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MMD_02.01.01

Russian Constructivism

Link: www.oddrob.dk/russian_constructivism_site

Design Decisions

The True Vanguard Art Movement




Foundation

In the early 1900s, several revolutionary directions in art and design began, for later to develop into modernism, which today we know so well from the majority of the design we surround ourselves in our everyday lives. But at that time there were thoughts that art should not be reserved for the upper class. That art can be constructed, abstract, without ornaments, new and provocative – and for the people.

One might argue that Russia first came up with the new modernist ideas. Russian futurism served as the basis for the new art form. It initially led to Russian constructivism and later to 'der Stijl' and 'Bauhaus' in the West. Bauhaus is today considered to be the cradle of modernism.

Within constructivism this meant that, in essence, the expressive personal touch was rejected, looking away from the illustrative and hand-made expressions. One sought a pure and universal expression. ie. ornaments were removed from the design and they saw the simple geometric shapes as an objective reality in itself. It was created by the Russian avant-garde but quickly spread to the entire continent. Constructivism influenced architecture, poetry, music, and even the consumer market and became the new everyday life in Russia of the time.



~ In Spring ~ Directed by Mikhail Kaufman (1929) ~

The typefaces of Russian constructivism are typically geometric, clean and straight forms. ie. within the classification, it will typically be a sans serif; no feet, ornaments or swung curves and no contrasts in the line, which means that the line has the same thickness throughout the letter. Headings can be crooked in an often diagonal expression.

In Russian constructivism, we especially see the red colours which became a symbol of the people's revolution. In addition, black and white, where the white is not a pure white but a cracked white, due to the fact that it did not print the white colour but let the paper shine through. The paper was not bleached white as we know it today but was more like a cracked white we know today from, for example, natural paper.

There were often only two colours in a design used together with the black and chapped white. Strong graphic layout, simple and powerful in their expression. The layout can be both static in its structure ie. almost symmetrical or have dynamic and diagonal compositions. Sharp and geometric shapes characterize the design. Illustrations are not used in Russian constructivism, but on the other hand, photographs are used as a collage element. Posters often have strong messages.

Influencers

For this project, a mobile first website was to be designed and built based on a theme of a 20th century art movement called “Russian Constructivism”. It is argued as being a precursor to “Modernism”.

Based on stastcounter.com study of most common mobile resolutions used in recent years, a resolution of 390 x 844 serves as a base for layout decisions.

Same resolution for an iPhone 12 pro in the device selection tab of chrome developer tools.

The choice of color pallet is based from the description of the movement provided in the text for this assignment and extracted from the image I found most appealing (“Books” by Alexander Rodchenko) and aligned with the text description.

Some key words: constructed; abstract; no ornaments; simple geometric shapes; sans serif; primary colors; straight lines.

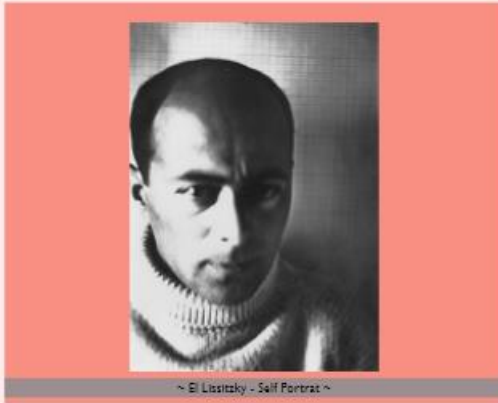


	HEX	RGB			CMYK			
	HEX:	R:	G:	B:	C:	M:	Y:	K:
	#f4491b	244	73	27	0	70	89	4
	HEX:	R:	G:	B:	C:	M:	Y:	K:
	#fde9ed	253	237	237	0	6	6	1
	HEX:	R:	G:	B:	C:	M:	Y:	K:
	#393335	57	51	53	0	11	7	78
	HEX:	R:	G:	B:	C:	M:	Y:	K:
	#f98f83	249	143	131	0	43	47	2
	HEX:	R:	G:	B:	C:	M:	Y:	K:
	#9b8e90	155	142	144	0	8	7	39

The gestalt law of **Figure-ground** is applied throughout the page, primarily in the images, where the light colored background pushes them in the foreground. This brings the viewer's attention to the center and giving the images a sense of depth and suspension. Further emphasis is being added by the even lighter colored background of the website body.

El Lissitzky

El Lissitzky (1890 - 1941) is one of the most influential and famous designers of the period. He uses primary colours and geometric shapes in the belief that this would be the new universal visual language that would be understood by everyone.



"One of our utopian ideas is the desire to overcome the limitations of the substructure, of the earthbound. We have developed this idea in a series of proposals. [...] 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."



Lissitzky saw the square as the source of all creative unfolding. He is especially known for his famous propaganda poster: "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge" where a red triangle, symbolizing the Communist rebel movements, pierces a white circle that would symbolize the Bolsheviks. El Lissitzky - Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, 1919 A poster that would encourage the people to revolution against the ruling regime. A revolution that came later, that today we denote 'The Russian Revolution'.

Lissitzky later travelled to the West, where he moved the constructivist ideals into the art group 'De Stijl'.

Alexander Rodchenko

Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) is another famous artist in Russian constructivism. He started his career painting, then he worked with graphic design, and later he worked with photograph. His photographs were socially engaged and innovative. He often shot his photos from an unusual angle - high above or below to shock the viewer. He wrote: "One has to take several different shots of a subject, from different points of view and in different situations, as if one examined it in the round rather than looked through the same keyhole again and again."

In the heading, a slightly edited version of Rodchenko's "Books" poster provides the law of **good figure** (law of simplicity). By removing all Cyrillic text, surrounding edges around the circle images of the shouting woman, along with the background between the geometric shapes gives the figure a sense of simplicity. The website body background color has the same "cracked" white that natural paper has that was lifted from the elements edited out of the image. This helps the image blend and also apply some figure-ground impression to it.

The **law of proximity** is presented at the bottom of the page in the footer, three boxed text links are grouped together, giving the viewer the impression of similar functionality. The **law of common fate** is provided by the hover function in that each texted box change to the same color when hovering over.

The **law of closure** can be seen on the screen shot to the left, where the width of the quote is the same as the width of the figures.

The **law of similarity** can be seen throughout the text, in that the size, color, font and style is equal between each heading, paragraphs and figure caption.

As per requirement to add descriptive text to our images, all images have been declared as figures and as we just learned to use figure caption recently, it seemed logical to do so. Image format is **.jpg** except for the heading image, that is **.png** as previously stated and for the intended use of an image with a transparent background.

To keep to the same style as the Russian constructivism movement intended, the font used is entirely sans-serif. A combination of 'Gill Sans MT' and an imported 'Titillium Web' from google fonts.



~ Poster by Alexander Rodchenko, 1924 ~

In his work on graphic design, he sought the unambiguous universal form. His work is characterized by its dynamics and energy.

Gustav Klutis

Gustav Klutis (1895 – 1938) is claimed to together with Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann and El Lissitzky to have created the subgenre 'Political photomontage'. A subgenre that originated in 1918. The ongoing theme in his works is propaganda and revolution.



~ Gustav Klutis Workers everyone must vote in the election of soviets 1930 ~

His first remarkable piece of work was a series of removable kiosks that were installed on the streets of Moscow in 1922. The kiosks were equipped with radio speakers, screens showing movies, and newspapers. The installation should mark the 5th anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

Legacy

The street artist Shepard Fairey and the band Franz Ferdinand are some of the contemporary artists who have clear and direct references to Russian Constructivism in their visual arts. But the term in today's context receives a different content and message than the highly propagandist and revolutionary message it had at that time of its origin.

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~ Check out other influential art movement of the 20th century ~

- ◊ [Fauvism and Expressionism](#)
- ◊ [Cubism and Primitivism](#)
- ◊ [Futurism Movement](#)

Log Summary

07_Feb_22

The start of the real nitty gritty. A nice and well-paced introduction to html and its design psychology through gestalt laws, contrast principals and text readability. The first theme assignment was also introduced.

08_Feb_22

Colors. All the colors. Who are the primary, why are they cold or warm? Where to get them and how to use them in Photoshop, among some other good editing methods and where and when to use them. Adobe XD is pretty neat too. 10/10

09_Feb_22

Tutorials – practice – tutorials – lunch- practice.

10_Feb_22

One more step up the latter. Keep a good folder structure or you'll regret it. Semantic Markup – writing code with some meaning and structure. CSS intro – makes your 90's looking website look more modern, neat. Look at all these fonts I can't decide from.

11_Feb_22

More CSS – alignments, box model, hyperlinks and how to color them. Time to finish this assignment.

You got this!!