Unovis: Epicenter of a New World

Aleksandra Shatskikh

Unovis (the Affirmers of the New Art), though it has been variously labeled a group, a collective, a school, a commune, an organization, and a program, is a phenomenon without parallel in the history of early Soviet art and defies classification. In its origins and day-to-day existence, Unovis betrayed many features of a sui-generis religious fraternity or variety of Masonic lodge. Unovis itself, adopting the revolutionary terminology of the era, preferred the description of a "party in art." This "party" of the artistic avant-garde, so its members believed, was called upon to ensure, through both theory and practice, the emergence of new forms of life via the evolution of new systems in art. The wide range and variety of its endeavors, its broad influence and tangible achievements, do, however, permit one to characterize Unovis as a unique (and largely realized) utopian model—firmly rooted in the ideas of Russian culture of the first decades of the twentieth century—of "art into life."

Kazimir Malevich was Unovis's moving force and architect. Like other leaders of the Russian avant-garde (such as Mikhail Larionov, Mikhail Matiushin, and David Burliuk), Malevich was endowed with exceptional organizational abilities. An irresistible urge to forge artistic alliances marked his career from the beginning; in Kursk at the close of the nineteenth century, for example, he had set up a studio, patterned after the Parisian academies, as a gathering place for artists with common interests. The general situation in European art—where the founding of one's own movement, endowed with a name, theory, and disciples, had become the pinnacle of self-affirmation for the vanguard artist—added fuel to Malevich's organizing efforts. In the mid-1910s, he assembled some ten artists under the banner of the movement he had inaugurated in painting, Suprematism. The group was called Supremus, and only the events of World War I prevented the undertaking's achieving its full promise.

Malevich nourished the idea of establishing an authoritative artistic center, which would fulfill multiple functions, over the course of many years. The planning that came to final fruition in the creation of Ginkhuk (the State Institute of Artistic Culture) in Leningrad went back to 1917. In September of that year, Malevich, who had been elected president of the Art Department of the Moscow Council of Soldiers' Deputies, wrote to Matiushin: "I've conceived a number of projects, to wit, organizing the First People's Academy of Arts in Moscow; my idea was warmly received, and the ball's rolling—soon I'll open several small departments of those cells which on a broad scale will constitute the Academy."[1] His work as a teacher in the State Free Art Workshops in Moscow and Petrograd was an additional spur to Malevich's ambitious plans. And the Vitebsk Popular Art School—especially during Malevich's first year and a half there—proved an ideal laboratory for the development of Malevich's ideas.

Malevich, accompanied by El Lissitzky, arrived in Vitebsk from Moscow at the beginning of November 1919[2] and was appointed to a teaching position at the Popular Art School, an institute of higher education founded and headed by Marc Chagall, a Vitebsk native. At the time, workshops were conducted at the school by Vera Ermolaeva, Nina Kogan, Lissitzky, Iurii Pen, Aleksandr Romm, Chagall, and the sculptor David Iakerson. Mikhail Veksler, Ivan Gavris, Evgeniia Magaril, Georgii and Mikhail Noskov, Nikolai Suetin, Lazar' Khidekel', Lev Tsiperson, Ivan Chervinko, and Lev Iudin were among the students. Il'ia Chashnik, who had spent a term at the Popular Art School and in the autumn of 1919 had enrolled with Malevich at the State Free Art Workshops in Moscow, followed his teacher back to Vitebsk.

Malevich was immediately occupied with a number of ventures. A week after his arrival, the *Pervaia gosudarstvennaia*

vystavka kartin mestnykh i moskovskikh khudozhnikov (*First State Exhibition of Paintings by Local and Moscow Artists*)—which included works by Chagall, Malevich, Vasilii Kandinskii, Ol'ga Rozanova, Robert Fal'k, and others—opened in Vitebsk. Lectures and public meetings were held in conjunction with the exhibition, and Malevich's appearances at them attracted large audiences. The chance to publish his theoretical text, *O novykh sistemakh v iskusstve* (*On New Systems in Art*), written in the summer of 1919, had been one of the motivations for Malevich's move to Vitebsk. Now that complex treatise furnished the basis for his lectures and speeches and was augmented by the "Ustanovlenie A" ("Statute A"), written on November 15, 1919. In the new appendix Malevich codified the tenets he presented to his students.

Lissitzky and the students in his graphics workshop printed *On New Systems in Art* lithographically and in an edition of one thousand copies, as specified by Malevich.[3] *On New Systems in Art* was the embryo of the "visual book" subsequently cultivated by Lissitzky. For Malevich's followers and students, the brochure was also painting's "declaration of independence" from objectivity, proclaiming the commandments of a "new testament"—among which the most significant was the injunction to introduce into art a "fifth dimension, or economy."

The zeal and homiletic power of Malevich's lectures—he had entered his prophetic period—worked their influence, above all, on those in his audience primed to apprehend the dizzying transition from figurative, representational art to art that was non-objective. Lissitzky, Ermolaeva, and Kogan were among the first to become fervent supporters of Malevich.

Almost in a matter of days, Lissitzky, an architect by training and until recently under the influence of Chagall, brushed aside figuration and the intricate decorativeness of his earlier work—which had been strongly colored by the traditions of Jewish culture—and plunged, with his native facility and passion, into non-objective art. A vestige of his stormy "romance" with Suprematism and its creator would remain with Lissitzky for the rest of his life: the "transrational" phrase from the opening of *On New Systems in Art*—*"U-el-el'-ul-el-te-ka,"* which became a sort of anthem or motto for Unovis—was the inspiration for Lissitzky's adopted name, first El and later El'.[4]

Ermolaeva and Kogan had come to Vitebsk from Petrograd (where their association began with the founding of the City Museum; their assignments to Vitebsk by Izo Narkompros [the Department of Fine Arts of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment] came one on the heels of the other) and were exponents, as their early works attest, of a figurative art making decorative use of devices of the avant-garde. At the Vitebsk Popular Art School, Lissitzky, Ermolaeva, and Kogan popularized Malevich's theories and formed among themselves a group of "elder Cubists."

The new artistic "party" grew at breakneck speed; as in a fairy tale, events unfolded over the course not of days but of hours. The tempo was set by the receipt, in November 1919, of a significant (and sizable) commission—decorations for the anniversary of the Vitebsk Committee to Combat Unemployment—to be filled in a brief span of time: the anniversary fell on December 17th. Malevich and Lissitzky made the preliminary sketches and plans for the decorations,

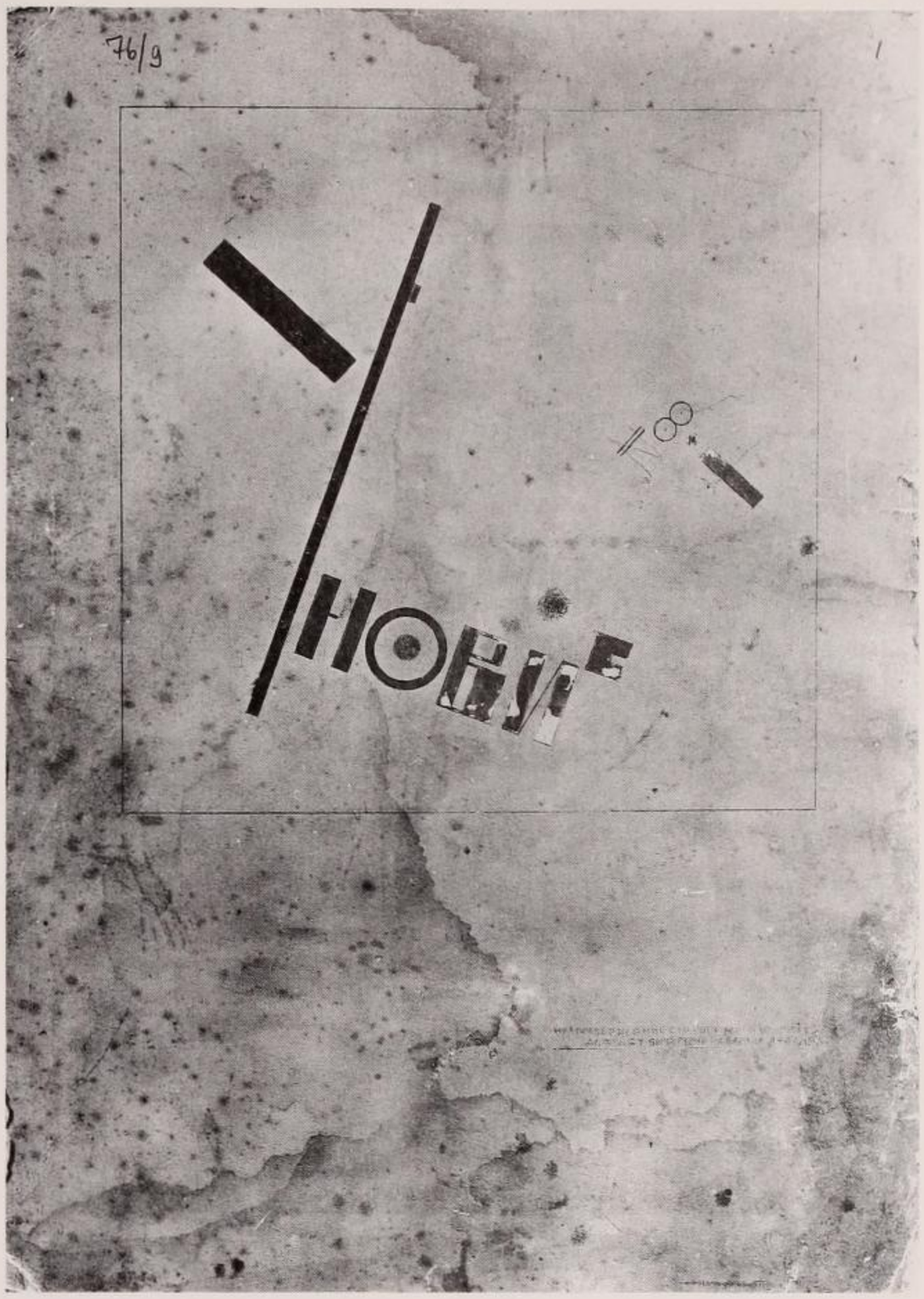

fig. 2
El Lissitzky
Cover for Unovis Almanac No. 1, *1920.*
Pencil, india ink, and gouache on paper, 35.5 x 25.5 cm.
Manuscript Division, State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow.

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fig. 1
Malevich (center) and members of Unovis en route from Vitebsk to the First All-Russian Conference of Teachers and Students of Art in Moscow, 1920. Lissitzky, Kogan, Ermolaeva, Chashnik, Khidekel', Iudin, and Magaril are among those pictured.

while teachers and students collaborated on their execution. Intensive labor was required to produce the enormous number of Suprematist decorative panels that adorned the White Army Barracks building, which housed the committee, as well as embroidered banners, slogans, and stage decorations for the committee's festive convocation. Such possibilities of practical application were from the beginning Suprematism's greatest attraction and immediately won over the majority of students at the Vitebsk school. Suprematism's entry into the "utilitarian world of things" would be the cornerstone of Unovis.

The aura in which Malevich and his work were bathed grew tenfold in the wake of a trip by the Vitebsk students and teachers to Moscow to view Malevich's first solo show, open from the end of 1919 through the beginning of 1920 at the Sixteenth State Exhibition. (The architect Moisei Lerman, who was among the Vitebsk students, has described this trip and the exhibition, as well as his vague recollection of encountering Vladimir Maiakovskii there.)[5] Malevich, their new leader, had all the necessary credentials: revolutionary innovation in his work, a fully thought-out theory, clear methods for advancing toward the new, and superior artistic results.

On January 19, 1920, the Vitebsk students organized Molposnovis (the Young Followers of the New Art). Nine days later, they joined forces with their teachers, the "elder Cubists," and Molposnovis was succeeded by Posnovis (the Followers of the New Art).

The members of Posnovis were determined to introduce new forms into all types of creative endeavor, and the celebration of Front Week in 1920 offered them an opportunity to try their hand. They decided to present the legendary opera *Pobeda nad solntsem* (*Victory over the Sun*) on February 6th, the first day of Front Week; the stage and costume designs for this production were created by Ermolaeva under Malevich's general direction (plate no. 152). Nina Kogan contributed the world's first "Suprematist ballet"—a curious and underappreciated venture, astonishing in its conception: Kogan proposed to show the "sequential unfolding of the movement of forms itself," crowned by the "supremacy of the black square" (plate no. 151).[6] (It should be noted that the idea of a "non-objective cinematography" put forward much later by Malevich was to some degree anticipated by Kogan's ballet.) And Mikhail Noskov gave a public lecture on the new art (he, together with his brother, Georgii, played a conspicuous role in the life of the Vitebsk school, Posnovis, and later Unovis; after 1922, unfortunately, all trace of the brothers vanishes).

With these successes, the members of Posnovis grew confident of their powers and resolved to represent themselves henceforth not merely as followers of the new art but as its affirmers. Unovis was born on February 14, 1920.[7] The name, an acronym in keeping with the verbal shorthand and word coining of the times, was greatly to Malevich's liking—he named his daughter Una in Unovis's honor. And the new word spawned others: *unovisets* (Unovist), *unovisskii* (Unovistic), and *unovizm* (Unovism). The ease with which "Unovis" entered the Russian language was an acknowledgment of the reality and vitality of a phenomenon for which no other word existed.

The months from November 1919 through May 1920 may be called Unovis's period of Sturm und Drang. Unovis's problems, working conditions, and the nature of its production are documented in detail in the typewritten *Al'manakh Unovis No. 1* (*Unovis Almanac No. 1*), completed by June 1920 (fig. no. 2).[8] A wealth of material by Malevich himself appears in the *Almanac,* wherein he devotes significant space to the notion of "collective creative work." (It was the precisely the possibilities for "collective creative work" that kept Malevich in Vitebsk for two and a half years.) His article "O 'Ia' i kollektive" ("On the Ego and the Collective")—in which Malevich expresses the views that served as the theoretical underpinning of Unovis—contains echoes both of the philosophy of "communality" (filtered through the prism of Russian Symbolism) and of the doctrines of the ruling political party, which gave the collective primacy over the individual: "'Collectivism' is one of the paths designated on the road map to achieving the 'world-man,' but it is perhaps still merely one of the necessary crossings restraining on its main highway millions of egos; it offers only an instant of forces converging for the perfection of the creative image of 'being'; in it, each ego preserves its individual force, but in order to move toward perfection the self must be destroyed—just as religious fanatics destroy themselves before the divine being, so the modern saint must destroy himself before the 'collective' and before that 'image' which perfects in the name of unity, in the name of conjunction."[9]

One of the practical consequences of Malevich's theorizing was a conscious striving among the members of Unovis for impersonality and anonymity; they signed their works not with their own names but with "Unovis." Unovis was among the first artists' groups in the twentieth century—if not the very first—to create and exhibit its production under a collective name. (Obmokhu [the Society of Young Artists] was for a long time credited with pioneering this practice. Obmokhu's group signature, however, arose out of entirely different circumstances; it was the result of artel-style practices in the executing of commissions.)[10]

The notion of "collective creative work" has not been a recurring feature of Russian culture alone but has enticed many of the great creative minds of our times. In postrevolutionary Russia, however, the utopian doctrines that had been one wellspring of the state's ideology would be turned upside down through the creation of a totalitarian regime, and the country would pay a heavy price for the attempt forcibly to translate speculative theories into reality. The dark side of a utopia of enthusiasts creating a new way of life according to a single blueprint compulsory for all would very quickly take its toll on Unovis's founder and his followers; Malevich would come to know the oppressive might of the official art that eventually attained power and state support. In 1927—with Ginkhuk, which had in some respects been the successor to Unovis, already closed—Malevich attached a note to the manuscripts he was leaving in the West, explaining, with some distress, the nature of those texts: "[Since I find] myself at the time under revolutionary influence, there may be powerful contradictions with my present form of defending Art, i.e., in 1927. These positions are to be considered genuine."[11] It must be said, to the credit of Malevich and his colleagues likewise "under revolutionary influence," that they never resorted to violent action against the "old guard." The members of Unovis did not regard destruction or abolition as their primary task; they were, rather, creators and cultivators of a new art and a new world. The legendary anecdotes about Malevich's persecution of Chagall prove, upon closer inspection, neither simple nor clearcut.[12] And it is also worth noting that Pen, the academic painter of the Wanderer school who was Chagall's first teacher, remained in his workshop at the Vitebsk school throughout the period that Unovis was based there.

In Malevich's eyes, "collective creative work" greatly expanded the domain of the new art, and the introduction of art into life was to be entrusted to a Council for the Affirmation of New Forms in Art, an elected administrative body that would be affiliated with the Vitebsk Provincial Department of People's Education. The "Plan raboty Soveta" ("Agenda of the Council"), which was published in the *Unovis Almanac No. 1,* contained five lengthy sections.[13] A good

portion of the council's mission was realized by Unovis, even though the Vitebsk authorities were, naturally, not inclined to organize such a body.

Unovis went before the Russian art public in June 1920, at the First All-Russian Conference of Teachers and Students of Art. Led by Malevich, the members of Unovis brought to Moscow an exhibition of their work, the *Unovis Almanac No. 1* (which had been hurriedly prepared in time for the conference), and Malevich's *On New Systems in Art.* A specially printed handbill, "Ot Unovisa" ("From Unovis," fig. no. 3), was distributed among the conference participants, who included representatives from all the provincial Free State Art Workshops as well as those in Moscow and Petrograd; the handbill, which opened with an insistent "We want, we want, we want," issued this appeal: "Under the banner of Unovis, let everyone join together to clothe the earth in new forms and meanings." Although the Vitebsk delegates missed the opening of the conference and arrived near its end, their projects and programs—notable for their careful thought, scope, and clarity—their passionate speechmaking, and their exhibition moved Unovis clearly to the fore.[14] It was also in June 1920 that Unovis rose to preeminence among the new art schools and that its influence spread to other cities: direct ties were established between Vitebsk and Perm', Ekaterinburg, Saratov, and Samara (in addition to Smolensk and Orenburg, where followers of Malevich's—Władysław Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro in the former, and Ivan Kudriashev in the latter—headed branches of Unovis).

It was with public artistic work—the creation of a "new utilitarian world of things"—that Unovis launched its expansion; during 1920–21, there was no undertaking or holiday in Vitebsk in which Unovis did not have a hand. Streets, buildings, signboards, trams, and even ration cards were decorated with Suprematist designs (plate nos. 127–129, 144, 148–150). Unovis had for the time being to work within the existing environment, and Suprematist designs served, more often than not, as new ornaments for buildings and objects of considerably older vintage. Yet the utopian idea of transforming the world on the basis of the formal potential of Suprematism had brought architecture within Unovis's compass. Architecture, it was generally accepted, was the necessary starting point of a new synthetic style. "Having established the specific plans of the Suprematist system," Malevich wrote in December 1920, "I am entrusting the further development of what is already architectural Suprematism to young architects in the broad sense of the word, for only in Suprematism do I see an era of a new system of architecture."[15]

The European Futurists are well known for their neoromantic schemes for humanity's settlement of the cosmos. Velimir Khlebnikov, Vasilii Chekrygin, and Malevich were their Russian counterparts, whose way had been prepared by Nikolai Fedorov's "philosophy of the Common Cause." In 1918, Malevich had described hypothetical architectural complexes in such articles as "Architecture as a Slap in the Face to Ferroconcrete."[16] The formulation "Suprematism is the new Classicism" would come later, following Unovis's move to Petrograd, but the need to create new architectural forms was first recognized, and the initial planning steps taken, in Vitebsk.[17] The architecture workshop (variously named at different times) was one of the most popular at the Vitebsk school and was headed by Lissitzky from the autumn of 1919 until his departure from Vitebsk in late 1920 (whereupon Chashnik and Khidekel' became the workshop's guiding figures). Lissitzky's talent for "integration" (as Selim Khan-Magomedov has aptly described it) had exceedingly significant consequences for Unovis.[18] Lissitzky fostered a strong utilitarian

fig. 3
"From Unovis," 1920.
Lithograph, 46 x 37 cm.
Manuscript Division, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

fig. 4
Unovis: Handbill of the Vitebsk Creative Committee *1 (November 20, 1920), with Chashnik's project in center column.*
Lithograph, 58.5 x 51 cm.
Manuscript Division, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

bias, and his professional training and striving for practical results were the bridge that led the innovators of Unovis "out of cold laboratories" and into the real world.

At the end of 1919, Lissitzky introduced three-dimensional elements into his new non-objective compositions. Such forms had, of course, been present in Malevich's earliest Suprematist works: at the *0.10* exhibition (Petrograd, 1915–16), he had shown a canvas incorporating a rectangular parallelepiped and cube. Malevich, however, included three-dimensional forms in his works only rarely, inasmuch as they engendered an illusory space that was at odds with the metaphysical space of the Suprematist canvas. Lissitzky's "bars," "plates," and "cubes," on the contrary, became permanent presences in his work, their execution betraying the practiced hand of the draftsman.

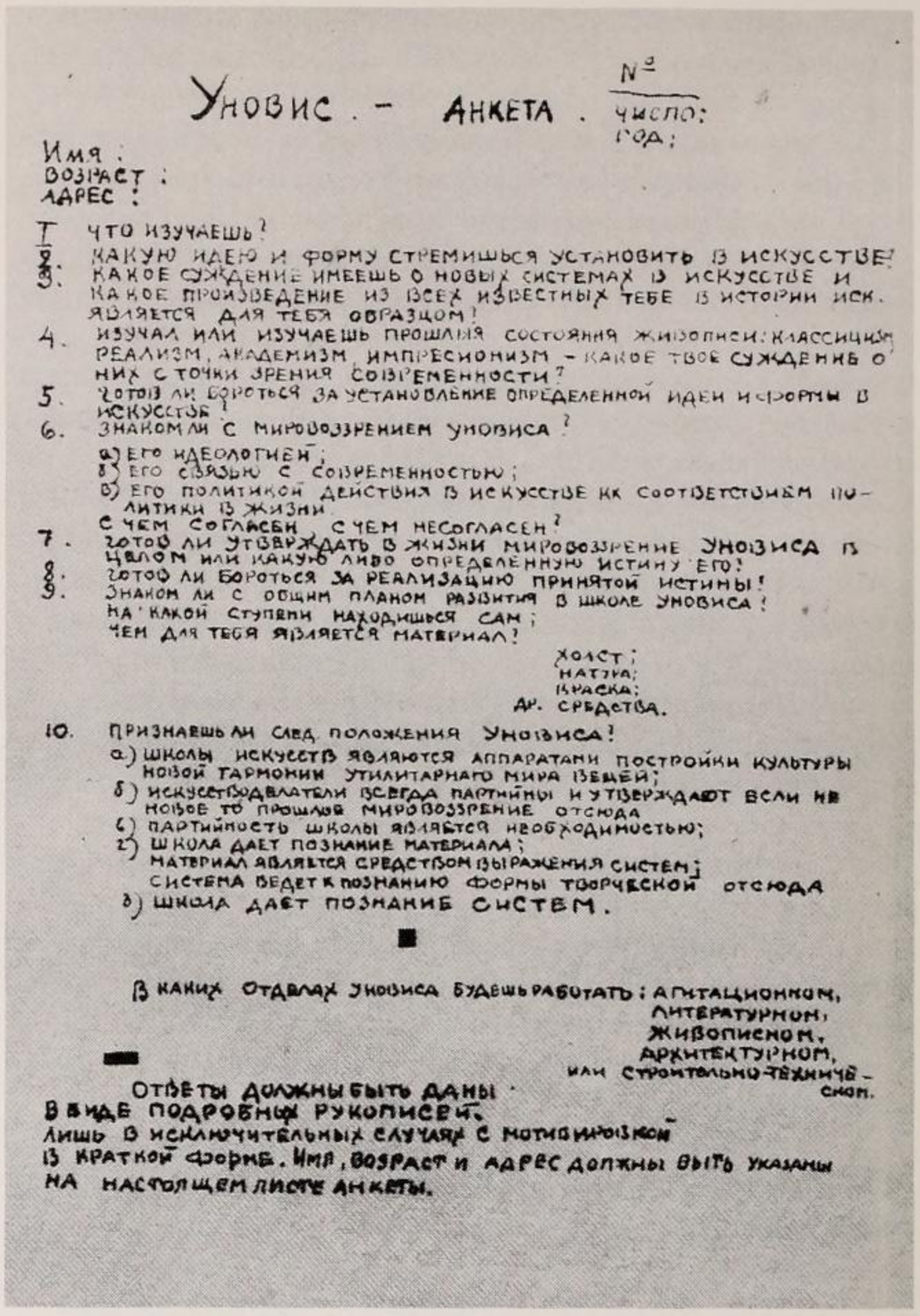
In Lissitzky's elegant works created under the influence of Suprematism, lines, planar shapes, and volumetric elements are combined at will. The "war of opposites," the disharmony that inevitably arose between surface-planarity and spatiality, was further exacerbated by Lissitzky's mixing of perspectives; he constructed almost every form according to a different vanishing point. The result was that each element "flew" into the composition along with the space it occupied and the *sdvig* (dislocation or shift) of colliding spaces provoked frustration in the viewer (the *sdvig,* of course, would become a favorite device of the Constructivists).

Lissitzky devised the name proun (from *proekt Unovisa* [project of Unovis] or *proekt utverzhdeniia novogo* [project of the affirmation of the new]) for these works only following the birth of Unovis; one does not encounter the term before mid-1920. (In Lissitzky's texts in the *Unovis Almanac No. 1,* the word "proun" was not employed once, even though a version of the composition celebrated thereafter as *Proun 1A: Most 1. Eskiz* [*Sketch for Proun 1A: Bridge 1,* 1919–20, plate no. 205] appeared as an illustration to one of his pieces. The formulations Lissitzky did use in the *Almanac*—"projects for new forms of utilitarian structures," "elaboration of tasks of the new architecture," and "projects for monumental decorations"—show him groping for the label that would carry such weight in the future.)

From the beginning, Lissitzky rejected any and all orientations in space for his prouns; he intended them to have neither top nor bottom, hence his use of varying perspectives. It was in the logic of three-dimensional forms, however, that they gradually grew heavy, were pulled "to earth," and demanded a reckoning with the laws of gravity. (It might be noted that Iakerson, also an architect by training—like Lissitzky, he had studied in the architecture and building faculty of the Riga Polytechnic Institute, but his enthusiasm for sculpture won out over his other interests; at the Vitebsk Popular Art School, Iakerson replaced Ivan Til'berg as head of the sculpture workshop[19]—made abundant use of three-dimensional forms in his work during 1920, yet he did so—and from the start—entirely in accordance with the laws of gravity.)

This adaptation of the principles of architectural drawing to Suprematism (a venture similar to that in which Gustav Klutsis was engaged at about the same time as Lissitzky, and perhaps even somewhat earlier) would be a catalyst for Malevich's arkhitektons.

The practical needs of the new state and of Soviet public life, which yielded Unovis commissions for decorations for speaker's rostrums to be used at mass meetings and demonstrations, were another factor in Suprematism's turn toward architecture during the Vitebsk years. Initially, Malevich, Lissitzky, and others confined themselves to decorating the rostrums' façades with Suprematist designs, into which they worked slogans and inscriptions, and did not alter



УНОВИС. – АНКЕТА. №
ЧИСЛО:
ГОД:

ИМЯ:
ВОЗРАСТ:
АДРЕС:

1. ЧТО ИЗУЧАЕШЬ?
2. КАКУЮ ИДЕЮ И ФОРМУ СТРЕМИШЬСЯ УСТАНОВИТЬ В ИСКУССТВЕ?
3. КАКОЕ СУЖДЕНИЕ ИМЕЕШЬ О НОВЫХ СИСТЕМАХ В ИСКУССТВЕ И КАКОЕ ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЕ ИЗ ВСЕХ ИЗВЕСТНЫХ ТЕБЕ В ИСТОРИИ ИСК. ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ ДЛЯ ТЕБЯ ОБРАЗЦОМ!
4. ИЗУЧАЛ ИЛИ ИЗУЧАЕШЬ ПРОШЛЫЯ СОСТОЯНИЯ ЖИВОПИСИ: КЛАССИЦИЗМ, РЕАЛИЗМ, АКАДЕМИЗМ, ИМПРЕСИОНИЗМ – КАКОЕ ТВОЕ СУЖДЕНИЕ О НИХ С ТОЧКИ ЗРЕНИЯ СОВРЕМЕННОСТИ?
5. ГОТОВ ЛИ БОРОТЬСЯ ЗА УСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ ОПРЕДЕЛЕННОЙ ИДЕИ И ФОРМЫ В ИСКУССТВЕ?
6. ЗНАКОМ ЛИ С МИРОВОЗЗРЕНИЕМ УНОВИСА?
   а) ЕГО ИДЕОЛОГИЕЙ;
   б) ЕГО СВЯЗЬЮ С СОВРЕМЕННОСТЬЮ;
   в) ЕГО ПОЛИТИКОЙ ДЕЙСТВИЯ В ИСКУССТВЕ КАК СООТВЕТСТВИЕМ ПОЛИТИКИ В ЖИЗНИ.
   С ЧЕМ СОГЛАСЕН, С ЧЕМ НЕСОГЛАСЕН?
7. ГОТОВ ЛИ УТВЕРЖДАТЬ В ЖИЗНИ МИРОВОЗЗРЕНИЕ УНОВИСА В ЦЕЛОМ ИЛИ КАКУЮ ЛИБО ОПРЕДЕЛЕННУЮ ИСТИНУ ЕГО?
8. ГОТОВ ЛИ БОРОТЬСЯ ЗА РЕАЛИЗАЦИЮ ПРИНЯТОЙ ИСТИНЫ!
9. ЗНАКОМ ЛИ С ОБЩИМ ПЛАНОМ РАЗВИТИЯ В ШКОЛЕ УНОВИСА! НА КАКОЙ СТУПЕНИ НАХОДИШЬСЯ САМ; ЧЕМ ДЛЯ ТЕБЯ ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ МАТЕРИАЛ?
   ХОЛСТ;
   НАТУРА;
   КРАСКА;
   АР. СРЕДСТВА.
10. ПРИЗНАВШЬ ЛИ СЛЕД. ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ УНОВИСА!
   а) ШКОЛЫ ИСКУССТВ ЯВЛЯЮТСЯ АППАРАТАМИ ПОСТРОЙКИ КУЛЬТУРЫ НОВОЙ ГАРМОНИИ УТИЛИТАРНАГО МИРА ВЕЩЕЙ;
   б) ИСКУССТВОДЕЛАТЕЛИ ВСЕГДА ПАРТИЙНЫ И УТВЕРЖДАЮТ ВСЛИ НЕ НОВОЕ ТО ПРОШЛОЕ МИРОВОЗЗРЕНИЕ ОТСЮДА
   в) ПАРТИЙНОСТЬ ШКОЛЫ ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ НЕОБХОДИМОСТЬЮ;
   г) ШКОЛА ДАЕТ ПОЗНАНИЕ МАТЕРИАЛА;
   МАТЕРИАЛ ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ СРЕДСТВОМ ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ СИСТЕМ;
   СИСТЕМА ВЕДЕТ К ПОЗНАНИЮ ФОРМЫ ТВОРЧЕСКОЙ ОТСЮДА
   д) ШКОЛА ДАЕТ ПОЗНАНИЕ СИСТЕМ.

В КАКИХ ОТДЕЛАХ УНОВИСА БУДЕШЬ РАБОТАТЬ: АГИТАЦИОННОМ, ЛИТЕРАТУРНОМ, ЖИВОПИСНОМ, АРХИТЕКТУРНОМ, ИЛИ СТРОИТЕЛЬНО-ТЕХНИЧЕСКОМ.

ОТВЕТЫ ДОЛЖНЫ БЫТЬ ДАНЫ В ВИДЕ ПОДРОБНЫХ РУКОПИСЕЙ. ЛИШЬ В ИСКЛЮЧИТЕЛЬНЫХ СЛУЧАЯХ С МОТИВИРОВКОЙ В КРАТКОЙ ФОРМЕ. ИМЯ, ВОЗРАСТ И АДРЕС ДОЛЖНЫ БЫТЬ УКАЗАНЫ НА НАСТОЯЩЕМ ЛИСТЕ АНКЕТЫ.

fig. 5
"Unovis Questionnaire," 1920–21.

the basic shape of these primitive structures (plate nos. 130, 147). However, Chashnik—one of the most talented of Malevich's followers and only twenty-six at the time of his death in 1929—created a project for a "tribune under the sign of Suprematism" for a square in Smolensk. Chashnik's project, illustrated in one of Unovis's publications (fig. no. 4), was later developed by Lissitzky (plate nos. 140–141) and served as the basis for his *Leninskaia tribuna* (*Lenin Tribune,* 1924, plate no. 142). Though acclaim for the *Tribune* accrued solely to Lissitzky, he always emphasized that the work was an "Unovis project."

Malevich's Suprematist system was born of the all-embracing *Chernyi kvadrat* (*Black Square,* 1915). The abyss of the *Black Square,* its philosophical ambiguity—it constituted both "all" and "nothing," both "non-objectivity" and "omni-objectivity"—made Malevich's masterpiece a sui-generis "project," a dense nucleus of meanings that Malevich spent his entire life extrapolating. Suprematist paintings—self-sufficient and primary "in the ranks of all the things of the world"—were the first issue of the *Black Square* and its infinitude: "With his brush the artist creates a new sign; this sign is not a form for apprehending what has already been prepared, built, and brought into existence in the world—it is a sign of the new, of what is in the process of being built and appearing in nature through the artist."[20] These Suprematist canvases were, Malevich wrote, sign-projects containing "proto-images of the technical organisms of the future Suprematist [world]."[21] Thus projection—the creation of blueprints or plans of the future Suprematist organization of the world—became the essential hallmark of Unovis's collective work and "project" the chief label for its production (a 1920 Unovis periodical, for example, authored by Chashnik and Khidekel', was entitled *Aero. Stat'i i proekty* [*Aero: Articles and Projects*]).

The "utilitarian world of things" so passionately proclaimed by Unovis did not coincide with the world that, during the same period, the Productivists (the future Constructivists) were seeking to create. Malevich and the members of Unovis wished to comprehend the "real" foundations of the universe and its "organic-natural transformation"—Suprematism acquired an ontological dimension. Malevich devoted virtually all of his time in Vitebsk to the writing of philosophical and theoretical treatises—some of which have yet to be published[22]—which defined the nature of the "utilitarian organisms" that made up the "unified system of the world architecture of the earth." The most advanced among Unovis's members understood and shared Malevich's views. Chashnik, for example, conceived Suprematist works (which he called outright "blueprints" and "plans") as projects for and instruments of a new universe and a new systematization of the world. The aims of the architectural and technical faculty created in Vitebsk in 1921 included, according to Chashnik, "study of the system of Suprematist projection and the designing of blueprints and plans in accordance with it; ruling off the earth's expanse into squares, giving each energy cell its place in the overall scheme; organization and accommodation on the earth's surface of all its intrinsic elements, charting those points and lines out of which the forms of Suprematism will ascend and slip into space."[23]

The differentiation of *real'nost'* (reality) from *deistvitel'nost'* (actuality) was one of the foundations of Malevich's theory. "Reality" lay concealed behind the world's objective envelope, and this envelope had to be torn open and the shackles of *predmetnost'* (objectivity) and *razum* (reason) broken in order to ensure the appearance of a new "Realism"—first in art and subsequently in the world at large. "Actuality," by contrast, was illusoriness incarnate, enslaving man's soul. Malevich and the members of Unovis aspired to create a new "reality," whereas the Productivists and Constructivists remained, in the

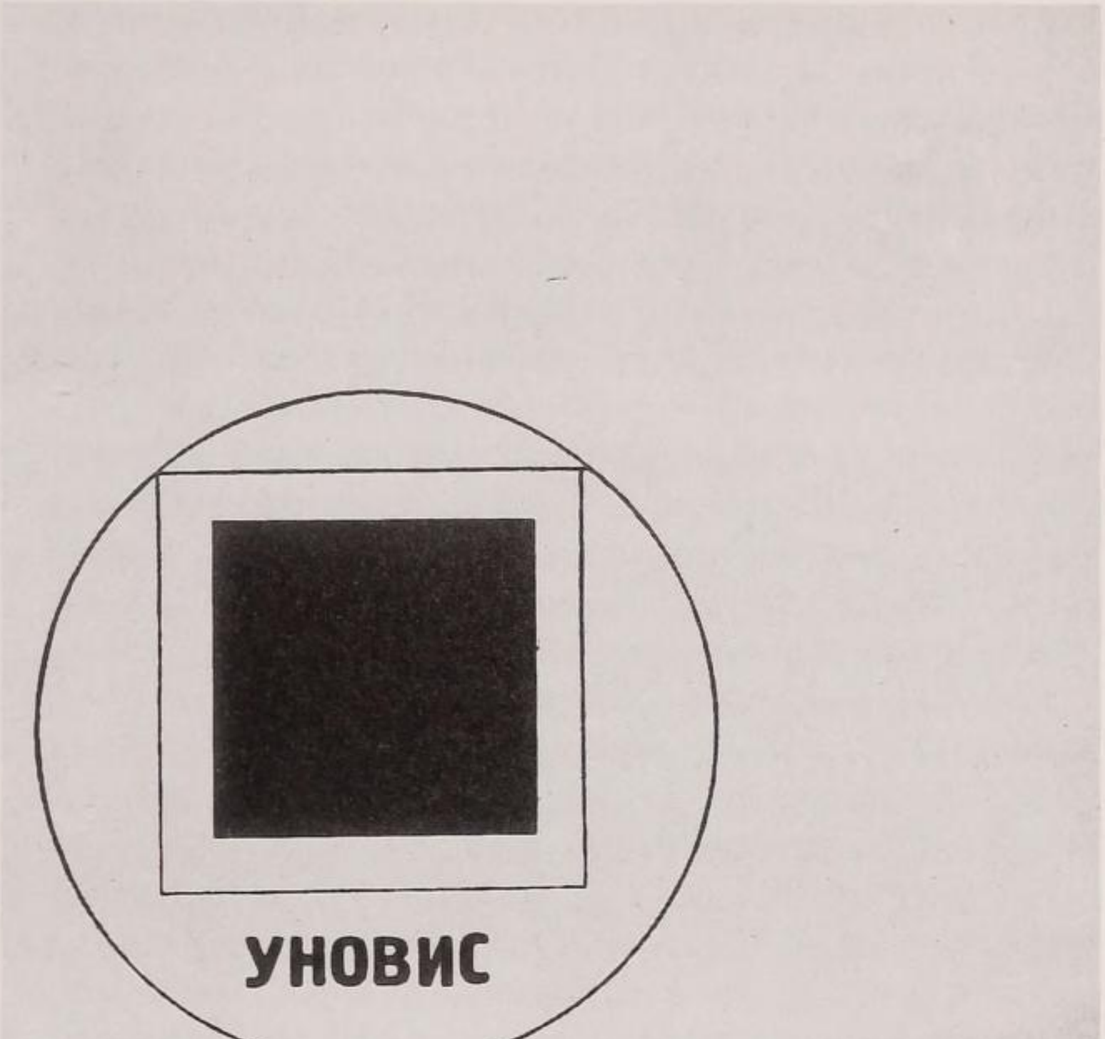


fig. 6
Unovis seal, reproduced in Lissitzky's A Suprematist Tale about Two Squares, *1922.*

Unovis view, servants of "actuality" ("lackeys of the factory and of production," as Malevich acerbically described them). The rivalry between Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin—who had taken non-objectivity in such contradictory directions—went back many years[24] and was manifest at the start of the 1920s in the competition between Unovis and Inkhuk (the Institute of Artistic Culture) and between Unovis and Obmokhu. The feud came into the open in December 1921, when more than two hundred Unovis works were exhibited at Inkhuk (members of Unovis were there to elucidate their displays, while Malevich delivered a lecture and participated in discussions).[25] The antagonism between Suprematism and Constructivism was plain to see; the two movements seemed opposite poles in the artistic transformation of the world.

(Lissitzky had been in Moscow from the end of 1920. A member of Inkhuk, he espoused a diluted, compromised version of Suprematism. Lissitzky and Malevich had gone radically different ways, though their personal relations—unlike those between Tatlin and Malevich—remained intact. The title of the journal founded by Lissitzky and Il'ia Erenburg in Berlin in 1922, *Veshch'/Gegenstand/Objet* [*Object*], was a programmatic one, announcing a certain polemic with the "non-objectivity" [or "omni-objectivity"] of Suprematism.)

The tension between the poles of Suprematism and Constructivism that colored numerous areas of early Soviet artistic life existed inside Unovis, as well. It was not Lissitzky alone who integrated impulses from one and the other system. The canvases of Iudin and Tsiperson—who were staunch adherents of Unovis—used layers of paint to achieve relief effects; incorporated sawdust, shavings, sand, and even seeds; and are evidence of the study in Vitebsk of the properties of heterogeneous materials and of attention to *faktura* (density). Moreover, certain members of Unovis—Veksler, Kogan, Georgii Noskov, Suetin, Khidekel', Chashnik, and Iudin—graduated from the Vitebsk Practical Art Institute with the title of "artist-Constructivist."[26]

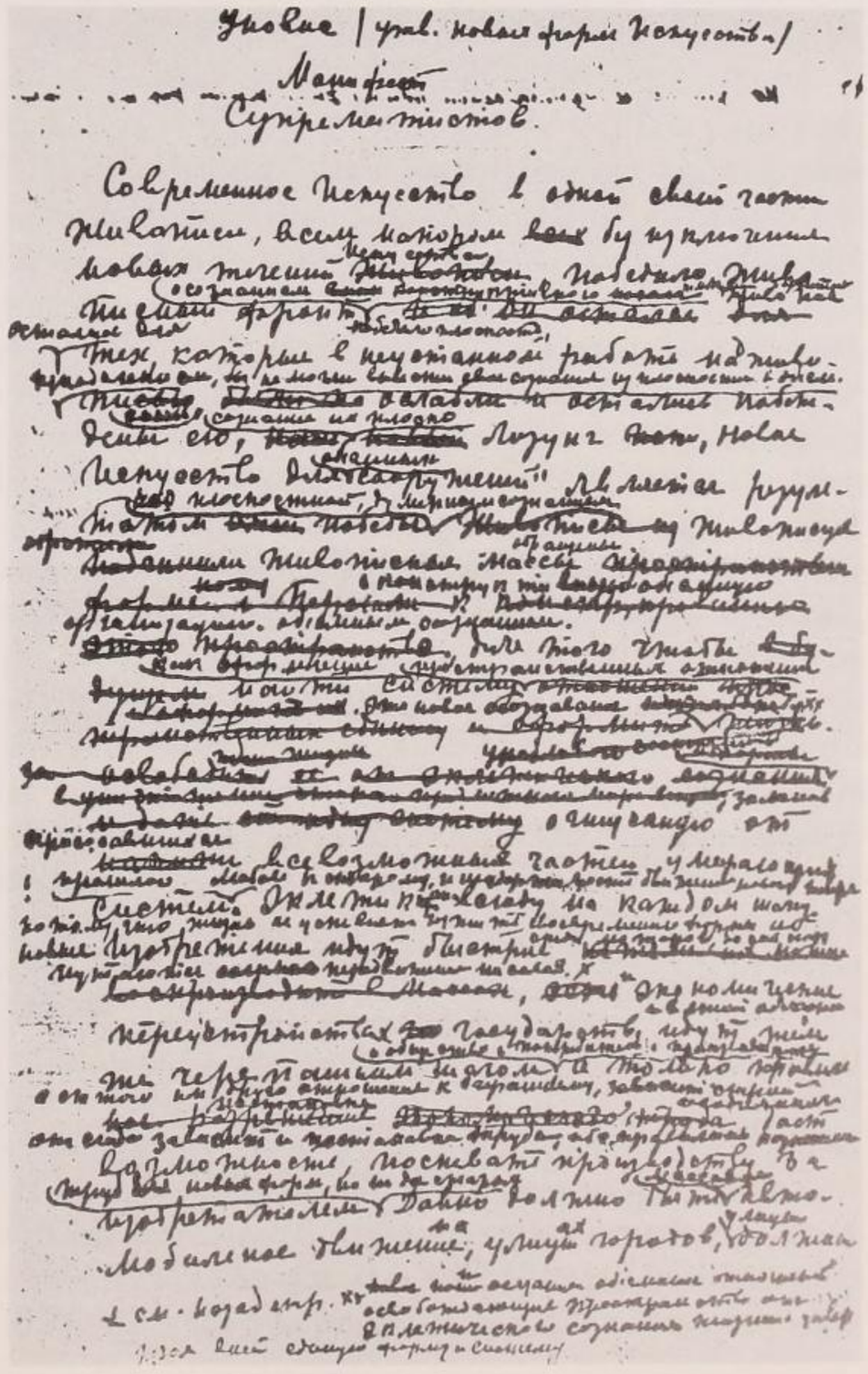
Unovis's pedagogical system was an integral part of its work. Even while Chagall was still at the helm of the Vitebsk Popular Art School, Unovis proclaimed the creation of a "Unified Painting Audience." When Chagall left in June 1920, Ermolaeva became the school's director; when the school was reorganized as the Vitebsk Practical Art Institute, she became rector and remained in that position until her own departure for Petrograd in the summer of 1922 (Malevich was chairman of the Council of Professors). The Unified Painting Audience was based on the program evolved by Malevich in the Moscow and Petrograd State Free Art Workshops. Ermolaeva and Kogan bore primary responsibility for putting that program into effect in Vitebsk, with Kogan in charge of the introductory course and Ermolaeva supervising students' methodical progress through the disciplines of Cézannism, Cubism, and Cubo-Futurism. (This advancement "from Cézanne to Suprematism" replicated Malevich's own evolution.) Malevich's role was to analyze student assignments and independent work through lectures and conversations intended to "diagnose" a student's talents and possibilities.

The implementation of Malevich's program did not, however, go entirely smoothly, and his analysis of the obstacles and their causes, as well as his careful observation of students' progress in apprehending the different systems of painting, led him to what he subsequently labeled the "theory of the additional element [*pribavochnyi element*] in painting." (In Vitebsk, Malevich used the terms *dobavka* [supplement] and *dobavochnyi element* [supplementary element].) The essence of his theory was that each new trend in painting represented an artistic complex begotten by one specific plastic "gene," a kind of formula-sign from which, as from the nucleus of a cell, the complex organisms of Impressionism, Cézannism, Cubism, and

fig. 7
Members of Unovis, 1921. From left, foreground: Suetin (with black square sewn to his sleeve), Efros, Veksler, Roiak, unidentified, and Chervinko; background: Iudin, Chashnik, Ermolaeva, Khidekel', Kogan, and Malevich.

fig. 8
View of the Unovis display at the Petrograd Artists of All Trends *exhibition, 1923.*

fig. 9
Kazimir Malevich
"Unovis (Aff{irmers} of New Forms in Art): Manifesto of the Suprematists," May 2, 1924.
Malevich Archive, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.



so on evolved. The straight line—the track of a point moving in space, and Suprematism's fundamental stylistic component—was declared the Suprematist "gene." Suprematism's "additional element" was, however, a summit few of Malevich's followers attained (Malevich critiqued the work of Ermolaeva and Kogan no less than that of his students). In 1925, in his article "Vvedenie v teoriiu pribavochnogo elementa v zhivopisi" ("Introduction to the Theory of the Additional Element in Painting"), Malevich would emphasize the Vitebsk origins of his theory and claim that many of his students had been "ill" from the additional element of Cézanne's painting, and that they had found the Cézannist Fal'k more attractive than himself (Fal'k taught in Vitebsk for several months in 1921, and took a number of Vitebsk students with him to the Moscow Vkhutemas [the Higher Artistic-Technical Workshops]; though Fal'k was a

member of the "old guard," Malevich never abandoned his sympathy and respect for him).[27]

To some extent, Unovis's pedagogical practices also embodied Malevich's notions of "collective reason" and "collective creative work." The most advanced students became teaching assistants: they conducted classes, delivered papers and lectures, and discussed and evaluated student work (and each other's). Gavris, Georgii Noskov, Suetin, Khidekel', Chashnik, and Iudin were serving in such a capacity by 1921. Khidekel' and Chashnik were responsible, moreover, for making the architectural and technical faculty the apex of the school. Chashnik wrote in 1921: "The study and apprehension of all systems of the new art in our painting faculties lead to the ultimate real faculty, the architectural and technical faculty . . . The architectural and technical workshop is the crucible of all the other faculties of Unovis, to which all creative individuals, as a unified collective of builders of the new forms of the world, must aspire."[28]

As a thinker, Malevich encouraged reflection and theoretical speculation in his followers, and under his demanding tutelage, Kogan, Khidekel', Chashnik, Iudin, and others gradually revealed a talent for both pedagogical and formal experimentation. And in order to graduate from the Vitebsk school, a student had not only to present the Council of Professors with an art work as his diploma project but to compose a theoretical treatise.[29] Chashnik drew a "Skhema postroeniia Vit[ebskikh] gos[udarstvennykh] khud[ozhestvennykh] tekhnicheskikh masterskikh" ("Structural Plan of the Vit[ebsk] St[ate] Art[istic]-Technical Workshops"), awarding to the student who had completed all courses the title of "consummate learned architect."[30] Iudin recorded his reflections on and experiments with color and form (the latter conducted in close contact with Ermolaeva) in his unique diary full of plans and tables. With the help of his colleagues in Vitebsk, Malevich laid the foundations of the "creative laboratory institute" which had been envisioned in the "Agenda" of the Council for the Affirmation of New Forms in Art and which would become a reality in Ginkhuk.

Malevich was the author of a vast unified oeuvre, in which the plastic and the verbal, works of art and of philosophy, were aspects of a single creative utterance about the world. The same was true of the "collective creative work" of Unovis. The rich and extensive body of writings by Lissitzky, Ermolaeva, Kogan, Chashnik, Khidekel', Iudin, Mikhail Kunin, Gavris, Mikhail Noskov, L. Zuperman, Osip Bernshtein, and others spans a wide range of genres—essays, treatises, explanatory notes, programs, projects, diaries, and letters—and is crowned by the works of Malevich himself, which were published under the Unovis imprint. Unovis's published works are, however, but the tip of the iceberg. One can only hope that the important documents still held in archives will be released and published in the near future.

It had been owing to Chagall's efforts, during his tenure as Commissar of Arts for Vitebsk, that a number of canvases by Russian artists of all movements—from members of Mir iskusstva (World of Art) to left painters—had been sent to the city to form the basis of a museum of contemporary art. Under Malevich's influence—and Malevich had been one of the most active of the museum reformers during the first months of the Soviet state—the Vitebsk museum was quickly transformed from a museum of contemporary art into a museum of painterly culture. The Vitebsk museum housed the fullest and most representative collection of Russian avant-garde works—it had eighteen canvases by Rozanova alone—of any provincial museum with the exception of the Rostov museum (whose collection had been assembled by Liubov' Popova). Space for the collection in Vitebsk was tight, and the majority of the paintings were stored at the Vitebsk Practical Art Institute. Temporary exhibitions of these works, often installed according to Malevich's instructions, were held at the school and served as material for his lectures and critiques. Malevich, Iudin wrote in his diary, "rendered a diagnosis" on the works of virtually every member of the Russian avant-garde.

Unovis was a "party" that accepted all comers; anyone—poet, musician, actor, or artisan—who wished to promote the "augmentation" of the world with new forms could join. Natan Efros, for example, who would become famous as a professional reader and reciter of poetry, was a member of Unovis's Tvorkom (the Creative Committee) in 1921. (Being a member of Unovis was not, however, generally synonymous with being a Suprematist—the Unovis member had to strive to become a Suprematist.) In the autumn of that year, Unovis, in furtherance of its goal of extending its influence to all creative endeavors, inaugurated the "Unovis Evening," a showcase for contemporary poetry, music, and theater. The first evening in the series, held on September 17, 1921, featured Efros in a solo performance of Maiakovskii's *Voina i mir* (*War and the Universe*), with stage design by Ermolaeva and Tsiperson, and Malevich reading his own poems.[31]

The Unovis "party," like any other, had its own program and bylaws. Applicants were required to complete the highly detailed "Anketa Unovisa" ("Unovis Questionnaire," fig. no. 5). A Working Committee, elected by all members and soon renamed the Creative Committee, supervised all "party" activities. (Once branches of Unovis had been established in other cities, the Vitebsk committee became the Central Creative Committee.) It was a collegial body, with no chairman; Ermolaeva was its secretary, and Bernshtein its clerk until his early death in 1922. Important documents were endorsed with the Unovis seal (fig. no. 6), which had been produced from a drawing by Lissitzky.[32] Malevich, Ermolaeva, and Kogan were permanent members of the Creative Committee during 1920–22; Lissitzky, Chashnik, Khidekel', Gavris, Suetin, Georgii Noskov, Chervinko, Iudin, and Efros all served on the committee at one time or another.

Unovis either organized or participated in a number of exhibitions, the first in Vitebsk in February 1920, when works by members of Posnovis/Unovis were shown as part of the school's student showcase. In June 1920, Unovis exhibited its works at the First All-Russian Conference of Teachers and Students of Art in Moscow. A one-day Unovis exhibition was held in Vitebsk on March 28, 1921. In December 1921, again in Moscow, Unovis exhibited at Inkhuk.[33] At a display in Moscow in March–April 1922 of works by students from the provincial art schools, those by Unovis were pronounced the most interesting.[34] Another exhibition was held in Vitebsk in May 1922. At the *Erste russische Kunstausstellung* (*First Russian Art Exhibition*) in Berlin during the autumn of 1922, Unovis displayed its works in a collective entry. Unovis made its final appearance at the *Petrogradskie khudozhniki vsekh napravlenii* (*Petrograd Artists of All Trends*) exhibition in Petrograd in 1923. Its sixty-odd entries, ranging from Cubism to Suprematism, offered a summation of its work and were exhibited—the paintings of Malevich not excepted—under the group's name (fig. no. 8).

Malevich and the members of his "party" assumed that branches of Unovis would be established throughout the world, and made several efforts at entering on the international stage. Unovis sent materials to Germany in 1921, for instance, and addressed a letter to Dutch artists in February 1922.[35] Suprematism was "exported" to Poland by Strzemiński and Kobro, who moved there in the early 1920s, and it served as the point of departure for Strzemiński's Unizm (Unism)—a Polish term that echoed the Russian "Unovism."

When he established the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius proclaimed a "joyfully creating commune, for which the Masonic lodges of the Middle Ages are the ideal prototype" as his goal. With its own watchword (the "transrational" *U-el-el'-ul-el-te-ka*), bylaws, program, and emblems, Unovis was akin to such a Masonic lodge. The Unovis fraternity's ritual extended even to the clothing of its members—Malevich himself was a prime example: his white apparel and white hat dramatized his passage into white Suprematism, which carried the "white world (world-structure), affirming the sign of purity of man's creative life." And in his diary Iudin mentions sewing a special Unovis red jacket.

Unovis took as its motto Malevich's Suprematist slogan: "The overturning of the old world of arts will be etched across your palms," to which, a short while later, "Wear the black square as a sign of world economy" was appended. And indeed, Unovis's members sewed the black square, their "Masonic emblem," onto the cuffs of their sleeves—the part of their clothing nearest their palms (fig. no. 7). Only Lissitzky employed the red square as an emblem of Unovis (in his design for its seal), and that was in tribute to the prevailing atmosphere in society: "Draw the red square in your workshops as a sign of the world revolution in the arts." Malevich and the true Unovis Suprematists always considered the black square—the "icon" and "zero form" of Suprematism—to be the symbol of Unovis.

The transfer of art-educational institutions from the jurisdiction of Narkompros to that of Glavprofobr (the Chief Administration for Professional Education) in 1921 marked the beginning of difficult times for Unovis. The Vitebsk teachers went unpaid for a considerable period; neither the central nor the local authorities offered the school any support. Unovis's utopian trust in the Soviet government's desire to build a new life on the basis of new forms in art was shattered and revealed as untenable.

Ten students were graduated from the Vitebsk Practical Art Institute in May 1922, after which Unovis ceased its activity in Vitebsk. By the beginning of June, Malevich was in Petrograd, to which Ermolaeva also returned; one after another, numerous members of Unovis—including Suetin, Khidekel', Chashnik, Iudin, Khaia Kagan, Magaril, and Efim Roiak—followed suit. Many among them became associates of the Institute for the Study of the Culture of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Artistic Culture (later Ginkhuk), where Malevich had been named director. Yet even in Petrograd/Leningrad, Malevich was unwilling to part with Unovis. His draft of "Unovis (utv[erditeli] novykh form Iskusstva). Manifest suprematistov" ("Unovis [Aff(irmers) of the New Forms in Art]: Manifesto of the Suprematists," fig. no. 9) dates from May 1924.[36] And at the end of 1924, in an open letter to artists in Holland, Malevich argued the necessity of creating "Unovises" throughout the world.[37]

Malevich's efforts to revive Unovis in new soil did not, however, meet with success. Under the weight of changed living conditions and social patterns, the phenomenon born in Vitebsk vanished. The future will tell us the true worth of the rich legacy that was left behind.

—Translated, from the Russian, by Jane Bobko

Notes

1. Kazimir Malevich, letter to Mikhail Matiushin, September 8, 1917, Manuscript Division, State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow, f. XXV/9, l. 21.

2. On the circumstances of Malevich's move to Vitebsk, see A. Shatskikh, "K. Malevich v Vitebske," *Iskusstvo* 11 (1988), pp. 38–43.

3. Kazimir Malevich, letter to Ol'ga Gromozova, 1920, Manuscript Division, State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow, f. XXV/9, l. 13–13ob. Published in Shatskikh, "K. Malevich v Vitebske," p. 43.

4. The first instances of Lazar' Lisitskii's use of the "article" El, and then El', are to be found in the *Unovis Almanac No. 1.* With the switch to German and the Latin alphabet, he signed his name "El Lissitzky." There are no grounds for the belief that Lissitzky chose *el'* because that is the pronunciation in the Russian alphabet for the letter *l,* his first initial; at the time, the word *liudi* was the guide to pronunciation. There is no question that Lissitzky's unusual name, hardly a pseudonym, was inspired by Malevich's highly musical "transrational" line, which had deep meaning for the members of Unovis; Malevich cited it repeatedly, and Chashnik's 1924 inscription in his fiancée's album called on her to "remember this madman . . . whose way of life is *U-EL-EL.*" See *Ilya Grigorevich Chashnik: Lyucite/1902–Leningrad/1929; Watercolors, Drawings, Reliefs,* catalogue for exhibition at Leonard Hutton Galleries (New York: Leonard Hutton Galleries, 1979), p. 11.

5. Moisei Lerman, conversation with author, Moscow, June 15, 1988.

6. N. Kogan, "O suprematicheskom balete," *Al'manakh Unovis No. 1,* l. 21.

7. The date—April 14th—given in Larissa A. Shadowa, *Suche und Experiment: Aus der Geschichte der russischen und sowjetischen Kunst zwischen 1910 und 1930,* trans. Helmut Barth (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1978), p. 309, and in Shatskikh, "K. Malevich v Vitebske" is incorrect.

8. The *Unovis Almanac No. 1* was "constructed" in five typewritten copies. Lissitzky's use of the verb *stroit'* (to construct), an obvious synonym for *konstruirovat',* is highly revealing of his evolving approach to the "construction of the book." The *Unovis Almanac No. 1* played a significant role in the development of Lissitzky's book design.

Today there are two known copies of the *Almanac,* one in private hands in Moscow, the other in the Manuscript Division, State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow, f. 76/9. All references in this essay to the *Almanac* are to the latter copy. A good portion of the contents of the *Almanac* has been published in Shadowa, *Suche und Experiment,* pp. 303–17.

9. K. Malevich, "O 'Ia' i kollektive," *Al'manakh Unovis No. 1,* l. 6ob.

10. See Aleksandra Shatskikh, "A Brief History of Obmokhu," in this volume.

11. Kazimir Malevich, note, May 30, 1927, Malevich Archives, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Reproduced in *Kazimir Malevich, 1878–1935,* catalogue for exhibition organized by the State Russian Museum, Leningrad, the State Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow, and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (Amsterdam and Moscow: Stedelijk Museum, 1988), p. 52.

12. See Alexandra Shatskikh, "Chagall and Malevich in Vitebsk. History of their relations," *Bulletin AICARC* 1–2 (1989), pp. 7–10.

13. The "Plan raboty Soveta" has been published in Shadowa, *Suche und Experiment,* p. 317.

14. "Materialy I-oi Vserossiiskoi konferentsii uchashchikh i uchashchikhsia iskusstvu," 1920, Central State Archive of Russia, Moscow, f. 2306, op. 23, d. 116. See also G. L. Demosfenova, "K istorii pedagogicheskoi deiatel'nosti K. S. Malevicha," in *Stranitsy istorii otechestvennogo dizaina,* Trudy VNIITE, vyp. 59 (Moscow: Vsesoiuznyi nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut tekhnicheskoi estetiki, 1989), pp. 143–70.

15. K. Malevich, *Suprematizm. 34 risunka* (Vitebsk: Unovis, 1920), p. 4.

16. K. Malevich, "Arkhitektura kak poshchechina betono-zhelezu," *Anarkhiia* 37 (April 6, 1918).

17. See Shadowa, *Suche und Experiment,* pp. 90–94.

18. See S. O. Khan-Magomedov, "L. Lisitskii. Rol' v stileobrazuiushchikh protsessakh i v stanovlenii dizaina," in *Stranitsy istorii otechestvennogo dizaina,* pp. 24–43, and "Novyi stil', ob"emnyi suprematizm i prouny," in *Lazar' Markovich Lisitskii, 1890–1941,* catalogue for exhibition organized by the State Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow, and the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (Moscow and Eindhoven: Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 1990), pp. 35–42.

19. On Iakerson, see A. Shatskikh, "Dereviannaia skul'ptura D. Iakersona," in *Sovetskaia skul'ptura 8* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1984), pp. 160–69.

20. *Al'manakh Unovis No. 1,* l. 12ob.

21. Malevich, *Suprematizm,* p. 2.

22. A number of Malevich's previously unpublished texts appear in D. Sarab'ianov and A. Shatskikh, *Kazimir Malevich. Zhivopis'. Teoriia,* forthcoming.

23. Il. Chashnik, "Arkhitekturno-tekhnicheskii fakul'tet," *UNOVIS* 2 (January 1921), p. 14.

24. See Charlotte Douglas, "Tatlin and Malevich: History and Theory 1914–1915" (Paper delivered at the international symposium, Vladimir Tatlin. Leben. Werk. Wirkung, Städtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, November 25–27, 1989).

25. See Vassilii Rakitin, "Malevich und Inkhuk," in *Kasimir Malewitsch zum 100. Geburtstag,* catalogue for exhibition organized by the Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1978), pp. 284–98.

26. "Spisok okonchivshikh Khudozhestvenno-prakticheskii institut v 1922 godu v mae mesiatse," State Vitebsk Regional Archive, f. 246, op. 1, d. 260, sviazka 17, l. 390ob.

27. K. Malevich, "Sorok piat'. Vvedenie v teoriiu pribavochnogo elementa v zhivopisi," 1925, private archive, Moscow, pp. 21–22. Malevich wrote a brief article on Fal'k in 1924. See K. S. Malevich, "Fal'k," in K. S. Malevich, *The Artist, Infinity, Suprematism: Unpublished Writings, 1913–33,* ed. Troels Andersen, trans. Xenia Hoffmann (Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1978), pp. 125–27.

28. Chashnik, "Arkhitekturno-tekhnicheskii fakul'tet," p. 12, 15.

29. Iudin's diaries for 1922 contain sketches for his diploma work (Manuscript Division, State Saltykov–Shchedrin Public Library, St. Petersburg, f. 1000). For Chashnik's diploma work on "Metod suprematizma" ("The Suprematist Method"), see *Ilya Grigorevich Chashnik,* pp. 20–24.

30. *Ilya Grigorevich Chashnik,* no. 57.

31. *Izvestiia Vitebskogo gubernskogo Soveta krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov* 208 (1920).

32. Lissitzky's drawing for the Unovis seal was reproduced on the final page of his *Suprematicheskii skaz pro dva kvadrata* (Berlin: Skify, 1922). Chashnik's "Structural Plan of the Vit[ebsk] St[ate] Art[istic]-Technical Workshops" is one of the documents that bear the seal. See *Ilya Grigorevich Chashnik,* no. 57.

33. This information comes from documents in the State Vitebsk Regional Archive, f. 837, op. 1, ed. khr. 59, l. 63, 87, IIIob.

34. *Vestnik iskusstv* 3–4 (1922), pp. 27–28.

35. K. S. Malevich, "A Letter to the Dutch Artists," in K. S. Malevich, *Essays on Art, 1915–1933,* ed. Troels Andersen, trans. Xenia Glowacki-Prus and Arnold McMillin (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 183–87. The fate of the materials sent to Germany is unknown.

36. K. Malevich, "Unovis (utv[erditeli] novykh form Iskusstva). Manifest suprematistov," May 2, 1924, Malevich Archive, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

37. K. Malevich, "Otkrytoe pis'mo gollandskim khudozhnikam Van-Gofu i Bekmanu," *Zhizn' iskusstva* 50 (1924), pp. 13–14.

The Great Utopia

The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde,

1915–1932

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State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

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Prefaces

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