



37 GRIGORIEV Four Peasants with Horse 1923

PRICED

Aspects of Russian Experimental Art 1900-1925

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In Russia modern art was delayed by feudalism. Only with industrialisation and a new educated, middle-class at the end of the 19th century, was the academic style broken. From this class there emerged Pavel Tretyakov who in 1892 founded the museum bearing his name, the first public collection of Russian art. Savva Mamontov's country house at Abramtsevo became a centre for modern design, which led to Constructivism; and by financing private productions, Mamontov virtually founded the great Russian movement in theatrical design. It was two other Russian merchants, Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morosov who later brought to Russia great collections of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Fauve and Cubist paintings.

The story of modern art in Russia begins with a group of artists called "The Wanderers", who in 1863 broke with the Academy. They were contemporaries of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov – what might be termed the first great generation of modern Russians. The young followers of "The Wanderers" included Repin (1844–1930), Vasnetsov,* Surikov (1848–1916), Levitan (1860–1900) and Korovin (1861–1939). The last named, who is regarded as the first Russian Impressionist, was appointed a professor at Moscow College in 1901 and deeply influenced his pupils, Larionov*, Goncharova*, Tatlin*, Falk*, Serov, the Burlinuk* brothers, Mayakovsky.

The second great teacher at the time was Valentin Serov (1865–1911) whose close friend Vrubel* was the finest talent of the period, the link between the centuries, the precursor of the emergent avant-garde. His study of Byzantine and mediaeval art led to renewed interest in folklore, as well as to the orientalism of Bakst*, whilst Vrubel's later work earned him the title "The Russian Cezanne".

Another major force pushing Russian art into the 20th century was the group called *Mir Iskusstva* (The World of Art), founded in 1899 by the stage designer Alexander Benois (1870–1960), a focus for artists who looked to Paris for their inspiration. Diaghilev edited the famous journal of the same name. He also organised a series of important exhibitions, and later commissioned young artists like Larionov and Goncharova to experiment in theatre design.

The *Mir Iskusstva* journal ceased in 1904, and was succeeded by a series of art groups and publications. Foreign artists, notably Picasso and Matisse, were invited to exhibit in Russia as early as 1907. Cubism and later Futurism became the significant influences from which local artists made their own remarkable developments. Alfred A. Barr Jr. the Director of the New York Museum of Modern Art, writes, "Rayonism, the invention of Michel Larionov, was with

* Included in the present exhibition

the Russian Kandinsky's *Abstract Expressionism* in Munich, the most purely abstract movement in Europe during the years 1911–12 . . . The first artist to establish a system of absolutely pure geometrical abstract composition was Kasimir Malevich of Moscow".

Werner Haftmann, in his monumental study *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, writes of a "veritable flood of modern tendencies in painting" in Moscow between 1910 and 1914 and describes "pre-war Moscow as the citadel of abstract painting". Russian artists travelled in Europe – Jawlensky* and Kandinsky* settled in Munich in 1896, the latter to return after the Revolution; Archipenko* went to Paris; Tatlin and others visited France, some went to Italy. They acted as magnets for itinerant Russians and channels for contemporary ideas. In 1915, the poet Marinetti, the ideological leader of Futurism, lectured in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Above all there were the collections of Morosov and Shchukin. It is estimated that by 1914 they had brought to Russia more than 100 Picassos and Matisse's, apart from other leading artists of the Ecole de Paris, providing local artists with the first hand evidence which was to encourage their own brave efforts.

It is claimed that Kandinsky painted the first abstract picture in 1910; a year later Larionov was moving towards abstraction; in 1913 Tatlin, a pupil of Larionov, made his first entirely abstract relief in glass, metal and wood; also in 1913 Malevich* designed an abstract backcloth for the ballet "Victory over the Sun" and painted his famous black square on a white ground.

There were three major movements in pre-war Russia – Larionov's Rayonism, Malevich's Suprematism and Tatlin's Constructivism.

Larionov founded his movement in 1911, a combination of Analytical Cubism and Futurism, later influenced by Delaunay, which moved rapidly into abstraction. Earlier Larionov and Goncharova had been influenced by German symbolism, as was the young Chagall*. After his first visit to Paris in 1906/7 Larionov became an intellectual force in Russia, publishing manifestos and organising exhibitions. He persuaded Kandinsky to leave the "World of Art" movement and Jawlensky, Tatlin and Malevich to participate in the famous "Donkey's Tail" exhibition of 1912, an all-Russian show which brought together divergent tendencies.

Malevich defined Suprematism as "the supremacy of pure emotion in art"; influenced by Fauvism and Cubism, he decided what was important was not the picture but "the experience of pure non-objectivity". Constructivism, rooted in Cubism and Futurism, related abstraction to the three-dimensional plane. Later joined by Gabo* and Pevsner, Tatlin experimented with suspended forms and monumental public structures, expressive of science and technology.

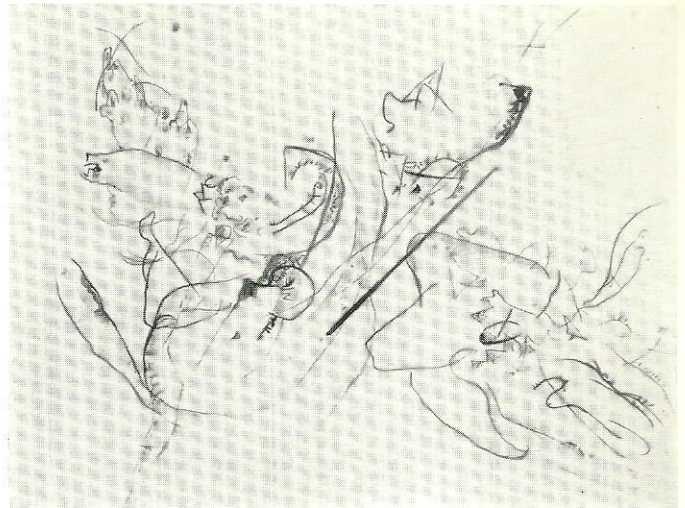
Together with Kandinsky, these movements were to have wide-spread influence throughout Europe; the idea of "pure non-objectivity" has clearly been the basis of later developments in Europe and the United States. They also permeated the German Bauhaus where Kandinsky was later to teach. Lissitzky* through his friendship with Moholy-Nagy, and Malevich who visited the Bauhaus in 1927, contributed to the Russian influence on modern architecture and industrial design.

Werner Haftmann makes an interesting analysis of the effect of the Russian character on the development of abstract art. "Why should it have been first Kandinsky?" he asks, and replies; "The answer begins in his nationality. Above all Kandinsky was a Russian. He tells us on frequent occasions that what aroused his imagination to abstract expression was the vision of Moscow in the evening sun. Then there was the sign language of Russian icons, the mystical colour and drenched twilight of the orthodox church, and the brightly coloured, abstract ornament of Russian folk art. But apart from these visual experiences, his Russian nature made it easier for him to depart from the material world . . . For the Russians with their mystical outlook had never regarded art as a reproduction of the visible world; they had always expressed their emotion in symbols. . . ." (This description equally applies to artists like Goncharova, Chagall and Jawlensky.)

A conflict eventually arose between Malevich's notion of "pure emotion", a version of art for arts sake, and the Constructivists who believed that art must have a direct function in society. Malevich had virtually ousted Chagall from the Principalship of the Vitebsk School of Art on the grounds that the latter's folklorist inspiration was old fashioned. He, in turn, was rejected and Constructivism became the Revolutionary style, backed by Trotsky and Lunarcharsky.

In 1921 Lenin made his famous denunciation of the modern movement – "a left-wing infantile disorder" he described it. Avant-garde artists were ironically described as "leftists" and Malevich's experiments were termed "a dead end". A book *Art of Russia*, published in New York in 1946, echoes the official Soviet viewpoint – "... the leftists' honeymoon did not last long. Their art was individualist, but did not lend itself to the social discipline and did not coincide with either the ideology or the aims of the revolutionary proletariat. It was an art of the few, incomprehensible and seemingly wholly useless even to the majority of the intelligentsia, to say nothing of the masses".

After Lenin's denunciation of modern art in 1921, the experimentalists were invited to "rebuild themselves". Soon after Kandinsky, Pevsner, Gabo and Lissitzky left Russia; Lissitzky later returned, but the other three settled in the West, major figures in the modern movement and of immeasurable influence. Larionov and



42 KANDINSKY Study 1915-1916

Goncharova had already joined Diaghilev in Paris in 1915; a number of other artists in this exhibition had also settled in Paris, or elsewhere. Those who remained, like Tatlin, Rodchenko and Lissitzky, devoted themselves to functional or applied art, often painting in conservative styles. As a result exhibition display, typography, poster-art, theatre and film design continued for many years to maintain a high standard in Russia.

There are a number of important omissions from this exhibition, especially of the Constructivist movement which was moving towards the proposition that individual works of art are meaningless. In 1921 Rodchenko signed a declaration that easel painting was dead and that the State required artist-engineers. In the case of both Tatlin and Rodchenko, their true significance is not fully evident in exhibitable material. One day the Soviet authorities, in conjunction with one or two Western museums, will perhaps mount a complete survey of the period, both in original works and documents. Another aspect of Russian art has not been fully explored; most of the artists in this exhibition, and a number of others, were outstanding experimental theatre designers, but fully to illustrate this subject a separate and different exhibition is needed. What we have attempted to present are "*Aspects of Russian Experimental Art 1900-1925*", and we hope that we will have conveyed to the British public, for the first time, some idea of the richness and daring of the art and ideas which emerged from Russia during the first quarter of the century.

GABO Nahum b. 1890

Born Briansk. Changed his name to avoid confusion with his brother Antoine Pevsner. Studied physics and engineering in Germany. First construction 1915. Returned to Russia 1917. Influenced by Tatlin and helped found Constructivism. Left Russia in 1921 for Germany. Later active in Paris and London and eventually moved to America. Retrospective Tate Gallery 1966.

24 Sculpture Plastic, Slate $7\frac{1}{2} \times 13$
(Private Collection)

GONCHAROVA Natalia 1881-1962

Born Tula. Studied in Moscow. Influenced by Larionov. Exhibited with the *Blue Rose* group and in the 1910 *Knave of Diamonds* exhibition. Settled in Paris in 1915, where she died. Designed ballets for Diaghilev, including *Coq d'Or*, *Firebird* and *Les Noces* recently revived by the Royal Ballet.

750	25	Peches et Fleurs Rouges 1907	Oil on canvas laid on board	$35\frac{3}{4} \times 28\frac{1}{4}$
3800	26	The Weaver 1910	Oil on canvas	$60\frac{1}{2} \times 39$
1750	27	Rayonniste Study 1911 <i>sold</i>	Watercolour	$8\frac{1}{2} \times 6$
3500	28	Les Baigneuses 1912/13 (<i>ill.</i>)	Oil on canvas	$90\frac{1}{2} \times 60$
4600	29	Ornament Electrique 1912	Pencil	$13\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$
	30	Rayonniste drawing 1912	Pencil	$9\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$
	31	Rayonniste drawing 1912	Pencil	$13\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$
1000	32	Rayonniste drawing 1912	Pencil	$13 \times 10\frac{1}{4}$
	33	Electricitee 1912 <i>sold</i>	Pencil	$13\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{8}$
	34	Rayonniste Study 1916	Watercolour	$14\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$

GRIGORIEV Boris 1886-1939

Born Moscow. Studied St. Petersburg. Participated in *Mir Iskousstva* group. Later influenced by Cubo-Futurism. Visited Berlin in 1918 and settled in Paris in 1929.

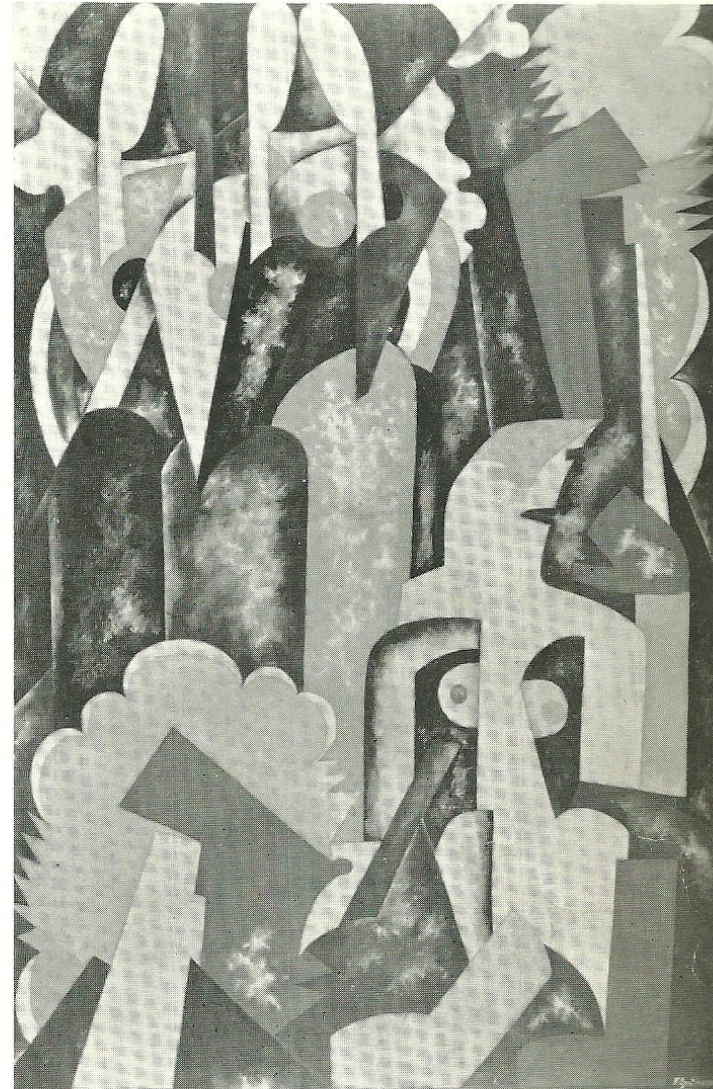
1400	35	Woman in Top Hat 1919 (Private Collection)	Oil on canvas	$28 \times 24\frac{1}{2}$
1000	36	Man with Goat 1920	Oil on canvas	$15\frac{3}{4} \times 26\frac{1}{4}$
1500	37	Four Peasants with Horse 1923 (<i>illustrated</i>)	Oil on canvas	35×69

100 watercolours exact.

JAWLENSKY Alexei von 1864-1941

Born Souslova, near Tver. Studied at St. Petersburg under Repin and in 1896 went to Munich where he met Kandinsky. Influenced by Russian folk art and icon painting. Later lived in Switzerland.

1850	38	Landscape with Gate	Oil on paper, laid on canvas	$14 \times 10\frac{1}{2}$
	39	Fauve Head of Woman 1908/9 (Private Collection)	Oil on board	$17\frac{3}{4} \times 15$



28 GONCHAROVA Les Baigneuses 1912/13

GRAHAM 100 f
CIKOWSKY 100 f

KANDINSKY Vassily 1866-1944

Born Moscow. Pioneer of abstraction and a key figure in the Russian contribution to modern art. Studied law. Went to Munich in 1896 and studied art. Exhibited in 1910 *Knave of Diamonds* exhibition. Helped organise the *Blaue Reiter* group and its exhibitions in 1911 and 1912. Returned to Moscow 1914 and later taught at the Moscow Academy. Left for Germany in 1921 and the following year joined the Weimar Bauhaus. Later lived in Paris.

- 40 Murnau Landscape 1909 Oil on board 19½ × 27½
(Private Collection)
- 41 Title page and contents of Kandinsky's Notebook 1916 10 × 13½
- 42 Study 1915/16 (illustrated) Watercolour 18¾ × 25
- 43 Abstract Landscape 1919 Brush drawing 13¾ × 10¼

9000
2750

Lithos £200.

KLIUN Ivan

A follower of Malevich. Died in Paris.

- 44 Still Life c. 1914 Watercolour 6¾ × 4½
(Collection Mr. & Mrs. Arnold C. Smith)
- 45 Abstract Study 1920 Pencil 6⅝ × 4
- 46 Abstract Study 1920 Pencil 9 × 7¼
- 47 Abstract Study 1921 Pencil 7 × 5½
- 48 Abstract Study 1921 Pencil 7½ × 6¾
- 49 Still Life Watercolour 9¾ × 7⅝

75
125
150
200
350

KUSTODIYEV Boris 1878-1927

Studied at the St. Petersburg Academy under Repin. Influenced by Impressionism. Book illustrator and theatre designer. After the Revolution painted topical subjects.

- 50 Peasant Woman Watercolour 14¾ × 12¼

300

LANSERAY (or LANCÉRE) Yevgenii 1875-1946

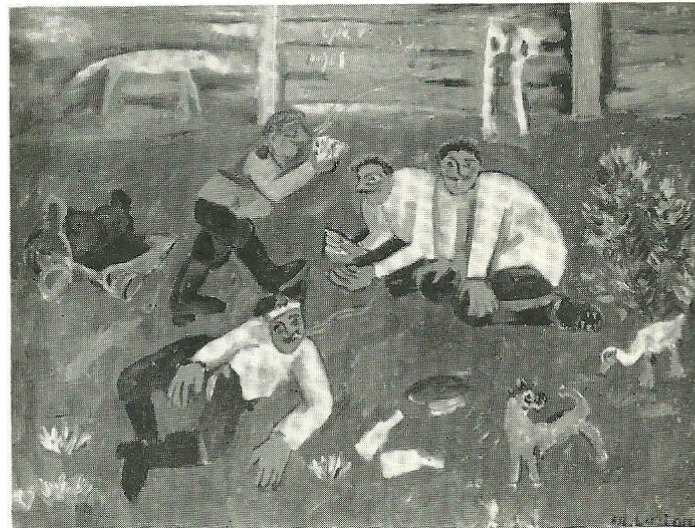
Nephew of Benois. Member of the *Mir Iskousstva* group. Went to Paris in 1896 and returned to Russia in 1900 to assist Diaghilev with the group's magazine.

- 51 Tumarina Blumenthal in the role of Muzaretski in *Wolves and Sheep* 1902 Pastel 13⅝ × 11½

250

LARIONOV Mikhail 1881-1964

Born Teraspol, near Odessa. Studied in Moscow. Visited Paris 1905, influenced by Bonnard and Symbolism. Founded Rayonism in 1911. Exhibited with *Blue Rose* group and in 1910 *Knave of Diamonds* exhibition; organised 1912 *Donkey's Tail* exhibition. Represented in Roger Fry's second Post-Impressionist exhibition, London 1912. Played important role in organising exhibitions of avant-garde art. Settled in Paris in 1915 and designed ballets for Diaghilev.



53 LARIONOV The Soldiers 1908

- 52 Boulangers c.1907 Oil on canvas 28½ × 23¾
- 53 The Soldiers 1908 (illustrated) Oil on canvas 28¼ × 36¾
- 54 La Rissa 1907-10 Oil on canvas 28 × 37
- 55 Composition 1907 Gouache 10 × 14¼
- 56 Composition 1907 Pencil, watercolour 10 × 7⅝
- 57 Composition 1907 Watercolour 10 × 7⅝
- 58 The Sea (Radiations) 1910/11 Watercolour 8 × 12
- 59 Rayonniste Landscape 1916 Ink, tempera, oil 12½ × 8½

950
3500
3500
1900
1750
1750
1500
1200

LISSITZKY Lazar (El) 1890-1941

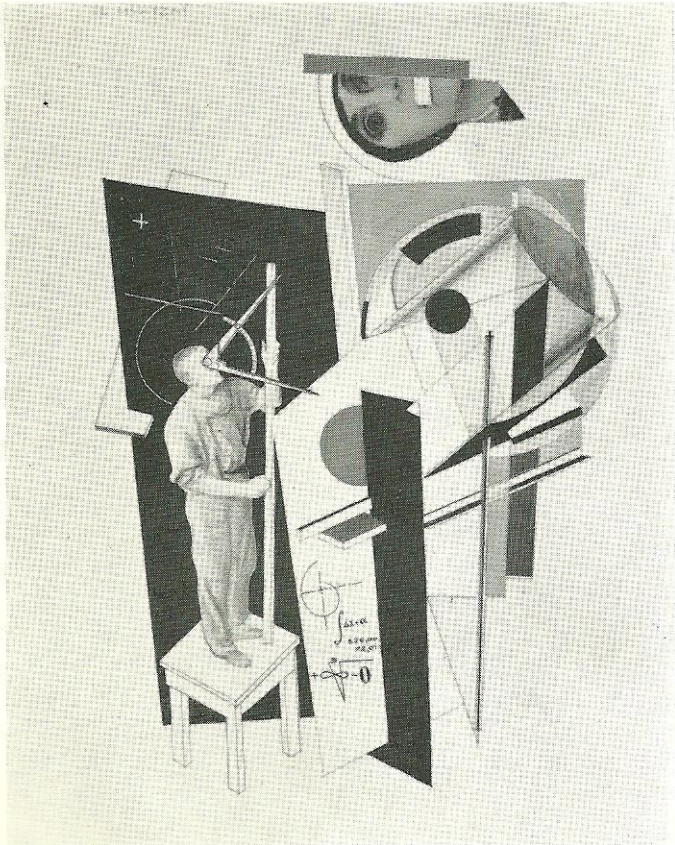
Born Smolensk. Studied engineering in Darmstadt 1909-1914. Went to Germany in 1921 and returned to Russia in 1928. Died in Moscow, devoting his last years to exhibition design and typography. First London exhibition, Grosvenor Gallery September-October 1966.

- 60 Proun P. 23 No. 6 1919 Oil on canvas 24½ × 30⅝
- 61 Chad Gadya 1919 Lithograph 11½ × 10½
(1 of a set of 11)
- 62 Tatlin Working on the 3rd International Sculpture c.1920 (illustrated) Collage 13 × 9½
- 63 Proun Study 1E c. 1920 Pencil, gouache 7⅛ × 9
- 64 Proun 1919/23 Lithograph 23⅝ × 17⅝
(1 of a set of 6)
- 65 Sieg über die Sonne 1923 Lithograph 21 × 17½
(1 of a set of 10)

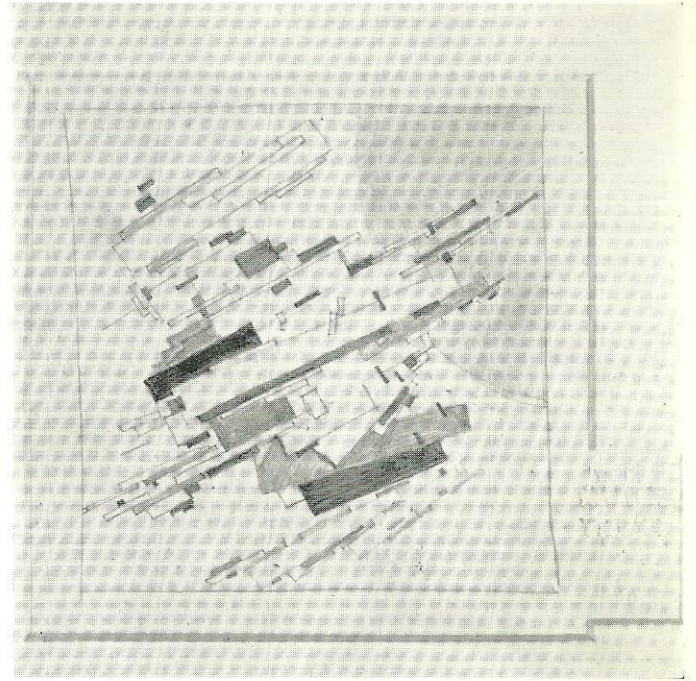
NFS
4000 set
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2800 set

ex call 4000 pencil gouache



62 LISSITZKY Tatlin Working on the 3rd International Sculpture c. 1920



69 MALEVICH Supremus 18 1916/1917

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------|---------|
| 69 | Supremus 18 1916/17 (illustrated) | Pencil | 6½ × 7½ |
| | (Private Collection) | | |
| 70 | Rocket-Sputnik Study 1919/20 | Wash | 5¼ × 6¾ |
| 71 | Suprematist Construction 1919/20 | Wash | 6½ × 7 |

2500
2000

MALEVICH Kasimir 1878-1935

Born Kiev. Studied in Moscow. Founded *Suprematism* 1913. With Mondrian and Kandinsky, one of the pioneers of abstract art; early work influenced by Fauves later by Cubism. Exhibited in 1910 *Knave of Diamonds* exhibition. In 1919 succeeded Chagall as Principal of the Vitebsk Art School. Visited Germany in 1927 – many works of that period now in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. After returning to Russia devoted himself to portraiture. Died in Leningrad. Retrospective exhibition Whitechapel Gallery, October 1959.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| 66 | House in Garden c. 1904 | Oil on canvas | 17 × 20¾ |
| 67 | Cubist Still life 1914 | Oil on board | 21¾ × 18½ |
| 68 | The Retreat from Lomzha c. 1915 | Lithograph | 14¾ × 22 |

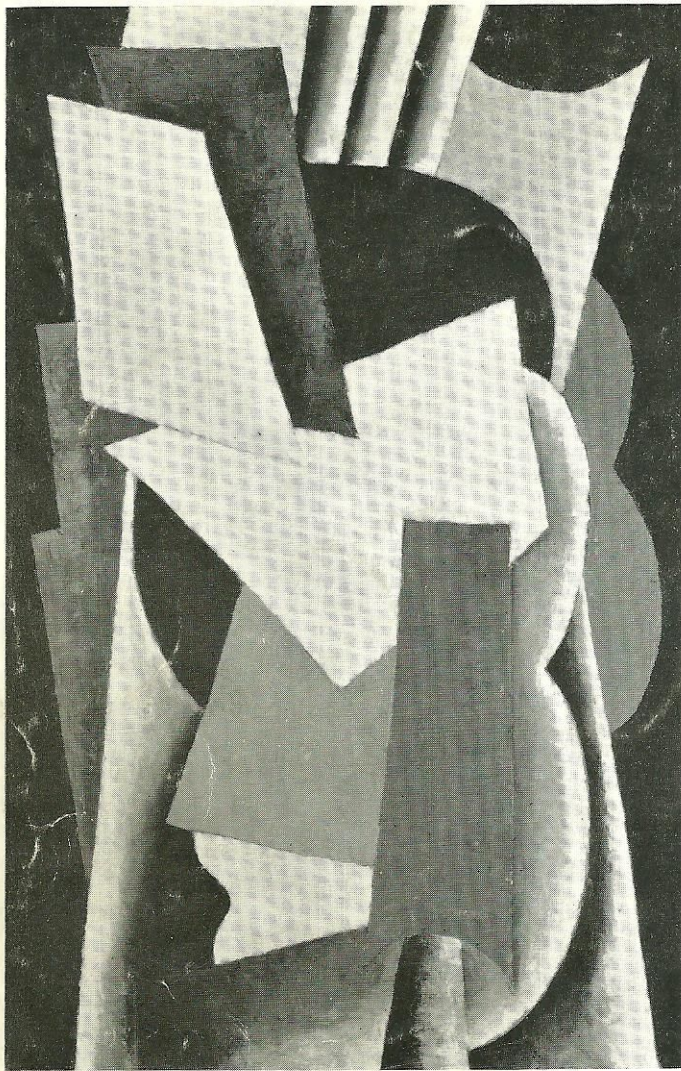
POPOVA Liubov 1889-1924

Born Moscow. Visited Italy and Paris between 1910 and 1913. Studied with Le Fauconnier and Metzinger. Returned to Russia 1914. Member of both *Suprematist* and *Constructivist* groups. Designed for the stage director Meyerhold and for industry.

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------|----------------------|
| 72 | Cubist painting 1915 | Oil on canvas | 41 × 34 |
| | (Collection Mr. & Mrs. Arnold C. Smith) | | |
| 73 | Still Life c. 1916 (illustrated) | Oil on canvas | 41½ × 27½ |
| 74 | Architectonic Composition 1918 | Oil on board | 20½ × 17½ |
| 75 | Composition Rouge | Watercolour | 13½ × 10¾ |

7000
4000

2250
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73 POPOVA Still Life c. 1916

SURVAGE (Sturzwagsh) Leopold b.1879

Born Moscow, of Scandinavian parents. Studied in Moscow. Influenced by Matisse and Cezanne. In 1907 met Larionov and Falk. Settled in Paris in 1908 and became part of the Cubist movement.

76 Landscape **1000** Oil on canvas 36 × 25½

TATLIN Vladimir 1885-1953

Born Kharkov. Studied in Moscow and visited Berlin and Paris in 1913. With Pevsner, Gabo and Rodchenko founded *Constructivism*. Worked on constructions and assemblages before 1914. Was never able to execute monumental, environmental sculpture. 1916 organised *The Store* exhibition. Later worked in the theatre. Died in Russia.

77 Boy Reading Oil on board 21¼ × 14½
(Private Collection)

78 Illustration 1916 **1200** Watercolour 6⅞ × 5½

VASNETSOV Viktor 1848-1926

Friend and contemporary of Serov and Vrubel. Painter of historical subjects. Later became a member of the *Mir Iskusstva* group. Brother of the architect of the Abramtsevo church and the Tretyakov Museum.

79 Carnival Fair **350 Bow** Oil on board 18⅞ × 27¼

VOLKOV Yefim 1844-1920

Born Tashkent. Professor of painting at the St. Petersburg Academy.

80 The Caravan gouache 18 × 20
(Collection Mr. & Mrs. Arnold C. Smith)

VRUBEL Mikhail 1856-1910

After studying at the St. Petersburg Academy he worked on the restoration of the 12th century church of St. Cyril in Kiev. Later studied Byzantine art in Venice. Also influenced by Cezanne. The most gifted and important precursor of 20th century Russian art.

81 An Actor in the Role of Mephistopheles at the Mariinsky Theatre. St. Petersburg Pencil 9 × 6½

600

YAKOVLEV Alexander 1887-1938

Well-known draughtsman and teacher. Travelled widely in Europe and America.

82 Peasant Woman with Kerchief 1912 Watercolour 13½ × 9⅞

83 Peasant Woman carrying Water 1917 Watercolour 13½ × 9⅞

**200
200**