



El Lissitzky

DESIGNER'S FULL NAME: Eleazar Markovich Lisitskii

DESIGNER'S PSEUDONYM/NICKNAME: El Lissitzky

GENDER: Male

YEAR BORN: 1890

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER BORN: Russian Empire

YEAR DIED: 1941

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER DIED: Soviet Union

RACE | ETHNICITY | RELIGION | POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE AFFECTED EITHER THE ARTIST'S LIFE EXPERIENCE OR WORK BECAUSE IT/THEY PROVIDED A CHALLENGE AT THE TIME, PLEASE EXPLAIN.

Caucasian, Russian, Jewish, Support of Soviet Union. He was forced to return to Russia during WWI, and his Jewish heritage led him to produce "Jewish national art." (El Lissitzky Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works.) His stance as a designer during the Russian Revolution led him to make propaganda posters in support of the revolution. It also drew him into the styles of Suprematism and Constructivism.

DID THIS DESIGNER DO NOTABLE WORK IN FIELDS OTHER THAN WHAT WOULD BE CONSIDERED GRAPHIC DESIGN TODAY? EXPLAIN.

He did not. All of his work consisted of some form of graphic design, such as book illustrations, magazine pages, advertisements, or propaganda posters.

LIST AT LEAST ONE OTHER WORK THAT IS NOT NAMED IN THIS TIMELINE FOR WHICH THIS DESIGNER IS WELL KNOWN. IF WORK CO-CREATED, LIST THE OTHERS INVOLVED.

A preliminary drawing for a "Monument to Rosa Luxemburg." (1919)

EXPLAIN IF THIS FAME IS ONLY WITHIN DESIGN CIRCLES OR ANY OTHER SUBSET OF THE POPULATION.

It is mainly known among design circles.

DOES THIS WORK EXEMPLIFY ASPECTS EXPLAINED IN PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

It was made with UNOVIS as propaganda art during the Russian Revolution, which he contributed toward due to his political stance.

FOR WHAT IS THIS DESIGNER MOST NOTED? EXPLAIN.

He is most noted for his work in Suprematism and his propaganda art. His pieces were simple and easily understood by any and all Russian citizens at the time of the revolution.

IS THERE ANYTHING CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT THIS DESIGNER? EXPLAIN.

His artwork supporting a revolution could definitely be considered controversial. So too would be being Jewish in the wrong place at the wrong time, combined with his desire to create Jewish artwork.

WHAT MATERIALS WERE MOST OFTEN USED BY THIS DESIGNER IN THE CREATION AND PRODUCTION OF WORK?

Most of his works were print, although he did do photography as well.

EXPLAIN THIS DESIGNER'S EDUCATION/TRAINING, INCLUDING ACADEMIC, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND /OR MENTORSHIPS.

He started training in Vitebsk. He also studied in the art school of Yehuda Pen. Afterward, he enrolled in the department of architecture at the Technische Hochschule in Darmstadt. His travels abroad took place during this time. After returning to Russia, he studied at the Riga Polytechnical Institute.

DID THIS DESIGNER PROMOTE A SPECIFIC IDEOLOGY IN HIS/HER WORK? EXPLAIN.

He was against the Russian Empire of the time, and believed in a socialist reform. His propaganda works, such as Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge is evidence of this.

WHY IS THIS DESIGNER VIEWED AS ICONIC IN THE HISTORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN?

Aside from his propaganda art, he was a prominent figure in the Russian avant-garde with his Suprematist and Constructivist styles. He was also an influence on the De Stijl style.

IS THERE ANY OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO KNOW ABOUT THIS DESIGNER?

No.

YOUR NAME: Hayden Harsson

GIVE YOUR EDUCATED OPINION OF THIS DESIGNER AND HIS/HER WORK. ALSO EXPLAIN WHAT INFLUENCE, IF ANY, THIS WORK HAS HAD ON YOUR OWN. A LACK OF INFLUENCE MUST BE EXPLAINED.

El Lissitzky's artwork has a very strong focus on minimalist, geometric design. His works featured mostly muted colors and heavy abstraction. Despite the intense abstraction, he still manages to keep his work from looking "simple." His compositions are interesting and still show movement, even despite the flattened shapes and colors. Without a similar cultural background and perspective, it is undeniable that a lot of the impact of his work is inevitably lost on me. Even so, it is evident that his works required great skill, understanding, and even more thought to accomplish as well as he did.

Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge is a very inspiring piece for me. Greatly abstracted artwork usually escapes my understanding and is, for the most part, grating. With this however, I feel like I could stare at it for hours, as it is just so pleasing to the eye. He uses a composition of only black, white, and red, as well as simple geometric shapes, such as triangles, rectangles, and circles. His composition focuses on stiff diagonals and negative space. In using this negative space, particularly around the white circle, he has managed to create the illusion of depth. It is also very noteable that he was so in touch with the political and artistic climate of Russia at the time, that he was able to communicate such a powerful idea about the revolution using such an almost

simplistic design. The fact that he understood his audience and how to communicate to them so powerfully and so efficiently is nothing short of awe inspiring. I feel like I could work for weeks at a time and never be able to communicate an idea with such simple imagery and still manage to make it so aesthetically pleasing.

New Man is a very interesting piece of his. It consists of simple curved lines, a couple of stars, and a few more geometric shapes, all arranged to create the impression of a human figure. This is a composition in which Lissitzky only uses white, black, and red, and the red as well and is only shown in one of the stars and in the square in the center of the composition. This piece is interesting in that it uses a few grays against the geometric shapes to create a real sense of depth, despite the very heavily abstracted forms. The composition also features several diagonals, making the human shape also resemble the shape of a star. The star shape is carried through from the star shaped eyes of the abstracted figure. Another interesting feature of this piece is that while the individual shapes seem to have some depth to them, there is no depth to the background. The background itself is solid white, and there are no hints of shadows on it, despite the shadows on the figure. It makes it appear as though the figure is floating in space.

I would say that Lissitzky has had a tremendous impact on my art and design. My very first design at ASU was a movie poster using black and white illustration with red shapes and using diagonals in the composition. I knew even then that I wanted to push myself to be able to create striking, yet simplistic compositions. It wasn't until looking at Lissitzky's work however, that I came to realize where it all started. While I still am not a fan of high abstraction, it is easy to see now just how much of an impact that Lissitzky has had on my work, and it gives me a greater respect for abstract art in general.

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