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| Rodchenko, Aleksandr Mikhailovich (1891-1956) |
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| Aleksandr Mikhailovich Rodchenko (b. 23 November/5 December 1891; d. 3 December 1956) entered the Russian avant-garde after Vladimir Tatlin invited him to take part in the 1916 Moscow exhibition, *The Store*. Showing large non-objective ink drawings created with compasses and geometrical structure, these two factors determined his painting and design work until Socialist Realism was forced upon art around 1930. From that time on, Rodchenko relied on his camera, a Leica, to photograph communist celebrations in Moscow, and major construction and industrial projects elsewhere. Considered good propaganda for the regime, his photojournalism was widely published, and received numerous awards during the 1930s. As with all Russian avant-gardists, Rodchenko’s creative life was divided into distinct periods of creativity before and after 1930. As a photojournalist, however, Rodchenko continued to work innovatively during the years of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. It was between 1916 and throughout the 1920s, however, that Rodchenko applied his creative mind to a wide range of media. Rodchenko’s creative boom in the 1920s was due to an increase in artistic activity following the October Revolution of 1917 — art schools were established, film and theatre venues opened, publications were produced, and aesthetic design and advertising began for State stores and manufacturing. During that short period, Rodchenko’s art gave a new and modern look to graphic design in Russia. |
| Aleksandr Mikhailovich Rodchenko (b. 23 November/5 December 1891; d. 3 December 1956) entered the Russian avant-garde after Vladimir Tatlin invited him to take part in the 1916 Moscow exhibition, *The Store*. Showing large non-objective ink drawings created with compasses and geometrical structure, these two factors determined his painting and design work until Socialist Realism was forced upon art around 1930. From that time on, Rodchenko relied on his camera, a Leica, to photograph communist celebrations in Moscow, and major construction and industrial projects elsewhere. Considered good propaganda for the regime, his photojournalism was widely published, and received numerous awards during the 1930s. As with all Russian avant-gardists, Rodchenko’s creative life was divided into distinct periods of creativity before and after 1930. As a photojournalist, however, Rodchenko continued to work innovatively during the years of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. It was between 1916 and throughout the 1920s, however, that Rodchenko applied his creative mind to a wide range of media. Rodchenko’s creative boom in the 1920s was due to an increase in artistic activity following the October Revolution of 1917 — art schools were established, film and theatre venues opened, publications were produced, and aesthetic design and advertising began for State stores and manufacturing. During that short period, Rodchenko’s art gave a new and modern look to graphic design in Russia.  Image: Construction.jpg  Figure 1 *Construction No. 89 (on Light Yellow).* 1919. Oil on canvas, 67.5 x 40 cm. Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Department of Private Collections, Moscow  Rodchenko began as a painter. His early non-objective canvases were achieved by beaming rays of light onto a screen (1917-18). These were followed by his ‘Black on Black’ paintings (1918-19), which featured celestial phenomena (eclipses, comets), and his ‘Line paintings’ (1919-20), also known as ‘Constructions,’ which were pure geometrical spatial arrangements of forces. These works were shown in two major avant-garde exhibitions in Moscow in 1919 and in 1920: The 10th State Exhibition, and the 19th State Exhibition respectively, with the latter including a retrospective painting of Vasily Kandinsky. Geometry was fundamental in Russian avant-garde art (and in modernism more generally), largely because artists were interested in the structures of order, from nature to the cosmos. Hence geometry was essential for giving order to their art, especially since it was the only means of capturing and expressing structures of energy and its movement. These subjects and ideas were the explicit subject matter of Rodchenko’s non-objective paintings (1919-21), which featured several drawings illustrating the catalogue of the famous 5 x 5 = 25 exhibition (Moscow 1921), and discussed in Rodchenko’s article, ‘The Line’ (1920). His modular sculptures of 1920-21 were three-dimensional explorations of this subject matter, and the depiction of forces through the order of geometry are the source of his innovative graphic design throughout the 1920s. It was also the foundation for his teaching of ‘constructive principles’ at the Vkhutemas, 1921-28, which was applied in the Metalwork Department and furniture design. Rodchenko was head of the Moscow Art Bureau of IZO Narkompros, 1920-22, which purchased works by the Russian avant-garde for the network of over 30 Museums of Artistic Culture throughout Russia. |
| Further reading:  (Dabrowski, Dickerman and Galassi)  (Khan-Magomedov)  (Lavrentiev)  (Noever)  (Opyt dlia budushchego – Dnevniki Stati, Pisma, Zapiski) |