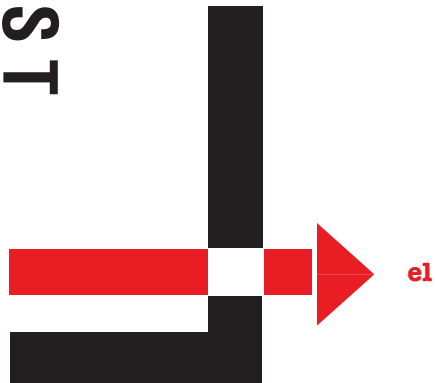


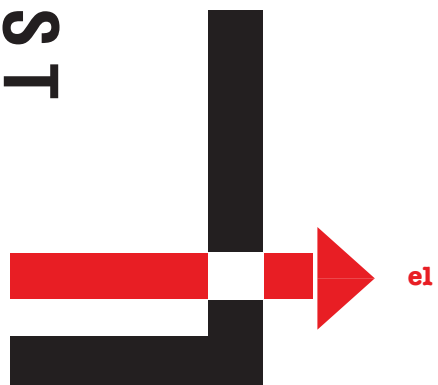
CRUSADER
CONSTRUCTAVIST
GOOD

PROSELYTIZER OF THE GREATER

EL LISSITZKY



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EL

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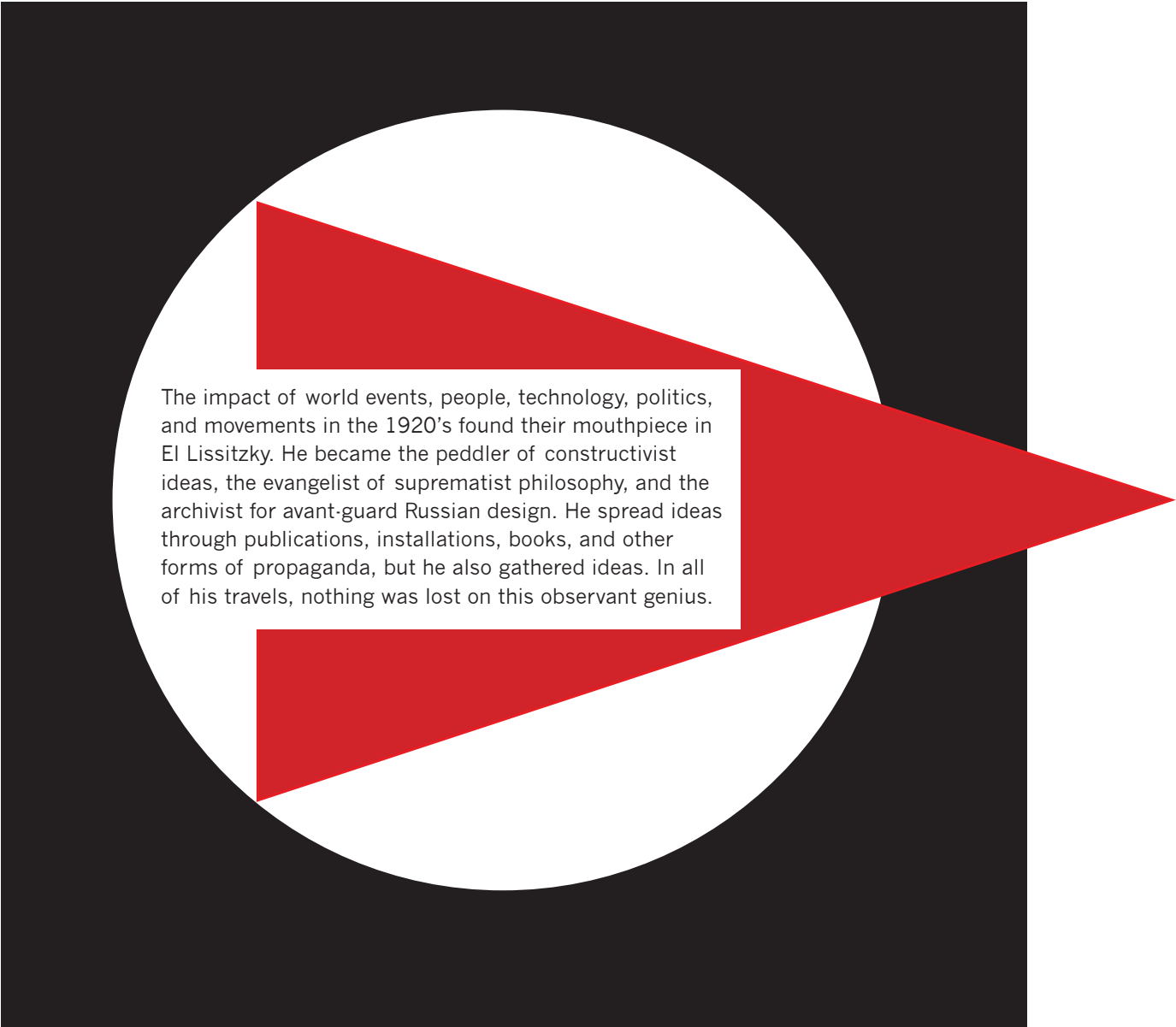
PHOTOMONTAGE



6

CHILDRENS BOOKS





The impact of world events, people, technology, politics, and movements in the 1920's found their mouthpiece in El Lissitzky. He became the peddler of constructivist ideas, the evangelist of suprematist philosophy, and the archivist for avant-guard Russian design. He spread ideas through publications, installations, books, and other forms of propaganda, but he also gathered ideas. In all of his travels, nothing was lost on this observant genius.

Lissitzky was born November 10th 1890 in Polshinok, Russia, but he almost grew up in America. His father came to the United States and started a successful business. Lissitzky's mother, was reluctant to relocate and asked her husband to return to Russia. Had Lissitzky grown up in the United States, it is doubtful that he would have occupied a similar place in art history and European politics (and I would be writing a different paper). His father returned from America, and the family moved to Vitebsk in Belorussia¹. The significance of these places can be seen in El Lissitzky's early work. The printed materials that he produced used traditional methods of printing, or were hand written. They were most comparable to folk art, in that they contained a simple narrative and were created by artists/illustrators that were not classically trained. They were El Lissitzky "Dick and Jane" books. It should be noted that during this time much of the printed material that Lissitzky produced were fables and children's stories and the books contained small wood block prints with a distinct style and color palette².



1. Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters Text*. (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1967), 15-20.

2. Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters Text* 84.



Futurist writing Zang Tumb Tumb
by F.T. Marinetti, 1914

Lissitzky from an early age had a fondness for drawing. He had made up his mind early on to become a painter. When he applied to the Petrograd Academy of Art he was rejected due to an unsuccessful copy of the classical Greek Discus-thrower. His skills were not the reason behind the rejection. Under Tsarist Russia, Jews were not allowed to enter the academy. During this time period, profession as well as geography limited Jews.³ The rejection to the academy became a turning point. El Lissitzky decided instead to study mathematics and engineering in Germany⁴. He excelled as a draftsman to the extent that he picked up extra money by completing his classmates' projects⁵. The extra money became a catalyst for European excursions and was used to purchase train tickets to Germany, France, Poland, Italy, and Holland. These excursions had a powerful effect on Lissitzky and exerted a strong influence on the artist and person that Lissitzky would become. While in Paris, he was taken by the architecture and the new steel construction of the Eiffel Tower. In Italy, he witnessed the changes taking place through the Futurist writings. These trips and encounters with other avant-garde artists expanded Lissitzky's world. He also recognized that his interactions with other artists represented an opportunity to introduce Russia to the rest of Europe.

3. Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters Text*, 16.

4. Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters Text*, 19.

5. Adela Spindler Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*. (West New York: Mark Batty Publisher LLC, 2003), 333.



Hammer and Cycle design for Soviet Union

By 1916 Lissitzky earned his degree from the Riga Technology University⁶. Revolution was gathering momentum among the working class and Marxist philosophy was spreading. The year of 1917 brought the Russian revolution. The Bolsheviks overthrew the czar and then killed and burned his family. Throughout and after the revolution, proletariat ideals spread and all were considered as equals. In the government that followed El Lissitzky eagerly accepted a position with the Committee of Art. His first project was the design for a flag for the New Republic⁷. Lissitzky duly appreciated the social freedoms that accompanied his new position and he became a grateful man who would serve the Communist ideals to the very last day of his life.

While working with the Committee of Fine Art, El Lissitzky took a teaching position in 1919 in Vitebsk that led to the creation of an important body of his work. In this position, he worked under and with Kazimir Malevich and Mark Chagall. The two mentors had vastly different styles. Chagall found his inspiration in dream-like stories and myths, and the brightly colored narratives of classic Russian folklore. Malevich, like Lissitzky, started with a foundation in painting and architecture. He transitioned out of traditional painting influenced by time, space, and how planes of color and form can occupy both.

6. Adela Spindler Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 334.

7. Adela Spindler Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 335.

Suprematism



Proun, *Globetrotter in der Zeit*, 1920-1921

Malevich was also one of the founders of Suprematism. The goal of Suprematism was to scrape away excess and bring design down to a cellular level. A microscope of sorts, Suprematism attempted to look at the building blocks of design. The square was considered the most basic form in this endeavor, Malevich saw suprematism as

“the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art.

To the Suprematist, the visual phenomena of the objective world are in themselves, meaningless; the significant aspect is the emotions and sensations produced which is quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth....the Suprematist does not observe and does not touch — he feels”.⁹

These ideals and philosophies steered El Lissitzky into a definite visual framework. Lissitzky started to formulate his ideas and beliefs and created a credo for type.

9. Fred S. Kleiner, Richard G. Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996), 1060.



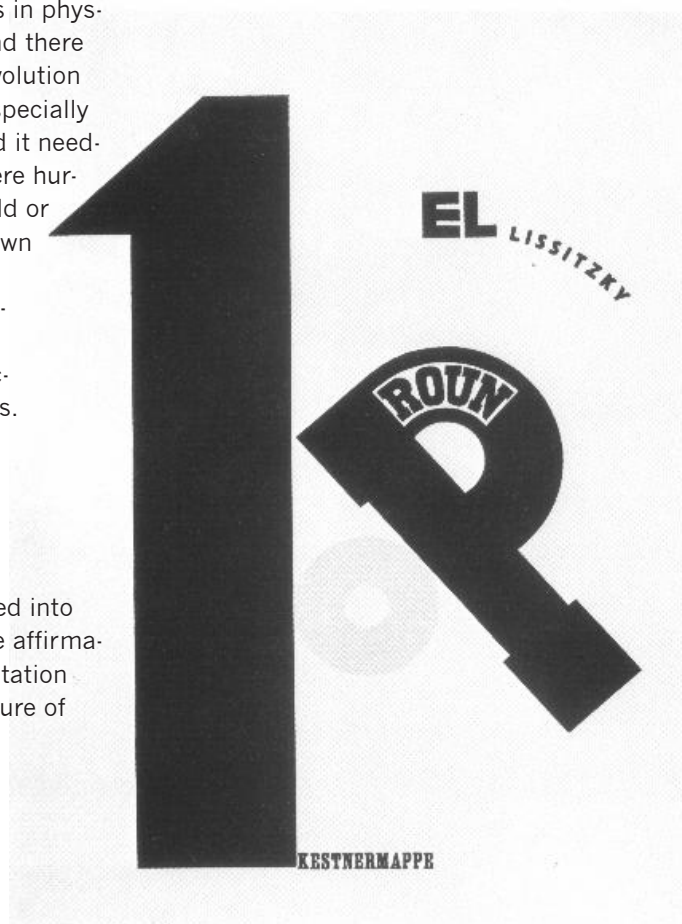
- 1** The words on the printed sheet are learnt by sight not hearing
- 2** Ideas are communicated through conventional words, the idea should be given through letter
- 3** Economy of expression-optics instead of phonetics
- 4** The design of book space through the material of the type, according to the laws of typographical mechanics, must correspond to the strains and stresses of content
- 5** The design of the book-space through the material of the illustrative process blocks, which gives reality to new optics. The super naturalistic reality of the perfected eye.
- 6** The continuous page-sequence-the bioscopic book
- 7** The new book demands the new writer. Ink-stamp and goose quill are dead
- 8** The printed sheet transcends space and time.
The printed sheet, the infinity of the book must be transcended.¹⁰

¹⁰ Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 341.

These visual transitions were dictated by changes in physics in addition to advancements in psychology and there was a need to find meaning and purpose. The revolution brought a redefining of meaning and purpose, especially in art. Fine art had slowly been stripped bare and it needed a new set of clothes. Designers and artists were hurriedly trying to define what this new clothing could or should be. El Lissitzky attempted to explain his own ideals:

“Midnight of art is ringing. Fine art is banished. The artist-idol is a prejudice of the past. Suprematism presses the entire picture into a black square on a white canvas. I did not invent anything. It is only the night I felt in me, and it is there I perceived the new, which I called suprematism it has expressed itself by the black plain that formed the square”.¹¹

These black squares and black planes transformed into what El Lissitzky called Prouns or “project for the affirmation of the new”.¹² “Prouns were an interchange station between painting and architecture, with architecture of course, being the pinnacle of art”.¹³



Cover, The Kestner Portfolio, 1923

11. Adela Spindler Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 335.
12. Margarita Tupitsyn, *Beyond the Abstract Cabinet*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 9.
13. Adela Spindler Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 335.



Study, *The Machinery*

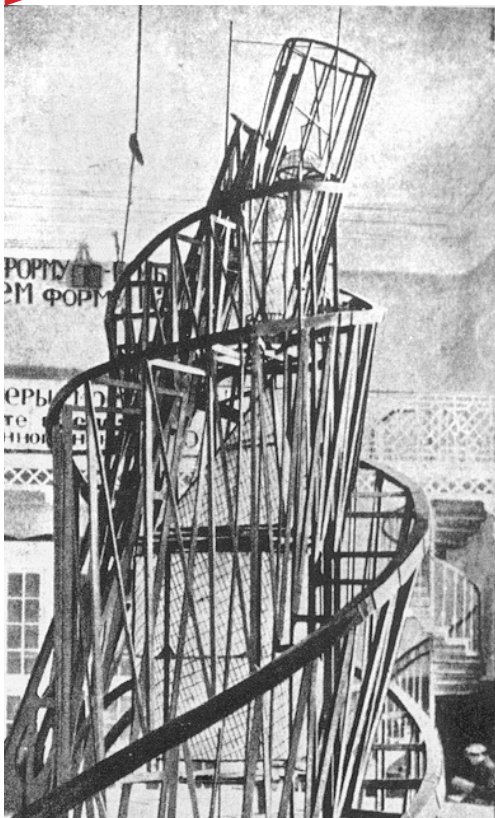
Lissitzky was looking for a vehicle to convey messages and provoke thought. He was looking for elements that were universal; symbols and forms that moved beyond the confines of national borders. He came to the conclusion that “the letter book is national but hieroglyph books become international”.¹⁴ He wanted to create a new means of communication that could be built just like architecture. Since basic shapes in design could be used just like in architecture to create direction and movement, and to make a building aesthetically and structurally sound, elements of design needed to be considered, it followed that to make design aesthetically and structurally sound, elements of architecture should to be considered. Questions that could be answered using both sets of elements included: Where is the open space? How can people move through the space? How can people move from floor to floor? Lissitzky came to the conclusion that the way that we interact within a three dimensional space should not be that different from how we interact with a two dimensional space. The main difference was that in two dimensions the movement is limited to the eyes. El Lissitzky wanted to take architectural elements and create two-dimensional structures for the eye to play within.

They embodied a new means of communicating ideas through the most basic of elemental shapes. These architectural arrangements became a body of work by Lissitzky called the Proun. This body of work developed under the guidance of Malevich, as El Lissitzky took the Suprematist philosophies espoused by Malevich and redefined the role of an artist and designer in post-revolution Russia.¹⁵

14. Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters*, 354.

15. Tupitsyn, *Beyond the Abstract Cabinet*, 10

Constructivism



Tatlin's constructivist model and design,
Monument to the Third International, 1920

In 1921 El Lissitzky returned to Russia after working on different collaborations and exhibitions to take a position at Vkhutemas (Higher Technical-Artistic Studios) with Rodchenko and Tatlin.¹⁶ The work coming out of the university was breaking new ground. The goal was to create utilitarian art that had a concrete purpose and function. The artists striving for this goal were “activist counterparts of the Bauhaus utopian dream of an artist–craftsman-engineer who would devote every talent to designing a better environment for human beings”.¹⁷

When El Lissitzky took his prouns to the level of a narrative, they became constructivist in nature. They were no longer just cerebral, spiritual, and visual explorations of shapes; Lissitzky used the narrative to give them a theme and a battle call. They had a function, a meaning, and a message. “Lissitzky was a proponent of the doctrine of functionalism. He applied it to mass-produced utility articles, whether furniture or newspapers. In both instances he showed a preference for that which was permanent, purposeful, economic, and objective”.¹⁸ He used any publication, art exhibit poster, or book cover as a vehicle to spread the word. This was a fundamental shift in Lissitzky’s thinking, from Suprematism, a belief in humanity’s spiritual nature, to constructivism, a belief that industrialization would lead to technology through which the artist-craftsman could build useful products for the betterment of society.

16. Tupitsyn, *Beyond the Abstract Cabinet*, 10.

17. Kleiner and Tansey, *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*,

18. Szymon Bojko, *New Graphic Design in Revolutionary Russia*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 17



Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, Poster 1919



“The artist is turning from an imitator to a constructor of the new world of objects. This world will not be built in competition with technology. The paths of art and science have not yet crossed”.¹⁹ Art and science were crossing, in a way, in El Lissitzky work. Einstein’s theory of relativity and ideas of space and time were emerging.

El Lissitzky was working on these narratives of black shapes and planes, each with their own perspective, each existing at an individual time and space. The elemental shapes in Lissitzky’s work were acting out events in parallel planes and these illustrations became dominated by the black plane or the black square. He saw “the square as the very source of all creative expression”.²⁰ These constructions transformed over time into an archetypal narrative about the interaction between the circle, square, and the triangle. El Lissitzky was commissioned to do a series of books and book covers using this archetypal narrative. The most successful of these pieces was *The Fable of Shapes*. They were similar to his childhood fables. “Of Two Squares” was the title of one of the pieces. In these narratives, colors as well as shapes symbolized archetypal themes. The red square is life and order with limitless possibilities. The black square is bad old ways, chaos, egoism, death, and the czarist regime.²¹ This same narrative quality can be seen in *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* symbolizing peace attacking a black square.²²

19. Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters*, 23.

20. Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 327.

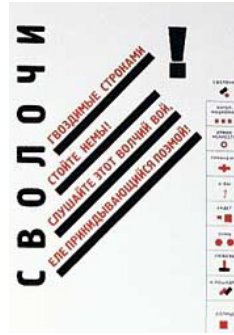
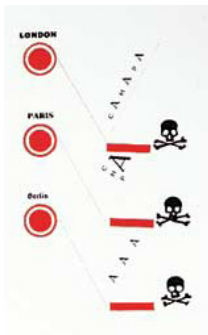
21. Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 336

22. Bojko, *New Graphic Design*, 44.



Cover, *The Voice* by Mayakovsky,
,1923

This became the formula for much of his work to follow. He used symbols, shapes, and colors to tell stories. The arrangement of the elements was an attempt to make communication universal or to achieve a universal meaning. He was pushing the idea of perception and how humans perceive information and this is seen in his collaboration on a book of poems entitled "The Voice". The book of poems was for the many Russians displaced in Germany who he hoped would congregate and read the poems aloud. On the cover of "The Voice", the O symbolized the open mouth of the reader. El Lissitzky thought of visual communication as something that need to be for the eyes not the ears. Through this and many other publications, he built bridges between politics and art, science and art, communication and psychology, two and three-dimensional planes for graphics, and spirituality and industrialization. His ability to straddle geographic, ideological, philosophical, and artistic lines may be the reason his influence can be seen on almost all of the art movements from the 1920s to the 1940s.



Pages from *For the Voice*, Berlin,1923

9. Fred S. Kleiner, Richard G. Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996), 1060.



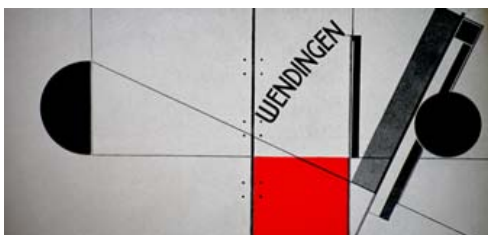
New Man, 1920-21

Two events piggybacked each other near the beginning of the twentieth century: World War I followed by the Russian Revolution. The end of the Russian Revolution found El Lissitzky back in Berlin. Post war Berlin became the crossroads for avant-garde art, theater, writing and music. At this time over seventy-seven “isms” were reported to have developed.²³ Berlin was a melting pot for people ravaged by war and inflation. This melding of languages, thought, culture, and ideas, became a springboard for El Lissitzky. In post revolution Russia, printing technology and technology in general was crawling along, far behind modern developments. Germany, however, had advanced print technology in place. “German technology enabled Lissitzky to dream and construct and covert those into concrete forms”.²⁴ The prevalence of printed periodicals at the time led print media to become the new art media for the masses. There were a record number of Russians living in Berlin and they were looking for a means to reach out and give meaning to the events that erupted from their country. “There was a supreme expression of hope and creative freedom that attended the early days of the Bolshevik revolution.”²⁵ There was a sense of possibility that the old guard had been removed and that socialism was on the move. There was a feeling of great empowerment, as if Europe was waiting with baited breath to see what would unfold from the remains of the war and revolution. Europeans realized in that in many ways it was a fresh start. This optimism was not lost on El Lissitzky. The opening of Europe allowed for more collaboration.

23. Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 339.

24. Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters*, 25.

25. Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 333.



Cover, The Periodical *Wendingen*, 1923



Cover, The Periodical *Broom*, 1922

There was a feeling of great empowerment, as if Europe was waiting with baited breath to see what would unfold from the remains of the war and revolution. Europeans realized in that in many ways it was a fresh start. This optimism was not lost on El Lissitzky. The opening of Europe allowed for more collaboration.

“He was one of the few Russian artists to travel between Europe and the Soviet Union during the 1920s and this mobility enabled him to have an enormous impact in the west. The visual work he produced while living in Europe between 1921 and 1925 influenced artists as varied in their thinking as Theo van Doesburg (the impresario of the Dutch de Stijl movement), Lazlo Moholy Nagy (the Hungarian artist-cum-engineer who taught at the Bauhaus), and Jan Tschichold (the fastidious typographic designer who became the leading promoter of the “New Typography”).”²⁶

With each new movement a new publication sprang from the rubble.

26. Ellen Lupton, “Reluctant Propagandist,” *Print* 54-3 (May June 2000): 58.



Cover *Die Kunstism* by Hans Arp and El Lissitzky 1925

El Lissitzky became the scribe; he recorded the names of the originators of changes, tremors, and movements as they passed through Europe. In his most recognizable book *Die Kunstismen*, his architectural adherence to order is clearly recognizable. On the cover, El Lissitzky used a modern sans serif typeface as well as playbill. This arrangement of type was a criticism directed toward the diverse movements that were more or less one big Ism.

“By employing the same letters over and over again “Ism us us us us us, etc” to signify artistic groups as diverse and contradictory as, for instance, Expressionism and Dada, *Die Kunstismen* front jacket suggested that the nomination of the avant-garde, like manifesto writing in general, had taken on the serial qualities of mechanical reproduction”.²⁷ Lissitzky built a white grid with the necessary context filling the cubicles. Scale just like in architecture played a part in his design. Size was used to draw the eye and emphasize while smaller elements were divided and balanced with white space. The book was an attempt to explain, in three languages, the isms of the time. To break down all of the information into concepts that could be printed in an organized cataloged format while still remaining interesting, Lissitzky created the book like an architect would create a library.

27. Paul Galvez, “Self Portrait of the Artist as a Monkey-Hand,” *October* 93 (Summer 2000): 109.



Cover, Merz, 1924

ABONNEMENTS- PREIS FÜR MERZ JÄHRLICH 4 HEFEN 4 Mark 2½ fl. 5 Reichsm. 1 Dollar		SPENDE DER KUNSTHAUS ZU ZÜRICH DIESE HEFEN WERDEN MIT DEM VERLAGEN DE S'UL. VERBUNDEN KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH, 1924
JAHRGANG I 1923 PREIS: 6 M., 4 fl., 10 fr., 2 Dollar		
MERZ 1 HOLLAND, GAK		
2	3	4
5	6	7
10	11	
ANZEIGE VON DER KUNSTHAUS ZU ZÜRICH DIESE HEFEN WERDEN MIT DEM VERLAGEN DE S'UL. VERBUNDEN KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH, 1924		
ANZEIGE ES IST ERSCHEINEN DIE ERSTE HEFEN VON EL LISSITZKY KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH, 1924		

Table of Contents Merz, 1924

The books and content were organized by shelves and then by floors. Within each floor there was a central space to access the information on that floor. The book became a two dimensional library divided into a sorting system of information. The divisions or floors were usually black lines. Most of his indexes used this system of organization. The black lines acted as floors that housed information in groupings of content. The content was also separated out and subdivided by font size and type orientation. Sidebars were not usually supporting beams in the structure of information. Instead, they would act as windows or doors to lead the eye out of a composition and onto the next page.

El Lissitzky's advancement in print media was due to his draftsman like compositions. Like a builder uses wood and steel he used existing materials mainly type to construct his ideas. He made his mark by arranging text and type in a way that had not been done before. Unlike the Dada poets who used verbal as their tools, Lissitzky used architecture and engineering. He took all of elements of his training and transferred them into print design. Because of his unique and powerful skill set, he was asked to create or collaborate on a prolific number of publications. Requests came from Avant-garde periodicals such as Broom, Gestaltung, Veshch, Merz, Wendingen, and Nasci. These printed works were a direct means to convey the ideas and philosophies of new Russian avant-garde to the non-Russian world. El Lissitzky, through all of these publications, became an evangelist of constructivism and suprematism.

Photomontage

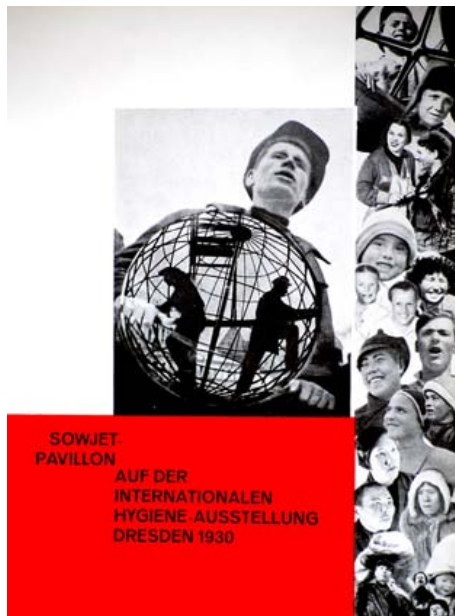


Photogram, 1931

The Futurists broke free from the mold of the printing press and the grid of letters. Where Futurism and Dadaism started, stopped, and overlapped is not clear. Dada was probably the greatest single movement of that time. Language and communication was turned on its ear, literally. Sight and sound took precedence over literal meaning and purpose. Never in history had communication not been about pure function. The Dadaists banished all laws of order, rationality, gravity, and perspective. The tensions of war had provoked a shattering of reason. This shattering “forced the students of art to put their cards on the table”.²⁸ Printed media became the broken reflection. Letters were inverted and they floated, danced, and shouted. Technological advancements meant that letters and words could be arranged on a surface without the confines of traditional methods. When El Lissitzky was introduced to photo processing, he realized that “the letterpress belongs to the past. The future belongs to the photogravure and to all mechanical processes”.²⁹

28. Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters*, 23.

29. Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters*, 356.



Cover, The catalogue of the Soviet section of the International Hygiene Exhibition



Cover for the catalogue of the Soviet section of the International Fur Trade Exhibition Leipzig 1930

Lissitzky photomontage works had the greatest impact and the installations found his largest audiences. He transformed the photomontage into a three-dimensional theatrical installation. In the 1928 Pressa exhibition in Cologne and Dresden, a style of engineering, architecture, typography, and design developed.³⁰ He created large models that acted as information posts arranged in the confines of a given space. He was also hired by many different state agencies: agriculture, commerce, foreign relations, and foreign communication - really any state agency that needed an exhibition.³¹ "In these exhibitions of 1927-1928, Lissitzky is turned into the Soviet Union's quasi official typographic expert".³² From fur, to grain, to travel, to the military, the photomontage became an organized three-dimensional package of information that the viewer could walk around read and interact with.

Due to the nature of photo mechanical, and photographic collage, letters could be placed on any orientation and printed at any size. This evolution in printing was embraced by El Lissitzky. His compositions became miniatures autobiographies. In addition, as he used photomontage, the subjects of his work changed. In each composition different influences can be seen. Hannah Hoch, Kurt Schwitters, George Grosz, John Heartfield, Raul Hausmann, Man Ray, and Lazlo Maholy Nagy influenced and were influenced by Lissitzky.

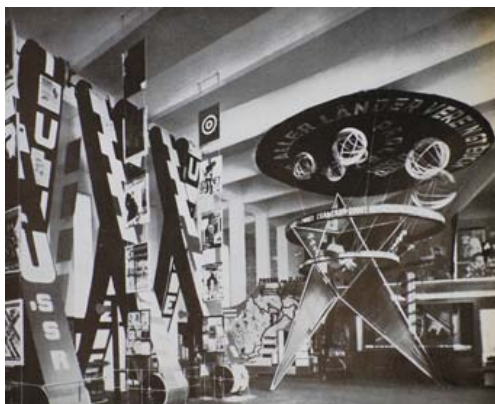
30. Lupton, "Reluctant Propagandist", 58

31. Jan Debbaut and Marielle Soons, *El Lissitzky Architect Painter Photographer Typographer*. (Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum 1990), 65.

32. Peter Nisbet, *El Lissitzky 1890-1941*. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Art Museum, 1987), 38



Entrance to the Soviet pavilion at the International Hygiene Exhibition



Pressa The entrance hall, Cologne 1928

The freedom of photo processing was explored to its fullest by El Lissitzky. The photos were collaged, blown up to monumental sizes, layered, and placed as labels on all types of steel and plaster constructions. Photos were heroic in nature and figures were larger than life. The subjects of the installation appeared to have meaning and purpose. This transformational power was applied to oratory endeavors. Through the use of a podium or another visual hierarchical high point, along with scale and color, strong nationalism and pride was evoked. Lissitzky's work shifted seamlessly from promotion to propaganda as WWII approached. This was nearing the end of his career, and fewer of his creations were constructed compositions of geometric shapes. Type was no longer a lead character, and compositions were designed entirely around the photograph. The power of photographic imagery trumped that of typography. El Lissitzky saw "photography as means of influencing our consciousness and emotions".³³

33. Debbaut and Soons, *El Lissitzky Architect*, 69.



Last Works, Poster: Make More Tanks, 1941

Russia as a new republic was also evolving and taking shape. World War II found Stalinist Russia less optimistic than eighteen years earlier.³⁴ Many artists had fled Russia. Chagall and Kandinsky found refuge in Europe. Loyal, El Lissitzky stayed. After years of battling tuberculosis and time in and out of sanitariums in Switzerland, he eventually died outside of Moscow in December 1941.³⁵

Lissitzky believed in the ideals and the power of the greater good and how design could be used as a tool for change and a catalyst of societal shifts. He helped make people believe in an ideal that is against the very nature of man. He attempted to elevate design beyond mere aesthetic consideration to the level where it would inspire thought, change, and action.

34. Tupitsyn, *Beyond the Abstract Cabinet*, 60.

35. Herbert Spencer, "Pioneers of Modern Typography," 70.



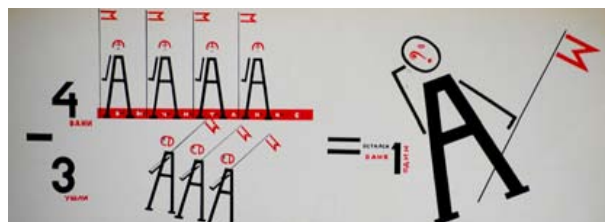
The Theft of the Crown, Illustrations for Ukrainian fairy tale, 1919

Some of El Lissitzky's earliest works were children's books. They were traditional in nature as some were hand-written and others were illustrated with wood block and wood cut prints. He began with *The Legend of Prague*, continued with *The Ukrainian Fairy Tale*, and the last in the series was *The Yiddish Storybooks*.³⁶ There was a central theme in all of Lissitzky's work. Even in his architecture there was a heroic element created either through color, or geometric shape, or scale that carried the supporting archetypes through the composition. The elements of the composition played out a script that was universal. Through the evolution of his career Lissitzky created a series of different illustrations for book covers or entire books. The style evolved but the narrative quality remained the same. With time, the characters drawn out in watercolor and ink became much more graphic, using simple building blocks (type, color, and geometric shapes). This is seen in *The Children's Mathematics Book* where the letters took on gestures and movements like characters. These books exemplified some of his greatest work.

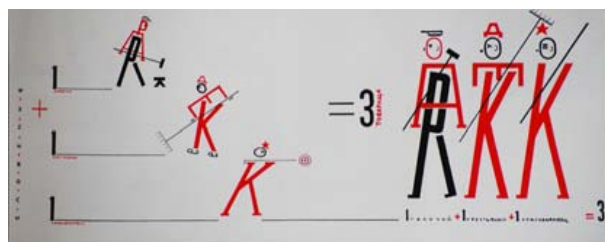


The Legend of Prague, Title page, 1917

36. Roatcap, *Highlights from the Matrix*, 335.



Sketches for the children's book Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, Division, 1928



1 worker+ 1 peasant+ 1 red Army man=3 comrades



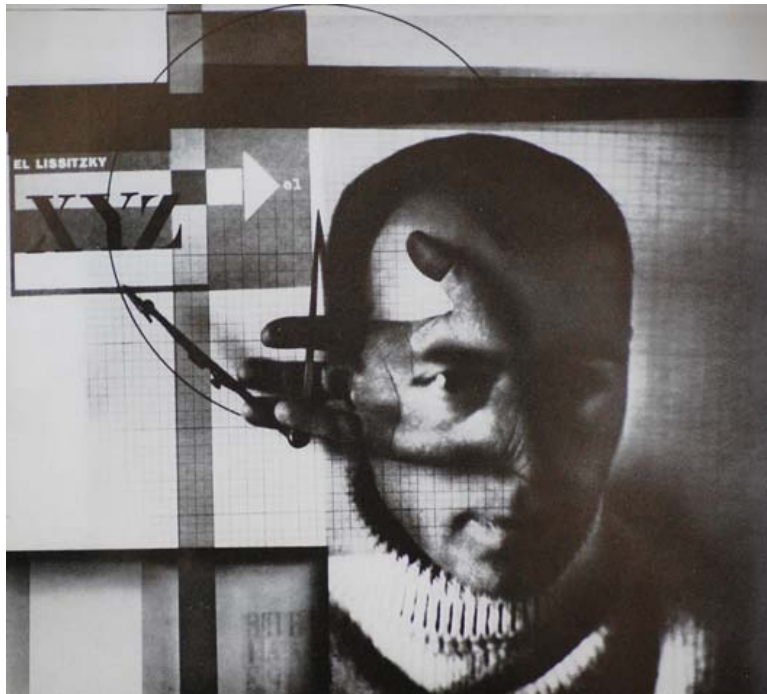
America, Europe, Asia, Australia Africa-
Proletarians of all lands unite

They showed all of his beliefs. They were simple and meaningful, and intended for the average child to understand. They educated and informed and allowed to the viewer to think about his world in a different way. They used the basic building blocks of the constructivism-utilitarian art. They were built in the same way through hierarchies, sub-groups, and classes, levels of importance due to placement and scale. They were also heavy on the communist agenda, as seen in "1 worker +1 peasant+ 1 army man=3 comrades".³⁷ All of the best elements of his work can be seen in these figures. Some of the prouns tended to fall into abstraction and doodlings of geometry but these were clear concrete images. They were made up of all of the elements of design, shape, space, line, texture, direction, value, and color. They were not as cluttered, contrived, or evangelical as the work with photomontage.

He treated the text and letter forms like a character, they were more literal in interpretation. I think he had a message, a story, and an agenda to spread. He could not achieve this through just designing architecture. He was attempting to achieve a means of communicating through typography and graphics. He wanted his symbols and his designs to exemplify a time and a belief. For Lissitzky, "The book is becoming the most monumental work of art. It is being grasped by hundreds of thousands of poor people".³⁸ The installations and propaganda were the most powerful and reached the greatest audience, but they were also ephemeral, while his books are a lasting reflection of his great contribution to design.

37. Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters*, 103.

38. Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky Life Letters*, 359



Self-portrait: *The Constructor*, 1924

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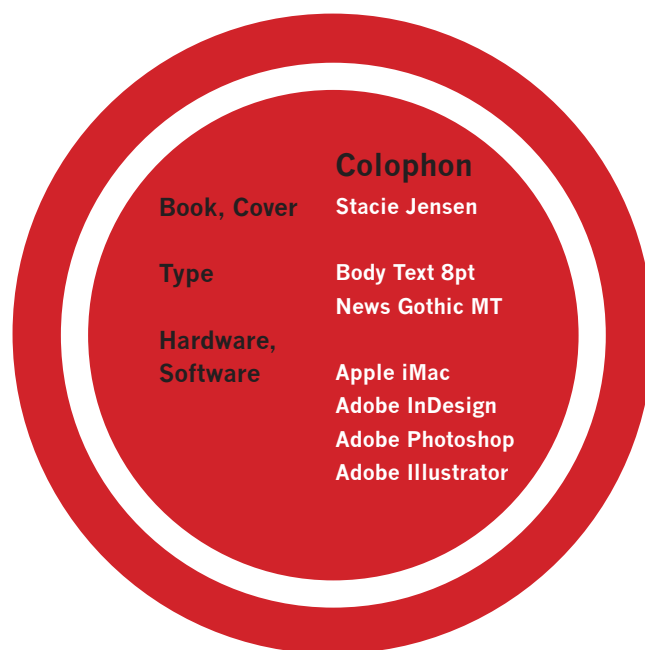
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