

heroes emerge: Borovikovsky and Levitsky, Orest Kiprensky and Vasily Tropinin, Fedotov, Repin, the Empress Maria Fedorovna and many others. Portraiture fares particularly well – perhaps due in part to Blakesley's exhibition of Russian portraits, *Russia and the Arts: The Age of Tchaikovsky and Tolstoy*, at the National Portrait Gallery, London, last year – although one can easily imagine landscapes, history painting or genre painting claiming the top spot in another version.¹

Blakesley concludes her book with the ninth exhibition of the Peredvizhniki in 1881, which featured a breathtaking display of the Russian school's greatest works: Repin's portrait of Modest Mussorgsky (State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow), Vasily Surikov's ominous *Morning of the execution of the Streltsy* (Fig.45) – seeming to anticipate the events surrounding the assassination of Tsar Alexander II – and Arkhip Kuindzhi's haunting, shimmery vision of the Dnieper river (State Tretyakov Gallery). Again, Blakesley's choice is unexpected. Just as Russian painting seems to start truly hitting its stride, producing works that would hold their own in any survey of European art, she ends. Many readers will want to know what comes next, and what all this meant for Mikhail Vrubel and Natalia Goncharova, Kandinsky and Malevich. In her final line, Blakesley offers only the most minimal of answers, writing that later artists 'stood on the shoulders of their predecessors'. In her refusal to say more, Blakesley makes, perhaps, the strongest argument for the school of Russian painting, declaring that its turn to Modernism is not the most interesting part of the story, that it is merely the next chapter in a much longer history. It is in this bold claim that Blakesley enacts a remarkable expansion of the field, making available to a wide audience a pantheon of previously little-known artists, fresh historical perspectives and a national tradition with global implications.

¹ It was reviewed in the June issue of this Magazine, 158 (2016), pp.470–71.

Lazar Khidekel and Suprematism. Edited by Regina Khidekel. With contributions by Constantin Boym, Magdalena Dabrowski, Charlotte Douglas, Tatiana Goriacheva, Irina Karasik, Boris Kirikov, Margarita Shtiglits and Alla Rosenfeld. 224 pp. incl. 180 col. ills. (Prestel, Munich, London and New York, 2014), £55. ISBN 978-3-7913-4968-88.

Reviewed by CHRISTINA LODDER

AS THE FIRST scholarly study of the innovative work of the architect Lazar Markovich Khidekel (1904–86), this book is a most welcome addition to the literature on the Russian avant-garde. Khidekel is not well known, but he played a vital role in applying the spatial and formal principles of Suprematism to architecture. Indeed, his Workers'

Club of 1926 was the first truly Suprematist architectural design. The story of how it came to be produced makes fascinating reading.

Khidekel was a fifteen-year-old student when he first came into contact with Kazimir Malevich, soon after the artist arrived in Vitebsk in November 1919 to teach at the city's art school. Subsequently, Khidekel became one of Malevich's most steadfast followers and a leading member of UNOVIS (Utverditeli novogo iskusstva, 'Champions of the New Art'), the group that Malevich set up in early 1920. It was dedicated to promoting Suprematism, introducing its language of coloured geometric forms against white grounds into all aspects of the everyday environment, and incorporating its features into all areas of design, from ration cards to posters, from textiles to buildings. The group shared Malevich's aspiration to reconfigure the world as a Suprematist utopia and create a Suprematist architecture.

Khidekel rapidly became one of Malevich's most valued disciples and assistants, a member of UNOVIS's creative committee and responsible for running the architectural and technical department after El Lissitzky left Vitebsk in late 1920. From 1923 Khidekel worked with Malevich at the State Institute of Artistic Culture (Gosudarstvenny Institut Khudozhestvennoy Kultury, or GINKhUK) in Petrograd, while studying architecture at the city's Institute of Civil Engineering.

Khidekel's design for the Workers' Club of 1926 fused a Suprematist approach to form and space with pragmatic concerns for function, materials and construction methods. While its asymmetrical massing and use of cantilevering were reminiscent of Malevich's own experiments with architectural form – his *planits* and *architectons* – Khidekel's design could actually be built. Yet Khidekel also explored architecture's spatial potential in sketches for dramatically cantilevered, intersecting and asymmetrically articulated rectilinear structures, which were intended to be raised above the ground on supports, or to inhabit cosmic space, such as his designs for a city on piers (1926–28) and an 'Aero-city' (1928). These visions remained firmly confined to the drawing board, especially after Khidekel was forced publicly to recant his previous attachment to Suprematism in 1934 and comply with the stylistic dictates of Stalinism. From then on his architecture conformed to official demands, although echoes of Suprematism sometimes remained. The school on Gorokhovaya Street in what was then Leningrad (1938), for instance, is in a Neo-classical idiom, although the site plan recalls a Suprematist composition with geometrical elements distributed along a single axis. During the thaw in East–West relations under Krushchev, Khidekel was encouraged to revisit his earlier experiments, producing numerous spatial paintings and innovative designs, including a project for a museum dedicated to the rocket scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, who had been an inspiration for UNOVIS's cosmic aspirations.

All this is documented in this superbly illustrated and informative volume, which makes full use of material preserved in the family archive. It is the first major monograph on Khidekel in English and provides a riveting discussion of the architect's creative theory and practice. The 115 large colour plates provide a visual history of his development from Cubo-Futurism and Suprematism (e.g. *Yellow cross*; 1923) to projects such as his design for the stage at the Red Putilov Workers' Club in Petrograd/Leningrad (1924) and later works. The book also includes a chronology of the architect's life and various documents and theoretical statements that he produced during the 1920s.

The essays act as an illuminating complement to this visual material. Regina Khidekel provides a general introduction, while Tatiana Goriacheva discusses Khidekel's work at UNOVIS, and Charlotte Douglas explores the cosmic dimension of Suprematist architecture. Alla Rosenfeld, Boris Kirikov and Margarita Shtiglits examine Khidekel's architectural work of the 1920s and 1930s, including the Club for the Red Sportsman's Stadium (1927) and designs for the socialist town of Dubrovka (1931–33) – sadly destroyed during the Second World War – in which Suprematist formal concerns were combined with a Constructivist approach to material and function. Finally, Constantin Boym and Magdalena Dabrowski discuss Khidekel within international artistic and architectural contexts. This book is essential reading for anyone wishing to gain a fuller understanding of Malevich, UNOVIS, Suprematist architecture and the achievements of the Russian avant-garde.

Jackson Pollock's 'Mural': Energy Made Visible. By David Anfam. 146 pp. incl. 67 col. + 39 b. & w. ills. (Thames & Hudson, London, 2015), £24.95. ISBN 978-0-500-23934-6.

Reviewed by PATRICIA SMITHEN

READING THROUGH David Anfam's book on Jackson Pollock's *Mural* (1943; University of Iowa Museum of Art) can be compared to the experience of looking at the painting itself: there is a structure steering you through, but it is easy to get lost in the pleasure of its dense thickets and layers of meaning.¹ Just when you think you understand where he is leading you, up pops an unexpected reference or antecedent to *Mural*, which Anfam swiftly corroborates with convincing evidence. It is an erudite, immensely engaging and illuminating display.

Although organised into three chapters with a structure loosely based on 'before', 'during' and 'after' the painting was made, the book is anything but linear in its approach, opening with Pollock's death in 1956 when the fateful car crash left Clyfford Still waiting in vain for