

Who are we?

Manifesto of the Group of Constructivists (c. 1922)

We do not consider ourselves obliged to build Pennsylvania stations, skyscrapers, Handley-Pages, mass-produced houses, turbo compressors, etc.

We did not create the technology.

We did not create man.

BUT WE

The *artists* of yesterday

The **CONSTRUCTORS** of today

man

1. have worked upon

2. are organizing

technology

1. have discovered
2. are harnessing
3. are purging
4. are fusing ourselves with

BEFORE – The engineers took their recreation in art

NOW – The artists take their recreation in technology

THERE MUST HOWEVER BE NO PLACE FOR RELAXATION

Who has seen a WALL ...

Who has seen SIMPLY a PLANE –

EVERYONE ... AND NO ONE.

There came one who had really seen and simply **SHOWED**

a **square**.

This means opening one's eyes to the *plane*.

Who has seen an **ANGLE**

Who has seen **FRAMEWORK**, a **DIAGRAM**

EVERYONE ... AND NO ONE

There came one who had really seen and simply **SHOWED**

a **LINE**.

Who has seen: an iron bridge

a dreadnought

a zeppelin

a helicopter

EVERYONE ... AND NO ONE.

The we came along – the first working-group of
CONSTRUCTIVISTS –

ALEKSEY GAN, RODCHENKO, STEPANOVA

... and we simply said: This is *today*

Technology is the mortal enemy of art.

TECHNOLOGY...

We are your first fighting and punitive detachment.

We are also your last unskilled labourers.

We are not daydreamers of art, who build in the imagination:

Aeroradio stations

Elevators and

Flaming cities

WE ARE THE BEGINNING

OUR BUSINESS is **TODAY**

a *tankard*

a Broom

Boots

a *catalogue*

And when one man in his laboratory set up

a *square*

Radio carried it to all who had need and who had no need, and soon on all the "ships of leftwing art" sailing under white, black, and red flags ... all without exception, without exception all was covered with *squares*.

And when yesterday one man set up in his laboratory

a *line*, a *grid* and a *dot*

radio carried it to all who had need and who had no need, and soon but especially on all the "ships of leftwing art" with the new title of "constructive", sailing under various flags ...

all without exception ... without exception is constructed on the basis of *lines* and *grids*.

Of course, the square existed before the line and the grid existed before.

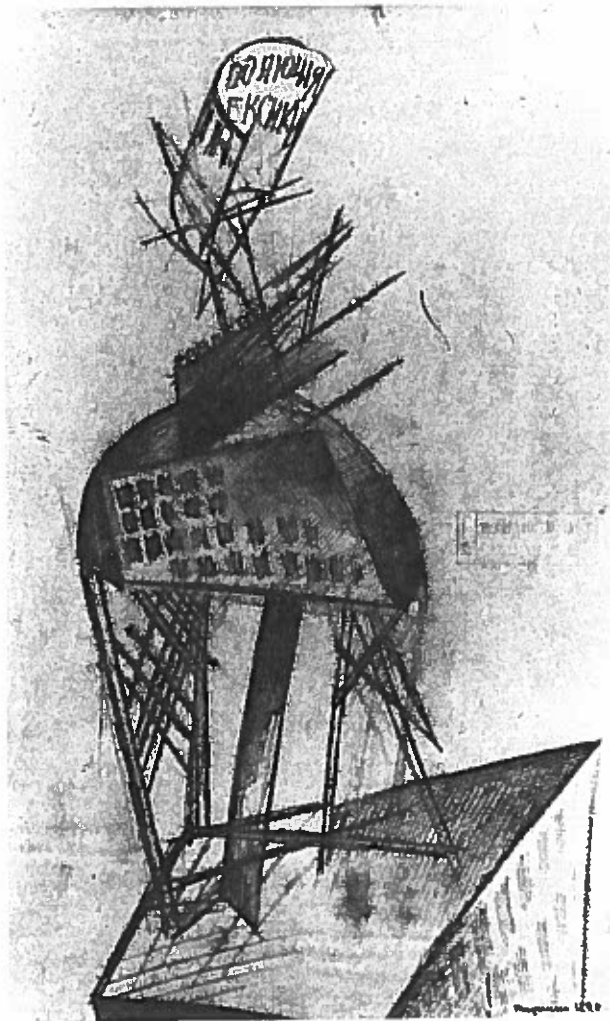
What's the point.

Well simply – **THEY WERE SHOWN**

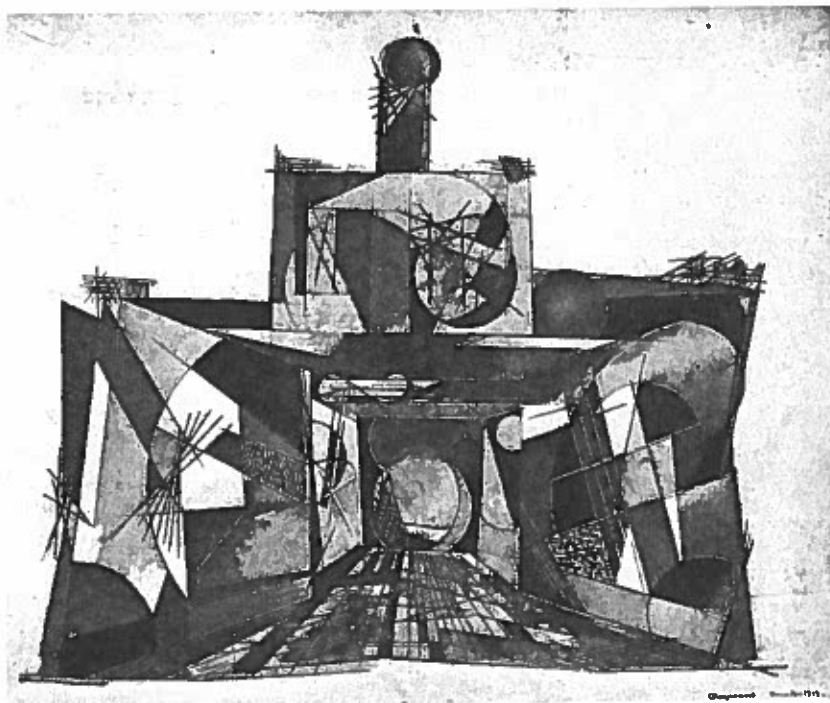
THEY WERE PROCLAIMED

121

A. Rodchenko
 Design for a city with
 "observatory", 1920
 Pencil on paper, 36 x 22 cm
 Reproduced "Rodchenko 1920"
 (lower right)



Rodchenko
 Design for a communal
 house, 1919
 Watercolour, opaque white
 Indian ink on paper
 mounted on cardboard,
 16 cm
 Reproduced in pencil
 "Rodchenko. December 1919"
 (lower right)



The square – 1915 MALEVICH's laboratory
 The line, the grid, the dot – 1919 RODCHENKO's laboratory
 BUT – after this
 The first working-group of CONSTRUCTIVISTS (ALEKSEY GAN,
 RODCHENKO, STEPANOVA)

proclaimed:
 THE COMMUNIST EXPRESSION OF MATERIAL
 STRUCTURES
 and
 UNCOMPROMISING WAR ON ART
 Everything came to a head,

and the "new" constructivists caught up with the fashion, wrote
 or painted "constructive" poems, novels, pictures and other
 trash. Others, fascinated by our slogans, imagining themselves
 geniuses, design elevators and radio-posters, but they have
 forgotten that all attention must be focused on the experimen-
 tal laboratories, which show us

NEW ELEMENTS
 PATHS
 OBJECTS
 EXPERIMENTS.

THE MODEL EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY
 and
 THE MATERIAL STRUCTURES STATION OF THE FIRST WORKING-
 GROUP OF CONSTRUCTIVISTS OF THE R.S.F.S.R.

The manifesto is typewritten and preserved in the Rodchenko/Stepanova
 Archive. The highlighting and spacing of the words was apparently done
 by Rodchenko.

According to Inkhuk records, the Working-Group of Constructivists,
 which included Aleksey Gan, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova,
 Karl Loganson, and Vladimir and Georgiy Stenberg, was formed at the
 beginning of 1921.

Rodchenko and Stepanova spent virtually the whole of 1921 working
 under the badge of Constructivism. Rodchenko made wooden spatial
 structures, which he called "constructions". Stepanova continued to work
 on her series of "Figures".

This work culminated in the exhibition "5 x 5 = 25", which was the
 first artistic declaration of Constructivism. Along with various other
 textual materials, a manifesto was drawn up to outline the theses and
 priorities of the Constructivists, just as Marinetti had once done for
 Futurism.

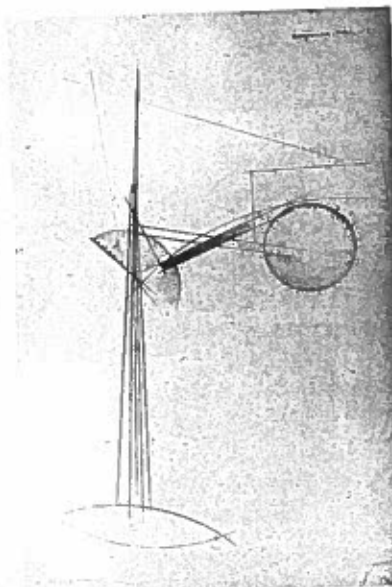
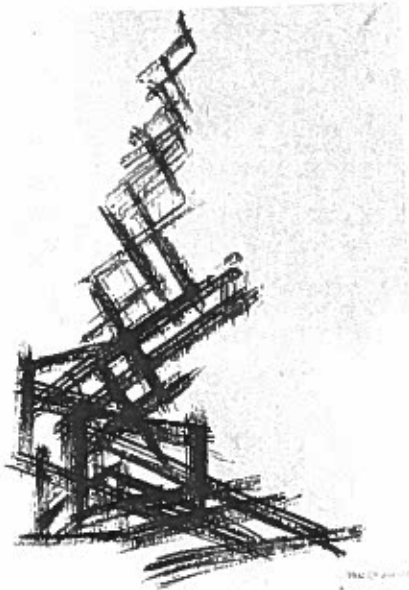
The text is typical for the beginning of 1922, when the experimental
 phase was over but real, practical Constructivism was still in its infancy.
 As befits a manifesto, the language is dogmatic and uncompromising.
 The movement affirms itself through denying the past.

The concluding words of the manifesto were most probably written
 by Aleksey Gan. In his writings, especially in his book Constructivism,

Works and Writings

Gan constantly stresses the ideological content of Constructivism, whereby the sociopolitical tasks of the Revolution have their counterpart in art in the productive, creative goals of Constructivism. It was Gan's efforts to politicize creative activity to the maximum and to minimize the

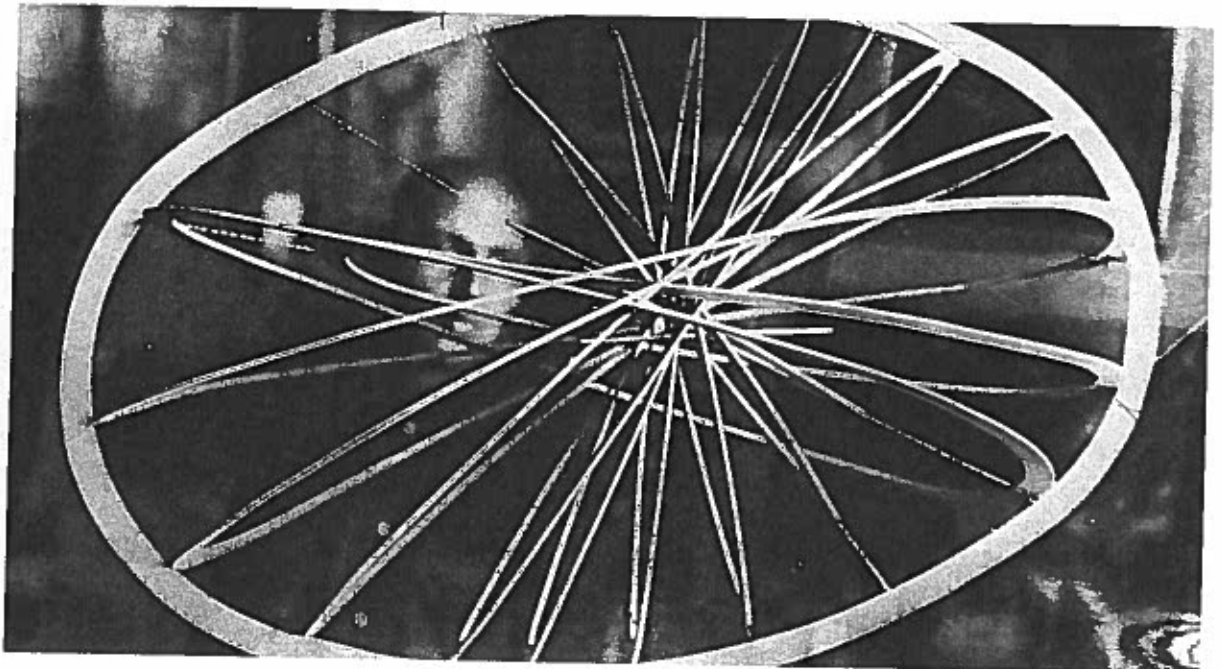
artistic component that led to the subsequent parting of the ways between himself and Rodchenko and Stepanova. In 1923/24 Gan created what he considered to be the true group of Constructivists from young artists, students at Vkhutemas.



123
A. Rodchenko
Design for a city, 1920
Pen and ink on paper
mounted on cardboard,
28 x 21 cm
Inscribed in pencil
"Rodchenko" (lower right)

124
A. Rodchenko
Construction no. 8, 1921
Pencil on paper, 35.8 x 22 cm
Inscribed "Rodchenko 1921,
no. 8" (upper right)

125
A. Rodchenko in his studio.
In the foreground:
Spatial construction
no. 12,
Photograph, 1924



126
A. Rodchenko
"Sovdep", design for the
House of Soviets, 1920
Pen and ink and opaque
white, 26 x 29.7 cm
Inscribed in Indian ink
"Rodchenko 1920"
(lower left)

127
A. Rodchenko
Construction, 1919
Pencil on paper,
35.5 x 22.5 cm
Stamped "Rodchenko";
inscribed in pencil "canvas
no. 5" (lower left)

