

and journals such as *The Cornfield (Niva)*, the cover of which is reproduced in a striking illustration (p. 277). But even to extend the author's stated time frame to the next logical staging post of 1917 would be a separate and major undertaking.

Yet these concerns with the later sections of the book are minor when set against the overall picture of a broad-reaching, synthesizing history that is a mine of detail and an impressive feat of scholarship, witnessed not least by copious footnotes and an extensive bibliography. Dianina's skill in successfully weaving together the strands of, among other things, art history, literature, museum studies and cultural history, while writing in a style which is both scholarly and eminently readable shines out from the pages of her text. This book will prove useful and interesting to a wide audience, from those who seek new material to explain this complex period to students, to those who are researching the deeper themes of national identity and cultural tradition with which its rich content engages.

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Gan, Aleksei. *Constructivism*. Translated and with an introduction by Christina Lodder. Editorial Tenov, Barcelona, 2013. xciii + 77 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$32.50: €29.00: £23.00 (paperback).

THE truly modern artist in early 1920s Russia was one who abandoned 'high art' forms such as easel painting, seeking in its place socially useful art which would transform all aspects of everyday life. Such were the goals of the Constructivists, who by 1921 committed themselves to reshaping the conditions of daily existence by creating objects based on the principles of formal and material integrity and utilitarian function (Christina Lodder, 'Constructivism and Productivism in the 1920s', in *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914–1932*, Seattle, WA, 1990, pp. 100–01). The Constructivist ethos was encapsulated by Nikolai Chuzhak, a literary critic and theoretician of Production Art, who described the goal of creating a new art that, rather than 'being an individualistic form of decorating life', would instead become 'a form of production' (N. F. Chuzhak, 'Pod znakom zhiznestroeniia [opyt osoznaniia iskusstva dnia]', *Lef*, Moscow-Petrograd, no. 1, March 1923, p. 22).

Aleksei Gan's 1922 book, *Constructivism*, was the first theoretical treatise of the movement, 'an attempt to explain, clarify, justify and promote the new creative approach' (pp. ix, xxxiii). In the words of John Bowlt, the text 'acted as a declaration of industrial constructivism and marked the rapid transition from a purist conception of a constructive art to an applied, mechanical one'

(John E. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934*, New York, 1976, p. 215). Appropriately, the book was designed in accordance with the principles of Constructivist graphic design, ‘with its bold use of lines, different typefaces, innovative spacing, and presentation of slogans slung diagonally across the page’ (p. xxxv).

Lodder’s introduction to the current volume represents a significant contribution to the scholarly understanding of Constructivism, while making Gan’s text accessible to those even with little background in Russian art history. The introduction also provides a fascinating, well-researched overview of the life and career of this foremost theoretician of Moscow’s Working Group of Constructivists, as the artists of the movement were initially known.

Gan’s book was stimulated by the many debates on construction and production that took place at INKhUK (Institute of Artistic Culture) during 1921 (Bowlt, p. 215). Gan characterizes his treatise on Constructivism as ‘an agitational book, with which the constructivists are beginning the fight against the supporters of traditional art’ (p. 1). He places the emergence of Constructivism into a historical context. Citing the three concepts (*tectonics*, *faktura* and *construction*) that lay at the basis of this new type of art, often described as ‘material and intellectual production’, Gan defines these terms’ cultural meanings and their importance in the movement. While the terms *faktura* and *construction* had already been utilized in contemporary artistic discourse, the term *tectonics* had been coined by Gan to encapsulate Constructivism’s ideological and industrial ethos (pp. xxvi, xxxiii). Throughout the text, Gan emphasizes Constructivism’s relationship to Marxism, suggesting that it represented the only truly revolutionary creative trend, and that it alone should be adopted as the official aesthetic of the Soviet Union (p. xxxv).

Although Gan was a key figure of Russia’s post-revolutionary avant-garde, the information on his life and career has been frustratingly scant, and for many years even the exact dates of his birth and death were unknown. As Lodder points out, until the 1990s, very little had been written about Gan (p. ix). Given the significance of Gan’s theoretical and practical output, Lodder’s account of his career is both greatly welcome and long overdue.

Lodder’s introduction sets Gan in the larger cultural and artistic context by linking his work to that of other Constructivists and highlighting his ties and collaborations with other important Russian avant-garde artists. In early 1919, Osip Brik invited Gan to join IZO Narkompros, the Department of Fine Arts in the People’s Commissariat for Education. Gan also became one of the editors of the journal, *Art (Iskusstvo)*. He had many friends in Russia’s vanguard circles — largely because he himself was not an artist, but was sympathetic to the experiments of the avant-garde, had a revolutionary background, and was well versed in Marxism (p. xxii). In particular, as Lodder observes, Constructivism’s fusion of the formal (read: artistic) and the ideological was

personified in Gan's close association with the artists Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova.

Lodder argues that Gan was a man of wide-ranging talents, and as such it is difficult to categorize him (p. xi). He edited two important journals, *Cinema-Photo* (*Kino-Fot*, 1922–23), and *Contemporary Architecture* (*Sovremennaya arkhitektura — SA*, 1926–30), which articulated Constructivist theory and practice in relation to film, photography and architecture. Gan also worked in theatre and film, designed some of the first kiosks embodying Constructivist principles, and developed the theory and practice of typography along Constructivist lines (p. ix).

Lodder also explores Gan's organizational and administrative involvement with the arts after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and amid the context of the emerging debates on Constructivism's role in contemporary Soviet life. Her examination of the artistic and political setting profoundly enriches Gan's text, making this publication a crucial resource for future scholarship on this important figure.

Lodder's knowledge of Gan's career and reputation, her mastery of the complex historical and theoretical debates of the time and her ability to analyse diverse cultural positions in an integrated manner is impressive. In her account of Gan's career, Lodder interweaves discussion of both contemporary theory and art-historical debates of the 1920s with close reading of a wide range of primary sources. This volume is an important contribution to the growing literature on Russian Constructivism, and will become essential reading for scholars and students of Russian cultural history and politics of the twentieth century.

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Ritzarev, Marina. *Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' and Russian Culture*. Ashgate, Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2014. xiv + 169 pp. Music examples. Notes. Select bibliography. Index. £60.00.

EVER since Rimskii-Korsakov first pressed Chaikovskii for details of the programme he claimed to have heard in the Sixth Symphony on the occasion of its premiere on 16 October 1893, critics have expended a great deal of effort and not a little imagination in trying to uncover the hidden narrative of the *Pathétique*. They are justified, of course, by Chaikovskii's claim, made in a letter to his nephew, Bob Davydov, that the idea behind the work 'will remain a riddle for everybody' (p. 1), as well as by his early intention to call the new work a 'programme symphony'. Marina Ritzarev's new interpretation of the symphony is just the latest attempt at solving the riddle and in many ways,