

**HENRYK
BERLEWI**

(1894-1967)

H. Berlewi 1923

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Henryk Berlewski, *Self-portrait*, 1922. Gouache on paper.
Muzeum Narodowe, Warsaw



Henryk Berlewski, *Self-portrait*, 1946. Pencil on paper.

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Cover image: *Élément de la Mécano- Facture*, 1923.
Gouache on paper, 21 1/2 x 17 3/4" (55 x 45 cm)

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Terminology and Style:

Berlewi first exhibited his Mechano-Facture works in Warsaw in 1924 under the Polish title *Mechano-Faktura*. He subsequently exhibited them in Berlin with the German variant *Mechano-Faktur*. For simplicity, throughout the book we have referred to these works using the English translation—Mechano-Facture—alone.

Caption information for the figures appearing in the essay is abbreviated. Please see the *List of Illustrations* on pages 49-54 for complete caption information.

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Nationhood, Internationalism, and Transnationality: Henryk Berlewi within the network of the European avant-garde

By Alla Rosenfeld, Ph.D.

The career of painter, graphic designer, theorist, and art critic Henryk Berlewi (1894 Warsaw–1967 Paris) does not fit easily into the generally accepted categories and histories of modern art. Rarely considered on his own terms, his work and writings have often been considered only in the narrow terms of artistic schools or national histories. Perhaps best known as an early proponent of international abstraction (Figs. 1, 48-50; Plates II-III, IV) and a leading figure of Polish Constructivism in the 1920s, Berlewi's role as an influential advocate of the Yiddish avant-garde cannot be overlooked. Berlewi himself never found his deep commitment to abstraction to be in opposition to his search for connections between modernist aesthetics and the formal principles of Jewish folk art. At the same time, Berlewi's role in the development of early twentieth-century modernist aesthetics is not always remembered or given proper consideration. He had anticipated the artistic experiments that were to preoccupy not only Polish artists, but also artists worldwide. Indeed, his late works (Figs. 62a-d) are commonly considered to be an anticipation of Optical Art, or Op Art, in which artists experiment with perception through use of color and shapes to generate a sense of movement in the brain.¹



FIG. 1. Henryk Berlewi, *Mechano-Facture: Construction*, 1924.

The fact that these different aspects of his career have rarely been considered simultaneously can be attributed to the tendency to assess the development of modernism within national or regional borders, a view that has only recently been challenged. French art critic Jean Cassou took an early step in his essay for the catalogue of the 1957 Paris exhibition *Précurseurs de l'art abstrait en Pologne*,² in which he argued that abstraction had emerged simultaneously and with equal force in France, Imperial Russia, the Netherlands, and Germany, but that Poland³ was uniquely located at the intersection of these influences. Scholar Magdalena Dabrowski refined this point of view, arguing that the geometric abstract idiom of the 1920s was already “a composite of Dutch and Russian [including Polish] movements: De Stijl, Suprematism, and Constructivism, catalyzed in Germany through the Dada movement.”⁴ The emergence of abstract art, in other words, “is a prime example of the power of network thinking.”⁵ This essay explores the issue of Berlewi's cultural mobility within the interwar networks of the European avant-garde, not only placing the artist's work into a particular Polish art-historical context, including the emergence of Jewish-Yiddish modernist culture, but also situating it in relation to the broader, transnational developments of modern art.

Berlewi's artistic education was already notable for its international character. His earliest years were spent at Warsaw's School of Fine Arts from 1906 to 1909. While still a teenager he left Poland to continue his education in Antwerp, Belgium from 1909 to 1910, where he pursued a conventional academic course of art education.



FIG. 2. Henryk Berlewi, *Pont Neuf, Paris*, 1912. Graphite on paper.

While studying in Paris at the *École des Beaux-Arts* and the *École des Arts Décoratifs* from 1911 to 1912 (Fig. 2), he was also introduced to various modern art movements before his return to Warsaw in 1913. For the next three years he attended Warsaw's School of Drawing where he studied under the direction of Professor Jan Kazimierz Kuzik (1860–1930). Although Berlewi was still creating a few realistic and stylized portraits in the 1920s (Figs. 3-5), his primary interests were Cubism and Expressionism (Figs. 7-10), and he had also discovered Futurism and Dada. As he later wrote in his memoirs published in the journal *Życie Literackie* (Literary Life), for him avant-garde art had not “[fallen] down from the sky without any transition and evolution.”⁶ In the memoir Berlewi stressed the decisive role of Formism (an umbrella term embracing the



FIG. 3. Henryk Berlewi, *Portrait of a Rabbi at his Ritual*, 1926. Oil on canvas.

Futurists, Cubists, and Expressionists in Poland), which, for him, paved the way for him out of “patriotic-academic traditionalism” to free art and consequently enabling a number of artists to move towards abstraction.⁷

But Berlewi's earliest experiments with modernist aesthetics cannot be divorced from his engagement with debates about Jewish culture in the same period. From 1918 to 1922, Berlewi associated himself with a group of poets and artists determined to create a new Jewish secular culture under the umbrella of Yiddishism, particularly in the wake of the Russian Empire's officially-sanctioned anti-Semitism. Various movements of the period offering new paradigms of Jewish identity and culture were by no means in harmony. A scholar in Jewish culture Gennady Estraiikh, explaining the difference between two competing Jewish nation-building models at that time, wrote: “Hebraism became the linguistic platform for advocates of the ingathering (or “return”) of all dispersed Jewish groups to their historical homeland, the Land of Israel, an ideology famously known as Zionism. Yiddishism, in contrast, tended to find followers among those activists who believed in a national awakening through the modernization of Jews within East and Central Europe without such an ingathering. While national territory was the key element in some varieties of Yiddish constructs, the majority believed that Jews would ultimately thrive in



FIG. 4. Henryk Berlewi, *Portrait of a Young Girl (Zofia Flisówna)*, 1920. Pencil and watercolor on paper.

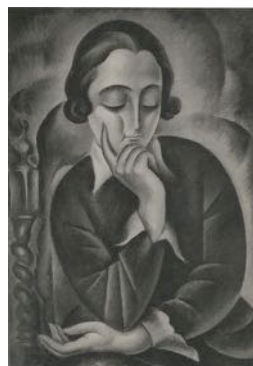


FIG. 5. Henryk Berlewi, *Romantic portrait*, 1921. Pastel on paper.



FIG. 6. Henryk Berlew, Cover for *Yiddish Theater* by Yitzhak Shifer, et al (Warsaw, 1921).

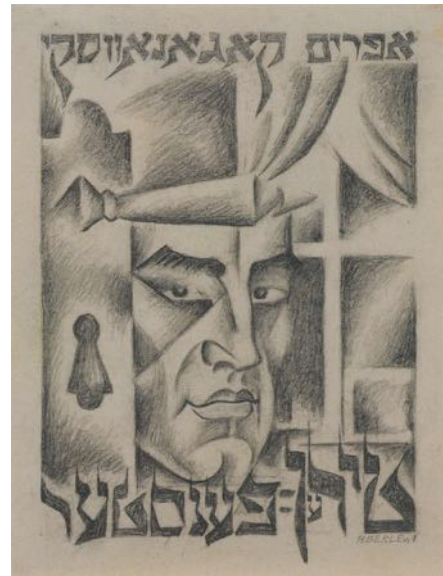


FIG. 7. Henryk Berlew, Cover design for *Doors-Windows* (1921) by Efroim Kaganovski. Crayon on paper, undated.



FIG. 8. Henryk Berlew, Cover for *In the land of the Vistula* by Jozsua Perle, 1922.



FIG. 9. Henryk Berlew, *Don Juan*, 1922. Ink on paper.



FIG. 10. Henryk Berlew, *Female torso*, 1922. Oil on canvas.

the Diaspora among other tolerant, egalitarian peoples.”⁸ According to these ideologues of Diasporic Yiddishism, modern Jews “would grow together into a modern nation by means of two key agents: a highly developed Yiddish culture and language; and a network of local, regional, national, and pan-Diasporic organizations.”⁹ Underpinning these ideas was the belief that Eastern European Jews could modernize without losing their Jewish character.

The goal of the Kultur-Lige (League for Jewish Culture), a secular Jewish organization with a socialist bent,¹⁰ was “to assist in creating a new Yiddish secular culture in the Yiddish language, in Jewish national forms, with the living forces to the broad Jewish masses, in the spirit of the working man and in harmony with their ideals of the future.”¹¹ Established in 1918 in Kyiv, the Kultur-Lige had various sections. The Arts section “has drawn the most accomplished Jewish painters and sculptors who feel that the direction of Jewish art in their route, that their creative possibilities are closely bound to the fate of the national creativity, and they will be fruitful only where the awakened Jewish democratic consciousness forges its distinct Jewish secular culture and artistic point of view.”¹² Branches of the Kultur-Lige’s Arts section were active at different times in the territories of present-day Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania, Romania, and Poland.¹³ Among the most prominent members of Kyiv’s Kultur-Lige Arts section were El Lissitzky (1890-1941) (Figs. 14, 23), Marc Chagall (1887-1985), Issachar Ber Ryback (1897–1935) (Fig. 15), Mark Epshtein (1897–1949) (Fig. 17), Joseph Tchaikov (Iosif Chaikov, 1888–1986), Aleksandr Tyshler (1898–1980), Boris Aronson (1898–1980) (Fig. 18), and Robert Falk (1886-1958). The members of the Polish branch included Jankel (Jakub) Adler (1895–1949) (Fig. 16), Berlewi, and Marek Szwarc (Schwarz, 1892–1958). In 1919, Berlewi and Adler organized the First Exhibition of Jewish Painting and Sculpture

in Bialystok. The exhibition, sponsored by the Arts section of the Kultur-Lige, included works by members of the Young Yiddish group and artists from Warsaw who gathered around Berlewi.¹⁴

The creation of Jewish illustrated books was proclaimed to be one of the urgent aims for the artists of the Kultur-Lige. The motto of the organization stated: “The Kultur-Lige stands on three pillars: 1) Jewish folk education; 2) Yiddish literature; and 3) Jewish art. Make our masses thinkers. Make our thinkers Jewish. This is the purpose of the Kultur-Lige.”¹⁵ During the 1920s, Berlewi illustrated many Yiddish-language books, exploring the possibilities of modernism within Jewish cultural traditions (Figs. 6, 13). In Berlewi’s drawings for these publications, he

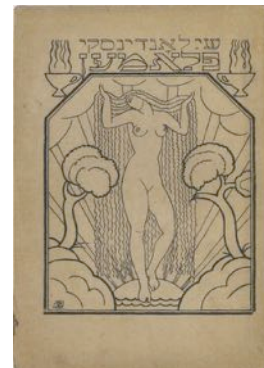


FIG. 11. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for a book of poetry *Flame* by Shmuel-Yakir Londinski (Warsaw, 1920).



FIG. 12. Henryk Berlewi, *Uriel Acosta*, lithograph published in a literary review *Ringen*, 1921.

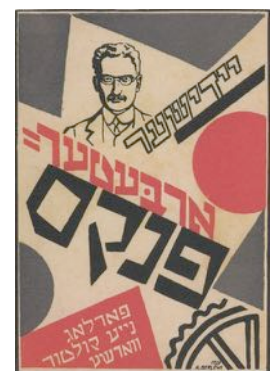


FIG. 13. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for almanac *Yiddish Workers Memorial Book: On the History of the Poale-Zion Movement* (Warsaw, 1927).

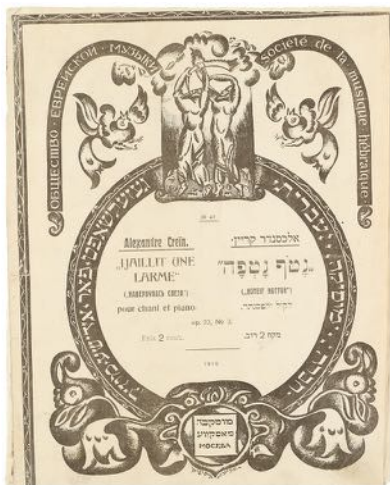


FIG. 14. El Lissitzky, Cover for sheet music of the Society of Jewish Music, no.47 (Moscow, 1919).



FIG. 15. Issachar Ber Ryback, Design for the frontispiece for *Shtetl* (Berlin, 1923). Graphite on paper.



FIG. 16. Jankiel Adler, *Rabbi*, 1924. Drypoint on paper.



FIG. 18. Boris Aronson, Cover design for the magazine *Der Hammer*, April 1926. Collage and ink on card.



FIG. 17. Mark Epshtein, Cover for Yiddish children's monthly journal, Vol.4, No.18. (Kiev, 1925). Lithograph.

employed the traditions of Jewish folk art, as well as devoting much time to a study of its stylistic characteristics and thus playing a key role in developing professional Jewish art.¹⁶ However, in Berlewi's book designs, the stylistic elements of Jewish folk art are subjected to modernist interpretation. His designs embody the changing trends of the Polish Jewish avant-garde, ranging from stylized folk motifs and expressionistic covers to pure abstraction. Some of Berlewi's early cover designs and illustrations from the period, made when he was still searching for his true artistic direction, are characterized by an eclectic manner of adapting graphic principles of Jugendstil, Cubism, and Expressionism (Figs. 7-12). In 1920, Berlewi created a print depicting the Jewish-Portuguese philosopher Uriel Akosta (1585-1640) (Fig. 12). Following his attempts to re-define Judaism, Akosta was excommunicated by the Jewish congregation in Amsterdam and, finally, after enduring years of ostracism and suffering, he committed suicide. This print also appeared on the cover of Karl Gutzkow's adaptation of Akosta's biographical notes published in Warsaw in 1921 by the Kultur-Lige. Berlewi's image of Akosta is a typical example of Expressionist style and is reminiscent of German Expressionist portrait prints with their flattened, angular, and often grotesque figures. Although the image of Akosta's face is reduced to a simple geometric structure with a strong contrast between black and white, it conveys a sense of the philosopher's inner intellectual and spiritual force.

In 1920 and 1921, Berlewi designed posters and sets for the Vilna Troupe's Warsaw productions of *Uriel Akosta* and *The Dybbuk*. S. An-sky's¹⁷ dramatic work *The Dybbuk: Between Two Worlds* (Yid., *Der dibek*; Heb., *Ha-Dibuk*, 1920) became the most celebrated play in the history of both Yiddish and Hebrew theater. *The Dybbuk* was based on material An-sky collected on an ethnographic expedition through Jewish



FIG. 19. Henryk Berlewi, *Khonen and Leah*, program cover for *Dybbuk* by S. An-sky, 1920. Lithograph.

towns of Western Russia he had organized just before World War I. The play, set in a small East European town presumably in the nineteenth century, tells the story of the star-crossed lovers Khonen, a poor yeshiva student, and Leah, the daughter of a rich man (Fig. 19). Leah's father scorns the proposal of the pauper Khonen and arranges instead to have her married into a still wealthier family. Amid unsavory cabbalistic manipulations designed to win the hand of his beloved, Khonen falls dead. But then, just before the wedding, his spirit enters Leah in the form of a *dybbuk* (from a root meaning "to cling" or "to adhere") and refuses to leave.

The 1920 world premiere production of *The Dybbuk* earned the Vilna Troupe an international reputation. Berlewi had been closely involved with the genesis of the Vilna Troupe's production; he was among a small group who gathered to listen to one of An-sky's first readings of the play in Warsaw, in the hall of the Yiddish Writers Club.¹⁸ According to Peretz, Yiddish theater needed to revolutionize itself into a high-culture institution: European, modernist, and national. The Vilna Troupe "merged the modernist neoromanticism of avant-garde Polish directors, Max Reinhard's German expressionism, and the Moscow Art Theatre's ensemble style with its Stanislavskian, realistic approach to stagecraft."¹⁹ Similar to the Jewish modernist artists, the Vilner Troupe, like Berlewi, played an integral role in the movement



FIG. 20a. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for Our "Melave Malka" (Yiddish Literary Anthology), Warsaw, ca.1921.



FIG. 20b. Henryk Berlewi, A Milking Cow (Cartoon). The Vilna Troupe's 1920 premiere of S. An-sky play *Dybbuk*, 1921.

to create a new secular Jewish culture rooted in modernism, shtetl imagery, and Yiddish language. Berlewi's poster and a cover illustration for the Vilna Troupe's production of *The Dybbuk* earned him significant recognition. In comparison to the austere, geometric style of Berlewi's *Uriel Akosta* (Fig. 12), the artist's highly stylized black and white portrait of the ill-fated lovers (Khonon and Leah) is created in a softer, flowing style (Fig. 19).

Berlewi also created a cartoon, or rather a satirical illustration about *The Dybbuk*, published on the cover of the Yiddish literary anthology *Undzer-Melave-Malka* (Our "Melave Malka"), partly dedicated to the play²⁰(Figs. 20a-b). A cow (representing *The Dybbuk*) is seen suckling four actors, while a fifth milks into a bucket. Under the group is the caption *Di vilner trupe* (The Vilna Troupe), and the young lovers Khonon and Leah

are clearly recognizable as characters from the play. The troupe's director, David Herman, is seen sitting by himself in the corner, looking at his actors morosely, as if to ask: "I got them a cow ... the milk's pouring into their mouths ... but what about me?" Berlewi's composition alludes to the Etruscan bronze sculpture *Lupa Capitolina*, the she-wolf that protected and suckled Romulus and Remus, the twins who, according to the legend, founded the city of Rome. Alongside poems and essays printed in the anthology appear portraits of the authors, some by Berlewi.

Throughout the 1920s, the leading Yiddish Expressionist and Futurist poets of the *Khalyastre* (Yid., "The Gang") group²¹headed by Uri Tsevi Grinberg (1896-1981), Peretz Markish (1895–1952), and Meylekh Ravitsh (1893–1976), sought out Berlewi's designs for their verse. Grinberg's *Mefisto* (Mephisto; 1922) and Markish's *Di Kupe* ("The Mound," 1922) were among the best products of the *Khalyastre*. *Di Kupe* (Fig. 21), one of the major works of the East European Yiddish avant-garde reflecting on the destruction of the pogroms,²²was published in Warsaw by the Kultur-Lige in 1921.²³The poem refers to a pogrom that took place in the town of Horoditch in September 1920. According to testimony given by two survivors, the perpetrators of the violence entered the town, assembled the Jews at a public square in front of a theater, and shot them. As the victims fell one on top of the



FIG. 21. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for *Di kupe* by Peretz Markish (Warsaw, 1921).



FIG. 22. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for *Radio* by Peretz Markish (Warsaw, 1922).



FIG. 23. El Lissitzky, Title page for *The Legend of Prague* by Moshe Broderzon (Moscow, 1917). Hand colored lithograph.



FIG. 24. El Lissitzky, Cover for the children's book *The Mischievous Boy* by Mani Leyb (Kiev-St. Petersburg, 1919).

other, their bodies formed a pile that still stood untouched two days later on Yom Kippur.²⁴ As Roy Greenwald writes: “The rise of the Yiddish avant-garde in Eastern Europe is ... impossible to dissociate from the extreme violence by which it was generated.”²⁵ Indeed, the *Khalyastre* group's boisterous image was grounded in trauma and their aesthetics projected a worldview of profound anxiety. In Berlewi's striking design, type was used as the primary visual element, and letters were transformed into ideograms suggesting human bodies. Berlewi's design for *Di Kupe* was a result of a synthesis of the Jewish artistic tradition with the achievements of the European avant-garde. Even more abstract is Berlewi's highly imaginative design for the 1922 cover of Markish's *Radyo* (Radio)²⁶(Fig. 22), where the Yiddish letters of the title have been transformed by the artist into radio waves, reminiscent of lightning flashes and

electrical power.

In the fall of 1921 Berlewi met the important Russian avant-garde artist El Lissitzky at Warsaw's branch of the Kultur-Lige. As the scholar Marek Bartelik pointed out, the Warsaw section of the Kultur-Lige gained additional importance by late 1920, following Soviet suppression of Jewish cultural life in Kyiv.²⁷ A new Kultur-Lige press had been established in Warsaw in December 1920 and in 1922 reprinted Mani Leib's children's book *Yingl Tsingl khvat* (The Mischievous Boy) (Fig. 24) with Lissitzky's Cubo-Futurist illustrations.²⁸ Therefore, Berlewi had the opportunity to see Lissitzky's book illustrations first-hand.

When Berlewi met Lissitzky in 1921, the latter artist had stopped in Warsaw en route to Berlin. Lissitzky had been sent to Germany as an informal ambassador of the Soviet government.²⁹ In the first decades of the twentieth century, Berlin was one of the key centers on the cultural map of transnational avant-garde movements. It brought together artists of different nationalities, beliefs and cultures, among them visual artists, writers, musicians, and performing artists. The Soviet government sought to restore contact with prominent members of the Western European avant-garde, which had been interrupted by the seven-year period of war and blockade. It also hoped to solidify support for the new communist regime among artists active in Germany.

From Berlin, Lissitzky had gone on to Weimar to attend the famous meeting of International Constructivists held on September 25, 1922. He also stopped in the Netherlands, where he met members of the De Stijl group. The aesthetic program of the group was so close to Lissitzky's principles that he soon joined the group. While abroad, Lissitzky grew close to the artists Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931), Hans

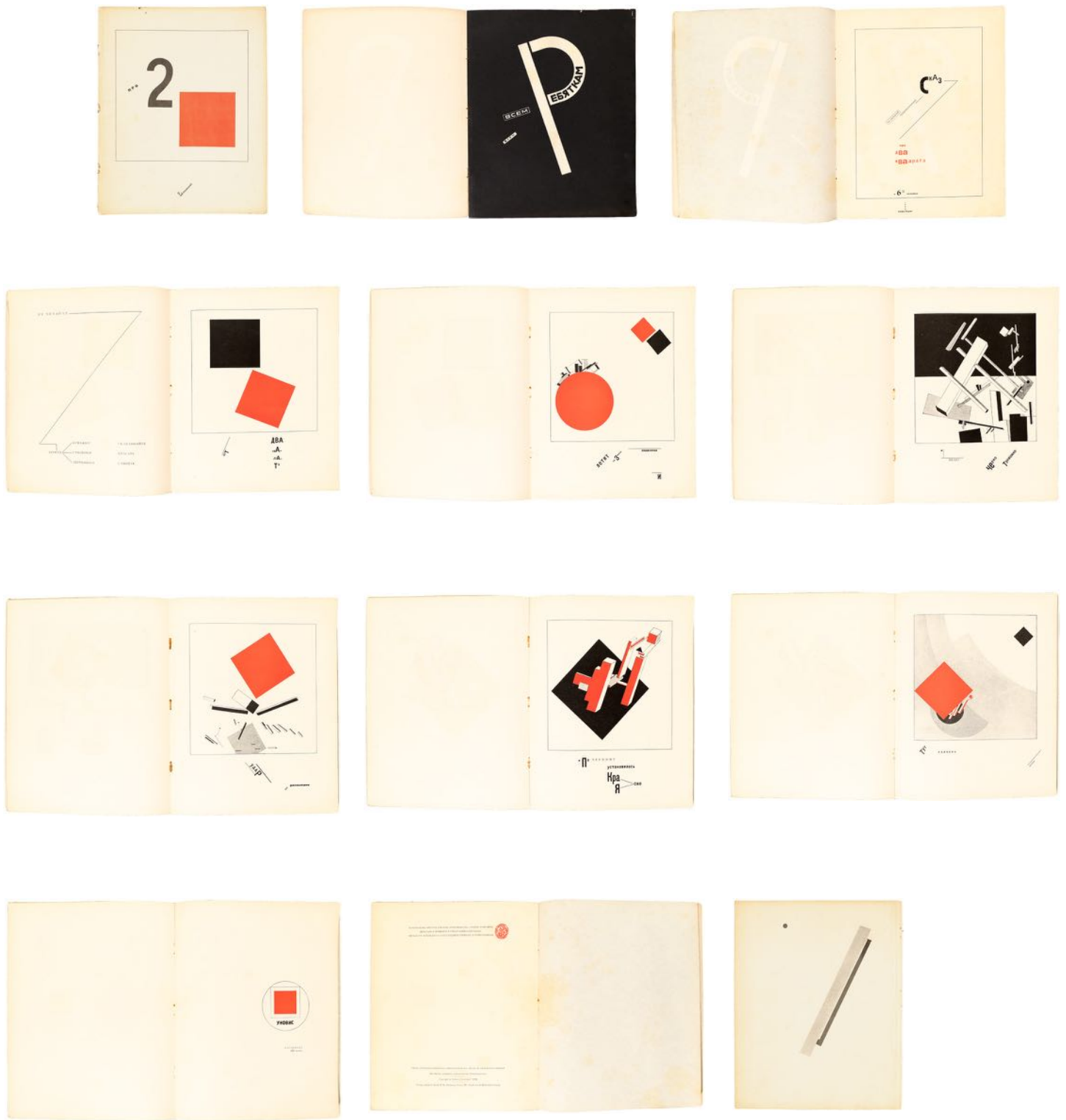


FIG. 25. El Lissitzky, Cover, title page and illustrations for *The Suprematist Tale of Two Squares in Six Constructions* (1920; published in Berlin in 1922). Letterpress.

Arp (1887–1966), George Grosz (1893–1959), and László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), among others. Through the initiative of van Doesburg, the unofficial leader of De Stijl group, Lissitzky's highly experimental book *Suprematicheskii skaz pro dva kvadrata* (The Suprematist Tale of Two Squares in Six Constructions) (Fig. 25) was published for the second time, and now translated into Dutch, in volume V of *De Stijl* with a preface by van Doesburg. *A Suprematist Tale* playfully conveys the ideas of the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent triumph of the Bolsheviks in graphic terms. Even more significant than the book's allegorical revolutionary content is its innovative form. As its title indicates, Lissitzky conceived the book according to the principles of Suprematism, the Russian avant-garde movement pioneered by Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) and characterized by a non-objective visual language of geometric forms. Lissitzky's book was initially conceived in Vitebsk in 1920 while the artist was lecturing on typography at the Vitebsk School of Art and was a working member of UNOVIS (Affirmers of the New Art). However, the book was not printed in Russian until 1922.³⁰

A follower of Malevich, Lissitzky based his design on the Suprematist system developed by his mentor, whose invitation to teach at the Vitebsk School of Art Lissitzky had arranged.³¹ Malevich had arrived in the city in October of 1919, touching off a tense artistic rivalry as many students who had studied with Marc Chagall, who also taught at the school, transferred to Malevich's classes and joined the UNOVIS (Affirmers of the New Art) group. Under the influence of the older artist, Lissitzky abandoned his figurative mode³² (Figs. 26, 40). The predominance of Malevich's supporters at the Vitebsk School of Art meant that UNOVIS became the most influential structure there, and, therefore, Suprematism was now recognized as an important modern art movement.³³



FIG. 26. El Lissitzky, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, 1920.

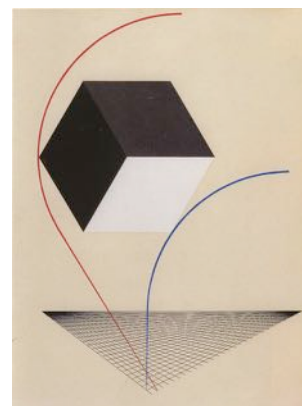


FIG. 27. El Lissitzky, *Proun*, 1924-1925. Pen and ink, watercolor and collage.

From Malevich, Lissitzky learned to value the expressive power of geometric shapes. The symbolism of the Suprematist square can be found in Malevich's theoretical writings, which, undoubtedly, Lissitzky was familiar with through the two artists' collaboration. As Malevich had written, the square is the primary building block in the Suprematist method.³⁴ He poetically called the square "a living, royal infant" that "is not a subconscious form" but "the creation of intuitive reason" and "the face of the new art."³⁵ According to Malevich, "the three squares of Suprematism stand for definite views of the world and ways of constructing it ... They have also acquired further meanings in a social context: black as the mark of economy; red as the signal of the Revolution; and white as pure action."³⁶



FIG. 28. Natan Altman, Cover design for *Origin. Commemoration* by Dovid Hofsteyn and Arn Kushnirov (Moscow, 1922). Pencil, ink and gouache on paper mounted on board with glassine.



FIG. 29. Natan Altman, Cover design for *Red Student*, No.8, 1923. Ink and gouache on paper.



FIG. 30. Natan Altman, Cover design for *Collection of Poems* by David Hofstein, 1923. Gouache, ink and cut paper mounted on paper.

However, whereas Malevich used geometric shapes to signify emotional states, “sensations,” Lissitzky in his book *Of Two Squares* (Fig. 25) gave them a narrative purpose — to promote the ideas of the Bolshevik revolution.³⁷ The subject of Lissitzky’s book — a fable about the cooperation of a black and a red square in the dispersal of absolute chaos and the establishment of a new order — was related to his 1920 poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* (Fig. 26). In Lissitzky’s *Of Two Squares* axonometric constructions and architectural renditions of Suprematist planar rhythms are united with elements of typesetting. Therefore, the images for Lissitzky’s book can be viewed as a bridge between Malevich’s two-dimensional Suprematist painting and Lissitzky’s own *Prouns* (a Russian acronym for “Projects for the Affirmation of the New”) created by architectural projection³⁸ and representing a hybrid of Suprematist and Constructivist ideals³⁹ (Fig. 27). Well-known author Ilya Ehrenburg, a close friend of Lissitzky’s during his Berlin days, recorded that Lissitzky had “an unshakable faith in Constructivism”⁴⁰ and the artist soon emerged as a central figure in the International Constructivist movement.

The innovative concepts and works of the Russian Constructivists also garnered attention in the West

in part through Lissitzky’s travels, which put him in contact with German artists and with members of De Stijl, particularly van Doesburg.⁴¹ As Christina Lodder has pointed out, thanks to Lissitzky, “the theory and practice of Constructivism that gained most currency outside the Soviet Union was a hybrid, devoid of the ideological and utilitarian fanaticism of the Moscow Constructivists and of the mystical extravagances of Suprematism. What remained was an aesthetic language of precise geometric forms that took its inspiration from the world of mathematics, industry, and the machine...”⁴²

In the midst of these momentous events which would shape artistic practice throughout much of the world for the remainder of the century, Lissitzky and Berlewi’s paths also crossed. The two artists, who shared many interests and experiences, became friends: both were Jewish, both had spent much of their lives in the Russian Empire, and both had at some point devoted themselves to illustrating Jewish folklore. Now they were both increasingly concerned with creating a universal artistic language stripped of any national connotations. In Berlewi’s speech at the opening of the exhibition of Jewish artists *What Do We Want?* in June

1921 in Warsaw, he stated that national art manifest itself “not in national themes, but in the individual form, corresponding to the essential character of a nation.”⁴³ Berlewi acknowledged the implied alternatives: Jewish nationalism or cosmopolitanism.⁴⁴ Many years later, when recalling these important developments, Berlewi wrote “we were careful not to speak about ‘Jewish art.’ This caution was determined by a certain need for linguistic precision. We did not like it to appear pretentious and we limited ourselves to purely artistic considerations, and not national ones. We wanted, first of all, to spread art among the Jews.”⁴⁵

The German capital hosted many Jewish modern artists from the territories of present-day Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. Among these artists were Lissitzky, Chagall, Natan Altman (1889–1970) (Figs. 28–30), and Ryback. All these artists created modernist works but at the same time, they made original contributions to the Jewish Renaissance. In the early 1920s, Berlewi was a member of the *Jung Idysz* (Young Yiddish) group of Expressionist writers and artists from Łódź,⁴⁶ and took part in their activities. The manifesto of the group stated: “In our symbolism, in our turning to Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, or the primitives — to which, nota bene, we don’t appeal — we embrace all of the above styles and call them... by the single name Futurism.”⁴⁷

It was under the influence of Lissitzky that Berlewi made the shift from lyrical Chagall-inspired symbolism to non-representational design. Describing the importance of his meeting with Lissitzky, Berlewi wrote: “Gradually, as Lissitzky developed his eloquence in order to praise this art not yet known to me, and like a true apostle pledged his support for Suprematism, I felt more and more drops of this poison infiltrating my soul. His fiery and simple words affected me like hashish. He beguiled me with an unknown, magic

painting of crystal purity, with the shimmering brightness of the new art. Truly illuminated, possessed with this ‘new religion,’ I vigorously devoted myself to the propaganda of this doctrine conceived in neighboring Russia.”⁴⁸

In 1922, Berlewi, together with Jankel (Jakub) Adler of the Young Yiddish group, represented Jewish artists from Eastern Europe at the Congress of the International Union of Progressive Artists in Düsseldorf. The Congress was the first gathering of representatives of all European avant-garde movements in painting and sculpture after the First World War and it was intended to boost transnational cooperation between the artists. The founding proclamation of the Union of Progressive Artists stated: “The long dreary spiritual isolation must now end. Art needs the unification of those who create. Forgetting questions of nationality, without political bias or self-seeking intention, our slogan must now be ‘Artists of all nationalities unite.’ Art must become international or it shall perish.”⁴⁹ However, the artists gathered in Düsseldorf had no common vision of modern art, a fact which led to internal strife. The proponents of the Constructivist movement joined forces against the Expressionist majority of the Congress, and the most committed artists — Theo van Doesburg, Hans Richter, and Lissitzky — established the *Internationale Fraktion der Konstruktivisten* (*International Section of Constructivists*) and signed a joint proclamation.

In his review of the First International Exhibition in Düsseldorf, Berlewi noted: “The notion of progress in art was up to now very relative and usually subject to local conditions. This kind of particularism in art could have no rationale. Recently, in some countries, artists are showing the will to break down dividing walls, to have mutual moral material support, to have a universal exchange of values, and to engage in common



FIG. 31. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for the literary-artistic journal *Albatros*, Volume 3-4, Berlin, 1923.

action. The internationalization of art — art belonging to the whole of humanity — turned out to be an unavoidable necessity.”⁵⁰

While in Düsseldorf, Berlewi again encountered Lissitzky and many other leading members of the European avant-garde, including Raoul Hausmann (1896–1971), van Doesburg, Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter (1888–1976), Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), and Viking Eggeling (1880–1925). Berlewi became friends with Eggeling, who was the first to use cinematography to express the rhythmic movement of pure forms. Berlewi devoted an article to Eggeling which he published in the Warsaw-based Yiddish journal *Albatros* in 1922.⁵¹ In his article, “Viking Eggeling and His Abstract-Dynamic Film,” Berlewi criticized the “Formists.” The artist argued that only the real dimension of the Futurist movement, namely, the dynamic movie, can adequately convey Futurist ideas.

It should be noted Berlewi’s turn to non-representational design under the influence of El Lissitzky allowed for some occasional exceptions. His radical experiments with Jewish calligraphy and an expressionistic style of drawing corresponded well with the fragmented language of the *Khalyastre* poets characterized by its verbal violence. In 1923, Berlewi created a cover for the third issue of *Albatros* (Fig. 31), the Yiddish journal devoted to new expressions in poetry and art, including works by *Khalyastre* poets.⁵² As a scholar



FIG. 32. Henryk Berlewi, portrait of Uri-Tsvi Grinberg in the book *Mefisto* by Uri-Tsvi Grinberg (Warsaw, 1922).

Avidov Lipsker has noted, *Albatros* stands out in its “modernistic inventiveness, its typographical boldness and striking illustrations, and above all, in the new expressionistic message that poet Uri Zvi Greenberg, the chief editor and principal contributor of poetry and essays, relentlessly impressed upon its readers.”⁵³ The periodical proclaimed itself as the organ of extreme individualism in poetry, advocating exaltation, renovation, and revolution of the spirit. It preferred rhythmic tautness and explosiveness to rounded, melodious verses. The first two issues of *Albatros* (1922-23) were printed in Warsaw; the third and fourth were bound together and published in Berlin (Fig. 31). Greenberg commissioned Berlewi to provide the typographic design of *Albatros* 3-4 when they were both in Berlin in 1922. The writer had already met Berlewi in Warsaw and in 1922 Berlewi’s portrait of Greenberg smoking a pipe appeared on the cover of his first Expressionist book *Mefisto* (Fig. 32). Berlewi’s design for *Albatros* exemplifies a new graphic approach that dispensed with the typical features of Expressionism. The cover is pure abstraction. Instead of crude lines of the woodcuts and linocuts, characteristic of the works of Ze’ev Weintraub and Mark Schwarz, who designed the title pages of the first two issues of *Albatros*, in Berlewi’s design the captions occupy the diagonal center of the title page in the last issues, while geometric forms (circles and squares) are



FIG. 33. El Lissitzky, Colophon for the portfolio of ten lithographs, *Puppet Portfolio* (the creation of the electromechanical peepshow *Victory Over the Sun* (Hannover, 1923). Lithograph.

FIG. 34. Kurt Schwitters, *Merz*, no. 11. *Typoreklame. Pelikan-Nummer* (Typographic Advertising. Pelikan Number), 1924. Letterpress.

placed symmetrically, dividing the script of the table of contents into separate units. Three more of Berlewi's full-page illustrations are reproduced in the journal. It was undoubtedly Berlewi's encounter with Suprematism and especially with Lissitzky's work that led the artist to apply a new artistic language in his design for *Albatros*.

Perhaps inspired by Lissitzky, Berlewi also traveled to the artistic center of Berlin. During his stay there from 1921 to 1923, he took active part in the international avant-garde artistic movement in the city, participating in exhibitions and contributing to publications. In 1922 Berlewi participated in the Novembergruppe's major modernist art exhibition in Berlin, followed by inclusion of his first *Mechano-Facture* (*Mechano-Faktura*, in Polish; *Mechano-Faktur*, in German) compositions in 1923 at the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung*, again as a member of the Novembergruppe. Those two years in Berlin were important for his artistic development. Berlewi listed the following events in 1923 as crucial not only for his creative career, but also for the development of the international avant-garde art:

"1—El Lissitzky published in Hannover his album *Electromechanical Theater*, inspired by

Krutchonykh's Futurist opera *Victory over the Sun*⁵⁴ (Fig. 33);

2—Founding of the magazine 'G.' Editors: Hans Richter, Mies van der Rohe, and Werner Graeff;

3—Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar: 'Art and Technology.' Triumph of Bauhaus ideology;

4—Kurt Schwitters published Dadaist quarterly *Mertz* (Fig. 34);

5—As far as I am concerned, after formulating the theory of my *Mechano-Facture*, first experimental compositions were presented in the *Grosse Berliner Ausstellung* in the Novembergruppe section (19.5-17.9.1923)"⁵⁵

Regardless of the apparent linguistic and



FIG. 35a; b. Henryk Berlewi, Cover and title page for *Out of the Depths* by Yehuda Gothelf (Warsaw, 1924).

cultural differences among experimental artists from different European countries, their mutual exchanges and relationships were both deep and broad. As a case in point, Lissitzky's typographic manifesto appeared in Kurt Schwitters' experimental publication *Merz* in July 1923. This manifesto summarized some of Lissitzky's ideas which he had implemented in practice and which had made an impact on Berlewi: "The words on the printed sheet are learnt by sight, not by hearing ...". He stressed that the artist should use "economy of expression — optics instead of phonetics" and pointed out that "... the design of the book-space through the material of the type, according to the laws of topographical mechanics, must correspond to the strain and stresses of the content."⁵⁶ Lissitzky rejected ornamental book design and proposed instead Constructivist principles, using innovative means of influencing ways of reading the book and employing only what was to be found in the compositor's type case.⁵⁷ In a letter written to Malevich in September 1919, Lissitzky argued that in the age of the automobile and the airplane, the book should be transformed from a transmitter of information into a bearer of visually perceptible meanings.⁵⁸

In December 1923, Berlewi returned to Poland after almost two years spent in Berlin. He continued illustrating Jewish books, creating cover designs for *Mi-ma'amaqim* (Out of the Depths) (1924) (Figs. 35a-b), a Hebrew volume, *Legion* (1925) (Fig. 38), and a journal devoted to the Yiddish theater (1927) (Fig. 39). He also worked as a stage designer for the Jewish Miniature Theater *Azazel*, a new Yiddish-language company founded in 1926. A genre of Yiddish performance, *kleynkunst* ("minor art") developed in the early twentieth century, primarily under the influence of Russian and Polish literary cabaret. *Kleynkunst* satirized both Jewish society and the political and social order of the non-Jewish world, especially in terms of its impact on Jews. Departing from



FIG. 36. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Poster advertising subscription for *LEF* magazine, 1924.



FIG. 37. Cover for the journal *Blok*, Volume 1, No.1, 1924.

the operettas and turgid plays dominating Yiddish theater at the time, *Azazel* comprised variety shows with many acts including songs, monologues, and skits. The founders of this new enterprise decided they wanted no more of the tired, old-fashioned *shund* (kitschy mass culture) stars, and instead sought out fresh new faces. The cabaret quickly became very popular for its edgy style, especially among artists and intellectuals.⁵⁹

The period between the two World Wars in Europe marked a moment of intensive artistic and intellectual exchange. The members of the Polish avant-garde were connected by many links with the rest of European experimental artistic movements.⁶⁰ As Berlewi noted: "A great network of periodicals has spread around the world, arguing for and propagating new ideas and new forms: the organization of co-operatives on economic and ideological grounds; the generally



FIG. 38. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for a book of poetry *Legion* by Gabriel Talpir (Warsaw, 1925)



FIG. 39. Henryk Berlewi, Cover for the periodical *Yiddish Theater* by Mikhal Weichert, ed. (Warsaw, 1927).

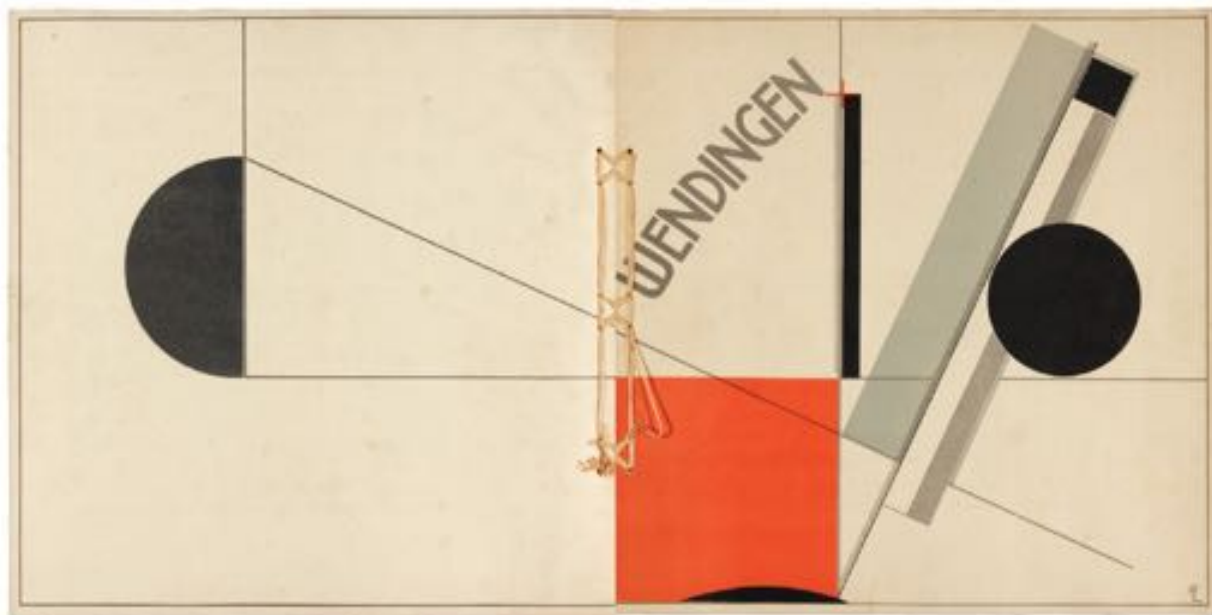


FIG. 40. El Lissitzky, cover for the periodical *Wendingen*, 1923, Lithograph.



FIG. 41. El Lissitzky, Cover for *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet* (Berlin), no. 1-2 (March-April 1922). Letterpress.



FIG. 42. Wladyslaw Strzemiński. *The Red Army is heroically fighting at the front...* Smolensk ROSTA Windows, 1920. Lithograph.



FIG. 43. Wladyslaw Strzemiński, Cover for *From Beyond: Poems, Volume I*, 1930. Letterpress.

international character of the whole movement — all these substantiate the claim that we are going through a period of transformation of traditional notions about art.”⁶¹ The spread of Constructivist ideals was helped by such magazines as Richter’s *G* (for *Gestaltung*), published in 1923 in Berlin; *LEF*, published in Moscow (1923-28) (Fig. 36) and edited by Vladimir Mayakovsky and Ossip Brik; the Polish *Blok* (1924) (Fig. 37); and the Czech *Disk* (1924). These magazines promoted Constructivism not only through content, but also through innovative typography based on strict vertical-horizontal elements, use of block lettering, and division of the page into large rectangular blocks of text, as exemplified in Lissitzky’s 1922 designs for *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet* (Fig. 41) and Rodchenko’s covers for *LEF*.

The first editorial of Lissitzky’s and Ehrenberg’s *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet* announced the renewal of contacts between Russian and Western artists and the emergence of a new “collective, international style.”⁶² The editors continued: “We hold that the fundamental feature of the present age is the triumph of the constructive method. We find it as much in the new economics and the development of industry as in the psychology of our contemporaries in the world of art. *Objet* will take the part of constructive art, whose task is not to adorn life but to organize it.”⁶³ 1922 marked the development of Constructivism in its Productivist phase in Russia. The Productivists asserted the centrality of engineering to creative work and offered the rational design of everyday objects as a remedy for the “useless” beauty of easel painting.⁶⁴ They also sought to extend the experiments in purely abstract art into the everyday environment by involving themselves in the production of utilitarian objects. Lissitzky took part in the organization and development of the *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung* (First Russian Art Exhibition), held in the Fall of 1922 at Galerie Van Diemen in Berlin. This was the first opportunity for the Western public to become acquainted with the recent art movements which had emerged in Russia, such as Suprematism and Constructivism.⁶⁵

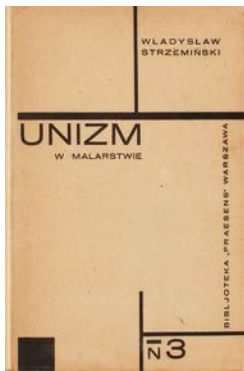


FIG. 44. Władysław Strzemiński, *Cover for Unizm in Painting, No.3* (Warsaw, 1928). Letterpress on paper.

While some Polish artists had personal links with the Russian avant-garde, others had greater contact with Paris or Berlin. The oeuvre of Malevich, however, was the primary source of inspiration for the artistic experiments of members of the Polish avant-garde, particularly the Polish Constructivists,⁶⁶ including Władysław Strzemiński (1893-1952). Strzemiński, one of his most convinced followers, can rightfully be called the proselytizer of Malevich's ideas in Poland. Strzemiński, born in Minsk to a Polish aristocratic family, while in Moscow in 1918 met the artist Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951), a Russian with German roots. Both were associated with various major Russian avant-garde artists and were acquainted with Aleksandr Rodchenko, Lissitzky, and Malevich, among others. Strzemiński had studied at the First Free Artistic Studio in Moscow. Kobro had contacts with the Moscow group *Obmokhu* (The Union of Young Artists) and had been a member of UNOVIS. In 1919 Strzemiński moved to the Russian city of Smolensk and co-founded a branch of the UNOVIS group with Malevich. Kobro arrived shortly thereafter and they were married in 1921. Strzemiński was responsible for artistic propaganda in the ROSTA (Russian Telegraph Agency) section of Smolensk and produced a series of propaganda posters there in 1920 (Fig. 42). The relatively short distance between Smolensk and Vitebsk facilitated continuous contact between

Strzemiński, Kobro, Malevich, and Lissitzky. The IZO studio in Smolensk run by Strzemiński and Kobro in 1920 and 1921 constituted a section of the UNOVIS group and Malevich was a frequent visitor to their workshop.⁶⁷ One of Strzemiński's first articles, "Notes on Russian Art," published in two issues of *Zwrotnica* (No. 3, 1922 and No. 4, 1923) was accompanied by illustrations of Suprematist drawings by Malevich. Indeed, while there were similarities, some polemical arguments between the radical Polish artists and Malevich also emerged. For example, Strzemiński's doctrine of *Unism* (Fig. 44), which he had arrived at by 1927, was on the one hand a continuation of Malevich's Suprematism (the artist even had earlier referred to it as a "post-Suprematism"), and, on the other, its complete opposition.⁶⁸ The term Unism referred back to Malevich's Unovis, of which Strzemiński was a member, while placing greater emphasis than Malevich on the material reality of the picture surface. Centre Pompidou curator Karolina Ziębińska-Lewandowska, in the catalogue of a recent exhibition devoted to Strzemiński and Kobro, writes that "according to the Unist theory of painting, the fact that it is a framed flat surface covered in paint determines a work's essence. Hence, everything that goes beyond these properties – movement, time, three-dimensionality, external references (mimetic, psychological, symbolic), etc. – ought to be rejected."⁶⁹

Around late 1921 or early 1922, when conditions



FIG. 45. Cover for the journal *Blok*, No.10, 1925.



FIG. 46. Photograph of the artist seen with his works at the exhibition at the Austro-Daimler Automobile Salon, Warsaw (March 14-25, 1924).

for avant-garde artists deteriorated in the Soviet Union, Kobro and Strzemiński fled to Poland, where they quickly established themselves as leading figures of the avant-garde and in 1924 became Polish citizens.⁷⁰ They took active part in the Constructivist movement, which had officially made its appearance on the Polish art scene in 1923 with the opening of *The Exhibition of the New Art* in Vilna. The exhibition embraced works by nearly all major Polish representatives of the movement and initiated the foundation of *Blok Kubistów, Suprematystów i Konstruktywistów* (Blok Group of Cubists, Constructivists, and Suprematists).

Both Strzemiński and Kobro were active members of *Blok* and Berlewi also affiliated himself with this group.⁷¹ *Blok*, which was active during the years 1924 to 1926, combined the artistic experiments which Strzemiński and Kobro had brought from Russia⁷² with those acquired by other *Blok* members through their contacts with the German artistic milieu, particularly via *Der Sturm* Gallery in Berlin. Together, the group founded the *Blok* journal in which they published their own theoretical pieces as well as texts by Marinetti, van Doesburg, Schwitters, van der Rohe, and Herwarth Walden. The *Blok* artists were also committed to Malevich's Suprematism; the first part of his essay "O Sztuce" (On Art) was published in the *Blok* journal in April 1924

and continued in subsequent issues. Works by Malevich (Fig. 45), van Doesburg, Lissitzky, Schwitters, Baumeister, and Moholy-Nagy were reproduced in the *Blok* and contact was maintained with representatives of other important avant-garde periodicals, such as *G (Gestaltung)*, *Mecano*, *Merz*, *Ma*, *De Stijl*, and *Der Sturm*.

The first issue of the *Blok* appeared on March 8, 1924 and was accompanied a week later, on March 15, by the opening of an exhibition of works by artists grouped around the magazine held at the automobile salon of the Laurin Clement company in Warsaw. The exhibition included works created in Cubist, Suprematist and Constructivist modes. Although both the representational and abstract works included in the show were quite varied, they were all characterized by geometric schematization. One day earlier, on March 14, 1924 Berlewi had inaugurated his own one-man show of abstract works at the Austro Daimler automobile salon (Fig. 46; Plate XI). The works he showed were a realization of Berlewi's theoretical assumptions outlined in his manifesto, *Mechano-Facture*, written between 1922 and 1924 and first published as a separate brochure in conjunction with the Warsaw exhibition and subsequently republished in September of 1924 in art dealer and gallery owner Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm* magazine.

In his manifesto *Mechano-Facture*, Berlewi argued that "Art must break with all the habits of the perfumed, perverse, over-sensitive, hysterical, romantic, boudoir-like, subjective art of the past. It must create a new language of form, one that is accessible to all and that is in harmony with the rhythm of life."⁷³ Texture (or *faktura*, as it was called in Russian and Polish) — "everything that makes up the material side of painting" — was for Berlewi an important aesthetic category of modern art. In his theoretical statement,

Berlewi discussed the “worship of material” by Russian theorist Vladimir Markov (Voldemārs Matvejs, 1877–1914) as well as by Constructivist artists such as Vladimir Tatlin and Aleksandr Rodchenko. Berlewi pointed out that to enhance “the working of texture, resort has been made to materials that have not previously belonged to the store of the means used by painters, such as newspaper clippings, cork, glass, sand, metal, etc. ... Though owing to texture, painting has come closer to its original element, it has also lost one of its specific characteristics, viz. its two-dimensionality.”⁷⁴ As he wrote, “to carry out the work of bringing together the textural values in a synthetic order,” the artist “must resort to the method of schematization.”⁷⁵ The mechanization of the means of expression were intended to match the accelerated rhythm of the quickly changing reality. Berlewi’s works featured in the exhibition at the Austro-Daimler automobile salon, consisted of flat geometric forms: rectangles, squares, and circles, square and dotted grids, and repetitive line segments. The geometric figures were executed in a limited palette or were covered with rows of white or black dots.

The concept of *Mechano-Facture* originated in Berlewi’s fascination with the cult of the machine and a strong faith in the objective value and precision of geometrical forms (Figs. 47-50; Plates I-III, V, VI). Berlewi’s manifesto declared that modern painting could divest itself of all implications of subjectivity and illusion if technique, texture, and motif were schematized according to principles of modern technology and mechanical reproduction. The exhibition of Berlewi’s work in the Der Sturm gallery from July 3 to July 17, 1924 was another illustration of his theoretical considerations. The forms of Berlewi’s *Mechano-Facture* works were mechanically created with the aid of perforated templates (stencils), although they were still hand-painted. Discussing his *Mechano-Facture* works between

1922 and 1924, Berlewi wrote in his article “Funktionelle Grafik der zwanziger Jahre in Polen (Functional Design of the Twenties in Poland)”: “The black dots on the white ground have a great power of vibration ... The optical illusion of movement created by these black dots gives the image a kinetic quality ... Certain mechanical, prefabricated elements (circles, undulating forms and parallel bars) have been arranged in an orderly, rectangular design which is dominated by a rhythmical movement towards the infinitely great and the infinitely small, while changes in volume are produced by the alternation between black and white. At that time, all this constituted a revolution in graphic design. A new vocabulary deriving from modern mechanization had been evolved.”⁷⁶

As was the case with their Russian counterparts, Polish Constructivists emphasized the importance of the “mechanization of the means of work” and “economic use of material.” In September issue (No. 6-7) of its 1924 journal, the *Blok* group published its collective manifesto *Co to jest konstruktywizm* (What is Constructivism?) which emphasized the necessity of integrating artistic problems with social issues: “Constructivism does not aim at the creation of a style as an unchanging established pattern based upon invented forms, accepted once and for all, but it takes up the problem of CONSTRUCTION that may and must be subject to continuous changes and improvements...”⁷⁷ In many of its aspects, this manifesto echoed the views of the Russian Constructivists. The manifesto also proclaimed that “construction determines the form” and that artists should take active interests in “building, filmmaking, printing, and the world of fashion.” The typographic design of the *Blok* journal served as a realization of the Constructivist postulate of maximum economy and clarity of text. Berlewi’s own works embody such Constructivist principles as objectivity, clarity, and economy. They

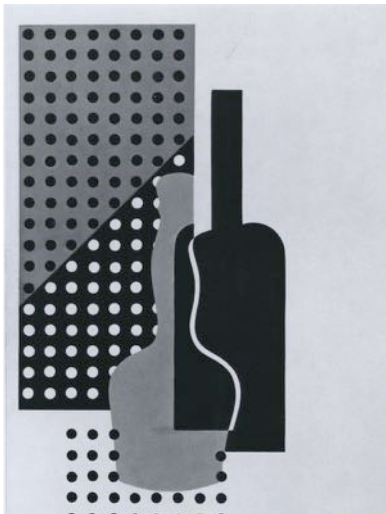


FIG. 47. Henryk Berlew, *Still life with Bottles*, 1922. Gouache on paper.

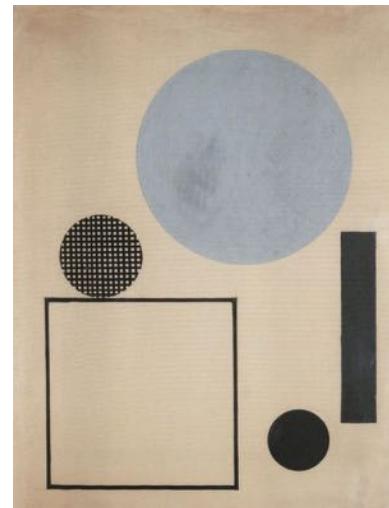


FIG. 48. Henryk Berlew, *Mechano-Facture: A Square and a Circle in Space*, 1923. Gouache and ink on paper.



FIG. 49. Henryk Berlew, *Mechano-Facture: Construction*, 1924. Gouache on paper.

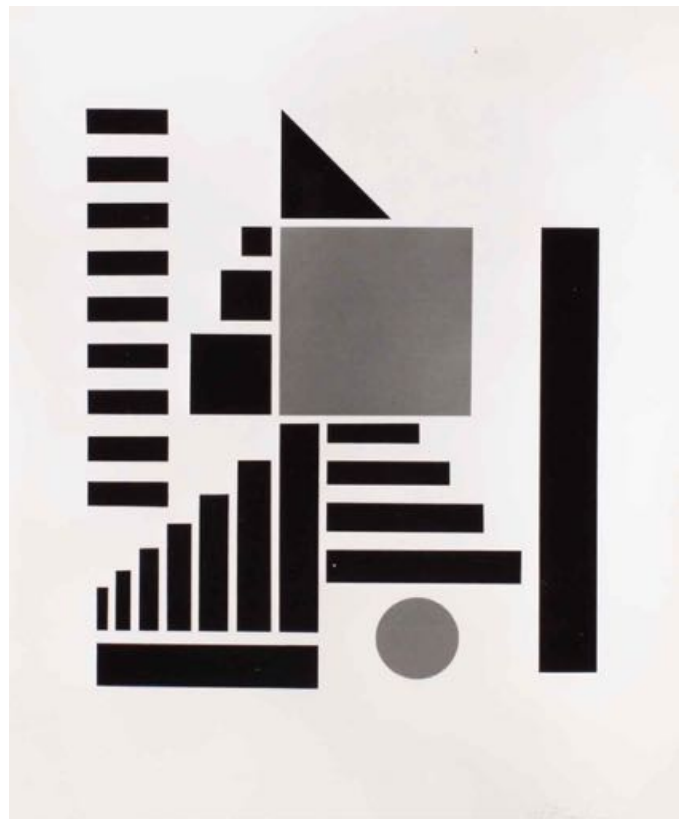


FIG. 50. Henryk Berlew, *Mechano-Facture: Composition in Red, Black, and White*, 1924. Gouache on paper.



FIG. 51. Henryk Berlewi, page from the booklet *Reklama Mechano*, 1924.

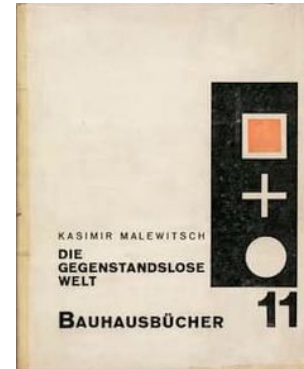


FIG. 52. Kazimir Malevich, cover for *The Non-Objective Word* (Munich, 1927).



FIG. 53. Documentary photograph of the party for Kazimir Malevich, Polonia Hotel, Warsaw, 1927.

demonstrate the close proximity of Berlewi and Lissitzky's formal concerns, and also between Berlewi and Russian Constructivist artists such as Rodchenko and Liubov Popova. What these international artists shared was the abrogation of historicism, purity of form, and nonobjective painting with no modeling or perspective. At the same time, they also shared a social conscience, viewing the arts as contributing to society, particularly through architecture and typography. In 1924, fully embracing the social importance of typography, Berlewi joined with poets Aleksandr Wat and Stanisław Brucz to found *Reklama-Mechano* (Fig. 51), an advertising company which introduced new typography and functional print into trade advertisements and, by extension, to a greater public whose members might not visit exhibitions of avant-garde art. The agency's posters and leaflets of 1924 to 1926 are among

the most important examples of Polish functional typography (Plates 12, 13).

In 1926, Polish artists were among the first to become acquainted with Malevich's latest theoretical work, *The Non-Objective World*. Excerpts from *The Non-Objective World* were printed alongside reproductions of Malevich's arkhitektonty (architectons) in the first issue of the journal *Praesens*.⁷⁸ Strzemiński and Kobro were at that time members of the *Praesens* group, having left *Blok*.⁷⁹ Malevich visited Poland between March 8 and 27 of 1927, in conjunction with a large exhibition of his paintings at the Polish Artists Club in Warsaw's *Polonia* Hotel. Berlewi met Malevich at a banquet in the latter artist's honor (Fig. 53) where Malevich delivered the lecture "Analysis of contemporary artistic directions," in which he described his research work at the Institute of Artistic Culture. From Warsaw Malevich continued to Berlin and then to the Bauhaus in Dessau. The Polish poet Tadeusz Peiper had introduced Malevich to Bauhaus Director Walter Gropius and the artist Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, an instructor at the school. Malevich came to Germany for two reasons: he wanted the opportunity to show his works outside of the Soviet Union and therefore engage his counterparts in western Europe,⁸⁰ and to arrange for the translation and publication of his book *The Non-Objective World*⁸¹ (Fig. 52).

The late 1920s saw many avant-garde artists leaving Poland. In 1928, Berlewi too left Warsaw to settle permanently in France. Professor Seth L. Wolitz, a scholar of Yiddish literature and an expert on Berlewi's career, has argued that the artist moved to Paris because there was little market for much of his abstract art in Poland and he earned very little money through his advertising work.⁸² After moving to Paris, however, Berlewi "discovered the bitter truth that the French had no interest in pure abstraction either."⁸³ The worldwide economic collapse late in 1929 certainly added to his difficulties as the market for art radically contracted. He abandoned his experiments with abstract painting and joined many other avant-garde artists in once again embracing a new sort of controlled figuration (Fig. 56) sometimes described as "the new classicism" or as a "return to order." Until the late 1930s, Berlewi divided his time between Paris and Belgium, supporting himself by paintings portraits of political and literary individuals.

During World War II, Berlewi took refuge in Nice, thus escaping the arrests, deportations, and murder of Jews by the Nazis. In 1942, already in his late 40s, he took the courageous step of joining the French Resistance, an act that was in itself an effort to preserve Jewish culture against a much more lethal force than the pogroms of his earlier life. After the war, Berlewi returned to painting, mostly focusing on portraits (Figs. 57, 58) and still lifes inspired by seventeenth-century French masters (Figs. 54, 55). He continued to write theoretical articles, and in 1961 published an article on the Russian avant-garde artists Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova, focusing in particular on their Rayonist works.⁸⁴

It was not until the 1950s that Berlewi returned to his roots as an abstract artist, engaging once again with his "mechano-textural" principles, which

he now also applied to experiments with three-dimensional objects and film. He often used a screening effect, achieving optical illusions by means of mutually covered transparent rhythmical planes. As in some of his *Mechano-Facture* works of the 1920s, Berlewi drastically reduced the range of colors, using only black, white, and red.

1957 was marked by two events of great importance for Berlewi's creative career. The first was the publication of Michel Seuphor's *Dictionary of Abstract Art* which included Berlewi's biography. Its complimentary exhibition *50 ans de peinture abstraite* (50 Years of Abstract Painting) at the Galerie Creuse in Paris, showed one painting by each artist from Seuphor's dictionary, illustrating a progression of abstract art towards optical art.⁸⁵ The second event crucial to Berlewi's return to abstract art was the 1957 exhibition *Précurseurs de l'art abstrait en Pologne: Kazimierz Malewicz, Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, Henryk Berlewi, Henryk Stażewski* (Precursors of Abstract Art in Poland: Malevich, Kobro, Strzemiński, Berlewi, Stażewski), organized by the Paris Galerie Denise René in collaboration with the Polish government. Berlewi was one of the central figures of the exhibition and his text *Mechano-Facture* was included in the catalogue.

The rediscovery of Berlewi's experimental abstract art in the 1960s led to a major re-assessment of his works and resulted in a number of one-man shows in major European cities. Summarizing this period in Berlewi's practice, Polish art historian Aleksander Wojciechowski argued that "the works from the last period prove the great vitality of the artist, who had already entered history once, but who was luckily able to return from history to the art of the present day."⁸⁶ (Figs. 60, 61)



FIG. 54. Henryk Berlewi, *Artichokes, Nice*, 1950. Oil on canvas.

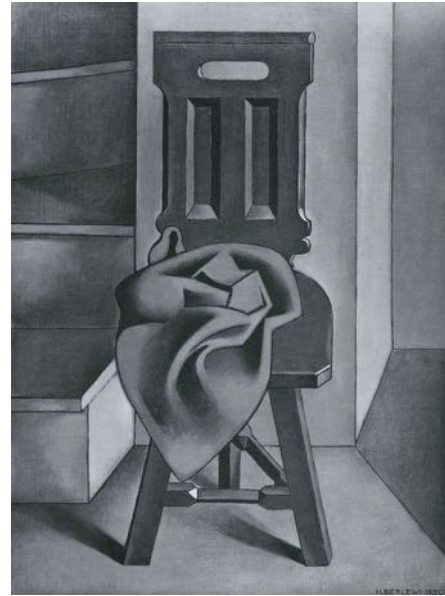


FIG. 55. Henryk Berlewi, *Chair with Red Drapery*, 1950. Oil on canvas.



FIG. 56. Henryk Berlewi, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1930. Charcoal on paper.



FIG. 57. Henryk Berlewi, *Eve*, 1950. Oil on canvas mounted on cardboard.



FIG. 58. Henryk Berlewi, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, 1967. Oil on canvas.



FIG. 59. Edward Hartwig, *Henryk Berlewi-Models*, photograph with *Mechano-Facture* and *Neo-Mechano-Facture* by Berlewi, Warsaw's Hotel Europa, 1962.

Like many other Op artists in the mid-1960s, Berlewi came to the attention of a larger public. In 1966, he collaborated with the Polish fashion label *Moda Polska* to create a line of dresses inspired by patterns from his paintings (Fig. 59). The Berman collection includes a photo of Berlewi surrounded by fashion models holding his paintings. The photo was published in the September 1966 issue of the Polish fashion magazine *Ty i Ja* and subsequently republished by the German tabloid B.Z. under the title "Papa of Op and Girls from Poland."

On August 4, 1967, Berlewi's obituary was published in the *New York Times*, after the artist's premature death from cancer at the age of seventy-two. The obituary mentioned that one of Berlewi's works had been included in the 1965 exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and "lured the buoyant, diminutive painter to this city for the first time." According to the *New York Times* reporter, Berlewi said then: "Manhattan is living Mechano-Facture. Why don't New Yorkers realize what beauty surrounds them?"⁸⁷ While in New York, Berlewi proudly wrote in a postcard to his friend Anatol Stern, the Jewish-Polish Futurist poet and writer:

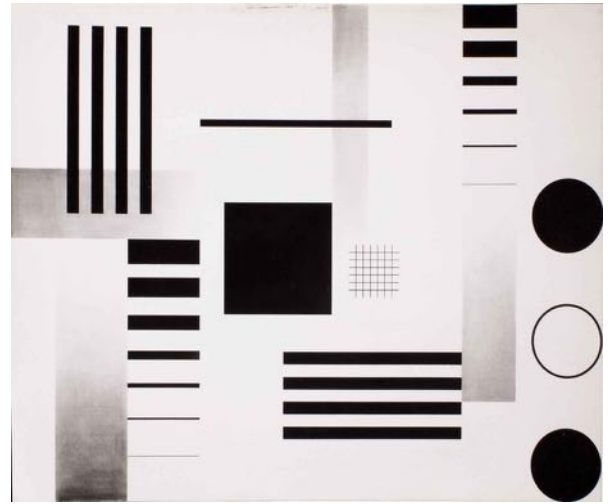


FIG. 60. Documentary photograph of a painting *Musical-Architectonic Composition* by Henryk Berlewi, 1961. Gouache on paper.

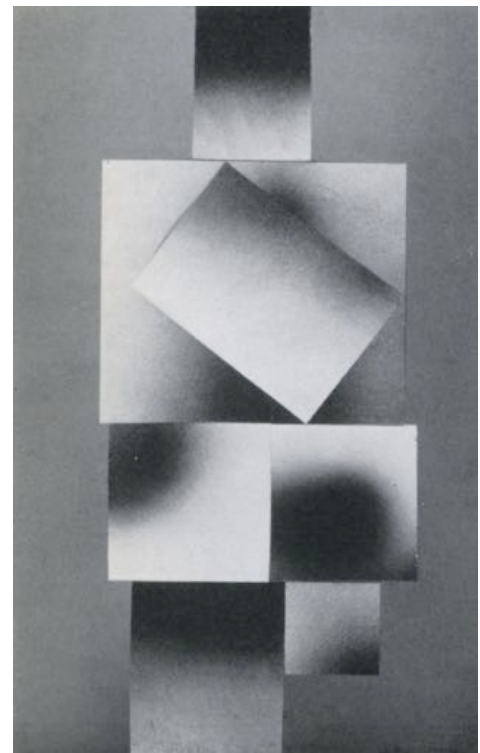


FIG. 61. Henryk Berlewi, *Sfumato*, 1963. Collage
"The whole of New York thinks of me as the father of Op Art."⁸⁸

As this essay demonstrates, during his long creative career both before and after World War II, Berlewi was a pioneer of both Yiddish modernism

and a prominent figure in the development of modernist art. Berlewi's *Mechano-Factures* are among the most original abstract works produced in the 1920s. He circulated among the avant-garde milieu of Berlin, Warsaw, and Paris, cultivated many international contacts that helped to forge connections between these centers through exhibitions and publications, and was an active member of various important avant-garde

groups. Professor Wolitz accurately assesses Berlewi's importance as "not only as an illustrator and artist of Yiddish poetry-covers but as an artist central to the entire avant-garde abstract art movement in Eastern Europe between the Wars. Having grown up in Poland, Berlewi's cultural identity as a Pole and a Jew was formed there, but as a fully mature artist he chose Europe as a territory for his universal aspirations."

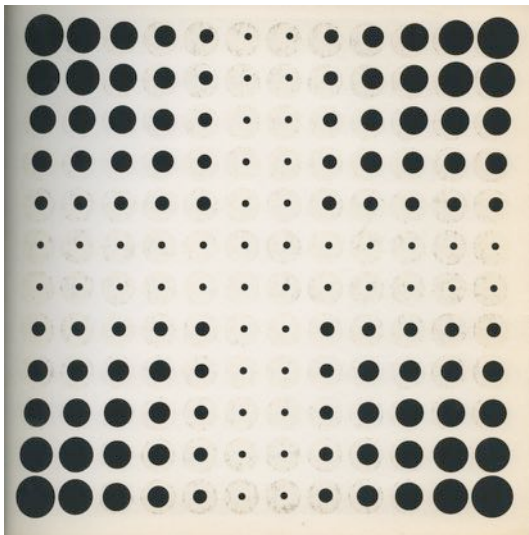
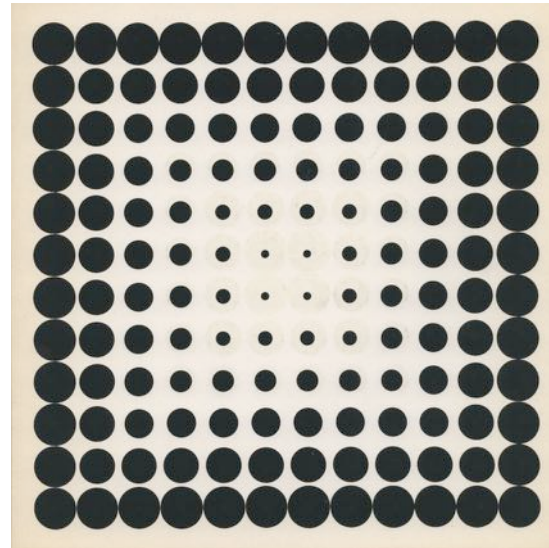
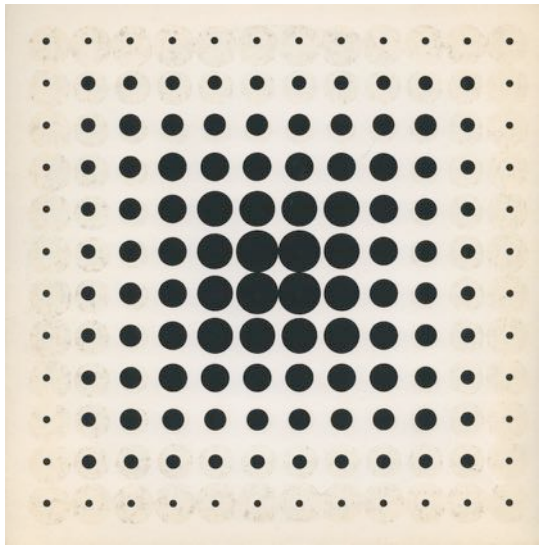


FIG. 62a-d. Henryk Berlewi, 4 works from *Mechano-Facture* series, 1962



Documentary photograph of Berlewi, c. 1930s.
Gelatin silver print, 12 x 9 3/4" (30.5 x 24.8 cm)
Merrill C. Berman Collection



Merrill C. Berman's collection also includes documentary materials assembled by Eckhard Neumann: Sturm publications pertaining to Berlewi, photographs of the artist and his works (1923-1961), and later publications on him (1961-1968).

ENDNOTES

- 1** Many French critics of the 1950s and 1960s described Berlewi as a forerunner of this movement, citing in particular the debt which well-known Op Art artist Victor Vasarely (1906–1997) owed to Berlewi. See Frank Popper, *Naissance de l'art cinétique. L'image du mouvement dans les arts plastiques depuis 1860* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1967), 66, 91 and Cyril Barrett, *Op art* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970).
- 2** *Précurseurs de l'art abstrait en Pologne: Kazimierz Malewicz, Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, Henryk Berlewi, Henryk Stażewski* [Precursors of Abstract Art in Poland: Malevich, Kobro, Strzemiński, Berlewi, Stażewski] (Paris: Galerie Denise René, 1957).
- 3** The Kingdom of Poland (*Tsarstwo Pol'skoe*), or Congress Poland, was established as a semi-autonomous state at the Congress of Vienna and included small parts of present-day Lithuania and Belarus. It remained under Russian Imperial control until 1915, when it came under German and Austro-Hungarian occupation. It re-emerged as a sovereign state at the end of World War I.
- 4** Magdalena Dabrowski, *Contrasts of Form: Geometric Abstract Art 1910-1980* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985), 109.
- 5** Leah Dickerman, "Inventing Abstraction" in *Inventing Abstraction, 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art*, eds. Leah Dickerman and Matthew Affron (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2013, London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 9.
- 6** Henryk Berlewi, "Nieco o dawnej awangardzie," *Życie Literackie* 27 (7 July 1957), 5-7. Berlewi wrote his memoirs following a disagreement with Andrzej Wat, the son of Aleksander Wat, with whom he had collaborated in the 1920s.
- 7** *Ibid.*, 5. Formism became a potent influence in Poland during the years immediately following 1923.
- 8** Gennady Estraikh, "The Kultur-lige in Warsaw: A Stopover in the Yiddishists' Journey between Kiev and Paris," in *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis. Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*, eds. Glenn Dyner and François Guesnet (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2015), 323.
- 9** *Ibid.*, 323.
- 10** On the Kultur-Lige see Hillel (Gregory) Kazovsky, *The Artists of the Kultur-Lige* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Gesharim Publishing House; Moscow: Mosty kul'tury, 2003); H. Kazovskii, "The art section of the Kultur-Lige," in *Jews in Eastern Europe*, 3:22 (Winter 1993), 5-22; and, Estraikh, "The Kultur-lige in Warsaw," 323-46.

- 11** Summary published by the Central Committee of the Kultur-Lige (Kyiv, November 1919), quoted in A. Kampf, *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1984), 206.
- 12** “*Kultur Lige Zamlung*, November 1919, Kyiv,” quoted in Ruth Apter-Gabriel, ed. *Tradition and Revolution: The Jewish Renaissance in Russian Avant-Garde Art, 1912-1928* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1987), 35.
- 13** By 1900, Warsaw was the Jewish cultural capital of the Jewish Renaissance in late Imperial Russia.
- 14** Marek Bartelik, *Early Polish Modern Art: Unity in Multiplicity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 140.
- 15** “Motto,” *Kultur Lige Zamlung*, November 1919, Kyiv, quoted in *Tradition and Revolution*, 35.
- 16** For a detailed discussion of the tradition of Jewish book illustration in Imperial Russia, see Chimen Abramsky, “Yiddish Book Illustrations in Russia: 1916–1923,” in *Tradition and Revolution*, 61–71 and Ruth Apter-Gabriel, “El Lissitzky’s Jewish Works,” in *Tradition and Revolution*, 101–25.
- 17** S. [Semen Akimovich] An-ski, or An-sky, was the pseudonym of writer, ethnographer, and activist Shloyme Zaynvil Rapoport (1863–1920).
- 18** David Mazower, “On Henryk Berlewi,” *The Mendele Review: Yiddish Literature and Language* 9, no. 5 (2005). <http://yiddish.haifa.ac.il/tmr/tmr09/tmr09005.htm>
- 19** See Jolanta Mickuté, “The Vilner Troupe, 1916-30: A Transformation of Shund Theater—For the Sake of National Politics or High Art?” *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 22, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2017): 98-135.
- 20** Henryk Berlewi, cover for *Undzer-Melave-Malka, aroysgegebn fun farayn fun Yidishe literaten un zhurnalisten in Varsha* [Our “Melave Malka” - Yiddish Literary Anthology- published by Union of Yiddish Authors and Journalists in Warsaw], M. Vonvild [Moshe Yosef Dickstein], ed. (Warsaw: Br. Wojckiewicz, ca.1921). For a detailed discussion of the cartoon, see Mazower, “On Henryk Berlewi.” <http://yiddish.haifa.ac.il/tmr/tmr09/tmr09005.htm>
- 21** *Khalyastre* was the major Yiddish cultural avant-garde movement in Poland between 1919 and 1924. *Di Khalyastre* (Yid., “The Gang”) received its title from Hillel Zeitlin, editor of the influential Warsaw daily *Moment*, who used the term in a derogatory sense because the practices of the group’s members in their struggle against realism in art outraged public opinion. *Di Khalyastre* was also the name of a journal under the editorship of Peretz Markish. The first volume was published in Warsaw in 1922, the second was published in Paris in 1924. The *Khalyastre*

movement can be divided into three periods: the year 1919, with the Łódź group associated with Young-Yiddish; the transitional period between 1921 and 1922, with the group surrounding Mikhal Vaykhert (Michał Weichert) and Alter-Sholem Kacyzne's journal *Ringen*; and, the period of 1922 to 1924, which spawned the journals *Di Khalyastre*, *Vog* (The Scales), and *Albatros*. On this, see Seith L. Wolitz, "Khalyastre," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2010. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Khalyastre>

22 Roy Greenwald, "Pogrom and Avant-Garde: Peretz Markish's *Di kupe*," *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2010): 65-84 and Joseph Sherman, Gennady Estraiakh, Jordan Finkin, and David Shneer, et al, *A Captive of the Dawn: The Life and Work of Peretz Markish (1895-1952)* (London: Legenda [an imprint of the] Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) and Maney Publishing, 2011).

23 *Di Kupe* was published in two slightly different versions: first in Warsaw in 1921 and then in Kyiv in 1922. In the summer of 1926 Peretz Markish moved to Moscow, where he established himself as an important Soviet Yiddish writer. He was awarded the Order of Lenin, one of the highest state honors, in 1939. Beginning that year and continuing until 1943 he served as the Chair of the Yiddish section of the Soviet Writers' Union. Throughout World War II Markish was a member of the board of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFK), a Soviet organization whose members included internationally-recognized cultural luminaries who were meant to appeal to Jews outside of the USSR after the German invasion in 1941. Despite his role in Soviet cultural organizations and official recognition of his contributions, he, like many other members of the JAFK, was arrested in 1949. In 1952, he and several other members of the JAFK were convicted of supposed anti-Soviet activity, espionage, and "bourgeois nationalism." Markish was shot on August 12, 1952 and rehabilitated only after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953.

24 The testimony was published by Eliezer David Rosental in volume 2, pages 24 to 25 of his *Megilat ha-ṭevaḥ: ḥomer le-divre yeme ha-pera'ot v'eha-ṭevaḥ ba-Yehudim ba-Uḳra'inah, be-Rusyah ha-Gedolah uve-Rusyah ha-levanah* (Yerushalayim: [publisher not identified], 687-691, 1927-1930).

25 Greenwald, "Pogrom and Avant-Garde," 66.

26 See Seth L. Wolitz, "Markish's *Radio* (1922): Yiddish Modernism as Agitprop," in *A Captive of the Dawn: The Life and Work of Peretz Markish (1895-1952)*, Joseph Sherman, ed. (Leeds: Legenda, 2011), 229-41. According to the scholar, the poem's aesthetic space provides a point of convergence for both communal and personal concerns built around the persona of the poet whose role is prophetic in three ways: to announce the arrival of the new age of Communism and agitate for its acceptance; to lead the Jewish people to abandon their old ways and progress towards the new truth; and to express the personal isolation and contradictions within the poetic persona on the lonely path to the new Utopia.

27 Bartelik, *Early Polish Modern Art*, 140.

28 *Ibid.*, 141.

29 Various scholars support this view. See, for example, Vasiliï Rakin, “Dva eksperimenta Lissitskogo,” *Detskaia literatura* 11 (1970): 46. Alan Birnholz was the first Western scholar to argue that Lissitzky was sent to Germany as an informal ambassador from the Soviet government. See Alan Birnholz, “El Lissitzky” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1973), 141. As Steven Mansbach pointed out more recently, it is evident that Lissitzky would have been an excellent choice to carry out such a mission since he spoke fluent German and had numerous contacts in Berlin. The Soviets had no official relationship at that time with the Weimar government; hence, employing an artist as emissary would make sense. Nevertheless, as Mansbach notes, no official documentation has to date been uncovered to verify this claim. See Steven A. Mansbach, “A Universal Voice in Russian Berlin,” in *Voices of Revolution*, ed. Patricia Railing (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000), footnote 5.

30 *Of Two Squares* was the first of Lissitzky’s books in Russian to be published in Berlin in 1922. According to Yve-Alain Bois, the reasons that *Of Two Squares* was printed in Berlin two years after it was conceived are primarily economic. In 1920, at the height of the Civil War, paper was scarce. There were also technical difficulties, since manual lithography widely used in Russia at the time was incapable of producing the desired precision and evenness of inking. Yve-Alain Bois, “El Lissitzky: Reading Lessons,” *October* 11 (Winter 1979): 116.

31 Lissitzky had already been introduced to Malevich in 1917, when both artists worked for the Moscow Soviet of Workers’ Deputies.

32 There is extensive literature on Malevich’s activities in Vitebsk and the history of UNOVIS. Key works include Tatyana Goryacheva, “UNOVIS: “We Will be Like Fire and Will Give the Force of the New,” in *Malevich’s Circle: Confederates, Students, Followers in Russia 1920s-1950s*, ed. Irina Karasik (St. Petersburg: The State Russian Museum and Palace Editions, 2001), 13-23; N. Gugin, “Poslednii god deiatel’nosti Vitebskogo khudozhestvenno-prakticheskogo instituta (1922-1923 uch. God),” in *Sbornik vystupleniia na naukovoi kanferentsyi prysvechanaï 75-goddyu Vitebskai mastatskai skoly* (Vitebsk, 1994); Galina Demosfenova, “K istorii pedagogicheskoi deiatel’nosti K.S. Malevicha,” *Stranitsy istorii otechestvennogo dizaina. Tekhnicheskaiia estetika. Trudy VNIITE* 59 (Moscow, 1989): 143-170; T.V. Kotovich, *Malevich. Klassicheskii avangard. Vitebsk-4, Posviashchaetsia 80—letiu UNOVISa* (Vitebsk: Vitebskii oblastnoi kraevedcheskii muzei), 2000; A. Shatskikh, “Malevich v Vitebske,” *Iskusstvo* 11 (1988): 38-43; idem, *Vitebsk: Zhizn’ iskusstva, 1917-1922* (Moscow: lazyki russkoi kul’tury, 2001); and, E. Trusova, “Vitebskaia khudozhestvennaia shkola v arkhivnykh dokumentakh,” in *Sbornik vystupleniia*.

33 In 1920, Lissitzky published two articles, “Suprematism of Creativity” and “Suprematism in World Reconstruction” in the UNOVIS almanac. See El Lissitzky, “Suprematism in World Reconstruction,” reprinted in English translation in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902-1934*, ed. John Bowlt (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 158. Lissitzky’s longstanding commitment to his mentor Malevich was also expressed in his series of twelve color

lithographs (1923) which use as their point of departure the famous 1913 Futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun*, for which Malevich created costume and set designs. This series of lithographs was published in Hannover, Germany by R. Leunis and Chapmann in 1923. Lissitzky developed this series from a set of watercolors that were exhibited in Berlin in 1922. The series, conceived as an electromechanical peepshow, came to be known as the *Puppet Portfolio*.

34 Kazimir Malevich, "Suprematizm. Iz kataloga desiatoi gosudarstvennoi vystavki Bespredmetnoe tvorchestvo i Suprematizm (Moscow, 1919)," reprinted in English translation in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, 143.

35 Kazimir Malevich, "Ot kubizma i futurizma k suprematizmu. Novyi zhivopisnyi realizm (Moscow, 1916)," reprinted in English translation in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, 133.

36 Kazimir Malevich, "Suprematizm. 34 risunka' (Vitebsk, December 15, 1920)," reprinted in A.S. Shatskikh, ed. *Kazimir Malevich. Sobranie sochinenii v 5 tomakh. Tom 1: Stat'i, manifesty, teoreticheskie sochineniia i drugie raboty, 1913-1929* (Moscow: Gileya, 1995), 185-189.

37 The meaning, iconography, and method of reading of Lissitzky's *Of Two Squares* have been the subject of considerable scholarly attention. Key works include Nikolai Khardzhiev, "El Lissitzky-konstruktor knigi," in *Iskusstvo knigi, 1958-60* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1962), 154-55; Vasilii Rakitin, "Dva eksperimenta Lissitskogo," *Detskaia literatura* 11 (1970): 46; Evgeny Steiner, *Stories for Little Comrades: Revolutionary Artists and the Making of Early Soviet Children's Books* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 25-32; Bois, "El Lissitzky: Reading Lessons," 113-28; Gerald Janecek, *The Look of Russian Literature: Avant-Garde Visual Experiments, 1900-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 202; *El Lissitzky: 1890-1941*, ed. Peter Nisbet (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, 1987), 25-26; Patricia Railing, *More About Two Squares* (Forest Row, East Sussex: Artists Bookworks and Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990); and, Victor Margolin, "El Lissitzky's Berlin Graphics," in *Voices of Revolution: Collected Essays*, ed. Patricia Railing (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000), 188-89.

38 For a discussion of Lissitzky as an artist integrating the styles of Suprematism, Constructivism, and Rationalism, see S.O. Khan-Magomedov, "A New Style: Three-dimensional Suprematism and Prounen" in *El Lissitzky, 1890-1941: Architect, Painter, Photographer, Typographer* (Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum, 1990), 35-46. It is important to note that Lissitzky studied architecture at the Technische Hochschule in Darmstadt, Germany, from 1909 to 1914. He also studied at the Riga Polytechnical Institute from about 1915 to 1917. This education could be perceived as a link to his ideology behind the *Proun*, which approaches the making of two-dimensional art as if it were three-dimensional. A significant part of Lissitzky's architectural training included the study of axonometric projection, frequently used in architecture, in which receding lines remain parallel and do not meet in a vanishing point. On this, see Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," *Art in America* (April 1988): 172.

- 39** The first *Proun* paintings were reproduced as a set of lithographs and published in the first *Proun Portfolio* in 1921. Many of the *Prouns* exist as studies in gouache and watercolor, as lithographs, or as fully developed paintings on canvas. Lissitzky wrote that he created the *Proun* out of the square and the circle. In these geometric compositions, the focus is on a complex notion of simultaneous perception and the issue of a single perspective as well as traditional pictorial space is denied.
- 40** Ilya Ehrenburg, *Liudi, gody, zhizn': Vospominaniia v trekh tomakh*, vol. I (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 393.
- 41** See Magdalena Dabrowski, *Contrasts of Form: Geometric Abstract Art 1910-1980* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985), 109.
- 42** Christina Lodder, "Art into Life: International Constructivism in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Central European Avant-gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910-1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002), 179.
- 43** Quoted in Jerzy Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów polskich w XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 1 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), 216.
- 44** *Ibid.*, 216.
- 45** H. Berlewi, "Der Zigzag fun der Yiddisher Kunst (The Zigzag of Yiddish Art)," originally published in *Almanach* (Paris, 1955), quoted in Kampf, *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century*, 203.
- 46** Named after an art review published in Yiddish, The Young Yiddish group was established in 1919 and dissolved around 1921. See Jerzy Malinowski, *Grupa "Jung Idysz" i żydowskie środowisko "nowej sztuki" w Polsce, 1918-1923* (Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Sztuki, 1987) and Marek Bartelik, "Models of Freedom: The Young Yiddish Group from Lodz, 1919-1921," in *Jewish Dimensions in Modern Visual Culture*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton-Long, Matthew Baigell, and Milly Heyd (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press; Hannover and London: University Press of New England, 2010), 220-44.
- 47** Unsigned manifesto, published in *Yung-Yidish* 2-3 (1919): 2.
- 48** See Henryk Berlewi, "El Lissitzky in Warschau," in J. Leering and Wienand Schmied, ed. *El Lissitzky*, (Eindhoven, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum/Basel, Kunsthalle/Hannover, Kestner-Gesellschaft, 1965). Quoted in *Henryk Berlewi Malarstwo*, exh. Cat. Zielona Góra, Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych, Muzeum Okręgowe Lubuskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Muzeum, 1967.

- 49** "Gründungsauftritt der Union internationaler fortschrittlicher Künstler" (Founding Proclamation of the Union of Progressive International Artists) in *De Stijl* 5, No.4 (1922): 49-52. Translation by Nicholas Bullock in Stephen Bann, ed. *The Tradition of Constructivism* (New York: Viking, 1974), 59.
- 50** Henryk Berlewi, "Miedzynarodowa Wystawa w Düsseldorfie [International Exhibition in Düsseldorf]," in *Nasz Kurier* (August 2, 1922), reprinted in English translation in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, eds., *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930* (Los Angeles, California: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 397-400.
- 51** See Lidia Głuchowska, "From Abstract Film to Op Art and Kinetic Art?: Henryk Berlewi's *Mechano-Facture* as a Transmedial Adaptation of Viking Eggeling's Experimental Films," in *The Aesthetics of Matter: Modernism, the Avant-Garde and Material Exchange*, eds. Sarah Posman, Anne Reverseau, David Ayers, Sascha Bru, and Benedikt Hjartarson (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter), 43-66.
- 52** Poet Esther Shumiatcher, a member of the group Khalyastre, penned the poem *Albatros*, from which the journal's title came.
- 53** Avidov Lipsker and Ruth Bar-Ilan, "The Albatrosses of Young Yiddish Poetry: An Idea and Its Visual Realization in Uri Zvi Greenberg's *Albatros*," *Prooftexts* 15 (1995): 89.
- 54** In 1923, Hans Richter founded the review *G*, which combined elements of both Constructivism and Dada and included contributions by such diverse artists as Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner, Malevich, Lissitzky, Mies van der Rohe, Schwitters, Hausmann, and Grosz. Van Doesburg's text "Toward Elementary Plastic Expression" was published in the July 1923 issue of *G*.
- 55** H. Berlewi, "Konstruktywista," in *Mieczysław Szczuka*, eds. A. Stern and M. Berman (Warsaw: WAiF, 1965), 139.
- 56** El Lissitzky, "Typography of Typography," *Merz* (Hannover), no. 4 (July 1923), reprinted in *Voices of Revolution*, 133. Lissitzky first visited Hannover in 1922, where he became friendly with Schwitters who had published Lissitzky's manifesto on typography in *Merz*. In 1924, while Lissitzky was in Switzerland, the two men co-edited number 8-9 of *Merz* entitled "Nasci."
- 57** Lissitzky believed that the purpose and the content of a book should determine its structure. In 1920, Lissitzky formulated his concept of the book design in the postface to the UNOVIS almanac: "...You should build the book as a body moving in space and time, as a dynamic relief, in which each page is a surface, containing forms; a new intersection and a new phase of the united system should be formed during each turn [of the page]." See El Lissitzky, "Primechanie ne k etoi knige," *UNOVIS*, 1920, The State Tretyakov Gallery, Manuscript Department (OR GTG),

Moscow, F. 76, D. 9, L. 51.

58 See Alexandra Shatskikh, "Lazar Markovich Lissitzky: Malevich and El Lissitzky—Leaders of UNOVIS," in *In Malevich's Circle*, 46 and Lissitzky's short article "Novaia kul'tura" (The New Culture), published in the Vitebsk journal *Shkola i revoliutsiia* (The School and Revolution), nos. 24-25 (1919): 11, reprinted in translation with commentary by Peter Nisbet as "Lazar Lissitzky, The New Culture," in *Experiment/Eksperiment, A Journal of Russian Culture* 1 (1995): 261.

59 *Azalel* did not last long. Financial difficulties forced its members on the road, where they sometimes joined forces with members of other cabaret companies in a struggle for survival.

60 See *Constructivism in Poland, 1923-1936 (Blok/ Praesens/ a.r.)* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki. Stuttgart: Dr. Gantz'sche Druckerei, 1974).

61 Berlewi, "Międzynarodowa Wystawa w Düsseldorfie," *Nasz Kurier* (August 2, 1922), reprinted in English translation in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, eds., *Between Worlds*, 397-400.

62 El Lissitzky and Ilya Ehrenburg, "Die Blockade Russlands geht ihrem Ende entgegen" (The blockade of Russia moves towards its end), Introduction to *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, No. 1 (Berlin, 1922).

63 *Ibid.*

64 See Natalia Adaskina, "The Place of Vkhutemas in the Russian Avant-Garde," in *The Great Utopia* (New York: The Guggenheim Museum, 1992), 289.

65 In the 1922 *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung* (The First Russian Art Exhibition) works of all different groups of artists who influenced the development of Russian art were displayed. Along with the works of artists who were already well-known, like Kandinsky, Chagall and Alexander Archipenko, works by the Constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin and by the Suprematist Malevich were also shown.

66 Jean Cassou, one of the authors of the 1957 exhibition catalogue *Précurseurs de l'art abstrait en Pologne* considered Malevich to be the main father figure of Polish abstraction. In the second essay in this catalogue, Julian Przyboś, the exhibition curator, an active member of the pre-war avant-garde movement and friend of Strzemiński, shared this view on the importance of the role Malevich played in the development of Polish art and emphasizes the Polish nationality of the artist.

67 On Unovis in Smolensk, see Alexander Lisov, "Branches of Unovis in Smolensk and Orenburg," in *Celebrating Suprematism: New Approaches to the Art of Kazimir Malevich*, ed. Christina Lodder (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 126-43.

68 Strzemiński introduced the foundations of his theory of Unism in the article "B=2" in 1924.

In his article "Dualism Versus Unism," first published in number 6-7 of the magazine *Droga* and reprinted in 1928 as "Unism in Painting," Strzemiński espoused the view that a work of art is plastically self-sufficient and proclaimed himself to be in favor of absolute autonomy of artistic work. In Strzemiński's theory of *Unism*, color, plane, line and space forged "a total, indestructible unity." He attempted to achieve the organic unity that would unite the shapes in the picture with its planes and borders, constituting a flat visual unity, cut off from the environment by the sides of the picture. See the English translation of extracts from this article in *Constructivism in Poland*, 86-87.

69 "Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński: In Search of Real Utopia," in *Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński. Une avant-garde polonaise*, Karolina Ziębińska-Lewandowska and Jarosław Suchan, eds. (Paris: Centre Pompidou and Milano: Skira Editore Milan, 2018), 14.

70 *Ibid.*, 15.

71 Members of the *Blok* group included Witold Kajruksztis, Katarzyna Kobro, Henryk Stażewski, Mieczysław Szczuka, Teresa Żarnower, and Edmund Miller.

72 In 1924, Kobro returned to Poland from Russia and joined the group.

73 Henryk Berlewi, *Mechano-Faktura* (Warszawa: Jazz, 1924), translated by Katherine J. Michaelson and republished in *Henryk Berlewi* (New York: Helen Serger, La Boetie in conjunction with Hervé Alexandre, 1978), 11-14.

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

76 Henryk Berlewi, "Funktionelle Grafik der zwanziger Jahre in Polen," *Neue Grafik* 9 (March 1961): captions 13 and 15.

77 "Co to jest konstruktywizm," *Blok*, no. 6-7 (1924), n.p.n. The essence of this statement was reprinted by Szczuka a year later in the essay "Czego chce Blok [What Does Blok Want]?" *Reflektor* no. 2 (1925), described as a program of the group.

78 See Olga Shikhereva, "Władysław Strzemiński," in *Malevich's Circle*, 86.

79 The *Praesens* group, consisting of painters, sculptors and architects, was mainly concerned with the relationship between architecture and the other visual arts.

80 In 1927, Malevich's exhibition took place at the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung. It was made possible by the Novembergruppe.

81 The translation of Malevich's book *The Non-Objective World* from Russian into German was

made by A. von Riesen and the book was published by Albert Langen in 1927 in Munich as volume 11 of the series of Bauhaus books under the title of *Die Gegenstandslose Welt*.

82 Wolitz, "Some Comments on David Mazower's article on Henryk Berlewi," <http://yiddish.haifa.ac.il/tmr/tmr09/tmr09005.htm>

83 *Ibid.*

84 Henryk Berlewi, "Michael Larionoff, Natalie Gontscharowa und der Rayonnismus," *Das Werk* 48, no. 10 (1961): 364-366

85 See Agata Pietrasik, "Restaging the Avant-garde: Henryk Berlewi's Return to Abstract Art," *Widok. Teorie i praktyki kultury wizualnej* 3 (2014). <http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/article/view/64/141>

86 Aleksander Wojciechowski, *Henryk Berlewi. Malarstwo*, Zielona Góra, Salon Wystawowy, 1967 (unpaginated brochure accompanying an exhibition).

87 "Henryk Berlewi, 72, Painter, Designer," *The New York Times* August 4, 1967, 29.

88 Henryk Berlewi to Anatol Stern (postcard), 30 March 1965, Anatol Stern papers. Quoted in Pietrasik, "Restaging the Avant-garde," <http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/article/view/64/141>)

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Albrecht, K. "Er gilt als Vater der Op-Art. Galerie Rewolle stellt Werke Henryk Berlewis aus," in *Bremer Nachrichten*, January 28, 1967.

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Heiderich, Günter, "Musikalische Bildkonstruktionen. Die Galerie Rewolle stellt Werke des polnischen Malers Henryk Berlewi aus," in *Weser Kurier*, January 28, 1967.

Helms, Dietrich, "Neue Arbeiten eines alten Pioniers – Henryk Berlewi bei Rewolle in Bremen," in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August, 1967.

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Wischnitzer-Bernstein, Rahel, "Mechanofaktur. Henryk Berlewis Ausstellung im "Sturm," in *Jüdische Rundschau*, August, 1924.



Henryk Berlewi, *Henryk Berlewi. Mechano-Faktura*, 1966.
Lithographic poster, 22 1/4 x 33 1/4" (56.5 x 84.4 cm)
Merrill C. Berman Collection

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1915-1921 Exhibits regularly at the *Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki* (Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts) in Warsaw
- 1922 Exhibits first work with the elements of *Mechano-Factura* (*Still Life with Bottles*), Nationalgalerie, Berlin
- 1923 *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung*, the Novembergruppe section, Berlin.
- 1924 Solo exhibition, the Austro-Daimler Automobile Salon, Warsaw.
Solo exhibition, *Galerie Der Sturm*, Berlin.
- 1950 *Ausstellung gegenständlicher Bilder Stilleben*, Galerie Pétridès, Paris
- 1957 *50 ans de peinture abstraite* (50 Years of Abstract Painting), Galerie Creuse, Paris
Précurseurs de l'art abstrait en Pologne: Kazimierz Malewicz, Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, Henryk Berlewi, Henryk Stażewski (Precursors of Abstract Art in Poland: Malevich, Kobro, Strzemiński, Berlewi, Stażewski), Galerie Denise René, Paris
- 1960 *50 Jahre konkrete Kunst*, Helmhaus, Zürich
- 1961 *Der Sturm: Herwarth Walden und die Europäische Avantgarde Berlin 1912-1932*, Nationalgalerie Schloß Charlottenburg, Berlin
- 1962 *Skripturale Malerei*, Haus am Waldsee, Berlin
- 1963 *Formes Mathématiques—Peintres et Sculpteurs*, Palais de la Découverte, Grand Palais, Paris
Werbegrafik 1920-1930, Frankfurt am Main
Solo exhibition, *Galerie Situationen 60*, Berlin
- 1964 *50 Ans de collage*, Musée de St. Etienne
Solo exhibition, *Maison de France*, Berlin
- 1965 Solo exhibition, *Centre d'Art Cybernétique*, Paris

- Les peintres et la nature*, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Saint-Denis
- Historically Important 20-th Century Masters*, Drian Galery, London
- Grand et Jeunes d'Aujourd'hui*, Musée d'Art de la Ville de Paris
- Les années 25*, Musée d'Art Décoratifs, Paris
- The Responsive Eye*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1966 Solo exhibition, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk pięknych, Warsaw. Traveling exhibition: Słupsk (Stolp/Pommern), Schloß; Łódź, Association of Polish Artists; Zielona Góra (Grünberg), Z.P.A.P (Association of Polish Artists)
- 1967 Solo exhibition, Galerie Rewolle, Bremen
- 1973-1976 *Constructivism in Poland, 1923-1936* . Traveling exhibition: The Folkwang Museum, Essen (1973); The Rijksmuseum Kroller-Müller, Otterlo (1973); and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1976).
- 1974 *Kunst im Polen*, Kunsthaus, Zürich
- 1986 *Contrasts of Form: Geometric Abstract Art, 1910-1980*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1988 *European Drawing Between the Wars*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 2005 *Drawing from the Modern, 1880-1945*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 2013 *Inventing Abstraction, 1910-1925*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 2017 Solo exhibition, Piotr Nowicki Gallery, Warsaw
- 2018-19 *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau*. The Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart-- Berlin; Muzeum Narodowe (The National Museum), Wrocław, Poland

Works by Henryk Berlewi in the Museums and Private Collections

Adolf Luther Stiftung, Krefeld

Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, Brussels

Cabinet des Estampes, Musée Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp

Graphische Sammlung der Technischen Hochschule, Zürich

Galerie des XX Jahrhunderts, Berlin

Joe Fishstein Yiddish Poetry Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Library

Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Krefeld

Kunsthhaus, Zürich

Kupferstichkabinett , Kunsthalle, Hamburg

Mid-Manhattan Library Art Collection, New York

Milan Dobeš Museum, Bratislava

Muzeum Narodowe (The National Museum), Warsaw

Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Nationalgalerie, Berlin

Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart

Summlung Egidio Mazzona, Berlin

Summlung Etzold at Museum Abteiburg, Mönchengladbach
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Merrill C. Berman Collection

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York

Wilanów Poster Museum, Warsaw

Henryk Berlew "Mechano-Faktur"

"Mechano-Faktura"), Warszawa 1924.

The translation has been made from the first edition, published in Warsaw in the form of a booklet, early in March 1924. The text is integral; only a short introduction by Aleksander Wat has been left out. "Mechano-Faktur" is Berlew's theoretical statement which would later become a basis for his activities as a painter and designer. It is the only developed theoretical motivation of the artist's endeavours, situating him within the constructivist movement. As the date of its writing the author gave June 1923, during his stay in Berlin.

Henryk Berlew Mechano-Faktur

During the recent decades, in the period of decomposing of traditional painting into its simplest elements, a new factor has emerged and arisen to a predominant significance in painting, the texture. Its essence is: 1) the surface of the painted canvas itself; the way (direction) of leading the brush and putting on paint; the thickness or thinness of the paint layer; a mat or glossy finish, roughness or smoothness; 2) the degree of intensity of colours, the patina, or in a word, the aggregate of all that composes the material side of painting.

Although texture has been existing ever since the beginnings of painting, it has never been devoted attention as a factor determining any value of a work whatever. Texture has been existing outside of the creative awareness, without absorbing a painter's mind. It has been something secondary and auxiliary; one obviously could not do without it, but that was all.

It was the great revolt in the plastic arts (cubism, futurism) that was necessary for the extremely emotionally loaded opportunities inherent in texture to be revealed.

In what does the emotionality of the working of texture consist?

A Russian theorist of texture, Markov, refined it, in his very interesting but rather chaotic book, as a "noise" brought about by association of various impressions that are evoked by the given texture of an object. Old pictures, eg. ikons, evoke by their peculiar texture a relevant "noise"

in us, different from the noises caused, e.g., by impressionist paintings. This author ascribes a great significance to texture, extending its functions upon everything that surrounds us, the organic and inorganic world.

Defining the essence of texture, Markov as well as other theorists start from a purely material assumption, i. e. they base it on a cult of the material itself. Investigating texture from this angle, French and in particular Russian painters have made a lot of interesting experiments. A worship of material, the scrutinizing of its properties in a laboratory, has been brought to its peak in Russia (Tatlin, Rodschenko). From all these researches an absolute emancipation of texture from the oppression of the other painterly factors has resulted and it has been given an independent significance.

To enhance the working of texture, resort has been made to materials that not previously belonged to the store of the means used by painters, such as newspaper clippings, cork, glass, sand, metal, etc. Those materials, arranged beside each other on a picture in a certain rhythmical relationship planned beforehand, have been forming unusually varied texture patterns, almost shocking a beholder accustomed to the gentle and smooth surfaces in painting.

Juxtaposing materials so varied as to their nature, with their different textural properties and different dimensionality, must have obviously modified the flat character of a picture, transforming it into a bas-relief that can be properly appreciated not only by sight, but also by touch. Their use has indeed greatly enhanced the emotionality of texture (stronger contrasts), but at the same time it has transformed painting itself into some new genre, a "Skulpturalerei" (Archipenko).

Though owing to texture, painting has come closer to its original element, it has also lost one of its specific characteristics, viz. its two-dimensionality.

Starting from the two-dimensional (flat) assumption in painting, all the three-dimensional hints (perspective) and actual protrusions must be considered as improper and violating the nature of painting. But on the other hand, we cannot give up again those enormous values of texture that have been attained in recent years by hard experimental labour. Now, how shall we reconcile one with the other?

Carefully analyzing the textural working of several materials (sand, glass, newspaper, wood), I have found out

that their working is not direct, i. e. those materials affect us not as such, but as metaphors of various textural combinations. A printed newspaper, as such, has some meaning for us: we can read it; but as an element in a texture it loses such utilitarian meaning absolutely, and it is transformed into a peculiar typographical rhythm, completely cut away from the contents brought by the printed letters. Similarly, glass as a texture is transformed into a hue that, because of its smoothness and polish, has the highest potentiality of contrast; sand becomes a grainy, pulverized, trembling timbre; wood is a proper wooden ornament, etc. I could quote many more similar examples of textural transformations of objects.

Thus, in their textural function, these materials lose their essential significance, or in other words, they are dematerialized. So it is not materials in themselves which are significant, but their equivalents. In consequence, if we invent suitable equivalents for the several materials, separately for glass, sand, wood, newspaper etc., we shall also be able to get the result of the working of textures, identical with the working of the texture of a material itself.

Relying consequently on this principle of equivalency of materials and developing it further, we shall create a wholly new and autonomous texture, independent on materials and corresponding to the nature of two-dimensional painting.

Apart from the faults of the texture of materials with respect to its incompatibility with the 2-dimensional properties of painting, also its anachronic character with respect to contemporary assumptions of the plastic arts must be stressed.

The texture of materials, with its enormous range of means, for there can be infinitely many materials, has compelled a painter to a continuous fumbling with the secrets hidden in every material, stimulating him to produce the most refined textural combinations and sophisticating his textural sensibility to the degree of perversity.

The texture of materials has been a susceptible soil to all kinds of individualism, subjectivism and morbid aesthetic refinement. Against the requirements of time: instead of simplicity and economy of means — too much complexity; instead of clarity — embroilment.

But I repeat, the results of the outright mythical cult of materials, expressed in already uncountable experiments, are enormous and they should by no means be denied.

What is at stake, is rather that the results already attained were appropriately employed and transformed for the new purposes. At this point industrial technology turns out to be our ally. I'll try to explain what I mean.

Taking the principle of equivalency of materials as the starting point to the new textural system, it must be stated that the finding out of textural equivalents for the several materials would alone reduce painting to the role of an imitator — if not of objects, then at any rate of their textures. Painting would be turned into some new kind of objectless impressionism, or into a kind of illusionism. Besides, a fresh start would be given to an even greater enhancement of subjectivism and chaos — and that because of the huge mass of materials present around us and not yet ordered in any manner with respect to their

texture. It would be a toilsome and complex work without any real advantages, except perhaps an even greater anarchy and confusion in the field of plastic creation — which of course does not belong to the demands of contemporary art. And thus, such equivalents should be produced, that would not be so-called mere photographs of textures of individual materials or objects, but that would contain in themselves a synthesis of all the textural values, chaotically scattered among all the objects in the world around us, in the whole universe.

To carry out the work of bringing together the textural values in a synthetic order, to call forth a disciplined textural system, we must resort to the method of schematization. A scheme as the only rational means of simplifying all entanglements, allowing to attain the end with the greatest possible economy of means, is what can help us in this case.

But then, the technical means of painting must be readjusted — applied to the tasks of the scheme. The old technique of painting, still lingering, with all its features of skillful virtuosity, accidentality, dependence on transient moods and whims of a painter, has been quite well fitted to the ends of the impressionistic and naturalistic, individualistic and subjectivist art of yesterday. However, the old technique is no longer appropriate for the principles of art of today which can be summarized as follows: a breaking with all imitation of objects (even if it is the most free), autonomy of forms, discipline in the broadest sense of the word, clarity permitting everyone to grasp the artist's intention, schematism, geometry, precision that facilitates everyone the ordering of his impressions obtained

from the given work. The technique of craftsmen is even more helpless when it comes to a creation of a new schematic textural system. And in that case, it is only the mechanistic technology, modelled after the industrial methods as independent from individual whims and based upon a strict and precise functioning of a machine, that can give us a hand. Thus, the painting of today, the art of today, should be based upon the principles of machine production.

A totally new creative system will be produced by mechanizing texture and the means of painterly expression. This concerns not only painting, but all creative effort altogether.

It does not at all mean an automatization of the creative process itself. On the contrary, by mechanization of the means we shall attain an even greater freedom of creating, a greater inventive opportunity.

The old system of the craft in painting, with all its load of naturalistic and academic prescriptions, has been nothing but an impediment for the freedom of invention. It was an artist's nightmare. It has been stealing the bulk of his creative energy, wasting it for trifling things without any weight, for morbidly refined virtuosity.

Art of today is a product of the present day. It must break with all the habits of art of yesterday, perfumed and perverted, oversensitive, hysterical, romantic, boudoir, individualistic. It ought to offer a new language of forms, accessible to all, that would not fall in collision with the rhythm of our present day.

Documentary photograph of Berlewi in front of his painting, c. 1950-60s.
Gelatin silver print, 9 x 6 5/8" (22.9 x 16.8 cm)
Merrill C. Berman Collection

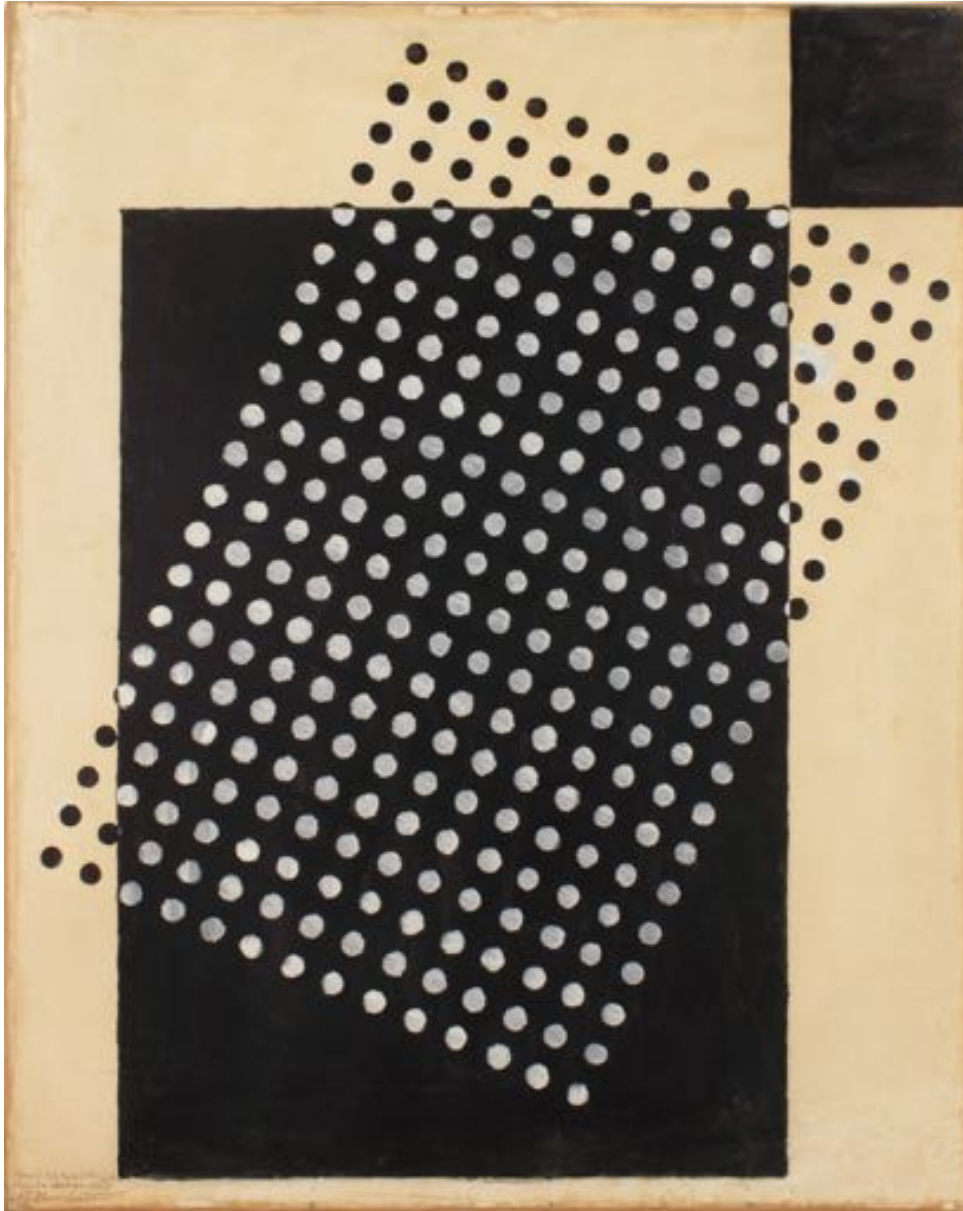


**WORKS BY HENRYK BERLEWI
IN THE MERRILL C. BERMAN COLLECTION**



• **Plate I.** *Neo Faktur 23*, 1923.
Gouache and pencil on paper, 21 x 16 5/8" (53.3 x 42.2 cm)

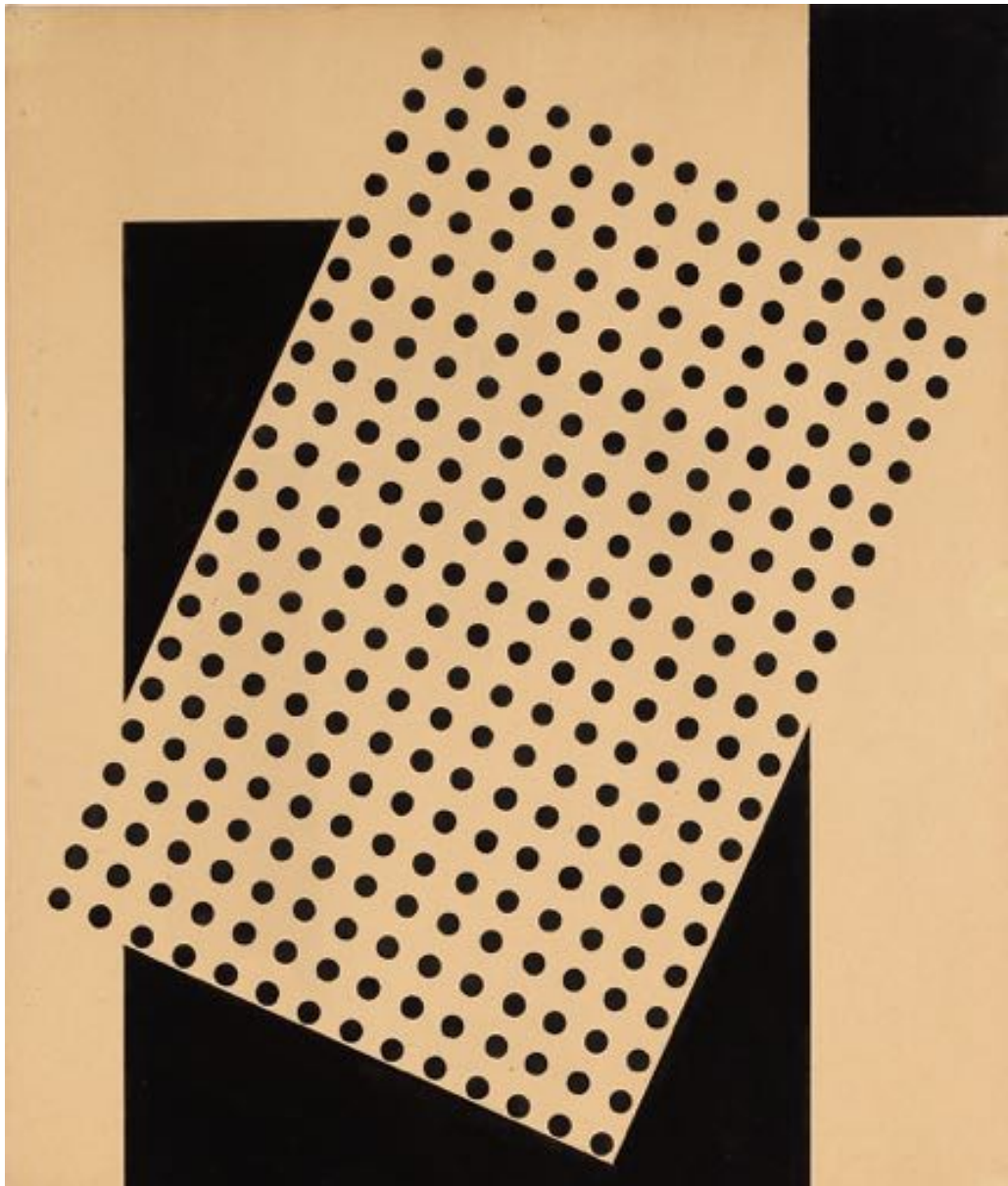
Provenance: The work remained with the artist prior to the resurgence of interest in his work in the late 1950s / early 1960s prompted by the art historian Eckhard Neumann (1933-2006).



• **Plate II.** *Élément de la Mécano-Facture*, 1923.
Gouache on paper mounted on board, 21 1/2 x 17 3/4" (55 x 45 cm)

Marks and inscriptions: Recto, lower left: *Eléments de la Mécano-Facture / première version 1923 / H. Berlewi*"

Provenance: The work remained with the artist prior to the resurgence of interest in his work in the late 1950s / early 1960s prompted by the art historian Eckhard Neumann (1933-2006).



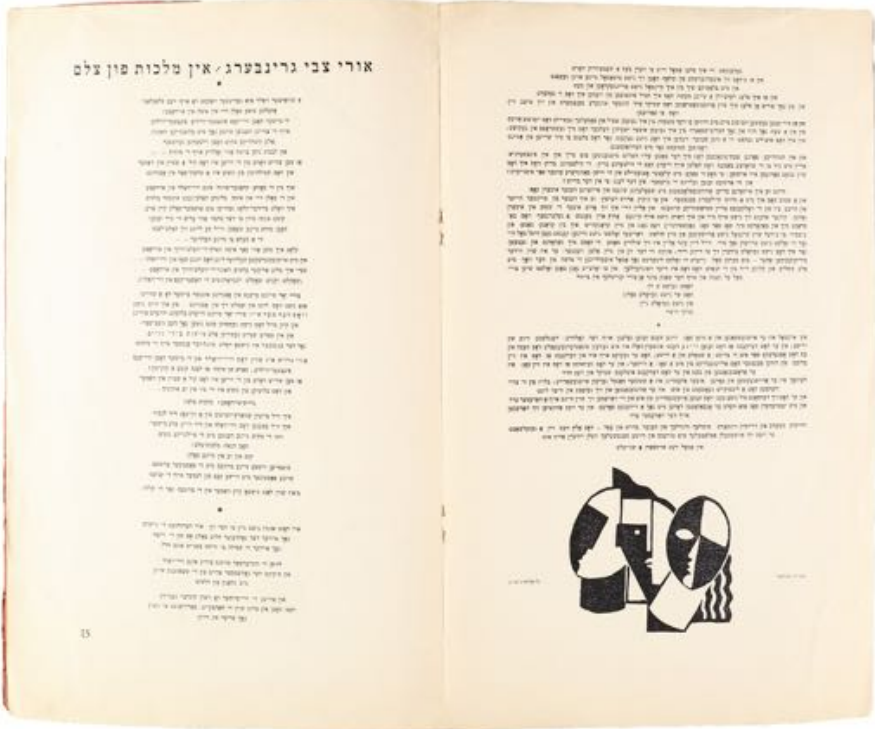
• **Plate III.** *Élément de la Mécano-Facture*, 1923.
Gouache on paper, 21 1/2 x 17 3/4" (55 x 45 cm)



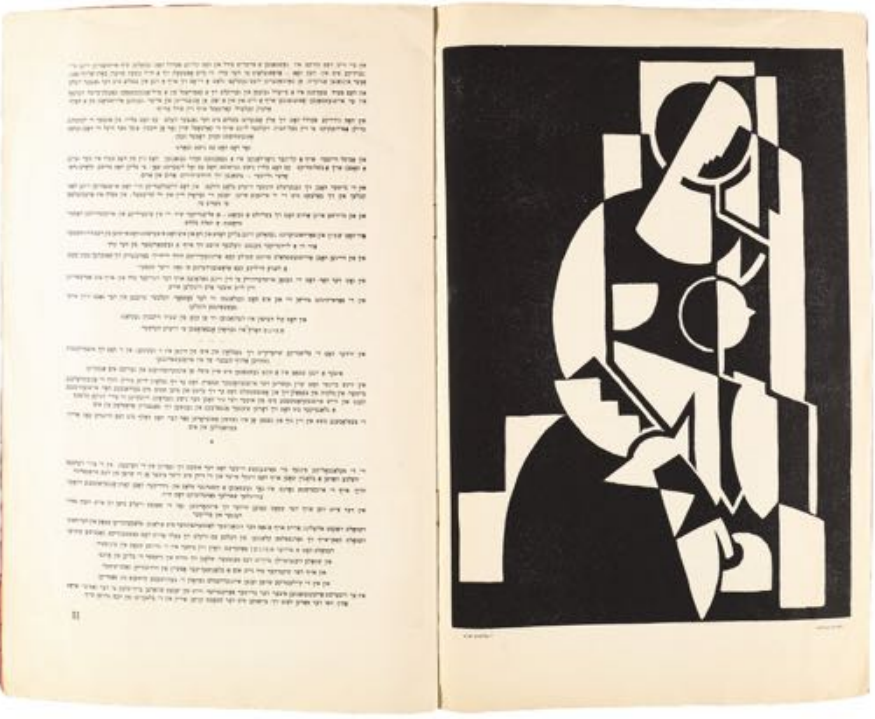
a-recto

• **Plate IV a.** Cover for *Albatros* (Journal devoted to new expressions in poetry and art), volumes 3-4, Berlin, 1923. Edited by Uri Tsvi Grinberg
Woodcut on paper, 15 x 10" (38.1 x 25.4 cm)

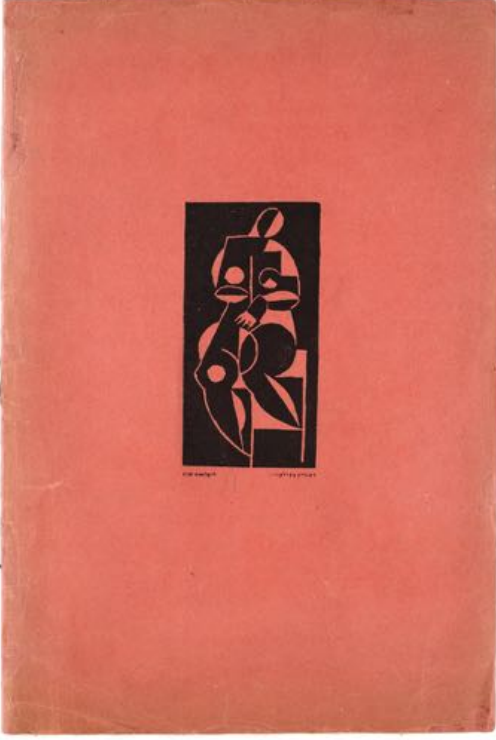
• **Plate IV b-d** Internal spreads and back cover for *Albatros* (Journal devoted to new expressions in poetry and art), volumes 3-4, Berlin, 1923. Edited by Uri Tsvi Grinberg.
Linocut on paper, 15 x 10" (38.1 x 25.4 cm)



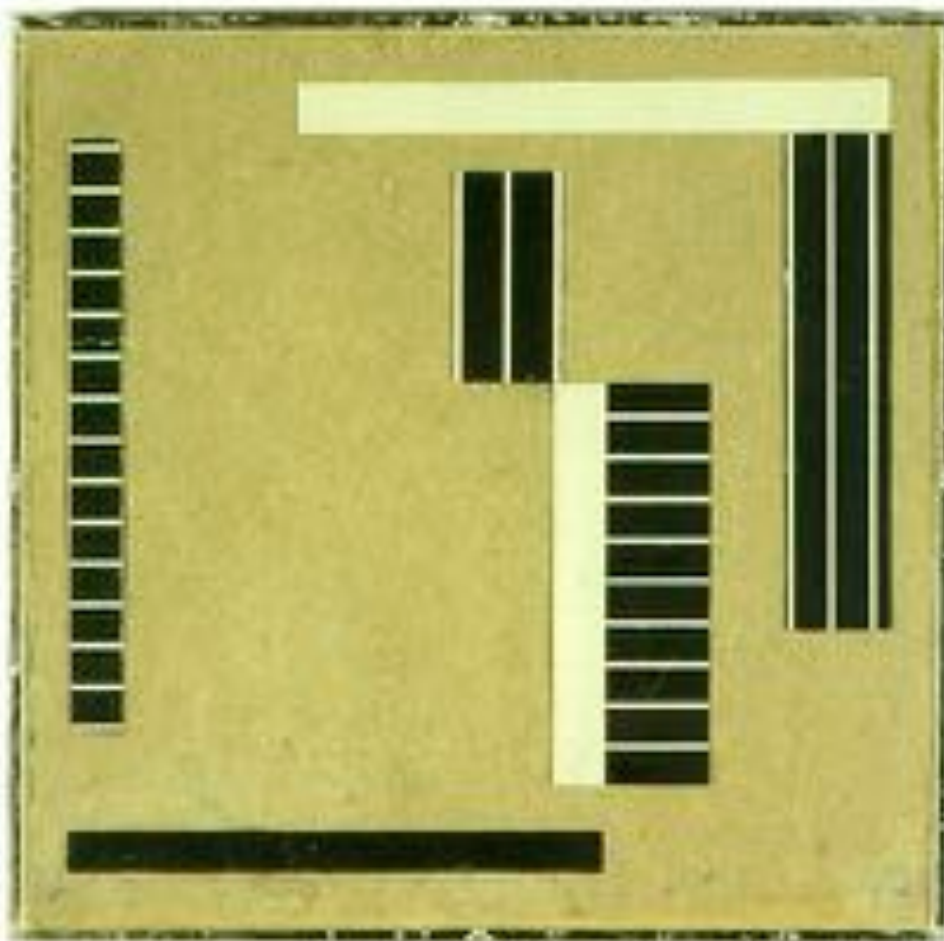
b- internal spread



c- internal spread



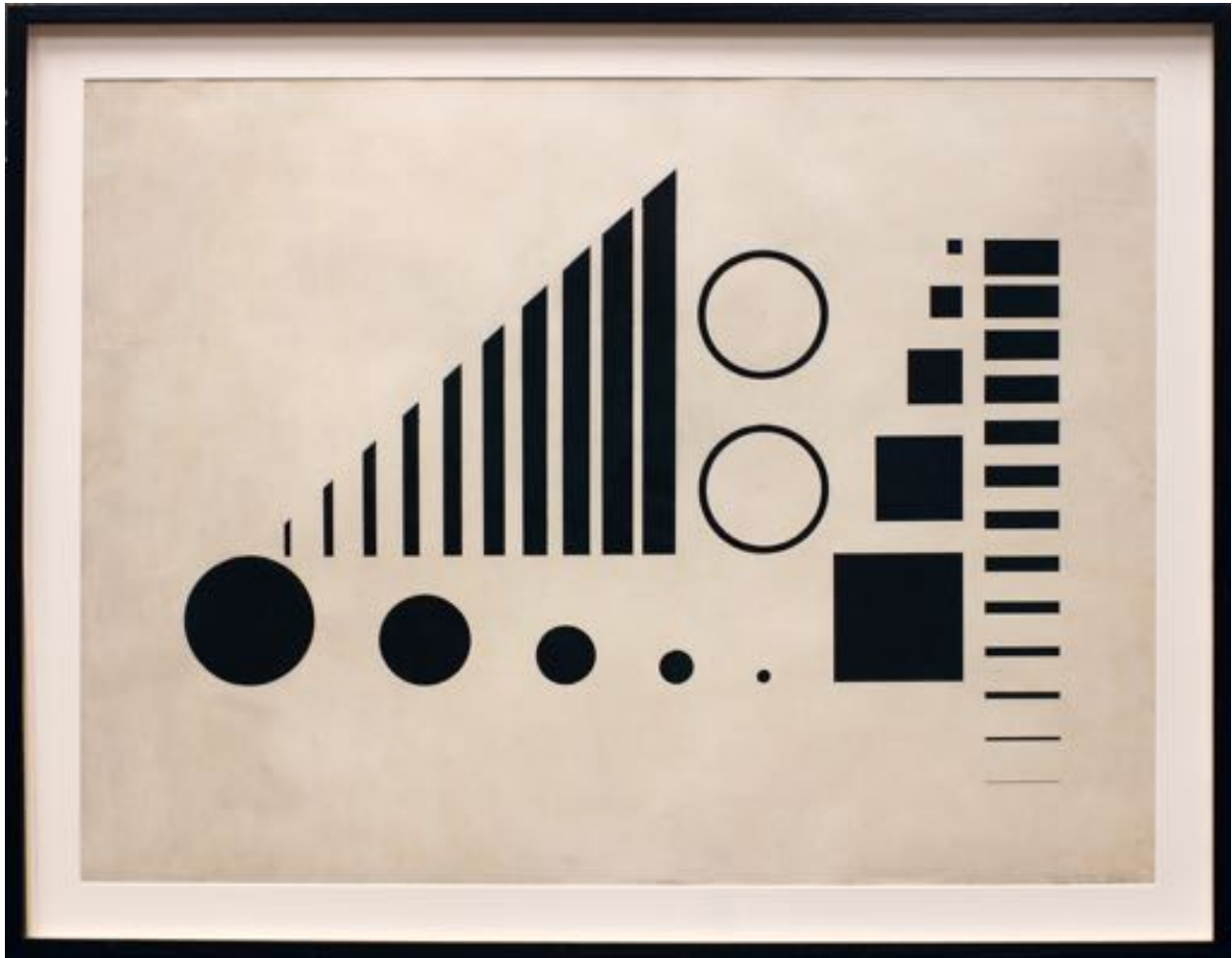
d- verso



• **Plate V.** *Mechano-Facture*, 1924.
Cut-and-pasted papers on paper, 7 7/8 x 8 1/16" (20 x 20.5 cm)



• **Plate VI.** *Mechano-Facture: Composition in Red, Black and White*, 1924.
Letterpress on paper, 24 x 19 5/8" (61 x 49.8 cm)





- **Plate VII.** (see left) *Kontrasty Mekanofakturowe (Mechano-Facture, Dynamischer Kontrast)*, 1924. Gouache on paper, 32 5/8 x 42 7/8" (83 x 109 cm)

Marks and inscriptions: Recto, bottom right: Henryk Berlewi 1924 / [Kont]rasty-mekanofakturowe

Provenance: The work remained with the artist prior to the resurgence of interest in his work in the late 1950s and early 1960s facilitated by the art historian Eckhard Neumann (1933-2006).

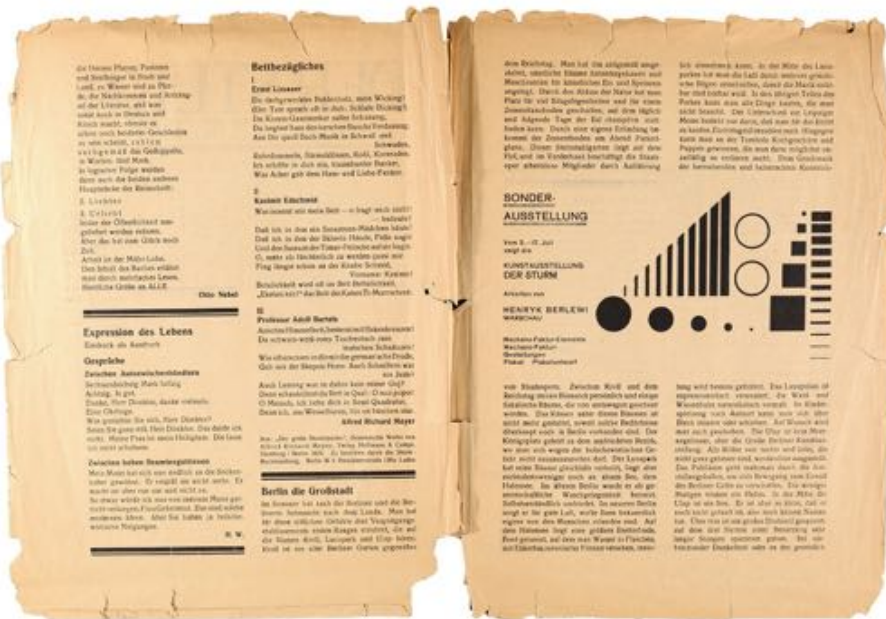
Early exhibitions: "Hendryk Berlewi: First Exhibition of Mechano-Facture Works," Austro-Daimler Automobile Salon, Warsaw (March 14-25, 1924) (see installation shot at right).

"Sonderausstellung: Arbeiten von Hendryk Berlewi, Warsschau, Mechano-Faktur-Elements, Mechano-Faktur-Gestaltungen, Plakat, Plakatentwurf," at Galerie *Der Sturm*, Berlin (July 3-17, 1924). Reproduced in the catalogue as "Mechano-Facture 1924" and in *Der Sturm's* newsletter (see previous page) and as a postcard (see following page).

Acquired by MoMA (March 2018)

- **Plate VIII.** One postcard from the group of 5, produced for the exhibition at *Der Sturm* gallery, 1924. Letterpress on paper (postcards), 4 x 6 1/4" (10.2 x 15.9 cm)

Acquired by MoMA (March 2018)



• **Plate IX.** Spread for the magazine *Der Sturm*, 15, 1924.
Letterpress on paper, 12 1/4 x 9 1/8" (31.1 x 23.2 cm)

• **Plate X.** *Contrasts of Elements of Mechano-Facture* in *Der Sturm*, 15, 1924, No 3, 157.
Letterpress on paper, 12 1/4 x 9 1/8" (31.1 x 23.2 cm)



• **Plate XI.** Design for poster: "Henryk Berlewi: First Exhibition of Mechano-Facture Works", 1924.

Stencil with gouache, 24 3/4 x 19 3/8" (63 x 49.2 cm)

Text: First Exhibition of / Mechano-Facture Works / at the Austro-Daimler Automobile Salon / Wierzbowa 6 / Exhibitor: Hendrik Berlewi / 14-25 March 1924

Edition: Unknown. Another copy of this poster is in the collection of Muzeum Plakatu w Wilanowie, Warsaw.

Provenance: The work remained with the artist prior to the resurgence of interest in his work in the late 1950s / early 1960s prompted by the art historian Eckhard Neumann (1933-2006).

Note: This hand-stenciled poster advertised the artist's one-man exhibition in Warsaw.

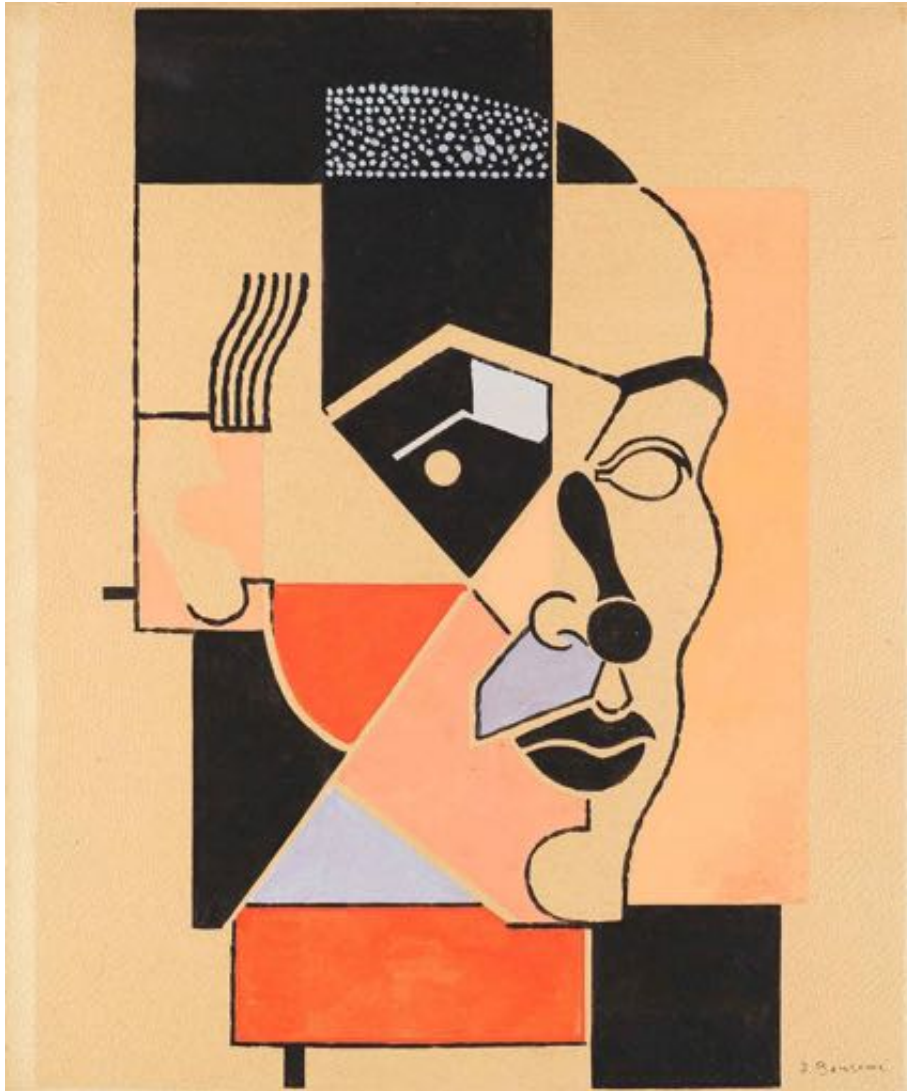
Acquired by MoMA (March 2018)



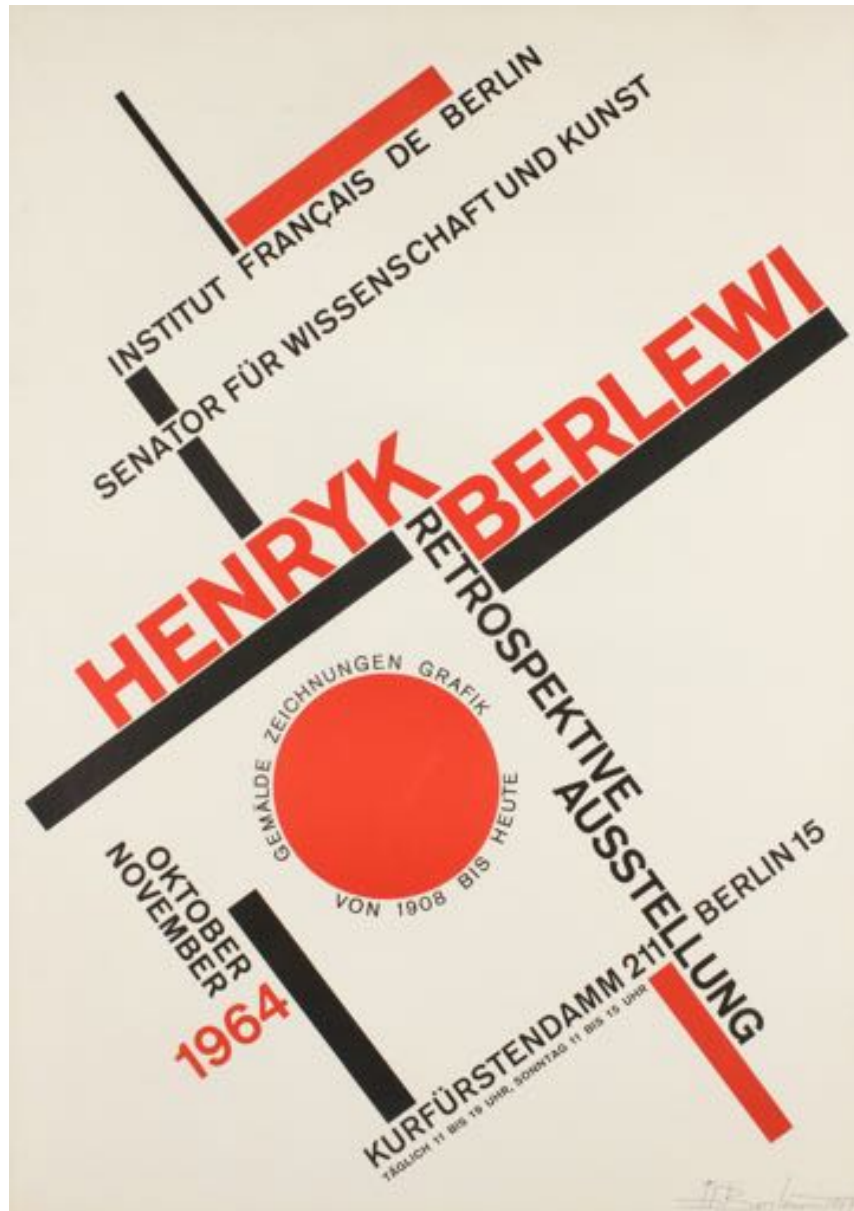
• **Plate XII.** Cover for a pamphlet *Prospekt Biura Reklama Mechano* (Mechano Advertising Agency), 1924. Letterpress on paper, 5 1/2 x 4 7/8" (14 x 12.4 cm)



• **Plate XIII.** Cover for the advertising booklet for the chocolate factory *Plutos*, 1925.
Lithograph and letterpress on paper, 5 7/8 x 5 7/8" (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

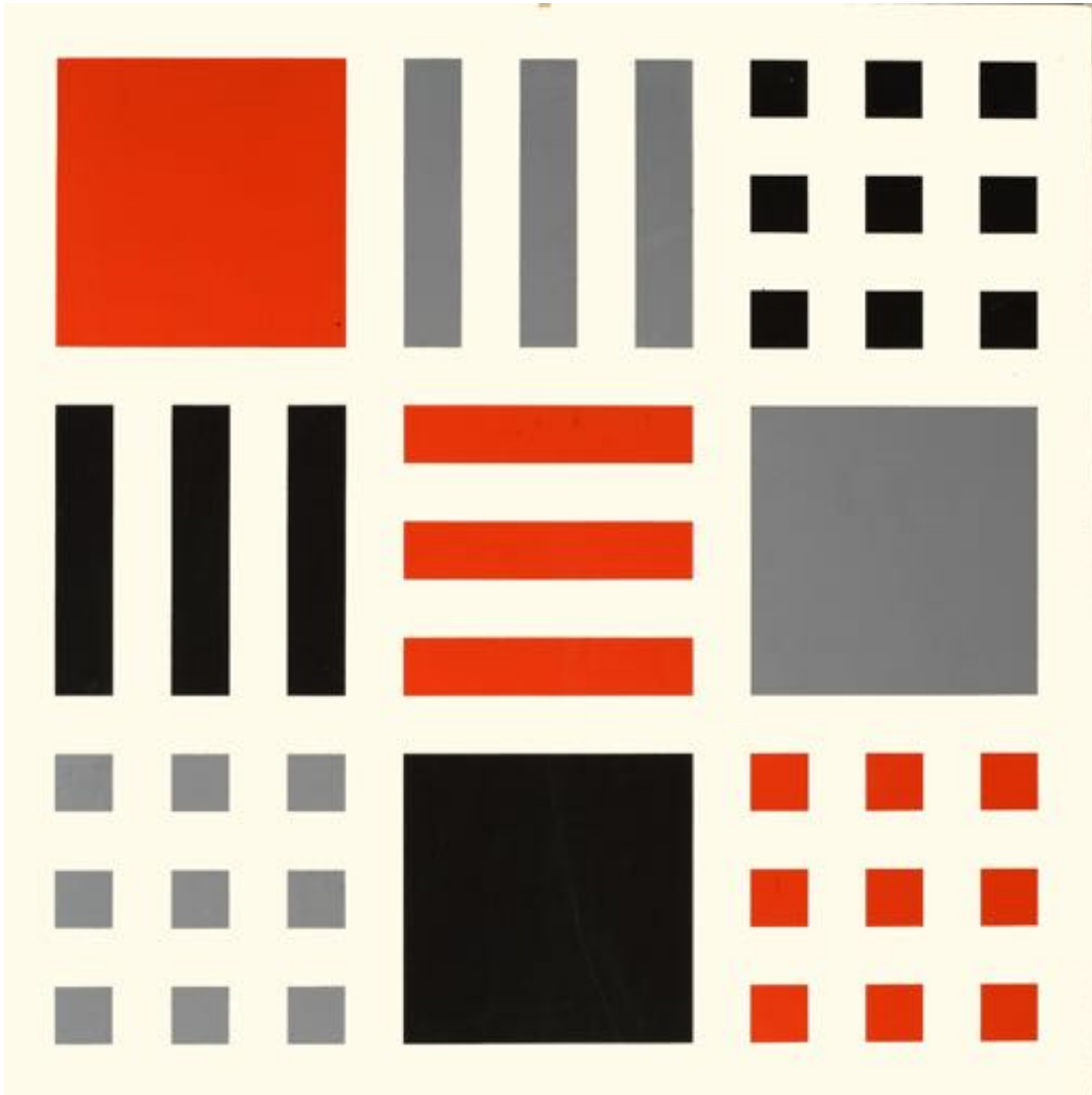


• **Plate XIV.** *Avantgarde Autoportret* (Self portrait), 1960, based on the 1922 version of Berlewi's self-portrait. Gouache on handmade paper, 15 x 12 1/4" (38 x 31.2 cm)



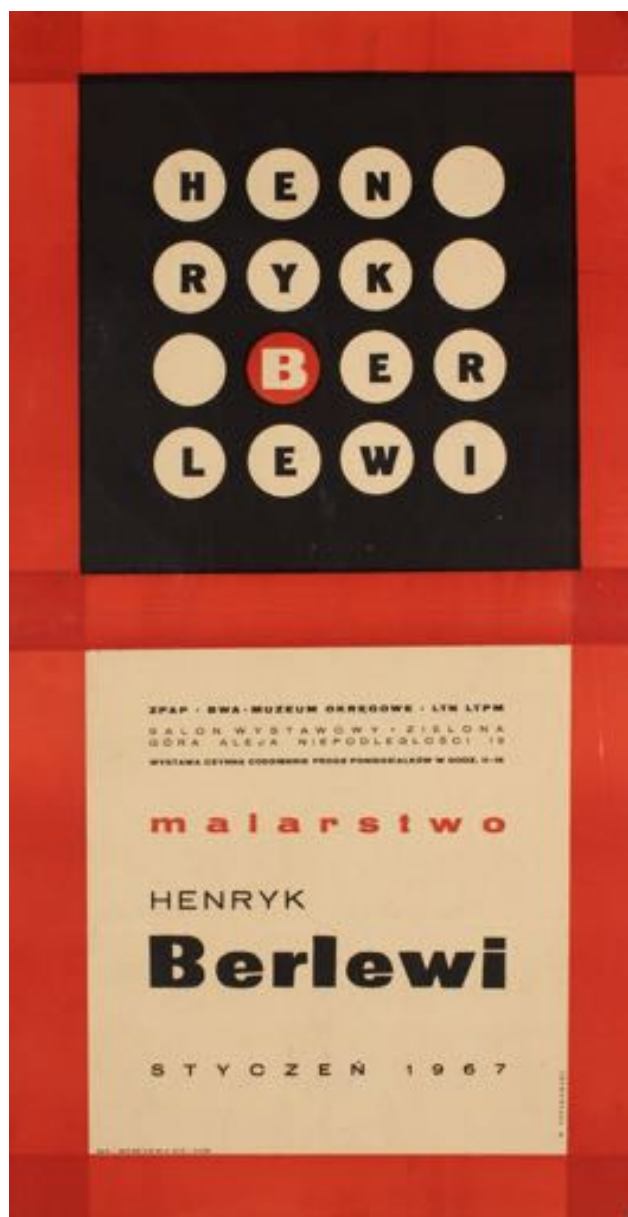
• **Plate XV.** Poster for Henryk Berlewi's retrospective exhibition in Berlin, 1964. Lithograph, 32 3/4 x 23 1/8" (83.2 x 58.7 cm)

Inscriptions: Institut Français De Berlin Senator Für Wissenschaft Und Kunst. Henryk Berlewi Retrospektive Ausstellung. Oktober-November 1964



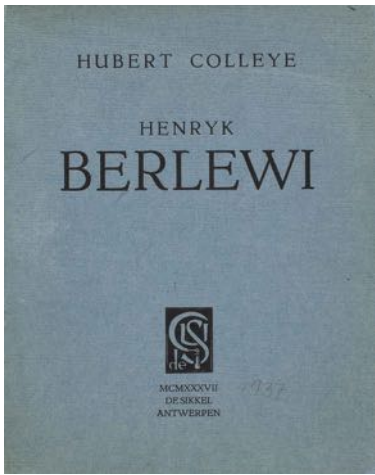
• **Plate XVI.** *Komposition* (Composition), circa 1964.
Oil on canvas, 29 7/8 x 29 7/8" (78 x 78 cm)

Formerly in the Merrill C. Berman Collection



• **Plate XVII.** Maquette for the catalog cover *Henryk Berlewi. Muzeum Okręgowe. Malarstwo. Styczeń 1967, 1967.* Lithograph, 35 x 18 1/4" (88.9 x 46.3 cm)

**RARE CATALOGS ON HENRYK BERLEWI
IN THE MERRILL C. BERMAN COLLECTION**



1



2



3



4



5



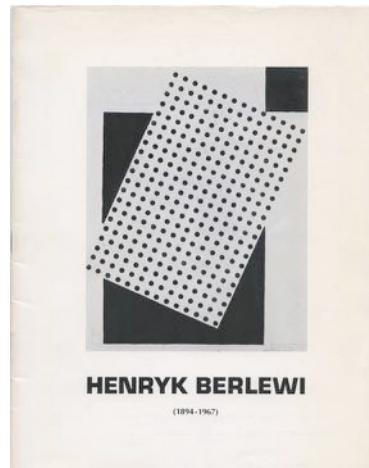
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7



8



9

- 1** Colleye, Hubert. *Henryk Berlewi: Poolsch Schilder* (Antwerpen: De Sikkel, 1937). 8 x 6 3/8" (20.3 x 16.2 cm)
- 2** *Mechano-Facture. Wyd. Jazz 1924* (reprint: Paris: LeClerc, 1962), 1962 reprint of 1924 original. 6 7/8 x 6 5/8" (17.5 x 16.8 cm)
- 3** *Mechano-Facture by Henryk Berlewi, situationen 60 galerie dokumentation* (Berlin, 1963). 8 3/4 x 8 7/8" (22.2 x 22.5 cm)
- 4** *Retrospektive Ausstellung H(enryk) Berlewi: Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Grafik, Mechano-Fakturen, Plastik von 1908 bis heute*. October-November 1964, Maison de France (Berlin: Gerhard Verlag, 1964). 11 x 8 1/4" (27.9 x 21 cm)
- 5** Neumann, Eckhard. *Henryk Berlewi and Mechano-Facture* (reprinted from *Typographica*), 1964. (London: Lund Humphries) 11 x 8 1/4" (27.9 x 21 cm)
- 6** *Henryk Berlewi Malarstwo*, exhibition catalogue. Zielona Góra, Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych, Museum Okręgowe Lubuskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Muzeum, 1967 (Warsaw, 1967). 8 1/4 x 8 1/4" (21 x 21 cm)
- 7** Ohff, Heinz. *Visuell Konstruktiv. Ausstellung in den Räumen der Kunstbibliothek*. June 30-August 7, 1968 (Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1968). 8 1/4 x 7 7/8" (21 x 20 cm)
- 8** *Berlewi, Témoignages*. With texts by Nina Kandinsky, Nicolas Baudy, Charles Estienne, Waldemar George, Raoul Hausmann, Georges Hugnet, René Massat, Jacques Menetrier, and Claude Rivière (Paris: Centre d'Art Cybernétique et Éditions de Beaune, 1965). 9 x 6 3/4" (22.9 x 17.1 cm)
- 9** Serger, Helen, ed. *Henryk Berlewi (1894-1967)*, exhibition catalogue, April 25-May 31, 1978 (New York: Helen Serger la boetie, inc, in conjunction with Hervé Alexandre, 1978). 9 x 7" (22.9 x 17.8 cm)

