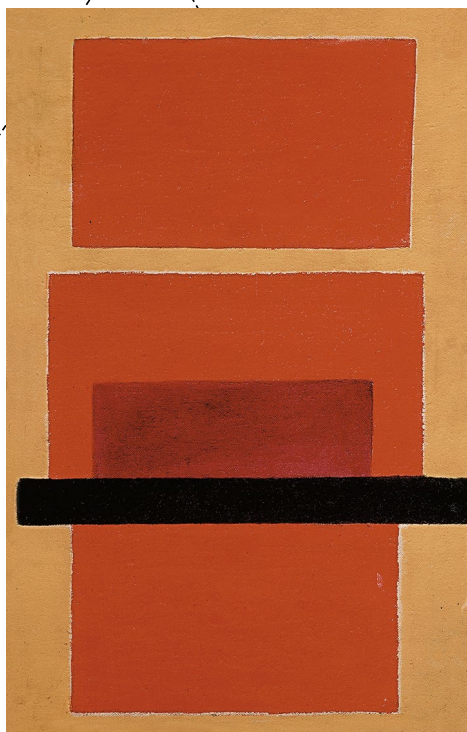


**A Cup of Consonances.
Approaching Rozanova**

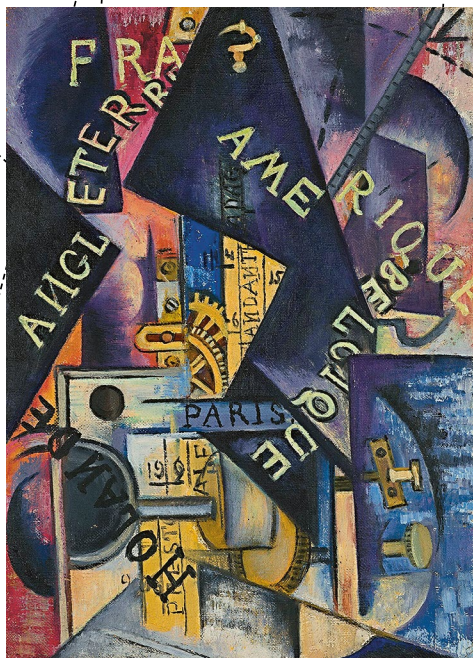
10 Nov 2023—28 Apr 2024
GES-2



2003



1916



1915

1914



1967

A Cup of Consonances. Approaching Rozanova

A Cup of Consonances. Approaching Rozanova is an attempt to comprehend a singular avant-garde woman artist, Olga Rozanova (1886–1918), through an exploration not just of her own oeuvre but of its possible echoes and resonances in later, unofficial Soviet art as well as in the work of present-day women artists.

The artistic career of Olga Rozanova (1886–1918) lasted about eight years, tragically ending when she was only thirty-two. This brief period, however, was replete with profound stylistic transformations and keen intuitions that considerably shaped the later evolution of painting—*tsvetopis* (“colour painting”), “transfigured” colour, radicalised Suprematism, translucent textures—and a revolution launched by a single green stripe. The transhistorical comparisons suggested by this exhibition are largely prompted by Rozanova’s poetics, its simultaneous untimeliness and rootedness in its own time. As an artist, Rozanova can be approached through the prism of Neo-Primitivism, Futurism, and Suprematism. She cannot, however, be contained by any of these movements—the explorations of colourism, composition, and rhythm she was absorbed in were always emphatically her own, and her striving for innovation was incessant. We might speak instead of Rozanova’s aesthetic anarchism—her eschewal of gurus, her unwillingness to heed a single method, her work’s resistance to neat art-historical periodisation, to slotting neatly into the grand archive of art. Rozanova is a contemporary artist par excellence to the extent that her art evinces the “disjunctive unity” of different eras, to borrow the art theorist Peter Osborne’s term. Irresolution and unity in disjunction are characteristic of much of Rozanova’s oeuvre, manifesting themselves in tensions between stasis and dynamism, colour and geometry, solid colour compositions and whitewashed luminous colour—and, more generally, in the tension between figurativism and abstraction. As Rozanova wrote to Alexei Kruchenykh in 1916: “I can now do paintings that are entirely realistic or entirely non-objective, but I avoid half-way pieces, because in my opinion there are no connecting links between these two arts.”

Unofficial Soviet art was set in motion by abstractionism. Interest in abstract art was fuelled by exhibitions of works by Pablo Picasso, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, and other prominent western painters in Moscow in the late 1950s. It was also at this time that Soviet artists first encountered works by

pre-revolutionary Russian avant-garde artists that had up until then been kept away from view in museum storerooms and in the collections of private connoisseurs such as George Costakis—whose own fascination with the virtuoso painters of the early twentieth century was sparked by Rozanova's work. During the so-called Thaw, abstract art was regarded as a symbol of artistic and social freedom, as the opposite of socialist realism. Like early twentieth-century art, it marked the emergence of a new artistic paradigm. It was part and parcel of a search for a new sociocultural identity that would oppose the official system from inside.

Two of the artists featured in this exhibition—Olga Potapova and Lydia Masterkova—were members of the Moscow Lianozovo Group (late 1950s–mid-1970s), a community of like-minded artists and poets in search of a new idiom which many of them believed could be found in non-objective art. An interest in abstractionism also marked the career of Efrosinya Ermilova-Platova, an artist who began as a Neo-Primitivist and Cubo-Futurist. She joined the Union of Soviet Artists but was later expelled from it for her “formalism” and refusal to paint portraits of Soviet leaders. Although Ermilova-Platova orbited the unofficial art world, she never fully belonged to any one of its groups. In Leningrad, emerging spiritualised abstract art was centred around the intellectual gatherings held by Tatyana Glebova and her husband Vladimir Sterligov as part of their “home academy.”

Though the links running between these artists and Rozanova's art are as natural as they are arbitrary, unofficial Soviet art has often been dubbed a “second” avant-garde. In particular, Lydia Masterkova has often been called an “Amazon of the Russian avant-garde's second wave,” a nod to “Amazons of the Russian avant-garde,” an umbrella term coined by the poet and writer Benedict Livshits to denote Olga Rozanova, Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962), Alexandra Exter (1882–1949), and other women artists of the early Soviet period. Livshits's sobriquet would later be used by the Guggenheim Museum as the title of its 1999–2001 travelling exhibition of work by these artists.

The contemporary women artists featured in *A Cup of Consonances* continue Rozanova's formal explorations and expand on her visionary discoveries. Both Galina Andreeva and the group *Malyshki 18:22* (Babes 18:22) draw their inspiration

from two of Rozanova's most famous works—*Green Stripe* (1917) and *Portrait of the Artist's Sister, Anna Rozanova* (1912), respectively—and invoke their motifs to raise environmental concerns and reflect on feminism.

Alexandra Paperno, Anna Kondratyeva, and Anna Titova rethink the fundamental principles of Suprematism and Cubo-Futurism through dynamic lighting and the geometry of colour forms. Alyona Kirtsova and Alexandra Galkina delve into abstraction as an expressive language and subject of study, while Liza Neklessa proposes we once again seek poetry's assistance in navigating a difficult historical moment.

The connection between Rozanova's art, that of the female artists of the Soviet "second avant-garde" and that of women artists of later generations is sustained by echoes, reflections, and resonances. The work of these artists revolves around an interest in the language of non-objectivity, the power of colour, and the refraction of space. It is based on a conception of abstract art as a discipline that exists somewhere on the frontier of the visible and invisible worlds and that is capable of combining philosophy and the laws of social and natural science into a coherent whole. *A Cup of Consonances* does not ask viewers to discover strict visual rhymes between works—rather, it is interested in more imprecise consonances, in subtle and shaky parallels that run between different eras, genres, and media. In particular—as is suggested by the title of the exhibition, and of its subsections, which are all taken from Rozanova's verse, *A Cup of Consonances* is interested in the parallels that run between art and poetry. If it is customary to see Rozanova's later works as anticipations of American Abstract Expressionism, they also invite comparisons to other contexts, asking us to hear echoes of Rozanova's freedom in contemporary artistic practices, and to find in these echoes new ways of approaching her life and work.

A Crisp Bow Flutters in My Hair

In 1911, Olga Rozanova joined the Saint Petersburg art association the Union of Youth (1909–1914). Founded, among others, by Mikhail Matyushin, Nikolai Kulbin, Iosif Shkolnik, and Elena Guro, the Union of Youth was the first registered society of avant-garde artists in Russia. The Union set itself the goal of promoting “modern trends in art.” Many of the works presented in this section of *A Cup of Consonances* were debuted by Rozanova at Union of Youth exhibitions. These early works bear traces of Neo-Primitivism, Neo-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Italian Futurism.

Rozanova the artist is characterised by a steady gaze, a trust in nature, an intuitive insight into the visible world’s materiality, and an almost naïve openness to the “charm of the spectacle.” This said, Rozanova’s method is not one of passive reproduction but rather of transubstantiation on paper and canvas. Her early cityscapes, still lifes, and portraits are marked by a generous objectivity and keen sense of colour. If *Cityscape with Coachman* (1910) and *Smithy* (1912) are populated by recognisable folkloric and lubok motifs, they also manifest a Futurist displacement of forms—the bends and kinks that gradually invade the landscape’s statuesque immobility lend it a hint of dynamism. The urban theme is reiterated in paintings such as *Restaurant* (1911) and *In a Café* (1912–1913), in which motifs of alienation, loneliness, and anomie prevail, conveyed through colour dissonances, grotesque renderings of figures, and sinister faces flashing frozen, half-grimacing smiles.

Portraits—of her mother, of her sister, of her brother, and of herself—hold an important place in Rozanova’s work of this period. In one of her self-portraits, Rozanova’s monochromatic rendering of her own face contrasts with the blue patterned background, lending her severe, concentrated visage a peculiar, almost iconographic expressiveness. One of the central works in this exhibition is the mocking and somewhat frivolous *Portrait of the Artist’s Sister, Anna Rozanova* (1912), which depicts the sitter reclining on a couch while looking frankly and defiantly

at the viewer. The figure's flat, distorted rendering is coupled in this canvas with a pointedly sophisticated colour scheme and the attractiveness of the sitter's face. The vase with flowers, set on a Matisse-like painted tablecloth, recalls Rozanova's still lifes from the same period.

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The art group *Malyshki 18:22* (Babes 18:22) was founded by the sisters Aksinya (b. 1990) and Nika (b. 1999) Sarycheva in Tomsk in 2018. These sisters' art subverts the stereotypical girly-girl aesthetic from within. No matter what difficult issue—aggression in society, inequality, the status of women in their native region, family dramas—is raised by these artists, pink dresses, sequins, fairy wands, teenage makeup, and other props of this kind always figure in the conversation. Babes 18:22's signature artistic style consists in this tension between the apparent facility and playfulness of girlish trifles and profound reflection on deadly serious topics.

In their new installation *Ceremonial Portrait of a Princess* (2023), Babes 18:22 consider expectations, aspirations, and oblivion through the prism of *Portrait of the Artist's Sister, Anna Rozanova*. The Tomsk artists were struck by how well-known and popular the creator of this canvas was in her own time and how undeservedly she was then forgotten. The "princess" of this work is a young woman who, despite great public expectation, is doomed to remain forever on the side-lines, to be eternally (as the artists themselves put it) "on the bench." Such stereotypes haunt, in one way or another, every woman, whether in the form of Disney heroines or through the terms of endearment addressed to them by their own families. Inspired by their childhoods, Babes 18:22 designed the *Princess Boutique* interactive mirror, a work which allows viewers to try on the ideal feminine image for themselves. The continuities between Rozanova's heroine and Babes 18:22's hotchpotch reflected princesses ask us to consider the expectations of gender equality that went unmet in the century that separates their works.

Torpor's Black Pillars

Written by Olga Rozanova and published by the Union of Youth in March 1913, "The Union of Youth Manifesto" proclaimed the renewal of art as the Union's supreme, unconditional goal. Rhetorically, Rozanova's text juxtaposes the "peaceful slumber" and "unanimous snoring" of past painters (the Wanderers, the World of Art, and their ilk) with the "wakefulness" of truly modern artists, open to the dazzlingly bright light of the "sun of Art."

Rozanova's Cubo-Futurist paintings of 1913–1914 evince a desire to put into practice the theoretical principles spelt out in her programmatic texts of that time, which were largely in line with those of the Italian Futurists. The ideas of rhythmic organisation of space, of dynamism, displacement, dismantlement, and free reassembly of forms are clearly discernible in these works. Rozanova's industrial landscapes directly contemplate the city and convey the turmoil of urban everyday life—in *Fire in the City (Cityscape)* (1913), for example, streelights, factory smoke, the roofs of houses, newspaper clippings, and pieces of wallpaper flash into a kaleidoscopic vortex. Rozanova's gaze registers the insignificant and the fleeting and implicates it into an overall spontaneous motion. Yet by the time of the paintings of 1915 and 1916—the "alogical" (i.e., absurdly composed) still lifes and interiors such as *Still Life (Room)* (1915), *Writing Desk* (1915), and *A Player's Dream (Clock and Cards)* (1916)—movement has become paradoxically frozen, time stopped. The leitmotif in these paintings is a frozen clock hand. The series is extremely "object-oriented": the titles of its constituent works, some of which were first shown at the *Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10* in Petrograd (the exhibition where Malevich's *Black Square* premiered), constitute a heterogeneous list of objects drawn out of their material context, "inventoried," and transformed into signs, before finally being given an arbitrary, geometrised form. These works anticipate the architectonic division of colour planes in Rozanova's later Suprematist paintings, but their subjects have not yet entirely slipped away into non-objectivity and retain some material distinctness.

Rozanova continued to explore the possibilities of colour throughout this period, combining solid colour fields and working with chromatic dispersion and light-permeable surfaces.

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The works by Lydia Masterkova (1927–2008) displayed in this section of the exhibition transcended Rozanova's remaining fidelity to figurativeness. Only the titles of these canvases hint at the connection of their abstract subjects to objects and phenomena in the real world—*Fish* (1960), for example, and *Cathedral* (1966; the title is an homage to the eponymous painting by Jackson Pollock, which had come to Moscow with the *American National Exhibition* in 1959). In *Cathedral*, the collage technique embraced by Masterkova in the 1960s comes to the fore: fragments of lace and liturgical brocade are incorporated into the work as though they were oil paint. As the artist's niece, the art historian Margarita Masterkova–Tupitsyna (b. 1955) would later put it, in this painting, medium acquires its own semantics. The liturgical brocade incorporated into *Cathedral* speaks to the rootedness of Masterkova's work in Russian culture and sets it apart from international post-war abstractionism, just as the use of traditional Russian techniques and crafts, from icon painting to lubok and embroidery, had distinguished the Russian Cubo-Futurists from their Italian counterparts. Masterkova's use of these fabrics proclaimed a spiritual theme that was also rich in political meaning in the context of a militantly secular Soviet culture. The lace and embroidery, in their turn, alluded to traditionally feminine attributes and crafts, which was no less bold a move in the patriarchal circles of unofficial Soviet art.

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Anna Kondratyeva (b. 1994) does not limit herself to a single medium. Performance, sculpture, graphic art, sunlight-assisted stencils—Kondratyeva selects a medium to match each of her statements, allowing it to become not just a vehicle for but an important part of the message itself. In *Primitive Photography* (2017–2023), Kondratyeva obtains faded images of extinct animals through sunlight-assisted stencils, while in her series *Gardens of Life and Withering* (2020–2023) she works natural materials directly into the landscape, leaving “traces” reminiscent of the work of the Cuban artist Ana Mendieta (1948–1985). In *Moscow 400* (2020), Kondratyeva embroidered traces of

nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk Test Site in velvet on satin. Kondratyeva has always been fascinated by temporality in the physical sense of the term—natural fluidity, impermanence, transition from one aggregate social or historical state to another.

In the series *Stealing Beauty* (2023), Kondratyeva paints the shadows cast by trees and flowers in acrylic on reflective material, manipulating the lighting in such a way that the painted shadows shimmer and disappear like shadows themselves. This is an intentional allusion to Cubo-Futurism, which had sought to capture movement by breaking it into its component parts. Comparable to stereo postcards in their subtle but continuous change, these drawings, as well as some of the other pieces in this room, exemplify art's ability to register alterations in states, things, and their elements.

The Sky's Crystal in Elevated Space

In “Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism,” a 1917 article written for the never-published journal *Supremus*, Olga Rozanova stated: “We do not regard the forms with which we operate as real objects. We do not force them to depend upon the up and down directions in the painting. We reckon with their practical meaning—which they don’t have. [...] Suprematism rejects the use of real forms for painterly ends. Like leaky vessels, they cannot hold colour.”

In 1917, Rozanova joined *Supremus*, the group formed by Kazimir Malevich two years prior. She went on to produce a number of non-objective works in which shape is created directly on the canvas and no longer has any real referent or prototype. Though Malevich singled Rozanova out among his followers, it is difficult to talk about linear continuity here. Rozanova believed herself to have arrived at geometric abstraction independently in 1915–1916 (“Suprematism consists entirely of my collages”), and the cerebral dryness, purism, detachment, and abstract “pictorial planimetry” (to borrow the art historian Abram Efros’s coinage) that have come to characterise Suprematism are alien to Rozanova’s work. Rozanova’s extraordinary colouristic talent would continue to find expression in this period: her extremely polychromatic and rhythmically rich abstractions generate a sense of full-blooded life, emotional plenitude, and dynamism.

In the final years of her life, Rozanova elaborated her own, innovative variation on non-objective painting. She called her method “transfigured colour,” but Varvara Stepanova’s term *tsvetopis* (roughly “colour-painting”) would be the name that stuck. *Tsvetopis* crowned Rozanova’s dogged search for “colour, disengaged from the body of things and no longer material” and has since occasioned frequent comparisons of Rozanova’s oeuvre with post-war American colour field painting as exemplified by Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. Although there is no agreement about which works can be definitively identified as examples of *tsvetopis* and what the “transfiguration” of colour actually meant in practice, the results of

Rozanova's colouristic explorations can be somewhat crudely divided into two groups of non-objective paintings. In the first group, as in *Colour Composition* (no later than 1918) and *Non-Objective Composition* (circa 1916), colour planes are condensed into simplified, soldered rectangular masses, and the distinction between figure and background is practically abolished. Contrastingly, in the second group, shapes are diffused, hence the title of *Dispersion of Colour* (1917). Outlines dissolve, colour is diluted, lightened, and disembodied, ultimately attaining a metaphysical quality—in *Green Stripe* (1917), colour-painting (*tsvetopis*) becomes light painting (*svetopis*). Shortly before her death, Rozanova conceived a plan for the festive lighting of Moscow to mark the first anniversary of the October Revolution, in which searchlights were to have pierced the sky with coloured rays. Colour was thus to have broken out of the confines of easel painting and illuminated the city itself.

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The late 1950s and early 1960s were marked by the emergence and flourishing of abstract painting in unofficial Soviet art. Abstractionism existed in a multitude of authorial versions rooted in the personal trajectory, creative experiments, and biography of particular artists, with each version at once unique and tending to the universal. The work of a single artist could include a whole range of approaches, from geometric Suprematism to lyrical abstractionism.

Olga Potapova (1892–1971) began her career as a portraitist, but started experimenting with abstract painting in the late 1950s. The canvas *Coloured Stones* (1966) hints at a figurative image, an alloy of the rounded shapes with rough, mineral-like surfaces that are a leitmotif in Potapova's oeuvre. In *Composition* (1959), a work akin to Rozanova's Suprematist canvases, these rounded shapes crumble into geometric planes seemingly suspended in outer space. If these works by Potapova consist of elements that obey the forces of attraction and repulsion, that rush towards each other or disperse, then *Blue Composition* (1962) and *Silent Knowledge* (1960) are multi-layered interlacings of lines and brush strokes that reach beyond the canvas and recall Abstract Expressionism.

Lydia Masterkova's early abstract works are combinations of simple forms that gradually become more complicated, coming to include multi-layered interlacings of colour planes and

scraps of fabrics—as in *Composition* (1965), for example. Masterkova is unafraid of engineering clashes of secondary colours, of achieving contrasting and energetic combinations. The muted colour of Masterkova's non-objective canvases allows for a calibrated balance and artful interweaving of fragmented and reassembled multi-textured forms. Vsevolod Nekrasov, a poet of the Conceptualist school and also a member of the Lianozovo Group, compared these intricate architectonics to musical performance: "Lydia Masterkova / paints like an orchestra."

Colour was the chief expressive force in the paintings of Efrosinya Ermilova-Platova (1895–1974). When the future artist saw works by Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, and the Burliuk brothers at the *Wreath* exhibition in Kherson in 1909, she was astounded. She subsequently spent several years studying with Konstantin Yuon and Ilya Mashkov before going through Neo-Primitivist and Cubo-Futurist phases. Ermilova-Platova worked in stage design and monumental decorative art and, alongside wholly figurative landscapes and still lifes, tried her hand at abstract art. *A Cup of Consonances* features rare specimens of Ermilova-Platova's pure abstractionism, which was distinguished by a bright colour scheme, a liberal use of impasto, and a seemingly chaotic mixture of layers of paint, as in the canvas *Good Mood* (1960–1965). Rhythm and pattern are more clearly articulated in *Spring Rhapsody* (mid-1960s).

The work of Tatiana Glebova (1900–1985) is based on the fusion of two traditions—the analytical method of Pavel Filonov, with whom Glebova studied from 1926 to 1932, and the theory of the so-called "cup-dome space" as the "new surplus element" elaborated by Glebova's husband the artist Vladimir Sterligov (1904–1973), who had been Malevich's student. The works by Glebova presented here are composed of refractive coloured planes which generate a spherical curved space within the canvas. Glebova saw painting as an opportunity to "observe the existence of the universe in colour" and regarded art as a whole as part of a spiritual quest: the members of the artistic circle that gathered at Glebova and Sterligov's apartment—or "home academy"—in Leningrad were interested in the visionary mysticism of the avant-garde and the Symbolists.

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Bella Pokrova (b. 1997) works mainly in porcelain: the artist explains this choice of medium in terms of her interest in the

archaeology of the Soviet world and its post-Soviet legacy. Porcelain, which transforms the everyday into an object of desire, was an important element of Soviet life: through its glossy shine, which was often at odds with surrounding objects, it provided hope, and made a tangible contribution to the aestheticization of ordinary life. As part of her 2019 *Myth* project, Pokrova filled a bathroom shelf with shiny white porcelain cosmetics jars as a commentary on our obsessive search for perfection in both the ideological and material spheres. Pokrova continued her reflections on the anxiety and nostalgia triggered by the material milieu of the past with her 2020 *Nests* series. Realistic wasp nests made of porcelain supplemented with paper reminded viewers of playing as children in the courtyards running between residential blocks, settings fraught with danger, threats, and challenges.

For *A Cup of Consonances*, Pokrova has produced *Cradles*, a project in which space is generated not by objects but by emptiness, not by addition but by subtraction. Pokrova has achieved the near-impossible with porcelain, turning it into an openwork cocoon with an ultra-thin lattice in place of a surface. The title's reference to a baby's crib indicates Pokrova's continued concern with memories and feigned nostalgia for the world of childhood. Her snow-white installation has been juxtaposed with Rozanova's "colour-painting" because it is comparable in terms of its radical experimentation—as in Rozanova's Suprematist works, air and light are no less crucial to *Cradles* than form itself.

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Galina Andreeva (b. 1986) raises environmental and social concerns while embracing a variety of techniques: in her installations, the natural collides with the manmade—organic materials are combined with mechanisms, vivid artificial paints with natural colours. Andreeva is interested in the extent to which man-made objects and humanity can be considered a product of the environment. Her project *POD* (2022) is a sculpture in which wiring, plastic, and other artificial materials serve as an extension and a kind of exoskeleton for tree branches and incidentally prolong their lives. In *Archive of Plants* (2022–2023), Andreeva scans the vegetation of central Russia with a mobile app, she then renders the results in a style that harkens back to mediaeval bestiaries and reflects on various aspects of technological progress.

For *A Cup of Consonances*, Andreeva has reinterpreted *Green Stripe*, one of Rozanova's principal works, through a two-part installation that is displayed in the exhibition space and on the Upper Platform. In the first part of the installation, in the exhibition space, green algae are recycled and transformed into paper. In *Green Column 2*, the second part of the installation exhibited on the Upper Platform, one finds a complex system of aquariums populated by live green algae engaged in photosynthesis. Both pieces riff on the principle of combining dissimilar material by responding to a much-anthologised painting with a sculpture produced not just from organic material but from living beings. Through BioArt, Andreeva carries Rozanova's formal experiments to the next frontier.

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The installations, sculptures, photographs, reconstructions, and objects produced by Anna Titova (b. 1984) deal with systems of relations between people, groups, and historical contexts. Titova is interested in the nature of power, in its connection to control and surveillance systems, and in the ideological construction of space. Titova's creative method is situated at the intersection of politics and aesthetics, documentary and fiction, visual poetry and critical discourse. In 2014, Anna Titova and Stas Shuripa (b. 1971) founded the Agency of Singular Investigations (ASI), which focuses on conspiracy theories, historical fictions, and imaginary futurologies. The duo adheres to a pseudo-documentary aesthetic, manufacturing archives of non-existent research institutes and drafting meticulous chronicles of fictional events.

Titova's piece *YHBHS* (You Have Been Here Sometimes) was first presented at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011—Titova was the sole Russian artist to be exhibited in the Biennale's main project, *ILLUMinations*. Responding to the theme of *ILLUMinations*, Titova designed a maze of coloured plexiglass in which visitors could "illuminate" themselves by encountering their own reflections and those of other people, challenging their ideas about colour and light, surface and shape, direct and symbolic meaning. The labyrinth of *YHBHS* is populated by figures that Titova calls "phantoms": these sculpted objects simultaneously allude to the African masks that catalysed European modernism and to the streamlined, Henry Mooresque modernist shapes that came out of it. Guiding us through

a series of encounters, Titova asks us to consider the role that the signals produced by art can play today.

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Alexandra Paperno (b. 1978) pays close attention to modernist culture and thought, to its emergence, existence, evolution, and errors. In her series of paintings and graphic works, she usually undertakes a versatile and multi-layered study of a certain topic and of the artistic techniques suitable for its treatment. She often uses a limited, almost monochromatic palette. Her project *On Sleeping Arrangements in the Sixth Five-Year Plan* (2017) depicts the cookie-cutter apartment interiors stipulated by the 1955 government decree “On the Elimination of Excesses in Design and Construction,” which led to the construction of the so-called *khrushchevki* (five-storey blocks of prefab flats) and the Party slogan “To every Soviet family, its own apartment!” The paintings that constitute Paperno’s *Star Maps* (2006) tend toward abstraction, but their schematic outlines can still be discerned. Utopian motifs of the cosmos, celestial bodies, and constellations often appear in her works.

In *Grey Sun* (2003–2018), tiny dots on star maps grow into a series of large tondi, producing a kind of palette for experimentation with the greyness, visibility, and nuances of a depicted object that is almost invisible to the naked eye. The expressive traces of paint on this canvas are balanced by complex shades of not-so-achromatic a grey. This is a striking, idiosyncratic modernist statement about form, abstraction, and utopia, about preparations for victory over the image of the sun, and it is not for nothing that Paperno’s triptych hangs in the room dedicated to Rozanova’s Suprematist paintings.

In her project *Blue Hour* (2023), Paperno continues her exploration of the freedom of the modernist gesture and the cyclical nature of art, though this time through photography. Paperno’s full-length photograph shows the artist tracing her own shadow on canvas, and alludes to a parable in Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* about the origins of painting. On learning that her lover was to depart for a long military campaign, a young Corinthian woman decided to capture the outline of his shadow on the wall of her house so that the image of her beloved would stay with her forever.

The title of Paperno’s project refers to the time of day when the sky turns deep blue and soft, diffused lighting

penetrates even the darkest corners. In the morning, the blue hour comes when the sun is still below the horizon but the atmosphere's upper layers are already illuminated by its first rays. In the evening, the blue hour follows the so-called golden hour, just as the the modernist utopia that strives for a better future follows the gold-infused landscapes of academicist painting.

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Alyona Kirtsova (b. 1954) is interested in the world around her, in the world of man-made objects and in the natural world, as well as in the possibilities of the line and the power of colour. Her series *Handbook of Colour* (the title refers to tables devised by Mikhail Matyushin and his students in 1932) consists of landscapes produced with horizontal lines, colour combinations, and shading. Through these minimal means, Kirtsova succeeds in conveying the feeling of light and the vibration of air.

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The *Lipstick* (2009) triptych by Alexandra Galkina (b. 1982) is also based on the interaction of simple elements. It consists of three monochromatic canvases of different sizes and colours hung one above the other to form a giant tube of lipstick. The piece plays an ironic game with shapes and how we usually perceive them: a traditionally "feminine" accessory is created from three geometric blocks and made to resemble a tower, thus functioning as a feminine take on Malevich's Suprematism, dialling back the founding father's heroic gusto in carnivalesque fashion.

In the series *One Marker* (2006–2007), Galkina filled a sheet of drawing paper with short marker strokes until the pen ran out. The size of the colour field and the intensity of the colour thus depended on the marker's capacities rather than on the artist's intentions. This demonstrative deployment and exhaustion of colour (that is, of a key element of abstract painting), an utterly and literally exhaustive probing of its limits, is a simple, witty gesture that can be regarded as an extreme reduction in the tradition of Malevich's *Black Square* and Joseph Kosuth's conceptual art.

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In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the German artist Isa Genzken (b. 1948) began making flat, elongated wooden

sculptures—ellipsoids and hyperboloids—based on complex computer calculations. The aerodynamic shape of these objects suggested that they had been produced industrially, but they had in fact been made by hand. Genzken's skilful play with perspective, contours, with diagonal and rounded multi-coloured segments does not just evoke a rich series of associations (as Genzken put it: "Of course, it was exactly this "content" that I wanted to bring back into the ellipsoids, so that people would say, 'It looks like a spear,' or a toothpick, or a boat") but also reflects the interest of the Suprematists in the behaviour of colour on flat and curved surfaces, hence the homage to Lyubov Popova (1889–1924) in the work's title, *Red-Black-Yellow Ellipsoid 'S. L. Popova'* (1981). As Rozanova wrote in this regard: "The colour of a ripe peach or orange is caused not only by the properties of the pigment, but also by the protuberances and hollows, velvetness or smoothness of its skin. [...] Take a red disk whose diameter is equal to that of a ball that is also painted red. The former will express the colour red more extensively, more uniformly over its entire surface. The ball will have the same strength of effect only when it is at the point of maximum illumination right up close to us."

Hyenically

The creative tandem of Olga Rozanova and the poet Alexei Kruchenykh was formed in 1913 and lasted until Rozanova's death in 1918. She designed ("decorated") many of Kruchenykh's Futurist books. These editions combined mass circulation-style printing with artisanal approaches. Rozanova often painted the linocuts and lithographs with text and illustrations by hand, and sometimes even the printing itself—for *Transrational Boog* (1915–1916) by Kruchenykh and Alyagrov (Roman Jakobson), for example—was also done manually with typesetting stamps. The books Rozanova worked on with Kruchenykh were a genuine laboratory in which numerous experimental gambits that later found spectacular expression in her paintings were devised and tested. In these collaborations, word and image should be regarded as a single, indissoluble whole, a synthetic hieroglyph. In their formal construction and composition, Rozanova's lithographs directly echo Kruchenykh's poems, visually embodying their syntactic shifts, alliterations, dissonances, and semantic fault lines. The most vivid interpenetration of word and form, sound and colour, transrational poetry and abstract images is found in *Universal War* (1916), for which Rozanova produced coloured appliques. Purifying colour of its relation to objects and material texture, it was in these collages that Rozanova took her first steps toward "transfigured" colour.

Rozanova's own non-objective poetry reflected and continued her pictorial experiments. Varvara Stepanova noted the "vocality" of Rozanova's painterly palette, but Rozanova's poems, obviously intended for reading aloud, are no less musical. As expressed in their arrays of complex chords and rhythmic patterns of vowels and consonants, open and closed rhymes, and alternating letters, Rozanova's mathematical precision does not cancel out but rather reveals a wide range of emotional overtones and contradictory, painful, eccentric, and phantasmagoric experiences.

The *Playing Cards* (1912–1913) series occupies a special place in the "deck" of Rozanova's paintings. It apparently

predates the 1914 series of linocuts reproduced in *Transrational Boog*, though the series are not identical. Playing cards were a favourite motif of Futurist poetics, combining vulgarity and mysticism, stereotype and portraiture, impersonality and individuality, menace and irony. Should we wish to, we might discern superficial resemblances to Rozanova's contemporaries (Kruchenykh, Goncharova, Tatlin, Matyushin) in the harsh and unpleasant physiognomies of the figures on the cards, and hazard guesses as to who trumped whom and the rivalries between them. Whatever the case may be, Rozanova masterfully approaches the personification of stock characters, endowing each with an individual, at once uncanny and attractive personality.

★

The artist and poet Liza Neklessa (b. 1989) is concerned with the status of women in society and social issues more generally. She touches on ecology and folklore in her attempts to examine the boundaries between contemporary visual art and poetry and to find opportunities to unite them. Neklessa works across completely different media: at times she limits herself to drawing, at others she produces large-scale installations from embroidery, household items, ceramic sculpture and, of course, texts. In her project *Woman Is a Home Decoration* (2019), Neklessa deconstructs the cultural cliché expressed in her title, showing how a woman's individuality can dissolve in the work of creating comfort, beauty, and maintaining an outward appearance that satisfies all expectations. In *Turned into a Grey Wolf, Turned into a Fast Falcon* (2021), a series of scratchboard prints, Neklessa draws on the research of the pioneering Formalist folklore scholar Vladimir Propp (1895–1970) to invoke folkloric motifs and examine modern social and personal relationships in a symbolic way, ultimately elaborating her own personal mythology. In *Igor* (2023), Neklessa once again turns to allegory and makes mushrooms her protagonists, coming up with 400 synonyms for the word “mushroom.”

Neklessa's illustrated poem *1917* (2023) was produced especially for *A Cup of Consonances* and is exhibited in the prints section. Set during the October Revolution, Neklessa's poem is partly an homage to Rozanova's pre-revolutionary transrational poems (1916–1917). *1917* deals with the subjective and universal experiences of tragedy, with the fact that time is

not able to ease the burden of loss, and with historical expediency and the subtle details which not only bring the reader face to face with events in close-up but push them nearer to human touch. Rozanova's refined form, coupled with a painful, jangling tension and a gloomy view of the nature of things is reflected in Neklessa's text, the topic of which could be rendered in no other tone. The author's illustrations help her lay down aesthetic coordinates for the "collation" of visual experiences evoked by reading her poem. Contemporary poetry is thus once again implicated in contemporary visual art.

The titles and dates of Olga Rozanova's works were provided by the museums which contributed them to this exhibition and may differ from those cited in scholarly literature.

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Efrosinya Ermilova–Platova
Alexandra Galkina
Iza Gentsken
Tatiana Glebova
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Velimir Khlebnikov
Anna Kondratyeva
Alexei Kruchenykh
Malyshki 18:22 (Babes 18:22)
Lydia Masterkova
Liza Neklessa
Alexandra Paperno
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Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts

A Cup of Consonances.
Approaching Rozanova

6+

Cover Images

Olga Rozanova
Non-Objective Composition,
ca. 1916
The State Russian Museum

Alexandra Paperno
Grey Sun, 2003
Courtesy of the artist

Olga Rozanova
Metronome, 1914–1915
The State Tretyakov Gallery

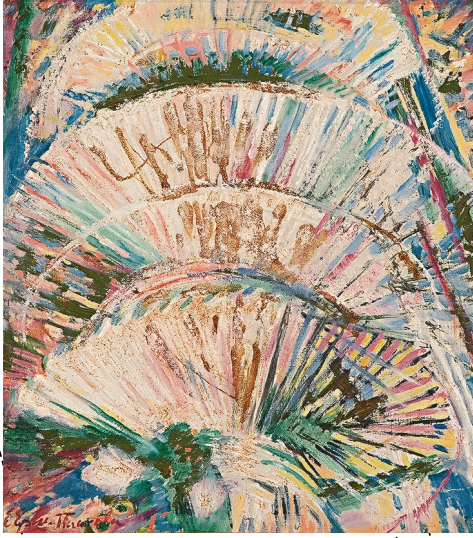
Lydia Masterkova
Composition with Black Lace, 1967
AZ Museum

Alexandra Galkina
One Marker (Green), 2006–2007
Courtesy of the artist

Olga Rozanova
Composition, 1916–1918
Nizhny Tagil Museum of Fine Arts

Olga Rozanova
*Portrait of Anna Rozanova,
the Artist's Sister*, 1912
Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts

Efrosinya Ermilova-Platova
Spring Rhapsody, mid-1960s
Collection of Evgeny Nutovich



1960



1912

A Cup of Consonances

Galina Andreeva

Efrosinya

Ermilova-Platova

Alexandra Galkina

Iza Gentsken

Tatiana Glebova

Alena Kirtsova

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Malyshki 18:22 (Babes 18:22)

Lydia Masterkova

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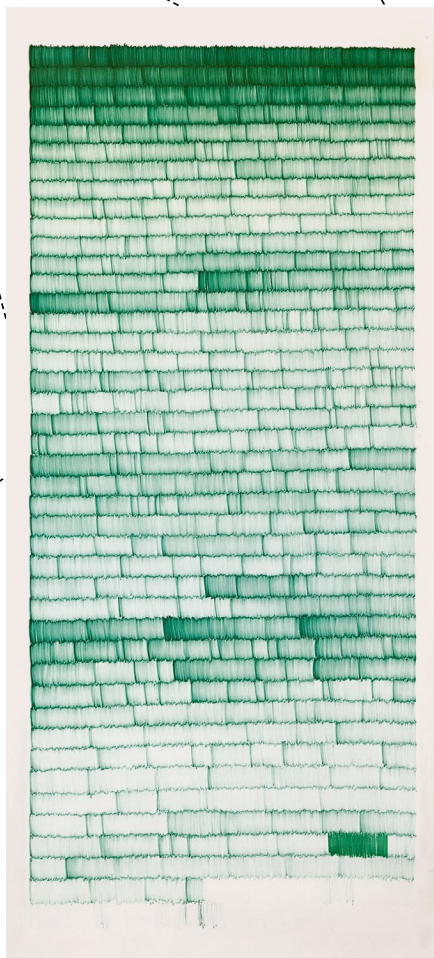
Bella Pokrova

Olga Potapova

Olga Rozanova

Anna Titova

2006



2007



1916