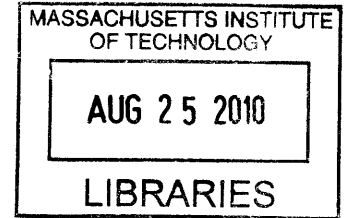


Architectures of the Everyday in 1920s and 1930s Russia

By

Tijana Vujosevic

Bachelor of Architecture
Master of Architecture
Yale School of Architecture, 2002



ARCHIVES

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARCHITECTURE:
HISTORY AND THEORY OF ARCHITECTURE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 2010

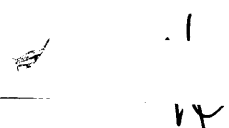
© 2010 Tijana Vujosevic. All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to MIT permission to reproduce and to distribute
publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in part in any
medium now known or hereafter created.

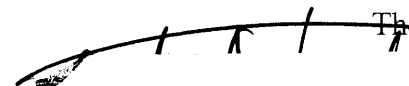
Signature of Author: _____


Department of Architecture, August 1st, 2010

Certified by: _____


Miriam Jarzombek
Professor of Architectural History and Theory
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: _____


Takehiko Nagakura
Associate Professor of Design and Computation
Chair of the Committee on Graduate Students



DISSERTATION COMMITTEE:

Mark Jarzombek, Professor of Architectural History and Theory (advisor)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Erika Naginski, Associate Professor of Architectural History
Harvard Graduate School of Design

Elizabeth Wood, Professor of History
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

ARCHITECTURES OF THE EVERYDAY IN 1920S AND 1930S RUSSIA

By Tijana Vujosevic

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on August 1st 2010 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture: History and Theory of Architecture

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an architectural history of Russian everyday life, or *byt*, in the first two decades after the October Revolution. In this period, the investigation and reform of *byt* was a project that vastly crossed the limits of the architectural profession. I survey ways in which the quotidian environment was understood, ordered and envisioned in a variety of practices: bureaucracy, literature, theatre, film, urbanism, and design. The dissertation explores the architecture of discrete geographies, sets of tactics and strategies, employed in mapping the terrain of the quotidian. It explores how the official rhetoric of labor and productivity was translated into ethics and aesthetics of existence.

The study is ordered chronologically, and according to scale. In the first chapter I explore the manipulation and invention of the everyday object. The second chapter is about the performance of the everyday in Meyerhold's biomechanical theatre, its ties with the Central Institute of Labor, and the charting of the agitated body in action onto the space of the stage. The third chapter captures a moment in the development of the Soviet bathhouse, or *banya*, in which the bath, resembling a factory, was conceived of as an efficient, working building, which processed citizens' bodies in their entirety, and in some cases, presented replicas of the world at large. In the fourth chapter I read collective workers' histories to reconstruct the aesthetic of the Moscow Metro and particular modes of perception needed to capture and behold its magnificence. The final chapter is about the efforts of wife-activists, or *obshchestvenitsy*, to represent a society of surplus and overproduction through their management of nature's bounty.

Thesis Supervisor: Mark Jarzombek

Title: Professor of Architectural History and Theory

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank the members of my committee, Mark Jarzombek, Erika Naginski, and Elizabeth Wood. Studying under them and receiving their guidance during the writing of my thesis was a great honor. I benefited greatly from Mark Jarzombek's kindness and prudence in all stages of my study. Conversations with him were always an exceptional intellectual challenge. He pushed me to pursue my research interest to the limits of my ability and develop independence as a scholar. To Erika Naginski I owe gratitude for helping me define the topic and scope of my research in its initial stage, and for aiding me, over the course of half a decade, in developing the intellectual rigor and clarity of expression in a non-native language that were crucial for my intellectual growth. Elizabeth Wood pointed me to examples from Russian culture that increased the breadth and solidity of this study, and monitored the project at every step. I also thank the professors at the History, Theory, and Criticism program at the Department of Architecture, David Friedman, Nasser Rabbat, Stanford Anderson, and Arindam Dutta, for education and inspiration they provided me with.

I owe much to moral support, enthusiasm, and curiosity of fellow students. With Mechtild Widrich and Michael Osman I shared all the excitement of intellectual and personal growth in the program from the very beginning. With Alla Vronskaya and Igor Demchenko I had endless debates on Russian history and a close comradeship. Deborah Kully and I met daily in times of crisis to work on our dissertations. Conversations with Fabiola Lopez-Duran, Olga Touloumi, Florian Urban, Pamela Karimi, Lauren Kroiz, Lucia Allais, and Ijlal Muzaffar were invaluable.

During my research in St. Petersburg, Anatolii Rykov of St. Petersburg State Universtiy provided great practical, moral, and intellectual support. The most valuable introduction was that to Maria Leonidovna, curator at the Museum of St. Petersburg History. In Moscow, Lyda Romanova helped me with great ingenuity navigate the labyrinth of state archives.

I could have never devoted myself to research and the writing of this dissertation without generous financial support. I was the recipient of the MIT Fellowship for five years, the Hyzen travel grant, and the Royal Fund Fellowship. Reading in the very early stages of my research was supported by a summer grant from the Graduate Research Fellowship at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. The International Fellowship of the American Association of University Women provided me with a year of funding. Completing the dissertation was made possible by the Gerda Henkel Doctoral Fellowship.

My mother Jasmina was always there for me. My father Misha and stepmother Lili helped me with their experienced advice and always dispersed my doubts in the success of this enterprise. My brother Filip, a much better writer, was always a source of inspiration. Finally, I have to thank my closest friend, Maynard, for bearing with me and for managing *byt* as I was finishing the thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	5
Acknowledgments	7
Introduction	11
Chapter One: The Administration of Things <i>The quotidian object in the 1920s</i>	33
Chapter Two: Agitation <i>The performance of the everyday in Meyerhold's theater</i>	69
Chapter Three: It Works <i>The Soviet bathhouse (c. 1930)</i>	100
Chapter Four: Gleam <i>Aesthetics of the Moscow Metro (c. 1935)</i>	134
Chapter Five: The Administration of Nature <i>Architectural expertise of wife-activists (1936-1939)</i>	169
Conclusion	204
Illustration Credits	208
Bibliography	213

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an architectural history of Soviet everyday life, or *byt*. It explores five domains of architectural practice – the design of everyday objects, the performance of the everyday in the biomechanical theater, the Soviet bathhouse, the aesthetics of the Moscow Metro, and the architectural expertise of the Stalinist housewife. My aim is to contribute to the historical and critical study of the quotidian by exploring how the material culture of *byt* reflected ideas about the new Soviet subject. This study has two main aspects. One is my focus on the eccentric, rather than the typical, on slippages that were part of translating rhetorical systems into aesthetics of existence. The second is my concentration on one specific problem – the way in which architecture articulated the relationship between everyday life and labor in the process of constructing ways in which citizens act, perceive, and inhabit the world.

What was Revolutionary *byt*? It was something different for the former aristocrat and for the Communist reformer. I will start with a paragraph from *Byt i bytie* (loosely translated as *Everyday Life and Spiritual Life*), written by Count Sergei Volkonsky, which was published in the Russian émigré community in Berlin in 1924. In this paragraph the author, an eminent theater worker and critic, describes his secret literary meetings with poet Marina Tsvetaeva conducted in the shadow of Revolutionary events:

But we know we lived then, we lived there. And it was horrible to live, and it was embarrassing to live, when so many around us died. And to

breathe the same air which women-assassins breathed? And the children, which played assassination. And the stories of those coming from the provinces: that little fourteen-year old executioner who met convicts who passed by him with a revolver and rolled them down the steps with a shot in the temple? And we breathed that same air. And we lived. And we survived. Do you remember all that? That was Soviet *byt*. [everyday life]

And do you remember our evenings, our horrible but precious “coffee” on the paraffin stove, our readings, our writings, our conversations? You copied my “Wanderings” and “Monasteries,” How strong was our resistance, how rewarding was our resolve! That was our *bytie*. [spiritual life]¹

This paragraph is not merely about the contrast between life in the street and the clandestine meetings of Russian intellectuals by the paraffin stove. Although it seemingly corresponds to the Western contrast between public and private life, it reflects the typically Russian dichotomy between *byt* as the domain of the ordinary and the banal and *bytie* as the higher life of the soul. But in this case *byt* ceases to be ordinary. The dichotomy is that between life and death. Banality is the banality of violence, and intellectual comradeship is the art of conquering and escaping the omnipresence of killing and dying.

The account of post-Revolutionary existence, in which everyday life truly becomes a domain of horror, is also an account of literature's power to transcend *byt*, to provide access to what Volkonsky called *sverkhzhiznenoe* - the world above and beyond the “unpleasant” issues of quotidian struggle for survival.² There is a parallel world, a world of metaphysical places and spaces, of monasteries and wanderings, a higher order architecture which one can build as a form of redemption and rebellion, leaving behind

¹ Count Sergei Volkonsky. *Byt i Bytie*. Berlin: K-vo “Mednyi vsadnik,” 1924, pp. 11-12

² The terms are cited from the following quote: “On one occasion you wrote to me that you like how quickly turn from the unpleasant issues of *byt* to those issues of *bytie* that are beyond and above life (*sverkhzhiznenie*).”Ibid, p. 10

problems of survival, of the body's fragility, of helplessness – problems of *byt* as the uncomfortable residue of spiritual existence.

The pursuit of higher spiritual existence was alien to Leon Trotsky, the Communist revolutionary, who participated in the large-scale effort to change relationships of production, what figured in Marxist literature as the “material basis” of the society. This was a political struggle, the struggle for the political victory of labor, of which violence in the streets was a necessary part. But, according to his writings compiled as the Civil War subsided, material life on the molecular level, that of the quotidian, did not necessarily correspond to Revolutionary liberation and emancipation. It was a parallel layer of material existence, a shadow of history, with its own logic and rules of development. In his *Problems of Everyday Life* [*Problemy Byta*], written at approximately the same time as Volkonsky's book, Trotsky announces that the problem of everyday life is the central problem of Party struggle in the aftermath of the Civil war. According to him, the great political victory of labor achieved little effect in the domain of the trivial, the “prosaic.”³

For Revolution to be complete, to be made universal, it had to permeate the molecular level of material life, the way people go about their daily affairs, the way they form their habits, and organize their physical environments. Trotsky criticizes Communists who devote themselves only to the grand cause, and calls for a comprehensive reform of *byt*. “In order to realize great ideas, we have to pay attention to

³ Leon Trotsky, *Voprosy byta* [Questions of Everyday Life]. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Krasnaya nov,” 1923, p. 7

trifles!” he proclaims.⁴ Victory of the proletariat hinges on “posing and resolving everyday, cultural tasks.”⁵

Byt is for Trotsky not known and resists control and progress. It is so opaque that it requires comprehensive and multidisciplinary study. It is so detached from changes on the large scale that it requires a completely different set of tools and tactics to be controlled and managed. *Byt* as the Communist prosaic, is not the double spiritual life, but is the double of history and “conscious creation” of the world:

In the study of daily life it is peculiarly manifest to what an extent man is the product of environment rather than its creator. Conscious creation in the realm of everyday life occupies but a negligible place in human history. Everyday life is accumulated from the elemental experience of men; it transforms in the same elemental way [*stikhiino*], under the pressure of technological progress or the occasional stimulus of revolutionary struggle, and in the end reflects to a much greater extent the past of human society than its present.⁶

Trotsky’s ambition was to reform *byt* and transform it into a domain of active agency. Volkonsky’s was that of escape. Yet in the writings of both the trivial, the banal, and the prosaic are the specters of greater intellectual and political strivings. They comprise a layer of existence in which randomness and human vulnerability reign.

The everyday is the terrain of fundamental estrangement. *Byt* is a world of absurdity, and violence, and ennui, the margin of politics and literature. But, in its strangeness, it also poses new problems to understanding and invention, and creates, in Communist imagination, enthusiasm that matches desperation that colors everyday struggle for survival. Architectures of the everyday are situated between these two poles.

⁴ Ibid., 33

⁵ Ibid., 7

⁶ Ibid., p. 34

The reader will encounter literary accounts of the confusion and strangeness of *byt* in this dissertation. In a story by Danil Kharms, a man is assigned a residence in a communal apartment, but no room, and occupies the corridor in which he sleeps and lounges, to the annoyance and rage of his cohabitants who pour kerosene on him and plot to set him on fire. Mikhail Zoshchenko provides an account of his unsuccessful visit to an overcrowded public bath managed by dysfunctional bureaucracy, during which he loses his clothes and tries to recognize them by the number and location of holes. Boris Arvatov, the noted theatre critic, writes about the everyday as a world of meaningless objects and unarticulated movements, in which people “wallow like frogs in mud and croak in it when it rains.”⁷ Everyday life is absurd and dysfunctional. Its protagonists experience puzzlement, melancholy, weariness, boredom, and profound alienation.

The strangeness of everyday life in the aftermath of the Revolution, however, was also an occasion for invention. The very condition that produced ennui offered opportunities for escaping it. If the quotidian was odd and exotic, then exotic things, constructs, apparatus, and environments could appear, such that would render *byt* wondrous and beautiful. Architecture could produce portable wings for going to work. It could create baths based on cosmological schemes. It could transform spaces of public transportation into castles.

I am particularly interested in how architecture created an eroticization of *byt*. By this I do not mean that it directly affected human sexuality in the narrow sense of the word, but that it created new regimes of movement, self-care, relationships to things,

⁷ Boris Arvatov, “Ot rezhissury teatra k montazhu byta,” [From theatre directing towards a montage of everyday life] in *Ob agit ai proz isskustve* [On agitation and production art] Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Federatsiya,” 1930, originally in *Zrelishcha* no. 24, 1923

modes of perception – new awareness of the body and modes of embodied being in the world. This eroticization is not a counter-culture at odds with official rhetoric and Communist ideology. It is part of the enterprise of reforming *byt* and translating the idea about the rule of laboring subjects and the progress of industrial production into an ethics of existence on a small scale. It performs that which is necessary to make the idea about the transformation of the “material basis” ubiquitous and universal.

In this dissertation, I was primarily interested in complete architectural cosmologies, aesthetic reconstructions of the entirety of *byt*. My focus was not on singular monumental objects, but on discrete sets of rules and tactics, geographies that materialize a mode of existence. That is, I was interested in recreations of the world as a site of production inhabited by the laboring body. These recreations involve a new ordering of the senses, metaphysics curiously executed in the material fabric of the prosaic and the banal.

What I show is how architectures of the everyday systematize ways people inhabit and perceive the world on a micro-scale, that of the body and its immediate environment. In the case of post-Revolutionary *byt*, their function is double. Firstly, they translate the bureaucratic and economic rhetoric of labor, efficiency, and productivity into a lifestyle. Secondly, they render the drab everyday wondrous and unfamiliar by eroticizing it. Among these architectures, I focus on those that have a metaphysical, cosmological component. By studying them, I discover the metaphysical capacity of architecture, not of the kind that explains the world, but which, in the Marxist spirit, recreates it in the material – the metaphysics of immanence.

My study of the architectures of the everyday is situated within four discourses about the everyday that have been developing since the 1960s: philosophy, philosophy of history, Soviet history, and history of art. In relation to these discourses, it addresses four important problems that arise in the study of the quotidian – the philosophical problem of alienation, the problem of the uniformity of the historical narrative, the problem of ideology, and that of agency.

The condition of alienation that is, in my opinion, key to understanding Soviet *byt*, figures as a topic in French philosophy of the everyday since the 1960s, and has figured most prominently in the work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel De Certeau. Central problems in the philosophical study of the everyday are the status of quotidian practice and the extent of human agency that is possible within its bounds. Both for Lefebvre and De Certeau, the everyday involves life within the confines of larger political structures, a stylistics and ethics of existence, a performance of ideology and its interpretation on the small scale. But their views on what constitutes subjective negotiation with larger frameworks of technology and power, on what the possibilities of reclaiming the power to construct meaning, vastly differ.

In his major philosophical treatise, *Practice of Everyday Life* (1974), De Certeau defines the quotidian as the consumption of culture, practiced by the silent majority of marginalized actors operating within larger frameworks of technology and power. For him, the everyday is a discursive practice, which consists not of “writing,” but of “reading” the products of dominant culture, a kind of “silent production” performed by the subjects of totalitarian networks of information. This silent production is a site of

anti-discipline in which subjects “enunciate,” “appropriate,” discursive systems on the level of the trivial, of the tactical.

The problem with De Certeau’s approach is that, though his philosophy seemingly affirms subjective agency, and charts new terrains of struggle for freedom, the possibilities for agency and freedom remain very limited because “reading” is a non-discursive practice. In other words, the silent masses read and consume, but do not write, and do not disturb or change the dominant discourse. Consumers do not ultimately introduce the everyday into the political and historical discourse. This is the privilege of the theorist, who “mythologizes” practices of construction and redeems them by constructing a speculative narrative.

My stance, which is at the basis of my interest in the architectural design of *byt*, is that discourses of consumption cannot, ultimately, produce a powerful affirmation of agency in the everyday. We have to look into the philosophy of cultural production in the quotidian. Henri Lefebvre’s theory is a powerful alternative, not only because it foregrounds cultural production, but also because his critique of the quotidian entails a sophisticated elaboration of the notion of alienation. I have both drawn on Lefebvre’s conclusions and aimed to contribute to his line of thought with a study of the Soviet post-Revolutionary condition.

Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* is based on a complex theory of alienation. For him, the social roles that the everyman plays, and the performance of everyday within larger ideological structures, do not liberate, but produce fundamental estrangement. The performance of the everyday does not facilitate knowledge, but only familiarity. In Western societies, the basic split is that between roles played in the

private and the private sphere, that of work and play, and this is an idea that Lefebvre draws from the tradition of Marxist thought, in which alienation from labor is fundamental for the modern condition. In the Communist society, which Lefebvre also discusses, it is not the alienation from labor, but the split between the exigencies of everyday life and the adaptation to larger ideological structures that produces alienation.

When writing about the Western society, Lefebvre finds a solution to this problem in the re-alienation of the everyday, the exposure of the uncanny within the familiar and the fake within what is most precious and human. It is the defamiliarization in great works of art, like those of Chaplin or Brecht, whose *Verfremdungseffect* was a way to overcome alienation. (We might add to this the Russian notion of *ostrannenie*, the use of artistic technique to present objects as if seen for the very first time, theorized by Victory Shklovsky, which influenced Brecht's method.) It is not the process of cultural consumption, but that of cultural production, already present within the historical narrative, that offers a way out of alienation in the quotidian, out of the incapacity of historical subjects to reflect on the totality of their existence within the context of performance and pre-scripted social roles. Lefebvre's idea is not to create a transcendental philosophical narrative, but to engage with cinema and literature. It also enables the historian to write a history of *byt* as a history of production.

Lefebvre did not explore in particular the dichotomy between conditions of material existence and ideology that created alienation in the Soviet quotidian. The study of architecture, rather than literature, is particularly important for developing this idea, since architecture relates specifically to the conditions of material existence, and because it connects the body to the society envisioned as a society of labor, and proposes new

modes of motility, perception, and design expertise. What is important to find out is how architecture figured as more than a material framework for social performance, how it can be an aesthetic transformation as well as a transparent materialization of the official rhetoric, whether it was not only as a political tool, but also a wonder.

The project of writing history as a history of wonder is established in recent essays of Carlo Ginzburg, *Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance* (2001), which resemble Lefebvre's writing. The title of the book already reflects the idea that the object of history has to be approached as impenetrable, as strange. Like Lefebvre, Ginzburg proposes that the historian borrow his methodology from the artistic method of defamiliarization. In his essay "Making it Strange: A Prehistory of a Literary Device," Ginzburg covers the history of the notion of defamiliarization from Marcus Aurelius, to Montaigne, Tolstoy and Shklovsky, in order to conclude that he will borrow his method from Marcel Proust. Life appears to historical actors as a riddle – they do not know the relationships of cause and effect; reality cannot be taken for granted, but has to be decoded, deciphered on the basis of how it appears. The historical object has to be observed as if seen for the very first time, and the unraveling of the historical narrative has to start from the imaginary as the most authentic and immediate material available to the historian, the starting point for reconstructing the big picture.

The main idea of microhistory is that the big picture, the historical master narrative is not accessible to individual historical actors, and that this narrative, on the small scale the fabric of history is heterogeneous, rather than consistent. It is the idea that on the micro-scale history involves discrete imaginaries, cosmologies, and eccentric worldviews.

The project of microhistory is a historiographic approach that promotes the notion of the heterogeneity of the historical narrative, an approach I have adopted in my thesis. It is impossible to understand this turn without situating microhistory within the half a century long tradition of departure from the historical paradigm of political history, concentrated on the history of the State, great deeds of great men, official documents, a history aiming for absolute objectivity. What is significant is that it is precisely the history of everyday life that performed this momentous turn, informed by the political agenda of focusing on the history of the masses rather than the great men. The Annales School departed from the history of events and concentration on social change over long periods of time. One of its most prominent representatives, Fernand Braudel, conceived of a history of everyday life from 1400-1980 in his famous work *Capitalism and Material Life* (1967), as a history of the repetitive, the routine, the passive, the “dust of history,” which, in a vision similarly to Trotsky's evolves slowly and independently from economic historical events. The categories that define the everyday, what Braudel calls “material life,” are things as crops, nutrition, housing, clothes, fashion, money, etc.

Braudel does not study the anomalous. He studies series, sequences, constants, the typical, rather than the exceptional, as he considers the “the history of the masses.” His study is not about freedom. It is about constraints to aspirations. “If man usually remained within the limits of the possible, it was because his feet were sunk in this clay,” he concludes about his subject matter.

According to microhistorians, everyday life is not the life of the anonymous mass and the terrain of unfreedom. By exploring the margins of political history, they

discover a terrain of active agency, freedom of interpretation, and cosmological imagination. In his 1993 essay “Microhistory: Two or Three Things I Know About It,” Ginzburg explains his historical project as the search for the “anomalous, rather than the analogous,” a principle which he put into action in his famous history of a milliner's queer heretic worldview elaborated in front of the Inquisition, *The Cheese and the Worms*. (1976) Giovanni Levi, another prominent microhistorian, elaborates on this principle in his essay “On Microhistory” in Peter Burke's *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (1992). The pursuit of the anomalous concentrates on the margins of great historical narratives, but it is not the pursuit of the eccentric for its own sake. The study of eccentricity is an exploration of the problem of free will, the potential for finding freedom from oppressive normative systems through negotiation, manipulation, opportunities for personal interpretations of normative reality. Through narrative construction, by creating connections between the “close-up” and the “long shot,” the historian avoids generalization and determinism, and the authoritarianism of positivist historical discourse, prominent in the early stages of the history of everyday life.

Dreams and aspirations, the variety of cosmologies and worldviews, developed by historical actors to whom the master narrative of history is naturally inaccessible, render history heterogeneous when observed on the small scale, that of the quotidian. It is this variety that makes it problematic to write about the everyday as the life of the mass, or even that of a particular class, such as that of the proletariat.

Recent Marxist history of everyday life, or *Alltagsgeschichte*, also takes issue with the Annales School. The aim of historians such as Alf Luedtke and Peter Shottler is to write the history of the working class in such a way that would examine the problems

of agency and historical determinism. In the collection of essays published as *History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (1995) Ludtke refutes the view that the life of masses can be studied in the context of supraindividual forces that shape history over long periods of time. Shottler objects to the fact that the Annales School, by replacing the Marxist notion of ideology with the notion of mentalities, introduced a psychological category, which threatens, in its vagueness, to reduce particular class-specific and individual imaginaries to the earlier notions of worldview and the spirit of times. The German solution is to approach ideology not as a general worldview but as a set of concrete aesthetic practices, relatively independent from the “clay” of material life, aesthetic practices through which a class negotiates freedom in the social context in which it is situated.

Architectures of the everyday are such aesthetic practices, which take the notion of everyday cosmologies to a completely new level of complexity, as material reconstructions of the world. However, they are situated within the complex of rhetorical, ethical, and aesthetic practices of which Soviet ideology is comprised.

The idea that ideology consists of a multiplicity of worldviews, and that it does not exist in the abstract, but is developed through a variety of bureaucratic, economic, artistic, literary, cinematic discourses, is consistent with the findings of the history of everyday life in the Soviet Union, which has been emerging in the last couple of decades. The central theme in this history is the citizen’s response to various systems of values and beliefs in the process and living circumstances they established. The pioneering study in this domain was Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* (1999). The author examines the practice of consumption,

the politics of survival in the context of State rationing and distribution of goods. She tries to form a picture of the Soviet subject, *Homo Sovieticus*, who responded to the difficulty in obtaining the basic necessities of life by developing the risky habits of a gambler in a permanent game of survival.

Christina Kiaer and Eric Neiman's anthology *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (2006), elaborates on this theme by examining how Soviet citizens were formed in this relationship with the government. Their unique hypothesis is that Soviet subjects were not so much “oppressed” by power as they were “produced” by it, through the praxis of *byt*. Rebecca Spagnolo's “When Private Home Meets Public Workplace” (about domestic laborers in the Soviet home) illustrates that *byt* is neither private nor public. Cynthia Hooper's “Terror of Intimacy” (about the logic of personal affiliations during the time of Great Terror) discusses *byt* as a terrain of performance of intimate relationships that most prominently displays Revolutionary ambivalence about subjectivity, interiority, and psychological integrity. It is this ambivalence that makes the creation of the specifically Communist subject possible.

The study of Communist subjectivity and citizen's ideological practices is incomplete without the study of architecture, the study of environments and physical and imaginary constructs by which these relationships are mediated, of ways in which values and beliefs were translated into a concrete style of existence. The relationship between the State and the subjects is mediated by material culture, the domain in which subjects are created in the most sensual, visceral manner, and political categories acquire an aesthetic dimension, which carries a political importance of its own kind.

The only study of the architecture of Soviet *byt* to date is Victor Buchli's *An Archaeology of Socialism* (1999). The author studies the development of the aesthetic environment in the Ginzburg and Milinis' NarKomFin communal house designed in 1929. Buchli traces the evolution of this domestic environment in the long period from 1930 to 1991, as a complex "cultural matrix" to which other cultural artifacts are related and as a lens refracting both societal macrostructures and the minutiae of everyday life. Buchli devotes his attention not to the building as a finished object, but to the way habitation changes over long stretches of time, unveiling the duration of a building's life over decades as a stage and vehicle of social change. He covers a huge time span, and a wide range of practices – from government housing policies to the tactics of distributing household objects in space.

Central to Buchli's study is the notion that everyday life is a stylistic enterprise and that habitation is performance. Inspired by Bourdieu, Buchli writes that Soviet ideology had to be performed on an everyday basis as a total aesthetic project, in which citizens had to constantly negotiate the prevailing model of life. Soviet culture was embodied in the details of dress, bearing, habitus, and bodily memory. And it was also embodied in the ways in which domestic space was apportioned, decorated, manipulated, and remodeled. Useful categories for its analysis are the study of the cultural climate, modes of spatial appropriation, domestic imagination, and gender performativity.

Buchli's archaeology of domesticity already points out to the status of the everyday as a domain that is on the margins of discursivity and formalization, yet is crucial for reflecting social norms. However, there are two problems inherent in his approach. One is that it is difficult to limit the study of *byt* to the architecture of the

domestic interior, precisely because the Russian quotidian cannot be readily translated as the private sphere, and because it encompasses a much larger domain of earthly existence, its agonies and trifles. The second one is that his history, like De Certeau's philosophy, is not that of architectural production, but that of inhabitation, of consumption, and shares the limitations of De Certeau's philosophy – it is not a real affirmation of subjective agency and the power to transform ideas about social relationships and embodied existence.

Recent art history of the early Soviet period engages with the problem of agency in the production of everyday spaces, the aesthetics of *byt*, and the problem of labor. But it does so in its peculiar way, governed by its disciplinary constraints. The object of research is almost uniformly the Constructivist movement, and historians generalize on the basis of its tenants, manifesting an affinity between the researcher and the object of research. There is a dichotomy between the artist as a producer and the mass as a recipient of the work of art, and agency is almost entirely attributed to the artist. Finally, there are, in the 1980s and the 1990s, attempts to read art as a transparent translation of political rhetoric, which serve the project of critical art.

The view of art as a kind of specialist, intellectual, production that uses methods of industry to bring art closer to *byt* as the domain populated by the working masses is promoted in one of the first works on Soviet art, Christina Lodder's *Russian Constructivism* (1983). She introduces this movement as artists' attempt to participate in processes of social change, as the rejection of art as an autonomous domain for the sake of revolutionizing culture. There are three moments in this endeavor. One is the alliance between art and ideology, the activist artist and the State. The other is the abandonment

of gallery space for the use of the methods of mass dissemination of art, what was literally bringing art to the street in agitprop activity. The third is the transparency of the process of producing the work of art, which transforms the composition into a construction, and which defines art as intellectual labor and contributes to the consequent alliance of Constructivist art and industry.

What characterizes post-Revolutionary art, according to Lodder, is the heroism of the artist who performs a liberating role by addressing the working masses as the recipient of the work of art; the idea that it is the transparency of technique that creates a correspondence between “intellectual labor” and the labor of production. The art historian celebrates production and believes in the transparency of the process of mechanical production as the road to political liberation.

The belief in technological transparency as a political device is prominent in the work of Benjamin Buchloh and Christina Kiaer. Buchloh's essay “From Faktura to Factography” (1984) is inspired by Walter Benjamin's “The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility.” It attempts to draw a distinction between art for the masses that can politically liberate and that which is politically oppressive, tracing the demise of Soviet modernism. He concentrates on El Lissitzky's work in the 1920s and in the 1930s. Buchloh creates a distinction between *faktura* and *faktography*, art which exposes the process of production, and thus “correlates” to industry, showing how a mode of perception is constructed, on the one hand, and art that presents itself as “natural.” The difference between the two perspectives is that one represents a society that is in the process of production and flux, and the other one in which a society are stable and

unproblematic. The first case is the case of Revolutionary socialism, and the second case, that of Stalinism, fascism, and contemporary Western capitalism.

Lodder established an unproblematic relationship between Constructivist art and Communist “ideology” in the 1920s, claiming that art was a direct realization of Communist politics. Similarly, Buchloh makes clear-cut divisions, assigning, without allowing any space for slippages or anachronisms, an aesthetic system to the political system of an entire historical period. This position enables Buchloh to advance the notion that a choice of an aesthetic regime represents a direct ideological alliance, that it establishes a direct relationship between art and power, which can be critical or affirmative.

Christina Kiaer's book *Imagine no Possessions: The Socialist Object of Russian Constructivism* (2005) is based on her exploration of Boris Arvatov's work on *byt* and the object. Kiaer has an agenda similar to Buchloh's: to find in Constructivism an alternative to capitalist modernism, an aesthetic system that would offer a way to resist contemporary consumer culture. Kiaer's work, which is directly concerned with the reform of *byt*, centers on Arvatov's idea that in socialist everyday life there would be no distinction between consumption and production, and that *byt* would demand a new relationship to the world of things, the transformation of things into working instruments, into “co-workers in human practice.” She goes further than Buchloh and proposes that it is not only the exposure of production techniques, but also the “psychological transparency” of the thing as something that is made, not used, that forms a new emotional relationship to the object that can be a form of resistance to capitalist society.

What can be questioned in Buchloh's and Kiaer's approach is the belief that there is a transparent translation of ideological systems into artistic production, and the relative simplicity of historical interpretation. For example, the actual political context for Kiaer's *Imagine no Possessions* is not the desire to get rid of possessions, but poverty and scarcity of things. Kiaer and Buchloch co-opt Russian art for their own political project – that of promoting critical art, based on the premise that the artist, by isolating him or herself from the dominant relationships of artistic production can effectively critique the society and subvert social relations. Inspiration for the critique of capitalism can be found in masterpieces of socialism. However, the fact remains that the Soviet artist, as opposed to the critical artist had no autonomy from the dominant relationships of production and dissemination of art, and that Soviet art was historically specific. Furthermore, the very idea about the heroic artist who has the power to transcend historical conditions and address and liberate the audience is very problematic.

Maria Gough debates with Kiaer in her book *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (1995), published in the same year. She argues that the object was not the main focus of Constructivism, and that the process of abandoning the art object for the object of everyday life had as its outcome the dissolution of the notion that the object is the site of artistic efforts. She also argues that the importance of the movement was not in that it was “a type of labor.” By examining the work of Karl Ioganson, she claims that the ultimate goal of the Constructivist artist as a reformer of *byt* was direct intervention in the process of production. This project failed, according to her, primarily because of workers' lack of cooperation. Maria Gough's study is invaluable in that it counters the myth of “intellectual production” as an obvious

corollary to industrial production. It also questions the idea about the close spiritual alliance between the artist, the State, and the workers, which is part of the Marxist discourse on Constructivism.

What were other visions and realities of masses' artistic and literary agency in post-Revolutionary Russia?

In his essay "The Author as Producer" (1934) Walter Benjamin cites sources from Soviet Russia in order to paint a picture of the socialist society (based on examples from Soviet Russia) in which workers' identities would not only be tied to factory work, but also to literary production. He contrasts classical genres of literature, such as poetry and the novel, to the Communist newspaper, which includes free contributions from the reading public, and promises to erase the division between the author and the reader. Benjamin enthusiastically embraces this phenomenon as a possibility for erasing class distinction between the intellectual and the populace, the hierarchy of genres, and, ultimately, for creating a world of polyvocal and heterogeneous aesthetic and political terrain, which is part of everyday, not some transcendental "spiritual" life.

This noble vision of workers' liberation and political freedom was not truly realized in the Soviet Union, in which, as Benjamin already noted, a class of bourgeois "specialists" took over intellectual production in the name of the proletariat. Aesthetic contributions of the "little man" in the form of, for example, collective writing, were edited by the intellectual and censored by the State, and they were hardly examples of complete freedom, which would not involve negotiation with official discourse. Moreover, the idea of the "working masses" as a political and aesthetic subject was reinforced, rather than destabilized in the official rhetoric.

But how is the history of architecture different from the history of Constructivism? It is not a history of the architectural profession. I focus on the production of discourse about the space of *byt* and its heterogeneity, which reflects the heterogeneity of influences and the diversity of participants in the process of its interpretation and construction. The transformation of *byt* was not a product of a professional discourse that operated in isolation. By expanding the project of studying Russian post-Revolutionary practice beyond art and beyond Constructivism, we can examine the complex weaving of bureaucratic, economic, literary, and artistic imaginaries involved in the ordering of the material environment, and examine the discord, consistencies and inconsistencies between these imaginaries. Architecture was not a dialogue between the architect and the mass, but a powerful technology of beauty and knowledge that was not a materialization of some unified ideology. It was an enterprise that happens at the interstice of concrete and sometimes dissonant ideological practices, which belong to different disciplinary domains, and involve, in various ways, the participation of the State, the worker, the specialist, the artist, the architect, the politician, and the art theorist.

By examining architectural cosmologies of Soviet everyday life, I hope to enrich philosophical, historical, and art historical study of the quotidian that has been developing since the 1960s. Both the transformation and the interpretation of *byt* in architecture involved the normal and the normative, but also the ludicrous, the magical, and the eccentric, as modes of negotiating and establishing the relationship between necessity and desire, between official and unofficial rhetoric, between the center and the margins. Some of the most unusual most eccentric constructions of *byt* as a domain of beauty and enlightenment are the topic of my dissertation. These are constructions that

render *byt* strange, which defamiliarize it while at the same time engaging with the official narrative of productivity. I clearly see liberating potential in these constructions, and a rich terrain for exercising human agency, not as a radical break from the oppressive State discourse, or a way to transcend *byt*, but as a way to formulate an aesthetics of existence in dialogue with concrete ideological practices.

What is common to these interpretations, as modes of ordering the quotidian material environment on a small scale, is that they constructed an image of the citizen's body in a quotidian circumscribed by the rhetoric of production and political victory of labor. These constructions were very concrete. They proposed ways in which the everyman can perceive the world and be perceived, ways in which he can talk, act, and interact with things and machines. They projected potential for new kinds of engagement of the body with the material world, and charted new technological horizons.

It is not only that, by examining these visions, we can grasp the nature and extent of human agency in early Soviet everyday architecture. Ultimately, for the historian, these new technological and aesthetic horizons, these visions of how things should work, offer more insight than positive facts into how things did not work, insight not only into the fascination with the quotidian, but also into its agonies.

CHAPTER 1: THE ADMINISTRATION OF THINGS

Listen to how I reckon now:

There isn't any measure

There are, instead of measure, our thoughts encased in things.

All things come alive,

Making Being attractive.

Danil Harms, 1929⁸

In 1920 Stanislav Gustavovich Strumilin, professor of economics at Moscow University and deputy chief of the State Planning Commission,⁹ decided to explore workers' *byt* as the uncharted territory of Soviet statistics. The enterprise started as an endeavor to measure workers' leisure activities in order to control and reform them. It evolved into a quasi-anthropological project of reconstructing the entire material microcosm of the quotidian on the basis of things as cues to a way of life.

⁸ Danil Ivanovich Harms, "The Measure of Things," in *OBERIU: An Anthology of Russian Absurdism*. Translated and Edited by Eugene Ostashsevsky. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006, p. 83

⁹ The Planning Commission (Gosplan) was founded in 1921 to create a general economic plan for the Soviet Union. Apart from creating and implementing the plan and coordinating efforts of institutions, the Commission had the tasks of organizing research necessary for creating the plan, training personnel, and disseminating propaganda about economic development. It was connected to the Council of Labor and Defense, and served as an advisory board to the government. From 1928, it was responsible for creating and implementing the Five Year Plans.

Strumilin's first project, "Time Budget Studies," was guided by the idea that the rationalization of Soviet life should not stop at factory work, but should spread onto the domain of leisure. Leisure was supposed to be salvaged from irrationality and sloth, and integrated into the productive universe, being the realm in which labor force is reproduced. "Much is now being thought and said about the rationalization, or, as it is now called, the scientific organization of labor," Strumilin writes. " But the question of the rationalization of worker's rest through the optimal use of his 'free' time – this question no one has asked up to now. How could it be asked, when we do not know even the factual distribution of this time and the level of its rationality and irrationality."¹⁰

In order to establish this factual distribution, Strumilin's team surveyed a sample of 76 families in Petersburg, Moscow, and Ivanovo-Voznesensk for a month in 1922. All findings were presented in a number of tables. One represents the distribution of sleeping, working and free time. Another explains the distribution of "free labor," or self-education. There is one that represents rest, including eating, "active entertainment" (walking, dancing, soccer, skiing, hunting, music, singing, chess, cards, lotto,) "passive entertainment" (entertaining and visiting, cinema and theater, churchgoing, visiting tea houses and inns.) The effort, continued in 1923/1924 to include meticulously categorized self-care.

¹⁰ "Byudzhnet vremeni russkogo rabochego v 1922 g." [The Time Budget of the Russian Worker], orig. in "Voprosy Truda" no. 3-4, 1923, reprinted in S. G. Strumilin. *Problemy ekonomiki truda* [Problems of Labor Economy]. Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957, p. 269

	Working men	Working women	Housewives	Helping men	Helping women	Total men	Total women	Total both sexes	Worker Family
Care of self	18.3	23.7	19.3	16.0	17.3	18.1	20.7	19.6	19.2
TOTAL									
Dressing, Undressing	4.6	6.2	4.6	2.8	5.4	4.5	5.2	4.8	4.5
Washing	5.0	7.0	5.5	5.4	3.7	5.0	5.9	4.4	3.1
Combing	2.1	6.9	5.2	2.8	5.8	2.1	5.9	4.4	3.1
Having Haircut	0.7	0.0	-	0.6	-	0.7	-	0.3	0.3
Shaving	2.4	-	-	0.7	-	2.3	-	0.9	0.6
Taking a Bath	3.3	3.4	4.0	3.7	2.4	3.3	3.6	3.5	5.3
Bathing In the River	0.2	0.2	-	-	-	0.2	0.1	0.1	1

- Figure 1. Stanislav Strumilin, "Domestic Labor in the Households of Office Workers in 1923/1924 (in the number of hours per worker per month)," Excerpt

The effort is obsessive. We discover in these surveys that laborers spend 10 minutes a day napping. That on working days they spend 1.5% of their sleeping time napping, and 3.9% on holidays, that women nap more than men. The average working class woman spends 12 minutes a week bathing in the river, exactly 5.8 hours singing, and 8.7 hours drinking tea. A man spends 1.9 hours playing lotto. The everyman dedicates an average of 0.5 hours a week to hunting.

The fabric of the everyday is woven of habitual actions, which can be charted on timetables. But to describe life, one should not stop at counting the number of hours spent sweeping the floors and emptying the samovar. The distribution, rationality and irrationality of workers' activities, is for Strumilin conditioned by nothing else but the material environment in which they unfold. Strumilin is resolute in his belief that it is the physical setting that makes man. The material quality of the environment is the cause of the findings in "Time Budget Studies." In his efforts to rationalize leisure he desires to see workers reading newspapers and going to workers' clubs instead of going

to bars; he prefers to see children going to schools instead of being kept at home and educated with the belt; and he thinks that what makes the difference between these kinds of behavior is the “domestic everyday environment [which] produces different tastes and different methods of education in different families.”¹¹

This material environment is made of – things. Things classifiable. Things countable. Complexes of things as a puzzle, which, if put together, offer cues to the very core of Russian rationality and irrationality and the nature of the everyday existence of the everyman. Strumilin's next scientific step was to count and classify things. Strumilin tackled the problem of the everyday object in his next project, “Domestic Life According to Inventories,” initiated in 1923 and published in 1926. The project was more sophisticated than time budget studies. In “Everyday Life and Statistics” Strumilin models his project after paleontology and anthropology:

They say that the great natural scientist Cuvier was able to paint the entire evolution of an animal on the basis of a single bone. Everyday Life and Statistics, “Studies of primitive culture examine even meager kitchen leftovers of the caveman and arrowheads [...] of the Stone Age. [...] We would like to take as an object of study not only random fossils of everyday life, but the entire complex of things in the worker's quotidian in all its fullness and inviolability.”¹²

In this project, workers' *byt* is no longer an easily apprehendable object of rationalization and streamlining, but figures as something so distant and strange to the State researcher that he has to examine it with the tools of reconstructing a long lost

¹¹ “Byt i statistika” [Everyday Life and Statistics] written in 1923, first publication in *Problemy ekonomiki truda*, in S. G. Strumilin. *Problemy ekonomiki truda* [Problems of Labor Economy]. Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957, p. 234

¹² “Byt i statistika” written in 1923, first publication in *Problemy ekonomiki truda*, in S. G. Strumilin. *Problemy ekonomiki truda* [Problems of Labor Economy]. Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957, pp. 393-394

ecology or a long lost civilization. The archeological enterprise of reconstructing this strange world involves excavating, counting, combining, classifying and reclassifying objects in dozens of lists and tables, mapping and remapping “complexes of things.” Strumilin first decides to disassemble the everyday material environment, and “take as a separate unit every spoon, every nappy, every handkerchief.”¹³ This principle is executed to its full potential. Then the objects are reassembled. Strumilin counts: furniture and décor; dishes and cookware; tools, machines, clocks, utensils and instruments' books, paintings, and albums; shoes by material; clothing and fabrics. Clothing is divided into hats, underwear, bed linen, bed accessories, outerwear, dresses and suits. We learn that there are 11.4 sewing machines and 25.2 clocks and watches per 100 inhabitants, and that the average lifetime of a sewing machine is 31.5 and that of a clock 15.2 years. There is a table of hygienic provisions that divides objects into brushes (with subcategories,) scissors, razors, tablecloths, table napkins, personal napkins, and handkerchiefs. It shows that per 100 provincial workers there are 56.8 handkerchiefs and that 100 city workers own 86.7 handkerchiefs and 37.3 razors.

The bureaucratic method of tabulation, measurement and classification is meant to offer a picture of the “fullness and inviolability” of life; it is supposed to provide a total picture of the workers' universe. At one point Strumilin calculates that among workers, office workers, and administrators, there is less than one bed per person. To determine that fact, he counted sofas and trunks. He then assumed that all beds are double and that all sofas and trunks are used for sleeping, and found a deficit,

¹³ “Domashnii byt po inventaryam” [Domestic Life according to Inventories], in S. G. Strumilin. *Problemy ekonomiki truda* [Problems of Labor Economy]. Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957, p. 365, originally published as “Rabochii byt v tsifrakh,” [Workers' Life in Numbers] *Statistiko-ekonomicheskie etjudy*, Planovoe khozaistvo: Moscow-Leningrad, 1926

concluding that at least 8% of the population, probably younger family members, has to sleep on the floor.¹⁴ This revelation is both detached from the grimness of everyday existence and presented through mercilessly obsessive calculation.

Probably the most striking example of obsessive object classification are the tables of objects divided by material into objects of felt, linen, steel and iron, wood, colored metals, tin, leather, rubber, glass, paper, porcelain, and bristle.

Material	Per 100 inhabitants		Average Price in Rubles	Durability in Years		Percentage of Usability of Possessions	Value in Rubles per 100 inhabitants	
	Number of Items	Sum in Rubles		Normal	Factual		In one year	In all years
1. Wool	331.0	2,028.9	6.28	6.7	4.5	31.9	317.2	1,410.0
2. Cotton, Linen, etc.	1,397.0	1,636.9	1.17	4.3	2.9	33.4	382.4	1,090.1
3. Iron, Cast Iron, Steel	703.5	1,211.7	1.72	17.9	8.8	52.4	67.5	588.5
4. Wood	533.5	953.3	1.78	15.8	9.0	43.0	60.0	541.1
5. Fur	63.2	594.7	9.39	10.8	6.9	36.0	54.7	379.2
6. Colored Metals	103.2	433.0	4.19	17.2	9/9	42.7	25.1	248.1
7. Leather	97.4	397.9	4.08	3.0	1.9	35.8	133.4	255.2
8. Rubber	52.1	160.5	3.08	2.2	1.5	28.6	72.7	114.4
9. Glass	120.0	144.8	1.21	14.2	7.9	44.5	10.2	80.4
10. Paper	172.9	141.0	0.81	27.0	7.7	71.6	5.2	40.0
11. Porcelain, Faience	400.2	109.4	0.27	9.1	5.8	36.4	12.0	69.4
12. Bristle	41.1	16.9	0.41	7.0	3.6	49.2	2.4	8.6
13. Clay	54.0	7.2	0.13	6.0	3.8	37.5	1.2	4.5
14. Other and Unknown Materials	147.2	509.7	3.45	18.8	10.5	44.7	26.8	281.1
TOTAL	4,216.5	8,395.9	1.99	7.2	4.5	39.2	1,170.8	5,110.6

Figure 2. Stanislav Strumilin, "Domestic Inventory of Workers in December of 1923 Classified by Material"

This classification of objects by material, rather than by use, is the most radical manifestation of Strumilin's project as an anthropological enterprise - a system in which

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 379-380.

things appear completely opaque, as crude heaps of material remnants of the Soviet civilization awaiting interpretation. Yet there is something else to the table. The count of objects by material underscores their preciousness more than a classification by use would. In its capacity to present the stark materiality of the thing the table displays, more than an abstract count of tablecloths, the abject poverty of the Soviet citizen, who owns one object of glass, one object of leather, and two objects made of paper.

The realm in which objects were circulated, which posed such a mystery to the State scientist, was the world of the gray and black bazaars, such as the Moscow Sukharevka, in which almost all the Russian population bought and sold something, haggled and negotiated, earning approximately 25-30% of their income, despite the nominal nationalization of trade that took place in 1918 and State attempts to control the distribution of goods and prices of essential items.¹⁵ What was the stage for poor man's trade before the revolution was now the general marketplace. Everything appeared in the bazaars: smuggled and homegrown food, industrial products that workers would receive as compensation and resell, clothing, furniture. Most participants were both consumers and producers; both buyers and sellers. An old coat would be exchanged for a pair of pants and some utensils, a factory made product exchanged for food. Objects often

¹⁵ See a detailed account of early Soviet Trade in Julie Hessler. *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. Hessler talks about the appearance of two economies in the post-Revolutionary times – the demonetarized economy of the state and the delegation of private trade to the gray and black markets. In 1918, the decree “On the state monopoly over trade in certain foods and items” introduced the nationalization of trade – consolidation of private trade into co-operatives and the introduction of fixed prices. Wealthier merchants were integrated into the new system as “bourgeois specialists,” whereas the small ones were forced to go into the street. The system of State distribution was highly dysfunctional, and was complemented by the burgeoning black market. During the NEP era from 1921-1928 the ban on private trade was lifted, but there were no large private trade enterprises – most merchants owned either stalls or small shops. The circulation of commodities involved a small-scale participation of small merchants and the entire citizenship that took on the roles of buyer and seller. Hessler quotes A. A. Goldstein, who remarked: “The nationalization of trade means that the whole nation trades.”p.69.

appeared as singular and precious. A stall would be adorned with an apple or two and a stalk of parsley. They were often eccentric and their emergence random. The bazaar featured all the flotsam and jetsam of pre-Revolutionary possessions that the owners would try to sell off for basic necessities. One might encounter an old gramophone. A silk dress. A silver spoon. Or a chandelier.

State science attempted to reconstruct this world of object consumption, distribution, and circulation below the government radar by using positivist statistical-anthropological methods, under the assumption that careful quantification and tabulation might help decode the circumstances under which the reproduction of labor power takes place. The work of a 1920s Petersburg writer, Danil Ivanovich Harms, offers a completely different reconstruction of Soviet *byt* by interpreting the citizen's relationship to the thing in post-Revolutionary anxiety and confusion as irrational and absurd. The production, consumption, and circulation of things form a haphazard chain of events that escapes logic. In his prose we encounter characters such as Masha from *The Cashier*, who produces a lone mushroom and carries it around in the hope of selling it. Instead, she ends up being hired as a cashier in a co-op and getting entangled in a crime scene. Or a man who hides a stick of butter in his mouth and goes around with it in order to outsmart his wife who also wants to eat it.

Harms dedicated his entire opus to life in the street, in the store, and in communal apartments. His poetics is not that of purposeful activity, but that of malfunction, obstacle, and incident in the new Soviet life. His interpretation of worker's rest and recreation is elaborated in the short story *Myshin's Victory*, in which the homeless and displaced human body in the corridor of the communal apartment

produces a new form of domestic disorientation and panic. The story is worth presenting in full, if only for its narration of the details of a domestic incident, and the concoction of boredom solemnity and violence it involves. But, for brevity's sake, I will quickly recount.

Myshin is an individual who will not get up. He lies as a corpse in the corridor of a communal apartment in which he has no room of his own. The tenants decide to call the police, as they cannot pass. The policeman comes with the house manager, and interrogates Myshin, who claims to be "resting" in his home. The tenants vent their anger about Myshin's behavior. They complain about his habit to purposefully stretch his arms and legs in the corridor, to lie on his back and watch people pass by. They tell about tripping on him at night. They fuss about stepping on nails that spill out of his pockets. And finally, they reveal their plans to pour kerosene on him and set him on fire. It turns out that Myshin is registered in the apartment, but was not assigned a room. All that the policeman can do is say that this is not "suitable" and leave. Tenants rejoice in this official appraisal, but Myshin stays on the floor, and life in the apartment goes on as usual, with all its madness and unresolved tension, in all its official impropriety.

Harms is described by critic George Gibian as "the chronicler and the troubadour of the trivial, the everyday, the normal."¹⁶ The normal is, in his short stories, the nonsense, violence, tragedy, and, occasionally, the magic of *byt* framed by the apparent rationality of official and formal speech and rituals. The normal is a completely independent random economy and logic of actions and objects that is the shadow and

¹⁶ George Gibian, "Introduction," to Danil Harms, *Izabrannoe*. Edited and introduced by George Gibian. Wurzburg: Jal-verlag, 1974, p. 37

residue of the rhetoric of efficiency, productivity and rationality, which the State can proclaim as “not proper,” but which, in its all pervasiveness, it cannot entirely control.

Harms occupied a completely different social position from that of Strumilin and met a different fate. The economist remained at the top of Moscow academia and bureaucracy for decades, as the chief theoretician of the planned economy, and, surviving Stalin’s purges, published major works in the theory and history of economy throughout the thirties, forties, and fifties. Early in his career he became a member of the Academy of Sciences, and lived in well repute into his late nineties. Harms was considered an anti-social eccentric and, at the end of his life, a criminal. He was expelled from technical school, exiled for a year for anti-Soviet children’s literature, and finally arrested for treason by the NKVD in 1941. He was imprisoned in a mental hospital and died of hunger during the German blockade of Leningrad in 1942. He lived off of meager honoraria he received for what he wrote for children magazines; his main opus was kept by friends and published in the non-government press, *samizdat*, in the 1960s.

The disruptiveness of Harms’s writing, which represented Soviet *byt* as complete chaos, is reflected in his interpretation of the quotidian thing and the methods of its ordering in the everyday environment. Harms ignores the rhetoric of productivity and efficiency – for him, free time consists of wasting time, drinking, smoking, and loitering. He also ignores the rhetoric of the utility of the object, restoring its strangeness and constructing a world in which objects have an independent existence and are not transparent to understanding.

Objects do not come into being through rational production and use. Rather, they are the product of boredom and self-importance that is the reality of human everyday existence:

In our free time we lie on the couch, smoke and drink lots, visit friends, talk a lot, making excuses for us to each other. We make excuses for our actions, separate ourselves from everything else and say that we have the right to an independent existence. Then we start imagining that we own everything that is outside of us. And all that exists outside of us, and which is separated by boundaries from us and everything else that differs from us and its [...] space (even if it's just air), we call an object. We separate out the object into an autonomous world, and it begins to own everything that lies outside of us, just as we do.¹⁷

In one of Harms's stories boredom charts the space of domestic spleen, in which an estranged inhabitant violently manipulates things in his surroundings, and, in a way, performs an study of his own abode, encountering, in his alienation, things in his apartment as if for the very first time:

Petya Gvozdikov once walked around his apartment. He was very bored. He picked up some piece of paper dropped by the maid from the floor. The paper turned out to be a cutout from the newspaper. This was not interesting. Petya tried to catch the cat, but the cat hid under the cupboard. Petya went to the foyer to get an umbrella, in order to chase the cat with the umbrella from under the cupboard. But when Petya came back, the cat was not under the cupboard any more. Petya looked for the cat under the sofa and behind the trunk, but he did not find it anywhere, but he found a hammer behind the trunk. Petya took the hammer and started to think what to do with it. Petya started banging on the floor with the hammer, but that was boring. Then Petya remembered that on the chair in the foyer there is a little box of nails. Petya went to the foyer, took a couple of thicker nails from the box and started thinking where to drive them. If the cat were there, it would of

¹⁷ "The Saber," *OBერიU: An Anthology of Russian Absurdism*. Translated and Edited by Eugene Ostashsevsky. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 84-85

course be interesting to nail the cat's ear to the door, and the tail to the threshold. But the cat was not there. Petya saw the piano. And, out of boredom, Petia went and drove three nails into the lid of the piano.¹⁸

Newspaper cutout. Cat. Umbrella. Hammer, nails, door, floor, and a piano. A series of haphazard discoveries, connections and fits forms Petya's domestic life. Domestic space becomes the terrain of a melancholy ritual, a chain of associations. What can one do with an umbrella? Chase cats? What can one do with a hammer? One can pound on the floor. What is the threshold for? For nailing a cat's tail. What are nails for?

In a way, Petya performs a study of his own apartment, encountering things as if seen for the first time and assembling them to map the territory of his room, as he goes around it in a state of boredom. Petya's domesticity of languor is a strange version of Strumilin's archeological enterprise, the creation of a domestic aesthetic as an assemblage of objects, but as an archeology on a micro-scale. Home is here a system of things, but not things classified and systematized. Instead, things are interpreted by random association, manipulation, and the way they are set into action.

In Petya Gvozdikov, the assemblage of things is not an abstract assemblage. Everyday space is a physical machine, a chain of actions and things, a sequence of events created in the physical encounter between the body and the object as an agent of action. The manipulation of things is a way the space is known as it is performed – through completely useless labor, which resembles in its automatism work on the

¹⁸ Translation mine. Russian text accessed on the Internet site http://www.kuzbass.ru/moshkow/lat/HARMS/xarms_prose.txt on October 16, 2009

production line. It comes from melancholy and alienation rather than from creative enthusiasm.

To give in to the drive of object-assemblage was not only a way to chart domesticity, but also one of the tenets of Harms's poetics. He envisioned writing as a process of associating words and objects, and gave one of his unpublished manuscripts of 1927 the title "The Administration of Things." Harms's poetic principle, one promoted by his OBERIU movement, is that of *predmetnost*, or object-mindedness.¹⁹ Object-mindedness implied the understanding of the entire world as an assemblage of objects, and understanding a piece of writing as an object-assemblage in turn. The aesthetic pleasures of Harms's stories are the pleasures of setting into motion chains of things "hopping in space, just as we do."²⁰ They are the pleasures of quick combination and endless possibility. This possibility comes from the ritual of writing as another way of ordering the world of things; it is a way of fabricating a system which the way of knowing the world and living in the world is by hiding and finding things, running into them, holding onto them, assembling and disassembling them, manipulating them in the zeal of useless production and the nonsense and anguish of post-Revolutionary "normal life."

It was one way to map the domestic world of *byt* by creating an order of objects, which involved not abstract classification and measurement, but manipulation and rearrangement within the confines of one's small private world located on the margins of the official society of productive labor and workers' struggle for political victory.

¹⁹ OBERIU declaration, in *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, vol. III (1970), pp. 69-73, orig. in *Afishi doma pechati*, no.2

²⁰"Saber," p. 85

The power of things to define the dramatic plot of this private existence, and to chart spatial and emotional constellations in the cramped abode is dramatized in a film about new Soviet erotic relationships. *Tretya Meshchanskaya* (translated as *Bed and Sofa*,) revolves around objects, the utilization of which is so arresting that the lack of speech in this 1927 masterpiece is hardly noticeable. Scripted by Victor Shklovsky and directed by Abram Room, the film tells the story of a working class ménage à trios choreographed around two iconic pieces of furniture, an iron bed and a sofa. Kolya, a construction worker, lives with his wife Lyudmila in a one-room apartment. His wartime friend Volodya, a printmaker, comes to Moscow and has no living space, without which he cannot find a job. The couple has an empty sofa, so Volodya finds a home there. Kolya is not particularly attentive to his wife, so polite and caring Volodya slowly wins her heart, and also a place in the bed, whereas Kolya is moved onto the sofa. Then Kolya seduces his wife again and goes back to the bed. Lyudmila gets pregnant. Not exactly sure who was the father of the child, she leaves the men to now share the bed between the two of them and sets off to find a new home.



Figure 3. Abram Room, *Tret'ya Meshchanskaya* [Bed and Sofa], 1927, still

The entire plot revolves around two iconic household objects. Moreover, all action in the film is also a performance with and around things – the story is told in the language of objects, and the quotidian is but a system of meaningful things and actions that take place in and around them. When the three are sitting at the table, they are not quarreling. Whether one is sleeping on the bed or on the couch is a marker of their romantic status. The mirror in one moment shows Lyuda wondering whether she is attractive enough for a new love and splits her image in two, as Volodya appears in one half of the picture. When the curtain at the entrance is closed, somebody always comes for a surprise visit. Actors speak with things in the house, and the house gives us all the cues, and creates the entire plot, woven around the two available sleeping spots and a table where inhabitants unite. The ordering of things and bodies within the walls of the apartment makes events possible. It defines the possibility of a way of life. It is the

architectural order of the quotidian, in which the minimal dimensions of living quarters created a situation in which the presence and distribution of objects creates possible modes of existence.

The complicated plot in Lyuda's apartment takes place in the context of an official rhetoric about the dissolution of family, the blueprint of which we encounter in the writing of the feminist Aleksandra Kolontai, *Family and the Communist State* of 1919.²¹ The official vision of the dissolution of the family did not really mean the institution of a ménage-a-trois as an erotic model, but instead the disappearance of patriarchy and the liberation of women from household duties and domestic labor through the collectivization of housework and childcare. The subject of this new Soviet domesticity, in visionary architectural designs of the 1920s, such as those proposed in a competition organized by the Society of Contemporary Architects (OSA), were single citizens, housed in individual rooms, which would then be incorporated into a new collective agglomeration – the *dom kommuna*, a manifestation of Communist living and the replacement of the bourgeois family with a new domestic constellation.

OSA, the Union of Contemporary Architects (*Ob'edinenia Sovremennikh Arkhitektorov*), was the most prominent architectural group involved in articulating material environments of Soviet collective *byt*. It was founded by architect Moisei Ginzburg, author of the collective NarKomFin house in Moscow, and its activities and architectural programs were made public in the journal *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura* [Contemporary Architecture], which came out from 1926 to 1930.

²¹ Aleksandra Kollontai. *Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo* [Family and the Communist State]. Tambov: Izd. Tambovskogo gubernskogo agenstva V. Ts. I. K, 1919.

In Ivanov's, Terkhin's and Smolin's project for the communal house, vestiges of bourgeois domesticity are demolished. Upper levels contain individual rooms. Dining, entertainment, and childcare are collectivized and placed on the lower level.

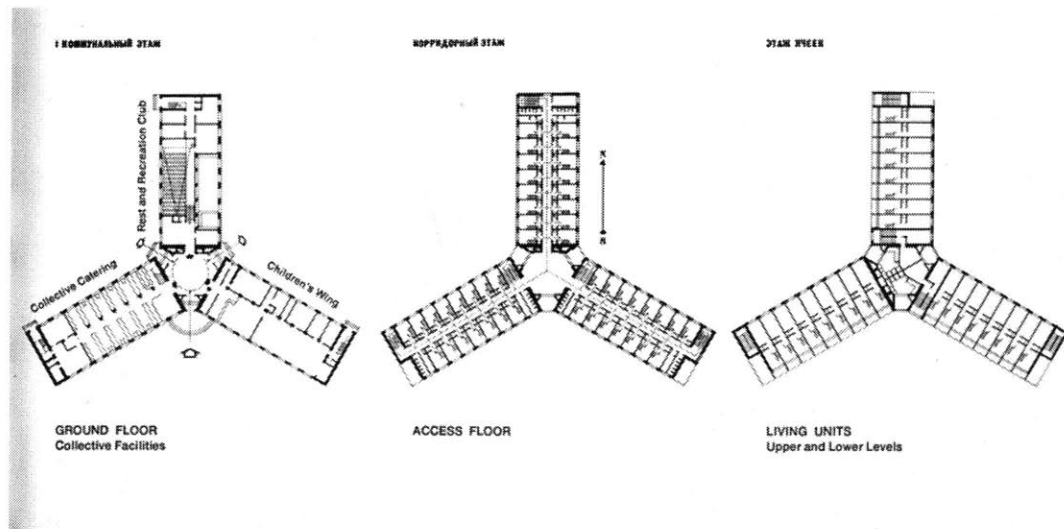


Figure 4. K. Ivanov, F. Terkhin, P. Smolin, *Communal House*, 1927

The domestic scheme involving a dislocation of all but essential functions into the collective sphere, and the reduction of the individual apartment into an atomic one-person cell was not only realized in *dom-kommuna* projects. It gave birth to the appearance of the Communist villa, a strange one-room construct in which the arrangement and rearrangement of objects played an essential architectural role.

In 1930, during the First Five Year Plan, OSA started an intimate and direct collaboration with State institutions. It was hired by the Building Committee of the Russian Republic to create norms for new housing, The OSA group survived during the First Five Year Plan, in which *Sovremennaiia Arkhitektura* was the only architectural

journal published in this period. The Building Committee of the Russian Republic, in collaboration, with the State Planning Commission, of which Strumilin was deputy chief, commissioned OSA to develop housing norms for new government construction. Detailed calculations of living surfaces and volumes that were the basis of these guidelines were published in the first issue of SA, including the diagrams of the “Economic Effectiveness of Different Types of Housing Units,” with complex and long calculations.

The topic of this joint research was no longer the development of communal housing, but the creation of a singular residential unit, the typical domestic hearth for the singular subject, which would define and satisfy a worker’s everyday needs. In many ways, the architectural result of this exploration was much more fantastic than the communal house.

Gosplan, Stroikom’s and OSA’s attempts to rationalize housing were coupled with the recognition of object-assemblage as an architectural opportunity. Their concoction, the *Individual House No. 30*, intended for mass production, was the result of a stylistic fascination with Western modernism, official Soviet passion for statistical analysis and rationalization, and the manipulation of things as a design procedure. This design was the result of a peculiar combination of these affinities and ideas pursued in *Sovremennaiia Arkhitektura*, the combined goals of calculating minimal volumes and surfaces and copying le Corbusier, all of whose villas were published in issue No. 5 of September 1929. The fantastic *Individual House No. 30* is a result of both of these interests. It is - a government designed villa resting on *piloti* with strip windows, to be inhabited by one citizen. Its plan is a perfectly efficient square. It measures four by four

meters or roughly thirteen by thirteen feet.²² It contains everything one person needs to live – a “sanitary- hygienic element,” a working desk, a bed and a sofa.

The architectural complexity of the project does not result from an innovative use of traditional architectural formal means – windows, walls, and partitions. Rather, the main tool of architectural expression for the government architect is the administration of things, their staging and rearrangement. The drawing provides one set of elevations and twelve different plans for the house. What is the difference between architectural solutions? We learn that the two items of furniture can be placed in the little villa in as many as twelve combinations, providing the “different level of differentiation of everyday functions in the room.”²³

²² This was twice the average square footage of living space in Moscow and Petersburg, which was 7 square meters per person.

²³ “Individual House No. 30,” *Sovremennaiia Arkhitektura* No. 6 (November 1930), p. 13

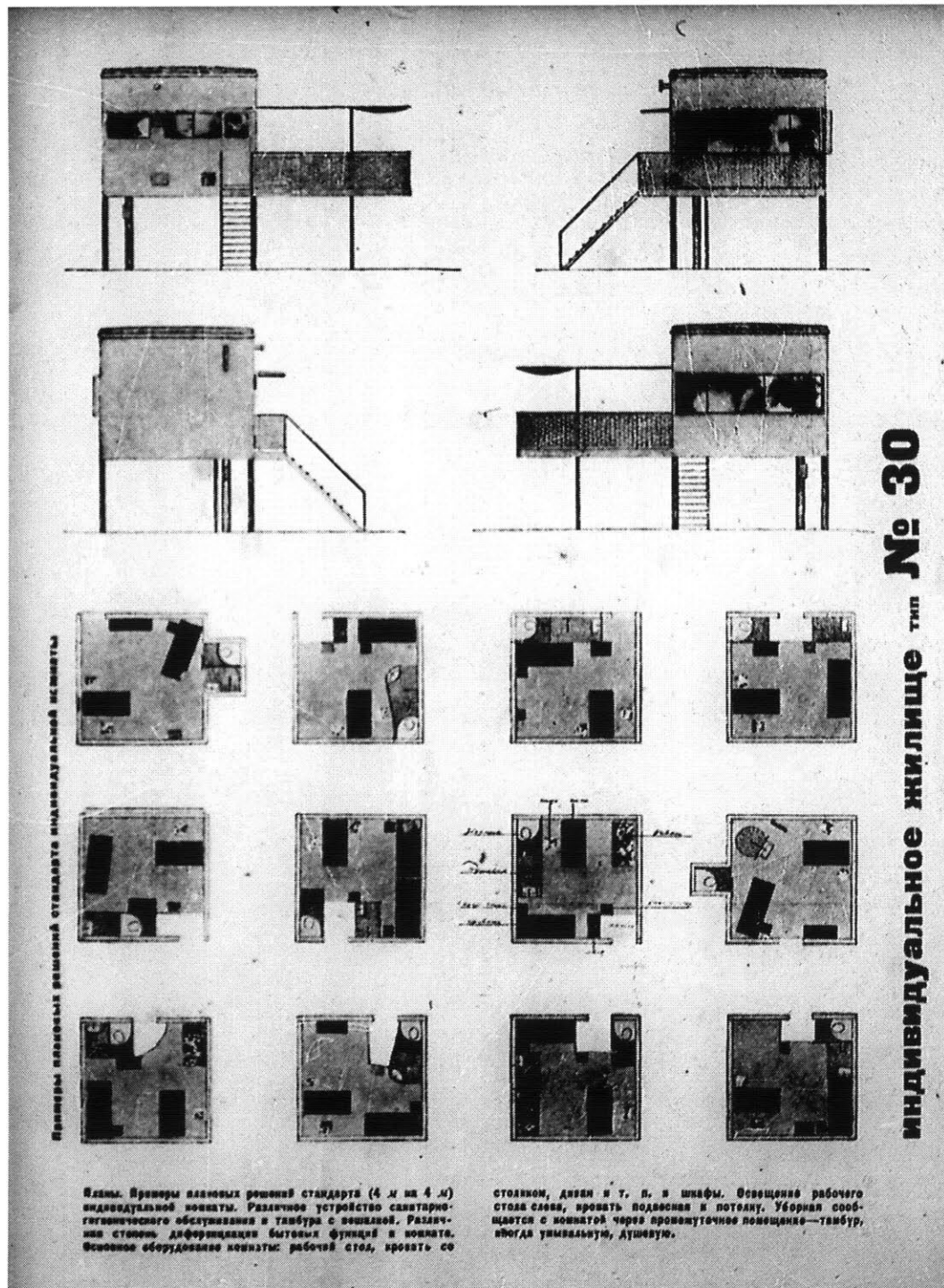


Figure 5. Individual House no. 30, elevations and 12 plans in *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura* (1930)

The bed and the sofa hop in space as game board pieces. Their permutations define habitation in terms of “levels of differentiation.” Living is determined by “functions” radiating from the bed, sofa, coffee table and the hygienic unit, rearranged in different constellations. The government effort to rationalize and streamline housing production is combined with the practice of using things as architectural devices and instruments for mapping domestic space, informed by previous State Planning Commission’s research into object inventories as the key element in defining workers’ everyday environment. The formal architectural language of the villa is something borrowed from Le Corbusier. The uniquely Soviet element in the design of *byt* is the reliance on the administration of things as a method for mapping and ordering the domestic environment.

The combination of the enthusiasm for rationalization and the curiosity for Western modernism produced other inventions presented in *Sovremennaiia Arkhitektura* during the First Five Year Plan. OSA’s fascination with the object was not limited to the idea to use object distribution as a tool of design. It involved in addition the invention of new things, the use of the thing to streamline and control labor, and the reduction of domestic space to that of the thing. The case in question is the invention of a peculiarly Soviet modernist object: the *kitchen-armoire*.

In 1929 SA’s reporter from Berlin L. Jacobson visited the housing exhibition in Stuttgart and reported his findings in the October issue. The topic of his report is the Frankfurt Kitchen. Jacobson is fascinated by his own discovery – the design of Greta Lehotska. What amazed the Soviet architectural correspondent was the condensation of labor and equipment in this design, a condensation that produced a completely new

choreography of domestic work. “So, for example, special care is taken that hands do not cross while washing dishes: the housewife takes the dirty dish with her left hand, washes it and wipes it, and puts it with that same left hand to dry on the board,” Jacobson notices.²⁴ “The principles of the economy of labor and time are brought here to great perfection.”²⁵

The central paradox in the matter was that SA at the same time advocated the replacement of the bourgeois kitchen with collectivized kitchen facilities. But the capacity of the Frankfurt kitchen to reorganize labor and transform housework into a mirror of Taylorized production was too tempting, and the German model created in the subsequent year a kind of a kitchen craze. In the article “The Problems of Housing Typology in the RSFSR” of January 1929, on a project developed in collaboration with Stroikom, Moisei Ginzburg refers to the Frankfurt kitchen, calculating that its compactness can “increase the economy of the coefficient of the ordinary housing type in comparison with existing examples and norms of EKOSO by 10-12%.”²⁶ Plans for “Kitchen Rationalization” were published, with graphs of movement showing paths between different appliances, which demonstrated the order of the housewife’s engagement with the appliances, such that her paths do not cross (similarly to her hands) as she proceeds from selecting food items, to washing them, cooking them, and taking them off the stove.

²⁴ L. Jacobsohn, “The Frankfurt Kitchen,” *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura*, No. 5 (October 1928), p.166

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Moisei Ginzburg: “The Problems of Housing Typology in the RSFSR” [Problemy tipizatsii zhil’ya RSFSR], *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* No. 1 (January 1929), p. 5

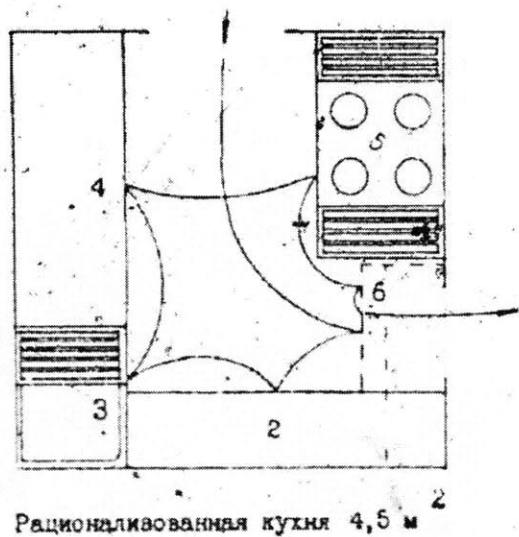


Figure 6. Rationalized Kitchen, *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura* no.1 (January), 1929

The Frankfurt Kitchen craze in *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* would not be truly interesting if it weren't for the fact that the Frankfurt kitchen was soon enough condensed into a thing. The contradiction between the fascination with the Taylorization of the traditional kitchen and the desire to collectivize cooking was resolved in a design that fit the measurements of reduced Soviet living space, only three months after uncovering the Frankfurt precedent. In January 1929 *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura* introduced the radically reduced version of the kitchen, which surpassed both the “ordinary” and the “rationalized” kitchen in its sensitivity for the Soviet way of life. It incorporated all basic culinary instruments reassembled into an oversized armoire. The entire justification behind the kitchen-armoire is that, with the Revolutionary transition to collective dining, this piece of “kitchen-furniture” would be emptied to become a wardrobe. The “element” was, in fact, a socialist transitional object

marking the passage from the past into the Communist future, a box in which all the refuse of a woman's gadgets was tightly packed to be discarded at an unknown date.

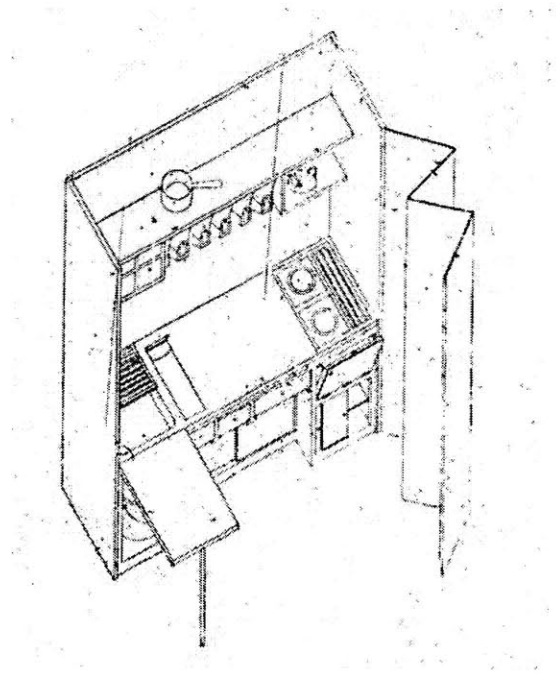


Figure 7. Kitchen Element, *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura* no. 1 (1929)

The condensation of domestic space into the kitchen-armoire was the ultimate replacement of traditional architecture with the design of the capitalized Thing, as the axis of new Soviet *byt*. The architecture of the armoire was inspired by principles of industrial production developed and introduced into the architecture of domesticity in the West, informed by Soviet ideas about social transformation, and situated within the formal and informal tradition of reducing the design of the minimal living space to the arrangement and acquisition of objects.

The kitchen-armoire was, according to its authors, modelled after a scientific laboratory. The room was replaced with an apparatus, a site of domestic production. In

its conception, it redefined domestic labor as experimentation. This experimentation involved not only performing household duties in a scientific manner, but also discovering a new type of object, which is operated by ways of assembling, disassembling, opening, and closing its multiple parts.

The invention of new objects that were, presumably, to be distributed by the State, and added to the household inventories, was also the invention of new forms of labor. New forms of labor entailed not only the streamlining of household chores, but also a new kind of intimacy between the body and the thing, a new kind of physical engagement that would accompany new forms of social relationships.

The thing produced by the architect and introduced into Soviet life by means of State distribution, rather than the free market, was supposed to enlighten. In the same issue in which the kitchen-*armoire* was presented, *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura* reprinted projects for foldable furniture designed by the students of the Higher Artistic and Technical Studios (VKhUTEMAS) in Moscow. Their compact household furniture of 1923 was presented as a system of objects that can be introduced as “not any kind of things, but things that organize and educate the society.”²⁷

These things that educate turn from one thing to another, move, fold into the wall, appear and disappear. They are unfinished, always on the brink of becoming something else, always ready to be bagged. There is a folding bed. There is bed that transforms into a chair.

²⁷ *Sovremennaia arkhitektura*, No. 3 (May 1929), p. 121

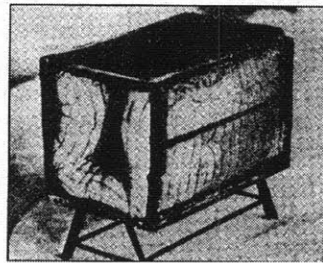
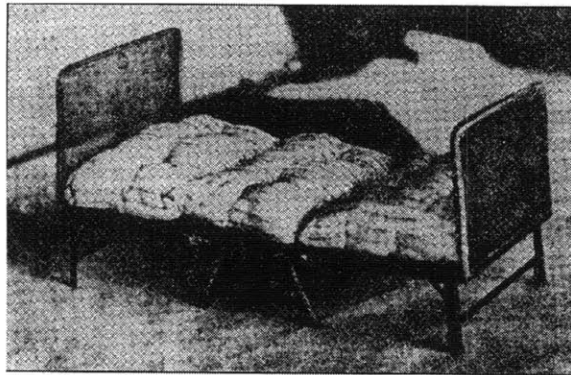


Figure 8. P. Galaktionov, *Folding Bed*, 1923

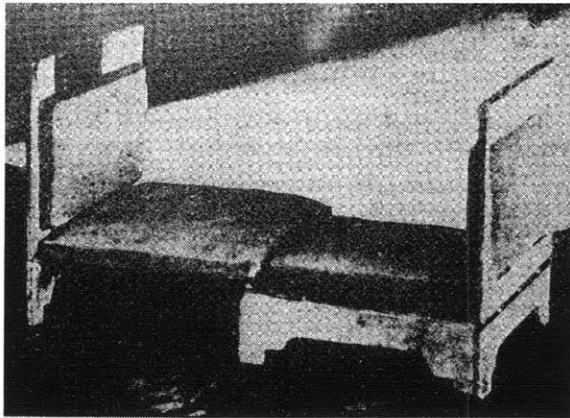


Figure 9. Nikolai Sobolev, *Bed-Armchair*, 1923

When projects were first exhibited and published in the magazine *Lef* in 1923, the central idea that informed their creation was not that of their use as educational tools, but precisely the fascination with folding and unfolding, the expenditure of energy in the manipulation of the singular object that condenses domestic functions in the cramped apartment. The inventory of domestic objects classified them as “moving things;

foldable things; multifunctional things.”²⁸ This peculiar classification reflected the passion for the power of the thing not only to facilitate, but to also produce domestic labor, to set the inhabitant in motion.²⁹ In other words, to redefine *byt* as the manual engagement of the inhabitant with the thing-apparatus.

The architecture of the thing-apparatus was potentially the architecture of containment and the architecture of escape. It was potentially means of reducing and means of expanding the space of *byt*. It defined need and articulated desire. Let me elaborate.

Nikolai Miliutin was an architect and a politician. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s he held the positions of Deputy Commissar for Social Security, Commissar of Finance, Chairman of Small Sovnarkom, Deputy Chairman of Tsentrosoiuz. His quotidian environment, elaborated as part of his urban project *Sotsgorod*, and published in 1930, in many ways reflected official ideas and the statistical imaginary from the early 1920s about the rationalization of *byt*. The home is no longer a site of suspicious social habits, random accumulation of objects, and waste of time on unproductive activities.

The project for collectivized living in a garden city that blurs the boundaries between the urban and the non-urban is the last project in the line of 1920s proposals for communal houses, which strongly reflects the official anxiety about the anarchy of the infra-official universe of 1920s urban *byt*, and displays the belief in State power to overcome this anxiety. What disappears from Miliutin’s socialist city is the chaos of

²⁸ Varvara Stepanova, “O rabotakh konstruktivistkoi molodezhi” [On the Work of Constructivist Youth], *Lef* 3 (1923) p. 53

²⁹ *Ibid.*

randomly circulated and randomly accumulated things, and with it the chaos and impropriety of bourgeois social relationships. The solution is simple. In Sotsgorod, it is not only that there is no longer any Sukharevka; there is no marketplace at all. It is not only that there are no strange marital situations - there is no marriage.

To dwell in a socialist way meant doing away with “economic and property motives” in association with other women and men. For Miliutin, that meant the dissolution of marriage as legalized prostitution. Instead of getting married, individuals could now associate freely according to their “tastes and habits,” as comrades.³⁰ Miliutin strongly believed in the power of the object to facilitate this transition. His main architectural intervention is the elimination of the double bed, as “the material basis for the breakup of the family.”³¹ His sentiments are strong: “One cannot but regret that in certain circles of our party, the bourgeois ideology is so strong, that, with a diligence worthy of a less petty purpose, they think up ever new arguments for retaining the double bed as a permanent and compulsory item in the worker’s home!”³² What does Miliutin offer instead? A compulsory single bed, preferably a sleeper or a Murphy bed, and an opportunity for comradeship between two individuals of unknown gender in neighboring units. Instead of a bed, these individuals share a bathroom. What forms the socialist erotic bond? Instead of sex, a love of hygiene.

³⁰ Nikolai A. Miliutin. *Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building Socialist Cities*. Arthur Sprague, translator. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974, p. 82

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77

³² *Ibid.*

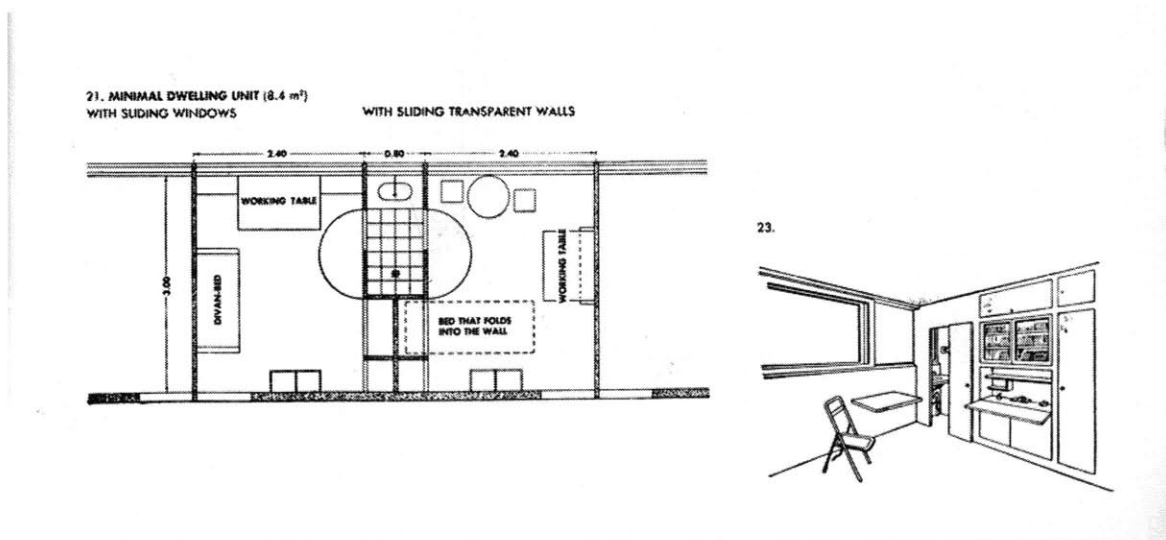


Figure 10. Nikolai Miliutin, “Living Cell,” in *Sotsgorod*, 1930

The rhetoric of the entire project is that of health and hygiene, and of State care for the citizen’s body. Doing away with property motives in human relationships also meant doing away with surplus things, for hygienic reasons. Miliutin plans to do away with the “mercantile center of the city,” and with all the plethora of useless objects that can be found within it. He throws away all the “various rags, which our inhabitants do so love to ‘prettify’ their dwelling, turning it into such a dusty accumulation of useless trash.”³³ Miliutin ends by describing old life as “enslavement with possessions.”³⁴ Instead, he installs equipment, “the minimum necessary equipment that is indispensable for man’s living quarters.”³⁵ As the worker uses his “equipment,” he constantly transforms his living quarters. Upon waking up, he would quickly collapse his bed into

33 Ibid., p. 84.

34 Ibid., p. 82

35 Ibid., p. 81

the wall in order to open the medicine cabinet. He would close the medicine cabinet in order to open the closet. He must close the closet in order to open the dressing table. Soviet clean and healthy living entails an expansion of the notion of housework to include constant exercise with architectural elements.

The architect houses the equipment in a miniature “living cell” measuring 3 by 2.4 square meters, the cleansed and condensed version of a furnished interior. The minimal equipment is further reduced; furniture consists of flips and flops coming in and out of the walls of the unit. Miliutin shows that he borrowed his ideas from the West. For example, he took the folding bed from the Bauhaus, and the sliding windows from Le Corbusier. By maximally condensing these collaged elements, Miliutin produces an expanded version of the kitchen-*armoire*. The *armoire* contains disassembled parts of a working table, a bed, a chair, a storage unit, a washbasin, and a medical cabinet. The repertoire of necessary tools is tied to the basic elements of productive recreation: sleeping, resting, hygiene, and the “use of books.”

Miliutin’s architecture of health and hygiene eliminated excess possessions and want. His contemporary, Vladimir Tatlin, crowned his 1920s career in assembling objects of *byt* by plotting an escape from necessity, the appearance of a magical possession that would materialize not need, but desire, enveloping the body as it explored the pleasures of new physical experience. He plotted an escape from the confines of the 8 square meter container. The escape from confined Soviet domesticity. And, ultimately, from Earth. Tatlin folded Miliutin’s system of flips and flops inside out. He added to the repertoire of desks, beds, and medicine cabinets, a set of mass-produced

wings. Instead of uniting citizens in the desire to regularly shower, he united them in the desire to fly.

Tatlin began his career with the famous never built Monument to the Third International, a gigantic iron structure bigger than the Eifel Tower that was to be erected in Petersburg and which included rotating elements housing various propaganda facilities celebrating the victory of the proletariat. In the 1920s, as the professor at VKhUTEIN [Higher Artistic and Technical Institute], he turned his attention to the design and production of objects for new life.

For Tatlin, objects were not designed to facilitate the new way of life; they embodied it. In the well known project published in Krasnaya Panorama in 1924, under the title “Novy Byt” [New Everyday Life,] he proposes two objects that are to define a new mode of existence – a garment for all seasons and a compact wooden stove. The garment has detachable parts, so that it can be used both in the summer and in the winter. The stove is for cooking, warming up food, drying fish, and regulating heat.



Figure 11. Vladimir Tatlin, “Novy Byt” [New Way of Life], *Krasnaya Panorama*, 1924

The garment is, in many ways, an architectural project. It is given not only in elevation, but also in a blueprint. The parts can be combined in different constellations to create garments for different seasons.

Tatlin developed the strategy disassembling and reassembling the object further in his projects of the 1920s. Pursuing this approach, which was ostensibly realized in a different way in Miliutin, he writes about taking furniture apart, retaining and discarding pieces, and putting them back together in different constellations. In “Let us Declare War on Chests of Drawers and Sideboards.” Tatlin writes about the merging of architecture and furniture and the appearance of objects that are both part of the architectural enclosure and mobile elements in the interior. “At moments this object may

disintegrate, become only a part of the whole, but continue to fulfill some functions.”³⁶ The entire interior, ultimately, might be disassembled and turned into an apparatus with detachable parts, with the citizen physically plugging into this system of things.

Throughout the 1920s Tatlin steadily worked on developing the idea of the object-apparatus into the most perfect architectural form: portable wings for going to work. He unveiled the project in 1932, having himself photographed in the embrace of a skeletal wooden contraption. He is shown pretending to levitate in the *Letatlin*, literally, Flying Tatlin, which was supposed to be “the most complicated dynamic material form that can enter the daily lives of the Soviet masses.”³⁷

³⁶ “The Problem of the Relationship between Man and Object: Let us Declare War on Chests of Drawers and Sideboards” (“Problema sootnosheniia cheloveka i veshchi. Ob’iavim voinu komodam i bufetam,” *Rabis*, no. 15, 14 April 1930, p. 9), in Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova, editor. *Tatlin*. New York: Rizzoli, 1989. p. 268

³⁷ “Art into Technology” (V. Tatlin, “Iskustvo v tekhniku!” In *Vystavka rabot zasluzhennogo deiatela iskusstv V. E. Tatlina*. Gosudarstvennyi muzei izobrazitel’nykh iskusstv, Moskva-Leningrad, 1932, pp. 5-8), presented in *Tatlin.*, p.311

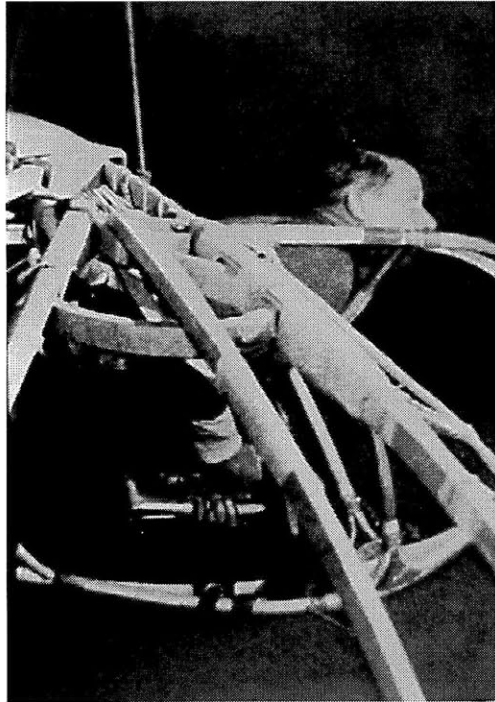


Figure 11. Vladimir Tatlin, *Letatlin*, demonstration

Tatlin explains the process that led him to his invention like this:

I proceeded from material constructions of the simplest forms to more complicated ones: these were clothes, objects of everyday life, up to the architectural construction in honor of the Komintern. The flying machine at the present stage of my work is the most complicated form that meets the needs of the moment for man's mastery of space.³⁸

³⁸ Ibid.

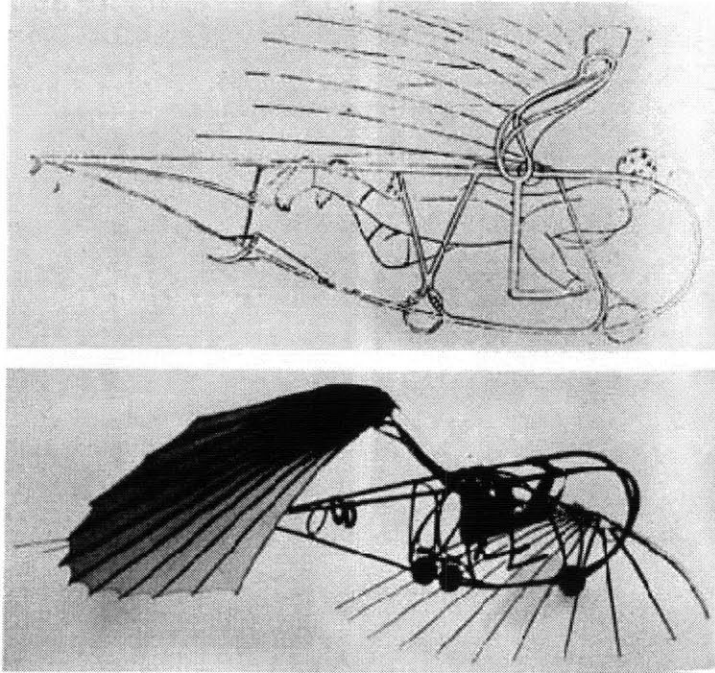


Figure 12. Vladimir Tatlin, *Letatlin*, 1932

The vehicle of mass transportation -- developed in collaboration with proven experts in the field of aviation – a surgeon and a flying instructor - was supposed to be a manmade bird. Flying lessons were to be introduced in elementary schools, and, some day in the future, according to Tatlin, it would be as indispensable for people to fly as it is for them to walk.

A man in “Letatlin” will lie in the position of a swimmer. And do the flying. He will work with his arms and legs as he already works when he’s swimming.”

And that will be aerial swimming. And for this swimming he’ll need to expend no more energy than for ordinary swimming.³⁹

To use the bird to fly to work was to expand one’s kinetic experience and discover a new source of physical pleasure. “My wing has three kinds of movement, as

³⁹ From Rakhtanov’s Essay ‘Letatlin – An Aerial Bicycle’, *Pioneer*, no. 9, 1932, p. 12, in *Tatlin*, p.310

has a bird,” Tatlin explains. “The wings can make small flapping movements. You can ‘rock’ yourself in the air.”⁴⁰

Tatlin’s project was a technical failure. If realized, though, Stanislav Gustavovich Strumilin would have to add to his Time Budget Studies at the beginning of the 1930s a record of how an average working class woman spends 6.2 hours a week flying. In his inventories we would find the fact that there are 57.6 wings per 100 citizens. This, of course, did not occur. Citizens did not fly to work and did not escape from their one-room apartments, conquering the skies above Moscow. But Miliutin’s plan for constructing a supposedly completely rationalized hygienic abode in which the citizen would be completely contained within a miniature cell-apparatus of folding and unfolding flaps and flops was never realized. The active relationship of the working body to the universe of working things could hypothetically be that of pleasure or that of efficiency, but it remained a puzzle to which there were only hypothetical solutions in the Soviet imaginary.

⁴⁰ From Zelinskii’s Interview ‘Letatlin’, *Vechernaiia Moskva*, no. 80, 6 April 1932, in *Tatlin*, p.30

CHAPTER 2: AGITATION

PAVEL SERGEEVICH: Mother, you reason as a completely unconscious element. Tell me, mother, what do you think an image is?

NADEZHDA PETROVNA: How would I know, Pavlusha, I don't read the newspapers.

PAVEL SERGEEVICH: Anyway, tell me, mother, what do you think an image is?

NADEZHDA PETROVNA: In the old days, Pavlusha, a postal servant had meals with us and he used to say, "You know, Nadezhda Petrovna, an image is a cry of the soul for the delight of the visual organs."

PAVEL SERGEEVICH: Maybe that is how it used to be, but now an image is a tool of agitation.

NADEZHDA PETROVNA: A tool? How can it be?

Nikolai Erdman, *Warrant*, 1925⁴¹

We have already concluded something. What we talk about when we talk about *byt* is not the meaning of everyday life. We talk about its technology. We talk about ways in which the quotidian environment is ordered, arranged, transformed, folded, taken apart, and reassembled. About techniques of motility and physical interaction with the environment that define a style of embodied existence in the world.

I explored the relationship between the body and the thing-apparatus in the microcosm of domestic *byt*. But what happens if the entire world is interpreted as a

⁴¹ Nikolai Erdman, *Mandat* [Warrant], Act I, Biblioteka Aldebaran, <http://lib.aldebaran.ru>, pp. 2-3, accessed April 2, 2008.

gigantic apparatus that the citizen connects to, investing it with energy and turning life energies into labor? What are the aesthetics and ethics of quotidian existence in world as a machine? And what would be the architecture of this pan-industrial world inhabited by a laboring body?

Aleksei Gastev, one of the prominent Russian revolutionaries and later State officials, started writing poetry at the same time he joined the Socialist Democratic Labor Party, in the 1900s. In his years spent between exiles and work in Russian and European factories, he forged a vision for a new society governed by labor not only politically, but also metaphysically. “The world itself will become a machine,” Gastev wrote in one of his poems, “The world itself will become a machine, in which for the first time cosmos will find its own heart, its own beat.”⁴²

After the Revolution, Gastev stopped writing poetry, and started working on his “last work of art,” and institution that he thought would realize his poetic vision.⁴³ This was the Central Institute of Labor (*Tsentral’ny Institut Truda*, or TsIT) in Moscow, opened with Lenin and Trotsky’s support in 1921, of which he was founder and director.

The Institute’s project was to forge the new mechanized man. At this time, Soviet society was open to the import of Fordist and Taylorist ideas. On this basis, Gastev undertook his own peculiar enterprise known as the “scientific organization of labor” (*Nauchnaya Organizatsiya Truda*, or NOT.) It involved analyzing movements with

⁴² Aleksei Gastev, “My Posiagnuli” [We Encroached] from *Poezija Rabocheho udara*. Petrograd, Izdanie Proletkul’ta 1918, Translation Kurt Johansson, in Kurt Johansson. *Aleksej Gastev: Proletarian Bard of the Machine Age*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1983, p.131

⁴³ This is discussed in more detail in editors’ introduction to N. M. Bakhrakh, Y. A. Gastev, A. G. Loseva, E. A. Petrova editors. *Aleksei Gastev. Kak nado rabotat’: Prakticheskoe vvedenie v nauku organizatsii truda*. [How to work: Practical introduction into the scientific organization of labor]. Izdatel’stvo “Ekonomika,” 1966.

cyclography – photographs of separate movements – in order to reach the “normal,” a system of most regular movements, which workers were supposed to cultivate. TsIT had broad outreach. Initially criticized for the very narrow focus on small operations such as felling wood with a chisel, it diversified to offer three to six month courses for construction and textile workers, and plane mechanics. If Gastev hadn’t fallen into disfavor as a counterrevolutionary in the early 1930s and been sent to GULAG in 1938, the Institute would have educated one million workers by 1938. It also had a broad disciplinary scope; it produced research in instruments, bioenergetics, psychotechnics, training pedagogy, and social engineering.

The creation of a new mechanized man entailed not only observing, measuring, and social engineering, but creating a new attitude to the body, a new understanding of the organism as a machine and a new technique of operating it.

Our first task consists in working with that magnificent machine that is so close to us – the human organism. This machine possesses a sophisticated mechanics, including automatism and a swift transmission. Should we not study it? The human organism has a motor, “gears,” shock absorbers, sophisticated brakes, delicate regulators, even manometers... There should be a special science, biomechanics, which can be developed in refined laboratory conditions, but can also be practiced in any room of the home in the open air, in any workshop. This science does not have to be the science of “labor” in the narrow sense of the word; it should border sport, but such sport in which movements are forceful, efficient, and at the same time light as air and mechanically artful.⁴⁴

To know and to train the body as a machine did not necessarily mean to engage directly into the process of industrial labor. It meant to conceive of the organism and to

⁴⁴ “Trenazh” [Training] in Pravda, Nov 16, 1922, republished in *Kak nado rabotat’*, p. 51, stress mine

perceive it as an assemblage of gears, breaks and absorbers in general, and to practice this learning outside of the factory; in everyday life. And it was to find beauty of living life as a citizen- apparatus.

The term “biomechanics” came into the Central Institute of Labor from one of its members, theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold, who investigated the question of the laboring body in a pan-machinic world throughout his career. His method of investigation involved propelling excited, convulsive bodies into the scenic abyss. It involved entangling actors with the cogs and wheels of moving scenographic contraptions. In his theatrical project, the vision of the world as a machine was translated into an aesthetics of motion, action, of muscular intensity. It was a new kind of theatre – a theatre in which there was no longer character psychology, but instead visceral reaction. It was a completely new kind of Communist agitation – one that entailed physical agitation of the organism-machine.

The theatre of physical agitation entailed producing a spatial order of transactions between bodies and other machines, in their efficiency, beauty and glory. Can we talk about the architecture of agitation? What kind of architecture was it? And can the mysteries of the mechanized organism be contained within an architectural order? To start exploring these questions, we have to start from the blueprints.

The *Magnanimous Cuckold*, staged in 1922, was a story of a complicated love affair, a play about desire, sex and jealousy. In it, a husband compels her wife, with increasing passion, to sleep with everybody he knows in order to find out who her real lover is. The plot is a crescendo of increasing tensions involving a great number of characters, which ends with the wife’s departure with one of the alleged lovers.

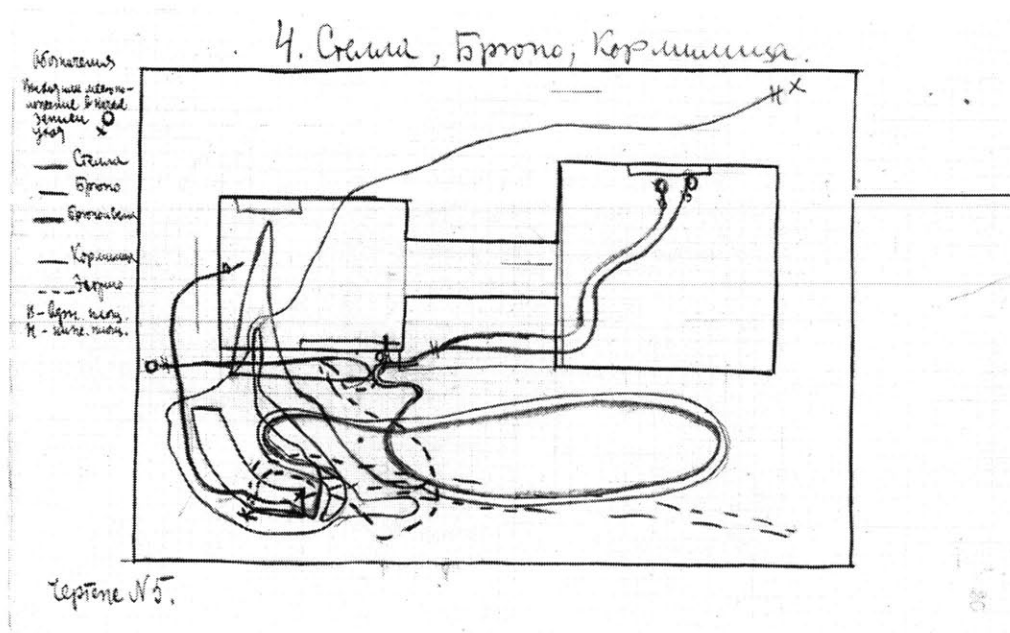


Figure 1. *Magnanimous Cuckold*, 1922. Plan of Scenic Movement. RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963 (GOSTIM), Opus 1, p. 20

The spectacle was mapped. In theatre archives, we find Meyerhold’s plans for the *Magnanimous Cuckold*. They are not perspectives or elevations of the set. Rather, the architecture of the set is elaborated in a series of blueprints. Meyerhold provides a complex spatial layout of action, a plan of the set and paths of the movements of the actors performing *byt* as mechanical, automatic, convulsive labor.

Paths of movement in the *Plan of Scenic Movement* in the fourth act [Figure 1] are graphically assigned the same importance as the stage set – the scenic apparatus their bodies in motion engage in, propel, and set in motion. The body is inscribed into the map, and its traces are part of the biomechanical topography. The plan depicts a complex weaving of undulating and intertwined orbits and the theatrical apparatus they traverse, an assemblage of the organic and the inorganic.

There is no interiority or exteriority in relationship to the set; the stage is a field of action and reaction, a field of intensities and speeds, contained within the dimensions of the theater and framed only by fixed points of arrival and departure.

The inscription of the body into the official document, the inscription of actor's movement into the blueprint, entails an assumption that this movement can be repeated, that it can be fixed. It entails a belief that the actors' bodies can somehow be trained to follow the circuitous path in every performance, that they can reach, in their performance, a point where there is as easy and automatic for them to re-traverse the plotted curve as it is for a traditional actor to remember his written lines. It is precisely because of this that we can talk about the Meyerhold theatre as a performance of an architectural blueprint, rather than a performance of literature.

What else can we discern about this architecture by looking at its blueprints? A *Table of Seconds of Movement* [Figure 2], which shows the passionate interaction between husband and wife, is an attempt to further fix the repeatability of the scenic performance. In the previous plan, the orbits of the actors were drawn in a somewhat loose manner, and the ability to repeat them depended on one's ability to read the hand drawn winding lines of organic movement. The table is an attempt to introduce more fixity to the scenic map. An orthogonal grid is superimposed over the stage, and paths are marked with numbers, showing the exact time a certain movement in the sequence should be performed.

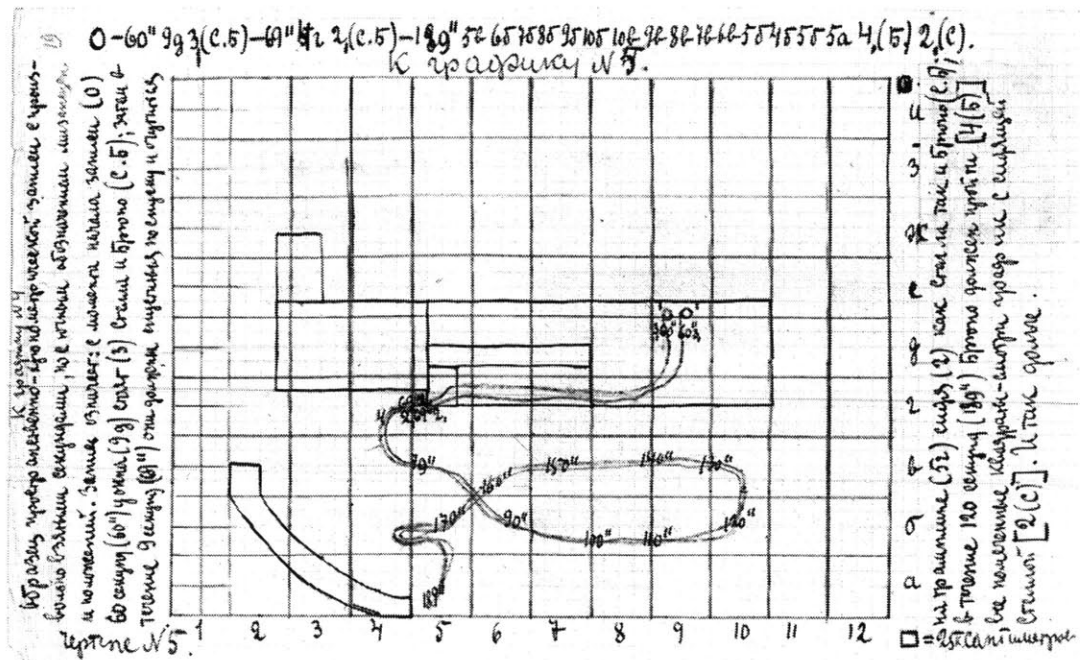


Figure 2. Magnanimous Cuckold, 1922. Table of Seconds of Movement. RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963 (GOSTIM), Opis 1, p. 19, Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963 (GOSTIM), Opis 1, p. 19

The problem of mapping the performance and inscribing the body and its organic motility into the architectural plan is solved by introducing timetables and an orthogonal grid as means of rationalization. The architecture of the stage, has now acquired a third dimension, that of time. And its blueprint, which now shows not only structure and path, but also rhythm, is transformed into a chronogram, a higher level of architectural order.

But in all these blueprints we find both precision and approximation. There is a sense that there are parts of biomechanical performance that can be contained within the rational architecture of the chronogram, and parts for which it is possible to create only a partial annotation. If the simple physical play between husband and wife could be

absolutely fixed using mathematical and bureaucratic methods, this is not the case with the *Plan of Scenic Movement for the First Scene of the First Act* [Figure 3].

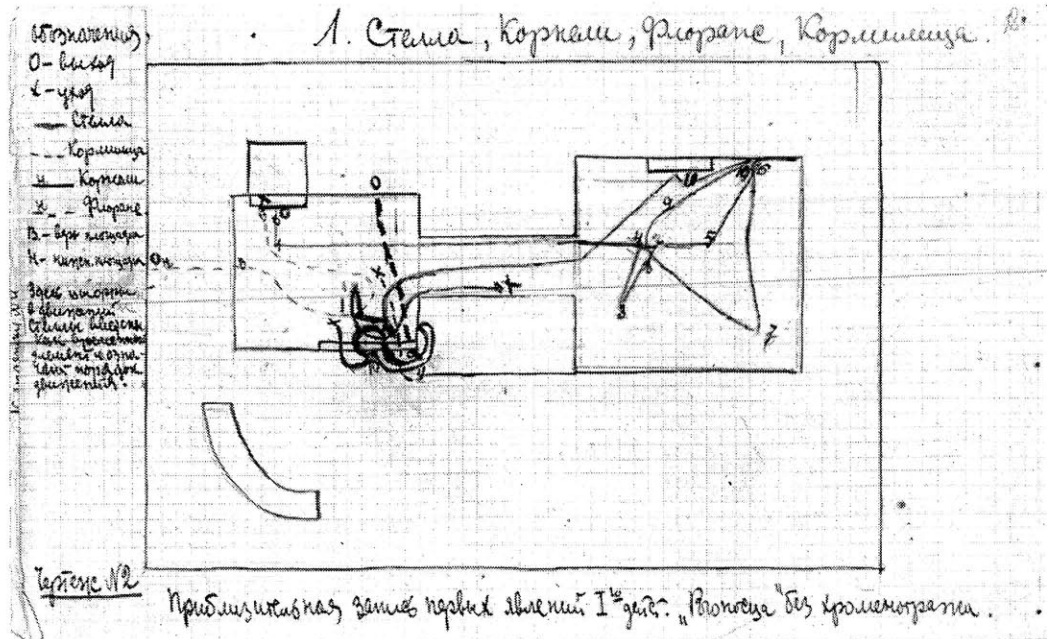


Figure. 3. Magnanimous Cuckold, 1922. Plan of Scenic Movement. RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963, Opus 1, p. 18

This blueprint is, as its title says, only an “approximate notation” of the scenic interaction of panoply of characters, the paths of which end up in a knot located in a corner of the set. The drawing is, again, made under the basic assumption that the paths are potentially reproducible. But the finale of the scene, the obscure knot tied around a corner of the set, suggests that there is a kind of a relationship between the body and the machine structure that goes beyond Meyerhold’s powers of graphic representation and beyond reproducibility.

Meyerhold’s blueprints chart an aesthetics of labor and everyday life, and an architecture of bodily constellations. How did the architecture of this new way of life

refract the official experiment in labor education and reform? What were the limits of the rationality and irrationality, efficiency and inefficiency in a theatre that tried to create a universe centered on the mystery of the mechanized organism?

If we are to start answering these questions, we have to move three years ahead and look into a completely different play, which establishes connections between the ethics of *byt* and the ethics of performance, and which formulates Meyerhold's aesthetic creed in the context of the post-Revolutionary years.

The *Warrant* of 1925 was possibly the most popular play of the Meyerhold theatre, an "everyday life tragicomedy" eliciting riotous laughter and massive enthusiasm.⁴⁵ It was staged in the years of the New Economic Policy, in which the radical reconstruction of society came to a pause, and pre-Revolutionary identities and ways of life resurfaced. The play is a critique of surviving pre-Revolutionary mores, and involves a kind of a meta-performance; a simultaneous ridicule of the fakeness of petty-bourgeois existence and the means of the classical theatre.

The plot is about the specters and shadows of the Revolution and about the so-called "Nepmen," petit-bourgeois speculators, as the alter-ego of the proletariat. About the unreality of images and beliefs. About a world reduced to specters and appearances. About the absolute reign of display value. And about double and triple identities in a world of make-believe. The spectacle opens with a scene in which Pavel Sergeevich

⁴⁵ *The Warrant*, understood by its contemporaries as a *bytovaya komediya*, or an everyday life comedy, written by Nikolay Robertovich Erdman a first staged in the Meyerhold State Theatre in Moscow on April 20 1925. This was probably the most successful play of the Meyerhold theatre, performed more than 100 times to what P. A. Markov, a contemporary, called "merry, irritated, indignant, caustic and every other kind of laughter in the audience." (*Beseda v Teatral'noi sektsoo RAKhN na temu o p'ese i postanovke p'esi Erdmana v teatre im. Vs. Meyerkhol'da* [Talk in the theatre section of RAKhN about the text and staging of Erdman's play in the Meyerhold Theatre], May 2, 1925, RGALI, Fond 963, Opis 1, Delo 459, p. 6)

Gulyachkin and Nadezhda Petrovna, his mother, debate which image to hang on the wall of their apartment. One is the religious *Creed*, the other a genre scene - *Evening in Copenhagen*. Debate ensues about the “content” of the image. Nadezhda Petrovna prefers the *Creed* for its “deeper content.” Pavel Sergeevich surprises her by revealing the hidden “content” of the *Evening* – its reverse side featuring the portrait of Karl Marx.⁴⁶ The plan is to display “the top boss of the Communists” if “government representatives” enter the home, and to hang *Evening in Copenhagen* upon the arrival of “decent people.”⁴⁷

The Warrant is a spectacle in which each image, each identity, has two sides, as a “true” one and a “role,” inhabited sometimes simultaneously to secure social survival. Life is a series of switches, duplicity, a costume party, albeit one in which successfully “passing” appears to be a matter of life and death. All social exchange is put in the service of this play.

The petty-bourgeois Gulyachkins are attempting to marry their daughter, Varvara, to Valerian Olimpievich Smetanich, the son of Olimp Valerianovich Smetanich, the party official, so that they have a reserve Communist identity. But in order for this plan to succeed, Pavel Sergeevich has to present himself as a Communist, and appear at dinner with Communist “relatives,” who, in turn, are actually street musicians. What is not known is that the Smetanichs harbor fantasies about securing an Imperial identity to keep in reserve. When the Gulyachkins’ cook Nastya comes in possession of a royal dress and ends up in their place, they mistake her for the Empress,

⁴⁶ Nikolai Erdman, *Mandat* [Warrant], Act I, Biblioteka Aldebaran, <http://lib.aldebaran.ru>, p. 3, accessed April 2, 2008.p.3

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and plot her marriage to the young Valerian Olimpievich. All schemes fall apart when the two crowds, that of the converted “Communist” Gulyachkins and the converted “Imperialist” Smetanichs, clash in the last act, and are reported to the police.

The Warrant is in essence about drag. About *byt* that becomes drag and merges with a kind of theatre which is a kind of drag. The scene with the painting in the beginning is not a caustic comment on travesty. It is comic because of the apparent chimera of the crossover, of the clumsiness of the attempt to pass with minimal and ludicrous means, of the comic debasement of bourgeois art as nothing but a minimal drag prop. It is comic because the canvas is now a blank slate onto which any image can be projected, and any ideology temporarily inscribed, a flickering appearance on the walls of a *camera obscura*.

The “warrant” of social survival, flashed by Gulyachkin throughout the play, is a self-composed piece of paper that certifies that he lives at his address. Whenever questioned about his ideological correctness, he pulls out this self-composed certificate, which he waives in front of his audience.⁴⁸

Gulysvhin’s imaginary identity is tied to the apartment. The entire spectacle of bourgeois *byt* is encased within the domestic sphere and exists in a world sequestered from Communist reality. But what is interesting is that this spectral world of the interior is also projected onto the outside, and the exterior is imagined as a spectacle. The window curtain opens the theatre box of the world: “Tamarochka,” a character is quoted to say in one scene, “Tamarochka, look into the window, see whether the Soviet rule has

⁴⁸ The “warrant” literally reads: “This confirms that Pavel Sergeevich Gulyachkin in fact lives in Kirochny Alley, Apartment no. 6, as here signed and sealed,” Nikolai Erdman, *Mandat*, Act III, Scene 3, p. 29

ended!" -- "No, I said, it seems it is still there." -- "Then, he said, Tamarochka, pull down the curtain, we will take a look tomorrow."⁴⁹

Propaganda becomes part of drag performance with no practical consequences. In a moment near the end of the play, Olimp Valerianovich identifies with the power of Communist rule, backing his fake identity to that extent that he becomes possessed by his role and delivers the Party line, attacking the bourgeoisie with passion that demonstrates the uncanny of ideological rhetoric.

The tragedy of the actors is that they are sentenced to triviality. When Gulyachkin's tenant reports everybody to the police for "attempting to take down Soviet power in their very apartment," no one gets arrested.⁵⁰ The heroes are in despair.

Ivan Ivanovich: They will not do it.

Olimp Valerianovich: What will they not do?

Ivan Ivanovich: They will not arrest us.

Pause.

Pavel Sergeevich: Mother, if they will not even arrest us, why on Earth will we live? Why on Earth will we live?⁵¹

Why the existential crisis? The failure to get arrested is ultimately the failure to be taken in, to be identified, to be integrated into the society, to be held responsible. The entire universe of Gulyachkins and Smetanichs is a universe of sanctioned lies, an everyday theatre of illusion. Domestic space is the space of *la folie*. Pavel Sergeevich's "warrant" is not legitimate and does not guarantee the right of passage in the new world, not only because it is self-fashioned, but also because cannot not really inhabit, as he

⁴⁹ "Tamara Lepopol'dovna: My husband told me this morning: "Tamarochka, look into the window, see whether the Soviet rule has ended!" -- "No, I said, it seems it is still there." -- "Then, he said, Tamarochka, pull down the curtain, we will take a look tomorrow,"" Nikolai Erdman, *Mandat*, Act I, Scene VII, p. 10

⁵⁰ Nikolai Erdman, *Mandat*, Act III, Scene 17, p. 40

⁵¹ Nikolai Erdman, *Mandat*, Act III, Scene 18, p. 41

claims, the world of mirages, the Shakespearean world/theater which is fantastically mocked in the background of the Gulyachkin circus.

Petty-bourgeois *byt* and the theatre of illusion were based on the same aesthetic principles – on the logic of true and performed identities, on the technology of drag, on the play between the visible and the invisible. To invent a new theatre and a new way of life was to train cognition and perception to seize the world as something more than a world of mirages and images. To seize the world as a site of action.

The point of theatre was not in its value on its own, but in its power to create a virtual *byt*, intensified and reorganized, a virtual world in which life could nevertheless become more comprehensible and more real. Boris Arvatov elaborated on this in his treatise “From Theatre Directing towards a Montage of Everyday Life,” which starts with a lament on alienation, chaos, and powerlessness in the post-Revolutionary world of possessions, feelings, and action:

We live in a disharmonious universe of mechanically produced things, which we do not feel; of feelings we do not believe in; of movements which we are not capable of directing. We do not govern *byt*, it governs us instead – governs with its spontaneity and lack of organization. And we wallow in it like frogs in mud and croak like frogs when it rains.

[...]But that is why we have theatre. There people teach and speak and lie and go for visits. There they make things and organize forms. There we have organized *byt*

Organized how?

Aesthetically!⁵²

⁵² Boris Arvatov, “Ot rezhissury teatra k montazhu byta,” [From theatre directing towards a montage of everyday life] in *Ob agit ai proz isskustve* [On agitation and production art] Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Federatsiya,” 1930, originally in *Zrelishcha* no. 24, 1923

To organize *byt* aesthetically, in Meyerhold's case, was to establish a dialogue with Gastev. What makes the theatre of everyday life different from the theatre of illusion, according to Arvatov's "Theatre as Production" [*Teatr kak proizvodstvo*], is the application of Taylorization, psycho-technics, and the rational study of movement. Instead of reflecting life, Taylorized theatre has transformative power, is "life-creating theatre" (*teatr zhiznetvorchestva*).⁵³

The power of theatre to create new modes of life rests on its power to produce new embodied subjects – new ways of moving, seeing, and operating the environment. It is not that it represented work in the factory, but it was, as Arvatov wrote, "the factory of a qualified man."⁵⁴ To qualify the public was to immerse it in this virtual everyday of mechanical existence– *byt* brought to the level of higher intensity, transformed, and created anew.

This theatre, which forges a new citizen and fabricates new modes of perception and cognition, is imagined, of course, as a tool of propaganda. But it is strange propaganda – not a recitation of ideology, as in the manic rapture of Gulyachkin, dizzy with his imaginary conversion, but as art of agitation in the literal sense. Bodies become weapons of agitation as agitated bodies. Theatre is propaganda made flesh.

"The first principle of biomechanics is: body-machine, the worker – as a machinist," was the famous slogan of Meyerhold's.⁵⁵ If classical theatre posited that the entire world is a stage, in Meyerhold's theatre the entire world was a site of labor,

⁵³ Boris Arvatov, "Teatr kak proizvodstvo," [Theatre as production] in *Ob agit i proz isskustve*, p. 138, originally in *Gorn*, vol. 1 (6), 1922

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.132

⁵⁵ Meyerhold, "Principles of Biomechanics," theses of lectures written by students of GVTYM, compiled by Korozhov, RGALI, Fond 998, Opis 1, Document 740, p. 42

performed onstage as theatrical labor – a battle of body-machines propelled by passion. Theatre created a new sensorium. It transformed the audience, by changing the way they see, move, and feel, into proletarian subjects, inhabitants of a world of industry.

Meyerhold strove to integrate the institutional discourse on labor training into his enterprise. “Extreme economy is needed in work, utmost Taylorism. All tasks are fulfilled with minimal, most purposeful means,” he proclaimed.⁵⁶ He transformed the scientific organization of labor into an aesthetic project. A new queer version of labor training emerges, the blueprints of which we have at hand.

Let us start with the premises as they were formulated by Aleksei Gastev. The first of them was a complete rejection of psychology, of metaphysics, and a corresponding belief in the capacity of science to measure, control, map, and train bodily excitation. In Gastev’s words this project is explained like this:

In the social sphere an era of precise measurements, formulas, drawings, control calibers, social norms must begin. In order that sentimental philosophers do not confuse us with thoughts about the elusiveness of emotions and the human soul, we have to pose the problem of the complete materialization of psycho-physiology and economy, so that we can operate with precise coefficients of excitements, mood, fatigue on one hand, and the graphs of economic stimuli on the other.⁵⁷

Meyerhold’s idea that movement, excitation, mood, and visceral states can be mapped and turned into a theatrical blueprint is based on Gastev’s scientific attitude to embodied existence. Gastev himself came up with the idea to abstract labor movements and

⁵⁶ Meyerhold, principles of biomechanics - theses of lectures written by students of GVTYM, compiled by Korozhov, RGALI, Fond 998, Opis 1, Document 740, p. 42

⁵⁷ Aleksei Gastev, “Nashi zadachi,” [Our tasks], 1920, in *Kak nado rabotat*, p. 26

develop a “pure” gymnastic technique. For Gastev, gymnastic exercise was means to producing efficient “real” labor operations endowed with pure automatism:

Gymnastics – it is pure technique of movement, in which there could and could not be the everyday lie necessity, but it is it, and only it, that is the school of real training. The exercise of imitation has as its goal to teach man to work. And then, when we come to real natural operations, we need to strengthen them with the most persistent and importunate training so that we reach bare automatism of labor.⁵⁸

The idea of educating movement for industry implied the notion of science of “labor” which does not have to be such “in the narrow sense of the word.”⁵⁹ It implied the idea that labor can find its expression in sports clubs, dances, and school classes. That it has a broad meaning; “the liquidation of elemental physical dissoluteness, when the entire body does not work, but helplessly wanders instead.”⁶⁰

In order to transcend the concept of labor in the narrow sense of the word, work had to be abstracted, made into a universal mode of interaction with the world, a way in which the embodied subject operated. The performance of labor on stage and in gymnastics played a key role in this operation. To develop the aesthetics of industrialized movement was to translate the science of labor into an ethics of existence. Aesthetics and science were developed concurrently. But Meyerholds’s theatre was not the only translation of the scientific organization of labor into scenic movement. There were other similar enterprises which developed at the same time and which belonged to the same discourse, possibly informing Meyerhold’s project. One of them was the State

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 53

⁵⁹ “Trenazh” [Training] in *Pravda*, Nov 16, 1922, republished in *Kak nado rabotat*, p. 51,

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Institute of Rhythmic Education, founded at the same time as TsIT, in 1921. It was a school for training “pedagogues-rhythmists,” according to the eurhythmic methods of Dalcroze, which were now to be “industrialized.”⁶¹ It was envisioned as a “scientific-artistic laboratory” in charge of “conducting practical scientific research work on the relationship between rhythmic education and the scientific organization of labor.”⁶²

The idea was to develop “Taylorized gesture both in labor and art.”⁶³ Students went to the factory “Electrosila No. 5” and searched for a musical rhythm in the production process. They recorded tempos of movement during various production operations. Then they turned them into dance. Performances of labor were fixed in cyclograms, created by one of the founders of the Institute, Tikhonov. He produced an array of long exposure photographs depicting rhythmic movement, by attaching bulbs to the moving man and, as a result, produced continuous light traces of movement in the dark.

Meyerhold’s blueprints for theatrical performance, which integrate continuous traces of the moving body, borrow from Tikhonov’s representation of work, and resemble the project in the State Institute of Rhythmic Education. But there is a key difference. Meyerhold’s method was not based on direct observation of production. Instead it was a translation of Gastev’s theoretical principles: anti-psychologism and the belief in automation of bodily movement as the way to realize the most intense and productive existence.

⁶¹ “Opyty v institute ritma,” [Experiments in the Institute of Rhythm,] *Vestnik Isskustv* no. 5, 1922, p. 26

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

I will first elaborate on anti-psychologism. Meyerhold's rejection of psychology and his celebration of radical embodiment was the basis of his rebellion against the theatre of illusion. His method was all about training the body, not training the fickle soul. A former student of the famous theatre director Constantin Stanislavski, Meyerhold rejected his "system," a method of acting based on deep introspection and psychological identification of the actor with the character, based on retrieving and reliving on stage what Stanislavski called "emotional memory."

No matter how demanding, exhausting, and deep, this identification with the literary character, this attempt to alter consciousness on stage as to inhabit the husk of the persona, was probably just another, immensely elaborate, form of drag ridiculed in the *Warrant*. Meyerhold countered it with a visceral method of acting that no longer engaged the mind, but which depended on the action and the reaction of the moving body. In order to explain it he uses an architectural metaphor:

Psychology cannot provide a concrete solution for a number of reasons. Building the theatrical edifice on psychological foundations is the same as building a house on sand: it will inevitably be torn down by those who pay attention to physical states [...] All psychological states are conditioned by certain physical processes. As he finds the correct form of his physical state, the actor assumes the position in which a certain "excitability" arises in him, which takes over the audience, drawing them into the actor's art (this is what we earlier called "capture"), and this is the essence of acting. An entire range of physical positions and states is at the foundation of those "points of excitability," which color themselves with this or that feeling.

The foundation of this system of acting, of "arousing feelings," is always: physical foundation.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ "Akter budushchego" [Actor of the future,] presentation of V. Meyerhold in the Little Hall of the Conservatory, May 12, 1922, in RGALI, Fond 998, Opus 1, 740, p.4

Audience is not engaged through a psychological rapport, but by visceral communication. In the absence of interiority, the self is no longer a psychological entity, the soul. It is the sense of embodiment, and the knowledge of the self is proprioception, the sense of the position of the body in space and its muscular capacities:

The work of the actor is the cognition of self in space. It is necessary to know one's body so that, assuming one or another position one can precisely know what it looks like in a given moment.⁶⁵

The aim of developing proprioception is not, however, rational control of movement, but, ultimately, complete automation - unconscious, blind, convulsive action:

There are three moments in acting: the intentional moment, the realization of intention in reflexes, voice, movement, and "reaction" – the moment in which all movements become reflexes and the cognitive aspect is reduced to a minimum.⁶⁶

Meyerhold does not only elaborate on Gastev's principles on labor management by translating them into aesthetics of theatrical performance. He goes further. He creates architecture for the laboring, completely visceral body, a topographic architecture represented in plans for the *Magnanimous Cuckold*.

Working with flesh and with the agitation of the flesh is still about *byt*, but it is not about domesticity, enclosure, and display. Instead, the elimination of the dichotomy between psychological interiority and exteriority corresponds to a plan of action that

⁶⁵ Lectures in set design and biomechanics read in the first year of GVYTI (State Higher Theatre Institute) in the school year 1921/1922, RGALI, Fond 998, Opis 1, 738, p.5

⁶⁶ Meyerhold, "Principles of Biomechanics," theses of lectures written by students of GVTYM, compiled by Korozhov, RGALI, Fond 998, Opis 1, Document 740, p. 42

happens entirely in the exterior, on a topographic plane traversed by bodies in action and defined by their recorded orbits.

The transformation of the domestic space of the pre-Revolutionary age into a Revolutionary open field of action and a corresponding transformation of theatre aesthetics is demonstrated in a play performed in the Meyerhold Theatre in 1929. *The Bedbug*, written by Mayakovsky, contrasts the domestic world of the NEP bourgeoisie to everyday life in the future, set in 1979. It is the summary of the way of life to be overcome, and a vision of organized *byt* in Communism.

In the first act Prisyarkin, a worker, dreams of a “beautiful life,” and finds it in the apartment of Mrs. Renaissance and her heavy furniture and family portraits. He leaves his workers’ dormitory and his girlfriend, and marries a daughter of a petty bourgeois. There is a fire during the wedding. Everyone burns, but a body is missing. Prisyarkin is frozen in cold water. In 1979 they find him. The proletariat has won in the entire world. Science and technology rule life. Among the strict, clean, sober people of the future, Prisyarkin is a strange figure, who is drunk, infatuated, and daydreams. He is treated as a lower being, and put in a zoo together with a bedbug.

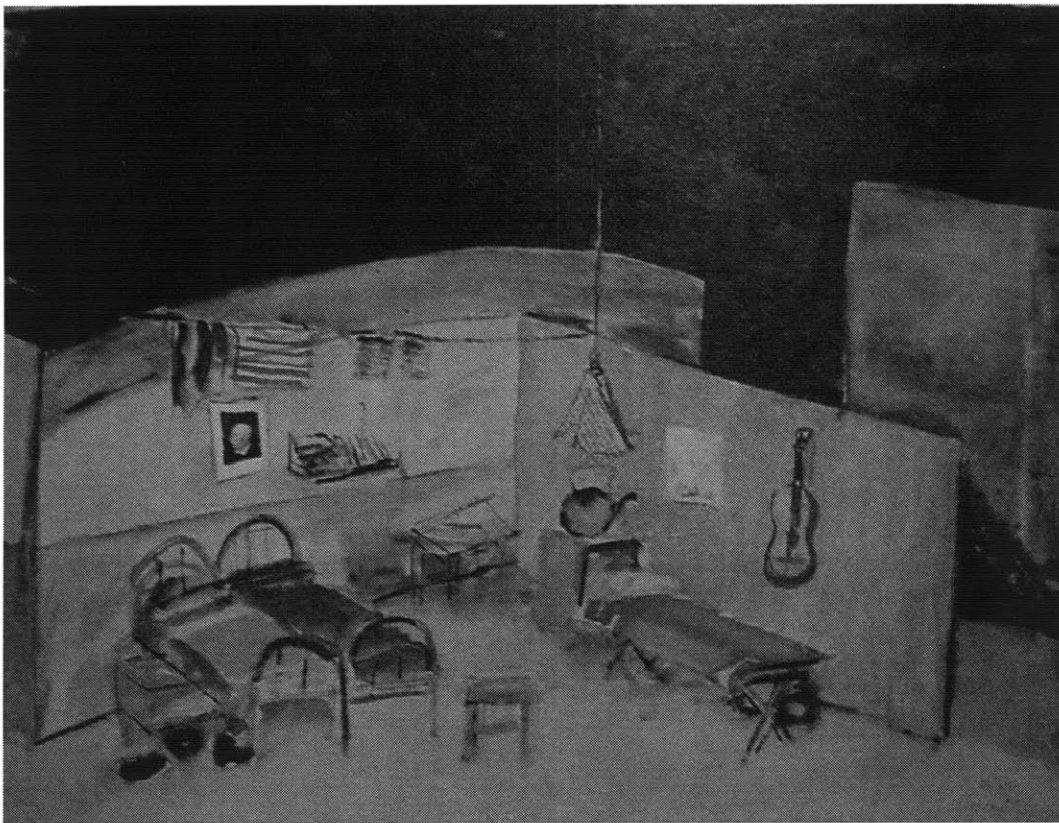


Figure 4. *The Bedbug*, 1929. Prisyppkin's Apartment, Act I

The two sets for the two acts of the play do not only significantly differ, but are designed by different scenographers. The set for the first act, depicting the chaos of bourgeois interiors and the agglomeration of things was designed by caricaturists Kukriuniks, and the second act, representing life in the future, by Alexander Rodchenko. Bourgeois *byt* was a world of interiors full of trash and a disorganized, decaying body encased in the trap of overcrowded domestic interiors.

What was the body of the future, and what was its spatial envelope?

Rodchenko designs the body of the future as that of a cosmonaut, 32 years before Yuri Gagarin. The self-contained environment provides the ultimate in self-control and

the ultimate in freedom. Ultimately, the environment of the future Soviet man is Cosmos.

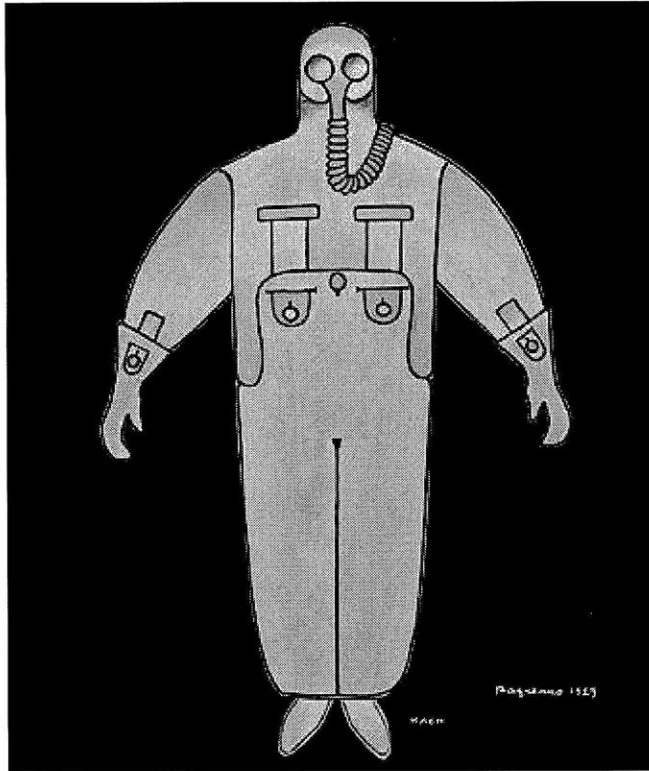


Figure 5. *Bedbug*, 1929. Man of the Future, Act II

This was, by no means, an isolated vision. As we can recollect, the connection between a cosmic imaginary and a pan-mechanical conception of the world is present in Gastev's poetry. But it is also part of a larger discourse of the early 1920s, and we can find it even in children's literature of this period. In 1922, Soviet writer Sigizmund Krzizhannovsky attempted to introduce a philosophical rejection of psychology, representation, and transcendence to children in his story *Catastrophe*. He wrote for children about Kant. The catastrophe, according to Krzizhanovsky, was the notion that "the entire world – so multicolored and immense (at first sight,) spherical, with the

flatness of poles – is the same thing as the tiny spherical crystalline lens of the human eye.”⁶⁷

In fact, according to Krzizhanovsky, the world a cosmos of things, “stones, nails, graves, souls, thoughts, tables, books, and also, “brilliant stars, “dimpest specks of dust,” which all “big and small” obediently circle around their corresponding tracks and orbits.”⁶⁸ The idea that they can be reduced to their reflection in the human eye did not really cause commotion in the universe, and stars were unconcerned. But it created a great catastrophe in human lives, as people dwelled into their own desires in order to find meaning in the world, and could not separate their own orbit from orbits of other phenomena. With the Revolution, things got back into order. “We have, thank God, the Earth separate, the eye separate,” man’s orbits are independent, and the world is a place in which “of course, it is not hard to play.”⁶⁹ Krzizhanovsky’s idea about the space of the materialist cosmology as ludic finds its epitome in Meyerhold’s space of theatre, which was literally a space of play. This space has a topography and an architecture of bodily orbits, carefully recorded in plans of the performance. These blueprints are, in the spirit of the scientific organization of labor, set into a rectangular grid and carefully timed. But what happens if we compare this topographic architecture of virtual, aesthetically organized, *byt* with Taylorized spaces of Soviet domesticity?

We can look at a different architectural example of Taylorization, the rationalized kitchen from the previous chapter. In this drawing, there is a perfectly

⁶⁷ Sigismund Davidovich Krzhizhanovsky, *Catastrophe* (1922), in Lib.ru Klassika. at http://az.lib.ru/k/krzhizhanovskij_s_d/text_0028.shtml accessed on 07/02/2008

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

closed loop of bodily movement, contained within the kitchen enclosure. Lines never cross each other, as they bounce off kitchen appliances.

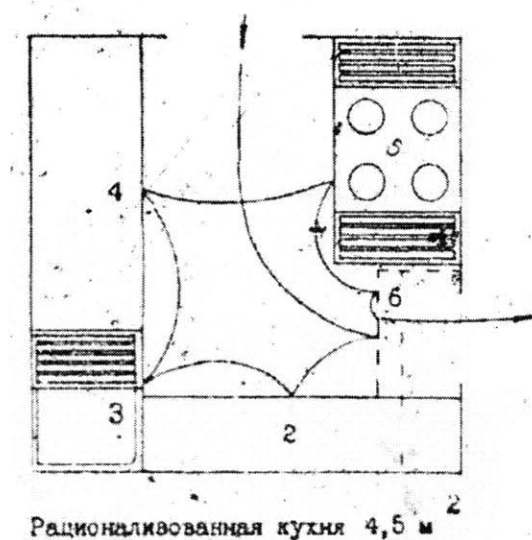


Figure 6. Rationalized Kitchen, *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura*, 1929

In Meyerhold's blueprints [Figures 1, 2, 3] the Taylorized subject is no longer the housewife, but a crowd of gymnasts. There is no one path, but a weave of multicolored squiggles crossing each other, encircling each other, inscribing seemingly chaotic across the surface of the stage. Instead of a regulated feminine body on a domestic production machine, there is a mass in mechanical rapture. The authoritarian but modest intention of the architect to choreograph female movement in the kitchen interior has its hyperbolic version in theatrical architecture that is an attempt to order the trance of spectacular labor.

There are two major differences between Taylorized domestic work and Taylorized theatrical work. One is in Meyerhold's abandonment of a functionalist logic,

which resulted in a completely different engagement with the working apparatus. Another one is economic: whereas the Taylorized kitchen was designed for a minimum expenditure of energy, Meyerhold's stage is a stage of excess, of manic performance of collective rapture. Let me elaborate on both points.

According to the logic of visceral performance, there were no longer an interior and an exterior, a public and a domestic sphere. There was no longer any traditional domesticity performed in the kitchen. Meyerhol's theatre was about the everyday, it is about *byt*, but it is about *byt* happening in a total exterior, a plane of tensions, excitations, movements, the agitation of the organism-machine traced in the plan together with the inorganic set-machine.

What is the status of the set in this topography? How does the set-machine function in relation to the agitated, moving body?

The *Magnanimous Cuckold* was set in a contraption of cogs and wheels designed by Lyubov Popova, presented in the blueprints as the rectangular shape. It was home to husband, wife, and the many suitors. What was interesting to the contemporaries was not its form, but the capacity to be functionally neutral, to accommodate any kind of plot or any kind of theatrical action. The set was a machine with no predetermined purpose, a machine that could do anything, a machine in the most abstract sense.

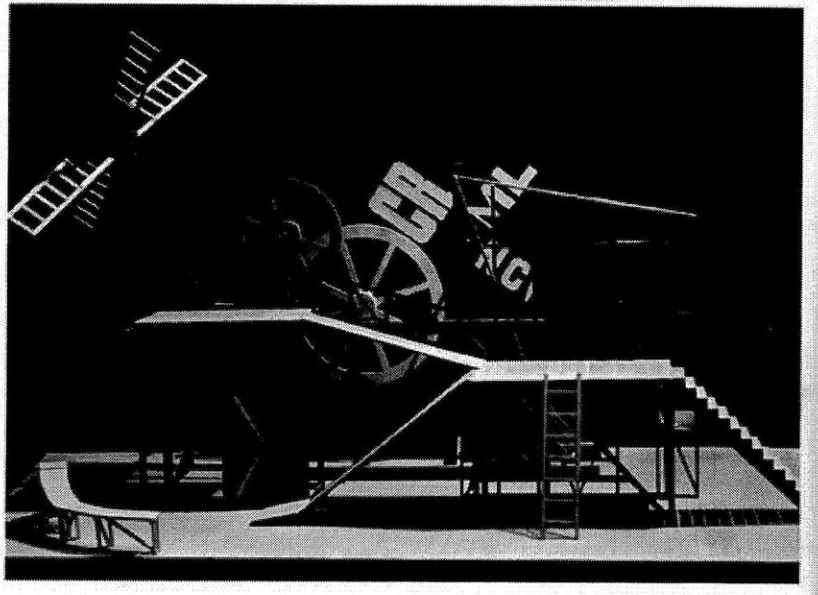


Figure 7. *Magnanimous Cuckold*, 1922. Set by Lyubov Popova.

Contemporary art critic Boris Alpers explains his enthusiasm for the set like this:

The plain wooden machine became, by actor's will, the milliner's home, and every new episode reveals different rooms and corners in this spatial construction. A flower in Stella's hand transforms the surface of the construction machine into a morning terrace. The surface of the set in front of the machine becomes a courtyard on which angry wives chase after Stella, or a dining room where magnanimous Bruno receives his guests, or his study, where he dictates his inspired works to quiet Estrug.⁷⁰

It is not only the enthusiastic critic who apprehends the set as a machine.

Another commentator, Sergei Ignatev, who presents the Meyerhold performance as a "murder of the theatre," notices that the set is no longer a construction but a mechanism.

The model of L. Popova is unsuccessful not because of its constructivism, but because of its machinism. Almost confused with production, taking machines, mechanics, instead of the constructive model, they took the machinic model, which has no connection with real action. Here we do not have accident, but

⁷⁰ Boris Alpers. *Teatr Sotsial'noi maski*. [Theater of the Social Mask], Moscow, 1931, p. 3

something much worse – a premeditated attempt to murder theatre. This premeditation is testified to by prozodezhda [production clothing], which does not have even a small relation to the theatre in its make and color.⁷¹

What Ignatev called the confusion of theatre with production was for Meyerhold an attempt to create a theatrical aesthetic of labor as the aesthetic of *byt* in the mechanized world. This attempt depended on the relationship between the the crowd of actors and the abstract “construction machine” that housed it, or, rather, worked with it.



Figure 8. *Magnanimous Cuckold*, set by Lyubov Popova, 1928.

A 1928 photograph taken at a performance of the *Magnanimous Cuckold* shows twelve actors in biomechanical motion. Their bodies form fields of tension, of action

⁷¹ Sergei Ignatof, “AKI, GITIS I KAT,” in RGALI, Fond 963, Opis 1, 314, p. 18

and reaction, as if connected with invisible cables. Action involves climbing and jumping on the set, channeling movement through and across the stairs and scaffoldings of the stage. The bodies and the set leave a shadow on the back wall, in which they blend into a single mechanism composed of body parts, scaffolding, and a moving wheel.

The scenographic machine and the bodies that operate with it are a singular theatrical apparatus. This apparatus was a materialization of Gastev's mechanistic cosmology, and a virtual condensed performance of life as labor and of labor as an economy of excitability.

Was this an economy of frugality, or an economy of exuberance? Contemporary critics could not agree. An author wrote in her retrospective of the first five years of post-Revolutionary theatre about the Magnanimous Cuckold as an example of minimalist aesthetics. She praised a rationality and starkness of Meyerhold's theatrical approach to the point of proclaiming it strict, monastic, and unworldly.

The scene was entirely naked, everything was taken down, and the immense empty space of the theatre scene produced a dark impression. What was especially overwhelming was the dirty damp brick wall, the only background of the spectacle.'

[...]

[This movement] is economical and strict in its work. It does not allow for one redundant surface, for one redundant line. It is ascetic, a removal from the glamour of nature, from beauty, from all ornaments of life. It is a monastery of art of sorts, strict and chaste in its utilitarianism, as it aims to fulfill its own goals, its own realism.⁷²

⁷² Gilarovskaia, Nadezhda Vladimirovna. *Teatral'no-dekoratsionnoe iskusstvo za 5 let*. [Theatre-decoration art in the last 5 years] Kazan': Kombinat Izdatel'stva i pechati, 1924, p. 24-25

For the correspondent of *Rabochaya Moskva*, the performance was not chaste, it was pornographic in its frenzied and exuberant corporeality. Upon seeing the *Magnanimous Cuckold* in 1922, he wrote about its vulgarity, about the moral corruption of Meyerhold's theatrical approach. He wrote about the lewdness of the bodies twisting and turning in space. The problem the correspondent had, if I can grasp it, that he expected a work of art that transcends the lowly, vulgar, and the earthly, but encountered instead an unbridled display of the joys and passions of flesh, an unveiling of the non-human in the human:

When you look at all these wheels, scaffolding, spring-boards, cages, turning doors, windmills, and such scenic devices among which our young actors yell, summersault, jump on top of each other, dance Hottentot dances like animals, performing sadistic, pornographic tasks of foreign and domestic morphinists and charlatans, one barely refrains from screaming; this is the utmost mockery.

And what is only done inside those studios in all these kinds of laboratories of the young actors. What a vacant soul, what a unscrupulous depraved existence, what sorry apes and acrobats of the body and soul must be produced by these studios where young people engage in 'biomechanics,' whose image we have seen last night in the state theatre: jumping on top of each other, dragging each other like animals [...], and speak with the innocence of saints the most vulgar and obscene things.⁷³

Meyerhold's theatre was, apparently, both chaste and lewd. This evaluation can be attributed to a duality inherent in his approach. It is a duality between a desire for what Meyerhold called "extreme economy," the execution of tasks with "minimal, most purposeful means," and the desire to explore the extremes of excitation and their power

⁷³ "Sharlatanstvo ili glupost'" [Charlatanism or Stupidity], *Rabochaya Moskva* 196, Nov 3, 1922, in RGALI, Fond 963, Opis 1, 314, pp. 3-4.

of visceral capture. We can trace the duality between the will for rationalization and the fascination with the passions of automated flesh to Gastev's work.

In TsIT, Gastev undertakes the task of creating a perfectly rational, minimalist science and pedagogy of labor. He tries to create a clean system of modernist rationality in which the expenditure of energy could be quantified and precisely traced. He creates "formulas, drawings, control calibers," and "precise coefficients of excitements, mood, and fatigue."⁷⁴

But what is charted and measured?

What is charted and measured is the mania of automated movement, the impetus of the body to merge with the mechanism, to realize its nature as a self-propelled automaton. Gastev's pre-Revolutionary poem *The Factory Whistles* is an ode to the unmediated intercourse between the mass and the machine, and ode to the automated, rhythmic body desiring the mechanism:

The crowd steps in a new march, their feet have caught the iron tempo.
Hands are burning, they cannot stand idleness, they cannot be without a
hammer, without work.
Strike, strike!
Quicker! Faster!
Chop! Saw!
To the machines!
We are their lever, we are their breathing, their impulse.⁷⁵

At the roots of both Gastev's and Meyerhold's Taylorization there is a peculiar eroticization of labor – a celebration of surplus energy invested into work. There is a fascination with the ecstasies in the merger of the organic and the inorganic in a pan-

⁷⁴ Aleksei Gastev, "Nashi zadachi," [Our tasks], 1920, in *Kak nado rabotat'*, p. 26

⁷⁵ From Aleksei Gastev, *Poeziiia Rabochego Udara*. Petrograd, Izdanie Proletkulta 1918. Translated by Kurt Johansson in Kurt Johansson, *Aleksei Gastev: Proletarian Bard of the Machine Age*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1983, p76.

machinic world. The challenge is the containment of the ecstasies of labor within a rational frame. Gastev's method is education. Meyerhold's method involves architecture. He superimposes over his chart of hand-drawn curvilinear orbits a modernist grid and marks time intervals, in an attempt to transform the dynamic field of performance into something precisely measurable.

But the translation of TsIT technology into architecture and its representation as something repeatable ultimately produces only an architecture of "approximation." When we look at the hand drawings of squiggles, crossing paths, knots, meanders, it is doubtful that this blueprint is a firm plan, that it can be precisely executed, and if it were, it is doubtful that it could be repeated. Instead, as in the view of one contemporary commentator, the plan produces nothing but accident and contingency:

[...] The Cuckold is accident after accident. Why do we have such a construction on the stage, and not a different one? This question arises from the plan of actors' movement.⁷⁶

Meyerhold's architecture of performance as an eroticized and a spectacular version of the Soviet factory is a set of blueprints for errant machines. It ultimately systematizes accident and presents it as a project. Meyerhold's experiments with automatism and the unconscious in virtual *byt* produced an architecture of mapped contingency. The ludic machine, in which labor figured as an overflow of energy, as a desire for mechanical existence, a machine of virtual production that had no products, was a mechanism of excess. This excess, this machinic delirium could only partially be contained within the system of modernist rationality.

⁷⁶ Sergei Ignatof, "AKI, GITIS I KAT," in RGALI, Fond 963, Opis 1, 314, p.4

CHAPTER 3: THE BATHS

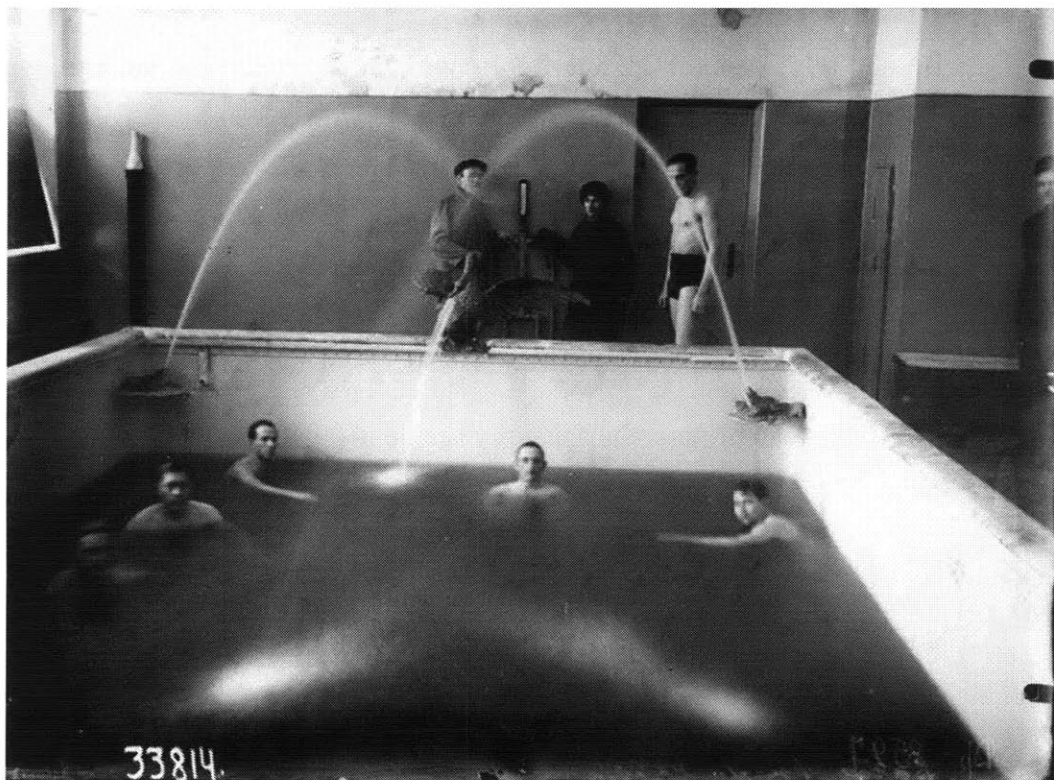


Figure 1. Group of Men in the Swimming Pool of the Trust for Baths and Laundries, 1932

If one ventures into the Central Archive of Cinematic and Photographic Documents in St. Petersburg and searches for an image of a public bath, one can locate item **Dr 8527 1932**. The item is a record of how, on one winter day in 1932, a small pool in Leningrad worked to its full capacity. On this day, five men, one barely visible in the left corner of the picture, dipped into the pool. Two men operated its mechanical

controls. There was an extra, a man who arrived too late to enter the pool, and one peeking from the side.

On this day, everything worked. Two crisscrossing jets emerged from the gaping mouths of cast iron frogs nested in the corners of the pool. A swan captured in half flight emitted a short and forceful spray. The heating system ran remarkably well. Two pool operators, still shivering underneath their winter hats, proudly stood by the thermometer and pointed to the display, which showed the perfect temperature in the basin.

We are looking at one small segment of this one day. It is the segment it took the camera to capture the men and the works, as they assembled to meet posterity. One man moved, leaving a blurry trace. The others tried to stand still, and were instructed to look straight into the camera.

The men in the photograph gaze back at us. All but one. A citizen, naked but for his bathing shorts, stood still for an entire minute, in a perfect *contraposto*, at the edge of the pool and stared sideways at the group of bathers. This nude posed on a strange threshold in time and space. He hadn't even done what he wanted to do that day – dip into the pool – when he was halted to pose for the photograph in the midst of his intention. His body, stark white and exposed in profile next to the pale low wall of the pool, divides the outside world from the phantasmagoric all-male microcosm of group bathing, inhabited by five squatting men, crowned by a sprinkler dome. We are looking at one slit in time in which the water was good, the fountains spurted water, the heating worked, and bliss was not something to be awaited; it was lived and recorded.

This photograph, created by the Leningrad Trust for Public Baths and Laundries, is a record of a beautiful and efficient ecosystem, enveloping the body of the citizen. It is

a record of architecture that, unlike many other things in Soviet *byt*, magically worked. After discussing working things, and working bodies, I will proceed to discuss buildings that work, the Soviet public bathhouses.

In Leningrad there were only fifty baths for 2.75 million inhabitants at this time.⁷⁷ The average citizen could take 1.24 baths a month.⁷⁸ In Moscow the situation was approximately the same.⁷⁹ Yet the bathhouse was one of the key utopian sites of Soviet industrialization in the era of the First Five Year Plan, from 1928 to 1932. This is when the first bathhouses were built after the Revolution. Their architecture was positioned at the threshold of a progressive world of socialist hygiene the citizen was just about to enter.

The projects for new facilities at this time celebrated the advances of mass-produced cleanliness and the precision with which its ecology could be regulated. The bath in many ways became a vehicle of bringing the ethics of planned industrialization close to the citizen's skin. It was the site where the relationship between the body and the State was performed as a public exercise.

Projects for baths were both important and few. Six public baths were built and two reconstructed in Moscow and in Leningrad between 1928 and 1932. In 1928

⁷⁷ The information comes from V. A. Rammo, "Na poroge novogo bannogo stroitel'stva," [On the Threshold of New Bathhouse Construction,] in *Voprosy kommunal'nogo khoziaistva* [Questions of Municipal Economy] No. 1 (January) 1931, p. 47.

⁷⁸ Calculation in the same article in, *Voprosy Kommunal'nogo Khoziaistva*. The specialist journal was dedicated to sewage, trams, water, housing, bridges, trash, snow, and typhus, and, since 1928, baths. Bathhouses were an object of precise and obsessive calculation, which was presented together with chiaroscuro architectural renderings of baths in construction and grand visions for baths in the future. The journal, which came out from 1924 to 1932 was the publication of the Advertising Trust of the County Office of Municipal Economy [ReklamTrest GubOtKomKhoz.]

⁷⁹ The information about Moscow comes from the State Archive of the Russian Federation [Gossudarstvenny Arkhiv Russkoi Federatskii (GARF),] Fond 314, Opis 1, Delo 5417, "Svedeniia o sostoianii banno-prachechnogo khoziaistva v 1931 godu v Moskve i Moskovskoi oblasti" [*The Summary of the Condition of the Bathhouse and Laundry Fund in 1931 in Moscow and the Moscow Region*], p.1.

Gundorov's *Stalinskie Bani* [Stalin Baths] and Panin's *Proletarskie Bani* [Proletarian Baths] were finished in Moscow. In 1930, *Kruglaya Banyia* [Round Bath] and *Gigant*, both designed Alexander Nikol'sky were built in Leningrad. *Gavanskie* Baths were transformed into the *Sanpropusnik Vasileostrovskogo Raiona* [Sanitary Conveyer of the Vasileostrovsky District] in 1931, and *Raznochinnie Bani* were renovated in 1932. These reconstructions were designed by Alexander Gegello. Nikolai Demkov designed two standardized baths in Leningrad, on Ligovskaya and Stantsionnaya streets.

This did not mean a massive proliferation of facilities for mass hygiene. But it did mean the first construction of public baths after the Revolution. The fact that no public baths were built prior to this period is curious, but easily explainable. During the New Economic Policy, small business flourished and private entrepreneurs rented and ran baths. The State gave up bath management, and the petty bourgeois managers simply did not have enough capital to build new bathhouses.

When it began to consolidate industry and collectivize agriculture, the State also began to take over bathhouses. We can get a sense of what this looked like by following the case against the private trust *Stroitel'* [Builder] in 1930, brought to daylight in the specialist Leningrad journal *Voprosy Kommunal'nogo Khozaistva* [Questions of Municipal Economy] published by the Advertising Trust of the Section for Municipal Economy of the Leningrad District (*Reklamtrest Leningradskogo oblastnogo Otkomhoza*).⁸⁰ In 1922, the trust rented seven baths from the Leningrad Regional Department of Municipal Economy (LGOKKH). According to the rulings of the

⁸⁰ V. P. Ivanov, "Istoriya chastnicheskogo Bannogo tresta" [The history of the private bath trust,] *Voprosy kommunal'nogo khozaistva* [Questions of the Municipal Economy, No. 7 (July) 1930, p. 62.

Leningrad Regional Court of 1930 the agreements are annulled and the baths go back to the Bathhouse and Laundry Management *Banno-Prachechnoe Khoziastvo*.)

The case against *Stroitel'* was not a criminal, but an ideological one. The renters were “unmasked.”⁸¹ What the court discovered was that the trust was “capitalist in its essence,” and that it only “worked in the guise of a workers’ association.”⁸² The result of the unmasking was the State takeover of the baths in the interest of “people’s health.”⁸³

The idea that popular self-care is a State affair, and that bathing publicly is a democratic right and duty has its prehistory:

Public, social, people’s baths should definitely be made and organized in such a way that every man, independent of his class or rank, the inhabitant of a certain place, would at any time be easily be able to access what is absolutely necessary for the care of upper layers of his body, that which he does not have at his home – to access it if not completely free of cost, then for a minimal price.

Although expressing similar concern for the wellbeing of the masses and the State role in caring for it, reflected in the 1920 *Decree for the Supply of the Republic with Baths*,⁸⁴ or in Trotsky’s campaign for the improvement of everyday life of the early

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 63

⁸⁴ Baths were among the first institutions collectivized after the revolution. When the Decree of the VTsIK about the Cessation of the Right to Private Property was passed, public baths became common property. They immediately became the symbols of popular rule in its glory. Even before it was certain how the management of baths would be organized, architectural visions for celebrating the joys of public hygiene appeared. In July 17 1919 Khudozhestvenyi Sovet Arkhitekturnoi Masterskoi SovKomHoz [The Artistic Committee of the Architectural Studio of the Soviet Communal Management organized a competition for the first regional thermae in Petrograd competition, for universal and grand people’s baths with showers, pools, stadia, etc. The importance of the supply with bathing facilities as a practical concern became recognized after this – with the passing of the Decree about the Supply of the Republics with Baths in 1920. It was also the moment when the trust Banprachmontazh [The Trust for [Assembling Bathhouses and Laundries] was formed as part of the Russian People’s Commissariat of Municipal Economy.

1920s,⁸⁵ this quote is of a much earlier date. It comes from the earnest turn-of-the-century treatise on public hygiene compiled in 1898 by a military doctor by the name of Goldenberg, the division doctor of the 25th infantry division of the Russian Army.⁸⁶ *The Public Bath for Armies and Popular Masses - its Hygienic, Sanitary, Medical, and Economic Aspects* was intended for figures of authority: doctors, military officers, city and district governments, and managers of factories and plants. The practice of hygiene was dislocated from the home, and its subject was the entire citizenry, the popular masses. Bathing the masses epitomizes a patronizing relationship of the State to its citizens, “the care of the father for the health of the family.”⁸⁷ The perfect form of that relationship is the military – the institution in which hygienic habits can be precisely timed, regimented, supervised, and scripted, like daily drills.⁸⁸ In the outside world, tactics of disciplining and careful supervision have to be applied to ensure that the masses are properly cared for.

⁸⁵ The primary written document of the campaign, waged at the beginning of the 1920s, at the end of War Communism is the collection of Leon Trotsky's articles and speeches *Voprosy byta* [Problems of Everyday Life]. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Krasnaya Nov," 1923. The collection of articles starts with the one under the famous title "There is More to Life than Politics Alone," and sets up everyday life as the domain of trifles and detail which complements great ideas and large political strategies of

the Revolution. "In order to realize great ideas, we must pay great attention to trifles!" (p. 33.) Trotsky would explain. The battle for a new society was becoming, in his eyes, "more detailed, and seemingly more prosaic." (p. 7.) It hinged on "posing and resolving mundane, everyday, 'cultural' tasks." (p.7) Fulfilling the potential of Revolution as the historical moment people's liberation meant remodeling quotidian existence.

⁸⁶ N. A. Goldenberg, *divizionyi vrach 25-I pekhotnoi divizii*. [N. A. Goldenberg, division doctor of the 25th infantry division of the Russian army] *Banya dlya voisk i dlya narodnykh mass v gigenicheskoi, sanitarnoi, lechebnoi i ekonomicheskoi otnoshenii: kratkiya ukazaniya dlya vrachei; lya voiskovikh chastei, gorodskikh i zemskikh upravlenii; dlya shkol, fabrik, zavodov, i dr.* [The Bath for Armies and for Popular Masses – its Sanitary, Medical and Economical Aspects: Short Instructions for Doctors, for Military Units, for Municipal and District Governments: For Schools, Factories, Plants, etc.] SPb: Tip. E. Evdokimova, 1898., p. 8

⁸⁷ Goldenberg., p. 2.

⁸⁸ Bathing was, as a matter of fact envisioned as a sort of "gymnastics" for the organism, "gymnastics for muscles and nerves and a system for regulating our organic temperature" that "insures the organism against every kind of danger." See Goldenberg, pp. 9-10.

We have already said – the mass is a big child, to whom it is necessary to show its own good by force, and to draw him to it by delicacies and lures, until it naturally and mentally grows to the point where he can rationally understand what is in his own benefit.⁸⁹

At approximately the same time when Goldenberg published his treatise on bathing as the ultimate expression of State care for its citizens, a man known only by his initials of D. F. published by Vladimir Gubinsky, a popular tractate *The Public Bath, its Benefits and Effects on the Human Organism according to Scientific Facts*.⁹⁰ Written in the spirit of the Russian proverb “If it were not for the bath, we would all perish” (*Koli ne banya, vse by my propali*.) it presents bathing as a question of life and death. The author’s theory is that warm clothing that Russians wear half of the year clogs pores and that this is a potentially lethal condition, due to impaired perspiration. Bathing is a life saving practice, if performed according to the traditional procedure of alternative washing, steaming, heating, and cooling the body.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Goldenberg, p.56

⁹⁰ *Banya, ee pol'za i vliyanie na organism cheloveka, sostavil po nauchnym' danym D. F.* [Banya, its Benefits and Impact on the Human Organism, compiled according to scientific data by D. F.]. St. Petersburg: V. I. Gubinskii, 1905.

⁹¹ The procedure entailed steaming in an extremely hot steam room (*parilka*.) coupled with beating with birch twigs (*veniki*) for circulation, exposure to cold water in tubs or showers, or outside snow in the countryside. This was a ritual of tempering the body, which produced extreme states and moods, with the final aim of strengthening the body and the spirit. Traditionally, exposure to extreme temperatures, p. 1092, was of equal importance as washing. As described in a H. Veber’s *Zapiski Vebera o Petre Velikom*, (quoted in I. A. Bogdanov. *Tri veka Peterburgskoi bani* [Three Centuries of the Peterburg Bath]. Saint Petersburg: Isskustvo-SPB, 2000, p. 42) the ritual would begin with heating the sauna until it heated so much that one could not stand on the floor of the room for fifteen seconds. Five or six men would enter the room, and their friend would close the sauna so tightly that they could hardly breathe. Then they would start yelling and he would let them out to get some fresh air. Then they would enter the sauna again and would repeat this until they were completely red. Then they would jump into a river or into snow in the winter, and they would stay in the snow covered up to their nose for several hours. They would stay there for a couple of hours “depending on what their medical condition would require, and they considered this method one of the main means of medical recovery.”

The public bath can cure everything. By rejuvenating the skin, it heals rheumatism and cold.⁹² Slow introduction to a humid environment aids in curing hydrophobia.⁹³ Frequenting the bathhouse is good for hypochondria “according to Becquerel.”⁹⁴ It cures irregular menstrual cycles.⁹⁵ It is the medicine for syphilis, and for scrofula.⁹⁶ People with a problematic emotional disposition benefit from the exposure to water, heat, and cold. Bathing speeds up the circulation of melancholy individuals, but also brings the phlegmatic ones back to life.⁹⁷

The bath, most importantly, has the power to heal as a collective, supervised environment, and the private, domestic practice of bathing rituals is harmful rather than beneficial. D. F. depicts the catastrophic effects of the private care of the self:

The domestic bath, set up in apartments for economic reasons, in store rooms, kitchens, and even foyers, can under no circumstances bring good, but it can rather bring harm to that who sits in the hot bath and inhales the air in the room which is colder than the water in the bath, and then the body has more heat than the lungs; apart from that the warm bath creates weakness and creates preconditions for falling ill with various types of colds whenever one does not take utmost care.⁹⁸

The bath, in Goldenberg’s vision of State care over the citizens, but also in D. F.’s more imaginative presentation of the bath as a universal healing place, is promoted

In modern, urban conditions pools with pleasant water of moderate temperature appeared, as one in the Leningrad Trust photograph from 1932. Lying in the snow is replaced with buckets of ice cold water and ice pools, but steam rooms still remained, as well as the idea that carefully tempering the body is the center of the bathing ritual.

⁹² *Banya, ee pol’za i vliyanie na organism cheloveka, sostavil po nauchnym’ danym D. F.*, p. 35

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 35

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38. Becquerel is most probably the French physician Louis Alfred Becquerel, who, in 1854 wrote a popular treatise on hygiene, *Traité élémentaire d’hygiène privée et publique*. (Paris, Asselin)

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7

as a site where what is most intimate, bodily functions and malfunctions, the care of the naked skin, becomes the object of public interest and collective performance. In a way, it becomes a place of secular communion where the citizens negotiate not their relationship to scrofula, melancholy, dysmenorrhea collectively.

What is important in both D. F. and Goldenberg is their suspicion of private bathing, and the insistence on its collectivization. This suspicion is shared by the Soviet government thirty years later, as is the desire for control and the belief in the educational function of the public bath:

The craving of the city population for water results in elemental creation of places for bathing. Unsupervised, without necessary guarantees that they are safe in the sanitary sense and appropriate for bathing, these places can become sources of mass infectious disease. The development of baths in this direction puts under question the sanitary-educational and socio-cultural aspect of the enterprise.

How was collective self-care imagined in the era of Soviet industrialization? How did the State plan to administer total care of citizens' bodies in the interest of collective sanitation, education, and culture? Goldenberg's model for the bath was the military. The idea of hygiene management and control was in the early Soviet thirties related to the idea of factory production. Production of cleanliness on a mass scale would be executed with industrial efficiency, or at least mimic industrial proficiency.

A photograph of a standardized bathhouse on Stantsionnaya Street designed by Nikolai Demkov around 1930 shows the public bath next to a heating plant. The two objects are supposed to be similar and complement each other. Like the plant, the bathhouse was supposed to be a production site of its own sort.

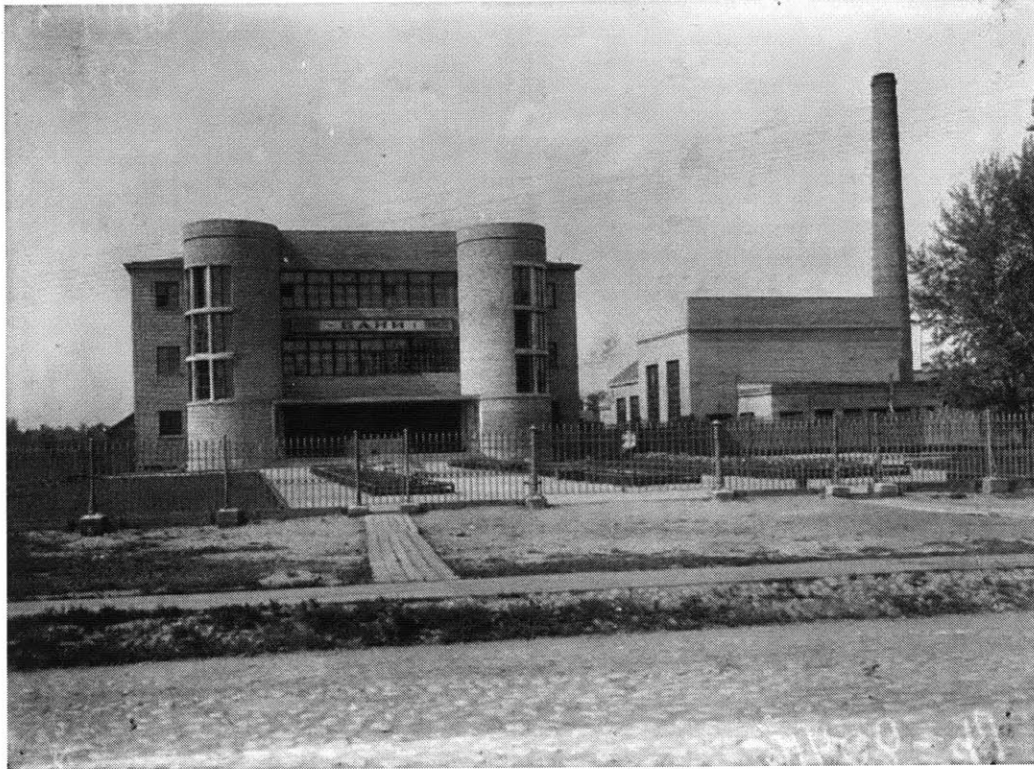


Figure 2. Nikolai Demkov, Bathhouse on 3 Stantsionnaya Street (photo 1934)

The machinic nature of the public bath is elaborated in long essays in the journal *Voprosy kommunal'nogo khozyaistva* [Questions of Municipal Economy.] The Soviet bathhouse was a total site of healing and hygiene. It comprised showers, pools, saunas, and facilities for doing laundry. The laundry, in particular, was the object of mechanization. Its architecture was a strange communion between the structural and the mechanical, and a typical article on the laundry was full of detailed renderings of all the apparatus employed, and calculations related to their physics.¹ First, there were renderings of dozens of laundry machines – the electrical drive, the hot water tub, the

spinning machine, various types of driers, steam rollers – all carefully rendered to the tiniest detail.

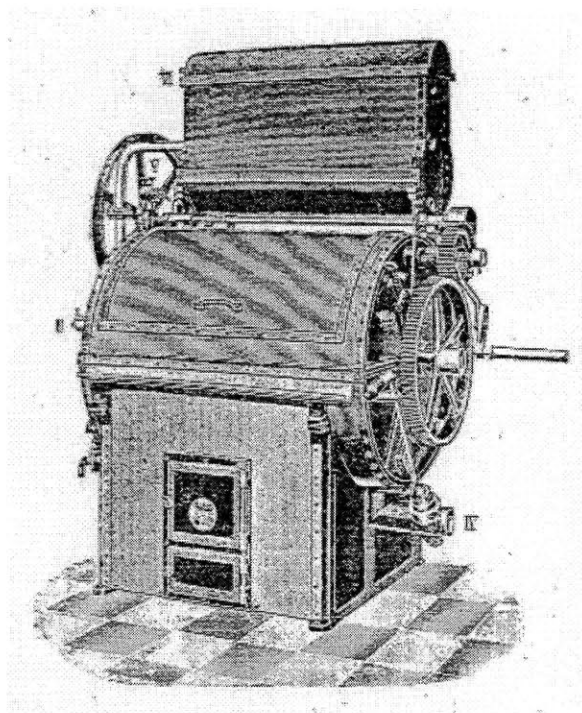


Figure 3. Washing Machine, *Questions of Municipal Economy*, 1931

Designing the laundry meant distributing these machines in space according to the logic of their operation. In the architectural journal *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* [Construction in Moscow] we find out that the Viennese company Oewa, which manufactured laundry instruments, was also invited to design Russian laundries.⁹⁹ Russian architects publicly admit that the design of the laundry is beyond their expertise.

⁹⁹ Eng. M. Smetenev, "Novye mekhanicheskie prachechnye," [New mechanical laundries,] in *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, No. 6 (June) 1930, p. 11 The company was asked to provide the design documents for one of the three laundries erected in Leningrad in 1929-1930, since the Soviet designers could not calculate the square footage of surfaces necessary for machine operation.

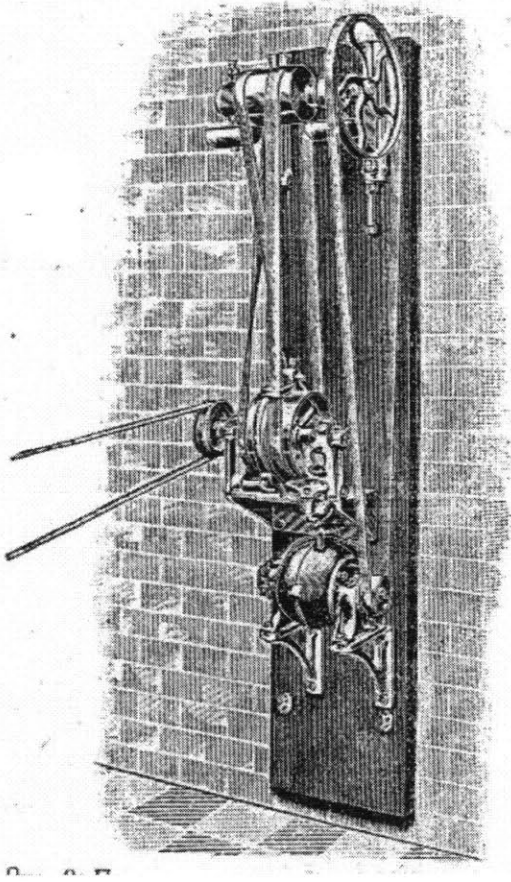
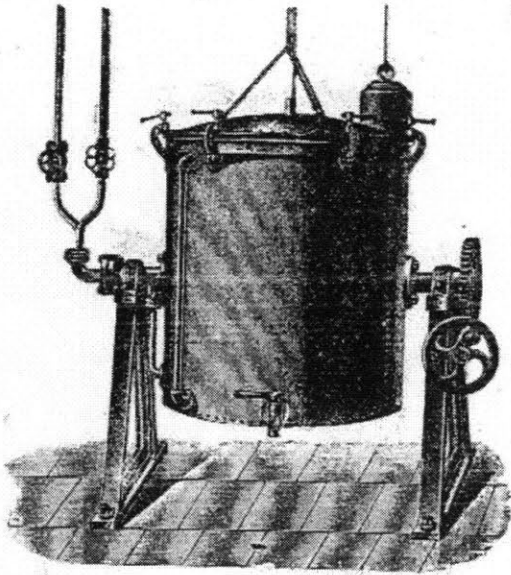


Figure 4. Boiler and Conveyor Belt for Laundries, *Questions of Municipal Economy*, 1931

A very important topic of discussion, in *Construction in Moscow*, as well as in *Questions of Municipal Economy*, is how the mechanical systems of the edifice work together with the machines – for example how the ventilation apparatus of individual machines complements the ventilation system of the building, or the capacity of sewage as adjusted to the dirty water emissions of particular apparatus. The journals elaborate the connections between one system and another, joints between apparatus, systems and bodies.

It was not only machines in a laundry that were connected with each other, plugged into building systems, and expected to work swiftly. The construction of baths was the construction of entire buildings that connect to other buildings, to other mechanical orders and enclosed ecosystems. If we look at *Proletarskiye Bani*, we find out that they are part of the factory complex of the Moscow Automotive Company (AMO,) and that their main feature is that they are powered by the nearby power plant, which connects the bath into the energetic circuit of the factory and worker's housing. The article in the popular magazine *Kul'tura i byt* [Culture and Everyday Life] betrays fascination with the circular logic of the bathhouse ecosystem - with the fact that dirty water goes back to the Technological Institute, is purified, and returned into the system.¹⁰⁰ A laundry facility in the Krasnopresensky district was designed to receive gas through a tunnel from the facility for burning trash.¹⁰¹

Banyas were buildings that work, parts of large mechanical ecosystems for processing energy and matter. But how did they work on the scale of the citizen's body,

¹⁰⁰ "Dvoretz Zdorovya" [Palace of Health], *Kul'tura i byt*, p. 67

¹⁰¹ Eng. M. Smetenev, "Novye mekhanicheskie prachechnye" [New mechanical laundries], in *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, No. 6 (June) 1930, p. 13

which they were processing? In order to apprehend how things were supposed to function, we might add to our record an account of how things did not work, at least before the First Five Year Plan.

In his short story *Bathhouse* (1924) Michail Zoshchenko disrobes in a public bath. As a token of bureaucratic surveillance and a guarantee of his safe return to the clothed state he receives two tickets from the wardrobe workers. Naked, he ties them to his ankles and proceeds to the bathing area, where he does not have much luck – he does not manage to take a bath in the overcrowded bathhouse, since there is no bucket available. When he decides to go home, he has the following exchange with the authorities:

I go back to the locker room. I give them one ticket. They give me my linen. I look. Everything is mine, but the trousers aren't mine. "Citizens," I say, "mine didn't have a hole here. Mine had a hole over there." But the attendant goes: "We aren't here," he says, "just to watch for your holes."¹⁰²

The bath was considered a mysterious place of black magic in the Russian folk tradition, because the bather became symbolically naked by taking off his crosses and amulets at the entrance.¹⁰³ Now, in the era of public bathing, of hygiene rationalized and demystified, the citizen receives from the modern bathhouse management amulets to tie around his bare ankles. But the amulets do not protect against anything. Rather, they

¹⁰²Mikhail Zoshchenko, "The Bathhouse," in *Scenes From the Bathhouse, and Other Stories of Communist Russia*. Sidney Monas, transl. Marc Slonim, ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962, p.24

¹⁰³According to W. F. Ryan's book *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*. (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), it was nakedness, real and symbolic that distinguished the bathhouse as an alternative spiritual domain. The bathhouse was a place where amulets, belts, and crosses protecting from the evil spirits were taken off. It was beyond the domain of official religion - a space of bodily transformation, and also a liminal space where children were delivered, and pagan rituals performed. Village magicians were initiated by visiting the bathhouse at midnight and it was believed that they go there when everyone goes to church.

signal the replacement of individual, subjective, inadequacy with the anonymity and chaos of collective malfunctioning.

Six years later, in one of the 1930 issues of the magazine *Culture and Everyday Life*, we encounter a scene from the public bath, which is precisely the opposite of the sketch from Zoschenko's story. In this magazine, dedicated to the struggle against alcoholism, in which alternative forms of socialization were introduced by presenting the architecture of clubs, pools, and other places of communal entertainment, the public bath is celebrated as one of the principal institutions of workers' enlightenment. The matter depicted in the celebration of the opening of the *Proletarskie Bani* is again the manipulation of pants and underwear. But what the workers describe is not a nightmare, but a dream:

So I came to the bathhouse, took off my dirty underwear, and gave it into the laundry, and I went to wash myself. For the time it took me to rinse in the bath, to swim, time passed, I returned into the waiting room and my underwear was clean and ironed, waiting for me.¹⁰⁴

After public exposure, the bather is sure to securely return to his private guise. The paternal role of the State is now performed as perfect service. It is no longer bath management that executes this service, but, in the spirit of industrialization, swift and precise machines. The care of the self is facilitated by mechanisms that work behind the scene, their operation concealed and revealed by architecture. "Look, it works!" "Look, we turned it on!" The same enthusiasm for smooth operation that we read in **Dr 8527 1932** is the allure of the Soviet urban bath.

¹⁰⁴ Ivan Kudriakov, "Dvorets zdorovya," [Palace of Health,], *Kul'tura i Byt* no. 13, 1930, p. 67

In the spirit of the mechanical production of cleanliness, in the Leningrad Vasileostrovsky District the old *Gavanskie Bani* were replaced with a “Sanitary Conveyor” [*Sanpropusnik Vasileostrovskogo Raiona*], designed by Alexander Gegello and finished in 1931. The façade of the Conveyor, pierced by thin slits, produces the effect of heaviness and monumentality, suggesting the presence of a stone monolith. It is, in a way, a processing line and a monument to the processing line.



Figure 5. Alexander Gegello: Sanitary Conveyor of the Vasileostrovskii District, 1931 (1933)

At the time when Gegello designed the Sanitary Conveyor, Soviet bureaucracy worked on extending the notion of bodily processing and on creating a recycling scheme similar to that in *Proletarskiye Bani* in Moscow. Only, what was to be recycled this time, were corporeal substances. The Popular Committee for Municipal Management proposed in 1932 the inclusion of various kinds of organic refuse into the detailed circular system of product “regeneration.” This was systematized in a document under

the title: “On the Intensification of Works on Extracting and Utilizing Waste Products in Bathhouse and Laundry Management.”¹⁰⁵

NarKomKhoz, in cooperation with scientific and research institutes, approached the investigation of these issues:

1. the regeneration, collection and utilization of soap from processed bath and laundry water
2. the use of heat in bath water
3. the use of human hair from hair salons as mix in felt used for construction¹⁰⁶

Other ideas included using fiber from hair left in bath water, and all wrapping paper that was handed in with clean clothes. The idea of rejuvenating the body was coupled with a propensity for recycling the substances it leaves behind. In the ultimate version of the scheme, some of these substances are integrated not only into the chemical ecosystem of the building, but also built into the very edifice as construction material.

The naked woman and man in the bathhouse become, in the wild dreams of Soviet official organs, objects of total processing, of comprehensive care, connected into energy systems and literally imbedded into a building. They are celebrated by architecture’s gravitas and placed on a conveyor belt.

In his visionary projects, Gegello went even further than State administration. He proposed to use the same building type for processing bodies both alive and dead. What can partially explain the solemnity of the *Conveyor* design is the formal connection Gegello established between the bathhouse, and the crematorium building. Images of both were published in *Questions of Municipal Economy* the same year the *Sanitary*

¹⁰⁵ “Ob usilenii rabot bo vyyavljeniyu i ispol’zovaniu otnodov v bannoprachechnom khoziaistve,” GARF, Fond. 314, Opis 1, Delo 5320, pp 7-8

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 8

Conveyor was finished. He essentially created the design for the crematorium by utilizing the façade of the *Conveyor* by adding additional wings to the side. This formal move expands the uses of the bathhouse building type, and with it the domain of the bath's functions.

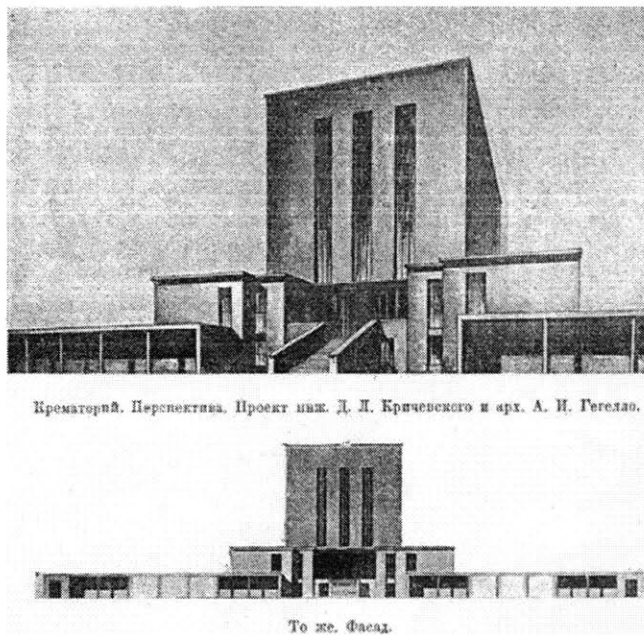


Figure 6. Gegello and Krichevsky: Design for a Crematorium, in *Questions of Municipal Economy*, 1931

The project is not so fantastic when we have in mind that the idea of using the bathhouse as a crematorium was not alien to the Soviet post-Revolutionary administration. The first Leningrad facility for cremation (the alternative to church burial) was, as a matter of fact, established in 1921 in the bathhouse of the Vasileostrovsky District.¹⁰⁷ The attempt was not a great success, and lasted only a

¹⁰⁷ Semenova, T. M., "Istoriya proektirovaniya pervogo petrogradskogo krematoriya," [The History of Designing the First Petrograd Crematorium,] in *Kraevedicheskie zapiski SPb – Issledovaniya i materialy* 1996, No. 4, p. 236. Despite many designs and building attempts of the 1920s and the 1930s, the first

couple of months. But the concept came back in 1959, when baths and crematoriums were grouped together in city planning. Unfortunately, there are no plans illustrating how the conversion of the bathhouse into a crematorium in 1921 was executed, and all the graphic elaborations of the idea we are left with are Gegello's facades from *Questions of Municipal Economy*.

The project for a public bath that recycles hair and uses it for construction, and the project for a *banya*-crematorium both expressed the desire to create a comprehensive hygienic regime that would involve the processing of all bodily matters on one site. It expressed the desire to transform the bathhouse into a microcosm in which the citizen practices the relationship to one's ephemeral condition, mortality, fragility, and the place of his or her body in the circulation of matter.

In the context of industrialization, mysteries of embodied existence are tied into a logic of working buildings and mechanical systems. The bathhouse was a building that became a site of citizens' initiation into the industrial society and of secular communion performed through modernist hygienic rituals.

The first project for a bathhouse of the late 1920s is, indeed, a temple to mass hygiene. The model of Alexander Nikol'sky's project is preserved in the Scientific Research Museum of the Russian Academy of Art. A recent photograph of the project against a black background underscores the singularity of this object, which was designed, with its circular plan and a gigantic glass dome, as a world onto itself, detached from the urban surroundings. The only other building present in the picture is the small heating plant, a tribute to the mechanical nature of the construction.

Leningrad crematorium was actually built as late as 1972.

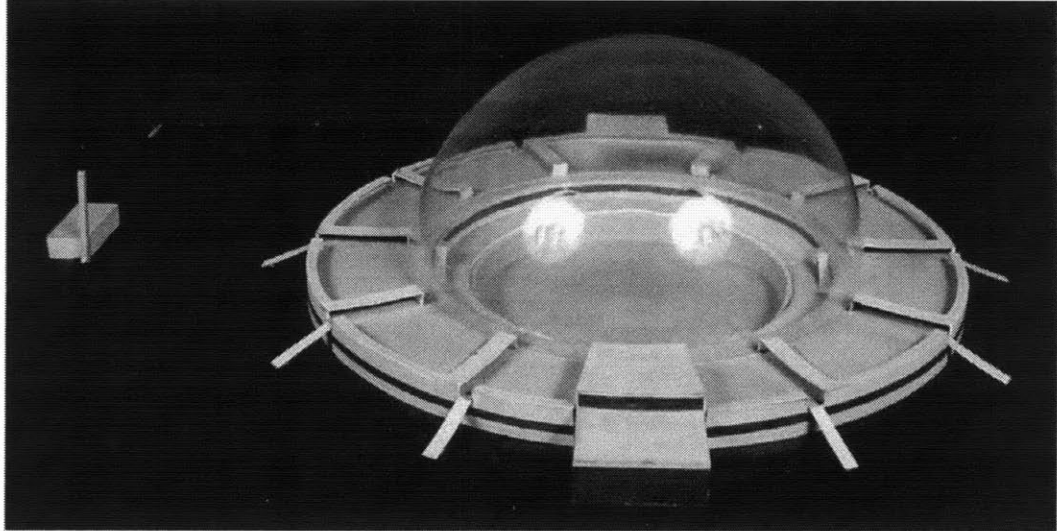


Figure 7. Project for a Bathhouse, Aleksandr Nikol'sky, 1927

In the center of the enclosure is a swimming pool with a diameter of 54 meters sheltered by a glass dome equipped by a mechanism that allows it to open and close. The capacity of the building is great – it can process 4,000 bathers a day, or 500 bathers an hour. The lower level of the building is split into two halves with two separate entrances – the male and the female half. In each half, facilities for undressing, steaming, and bathing are laid out in succession, in two different “classes,” levels of luxury, for each sex.

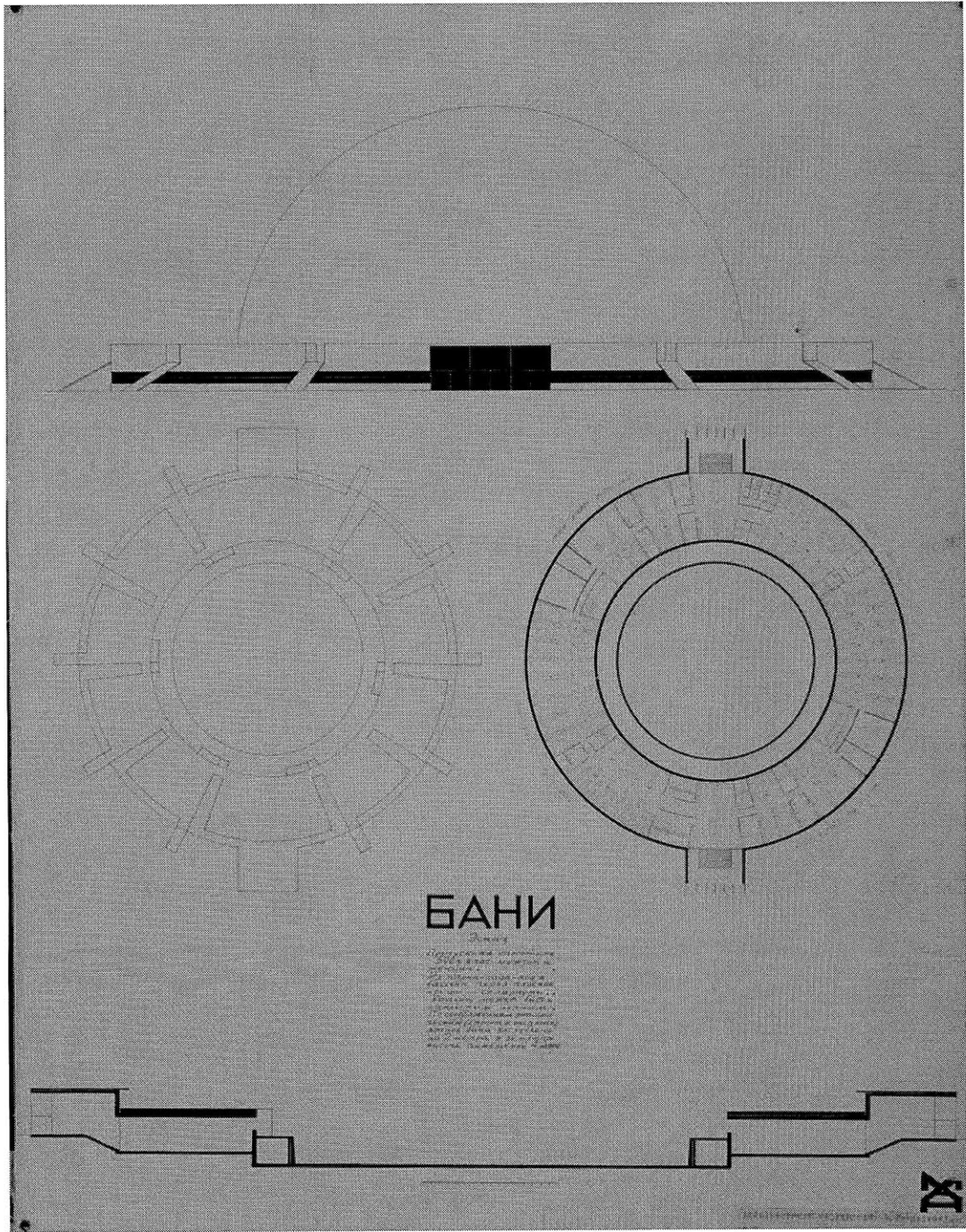


Figure 8. Project for a Bathhouse, Aleksandr Nikol'sky, 1927, Original drawing

The singularity of the pool building was underscored by its peculiar relationship to the terrain. The building is not level with the ground. Dressing, showering, and steaming facilities are buried 2 meters into the ground, and the solarium on the roof is two meters above ground and ties to the land only by thin ramps that lead to the deck. The building is intentionally isolated from the surroundings – elevated above it and buried below it, its singularity circumscribed by the round plan. This is more than a radical modernist non-relationship to the site – this is the building as an extreme, condensed model of detachment. It is the detachment of a ritual territory dedicated to the rites of bodily care, topped by a gigantic mechanically operated dome.

We find extreme models of such detachment in projects of the suprematist movement, spearheaded by Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky. Nikol'sky was probably the only architect who joined the suprematists, who gathered around the Institute for Artistic Culture (INKHUK) in Leningrad after Malevich's move from Vitebsk in 1922.¹⁰⁸ Suprematist painters threaded the boundary between a graphic project and an architectural structure. Possibly the most illustrative example of this are Malevich's *Arkhitektions*, compositions of bright rectangles, which were to be inserted into the city skyline, and which were to exist both as painting and building, defamiliarizing the city skyline. And which would materialize one of the open possibilities of socialism – the elimination of gravity.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ See more about this in Dimitrii Kozlov, "Aleksandr Nikol'skii i suprematisty [Alexandr Nikol'sky and the Suprematists] in *Sbornik trudov fakul'teta istorii iskusstv Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge* [Journal of the School of History of Art of the European University in Saint Petersburg], St. Petersburg, 2007, pp. 98-114

¹⁰⁹ "The idea of the conquest of the substructure, the earthbound, can be extended even further and calls for the conquest of gravity as such. It demands floating structures, a physical-dynamic architecture," El

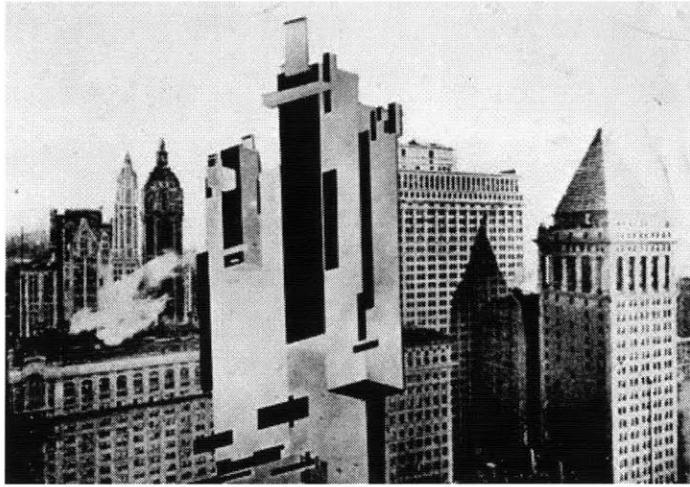


Figure 9. Kazimir Malevich, *Arkhitekton*, 1924

Nikol'sky's bathhouse was, in its geometric clarity and singularity, both a map of the streamlined hygienic cosmos, and a project for a functioning bathhouse. It remains, in its graphic austerity, a set of three concentric circles blown up and thrown onto the ground of a Leningrad suburb and blown up into a three-dimensional sketch of a building, its mystical character closely tied to its graphic simplicity.

Although never built, the model bathhouse was the only edifice of its type considered as a major Soviet monument in El Lissitzky's 1930 treatise *Architecture for World Revolution*. This was not only due to stylistic affinities. The emphasis on bodily care as a public, communal ritual paralleled El Lissitzky's call for public and "universal" architecture as a replacement for "private and intimate" commissions of the past.¹¹⁰ The little universe of "phys-culture" designed by Nikol'sky becomes in his *Architecture for World Revolution* one of the main examples of architecture responding to the new

Lissitzky, in "New Cities," in *Architecture for World Revolution*, Eric Dluhosch, transl. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984, p.65

¹¹⁰ El Lissitzky. *Architecture for World Revolution* (1930). p. 27

economy of socialist industrialization, side by side with buildings such as Brothers Vesnin's Palace of Labor of 1923 and Leningradskaya Pravda of 1924, and Melnikov's Soviet Pavillion at the World Fair of 1925.

In the period when Lissitsky was writing *Architecture for World Revolution*, several baths were actually being built in Leningrad and Moscow. Yet he chose to present the virtual and most ambitious vision of what collective bathing could entail and how it could be stylized in socialism. The gigantic temple to hygiene illustrated the desire to produce hygiene on a mass scale; its formal detachment from the urban milieu created a temple of self-care which transformed hygiene into mass initiation.

Nikol'sky's monumental project was never built. But its scaled down and revised version, what is today known as *Kruglaya Banyya* [Round Bathhouse], was. Between 1927 and 1930 NarKomStroi, the Leningrad Committee for Municipal Construction, undertook the erection of a bath based on Nikol'sky's scheme in a Leningrad suburb. The bathhouse was small – it could only process 2,400 citizens a day, and its diameter was only 21 meters – less than half of the size of the pool in the original plan.

Despite the miniaturization of the project, the suprematists claimed it. Contemporaries had the opportunity to look at the round bath from an airplane. In the November issue of *SSSR na stroike* [USSR in Construction], the most expensive and sophisticated Soviet propaganda journal that was published from 1931 to 1941 in four languages (French, German, English, and Russian,) we look at its photograph from the air. The image, included in the *SSSR na stroike* by El Lissitzky, who was at this moment in charge of editing the graphic design of this journal, presents the building in the spirit of an *architecton*. The building seems to levitate in space, and its shape is cut off at the

edges, so that the roof is transformed into a flat geometric shape merging with the surface of the photograph.

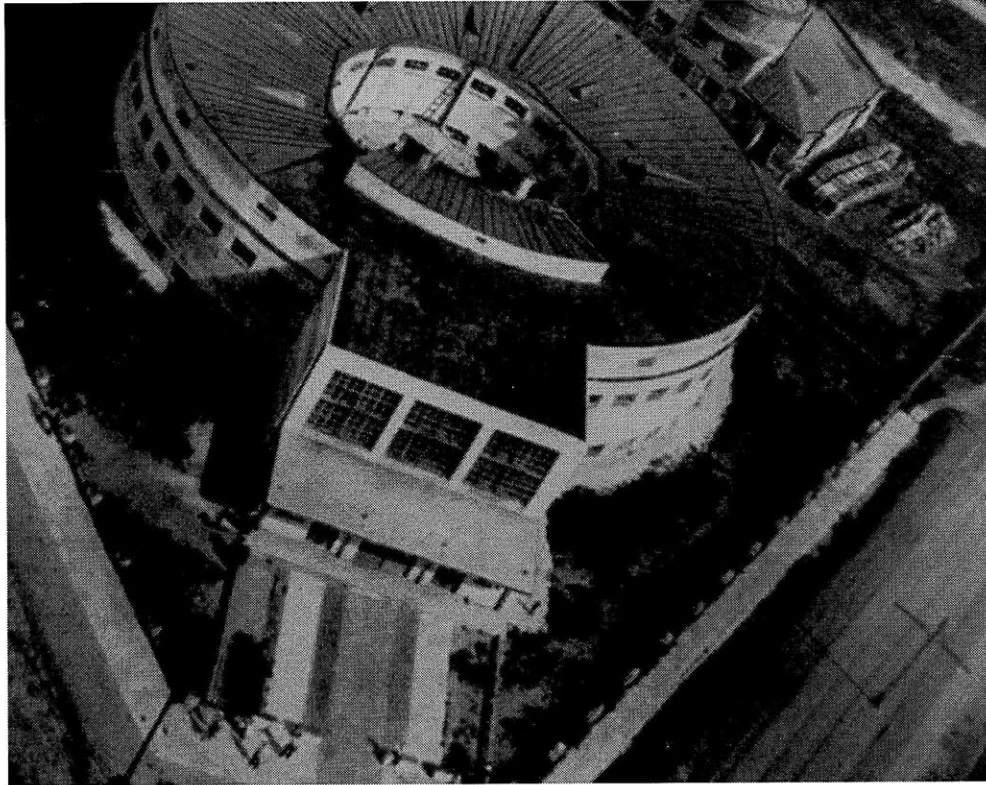


Figure 10. Nikol'sky, Round Bathhouse, in *USSR in Construction*, No. 11 (November) 1931

But the Round Bathhouse is something very different from its original model. It is not only that it has a diameter of only 21 meters with the interior hole of 9.5 meters. It is not only that there are fewer bathers. The minuscule version of the interplanetary vehicle in Nikol'sky's experimental project loses its roof deck and does not enable citizens to levitate above ground. In fact, it disappears in the surroundings, with its white

walls camouflaged for most of the year in the snow-covered landscape of the Leningrad suburb.



Figure 11. Round Bathhouse, 1930, photograph mine

If we look at the original drawing of the second version, we also see that now there is only one entrance to the building. There are also two floors. The structure also does not have a symmetrical male and female half – men and women share an entrance and occupy potentially separate floors. The perfect symmetry of the project is lost when Nikol'sky divides each floor into a smaller section for the first class and a bigger section for the second class.

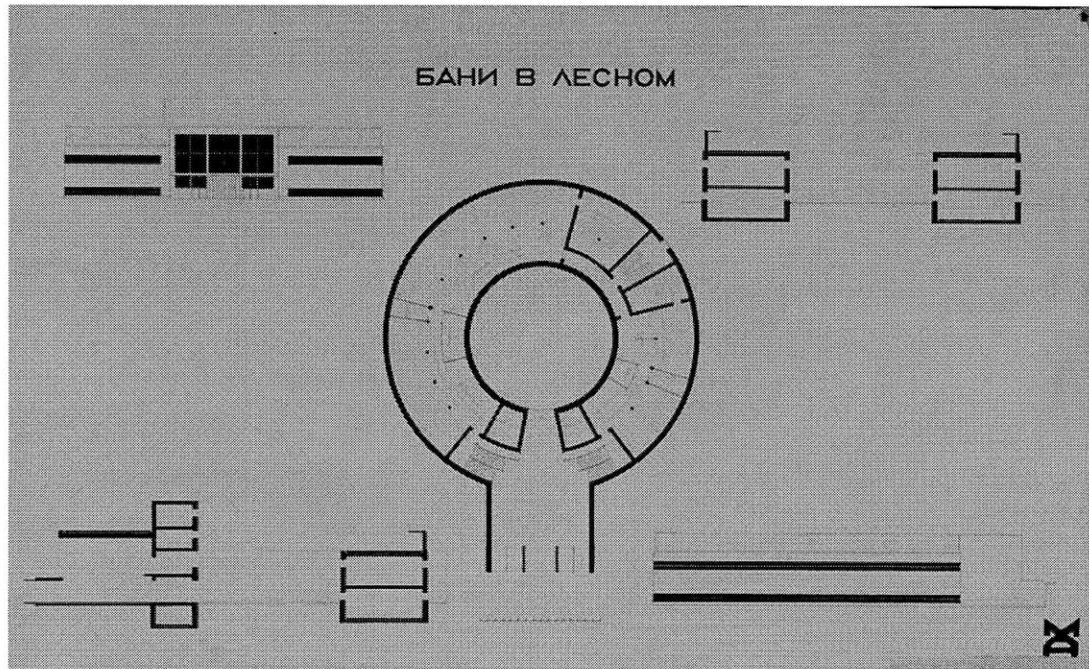


Figure 12. Round Bathhouse, Nikol'sky, Original drawing, 1927

The Round Bathhouse is still a hermetic, self-enclosed world of hygiene. But in the center of the white bunker, there is no longer a place of mass communion topped by a mechanical glass dome. Nikol'sky leaves a hole, an empty space in the middle. A hole that leaves open the question of what might be in the center of the Soviet cosmos of self-care.

Several decades later, women and men share floors. A small heated pool was added to the center of the structure. It is a pool with a circumference of barely 5 meters, which can comfortably accommodate at most a couple of swimmers, according to author's estimate. In this steamy realm, male and female bathers from different parts of the building meet. Whereas in the center of the original project was a space of mass

communion, throughout the life of the built project, the central void becomes a space of intimate encounters, and subtle eroticism replaces the mass ritual.



Figure 13. Round Bathhouse, photograph mine

Let me now go back to the years that followed the erection of Nikol'sky's round bathhouse. Nikol'sky did not only work on his own round bath. He also supervised Anatoly Ladinsky, who designed another round bathhouse, opened in the Syberian city of Tyumen in 1931. With its 30 meters in diameter, it was only slightly bigger than Nikol'sky's project. Ladinsky's bathhouse is the most hermetic version of the round type. And it is also the most direct translation of the idea that the bathhouse is a working building and a processing machine.

The project was published in the January 1932 issue of *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* [Building in Moscow] under the title “When is the Erection of Structures without Direct Lighting Feasible?”¹¹¹ The main topic discussed by the architect was the optical isolation of the building from its surroundings, and the fact that most of the washing and the steaming takes place in the dim space of the bath interior. Ladinsky comes up with rational justifications for his approach: the need to concentrate the infrastructure in the center of the building and to place baths and saunas close to it, and the problems with placing showers next to exterior walls, which are then ruined by moisture and ice.

What the scheme creates is a small self-sufficient universe that is both physically and optically closed onto itself. This system has its own peculiar logic, informed by engineering requirements, a logic which also creates a peculiar cosmology of the enclosed bathing universe. The center of Ladinsky's circle is not hollow. As the section shows, at the center of the building are mechanics: sewage, ventilation, and most importantly, the heater. The bathhouse in Tyumen is a smaller scale realization of Nikol'sky's model universe, but in this variation, a universe organized around infrastructure, mechanical workings.

The scheme of Ladinsky's world of hygiene consists of four concentric zones – the saunas, showers, and lockers with two corridors around them for access. They are arranged according to temperature. The heating shaft, 3 meters in diameter, is in the center. They are surrounded by saunas. The saunas are encircled by a band of showers.

¹¹¹Anatoly S. Ladinskii, “Ratsionalizatsiya proektirovaniya tait v sebe ogromnye vozmozhnosti ekonomii: Kogda tselesoobrazna postroika zdaniy bez pryamogo osveshcheniya?” [The rationalization of design hides great potential for economizing: When is the construction of buildings without direct lighting purposeful?], *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* no. 1 (January) 1932, p. 30

Cold dressing rooms and lockers are around the periphery of the building. The layout of the *banya* replicates the structure of the Solar system.



Figure 14. Anatoly Ladinsky, Bathhouse in Tyumen, 1931, section

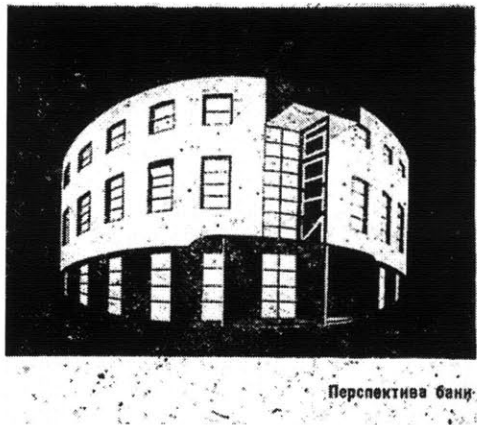


Figure 15. Anatoly Ladinsky, Bathhouse in Tyumen, 1931, perspective

For Ladinsky, the bathhouse is not a place in which the citizen dwells. It is a place of movement. The citizen does not linger in the bathhouse, but as he spends 5 minutes undressing, 40 minutes washing and steaming, and 15 minutes dressing, and accomplishes his task in an hour of constant activity and movement.

The citizen follows a planned path, which prevents mixing of the dirty and the clean. The bather enters a “dirty” staircase, takes of his clothes, and puts them in a two-

sided locker. He proceeds to the washing room and the sauna, then goes into another “clean” hallway, approaching his locker from the other side, dressed, and exits the building through a “clean” staircase.

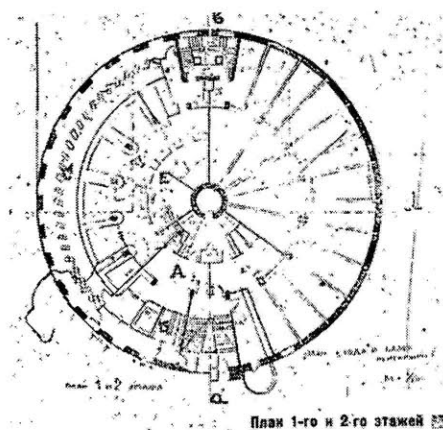


Figure 16. Anatoly Ladinsky, Bathhouse in Tyumen, plan

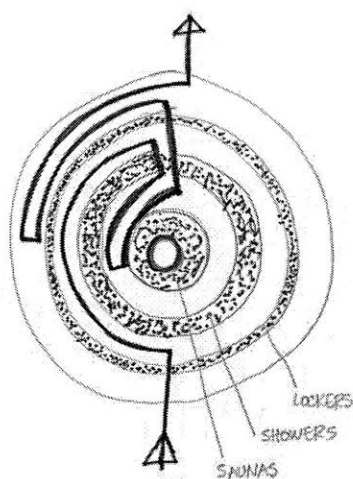


Figure 17. Bathhouse in Tyumen, scheme of the bathing sequence, sketch mine

The ritual of bathing was at the same time a ritual of production. As they traversed the building according to the marked path of self-transformation, as they journeyed through the building’s entrails, people performed the work of self-

transformation according to the script marked by the building. The logic of the building was an operative logic. The citizen processed in the depths of this dimly lit world was the object and subject of the production of cleanliness.

Eventually the plot for the bathhouse migrated to the architecture of industrial facilities. We leaf through the January 1932 issue of *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura* in which the project for the Banya in Tyumen was published. We stumble upon a design for a project with an uncannily similar plan and a similar idea about how the process of production should be scripted – it is the project for a new Bread Factory No. 5 erected in 1932, one of the six new bakeries planned for Moscow in 1931 and 1932, all with a circular plan.¹¹²

¹¹² K Yakovlev, I. Filimonov, “12 hlebnikh fabrik,” [Twelve bread factories], *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* No.1 (January) 1932, pp. 18-21

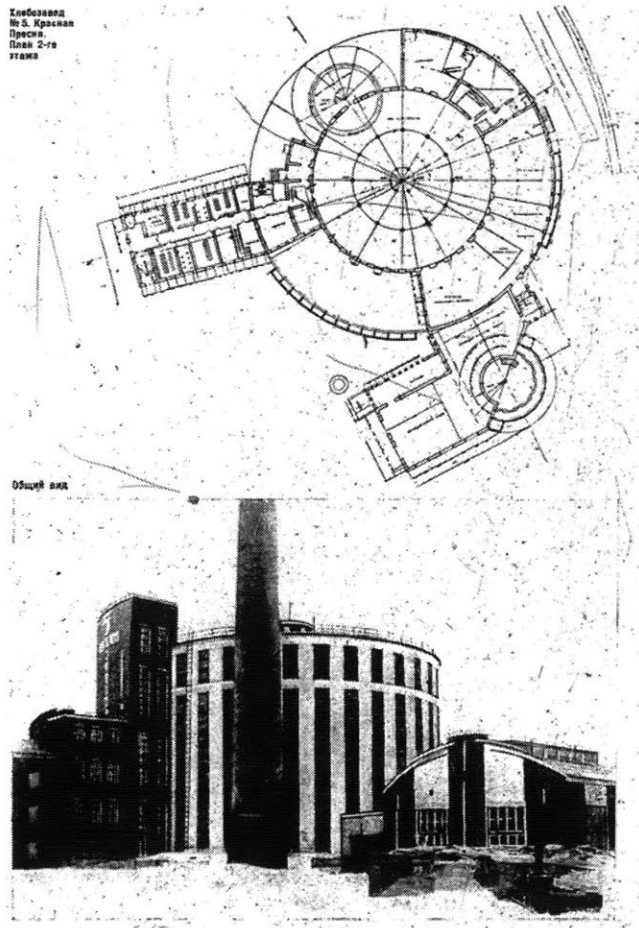


Figure 18. Bread Factory No. 5, *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, 1932

The idea behind Bread Factory No. 5, which reflected “the revolution in baking bread,” was that production should take place on concentrically disposed round conveyors of different temperatures, similarly to how in the Tyumen bath various stages of the bathing process take place in concentric circles located around the electrical heart. Bread is baked in the center of the structure, then it is transported onto “endlessly moving belts,” which transport it to the cooling facility, and further on to sorting for transportation.¹¹³

¹¹³ Ibid, 18

The official justification for designing the factory as a building with a circular plan was the “rationalization” of the building process, the savings in labor and material. “Comparing the rectangular and the round plan, we see that, with the approximately same area of usable space, the area of walls in the round building is 12.5% less than in the rectangular one. This made us chose the round form.”¹¹⁴ “The maximum compactness of the factory is achieved.”¹¹⁵

Rationalization in Bread Factory No. 5 meant introducing into the building a endlessly rotating mechanical belts and creating a *perpetuum mobile*, a building in constant operation. What is interesting in both No. 5 and in Tyumen is that perfect rationalization and mechanization involved creating structural and mechanical systems that resemble the celestial. The projects reflect the capacity of architecture to inscribe cosmic schemes into the mundane operations of *byt*, such as showering and baking bread.

We can read these schemes for the production of cleanliness and food in mechanical cosmos as miniature and isolated maps of the cosmic vision of early Gastev we read before. ““The world itself will become a machine, in which for the first time cosmos will find its own heart, its own beat.”¹¹⁶

According to plans, it might have been a world akin to a bathhouse.

¹¹⁴ Ratsionalizatsiya proektirovaniya tait v sebe ogromnye vozmozhnosti ekonomii: Kogda tselesoobrazna postroika zdanii bez pryamogo osveshcheniya?” p. 31

¹¹⁵ K Yakovlev, I. Filimonov, “12 hlebnikh fabrik,” [Twelve bread factories], *Sovremennaiia arkhitektura* No.1 (January) 1932, p. 18

¹¹⁶ Aleksei Gastev, “My Posiagnuli” [We Encroached] from *Poezija Rabochego udara*. Petrograd, Izdanie Proletkul'ta 1918, Translation Kurt Johansson, in Kurt Johansson. *Aleksej Gastev: Proletarian Bard of the Machine Age*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1983, p.131

CHAPTER 4: GLEAM

Do you know what technological passions are? [...]

They are life at its extreme!

I have been in Moscow for three years, and I do not know almost anything but its center. I have never been to a store – I just sometimes see them in a flash from the window of a racing car.

My world is the Metro.

When I go around the tunnel, I do not see it.

For me, it is only time, enveloped in spatial forms.¹¹⁷

This is a quote from the writing of a worker by the name of Gertner about his experience of working on the Moscow Metro in the mid 1930s. It is an account of extreme technological rapture experienced in the entrails of the Soviet metropolis. It is an account of a parallel molar life of trance lived below Moscow's streets. Gertner's description of life below Moscow is not only about the passions of movement and mechanized labor isolated in a world of their own. It is also about certain aesthetic expectation, a way of seeing and experiencing the city by inhabiting this parallel world – about speed, sudden flashes, blindness, even the curious possibility to experience space as time.

This chapter is about the Moscow Metro and the aesthetic expectations with which it was invested as the most important public work of the 1930s. The Metro had a

¹¹⁷A. I. Gertner, "O smelosti" [On Courage], in *Rasskazy stroitelei metro* [Stories of Metro Builders], Moscow: Istoriia fabrik i zavodov, 1935, p.116-117. Emphasis in the original.

central place in the discourse of urban transformation, technological miracles, and passion for the building of socialism. How was, in this context, the Metro supposed to be beautiful? How was it to be perceived? What were the aesthetic tactics involved in creating the symbol of collective wealth, the Soviet fetish?

My main sources are collective histories that provided the central myth of the Metro construction. They were also texts in which the allegedly unprecedented beauty of the Metro was related to the joys of technology, collective labor and mechanized movement. They intertwined the ethic of 1930s socialism and the spirit of the Five Year Plans with an aesthetic of surface management, haptic perception, magnificence, and blinding gleam. These were *Stories of Metro Builders* (Rasskazy stroitelei Metro) and *How We Built the Metro* (Kak my stroili Metro), published in the year of the Metro opening, in 1935, by a publishing house called *Histories of Factories and Plants* (Istoriya Fabrik i Zavodov).

These were not marginal publications. They were widely distributed – *Stories of Metro Builders* prepared the public for the opening in March, and *How We Built the Metro* celebrated it in June. *How We Built the Metro* was disseminated in an astonishing 100,000 copies. Both volumes were part of Maxim Gorky’s project of writing histories of “little men.”¹¹⁸ The third volume in the series, which was planned to follow, never came out, due to the atmosphere of secrecy which surrounded the Metro site in the

¹¹⁸ See Katerina Clark, “Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan,” in *Cultural Revolution in Russia*, Sheila Fitzpatrick, editor, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978

second half of the 1930s, when, in the context of Stalinist purges, archives on Metro construction were closed and their publication became a taboo.¹¹⁹

Stories of Metro Builders, is a compilation of individual accounts of workers, who came to the site of the Metro construction, and whose lives were transformed by the process. *How we Built the Metro*, the official myth of the Metropolitan, was more cacophonous, and written by more than one hundred workers, engineers, architects, and political agitators, as a collective history of the so-called *Metrostroï*.¹²⁰ It is about the transformation of builders, nature, society, and the beauty of Moscow's underground system.

How We Built the Metro, the more complex of the works, which I will mainly discuss, begins with official speeches of Iosif Stalin and Lazar Kaganovich, the head of the Moscow Communist Party and the head of *Metrostroï*. They are followed by chapters on Bolsheviks on the Metro and Komsomol construction, chapters on the enlightenment of people as they built the masterpiece together. The body of the work, however, is a traversal through metro stations, interlaced by stories about different aspects of the construction of the Metro. Due to the encyclopedic ambition of its editors, that to provide a full and definitive historical account of the majestic achievement of little men, the text is amazingly eclectic. There is a chapter on the "Architecture of the Metro," written by architect Nikolai Kolli, but it is given equal importance to a chapter on freezing the ground, "Nine Billion Calories of Cold," and a chapter on the escalator "Living Staircase." The text has the structure of the Metro. Drab

¹¹⁹ Mary A. Nicholas and Cynthia A. Ruder, "In Search of The Collective Author: Fact and Fiction from the Soviet 1930s," *Book History*, vol. 11 (2008), p. 238.

¹²⁰ *Metrostroï* is a neologism from *metro* and *stroika* (construction), the name of Moscow metro corporation, as well as a noun referring to the labor of construction.

passages with figures and descriptions of construction operations are interrupted, as if by wells of electric light, but poetic descriptions of ecstatic experiences, enchantment with Metro's might and beauty.

An account of the sightless and heated struggle with nature underneath Moscow, stories relate the epic engineering feat of freezing, digging, blasting, and excavating earth and the parallel ideological transformation of its builders. The magnificence of ornament and textures in the finished metro, the magic of electrification embodied in the historic Work, and the faces of travelers showing joy and fascination with it are illustrated with sea-blue photographs lacing the book.

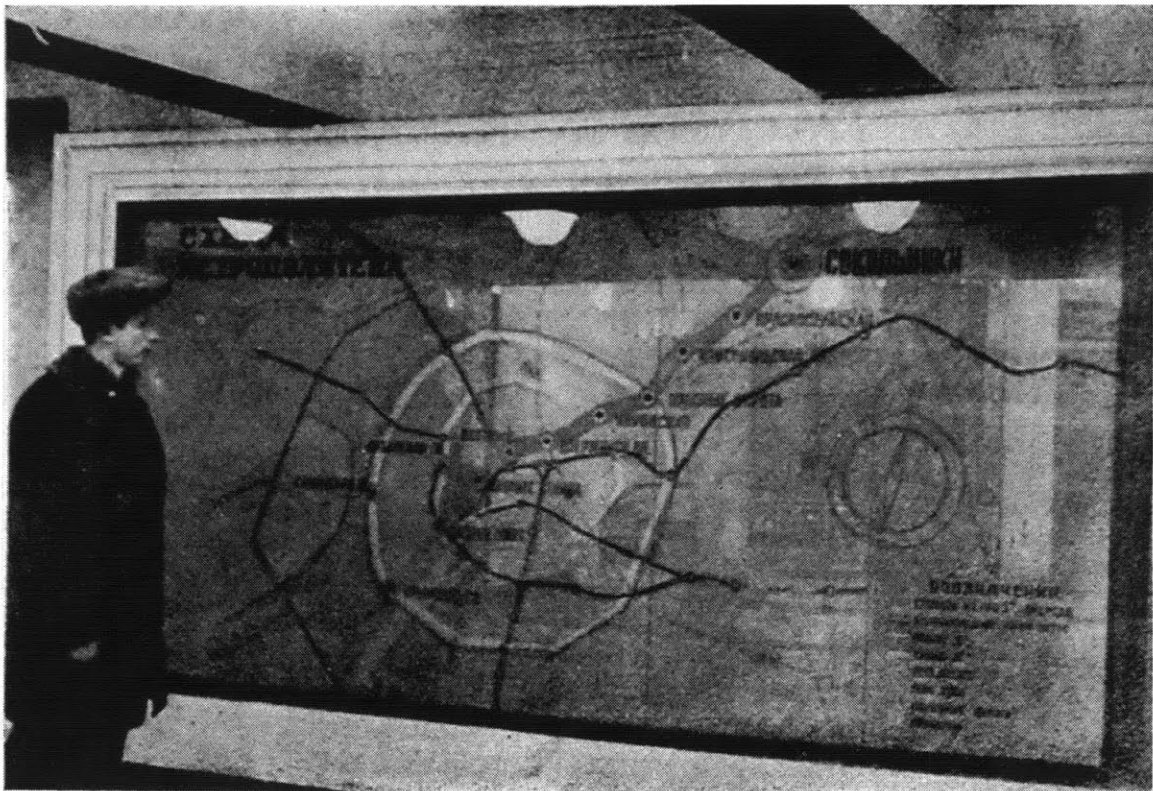


Figure 1. "The Map of the Metro." From *How We Built the Metro*, 1935

The basic textual form employed – the *otcherk*, borders between literature and journalism and effectively conceals the text’s artifice and blurs authorship. Consisting mostly of quotes and dialogues, the text is supposed to be an unmediated record of speech. The collective author transcribes events, anecdotes, and official speeches. The history is imagined as a mass masterpiece that illustrates a confluence of destinies into one, an *esprit de corps* of socialist reconstruction.

The Moscow Metropolitan was, indeed, a structure meant to represent an infinite mass of the workers in a structure of absolute magnificence. It was imagined as built by the entire country, as an ongoing “labor of millions.”¹²¹ The Metro was ultimately dedicated, to the dignity and comfort of an even larger entity: “millions of workers always and everywhere.”¹²²

¹²¹ I. G. Aingorn, A. I. Levchenko, “*Stroila vsya strana*” [The Entire Country was Building], *Kak my stroili metro* [How We Built the Metro], on *Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, http://www.metro.ru/library/kak_my_stroili_metro/, accessed May 25, 2009

¹²² “*Pobeda metro – pobeda sotsializma: Rech’ tovarisha L. M. Kaganovicha na torzhestvenom zasedanii, posvyashchennom puskui metropolitena, 14 maya 1935 goda*” [The Victory of the Metro is a Victory of Socialism: The speech of comrade L..M. Kaganovich on the ceremony dedicated to the opening of the metro, 14 May 1935], *Kak my stroili metro*, p. XXVII.

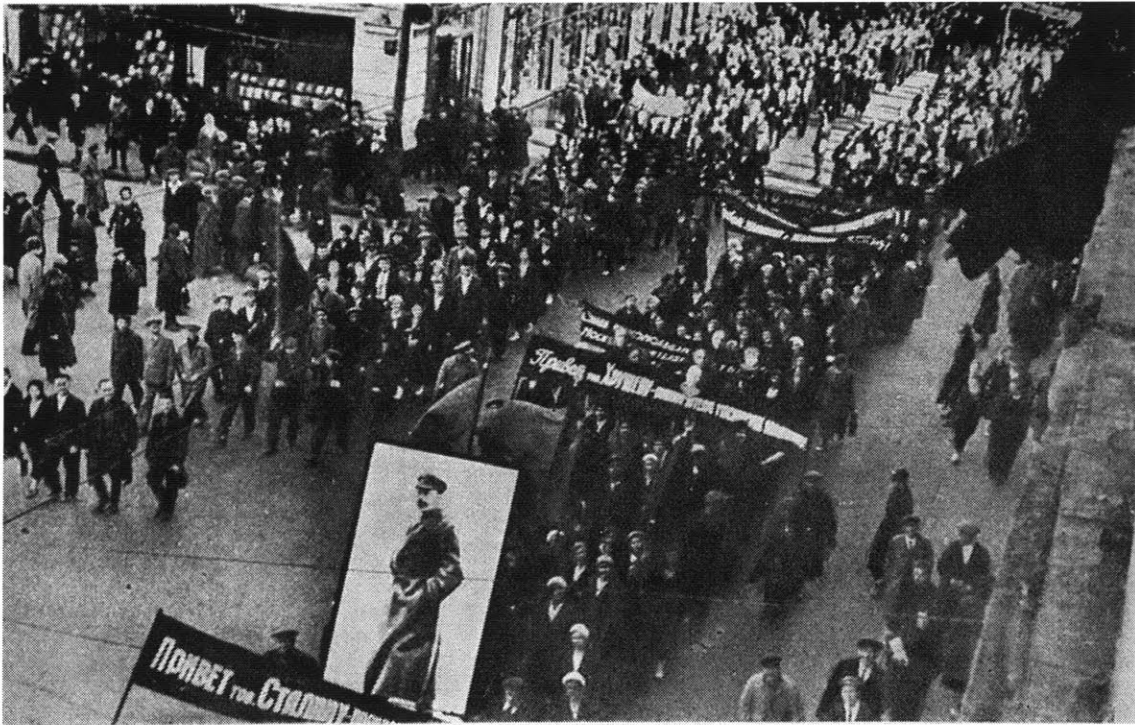


Figure 2. “Workers’ Parade on the Day of Metro Opening, 15 May 1935,” from *How we Built the Metro*, June 1935

How We Built the Metro was finished right before the Metro opening on May 15, 1935. On this day, the opening of the first line was celebrated by an ecstatic mass demonstration of synchronized movement in the streets of Moscow. Workers celebrated with “Songs of Metro Conquerors,” the scores for which were distributed on the spot. A radio broadcast of events in a passenger car was transmitted to the entire Soviet Union.

The Metro was the most precious child of the Second Year Plan, the period of intense industrialization of the country, which began in 1932. The two most powerful symbols of the plan were the Metro and its “younger brother,” the Volga-Moscow canal. The canal was built by prisoners as means of their correction, the Metro by workers as

means of their transformation into enlightened urbanites. For a society in which “the toil of the great socialist building site” (*stroika*)¹²³ was the central metaphor of its political life, actual construction became a potent allegory; the Metro and the Canal became the central symbols of “the new socialist state under construction.”¹²⁴

Described by its builder-writers in *How We Built the Metro* as a system of “magnificent underground castles,”¹²⁵ the Metro embodied the prestige of the “magnificent, planned world of socialist industry,”¹²⁶ and displayed the wealth produced by socialist modernity. It was clad in marbles and granites brought from the Crimea, Karelia, the Urals, and the Soviet Far East. The stations were vast, richly decorated, and imagined as anterooms, evoking “being in a theater lobby or the entrance hall of a first class hotel.”¹²⁷ They were supposed to produce a fast impression, to “influence the observer within five minutes.”¹²⁸ The observer was supposed to be impressed by opulence, and also by marvels of modern technology. Elaborate lighting imbedded in the Metro’s skies displayed the workings of its hidden “electrical heart” and animated the

¹²³ Starostin K. F., Mar’yanovskii A. I., Reznichenko E. D., Fel’dman E. V., Pogrebinskii K. S., Lipman N. I., Eshin D. B., Mozel’ N. P., Tseitlin L. V., “*Bol’sheviki na Metrostroie*” [Bolsheviks on the Metrostroii], in *How we Built the Metro*, p. 38

¹²⁴ “*Pobeda metro – pobeda sotsializma: Rech’ tovarisha L. M. Kaganovicha na torzhestvenom zasedanii, posvyashchenom puskui metropolitena, 14 maya 1935 goda*” [The Victory of the Metro is a Victory of Socialism: The speech of comrade L..M. Kaganovich on the ceremony dedicated to the opening of the metro, 14 May 1935]

¹²⁵ K. F. Starostin and others, “*Bol’sheviki na Metrostroie*” [Bolsheviks of the Metrostroii], *Kak my stroili metro, Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, http://www.metro.ru/library/kak_my_stroili_metro/, accessed May 25, 2009

¹²⁶ G. F. Klimov, “*Za kachestvo*” [For Quality], in *Kak my stroili metro, Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, http://www.metro.ru/library/kak_my_stroili_metro/, accessed May 25, 2009

¹²⁷ Efim Reznichenko, *Dni i gody metrostroia* [Days and Years of Metrostroii], cited by Jenks, Andrew. “A Metro on the Mount: The Underground as a Church of Soviet Civilization,” *Technology and Culture* 41, number 4 (October 2000), p. 713

¹²⁸ *Kak my stroili metro*, p. 196

magical underworld with glimmering luminosity.¹²⁹ The smoothly moving escalators were referred to by the fairytale rhyme *lestnitsa chudesnitsa*, the self-propelled stairway.¹³⁰

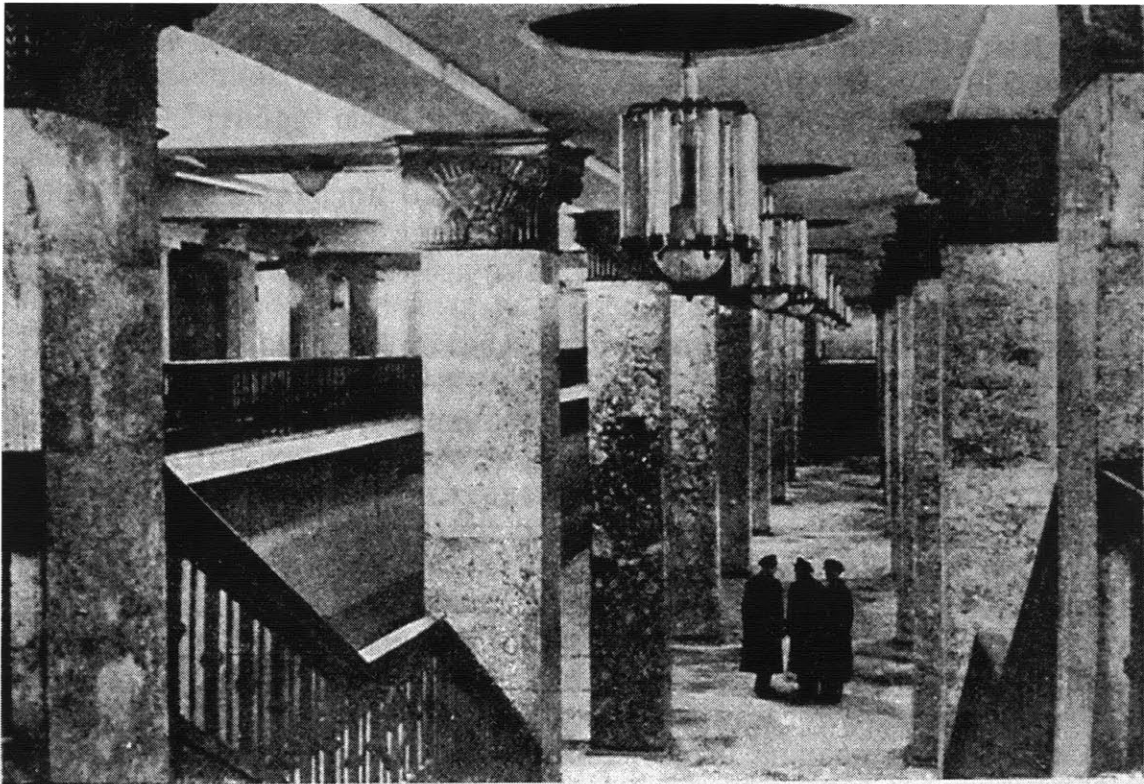


Figure 3. “Komsomol’skaya,” from *How We Built the Metro*

For Muscovites, the breathtaking vehicle of monumental propaganda combined urban transportation with “a significant rise of cultural standards,” and an education of

¹²⁹ I. E. Katsen, B. G. Gershtein, A. A. Averin, “*Eletricheskoe serdtse metro*” [Electrical Heart of the Metro], in *Kak my stroili metro, Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, http://www.metro.ru/library/kak_my_stroili_metro/, accessed May 25, 2009

¹³⁰ L. A. Ostrovskii, “*Zhivaya lestnitsa*” [The Living Stairway], in *Kak my stroili metro*

“aesthetic sensibilities.”¹³¹ Pilgrims to the center of Soviet political power and technological modernity could also hardly circumvent the splendid underground corridors permeating the city. Photographs in *How We Built the Metro* show various “delegates,” workers and peasants from all over the country, flocking to see the wonder.

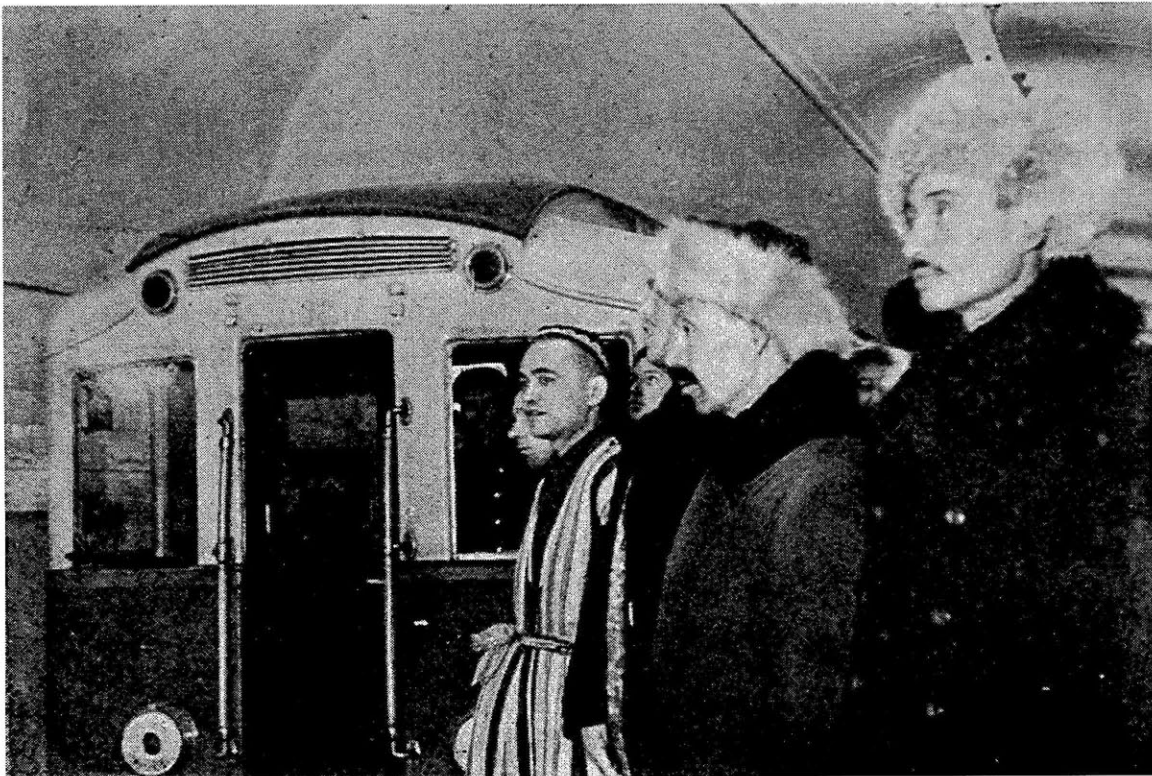


Figure 4. “Delegates of the Second Congress of Vanguard Farmers,” in *How we Built the Metro*

The Metro was, according to contemporary accounts, better than any Metro in existence. In reality, the Moscow Metropolitan was technologically inferior to many Western systems. (For example, the maximum speed of trains was only 32 miles per hour, compared to 45 miles per hour in the much older New York subway.) But the

¹³¹ K. F. Starostin and others, “*Bol’sheviki na Metrostroie*,” [Bolsheviks on the Metrostroï], *Kak my stroili metro*, p. 41.

advantage of the Moscow underground was in its aesthetic superiority, in its power to entrance and exalt the masses. It was, according to contemporary commentators cited in the book, such as the head of its construction Lazar Kaganovich, and its architect, Nikolai Kolli, the most beautiful Metro in the World. Its beauty was supposed to showcase the “victory of socialism as a principle,”¹³² to embody the labor of millions, and to exhibit the rebuilding of Moscow as a socialist metropolis. Its aesthetic superiority demonstrated the superiority of the socialist system and the success of the Second Five Year Plan.

In order to understand how the aesthetics of the Metro, as a new site of collective quotidian, reflected proletarian political victory, we have to explore the transformation of mass motility as political transformation.

When he tries to survey the cacophony of Moscow *byt* of the preceding era of the New Economic Policy in his much quoted essay of 1927, Walter Benjamin describes the traffic and the blooming small trade in one take. For Benjamin Moscow was not urban. It was a “gigantic village,” a “rurally formless” ecology, a countryside settlement “playing hide and seek with the city.”¹³³ There was a “backward state of traffic” and a “close mingling of people and things.”¹³⁴ There were sleighs, set low to the ground, with people on them rubbing off of other people and things as they pass them in the silent bustle of the snow covered capital. Cars were few. “They are used only for weddings

¹³² “*Pobeda metro – pobeda sotsializma: Rech’ tovarisha L. M. Kaganovicha na torzhestvennom zasedanii, posvyashchennom puskui metropolitena, 14 maya 1935 goda*” [The Victory of the Metro is a Victory of Socialism: The speech of comrade L..M. Kaganovich at the ceremony dedicated to the opening of the metro, 14 May 1935], *Kak my stroili metro*, p. XXVII.

¹³³ Walter Benjamin, “Moscow,” in Peter Demets, editor, *Reflections*. New York: Schocken Books, 1986, pp. 112, 125, 124.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 112.

and funerals and for accelerated government.”¹³⁵ The author’s passage through the city on a sleigh was a passage through things, a passage through a quiet snow covered market. It was a passage between goods – picture books, paper kites and fans, wooden toys, wooden spoons, baskets, a parrot, stuffed birds, clothes hangers, cakes, scrap iron, accordions, and icons. The journey through a rurally formless Moscow was a winding passage through a sprawling market.

In the period of nationalization and centralized state planning, which began a year after Benjamin’s report, movement was channeled, harnessed and controlled by official means. This was a symbolic and practical political project, initiated in the winter after Benjamin’s report. The First Five Year Plan did not only spell the end to small business ownership and petty trade. It was also an effort to channel the mobility of people by introducing internal passports.¹³⁶ It was a period of new ideas about the efficiency and speed of movement that corresponded to accelerated industrialization and the centralization of power.

The most important change, however, was the introduction of City Planning made within the context of the re-collectivization of the economy during the First Five Year Plan. Lazar Kaganovich, the head of Metro construction, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the head of the Moscow Division of the Communist Party from 1930 to 1935, wrote about the “Internal Planning of Cities.” He explained that the Duma intended to plan the city during the 1920s, but could not

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 100.

¹³⁶ Alessandro De Magistris in his books on Soviet urbanization describes the Soviet Union of the NEP period as a period of “absolute fluidity,” during which Russia was transformed into “a country of vagabonds.” See Alessandro De Magistris. *La costruzione della città totalitarian: Il piano di Mosca e il dibattito sulla città sovietica tra gli anni venti e cinquanta*. Milan: CittàStudioEdizioni, 1995, p. 47

because of the interests of private property. As of the late 1920s, all city property was in government hands, and city planning on a large scale could start. The difference between socialist and capitalist cities was between planning and the chaos of the market.¹³⁷

What City Planning was meant to counter and solve was the condition noticed by Walter Benjamin, the condition of “a village playing hide and seek with the city.” It is exactly the same condition, the complicated and convoluted circulation and the weirdness of Moscow side streets, that Lazar Kaganovich describes as the object of destruction by city planning. Only that, in his terms, the difference is not exactly that between village and city, but that between sobriety and drunkenness:

Let us take for an example an old city, for example, Moscow. We all know that cities were built in an elemental [*stikhiinii*] manner, especially merchant cities. When you walk down Moscow side streets and passages, you get the impression that all these little passages were plotted by a drunk builder.¹³⁸

For Kaganovich, it is the merchant, petty bourgeois, city that is inebriated. The new city of sobriety is the city of socialist centralized planning. It is based on a “scientific-technical approach.”¹³⁹

This planned Moscow was a child of the Second Five Year Plan (1932-1937). Principal directions for the plan were fixed on the third regional conference of the VKP in January 1932. The City Direction of Architecture and Planning (APU) led by Vesnins, Semenev, Golosov, Kolli, and Chernyshev, created a general scheme by the

¹³⁷ L.M. Kaganovich. *Za sotsialisticheskuyu rekonstruktsiyu Moskvyy i gorodov SSSR – pererabotannaia stenograma doklada na iunskom plenumе TSKVKP (b)*. [For the socialist reconstruction of Moscow and cities in the USSR – edited stenogram of the speech on the June session of the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (b).] Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1931, p. 65

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

beginning of 1933. It was modified in accordance to ongoing works to be finalized in 1935, to fix a concentric scheme, with four radial boulevards dividing Moscow into districts and a ring delineating the boundaries of the city center.

It was not the spectacular vistas that became the symbol of new Moscow, as it happened, for example in Hausmann's Paris, in the context of 19th century bourgeois speculation and urban spectacle. The Metro, as the centerpiece of planning, finished before the finalization of the Moscow city plan, was a labor of clandestine burrowing underneath Moscow.

What granted the Metro the status of a special symbol of centralized planning on an all-Soviet scale was its intimate connection to the flow of the urban everyday and the radical transformation of chaotic quotidian circulation into a streamlined passage through palatial labyrinths in which the citizen could feel “the dignity of workers always and everywhere,” materialized by the State.¹⁴⁰

The scientific reconstruction of Moscow was envisioned as a reconstruction of *byt*, the adjustment of the conditions of everyday life to the tempos of socialist industrialization.

We entered the period of socialism. This means that, as we finish laying the foundations of the socialist economy, as we develop the general industrialization of the country, we have to start an overarching struggle for the reconstruction of material-everyday (*material'no-bytovykh*) and cultural conditions of the lives of workers and working masses, on the socialist basis.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰“*Pobeda metro – pobeda sotsializma: Rech' tovarisha L. M. Kaganovicha na torzhestvenom zasedanii, posvyashchennom puskui metropolitena, 14 maya 1935 goda*” [The Victory of the Metro is a Victory of Socialism: The speech of comrade L..M. Kaganovich on the ceremony dedicated to the opening of the metro, 14 May 1935], *Kak my stroili metro*, p. XXVII.

¹⁴¹ L.M. Kaganovich. *Za sotsialisticheskuyu rekonstruktsiyu Moskvy i gorodov SSSR – pererabotannaia stenograma doklada na iunskom plenumie TSKVKP (b)*, p. 9

When writing about the overarching struggle for the reconstruction of *byt*, Kaganovich occasionally writes about Soviet domesticity. It is worth interrupting this narrative to relate how the Soviet leader introduces in the middle of his speeches stories about little men. He dryly and in detail describes the grimness and absurdity of everyday life and the impossible living conditions. Thus, for example, he digresses to tell a “living fact” about the life of Sergei Pavlovich Zemskii.¹⁴²

Sergei Pavlovich Zemskii, a worker in Shempetil'nikovskii trampark metalworker with 11 years of experience. He earns 160 rubles, his wife has a pension of 37 rubles, and they have a family of three. They live on 14 Bersen'evskaya naberezhnaya, apartment 5. They have two rooms of a total area of twenty square meters [215 square feet.] But in order to enter the apartment of Zemsky's it is necessary to pass through a corridor in which there are six to ten seasonal workers, who live on the neighbor's premises. Thus Zemskii is cut off from the kitchen and forced to transform one of his rooms into a kitchen. In addition to that, there is constant fighting, provoked by the discontent of the people living in the walk-through room. All this constitutes the difficult living conditions of comrade Zemskii.¹⁴³

Planned intervention in the domain of “living facts,” which Lazar Kaganovich cites, is extremely modest. For example, Anton Kuz'mich Kosachev, the worker in a gas factory, who lived on a bunk bed before the revolution and his wife and children in the countryside, got “a light filled room with gas, a bathroom, water, and sewage.” His family moved in from the countryside and integrated into factory life.¹⁴⁴ Semen Ivanovich Lesenkov, an old lathe operator in the factory “Red Torch,” who lived in a half-basement with an 8 person family and went to fetch water one kilometer from his

¹⁴² Kaganovich calls his digressions “living facts.” Ibid., p. 17

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

house, got two rooms in a new house with a total area of 24.5 square meters [263 square feet] for a family of 7, with water, gas stove and electrical lighting.

How do we understand the pursuit of monumentality and magnificence, the exuberant expenditure of means and labor, the image of abundance that the Metro was supposed to project, in light of the austerity and modesty of architectural modifications of workers' dwellings? When we talk about the Metro, we talk about the dislocation of domesticity. About exiting the tightly packed room and being at home in an underground urban geography of marbles, lights, and machines. The understanding of the metro as a "lobby of a first class hotel," already signals that it was envisioned as an alternative to the homely.¹⁴⁵

In the Metro, familial domesticity becomes mass domesticity. The workers struggle with living space, noisy neighbors, and lack of running water in their home. But, together, they created a splendid underground palace which competes with the homes of the pre-Revolutionary aristocracy and is now the communal property of the workers, who witness not only collective magnificence, but also the birth of the new, Soviet, column:

The peasant, the worker, can see in the metropolitan, in those flames, in those marble columns, not only marble, not only a marvelous technical structure. He sees in the Metro a realization of his might, of his power. In the past only landowners, only the rich utilized marble. And now the power is ours, this construction is for us – workers and peasants – these are our marble columns, our own, Soviet, socialist.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Efim Reznichenko, *Dni i gody metrostroia* [Days and Years of Metrostroii], cited by Andrew Jenks, "A Metro on the Mount: The Underground as a Church of Soviet Civilization," *Technology and Culture* 41, number 4 (October 2000), p. 713

¹⁴⁶ "Pobeda metro – pobeda sotsializma: Rech' tovarisha L. M. Kaganovicha na torzhestvennom zasedanii, posvyashchennom puskui metropolitena, 14 maya 1935 goda" [The Victory of the Metro is a Victory of

The underground labyrinth, so brilliant and so infused with collective enthusiasm that it becomes in the official imaginary a blazing apparition, was a world of virtual *byt*. This *byt* was not virtual because it was unreal. The Metro was physically there and part of the quotidian commute. It was virtual because the passage through the underground offered glimpses into what the world might look like when transformed by the ecstatic spirit of socialist industrialization, and what the proletarian home of the future, opulently decorated, set in motion, and mechanized, will look like.

In the imaginary of the collective histories, the proletarian masses do not dwell on their property. The virtual inhabitant of the underground system is an endless, formless crowd in perpetual motion. The crowd “animates” the structure, it “animates” the entire city and the entire social system, which is envisioned as the extension of the great Work. This is how one of the commentators in *How We Built the Metro* conjures this image:

On the day when this book falls into the reader’s hands, underground trains will be moving under the streets and squares of the great city. Thirteen marble palaces, erected under the ground, animated by the endless motion of passengers, the circulation of human stream, the din of Moscow – that delirious Niagara, which turns, day and night, the turbine of socialism. The life-building effort and the energy, which gushed into Moscow with millions of human faiths, the spirit of people constructing socialism lead by the great Communist Party – this is the force which scraped new paths under the ground.¹⁴⁷

Socialism: The speech of comrade L..M. Kaganovich on the ceremony dedicated to the opening of the metro, 14 May 1935], *Kak my stroili metro*, p. XXVII.

¹⁴⁷ Aleksandr Kosarev and others, “Ob avtorah etoi knigi,” in *Rasskazy stroitelei metro*, p. 8

Collective travel, according to the image, is the extension of collective labor – the performance of *esprit de corps*, of the delirium of mass motion, the delirium of becoming a human stream that fuels socialist modernity. This conversion takes place on a hidden underground site – in the tunnels underneath Moscow. The idea that the masses should flow through these tunnels like a “delirious Niagara, which turns, day and night, the turbine of socialism,” merges the obsession with creating and directing crowd movement with the fascination with electricity as a key element of Soviet industrialization.

Electricity was both the symbol and the vehicle of Soviet power and industrial development. This was established already in the early 1920s, at the time of the first program for post-Revolutionary economic recovery, and the formation of the State Electrification Commission (GOELRO.) This is when Lenin produced his thereafter endlessly repeated and reproduced slogan: “Communism is Soviet Power plus the electrification of the whole country.”

The Metro was not only a symbolic circuit, in which the motion of the proletariat would be converted into energy that propels socialism ahead. It was also a concrete display of electrification. In it, electricity powered fast moving trains and smoothly flowing elevators. It transformed dark underground burrows into wells of light. The aesthetic challenge was to render electricity visible. It was a challenge to make electricity visible in such a way that would make the Metro, a site of collective labor, collective urbanity, and mass domesticity, really glow with the flames of proletarian victory, as in the vision of Kaganovich.

On May 1, 1934, Kaganovich, according to the myth, called the architects on the phone. “Dear Comrades, we should make Metro stations,” he said. “What is the deadline?” “Twenty five days.” “Which station?” “You, Comrade Kolli, Kirovskaya, you, comrade, that one.” “What kind of stations shall we make?” “Beautiful stations.”¹⁴⁸

What was beautiful? This is what I will try to reconstruct.

By randomly distributing the stations among architects, Lazar Kaganovich attempted to achieve what was his aesthetic ideal – the infinite stylistic variety of stations. In his speech at the Metro opening, he stresses that what constitutes the victory of the Metro as a victory of socialism is the fact that no two stations are the same. The very lack of formal unity is proof of joyous life under Communism – its palace is not drab and uniform, but constantly transforms and changes shape.

¹⁴⁸ N. Y. Kolli, “Arkhitektura Metro,” [Architecture of the Metro], in *Kak my stroili metro* [How We Built the Metro], on *Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, http://www.metro.ru/library/kak_my_stroili_metro/, accessed May 29, 2010

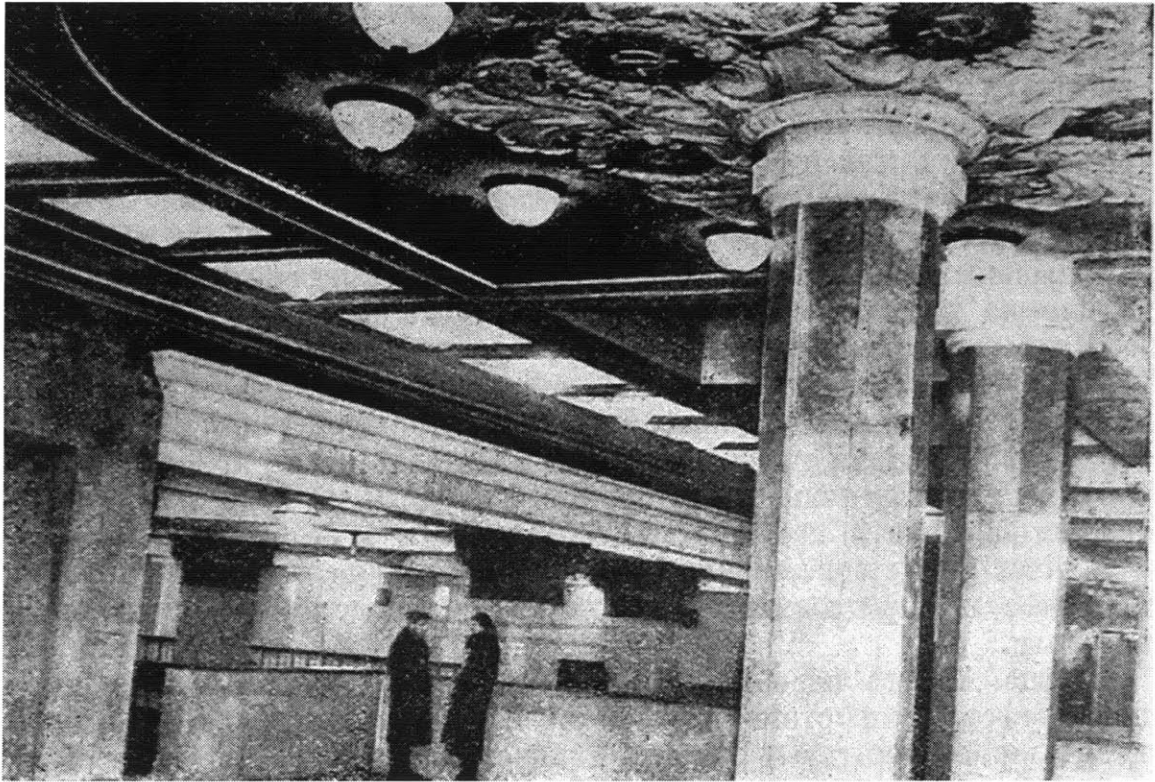


Figure 5. "Komsomol'skaya," from *How We Built the Metro*



Figure 6. Dvoret's Sovetov, 1935, photo from the 1950s

If we look at the images of Chechulin's *Komsomol'skaya* station, with its capitols made of wheat and decorated with hammers and sickles, and Likhtenberg and Dushkin's *Dvorets Sovetov*, which conveys monumentality through sober and minimal means, we can understand this statement. But, of course, the involvement of the architectural profession introduced some stylistic preferences and some formal expertise into the design of the Metro. The charrette was supervised by a committee comprised of government officials and old classicists, such as academician Schusev, who supported liberal interpretation of classical styles. Under this guidance, Likhtenberg and Dushkin, for example, claimed, that in their design for *Dvorets Sovetov* they "drew on the annals of Egyptian architecture," supposedly copying the underground corridors beneath the pyramids.¹⁴⁹

But the Metro's beauty, according to narratives in *How We Built the Metro*, was not manifested in on classicist formal solutions and stylistic variation. It depended on managing surface treatment and lighting so that the power of electricity could be amplified and reflected. What was discussed in the accounts of the time was the Metro's "beautiful architectural cloak."¹⁵⁰ It was not a construction or a composition, but of an "architectural phenomenon," an ethereal "aura of lyrical soulfulness" in an underground electrified universe.¹⁵¹

The architectural text is about marbles – about how hard it is to excavate them,

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ I. D. Gortseridze, "Stantsiya Krasnye Vorota" [Krasnye Vorota Station], in *Kak my stroili metro* [How We Built the Metro], on *Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, http://www.metro.ru/library/kak_my_stroili_metro/, accessed May 29, 2010

¹⁵¹ N. Y. Kolli, "Arkhitektura Metro," [Architecture of the Metro], in *Kak my stroili metro* [How We Built the Metro], on *Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, http://www.metro.ru/library/kak_my_stroili_metro/, accessed May 29, 2010

how hard it is for the architect to select them from switches, how they have to be measured and calculated, how inspired one must be to invent detail. Architectural expertise is also about color, illumination, about sensations of lightness, expanse, and solidity, the magical power of electricity to, in the words of one architect, create “in the underground space without natural lighting a feeling of lightness and joy of life.”¹⁵² In the words of another architect, electricity was “an organic structural element” that “brings marble back to life.”¹⁵³

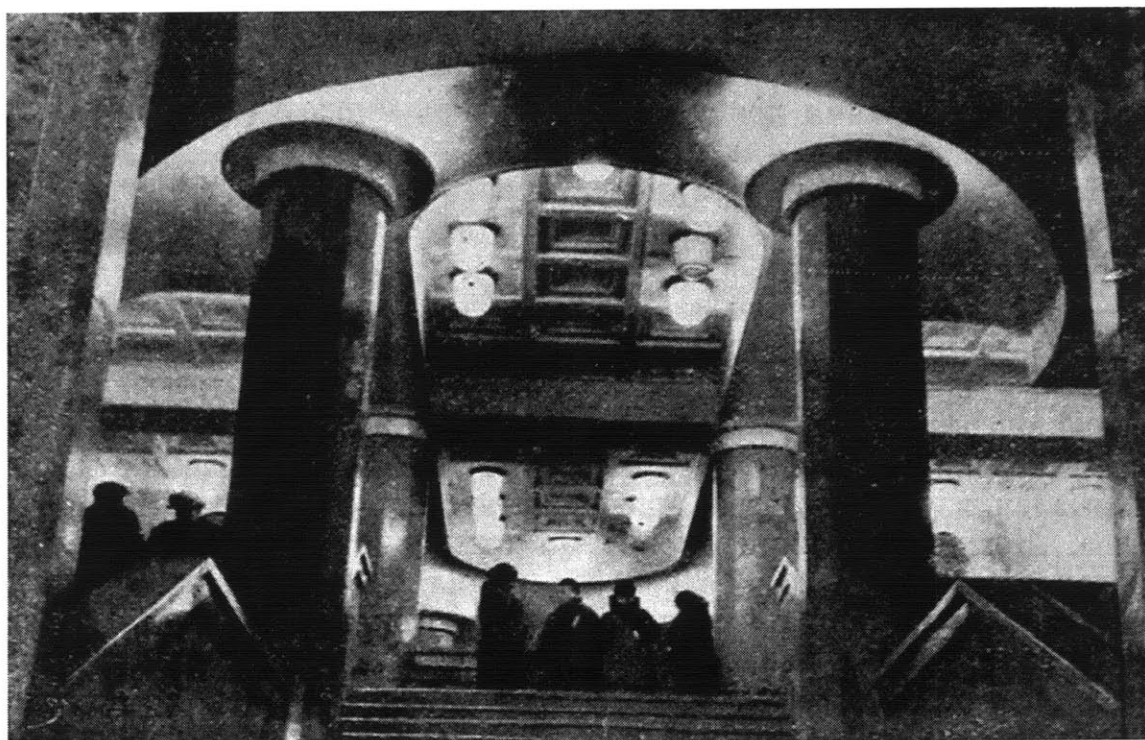


Figure 7. “Krasnoselskaya,” from *How we Built the Metro*

To effect this alchemical transformation of the inanimate into the animate was to design ethereal qualities of the surface – shimmer and glow. To design the new Soviet

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

fetish was to design its gleam. When he talked about the beauty of the Metro at the opening, Academician Shchusev did not talk about form or style. He talked about gleam. “What we have seen under the ground surpassed in impression all expectations, he pronounced. “Metro stations gleam with cleanliness and shimmer of polished marbles. [...] Moscow Metro can justly be called the most beautiful in the World.”¹⁵⁴

It was not only marble columns and walls that were supposed to shine. A delicate attention to surfaces aimed at making them shimmery and effervescent was demonstrated in the design of the train car. The idea of architecture as surface management and the production of gleam was extended in an article written by designer Kravets during construction in 1933, “Architecture of the Metro Car.” Kravets explains architecture as the light “specter” of the train, composed of “mirror glass, metal elements plated with nickle, polished wood and the matte surface of the ceiling, the natural wood of the seats, the red wood of walls, the silver reflections of the nickle surface.” Design, even at this small scale, was the design of gleam.

¹⁵⁴ A. V. Shchusev, in L. Kovalev, editor. *Metro. Sb-k, posvyashchennii pusku oskovskogo metropolitena* [Metro: anthology dedicated to the opening of the Moscow metropoliten]. Moscow: 1935, p. 280.

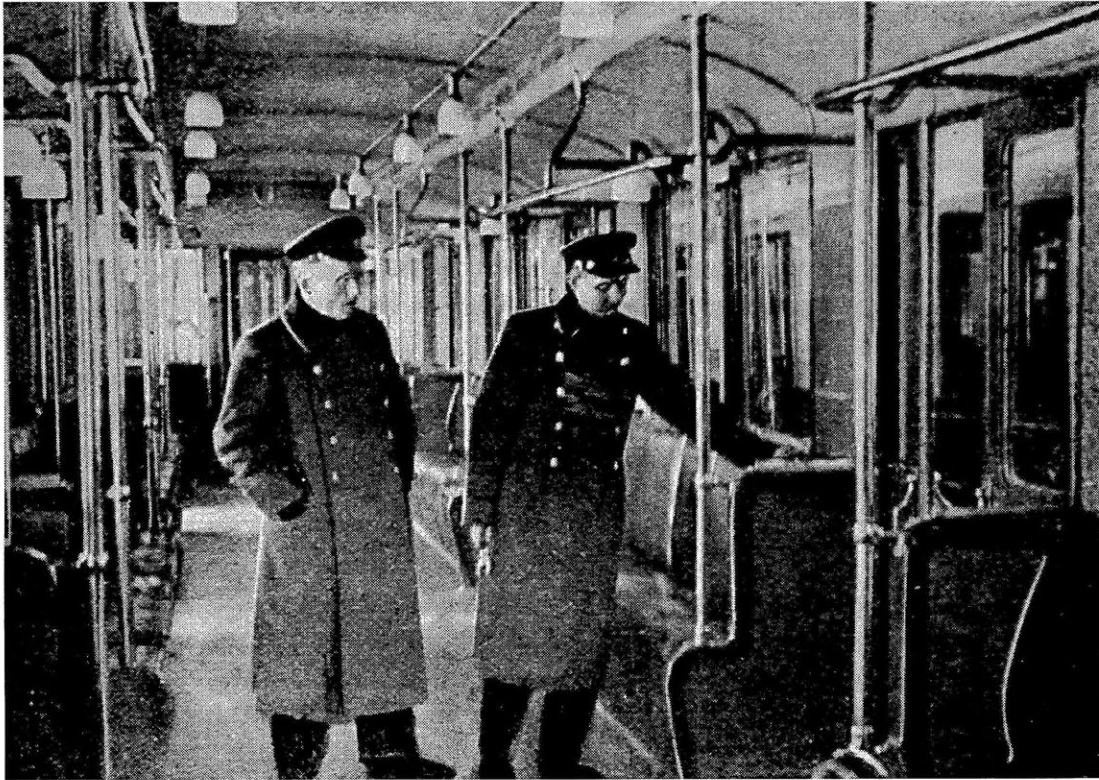


Figure 8. "Inspection of Metro Cars," from *How we Built the Metro*

A photograph in *How We Built the Metro*, featuring two Metro officers visiting the new car on the day of the Metro opening, shows the inspection of gleam – not only by eye, but also by touch. An officer with a wrench in his hand, as he just completed fixing the car, uses his other hand to touch the nickel-plated surface of the rail in order to fully test its cleanliness, smoothness, and shine. The iridescent beauty of the Metro, which materialized the live-giving power of electricity, collective opulence, and immense investment of collective labor, could be literally grasped even on the scale of the smallest detail.

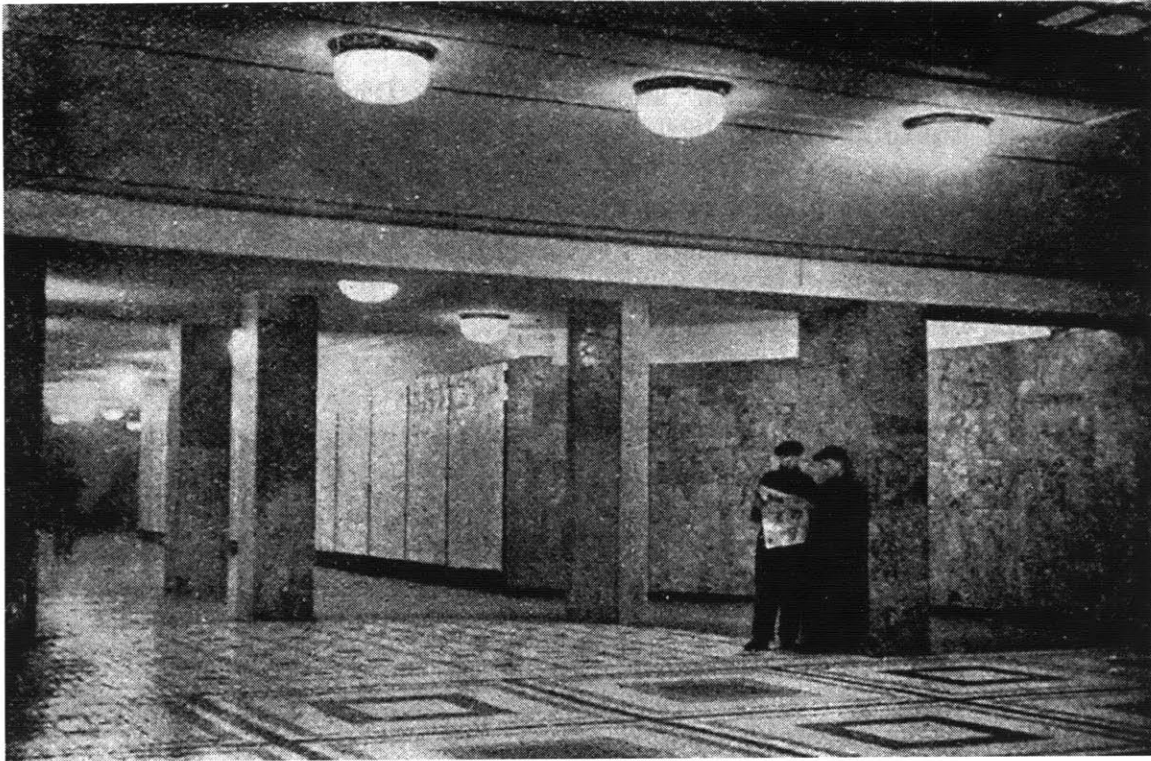


Figure 9. "Dzerzhinsky Square, Entry Hall," from *How we Built the Metro*

The lights in the Metro were supposed to be so bright that the workers could read newspapers, situated among marble columns and polished floors in which they were reflected. The Metro was not only shimmery and perfectly lit. It was also a world of enlightened existence, made for a life in which the proletarian, for example, spends his free time reading the newspaper with his comrade.

The radical aesthetic makeover of the workers' collective environment, and the education of the sensibility for surface-management, was part of an intended cultural transformation. The Metro was supposed to be an educational tool, not only for the passengers, but also for its builders, who were supposed to change, through the process

of construction, from vagabond individuals from the countryside into a conscious collective subject of socialist construction.

The first leg of the Metro employed 75,000 workers, most of them very young, most of them escaping from the famine stricken countryside, in the process of mass migration that started during the First Five Year Plan. More than 4 million peasant refugees flocked into Soviet cities in 1931 alone, and over 11 million between 1928 and 1932.¹⁵⁵ The population of Moscow alone grew from 2.2 million to 3.7 million in the four years of the First Five Year Plan, 1929-1932.¹⁵⁶ State institutions spearheaded by NKVD (State Commissariat of Internal Affairs) did much to control the movement of the population through housing legislation, distribution, and habitation-related identification documents. Their efforts were aimed towards forcing people into sedentary lifestyle, controlling migration from the countryside, and clearing the city of individuals not directly engaged in production. During the migration from the villages into the cities during the famine of 1928 to 1932 people would get housing from the factory administration as permanent workers. If they lost their job, the entire family would be evicted in three months. Workers were introduced to identification documents as early as 1919, and this aided the government to trace the population and tie it to the place of domicile, as the cards since the early twenties contained extensive information about migration, living space, neighbors, etc. But in 1932, internal passports were introduced in the cities of Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, Kiev, Minsk, Odessa, Rostov

¹⁵⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Great Departure: Rural-Urban Migration in the Soviet Union, 1929-33," in William G. Rosenberg and Lewis H. Siegebaum, *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 22.

¹⁵⁶ Mike O' Mahoni, "Archaeological Fantasies: Constructing History on the Moscow Metro," *The Modern Language Review* 98, Number 1 (January 2003), p. 142

and Vladivostok, making these people inaccessible to newcomers from the outside who were not sponsored by an inside urban agent.¹⁵⁷ Assimilating newcomers to the city through labor and educating them on the construction site, was the object of complex State engagement. Labor was meant to be not only a process of conquering the landscape, but also a process of self-transformation into enlightened urbanites, the transformation of “illiterate, backward, uncivilized people, even hooligans, into vanguard, informed toilers of the great socialist building site.”¹⁵⁸

Instilling *kul'turnost'*, or acculturating these people, was essentially a transformation of *byt*. Political enlightenment was the same as the development of supposedly cultured everyday habits.¹⁵⁹ *Kul'turnost'* seemed to encompass a wide range of practices. It was, of course, the ability to pace the work with machines. But it also required basic literacy, good personal hygiene, an expertise in domesticity and an interest in world affairs accounted in wall newspapers. Tens of thousands of workers, housed in temporary wooden barracks on the outskirts of Moscow were trained not to go to bed in dirty boots, to change sheets regularly, to use a book, a mirror, a lamp, a curtain. Workers were taught how to enjoy a game of chess in city's Parks of Culture

¹⁵⁷ Mark Grigorievich Meerovich, *Kak vlast narod k trudu priuchala: zhilishche v SSSR – sredstvo upravleniia liud'mi 1917-1941 gg.* [How the Government Trained the People to Work: Housing in the USSR as Means of People Management] Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2005.

¹⁵⁸ Starostin, K.F., Maryanovskii A.I., Reznichenko A.D., Fel'dman E.V., Pogrebinskii K.S., Lipman N.I., Eshchin D.B., Mozel' N. P., Tseiplin L.V., “Zabota o zhivom cheloveke” [Concern for the living man], in “Bolsheviki na Metrostroie” [Bolsheviks in *Metrostroii*], in *Kak my stroili metro, on Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, accessed May 25, 2010

¹⁵⁹ According to Vadim Volkov, “The Concept of *Kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process,” in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed. *Stalinism – New Directions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 211-212, *kul'turnost'* is a notion developed from the German opposition between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* and employed to signify the mass enlightenment as intelligentsia's propagation and transmission of national material culture, it was a product of the Slavophile discourse of the 1880s. In the 1930s, the agent of *kul'turnost'* was the Communist Party, more appropriate for the partisan project than, for instance an academic institution.

and Recreation. The new urbanites were taught not to be afraid of trams and cars. They were taught to shower regularly and use the radio.

The attention to the cleanliness, shine, color, porosity, and touch of most intimate surfaces was ultimately the most important manifestation of culture-mindedness in the early 1930s.¹⁶⁰ Cultural knowledge was at the time understood as a combination of fashion, cleanliness, and domesticity, which were all described in terms of surface-management. The presence of cultural consciousness was rendered visible in smoothly shaven faces, curtains, lampshades and the emblematic white tablecloth. Until the late 1930s, when learning a classical body of knowledge came to define a cultured, edified citizen, *kul'turnost'* had consisted of an evolving sense of decorum, which included a refined responsiveness to colors and textures.¹⁶¹

In *How We Built the Metro*, acculturation was a matter of most intimate self-care. The whiteness of sheets and curtains is often discussed in our treatise. But it gets closer than that. An example of an accultured individual is Lenin Medalist Brigadier Rebrov, whose photograph accompanies passages on acculturation. His face is smoothly shaven and he sports a clean shirt and a silk tie underneath his working costume. His smile reveals a token of abundant socialist modernity – a shiny golden tooth. The beauty of Metro builder's most intimate body part is, as if inspired by Metro architecture – the beauty of gleam.

¹⁶⁰ Vadim Vokov, "The Concept of *Kul' turnost'*" pp. 217-222.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.



Figure 10. “Brigade-leader Rebrov, Lenin Medalist,” from *How we Built the Metro*

The pinnacle of the labor of edification and self-edification, performed on the intimate scale, was ultimately building marble palaces as aesthetic models and tools of enlightenment. “The magnificent underground castles, each built in its own particular style” certainly “provided rich material for comparison and study,” awakening in the workers a thirst for beauty.”¹⁶²

But how did the comrades of Brigade-leader Rebrov, according to their accounts perceive shining architecture? From workers accounts, which accompany those of State bureaucrats and architects in *How We Built the Metro*, we can read that the sensitivity for gleaming architecture as both a product of labor and the object of perception involved a peculiar aesthetic mode, the impulse to perceive gleam both by seeing and

¹⁶² Starostin, K.F., Maryanovskii A.I., Reznichenko A.D., Fel’dman E.V., Pogrebinskii K.S., Lipman N.I., Eshchin D.B., Mozel’ N. P., Tseiplin L.V., “Bolsheviki na Metrostroie” {*Bolsheviks in Metrostroi*}, in *Kak my stroili metro, Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, accessed May 25, 2009.

touching, the need to behold the sparkle of shiny surfaces with both the eye and the hand, a haptic mode of perception that resembled that of the two inspectors fondling the car's railings.

Passages from *How We Built the Metro* that describe the departure of workers from the building site describe a visual-tactile relationship to the surface. The anxiety about the end of labor, about the transformation of manual work into a visual effect, results in a fetishistic relationship to the precious product of work. Marble surfaces, cloaking hours of hard labor are for the last time touched, fondled, and caressed with love and melancholy.

The night before the test drive of the trains, metro workers, exhausted by weeks' lack of sleep and incredibly excited, wandered around the gleaming underground palaces. Transportation authorities had already taken over. Metro officials in navy blue uniforms took control of the stations. Yet the builders, for whom the only thing left to do was to go to bed, could not take their eyes off their child. It would occur to them that they need to make roof paper paths for the clean tile floors, so that the guests do not stain the precious station. They would test the mechanisms of American doors a thousand times to make sure they work properly. Secretly, they would rub a spotless marble plate with their sleeves, as if cleaning eyeglasses.¹⁶³

Visual and tactile fixations are merged in a later passage about a new kind of seeing. During the act of remembering, the worker's eye touches architecture, the eye caresses the gleaming surface.

As they were leaving the site,

[The workers] pined, they loomed about from corner to corner, caressing their well made environment with their eyes, recollecting the

¹⁶³ M. O. Rohvarger "Stantsiya Smolenskaya Ploshad' {The Smolenskii Square Stop}, in *Kak my stroili metro, Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, accessed May 25, 2009

history of each meter, every yard of the tunnel and the station. At that moment, a faraway hum resounded. It grew louder in the tunnel's orifice, and finally embodied itself in a train, approaching the platform. The train was mirrored in the marble. Laughing and screaming with joy, girls and boys in overalls threw themselves at it. They realized that, crowning their work, is - a train, a train under Moscow. When it disappeared in the tunnel, they long stared behind it. The metro exists. It is time for builders to leave.¹⁶⁴

The anxiety about the transformation of labor into a visual effect is resolved in this moment of post-partum melancholy by establishing a metaphorical connection between the hand and the eye. Seeing is not only immediate perception, but also the memory of manual labor. The laborer still sees the object as if seeing it with his hands. The labor of construction metamorphoses into the labor of perception.

This is a thoroughly modernist relationship to the work of art, rather than an indulgence in the classicist formal language. The idea of perception as labor, dependent on class and the position of the individual in the division of labor, was prominent in the aesthetic theory of a contemporary art historian Ieremiya Ioffe. In his 1932 study, *New Style*, in which he tries to develop a philosophy of perception based on the study of modern art, Ioffe writes about seeing as working, and as an act that involves the entire body, and the relationship to the social world.

Experience is not passive reflection, determined by physiology and organs of perception, but an act of labor, performed by the entire organism and determined by the position of the individual in the social division of labor. To see is not only to receive stimulus of the retina, but to coordinate the movement of muscles of the eyeball (accommodation and convergence) with the

¹⁶⁴ M. O. Rohvarger "Stantsiya Smolenskaya Ploshad' {The Smolenskii Square Stop}, in *Kak my stroili metro, Moskovskoe Metro -- Proekt studii Artemiia Lebedeva -- Biblioteka*, accessed May 25, 2009

movement of the entire body in relation to the outside world, and this movement has social character. Here we encounter the inseparability of the subject and object, their interrelation and internal connection in concrete practice.¹⁶⁵

The perception of gleam is active perception. Active perception is the way a worker sees the world, and he has to see the world in a way that goes beyond form – he has to master gleam, the symbol of the new era of electrification, the shine of the ultimate fetish of proletarian labor.

The tie between the subject and object of labor, the inseparability between subject and object of perception, rests on the presence of a moving, caressing gaze, always in such a relationship to the surface that borders on the tactile. It is the presence of a cinematic eye capable of seeing beyond form and apprehending the world as a “work of illumination” molding to the moving gaze. In the first volume of workers’ accounts, architecture of the Metro, synonymous with the play of the marble surface and electric lighting, demands a gentle interaction between the viewer and the viewed, in which the marble column gently responds to the viewer:

Marble! Mastering the proportions and elements of the environment, the passenger now experiences a new impression – color and tint. He has just observed the station as a sculpture, from the aspect of its volumes. Now he sees the station as a work of illumination. Soft gleaming tones of marble ripple as the spectator pilots his gaze from column to column.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Ieremia ioffe. *Novyi stil'*. Moscow and Leningrad: IZOGIZ, 1932, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶⁶ Aleksandr Kosarev and others, “*Ob avtorah etoi knigi*”, in *Rasskazy stroitelei metro*, pp. 9-10



Figure 11. I. G Taranov, N. A. Bykova, *Sokol'niki*, 1935 (Contemporary photograph)

To pilot the gaze was to animate the surface, to realize, in a peculiar way, the architectural idea about the power of light to infuse the inorganic with life. Glean was the impression of life in the cold marble. Lazar Kaganovich gets carried away by the peculiar qualities of the dark blue marble from Ufa employed in the *Sokolnicheskaya* station. He compares it with a “stormy sea,” stressing that “it is true that the play of veins of this marble really leaves the impression that it lives, moves, creates waves. Ufaei is sometimes unusually saturated with gray tones and produces a kind of blueness of the air.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Nikollai Kolli, “Arkhitektura Metro.”

The discourse on electrification and mechanization of urban life and State attempts to display opulence were translated into a peculiar discourse on the architectural aura. The labor of perception produces an experience of life in the inorganic, tinted air, colors one can almost touch.

The auratic qualities of the Metro's architecture do not disappear once the worker enters the train. Rapid movement produces a new sort of capture. In workers' imagination, the train, as the mechanical extension and aid to the moving eye highly accelerates the perception of the aura and creates a kaleidoscopic image of all the Metro's stations at once. Here is the continuation of the previous passage:

Soft gleaming tones of marble ripple as the spectator pilots his gaze from column to column. The silver tint of "Sokol'niki" blends into the pink tones of "Komsomol'skaya Ploshad", " expands into the purple of "Krasnie Vorota," and finally, fuses all colors and hues into the white specter, blazing with a blinding glow from the ceiling of "Dvorets Sovetov."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Aleksandr Kosarev and others, "Ob avtorah etoi knigi", in *Rasskazy stroitelei metro*, pp. 9-10



Figure 12. “Delegates of the Seventh Soviet on the First Metro Ride,” from *How we Built the Metro*

The orgasmic ending of the imaginary train ride reveals the ultimate ambition behind the aesthetic of gleam – the ambition to create beauty so intense that it blinds. It is an ambition to create an aesthetic experience of infinite magnificence and total mechanical rapture, the merger of the subject and object in the ecstasies of haptic perception.

Popular histories construct a unique aesthetics of the workers’ relationship to the Soviet urban fetish. *How We Built the Metro* and *Stories of Metro Builders* invent a logic of gleam that rests on the ambition to destabilize the division between the optical and the manual and, by extension, between perception and labor. The work of

perception, the effort of the cinematic gaze to capture gleam, was the labor of capturing and claiming communal wealth created by Soviet Power and electricity.

CHAPTER 5: THE ADMINISTRATION OF NATURE

So far, I have explored the physical environment of the Russian 1920s and the 1930s as a site of labor. I have discussed working objects, working bodies, working buildings, a public site of technological rapture. This chapter is about the aesthetics of gendered labor and female architectural expertise. It is about translating the rhetoric of surplus production into the rhetoric of biological surplus as the feminine domain. I will explore feminine architectural and horticultural know-how in rendering the imaginary of bounty in the Stalinist society. I will trace the development of this know-how in the prominent movement of wife-activists, or *obshchestvennitsy*, in the late 1930s.

The movement of wife-activists lasted from 1934 to 1941 and united thousands of women in the effort to improve everyday life through social activism and the care of the family and the spouse inside the home. The movement was initialized during the period of the Second Five Year Plan (1932-1937). In this period a new, more conservative attitude towards the family emerged. The notion of “culturedness” (*kul'turnost*) permeated the culture of the everyday and entailed rising standards of hygiene, décor, and politesse. Engineers and managers, cadres much needed in the plants, were no longer seen as “bourgeois specialists,” and were given a privileged social status, but also a duty to relocate into underdeveloped parts of the country. Their wives, who moved with them, in most cases, had no official job, and engaged very early on in spreading *kul'turnost* and

in providing support to the industrialization movement with their nurturing and caretaking labor.

The best source on the wife-activists' movement is Rebecca Balmas-Neary's authoritative monograph, "Flowers and Metal," written as her doctoral dissertation at Columbia University in 2002.¹⁶⁹ In this work, apart from providing a detailed history of the movement by studying its conferences and conventions, Balmas-Neary analyzes the roles of the wife-activist as a spouse, mother, and public figure. Despite the fact that the goals of activism were often meant to be pursued in the intimacy of the domestic interior, the movement was not, Balmas-Neary has argued, a total Stalinist regression towards traditional family values, but the continuation of 1920s women's activism in a completely different form and under new circumstances. Balmas-Neary has also argued that the wife-activists movement, however apparently conservative, did not, in fact, entail the existence of a stable gender system, since the roles of a spouse, loyal to her husband, and a public figure, loyal to the common cause, were in most cases hard to reconcile.

I want to pay close attention to what was of one of the constants of the movement – the role of women in the management of surplus – the supposed surplus of industrial production, but also the management of nature's fecundity manifested in their motherly role and the creative relationship to nature.

According to its founding legend, the wife-activists' movement started with a horticultural intervention in the industrial environment. The wife of the station manager Srurovtsev in a Krasnouralsk metallurgical plant created, in a dirty factory yard, an island

¹⁶⁹ "Flowers and Metal": The Soviet "Wife-Activists' Movement" And Stalin-era Culture and Society 1934-1941. PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2002.

of beauty and tranquility – a square planted by flowerbeds. On his tour of the factory, the Commissar of Heavy Industry Grigory Ordzhonikidze noticed this intervention, and joyfully pronounced the woman “a pioneer of the movement of wives-*obshchestvennitsy*.”¹⁷⁰ His own wife was soon to follow the example of Surovtseva.¹⁷¹

But Ordzhonikidze’s proclamation was not in actuality the first time the word *obshchestvennitsa* was used. The term can be traced back to the 1920s. We find one of the earlier mentions of the term in the journal *Kommunistka* [Communist Woman] which came out in the second half of the 1920s. In 1928, on the occasion of the 8th of March, the International Woman’s day, an author by the name of S. Smidovich stresses the woman’s task in improving *byt* as that of total commitment to the role of the wife-activist:

To fight with the lack of culture, with the backwardness of our *byt*, starting with workshops and ending with the life of children in the workers’ family, not being interested only in one’s own family unit, but also undertaking work on improving the cultural level of the collective, to be an *obshchestvennitsa* to the end.¹⁷²

The discussion of the role of the wife-activist in *Kommunistka* centers on collectivization of household chores improving everyday life. The vehicle for improving *byt* is the worker’s club, in which women would share the burden of household work and give each other advice on rearing children.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ This is recounted in Balmas-Neary p. 1.

¹⁷¹ Ordzhonikidze’s wife was a member of the “Industrial Commanders’ Wives Movement” which appeared in 1935 in the iron and steel branch of the Kirov iron and steel plant in Makeevka in the Donbass coalfield, one of the largest steel plants in the world with 20,000 workers. Ordzhonikidze was a patron of this plant and a close friend of its director Gvakhariya. See Francesco Benvenuti. “Industry and Purge in the Donbass 1936-1937,” *Europe-Asia Studies* vol 45, No. 1 (1993), pp. 68-69.

¹⁷² S. Smidovich. “8 Marta i novy byt” [March 8th and New Everyday Life], *Kommunistka* 2 (February) 1928, p. 51

¹⁷³ Z. Rakitina. “Klub v razreshenii voprosov nogovo byta” [The Club in Solving the Problems of the New Everyday Life], *Kommunistka*. 4 (April) 1927, pp. 40-43

The discourse about everyday life in the journal is about basic needs, living under the constraints of quotidian poverty, and providing basic provisions for the worker, and one of the main themes is providing proper nutrition. An article on the lives of German workers, for example, is entirely dedicated to reporting on their wages and the price of different food items.¹⁷⁴ There is no room for excess, and there is no mention of design and architecture.

The first recounted projects of wife-activists were also set in the context of scarcity and poverty. A paradigmatic example of early wife-activists' interventions was that of Evgeniia Vesnik, who established in 1934 a henhouse in Krivoi Rog. In the metallurgical plant in which her husband was working, the former opera singer managed to develop a farmer's know-how that assured a steady supply of food and a relative self-sufficiency of the metallurgical collective.¹⁷⁵ Surovtseva with her flowerbed created a small token of *kul'turnost* and beauty; Vesnik tended to the collective's basic existential needs. In both cases, women extended their nurturing and caretaking role beyond the domestic sphere, and by managing nature, provided a relief from a hard and joyless existence.

These early interventions of wife-activists took place at the tail end of one of the greatest catastrophes in Soviet history – the Great Famine, which took lives of approximately five million people, and made life more than hard and joyless for millions of others, who lived in near starvation.¹⁷⁶ The famine was, for the most part, produced not

¹⁷⁴ “Iz byta germanskikh rabotnits”, [From the Everyday Life of German Workers] *Kommunistka* No. 1 (January) 1927, p. 79

¹⁷⁵ *Flowers and Metal*, pp. 98-102.

¹⁷⁶ Wheatcroft, S. G. 1990. “More Light on the Scale of Repression and Excess Mortality in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.” *Soviet Studies*, vol.42, no. 2 (April): 355-367.

by a failure in agricultural production, but by government policies – trading grain for foreign currency needed to buy arms and industrial machinery instead of making it available as food. It decimated the population of the grain producing rural areas, but was sharply felt in the cities – even in Moscow mortality rose by a third.¹⁷⁷

In the years that followed this collective trauma, the government tried to conceal its impact and compensate for it with rhetoric of increased population growth and industrial output. One of the symptoms of this phenomenon was the denial of the death toll of the famine and the sharp decrease in childbirth rates in this period. A key example was the organization and reorganization, and eventual cancellation of the Soviet census. The census planned for 1935 was postponed for 1936, to be finally held on January 7, 1937. When the Statistical Commission found that, instead of 180 million people as Stalin hoped, or 170 million that was the minimal estimate, the population of the Soviet Union was only 162 million, chief statistical professionals were arrested and imprisoned, the census was proclaimed invalid, and postponed for 1939, when the numbers were grossly inflated.

The denial of the decrease of the Soviet population was accompanied by rhetoric of increased economic output and a supposed overabundance of goods. In his well-known speech at the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites, hero workers who exceeded production quotas due to their mastery of modern technology, on November 17, 1935, Stalin claimed that life was becoming better and “more joyous”.¹⁷⁸ Fully industrialized

¹⁷⁷ Davies, R. W., Tauger, M. B., and Wheatcroft, S. G. 1995. “Stalin, Grain Stocks, and the Famine of 1932-1933.” *Slavic Review* Vol. 54 no. 3 (Autumn): 651

¹⁷⁸ Iosif Visarionovich Stalin. “Speech at the First-Union Conference of Stakhanovites, November 17, 1935.” in Stalin, J. V. *Problems of Leninism*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1976, p. 785

Soviet economy was creating in the near future a society of wealth and abundance, true Communism in which each citizen would be provided for according to his needs.

As of 1936, a new rhetoric of surplus emerged. The basis of this rhetoric was an apprehension that overproduction and overpopulation, which were, for Marx, elements of capitalist crisis, and symptoms of contradictions inherent in the capitalist modes of production, do not pose a problem in socialism.

In Part 3 of the third volume of *Capital*,. Marx writes about barriers to capitalism posed by the market. The need to expand capital creates the need to increasingly extract surplus-value through the sale of commodities. Commodities cannot all be consumed by capitalists, because then they wouldn't be converted into capital. They have to be consumed by workers. But, at the same time, workers are underpaid, so that unpaid labor could be converted into capital. There are natural limits to consumption. The underconsumption of commodities leads to an over-accumulation of capital and decreased profit. As a result of that, workers have to be laid off and there is a relative overpopulation.

Presumably, according to Soviet speculations, production in a socialist system would tend to people's needs and not be driven by the urge to accumulate capital. It would overcome the problems of over-production and over-population. This is how a Soviet propagandist enthusiastically described this condition:

In our country, comrades, there is no danger of a surplus of population. There is also no danger of an overproduction of

goods. The more people we have, the better for us, the more goods we have, the better.¹⁷⁹

The result of this enthusiasm for the creation of a new economic system was a simultaneous celebration of productivity and fertility. In this context, procreation was no longer a personal, domestic problem, but a public issue. State advertised social advances that facilitate care for mother and child and instituted new legislation, which banned abortion and made avoidance of paying child support very difficult.¹⁸⁰

In a typical book of the time, *Motherhood in Capitalism and Socialism*, Boleslav Smulevich discusses the 19th century English Malthusian league which promoted birth control as an effort to deal with the problem of surplus population.¹⁸¹ This is, according to him, a problem of capitalist society, in which unemployment steadily grows, and not the problem of the Soviet society, in which unemployment does not exist, as it steadily moves towards ever increasing levels of production, which can accommodate any level of population growth.

I want to examine the projected role of wife-activists, as caretakers and nurturers, in the management of biological and industrial surplus. What especially interests me is

¹⁷⁹Andrei Andreevich Andreev. *Kommunisticheskoe vospitanie molodezhi i zadachi komsomola*, [Communist Upbringing of Youth and the Tasks of the Komsomol] Partizat CK VKP(b) 1936, pp. 9-10

¹⁸⁰The decree on the family of June 27, 1936 brought by the Central executive committee of the Soviet of People's Commissar's of SSSR instituted a two year jail sentence for performing abortion and made divorce very difficult, since the parties had to pay fines and have the divorce recorded in their passports. See *O zapreshenii abortov, uvelichenii material'noi pomoshchi rozhenitsam, ustanovlenii gosudarstvennoi posmoshchi mnogosemeinym, rashirenii seti rodil'nykh domov, detskikh iaslei I detskikh sadov, uslenii ugolovnogo nakazaniia za neplatezh alimentov I o nekotorykh izmeneniiakh v zakonodatel'stve o razvodakh*. [On the Ban of Abortion, the Increase in Material Aid to Women in Childbirth, the Institution of Government Aid to Families with Many Children, the Expansion of the Network of Childbirth Facilities, Nurseries and Kindergardens, the Increase of Criminal Punishment for Non-Payment of Child Support and some Alteration in Divorce Legislation]

¹⁸¹Boleslav Iakovlevich Smulevich. *Materinstvo pri kapitalizme i socializme*. [Motherhood in Capitalism and Socialism] Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe social'no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1936.

the range of activities assigned to women in the ordering of the material environment. I will look at the first several years of the pilot publication of the wife-activist movement, the journal *Obshchestvennitsa*, which appeared concurrently with the emergence of the representation of Soviet society as a society of abundance.

The decree about the publication of *Obshchestvennitsa* was issued by the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry (NKTP), headed by Grigory Ordzhonikidze. The journal was published from August 1936 until the German invasion in 1941. It was a relatively elite publication, intended for the wives of technical specialists, with a large format and luxurious illustrations and a relatively small circulation ranging from 10,000 to 80,000 copies. It painted a picture of Soviet life as abundant, joyous, and progressive.

The editorial board of *Obshchestvennitsa* changed over time, and the composition was highly unstable. The magazine had an official editorial board only in the first year of publication. Among the editors Yevgeniia Yezhova, editor of the luxurious illustrated magazine about Soviet industrial achievements *USSR na stroike* [USSR in Construction,] the wife of NKVD chief Nikolai Yezhov, the mastermind of the Great Purge. Other editors were A. S. Popova, editor of a popular magazine devoted to popular science, *Tekhnika-molodezhi* [Technology for the Youth], and Vera Shveister, the official of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry. As of the end of 1937, the journal had no official editors, and was possibly ghost-edited by the Commissariat of Heavy Industry.

Obshchestvennitsa would not be that interesting if it were a simple tool of official propaganda, which painted a flat picture of a joyous world populated by enlightened women-caretakers in a progressive Soviet society through repetitive tropes.

What makes it interesting is the level of detail with which an entire range of authors creates in the magazine a peculiar fantasy world informed not only by official rhetoric, but also by the apparent desire of the contributors and the readership to triumph over the recent trauma of poverty, hunger, and lack. Women do figure as consumers of surplus and producers and educators of children. But the meticulousness with which the transformation of the smallest details of everyday life is described, and the extensiveness and obsession with which the discourse on their power to transform the physical environment is elaborated, testifies to something else. It is an effort to create, in this publication, an alternative *byt*, in which poverty would be, if not transcended, then thoroughly masked. In this universe, women leave their sweat behind and become horticultural and architectural experts in charge of beautifying the world.

I will begin, however, with the official setup, which is that of the standard rhetoric of fertility and consumption.



Figure 1. “Young Mother in the Maternity Clinic Votes for the Best Friend of Women Workers and children, Comrade Stalin,” *Obshchestvennitsa* 7, 1938, p. 20

A woman-activist in the journal first and foremost figures as a mother and a caretaker and is represented either holding her own children or managing a collective daycare center. The intimacy of the relationship between the mother and the child is stressed by a conspicuous absence of biological fathers in all the images. It is only the political leaders that appear as symbolic fatherly figures, as in the curious image of a woman who has just given birth, presented in the moment of “voting for Stalin,” right after she placed his picture next to flowers on her nightstand.

The family unit, guarded by the State, is, in *Obshchestvennitsa*, that of a mother and her child. The ethical template for this family unit was Rubens’s *Holly Family with the Basket*, luxuriously reproduced in the very first issue of the journal.



Figure 2. Peter Paul Rubens. “Holy Family with the Basket” (1616), reprinted in *Obshchestvenitsa* 1, 1936, p. 13

The religious model also provided an aesthetic template for the appearance of the wife-activist. The first domain for the management and display of abundance was that of the mother and child’s body. In order to achieve Rubenesque standards, the woman had to behave a certain way, to adhere to a certain regime of self-care and care for children. Self-care was a public matter, and a manifestation of *kul’turnost*, as shown in multiple photographs of wife-activists inspecting the cleanliness of each other’s hands and nails in public. But it was also the terrain for displaying femininity as attention to appearance and consuming agricultural and industrial products.

The main domains of self-care and the care of children were cosmetics and nutrition. Cosmetic care of the face and hair entailed elaborate rituals, illustrating with pictures of women applying various products. In one article, there is a five day regimen

for “clearing blotches and achieving a healthy color of the skin.”¹⁸² It involves steaming the face above a pot with chamomile tea, rituals of heating and cooling the skin, utilizing ground almond, but above all, applying the supposed variety of various creams and lotions for all types of skin available in pharmacies and stores. The Director of the Moscow Institute of Cosmetics and Hygiene appears as the authority on face and hair, and he gives in two issues in 1937 complicated instructions for “systematic” bodily care.”¹⁸³ He does not miss the chance to promote the availability of modern cosmetic products created by Soviet industry – soap “Detskoe” for cleaning the face, cooling creams “Flora” and “Snezhinka,” creams “Lanolinovy,” “Lotos,” and “Ogurechny” for dry skin.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² M. Vishniak, “Uhod za litsom” [Facial Care], *Obshchestvennitsa* 2, 1936, p. 26

¹⁸³ I. Belachov. “Uhod za volosami,” [Hair Care] *Obshchestvennitsa* 16, 1937, pp. 31-32. “Uhod za kozhei litsa” [Care of Facial Skin] *Obshchestvennitsa* 11 1937, p. 31

¹⁸⁴ In her book *The Soviet Dream: World of Retail Trade and Consumption in the 1930s* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.) Amy Randall elaborates on the rise of consumer culture and advertising of commodities in the Soviet Union of the 1930s. Old Revolutionary ideals of asceticism were abandoned, and new Soviet citizens were defined not only as producers, but also as consumers. Rationing, despite the fact that it could not be abandoned until mid 1930s, was condemned as early as 1931, and the ideal was to create an efficient and comfortable store, without lines, in which the citizen could buy what he or she wishes. Soviet industry was incapable of meeting consumer needs, but modern retail stores became part of Soviet modern utopia together with technological achievements. Women were particularly targeted as subjects of new, enlightened, Soviet consumption, who were supposed to develop “Soviet taste.”



Figure 3. Advertisement for creams “Flora” and “Onyx” on the back cover of *Obshchestvennitsa* 7, 1938

What the Institute Director also stresses is that proper nutrition is key to beauty. The wife-activist of the *Obshchestvennitsa* journal was not supposed to solve the problem of hunger, but to be an avid consumer of supposedly abundant food. Her task was to eat well and feed her children well. The journal provides recipes and diets that hardly manifest any attempt at frugality. Recipes are for pot-roasts and fruit salads. There are no diets for losing weight – the aim is to get fat. A proposed diet “How to Gain Weight,” intended for teenagers and presumably self-respecting women, recommends sleeping 9-10 hours a day and eating cream, butter, condensed milk, margarine, lard, greasy pork and beef, fish and poultry, cakes, nuts, almonds, chocolate,

honey, jam, and dried fruit.¹⁸⁵ A diet for small children recommends feeding them every couple of hours with milk, cookies, vitamin juice, ground apple, semolina kasha, pureed vegetables, sweet pudding, vegetable puree with liver or brains, eggs, fruit, pureed potato soup, cutlet with carrot sauce. The aim to be achieved was to make a child look (overly) well fed.



Figure 4. *Obshchestvennitsa*, 5, 1937, p. 18

The article in *Obshchestvennitsa* about the “Protection of the Rights of Mother and Child” in issue no. 5 of 1937 is illustrated with a picture of a very plump boy, presumably fed according to the previously discussed diet. The boy is naked except for

¹⁸⁵ V. Mendel'son, “Kak popolnet” [How to Gain Weight], *Obshchestvennitsa* 16, 1937, p. 30-31

his shoes and hat. He is placed amongst shrubs in what is meant to be a natural setting, the healthy environment for the healthy child. And women's competence in nurturing the child extended to managing nature at large.

Women's management of natural reproduction and industrial surplus was matched in one of the main activities and the symbol of the movement – the care for nature's fecundity and the enthusiasm for greenery and nurturing plants. Horticultural intervention, according to the official legend recounted in *Obshchestvennitsa*, started the entire movement. When Heavy Industry Commissar Grigorii Ordzhinidike noticed a flowerbed in the middle of an Ural factory and declared it a pioneering act of woman's socially-minded work, horticultural efforts obtained official recognition and became the core symbol of the new movement.

There are images in *Obshchestvennitsa* showing horticulture as collective labor of loving care. They show women united in the creation of flowerbeds, shrubs, young trees and green islands with fountains in the midst of the industrial landscape. A paradigmatic caption says that they are “carefully and lovingly looking after young plantings.”¹⁸⁶ The emergence of *obshchestvennitsy* as a mass movement epitomized in the creation of vegetal ornament facilitated women's performance of 1930s femininity.

¹⁸⁶ *Obshchestvennitsa* 1, Aug 1936, p. 11



Figure 5. "Fountain in the Mechanical Department of a Train Depot," *Obshchestvennitsa* 11, 1938, p. 19



Figure 6. "Wife-activists of the Debal'tsev station are Creating a Flower Garden in front of the Passenger Platform." *Obshchestvennitsa* 7-8 1937, p. 33

This enterprise entailed developing a specialized body of knowledge about plants, ranging from small potted plants for the home to great public installations for major holidays. The attention to this topic is at its most intense in the journal in 1937. The author of most articles and the creator of this specialized body of knowledge was a

journalist by the name of Sushkin. His immensely long article in 1937 is dedicated to getting plants to open in the winter (divided into sections about bulbous and tuberose plants,) then about shrubs and finally about grassy perennials. In each section, there are instructions about the choice of specimens of bulbs and branches, storage, light exposure, watering. The site of the project is a pot with a 12 cm diameter, located in the interior of a well heated home (also a symbol of prosperity) in the midst of winter. The program is the “awakening of life” in sleeping nature.¹⁸⁷

In winter the “awakening of nature” is a small scale, domestic project. In spring it becomes an urban project and a collective public exercise as a crucial part of socialist festivities. In the article “Flowers and Greenery in the Celebrations of the First of May” of 1937 it is explained that the International Labor Day has to be “beautiful and colorful,” and that main means of its aesthetic articulation is the cultivation of special greenery.¹⁸⁸ A special project was making “green posters” with portraits of leaders and revolutionary slogans. They are produced in a very sophisticated manner, by growing sprouts over several days in textile, to create a grassy fabric, and then decorating it with flowers to form letters and images. Celebration of spring also involved decorating windowsills, balconies and facades with garlands and window plantings. The production of horticultural architectural ornament which “ceased to be luxury, but is a necessity in the lives of the working class.”¹⁸⁹ Women are also invited to contribute to the beauty of the International Labor Day by showcasing in windows for this special day, if it is sunny, the results of their work of their interior decoration – special species such as

¹⁸⁷ G. Sushkin, “Vygonka rastenii,” [Getting Plants to Open up], *Obshchestvennitsa* 21, 1937 p. 50

¹⁸⁸ G. Sushkin. “Tsvety i zelen’ na pervomaiskikh torzhestvakh” [Flowers and Greenery in the Celebrations of the First of May,] *Obshchestvennitsa* 6, 1937, p. 31

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

palms and ficus trees that they managed to nurse in the tropical conditions of the indoor domestic environment.

What kind of aesthetic expertise did women's engagement with the world of plants entail? In an article "The Design of Plantings, we learn that "in order to plant greenery one needs to know how to group trees, shrubs, and flowers, so that they would create a pleasant combination of forms and colors during the entire period of their growth from the early spring to late fall."¹⁹⁰

The expertise on form entailed a complex knowledge of proper arrangements of plants and the plant species (together with Latin names) that create a good composition. For example, a good composition would be one of a center composition of American dahlias with a border of dark pygmy dahlias planted at a distance of 15-20 cm from the center composition. Flowerbeds yield most interesting compositions, as they can be planted in a round, oval, ellipsoid, square, rhomboid, polygonal, or a star-shaped form.

But probably the more important element of horticultural expertise was the expertise on color, or *tsvet*, the same word used in Russian for both flower and tint. This entailed the use of flowers and colors for artistic expression. The purpose of all groupings and regroupings of trees, shrubs, and flowers, was the creation of flower "drawings, in tones and half-tones."¹⁹¹ There is the idea that there should be slogans and portraits of leaders executed in the medium of plants, similar to those used in the First of May parade. But what is the object of expertise is the abstract arrangement and juxtaposition of color. We learn that the most beautiful flowerbeds are those that are

¹⁹⁰ G. Sushkin, "Oformlenie posadok" [The Design of Plantings,] *Obshchestvennitsa* 8, 1937, p. 44

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

continuous and made of one color, with a thin border of another color. We learn that grouping plants in concentric circles should be executed according to the rule that the tallest and the brightest plants are planted in the middle, and that the height of plants and their brightness is supposed to decrease towards the end. We learn about the entire spectrum of colors available to the wife-activist for the execution of her creations.

It is interesting that women's horticultural expertise on *tsvety* translated into a limited but supposedly psychologically crucial input into the design of the interior.

The problem of interior design, the "culture of dwelling," is introduced already in the second issue of *Obshchestvennitsa*, as the problem of "culture and everyday life."¹⁹² The basic elements of interior design, according to the journal, are architecture, the choice and distribution of furniture, interior decoration, and wall finishing. Of these domains, architecture of the dwelling is the domain of (male) specialists. The choice of furniture and wall finishing is "a mass art in the full meaning of the word; this colossal mass creation the woman has an active role as the mistress and the organizer of the home."¹⁹³

Women's task is to foster a "culture décor of the everyday environment [as] deeply humane."¹⁹⁴ In their choice of decorative objects, the mistress of the home uses folk artifacts, preferably animalistic sculpture and figurines with flower patterns and fabrics with vegetal motives.¹⁹⁵ As far the furniture is concerned, the author of the article

¹⁹² D. Arkin. "Kul'tura Zhilishcha" [The Culture of Dwelling,] *Obshchestvennitsa* 2, 1936, p.10

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ In another article of 1937 there are clear instructions for the decoration of the interior. Instead of petty-bourgeois sculpture – guitar players, boys with baskets, sickly sweet sportswomen, baby dolls. Sculpture should be "close to life," which means it should be made by folk artists and include, appropriately, motifs from nature. The author recommends the works of animalist Efimov with his works "Fallow Deer,"

admits that space for design intervention is limited due to the circumstance of limited and low quality production of Soviet furniture industry. But, in any case, the main principle of interior design is minimal and sparing furnishing; what is to be avoided is the cluttering of space and the petty-bourgeois “subjection of man to the thing.”¹⁹⁶

In large apartments (which are here presumably the norm) avoiding the cluttering of space with furniture provides a new possibility – “taking advantage of the artistic role of the wall itself, as a fixed background in the interior.”¹⁹⁷

The management of this background is the women’s design domain. And in its conception, the femininity of the interior is expressed in the choice of warm, comforting colors, whether the rooms are painted in the same spectrum or in contrasting shades. But the enterprise of “solving the problem of color” was soon developed into a more sophisticated science.

In an article on “The Interior, its Architecture and Lighting Design,” written for the readership of wife-activists, little attention is given to the actual architecture of the interior, apart from the instruction that in the consideration of “the artistic aspects of painting the interior,” the housewife should “pay attention to the advice of the artist and the architect and study the best models of interior design of buildings similar in type.”¹⁹⁸

But she is also expected to develop extensive knowledge of the physical properties on

“Falcon,” “Dolphin,” Battle of Elks, “Hen on a Sphere,” “Ostrich,” as well as the work of other animalists and folk sculpture and textiles with vegetal patterns. This utilization of representations of nature as means of creating comfort in the home is a para-architectural enterprise – the animals and plant patterns are the unfortunate replacement of sculptures of leaders, which are not available on the market but only present in their monumental form as part of the “synthesis of art, architecture and sculpture” on a large scale. See K. Kravchenko, “Ob uute” [On Comfort,] *Obshchestvennitsa* 17-18 1936, p. 10-11

¹⁹⁶K. Kravchenko. 1937. “Inter’er, - ego arkhitektura i svetovoe oformlenie” [The Interior – its Architecture and Lighting Design]. *Obshchestvennitsa* 13, 1937, p. 18

¹⁹⁷ D. Arkin, “Kul’tura zhilishcha,” p. 11

¹⁹⁸ K. Kravchenko, “Inter’er, - ego arkhitektura i svetovoe oformlenie” [The Interior – its Architecture and Lighting Design], p. 19

light and color and their subtle, background influence on the human psyche. Knowledge of the physical properties of color involved knowledge about the reflection coefficients for natural and artificial lighting. Then there was a subtle knowledge on the reflexive properties of outside objects. For example, if there were trees outside the window, there would be a green reflection in the room, and the walls should be painted a light yellow color.

Women were supposed to differentiate between achromatic and chromatic colors, and to know when to use “light” and “heavy” tints. A separate body of knowledge was the knowledge of the relationship between *faktura* of household objects and properties of color. There are instructions for using different colors for different geographic locations – cold tints in the South and warm tints in the North.

The purpose of color management was to create a psychological background for everyday life. The author of the above mentioned article traces the idea back to Goethe. He claims that the exact relation between particular emotions and colors is not known, but, on the other hand, gives determinate instructions on painting the interiors of different types of environments. For example, libraries should be painted green since this color is the easiest on the eye.

Psychological and physical knowledge of color was complemented by a technical know-how; socially-minded were not only expected to know about color, but also, in some cases, how to paint themselves. In the article “Apartment Renovation,” the authors stress that organizations for building and reconstruction serve the population poorly, and that it is very expensive to employ them, due to the high valuations and norms. This is the opportunity for women to step in – to organize “independent women’s

brigades,” or groups of at least two people, and undertake the “rejuvenation’ of the environment” themselves.¹⁹⁹ The entire “renovation” consists of repainting the walls, and women are given detailed explanations on how to proceed in order to execute the transformation. There are detailed instructions on how to remove existing color, cover cracks, cover walls with prime coating, and how to use oil paint. The author provides exact proportions for making paint from pigment, chalk and paste for blue, yellow, green, red, and brown paint.

Women’s labor on color-production extended from these large projects of “renovation” to the work on detail. We can get a glimpse of the actual poverty of the era and the lack of industrial products from articles published in the journal about how to make at home different household objects. The article on the spherical lampshade suspended from the ceiling (*plafon*), intended for the use “in nurseries and bedrooms,” instructs the woman how to sew this object out of colored silk scraps.²⁰⁰ The object is very elaborate and requires a lot of skill to make. Part of the know-how in the construction of the lampshade is the choice of colors suitable for the nursery. The author finds it necessary to provide a description of a suitable sequence of colors on the ball: blue, pink, yellow, green, red, violet, white, pink, green, orange, cream. The aid the housewife receives from modern Soviet industry are ready-made powder paints “Raduga” [Rainbow], which are dissolved in water, and pieces of silk are then boiled in it to produce the desirable colors.

¹⁹⁹ Lipshtein, L. and Lifshits A. “Remont kvartiry” [Apartment Renovation], *Obshchestvennitsa* 2, 1936, p. 25

²⁰⁰ Ksanina, T. “Plafon dlia detskoi i spal’nyu” [Lampshade for the Nursery and the Bedroom], *Obshchestvennitsa* 8, 1937, p. 45.

Women's expertise in the science and management of color finds its ultimate application in the design of nurseries. To understand abstract aesthetic categories, stated in the title of the most extensive article on nursery design, "Proportion, Form, Color," is to understand basic principles of "the mental and physical development of the child."²⁰¹ High aesthetic competence in the service of pedagogy comes from mastering an encyclopedic body of knowledge, "the laws of physics, physiology, physiological optics, color science, history of art and pedagogy," and the possession of this knowledge prevents the woman from relying only on her taste, empowering her to develop an aesthetic sense which is scientifically backed.²⁰² All the science of physiology, physics, and history of art is placed in the service of the following activities: "painting the walls, choosing electrical fittings, furniture, curtains, little paintings, color for toys and even the color of the caretakers dress."²⁰³

Most of the article is about physio-psychological expertise. For example, the woman should know how "not to tire the eye and the psyche, not to disturb the physiological and the psychological balance of the organism, as the eye transfers the irritation from the retinal membrane to the brain."²⁰⁴ Instructions on how to achieve that through the management of color are, again, extensive. In order not to overwhelm the reader, I will just end by saying that they entail the creation of a totally color-controlled environment, in which the colors of every element of child's furniture, even the clothes of the caretakers, if the nursery is communal, are described and prescribed in detail.

²⁰¹ Mashkova, N. "Proportsii, forma, tsvet" [Proportions, Form, Color], *Obshchestvennitsa* 9-10, 1936, p.

36

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

Mothers' knowledge of art history is applied to the choice of paintings, which are not only meant to be decorative, but also to develop the child's taste. This is achieved by choosing a painting that is at the same time comprehensible to the child and corresponds to the principles of Socialist realism, which means it should be painted in "a correct and literate manner."²⁰⁵ Mother's understanding of Socialist realism should be guided, again, by her choice of color – there should be a harmony of tint and a soft transition from one color to another. As in the choice of home ornament, what we see in the pictures is that iconic leader's portraits and images of the worker or the festive mass characteristic of Socialist realism are not employed in this environment. It is a still life that hangs in the nursery, above a chest. On the chest there are vases and fabric reflecting the color of the fruit and the tablecloth in the painting. The resonance between the painting and the element of interior decoration underscores the painterly nature of women's expertise.

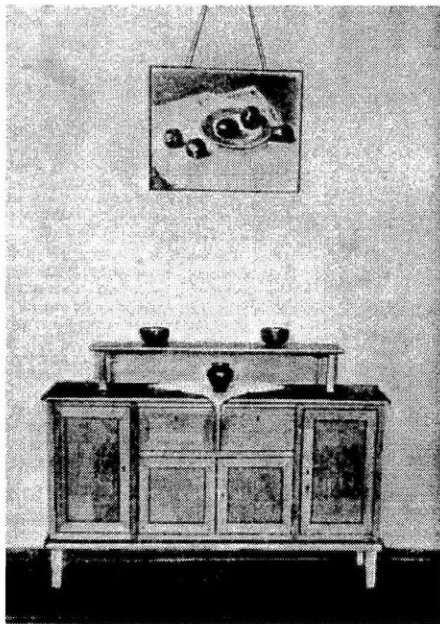


Figure 7. "Side Cabinet (Bufet)," *Obshchestvennitsa* 9-10, 1936, p. 36

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

The scope of socially-minded woman’s competence in interior design was very narrow and this was compensated by developing a sophisticated body of knowledge about only one thing – the choice, arrangement and application of color. The design of nurseries, however, allowed for new areas of women’s competence – design for children.

In one of the rare architectural plans in *Obshchestvennitsa* we are given a template for reconstructing two apartments into a nursery. The plan was to be executed by women. Their labor is, again, not that of erecting a new structure, but that of renovation or *remont*. The plan is not a determinate image of a nursery, but just an example of one intervention which prescribes the necessary elements of the facility and illustrates on a convenient example the division of children into two age groups and the relative symmetry of the establishment.

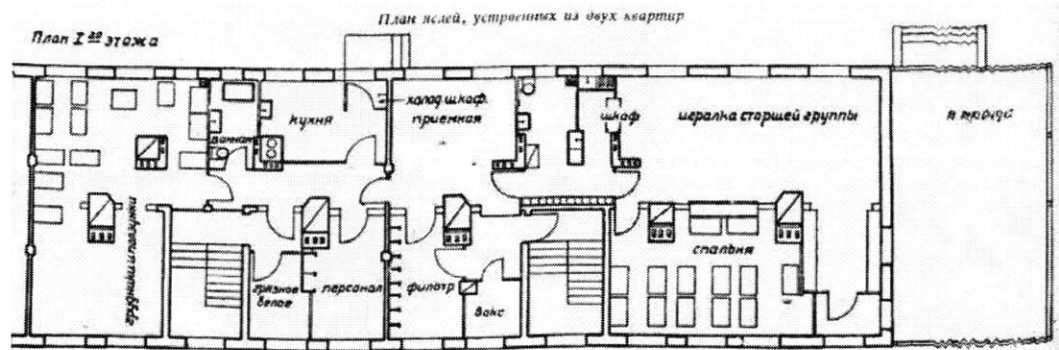


Figure 8. “Plan of Nursery, Made our of Two Apartments,” *Obshchestvennitsa* 6, 1937 p. 20

There was also a template for the design of children’s furniture provided by the State. The Moscow Regional Scientific – Research Institute for Health in Young

Childhood (MONIORD) developed models “satisfying all hygienic and aesthetic requirements.”²⁰⁶ Furniture was, however, meant to be made by hand by socially-minded women and painted carefully in appropriate colors.

What is provided this time are not detailed instructions but only templates which, like a model for a dress, can now be executed in a variety of ways, and, by putting women in charge of extensive remodeling and furniture-making expand, in a small way, their area of design competence beyond that allowed in the grown-up environment.

Children’s architecture was not only depicted but celebrated as the architecture of miniature. A typical photograph of collective daycare facilities shows children washing their hands above very small sinks, small towels and small shelves, the captions stressing that the sinks are specially made for children’s size as the achievement of modern interior design. Children are shown playing on an elaborate wooden construction of little steps and slides, mobile toy structures inserted into grown-up architecture.

Miniaturization of architecture is brought to its full potential as the architecture of the toy in the organization of outdoor spaces, in which it becomes the art of the play pavilion, a device of *divertissement*, or the *folie*. The nurturing roles of the woman as the mother and as the caretaker of the biological environment come together in the design of children’s parks and playgrounds. The paradigmatic image of the woman’s architecture is that of a well-kept garden with a green lawn and strategically placed trees, bushes, and flowerbeds, populated by fountains and miniature architectural devices. The scheme of the imagined setting of children’s interaction with nature, as given in elevation, rather

²⁰⁶ “Proportions, Form, Color,” p. 37

than in plan, is an idyllic scene that involves a vivid imaginary of various kinds of child's bodily engagement with the material environment.

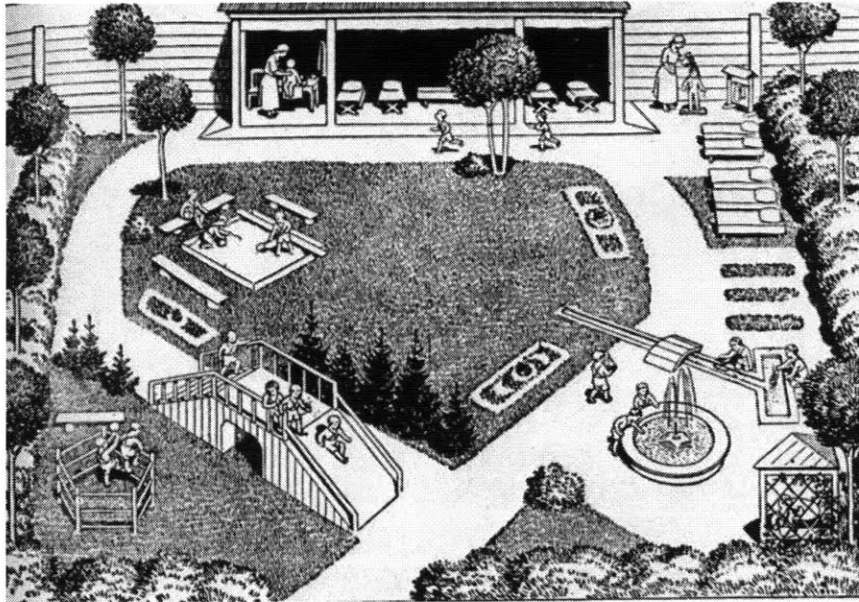


Figure 9. Scheme of an outdoor playground in a kindergarten, *Obshchestvennitsa* 6, 1937

Apart from nurseries, privileged sites for the creation of play devices were summer camps, and these devices were not referred to as toys, but as “constructions.” We find out, for example, that the 1938 summer camp of the Stalin automobile factory in Levkovo had a huge wooden construction “Ship” and a playhouse not only situated in nature, but also decorated with plants in the style of folk art.²⁰⁷ In this summer camp, we also encounter a play henhouse supposedly run by children who take care of animals and the facility for education and entertainment’s sake.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ *Obshchestvennitsa* 4, 1938, p. 4

²⁰⁸ *Obshchestvennitsa* 5, p. 17

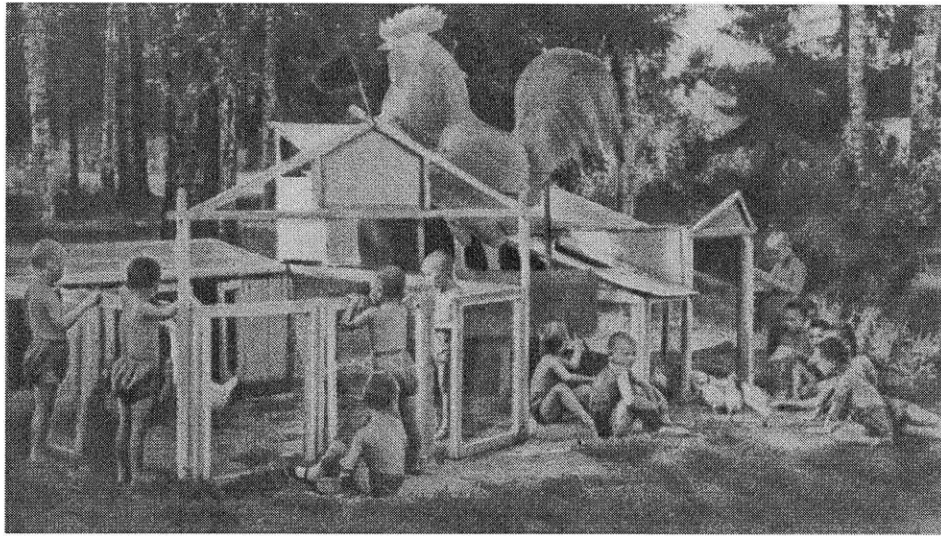


Figure 10. "Children from the Stalin kindergarten on Vacation in the Village of Leskovo in the Moscow Region are Tending after Hens and Taking Care of the Cleanliness of the Henhouse," *Obshchestvennitsa* 5, 1937, p. 17

The henhouse building contains rhetorical allusions to the form of the traditional house, such as the skeletal outline of a gable in the front, the smaller one in the corner, little overhanging roofs, and a play window on the side. This is not a shed for holding chickens. The creator had a clear architectural ambition, as she strived to articulate the aesthetics of children's cohabitation with animals in nature. But the logic of the structure is by no means self-evident, and in order to make sense of the surplus of formal tropes, we are presented with a staged demonstration of how it is used, as a toy or a device. It has no architectural autonomy on its own, but has to be represented with all the children and all the hens in a variety of positions and situations, and this representation makes it clear that we are also looking at a scaled-down double of architecture. This minimization of architecture is further stressed by the insertion of a gigantic cock in the middle of the structure, in comparison to which the entire construction and all its inhabitants look as actors in a fairy-tale Lilliputian world.

We recollect the labor of pioneering *obshchestvennitsy*, epitomized in Evgeniia Vesnik's henhouses in the Urals in 1934 to feed the starving workers, as a template for wife-activists' self-organization. In 1938 the henhouse is a garden folly. The heroism of pioneering endeavors in managing nature, such as those of Evgeniia Vesnik and Zinaida Gavrilovna (the planter of the first factory flowerbed) did not translate into major forms of aesthetic and architectural expertise. Wife-activists, whose accepted domains in the design of the environment were planting flowers, choosing colors, and designing nurseries and playgrounds, were apparently assigned a marginal role in the Stalinist enterprise ordering of the material environment, albeit one crucial for defining modern femininity.

But the presence of women's labor and especially their power to produce tokens of nature's abundance is not invisible – it is actually everywhere, and the image of bounty produced by the woman threatens to overwhelm architecture. There is an image in an issue of *Obshchestvennitsa* in the advice on how to make an aquarium. It features the metal frame of the aquarium, on one side of the metal structure transforming into a vegetal outgrowth.

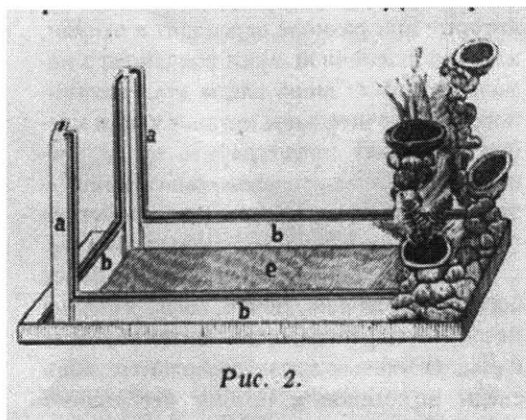


Figure 11. Aquarium. *Obshchestvennitsa* 1, 1938, p.60

It is arguably the same principle that guided wife-activists' aesthetic intervention in the poorly kept, and poorly furnished public interior, which guided their comprehensive project of masking poverty by means of planting. The plant transforms the dilapidated room into a miniature paradise. In all the images of Soviet interiors featured in the journal the entire interior is overtaken by the presence of a key feature – the potted plant. The potted plant is the centerpiece in a manager's office. It is the main element in the renovation of a worker's dining room. It hides most architectural surfaces in the design of a dance hall. Canopies of plants hang over ill people at the sanatorium or a group of children looking at the aquarium. Potted plants are huge. Potted plants are small. The most prominent kinds are tropical – the ficus and the palm tree. In the black and white photographs, the plants are colored in, and their green tint signals the wife-activists' conquest of structure by horticulture.



Figure 12. "Breakfast in a Children's Sanatorium," *Obshchestvennitsa* 9-10 1937, p. 44



Figure 13. *Obshchestvennitsa* no. 9-10 1937, p. 21

But there were things the housewives could not conquer. The flipside of the image of natural bounty expertly managed by wife-activists and displayed on the pages of *Obshchestvennitsa* was the lurking presence of death. Death in the past, the trauma of famine, was concealed in the image of beautiful *byt*. The horror of Stalinist purges was effectively purged from the pages of the journal. But death in the future could not be purged, as its presence was immanent to the wife-activist's role as feminine logistical support in a society that was in the late 1930s getting ready for the Second World War.

Children were the objects of care, and it is rare to find a first person child's account about the relationship with one's body and nature's bounty. When we do find one, as we do in a poem "Mirror," published in 1938, we encounter the following lines: "I come to the mirror /I look at myself in it /I move away, I move closer/I see the same thing- /A boy walking around all day/Pale, like a shadow./I walk around sad, because I am not putting on weight./ If I am weak and skinny./How will they take me into the army?/ How will I go to training?/ I will not be able to lift up the rifle./ I will not be able to get on the horse./ They will not take me!/One must be healthy,/ One must be ready for defense,/ Because everyone has to be/ The defense of the country./So I decided to get better/ Started to force myself to eat:/ I ate pea *kissel*, / Milk and *vermishel'* (vermicelli)/ Ham and sour milk,/ Jam and buckwheat porridge,/ *Kulyebyaka* and omelet.../ Am I gaining weight or not?/ I get to the mirror,/ I look at myself in it./ I move away, I move closer/ I see the same thing:/ A boy walking around all day/ Pale, like a shadow./ How will I get recruited?/ I started eating more and more,/ I ate everything / All that is sour, all that is sweet,/ All that I don't like,/ Just so that I would get fatter./ I tried to get

better,/ Started exercising./ I went each morning to drills,/ Waking up all by myself/
Time passed unnoticeably/ And three weeks went by./ I get to the mirror,/ I look at
myself in it./ I move away, I get closer,/ But now I already see / There is a warrior in the
mirror./ Well, I did not try for nothing./ I will go to training,/ I will easily lift a rifle./ I
will deftly get on the horse –/ They will take me into the army!”²⁰⁹

Children are raised plump, happy, and healthy so that they can fall for their country. The aesthetics of abundance, when it came to children’s bodies, is the aesthetics of military readiness. In the militaristic rhetoric which appears on the pages of *Obshchestvennitsa* at the same time as all the advice on decorating, planting and feeding, fertility and death are linked. Creating a biological surplus, a wealth of people, does not only mean to create citizens who will enjoy the riches of a supposedly developed industrial society. It is to create a population that can itself be consumed.

The mother was not only to prepare her child and husband for war, she was to prepare herself, too. Images in which wife-activists are shown undergoing “military training” and “defense exercises” are not many, but they harshly stand out of the landscape of flowerbeds, lawns, well ordered environments, dresses, cosmetic products, and babies. In all of them, the well kept visages of the feminine caretaker are replaced with gasmasks. We encounter an image in which women are holding a meeting, all of them wearing gasmasks. Or, in another, they learn how to drive in gasmasks. In gasmasks they go on hikes. The gasmask and the military coat is an image of femininity

²⁰⁹ Stovaratskii, A. “Zerkalo” [The Mirror] from “Mama, Pochitai!” [Mother, Read to Me], *Obshchestvennitsa* 11, November 1938, p. 55

parallel to that of the well kept visage, silk hair, and curvaceous bodies. It is the femininity of the apocalypse.

As early as 1937, a photograph from *Obshchestvennitsa* features women under gas masks and protective coats in the barren oil fields of Baku, in Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, dwarfed by industrial structures. Nine women step together in a steady march towards the camera, somewhere far away from Moscow.



Figure 14. "Activists of the Oil Plant in the Name of Kaganovich (in Baku) are Finishing Their Training Mission in Gas Masks," *Obshchestvennitsa* 9-10, 1937, p. 48

Wife activists protected and elaborated through their design the picture of a society of surplus. The flipside of their world of overproduction was a world on the brink of destruction. In it, they were put in a place where it was not only the imago of Soviet economy they were called upon to defend.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I wrote about the multiplicity of heterogeneous poetic and ethical practices involved in ordering the quotidian environment in Russia in the first two decades after the October Revolution. These were practices that often crossed the boundaries of art and the architectural profession. I considered them in the plural, as the architectures of everyday life.

In a society officially governed by liberated workers, the dominant political discourse was that of production and technological development. Bureaucratic, political, economic, and artistic efforts to reform everyday life, or *byt*, were part of a comprehensive project of integrating everyday life into a world of rationalized and mechanized labor. I explored the place of architecture in these efforts.

In the Russian 1920s and 1930s, *byt*, as an object of reform, was no longer a private matter. Domesticity was dislocated into the public domain. Micro-politics of the immediate bodily environment were linked to the macro-politics of production and work. Architecture materialized the vision of the society of labor, recreating the world of labor in the physical environment, creating discrete orders of the senses that translated the Soviet economic and bureaucratic rhetoric of labor into a lifestyle, but also eroticized the drab everyday.

I explored this condition by focusing on problems of the working object, the working body, the working building, the public construction site, and female labor in the

environment. The studies are ordered chronologically, and by scale. I proceeded from the domestic detail, to end with a transformation and conquest of nature.

In my first chapter, “The Administration of Things,” I explored habitation as a physical interaction with the environment mediated by the object-apparatus. I explored the bureaucratic and poetic order of objects, in the attempt to find out how the everyday figured as an extension of the world of productivity. Key to this phenomenon was the appearance of the object-apparatus – the apparatus of both pleasure and efficiency, used within the confines of the ubiquitous one-room apartment as a tool of ordering space, of creating different domestic constellations and defining new forms of bodily engagement with the material environment. The object was a tool for both inhabiting the domestic microcosm and for transcending its limitations.

“Agitation,” my second chapter on the biomechanical theater, is about cosmos plotted by the orbits of laboring bodies. It is about the theater of Vsevolod Meyerhold which redefined agitation as the work of agitated bodies on stage. This concept developed in close collaboration with the Central Institute of Labor and its attempts to make production more efficient. What it had in common with this project was the vision that the Soviet subject is not a psychological, but a corporeal entity. But the theater brought materialism to the extreme, recreating the world as a cosmos of convulsive bodies in action and ultimately presenting not the efficient body, but passion, desire, and exuberance.

In my third chapter, “It Works,” I studied Soviet baths, worlds of mass produced hygiene and popular communion. In the period around 1930, when the baths were collectivized, a connection between bathing and factory production was established,

which led to the concept of the bath as a site of total body processing. I paid special attention to those projects, which aimed to replicate the world, as sites of group ritual, and systems dedicated to the entirety of bodily functions.

“Gleam,” the fourth chapter, is about the Moscow Metro, built in 1935, as the site of communal construction and riches. It is about the connection between the work of construction and the work of perception. The Metro was a universe of collective opulence underneath Moscow. By reading collective accounts of construction, I explored how new modes of perceptions were used to claim and capture this opulence.

The final chapter, “Administration of Nature,” is about a society of supposed industrial surplus, and the work of women on expressing this condition by transforming the entire world into an image of fertility and bounty. This project is elaborated on the pages of the journal *Obshchestvennitsa*, or “socially minded woman,” which was a construction of a parallel world of green gardens, plump children, horticulture, and beauty, in the midst of hunger, purges and militarism.

All these architectures were reconstructions of the world that envelops the laboring body. By studying them, we discover that the everyday is not an amorphous dust of history, but a terrain of rich aesthetic production involving panoply of actors and disciplines. Architectures of the everyday were always circumscribed the State rhetoric of production, but they created peculiar metaphysical systems which did not chart new ideological, but new erotic horizons – new lifestyles, relationships between the body and the world. They translated grand social visions into little quotidian cosmos, both metaphysical and concrete.

The tragedy of the everyday is that its actors never escape the brutal course of World history. Authors of its architecture often face a tragic end, get censored, their work disappears, or, as the socially minded women, end up transforming the Garden of Eden into a Theatre of War. But what is important to know is that on the micro-scale, World history is, in fact, the fate of discrete worlds, which are not only political and ethical, but have their own material articulations.

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Chapter One

Figure 1. Stanislav Strumilin, “Domestic Labor in the Households of Office Workers in 1923/1924 (in the number of hours per worker per month).” Image and translation mine, adaptation from Strumilin, Stanislav G. Problemy ekonomiki truda [Problems of Labor Economy]. Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957.

Figure 2. Stanislav Strumilin, “Domestic Inventory of Workers in December of 1923 Classified by Material.” Image and translation mine, adaptation from Strumilin, Stanislav G. Problemy ekonomiki truda [Problems of Labor Economy]. Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957.

Figure 3. Abram Room, “Tret'ya Meshchanskaya” [Bed and Sofa] (1927), still. www.greencine.com

Figure 4. K. Ivanov, F. Terkhin, P. Smolin, “Communal House” (1927). Kopp, Anatole. Town and Revolution: Soviet Architecture and City Planning, 1917-1935. London; New York: Academy Editions; St Martins Press, 1985.

Figure 5. “Individual House no. 30.” Sovremennaya Arkhitektura No. 6 (September 1930)

Figure 6. “Rationalized Kitchen.” Sovremennaya Arkhitektura, No. 1 (January 1930)

Figure 7. “Kitchen Element.” Sovremennaya Arkhitektura No. 1 (January 1929)

Figure 8. P. Galaktionov, “Folding Bed.” Lef 3 (1923)

Figure 9. Nikolai Sobolev, “Bed-Armchair.” Lef 3 (1923)

Figure 10. Nikolai Miliutin, “Living Cell.” Miliutin, Nikolai. Sotsgorod (1930). Cambridge, MIT Press, 1974.

Figure 11. Vladimir Tatlin, “Novy Byt” [New Way of Life] (1924). Zhadova, Larissa, A, editor. Tatlin. New York: Rizzoli, 1989

Figure 11. Vladimir Tatlin, “Letatlin,”(1932) demonstration. Tatlin.

Figure 12. Vladimir Tatlin, “Letatlin”(1932), from Tatlin.

Chapter Two

Figure 1. “Magnanimous Cuckold” (1922). Plan of Scenic Movement. RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963 (GOSTIM), Opus 1

Figure 2. “Magnanimous Cuckold” (1922). Table of Seconds of Movement. RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963 (GOSTIM), Opus 1, p. 19, Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963 (GOSTIM), Opus 1

Figure 3. “Magnanimous Cuckold” (1922). Plan of Scenic Movement. RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art), Fond 963, Opus 1

Figure 4. “Bedbug” (1929). Prisyppkin’s Apartment, Act I, Collection of the Bakhrushin Theater Museum in Moscow

Figure 5. “*Bedbug*” (1929). Man of the Future, Act II. Collection of the Bakhrushin Theater Museum in Moscow

Figure 6. “Rationalized Kitchen,” Sovremennaia Arkhitektura, No. 1 (January 1930)

Figure 7. “Magnanimous Cuckold” (1922). Set by Lyubov Popova. Art in the Picture; An Introduction to Art History, www.artinthepicture.com

Figure 8. “Magnanimous Cuckold” (1922). Set by Lyubov Popova. Collection of the Bakhrushin Theater Museum in Moscow.

Chapter Three

Figure 1. “Group of Men in the Swimming Pool of the Trust for Baths and Laundries” (1932). Central Archive of Cinematic and Photographic Documents in St. Petersburg

Figure 2. Nikolai Demkov, Bathhouse on 3 Stantsionnaya Street (photo 1934). Central Archive of Cinematic and Photographic Documents in St. Petersburg

Figure 3. Washing Machine. Voprosy Kommunal’nogo Khoziaistva, No. 2-3 (Jan-Feb) 1931

Figure 4. Boiler and Conveyor Belt for Laundries. Voprosy Kommunal’nogo Khoziaistva, No. 2-3 (Jan-Feb) 1931

Figure 5. Alexander Gegello: Sanitary Conveyor of the Vasileostrovskii District, 1931 (photo 1933). Central Archive of Cinematic and Photographic Documents in St. Petersburg

Figure 6. Gegello and Krichevsky: Design for a Crematorium. *Voprosy Komunal'noy Khoziaistva* No. 9 (Sept) 1931

Figure 7. Aleksandr Nikol'sky, Project for a Bathhouse (1927), Model. A. S. Nikol'sky: Makety eksperimental'nykh proektov 1920-1930 gg. iz sobrania Nauchno-issledovatel'skogo muzeya Rossiiskoi Akademii Khudozhestv [A. S. Nikol'sky: Models of Experimental Projects from the 1920s and 1930s, from the Collection of the Scientific-Research Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts]. St Petersburg; Goethe Institut, 2008.

Figure 8. Aleksandr Nikol'sky, Project For a Bathhouse (1927), Original drawing of the unbuilt version), image accessed in the digital collections of the State Museum of St. Petersburg History

Figure 9. Kazimir Malevich, "Arkhitekton" (1924). Daniel Webster College Digital Collection of Dr. Donald Wellman
<http://faculty.dwc.edu/wellman/Architekton.htm>

Figure 10. Photograph of Nikol'sky's Round Bathhouse. in USSR in Construction, No. 11 (November) 1931

Figure 11. Nikol'sky, Round Bathhouse, as built in 1930, photographed by Tijana Vujosevic in 2009.

Figure 12. Aleksandr Nikol'sky, Round Bathhouse (1927), Original drawing, Built version. image accessed in the digital collections of the State Museum of St. Petersburg History

Figure 13. Nikol'sky, Round Bathhouse, as built in 1930, photographed by Tijana Vujosevic in 2009.

Figure 14. Anatoly Ladinsky, Bathhouse in Tyumen (1931), section. Stroitel'stvo Moskvyy 1 (January) 1932

Figure 15. Anatoly Ladinsky, Bathhouse in Tyumen, perspective. Stroitel'stvo Moskvyy 1 (January) 1932

Figure 16. Anatoly Ladinsky, Bath in Tyumen, plan. Stroitel'stvo Moskvyy 1 (January) 1932

Figure 17. Bath in Tyumen, scheme of the bathing sequence. Sketch by Tijana Vujosevic.

Figure 18. Bread Factory No. 5. Stroitel'stvo Moskvyy 1 (January), 1932

Chapter Four

Figure 1. “The Map of the Metro.” Kosarev, Alexander, ed. Kak my stroili Metro [How We Built the Metro]. Moscow: Istorija fabrik i zavodov, 1935.

Figure 2. “Workers’ Parade on the Day of Metro Opening, 15 May 1935,” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 3. “Komsomol’skaya,” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 4. “Delegates of the Second Congress of Vanguard Farmers.” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 5. “Komsomol’skaya,” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 6. “Dvoretz Sovetov” (photo from the 1950s). Moskovskoe Metro: Proekt Artemia Lebedeva. www.metro.ru.

Figure 7. “Krasnoselskaya.” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 8. “Inspection of Metro Cars.” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 9. “Dzerzhinsky Square, Entry Hall.” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 10. “Brigade-leader Rebrov, Lenin Medalist.” Kak my stroili Metro.

Figure 11. Sokol’niki (contemporary photograph). Moskovskoe Metro: Proekt Artemia Lebedeva. www.metro.ru.

Figure 12. “Delegates of the Seventh Soviet on the First Metro Ride.” Kak my stroili Metro.

Chapter Five

Figure 1. “Young Mother in the Maternity Clinic Votes for the Best Friend of Women Workers and Children, Comrade Stalin.” Obshchestvennitsa 7/1938

Figure 2. Peter Paul Rubens. “Holy Family with the Basket” (1616). As reprinted in Obshchestvennitsa 1/1936

Figure 3. Advertisement for creams “Flora” and “Onyx.” Obshchestvennitsa 7/1938

Figure 4. Child. Obshchestvennitsa 5/1937

Figure 5. “Fountain in the Mechanical Department of a Train Depot.” Obshchestvennitsa 11/1938

Figure 6. “Wife-activists of the Debal’tsev Station are Creating a Flower Garden in Front of the Passenger Platform. Obshchestvennitsa 7-8/1937

Figure 7. “Side Cabinet (*Bufet*)”, Obshchestvennitsa 9-10/1936

Figure 8. “Plan of Nursery, Made out of Two Apartments.” Obshchestvennitsa 6/1937

Figure 9. Scheme of an outdoor playground in a kindergarten, Obshchestvennitsa 6/1937

Figure 10. “Children from the Stalin kindergarten on Vacation in the Village of Leskovo in the Moscow Region are Tending after Hens and Taking Care of the Cleanliness of the Henhouse.” Obshchestvennitsa 5/1937

Figure 11. Aquarium. Obshchestvennitsa 1, 1938

Figure 12. “Breakfast in a Children’s Sanatorium.” Obshchestvennitsa 9-10/1937

Figure 13. Children at Play. Obshchestvennitsa 9-10/1937

Figure 14. “Activists of the Kaganovich Oil Plant (in Baku) are Finishing Their Training Mission in Gas Masks.” Obshchestvennitsa 9-10/1937

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alpers, Boris. Teatr Sotsial'noi maski [Theater of the Social Mask]. Moscow: Gos. izd-vo khudozhestvennoĭ literatury, sektor iskusstv, 1931.

Andreev, Andrei Andreevich. 1936. Kommunisticheskoe vospitanie molodezhi i zadachi komsomola [Communist Upbringing of Youth and the Tasks of the Komsomol]. Moscow: Partizat CK VKP(b).

Arkin, David. 1936. "Kul'tura Zhilishcha" [The Culture of Dwelling]. Obshchestvennitsa 2: 10 – 11

Arkin, David. Isskustvo bytovoĭ veshchi: ocherki noveishei hudozhestvennoi promyshlennosti [The Art of the Everyday Thing]. Moscow: OGIZ-IZOGIZ, 1932

Arvatov, Boris. "Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing." (1925) Christina Kiaer, transl. October, Vol. 81 (Summer 1997): 119-128

Arvatov, Boris. Ob agit ai proz isskustve [On agitation and production art] Moscow: Federatsiya, 1930.

Balmas-Neary, Rebecca. "Flowers and Metal: The Soviet "Wife-Activists' Movement" And Stalin-era Culture and Society 1934-1941." PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2002.

Belakhov, I. 1937. "Uhod za kozhei litsa" [Care of Facial Skin]. Obshchestvennitsa 11: 31

Belakhov, I. 1937. "Uhod za volosami," [Hair Care]. Obshchestvennitsa 16: 31-32

Benjamin, Walter. Reflections. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.

Benvenuti, Francesco. "Industry and Purge in the Donbass 1936-1937," Europe-Asia Studies vol 45, No. 1 (1993): 68-69

Bogdanov, Igor Alekseevich. Tri veka Peterburgskoi bani. [Three Centuries of the Peterburg Bath]. Saint Petersburg: Isskustvo-SPB, 2000

Boym, Svetlana. Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Braudel, Fernand. Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800 (1967). New York:

Harper and Row, 1973.

Buchli, Victor. An Archaeology of Socialism. Oxford; New York: Berg, 1999.

Buchloh, Benjamin H. D. "From Faktura to Factography." October 30 (Fall 1984): 82-119

Burke, Peter. "Introduction." Burke, Peter, editor. New Perspectives on Historical Writing. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.

Clark, Katerina. "Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan." Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed. Cultural Revolution in Russia. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978.

De Magistris, Allesandro. La costruzione della città totalitarian: Il piano di Mosca e il dibattito sulla città sovietica tra gli anni venti e cinquanta [The Construction of the Totalitarian City: Moscow and the Debate about the Soviet City from the 1920s to the 1950s]. Milan: Città Studio Edizioni, 1995.

D. F. Banya, ee pol'za i vliyanie na organism cheloveka, sostavil po nauchnym' danym D. F. [The Bathhouse, its Benefits and Impact on the Human Organism, compiled according to scientific data by D. F.]. St. Petersburg: V. I. Gubinskii, 1905.

Davies, R. W., Tauger, M. B., and Wheatcroft, S. G. 1995. "Stalin, Grain Stocks, and the Famine of 1932-1933." Slavic Review Vol. 54 no. 3 (Autumn): 642-657

De Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life (1974). London and New York: Verso, 1991.

Dobrenko, Evgeny and Erik Neiman, eds. Landscapes of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003.

"Dvoretz Zdorovya" [Palace of Health]. Kul'tura i byt: 67-71

Erdman, Nikolai. Mandat : pīesa v trekh deīstviakh [The Warrant: A Play in Three Acts]. (1924) München : Sagner in Kommission, 1976.

Filimonov, I and K Yakovlev. "12 hlebnikh fabrik," [Twelve Bread Factories]. Sovremennaia arkhitektura No.1 (January) 1932: 17-20

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "The Great Departure: Rural-Urban Migration in the Soviet Union, 1929-33." William G. Rosenberg and Lewis H. Siegebaum, Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gastev, Aleksei. Kak nado rabotat': Prakticheskoe vvedenie v nauku organizatsii truda. [How to Work: Practical Introduction into the Scientific Organization of Labor]. Ekonomika, 1966.

Gastev, Aleksei. Poeziya rabocheho udara [Poetry of the Factory Floor] Petrograd: Proletkul't, 1918.

Gilarovskaia, Nadezhda Vladimirovna. Teatral'no-dekoratsionnoe iskusstvo za 5 let [Theatre-decorative art in 5 years]. Kazan': Kombinat Izdatel'stva i pechati, 1924.

Ginzburg, Carlo. The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller (1976). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Ginzburg, Carlo. "Making it Strange: A Prehistory of a Literary Device," in Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance (1998) New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Ginzburg, Carlo. "Microhistory: Two or Three Things I Know About It." Critical Inquiry, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Autumn 1993): 10-35

Ginzburg, Moisei. "Problemy tipizatsii zhil'ya RSFSR" [The Problems of Housing Typology in the RSFSR]. Sovremennaiia arkhitektura No. 1 (January 1929): 5

Ginzburg, Moisei. Stil' i epokha: problemy sovremennoi arkhitektury [Style and Epoch: Problems of Contemporary Architecture]. Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo, 1924.

Ginzburg, Moisei. Zhilishche [Housing]. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Nauchno-Technicheskoe Izdatelstvo Stroitel'noi Industrii i Sudostroenia, 1934.

Goffman, Erving. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. New York: Doubleday, 1959.

Goldenberg, N. A. Banya dlya voisk i dlya narodnykh mass v gigenicheskom, sanitarnom, lechebnom i ekonomicheskom otnoshenii: kratkiya ukazaniya dlya vrachei; lya voikovikh chastei, gorodskikh i zemskikh upravlenii; dlya shkol, fabrik, zavodov, i dr. [The Bathhouse for Armies and for Popular Masses – its Sanitary, Medical and Economical Aspects: Short Instructions for Doctors, for Military Units, for Municipal and District Governemts: For Schools, Factories, Plants, etc.] Saint Petersburg: Tip. E. Evdokimova, 1898.

Gough, Maria. The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Dobrenko, Evgeny and Erik Neiman, ed. Landscapes of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003

Harms, Danil. Izabrannoe [Selections]. George Gibian, ed. Wurzburg: Jal-verlag, 1974.

Hessler, Julie. A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Ivanov, V. P. "Istoriya chastnicheskogo Bannogo tresta" [The history of the private bath trust,] Voprosy kommunal'nogo khoziaistva, No. 7 (July) 1930: 62

Ioffe, Ieremia. Krisis sovremennogo iskusstva [Crisis in Contemporary Art] Leningrad: Tabochee izdatel'stvo "Priboi," 1925.

Ioffe, Ieremia. Kul'tura i stil': sistema i printsipy sotsiologii iskusstv. [Culture and Style: A System and the Principles of the Sociology of Art]. Leningrad: Priboi, 1927.

Ioffe, Ieremia. Novyi stil' [New Style]. Moscow and Leningrad: IZOGIZ, 1932.

Jenks, Andrew. "A Metro on the Mount: The Underground as a Church of Soviet Civilization," Technology and Culture 41, number 4 (October 2000): 697-724

Johansson, Kurt. Aleksej Gastev: Proletarian Bard of the Machine Age. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1983.

Kaganovich, Lazar M. Za sotsialisticheskuyu rekonstruktsiyu Moskvyy i gorodov SSSR – pererabotannaia stenograma doklada na iiunskom plenum TSKVKP (b) [For the socialist reconstruction of Moscow and cities in the USSR – edited shorthand recording of the speech on the June session of the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (b)]. Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1931.

Kiaer, Christina. "Boris Arvatov's Socialist Object." October 81 (Summer 1997): 105-118.

Kiaer, Christina. Imagine No Possessions, the Socialist Object of Russian Constructivism. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.

Kiaer, Christina and Erik Neiman, eds. Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Kollontai, Alexanra. Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo [Family and the Communist State]. Tambov: Izd. Tambovskogo gubernskogo agenstva V. Ts. I. K, 1919.

Kommunistka. 1927. "Iz byta germanskikh rabotnits." [From the Everyday Life of German Workers]. No. 1 (January): 77-79

Kosarev, Aleksandr, ed. Kak my stroili Metro [How We Built the Metro]. Moscow: Istoriia fabrik i zavodov, 1935.

Kosarev, Aleksandr, ed. Rasskazy stroitelei metro [Stories of Metro Builders]. Moscow: Istoriia fabrik i zavodov, 1935.

Kovalev, L. and Aleksei Shchusev, ed. Metro. Sbornik posvyashchenii pusku moskovskogo metropolitena [Metro: anthology dedicated to the opening of the Moscow metropoliten.] Moscow: 1935.

Kozlov, Dimitrii. "Aleksandr Nikol'skii i suprematisty" [Alexandr Nikol'sky and the Suprematists]. Sbornik trudov fakul'teta istorii iskusstv Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge. St. Petersburg, 2007: 98-114

Kravchenko, K. 1937. "Inter'er, - ego arkhitektura i svetovoe oformlenie" [The Interior – its Archtitecture and Lighting Design]. Obshchestvennitsa 13: 18-19

Kravchenko, K. 1937. "Ob uiute" [On Comfort]. Obshchestvennitsa 17-18: 30-31

Krzhizhanovsky, Sigismund Davidovich. Sobranie sochineni v piati tomakh [Collected Works in Five Volumes], vol. 1. Sankt-Peterburg : Symposium, 2001.

Ksanina, T. 1937. "Plafon dlia detskoj i spal'noi" [Lampshade for the Nursery and the Bedroom]. Obshchestvennitsa 8: 45-46

Ladinskii, Anatoly, "Ratsionalizatsiya proektirovaniya tait v sebe ogromnye vozmozhnosti ekonomii: Kogda tselesoobrazna postroika zdaniia bez pryamogo osveshcheniya?" [The rationalization of design hides great potential for economizing: When is the construction of buildings without direct lighting purposeful?]. Sovremennaia Arkhitektura no. 1 (January) 1932: 30-33

Lefebvre, Henri. Critique of Everyday Life (1947, 1961, 1981). London and New York: Verso, 1991.

Levi, Giovanni. "On Microhistory." Burke, Peter, editor. New Perspectives on Historical Writing. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992: 91-113.

Lipshtein, L. and Lifshits A. 1936. "Remont kvartiry" [Apartment Renovation]. Obshchestvennitsa 2: 25

Lissitsky, El. Architecture for the World Revolution. Eric Dluhosch, transl. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1984.

Lodder, Christina. Russian Constructivism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Lotman, Jurij. "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Russian Eighteenth Century Culture". Lotman, Jurij M. and Boris A. Uspenskij. The Semiotics of Russian Culture. Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1984.

Luedtke, Alf, ed. History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Marx, Karl. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Ben Fowkes, transl. New York : Vintage Books, 1977.

Mashkova, N. 1936. "Proportsii, forma, tsvet" [Proportions, Form, Color]. Obshchestvennitsa 9-10: 36-37.

Meerovich, Mark Grigorievich. Kak vlast narod k trudu priuchala: zhilishche v SSSR – sredstvo upravleniia liud'mi 1917-1941 gg. [How the Government Trained the People to Work: Housing in the USSR as Means of People Management] Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2005.

Mendel'son, V. 1937. "Kak popolnet" [How to Gain Weight]. Obshchestvennitsa 16: 30-31.

Miliutin, Nikolai A. Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building Socialist Cities. Arthur Sprague, translator. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974.

Mikhailovna, Alla, ed. Meyerhold i khudozhniki [Meyerhold and Artists]. Moscow: GALART, 1995.

Nicholas, Mary A. and Cynthia A. Ruder. "In Search of The Collective Author: Fact and Fiction from the Soviet 1930s." Book History, vol. 11 (2008): 221-244

"OBERIU Declaration." in Oxford Slavonic Papers, New Series, vol. III (1970): 69-73.

O' Mahoni, Mike. "Archaeological Fantasies: Constructing History on the Moscow Metro." The Modern Language Review 98, Number 1 (January 2003): 138-150

“Opyty v institute ritma” [Experiments in the Institute of Rhythm]. Vestnik Isskustv no. 5 (1922): 26

Ostashevsky, Eugene, ed. OBERIU: An Anthology of Russian Absurdism. Translated and Edited by Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006, p. 83

Punin, Nikolai. Noveishie techeniya v russkom isskustve I. [The Latest Currents in Russian Art I] Leningrad: Gosudarstvennii russkii muzei, 1927.

Punin, Nikolai. Noveishie techeniya v russkom isskustve II. [The Latest Currents in Russian Art II] Leningrad: Gosudarstvennii russkii muzei, 1928.

Rakitina, Z. 1927. “Klub v razreshenii voprosov novogo byta” [The Club in Solving the Problems of the New Everyday Life]. Kommunistka 4 (April): 40-43.

Rammo, V. A. “Na poroge novogo bannogo stroitel'stva” [On the Threshold of New Bathhouse Construction]. Voprosy kommunal'nogo khoziaistva No. 1 (January) 1931: 47

Randall, Amy. The Soviet Dream: World of Retail Trade and Consumption in the 1930s. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Ryan, William F. The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

Shklovsky, Victor. Third Factory. Richard Sheldon, transl. Ann Arbor: Adis, 1977.

Smetenev, M. “Novye mekhanicheskie prachechnye” [New mechanical laundries]. Stroitel'stvo Moskvy No. 6 (June) 1930: 11-13

Smidovich, S. 1928. “8 Marta i novy byt” [March 8th and New Everyday Life]. Kommunistka 2 (February): 49-

Smulevich, Boleslav Iakovlevich. 1936. Materinstvo pri kapitalizme i socializme. [Motherhood in Capitalism and Socialism]. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe social'no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo,.

Stalin, Iosif Visarionovich. “Speech at the First-Union Conference of Stakhanovites, November 17, 1935.” in Stalin, J. V. Problems of Leninism, 785. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1976.

Stites, Richard. Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Visions and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 1989.

Semenova, T. M., “Istoriya proektirovaniya pervogo petrogradskogo krematoriya” [The History of Designing the First Petrograd Crematorium]. *Kraevedicheskie zapiski SPb – Issledovaniya i materialy* 1996

Stepanova, Varvara. “O rabotakh konstruktivistkoi molodezhi” [On the Work of Constructivist Youth]. *Lef* 3 (1923: 53

Stovaratskii, A. 1938. “Zerkalo” [The Mirror], from “Mama, Pochitai!” [Mother, Read to Me]. *Obshchestvennitsa* 11: 55 – 56.

Strumilin, Stanislav Gustavovich. Problemy ekonomiki truda [Problems of Labor Economy]. Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957.

Sushkin, G. 1937. “Oformlenie posadok” [The Design of Plantings]. *Obshchestvennitsa* 8: 44-45.

Sushkin, G. 1937. “Tsvety i zelen' na pervomaiskikh torzhestvakh” [Flowers and Greenery in the Celebrations of the First of May]. *Obshchestvennitsa* 6: 31.

Sushkin, G. 1937. “Vygonka rastenii” [Getting Plants to Open up]. *Obshchestvennitsa* 21: 50.

Tafuri, Manfredo and Francesco Dal Co. Modern Architecture. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979.

Tsivian, Yuri. “O Chapline v russkom avangarde i o zakonakh sluchainog v isskustve” [On Chaplin in Russian Avant-garde and the Laws of Coincidence in Art]. *NLO* 81 (2006) [internet journal]

Trotsky, Leon. Voprosy byta [Questions of Everyday Life]. Moscow: Krasnaya nov,

Vishniak, M. 1937. “Uhod za litsom” [Facial Care]. *Obshchestvennitsa* 2: 26.

Volkonsky, Sergei. Byt i Bytie [Everyday Life and Spiritual Life]. Berlin: Mednyi vsadnik, 1924.

Volkonsky, Sergei. “Istoricheski-vospitatel'naya rol' ritma [The Historical-educational Role of Rhythm, Talk delivered at the All-Russian Congress of Artists in the Academy of Arts on December 27th, 1911]. Sergei Volkonskii. Khudozhestvennye otkliki. St. Petersburg: Apollon, 1912.

Vadim Volkov, "The Concept of *Kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process." Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed. Stalinism – New Directions. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Wheatcroft, S. G. 1990. "More Light on the Scale of Repression and Excess Mortality in the Soviet Union in the 1930s." Soviet Studies, vol.42, no. 2 (April): 355-367.

Wood, Paul. "The Politics of the Avant-Garde." The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde 1915-1932. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1995.

Zhadova, Larissa Alekseevna, ed. Tatlin. New York: Rizzoli, 1989.

Zoshchenko, Mikhail. Scenes From the Bathhouse, and Other Stories of Communist Russia. Sidney Monas, transl. Marc Slonim, ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962.