Pavel Nikolaevich Filonov (1883-1941)

Pavel Filonov was a renowned figure at the height of the twentieth-century Russian avant-garde. Known as the creator of ‘Analytical Art and the Theory of Madeness’, he was beloved as a pedagogical leader of his own school, and fundamental as a pioneer through the creation of paintings and literature distinguished by their radical modernity and innovative ideologies.

Filonov was born in Moscow on 8th January 1883. An orphan at thirteen he moved to St Petersburg where he resided until his death. In 1910 Filonov joined and exhibited with the innovative Union of Youth movement, which broadened his artistic oeuvre to include set design and literature illustration. In 1914 Filonov clarified his artistic ideology, publishing his manifesto on ‘made’ paintings, distinguished by its morphological evolutionary overtones and its focus on persistent work, perhaps illustrated in his experimental poem *Sermon Chant of Universal Flowering* (1915). In 1922 he joined the INKh and exhibited with them in 1923, when he published his manifesto ‘Declaration of Universal Flowering’. Filonov then began to re-formulate his artistic ideals pedagogically, establishing the Collective Masters of Analytical Art in 1925. He supervised a number of artistic projects, including the illustration of the Finnish epic the *Kalevala* in 1933. His work was largely attacked by critics, indeed in 1930 his one-man exhibition was not allowed to open, thus from 1934 until his death Filonov did not exhibit publically. The artist died of pneumonia during the blockade of Leningrad on 3rd December 1941.