

# ISSUES IN GUSTAVS KLUCIS' AGITATIONAL STAND RESEARCH

Sniedze Kāle

**W**hat do American artist Barbara Kruger<sup>1</sup>, Greek sculptor Kostis Velonis<sup>2</sup> and Latvian designer Valdis Celms<sup>3</sup> have in common? All of them have at one point or another followed Gustavs Klucis' (1895–1938) agitational stand rostrums and produced their repetitions. Immortalised in graphics, these examples of agitational art have proved to be so powerful that since 1967<sup>4</sup>, their reconstructions have been produced in museums across the world, with each generation of artists, curators and scholars discovering them anew. For example, the 1979 Paris exhibition “Paris–Moscou: 1900–1930”, the New York Guggenheim Museum 1992 exhibition “The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde 1915–1932”, the 2002 *!Avantgarden!* exhibition at the Munich Haus der Kunst, the 2013 London exhibition “Utopia Ltd”, and “Revoliutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test” in Venice and Chicago in 2017. Some marvel at the engineering solutions of separate constructions, others are captivated by their multifunctionality, yet several questions related to their realisation have remained unanswered. During her research on Latvian artist groups in interwar Soviet Russia, the author of this article found information which made it necessary to look into untested assumptions. The aim of the publication is to shed light on particular contradictions and make corrections, without aiming to provide a thorough analysis of Klucis' agitational stands, which will soon be available in Maria Gough's monograph “How to Make A Revolutionary Object?”<sup>5</sup>

## The Birth of a Myth

Researchers have long referred to the information about the realisation of Klucis' agitational stands in real life published and later propagated by art historian Larissa Oginskaya (*Лариса Огинская*). In fact, conviction about the existence of such stands was so strong that a critical chemical and authorship analysis of the example in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York was only carried out in 2016, and its result was negative.<sup>6</sup> Oginskaya wrote, without providing a concrete source, that one of the agitation stands “with an antenna and a light source – *The International* – was produced and installed on the roof of the hotel building on Tverskaya Street, where the dormitory of the participants of the congress was located”.<sup>7</sup> This version might have originated from the texts accompanying the proposal for the stand, since the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (*Российский государственный архив литературы и искусства*) holds a design for the antenna “The 3rd International” with the text “Device for the roof of the building on Tverskaya – dormitories of the congress delegates” as well as a reference to electric lighting. In other publications Oginskaya likewise repeats this information<sup>8</sup> without clarifying its source therefore confirmation of the facts had to be sought in other available sources.

## Documentarians and the Press Remain Silent

Footage from film director Dziga Vertov's (*Дзига Вертов*, 1896–1954) 1922 newsreel *Kino-Pravda* (*Кино-Правда*) No. 14 documents the proceedings of the traditionally decorated and familiar October celebration and the special Comintern as well as the sign placed in the assembly hall. Only one innovatory and functional object has been filmed, namely, the film's titles by artist Alexander Rodchenko (*Александр Родченко*, 1891–1956).<sup>9</sup> He employed different approaches for text transitions: with a rotating mechanism, animated letters and graphical drawings which are included in a single shot that follows constructivist formal solutions with abstract forms and verticals, therefore it is doubtful that Vertov would have missed Klucis' structure on the ridge of the building.

Press accounts provide a confirmation of its absence – the journalist from *Izvestia* (*Известия*) scrupulously described the details of the decorations: “Near the council on Teatralnaya Square, in Tverskaya Street [sic! – S. K.] – mountains of greenery; hammers resound, having climbed up firemen's ladders, artists-decorators are decorating buildings. This time, in contrast to last year – when Futurism was dominant, all decorative posters are kept in simple, realistic tones more understandable to non-



1. “Workers of the World, Unite! (corrected title). Welcome, Delegates of the World Proletariat!”. 1922. Coloured inks on paper. 17.5 x 26.8 cm. LNMA, coll. No. Z-7842

art viewers.”<sup>10</sup> In the conclusion of the report we learn that this year, in order to save money and also for other reasons, the organising committee for the celebrations has decided to use its own resources, volunteers and amateurs in the decoration of the city.

Neither newsreels nor the press and photographs confirm the realisation of the constructions in real life. Klucis made photographs of his earlier constructions and it would seem illogical that someone who used the photo camera and took pride in his works, would not have recorded and catalogued the realised construction.

At the same time, the construction's graphical proposal is reproduced in issue 4, 1923 of the magazine *LEF* (*ЛЕФ*) as “Design for a Radio Rostrum”.<sup>11</sup> In the preceding issue, Russian architect Anton Lavinsky's (*Антон Лавинский*, 1894–1968) design for a book kiosk is reproduced as a photograph<sup>12</sup> and indeed shows the project in material form, also reporting on its realisation on a national scale. If Klucis' proposal had been realised, this information should have been reported not only in the Russian but also the Latvian press.

## What Is the True Origin of the Agitational Stands?

In her 1991 publication, Oginskaya likewise claims that “the proposals for festive stands were represented in the exhibition in Kremlin's Georgievsky Hall, which was dedicated to the 4th Congress of the Comintern”.<sup>13</sup> Leafing through contemporary issues of the newspapers *Izvestia* and *Pravda* (*Правда*), we find a description of the exhibition which was presented in Kremlin's Georgievsky Hall and which seemingly does not leave room for Klucis' proposals for festive stands: “The large Georgievsky Hall, whose walls are peppered with inscriptions, is now hosting another exhibition, organised in honour of the 4th Congress. Photographs and portraits of the leaders



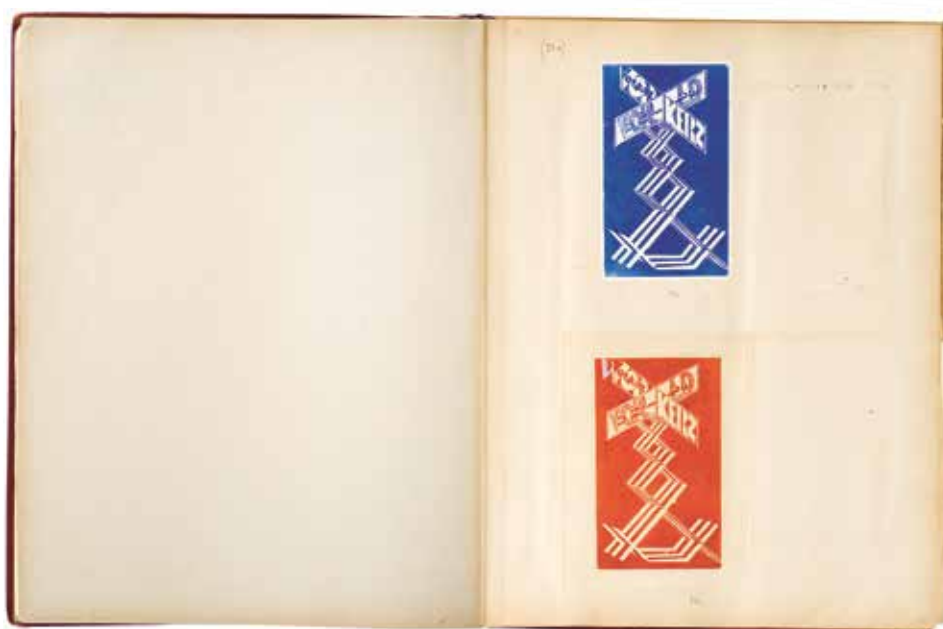
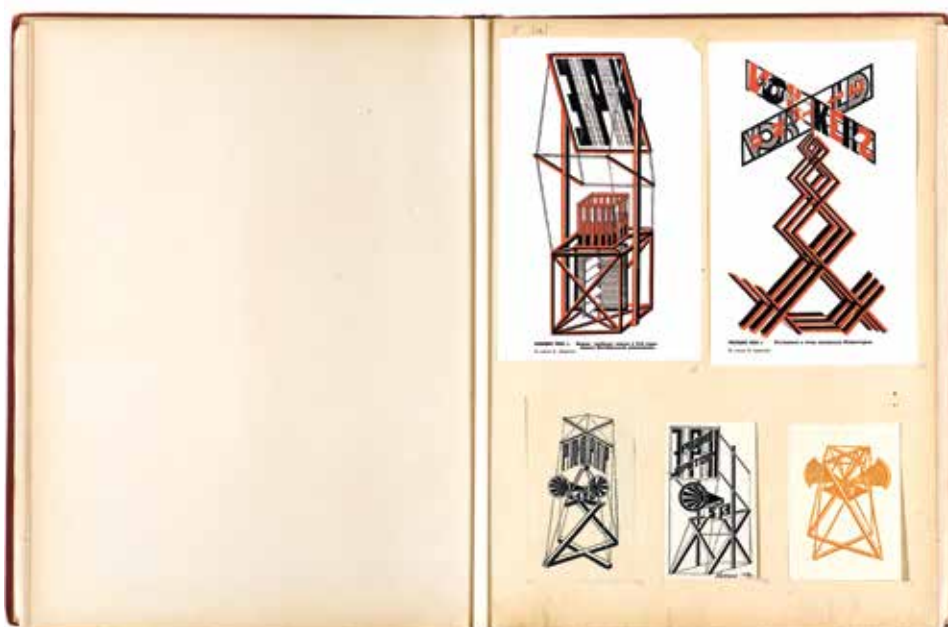
2. Gustavs Klucis. “Workers of the World, Unite! Welcome, Delegates of the World Proletariat!”. 1922. Coloured inks on paper. 17.8 x 28.7 cm. LNMA, coll. No. Z-8750/72a

of the workers' movement; charts reflecting the growth of the communist party in different countries; newspapers, magazines, newspapers and books of different sizes in different languages, peculiarly arranged in the exhibition's vitrines.”<sup>14</sup> The vitrines were devoted to the East, India, China, Japan, representing communism across the world. The report emphasised the communist press as the main source of international propaganda<sup>15</sup> without mentioning proposals for foldable constructions (1–2) with greetings to the delegates in different languages (LNMA, No. Z-7482; No. Z-8750/72a), which have been identified

in the collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art (LNMA) and confirmed in the scientific catalogue compiled by Iveta Derkusova.<sup>16</sup> It is doubtful that the journalists would have omitted the innovative reception of the delegation, since the review of the achievements in theatre in the same newspaper several issues earlier highlights the originality of the constructions used in the production of “The Magnanimous Cuckold” (*Le Cocu magnifique*), a play by Belgian expressionist Fernand Crommelynck (1888–1970) directed by Vsevolod Meyerhold (*Всеволод Мейерхольд*, 1874–1940), stage design by Lyubov Popova (*Любовь Попова*, 1889–1924): “The most interesting and powerful moment of the production – the final scene of the destruction

of the machine, which is solved by two mechanised constructions (...).”<sup>17</sup>

But what then was the idea behind the making of Klucis’ agitational stands? As varied as the conditions and tasks of their creation. Klucis recognised the importance of realising his constructions in material form<sup>18</sup> in order to increase the prospects of their reproduction abroad. Since 1919, public tenders for the creation of kiosks were announced, and Klucis tried his hand at designing a universal kiosk, yet the idea was ambitious and difficult to carry out in practice. Other projects, meanwhile, were more down to earth, easier to transport and reuse.<sup>19</sup> Klucis was interested in promoting his works outside of Russia through print-making techniques. From January 1922<sup>20</sup> he worked at



3. Gustavs Klucis. “Workers of the World, Unite!”. Construction Project for the Fifth Anniversary of the October Revolution. 1922. Coloured and black ink, graphite pencil, lacquer, and watercolour on paper. 67.2 x 42.5 cm. STG, inv. No. 15382. From: Gustav Klucis. *Retrospektive / Hg. von H. Gassner, R. Nachtigäller.* – Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1991

4. Gustavs Klucis. Rostrums and radio-orators. 1922. Page from Red Album II. Various print techniques. 48.5 x 36.4 cm (page). LNMA, coll. No. Z-8750/38-42

5. Gustavs Klucis. “Workers of the World, Unite!”. 1922. Page from Red Album II. Linocut on paper (printed in red and blue). 48.5 x 36.4 cm (page). LNMA, coll. No. Z-8750/84a-85a

the art studio of the Club of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee named after Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov (*ВЦИК клуб имени Я. М. Свердлова*), where it was possible to make prints, also creating the reprints of agitational stands which were pasted in “Red Album II” that is described below.

The author of this article turned to this subject having found a short report in the publication *Krievijas Cīņa* (“The Russian Struggle”) of the Latvian Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia: “On the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the October Revolution, a closed project competition was announced by the SCCP [State Central Communist Party – S. K.] for the preparation of proposals for the decoration of the Kremlin and houses of the soviets. 12 architect and painter groups and individual painters participated in the competition. The winners were: I prize: association of architects-artists; II prize: I Revolutionary Latv[ian] Artist Group (Veidemanis K., Johansons K. and Klucis G.); II Artist Section of the Political Education Committee of the Revolutionary War Council of the 12th Army; III prize: architect Muratandov.”<sup>21</sup>

The Latvians had “brilliantly proved their capabilities in such grandiose assignments, the decoration of houses, streets and squares for a national celebration, which is the task of the artists of the future”<sup>22</sup>. In the report, the association is referred to both as “Group of Revolutionary Latvian Artists” and “Group of Latvian Painters”, creating confusion about their institutional affiliation, furthermore, for only one of them – Kārlis Veidemanis (1897–1938) – the art of the easel was the main occupation. This is the only official information confirming this collaboration, since during first-time research in 2019 in Russian archives – Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, Central State Archive of the City of Moscow, State Archive of the Russian Federation and Russian State Archive of Literature and Art – additional materials about the Latvians in this competition were not found. This announcement makes it possible to put forward the hypothesis that some of the stands are in fact a collaboration of all three artists, although in one sense Klucis was ahead of his compatriots.

### The Origins of the Competition Proposal

In the First Russian Art Exhibition in Berlin, which was assembled in the spring and summer of 1922<sup>23</sup>, Klucis was represented with several works. On the occasion of the recently published anthology “100 Years On: Revisiting the First Russian Art Exhibition of 1922”<sup>24</sup> international research was carried out and by tracing German customs stamps and the numbering of the works in the exhibition, a team of scholars identified three specific surviving Klucis’ originals which had indeed been shown in *Galerie van*

*Diemen & Co*. They are the 1920 painting “Non-objective” (Azerbaijan National Museum of Art, No. R-16/1171), the “Graphic Construction: Design” (Vyatka Art Museum in Kirov, No. PA-175) from 1922<sup>25</sup> and the 1922 drawing “Workers of the World, Unite”. Construction Project for the Fifth Anniversary of the October Revolution” (Tretyakov Gallery (TG), No. 13019<sup>26</sup>). (3)

If the first two continue Klucis’ experiments with abstract forms and rhythms, the latter stands out since it most likely demonstrates his approach to construction design and ambitions in decoration design prior to the collaboration of Latvian artists. It synthesises the elements found in Klucis oeuvre: a sphere decorated with written greetings, an axonometric construction grid in its base as well as, for the purposes of composition, protruding satellite legs. The construction itself is a utopian structure which announces slogans in different global languages using technologies of the future. On the drawing there is the artist’s explanation about the idea and function of the construction for Revolution Square: “Inside the red sphere there are devices that project slogans and images of the revolution.” It is not clear when the above-mentioned closed competition was announced, yet it was Kārlis Johansons (1890–1929), and not Klucis who participated in the Berlin exhibition with three dimensional objects.

### Precedents to Collaboration

While Klucis was the first to present a “futuristic” agitational stand design for public celebrations, the decoration of the citadel of Soviet power was the daily task of the Latvian Artists’ Commune, also known as *LATKbUK*, an organisation which was established under the Office of Art Communes of the People’s Commissariat for Education and acquired official status with a certificate issued on 15 January 1920.<sup>27</sup>

The Latvian Artists’ Commune was originally based in the same location that hosted the exhibition of the Kremlin Artists Circle *Daile*,<sup>28</sup> namely, Room 72 of the Ascension (Voznesensky) Convent,<sup>29</sup> while in May 1921 the organisation found a home at 8 Strastnoy Boulevard. At the time of its establishment, the number of members in the Workers’ Commune was larger – it included Aleksandrs Grencēvičs (1898–?), V. Līkums, H. Legzdiņš. A year later, only five of the eight original artists were to be found here: Voldemārs Andersons (1891–1938), Aleksandrs Drēviņš (1889–1938), Gustavs Klucis, Kārlis Johansons and Kārlis Veidemanis.<sup>30</sup>

The official task of the organisation was to “bring into artistic craftsmanship – the forms of decorative and pure art. Fighting against all of the market’s shallow products”<sup>31</sup>, which they planned to realise through wall paintings, decorations, drawings, examples of visual art

and the production of posters, banners, advertisements, covers, regiment insignia and orders. The contribution of the commune is detailed in the cost estimate for 587 thousand roubles submitted to the commission on 1 April 1920, which lists the following locations in the decoration of the Kremlin: Kutafya Tower, Troitskaya Gate, barracks of the I Machine Gunners Course, Comrade Lenin Stairwell, court building, Club named after Sverdlov, arsenal, Spasskaya Gate, dormitories of the commissars, Kremlin garrison and hospital, Grand Kremlin Palace, Kremlin square. In virtually all of these places the entrance and facade were decorated with additional slogans.<sup>32</sup> It is clear from the list of works submitted by the commune that the works were carried out before the establishment of the Kremlin Studio *Daile* and the official registration of the workers' commune, confirming the natural functioning of the group in practice.

Most likely, Klucis lacked the technical knowledge for the production of three-dimensional objects, as well as needed additional forces in the preparation of the project, therefore he involved Latvian colleagues who had already proved themselves in collaboration. Considering the presence of these works in Klucis' archive and the subsequently published derivatives from the anonymous construction proposals, he may have had a greater initiative (or greater ambition?) in the five-year anniversary project.

### **The Collection Left by Gustavs Klucis and Its Overview**

Let's dwell on the above-mentioned "Red Album I" and "Red Album II", held in the collection of the LNMA, which Klucis is said to have prepared in 1935<sup>33</sup> in order to mark his 40th birthday with an exhibition at the All-Russian Cooperative Artists Union *Vsekokhudozhnik* (*Всекохудожник*) and to compile a catalogue, which was never published.<sup>34</sup> It is known that the artist numbered the albums in reverse order<sup>35</sup>: the first is the survey of works from the later part of his career, while the second – from the early period. Perhaps it points to the order in which the albums were made and their significance in what was already a socialist realist context. The second album is missing several images, but there are titles for works which do not have photographic reproductions, while the first one appears to be complete.

In the context of this study, the second album is of greater interest, since it includes agitational stands as prints, as well as Indian ink drawings, one of which is an agitational stand. Thus, we can assume that the artist was thinking not only about the reproduction of his works, but also a complete overview of his career. It is important to note that the majority of original drawings for the agitational stands are outside this album, while one of those included has a counterpart in the collection of the LNMA.

Let's take a closer look at the origin of the design for two almost identical agitational stands, which the LNMA collection attributes as "Workers of the world, unite! Welcome, delegates of the world proletariat! Design for an agitational stand for an exhibition during the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in the Georgievsky Hall of the Grand Kremlin Palace, Moscow" (1922, LNMA, Nr. Z-7482; Z-8750/72a). (1–2) Both were received from the artist's widow Valentina Kulagina (*Валентина Кулагина*, 1902–1987), and were added to the collection in one transaction but with different dates.<sup>36</sup> These graphic works differ in several details – the arrangement of the text in the outer stands, spelling corrections, the intensity of the red colour, size and colour of the paper as well as the artist's signature. The survey prepared by Klucis contained a version with his signature and a corrected title, furthermore it is placed not among the other graphically printed stand designs, but among later works. Besides the mentioned original, the album contains prints for the following tribunes (4): "Radio-orator No. 4" (*Радиооратор № 4*), "Radioorator. Ekran No. 5" (*Радиооратор. Экран № 5*) and "No. 8" (*№ 8*), two typographic prints from the illustrations used in Boris Arvatov's (*Борис Арватов*, 1896–1940) article in issue 2, 1923 of the magazine *Proletarskoye Studentchestvo* (*Пролетарское студенчество*) as well as an alternative version of the graphic "Workers of the World Unite" [error in the title – S. K.] in two colours – blue and red (5).

In his autobiography, the artist is fending off accusations of formalism, therefore every word he wrote had to be carefully considered. Several paragraphs devoted to the agitational stands point to their connection to industrial art or the right to exist in the context of socialist realism, and underline Klucis' personal task of "transforming the poster, the book, the illustration, the postcard into the communicators of the slogans of the Party to the masses",<sup>37</sup> which the artist expressed in the passive voice – "it was necessary to change their outward appearance". Unlike other sentences that emphasised the possessive or personal pronouns "my" and "I", here it remains unsaid who specifically contributed to the search for the outer appearance of the stands. Similarly, in the text that follows, Klucis does not mention the collaboration with other Latvians, writing that "during the first and second five-year periods I took active part in the decoration of the city's streets for revolutionary celebrations"<sup>38</sup>.

Perhaps Klucis respected the boundaries between personal and group authorship and only included in the "Red Album II" the stands he made himself? This assumption is not entirely reliable, since there are blank sheets among the images as well as missing pages. Nevertheless, Klucis noted down the most important works for which there were no reproductions. Thus page 5



contains only titles, for example, “Sketches for Wall Panels in 1918 and 1919”, likewise, several autonomous stands are signed and accompanied by comments regarding the places where they were intended to be installed. Importantly, the sketch for the stand (LNMA, No. Z-7842) left out of the album was drawn on a reused sheet of paper (1) and thus differs from a group of works in the George Costakis Collection (GCC) at the Thessaloniki Museum of Modern Art described below, yet their measurements coincide. Klucis was not bothered by spelling mistakes in the titles of other stands pasted in the album, hence the repetition of the work was prompted by another reason.

### Anonymous Working Group

The most complete collection of stand originals is kept in Thessaloniki, although Klucis’ works are framed. Courtesy of Angelica Charistou, curator at the museum, in spring 2024 the author had access to photographic documentation of their reverse sides, carried out in 2008.

On the basis of the GCC, it is possible to set apart an anonymous and representative group of works. The only information that occasionally appears on them is the height of the construction,<sup>39</sup> for example, on works with collection

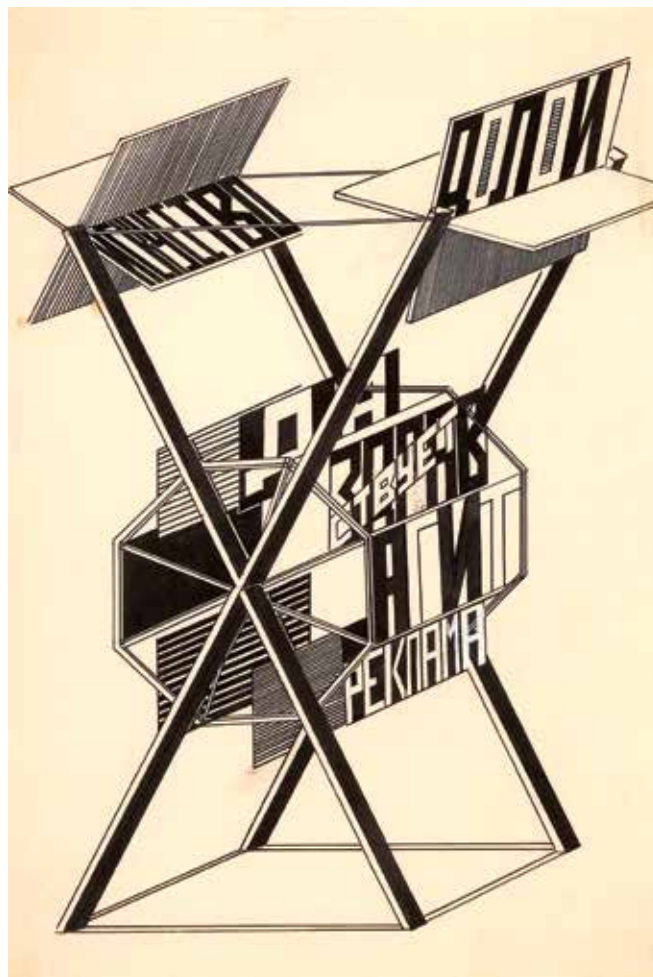
numbers No. 144 (240 mm) and No. 385 (72 mm) (6). The reverse of other works is untouched, these have the following collection numbers and titles: “Radio-orator No. 7” (GCC, No. 292), “Agit-prop for Communism of the Proletariat of the Whole World” (GCC, No. 144), “Down with Art! Long live Agitational Propaganda!” (GCC, No. 188) (7) and “Design for Rostrum” (GCC, No. 66). Based on measurements, “Speakers’ Rostrums” (TG, No. PC-12060) from the TG could also be counted among this set, if it were possible to ascertain that the reverse of the work is also presentable.

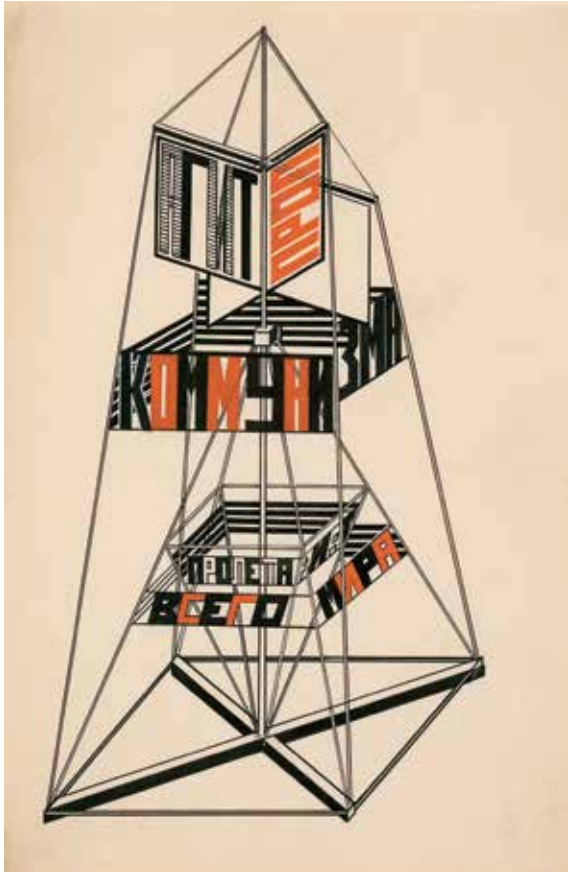
The listed works, with a variation of a few millimetres, constitute a group drawn on similar paper, where one side is between 17.5 and 17.8 cm long, while the other is from 26.8 to 27 cm wide. Two comparable examples fall outside of this frame: the work ““Long Live the Anniversary of the October Revolution.” Design for Speaker’s Platform” (GCC, No. 356), measuring 26.8 x 16.8 cm, and the above-mentioned “Agit-prop for Communism of the Proletariat of the Whole World” (GCC, No. 144) (8) measuring 26.5 x 17.3 cm. The differences in paper size may have been caused by general scarcity, a cutting error as well as the accuracy of the measurer.



6. Design for Propaganda Kiosk. 1922. Ink and gouache on paper. 17.4 x 12.6 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 385

7. “Down With Art! Long Live Agitational Propaganda!”. 1922. Ink, pencil and gouache on paper. 26.7 x 17.6 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 188





8. "Agitprop of Communism of the proletariat of the world". 1922. Gouache and ink on paper. 26.5 x 17.2 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 144



9. Screen-Rostrum-Display Shelves-Kiosk. 1922. Indian ink, gouache, graphite on paper. 37 x 26.8 cm. STG, inv. No. PC-12063. From: Gustav Klucis. *Retrospektive / Hg. von H. Gassner, R. Nachtigäller.* – Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1991

For the design competition, there was no need to include authorship or unnecessary explanations, since these were normally presented in the project proposal. The author did not find the competition's rules or the project application, however the collection of Klucis' works in Thessaloniki preserves a page from the draft of the accompanying description (GCC, No. 593), concretising in typewriting the appearance and location of one of the constructions – it had been intended to reach the height of two to three people and be located near a public library. The separate cylinders were to be turned as pointers to shops, theatres and other buildings, equipping them according to necessity with arrows and addresses, and one of the cylinders was to contain a megaphone for advertisements.

Besides the presentable sheets it is possible to follow presumably unsigned solutions for the construction of the universal stand. Thus, in the work "Design for a Speaker's Stand with a Projection Screen and Display Shelves" (TG, No. P47574) (9) the stand is conceived as a set of foldable constructions, all parts of which fit in its bottom section or box: the construction of the informative shelves as well as the agitational stand extends from the sides of the box, while the structure of the screen, traced at the top, corresponds to the width of the frame of the box, making it easier to transport and fold, similar to the stand attached to the base. In the sketch for the kiosk "Workers [of the] World Unite. The Salvation is the Development of Industry" (GCC, No. 187) (10) this proposal has lost its compactness and economy of materials and grown into an ambitious independent structure, repeating the idea of retractable stands, foldable shelves and a projection screen. The construction has acquired an even more universal character through the addition of a ladder, an orator's platform and a band for displaying propaganda slogans, yet there are reasons to doubt their functionality. At the crown of this version is the text "Workers World Unite", which matches Klucis' solution for the sphere in the above-described work from the First Russian Art Exhibition in Berlin, but contains a grammatical mistake, the phrase "of the" is missing.

The above-mentioned examples, where, in one case, only the construction has been developed in accordance with its function, while, in the other – an artistically impressive ensemble has been created, which also occurs elsewhere. The reverse of the small stand "Radio-orator No. 8a" (GCC, No. 177) (11) from Thessaloniki only shows the constructive solutions: foldable, supporting legs held in place by cables and a disc intended for text projections – a principle that is further adopted in the construction of "Radio-orator No. 2" (GCC, No. 377b; No. 377a). Here it is possible to discern the sequence of work: first the constructions were worked out, then these were enveloped in decorative design, where, by playing on different texts on the summits of the radio-orators, the speakers were emphasised on the visualised lines of radio beams.

Continuing on the subject of decorative design, there are two known unsigned sketches for the festive decoration of the Kremlin wall: one on clear paper with photo-montaged aeroplanes, which is held in the collection of the LNMA (No. Z-7863) (12), while the other, less finished, drawn on a reused study drawing paper, held in the collection of the St. Petersburg Museum of Theatrical and Musical Art (No. 23272/243 OP 25502). If the latter contains a greeting on the anniversary of the October in Cyrillic, the former is in English on a dirigible, with the orange-red tone that is used visually corresponding to that found in the details of the stand in works



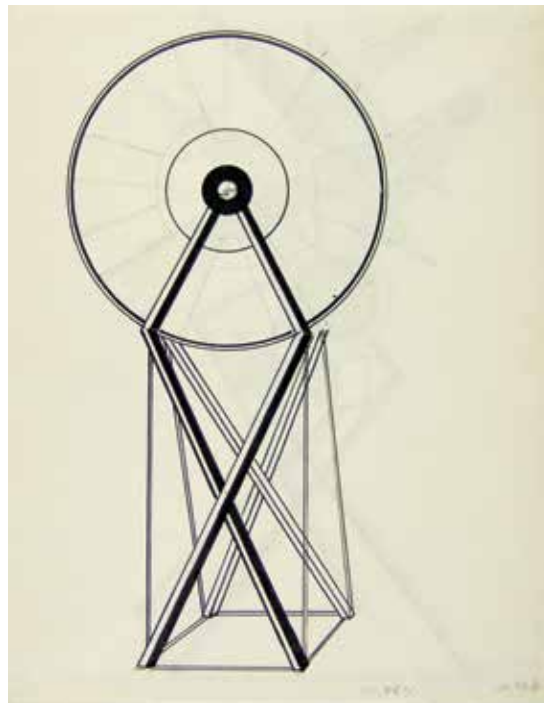
No. 144 and No. 292 from the Costakis Collection. In both of the Kremlin sketches, the main means of artistic expression is the visualised radio beam motif and its universal role in uniting the working class. 1922 was the turning point in radio broadcasting in Moscow, allowing not only instantaneous exchange of news, but also an opportunity for an impressive propaganda campaign, in the realisation of which the group of Latvian artists wanted to express themselves.

The failure of the project of the Latvian authors in the competition was hardly a surprise, since how was such an ambitious design to be realised? Even if an official opening of radio broadcasts was planned in connection with the Comintern and the jubilee, Vladimir Lenin's speech was played from records and not live, furthermore, it was broadcast after 8 December 1922.<sup>40</sup> If aeroplanes and the decoration of the Kremlin wall with red and black draperies was a regular occurrence at festive parades, then radio broadcasts with illuminations or graphic imitations, agitational stands and tribunes in key locations for the proceedings of the celebration was the innovation proposed by the artists. The artists, most likely, were hoping for bigger funding in order to finally refresh the celebration with innovative solutions, whose practical implementation was only beginning<sup>41</sup>, but the idea remained on paper. Also of little help was Avratov's belated defence of agitational art, calling for the use of new forms of urban decoration for national celebrations, which would follow their function and not simple decorative tradition.<sup>42</sup> The financial situation was so harsh that even the official winners of the competition could not realise their idea.



10. "Workers [of the] World, Unite. Salvation is the Development of Industry". 1922. Watercolour, ink and pencil on paper. 32.9 x 24 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 187

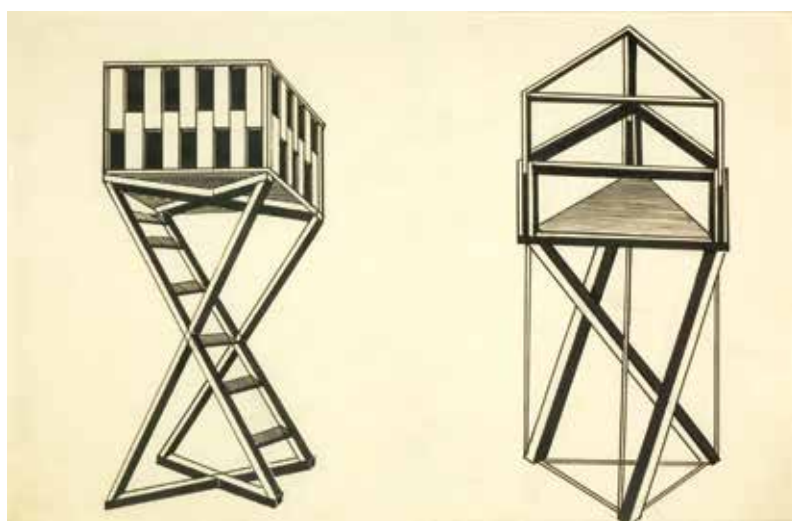
11. Radio-Orator No. 8. Two-sided. 1922. Ink on paper. 17.7 x 13.8 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 177







12. "Quake, [ye] Bourgeois! Radio for the proletariat! Long live the proletarians! Glory to those who have fallen in the struggle!". 1922. Photomontage, gouache, ink and pencil on paper. 31.7 x 45 cm. LNMA, coll. No. Z-7863



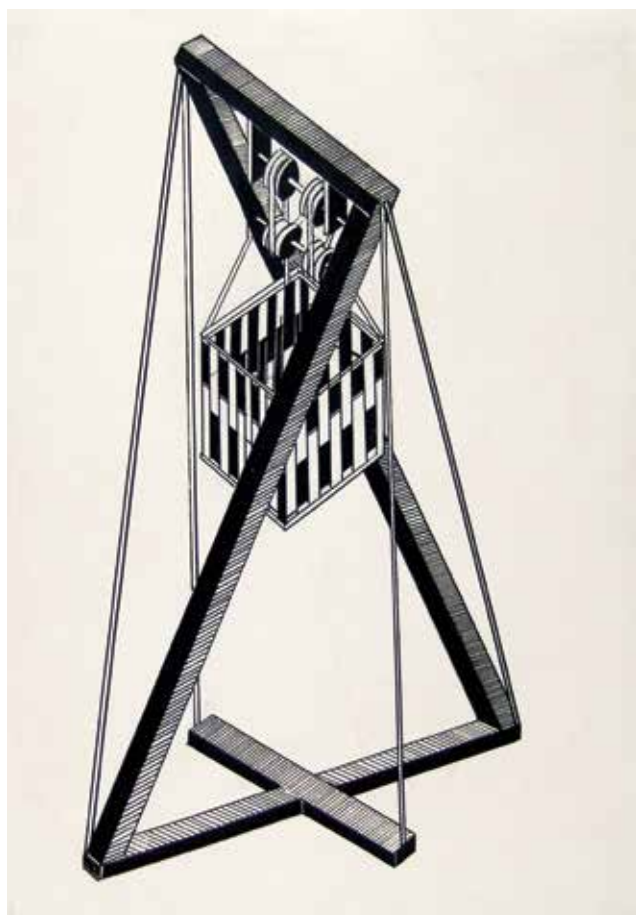
13. Speakers' Rostrums. 1922. Indian ink on paper. 17.8 x 27 cm. STG, inv. No. PC-12060

With the anonymity, sheet size and the style of execution in mind, the above-mentioned group of works could be attributed to the collective work of Latvian artists Johansons, Veidemanis and Klucis. Thus, upon comparison, the design of the stands from the Tretyakov Gallery ("Speakers' Rostrums". TG, No. PC-12060) (13) represents only carefully developed speakers' platforms, focusing on their construction, not visual appearance. In other signed, more utopian and ambitious projects, Klucis employs the orator's basket seen in "Speakers' Rostrums", such as "Ekran" (GCC, No. 229; No. 743; No. 746), where the ladder for the speaker to climb into position is retained in but one case (15), since greater attention was devoted to free fantasy about general ideas that would be possible to bring together here: a cinema screen and bookshelves among which the person addressing the people is seated.

A second group of works, which share with the first paper of a similar colour, is smaller in both format and number: "Radio Orator No. 3" (GCC, No. 73), "Design for Propaganda Kiosk" (GCC, No. 385) (6) and "Radio Orator No. 8a" (GCC, No. 177) (11). On the reverse of the last work is a sketch for another work, giving reason

to doubt that these had been submitted as part of the project as one set. The author did not gain access to Klucis' remaining original stands in the Tretyakov Gallery to study the colour and size of the paper, yet, courtesy of researcher Derkusova, she had access to reproductions of the works loaned for the exhibition<sup>43</sup>. From these it can be inferred that the Lenin's speech "Radio-Orator No. 3" (TG, No. 12062) was made on a larger (23.8 x 17.3 cm) and lighter sheet of paper than the example with the same number found in Thessaloniki with the broadcast of the speech by Grigory Zinoviev.

The notes for all examples of "Ekran" rostrums from Thessaloniki contain the idea behind their creation: "Proposal for construction: Rostrum-screen-kiosk for the 5th anniversary of the October Revolution and the 4th Congress of the Comintern" (this specific example is from work No. 746). It can be assumed that the "Ekran" were repeated and later also exhibited in a different context, in which it was necessary to note their origin, while among the group of works described above, we find neither Klucis signature, nor written explanation of the intention.



14. Design for Rostrum. 1922. Ink on paper. 26.7 x 17.6 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 66

### What Happened to Johansons?

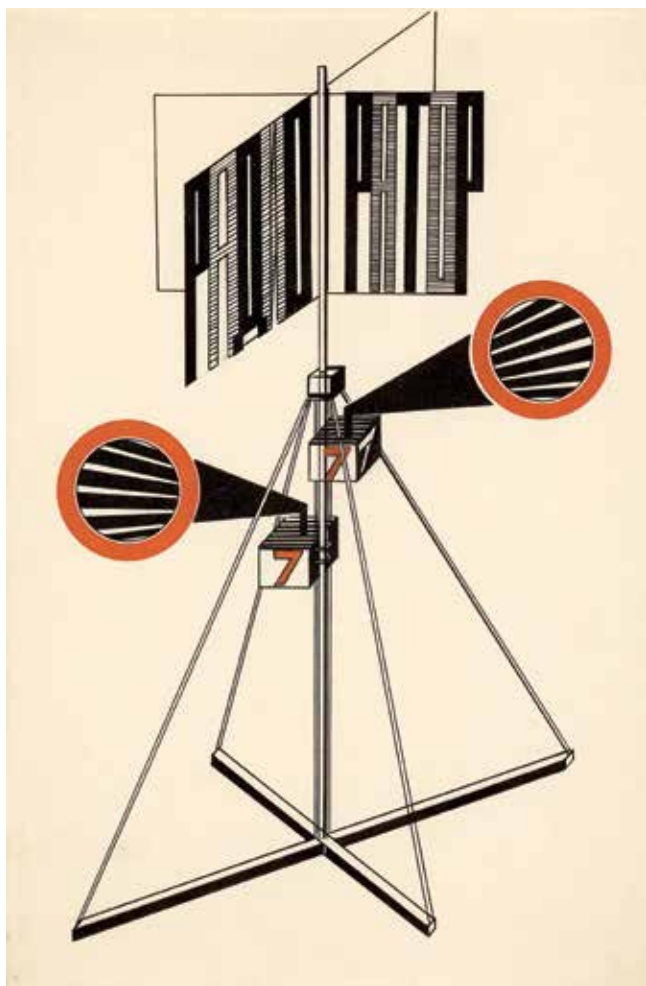
Let us dwell briefly on Rodchenko's rotating mechanisms filmed by Vertov: these are made from wood and cardboard as unique, single-use carriers of textual information with a dimension of movement or three-dimensionality. Two principles are used for the rotating mechanisms – either the construction itself rotates or it is placed on a rotating support and employs a modular system, with the texts "From one" and "side" glued or attached. The wheel, meanwhile, has a simple structure, with text placed on the sides of the rectangle of the wooden construction and driven by an external force. A similar principle can be observed in the examples in the Costakis Collection, "Down with Art. Long Live Agitational Propaganda" (GCC, No. 188) (7) and "Design for Propaganda Kiosk" (GCC, No. 385) (6).

Despite the fierce competition,<sup>44</sup> the constructivists also employed universal mechanisms – the wheel had for centuries been used in different fields of the economy. Yet, in contrast to Rodchenko's proposal, "Design for Propaganda Kiosk" has also gained modular repetition for the informative wings and the inside grid, the principle of

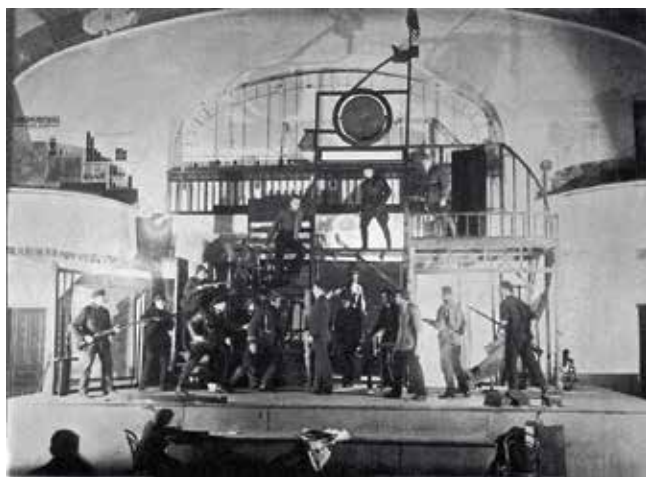


15. Gustav Klucis. "Ekran". Design for Screen, Rostrum and Propaganda Stand. 1922. Ink on paper. 23.8 x 17.8 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 743





16. Radio-Orator No. 7. 1922. Gouache, ink and pencil on paper. 26.9 x 17.7 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 292



17. Kārlis Veidemanis. Design for the performance “The Proletariat and Comintern”. 1925. Latvian National Museum of Literature and Music, inv. No. 153.956

cross-bracing and cable tension for attaining balance. This construction has been repeated and expanded in another design for an informative stand in the work “Down with Art. Long Live Agitational Propaganda”. Here, the mechanism of the wheel has been simplified, adding wing constructions with text at the top, which are more visible in a crowd, and the solution for the support has been optimised – they are held in place only by the weight of the stand and tension. Johansons’ researcher Gough has drawn attention to his attempts at finding a formal solution of maximum functionality, using fewer elements and attaining greater efficiency<sup>45</sup>, which we can observe in the succession of these two stands. Furthermore, the text in the second construction and its correspondence to the artist’s statement only sharpens this observation. In the announcement of Johansons’ *INKĻUK (ИHXVК)* working group “From Construction to Technology and Invention” of 9 March 1922, he used a declarative form of expression to write “Down with art, long live technology!”<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, a year later Johansons had reached the conclusion that art is a profession “from which (..) the artist cannot live. That has many reasons, chief among which – art’s bankruptcy, its futility, inability to perform its tasks in connection with the advancements of science and technology”,<sup>47</sup> therefore we can assume that he was not at all concerned about claiming authorship in the production of the stands. It is known that as late as autumn 1923, Klucis and Johansons exhibited their constructions together at the presentation evening of the Latvian group of the Latvian Left Front, or *Krešis*,<sup>48</sup> ruling out tension in their relationship due to competition.

The constructional principles proposed by Johansons are directly applicable and identifiable in the large group of works separated by the author: the constructions do not have unnecessary elements, they are subordinated to their function; they dismantle the boundary between interior and exterior; the basis of their structure is the cross<sup>49</sup> as well as self-tensile constructions; these consist of foldable combinations of metal and cables (GCC, No. 292) (16) as well as the combination of three equal support beams and balance through their intersection (TG, No. PC-12060) (13). It is possible to follow attempts at simplifying the constructions, for example, if one solution for an orator’s rostrum (GCC, No. 66) (14) shows an attempt at finding a way of eliminating the ladder (by employing a system of pulleys), then in another (TG, No. PC-12060), the ladder is designed as a foldable mechanism with a double function – as a support and as a means of climbing into position.

Klucis’ oeuvre prior to the agitational stand competition already includes decorative constructive solutions, therefore the functional part of several of the anonymous stands might be the contribution of Johansons. A question remains regarding the overall vision and whether it was Klucis who had the leading role here?

### The Group’s Achievements

Researchers have already expressed an assumption that the constructions of Klucis’ stands have been influenced either by his competitor Rodchenko or collaborator Johansons. Regarding Klucis’ stand, art historian Selim Khan-Magomedov (*Селим Хан-Магомедов*) stresses specifically the constructive originality and innovations: “It is the principle of modules, self-tensile constructions”, which was first



discovered by Johansons in May 1921, “There is no doubt. Klucis took part in this [OBMOKbU – S. K.] exhibition and essentially developed several ideas in the creation of abstract as well as semi-functional constructions.”<sup>50</sup>

Recent literature has put more emphasis on design innovations. Austrian researcher Klemens Gruber has remarked that the multi-functionality of these devices succeeds in replacing man, since Klucis has imbued them with an anthropomorphous character by calling them “Radio Orators”.<sup>51</sup> These were envisioned as talking, film-projecting and required literature and slogan-spouting machines, or an entirely new means of meaningfully

agitational content, for example, in Rodchenko’s 1919 design proposal for a newspaper kiosk,<sup>53</sup> but what had been lacking were the functional solutions that could provide the utopian building<sup>54</sup> with a support,<sup>55</sup> therefore the innovation in the solution for the stand of the Comintern and the fifth anniversary from 1922 lies precisely in bringing together all of the elements where function and form is fused together in a harmonious whole. If prior to the said competition Klucis was more interested in formal experiments, then, in collaboration with Johansons, these ideas could be materialised in objects that can actually be built.



18. Gustavs Klucis. “Workers of the world, unite!” (corrected title). 1922. Linocut, gouache on paper mounted on paper. 22.9 x 13.2 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 747

19. Gustav Klucis. “Ekran”. 1922. Watercolour and ink on paper. 24.6 x 16.5 cm. SMCA, Costakis Collection, No. 229



presenting the content relevant to the celebration. The stands employ “functional aesthetics”, “simplicity, economy, expediency”, where as “a kind of modular solution, it combines with the latest technological components: the loudspeaker and the projection screen – future trademarks of all Constructivist presentations”.<sup>52</sup> Since more detailed analysis is to be expected from Gough’s forthcoming book, this publication only briefly focuses on their significance according to the views of several researchers.

The history of Soviet agitational art contains earlier examples with screens, loudspeakers, platforms for

The contribution of the third Latvian artist Veidemanis to the group’s work remains unclear. It is known that in the general exhibition of Latvian artists<sup>56</sup> that opened in September 1922, the dominant current in Veidemanis’ oeuvre was cubism, while the design for the staging of *Darba himna* (“Hymn to Work”) showed “spirals of macrocosmic suns and planets”, while “his colour scheme and texture is defined and clean. Construction and composition in some works have drifted into another direction.”<sup>57</sup> Alongside painting, he regularly worked as a stage designer for Latvian theatre companies. It cannot be inferred from the reviewer’s text whether *Darba himna* was staged with only a decorative



20. Decoration of the Kremlin Wall for the Fifth Anniversary of the October Revolution and the Fourth Comintern Celebration. November 1922. From: <https://www.rferl.org>

painting in the background, or were there also spatial elements, which, for reasons of economy, mostly had to be combined. Regarding Veidemanis' personal exhibition taking place in the summer of 1923, a critic and adherent of traditional art remarked: "He has yet to find his own unique, suitable style, oftentimes ending up bogged down in extremes."<sup>58</sup> In autumn the artist went on a creative trip to Berlin. In 1925, for the stage design of Latvian director Teodors Amtmanis' (1883–1938) 20-year anniversary production of *Proletariāts un Kominterne* ("The Proletariat and the Comintern") at the Communist University of the National Minorities of the West<sup>59</sup> Veidemanis used a large-scale climbing construction (17), where the overhanging platforms and ladders are combined with decorative elements (dividers). At the top of the construction he placed an accent in the form of a red sphere and on the right, a semi-circular compositional curvature, which demonstrates a harmonious synthesis of constructive and decorative elements. We can find parallels of this approach in the multi-functional kiosk-platform held in Thessaloniki (GCC, No. 187) (10), while the execution of the red sphere bears similarities to the filled circle enclosed in a double line seen in the work from the Berlin exhibition (TG, No. 13019) (3) and the sketch for the decoration of the Kremlin (LNMA, No. Z-7863) (12).

### Conclusions

Despite repeated references to the physical construction of Klucis' agitation stands in 1922, the author did not find supporting documentary evidence. The proposals for the

agitation stands were made over several periods, and a larger group of similarly sized works can be identified in the Costakis Collection in Thessaloniki, which might be a collective work of Latvian artists Veidemanis, Johansons and Klucis. In light of this new information, the earlier attribution to Klucis stands<sup>60</sup> because of the economy of materials, the use of a modular system and thought-out structure, which are characteristic of some constructions but adopted superficially in others, should be re-evaluated.

A set of works highlighted may have been submitted to the competition for the Fifth Anniversary of the October Revolution, since they are made on clear, similarly sized paper suitable for a project proposal, with differences of a few millimetres. Several of Klucis' works may have been made by synthesising the principles developed in the group and adding his own elements, which made the propaganda stands visually more impressive and ambitious. Later Klucis has carefully gone through his works and diligently signed them, even correcting spelling mistakes in graphic prints (19). Similarly, the reverse of one of the works from the Costakis Collection contains the remark "mine" (GCC, No. 397), which separates his own work from those of others even when he had no wish to sign it.

We can recognise the ideas visible in the Tretyakov Gallery's version of the Multifunctional Stand-kiosk in the example of Klucis' latticed tower "Ekran" (19). If many of the anonymous works are characterised by well-considered synthesis of form and function without unnecessary elements in their constructions, the prints bearing Klucis' signature show an artistically more ambitious approach: an

emphasis on rhythm, the very same constructive elements are used as graphical means of expression with no concern for their utility. This interest in impressive appearance is also confirmed by the author of two Klucis' reconstructions, Jürgen Steger.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Klucis stood out among his peers by compensating the poverty and greyness of the Soviet regime (20) with free imagination and determination, tirelessly promoting his achievements in the designing of the stands.

Previous researchers have remarked that the "proposals for festive stands are among the first works of Soviet "production art",<sup>62</sup> hence future research should focus in greater depth on which was Klucis' individual achievement and which a contribution of the Latvian Artists' Group

practiced since 1918 through regular participation in various decoration assignments.<sup>63</sup>

### Note on image captions

If a title is integrated into the drawing, I use it in the attribution of the work, leaving spelling errors as well, as they are important for further research. If there is no author's note or numbering, then I am guided by the typology introduced by the represented museums. So far all the mentioned works are attributed to Klucis, but given the hypothesis of wider authorship put forward in the article, I leave his note only in situations where it is proven by Klucis's signature or the catalogue of compiled works. Also the chronology should be further clarified.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Kruger's installation "Untitled (Surrounded)" in the 2017 exhibition "Revolutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test", Venice.

<sup>2</sup> Installation in the artist's 2009 personal exhibition "How Can One Think Freely in the Shadow of a Temple" at the Kunstverein in Hamburg.

<sup>3</sup> Valdis Celms gave the assignment to the students of year I of the Department of Design of the State Art Academy of Latvia to develop the constructive solutions of Gustavs Klucis' agitational stands, presenting the works at the 5th Latvian SSR Design Exhibition in 1977.

<sup>4</sup> In an art exhibition in Warsaw on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Soviet power two metre-high reconstructions of Klucis' works were built. See: *Oginskaja L. Густав Клуцис. – Москва: Советский художник, 1981. – С. 26.*

<sup>5</sup> Since 2017, Maria Gough has been working on the manuscript of this book. See: Art Institute of Chicago. Maria Gough: Drawing for World Revolution // The University of Chicago: Department of Art History (<https://arthistory.uchicago.edu/happenings/events/maria-gough-drawing-world-revolution>, accessed 23.03.2024).

<sup>6</sup> *McGlinchey C. A Critical Look: How Science Cast Doubt on a Sculpture Attributed to Gustav Klucis // Medium. – 2016. – 9 Nov. (<https://stories.moma.org/a-critical-look-how-science-cast-doubt-on-a-sculpture-attributed-to-gustav-klucis-f750dcd77b36>).*

<sup>7</sup> *Oginskaja L. Густав Клуцис. – С. 26.*

<sup>8</sup> See: *Oginskaja L. Художник – агитатор // Декоративное искусство. – 1971. – № 5. – С. 37; Oginskaja L. Das Phantastische und die Realität in den Konstruktionen von Gustav Klucis // Gustav Klucis. Retrospektive / Hg. von H. Gassner, R. Nachtigäller. – Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1991.*

<sup>9</sup> *Lavrentyev A. Alexander Rodchenko. – Moscow: Sergey E. Gordeev, 2011. – P. 167.*

<sup>10</sup> [З. Риж. ?]. Москва. VII Накануне // Известия. – 1922. – № 251. – 5 ноября.

<sup>11</sup> Клуцис. Проект радио-трибуны // ЛЕФ. – 1923. – № 4. – С. 61.

<sup>12</sup> Книжный кноск. Проект констр. Лавинского // ЛЕФ. – 1923. – № 3. – С. 44.

<sup>13</sup> *Oginskaja L. Das Phantastische und die Realität in den Konstruktionen von Gustav Klucis. – S. 113.*

<sup>14</sup> *Виленский В. (Сибиряков). Заметки журналиста // Известия. – 1922. – № 255. – 11 ноября.*

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Catalogue // Gustavs Klucis: Latvijas Nacionālā mākslas muzeja kolekcijas zinātniskais katalogs = Gustavs Klucis. Complete Catalogue of Works in the Latvian National Museum of Art / Sast. I. Derkusova. – Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs; Neputns, 2014. – 2. sēj. – 81. lpp.

<sup>17</sup> *Уриэль. «Разрушители машин» в театре Революции // Известия. – 1922. – № 251. – 5 ноября.*

<sup>18</sup> "Gustavs says, if the constructions will be made in material, only then they would be printed abroad." – Valentina Kulagina's diary entry from 29 December 1921. See: *Tupitsyn M. Gustav Klucis and Valentina Kulagina: Photography and Montage after Constructivism. – New York: International Center of Photography; Göttingen: Steidl, 2004. – P. 171.*

<sup>19</sup> For more see: *Lodder C. Gustavs Klucis: Stands for the Revolution // Re-Constructivism / Ed. by J. Milner, E. Sudakova. – London: Gallery for Russian Arts and Design, 2013. – P. 23.*

<sup>20</sup> And worked there until 1923. See: Gustavs Klucis biography // Gustavs Klucis. Kāda eksperimenta anatomija = Gustavs Klucis. Anatomy of an experiment / Sast. I. Derkusova. – Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs; Neputns, 2014. – 183. lpp.

<sup>21</sup> Latviešu gleznotāju panākumi konkursā // Krievijas Cīņa. – 1922. – Nr. 104. – 22. okt.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> There were not enough works for the exhibition, therefore the selection had to be expanded.

<sup>24</sup> 100 Years On: Revisiting the First Russian Art Exhibition of 1922 / Ed. by I. Wünsche, M. Leimer. – Köln: Böhlau, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> An image of this work is published in the book: *Неизвестный русский авангард в музеях и частных собраниях: альбом / Состав. А. Сарабянов. – Москва: Советский художник, 1992. – С. 116.*

<sup>26</sup> Here and below, in relation to the examples from State Tretyakov Gallery, the author refers only to the information available in published materials and the archive of researcher Iveta Derkusova, due to lack of access.

<sup>27</sup> Latvian War Museum, inv. No. 9114 / 2305 VII.

<sup>28</sup> At the exhibition of Latvian riflemen-artists in the Kremlin, the official name of the group was *Daile*. For more see: *Kāle S. Latvian Riflemen's Young Artists Circle Daile and its Members. Revision of the Current Interpretation // Saint-Petersburg Historical Journal. – 2016. – No. 4. – P. 144–159.*

<sup>29</sup> Latviešu mākslinieku darba komūna // Krievijas Cīņa. – 1920. – Nr. 6. – 27. janv.

<sup>30</sup> Extracts about artist communes. Information Centre of the Art Academy of Latvia (LMA IC), file A 16/1, Nr. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Latviešu mākslinieku darba komūna.

<sup>32</sup> Extract about artist communes.

<sup>33</sup> Based on selected insertions, for example, on page 4 in Album I, among works made in 1931 there is suddenly a print of radio orator No. 8 from 1923. It also appears that someone has intervened after Klucis into the chronological presentation and pasted works into the album according to other considerations.

<sup>34</sup> Album // Gustavs Klucis: Latvijas Nacionālā mākslas muzeja kolekcijas zinātniskais katalogs = Gustavs Klucis. Complete Catalogue of Works in the Latvian National Museum of Art. – 2. sēj. – 220. lpp.

<sup>35</sup> Klucis' researcher Iveta Derkusova has changed the numeration in the album according to the chronology of the works' creation. From author's correspondence with the researcher on 15 March 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> *Klucis G. Autobiography // Gustavs Klucis: Latvijas Nacionālā mākslas muzeja kolekcijas zinātniskais katalogs = Gustavs Klucis. Complete Catalogue of Works in the Latvian National Museum of Art. – 1. sēj. – 209. lpp.*

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> This information may be useful for future makers of reconstructions.

<sup>40</sup> *Lodder C. Gustavs Klucis: Stands for the Revolution. – P. 33.*

<sup>41</sup> Live radio broadcasting began on September 1922 and public loudspeakers were installed on several important buildings. See: Ibid. – P. 32.

<sup>42</sup> *Авратов Б. Организация революционного праздника // Пролетарское студенчество. – 1923. – № 2. – С. 35–38.*

<sup>43</sup> The exhibition "Gustavs Klucis. Anatomy of an Experiment", curated by Iveta Derkusova, took place from 23 August to 26 October 2014 at the *Arsenāls* Exhibition Hall of the LNMA.

<sup>44</sup> It is known that there was creative competition between Klucis and Rodchenko. On 13 April 1922, Klucis was working on "veshch" (вещь), which he had not wanted to show to anyone and



which Kulagina considered to be a new turning point, yet eventually he had himself allowed Rodchenko in. See Kulagina's diary entry from 13 April 1922: *Tupitsyn M.* Gustav Klutis and Valentina Kulagina: Photography and montage after constructivism. – P. 173.

<sup>45</sup> *Gough M.* The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution. – Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. – P. 81.

<sup>46</sup> *Ioganson K.* From Construction to Technology and Invention // Russian Avant-Garde, 1910–1930: The G. Costakis collection: Theory. Criticism / Ed. by A. Kafetsi. – Athens: National Gallery and Alexandros Soutzos Museum, 1995. – P. 662.

<sup>47</sup> Kārlis Johansons' letter to family in Latvia. 21 June 1923. LMA IC, case J-59/3, No. 16.

<sup>48</sup> For more on *KreĶs* see: *Kāle S.* Padomju Krievijas Latviešu kreisās mākslas frontes liktenis – slīktenis // *Letonica*. – 2023. – Nr. 50. – 60.–90. lpp.

<sup>49</sup> *Ioganson K.* From Construction to Technology and Invention. – P. 662.

<sup>50</sup> *Хан-Магомедов С.* Густав Клуцис. – Москва: С. Э. Гордеев, 2011. – С. 97.

<sup>51</sup> *Gruber K.* An Early Staging of Media. Gustav Klutis's Loudspeaker Stands // *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae. Film and Media Studies*. – 2010. – No. 2. – P. 127.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* – P. 126.

<sup>53</sup> *Lavrentyev A.* Alexander Rodchenko. – P. 122.

<sup>54</sup> In 1920, the design for the kiosk was reproduced on several occasions. See: *Lavrentyev A.* Alexander Rodchenko. – P. 127.

<sup>55</sup> For more on the realisation of the model in miniature see: *Ibid.* – P. 122.

<sup>56</sup> Latviešu mākslinieku gleznu izstāde // Krievijas Čiņa. – 1922. – Nr. 84. – 6. sept.

<sup>57</sup> *Kr-ts.* Latviešu jauno mākslinieku grupas gleznu izstāde Maskavā // Krievijas Čiņa. – 1922. – Nr. 97. – 5. okt.

<sup>58</sup> *R-Ķs.* K. Veidemaņa gleznu izstāde // Krievijas Čiņa. – 1923. – Nr. 81. – 24. jūl.

<sup>59</sup> The performance took place on 15 March 1925. See: *Teodora Amtmaņa.* // Krievijas Čiņa. – 1925. – Nr. 27. – 5. marts.

<sup>60</sup> *Lodder C.* Gustavs Klucis: Stands for the Revolution. – P. 24.

<sup>61</sup> From author's correspondence with Jürgen Steger on 10 April 2024.

<sup>62</sup> *Oginskaja L.* Das Phantastische und die Realität in den Konstruktionen von Gustav Klucis. – S. 112.

<sup>63</sup> This research was carried out within the project "Cultural and creative ecosystem of Latvia as a resource of resilience and sustainability" / CERS (No. VPP-MM-LKRVA-2023/1-0001). The author expresses gratitude to the Art Academy of Latvia for granting the Erasmus+ scholarship which made it possible to carry out original research in Thessaloniki as well as to Iveta Derkusova, Marita Bērziņa, Angelica Charistou and Jürgen Steger.

<sup>64</sup> Gough also points to a later date for the creation of radio orators – in 1923. See: *Gough M.* Press // *Revolutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test* / Ed. by M. S. Witkovsky, D. Fore. – Yale: Yale University Press, 2017. – P. 83. (217)

## Attēlu saraksts

1. "Pasaules strādnieki, savienojieties! Laipni lūgti, visas pasaules proletariāta delegāti!" (ar labotu uzrakstu). 1922. Papīrs, krāsainas tušas. 17,5 x 26,8 cm. LNMM, kol. Nr. Z-7842.

2. Gustavs Klucis. "Pasaules strādnieki, savienojieties! Laipni lūgti, visas pasaules proletariāta delegāti!" 1922. Papīrs, krāsainas tušas. 17,8 x 28,7 cm. LNMM, kol. Nr. Z-8750/72a.

3. Gustavs Klucis. "Pasaules strādnieki, savienojieties!" Konstrukcijas mets Oktobra revolūcijas piektajai gadadienai. 1922. Papīrs, krāsainā un melnā tuša, grafīta zīmulis, laka un akvarelis. 67,2 x 42,5 cm. VTG, inv. Nr. 15382. No: Gustav Klucis. *Retrospektive / Hg. von H. Gassner, R. Nachtigäller.* – Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1991.

4. Gustavs Klucis. Tribīnes un radiooratori. 1922. Lapa no "Sarkanā albuma II". Dažādas iespiedtehnika. 48,5 x 36,4 cm (lapa). LNMM, kol. Nr. Z-8750/38-42.

5. Gustavs Klucis. "Pasaules strādnieki, savienojieties!" 1922. Lapa no "Sarkanā albuma II". Papīrs, linogriezums sarkanā un zilā krāsā. 48,5 x 36,4 cm (lapa). LNMM, kol. Nr. Z-8750/84a-85a.

6. Propagandas kioska mets. 1922. Papīrs, tinte, guaša. 17,4 x 12,6 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 385.

7. "Nost ar mākslu! Lai dzīvo aģitācijas reklāma!" 1922. Papīrs, zīmulis, guaša, tinte. 26,7 x 17,6 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 188.

8. "Komunisma aģitācija un propaganda visas pasaules proletariātam". 1922. Papīrs, guaša, tinte. 26,5 x 17,2 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 144.

9. Ekrāns tribīne vitrīna kiosks. 1922. Papīrs, guaša, tuša, grafīta zīmulis. 37 x 26,8 cm. VTG, inv. Nr. PC-12063. No: Gustav Klucis. *Retrospektive / Hg. von H. Gassner, R. Nachtigäller.* – Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1991.

10. "Pasaules strādnieki, savienojieties! Rūpniecības attīstība ir pestīšana". 1922. Papīrs, akvarelis, tinte, zīmulis. 32,9 x 24 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 187.

11. Radioorators Nr. 8. Divpusējs. 1922. Papīrs, tinte. 17,7 x 13,8 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 177.

12. "Drebiet, buržuji! Radio proletariātam! Lai dzīvo proletārieši! Slava cīņās kritušajiem!" 1922. Papīrs, fotomontāža, guaša, tinte, zīmulis. 31,7 x 45 cm. LNMM, kol. Nr. Z-7863.

13. Oratoru tribīnes. 1922. Papīrs, tuša. 17,8 x 27 cm. VTG, inv. Nr. PC-12060.

14. Tribīnes mets. 1922. Papīrs, tinte. 26,7 x 17,6 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 66.

15. Gustavs Klucis. "Ekrāns". Ekrāna tribīnes aģitstenda mets. 1922. Papīrs, tinte. 23,8 x 17,8 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 743.

16. Radioorators Nr. 7. 1922. Papīrs, guaša, tinte, zīmulis. 26,9 x 17,7 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 292.

17. Kārlis Veidemanis. Noformējums uzvedumam "Proletariāts un kominterne". 1925. Latvijas Nacionālais rakstniecības un mūzikas muzejs, inv. Nr. 153.956.

18. Gustavs Klucis. "Pasaules strādnieki, savienojieties!". 1922. Papīrs, pielīmēts papīrs, guaša, linogriezums. 22,9 x 13,2 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 747.

19. Gustavs Klucis. "Ekrāns". 1922. Papīrs, tinte, akvarelis. 24,6 x 16,5 cm. VLMM, Kostaka kolekcija, Nr. 229.

20. Padomju varas piecgades un Ceturtās kominternes svētku rotājums Kremļa sienai. 1922. gada novembris. No: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-1922-tumultuous-events-anniversaries-putin/31636196.html>.

### List of abbreviations in captions / Saīsinājumi attēlu parakstos

LNMA – Latvian National Museum of Art / LNMM – Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs

STG – State Tretyakov Gallery / VTG – Valsts Tretjakova galerija (Maskava, Krievija)

SMCA – State Museum of Contemporary Art / VLMM – Valsts Laikmetīgās mākslas muzejs (Saloniki, Grieķija)

## Kopsavilkums

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### GUSTAVA KLUČA AĢITĀCIJAS STENDU PĒTNIECĪBAS JAUTĀJUMI

Sniedze Kāle

Līdz šim pasaules mākslas vēsturē Gustava Kluča (1895–1938) vārds izskan divos kontekstos – fotomontāžā un aģitmakslā. 1922. gada Oktobra revolūcijas piecu gadu jubilejai un IV Kominternei veltītais noformējums – vairākos desmitos skaitāmie aģitācijas stendu projekti – ir izpelnījis vislielāko uzmanību un bijis tik ietekmīgs, ka kopš 1967. gada pasaules muzejos regulāri tiek veidotas šo darbu rekonstrukcijas, katrai mākslinieku, kuratoru un zinātnieku paaudzei tos atklājot no jauna.

Vieni apbrīno atsevišķu konstrukciju inženierisko risinājumu, citus aizrauj to vizonārisms, tomēr daži ar to realizāciju saistīti jautājumi ir palikuši neatbildēti. Pētīt latviešu mākslinieku grupējumus starpkaru Padomju Krievijā, raksta autore uzdūrās informācijai, kas lika izsekot nepārbaudītus pieņēmumus. Publikācijas mērķis ir izgaismot atsevišķas pretrunas un veikt precizējumus, nepretendējot uz vispusīgu Kluča aģitācijas stendu analīzi.

Pētnieki ir ilgstoši atsaukušies uz mākslas zinātnieces Larisas Oginskas (*Лариса Огинская*) radīto un vēlāk izplatīto informāciju par Kluča aģitācijas stendu realizāciju. Ne kino hronikas, ne prese vai konstrukciju fotogrāfijas to neapstiprina. Klucis, kurš ikdienā izmantoja fotoaparātu un lepojās ar saviem darbiem, nav iemūžinājis un katalogizējis realizēto konstrukciju. Tāpat informācija presē liek apšaubīt, ka atsevišķi svētku stendu projekti bija redzami IV Kominterne kongresam veltītajā izstādē Georga zālē Kremli.

Līdzās Kluča parakstītajiem iespiedgrafikas darbiem vairāki stendu projekti patiesībā varētu piederēt latviešu mākslinieku grupai. 1922. gada 22. oktobra laikraksta “Krievijas Cīņa” paziņojumā vēstīts: “Oktobra revolūcijas 5 gadu svētku svinībām priekš Kremļa un padomju māju dekorēšanas projektu izgatavošanas no VCKP tika izsludināts slēgts projektu konkurss”, kur otrā godalga piešķirta revolucionāro latviešu mākslinieku grupai (Kārlis Veidemanis, Kārlis Johansons un Gustavs Klucis), kas “spoži pierādījusi savas spējas pie tik grandioziem darbiem, namu, ielu, un laukumu dekorēšanā tautas svētkos, kas ir nākotnes mākslinieku darba lauks”. Šī ir vienīgā oficiālā informācija, kas apstiprina kopdarbu, tādēļ autore devās izpētes braucienā uz Georga Kostaka kolekciju Valsts Laikmetīgās mākslas muzejā Salonikos, kur glabājas lielākais aģitācijas stendu oriģinālzīmējumu krājums.

Sajā krājumā varēja izcelt reprezentatīvu darbu grupu, zīmētu uz līdzīga tīrāksta papīra, kur viena mala ir no 17,5 līdz 17,8 cm

gara, bet otra – no 26,8 līdz 27 cm plata, kas varētu būt iesniegta minētajā projekta konkursā. Lai arī tā līdz šim ir atributēta Klucim, autorība būtu vēlreiz kritiski jāizvērtē. Tē ir identificējami tieši uz uzbūvi vērsti projekti, kur atrodamas sasauces ar Kārļa Johansona (1890–1929) daiļradi: konstrukcijām nav lieku elementu, tās ir pakārtotas funkcijai un nojauc robežu starp interjeru un eksterjeru; to pamatā ir krusts, pašnosprīgojums, saliekamas metāla un virvju kombinācijas, kā arī trīs vienādu balsta koku kombinācija un līdzsvarošana ar savstarpējo šķērsojumu.

Publikācijā apzinātie aģitācijas stendi (kā tīrāksti, tā melnraksti) ir zīmēti vairākos etapos, un to raksturs ir neviendabīgs. Ir izsekojami mērķtiecīgi centieni vienkāršot konstrukcijas piemēram, oratoru tribiņu kāpņu dizainā. Turpetim Kluča parakstītajā un pavairotajā stendā “Ekrāns” tribiņu grozs ir zaudējis sasaisti ar pārdomātu lietojumu, pārvēršoties par aplikatīvi uzliekamu vai iekarīnamu režģi, uz kuru tikai vienā gadījumā ved kāpnes, te uzmanība piešķirta dekoratīvai daudzfunkciju apspelei.

Kluča sastādītajā darbu katalogā jeb “Sarkanajā albumā II” ir ievietota proporcionāli mazākā aģitācijas stendu daļa, tās ir estampā vai tipogrāfijā pavairotas grafikas, kā arī viens parakstīts oriģinālzīmējums, kam Latvijas Nacionālajā mākslas muzejā ir anonīms līdzinieks. Mākslinieka autobiogrāfijā ir izvairīgi aprakstīts aģitācijas stendu tapšanas process, kur “bija nepieciešams mainīt to ārējo veidolu”, nenosaucot darītāju. Tāpat Klucis izceļ savu pienesumu – “pirmās un otrās piegādes periodā es aktīvi piedalījos pilsētas noformēšanā revolucionāro svinību reizēs” –, nepieminot Latviešu mākslinieku darba komūnas materiālos uzrādīto regulāro sadarbību Kremļa un citu Maskavas reprezentatīvo vietu rotāšanā no 1918. līdz pat 1921. gadam, kuras sastāvā ietilpa arī ambiciozāk noskaņotais novators.

Tiesa, trīs minēto latviešu kontekstā Klucis ir uzskatāms par pirmo, kurš publiski izstādījis piegādes revolūcijai veltītu stendu – utopisku būvi ar projekcijas ekrānu – jeb grafikas darbu, ar kuru bijis pārstāvēts Pirmajā Krievu mākslas izstādē Berlīnē, bet telpiskas konstrukcijas tur bija Johansonam. Savukārt par Kārļa Veidemaņa (1897–1938) darbību 1922. gadā atrodamas ziņas, ka viņš sekojis arī jaunajiem virzieniem, bet 1925. gada uzveduma “Proletariāts un Kominterne” noformējums uzrāda viņa konstruktīvās izpausmes scenogrāfijā.

Autore strādāja ar ierāmētiem darbiem un pretrunīgām ziņām no kolekciju katalogiem, kā arī nevarēja piekļūt atbilstošajiem oriģināliem Treťjakova galerijā. Lai droši precizētu secinājumus, būtu jāveic darbu izrāmēšana, pārmērīšana un tehnikas pārbaude, jo angļiskajā versijā ir lietots “tintes” nevis “tušas” apzīmējums un, piemēram, nereti aprakstā minētā gūša vizuāli nav saskatāma. Tāpat ķīmiskā izpēte visās kolekcijās ļautu apstiprināt vai noliegt publikācijā izvirzīto pieņēmumu, ka izdalītās anonīmās grupas zīmējumi ir bijuši kolektīvs darbs. Vai arī tā bijusi tikai idejiska kopdarbība? Kāpēc it kā hronoloģiski agrīnākajā Kluča utopiskās būves projekta nosaukumā *Workers of the World Unite* nav kļūdu, kamēr anonīmajās, arī Kluča parakstītajās aģitstendu grafikās tajā pašā nosaukumā, piemēram, trūkst dubultā W vai tas ir labots? To jāprecizē tālākajos pētījumos, pārbaudot ne vien autorību, bet arī datējumu, kas līdz šim nekritiski pieņemts par 1922. gadu un atkārtots.