

THE THEORY OF RECOMPOSITION

An important aspect of the activity of the "New Artists"¹ was their theoretical activity. Many of the works produced by the "New Artists" in the fields of music, theatre, painting and literature possessed a clearly defined theoretical basis. One of the fundamental elements was the theory of recomposition, a theory which was published in the form of several articles by the critic Potapov² in our art-theoretical journal "Novost". One could say that the theory of recomposition arose out of articles printed in journals during the years 1982-1984.

What is this theory?

During those years I gave a lot of attention to Rauschenbach's studies³ of spatial constructs. It was one of the few books which actually analysed the experience of visual images of various peoples and drew conclusions, whereas standard art criticism was no more than simple description, and offered no serious conclusions at all relating to the functioning of the human being. I was never satisfied with Freudianism, for instance, or other approaches based in areas outside of art, although I read Freud's books with interest, especially the ones on art. But in Rauschenbach's work I discovered a man standing on the threshold of a certain truth which I had been able to apprehend through the cunning contrivances of youth. One of these experiments is described in the secret appendix to the book "Zero-Object". It occurs in a sealed form in the collection "Zero-Object" in two copies, one of which is in Moscow, the other in Leningrad. It is a description of an experiment conducted in parallel with the display of the Zero-Object⁴. While the Zero-Object was on exhibition in the Kirov House of Culture, certain experiments were

¹ The "New Artists" appeared on the art scene in Leningrad in the mid-80s, as a "third force" interposed between the contesting "official" and "unofficial" artists. The fundamental principles of their activity were: Mikhail Larionov's "cult of everythingness" - art is made of everything, on "any surface"; the abolition of the priority of the creative individual - the "New Artists" created their works collectively, authorship was of secondary importance; the artist is not restricted to the sphere of painting, he works with music, film, photography, fashion, cookery, theatre, literature, criticism.

² "I. Potapov" was a pseudonym of Timur Novikov.

³ Boris Viktmovich Rauschenbach (b. 1915), a leading Soviet specialist in mechanical engineering, the theory of combustion and guidance systems for space craft; he also studied and developed theoretical bases for various forms of perspective. Well known as the author of the books "Spatial Constructs in Old Russian Painting" (Moscow, Nauka, 1975), devoted to questions of the so-called "inverse" perspective in old Russian art, and "Spatial Constructs in Painting" (Moscow, Nauka, 1980), which analyses the methods by which space was represented on a flat surface in Ancient Egyptian art and medieval art (Byzantium, Russia, India, Iran) and in the work of Cezanne.

⁴ The "Zero-Object" served as a point of departure for the gathering around Timur Novikov of a group of artists who later called themselves the "New Artists". This gesture in the dialectic of evolution and revolution was a natural development. The meaning of revolution (to which Timur Novikov often appeals) is the setting of the hands of the clock of history (or an) back to zero, the starting point for the activity of any "New" groups. The 20th century offers a substantial number of examples which repeat the figure zero in a cyclical development - here we can adduce two: 1) On 29 May 1915, K.S. Malevich (1878-1935) wrote to M.V. Matiushin (1861-1934), "Since our intention here [in a journal] is to reduce everything to zero, I have decided to call it 'Zero'. Afterwards we will go beyond zero". 2) The activity of the "Zero" group in Dusseldorf from 1957 to 1967. It should be noted that, in contrast with the "monochrome, vibration, seriality, achromia, colour structure and kinetism" of the "Zero Group" (quoted from Herman Helfert's Manifesto), the "Zero-Object" is semantically more akin to John Cage's silence, presenting the form-creating emptiness of an empty hole behind the shielding apparatus of an exhibition.

carried out by the "New Artists", in which the most varied people took part. It is difficult now to describe these experiments, but they were all experiments to do with consciousness and the human psyche. During these experiments the influence of the Zero-Object was measured - on people and on the environment, and certain phenomena were discussed, such as: what might happen if space were to pass through the Zero-Object. The Zero-Object was the hole in the middle of a bagel that turns space inside-out⁵, and does a few other things besides. All of these side effects were studied by young people using very uncomplicated research technologies. We need not go into the details of these experiments, we can simply note that as a result I came to the conclusion that consciousness - which has a specific nature and acts in an automatic, mechanical fashion - and the functioning of the human brain are subject to observation, as is the process of perception, one of the most important processes for visual art.

Let us simplify our model and imagine the human being as an assembly of mechanisms. His eyes are video cameras which transmit a signal via wires to the memory block in the head, i.e. to a computer. The processing of the signal between eye and computer. Professor Rauschenbach discovered, changes over time. It is an unstable process. An immense number of experiments carried out not only by him, but by a vast number of enthusiasts, in the 30s, 40s and 50s, have established certain facts of considerable interest to us. For instance, if black-and-white photographs are shown to members of primitive tribes⁶ who have grown up in the Amazon basin, or in isolated parts of Africa, then these people, who have never seen a photograph, or a television or pictures, that is, any conventional representation of three dimensions in two dimensions, are unable to interpret these images as images of real objects. They perceive nothing but a chaotic confusion of black, grey and white patches. That is to say, they do not possess a corresponding signal-processing system. On the basis of this extremely simple experiment Rauschenbach came to the conclusion that each people forms its own system of visual perception

⁵ The problem of space passing through the Zero-Object fits into the broad context of the theoretical speculation and visual experimentation with space that have been carried on in Russia throughout the 20th century. Four-dimensional space and its properties are the subject of the book "TERTIUM ORGANUM: the key to the world's riddles" (St. Petersburg, 1911) by the thinker Petr Demianovich Uspensky (1878-1947), who was later a follower of Georgy Ivanovich Gurdjiev (1872-1949). Non-objectivity as a specific abstract mode of awareness of the environment and its extension in space was Malevich's basic conception. In criticising the spatial constructs of contemporary art, Malevich wrote, in particular, that "futurism developed space almost exclusively, but its form, being bound by object reality, did not make world space present even to the imagination. Its space was limited by the space which divides things from each other on the earth" (from a letter to Matiushin, 1916). In Leningrad in the 60s and 70s, Malevich's student, the artist Vladimir Vasilievich Sterligov (1904-1973), studied the properties of twisted space such as a Mobius strip. Sterligov created his own "cup-dome" plastic painterly system. The basic structural unit of the cup-dome system was not Malevich's suprematist straight line, which Sterligov said expressed the organisational principle of euclidean space (Sterligov called it Euclid's straight line), but an S-shaped curve reflecting a property of non-euclidean space, in which the shortest distance between two points is not a straight line.

⁶ The absence of the concept of "art" among the Australian aborigines, the eskimos and the indians of North America is no more surprising than, for instance, the identification of the two-dimensional image of a photograph or cinema image with objective three-dimensional space by the people of the so-called "civilised world".

within its own culture⁷. And sees in exactly the manner it has educated itself to see. That is to say, that the Chinese and the Japanese and, for instance, Europeans by no means saw things in precisely the same way⁸. In principle, at that time they saw things quite differently, and they saw quite different things. The inverse perspective which we see in ancient icons is not some kind of metaphorical form or image, as certain scholars write: it is the direct vision of a man of that time, his coding system, his translation of the surrounding space on to a flat surface. Rauschenbach thus took a step in the direction of developing new systems of spatial constructs for the new man⁹. The problem of the new man has been actual for many centuries, but has become particularly acute in our time, with the appearance of a civilisation which is in some sense new and very different from the civilisation which preceded it; a machine civilisation employing rockets, aeroplanes, telephones, faxes, televisions and other devices previously unheard of. As a result the human population is no longer content with the systems of perception and spatial coding which satisfied it in centuries gone by¹⁰. The beginning of the century saw the smooth transition, for instance, from the construct of direct perspective on which traditional painting is based, to an identical perspective in photography, the cinema and television, resulting from a system of coding information which employed an objective lens, i.e. a specially designed device which could not express a view of space except as perceived from a single point¹¹. And yet a person does not stand still, his constant movement through space means that he carries in his head far more units of information, since he simultaneously processes images perceived from various points in space. This mode of perception allows a human being to perceive space in a far broader manner than the ordinary photograph portrays. Sooner or later the gulf between reality and photograph becomes obvious. A human being is constantly aware of the non-correspondence

⁷ In relation to the problem of the creation by each culture of its own unique system for the construction of space, we can refer, in particular, to Erwin Panofsky's work "Perspective as Symbolic Form" (E. Panofsky. Die Perspektive als "symbolische Form", Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, 1924-1925), which Rauschenbach criticised for its corrections to the system of linear perspective in order to accommodate the convex curvature of the retina.

⁸ In addition: "The world presents itself to us as a kaleidoscopic stream of impressions which has to be organised by our consciousness, and this means fundamentally by the system of language preserved in our consciousness" (B. Worf, Science and Linguistics, p. 174). In this way, language and sense perceivers are superimposed on the genetic programme of an individual or an artist born in or another set of circumstances.

⁹ The programme for the creation of the New Man was worked out in detail and is well known to virtually every inhabitant of the former Soviet Union, due much less to the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche than the fact that it was a fundamental component of the General Programme for the Building of Communism.

¹⁰ In Russia in the 20s new spatial systems appeared not only in painting, but also in literature. In his article "The New Russian Prose", Yevgeny Zamiatin wrote: "All realistic forms are a projection on to the motionless, flat coordinates of Euclid's world. These coordinates do not exist in nature, this world is conventional, abstract, unreal... a projection on to curved surfaces in rapid motion is much closer to reality - as is done by both mathematics and art. Realism is not primitive, not realia, and realiora consists in sudden shifts, distortion, curvature, non-objectivity" (from the book "Faces", New York, 1967, p. 210

¹¹ In an attempt to overcome the limitations of the single viewpoint, Mikhail Matiushin introduced the concept of "expanded viewing", defined as "the act of conscious employment of central and peripheral vision in a simultaneous effort of viewing" ("The forms of variability of colour combinations. A reference-book on colour", Moscow-Leningrad, 1932, p. 13). According to Matiushin's theory, expanded vision "provides the total sensation of any moving object, because as a result of the physiological characteristics of the eye, it is the periphery of the retina that is most sensitive to movement"

of what he sees in reality to what he sees in a photograph or a picture. A result of this is one of art's oldest movements - the creation of bas-reliefs, sculptural compositions combined with bas-reliefs, diaramas, panoramas... Following large compositions in various military, naval and artillery museums, we have the appearance of artists like the kineticists... Let us also recall the modern form of the -so-called installation. The attraction of another dimension, the urge to move beyond the restrictions of the flat surface is quite evident in the servants of modern culture¹². It is sufficient to recall the stereo-cinema, which never became established because it is too expensive, but still exists as a genre. What new possibilities have we acquired in recent times? We can immediately call to mind that the post-war period has been the time of computers. New systems of information processing have appeared, including for spatial information. Remember that in depicting space schematically, like a blueprint, the Egyptians employed specific lines on the basis of which everything was constructed. The size of a figure was relative to the person's importance, i.e. the sign had an ideological significance, its size was very important. If we picture to ourselves an Egyptian fresco or papyrus, then we will immediately realise that the coding system the Egyptians used on a papyrus was similar to the 19th century European system, and to a modern computer graphics pad, which conveys ordinary frontal perspective quite unacceptable. Having made these observations and come to the conclusion that all the elements of the Japanese or ancient Russian spatial constructs are closer to computer thought than traditional frontal perspective, I began to work on the development of a new system for conveying space, one which would satisfy the modern human being. This system was based on a perspective described in Rauschenbach's book "The Construction of Space in Painting", which he called perceptual perspective¹³. Perceptual perspective, which he defined closely by means of mathematical formulas, consists in the following: in the distant or mid-plane, a person perceives the line of the horizon in frontal perspective, while what lies immediately under his feet is perceived in inverse perspective, and the space between them is twisted according to a very complex mathematical system. I realised that I could not simply stop at this, that the present moment demanded the move to a system for encoding space. Linear perspective was not God-given for all eternity! I began to develop a system, not of perceptual perspective, but a semantic system for the construction of space. My main goal was that it would be understood by the human being.

I spent a lot of time on the shores of various seas, in open country... I had drawn horizontal landscapes and landscapes divided by a horizontal line since I was a small child. These compositions may be seen in my early exhibitions in the 70s. Perhaps they came from my subconscious. But later I decided to find out what made me want to do this. I observed that most normal draftsmen always begin by dividing off the the sky from the earth, that is, by drawing the line of the horizon. I tried introducing not a dual, but a triple division. Guess what - it just doesn't work! Not at all. Years of experimenting led me to realise that a tripolar system didn't function.

¹² The artist Ilya Kabakov (b. 1933) calls the installation "the fourth dimension of the plastic arts".

¹³ The concept of "perceptual" (scientific) perspective was introduced by Rauschenbach to describe a more faithful construction of space on a flat surface, taking account of all the features of perception. Rauschenbach gives the name of scientific perspective to a system which is derived mathematically solely from the human psychobgy of visual perception. All other forms of perspective, such as inverse perspective, are special cases of perceptual perspective.

Human beings are used to working with a dual division of space¹⁴. The number is the highest expression of harmony. We divide nothing into two and we get the Tao, harmony. Our brain works comfortably with these two spaces, processes them, gives them various meanings. This is all described in my works. That is to say, they express the free establishment of space by means of the sign. This space may establish the structure of space by means of its natural sign or signal, for instance, green means field. But in addition to this, we can make use of the totally opposite effect: yellow means field, yellow means sky. Or yellow means sea. Once the confirmatory sign has been set in place, you immediately apply the functions of that space to that small section of the surface. That is semantic perspective.

This perspective became fundamental to my work, if not the ground¹⁵, then at least the blocking-in. What was left was to work out the details. The creation of this semantic perspective gave me the chance to expand and contract space by means of the positioning of one or another sign either closer to or further away from the line of the horizon entirely at will. In this way I came to the works I produced during the last six years of the 80s. During those years I tested the effect of the sign on people. By positioning it in certain places, we summon up space of the scale we require. That is, the scale of space is determined by the artist through the positioning of the sign. And the scale is defined in relation to the size of the sign.

Let us recall the book written by the remarkable Father Pavel Florensky, in which he describes the freedom of the Russian icon artist within his canon¹⁶. Indeed, a man who possesses a canon is much freer than one who does not. Because a man without a canon does not know whether to turn left or right. One can only move fast in a defined direction. A canon bestows immense freedom. Being free, you can change the colour of the sky or the earth, bringing them into any condition and any relationship, for after all, in nature everything changes with catastrophic speed. We cannot detain the sunny weather for even two days in a row¹⁷. Night falls. Clouds blow up. Or something else happens. Lightning glimmers. Landscapes shift. Green leaves flourish. Green leaves fall. Or turn red. Or white snow falls. This changing of the scenery, so natural in the theatre, has proven less easily accepted in painting. When the artist's brush was liberated from serfdom, it lost the most important thing - the content it had been struggling for. Attempts to

¹⁴ As a computer, the brain may be regarded as a machine which processes binary code. The world and its origins are described in a dualistic manner. The figure two is the basis of binary oppositions. Man's natural world is dual (man/woman; day/night; twins). A triple system of ascribed perfection is adequate to the expression of any transcendental world-view. For instance, the Trinity in Christianity, the Trimurti in Hindu Theogony, the three spheres of the shamanic model of the world, etc.

¹⁵ Here Novikov is referring to the chalky ground used in old Russian icon-painting, on which the artist painted following the basic principle of a gradual transition from light to dark.

¹⁶ Father Pavel Florensky (1882-1937), a Russian theologian, philosopher, art-historian, mathematician and engineer. He served as a priest in the Sergiev Posad ("Settlement of St. Sergius"). After the revolution he was a member of the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments of Art and Antiquity, taught mathematics and physics, and made several discoveries in the area of electrical technology. In 1933 he was arrested and exiled to a prison camp, in 1937 he was executed by shooting. His work "The Iconostasis", written in 1921-22, speaks, among other things, of the beneficial influence of a canon on the artist.

¹⁷ The climate of St. Petersburg is damp and maritime. For the greater part of the year the days are mostly cloudy and overcast, with scattered lighting. The average number of sunny days each year in St. Petersburg is 62.

establish a canon led nowhere. And yet, children the whole world over had always drawn a line, a house and a sun, and had no problem at all communicating in this elementary and conventional language. And above all I would like to draw attention to the fact, often spoken of by artists, but which they often forget, that art is primarily a language for expressing something. I have come to the conclusion that this language must be simple. For instance, the experiments with Esperanto and other languages in the 20th century have shown that language should be purer, smoother, simpler, not too wise, which is what has now happened to simple English in New York, where it has been reduced to 30 words. Let us recall the language of Ella the Cannibal¹⁸. This primitive language, at once comprehensible and familiar in every part of the globe, made me realise that I was on the right road, that I was not working in the first-order information- processing department, but in the second-order information- encoding department. That is to say, I was approaching those strata of art which are eternal and lasting, I was approaching certain constants. What marvels have I discovered in this area of art?

As you will recall, one of the fundamental postulates of the theory of composition is completeness. Try breaking a piece off an antique portico. What happens to it? It completely collapses. Whereas I, using my small sign - I have constantly reduced the sign's size and become convinced that it must be very small - act like a medium, that is to say, I do not attempt to impose the sign on myself, I try to act in such a way that the sign imposes itself on me. I have realized that the sign is self-reducing. I have realised that this is a natural process. I have begun to study this area of perception and become convinced that when we glance around, very often we are seeking for very small objects -a cigarette lighter, matches, a cigarette, a spoon... If you picture to yourself the 360 degrees of space which surround us, and then picture a teaspoon, you will realise what an insignificantly small object it is! And we are constantly looking for small objects. It is them that we deal with. Big objects are perceived in situations such as when we notice a stool in order not to stumble over it but go around it. We practically do not notice large objects. This love for the small sign, for the small object, led me to the thought that the signal should be reduced, so that it would be more willingly perceived and the space would be more natural. By leaving this single sign or pair of signs and simplifying their perception, that is, by removing all superfluous detail, I arrived at the type of picture which I produced for a long time.

The theory of recomposition, based on semantic perception, stated that if the space on which an artist worked was ideal, then it was not subject to the old laws of composition. Having achieved the natural construction of the signs, that is, of small signs on a large surface, I reached the point at which a composition balanced in itself allowed this little bug of a sign to move freely across it like a fly without disturbing the general equilibrium. In this way the composition became free for me. I can shift a boat sailing across the ocean to the right or the left - the composition is not disturbed, it remains natural and harmonious. I once made a short cartoon film, in which a little ship moves across this space, and an aeroplane flies through it.

But what then is recomposition the desire to swap things about? Or an expression of the law that changing the places of the elements in an addition does not alter their sum? Or something else? Of course, by that time, I already knew about collages and such things. And I had seen various old

¹⁸ Ella the Cannibal, a character in Ilf and Petrov's popular satirical novel "The Twelve Chairs", written in 1931. Her vocabulary consisted of thirty words, which she used with varying intonations and in relation to the context - in accordance with Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of linguistic games - to make her meaning clear.

works of art reconstructed. But an important part was played by my reading 'Hermann Hesse's book "The Glass Bead Game"¹⁹, where the author gives a very worthy description of the history of art as passing from a period of topical satire to the High Castalian period, in which they do nothing new, they just play their bead game and create something new out of the old. I took the point that the new always appears like something old which has been forgotten²⁰. This free use of the art around us was entirely in harmony with the technological opportunities of the "New Artists". The theory of recomposition thus gradually took shape of its own accord. No small role in its development was played by the joint experiments conducted by Igor Verichev and myself. Igor Verichev²¹ is not only a musician, but an outstanding theoretician. His article "The Versification of Information", printed in one of our first compilations, was an important theoretical study of this area..

However, some things are hard to put into words. Here we approach such matters as the imperative nature of the mass media of information, and Verichev always worked precisely with information. The versification of information is his profession. By studying versified information flows, he discovered many laws of versification. But since this is a very important topic affecting everybody's life, it is very hard for me to speak about it here.

I can only say that Igor Verichev attained such heights in this area that when he used one word or another in a composition, it resonated even in a distant section of the information field, as he called it²². In general, I can only say that we are indebted to Igor Verichev and his activity for many of the things that have happened in our country in recent years. In reality, he is the genuine hero of perestroika. On the basis of versification and parallel studies in the area by other theoreticians, we developed specific methods allowing us to create new art from old. In essence, recomposition is the method which makes it possible to organise new art out of old.

They may say that the "New Artists" are noisy and pugnacious, but that is not really the case at all. They have never promoted themselves, never attempted to occupy the leading positions, never made self-praising television programmes, never written for the newspapers. Quite the opposite, in fact. Their activity has been entirely devoted to the direct action with which they were concerned, that is, the development of various methods. Since these methods are extremely general and accessible, as a rule, after the "New Artists" they were very quickly introduced into the sphere of mass production not only by the "New Artists" themselves, but by many others.

These linguistic developments were shared by the "New Artists" with the whole of culture. If we review closely the periods of our culture prior to the appearance of the "New Artists" and since, we notice certain distinguishing features which have been inherited from the "New Artists" by other artistic groupings exploiting a new content. The "New Artists" were not particularly concerned with content. They were more interested in the expressive capabilities of visual art. This was the direction of their experiments in the 80s.

¹⁹ Hermann Hesse's novels "Steppenwolf" and "The Glass Bead Game" were very influential among the Soviet intelligentsia, becoming "pass-words" in the sense of J.-F. Lyotard.

²⁰ The saying "a new broom sweeps clean" refers us yet again to the theme of Zero and the Cycle.

²¹ Igor Verichev was one of the original members of the musical group "New Composers", who produced their music from the music of other composers according to the principles of montage and collage.

²² One of the most important Soviet mythological fairy tales by the writer Arkady Gaidar (1904-1949), "Malchysch Kilbachysh", concludes with a scheme for the instantaneous dissemination of information: "They'll sing it over there, we'll pick it up over here".

Of course, a considerable contribution to my seeking at the time was made by the Russian avant garde artists of the 20s, who wrote an immense number of theoretical works about art. In studying their legacy, I came across the books of the remarkable Soviet cinema director Kuleshov²³ written in the 20s, and in them I discovered the theory of montage. That is to say, the theory that he advanced in the area of montage in the cinema. There he described the experiments he carried out in 1918, during the revolution, at a time when, on the one hand, ideology had shifted its position and new films were needed, and, on the other, there was no film stock with which to shoot them. And therefore Kuleshov offered to make new films from old. he began making new films out of old ones, using the editing and cutting skills he already possessed. Before the revolution Kuleshov studied under the famous Russian director Bauer²⁴ and worked as his assistant and collaborator, at times his visual designer, for many years. It was later on that Kuleshov became a director himself! It should be noted that many 20th century film-makers came to the cinema from art. So Kuleshov worked on montage and developed his own theory of the process, which he expressed in his books on montage, many of which later became classics of world cinema literature. Cinema criticism possesses the concept of "the Kuleshov effect", which can briefly be defined as follows, in Kuleshov's words: "You mount the face of the actor Mozhukhin and a plate of soup in sequence. Another version is the face of the actor Mozhukhin and an electrical power-transmission line. A third version is the face of the actor Mozhukhin and a dead child on the table. The montage gives us varying psychological interpretations of the face of the actor Mozhukhin". In this way Kuleshov established the conventional nature of the actor's acting and the definitive role of montage, thereby developing new means of expression for the cinema in this area. Another of Kuleshov's postulates is that if you mount in immediate sequence an image of a man's face taken in one spot while he is looking up, another taken in another spot from the lowest point of a high-voltage power transmission line, and an image of a field of wheat, then the result is a man walking through a field and looking at a high-voltage power transmission line. That is to say, this was confirmation of the imaginary space of the cinema²⁵, which was subsequently exploited ever more actively. Kuleshov was among the very first to introduce this imaginary space into the cinema. A third postulate of Kuleshov's stated that if you take shots of explosions, shouting people, flowing water and charging cavalry, then you can mount these apparently unconnected frames in sequence either as the people rejoicing at the construction of a new hydroelectric power station, the taking of a city by military force, or a natural disaster: thereby he extended the

²³ Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov (1899-1970), Soviet cinema director and theorist. The first to study montage. In his articles of 1917-1923, he reached an understanding which became the basis for the theory of montage. He proved experimentally that by linking one and the same frame with various others, the director could create a new aesthetic reality ("the Kuleshov effect"), and that the contextualisation - the "linkage" of the frames - determines the meaning of the original frame. In 1942 he made the famous film "Timur's Oath".

²⁴ Yevgeny Frantsevich Bauer (1865-1917), Russian film director and artist, one of the pioneers of the theory of montage in the cinema. The actor Mozhukhin began his career in Bauer's films.

²⁵ Almost at the same time as Kuleshov developed the imaginary space of the film, Pavel Florensky developed his theory of virtual realities in geometry. The cover for his book "Virtual Realities in Geometry" (Moscow, 1992) was designed by the print-maker and theoretician of art Vladimir Andreievich Favorsky (1886-1964). Florensky commented that the design represented one of the possible expressions of the principle of virtual reality in visual art.

strategy of montage to total inclusivity²⁶. Having become aware of these discoveries of Kuleshov's, made in the 20s, I realised that they represented a truly mighty leap forward into the space of the future, which could not be adequately embodied at that time, but now this method is ubiquitously triumphant in art²⁷.

If we recall Verichev's methods of the early 80s, when he followed Kuleshov and revived his tradition by beginning to make new music out of old, without himself producing any musical sounds, using nothing but old sounds, mixing . them and changing their meaning, using signals from radio broadcasts and fragments of educational or science fantasy programmes and so forth, and then we look at the condition of modern music, we realise that Verichev was one of the pioneers in the genre of recompositionn in music, which is now known as discotheque culture or DJ culture, when the DJ is not simply an individual playing some music, but the conductor of an entire orchestra including absolutely every recording in existence²⁸. But Verichev was not satisfied with superficial research into this area. He was concerned that the music should affect the listener, and the power with which it affected the listener was of considerable interest to him at that time. He investigated such things as the meaning of a word, the power of a word; things already well-known, like mantras, incantations, prayers - such essentially different phenomena often bear a certain resemblance to each other; they employ certain combinations which possess a certain power. It was such words, combined with power, that Igor Verichev studied²⁹. Note that subsequently most of the lines from his compositions effectively entered the folklore of the language, for instance "it's all going to start from here". After he used this fragment of a radio broadcast torn out of context it went the rounds on the tape reels, and then it became a heading for newspaper columns and a title for radio broadcasts and was quoted constantly. We could recall many other occasions when his work was quoted. But, of course, all that reached its height when his composition was shown on television...

Editing of text and notes by OLVI MATUR, May 1993

²⁶ Kuleshov was followed by others who made active use of montage in the cinema - Vertov, Pudovkin, Eisenstein... Montage was also the basis of Klutskis' work in photography and painting.

²⁷ In Russia montage remains one of the most powerful artistic devices, both in feature films (e.g. Kovalov's "The Gardens of Scorpio", 1992; or Lebedev's "Two Captains - 2", 1992) and in documentary features (Nevzorov's news programme "600 seconds").

²⁸ The assembly of musical and theatrical elements on the principle of collage-was the basis of the varied forms of acoustic art produced by the groups Popular Mechanics and New Composers, the discotheques Acid House and Techno Music - whose founders included Georgy Gurianov, Sergei Bugaev (Africa) and Timur Novikov. (The discotheque movement in the former Soviet Union originated in Leningrad in the late 80s in artistic circles).

²⁹ The strategy of quotation undoubtedly refers us to a general policy of deindividualisation, or rather deauthorisation, the production of works of art not openly declared to be the work of the "New Artists". This process effectively terminated by the beginning of the 90s, when the general "supra-artistic" concern with the individual led the more outstanding of the "New Artists" to begin working independently (with the sole exception of a single grouping -"Necrorealism". However, we should note that "despite" the artists' working individually, quotation as one of the forms of deauthorisation has by no means disappeared; in the work of artists like Timur Novikov and Sergei Bugaev (Africa) it occupies a place of honour in the overall programme of montage.

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