RUSSIAN FUTURISM

Russian Futurism is the broad term for a movement of Russian poets and artists who adopted the principles of Filippo Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurism* which espoused the rejection of the past, and a celebration of speed, machinery, violence, youth, industry, destruction of academies, museums, and urbanism; it also advocated for modernization and cultural rejuvenation.

Russian Futurism began roughly in the early 1910s; in 1912, a year after the beginning of Ego-Futurism, the literary group "Hylea" - also spelt "Guilée" and "Gylea" – issued the manifesto *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*. The 1912 movement was originally called Cubo-Futurism, but this term is now used to refer to the style of art produced. Russian Futurism ended shortly after the Russian Revolution of 1917, after which former Russian Futurists either left the country, or participated in the new art movements.

> ***"The Russian people have an innate taste for art. They have created folk melodies, which have supplied themes for all our great composers, for Stravinsky, for example."–*** Goncharova

Notable Russian Futurists included Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Lyubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, David Burliuk, Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Velmir Khlebnikov.

The Italian Futurist Manifesto celebrated the "beauty of speed" and the machine as the new aesthetic. Marinetti explained the "beauty of speed" as "a roaring automobile is more beautiful than the *Winged Victory*" further asserting the movement towards the future. Many art forms were greatly affected by the Russian Futurism movement within Russia, with its influences being seen in cinema, literature, typography, politics, and propaganda. The Russian Futuristic movement saw its demise in the early 1920s.

Group photograph of some Russian Futurists, published in their manifesto *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*. Left to right Aleksei Kruchyonykh, Vladimir Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, David Burliuk and Benedikt Livshits

The concept and style of 'Cubo-Futurism' became synonymous with the works of artists within Ukrainian and Russian post-revolutionary avant-garde circles as they interrogated non-representational art through the fragmentation and displacement of traditional forms, lines, viewpoints, colours, and textures within their pieces. The impact of Cubo-Futurism was then felt within performance art societies, with Cubo-Futurist painters and poets collaborating on theatre, cinema, and ballet pieces that aimed to break theatre conventions through the use of nonsensical *zaum* poetry, emphasis on improvisation, and the encouragement of audience participation (an example being the 1913 Futurist satirical tragedy *Vladimir Mayakovsky*.)

Aleksandr Shevchenko (1882 **–** 1948) was a Ukrainian modernist painter and sculptor.

In 1912, he had a major showing with the Donkey's Tail, a radical modernist group. The following year, he published two works of art theory; *"Neo-primitivism, its Theory, its Possibilities, its Achievements* and *The Principles of Cubism and Other Trends in World Art of All Times and All People.* In these works, he defends the spontaneity of Russian folk art and the lubok (a popular print style), and claims that it has "oriental" roots.

Shevchenko echoed the sentiment of the Futurists' endorsement of the machine age when, in 1913, he stated, "the world has been transformed into a single, monstrous, fantastic, perpetually-moving machine, into a single huge non-animal automatic organism… [this] cannot help but be reflected in our thinking and in our spiritual life: in Art". The "cult of the machine" became an increasingly utopian concept within Cubo-Futurist circles, with artists perceiving the idyllic phenomenon of machine production as the foremost "proletarian creation" due to its ability to help construct an equitable, collective life for all people regardless of class.This ideological conception of utopian perfection through machinery significantly impacted the stylistic elements of the Cubo-Futurist movement, influencing artists to experiment with pure abstraction, geometric shapes, harsh lines and planes, and the deconstruction of organic forms into powerful structures infused with machine symbolism.

Shevchenko's *Musicians* (1913) shows a man playing a violin and woman playing a harp. She is wearing an apron and they seem to be in a domestic setting, possibly a kitchen, so may represent a married couple enjoying a snatched bit of leisure time together, with no concern for an audience. The colouring and fragmentation betrays an influence of Picasso and Braque in their early phase of Cubism.

Mikhail Larionov (1881 – 1964) was a Russian avant-garde painter who worked with radical exhibitors and pioneered the first approach to abstract Russian art. His lifelong partner was fellow avant-garde artist, Natalia Goncharova. They left Russia and went to Paris in 1914.

"If we wish to paint literally what we see, then we must paint the sum of rays reflected from the object." –Larionov

He studied at the Moscow school of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture; but was suspended three times for his radical outlook.

His early style was Impressionist but after a visit to Paris in 1906 he moved into Post-Impressionism and then a Neo-Primitive style which derived partly from Russian sign painting. His ***Self Portrait*** of c.1910 betrays an influence from the Post Impressionist works that he encountered in Paris. Larionov was a founding member of two important Russian artistic groups Jack of Diamonds (1909–1911) and the more radical Donkey's Tail (1912–1913), giving names to both groups.

In 1908 he staged the Golden Fleece exhibition in Moscow, which included paintings by international avant-garde artists such as Matisse, Derain, Braque, Gauguin and van Gogh.

Together with Goncharova he invented the style which they called Rayonism, generally said to run fro 1912 to 1914; however, it is possible that Goncharova made the first Rayonist paintings as early as 1909. In their manifesto, Larionov declared "Long live the style of Rayonist painting created by us, free from realistic forms, existing and developing itself only according to its own pictorial laws."

The Rayonists sought an art that floated beyond abstraction, outside time and space, and to break the barriers between the artist and the public. The idea being that certain scientific principles, such as radioactivity, ultraviolet light, and x-rays, were the foundation of their artistic vision. Rayonist paintings thus focused on the rays reflecting from the objects, and how the rays moved. They derived the name from the use of dynamic *rays* of contrasting colour, representing lines of reflected light — "crossing of reflected rays from various objects."

Rooster and Chicken (1912) conjures up the farmyard scene in a riot of colourful lines. The cockerel (rooster) takes up the greater part of the picture, with the head and possibly the brown wing of the chicken barely visible at the bottom,emerging from beneath its feet.

"We declare: the genius of our days to be: trousers, jackets, shoes, tramways, buses, aeroplanes, railways, magnificent ships - what an enchantment - what a great epoch, unrivalled in world history." – Larionov

Larionov's Rayonism was based on the scientific theories of light and on creating a picture space in which the artist reflected on the action and refraction of rays of light. In his own words, "painting manifests itself as a fleeting impression." Larionov added to Mayakovsky's definition of Rayonism as a Cubist interpretation of Impression that "it imparts a sensation of the extra-temporal, of the spatial. In it arises what could be called the fourth dimension, because the length, breadth, and density of the layer of paint are the only signs of the outside world."

As may be seen in the Thyssen-Bornemisza ***Street with Lanterns***, (1913) Larionov's Rayonism is based on the expansion of light that emanates from different sources, in this case street lamps.

Vladimir Mayakovski had stated, "We see the electric street lamp more often than the old Romantic Moon."

In the *Rayonist Manifesto*, written in 1912 but published the following year, Larionov and Goncharova wrote:

"We do not sense the object with our eye, as it is depicted conventionally in pictures and as a result of following this or that device; in fact, we do not sense the object as such. We perceive a sum of rays proceeding from a source of light; these are reflected from the object and enter our field of vision."

"A spark of the spirit lives in us, it is connected with all spirit. It is divine. It is drawn to other, similar sparks. This is the urge to creation." – Goncharova

Natalia Goncharova (1881 – 1962) was an avant-garde artist, painter, costume designer, writer, illustrator, and set designer. She studied first to be a sculptor, at the prestigious Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, where he father, an architect, had previously studied. It was there that she met Mikhail Larionov, her lifelong partner, whom she married in 1955. She won prizes for her sculpture but withdrew from the Moscow Institute in 1909 due to its policy of denying women the right to get the diploma upon the completion. She took classes at Illia Mashkov and Alexander Mikhailovsky's studios, where she was able to study male and female nudes, but in 1910 was expelled, along with Larionov and a number of other students, from the portrait class for imitating the contemporary style of European Modernism.

She, along with Larionov and the other expelled students founded the Jack of Diamonds (1909–1911), Moscow's first radical independent exhibiting group, which later split to form the more radical Donkey's Tail (1912–1913). She was also a member of the German-based art movement *Der Blaue Reiter*. She moved to Paris in 1921 and lived there until her death.

Goncharova was the great granddaughter of famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin.

Her early ***Self Portrait*** of 1907 shows her standing in front of her paintings pinned to the wall, holding a sheaf of flowers. Although painted with flattened forms, in a modernist manner, extensive floor area, and chair in the background, create a spacial dimension, thrusting the figure close up behind the picture plane. It is painted in a slightly naive style, perhaps influenced by folk art and the Primitivism of Gauguin.

Goncharova and Larionov joined Hylaea, a literary group of Russian Futurists which had developed independently of Italian Futurism. Shortly afterwards the couple solidified their notion of Rayonism, a movement characterized by an abstract visual splintering applied to disrupt and extend the visuality of objects into the surrounding space.

Goncharova, Larionov and other Rayonists sought to visually deconstruct rays of light. Peer into a prism and the dimensionality of an object will appear to split, duplicate, minimise, or swell. In Goncharova's ***Rayonist Lilies***, (1913) each lily head becomes a star in a luminescence similar to the effect of squinting at streetlights in the night. The space surrounding the lilies becomes a thousand volatile tectonics grinding against the other and vases angle off into variegated gems.

Cyclist (1913) is Goncharova's most well known painting. In it Cubist fragmentation is used to indicate the cyclist's speed. Movement is also portrayed in the work's Futurist elements, such as its repetition of forms and dislocation of contours. The dynamic effect of multiplied forms and repeated delineation is further amplified by Goncharova's use of broad brushstrokes. The presence of urban life is included in the work through the use of street signs in the background.

Cyrillic letters from the shop signs are visually "shifted" onto the bicyclist in the painting. The art historian Tim Harte views the pointing finger on the leftmost storefront as part of a "visual clash" since it points in the opposite direction of the cyclist's motions.

However, the composition is distinct from classical Futurist works due to its higher level of visual balance. In particular, *Cyclist c*ontrasts with the more abstract and dematerialized representation of cycling found in Boccioni's 1913 painting *Dynamism of a Cyclis*t.

Aleksei Kruchenykh created Zaum (translated as beyonsense) in order to show that language was indefinite and indeterminate. Kruchenykh stated that when creating Zaum, he decided to forgo grammar and syntax rules. He wanted to convey the disorder of life by introducing disorder into the language. Kruchenykh considered Zaum to be the manifestation of a spontaneous non-codified language.

Velimir Khelinbov believed that the purpose of Zaum was to find the essential meaning of word roots in consonantal sounds. He believed such knowledge could help create a new universal language based on reason.

Members of Hylaea found significance in the shape of letters, in the arrangement of text around the page, in the details of typography. They considered that there is no substantial difference between words and material things, hence the poet should arrange words in his poems like the artist arranges colours and lines on his canvas. Grammar, syntax, and logic were often discarded; many neologisms and profane words were introduced. Khlebnikov, in particular, developed "an incoherent and anarchic blend of words stripped of their meaning and used for their sound alone", known as zaum.

Khlebnikov *Zangezi* (1922)

The role of the 'representational' arts,–painting, sculpture and even architecture....has ended, as it is no longer necessary for the consciousness of our age, and everything art has to offer can simply be classified as throwback." – Popova

Lyubov Popova (1889 – 1924) was born near Moscow to the wealthy family of Sergei Maximovich Popov, a very successful textile merchant and vigorous patron of the arts, and Lyubov Vasilievna Zubova, who came from a highly cultured family.

Popova travelled widely to investigate and learn from diverse styles of painting, but it was the ancient Russian icons, the paintings of Giotto, and the works of the 15th and 16th century Italian painters which interested her the most. In 1912 she visited Sergei Shchukin's collection of modern French paintings. In 1912–1913 she studied in Paris, where she met fellow Russians Alexander Archipenko and Osssip Zadkine. In 1914 she returned to France and Italy at the development of Cubism and Futurism.

From 1914 to 1915 her Moscow home became the meeting-place for artists and writers. In 1914–1916 Popova contributed to the two *Knave of Diamonds* exhibitions, in Petrograd.

Popova was one of the first female pioneers of Cubo-Futurism. Through a synthesis of styles she worked towards what she termed *painterly architectonics*.

Her knowledge of the styles of Cubism and Futurism which she had encountered in Paris are revealed in her ***Study for a Portrait*** (1915). In addition to the fragmented forms, geometricised shapes and collaged newspaper and wallpaper, and addition of sand to add texture, which she had derived from Picasso and Braque, she includes the word "Futurismo" and a fragment of "Cubism", as a 'manifesto' of her modern painting style.

The focus of Cubo-Futurist painting was to show the intrinsic value of a painting, without it being dependent on a narrative.

Air+Man+Space (1912) presents a fragmented, robot-like figure, picked out in rusty reds and oranges, against a steel blue/grey background.

The surface is divided up by floating rectangular forms, sliced through by diagonals imparting a dynamic energy, expressing a too and fro, rocking sensation to the picture.

At the heart sits the figure, motionless but alert. possibly a mechanical but also spiritualised figure, perhaps piloting some etherial machine, composed of cylinders and cones, and possibly indications of levers, through the upper atmosphere towards some distant star: a transcendent man of the future.

Composition with Figures (1913) depicts two female figures, highly stylised and abstracted into geometric planes and facets. It is a very dynamic piece and Popova has painted the figures in vibrant, saturated colours. For contrast she has added a gray-scale background and hints of greens and blues to complement the reds and oranges. Although difficult to make out closer inspection reveals the the faces of the two women, the one on the left has hair falling in waves in the style of the day. The figure on the right is holding a guitar, a common motif in Cubist art, while a still life of a bowl of fruit appears at the bottom, and a jug on a table to the left, indicating an interior setting. Top left is a landscape with a building, possibly a church, suggesting a view through a window; a trope which opens up an inside-outside contrast.

The subject of ***Portrait of a Philosopher*** (1915) is the artist"s brother, **Pavel Sergeyevich Popov** (1892–1964), philosopher and keeper of the artist's creative heritage following her early death.

There are several known painterly and graphic versions of this portrait. The image of Pavel Popov, however, is merely the starting point for further painterly impulses. The title of the work underlines the sense of generalisation and estrangement from a real person. The portrait also reflects an invariable facet of Russian avant-garde art – irony. Popova's composition is filled with irony, seen in the title of the work, top hat, white shirt-front, dandified moustache, sceptical grin, wineglass and the copy of the *Philosophical Revue*.

In 1916 Popova joined the Supremus group with Kazimir Malevich.

Space-Force-Construction (c.1920-21) is painted in oil with marble dust on plywood. It is part of a series she created studying space-force constructions. This series is significant as it marks a move from canvas to alternative painting surfaces for Popova (both the above plywood piece and cardboard pieces which were exhibited) as well as a shift towards a more limited colour palette of black, white, and a reddish brown.

Popova contributed to the development towards abstraction in painting. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, she embraced the ideals of the new social realism and designed propaganda posters. This is one of Popova's late paintings. In 1921, she began designing textiles, books, stage sets and costumes, all in the service of the Soviet Union.

Lyubov Popova died in 1924 of scarlet fever, aged only 35, having made a significant contribution to the development of abstract art in the early twentieth century.

Russian Collectors were influential in the promotion of modern European art.

Sergei Ivanovich Shchukin (1854 – 1936) was a Russian businessman who became an art collector, mainly of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art. There were several art collectors in the Shchukin family. Following a trip to Paris in 1897, when he bought his first Monet, eventually 258 modern works decorated the walls of his palatial home in Moscow; including significant works by Cézanne, Renoir, van Gogh, Gauguin, Henri Rousseau, Derain, Marquet and Picasso. Shchukin was particularly notable for his long association with Matisse, who decorated his mansion and created one of his iconic paintings, *La Danse*. His collection was open to the young generation of artists. After the 1917 Revolution, the government appropriated his collection.

Ivan Abramovich Morozov (1871 – 1921) was a Russian businessman and, from 1907 to 1914, also a major collector of avant-garde French art. His collection was also appropriated by the state

Sergey Schukin
by **Dm. Melnikov** (1915)

"The world is a piece of raw material - for the unreceptive soul it is the back of a mirror, but for reflective souls it is a mirror of images appearing continually."
– Rozanova, manifesto of the Union of youth

Olga Rozanova (1886 – 1918) painted in the styles of Suprematism, Neo-Primitivism, and Cubo-Futurism. From 1907 to 1910 she studied in a number of private studios in Moscow where among other drawing and painting students she met Lyubov Popova. By 1910, she was fairly well-known in Russian art circles.

She joined the Union of Youth in 1911, becoming one of the most active members of this organization, and exhibited with the Donkey's Tail group from it's first appearance.

In 1913, Rozanova was elected to the executive board of the Union of Youth - which by this point had expanded to incorporate various artistic and literary collectives. She composed the group's manifesto, *The Foundations of the New Art and Why It is Not Understood*, which defines aesthetic beauty as a life-giving, ethical force, proclaiming freedom from creative convention as the only means of capturing and engaging with that force. Rozanova's was the first in a series of legendary Russian artistic manifestos written in 1913, including Mikhail Larionov's *Rayism*, Aleksandr Shevchenko's *The Manifesto of the Rayists and Futurists*, and the sound-poetry manifesto *Declaration of the Word as Such*, co-authored by Rozanova's future-husband Alexei Kruchenykh. The ideas in Rozanova's manifesto were based partly on her study of a Russian translation of Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger's 1912 text *Du Cubisme*, as well as the 1910 *Manifesto of Futurist Painters.*

Of all the Russian Cubo-Futurists, Rozanova's work most closely upholds the ideals of Italian Futurism. During Filippo Marinetti's visit to Russia in 1914, he was very impressed with her work and Rozanova later exhibited four works in the *First Free International Futurist Exhibition* in Rome, in1914. Other Russian artists featured in the exhibition included Alexander Archipenko, Nikolai Kulbin and Aleksandra Exter.

She met the poet Aleksei Kruchenykh in 1912, who introduced her to the Russian Futurist concept of zaum poetry. Rozanova would write her own poetry in that style, and also illustrated books of zaum poetry, two examples being *A Little Duck's Nest of Bad Words* and *Explodity* (both 1913). With Kruchenykh, she would invent a new kind of Futurist book, the *samopismo*, where the illustrations and the text would be literally connected.

Blue on Tin (1913) is a lyrical piece where Rozanova is exploring the relationships between the 'weight' and colour of the forms. Although the shapes are organized into a geometric pattern, they appear to be infused with the presence of a figure or landscape – recalling natural forms such as mountains, the sun, or the feathers and eye of a bird. The paint is laid on quite thickly, creating texture, solidly in places and graduated in others. It has been called “a masterpiece of early abstraction and a powerful example of the intensity and beauty that Rozanova brought to her work.”

Unlike most of the other female avant-garde artists, Rozanova was the only one who did not study abroad to learn about European art. However, in ***Metronome*** (1915) she includes the word Paris, as well as European countries, perhaps stemming from her knowledge of the Cubist avant-garde, but perhaps also from a yearning to travel more widely and be a part of the revolution going on in France, a wish which due to her early death was never to be fulfilled.

Like both the Futurists and the Cubists, Rozanova integrates text into her work, arranged in this case in diagonal and curved lines spreading upwards across the canvas. We can posit an affinity with the "Word Paintings" of the Futurist Carlo Carrà, including his *Interventionist Demonstration* completed the same year, though the Cubists Picasso and Braque had been experimenting with the incorporation of written messages and found texts into their paintings and collages from an earlier time.

The fractured, angular planes which define the picture-surface, and the emphatic use of chiaroscuro to define and delimit those surfaces, are equally suggestive of French and Italian precedents, while the representation of clock gears, winding mechanisms, and bolts, indicates the piece's subject-matter.

Again, it is possible to identify unique elements in Rozanova's interpretation of the Cubo-Futurist aesthetic.

Nina Gurianova suggests, for example, that the theme of the clock-mechanism reflects the artist's interest in "achronic consciousness", the infinity and perpetual motion of historical time, a concept also explored by contemporary religious philosophers such as Nikolai Fyodorov and Pyotr Ouspensky, suggesting the spiritual and esoteric underpinnings of Rozanova's work.

Rozanova maintained that the creation of pictures based on the "Abstract Principle" constitute three stages: the intuitive principle; the individual transformation of the visible; and, abstract creation

Rozanova joined the avant-garde Supremus group in 1915, which was led by former fellow Cubo-Futurist Kazimir Malevich. By this time, her paintings had developed from the influences of Cubism and Futurism, and took an original departure into pure abstraction, where the composition is organized by the visual weight and relationship of colour.

Non-Objective Composition (1916-17) reveals her involvement with the Suprematist ideas of Kasimir Malevich: composed of lines and shapes filled with flat areas of colour, and bearing no references to the visual world. However, the converging diagonals create a perspective illusion of deep penetration into the picture surface, and the repetition of curves, suggesting force-lines, are reminiscent of her Futurist works. Also, her non-figurative paintings of this time still retain forms suggestive of still-life objects and the built environment. Some of her late, pure abstractions such as *Green Stripe* and *Non-Objective Composition (Colour Painting)* both of 1917, are remarkably prescient of the Abstract Expressionist works of Barnet Newman or the *Homage to the Square* compositions of Josef Albers thirty years later.

Rozanova died of diphtheria at the age of 32 in Moscow in 1918, following a cold she contracted while working on preparations for the first anniversary of the October Revolution.

"deconstruction is the opposite of construction.
a canon can be constructive.
a canon can be deconstructive.
construction can be shifted or displaced." – David Burliuk

David Burliuk (Burlyuk – Ukrainian spelling 1882 – 1967) was a Russian-language poet, artist and publicist associated with the Futurist and Neo-Primitivist movements. He has been described as "the father of Russian Futurism."

While many art-forms and artists converged to create "Russian Futurism", David Burliuk is credited with publicizing the avant-garde movement and increasing its renown within Europe and the United States. Burliuk was a Russian poet, critic, and publisher who centralized the Russian movement. While his contribution to the arts were lesser than his peers, he was the first to discover many of the talented poets and artists associated with the movement. Burliuk was the first to publish Velmir Khlebnikov and to celebrate the Futurist poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky.

David Burliuk has been likened to a punk. Not a leather-jacketed Sex Pistols punk with safety pins through his ears, but as a rebellious figure in the Russian contemporary art world in the early part of the 20th century, Burliuk and his Cubo-Futurist cohorts challenged – even assaulted – social norms. They walked in public spaces wearing ridiculous clothes, painted their faces, wrote plays incomprehensible to the public, and were even known to fight audiences at their poetry recitations.

Revolution (1917) may depict his attitude to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, although he had fled his native country the year before, following the death of his brother in the First world War, travelling through Japan and the far east, and finally settling in Long Island, USA, where he remained for the rest of his life. Always experimenting he incorporates collaged elements – a beer mat, washers and a metal tube suggestive of a gun – into the work. Small figures in his Neo-Primitive style battle it out, while a white triangle, perhaps representing the White Army forming a wedge, obtrudes in opposition to the Bolsheviks.

OBERIU (English: the **Union of Real Art** or the **Association for Real Art**) was a short-lived avant-garde collective of Russian Futurist writers, musicians, and artists in the 1920s and 1930s. The group coalesced in the context of the "intense centralization of Soviet Culture" and the decline of the avant garde culture of Leningrad, as "leftist" groups were becoming increasingly marginalized.

Founded in 1928 by **Daniil Kharms** and **Alexander Vvedensky** OBERIU became notorious for provocative performances which included circus-like stunts, readings of what was perceived as nonsensical verse, and theatrical presentations, such as Kharms's *Elizabeth Bam*, that foreshadowed the European Theatre of the Absurd. The presentations took place in venues ranging from theatres and university auditoriums to dormitories and prisons. The group's actions were derided as "literary hooliganism" in the ever-more conservative press of the late 1920s. It was chastised even more in the early 1930s, and many of its associates were arrested. The OBERIU has often been called "the last Soviet avant-garde."

After the Bolsheviks gained power, Mayakovsky's group—patronized by Anatoly Lunacharsky, Bolshevik Commissar for Education—aspired to dominate Soviet culture. Their influence was paramount during the first years after the revolution, until their programme—or rather lack thereof—was subjected to scathing criticism by the authorities. By the time OBERIU attempted to revive some of the Futurist tenets during the late 1920s, the Futurist movement in Russia had already ended. The most militant Futurist poets either died (Khlebnikov, Mayakovsky) or preferred to adjust their very individual style to more conventional requirements and trends (Aseyev, Pasternak). The decline of futurism can also be seen in Russia when Kruchenykh attempted to publish *Fifteen Years of Russian Futurism 1912-1927* in 1928 and the Communist Party made it clear they did not want any futurist influence in Soviet literature. This marked an abrupt fall from grace for Kruchenykh's writing and futurism as a literary movement.

Burliuk worked in a number of different styles, perhaps reflective of his restless and 'larger than life' personality. Painted in America between 1930 and 1940 ***Landscape with a Carriage and a Mill (a landscape from four points of view)*** retains elements of his Futurist works. Mixing images of figures, modes of transport, machinery, the built landscape and farmland in a wild kalidascope of fragments he creates a picture which (perhaps in a gesture of not wishing to conform to the norm) can be hung and viewed from any angle.

"With the most primitive means the artist creates something which the most ingenious and efficient technology will never be able to create." – Malevich

Kazimir Malevich (Ukrainian spelling, Kazmyr Malevych 1879 **–** 1935) was an avant-garde artist and art theorist, whose pioneering work and writing influenced the development of abstract art in the 20th century. Born in Kiev to an ethnic Polish family, his concept of Suprematism sought to develop a form of expression that moved as far as possible from the world of natural forms (objectivity) and subject matter in order to access "the supremacy of pure feeling" and spirituality.

Self Portrait 1908-10

Woman with Pails, Dynamic Arrangement (1911-12) is painted in his earlier Cubo-Futurist mode. He frequently used incidents from rural life as motifs for his technical and pictorial researches into developing new forms of artistic expression. Here he depicts a peasant woman carrying two pails on a wooden yoke across her shoulders. The form of truncated cones depicting the pails, painted grey to suggest that they are made of metal is echoed in the sweep and folds of the woman's dress, and carried through into elements of the landscape; the theme carried through to the

extent that the subject all but disappears into the fabric of the composition. Indications of the landscape: green fields, buildings, and maybe a path which she is walking along, and the traditional use of light and shade to give three dimensional form to the pails and skirts impart a hint of realism in an otherwise highly abstracted image.

The Knife-grinder (c.1912-13) also depicts a type of person who is generally overlooked by society; and is painted in a Cubo-Futurist style, hence the fragmentation of form and sense of excessive movement associated with Futurism and the abstract geometry related to Cubism.

The painting depicts a moustached man in a suit and hat manually grinding a knife on a knife sharpener, or a grinding wheel. The man is in a constant state of movement; repeatedly inspecting his progress on the knife, then busily peddling the machine, applying the blade to the machine in a fragmentary way. Shavings of metal are suggested by chunks of green around the grinder's face and hands. Behind him on the left is the fragment of a banister, while from the bottom right corner a staircase sweeps up and around and out at the top of the picture. The setting suggests that the workman is a professional knife grinder in his workshop.

Blue, green and silver are the dominant colours in the painting; other colours used are orange, yellow, brown and crimson. The metallic palette emphasise the drama of the mechanical activity and the manner in which the shavings and knife glitter at the centre of the composition..

The subject of ***The Aviator*** (1914), painted in a transitional phase between Cubo-Futurism and his purely abstract Suprematist, works is difficult to interpret. The title may be ironic, suggesting that the suited and top hatted man who is the main protagonist in this strange agglomeration of objects and forms, and seems to be floating–stiffly like a shop mannequin–over a sea of abstract shapes, is some kind of voyager into an indeterminate future. A 'cardboard cut-out' fish floats in front of him, deathly white while a metal fork hovers menacingly across one eye. Behind him is an enormous saw blade, while in his gloved hand he holds a playing card. Fragments of words in Cyrillic lettering are distributed in the background at the top of the painting.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution, which was in part brought about by artists, many artists embraced the new regime and ideas of communism for a new worker state. Lenin's idea of a political avant-garde as an agent for social change legitimised their own calls for radical action to combat conservative attitudes to art and society. It was an opportunity to sweep aside old ideas, to modernise and transform the Tsarist state with its inequalities and social injustices. It led to a great flowering of art, literature and theatre which had a far reaching effect on the future development of art in Europe. By 1913 Malevich began to reject representational art, finally believing that his revolutionary suprematist abstractions were more relevant to the new times.

From October 1917 art would no longer be for the bourgeois and aristocrat but for the people. As the poet Mayakovsky declared "the streets are our brushes, the squares our palettes".The art market was abolished and museums nationalised; the worker state became the patron of the arts.

Many artists were given important roles in state institutions, Tatlin, Malevich, Kandinsky, Chagall, Popova, Stepanova, Rodchenko, Lissitzky and others taught at the newly created art schools where they pioneered innovatory teaching methods, which were later to influence the Bauhaus.

Moving out of their studios artists now "created 'agit-prop' (agitation and propaganda) using their talents to decorate propaganda trains and boats, make Rosta street posters and organise public pageants and events. For example, in 1920 Altman and other artists involved 2,000 members of the Petrograd proletariat in the re-enactment of the storming of the Winter Palace which included decorating buildings with gigantic abstract banners, and using factory sirens and arc lights.

"Under the slogan 'Art into Production' artists were to go into the factories to create modernist, mass produced designs because the new social order demanded new materials and new forms. For example, Popova and Stepanova designed textiles printed with the abstracted motifs of modernity: the zigzag of

electricity, the whirl of aeroplane propellors, the cogs and wheels of trains and tractors.

“Meanwhile, artists such as Deineka argued that modernism was inaccessible to the masses. This was indeed often true. Abstract street decorations were said to frighten the horses. No less committed to the revolution, they argued for a representational art which would carry revolutionary messages. Seen as reactionary by the Constructivists, they were the forerunners of Socialist Realism.” (Christine Lindey: *Art and the Bolshevik Revolution*)

Following the rise of Social Realism and the suppression of modernism some artists and writers capitulated and changed their styles, some continued to work in secret, others left for France, Germany and America while some, sadly, lost their lives in the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. It is certain that during the nineteen twenties and thirties the heavy hands of Stalinism in Russia and Nazism in Germany cast a thick and dark cloud over the cultural life of Europe, following the most sunlit and liberating period in the history of western art.

GALLERY

Larionov

Portrait of Natalia Goncharova 1915


Self Portrait


The Glass 1912


Lady with a Fan. Sketch of a costume for the ballet 1916


Sausages and Mackerel 1912


Red Rayonism 1913


Still life with Carafe and Curtains c.1914

Goncharova


Khorovod 1910


Dynamo Machine 1913


Cats 1913

Peasants Gathering Grapes 1913

Blue Green Forest 1913

The Orange Vendor

Popova

The Model 1913

From A Dyer's Shop, 1914

The Pianist 1914

Lady with guitar 1914

Untitled, 1915

Birsk 1916

Spatial Force Construction, 1920-21

Rozanova

Dissonance 1913

Factory and Bridge 1913

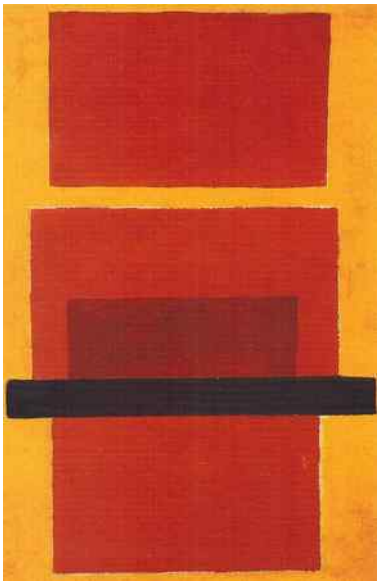
Cityscape 1914

Portrait

Still-life (Futurist Composition) 1915

Composition with Cards 1915

Green Stripe 1917



Non-Objective Composition. Colour Painting 1917