

International Print Center New York presents

Russian Revolution: A Contested Legacy

Curated by Masha Chlenova

A Century in Pursuit of Individual Freedoms through Rare Historical Print Media and Contemporary Works of Art

October 12–December 16, 2017

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 12, 6–8pm

Press & member preview at 5pm



Images: Left, **Gustav Klucis**, *First of May - Day of the International Proletarian Solidarity*, 1930. Lithograph 41 1/4 x 29 1/4 in. The Museum of Modern Art, Purchase Fund Jan Tschichold Collection, 1937. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art, licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Right, **Anton Ginzburg**. *Esperanto* poster from the *Meta-Constructivism* poster series, 2016. 36 x 48 in. Courtesy of the artist. Image © 2017 Anton Ginzburg.

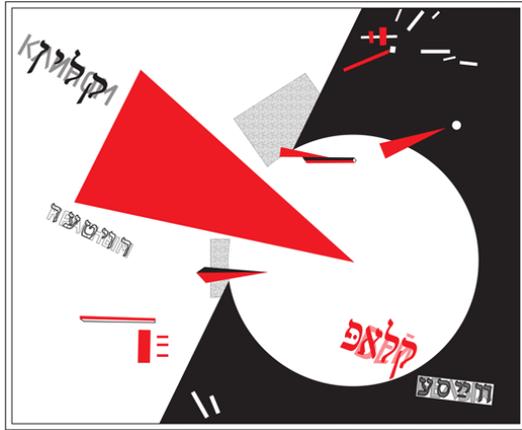
(New York, NY – September 25, 2017) International Print Center New York (IPCNy) is pleased to present ***Russian Revolution: A Contested Legacy***. Commemorating the centennial of the 1917 Russian Revolution, this scholarly exhibition looks beyond the canon of the Russian avant-garde to focus on three avenues of individual freedoms sought by the fledgling socialist society: the equality and emancipation of women; internationalism, including racial equality and the rights of ethnic minorities in Russia, especially Jews; and sexual and gay liberation. By placing a selection of historical printed works by key Russian avant-garde artists of the 1920s and 1930s in dialogue with contemporary works by Russian-born, New York-based artists **Yevgeniy Fiks** and **Anton Ginzburg**, the exhibition evaluates these often-observed goals of the Revolution and addresses their continued urgency today – in Russia, the United States, and elsewhere.

The historical component of the exhibition, which features posters, book covers, journals, and illustrations by some of the most well-known names of the Russian avant-garde alongside more obscure artists of the movement, exemplifies the print medium's preeminent role in Soviet revolutionary society as the most accessible means for disseminating social and political ideals on a broad scale. Images and text from the American journal *The Crisis* (1923) in which Harlem Renaissance writer and intellectual **Claude McKay** published an essay entitled "Soviet Russia and the Negro"—inspired by his visit to Soviet Russia as an invited speaker at the Fourth Congress of Communist International—provide global context for the progressive, open nature of Soviet society in the early post-revolutionary years. In the essay, McKay's observations on Soviet achievements in the area of fighting racial prejudice, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism reflect the genuine internationalist aspirations of the fledgling socialist state. A video documenting Yevgeniy Fiks' performance *Soviet Russia and the Negro. Kaddish* (2011) offers a contemporary perspective on this issue: here, Fiks reads McKay's essay on the sites in Moscow where hate crimes had been committed recently against people of color.

EI Lissitzky and **Natan Al'tman**, central figures of the Russian avant-garde and its internationalist aspirations, are presented in the lesser-emphasized context of their work celebrating and modernizing Soviet Jewish visual culture. The exhibition features EI Lissitzky's 1922 illustrations and cover designs for Jewish tales such as *4 Teyashim*, which are written in Yiddish and designed in a modern graphic style reminiscent of his iconic revolutionary poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* (1920). Yevgeniy Fiks's 2015 screenprints of the same title appropriate the latter's iconic composition, but overlap the original Russian text with Yiddish writing, challenging established art historical narratives in which Lissitzky's identity as a modern, international artist superseded his Jewish identity.

Other highlights include a selection of posters advocating for women's rights, including **Elizaveta Ignatovich's** *Struggle for the Polytechnical School* (1931), which calls for women to receive technical education, and a 1931 poster by **Sergei Sen'kin's** presenting a young Soviet woman as a symbol for the multi-million members of the Komsomol, the Bolshevik youth organization. Meanwhile, iconic images by **Gustav Klucis** reflect the homosocial theme underlying the same-sex solidarity in Soviet society, especially in the all-male worlds of miners and other industrial sectors.

The contemporary works on view prioritize the agency of Russian-born people to speak about Soviet history as personal history, and to address the Revolution's legacy in all its complexity. In Yevgeniy Fiks's *Leniniana* (2008) painting, the artist erases Lenin from the ubiquitous portrait of the revolutionary leader, familiar to every Soviet household through millions of printed reproductions, and thus reflects on the selective nature of historical memory. In his posters from the 2016 *Meta-Constructivism* series, Anton Ginzburg claims to use Russian Constructivist methodology to present current points of view on the central themes of that movement in the 1920s, such as sexual liberation, the creation of the Jewish Kultur League, and attempts to develop a universal language. By preserving the Revolution's radically transformative impulses, and recognizing its limitations, both artists maintain the critical social stance still necessary in the ongoing struggle for individual freedoms worldwide.



Images: Left, **Yevgeniy Fiks**. *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, 2015. Screenprint. 33 x 39 in. Edition: 18. Published by Eminence Grise Editions/Michael Steinberg Fine Art. Collection of Richard Gerrig and Timothy Peterson. Image © 2017 Yevgeniy Fiks. Right: **El Lissitzky**. *4 Teyashim (4 Billygoats) by Ben Zion Raskin*, 1922. Letterpress cover. 8 1/4 x 10 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Jan Tschichold Collection, Gift of Philip Johnson, 1977. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art, licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an extensive brochure designed by **Anton Ginzburg** and published by IPCNY, featuring an essay by curator **Masha Chlenova**, as well as an illustrated chronology by Chlenova and **Yevgeniy Fiks** and a bibliography providing further historical context for the material on view.

Extensive public programming will coincide with New York Print Week and continue throughout the fall season. These will include workshops and performances by **Yevgeniy Fiks**, and an academic conference bringing together scholars of Soviet modernism to discuss the three themes detailed above.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Friday, October 27, 2017 at 3:00pm at IFPDA Print Fair: Curator **Masha Chlenova** will give a lecture entitled “Embattled Images: Print Culture in the Russian Revolution”, followed by a Q&A session. Tickets at <http://www.printfair.com/>.

Saturday, October 28, 2017, 1:00–4:00pm at 524 West 26th Street, Ground Floor: Exhibiting artist **Yevgeniy Fiks**, working with **Bushwick Print Lab**, will lead “Obama, Trump, and the Russian Revolution,” a poster-making workshop exploring the use of re-purposed Russian Revolutionary imagery to satirize contemporary American politicians. Using a selection of thematic imagery, participants will let their political subconscious run loose to reveal what philosopher Boris Groys defined as “Russia as the West’s subconscious.” Free and open to the public.

Tuesday, November 28, 2017, 6:45pm and 9pm at Anthology Film Archives: “Show & Tell: Anton Ginzburg.” Two screenings of exhibiting artist **Anton Ginzburg**’s short films, each followed by Q&A sessions. Tickets at <http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/>.

Thursday, November 30, 2017, 7:00pm, with curator introduction and walkthrough at 6pm, at IPCNY: “Lily Golden, Harry Haywood, Langston Hughes, Yelena Khanga, Claude McKay, Paul Robeson, Robert Robinson on Soviet Jews” (2017). A performative reading organized by **Yevgeniy Fiks** which traces the history of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union between the 1920s and 1980s via memoirs of Soviet citizens of African American descent and African Americans who resided in or visited the USSR. Free and open to the public.

Friday, December 1, 2017, all day, at Columbia University: In collaboration with the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, curator **Masha Chlenova** and Harriman Postdoctoral Research Scholar **Maria Ratanova** have organized an academic conference. Leading scholars of Soviet modernism will address central topics of the exhibition, including **Dan Healey** (University of Oxford), **Julia Mickenberg** (University of Texas, Austin), and **Kate Baldwin** (Northwestern University), with keynote talks by **Maria Gough** (Harvard University) and **Christina Kiaer** (Northwestern University). Chlenova, Fiks and Ginzburg will discuss responsibility towards Russian revolutionary history and its legacy in a round-table entitled “What is to be done with our past?” Russian-American culture workers discuss historical responsibility in the era of Putin and Trump.” Full Program to be announced by the Harriman Institute at www.harriman.columbia.edu.

For further information, please visit <http://www.ipcny.org/russianrevolution>.

GROUP AND SCHOOL VISITS may be arranged with advanced booking by contacting stephanie@ipcny.org or 212.989.5090.

CURATOR AND ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

Masha Chlenova (Ph.D., Columbia University; b. 1973 Moscow; has lived and worked in New York since 1995) is a curator and modernist art historian specializing in the Russian avant-garde. She has worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and The Museum of Modern Art where she co-organized a major survey of abstraction across media entitled *Inventing Abstraction, 1910-1925* with Leah Dickerman. This exhibition and its publication won awards from the International Association of Art Critics, the Association of Art Museum Curators, The Association of American Publishers, and the Dedalus Foundation. Her writing has appeared in the journal *October* and in publications of the Guggenheim Museum, MoMA, Tate Modern, Royal Academy of Arts in London and Art Institute of Chicago. She recently contributed a chapter to a monograph on Waclaw Szpakowski, the Polish abstract artist of the 1920s-30s, and organized the first extensive presentation of his work in the United States in the exhibition *Grounding Vision: Waclaw Szpakowski*, held at Miguel Abreu Gallery in New York in January 2017. She served as curatorial consultant for the upcoming exhibition on the Russian avant-garde at the Art Institute of Chicago entitled *Revolutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test, 1917-37* and contributed an essay to its catalogue. Her other publications in 2017 include: “Soviet Museology in the Cultural Revolution: An Educational Turn, 1928-33” in the French peer-reviewed journal *Histoire @Politique* and “Soviet Art in Review: ‘Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic’ in Leningrad, 1932” in *Revolution: Russian Art, 1917-32*, John Millner and Natalia Murray, eds. London: Royal Academy of Arts. Since 2015 she has been teaching art history at The New School and in April 2017, she began as a project-based curator at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, where she is initiating a multi-year research and exhibition project dedicated to the Stedelijk’s outstanding collection of Russian modernism and is organizing a major exhibition of Willem de Kooning.

Yevgeniy Fiks (b. 1972, Moscow; has lived and worked in New York since 1994) is a contemporary artist who works across mediums and disciplines, producing artworks, exhibitions, and books that seek out and explore repressed microhistorical narratives that highlight the complex relationships between social histories of the West and the Soviet bloc in the 20th century. Fiks’s work has been shown at Winkelman and Postmasters galleries (New York), MASS MoCA, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Moscow Museum of Modern Art and Marat Guelman Gallery in Moscow; Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros in Mexico City; and the Museu Coleção Berardo in Lisbon. His work has been included in the Biennale of Sydney (2008), Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2011), and Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2015). His most recent projects include the installation *Óptica Bronstein* (2017) (with Pablo Helguera) in the exhibition *Space Force Construction* at the V-A-C Foundation, Venice; and the curatorial project *In Edenia, a City of the Future* (2017) (with Larissa Babij) in Yermilov Center, Kharkiv, Ukraine.
<http://yevgeniyfiks.com>

Anton Ginzburg (b. 1974, St. Petersburg; has lived and worked in New York since 1992) is known for his films, sculptures, paintings, and text-based printed work investigating historical narratives and poetic

studies of place, representation, and post-Soviet identity. His work has been shown at the 54th Venice Biennale, the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, White Columns in New York, Lille3000 in Euralille, France, and the first and second Moscow Biennales. His films have been screened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Les Rencontres Internationales in Paris, and Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. Forthcoming projects include *Stargaze: Orion* (2016), a 24-foot outdoor sculpture commission for the US Embassy in Moscow (Art in Embassies), as well as screenings of his recent films at Whitechapel Gallery in London on October 1, 2017 and at Anthology Film Archives in New York on November 28, 2017. His work will be the subject of a one-person exhibition at Fridman Gallery in New York, November 14 – December 23, 2017. <http://www.antonginzburg.com/>

PRESS CONTACT

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ABOUT IPCNY

International Print Center New York (IPCNY) is New York's flagship non-profit arts institution dedicated to the innovative presentation of prints by emerging, established, national, and international artists. Founded in 2000, the print center is a vibrant hub and exhibition space located in New York's Chelsea gallery district. IPCNY's artist-centered approach engages the medium in all its varied potential, and includes guest-curated exhibitions that present dynamic, new scholarship as well as biannual New Prints open-call exhibitions for work created in the last twelve months. A lively array of public programs engages audiences more deeply with the works on display. A 501(c)(3) institution, IPCNY depends on foundation, government, and individual support, as well as members' contributions to fund its programs.

CREDITS

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LOCATION & HOURS

508 West 26th Street, 5A
between 10th and 11th Avenues
Gallery hours Tuesday–Saturday 11am–6pm
Free and open to the public,
and wheelchair accessible
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