseph Stalin

c. 1930

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

This informal, domestic portrait offers a marked contrast to the many official portraits of Stalin. Rublev, who was still in his twenties and experimenting with a deliberately primitive style of painting, did not intend to create a subversive picture of the dictator.

Nevertheless, it was unthinkable to show it to Stalin or exhibit it in public, so the work remained hidden in Rublev's studio until the artist's death.

Isaak Brodsky

Portrait of Joseph Stalin

1927

Oil on canvas

The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St Petersburg

Isaak Brodsky

Lenin in Smolny

1930

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Brodsky, a prominent realist artist of the era, painted Lenin many times. This portrait of the leader in the Bolshevik headquarters in Petrograd, produced after his death but based on earlier drawings, became the archetypal image of Lenin in the Soviet Union.

Although an official portrait, it is an intimate portrayal of Lenin, who sits quietly writing a letter, while the empty armchair seems to invite the viewer to join him.

Boris Kustodiev



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Demonstration on Uritsky Square
on the Day of the Opening of the
Second Comintern Congress in
July 1920
1921

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Central display

Nikolai Terpsikhorov

First Motto

1924

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Vera Mukhina

Flame of the Revolution

1922–1923

Bronze-toned cast of 1954

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

This sculpture was Mukhina's entry for the competition to design a monument honouring the Revolutionary Yakov Sverdlov. The competition was part of Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda.

Reconstruction of a Revolutionary Banner with the Slogan "All Power to the Soviets"

Paint on double-bonded fabric

Reconstruction by India Harvey, 2016

Arkady Shaiket

Red Square

1926

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Alexei Shchusev

Lenin Mausoleum

1929

Gouache, ink and pencil on paper

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Alexei Shchusev

Model of Lenin's Mausoleum 1924

Wood

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Defying Russian Orthodox tradition, Lenin's body was not buried but instead displayed for public worship in a specially designed mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow.

Shchusev's wooden mausoleum was partly inspired by Ancient Egyptian pyramids. The permanent structure in marble and granite, which still stands today, combines the grandeur of the Socialist Realist style with elements of avant-garde architecture.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Beside Lenin's Coffin

1924

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

This painting of "holy" Lenin in his coffin glows with a preternatural, divine light.

Based on sketches made at Lenin's funeral, the work was excluded from public display for many years, as it was unacceptable to show the leader dead.

Display case 1

Unknown

Stalin as the Glorious Leader

1928

Lacquer, tempera and gold paint on papier mâché

The Petr Aven Collection

Mikhail Adamovich Dulevo Porcelain Factory, Moscow

Plate Depicting the Second Interim
Wooden Mausoleum of Vladimir
Lenin, which Preceded the Present
Granite Mausoleum
1924

Enamel paint on porcelain, gilding

The Petr Aven Collection

Mikhail Adamovich

State Porcelain Factory, Petrograd

Cup Depicting Leon Trotsky
with the Inscription "Red Army
Workers' Defence"
1923

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Maria Lebedeva

State Porcelain Factory, Leningrad

Decorative Vase with the
inscription "The Liberated People"
and Vladimir Lenin's Portrait under
Banners and Depictions of Scenes
of Life in Different Nations
1929

Enamel paint on porcelain, gilding, etching on gold

The Petr Aven Collection

Nikolai Demkov

Kerchief with Portrait of Lenin in
the Centre and Trotsky's Corner
Portrait Cut Out
1924

Cotton

The Burilin Ivanovo Museum of Local History, Ivanovo

(continued over)

Textiles, like other everyday objects, were used as Soviet propaganda. The portrait of Trotsky printed on this headscarf was cut out at some point after Stalin expelled him from the Communist Party in 1927.

Display case 2

184 Rudolf Vilde State Porcelain Factory, Petrograd

Plate with the Inscription

“Workers’ Victory 25 Oct.” on a
Red Banner

1919

Enamel paint on porcelain, silvering, gilding, etching on gold

The Petr Aven Collection

Natalia Danko

State Porcelain Factory, Petrograd

Woman Embroidering a Banner
1919

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Films:

Dziga Vertov

Film Truth (Kino-pravda), no. 21
January 1925

Produced by KultKino

Excerpt: 1 minute 5 seconds

Titled to evoke the Communist Party newspaper 'Pravda' ('Truth'), Vertov's newsreel series 'Film Truth' reported on current events with a keen ideological bias.

This memorial edition marking the first anniversary of Lenin's death included a novel graphic summary of his worsening health, followed by footage of mourners at his state funeral:

Felix Dzerzhinsky, first head of the Cheka (the military and security arm of the Party); the Red Army general Mikhail Frunze; Lenin's widow and his sister; and Stalin.

Sergei Eisenstein and Grigori Alexandrov

October
1928

Produced by Sovkino

Excerpts: 1 minute 10 seconds

Commissioned to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, this film is built around spectacular re-creations of key events, including Lenin's arrival at the Finland Station in Petrograd and the storming of the Winter Palace.

Counterpointing these were more conceptual sequences, such as the toppling of a statue of a Tsar, which is later shown in reverse motion to indicate the threat of counter-Revolutionaries.

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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Manager



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Audio tour



Main commentary



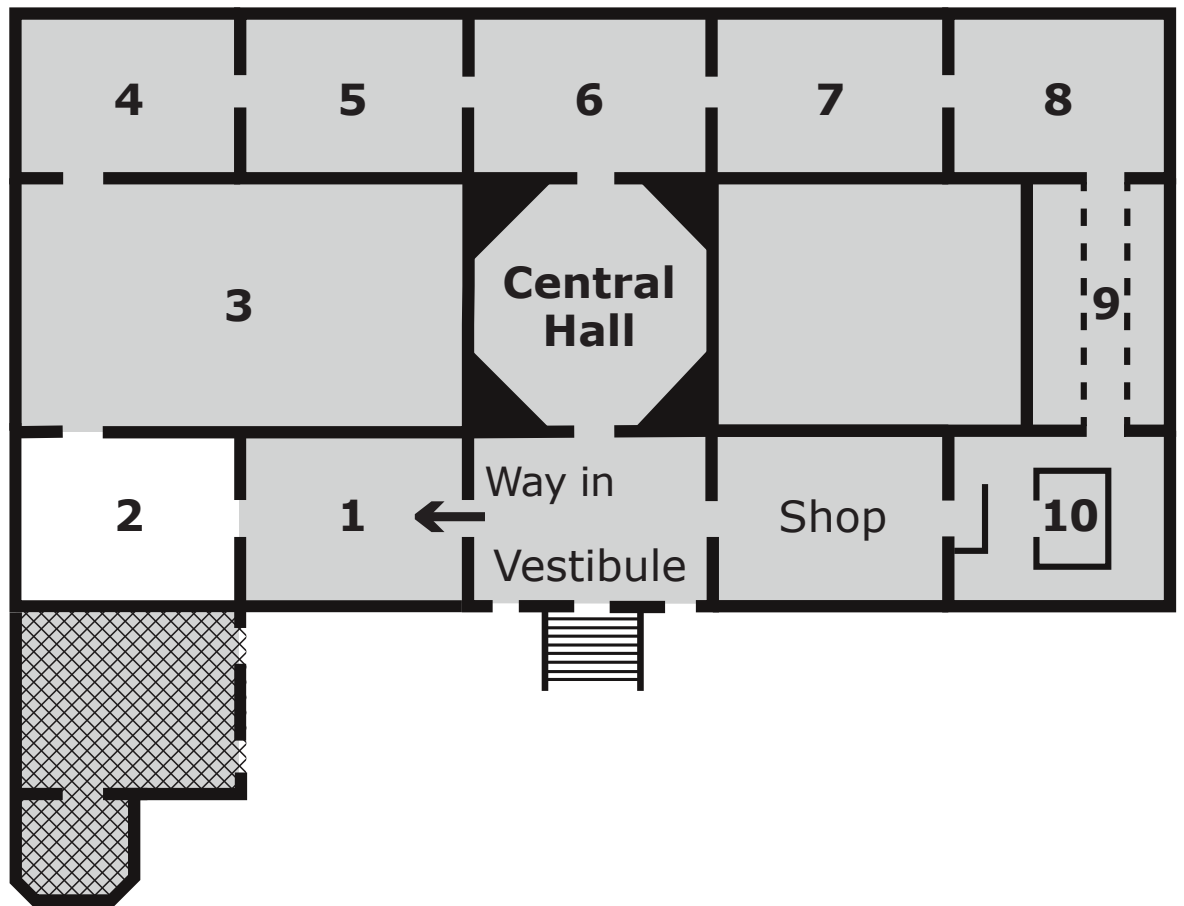
Descriptive commentary



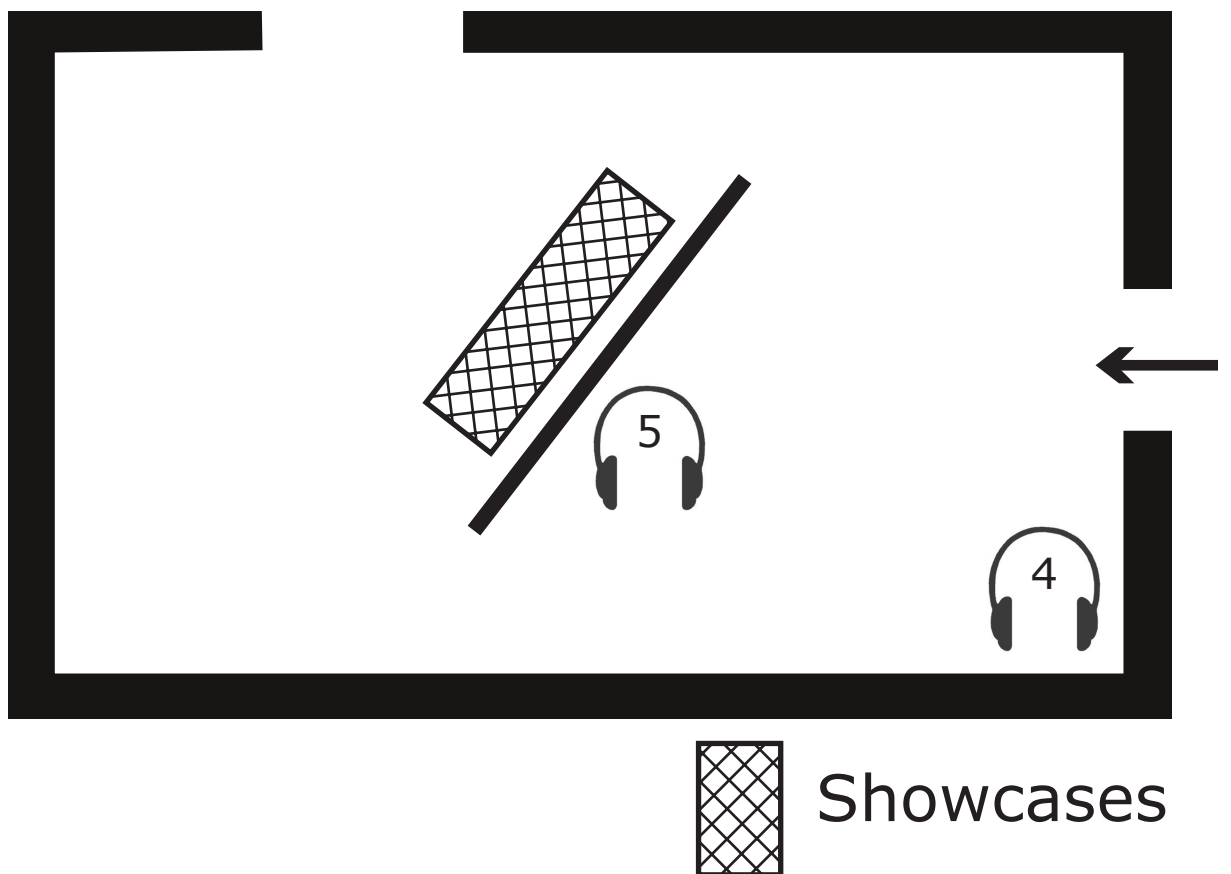
Man and Machine: introduction to this gallery



Alexander Deineka, Construction of New Workshops, 1926



You are in 2



Showcases

Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

Main Galleries:

11 February – 17 April 2017

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Man and Machine

Stalin's principal goal was to turn the Soviet Union into a world power by expanding its industrial production.

In 1928 he introduced the first of his Five-year Plans, which set targets for every factory. Physical labour and the healthy, efficient worker – both female and male – would bring advances in industry and communal wealth.

A new breed of superhero workers known as “shock-workers” symbolised this access to power through a synthesis of man and machine.

Painters, graphic designers, photographers, film-makers, ceramicists and textile designers were all encouraged to promote industry and the heroic worker.

Photography was perhaps the medium best suited to capturing the visual drama of industrial machinery.

As they could be reproduced for mass consumption in magazines and posters, photographs played a vital role in conveying political messages to the people.

Film also reached a wide audience. Sequences in Dziga Vertov's film 'The Man with a Movie Camera' (1929) brilliantly suggest the aesthetic appeal of industrial processes and modernity.

Workers were seen as the liberated proletariat who no longer had to sell their life and labour for the profit of others. Together they collectively owned the means of production in what Karl Marx had called a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The reality, however, was strikingly at odds with this ideal. Many workers were effectively slaves, and strikers and slow workers were imprisoned or shot. Thousands died in accidents, of starvation or from freezing temperatures.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Vladimir Mayakovsky

Blacksmith

March 1921

Recreation by Sofia Jonsson, 2016, of a design for a
Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) Stencil

Arkady Shaiket

Brigade of Shock-workers

1928

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Ignatovich

Crankshafts

1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Alexander Rodchenko

Steering Wheels

1929

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Ignatovich

Generator

1929

Gelatin silver print (stamped)

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Large high-performance machines demonstrated the modernisation of Soviet Russia and its growing energy production. The electricity generator became a source of wonder and pride.

Here Ignatovich focused on the machine itself, as if it were a robotic creature newly created. This persuasive image, which was accessible to the masses through publication, has a message: working together, man and machine produce unprecedented power.

Arkady Shaiket

Komsomol at the Wheel 1929

Print from the 1950s

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

This image promotes the strong, heroic worker, a member of the Komsomol Communist youth organisation whose muscular strength is harnessed to the power of industrial machinery.

Posed high up behind a great wheel, he is an ideal as anonymous and perfect in his way as a Classical sculpture.

Georgi Zelma

Crane Operator

c. 1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Ignatovich

Tightening the Bolt: Lever Controls
for Tramways

1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Georgi Zelma

Red Army Soldiers by Power Cable

1931

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Ignatovich

Stretching Cables

1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Arkady Shaiket

Construction of the Moscow Telegraphic Centre

1928

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Natan Altman

Russia. Labour

1921

Paper, enamel and charcoal on mahogany

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Alexander Deineka

Let's Mechanise Donbass

c. 1930

Gouache and collage on paper

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

The coal-mining centre of Donbass, situated in the basin along the Donets River in eastern Ukraine, was massively developed by the Soviets in the 1920s. Deineka's design became a celebrated poster urging the mechanisation and electrification of industry, essential props of Stalin's first Five-year Plan.

The artist's method here is closer to Constructivist photomontage than to painting.

Vyacheslav Pakulin

Turbine Shop at the Factory

'Elektrosila'

1931–1932

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Ekaterina Zernova

Tomato Paste Factory

1929

Oil on canvas

The Astrakhan State Art Gallery

Nikolai Denisovsky

Cast Iron Output

1930

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Pavel Filonov

Tractor Workshop at the Putilov
Factory

1931–1932

Oil on canvas mounted on cardboard

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Alexander Deineka

Textile Workers

1927

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

In this textile factory heavy spools of thread are dragged away, while others are fixed in the looms or stored above them, depicted end on in a pattern of black circles.

Deineka assembled his compositions from collages of drawings, graphic images and photomontages. The spacious clarity and geometric structure of this painting show him combining an avant-garde visual vocabulary with figurative imagery.

Isaak Brodsky

Shock-worker from Dneprostoi 1932

Oil on canvas

The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St
Petersburg

Here Brodsky celebrates the hydroelectric dam on the Dnepr River, which fuelled factories employing half a million people. The shock-worker was a new breed of superhero worker, highly efficient and assigned the most strenuous tasks.

Central display

Alexander Deineka



Construction of New Workshops 1926

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Display case (back of central display)

Unknown

Kerchief Commemorating
the Second Congress of the
Trekhgornaya Textile Workers
1930s

Cotton fabric

JSC Trekhgornaya Manufactura, Moscow

Andrey Golubev

Red Spinner
1930

Cotton print fabric, chintz

The Burilin Ivanovo Museum of Local History, Ivanovo

Pre-revolutionary textile designs had mainly come from Parisian pattern books and were dominated by floral motifs. After the Revolution these patterns were rejected as bourgeois and thousands were destroyed.

This fabric depicting a textile factory is typical of the new, acceptable motifs reflecting idealised modern Soviet life.

Daria Preobrazhenskaya

Five Years in Four

1930

Chintz, cotton fabric

The Burilin Ivanovo Museum of Local History, Ivanovo

The title of this fabric refers to Stalin's aim to complete his first Five-year Plan for industry in only four years.

Liudmila Protopopova

Cup from the "Industrial" Tea Service

1931

Vitrified enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Mikhail Mokh, State Porcelain Factory, Leningrad

Tea Set 'Metal': Tray, Teapot,
Sugar-bowl, Milk Jug, Two Cups
with Saucers
1930

Enamel paint on glazed porcelain, gilding, etching on gold
The Petr Aven Collection

Russia's principal porcelain works, the Imperial Porcelain Factory, was founded in 1744. After the Bolshevik Revolution it was nationalised by the state, producing ceramics for government and public consumption.

The large quantities of white porcelain left over from imperial times were decorated with proletarian political subjects and called "agitational porcelain". Imperial monograms were simply painted over with the hammer and sickle.

Unknown State Porcelain Factory, Leningrad

Dish Depicting a Moulding
Workshop

1931

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Films:

Dziga Vertov

The Man with a Movie Camera

1929

Produced by VUFKU

1 minute 7 seconds

Vertov made this experimental film, without plot or intertitles, to demonstrate his belief that “life caught unawares” would interest audiences as much as the “opium” of fictional drama, a genre that he despised. We see a cinema audience fascinated by the exploits of a cameraman filming everyday life in Moscow and various Ukrainian cities.

Dziga Vertov

Enthusiasm

1930

Produced by VUFKU

Excerpt: 51 seconds

With ‘Enthusiasm’, Vertov was one of the first Soviet film-makers to use recorded sound. This ‘Symphony of the Donbass’ celebrated the industrial achievements of Stalin’s first Five-year Plan.

Vsevolod Pudovkin

The Deserter

1933

Produced by Mezhrabpom, USSR

Excerpt: 1 minute 9 seconds

A foreign shipyard completing an order for the Soviet Union is the setting for 'The Deserter', Pudovkin's delayed first sound film, which put into practice the radical manifesto for "asynchrony" that he had developed with Eisenstein in 1929.

Here, rapidly edited industrial sound and imagery also recall the Constructivist aspirations of the 1920s.

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Large
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Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Brave New World: introduction to this gallery



52 Alexander Deineka, The Defence of Petrograd, 1928



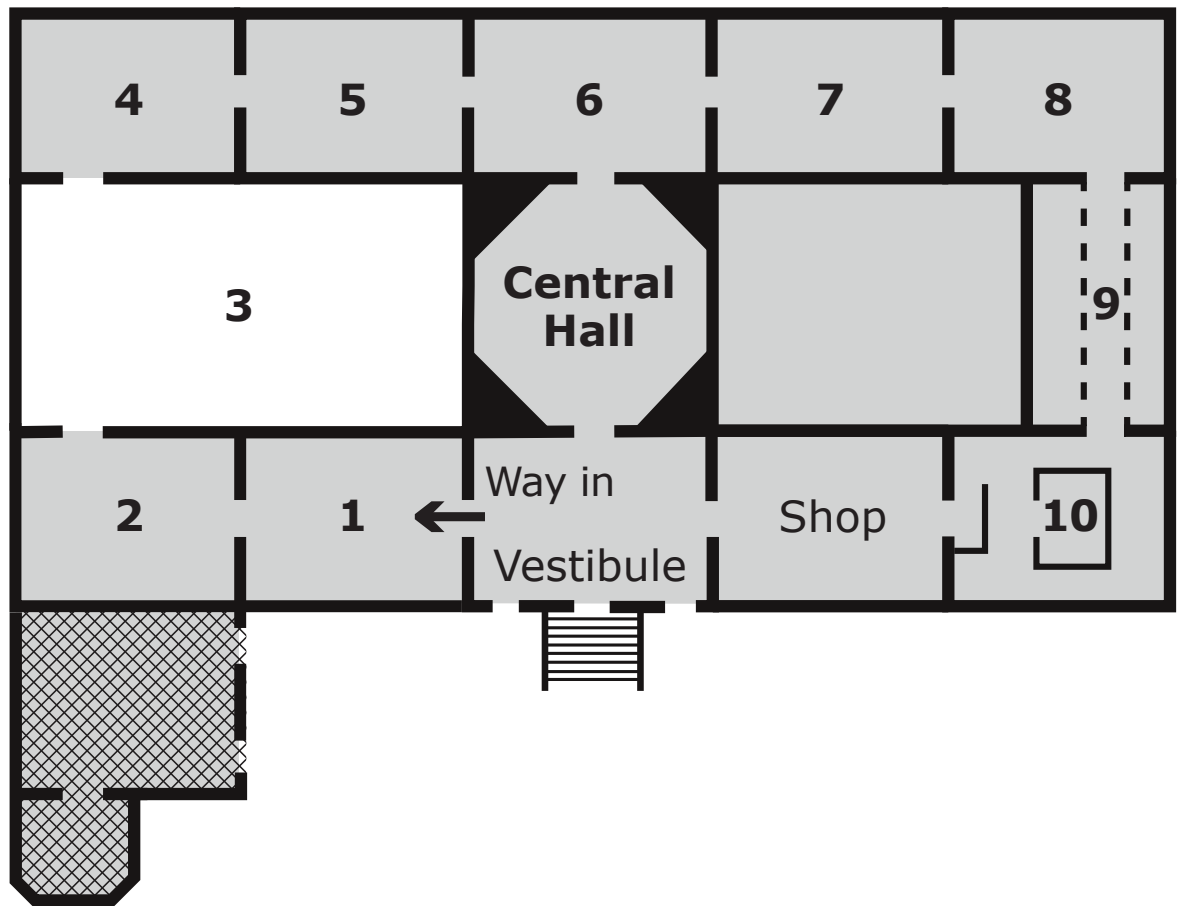
Vasily Kandinsky, Troubled, 1917



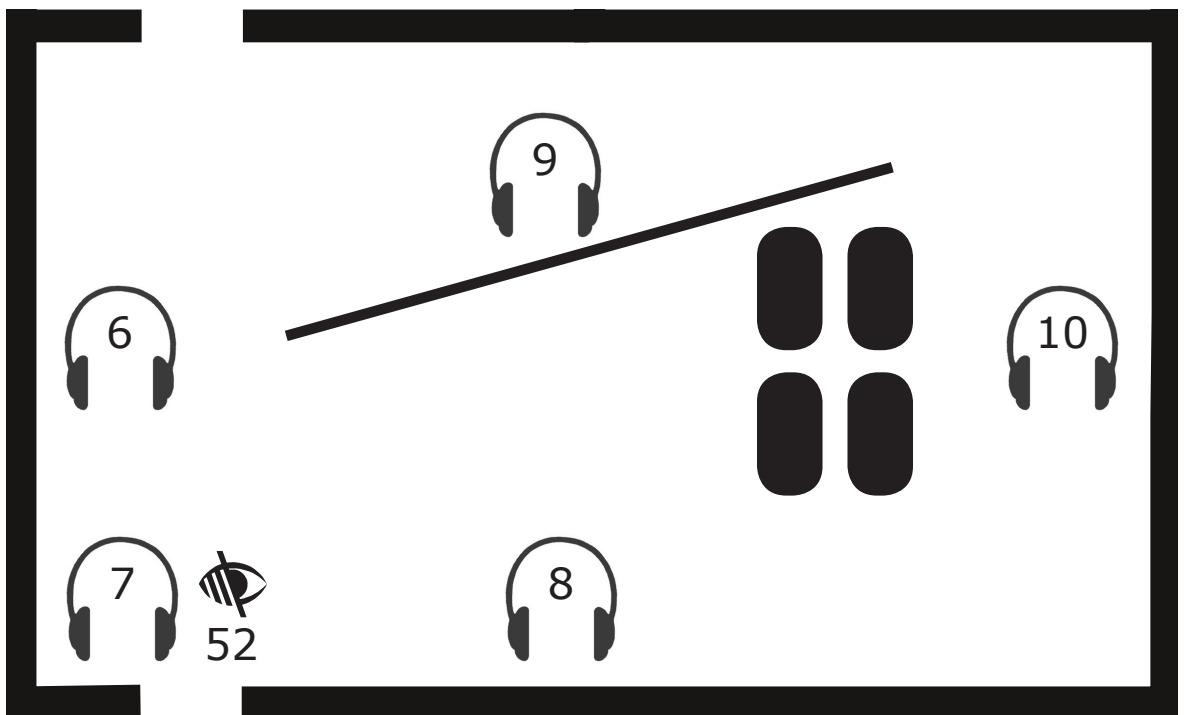
Alexander Golovin, Portrait of Vsevolod Meyerhold, 1917



El Lissitzky, Design for an Apartment, 1932



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 Seating

Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Brave New World

At first, the avant-garde passionately embraced the Revolution, which seemed to offer an opportunity to create an entirely new culture.

Radical innovations in Russian art had already occurred a few years before 1917, when artists such as Kazimir Malevich developed styles based on pure geometric form and colour.

But in the heady days after the Revolution, Vasily Kandinsky, El Lissitzky, Pavel Filonov, Lyubov Popova and many others seized their chance to shake off the past and produce brave new art.

The existing cultural infrastructure collapsed. Trains brightly painted with slogans and images, distributing propaganda materials, travelled throughout the country spreading Bolshevik ideas and art.

Avant-garde artists took on official cultural roles and gathered around the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (known as **NARKOMPROS**), led by Anatoly Lunacharsky, which recognised their status and secured them state commissions – an important source of work in the absence of a commercial art market.

The freedom and euphoria of the Revolution produced some of the most remarkable talents in art, theatre, music, literature and architecture.

But as early as 1921, their innovations were constrained by an increasingly repressive state. One of the greatest poets of the time, Alexander Blok, died that year, heartbroken by what the Revolution had so rapidly become.

For many, his death symbolised the death of the Revolution.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Boris Kustodiev

The Bolshevik

1920

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Kustodiev, who was disabled, described looking down on the Revolution from his window.

This big Bolshevik is a proletarian type, no more an individual than the crowd almost crushed beneath his feet. His size reflects the strength of the masses, that unstoppable stream of figures that spills around him and moves towards the church, perhaps to occupy or destroy it.



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7

Alexander Deineka

The Defence of Petrograd 1928

Oil on canvas

The Central Armed Forces Museum of the Russian Federation, Moscow

This painting looks back to October 1919, the height of the Civil War, when the White Army reached Petrograd. The Bolshevik government in Moscow was prepared to let the city fall, but the Revolutionary Leon Trotsky personally organised its defence.

Factory workers were given weapons and the White Army was forced to retreat. Weary soldiers, on the upper level, are replaced by the inexhaustible supply of workers ready to die for the Soviet state.

Vladimir Mayakovsky

Enemies Surround Us...

June 1921

Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) poster series
reproductions

Collection of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of
Merrill C. and Dalia Berman, New York, to American
Friends of the Israel Museum © The Israel Museum,
Jerusalem by Meidad Suchowolski

**Enemies surround us, We've a famine to
fight**

There cannot be a more desperate plight.

Now, let's ask ourselves a question –

What is the English worker's situation?

1

In England the bourgeoisie's warehouse is crammed with
goods

But do workers have proper food, or clothes, or boots?

2

On the contrary, their earnings disappear

3

And the capitalist runs off looking for better markets,

4

While the destitute worker is left with empty pockets.

5

Prices soar as fast as a horserace;

Too fast for wages to keep up the pace.

6

Then the capitalist closes the factory down –

Having found not a buyer in the whole town.

But the English Cheka will make him pay

For all of his dastardly deeds some day.

7

Take a look at what's happened:

England is rich, rolling in wealth –

But 2.5 million have no jobs.

8

Which means 6 million hungry mouths to feed
When you count the jobless and their families.

9

It's easy to foresee what's going to be –
The workers will have a look and see

10

And firmly take hold of warehouse and factory.

11

And since this crisis exists the world over –

12

Worldwide revolution is at their door –
As clearly as two times two is four.

Abram Shterenberg

The Poet and Painter Vladimir
Mayakovsky at His Last Exhibition
'Vladimir Mayakovsky: Twenty
Years' Work', Moscow
1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Mayakovsky said that an artist's palette was the street. He produced slogans and images for advertising hoardings, government shops and even sweet wrappers.

Here, he poses in front of a wall of hand-stencilled satirical posters that he made for the Russian Telegraph Agency (**ROSTA**) to promote literacy, hygiene and political events.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Portrait of the Poet Anna

Akhmatova

1922

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Anna Akhmatova's apartment in Leningrad was a place where the intelligentsia could meet to talk freely; it is now a museum.

Her first husband, Nikolai Gumilev, was executed for his anti-Bolshevik activities and their son Lev was sent to jail.

Her long-term partner, the art critic and curator Nikolai Punin, was arrested in 1949 for criticising the tastelessness of official portraits of Lenin. He died in the Gulag.

Kazimir Malevich

Portrait of the Art Critic and
Curator Nikolai Punin

1933

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Alexander Rodchenko

The Poet and Painter Vladimir
Mayakovsky

1924

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Mayakovsky was the greatest of the Russian Futurists – poets and painters determined to shock society. The Bolsheviks initially embraced him, but his scathing wit challenged the conservative tastes of the Party leaders.

By the late 1920s Mayakovsky was disillusioned with the regime. His plays satirised Soviet philistinism and in 1930, devastated by the Revolution's failure to match up to his dream, he shot himself.

150,000 people attended his funeral, while Stalin proclaimed him "the best and most talented poet of our Soviet epoch".

Moisey Nappelbaum

The Writer Maxim Gorky
1927

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Maxim Gorky's work, notably his play 'The Lower Depths' (1902), revealed the poverty and hardships of the Russian people.

He was a prominent figure in the Revolution but had a difficult relationship with Lenin's Bolsheviks: they publicly acclaimed him but he privately loathed their brutality.

Similarly, Stalin hailed Gorky as "the great proletarian writer", founding father of Soviet literature and inventor of Socialist Realism, but Gorky found it hard to condone the regime's increasingly extreme policies.

Moisey Nappelbaum

The Poet Anna Akhmatova

1924

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Anna Akhmatova was one of the most acclaimed poets in Soviet Russia. Her poems – sensuous, religious and erotic – were learned by heart by millions. The Bolshevik Commissar for Culture denounced her as "half-harlot, half-nun".

(continued over)

With her husband executed and her son in the Gulag, she devoted her masterpiece 'Requiem' (1935–1940) to Stalin's purges, defying the regime to close her "tormented mouth, through which one hundred million people scream".

Moisey Nappelbaum

The Poet Alexander Blok 1921

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

The Symbolist poet Blok wrote mystical verse steeped in images of beauty and decay.

He embraced the Revolution as a quasi-religious second coming, but soon became disillusioned.

When his requests to leave the Soviet Union for medical treatment were refused, the writer Maxim Gorky warned the Bolshevik leadership: "Blok is Russia's finest poet. If you forbid him to go abroad, and he dies, you and your comrades will be guilty of his death."

Permission was only granted several days after Blok died.

Moisey Nappelbaum

The Theatre Director Vsevolod Meyerhold
1929

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Meyerhold was a great experimental force in avant-garde theatre. He developed Biomechanics, an innovative method of acting in which emotions were expressed primarily through bodily movements.

(continued over)

In his plays, illusionistic scenery and staging were replaced by mechanical effects, circus and music-hall devices, and abstract costumes. He collaborated with leading figures of the avant-garde, including the composer Dmitri Shostakovich.

In 1940 Meyerhold was executed, a victim of Stalin's programme of persecution.

Film:

Vsevolod Meyerhold

Biomechanics

January 1928

Excerpt: 2 minutes 3 seconds

Meyerhold devised Biomechanics as a system of movement and gesture for acting and dance.

This first filmed demonstration features stabbing and archery. Rhythmic movements were used to indicate emotions, minimising illusion in favour of factual demonstrations of energy and tension.

This physical theatre was closely related to music hall, circus and puppetry. It became a powerful means of propaganda.

Moisey Nappelbaum

The Composer Dmitri

Shostakovich

1930s

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Shostakovich is one of the most significant composers of the twentieth century. His music combines the Romantic tradition with moments of atonality and a strong element of irony.

He had a troubled relationship with the Soviet authorities. After Stalin attended his daring opera 'Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District' in 1936, Shostakovich was censured as "an enemy of the people".

In 1948 he was denounced again, for "formalism" and "Western influences", and much of his music was banned.

Man Ray

The Film Director Sergei Eisenstein 1929

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Eisenstein was a pioneer of Soviet film. In Moscow he worked with the avant-garde theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold and had contact with the radical film director Dziga Vertov.

Eisenstein employed an innovative form of editing known as montage, in which independent shots collide or are superimposed. His films 'The Battleship Potemkin', 'The Strike' (both 1925) and 'October' (1928) are dynamic, dramatic responses to the Soviet requirement to represent the heroism of the Revolution.

Moisey Nappelbaum

The Composer Sergei Prokofiev Late 1940s

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

One of the greatest composers of the twentieth century, Prokofiev wrote the ballet 'Romeo and Juliet' (1935), the children's musical story 'Peter and the Wolf' (1936) and the score to Eisenstein's film 'Alexander Nevsky' (1938).

Prokofiev left Russia for the United States after the Revolution, later settling in Paris. In 1936, courted by the Soviet authorities with promises that were never kept, he returned to his homeland.

In 1948 he was forced to begin composing works glorifying the Soviet system.

Mikhail Prekhner

El Lissitzky

1934

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

In this carefully composed photograph the photojournalist Prekhner employs a plunging viewpoint and raking light to bring out the dynamic V-shape of the figure and his shadow. He pays homage to Lissitzky's own innovative geometric compositions.

El Lissitzky

Constructor (Self-portrait with Dividers)

1924

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Lissitzky trained as an architect-engineer and from 1922 travelled in Western Europe, meeting many of the avant-garde.

In this self-portrait he used multiple exposures and negatives to create a seamless composite image, his draughtsman's dividers presenting him as designer, architect and engineer.

The instrument is also an ancient symbol of God as the "architect of the universe".

Alexander Rodchenko

Narkomfin [People's Commissariat of Finance] Building 1932

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

This building of 1932 by Moisei Ginzburg and Ignaty Milinis marks a high point of international architecture in the Soviet Union.

An experiment in communal living, it was intended to house workers in basic apartments, without kitchens, to encourage them to use the collective canteen and crèche facilities.

El Lissitzky entered the competition to produce a standard design for the apartment interiors.

El Lissitzky

Design for an Apartment for the Narkomfin [People's Commissariat of Finance] Building, 1932

Reconstruction by Henry Milner, 2016

Wood, card, paper, metal and paint

Courtesy of Henry Milner

Lissitzky's model of a standard apartment in the Narkomfin building is lost, but his photomontages of the design are preserved in the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

The images show that he incorporated a small cutout figure of a child, furniture and photographic city views that were visible through the windows. They also reveal the materials with which he worked, and that he precisely followed the proportions of the building.

Using this information Henry Milner has constructed this model to full scale, bringing to life Lissitzky's vision. The clarity, simplicity and harmony of the spacious split-level interior perfectly embodied the new Soviet lifestyle.

Unknown

View of the Comintern Radio
Tower in Moscow by Vladimir
Shukhov from the wall of the
Donskoy Monastery
1935

Photograph facsimile

© Schusev State Museum of Architecture

Lyubov Popova

Space-force Construction
1921

Oil, tessellation on plywood

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Lyubov Popova

Space-Force Construction

1921

Oil with metallic powder on plywood

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

In 1921 Popova and other Constructivists concluded that painting could not be understood by the masses. They turned instead to design, with the aim of making useful objects for the new society.

In Popova's spatial constructions, oil paint was considered one medium among several and canvas gave way to new materials – plywood in this case.

She also designed fabrics, clothes and spectacular sets and costumes for Meyerhold's plays, and produced radical book and poster designs.



Vasily Kandinsky

Troubled

1917

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Alexander Tyshler

Formal-Colour Construction of
Red

1922

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Konstantin Yuon

New Planet

1921

Tempera on cardboard

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Mikhail Matiushin

Movement in Space

c. 1921

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Central display

Ivan Puni

Spectrum: Flight of Forms

1919

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Sofya Dymshits-Tolstaya

Propaganda Glass “Labour is
the Foundation of the RSFSR
[Russian Soviet Federative
Socialist Republic]”

1919–1921

Oil on glass

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Sofya Dymshits-Tolstaya

Propaganda Glass “Peace to the
Sheds, War on the Palaces”

1919–1921

Oil on glass

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Sofya Dymshits-Tolstaya

Propaganda Glass “Workers of the World, Unite!”

1919–1921

Oil on glass

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Dymshits-Tolstaya’s propaganda paintings were unconventional in their use of glass. They link images of workers’ tools with fragments of slogans from the early revolutionary years.

The Russian word-fragments here – **strana** (country) and **prolet** (proletariat) – are from Marx’s phrase “Workers of the World, Unite!”

Dymshits-Tolstaya later painted realistic Soviet portraits.

Pavel Filonov

Heads (Human in the World)

1925–1926

Oil on paper mounted on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Pavel Filonov

Formula of the Petrograd

Proletariat

1920–1921

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

In Filonov's complex paintings, figures reveal smaller, even more detailed images, a method that he referred to as "universal flowering". His images seem to emerge from the flow of memory, representing ancestors, folklore and urban groups. He called this synthesis of social elements a "formula".

Later, under pressure from the Soviet authorities, Filonov worked in a highly realistic style. He died of starvation during the Nazis' siege of Leningrad in 1941.

Pavel Filonov

Formula of Spring

1927–1929

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Vasily Kandinsky

Blue Crest

1917

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Boris Grigoriev

Commissar (People's Commissar
Anatoly Lunacharsky)

1921

Oil on canvas

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

In 1917 Lunacharsky became the first Soviet Commissar (Minister) of Public Enlightenment – Lenin's "cultural ambassador".

He was a prolific writer and art critic who supported the avant-garde as well as defending artistic pluralism. He was responsible for increased literacy in Russia and for the protection of historic buildings threatened by the Bolshevik Party.

When Stalin consolidated his power in the late 1920s, Lunacharsky lost all his important positions.

Yury Annenkov

Portrait of the Theatre Director
Vsevolod Meyerhold
1922

Pencil on paper

The Petr Aven Collection

Aristarkh Lentulov

Portrait of the Theatre Director
Alexander Tairov
1918–1919

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Alexander Tairov was an experimental theatre director who produced classical plays but borrowed techniques from contemporary cabaret and Indian and Japanese performance.



Alexander Golovin

Portrait of the Theatre Director
Vsevolod Meyerhold
1917

Oil on canvas

The St Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music

Vladimir Kozlinsky

Despite the Best Efforts of Our
Enemies over Three Years the
World Revolution Proceeds with
Gigantic Steps!
1920

Poster reproduction

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Molly Bretton, Access Manager



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Large
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Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Audio tour



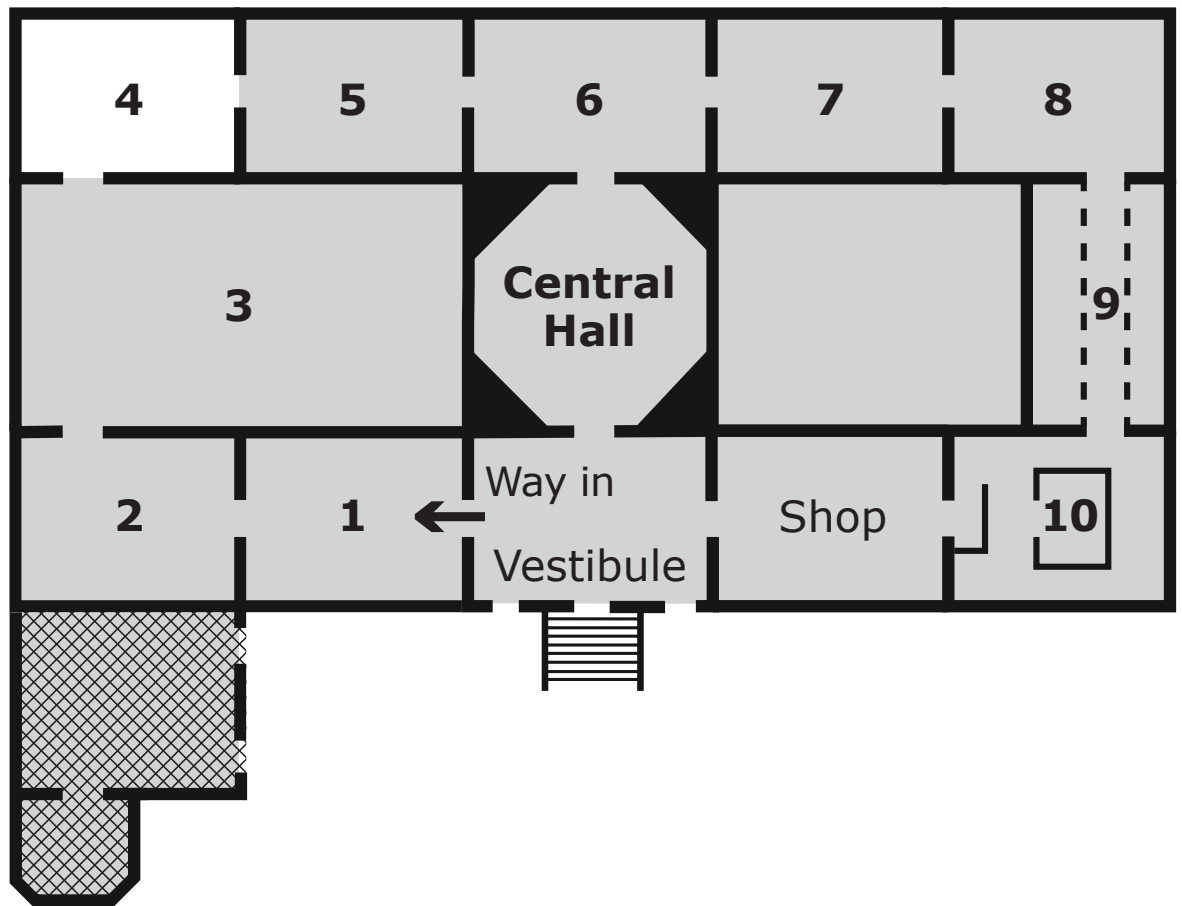
Main commentary



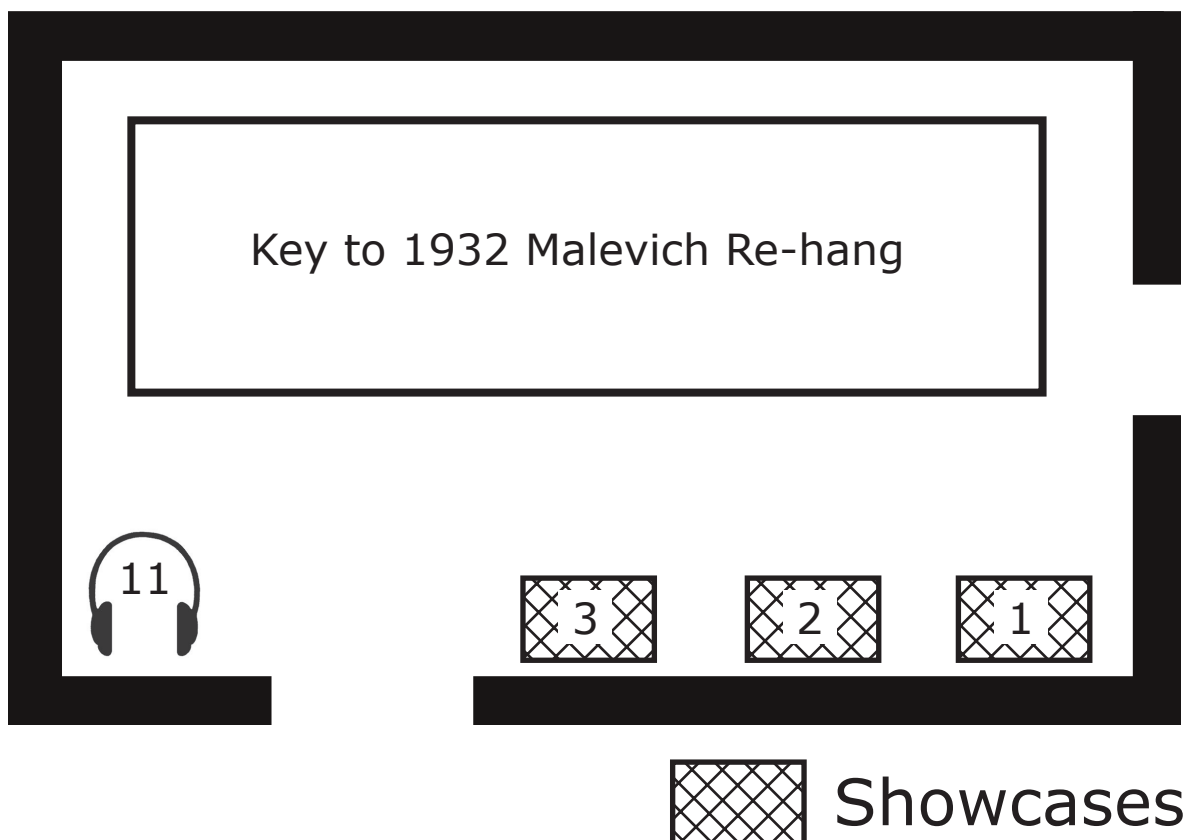
Descriptive commentary



Kazimir Malevich: introduction to this gallery



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Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Malevich Re-hang

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Kazimir Malevich

Kazimir Malevich was a leading painter of the Russian avant-garde.

A pioneer of geometric abstraction, he was a mystic who believed that art should express spirituality. In 1915 Malevich invented Suprematism, a purely abstract style epitomised by his 'Black Square', which he said represented the "zero of form".

The painting became a symbol of the new art.

In the late 1920s Malevich's abstract paintings were denounced by the Soviet authorities, for whom they failed to express social realities. But in 1932 he was invited to hang a room of his own works in the exhibition 'Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic' at the State Russian Museum in Leningrad.

This gallery presents an almost exact re-creation of that display. 'Red Square (Pictorial Realism of a Peasant Woman in Two Dimensions)' and 'Black Square' (a later version of the 1915 original) occupy the centre.

Complex Suprematist canvases are exhibited with Malevich's later, more figurative paintings, in which blank faces hauntingly evoke lost identity on the collective farm. These were Malevich's attempt to conform to the Soviet dogma that required art to be representational.

On an altar-like table he assembled **arkhitektoniki** (architectons), radical prototypes of buildings without doors or windows. The smaller architectons here are the plaster originals and the larger models are reconstructions.

Malevich put a figure on top of the tallest architecton, which was displayed against a colourful Suprematist painting – an image of Soviet man caught up in a dynamic vision of the cosmos.

Opposite the re-created display are works by Malevich's followers Nikolai Suetin and Ilya Chashnik, who made beautiful ceramics for the State Porcelain Factory using designs for everyday objects derived from Malevich's art.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Kazimir Malevich

Desk and Room

1913

Oil on canvas

On loan from a private collection

In his early work Malevich experimented with different styles, from Symbolism to Fauvism, Cubism and Futurism. This painting is one of the most important demonstrations of his investigation of Cubist and Futurist analyses of form and space.

Malevich's tireless exploration of styles eventually concluded with the movement that he called Suprematism.

Unknown

Malevich with His Display at
the Exhibition 'Fifteen Years of
Artists of the Russian Soviet
Republic', State Russian Museum,
Leningrad
1932–1933

Photograph facsimile

© Photo collection of V. Tsarenkov

Ivan Klyun

Non-objective Painting According
to the Principle of Light-Colour
1921

Oil on cardboard

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Ilya Chashnik

Suprematism

1924–1925

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Ivan Klyun

Composition

1920

Oil on cardboard

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Display case 1

Kazimir Malevich

Plate with Suprematist Design

1923

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Kazimir Malevich

Plate with Suprematist Design:
Dynamic Composition
1923

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Display case 2

Nikolai Suetin

**State Porcelain Factory,
Leningrad**

Coffee Pot

1925

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Nikolai Suetin
State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd

Plate with Suprematist Design
1923

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Ilya Chashnik
State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd

Plate with Suprematist Design
1923

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Nikolai Suetin

**State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd**

Suprematist Inkwell (with a Disc)
with Removable Cover
1923

Enamel paint on porcelain, gilding, etching on gold

The Petr Aven Collection

Display case 3

Nikolai Suetin

**State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd**

Cup and Saucer with Suprematist
Design
1923

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Nikolai Suetin

State Porcelain Factory, Leningrad

Plate with a Woman Depicted in a
Suprematist Manner
1934

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Nikolai Suetin

State Porcelain Factory, Leningrad

Plate Depicting Three Silhouettes
1929

Paint on glazed porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Nikolai Suetin

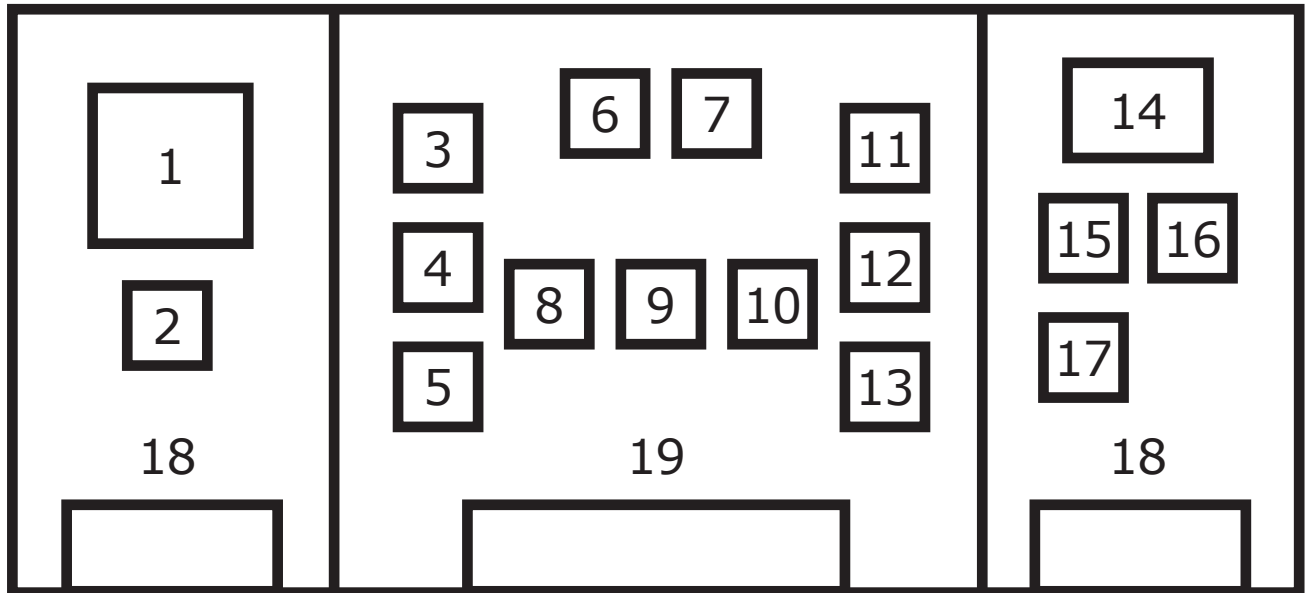
State Porcelain Factory, Leningrad

Vase with Ornamental
Suprematist Elements
1930

Vitrified enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Key to 1932 Malevich Re-hang of his display at the exhibition 'Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic', State Russian Museum, Leningrad, 1932



1 Sportsmen

1930–1931

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

2 The Red House

1932

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

3 Female Torso

1928–1929

Oil on plywood

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

4 Female Portrait

1928–1929

Oil on plywood

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

5 Torso (Prototype of a New Image)

1928–1929

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

6 Black Square

1932

Oil on canvas

The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

7 Red Square

(Painterly Realism of a Peasant Woman in Two Dimensions)

1915

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

8 Suprematism

1915–1916

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

9 Dynamic Suprematism

Supremus

c. 1915

Oil on canvas

Tate: Purchased with assistance from the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1978

Tate have generously lent this painting to the exhibition in place of 'Supremus 56' (1916–1917), which could not be available for loan.

10 Suprematism (Supremus No.58)

1916

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

11 Peasants

c. 1930

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

12 Landscape with Five Houses

1928–1929

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

13 Three Female Figures

c. 1930

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

14 Red Cavalry

c. 1932

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

15 To Reaping (Marfa and Vanka)

1928–1929

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

16 Suprematistic Construction of Colours

1928–1929

Oil on plywood

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

17 Woman with Rake

1930–1932

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

18 Architectons and Figurines

Late 1920s

Plaster

Collection of Vladimir Tsarenkov

19 Architectons and Figurines

Late 1920s

Reconstruction by Henry Milner 2016

Modelboard, clay and paint

Courtesy of Henry Milner

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Large
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Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



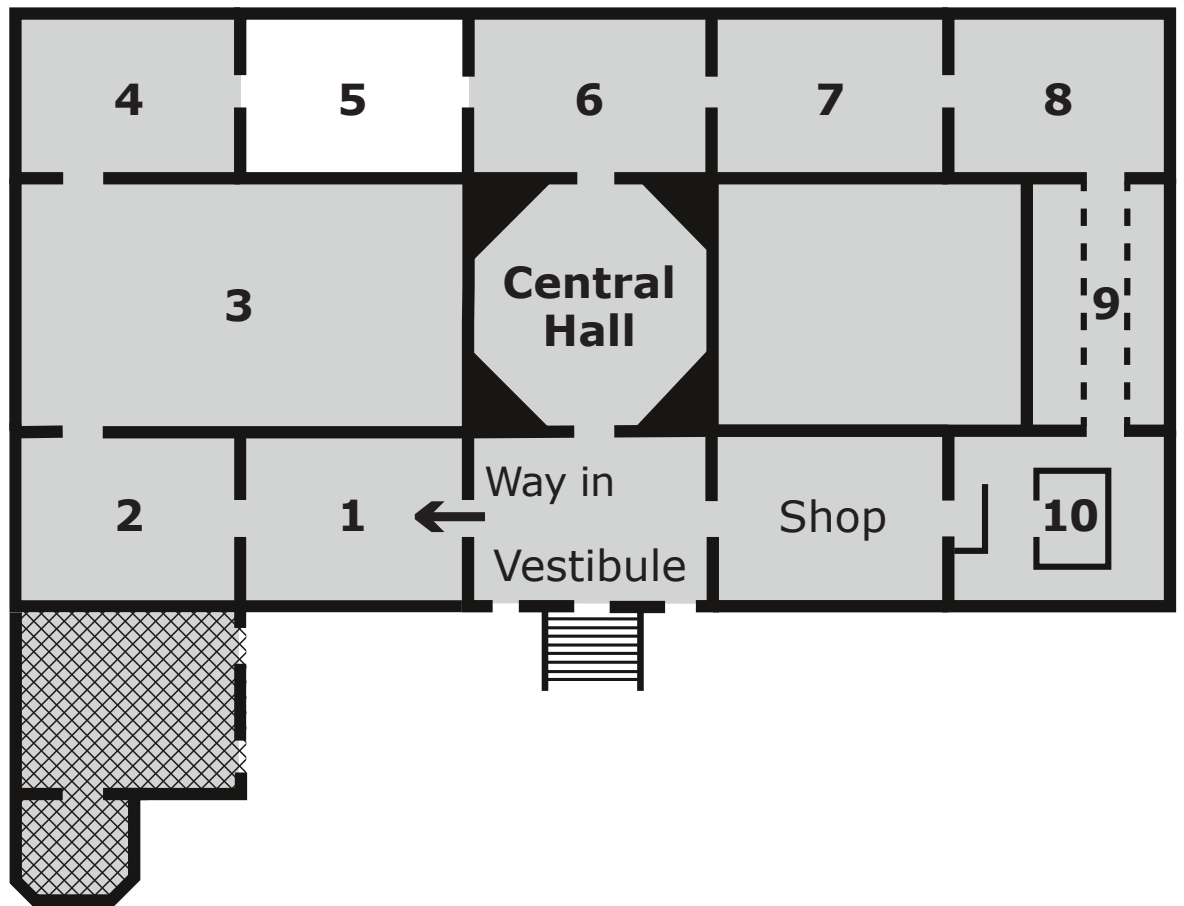
Fate of the Peasants: introduction to this gallery



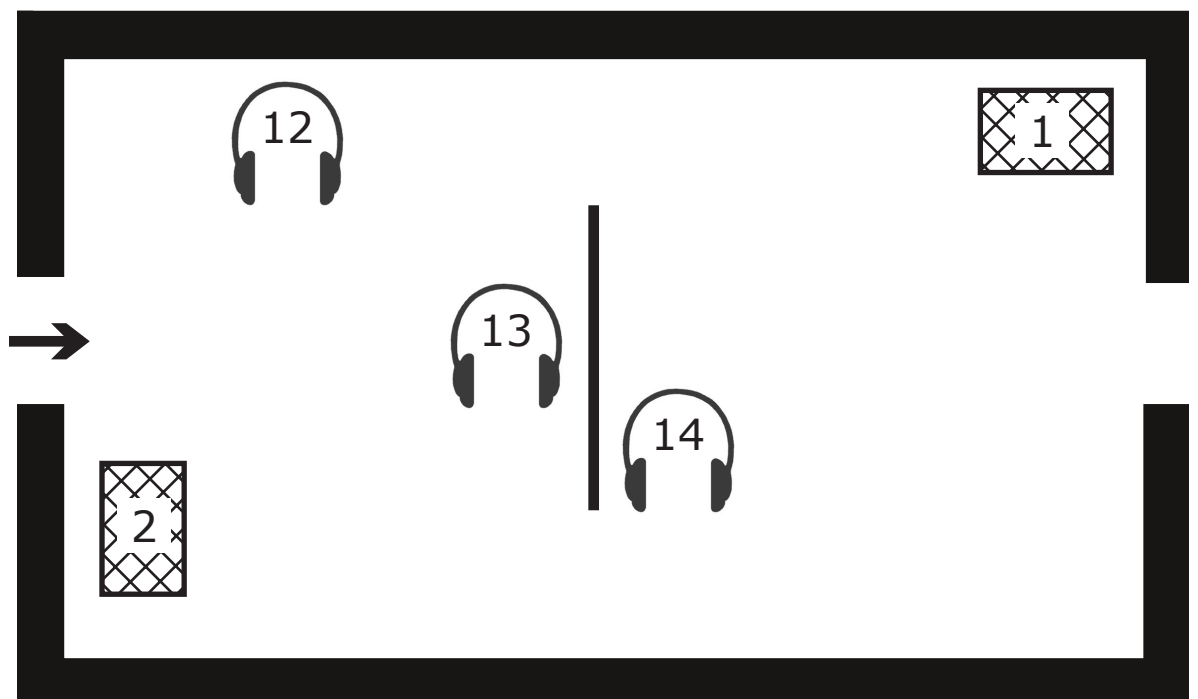
Boris Grigoriev, Land of Peasants, 1917




Kazimir Malevich, Head of a Peasant, 1928–1929



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 Showcases

Revolution

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Fate of the Peasants

When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they promised the peasants ownership of the land, a pledge that they had no intention of keeping.

The devastating effects of the Civil War (1917–1922) and the catastrophic famine and drought that followed left many peasants with no means of survival.

After the Revolution, the peasants had been promoted as equal partners with industrial workers, symbolised by the hammer and sickle of the Soviet emblem. But the industrialisation of agriculture could not be achieved with the old methods. The image of industry embracing agriculture was undermined by hunger and empty fields.

Stalin's first Five-year Plan (1928) introduced collectivisation, combining farms into ever-larger agricultural communes (**Kolkhozy**).

Villagers were uprooted from their homes and their ancient way of life was wiped out. Desperate peasants destroyed their stock and equipment in protest, but over half the nation's farms were collectivised and famine returned.

Malevich captured the peasants' loss of identity in his figures with featureless faces, but painting, photography, film and journals of the period mostly celebrated Soviet prosperity in images of golden wheat fields, happy peasants and gleaming new tractors – utopian visions of a future to be reached through hard work.

In fact, millions died.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Boris Grigoriev

Old Dairy Woman

1917

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Alexei Pakhomov

Reaper (Harvest)

1928

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Ivan Lebedev and S. N. Ridman

**All-Union Agricultural Exhibition,
Moscow
1923**

Poster

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

The All-Union Agricultural Exhibition was a massive propaganda exercise, to which peasants were brought to admire plentiful produce from throughout the Soviet Union, displayed in wooden pavilions.

The reality of Soviet agriculture was in fact much bleaker.

Sergey Burylin

Tractor

Late 1920s

Roller print on calico

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Dmitry Moor

Help!

1921

Poster reproduction

© Universal History Archive/UIG/ Bridgeman Images

Boris Ignatovich

Reading the Newspaper at the
Collective Farm

1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Arkady Shaiket

Lenin's Lamp: Light Bulb in a
Peasant House

1925

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Georgi Zelma

Brigade Meeting on the
Collective Farm

1929

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Arkady Shaiket

Electrification of Lapatino Village
1925

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Grigory Ryazhsky

The Collective Farm Team Leader
1932

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Pavel Filonov

Collective Farm Worker
1931

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

The granite-like face and expressionless eyes of this anonymous farm worker convey a stoical resignation to his fate. Behind him are the buildings of the collective farm.

Konstantin Rozhdestvensky

Family in a Field
1932

Oil on cardboard

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Alexei Pakhomov

Portrait of Shock-worker,
Molodtsova
1931

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Alexei Pakhomov

Haymaking
1925

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Central display



Boris Grigoriev

Land of Peasants
1917

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg



Kazimir Malevich

Head of a Peasant
1928–1929

Oil on plywood

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Malevich painted this peasant's face and beard in bright red and white geometric sections.

In the background, peasants are working in a line in the fields. Strips of different crops stretch to the horizon, as colourful and decorative as patchwork, while aeroplanes fly overhead in a metallic sky.

On this large collective farm, the old way of life is transformed by the new.

Nikolai Suetin

A Woman with a Saw

c. 1920

Oil on wood

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Display case 1

Unknown

Kolkhoz Box

c. 1923

Lacquer, tempera and gold paint on paper mâché

The Petr Aven Collection

After the Revolution the Bolsheviks eradicated the Russian Orthodox Church.

In response, icon painters adapted their refined techniques, combined with influences from Japanese lacquer work and Russian folk art, to produce new Soviet images for papier-mâché trays and boxes like the one displayed here, which shows a scene on a collective farm.

This miniature painting technique is known as Palekh, after the village where it originated.

Vladimir Maslov

Tractor

1925

Ornamental chintz, cotton fabric

The Burilin Ivanovo Museum of Local History, Ivanovo

Natalia Danko

**State Porcelain Factory,
Leningrad**

Dancer

1929

Naum Kongiser

**State Porcelain Factory,
Leningrad**

A Radio for the Village

1927

Natalia Danko

On Guard: Women's Watch 1938

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Natalia Danko depicts a young peasant woman turning in a rhythmic folk dance, keeping alive a timeless Russian identity.

Peasant women also protected the crops, as Danko's other item here shows.

In the third porcelain piece, a young Communist of the Pioneer movement, recognisable by his red scarf, teaches a bearded old peasant how to use headphones to hear Radio Moscow

Elizaveta Rozendorf
State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd

Dish Depicting a Girl with a
Pumpkin

1920

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Elizaveta Rozendorf
State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd

Dish Depicting a Reaper

1920

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Sergei Chekhonin

Proletariat Porcelain and Faience Factory, Bronnitsa

Plate Depicting a Great Star with
a Sheaf of Corn, Inscribed: "Who
Is Not With Us Is Against Us"
1922

Vitrified enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Display case 2

Ivan Ivanovich Riznich State Porcelain Factory, Leningrad

Large Vase with Peasant Dance
1929

Vitrified enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Films:

Sergei Eisenstein and Grigori Alexandrov

The Old and the New
1929

Produced by Sovkino

Excerpt: 2 minutes 24 seconds

Originally commissioned to make a film about

(continued over)

the collectivisation of agriculture, Eisenstein only returned to this project after making 'October' (1928), by which time Stalin's agricultural policy had changed.

Mechanisation became the new theme of this film, with the heroine Marfa championing a cream-separator and the traditional scythe challenged by harvesting machinery.

Alexander Dovzhenko

Earth

1930

Produced by VUFKU

Excerpt: 54 seconds

In this poetic drama the Ukrainian-born Dovzhenko portrayed the attitudes of different generations towards the changes in village life. In this excerpt the arrival of the first tractor is greeted with incredulity and exultation.

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Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Eternal Russia: introduction to this gallery



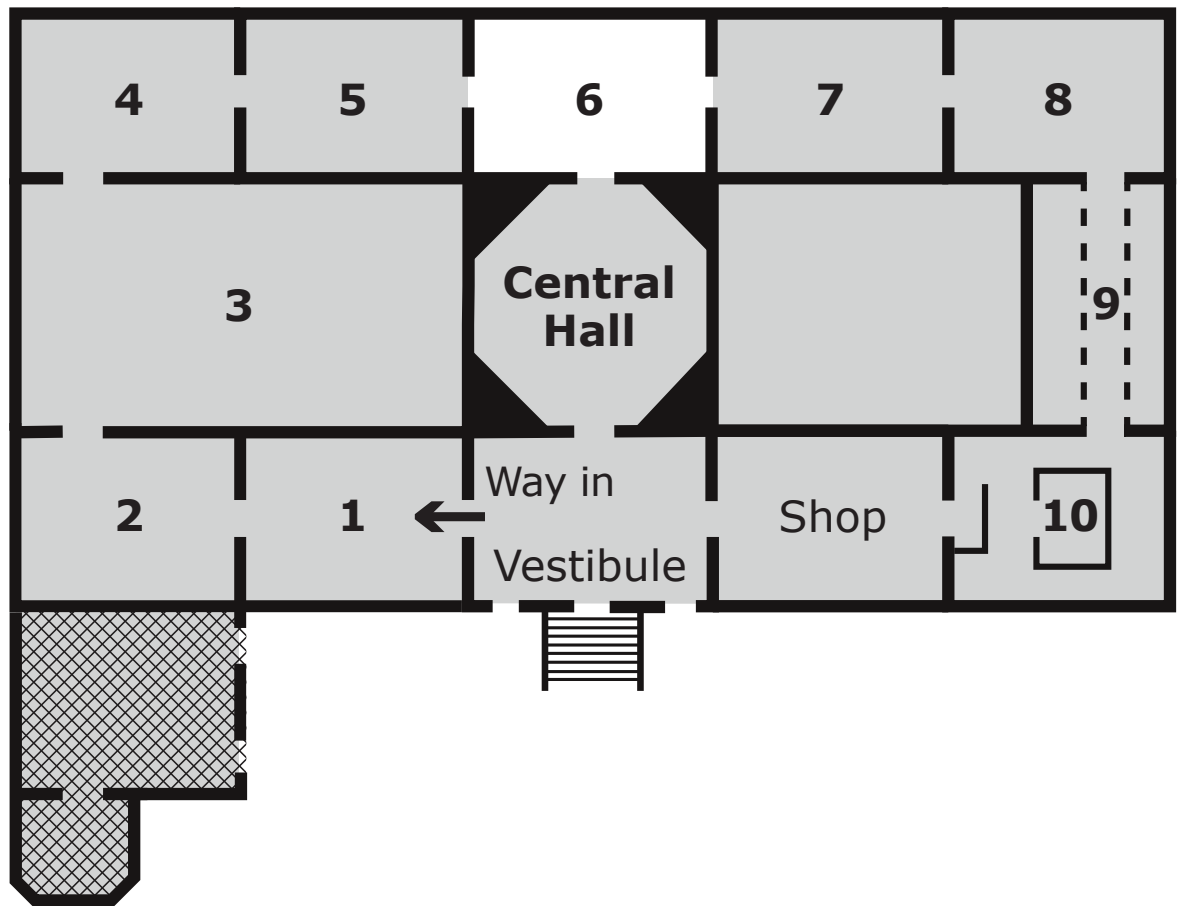
Marc Chagall, Window over a Garden, 1917



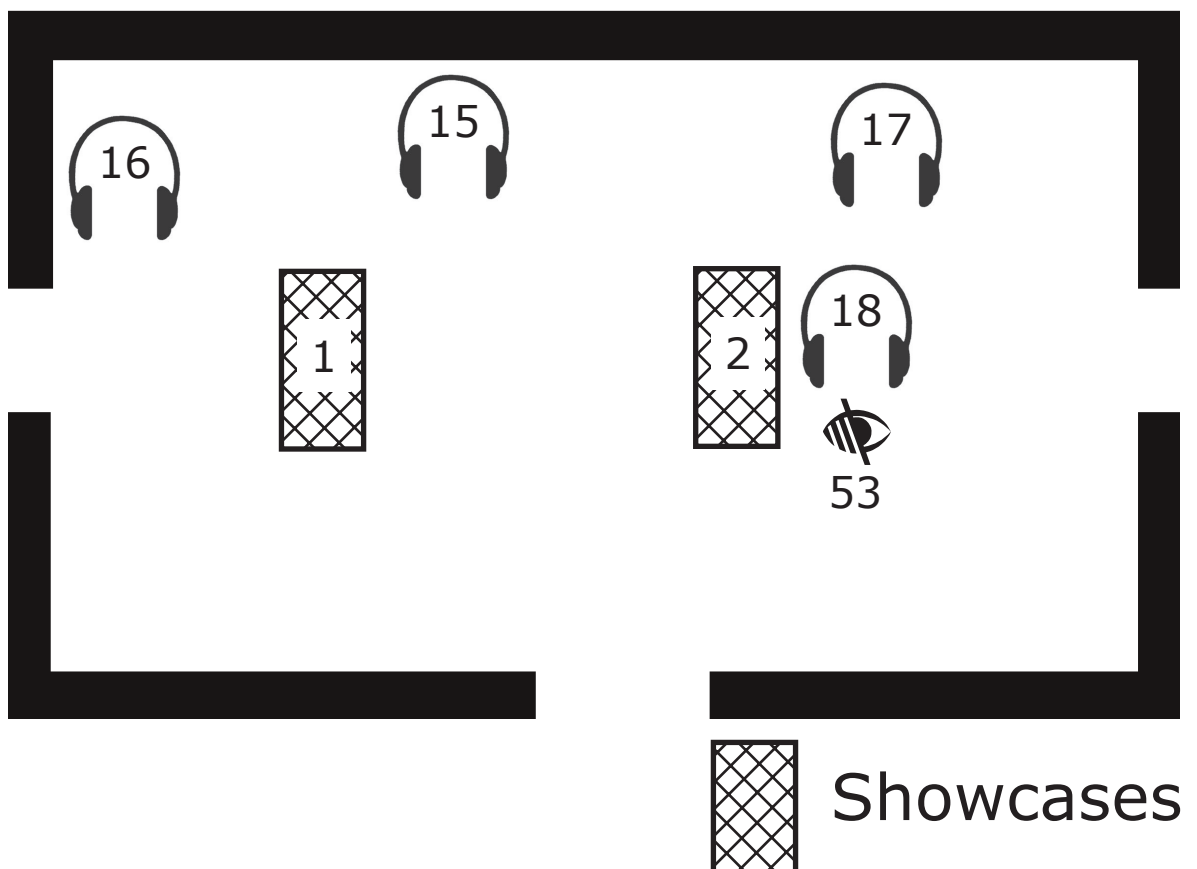
Boris Kustodiev, Carnival, 1919



53 Anna Golubkina, Birch Tree, 1927



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Eternal Russia

Even in revolutionary times, the traditional images of Tsarist Russia, such as birch forests and colourful onion-shaped church domes, persisted as signs of national identity.

Many Russian artists, philosophers and writers were nostalgic for the beauty and charm of the old Russia, rapidly disappearing under the boots of the proletarian masses.

During this era of state nationalisation and confiscation of private and ecclesiastical property, they pleaded for the retention of the Orthodox faith and argued for the preservation of churches and the traditional peasant culture threatened by collectivisation.

In lyrical paintings and beautifully decorated art journals, artists expressed their longing for a country that no longer existed.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)



Marc Chagall

Window over a Garden 1917

Oil on paper mounted on cardboard

The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St
Petersburg

Aristarkh Lentulov

Gates with Tower: New Jerusalem 1917

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Aristarkh Lentulov

Tverskoy Boulevard

1917

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Known in Paris as the “Cubiste à la Russe”, Lentulov was a major figure of the pre-revolutionary avant-garde.

This exuberant composition depicts the cathedral of the Strastnoy Convent on Tverskoy Boulevard, Moscow. The toppling structure and anxious faces of the passers-by, overlooked by a statue of the great Russian writer Alexander Pushkin, introduce a disquieting note.

In 1919 the convent was closed, reopening in 1928 as an anti-religious museum; it was eventually demolished in 1937.



Boris Kustodiev

Carnival

1919

Oil on canvas

The Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum,
St Petersburg

Konstantin Yuon

The Day of Annunciation

1922

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Mikhail Nesterov

Philosophers

1917

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Nesterov wanted to express the spiritual values of pre-revolutionary Russia.

This double portrait depicts two major Russian philosophers: Pavel Florensky (in white), a priest and mathematician known as the “Russian Leonardo da Vinci”, and the theologian and economist Sergei Bulgakov.

They are walking in the grounds of Russia’s most sacred monastery, Troitse-Sergievskiaia Lavra.

Bulgakov was expelled from Russia in 1922, along with other prominent intellectuals, on one of the so-called “philosophers’ ships”; Florensky was arrested in 1933 and shot in 1937.

Marc Chagall

Promenade

1917–1918

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Here Chagall celebrates the joy of his marriage. Of his wife Bella, he later wrote: "She has flown over my pictures for many years, guiding my art."

The setting is Chagall's hometown of Vitebsk, where he founded an art school and was Commissar of Arts. The work's spirit of freedom and hope echoes Chagall's optimism at the time of the Revolution, but in 1922, disillusioned and poor, he left Russia permanently for France.

Vasily Baksheev

Blue Spring

1930

Oil on wood

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Igor Grabar

By the Lake

1926

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Filip Maliavin

Troika

1933

Oil on canvas

Private collection

Display case 1

Jar-Ptitza (Firebird)

1922–1926

Berlin, Dr Selle & Co

14 issues, bound in two volumes

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Published in Berlin from 1921 to 1927, the monthly art and literature journal 'Jar-Ptitzá' was prominent among the many publications produced abroad for the large Russian émigré population. Drawing on the rich traditions of Russian fairy tales and folk art, the magazine's vibrant images of onion-domed churches, castles and snow-covered carriages encapsulated the nostalgic longing that many émigrés felt for pre-revolutionary Russia.

Display case 2

Anna Golubkina



53



18

Birch Tree

1927

Bronze

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Films:

Grigory Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg

The Youth of Maxim 1935

Produced by Lenfilm, USSR

Excerpt: 1 minute

This story of a young worker becoming a Bolshevik in pre-revolutionary St Petersburg begins with a rousing evocation of New Year's Eve celebrations, accompanied by music by the young Shostakovich.

Kozintsev's and Trauberg's film proved so popular that Maxim returned in two sequels.

Olga Preobrazhenskaya and Ivan Pravov

Women of Ryazan
1927

Produced by Sovkino, USSR

Excerpt: 57 seconds

The actress turned director Preobrazhenskaya showed the traditional customs of Soviet village life in a series of films, starting with this portrayal of women's lives in provincial Ryazan before and after the Revolution.

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Large
Print

Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Do not remove from gallery

Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



New City, New Society: introduction to this gallery



Eduard Alma Tenisman, Worker Seated at the Table, 1927



54 Plate with Inscription "He Who Will Not Work Shall Not Eat, 1921"



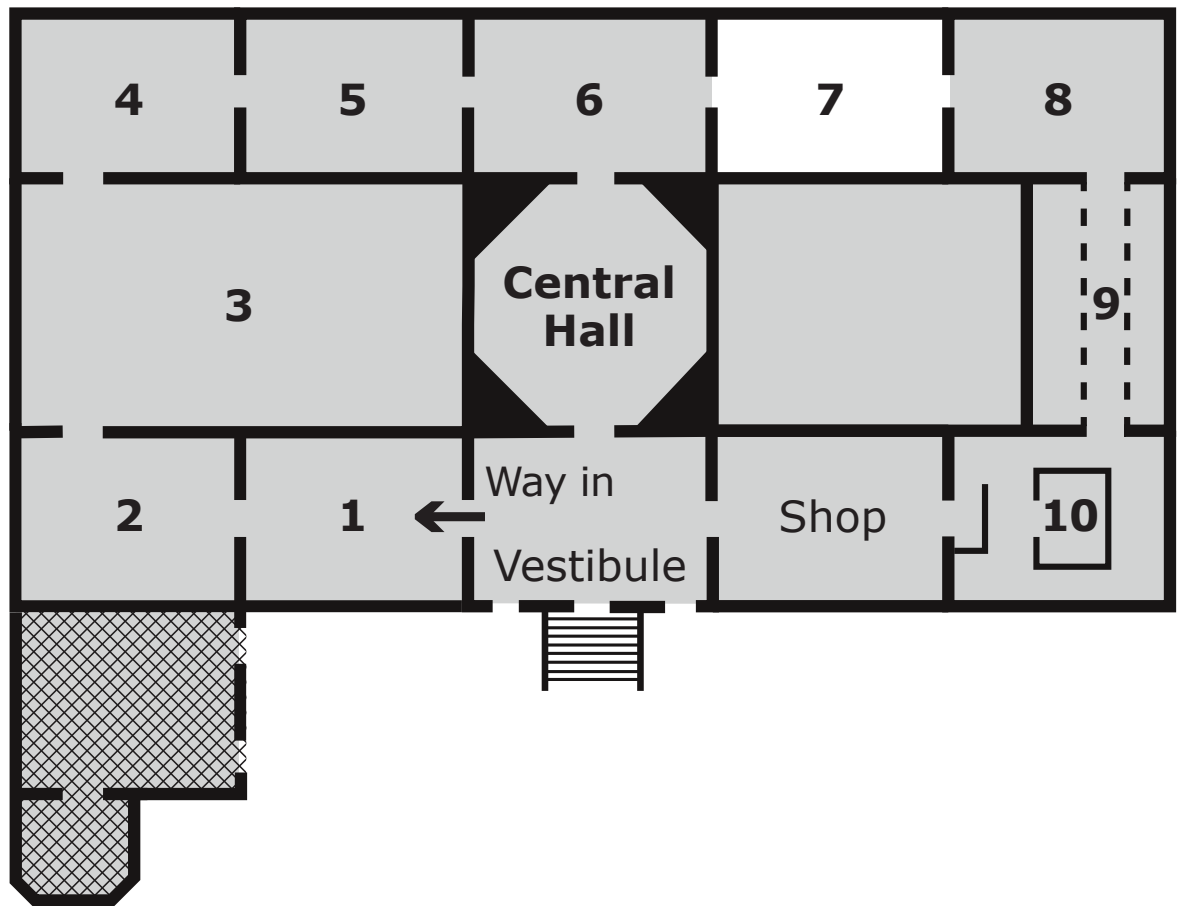
Diagram: "The Quantity of Products Given to the Citizens in Exchange for Coupons...", 1920s



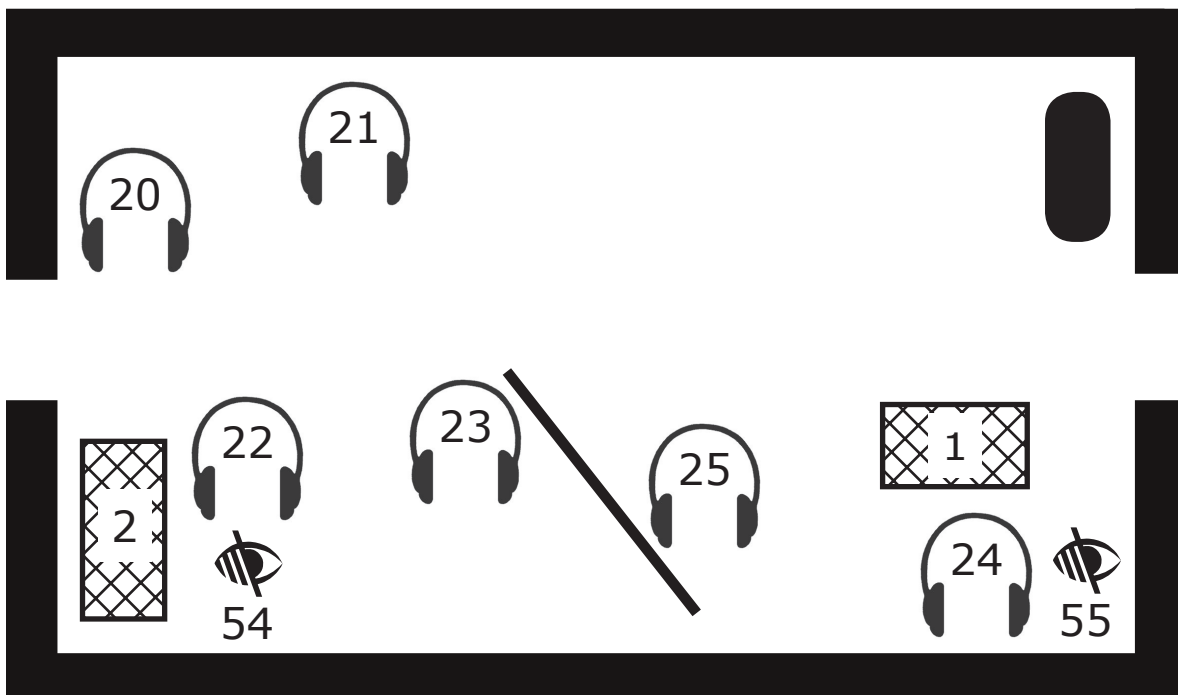
55 Alexander Samokhvalov, Tram Conductor, 1928



Solomon Telingater, Red Army: First Cavalry, c. 1928



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Seating



Showcases

Revolution

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New Economic Policy (wall text)

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New City, New Society: War Communism

War Communism was the austere economic and political programme introduced by the Bolsheviks during the Civil War (1917–1922) with the aim of keeping the cities and the Red Army supplied with food and weapons.

In the hands of inexperienced workers and soldiers, the economy and urban infrastructure collapsed and great hardship ensued.

Private enterprise was banned, industries were nationalised and most banks closed down. Food and fuel supplies quickly ran out, propaganda posters filling the windows of empty shops.

In January 1918 electricity was cut off and the trams stopped. Sewage disposal failed, which led to epidemics of disease. The state monetary system foundered and strictly rationed food coupons were issued and distributed according to people's class.

To make matters worse, the starving citizens of Petrograd were not allowed to leave the city. Their only chance of escape was to join the Red Army.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)



Eduard Alma Tenisman

Worker Seated at the Table
1927

Oil on canvas

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Unknown

**Food Coupon of the 2nd Category
for July in the name of Felkergam
[Felkerzam] A.**
1920s

Offset printing and handwriting on paper

Unknown

Additional Bread Coupon for the
Member of the Family of the Red
Army Soldier, Issue No. 3, 1920
in the Name of Smirnova I[rina]
1920

Offset printing and handwriting on paper

On 21 November 1918 the All-Bolshevik
Council of the People's Commissars
(**SOVNARKOM**) banned the commercial sale
of food and introduced a system of rationing
in which food was allocated according to
social status.

In the highest category were workers and
government leaders, who were allowed half
a pound of bread per day. Public servants
were entitled to quarter of a pound of bread,
the bourgeoisie one eighth of a pound and,
finally, dependents were given one sixteenth
of a pound.

Unknown

Voucher for Use of the Bathhouse
of North-western Railways in the
Name of Gorshkov A. [H.]

1922

Typographical printing and handwriting on paper

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Vladimir Lebedev

Food Tax Poster. Give a Part of
the Harvest to the City, and Keep
the Rest

1921

Linocut

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Boris Ignatovich

The Hermitage

1929

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Tseitlin

Food Coupon

1920

Pencil and ink on paper

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

This design for a food coupon was produced by Tseitlin, a student of Malevich, in a Suprematist style.

Since artists belonged to the third category in the rationing system, the bourgeoisie, and were entitled only to a very small amount of bread, Tseitlin ironically designed special coupons for avant-garde artists, incorporating letters and numbers in abstract compositions.

Unknown

Advertisement “Of Course,
Cream-soda!”

1926

Chromolithograph (1st state) on paper

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Unknown

Calendar for 1922 after a
Drawing by Boris Kustodiev

1921

Chromolithograph on paper

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Unknown

Poster for the Commercial and Industrial Companies of Petrograd 1922

Chromolithograph on paper

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Unknown

Restaurant Menu After June 1924

Oil on plywood

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Alexander Rodchenko

Mercedes Ambulance Car 1929

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Arkady Shaiket

In the Café

1920

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Alexander Rodchenko

Cigarette Vendor, Pushkin
Square, Moscow

1926

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

New City, New Society: New Economic Policy (NEP)

A naval revolt against the Bolsheviks in Kronstadt in 1921 and insurrections throughout the country forced Lenin to replace the failed policy of War Communism with the New Economic Policy (NEP).

He saw this “state capitalism” as an interim, emergency measure to save the economy, and insisted that it was different from all other forms of capitalism. Peasants were allowed to sell their produce freely once more, and private trade and the leasing of enterprises were also permitted.

As a result, the shop shelves were stocked again, restaurants reopened and city life regained its vibrancy.

Artists recorded the range of new citizens created by the NEP, from the well-dressed bourgeoisie to severe political agitators. Posters advertised consumer goods and entertainments such as the cinema.

The “Roaring Twenties” had come to the Soviet Union – for a while.

In 1928 Stalin replaced the NEP with Central Planning and announced the first of his Five-year Plans, with the aim of achieving full industrialisation through absolute state monopoly.

Georgy Petrusov

New Building

1931

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Eleazar Langman

Old and New: Church and
Universal Store

1930–1931

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Georgy Petrusov

New Building from Above
(Kharkov)

1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Izrail Lizak

Walk

1928

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Lizak was famous for his street scenes and in the 1920s claimed that the street was his sole source of inspiration.

In this semi-abstract painting of parading glamorous women, he captured the colour and energy of urban spectacle during the relatively prosperous years of the New Economic Policy.

Alexander Samokhvalov

Tram Conductor
1928

Tempera on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

The rapid changes in urban society in this period were particularly evident in the role of women. This formidable conductress selling tickets is a goddess of the new world.



Illuminated by flashes of electric light, she dominates the futuristic interior of the tram.

Samokhvalov explained: “the colossal, terrible force of electricity – previously only considered subordinate to Elijah the prophet and Zeus the thunderer – is now subordinated to a simple woman worker”.

Alexander Labas

Red Army Soldier in the Russian Far East 1928

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

In the late 1920s Labas produced an extensive series of works dedicated to soldiers in the east of the Soviet Union. The paintings have the immediacy of reportage.

Here he captures the loneliness and sense of alienation experienced by a soldier who returns to a large city, such as Vladivostok, after fighting on the battlefield.

Sofya Dymshits-Tolstaya

Woman Agitator

1931

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Vladimir Lebedev

Portrait of the Dancer and
Choreographer Nadezhna
Nadezhdina

1927

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Vladimir Stenberg and Georgi Stenberg

Poster for the Moscow Kamerny
[Chamber] Theatre European
Tour
1923

Poster reproduction

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Alexander Rodchenko

Beer against Poteen!
(Advertisement for Three Hills
Beer for Mosselprom Department
Store, Moscow)
1923

Poster reproduction

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Alexander Rodchenko (design) and **Vladimir** **Mayakovsky** (text)

Workers: High Prices and NEP
Don't Scare Us (Advertisement
for Bread for Mosselprom
Department Store, Moscow)
1923

Poster reproduction

© Fine Art Images, Germany. © DACS 2017

Vladimir Stenberg and **Georgi Stenberg**

Poster for the Film 'The Three
Million Case'
1926

Poster reproduction

© GRAD: Gallery for Russian Arts and Design, London

Dmitri Bulanov

Advertisements in the Tram are
Read Every Day by Millions of
People

1927

Poster reproduction

© Fine Art Images, Germany

Unknown

Advertisement for the Russian
Release of Walter Ruttmann's Film
'Berlin: Symphony of a Great City'
1928

Poster reproduction

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Solomon Telingater

Red Army: First Cavalry (collage 2)

c. 1928

Photomontage, paper, card and gouache

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Vladimir Lebedev

The Red Vision of Communism is
Brushing over Europe

1923

Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) poster reproduction

© Pictures from History/Bridgeman Images.

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Vladimir Lebedev

The New Bourgeoisie in the Republic of Labour (A Threat to the Proletarian State)

1923

Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) poster reproduction

© Pictures from History/Bridgeman Images.

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Vladimir Lebedev

The Struggle against Sales in the Streets

c. 1920

Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) poster reproduction

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Alexander Deineka

Ping-pong

1928

Gouache and watercolour on paper

Alex Lachmann Collection, London



Unknown

Diagram "The Quantity of
Products Given to the Citizens
in Exchange for Coupons
in Canteens and other
Establishments in Petrograd and
the Suburbs in 1919, 1920 and
1921"

1920s

Ink, pen and watercolour on paper mounted on
cardboard

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Unknown

Diagram "The Quantity of
Food for Children in Petrograd
(January–October 1918)"
1920s

Coloured ink, pen and watercolour on paper mounted
on cardboard

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

Unknown

Diagram "In One Year a Mature
Man Consumes Approximately..."
1920s

Ink and pen on paper mounted on cardboard

The State Museum of the History of St Petersburg

David Shterenberg

Aniska

1926

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Shterenberg spent part of his early career in Paris in the circle of Modigliani and Chagall. Returning to Russia in 1917, he soon became involved in implementing Soviet cultural policy as head of the Department of Visual Arts in the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (**NARKOMPROS**).

In this painting, a young girl stands in a stark interior. A half loaf of bread, the only frugal provision, powerfully evokes the deprivation of the post-revolutionary years.

Display case 1

Natalia Danko

**State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd**

Woman Worker Making a Speech
1923

Vitrified enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

**Alisa Brusketi-
Mitrokhina**

**State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd**

Bourgeois Woman Selling Her
Possessions
1918

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Alexandra Shchekotikhina- Pototskaya State Porcelain Factory, Petrograd

Dish with the inscription "Sailor's
Walk. 1 May 1921 in Petrograd"
1921

Enamel paint on porcelain, silvering, gilding, etching

The Petr Aven Collection

Display case 2

Alexandra Shchekotikhina- Pototskaya

Dish with the inscription

“Commissar”

1921

Enamel paint on porcelain

The Petr Aven Collection

Vasili Timorev

State Porcelain Factory, Petrograd

Plate Depicting Identity Papers
and Work Papers Surrounded
with a Red Banner Inscribed "He
Who Works Shall Eat"

1920

Enamel paint on porcelain, gilding

The Petr Aven Collection



54



**Alexandra
Shchekotikhina-
Pototskaya
State Porcelain Factory,
Petrograd**

Plate with the Inscription "He
Who Will Not Work Shall Not Eat
1921"

1921

Enamel paint on porcelain, underglaze cover in cobalt,
gilding

The Petr Aven Collection

Films:

Yakov Protazanov

Aelita

1924

Produced by Mezhrabpom, USSR

Excerpt: 1 minute 24 seconds

Best known for its Cubo-Futurist dream sequences set on Mars, 'Aelita' actually begins in starving Moscow in 1921. Refugees from the Civil War arrive by train, one of whom tries to bribe an official in charge of allocating housing. Many famous posters of the period appear in situ.

Boris Barnet

The House on Trubnaya Street 1928

Produced by Mezhrabpom, USSR

Excerpt: 1 minute 20 seconds

In Barnet's witty satire on the emerging class structure of Soviet Russia we see the morning routine of a communal tenement, with diverse households spilling onto the staircase and showing scant regard for their neighbours.

Fridrikh Ermler

Fragment of an Empire 1929

Produced by Sovkino, USSR

Excerpt: 1 minute 26 seconds

In Ermler's psychological treatment of the meaning of revolution, a First World War soldier suffering from shell-shock regains his memory and returns, bewildered, to St Petersburg – now Leningrad, full of mysterious new statues and bustling with sophistication.

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Large
Print

Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Do not remove from gallery

Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin: introduction to this gallery



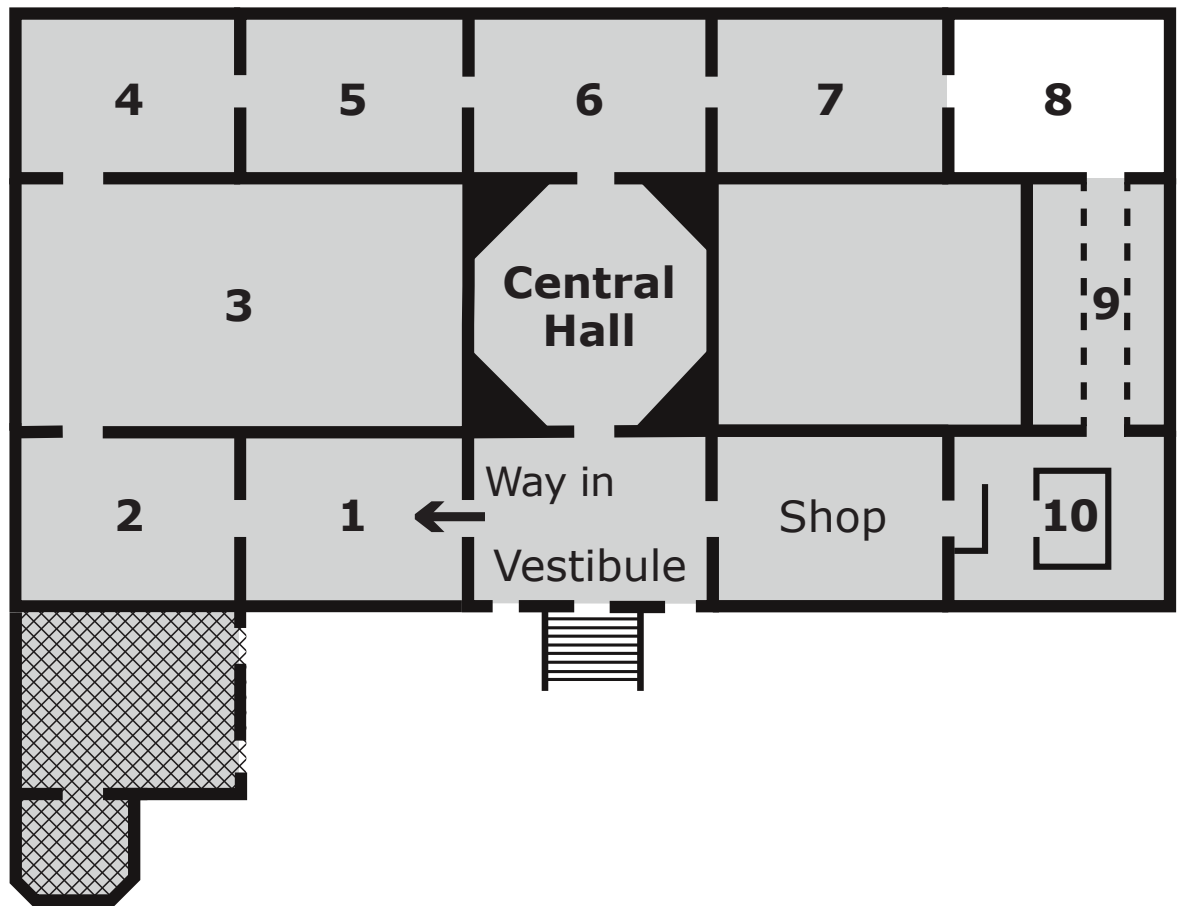
Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Portrait of a Boy (Vasya), 1921



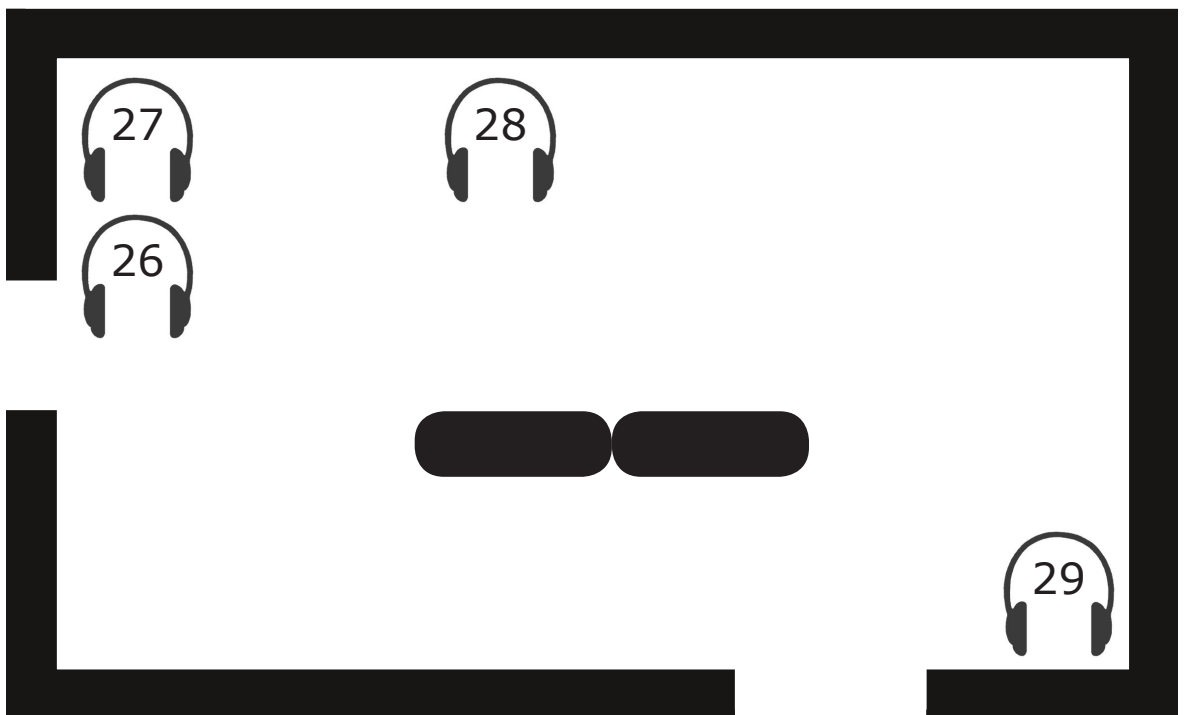
Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Midday. Summer, 1917



Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Around the Samovar, 1926



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 Seating

Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

The painter Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin was born in a small village on the Volga River. His ancestors were bandits and according to family legend his surname derives from the vodka produced by his grandmother.

He grew up among Old Believers (the unreformed branch of the Russian Orthodox Church).

As a young man Petrov-Vodkin studied Russian icons and fresco painting, and in 1902 he travelled to Munich, where he attended classes in the studio of one of Kandinsky's teachers.

His travels took him to Italy, where he was deeply influenced by early Renaissance painting, and to Paris, where he discovered the art of Gauguin and other Post-Impressionists.

On his return to Russia in 1908, Petrov-Vodkin developed a unique style of painting based on elliptical space or “spherical perspective”, often employing a curved horizon line that took account of multiple viewpoints and spatial progression through time.

This innovative use of space influenced avant-garde film directors and photographers.

Petrov-Vodkin supported the Revolution, which he saw as a cathartic force, and designed hoardings and murals for Lenin’s Plan for Monumental Propaganda. He became highly respected and in 1932 was appointed President of the Leningrad Regional Union of Soviet Artists (**LOSSKh**).

Like Malevich, he was given his own room in the seminal exhibition ‘Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic’, although there is no exact record of the works displayed.

Ultimately, however, his art is metaphysical rather than political, a reflection of the human spirit and the cycle of life. In his paintings he celebrated the “optical magic” that he perceived in the world.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin



Portrait of a Boy (Vasya)

1921

Oil on canvas

The Petr Aven Collection

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

**Still-life with Glass, Fruit and
Photograph**

1924

Oil on canvas

The Petr Aven Collection

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin



Midday. Summer

1917

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

This idyllic view of the Russian countryside on a summer day was painted in the year of the Revolution. It represents the funeral of the artist's father. The quiet scene is shown from above and its elliptical space suggests the cycle of life rather than a single moment.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Cherry Blossom in a Glass

1932

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Still-life with a Herring

1918

Oil on oilcloth, mounted on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

This still-life registers the lack of food in post-revolutionary Petrograd, when bread, potatoes and herring constituted the meagre diet of most citizens. Due to a shortage of canvas, the painting was originally executed on oilcloth (and later mounted on canvas). Petrov-Vodkin rendered each of the objects with reverence and wonder. The potatoes are heavy on the pink tablecloth, while the herring scales shimmer like precious stones on the blue paper.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Still-life with a Violin

1918

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Petrov-Vodkin was a gifted, semi-professional violinist. In this still-life the solid form and rich, dark tones of the violin are foils for the translucent scene beyond the window.

Inspired by Novgorod icons, Petrov-Vodkin based his compositions on three pure colours: yellow, red and blue.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

1918 in Petrograd (Petrograd Madonna)

1920

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

This painting is dedicated to one of the most challenging years in post-revolutionary Petrograd, when the austere conditions were turning people against revolutionary ideology. The mother and child are above the turmoil, symbolising purity and goodness.

This recurring theme in Petrov-Vodkin's work reveals his love of Giotto and Fra Angelico, as well as Russian icons. Still and pellucid, the figures exude a sense of the eternal, which made this image a celebrated "icon" of the new Russia.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Morning Still-life

1918

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin



Around the Samovar

1926

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Fantasy

1925

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Here Petrov-Vodkin returned to the subject of a famous earlier work, 'The Bathing of the Red Horse' (1912; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow). The red horse was a traditional Russian symbol of change and red was the colour of the Revolution.

After Lenin's death in 1924, many felt that revolutionary ideals had died with him. This magnificent horse flies over the troubled world, but its rider looks back rather than forward to the future.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

After Battle

1923

Oil on canvas

The Central Armed Forces Museum of Russian Federation

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Death of a Commissar

1927

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

In this painting Petrov-Vodkin looks back to the Civil War (1917–1922) and treats the universal theme of human sacrifice. The work was thought to reflect the artist's disillusionment at the death of revolutionary ideals and was banned from exhibition by Soviet officials.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin

Self-portrait

1918

Oil on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

In the tunnel

Vladimir Krinsky

At the Parade

1925

Reproduction by Andrew Davidson, 2016, of an illustration for the magazine 'Spotlight'

© The Schusev State Museum of Architecture, Moscow

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Large
Print

Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Stalin's Utopia: introduction to this gallery



Alexander Deineka, Race, 1932

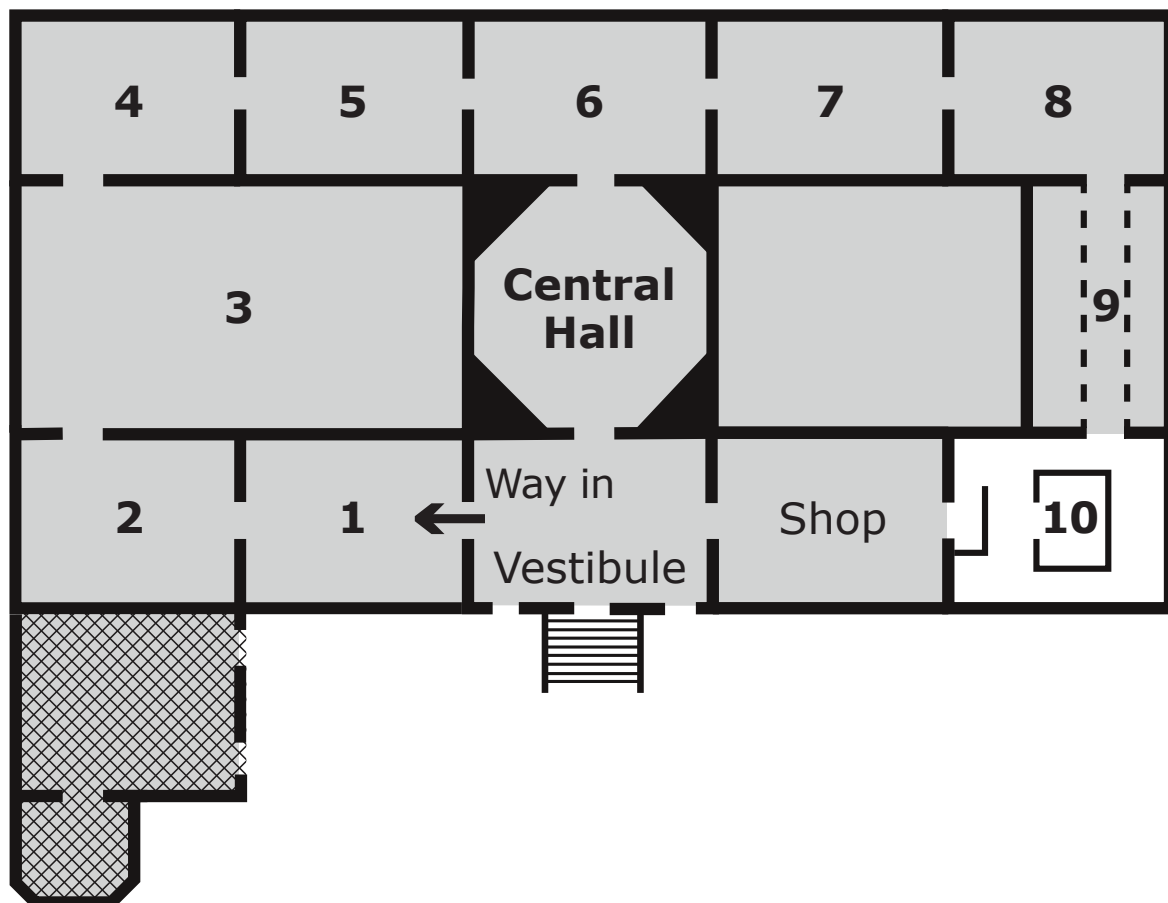


(2 labels) Boris Ignatovich,
Demonstration, 1927

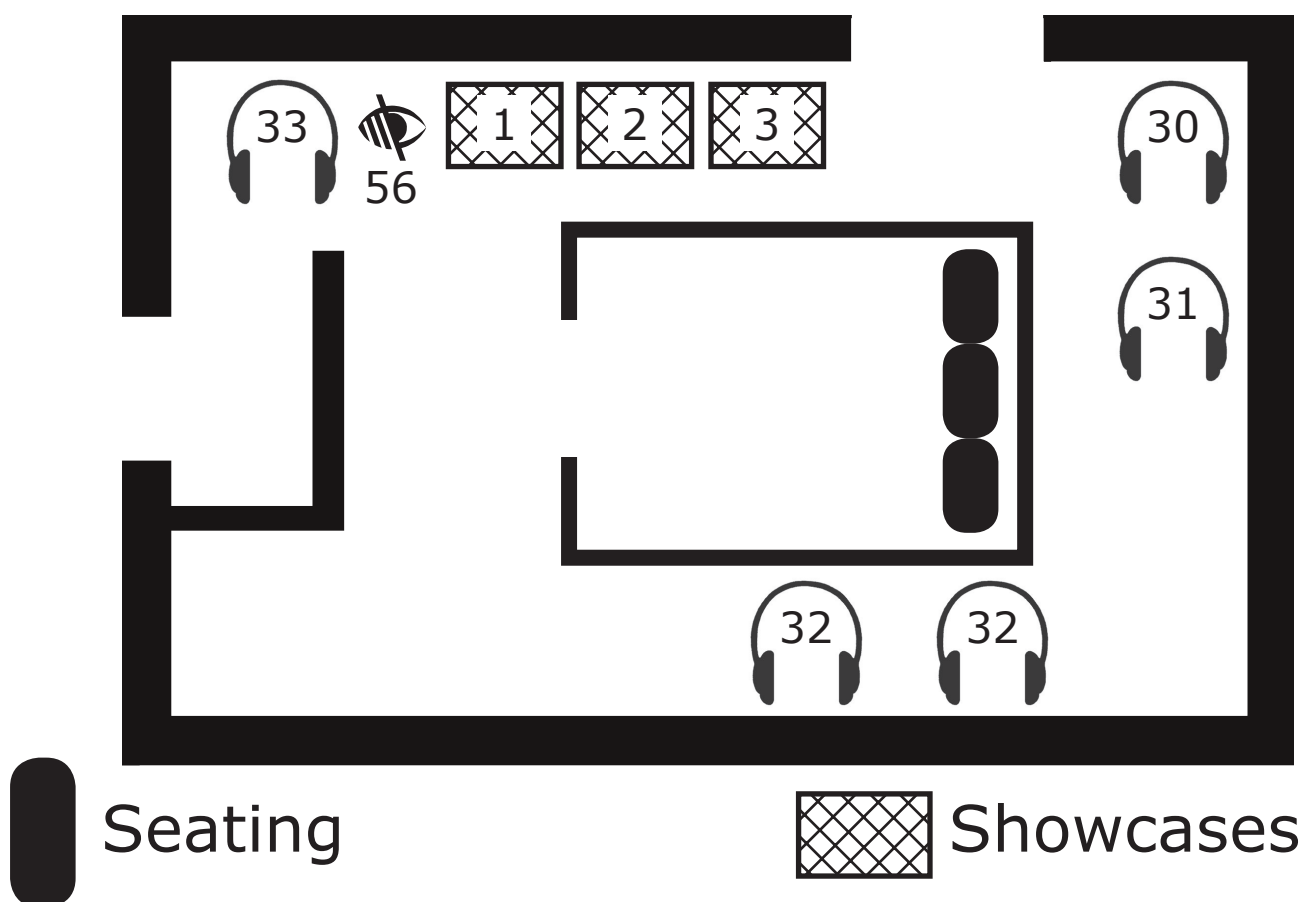
Boris Ignatovich, May Day, Red Square,
Moscow, 1927



56 Boris Iofan, Palace of the
Soviets, 1932



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Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

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Room of Memory

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Stalin's Utopia

Joseph Stalin's utopian vision for a politically unified Soviet Union crystallised around 1932, and from this time until his death in 1953 his leadership was unopposed.

Military parades promoted a strong, coherent political identity. It was felt that sport, like marching, was a physical discipline that would make the country great and perfect the bodies of its citizens.

Paintings like Alexander Deineka's 'Race' are thus full of political intention.

The exhibition "Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic" in 1932, designed to celebrate artistic liberty and progress, was in fact the last call for freedom of the arts.

After this point, avant-garde art was suppressed. Within a year, it had vanished, locked in cupboards and storerooms.

Henceforward, the Union of Soviet Artists was the sole arbiter of Soviet art, which it deemed should be collective in production, public in manifestation and Communist in ideology.

Socialist Realism, with its unrelenting view of a perfect world, an idyll out of reach, became the only approved style in the Soviet Union.



List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Arkady Shaiket

Physical Training (Morning
Gymnastics)

1927

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Ignatovich

Dinamo Stadium, Moscow
1932

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Alexander Samokhvalov

Sportswoman with a Shot-put 1933

Oil on canvas

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

This young woman is a physically perfected type, a figurehead for the new regime.

Samokhvalov's broad handling of paint and clear colour reinforce the female athlete's air of confidence.

He was interested in Constructivism but turned to figurative paintings of the new Soviet lifestyle, including athletics and sports parades.



Alexander Deineka

Race

1932

Oil on canvas

The Association of Historical and Regional Art, Tula

Yury Pimenov

Football

1926

Oil on canvas

The Astrakhan State Art Gallery

Pimenov, like Samokhvalov and Deineka, made paintings that the masses could understand, often focusing on heroic images of the human figure. Footballers were admired for their strength and team spirit, ideals promoted by the Soviet state.

Alexander Samokhvalov

Girl in a Football Jersey

1932

Tempera on canvas

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Alexander Deineka

Football

1924

Oil on canvas

Collection of Vladimir Tsarenkov

Boris Ignatovich



May Day, Red Square, Moscow

1927

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Alexander Rodchenko

Pioneer with Trumpet

1930

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

With no memory of life in Imperial Russia, the young Communists of the Pioneer movement were valued as the first pure generation of the Soviet Union. They contributed to the new society by doing helpful deeds and often participated in parades, led by a bugler.

Rodchenko's close-up, low viewpoint dramatically frames this Pioneer against the sky – he appears as a heroic, anonymous figure.



Boris Ignatovich

Demonstration

1927

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Ignatovich

Dinamo Factory Brass Band

1926

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Georgy Petrusov

Caricature of Alexander

Rodchenko

c. 1933–1934

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Varvara Stepanova

Result of the Five-year Plan 1932

Photomontage

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Alexander Deineka

Who Is Winning? 1932

Gouache and collage on paper

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

This collage, a study for a painting, sums up the period from the 1917 Revolution to 1932, and symbolises Stalin's ambitious plans for industry and growth.

The figures walking confidently towards the viewer are the planners, engineers and architects who would build Stalin's utopia.

(continued over)

The great new city of housing blocks and railways is behind them, but Deineka has also added retrospective themes such as the 1917 storming of the Winter Palace and the Civil War.

Moisey Nappelbaum

Joseph Stalin

c. 1934

Gelatin silver print

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Boris Iofan

Palace of the Soviets, Perspective
1935

Ink on paper

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Display case 1



Boris Iofan

Palace of the Soviets 1932

Wood

Alex Lachmann Collection, London

The Palace of the Soviets, the ultimate Soviet monument, was intended to be the tallest building in the world, surmounted by a statue of Lenin.

It was to be located on the site of the demolished Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. Iofan's winning Neoclassical design was later revised into a skyscraper.

Building began in 1937 but was brought to a halt by the German invasion in 1941. The foundations became a giant swimming pool and the cathedral was rebuilt in the 1990s.

Display case 2

Unknown

XIV Years of the Red Army 1932

Lacquer, tempera and gold paint on papier mâché
Alex Lachmann Collection, London

Display case 3

Nizhny Novgorod

Commemoration of the Flight of a Russian Dirigible from Moscow to New York Piloted by Three Soviet Airmen c. 1932

Lacquer, tempera and gold paint on papier mâché
Alex Lachmann Collection, London

The Palace of the Soviets is shown on one side of this urn and on the other the Empire State Building in New York.

Films:

Unknown

Moscow Sports Parade

Compilation distributed by Unity
Films,

Great Britain, 1939

Excerpt: 3 minutes 14 seconds

Elaborately choreographed displays in Red Square, Moscow, became an important feature of Soviet culture in the 1930s. Stalin was always highly visible, either as an image or in person.

This uncredited footage of a sports parade was distributed in Britain by the workers' theatre group Unity, which was known for its socialist propaganda productions.

Vladislav Mikosha

Destruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow

5 December 1931

Excerpt: 1 minute 33 seconds

The ornate Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, consecrated in 1883 as a memorial to the defeat of Napoleon in 1812, was demolished with explosives on 5 December 1931, after its gold domes and contents had been removed.

Mikosha, the young cameraman who made this film of the demolition, later became a celebrated war photographer.

Room of Memory

“No generation had a fate like that in history”
–Anna Akhmatova

Stalin ruled by terror and millions of Russians died during his brutal reign.

The photographs shown here document some of those who were persecuted during his so-called purges. Taken after the victims were arrested, the images are testimony to the horror that emerged under the Soviet regime and lasted until Stalin’s death in 1953.

To crush any so-called anti-Soviet elements in society, he expanded the powers of the secret police, encouraged citizens to spy on one another and sent many innocent people to the Gulag – forced-labour prison camps, mostly in Siberia.

There, many were shot, often with no trial and on fabricated charges.

Starting in the late 1920s and continuing throughout the 1930s, there were massive waves of arrests. The victims included engineers, scholars, economists, politicians, writers, composers and artists, as well as thousands of ordinary citizens.

Vsevolod Meyerhold, the great theatre director, was tortured and shot. The critic and curator Nikolai Punin, who supported radical art after 1917, was exiled to the frozen far north of the country, where he died.

The most extreme period of persecution, between 1936 and 1938, is known as the Great Purge.

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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Manager



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Large
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Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

Wohl Central Hall

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Audio tour



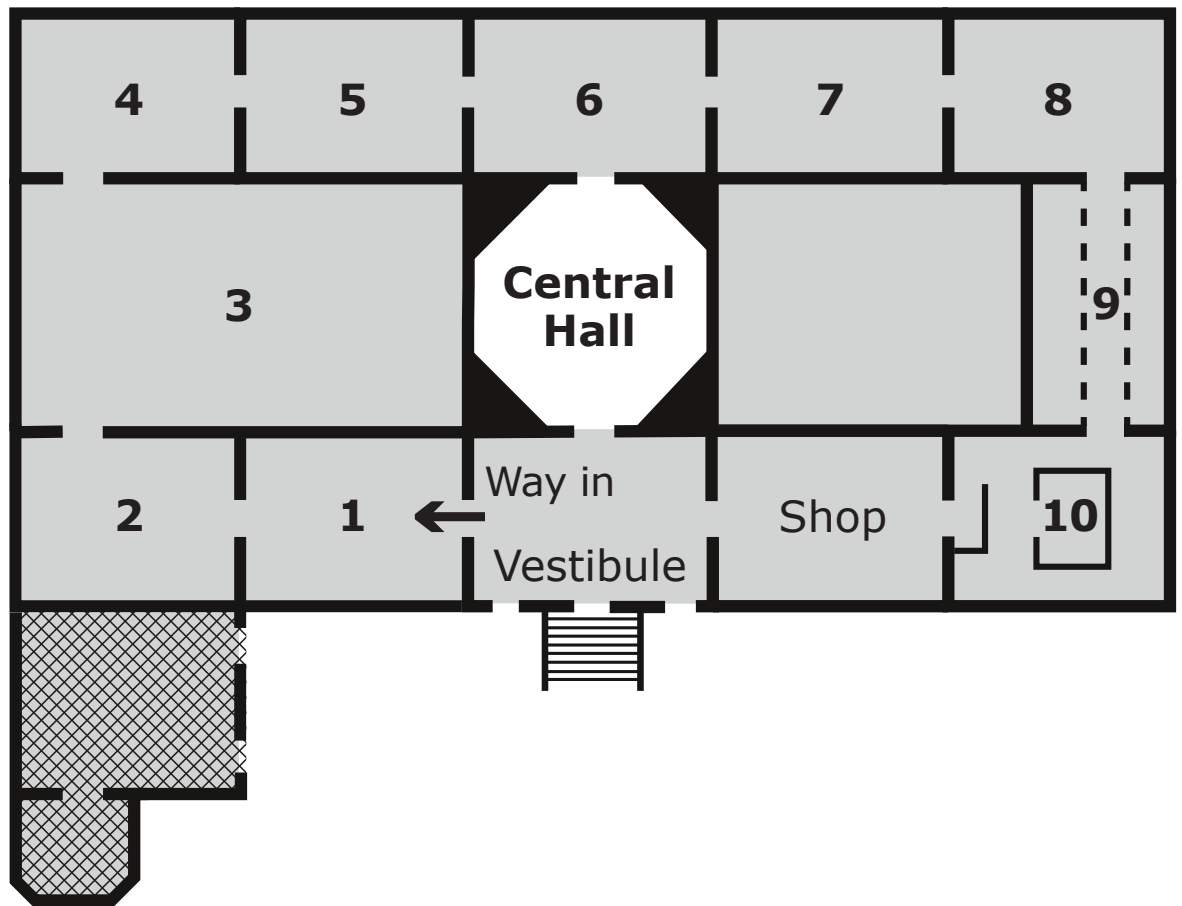
Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Vladimir Tatlin – ‘Letatlin’: introduction
to this gallery



You are in Wohl
Central Hall



Revolution

Russian Art 1917 – 1932

Main Galleries:

11 February – 17 April 2017

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Vladimir Tatlin: 'Letatlin'

This is a modern re-creation of one of Vladimir Tatlin's gliders, a series that he worked on between 1929 and 1932. He called them 'Letatlin', joining his own name with the Russian word **letat**, "to fly".

Tatlin's gliders were prototype flying machines for a new era, when man might soar like a bird on currents of air. His research into natural structures, especially the skeletons of birds and insects, led him to make winged constructions big enough for a pilot out of steamed and bent ash wood.

These beautifully crafted gliders, which resemble the bird studies of Leonardo da Vinci, never flew successfully. They were displayed in the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, in 1932.

An artist and architect, Tatlin was a pioneer of the Constructivist movement.

'Letatlin' conformed to the Constructivists' belief that art should be practical and serve people's needs, in this case a machine for flying or, as Tatlin called it, "a worker's flying bicycle".

This series of visionary gliders also relates back to his best-known work, the Utopian 'Monument to the Third International' (1919–1920), known as "Tatlin's Tower". This unrealised design for the Communist International headquarters in Moscow synthesised art and technology.

But Tatlin was a mystic, too, and his flying sculptures can be seen as a metaphor for aspiration and setting the imagination free.



List of works

Vladimir Tatlin

Letatlin

1932

Reconstruction by Henry Milner, 2013

Green ash, cork, leather, steel, calico, cotton, webbing, plywood and twine

Courtesy GRAD: Gallery for Russian Arts and Design, London

Unknown

Presentation of Vladimir Tatlin's
'Letatlin' in Moscow

1933

Photograph facsimile

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

© Fine Art Images, Germany

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