

The epic literatures of many peoples, in both East and West, feature sagas in which two heroes, equal in prowess, are pitted against each other. Valiant warriors in both sides watch their duel with bated breath. The first of two events that determined the fate of art for a long time to come—and not just in Russia but in many other countries—took place in Moscow in the spring of 1914:

Dear

Dear Sirs,

On the 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 of May this year the studio of Vladimir Tatlin () will be opened from 6 to 8 p. m. for a free viewing of his SYNTHETIC _STATIC compositions. In addition, at seven o'clock on the aforementioned days, the futurist Sergei Podgaevskii will dynamically declaim his latest poetic transrational records.

A hand letter placard mounted above the entrance to the apartment proclaimed BEHOLD THE TRICK

Podgaevskii could not simply read his verses—he had to dynamically declaim them. And they weren't even records but poetical transrational records. The choice of words is indicative of a change of mood in Moscow artistic circles, of a gravitation toward the transrational and the alogical. Toward Dada in place of Futurism.

Tatlin used metallic netting and smoked glass in one of the compositions on display, which people claimed was a depiction of a "tea room at night." They were however, hard pressed to say what was represented in the other "synthetic-static" works, which had been hung alongside Tatlin's beautiful and perfectly legible set and costume designs for Mikail Glinka's opera Zhizn' za tzaria (A life for the Czar, 1836). Observers today wish to see a connection between Tatlin's Les (Forest, 1913) design for Glinka's opera and his first reliefs

But the brake between them is obvious. There is no smooth transition. Tatlin took not a step but a leap to the unknown.

Nonetheless, Tatlin with childlike cunning, continued to try to convince the public that there was no particular difference between his new work and old—although he feared he would not be believed. In December 1914, he was invited to contribute as a member of World of Art to the Artist of Moscow for the victims of the war exhibition where he showed his designs for A Life for the Czar. Yet two or three hours prior to the opening he arrived with his

PAINTERLY RELIEF, 1914—a composition with wire, iron, cardboard, and enamel on board—and proceeded to hang it as if that was nothing out of the ordinary. The organizers endeavored to remove the relief of the exhibition—such an eccentric plank, such an aesthetic curiosity, did not suit

a flag waving, patriotic exhibition. Thanks however, to the the insi:

Thanks however to the insistence of several other artists—and because spectators had already begun to filter into the exhibition halls—Tatlin's reliefs was allowed to remain.

The following year, Sergei Shchukin, one of the most significant collectors of the time, bought a relief by Tatlin out of the TRAMWAY V EXHIBITION in Petrograd, paying what seemed to Russian artists a fantastic prize—three thousand rubles.

For that amount of money one could purchase fifteen to twenty landscapes by the enterprising "father of the Russian Futurism," David Burliuk, or two or three splendid paintings by one of the most popular and prominent artists of the time, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin.

Amazement bordered on shock. What was the secret of a few boards and pieces of iron and wire all of which could be found in any barn or garbage dump?

In late autumn of 1915, another artist in Moscow, KASIMIR MALEVICH, was attempting to convince his colleagues in futurist and Dada happenings to gather under a new banner. He proposed that the poets of yesterday's Futurism "change the battle with thought, content and logic... advance Alogism after Futurism.—in essence that they learned from the experience example of his alogists' paintings. Malevich even provided examples of his own of the new poetic structures: Papuans boxed, but

Cottage second class

Ticket. Park Arch.

These lines loosely match his painting *Through Station: Kuntsevo*, 1913, while another of Malevich's examples brings to mind his *Cow and Violin*, 1913