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Source: *Art Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1, From Leningrad to Ljubljana: The Suppressed Avant-Gardes of East-Central and Eastern Europe during the Early Twentieth Century (Spring, 1990), pp. 44-51

Published by: [College Art Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/777179>

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Natalia Goncharova and Futurist Theater

By John E. Bowlt

The name of Natalia Sergeevna Goncharova (1881–1962; *Fig. 1*), one of the foremost Russian painters and designers of the twentieth century, has been linked inextricably to that of Mikhail Larionov (1881–1964; *see Fig. 2*). Whether we read contemporaneous descriptions (for example, the painter Alexander Gerasimov referred to her as Larionov's "companion and shadow")¹ or more current assessments of her work, the mechanical articulation—Larionov and Goncharova, Goncharova and Larionov—continues to occur. We must therefore appraise her achievements in terms of her own work rather than in those of Larionov. From her first published drawings in the journal *Yunost* [Youth] of 1907 to her illustrations for the *Festschrift* dedicated to Sofia Melnikova in Tiflis of 1919, and from her enormous one-woman exhibitions in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1913 and 1914² to her stage designs for Sergei Diaghilev's *Saisons Russes*, Goncharova manifested an original, forceful, even abrasive personality that sets her clearly apart (*see Fig. 3*). The principal area in which Goncharova excelled was the theater; thus, the focus of this essay is on her contribution to the aesthetic of performance.

One of the most striking innovations of the artists of the Russian avant-garde was their transcendence of the traditional dividing line between "life" (the social, ritualized conventions of private and public comportment) and "art" (the creation of aesthetic objects). The paintings, designs, and constructions of artists such as the Burliuk brothers, Pavel Filonov, Goncharova, Larionov, Kazimir Malevich, and Vladimir Tatlin



Fig. 1 Natalia Goncharova, 1912, photograph. Courtesy of the late Mme Alexandra Larionova, Paris.

were an integral part of their way of life; their clothes, human relationships, and even bodily movements expressed their artistic world views no less powerfully and provocatively than did their paintings and sculpture. The conventional formula "life and work," with its implied dichotomy, does not function here, for it is the inherence of art in life and life in art that makes individuals such as Goncharova so magnetic—and, for us today, so remote. Just as we cannot understand completely the resonance of contemporary rock culture without taking into account the effect of narcotics,

so we cannot appreciate the exploits of the artists of the Russian avant-garde without understanding their total dedication to the artistic act—i.e., their replacement of the calendar schedule by the boundless process of artistic creativity. In other words, if a "conventional" artist were asked whether he or she regarded activities such as walking and talking as constituent parts of his or her artistic expression, the response would probably be negative. If, however, Goncharova were asked the same question, chances are that she would answer affirmatively. Of course, the artists of the Russian avant-garde are not alone in this respect, but they seem to have established, or at least consolidated, a trend toward what the playwright Nikolai Evreinov called in 1910 the "theatricalization of life."³ Vincent van Gogh and Mikhail Vrubel



Fig. 2 Mikhail Larionov, *Rayonist Portrait of Natalia Goncharova*, 1913 (from M. Larionov, *Luchizm*, Moscow, 1913).



Fig. 3 Unknown artist, *Composite Portrait of Sergei Diaghilev and Natalia Goncharova*, 1914, ink on paper, 12 × 8 inches (30.5 × 20 cm). Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Nikita D. Lobanov-Rostovsky, London. The rendering of Diaghilev on the left is taken from a caricature by Pavel Shcherbov called *Salzburg* (1898). The rendering of Goncharova on the right is taken from her Cubo-Futurist painting *Lady in a Hat* (1913; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris). The text reads: “The famous Diaghilev, as drawn *jokingly* by P.E. Shcherbov, our famous caricaturist. This same Diaghilev has invited Mrs. Goncharova to paint the decorations for Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera *The Golden Cockerel*. Her self-portrait, drawn *not jokingly*, is placed above the text. Dotted lines indicate what has been added by the artists working on the production.”

were touched by the same madness, and, nearer our time, Jackson Pollock, Joseph Beuys, and perhaps Andy Warhol were also victims of this attitude, burnt up on the altars of their own art.

The entire macrocosm of Goncharova’s life should be approached, from this perspective, as a work of art—a “play of device,” as the Constructivists would have called it.⁴ Of course, she was active as a designer for the traditional disciplines of the performing arts as well (e.g., for Alexander Tairov’s Chamber Theater in Moscow and for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in Paris), but primary attention must be given to Goncharova’s own “living theater” before an adequate

assessment of her involvement in established theaters can be undertaken.

What little we know of Goncharova’s biographical chronology, associations, and tastes reveals that, from the very beginning, she was a strong-willed, energetic, and unorthodox individual.⁵ Her enrollment at the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture in 1898 was an unusual step for a bourgeois young woman of only seventeen. Her cohabitation with Larionov stirred the indignation of both church and public. Her slacks, her emphatic manifestos, her two enormous one-woman exhibitions, and, of course, her attachments to, and confrontations with, the Moscow Cubo-Futurists—all these elements were, surely, symptoms of a histrionic personality. Certainly, in private relations and behavior, Goncharova enjoyed a license that only actresses and gypsies were permitted, and perhaps because of this dubious social reputation rather than as the result of any apparent innuendos in her paintings, she was said to traverse the “boundary of decency”⁶ and to “hurt your eyes.”⁷ These are characteristic reactions to the *event* of Goncharova’s life (“event” in our contemporary theatrical sense), to her acting and posturing, her masquerading and promenading—her own “theatralization of life.” The artist’s desire to transform herself into a moving artifact is nowhere more obvious than in her specific interest in face- and body-painting, as practiced by the Rayonist circle of which she was a part.⁸ Goncharova even made several public appearances bare-breasted, with abstract designs painted on her body (*Fig. 4*). In 1912 and 1913 Goncharova and her friends painted their faces and walked along Kuznetskii Most and the Petrovka in Moscow, the downtown district where the fashionable art stores of Avanzo and Khudozhnik, the respectable private art galleries (the Lemerrier Gallery and the Mikhailova Salon), and the center of Moscow’s *haute couture* operated. The encroachment of Goncharova and her Cubo-Futurist colleagues into this milieu was a shock to the purveyors and purchasers of good taste on several occasions.

A number of group and individual photographs of Konstantin Bolshakov, David Burliuk, Goncharova, Vasilii Kamensky, Larionov, Mikhail Le-Dantiu, and Ilia Zdanevich taken between 1912



Fig. 4 Natalia Goncharova, *Design for a Woman’s Breast*, 1913. Present whereabouts unknown.

and 1914 illustrate Larionov’s and Zdanevich’s manifesto of 1913 called “Why We Paint Ourselves,”⁹ which refers to women’s makeup, tattooing, and ancient Egyptian eye shadow as analogous activities:

We paint ourselves for an hour,
and
a change of experience calls for a
change of painting, just as picture
devours picture, when on the other
side of a car windshield
storewindows
flash by running into each
other. . . .

Facial expressions don’t interest
us.
That’s because people have grown
accustomed to understanding
them,
too timid and ugly as they are.
Our
faces are like the screech of the
trolley
warning the hurrying passers-by,
like
the drunken sounds of the great
tango.¹⁰

The painted faces of Goncharova, Larionov, and their friends sport abstract, weird designs—sometimes geometric symbols or letters of the alphabet or animals such as pigs and birds (see *Fig. 5*). The hieroglyph, the rebus, the chance item of graffiti, the secret message, and the in-joke were important components of the Cubo-Futurists’ lexicon, especially Goncharova’s. They were part of the mumbo-jumbo and the spells of rituals that accompanied their outlandish behaviour. Goncharova, in particular, was fond of the secret evocation

and the magical gesture, and her body-painting and studio paintings of 1912–13 often carry hieroglyphic sequences that baffle the profane audience. The oblique signs of pictures such as *The Bicyclist*, *Laundry*, and *Rebus* (Fig. 6) seem to relate to some primitive, hieratic ceremony, evoking images of the voodoo and the shaman.¹¹

Larionov and Zdanevich commented on their face-painting in an interview that they gave to the editor of the Moscow middle-class magazine *Theater in Caricatures* in 1913, and as an autobiographical commentary, it is especially valuable:

“We have come to tell you,” says Larionov, “of the latest sensation in the field of Paris fashions. We Futurists are better understood and appreciated abroad. Certain actresses have introduced the fashion of powdering themselves with brown powder and of circling their eyes with green pencil. The result is very nice and original. . . .”

“Downright exotic!” the editor exclaims.

Indignant and annoyed, Larionov goes on:

“Just let me explain the meaning of our tattooing.”

The prophet takes a piece of charcoal and makes an incompre-



Fig. 5 Mikhail Larionov, his face decorated with Rayonist designs, 1913, photograph (from *Teatr v karrikaturakh* [The Theater in Caricatures], Moscow, September 21, 1913, p. 9).

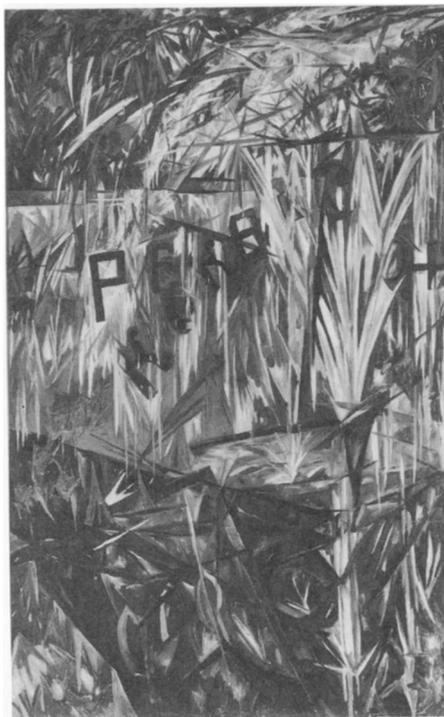


Fig. 6 Natalia Goncharova, *Rebus* (Rayonist Garden: Park), ca. 1912, oil on canvas, 55³/₈ × 34³/₈ inches (140.6 × 87.3 cm). Collection of Sam and Ayala Zachs, Jerusalem.

hensible hieroglyph on the face of his interlocutor.

“What’s that?”—one of the office workers speaks up.

“A tango,” says Larionov, “get it?”¹²

Obviously, this statement was made tongue-in-cheek and perhaps the artists in the Rayonist circle never really imparted special meaning to their facial hieroglyphs. On the other hand, it is not fortuitous that Larionov, both in his interview with the editor and in his manifesto, would identify face-painting with the tango. Once again, we are confronted with an unconventional artistic gesture (face-painting) within a theatrical context, i.e., the discipline of ballroom dancing. We should remember that between 1912 and 1914 the “in” dance was the tango, and one could learn its steps in a variety of Moscow dance studios, primarily that of the caricaturist and stage designer Pavel Ivanov who used the pseudonym Mak (see Fig. 7).¹³ Ivanov (whose portrait Goncharova painted in 1913) and his wife were the “best pair of tango dancers in Moscow,”¹⁴ and they in turn were close to the Cubo-Futurists and to the gilded youth that accompanied the Burliuks, Goncharova, Larionov, and

Vladimir Mayakovsky on their escapades. For example, there was Ivanov’s student Antonina Privalova (see Fig. 8), a “primary follower of Futurist novelties”¹⁵ and a tango dancer who was a proponent of Rayonist face- and body-painting; her husband is identified as the Moscow businessman G. Privalov, who collected modern Russian art, including works by Goncharova. For that select few, the tango, encouraging rhythmical abandon and the wearing of masks, was, like the new painting, an iconoclastic emblem of sexual emancipation.¹⁶ Another photograph of a couple dancing the tango¹⁷ accompanied the manifesto of face-painting published in December 1913—surely an indication of the special status that the tango enjoyed among the avant-garde. The ramifications are many—from the Cubo-Futurist book of poems *Tango s korovami* [Tango with Cows] published by the Burliuks and Kamensky¹⁸ and the photographic fragment of a tango couple in Kazimir Malevich’s *Woman at an Advertisement Column*¹⁹ to Alexander Rodchenko’s tango photomontage for Mayakovsky’s *Pro eto* [About It].²⁰ Like the tango, which derives from an African drum dance, Rayonist face-painting can be regarded as a modern extension of an ancient rite, i.e., ritualistic face- and body-painting in primitive societies. True, there is no documentary evidence that Goncharova and Larionov



Fig. 7 Pavel Ivanov and the celebrated cabaret artist Elsa Krüger dancing the *Tango of Death*, 1913, photograph (from *Teatr v karrikaturakh* [The Theater in Caricatures], Moscow, December 25, 1913, p. 24). Krüger wore dresses designed by Goncharova.



Fig. 8 The Moscow socialite Antonina Privalova, her shoulder decorated with Rayonist designs, 1913, photograph (from *Teatr v karrikaturakh* [The Theater in Caricatures], Moscow, September 21, 1913, p. 14).

painted their faces and danced the tango with awareness of such precedents, but it is known that they were well informed about black African and American Indian body-painting, Polynesian tincturing, and the tattooing of the Scythians. For the Rayonists, as for their primordial predecessors, these chameleonic gestures were made for, or during, the dance; the jagged lines and cryptic letters, the animals and grid compositions sported by David Burliuk, Goncharova, Larionov, and Zdanevich at this time required the complement of a theatrical environment as much as did the rhythmical convolutions of the swirling witch doctor. The ancillary paraphernalia of masks, effigies, and talismans were also of great interest to Goncharova, as is evident from some of her theater work done in Paris in the early 1920s. Indeed, Goncharova advanced her hieroglyphic system of face-painting into real theater, too, i.e., the Pink Lantern cabaret and the Tavern of the 13, active in Moscow in 1913, where improvisational dance was a principal attraction.²¹

During the decade before 1917 there were many little theaters, nightclubs, and restaurants in Moscow and St. Petersburg that called themselves cabarets. The functions and artistic levels at

these institutions varied considerably. Some relied for their effect on “singers, nude dancers, choirs, circus numbers, and gypsy choruses”;²² others focused on particular artistic groups such as the Cubo-Futurists; and their collected names constitute a kaleidoscope of the most exotic epithets—the Bat, Bi-Ba-Bo, the Blue Bird, the Green Lampshade, the Pink Lantern, the Stable of Pegasus, Petrouchka, etc. In general, the Russian (and Western) cabarets confronted artists with a set of circumstances that forced them, uniformly, to rethink the question of design and actor-audience response. The proximity of the auditorium to the scenic action, the miniature stage, the ever-changing repertoire, the need to change sets and costumes rapidly, the extension of the decorative scheme to the walls, to the ceiling, and even to the audience itself—such conditions prompted the critic André Boll to observe that this kind of theater was the ultimate challenge for a designer’s imagination.²³

The short-lived Pink Lantern cabaret, a parody of the famous literary gathering place of Pushkin’s time called the Green Lantern, opened in Moscow in October 1913. Contemplated as a Futurist theater by Goncharova, Larionov, and Zdanevich, along with the poets

Bolshakov, Anton Lotov, and Mayakovsky, the Pink Lantern was to have had a Futurist dramatic repertoire and the stage design was to have been Rayonist and *zaum* [allogical] with:

... the stage mobile and moving to different parts of the auditorium. The decor moves also, following the actor ... the audience lies in the middle of the auditorium during the first act, and in a net, suspended below the ceiling, in the second. In the play *VA-DA-PU* the music and lighting play an important role, corresponding to free movements of the dance.

In many plays the language is beyond the limits of ... ideas, being a free and invented onomatopoeia.²⁴

During the evenings, Goncharova and Larionov managed to paint the faces of members of the audience, although, as one correspondent noted, the result was not especially “Futurist.”²⁵ The public responded in much the same way that it did to the painted faces of circus clowns refusing or accepting the invitation to have a pig painted on a cheek or forehead, and certainly not regarding these actions as “art.” One correspondent described such an evening:

The Futurists abused the “crowd” with all the words at their disposal, and the audience tormented these “clowns of art” mercilessly ... as a result the artist Goncharova slapped a certain barrister.

A disgraceful, brazen, and talentless can-can reigns dissolutely in the temples of art, and grimacing and wriggling on its altars are these shaggy young characters in their orange shirts and painted physiognomies.²⁶

When the Pink Lantern closed after only a few performances, Goncharova and Larionov replaced it immediately with another “wild pantomime”²⁷—the Tavern of the 13 in November 1913. Projected as a “purely Futurist cabaret,”²⁸ the Tavern was to have hosted disputes by “Rayonists, Victorianians [*sic*], Cubists and extreme-rightist Futurists, ego-poets, and everythingists.”²⁹ Entrance was by a tenruble note or by letter of recommendation, and the kind of poetry declaimed—by Bolshakov, Lotov, and L. Frank—was *zaum*, fragments of



Fig. 9 Frame from the film *Drama in the Futurists' Cabaret No. 13* (from M. Calvesi, *L'Arte Moderna* [Milan: Fabbri, 1967], p. 314). It is assumed (perhaps falsely) that the two actors in this frame are Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova.

which often appeared in the artists' face-painting. Here is a typical sound poem by Frank called "In the Restaurant":

Kardamash, mash, sharash,
Trendi, buli
U u u
Agva, kimeva
Farmenzon
Steno, bri tarelbi
Kriuki, kriuki, kriuki
Mamsi, mamsa, mamsu,
Olnigidza kravdoi.
Fi, fa, fu
Vot!?
Nashi priekhali.³⁰

The Tavern, open for only a few weeks, survived long enough for a movie to be made of it under the title *Drama in the Futurists' Cabaret No. 13*, released in January 1914 with Goncharova and Larionov said to be the main characters.³¹ While no copy of this movie has ever surfaced in Soviet or Western repositories, a single frame survives (*Fig. 9*).³² According to one source, the movie was 431 meters (20 minutes) in length, was directed by Vladimir Kasianov, and "attracted full houses and . . . scandals."³³ This is understandable from the bizarre plot:

The premises of the cabaret. The Futurists are preparing for a festive party. They are painting each other's faces, while the artist Goncharova is even décolletée.

As these preparations are coming to an end, a title appears on the screen: "The hour 13 has struck. The Futurists are gathering for a party."

One of the secondary personages, apparently, a poet, waves a sheet of paper that is marked all over with zig-zags and with letters that are scattered about in disorder. This is a poem dedicated to Goncharova. While reading the poem, he keeps on turning one side, then the other, then his backside, to the audience.

Then comes the turn of a very tall woman—the danseuse Elster. Dressed in a white costume slit to the waist, she dances the "Futurist tango." . . . Elster likewise dedicates her performance to Goncharova, and, therefore, upon completing her dance, she gets down on her knees before the artist and kisses her foot.

Later, Goncharova herself arises and, teamed with some sort of decorated character, she dances the *chechetka*, quite clumsily and fussily. . . .

After a new declamatory item on the program comes the turn of the main "sensation," which is the proper beginning of the "drama." This is the "Futuredance of death," during which one partner must kill the other. The Futurists draw lots. It falls to the *futuristka* Maximovich. She climbs onto a table with a man whose eye-sockets are thickly smeared with black paint, and [the couple] are given crooked daggers. The Futuredance consists of [the] man tossing the woman from arm to arm, raising the dagger threateningly and striking her, not yet with the blade, but with the handle of the knife. The man gradually flies into a rage and finally plunges the blade into the woman's chest, killing her outright.

A title appears: "A Future-funeral." . . .³⁴

There exist several versions of the story and some critics maintain that Goncharova and Larionov were the only actors in the movie, but whoever kills whom, this movie, once again, connects face-painting and the tango within a theatrical genre. It also presents Goncharova as actress, dancer, and emancipated muse.³⁵

In the light of Goncharova's antics in the Moscow cabaret scene of 1913–14 and of her public notoriety, it is not surprising to find that her one and only contribution to "straight" dramatic theater—Alexander Tairov's production of Carlo Goldoni's *II Ventaglio* of January 1915—was greeted as "clownish tricks" and "too leftist."³⁶ Judging by the set for Goldoni's play, it is clear that Goncharova wished to evoke associations with Russian folk art, as she had done in designs for *Le Coq d'Or* for Diaghilev in Paris the year before.³⁷ Although Goncharova was familiar with eighteenth-century Venetian culture, her perception was Muscovite rather than northern Italian, and she was applying the same primitive, popular imagery that she had used, for example, in Neoprimitivist paintings such as *Spring Gardening* (1908).³⁸ Tairov himself had mixed feelings about Goncharova's design, as he mentioned later in his *Notes of a Director*:

The joyful decorations and costumes of Natalia Goncharova . . . were, for me, merely the ultimate compromise (a bitter truth, of



Fig. 10 Natalia Goncharova, *Costume for a Spanish Dancer in "España"* (not produced), 1916, pochoir, 19½ × 12¾ inches (49.5 × 32.5 cm) (from Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov, *L'Art décoratif moderne* [Paris: La Cible, 1919]).

course, that was softened by Goncharova's enchanting talent), because, for all their "leftism," they were very much a reflection of the Conventional Theater.³⁹

Despite her training as a sculptress, Goncharova was not truly an artist of three dimensions, and she tended to use the backdrop, wings, and costumes as pictorial surfaces rather than as projections into public space; thus, her stage design functioned typically as a conventional, illustrative vehicle, not as a volumetric architectural complex. For that reason, from 1916 onward, Tairov welcomed the three-dimensional designs

of artists such as Alexandra Exter, the Stenberg brothers (Georgii and Vladimir), and Alexander Vesnin.

Diaghilev did not share Tairov's reservations about Goncharova's abilities, and, working with her in Lausanne and San Sebastien in 1915–16, he encouraged her to prepare four ballets—*Liturgie*, *España* (see Fig. 10), *Triana*, and *Foire Espagnole*—not one of which, unfortunately, was ever implemented. Goncharova's intense activity produced not only numerous designs for sets and costumes but also three portfolios of pochoirs—*Liturgie* (Lausanne,

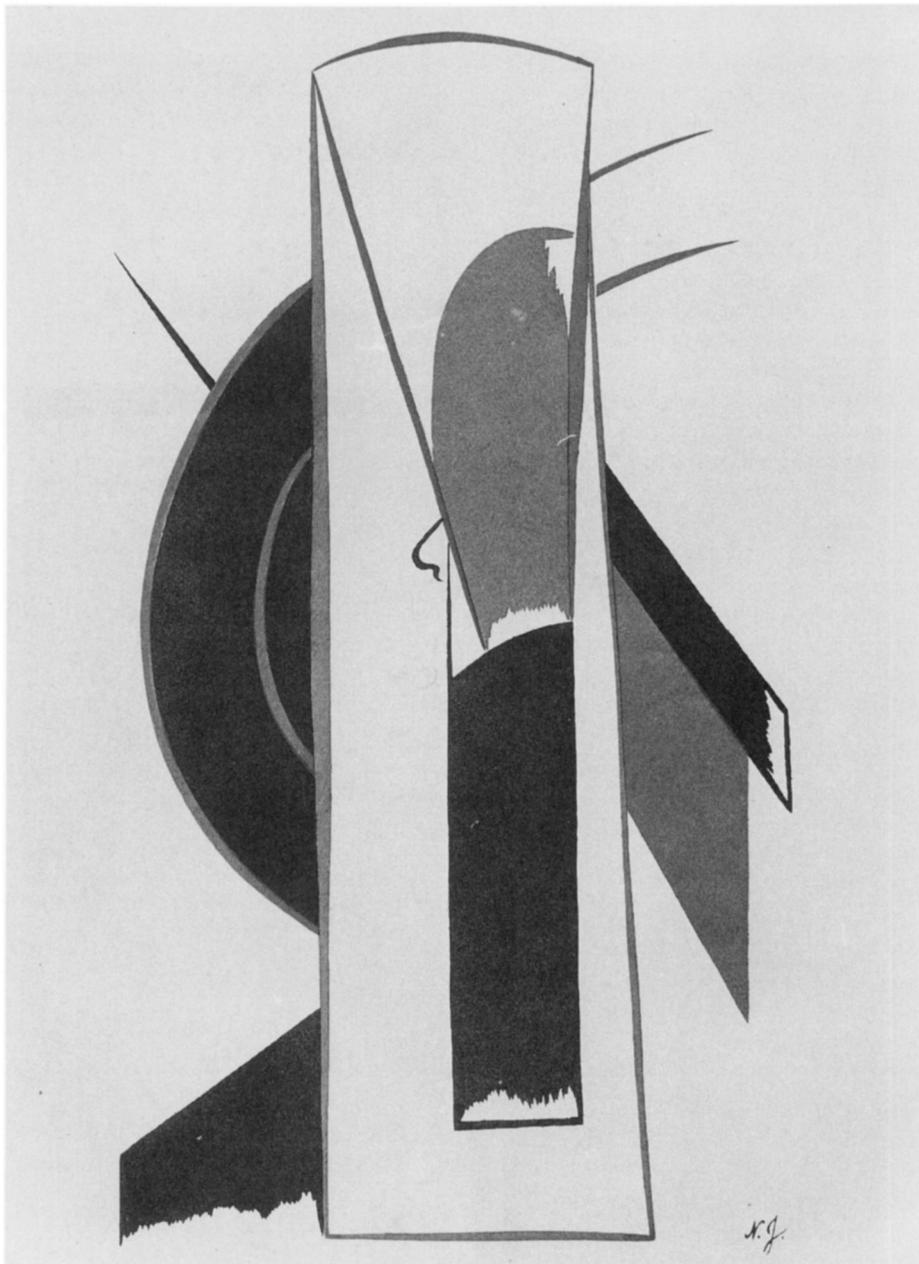


Fig. 11 Natalia Goncharova, *Portrait of Sergei Diaghilev*, ca. 1916, pochoir, 19¼ × 12¼ inches (50 × 31 cm) (from Natalia Gontcharova and Mikhail Larionov, *L'Art décoratif moderne* [Paris: La Cible, 1919).

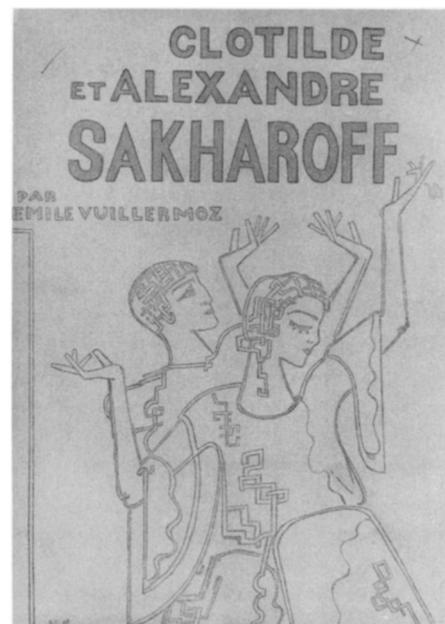


Fig. 12 Natalia Goncharova, cover for *Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff*, by Emile Vuillermoz (Lausanne: Editions Centrales, 1935).

1915), *Album de 14 Portraits Théâtraux* (Paris, 1916), and *L'Art Théâtral Décoratif Moderne* (Paris, 1919; see Fig. 11)—the last two being joint enterprises by Goncharova and Larionov. From 1914 Goncharova was involved directly in the activities of the Ballets Russes, a collaboration that has been documented and discussed in many recent publications.⁴⁰ She also worked for other troupes and for impresarios such as Ida Rubinstein and Clotilde and Alexandre Sakharoff (see Fig. 12).

Goncharova and Larionov participated in less orthodox forms of theater in Paris during the 1920s, helping to organize at least four charity balls: the Grand Bal des Artistes, or Grand Bal Travesti Transmental (February 23, 1923), the Bal Banal (March 14, 1924; Fig. 13), the Bal Olympique, or Vrai Bal Sportif (July 11, 1924), and the Grand Ourse Bal (May 8, 1925). The Grand Bal des Artistes was the most ambitious, and, as the flyer proclaims, it was intended as a fair, not simply a ball.⁴¹ The program included four dance bands and two bars serving "pommes frites anglaises et cocktails," and the dancing was supplemented by all kinds of happenings:

Goncharova and her boutique of masks, Delaunay and his Transatlantic Company of pick-pockets, Larionov and his Rayonism, Léger and his orchestra decor, Cliazde



Fig. 13 Natalia Goncharova, entry ticket and publicity for the Bal Banal at the Salle Bullier, Paris, March 14, 1924, printed in brown and gray on buff paper, 12 × 6¼ inches (30.5 × 15.7 cm) (from M. Chamot, *Goncharova* [London: Oresko, 1979], p. 73).



Fig. 14 Natalia Goncharova, mask for her boutique at the Grand Bal des Artistes, Paris, February 23, 1923.

[Ilia Zdanevich] and his 41-degree fevers. . . .⁴²

The Grand Bal was a philanthropic venture for the Union of Russian Artists, a society that brought together many Russian émigré painters and critics, such as Viktor Bart, Sonia Delaunay, Serge Romoff, Léopold Sur-



Fig. 15 Natalia Goncharova, marionette for Yuliia Sazonova's Théâtre des Petits Comédiens, Paris, 1923 or 1924.

vage, and Ilia Zdanevich. In addition to costumes, Goncharova and Larionov designed much of the publicity material, including the program, the flyer, the ticket, and the large poster. They also invited Russian and French colleagues, the "greatest geniuses in the world"—including Bart, Albert Gleizes, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, and Surville—to sponsor and design forty *loges*, which were then sold in aid of the Union.

As with her publicity materials for the Bal Banal (flyer) and the Bal Olympique (poster, program, and ticket), Goncharova incorporated motifs from

her paintings and ballet designs into the Grand Bal poster; in style and composition it brings to mind a number of canvases such as *Bathers* (1917–23) and her several renderings of Spanish women.⁴³ Goncharova's boutique of masks included designs reminiscent of African ceremonial masks (see *Fig. 14*).⁴⁴ For the most part, the Grand Bal des Artistes maintained the courtly tradition of the costume ball, especially of the Viennese *ballo in maschera*, which made extensive use of sophisticated masks to conceal a person in an erotic game of hide-and-seek, rather than to superimpose a new one. But Goncharova's masks, like African ones, seem to represent other faces, and to serve as vehicles of ritualistic transformation.

At the 1923 ball Goncharova also sold wooden dolls—effigies—that she had been making for Yuliia Sazonova's Théâtre des Petits Comédiens, which opened in Paris in 1924 (see *Fig. 15*). They included marionettes intended to illustrate *Rural Holiday*—a pantomime by Larionov with music by Nikolai Cherepnin produced by Sazonova during the Christmas season in 1924. Once again, these images draw on a primitive tradition of lapidary figures and witch imagery from Russian mythology. They have little in common with the marionette finesse of the puppet tradition explored by other Russian artists of the time such as Nina Efimova-Simonovich, Exter, Nikolai Kalmakov, El Lissitzky, Liubov Popova, and Elizaveta Yakunina. In fact, Goncharova's figures seem

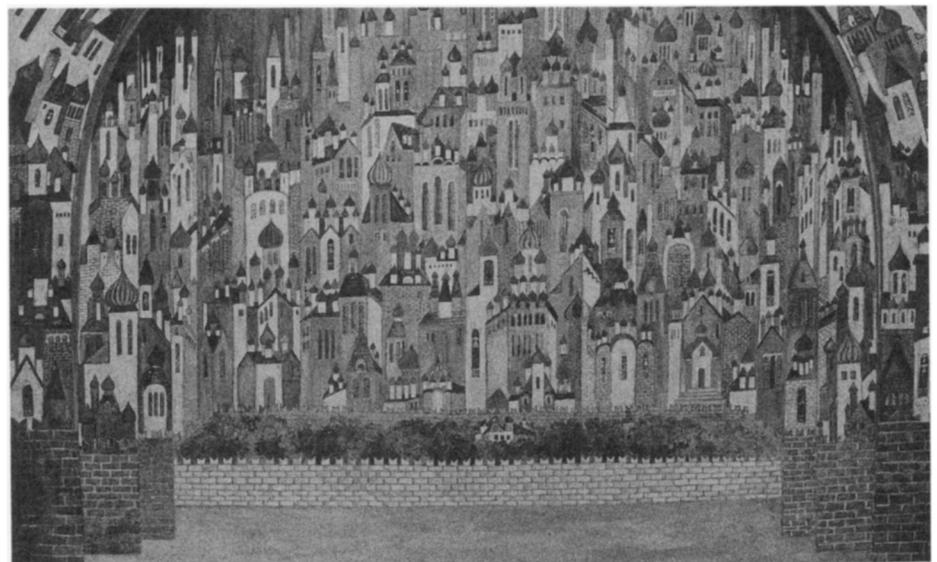


Fig. 16 Natalia Goncharova, *Stage Design for Scene 2 of "The Firebird,"* 1926, watercolor, 28 × 40 inches (71 × 101.5 cm). Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Nikita D. Lobanov-Rostovsky, London.

to express the essentially fetishistic function that Sazonova associated with the puppet:

Just as algebraic signs substitute certain desired quantities, so the conditional flesh of the marionette substitutes for real human flesh. . . . The infinite variety of the puppet repertoire [has] one basic characteristic: indifference to the prose of everyday life and to the manifestation of the eternal qualities of the human soul.⁴⁵

Goncharova returned to wooden marionettes and toys in her preparations for a number of Parisian chamber productions in the 1930s, including the inanimate ballet *Jouets* of 1934. She also continued to work for the “adult” theater, including the ballet, until 1961 when, bedridden with arthritis on the rue Jacques Callot, she advised for the Royal Ballet production of *The Firebird* (see Fig. 16). That collaboration—which has been described as showing quintessentially “how the decor of an imaginative artist can enhance the dramatic and emotional effect of music and dancing”⁴⁶—might well be interpreted as Goncharova’s last tango in Paris.

Notes

- 1 Alexander Gerasimov, “Iz vospominanii,” in Nina Moleva (ed.), *Konstantin Korovin. Zhizn i tvorchestvo* (Moscow, 1963), p. 39.
- 2 The exhibitions were held at the Art Salon and the Dobychina Art Bureau, respectively.
- 3 Evreinov explained his theory of the “theater in life,” the “theatricalization of life,” and the “conditional theater” in several publications, e.g., *Teatr kak takovoi* (St. Petersburg, 1912), *Teatr dlia sebia*, 3 vols. (Petrograd, 1915–17), and *Teatralizatsiia zhizni* (Moscow, 1922). For commentary see Spencer Golub, *Evreinov, The Theatre of Paradox and Transformation* (Ann Arbor, 1984).
- 4 Korneliū Zelinsky and Ilia Selvinsky (eds.), *Gosplan literary. Sbornik literaturnogo tsen-tra konstruktivistov* (Moscow, 1924), p. 10.
- 5 See, for example, the personal reminiscences of Goncharova by critics and fellow artists in Tatiana Loguine (ed.), *Goncharova et Larionov* (Paris, 1971).
- 6 Goncharova’s studies and decorations displayed at the Society of Free Aesthetics in Moscow in March 1910 were criticized as such. See *Golos Moskvyy* (Moscow), March 25, 1910, p. 3.
- 7 E.N., “Na vystavke kartin Natalii Goncharovoi,” *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 5 (October 6, 1913), p. 14.
- 8 Larionov defined Rayonism as forms created from the intersection of light rays reflected by contiguous objects.
- 9 Some of the photographs are in the Burliuk family archive in Hampton Bay, Long Island, New York; the manifesto of 1913 is translated in John Bowlt (ed.), *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902–1934* (New York, 1976), pp. 80–83.
- 10 Ibid., p. 81.
- 11 *The Bicyclist* is reproduced in Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment* (London, 1962), pl. 20; *Laundry* is reproduced in Mary Chamot, *Goncharova* (Paris, 1972), p. 51. The latter first appeared as a “Futurist painting” next to *zaum* poetry by Anton Lotov in *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 1 (September 8, 1913), p. 15.
- 12 “Poslednii krik Parizhskoi mody, Ubezhdennye grimasniki,” *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 14 (December 8, 1913), p. 14.
- 13 Ivanov (c. 1886–c. 1960) worked as a caricaturist for several St. Petersburg and Moscow journals, including *Satirikon* and *Teatr v karrikaturakh*.
- 14 Natalia Serpiskaia, “Memuary intelligentki dvukh epokh,” MS in Central State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow, f. 1604, op. 1, ed. khr. 1248, p. 46, l. 90. Ivanov’s portrait—now lost—was listed in the catalogue of Goncharova’s exhibitions in 1913–14 (cited in n. 2 above).
- 15 Privalova is described as such in *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 3 (September 21, 1913), p. 14.
- 16 For comments on the tango, see: Z., “E.A. Krüger o ‘tango,’” *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 16 (December 25, 1913), p. 24.
- 17 The photograph is published in *Argus*, December 1913, p. 115.
- 18 Vasilii Kamensky, *Tango s korovami* (Moscow, 1914).
- 19 *Woman at an Advertisement Column* (1914) is reproduced in Wim Beeren et al., *Malevich*, exh. cat. (1988–89) for State Russian Museum (Leningrad), State Tretiakov Gallery (Moscow), and Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), pl. 48.
- 20 Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Pro eto* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1923), opp. p. 30.
- 21 P.K., “Rozovyi fonar,” *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 6 (October 13, 1913), p. 15.
- 22 Evgenii Gershuni, *Rassakazyvaiu ob estrade* (Leningrad, 1968), p. 16.
- 23 André Boll, *Du décor de théâtre* (Paris, 1926), p. 69.
- 24 “Okolo khudozhestvennogo mira. Grimasy v iskusstve. K proektu futuristicheskogo teatra v Moskve,” *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 1 (September 8, 1913), p. 14.
- 25 See article cited in n. 21 above.
- 26 Anon., “Opiat futuristy (vmesto peredovoi),” *Akter* (Moscow), no. 4 (1913), pp. 1–2.
- 27 “Okolo khudozhestvennogo mira” (cited in n. 24 above).
- 28 “Kabak trinadtsati,” *Teatr v karrikaturakh* (Moscow), no. 11 (November 17, 1913), p. 10.
- 29 Ibid. For a discussion of Everythingism, see: Mikhail Le-Dantiu, “Zhirovopis vsekov,” *Minushee* (Paris), no. 5 (1988), pp. 183–204. Le-Dantiu was the defendant in a court case involving face-painting and public propriety. See: *Zhizni sud* (St. Petersburg), May 9, 1913, p. 10.
- 30 L. Frank: “V restorane,” *Teatr v karrikatu-*
- rakh* (Moscow), no. 3 (1914), p. 12. The poem is meaningless except for the last two lines, which can be translated as: “Here they are!/?/Our guys have arrived.”
- 31 I am indebted to Jerry Heil for information about the movie *Drama in the Futurists’ Cabaret No. 13*. See his article “Russian Futurism and the Cinema: Majakovskij’s Film Work of 1913,” *Russian Literature* (Amsterdam), no. 19 (1986), pp. 175–92.
- 32 The frame is reproduced, for example, in Maurizio Calvesi, “Il Futurismo Russo,” in *L’Arte Moderna* (Milan) 5, no. 44 (1967), p. 314.
- 33 Heil (cited in 31 above).
- 34 The translation is in *ibid.* The “danseuse Elster” is probably a reference to the tango dancer Elsa Krüger, one of Mak’s favorite partners.
- 35 For other versions of the plot, see *ibid.*
- 36 Alexander Tairov, *Zapiski rezhissera. Stati. Besedy. Rechi. Pisma* (Moscow, 1970), p. 103.
- 37 Prince Sergei Volkonsky (*Otkliki teatra* [Petrograd, ca. 1922], p. 57) said of *Le Coq d’Or*: “Mrs. Goncharova, our famous Futurist painter, has gone beyond all confines of what a child’s fantasy can construct!”
- 38 Reproduced in Chamot (cited in n. 40 below), p. 33.
- 39 Tairov (cited in n. 36 above).
- 40 See, for example, Mary Chamot, *Goncharova: Stage Designs and Paintings* (London, 1979), *passim*.
- 41 “*Foire de nuit*” is inscribed on the flyer, a copy of which is reproduced in Loguine (cited in n. 5 above), p. 132.
- 42 *Ibid.* “Forty-one degrees” refers to an avant-garde group of poets and artists that Zdanevich and his friends founded in Tiflis in 1917.
- 43 The Grand Bal poster is reproduced in Loguine (cited in n. 5 above), p. 132. *Bathers* and portrayals of Spanish women appear in Chamot (cited in n. 40 above), pp. 69 and 71–74.
- 44 Natalia Goncharova, preface to the catalogue of her exhibition at the Art Salon (Moscow, 1913), p. 3. Goncharova had known about such masks since at least 1912 or 1913, judging from a statement published here in which she maintained that the “Aztecs, Negroes, Australian and Asiatic islands—the Sunda (Borneo), Japan, etc., these, generally speaking, represent the rise and flowering of art.” The catalogue also includes a portrait of Goncharova with Larionov in “masquerade costume” (whereabouts unknown).
- 45 Yulia Slonimskaia [Sazonova], “*Marionetka, Apollon*” (Petrograd, 1916), no. 3, p. 30.
- 46 Chamot (cited in n. 40 above), p. 81.

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