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Art, Politics, and Revolution:
The Russian Avant-Garde and the Struggle for Ideas
K-16 Workshop, CREES, University of Kansas
Spencer Museum of Art
Saturday, April 12, 2008, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

E. W. Clowes, "Utopia in Avant-Garde Russian Art and Literature"

I. Political background: ideal of society based on equality
Utilitarians (technology, radical egalitarianism, liberation of women):
Crystal Palace, The Great Fair, Sydenham Hill, England, 1851

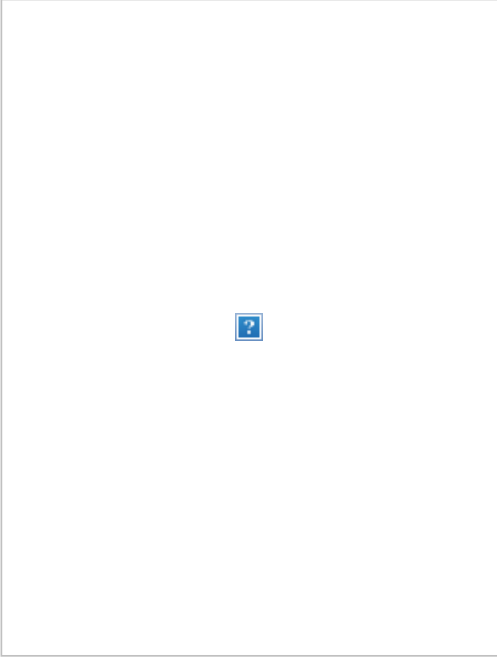


Godbuilding and Prometheanism (hyperbolic images, larger-than-life creator/superman)

Proletkult (Russia's new proletariat as the new universal humanity)

II. Art: breaking free of realism

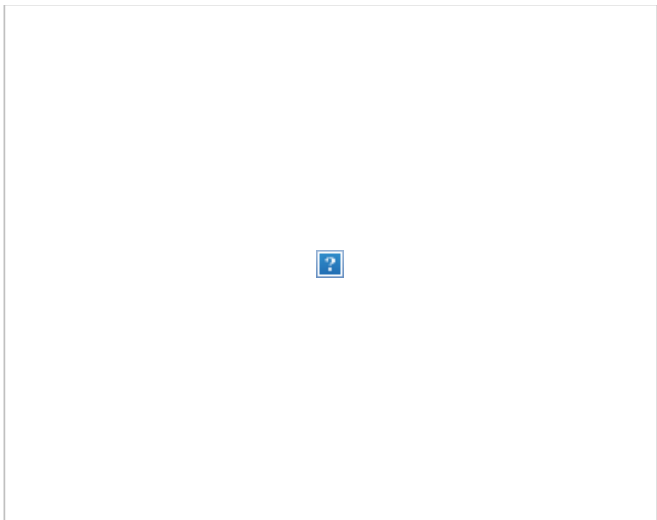
A. Folk and religious background:
lubok, woodcut



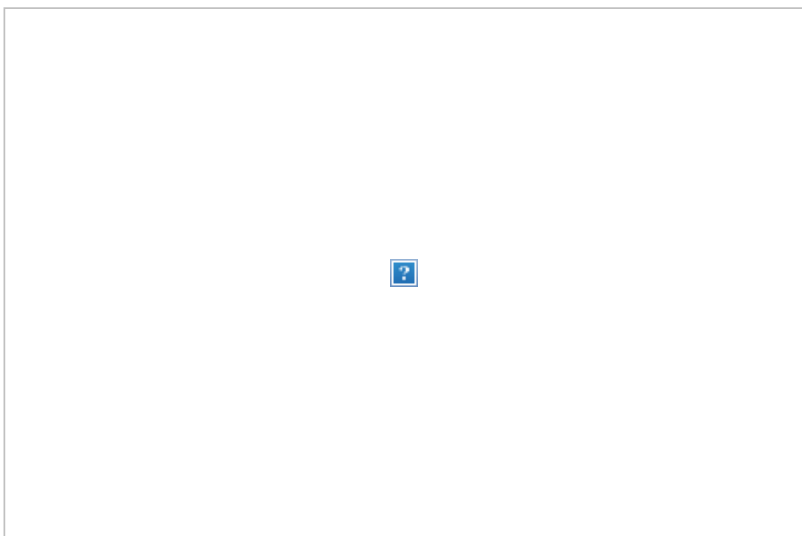
icon



B. Modernist background: foregrounding and separating of basic aspects of art (rhythm, color, shape)
Goncharova, neo-primitivist picture



Vrubel', icon



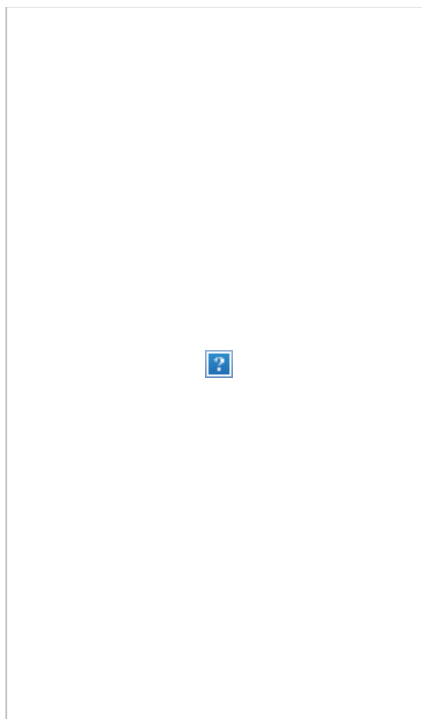
C. Avant-garde

Rodchenko, "Revolution of the Spirit," graffiti, 1919.

Translation of words:

"Be joyful
today is the
REVOLUTION OF THE SPIRIT
BEFORE you
TAKE HEED OF US
who have thrown off the age-old
chains of
PHOTOGRAPHICITY

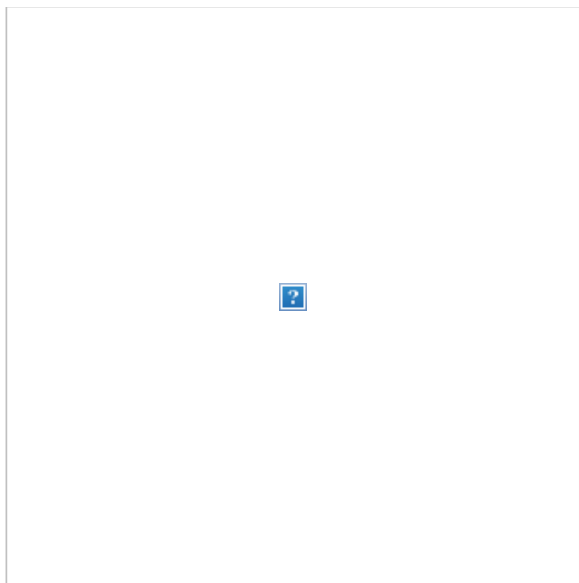
CLICHÉ
PLOT-NESS
WE
Russians are
COLUMBUSES
OF ART
DISCOVERERS OF NEW PATHS OF CREATIVITY
today
is our
VICTORY



1. Suprematism: Malevich's pure art freed of "the ballast of objectivity"
Malevich, "Suprematism," pdf file (1915)



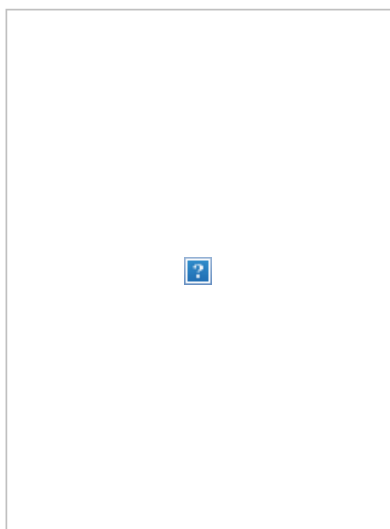
Malevich, Black Square (1913)



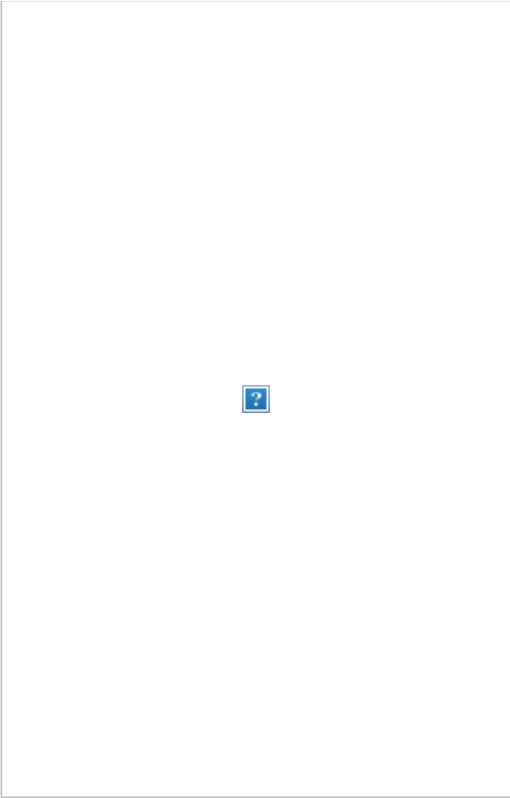
2. Constructivism and utopia:

a) clothes design

Popova, fabric design



Stepanova, jumpsuit "Prozodezhda"



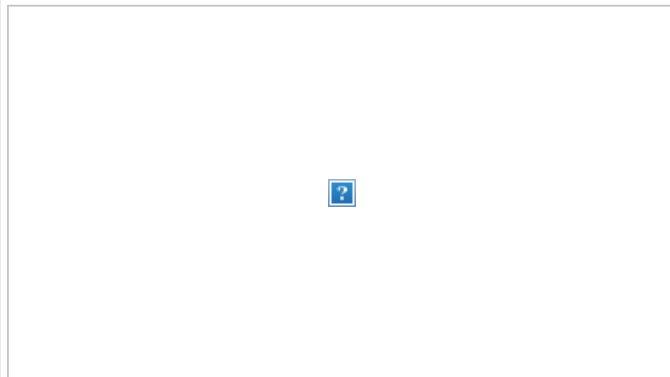
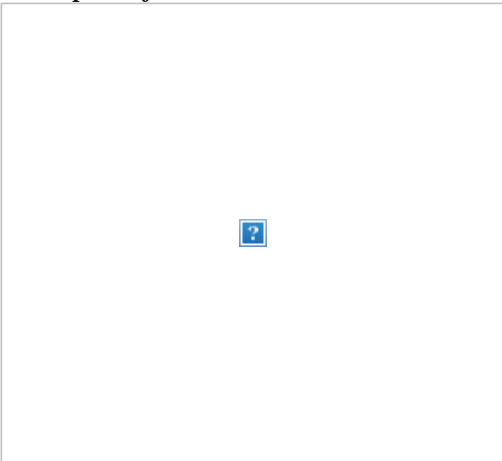
b) furniture design

Tatlin, Counter-reliefs

Vladimir Tatlin - Counter Relief - 1914-15 - iron, copper, wood, rope 71x118cm

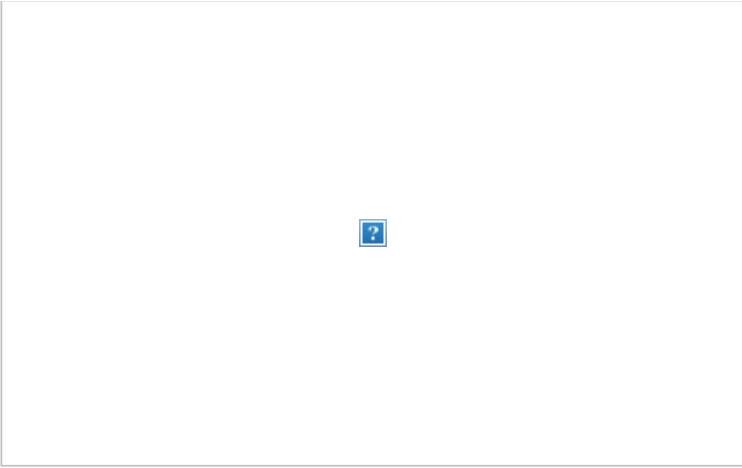
<http://collagemuseum.com/constructivism/tatlin.html>

o collapsible furniture



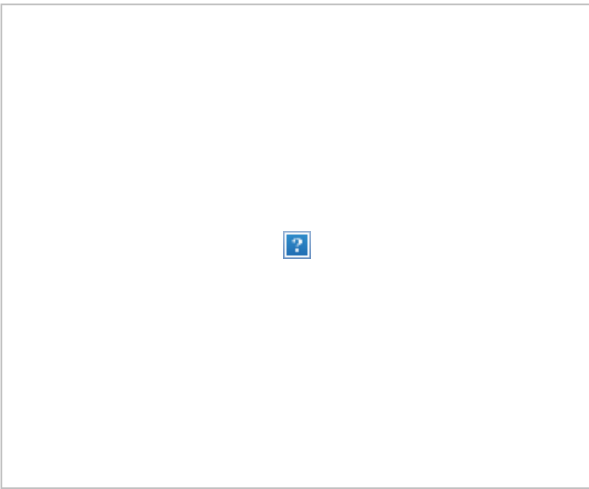
c) flight

Miturich, flyer [letun]

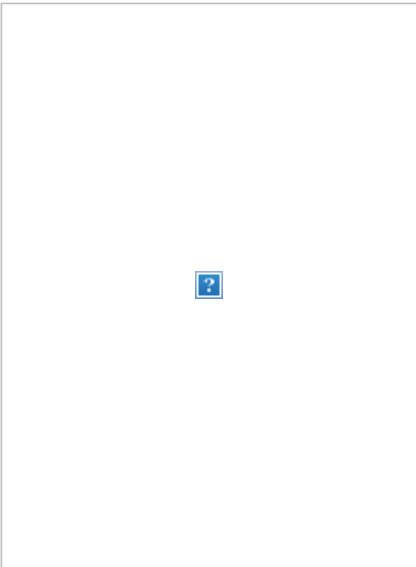


d) cities in space

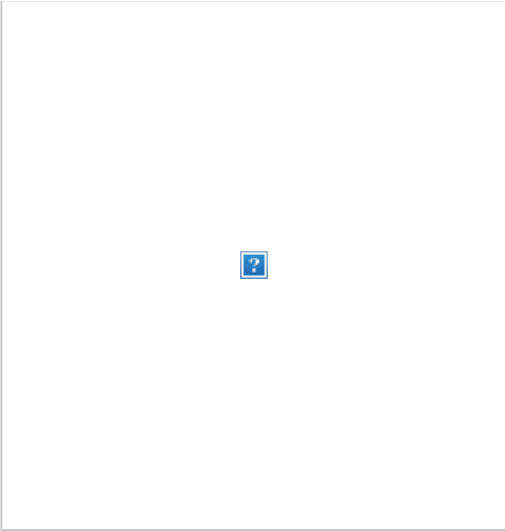
Rodchenko's mobile



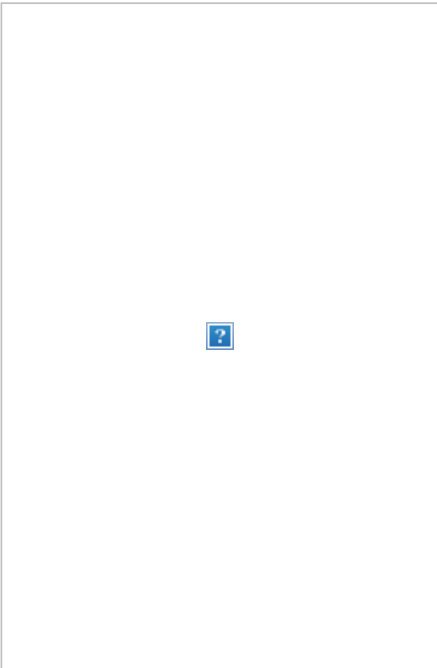
Kliutsis, Dynamic City (1919)



Krutikov, Space City of the Future (1928)



D. Impact of the Russian avant-garde:
image from NYT advertising
Komar and Melamid fake advertising



III. Literature: experimentation with language

A. Futurism: youthful poets with artistic talent

Vladimir Mayakovsky, photo portrait by Rodchenko

Back cover of the book *Conversation with the Finance Inspector about Poetry (Razgovor s finansinspektorom o poesii)*, by Vladimir Mayakovsky. 1926.

Letterpress, 6 7/8 x 5" (17.4 x 12.9 cm).

Collection Jack Banning. Courtesy Ubu Gallery, New York

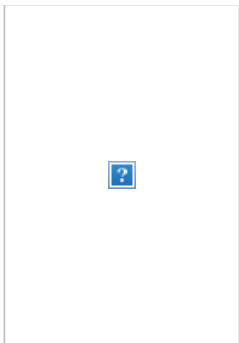
http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/1998/rodchenko/texts/portraits_mayakov_jpg.html

Velemir Khlebnikov, photo portrait

Alekséi Kruchónykh, author of Futurist play, Victory over the Sun

B. Proletkult: new writers from among the Russian proletariat

Alekséi Gástev



Aleksei Kapitonovich Gastev (1882-1939)

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