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RODCHENKO’S WORKERS’ CLUB FURNITURE

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Rodchenko designed a Workers’ Club as one of the Soviet exhibits for the International Exhibition of Decorative Art held in Paris in 1925. The Soviet exhibits were intended to project an image of the Soviet Union as civilized and progressive (MoMA).

The geometric design of the Workers’ Club by Rodchenko evoked a culture of hygiene, rationality and economy. It demonstrated the interior organization of an educational-informative club for the working people of the USSR. It embodied the socialists’ vision not merely by granting leisure to workers but by reconceiving leisure as active and collective rather than passive and solitary (MoMA).

The design of the Workers’ Club consisted of several components which served multiple functions. Most of them aimed at educating the worker through the most up-to-date information technologies (MoMA).

- The table consisted of the side flaps that can be raised or lowered, depending on the activity of the club member (Kiaer, 5-6).

- The chess ensemble consisted of two chairs separated by a nifty revolving chessboard on hinges which give the players access to their seats (Kiaer, 5-6).

- The wall newspaper incorporated a speaker's tribune, a place for the president or editor of a newspaper, a sliding partition for showing illustrative material, and a moving film screen for slides and slogans. The whole thing was collapsible and could be transported from place to place (Lavrentiev, 152).

- The orator stand expanded and collapsd elements in the fold-out screen for projecting slides, contractible bench and speaker's platform (Kiaer, 5-6).

These furniture pieces were made with two types of details: telescopically extending parts to alter their lengthwise dimensions, and the use of a ball-and-socket joint that made it possible in some cases to fold back surfaces and in others to slide apart openwork grids (Lavrentiev, 152).

By using modular furnishings, the design of the Workers’ Clubs was possible to modify objects and expand different portions of the space. Particularly important was the way information was presented, using mobile vitrines for showing documents and photographs, a mobile vitrine for posters and slogans, and a wall newspaper with moving strips for "automatic imposition” (Lavrentiev, 151).

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Workers’ Clubs 1925, MoMA, accessed October 26, 2017, https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1998/rodchenko/texts/workers\_club.html

“What are you sitting on: (Non) Mass Furniture in the USSR”, Strelka Magazine, accessed October 4, 2017, http://strelka.com/en/magazine/2017/06/20/soviet-furniture

Christina Kiaer, “Rodchenko in Paris”, October, Vol. 75, Winter, 1996.

Alexander Lavrentiev, “Experimental Furniture Design in the 1920s”, The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts, Vol. 11, Russian/Soviet Theme Issue 2, Winter, 1989.