

**Steve YATES**

*Fulbright Scholar, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA*

## FACETS OF PROTO MODERN PHOTOGRAPHY: HISTORY OF AVANT-GARDE IN RUSSIA, EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

**Summary.** The wide array of artistic and technological innovations in early modern photography at the beginning of the twentieth century combined historical mediums and approaches with new media and technologies in the mainstream of modern art. A diverse generation of multidisciplinary artists began to combine photographic practices with other art disciplines and skills, setting the stage to the new century for contemporary art practices around the world at the end of the past century.

As the dawn of the modern era emerged across the United States, Europe and Asia in the early twentieth century, the Russian and European Avant-garde established a broad range of individual forms and styles. The first decades witnessed innovations by artists, photographers, filmmakers, painters, architects, musicians, writers, and poets seeking new directions. Modernists moved beyond tradition in expressing increasing changes found throughout everyday life. Artists combined photography, its scientific process and craft with emerging technologies and media to create modern subjects, approaches, and styles with unprecedented vision.

While the early modern history of photography globally remains to be written, a wide range of artists established a much broader scope of contributions to Russia than Western or Eastern counterparts. From Moscow to Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Russian Avant-garde created prototypes of modern photography in multiple forms and through a variety of means that spread internationally. Over the lifetimes of artists and their oeuvres, modern styles and approaches were invented with independent vision. Photographers worked with a wide variety of materials and means of media printed on paper photomechanically using ink and related cinematic as well as other emerging technologies. Photographs were made, remade and reprinted, used and reused, with an array of diverse and meaningful perspectives. Proto modern photographers broke from conventional models and traditional genre by creating their own subjects with those experienced in the everyday world.

The history of proto modern photography in Russia resides more in enduring ideas than the initial prints crafted in conventional darkroom practices. The darkroom often became a means to other ends. Artists worked beyond the limitations of the medium into experimental paths. Innovations from the studio and printing press with ink on paper moved from the historical limitations of photography as a medium to repetitive processes intrinsic to the medium.

The twenty-first century offers unlimited opportunities for study in the modern art history of photography. Research not only lays a critical foundation for better understanding the contributions in the former USSR but the global evolution of modern and postmodern art. The true and extraordinary complexities in the early history modern photography formed by the Avant-garde through a wide array of styles and methods help inform transdisciplinary approaches today offering knowledge and understanding in a new world of seemingly unlimited artistic potentials.

**Keywords:** proto modern photography, modern history of photography, avant-garde, early modern era, technologies, photolithography, photomechanical, modern printing press, innovations, modern form and color, abstraction, mixed genre, multidisciplinary, photographic arts.

For more than two decades in the early twentieth century, the Russian Avant-garde developed a wide diversity of forms of modern photographic expression in depth and breadth. Individual contributions expanded new vision with the application of

emerging technologies and multimedia. Inventions such as the small hand-held 35mm camera to faster papers and darkroom equipment moved forward with related cinematic advances. The emergence of the modern printing press and mass-printing

processes such as photomechanical and photolithographic prints applying ink on paper offered further potentials outside the darkroom. The Russian Avant-garde established a newfound freedom of expression with photographic contributions of global significance beyond borders and cultural isolation.

While exhibitions, catalogs and avant-garde publications were produced along with official political and social themes during the era, today research concerning the contributions of early modern photography in Russia is a rich field of study in art history. Innovations throughout the first half of the century remain to be fully researched and comparatively analyzed for future histories supported by contemporary scholarly publications and exhibitions. Government archives, museum collections, and centers of photography are more accessible to the public. Scholars, historians, teachers, and students in art history are increasing with demands for more sources for study and permanent curricula. Curators are encouraged to develop exhibition concepts from individual research and collaborations.<sup>1</sup> Courses in modern art history at universities, photography academies, schools, and contemporary master workshops continue to be developed for the first time.

A more comprehensive modern art history of photography remains at formative stages in universities and schools. Master classes, symposia, lectures, and exhibitions continually dedicate more time and resources with growing popularity across the country. Global historical perspectives and educational forums provide scholarly exchanges with original research and knowledge. Contemporary writings especially found in quality photography catalogs, journals and various Internet sources are establishing an essential foundation as comparative analysis is critical for future publications of scientific rather than ideological art histories.

Lecturing and researching on early modern photography in the USSR and its emerging democracies of Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and Belarus as a Fulbright Scholar in 1991, led to curating, writing

and further lecturing for subsequent exhibitions and journals. The wide diversity of early forms of modern photography came from many practices by artists internationally during the first decades of the twentieth century in the mainstream of modern art. Subsequent conversations with preeminent photography historian Beaumont Newhall led to one of the first exhibitions raising the question “where did modern photography begin?” Encouraging further research about a new chapter of history with his term “proto modern” photography, Beaumont asked me to research, curate, and write the essay for *Proto Modern Photography* in 1992. The exhibition traveled from the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe to the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House in New York. A wide array of loans from major private and institutional collections including Thomas Walther, Houk Friedman Gallery, Howard Greenberg, Joy Weber, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, J. Paul Getty Museum, New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art and George Eastman House, University of New Mexico, Princeton University, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Center for Creative Photography, and others were included. Today, further contributions, such as the Walther Collection – now part of the collection at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, continue to add further to the history of modern photography.<sup>2</sup>

The twenty-first century offers unlimited opportunities for study in the art history of photography internationally. Research in the early modern history of art lays the essential foundation for better understanding of contributions from the former USSR. The true and extraordinary complexities of modern photography formed by the Avant-garde in a wide array of photographic forms are diverse from the darkroom to studio and printing press. In numerous ways, the Russian Avant-garde set the stage for multiplicity found in contemporary photographic arts around the world today, including the historic return of digital art forms to ink on paper outside the darkroom. Experiments by the Avant-garde in the use of photography with the modern printing press and approaches to multimedia set precedents

for contemporary art in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Advances in digital technologies return to ink on paper, video and other emerging tools virtually eliminating photographs made in the chemical darkroom historically.

### PROTO MODERN PHOTOGRAPHY

As the dawn of the modern era emerged across the United States, Europe and Asia in the early twentieth century, the Russian and European Avant-garde established a broad range of individual forms and styles in modern photography. The first decades witnessed innovative art forms by painters, architects, musicians, writers, and poets seeking new directions around the world. Modernists moved beyond tradition in expressing increasing changes found throughout everyday life. Artists combined photography, its scientific process and craft with emerging technologies and media to create modern subjects, approaches, and styles with unprecedented vision.

The wide diversity of early forms of modern photography shifted beyond the limitations of literal description or factual rendering made by the camera. Artistic intention defined modern photographic expression for the first time in countless forms. What was selected as subjects made with the camera became as important as the ideas of artists influencing the final form of expression. The shift from conventional genre and approaches into modern style and meaning were historic. Unique subjects were created with inventive purpose. Innumerable photographic forms from the darkroom to the studio and printing press expressed change in design from modern life.

The modern history of photography in Russia remains to be written. A wide range of artists established a much broader scope of approaches than Western or Eastern counterparts. From Moscow to Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Russian Avant-garde created prototypes of modern photography in multiple forms and a variety of means that spread throughout Europe.

The complexity of innovations went far beyond the first prints made inside the chemical darkroom. Over the lifetimes of artists and their oeuvre, modern styles and approaches were invented with independent vision. Photographers worked through a wide variety of materials and means of media printed on paper photomechanically using ink and related cinematic as well as other emerging technologies. Photographs were made, remade and reprinted, used and reused, with an array of new meaningful perspectives.

Proto modern photographers broke from conventional models and traditional genre by creating their own subjects from those discovered in the everyday world innovating a wide assortment of themes with such inventions of modern photomontage,<sup>3</sup> avant-garde publications, photographs and photolithographic prints on larger-than-life sizes, and even fabricated photographs to be photographed inside the studio. Artists appropriated, borrowed and used photographs by others. There was no limit to any single theme, style or method. Applications of photography combined original perspectives to reach the masses in multiple forms. The meaning of the *original* was often created and redefined in large numbers. Expanded to include a wide variety of printing techniques. Often originals from the same negative were made and remade with different directions in practice.

The history of proto modern photography in Russia resides more in enduring ideas than initial prints crafted from conventional darkroom practices. The darkroom often became a means to other ends. Artists worked beyond the limitations of the medium into experimental paths. Innovations from the studio and printing press applying ink on paper moved from limitations in photography to the repetitive process intrinsic to the medium.

In contrast, photographers Paul Strand and his friend Alfred Stieglitz, who edited and produced the modern art and photography journal *Camera Work* in New York, defined their own style of modern photography in the final issue of 1917. "Photography," they wrote, "finds its *raison d'être*, like all

media, in a complete uniqueness of means ... The full potential power of every medium is dependent upon the purity of its use."<sup>4</sup> The *purity* and *uniqueness of means* of the medium also became key pillars to such autonomous aesthetics in early modern photography as the new century unfolded.

In Russia, such approaches became one of many alternatives. While pure forms of modern photography were being established by artistic intent, they stood alongside innovative alternatives with many other modern art forms, media and styles in photographic expression. The wide range of approaches found throughout early modern photography in Russia include but are not limited to what Strand and Stieglitz emphasized in their individual style of work. Terms of *purity* and *uniqueness of means* inside the limitations of the medium were one of many explanations in the wider array of global innovations invented in proto modern forms of photography.

A great part of the history of the Russian Avant-garde began in the provinces and bordering countries. As artists began to move in the historic transition to larger metropolitan centers, many trained in art

schools, and in some cases, worked in photography studios as well as in early modern cinema developing skills from a variety of traditional art mediums with modern technologies, media and newfound resources, expanding the definition of traditional photography collectively by intent through modern approaches, exhibitions and the printed page.

Key figures and collaborators such as Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova received their education and practice in the Art School east in Kazan before the end of World War I when they moved to Moscow. Teacher and painter Nikolai Fechin encouraged their experiments and discovery with a variety of hand-made mediums (Fig. 1). Fechin's mastery of the human figure with expressive use of color provided a model of classic discipline with exploration into new paths of modern expression.<sup>5</sup>

Rodchenko and Stepanova experimented with the mixture of traditional mediums including collage and influences from Asia. However, they did not begin to combine photographs and develop modern, and consequently use the camera and darkroom until working in Moscow. The growing



Fig. 1. Kazan Art School recently reopened after serving as an aircraft factory during Soviet era, postcard photograph, c.1912; and Kodachrome photograph, 2007. School exhibition in 1912 and Nicolai Fechin painting class, Kazan Art School, c.1910

metropolitan city provided new opportunities with greater demands for modern potentials including co-establishing the modern Constructivist movement with other artists.

Early modernists in Russia began to transform and mix traditional genre such as portraiture, landscape and still life with other approaches through a wide array of materials. Proto modern forms of photography evolved independently in the currents of progressive art movements such as Constructivism and Suprematism as well as outgrowths of Futurism and Cubism. Attention to iconographic traditions rooted in Byzantine culture and applications of Asian aesthetics further expanded modernist practice<sup>6</sup> embracing new facets of style and content in form, color, abstraction and language, which added to the growing complexity of modernism.

Photographers expanded subjects into broader themes including urbanscapes and topography. Inventive nontraditional viewpoints, often aided by the increasing mobility and cinematic-based innovations of technology, such as smaller cinematic and 35mm still cameras, greatly supported the transformation into modernism.<sup>7</sup> The wide range of experimental practices provides a multidirectional overview established in early modern art with photography in Russia.

Proto modern photography of the Russian Avant-garde falls within several collective areas of artistic practice. The activities are directly interrelated. They provide a shared view about the diversity of modern photographic forms of expression through a wide range of styles and approaches. Thematic areas include: *modern photographic exhibitions, installations, cinema and theatre; modern color; abstraction and modern language; modern form; modern figure; and modern landscape.*

#### MODERN PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITIONS, INSTALLATIONS, CINEMA AND THEATRE

Architectural-scale installations and the use of larger-than-life photographs, especially in exhibitions and staged outdoor productions, were one of the unique and little known contributions of the

Russian Avant-garde in public spaces. Exhibitions were expanded into installations with large-scale photographs from exposition halls to cinema and theatre. The Russian modernists began to apply photography to architectural spaces in unprecedented ways in design and function.

Artists used photography and modern to create architectural-scale works and oversized presentations in two and three-dimensional forms with technology from the early 1920s to 1930s. Such work was interrelated with sculpture, architecture and painting. Photography created for open public display offered multidimensional purposes that established precedents in scale and subjects that moved outside the limitations of conventional darkroom methods.

Modern exhibitions and installations as well as cinema integrated oversized photographic elements including modern photomontages and filmmaking montages from the darkroom in large displays, sets, and exhibition designs in two and three dimensions. Photographic subjects staged in the studio, fabricated to be photographed, were combined with other hand-made media. Architectural sites and outdoor displays became commonplace in the 1920s. Limitations of the medium were advanced as photography became a common universal language for the masses serving artistic, educational, promotional and political purposes throughout Russia and Europe (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. *Untitled, Moscow, Revolution Square, Stalin and Voroshilov with army parade on the building in the Red Square, c.1935-1936, gelatin silver photograph (HB211), Collection in the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia*

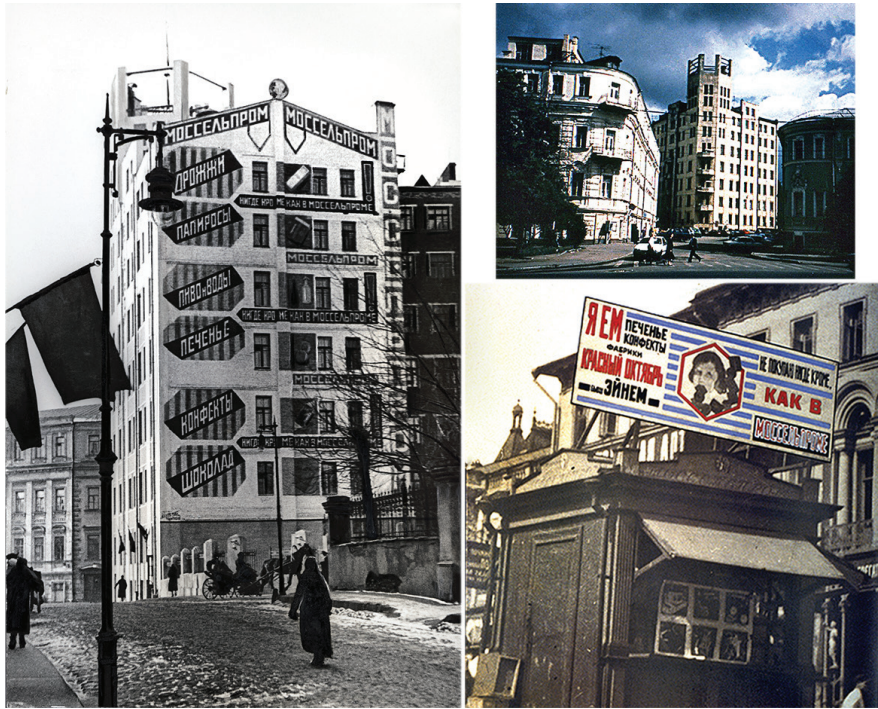


Fig. 3. Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, *Untitled [Mosselprom Building with typographical design]*, gelatin silver photograph, 1925; and advertisement “Einem biscuits” on the top of kiosk, Moscow, painted modern photomontage, 1923-1924, Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia. Mosselprom Building, Moscow, Kodacolor photograph, 2006

Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, in collaboration with the modern poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, created extensive works with photography, film, language and other mediums from the printed page to large scale applications outside buildings in Moscow exploring ideas from the studio into the everyday world, and applying modern

forms of photography and print typography including modern photomontage into various three-dimensional contexts (Fig.s 3).

El Lissitzky combined cinema, photography and modern photomontage with inventive three-dimensional forms and spaces throughout exhibition designs in central Europe. From museums to exposition

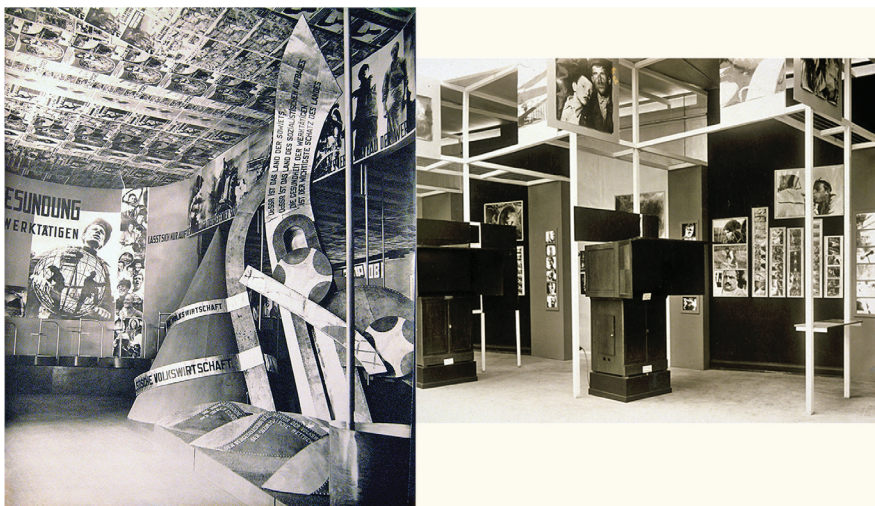


Fig. 4. El Lissitzky, “*Pressa*” [International Press Exhibition, photomontage room installation], Cologne, 1928, Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow. El Lissitzky, Russian Film Room with cinematic viewers and modern photomontage installation, Film and Photo Exhibition, Stuttgart, gelatin silver photograph, 1929

halls, his innovations helped set new standards for productions and staging that included unprecedented forms and scale with modern photography (Fig. 4). Filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein devised related cinematic techniques in montage to staged sets to show further interactions with the machinery of modern life. Their collaborations with film crews and experiments combined modern film and photography which created hybrids of both mediums in a variety of forms (Fig. 5-6). Modern cinema and theatre helped set precedents for contemporary installation works, modern photographic practices and video technologies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The young generation of proto modernists such as Rodchenko, Stepanova and Gustavs Klucis from Latvia, and other students from the faculty in the newly formed state school of Vkhutemas (acronym for Vysshieye Khudozhestvenno-Tekhnicheskiye Masterskiye, Higher Art and Technical Studios) in Moscow experimented with various photographic forms in exhibitions. Klucis further developed architectural installations with modern photography in unprecedented, large-scale multidimensional applications for public spaces (Fig. 7-8).<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 5. Dziga Vertov, "Man with a Movie Camera" [detail from cinematic montage], 1929



Fig. 6. Sergei Eisenstein, "Battleship Potemkin", modern film [soldiers advancing down steps, detail from cinematic montage sequence, Odessa Port on the Black Sea, Ukraine, Black Sea]; and untitled [cinema set on Odessa steps with cameramen Tisse and Alexandrov], photograph, 1925



Fig. 7. Vkhutemas Faculty and students' exhibition on discipline and courses of color, space and architecture (HB225), c.1923-1926. Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia



Fig. 8. Gustavs Klucis, from the Red Album catalog of the artist's work with photographs. Page 17, photomontage panel on the façade of the Mossovet Hotel for May Day, 1933. Collection of Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, Latvia

### MODERN COLOR

With the advent of modern industrial printing presses and ink on paper processes, and virtually unlimited regenerations of photography on the printed page, came further extraordinary artistic possibilities. Photographic multiples created applying ink on paper rather than limited chemical prints made in the darkroom developed prolific potentials for modern photography. The intrinsic character of repetition found in the historic photographic process was multiplied by technologies in press media. The printed page advanced many groundbreaking innovations by the Russian Avant-garde into emerging technologies of mass media through

progressive journals, including color lithography and letterpress, larger-than-life printed posters and other forms of photomechanical printing.

Print technologies provided new alternatives in color. The Russian Avant-garde, many schooled in painting, drawing and printmaking explored the far-reaching potentials of color with photography beyond the black and white chemical darkroom. Photographs provided a literal model of reality with observable references to the visual world. Modern color added in the studio as well as through the printing press applying ink on paper became an art in its own right with innumerable expressive possibilities.





Fig. 9. Gustavs Klucis, "Attack. Latvian Riflemen" ("Attack. A Strike at the Counter-revolution"), first modern photomontage with pencil and charcoal on paper, spring 1918. Gustavs Klucis, Red Album, page 1 of early Cubo-Futurist drawings and prints, 1918-1919. Gustavs Klucis, "Socialist Reconstruction", Design for the photolithographic poster, modern photomontage with Indian ink, gouaches, collage and varnish on paper, 1927. Collection of Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, Latvia. Valentina Kulagina and Gustavs Klucis, untitled [Klucis and Kulagina in their studio], gelatin silver photograph, c.1926, Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky

Photographers who received training in painting or related disciplines in the arts contributed with others producing color by other means. Through individual innovations, artists created new facets before color film and chemical processes were available decades later. Color coexisted with various degrees of independence within the structure of photography's lens-based depictions of the visual world.

Artists went further than the rendering or vivifying reality with varied applications of color. From oil paint to watercolor and gouache in the studio to color pigmented inks from the printing press, color became a self-sufficient quality of expression in its own right. Independent applications of color provided new and often abstract dimensions to modern photography in a wide array of inventive forms.

Collaborations by artists, writers and poets, from Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova to Gustav Klucis and Valentina Kulagina, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Osip and Lily Brik, and others, added new sensibilities in combinations of color with modern photography and modern photomontage.

Color was self-referencing aesthetic element with semi-autonomy. The idea that color coexisted with various photographic forms and variety of media was a challenging proposition directly associated with historical icon painting as well as the advent of abstract art.

Collaborative modernists and Vkhutemas teachers in modern color Gustavs Klucis and Valentina Kulagina created one of the largest oeuvres in color applying ink on paper using photolithography and photomechanical technologies in the modern printing press, especially combining various mediums and art disciplines into variations of modern photomontage. As the first inventor of modern photomontage, Klucis applied various methods with found and self-made photographs, cutting and pasting, drawing and adding color including various painting methods, and inks in printing processes. The artist merged color with photography, language, drawing, and design as well as painterly abstract forms from his early Cubist-Futurist works (Fig. 9).<sup>9</sup> Modern photomontage became an unprecedented fine art form in its own right subsequently with



Fig. 10. Elena Semionova, "Aviation Mainstay of Peaceful Labor", modern photomontage with photolithographic poster, 1926, Collection of the State Museum of V. V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia

other inventors such as the Dadaists and Surrealists. Found photographs cut and pasted alongside individual photographs, often set up and made in the studio, amplified themes and subjects with expressive constructions of color and form.

Pioneering modernists developed a myriad of ways in how to add color by integrating it with black and white photography. The Avant-garde established historical precedents combining the unrealized potentials of color with various forms of printed photography, especially printing methods applying ink on paper in photomechanical produced journals and posters which helped lay the groundwork for digital photographic technologies in the next century (Fig. 10).

#### ABSTRACTION AND MODERN LANGUAGE

From the independent and non-referential applications of color to the language of geometric forms in modern art, the Russian Avant-garde pursued other forms of visual vocabulary without the perceived limitations of the chemically based photographic medium. Artists helped introduce elements of abstraction into the realistic lexicon of black and white photography, especially from advances in modern painting, drawing, sculpture, and

architecture. Photographs also became an added means to help transform the emergence of modern written and visual language. A mixture of disciplines merged abstraction and modern language with photography, art and design.

The proto modern photographer in Russia contributed more than what painting or sculpture alone provided with the visual lexicon of camera imagery. Innovative ways of seeing became a critical part of modern prototypes. Abstraction and geometric form articulated with imagery from the camera's lens amplified unparalleled dimensions of modern art.

Geometric forms, lines, gradients of values, including color from light to dark, diagonals, curves and elements of light, traditionally conceived in other art forms, were combined with images made by the camera and real world. Experiments widened the diversification from the conventional chemical darkroom process to new mediums such as modern photomontage and other art disciplines.

Growing alliances between modern literature, art and photography opened more doors between photography and modernization of the Cyrillic Russian language. Language served more than as a verbal illustration to photographs as artists used visual

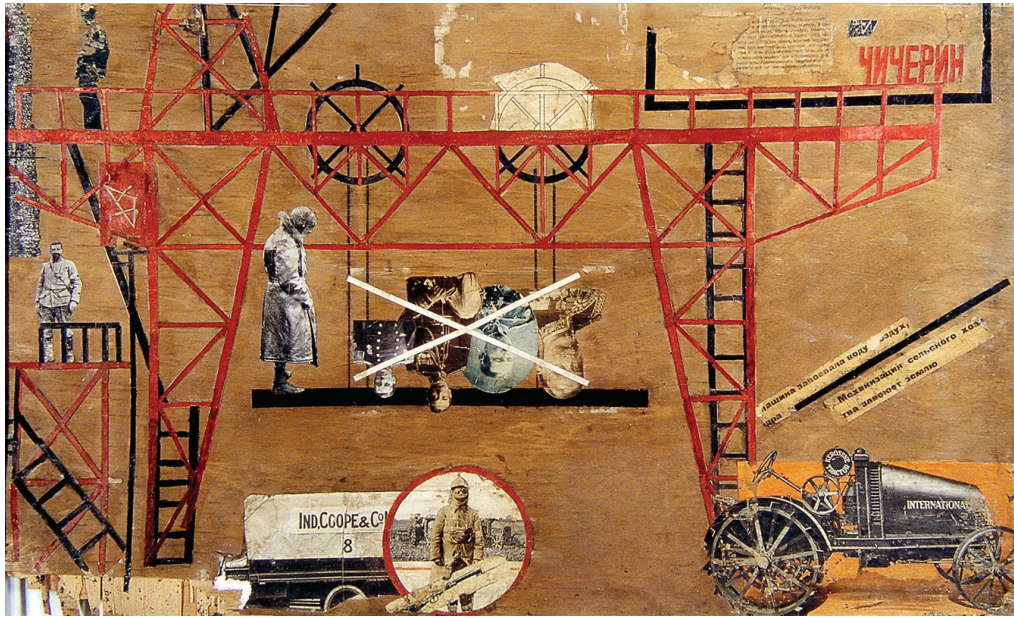


Fig. 11. Liubov Popova, Part of the Design for the stage set for “Zemlia Dybom” (“Earth in Turmoil”), an adaption by Sergei Tretiakov of Martinet’s verse drama “La Nuit”, modern photomontage, gouache, newspaper and photographic paper collage on plywood, 1923, Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art – Costakis Collection, Thessaloniki, Greece



Fig. 12. Gustavs Klucis, Constructions, experiments with large glass plate negatives, painted liquid emulsions, ink, painting and drawing, and chemical development with photographs from original sculptures and modern photomontage, 1919-1921, Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art – Costakis Collection, Thessaloniki, Greece



Fig.13. Aleksandr Rodchenko and Vladimir Mayakovsky, advertisement for GUM, photomontage, 1923; and Syphilis, cover for book of poetry, negative modern photomontage, 1926, Collection of the State Museum of V. V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia

forms from the literal to the abstract. The geometric character of printed Cyrillic letters and words created visual elements and narratives in a variety of media. At times, counterpointing in parity with modern photographs, photomontage, cinema and photomechanical prints applying ink on paper (Fig. 11-13).

From advertising to books of poetry, avant-garde journals, books and lithographic prints, from posters to other printed matter, language and the unique character of the Cyrillic vocabulary served as independent and fundamental visual elements in the final form of modern expression. The use and mixtures of modern linguistics as another optical component with modern photographs, modern photomontage and multimedia helped broaden styles and approaches with unmatched experiments and innovations with a variety of materials.

#### MODERN FORM

Manufactured objects from factories and other products from industrial production, mechanized architecture and their ever-increasing role in everyday life were increasingly fresh subjects for early modern photographers. Engineered materials and structures became a subject in their own right. Original perspectives created from more mobile viewpoints thanks to the first, smaller hand-held 35mm cameras that added to the vocabulary of the new proliferation of mass-produced objects, modern architecture and everyday change in surroundings



Fig. 14. Aleksandr Rodchenko and Ilya Ehrenburg, *Materialization of Science Fiction*, negative and positive modern photomontage with offset printing, 1927, Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia

and symbols. The proto modern photographer concentrated upon the distillation of forms in many ways, from the subjects created by the camera to the darkroom, studio and advancing forms of expression with the photomechanical press. Manufactured

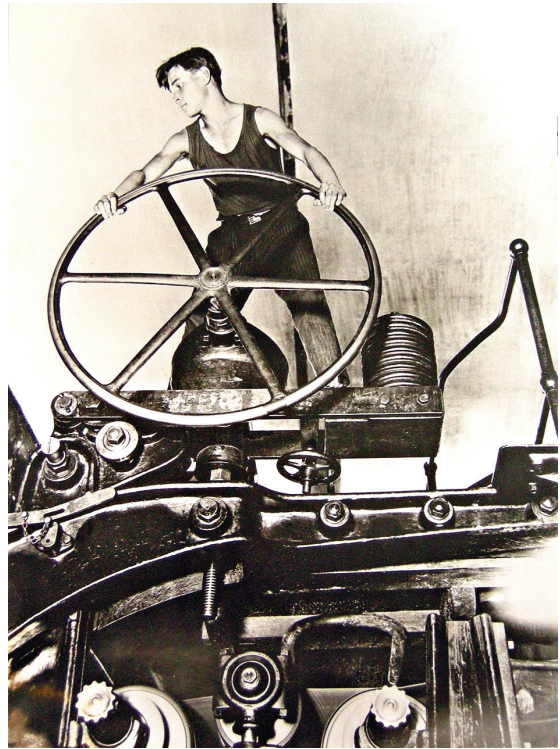


Fig. 15. Anatoly Shaikhet, *Komsomol Youth*, gelatin silver photograph, 1929, Collection of Sergei Burasovsky



Fig. 16. Mark Markov-Grinberg, *Symbols Changing in Moscow Kremlin*, gelatin silver photograph, 1935, Collection of Sergei Burasovsky



Fig. 17. Boris Ignatovich, *Untitled [Airplane]*, gelatin silver photograph, c.1935, Private Collection

objects and their mechanized shapes, factory production in daily urban scenes from mass culture provided a wide array of newfound themes and original points of view for the artist (Fig. 14-17).

Modernists as László Moholy-Nagy working in thirteen mediums, while living, traveling and meeting in Germany with Russian Avant-garde as Lisitzky, Kandinsky, Mayakovsky along with other leaders of modern movements, provided an even broader framework. After Moholy-Nagy began to teach and design publications with photography at the Bauhaus in 1923, the artist expanded his experiments in media cross-influenced by a prolific number of photographic inventions and innovations. Like Rodchenko later turning to photography with the camera, some of his earliest photographs include architectural subjects in Paris and Berlin. He photographed the technological Funkturm Berlin, the Radio Tower under construction by architect Heinrich Straumer. The positive version was part of the design of Bauhaus Book Number 9, *Kandinsky: Punkt und Linie zu Fläche (Point and line to plane)* published in 1926 including Kandinsky's seminal essay about non-objective painting. Moholy-Nagy sent a negative version of the photograph to Vladimir Mayakovsky in Moscow after meeting him at a train station in Berlin (Fig. 18).

Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova made unique examples comprising two and three-dimensional photographic forms to be printed in thousands of copies and multiples by the modern printing press. The second issue of *USSR in Construction*

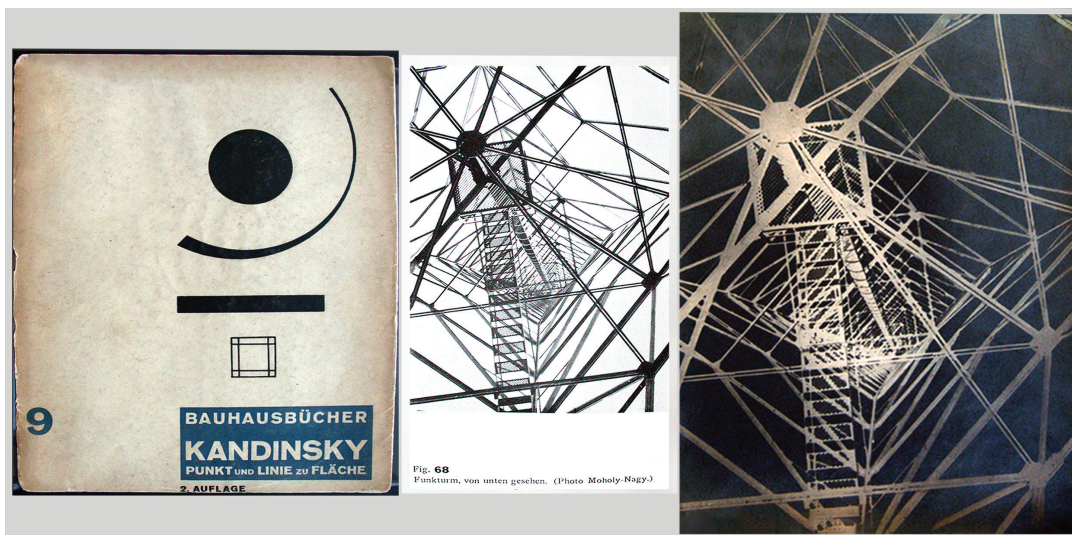


Fig. 18. László Moholy-Nagy, *Bauhaus Book Number 9, Kandinsky: "Punkt und Linie zu Fläche"* ("Point and line to plane"), 1926, cover and page with "Funkturm von unten gesehen" ("Berlin Radio Tower from below"). László Moholy-Nagy, *untitled [Funkturm Berlin from below]*, negative gelatin silver photograph, c.1925-1926, Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia. Hattula Moholy-Nagy, Ann Arbor, Michigan



Fig. 19. Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, "USSR in Construction", Parachute Issue, photomechanical print with ink on paper attached to page, Number 2, February, 1937, Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh

in February 1937 was dedicated to military parachutists. The Russian edition included a three-dimensional foldout paper parachute, printed in color and attached to the page (Fig. 19). The sculptural shape extended the printed journal beyond the two-dimensional reading page into the implicit reality of the viewer. Form and function intermixed with modern photography in ways that redefined the role of the reader, viewer and artist.

Rodchenko further engaged three-dimensional constructions with photography in the studio. *Mena Vsekh* is a "three-dimensional photomontage for book cover of Constructivist poets" (Fig. 20) that began as a staged still life. Cut photographs were assembled with small rectangular plates of glass and geometric typographical elements and that were recreated photographically. Real objects including a drawing compass and architectural drawing triangles, ink, pen and pocket watch complete the

complex multi-dimensional work. In many ways, the sculptural aspects of the modern photomontage construction speak to Rodchenko's development as an artist. Modern tools added to the construction reference from work in modern painting, printmaking, architecture, film and geometric drawing and sculpture. After Rodchenko started using his first camera late in December 1923, the "three-dimensional photomontage" was as much a self-portrait as a study for the book cover of Constructivist poets. The construction and expansion of portraiture of with the subject to be photographed in the studio, references modern advances and innovations existing in Rodchenko's other artworks in a variety of mediums and experiments at the time.

Another quintessential modern multimedia work created with the photographic process the same year is "Self-Portrait, The Constructor" by El Lissitzky (Fig. 21) made with two separate negatives from the

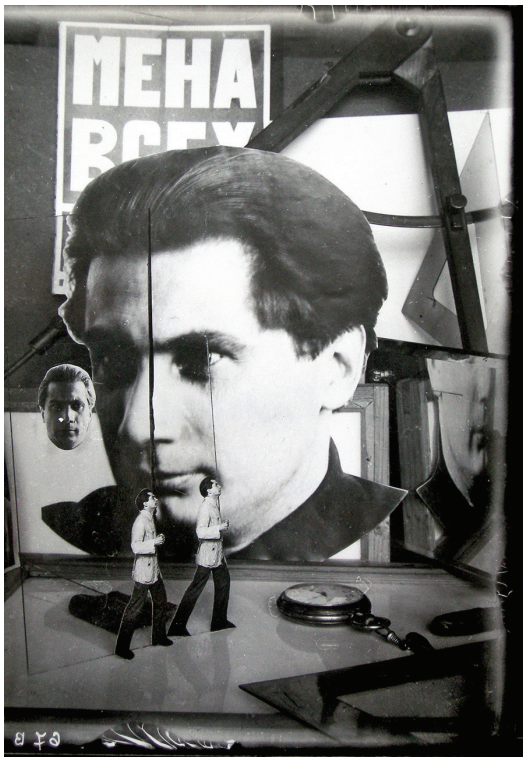


Fig. 20. Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Mena Vsekh" ("Change of Everybody"), three-dimensional [modern] photomontage for book cover of Constructivist poets, gelatin silver photograph of still life with cut photographs, glass, typographical elements, compass, drawing triangles, ink, pen and pocket watch, 1924, Private Collection

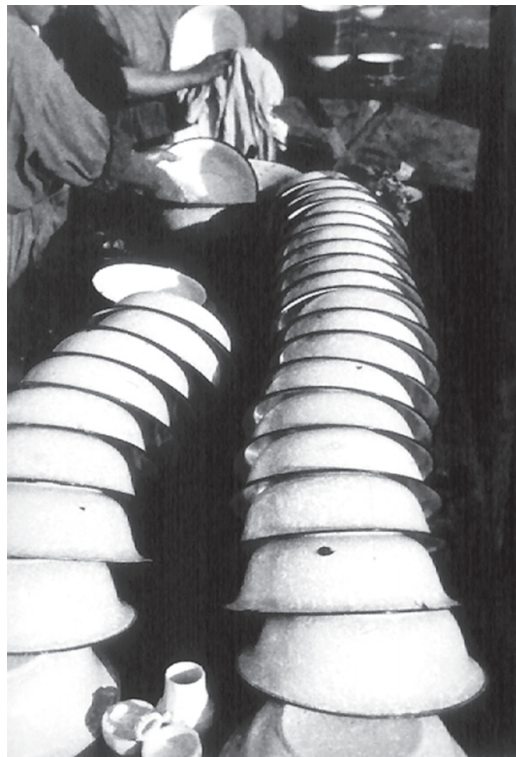


Fig. 22. Boris Ignatovich, Dining Room, 1937, gelatin silver photograph, Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh

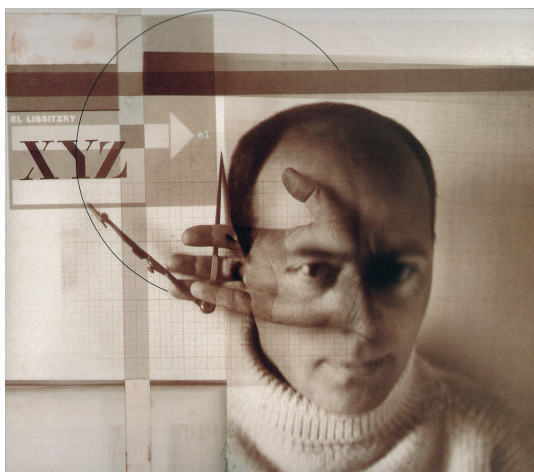


Fig. 21. El Lissitzky, Self-Portrait, The Constructor, modern photograph from two negatives, collage, photomontage, photogram, ink drawing and painting in gouache. Collection of State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia

camera: the face and eye, and the artist's hand with drawing compass. Lissitzky added further dimensions of media as collage, photograms and photomontage to the unconventional portrait that he rephotographed. A typographical fragment printed

in reverse from his stationary letterhead design is combined with semi-transparent English letters "XYZ". Added to the surface of the combination photograph and other media is gouache painting and drawing in black ink of a partial circle made by the compass. The artist made various positive and negative photograph versions of the self-portrait to explore further variations and potentials through the photographic process.<sup>10</sup>

The photographic process, with its intrinsic reproducibility and countless recreations starting in the chemical darkroom, offered fewer limitations compared to other traditional art mediums thanks to the modern use with emerging technologies. The lens-made optical character of photography images, and multiplication of prints in various forms introduced new aspects of modernity through multiplicity, meaning and content. The Russian Avant-garde expanded the idea of proto modern photography beyond the boundaries and historical definition of the medium.



Fig. 23. Aleksandr Rodchenko, *The Horse Race*, gelatin silver photograph, 1939, Private Collection



Fig. 24. Georgi Zelma, *Accordion Band*, gelatin silver photograph, 1937, Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh



Fig. 25. Georgi Zelma, *Sportsman's Parade, Red Square*, gelatin silver photograph, 1937, Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh





Fig. 26. Georgi Zelma, *Self-portrait, Tashkent, 1924*,  
Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh

Photographic themes of repetition, represented by factory manufactured commodities, everyday mass-produced goods, and living subjects, became a common focus in recurrent themes of modern expression in photography. Continuous production and mechanized industry represented change within emerging modern cultures that offered an unprecedented milieu of potentials (Fig. 22-25).

Boris Ignatovich turned his camera to commonplace realities as an eyewitness with keen understanding. From street views to manufactured objects from the factory, he found uncommon perspectives in the commonplace. To heighten reality by revealing the extraordinary from the ordinary. Georgi Zelma (Fig. 26) worked with newfound subjects spreading throughout Moscow as well as in his family homeland in Uzbekistan where he grew up in Central Asia. Documenting the introduction of the first sewing machines, radios, farm tractors, and other mass produced for products as well as electricity and cinema production that moved other historic cultures into the modern era.<sup>11</sup> Rodchenko, influenced to a degree by the art of Japan when schooling in Kazan under painter Nicolai Fechin who encouraged experimentation in various media, turned towards high and low angled views with prototypes of cinematic 35mm film cameras offering new mobility with subjects emerging in the everyday modern world.<sup>12</sup>

These and other proto modern photographers took advantage of the industrial and uncompromising optical nature of photography to create innovative forms of meaning, subjects and processes in their expansion of the lexicon of art contributing in ways that other art media alone could not convey. As an ideal modern medium, photography opened the world of ideas with change, where living realities resonated on a day-to-day basis. Establishing modern forms of photography went hand in hand with new artistic vision into the future.

#### MODERN FIGURE

Like portraiture, the Russian Avant-garde broadened the human figure as a subject universally. Individual physique and visual characteristics of individuals as well as groups of people played a central role in multifaceted themes and unconventional viewpoints. As independent visual elements, human forms offered multiplicity in meaning. From the simplicity and reduction of people made with the camera to the staged use of assemblies of individuals, groups and narrative sequences, the photographer directed a wide array of modern imagery to expand figurative genre.

Early modern photographers moved beyond traditions in portraiture and descriptions of individuals. Human shapes, forms and collective structures from people to the masses played a more active role. From modern photographs to modern photomontage, avant-garde journals, and photolithographic posters to photomechanical prints with ink on paper, personal approaches in style and vision created new themes with distinctive points of view. Even documentary based subject matter that depicted everyday scenes was seen and composed in very different terms with human forms (Fig. 27-29).

Narratives became an ever-increasing new genre with staged scenes and theatrical settings in all photographic mediums. In 1923, Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote the book of poetry *Pro Eto*. His personal poems centered on the daily separation from lover Lily Brik. Rodchenko illustrated passages with eight modern photomontages as visual metaphors. He created ten works, two were not published.<sup>13</sup> He also created other narrative series with modern

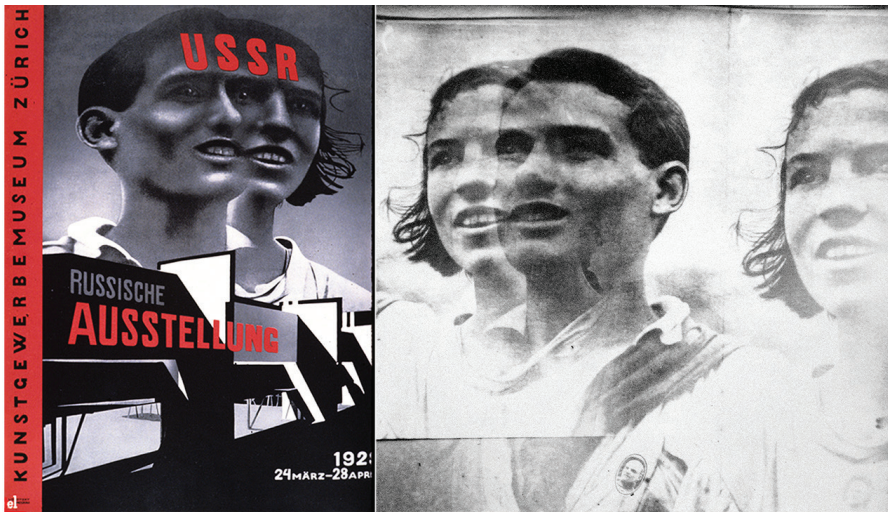


Fig. 27. El Lissitzky, *Pioneers*, used for 1929 Zurich exhibition poster, modern photomontage, 1929, Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia; and poster for Russian Exhibition in Zurich with *Pioneers*, modern photomontage, photomechanical print with ink on paper, 1929



Fig. 28. Gustavs Klucis, *Untitled [Klucis and hand, HB231]*, gelatin silver photograph, c.1926, Collection of the State Museum of V.V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia. Gustavs Klucis, *We will fulfill the plan of great works (modernization)*, verso cover of "Artists Brigade", Number 1, photo-offset with ink on paper, 1931, Library of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain



Fig. 29. Boris Ignatovich, *The Hermitage*, gelatin silver photograph, 1932, Collection of Sergei Burasovsky



Fig. 30. Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Pro Eto" cover, pasted photograph of Lily Brik by Abram Shterenberg with gouache and ink, 1923. Aleksandr Rodchenko, untitled, unpublished modern photomontage of Lily Brik and zoo, modern photomontage with drawing, ink and gouache, 1923. Mikhail Kaufman, Rodchenko in Working Suit by Stepanova from drawing by Rodchenko, gelatin silver photograph, 1922 (note: Kaufman was the brother of modern filmmaker Dziga Vertov). Aleksandr Rodchenko, Lily Brik from the Chauffeur series, gelatin silver photograph, 1928. Collection of the State Museum of V. V. Mayakovsky, Moscow, Russia

photographs such as Brik and her chauffeur (Fig. 30).

The cover of *Pro Eto* by Rodchenko incorporated the photograph of Brik made by Abram Shterenberg cut and merged with black ink and typographical hand-made coloring. The eight modern photomontages throughout the pages of the book exemplify

the diverse nature of modern photography created in the studio. The persona of Brik, Mayakovsky and other individuals in various fragments assembled with the poetic prose serve as powerful visual counterparts to the free verse together revealing true passions, dimensions, and realities of everyday life during the 1920s. Human elements created

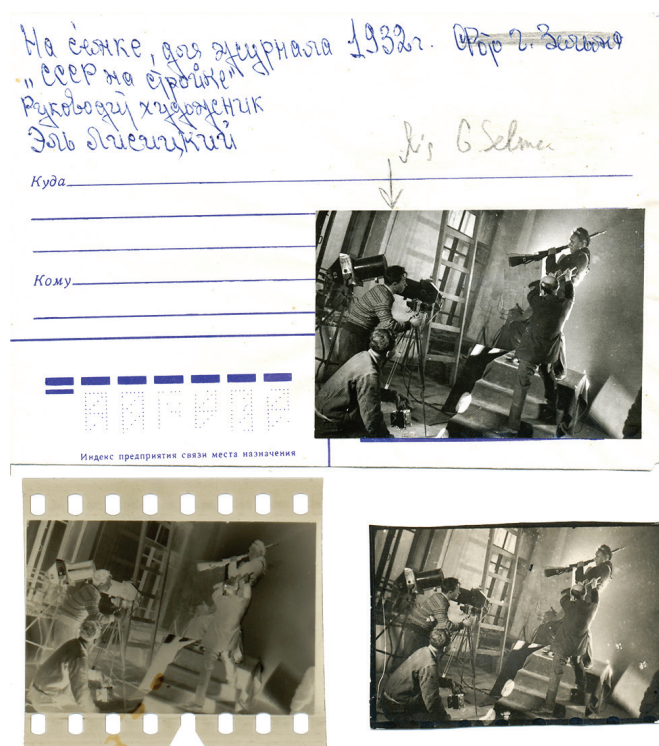


Fig. 31. Georgi Zelma and El Lissitzky on set of *USSR in Construction*, envelope with negative and gelatin silver photographs, contact prints with writing in ink and pencil, 1932. Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh

throughout Rodchenko's wide range of figurative images are a visual centerpiece that is interconnected with the language. The stark realism and documentary style of the book combine modern verse with modern photomontages, which represents the complexity of rapid change by kaleidoscopic fragments of life, expressing multiplicity in a complex, counterbalancing metaphor of words and pictures.

Further collaborations underline the importance of the human figure in the diverse contributions by other proto modern photographers. Georgi Zelma, El Lissitzky and Semion Fridland worked together to photograph and design the special Red Army issue of the *USSR in Construction*. The journal, which was published in Russian, German, Spanish, French and English languages from 1930-1941 and briefly in 1949, became a temporary sanctuary for modern photomontage and photography. By the late 1930s, Soviet purges increased at home and the freedom of expression was reduced to propaganda and ideology. By the Second World War, the era of early modern photography in Russia ended.

The Design for Red Army issue included military characters fashioned and dressed in lighted sets by

the photographers with inventive dedication and imagination (Fig. 31). The individuals in military dress with weapons provided role modeling to create a social model for the masses. Staged lighting, angled points of view and chosen gestures with each person strengthened the fortitude of military spirit. Such narratives became an important part of the Russian Avant-garde's treatment and subsequent development of the modern figure.

#### MODERN LANDSCAPE

For the early modernists, the landscape as subject and traditional genre shifted primarily from natural forms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the industrialized and urban topographies built in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The impact and influence of human-made elements, from architecture and industry to war, became an inextricable part of the modern landscape in character and essence. Culturally constructed geography increasingly replaced exacting descriptive renditions of nature.

How the landscape was seen and constructed with the camera became important decisions in meaning

and content. The selection of subject matter and points of view shaped the final forms of expression. Human presence and influence in the modern landscape became paramount.

The turn by the Russian Avant-garde towards cultural geography marked a decisive shift from traditional landscapes. Modern photography was not only informed by intention but the human condition. "It is only now that we are acquiring sufficient perspective on the nineteenth century in terms of a metaphor of growth and decay and evolution,"

writes contemporary, late twentieth century cultural geographer J.B. Jackson. "We can best rely on the insights of the geographer and the photographer and the philosopher. They are the most trustworthy custodians of the human tradition. For they seek to discover order within randomness, beauty within chaos and the enduring aspirations of mankind behind blunders and failures."<sup>14</sup>

From city-erected scenes of architecture and emerging urban spaces combined with the daily movements of the masses to birds-eye views by air and



Fig. 32. Georgi Zelma, *Tramways, Moscow*, gelatin silver photograph, 1929, Collection of Paul Harbaugh and Michael Mattis

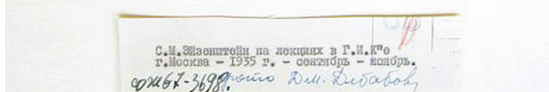


Fig. 33. Dmitry Debabov, *Belorussian Train Station, Leningrad Highway*, 1935, Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh



Fig. 34. Boris Ignatovich, *St. Isaacs [Leningrad]*, gelatin silver photograph, 1930, Private Collection

the ceaseless motion of trams and industrial modes of transportation, a new immediacy permeated the landscape. Early modern photographers perceived life no longer as a timeless or eternal setting. Rather commonplace reality became a faster paced phenomenon to be garnered or lost in shifting transitions of the industrial terrain and modern machinery (Fig. 32-34).

The Russian Avant-garde developed modern tendencies to establish their own photographic terms through technology and inevitable advances towards the future. In vision and meaning, some of the consequences were not always satisfying artistically. By the advent of World War II, past options in the freedom of expression were reduced fundamentally to controlled existence. The innovative precedents and advances that flourished in the 1920s were redirected and replaced by the designated purposes of the state.

El Lissitzky's last modern photomontage printed in 1941 as a color photolithograph right before his death dedicated industry and war machinery with the entry of the Soviet Union into World War II. Portraying the campaign effort with messages to the

masses and symbolically ending the avant-garde era and proto modern photography (Fig. 35). Modern photomontage was turned towards the military efforts as it began with the *USSR in Construction*. During the following years, Dmitry Baltermants along with Georgi Zelma and other war correspondents documented some of the most painful scenes of war from Kerch to Stalingrad. Many images were not published in many cases for the first time until decades after the War. At the end of December 1941, the Soviet Army briefly recaptured the historic city of Kerch in the Crimea. Baltermants photographed families in the field searching for their loved ones. On January 1, 1942, he photographed several images of a woman who found her husband. Later printing the photographs of the scene combined with another image of a tumultuous sky. The powerful modern document, created with an unparalleled sense of universal anguish about war, was titled "Grief". It combines some of the advances of modern photography with the human destruction of war (Fig. 36).<sup>15</sup> From Lissitzky's final contribution rooted in his personal innovations in modern art, photography and photomontage to Baltermant's profound and timeless view of all wars made with



Fig. 35. El Lissitzky, *All for the victory, all for the front*, modern photomontage, photolithography, 1941, Russian State Library, St. Petersburg



Fig. 36. Dmitri Baltermants, *Grief*, Kerch [Crimea with and without clouds], two gelatin silver photographs, January 1, 1942, Collection of Paul and Teresa Harbaugh

the camera, a major shift signaled the end of decades of innovative artistic contributions by the avant-garde.

From the darkroom to the artist's studio, the Russian Avant-garde laid the foundation for new tenets in a wide array of advances and approaches with proto modern photography. Artists echoed the diversity and emergence of the modern era in their art with profound historical change. Ultimately required to create mandated ideological and social agendas, the formative years of modern art and photography established by the world-class innovations of artists of the Russian Avant-garde vanished. Modern photography, emerging and recognized in the 1920s was replaced, reassigned and redirected into ideological photojournalism and official sanctioned styles of social realism. Yet the formative stages of modern photography and its related prototypes did envisage the future that was so sacrosanct to the modernists. Contemporary photographic art in many forms today continues to change the world with endless emerging technologies, including digital prints returning to ink on paper, which reflect the spirit of the early historic innovations and many precedents without limitations once again.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Yates, Steve. Curator-to-Curator: The Critical Role of Concept, Research and Collaborations (László Moholy-Nagy). *Museum Journal*, Moscow, February 2010, p. 70-76. [куратор куратору: роль идей, исследований и сотрудничества, музей, 02, 2010, к теме номера, 70-76].
- <sup>2</sup> Yates, Steve. Proto Modern Photography. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 1992. For Internet access to continued research in early modern photography from a private collection see: [www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/](http://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/)
- <sup>3</sup> The author in a lecture introduced the term "modern photomontage" for the International Symposium and wrote two essays for the National Museum of Art in Riga, Latvia in October 7-9, 2014. To qualify the new uses of photomontage during the modern era in distinction from past general use and history of general term. See: Yates, Steve. Gustavs Klucis and the Avant-garde: Proto Modernism to Photographic Ideas for the 21st Century, ed. Irina Derkusova. In *Klucis, Gustavs. Anatomy of an Experiment*. Riga: The Latvian National Museum of Art, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Photography, *Camera Work*, Numbers 49-50, June 1917, 3. For the inaugural exhibition of early modern photography see: Yates, Steve. *Proto Modern Photography*. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 1992, co-curated with late preeminent historian Beaumont Newhall, beginning the investigation into the broad spectrum of early modern photography.

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive art history see: Tuluzokova, Galina. *Nikolai Fechin*. St. Petersburg, 2007 in Russian; and *Nicolai Fechin. The Art and the Life*. Fechin Art Reproductions, 2012. Fechin left Kazan for the United States in the early 1920s and eventually established his studio in Taos, New Mexico.

<sup>6</sup> Yates, Steve. Gustavs Klucis un Avangards – no Protomodernisma līdz 21. gadsimta fotogrāfijas idejām [(Gustavs Klucis and the Avant-garde: Proto modernism to photographic ideas for the 21st century)], ed. Iveta Derkusova. In: Gustavs, Klucis. *Kāda Eksperimenta Anatomija, Gustavs Klucis (Anatomy of an Experiment)*. Riga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2014, p. 74-75.

<sup>7</sup> In Paris in spring 1925, Rodchenko acquired the new Sept hand-held film camera, and the Ika, the precursor to the 35mm Leica camera. He began to use the cameras to develop his modern style from high and low points of view. See: Rodchenko's Diverse Photographic Modernism. in: Rodchenko, Aleksandr, *Abangoardiako argazkigintzea, fotomontaketea eta zinemagintzea (Modern photography, photomontage and film)*. Bilbao: Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa Fundazioa Rodchenko, 2003, trilingual publication in Basque, English and Spanish accompanying the international traveling exhibition curated and edited by Steve Yates, assembled by Curatorial Assistance and the Art Museum at the University of New Mexico, United States.

<sup>8</sup> Special thanks to Iveta Derkusova, Deputy Director of the Latvian National Museum of Art for our research collaborations and correspondence for identifications.

<sup>9</sup> Yates, Steve. Gustavs Klucis un Avangards – no Protomodernisma līdz 21. gadsimta fotogrāfijas idejām (Gustavs Klucis and the Avant-garde: Proto modernism to photographic ideas for the 21st century), ed. Iveta Derkusova; In Klucis, Gustavs, *Kāda Eksperimenta Anatomija, Gustavs Klucis (Anatomy of an Experiment)*, Riga: Latvian National Museum of Art, 2014, p. 55-81.

<sup>10</sup> The original self-portrait in various media was discovered during research in the Library Archive of the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow in 1992 and subsequently used as the cover for *Poetics of Space: A Critical Photographic Anthology*. University of New Mexico Press, 1995, ed. S. Yates, which included essays by Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy and others.

<sup>11</sup> Yates, Steve. *The early modern documentary photography of Georgi Zelma, 1924-1944*, unpublished manuscript from Family archive research.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. "Rodchenko's Diverse Photographic Modernism," Rodchenko, Aleksandr. *Abangoardiako argazkigintzea, fotomontaketea eta zinemagintzea (Modern photography, photomontage and film)*. Bilbao: Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa Fundazioa Rodchenko, 2003, p. 219-220,

<sup>13</sup> For an insightful historical account of the poem, publication, collaborations and individuals during the period including the ten modern photomontages, see: Lavrentiev,

Aleksandr. *Vladimir Mayakovsky, It (Pro Eto)*. Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1994, trilingual in Russian, English, German.

<sup>14</sup> Yates, Steve, Editor. *The Essential Landscape with essays by J. B. Jackson*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985, p. 84. Also see: J. B. Jackson. *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980.

<sup>15</sup> For one of the most recent comprehensive accounts concerning the history of Baltermant's photograph "Grief", and the various journals where it was published as well as its cultural significance in Jewish history in the USSR, see: Shneer, David. Picturing Greif: Soviet Holocaust Photography at the Intersection of History and Memory, *American Historical Review*, February 2010.

**Steve YATES**

*Fullbright stipendininkas, Albuquerkė, Naujoji Meksika, JAV*

## PROTO MODERNIOS FOTOGRAFIJOS ASPEKTAI: AVANGARDO ISTORIJA RUSIJOJE, EUROPOJE IR CENTRINĖJE AZIJOJE

### Santrauka

Dvidešimtojo amžiaus pradžioje vyraujanti modernaus meno kryptis apėmė platų meninių ir techninių inovacijų lauką, kuriame buvo derinamos istorinės medijos ir požiūriai su naujosiomis medijomis ir technologijomis. Įvairių tarpdisciplininio meno atstovų karta pradėjo derinti fotografijos praktiką su kitomis disciplinomis ir įgūdžiais, sukurdami globalią sceną šiuolaikinio meno praktikoms praėjusio šimtmečio pabaigoje ir naujojo pradžioje.

Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose, Europoje ir Azijoje auštant moderniai erai, Rusijos ir Europos avangardas įtvirtino platų meno formų ir stilių spektrą. Pirmieji dešimtmečiai matė naujų kryptių ieškančių menininkų, fotografų, kino kūrėjų, tapytojų, architektų muzikų, rašytojų ir poetų kuriamas naujoves. Išreikšdami kasdienio gyvenimo pokyčius modernistai peržengė tradicijų ribas. Menininkai derino fotografiją, jos mokslinius procesus ir amatą su pasirodžiusiomis naujomis technologijomis ir medijomis, siekdami kurti modernias temas, požiūrius ir stilius, kuriems buvo būdingas precedento neturintis matymas.

Nors ankstyvosios modernios fotografijos istorija globaliu požiūriu dar turės būti parašyta, bet Rusijoje plataus menininkų rato indėlis į ją buvo platesnio spektro, nei kolegų Vakaruose ar Rytuose. Nuo Maskvos iki Rytų Europos ir Centrinės Azijos, rusų avangardas sukūrė modernios fotografijos prototipus, naudodamas įvairias priemones ir formas, kurios paplito tarptautiniu mastu. Menininkų gyvenimo ir kūrybos laikotarpiu, buvo išrasti modernūs stiliai ir požiūriai, pagrįsti nepriklausomu matymu. Fotografai dirbo su plačia medžiaga ir priemonių įvairove, naudodami fotomechaninio spausdinimo rašalu ant popieriaus mediją ir susijusias kino bei kitas tuomet atsiradusias technologijas. Fotografijos buvo kuriamos, perkuriamos ir iš naujo spausdinamos, naudojamos ir pakartotinai panaudojamos daugybe skirtingų ir prasmingų būdų. Pirmieji modernūs fotografai išsilaisvino iš konvencinių modelių ir tradicijų, sukurdami savo pačių temas, susijusias su kasdienio gyvenimo patirtimi.

Rusijoje proto-modernios fotografijos istorija labiau susijusi su ilgai išlikusiomis idėjomis, nei su pirmaisiais atspaudais, įprastais būdais sukurtais fotolaboratorijose. Fotolaboratorija dažnai pasitarndavo kitiems tikslams. Menininkai dirbdavo nepaisydami medijos galimybių ribų ir linko į eksperimentus. Fotolaboratorijos ir rašalo spaudos ant popieriaus naujovės vedė nuo istorinių fotografijos kaip medijos ribotumų prie pakartojimu pagrįstų procesų būdingų pačiai medijai.

Dvidešimt pirmasis amžius suteikia neribotų galimybių studijuoti su fotografija susijusio modernaus meno istoriją. Tyrinėjimai ne tik padeda svarbius pamatus geresniam ankstesnių Sovietų sąjungos šalių indėlio, bet ir globaliam modernaus ir postmodernaus meno vertinimui. Naudojant platų stilių ir metodų spektrą avangardo sukurta tikra



ir nepaprasta ankstyvosios modernios fotografijos istorijos įvairovė padeda suprasti šiandienos tarpdisciplininius požiūrius. Visai tai siūlo žinias ir supratimą naujame, atrodytu, neribotų meninių galimybių pasaulyje.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** proto moderni fotografija, modernios fotografijos istorija, avangardas, ankstyvoji modernioji era, technologijos, fotolitografija, fotomechaninis, modernus spausdinimo presas, inovacijos, moderni forma ir spalva, abstrakcija, mišrus žanras, daugiadisciplininis, fotografiniai menai.

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#### STEVE YATES

Steve Yates is a three-time Fulbright Scholar to Russia (2007 and 1995) and countries of the former USSR (Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine and Belarus, 1991), founding museum curator of photography at the Museum of New Mexico (1980-2007), photographic artist including site-specific installations and collections globally, international lecturer, author and researcher of the history of photography in modern art history. Masters and doctoral degrees, University of New Mexico in photographic history, artistic practice, teaching and museum work with Distinguished Professor Van Deren Coke and Beaumont Newhall, preeminent historian and founder of the Photography Department, The Museum of Modern Art. Visiting artist-scholar in over twenty-eight countries most recently in China, Moscow and Bucharest:

[www.linkedin.com/in/steveyateshistory](http://www.linkedin.com/in/steveyateshistory).

El. paštas / E-mail: [syates13@hotmail.com](mailto:syates13@hotmail.com)