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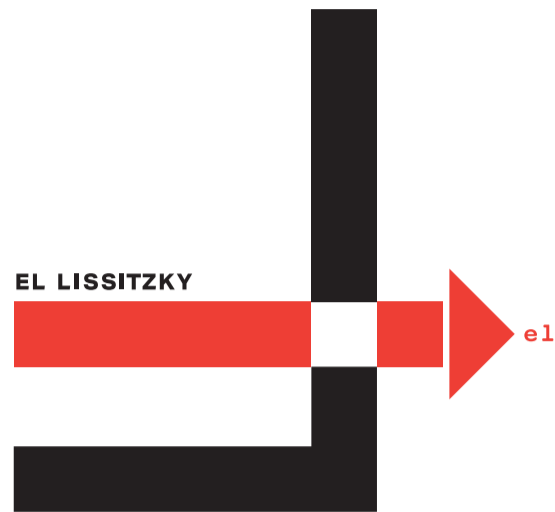
**IST DAS**

**L E B E N**

THE NEW MAN, THE ANNOUNCER, THE CONSTRUCTOR

EL LISSITZKY

Self-portrait As The Kestner Gesellschaft



07.07.2023

Dear (Kestner) Gesellschaft,

(So) here I am, again, your El, back home; it does feel like home, here in Hanover, here at the Kestner. It's been so long ... But as the poet says, hinauf und zurück ...

This exhibition is my anabasis: both at once, a return and a departure; my (ultimate) Proun Room, a habitat of homecoming. Die Kunst ist das Leben.

This exhibition is (my) self-portrait as an institution: an enduring act of becoming and a speculative process of self-identification; (my) reflection in a mirror (of an institution).

It is a celebration of my first ever institutional solo exhibition. What an appreciation!

I read in the press release: "With the exhibition The New Man, The Announcer, The Constructor, the Kestner Gesellschaft traces the founding moments of its history and the avant-garde mission. Presented only seven years after the Kestner Gesellschaft's establishment in 1916, the exhibition El Lissitzky in 1923, was the very first institutional solo show of the Russian artist, marking his groundbreaking position as the announcer of the new vocabulary which revolutionized the formal language of art as well as his role as a constructor of an institutional thinking, based upon the scientific and experiential perception and innovative approach to exhibition's architecture, strategies of display and a total understanding of artistic creation."

Yes, indeed, I keep saying: Der Weg ist das Schöpferische der Erfindung (!)  
Welcome to The New Man, The Announcer, The Constructor!  
What an honor to be hosted here again!



Exhibition rooms Kestner Gesellschaft, Königstraße 8, 1923, photomontage, Archive Kestner Gesellschaft

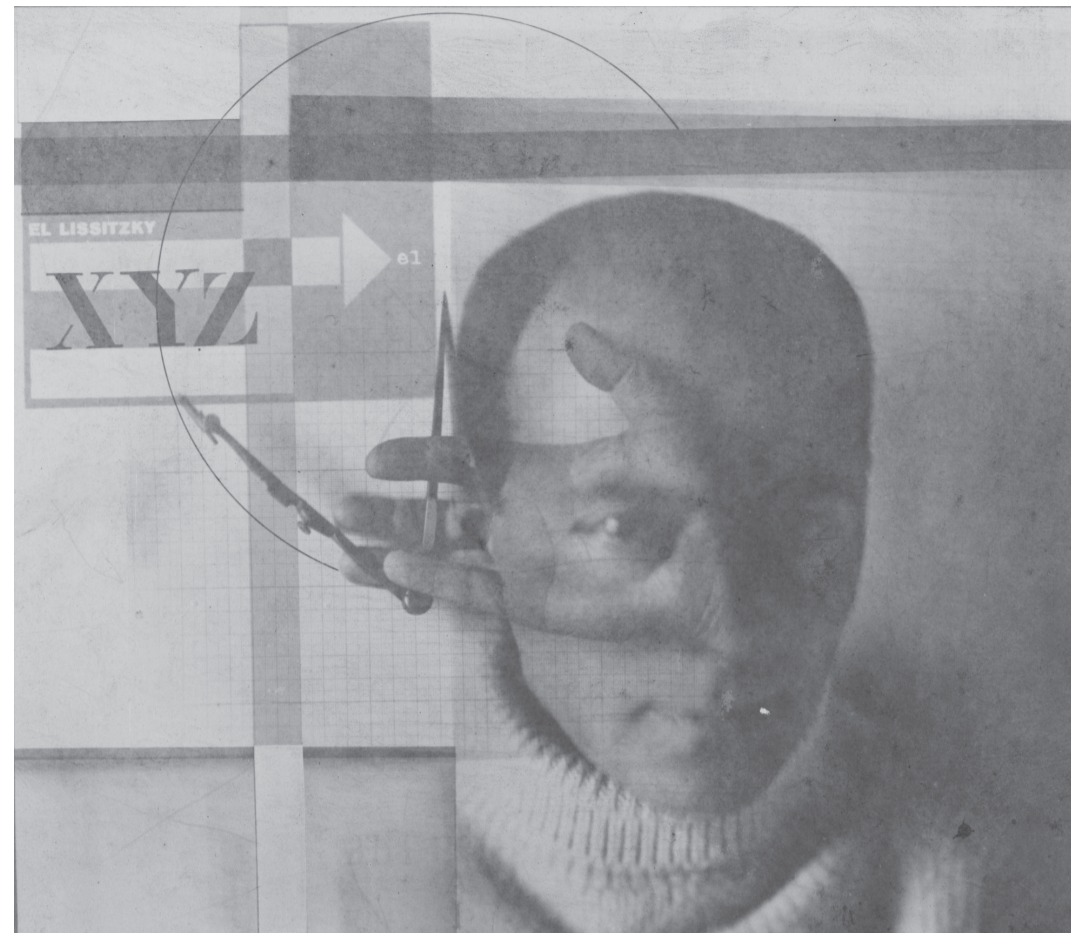
I proudly continue: "This exhibition celebrates the centenary of this exhibition by paying a tribute to this significant fact in the Kestner Gesellschaft's institutional history, a fact which planted a seed for a vast variety of experimental and progressive ideas, reflected in the future program and the institutional identity of the Kestner Gesellschaft. It not only emphasizes the pioneering and visionary aspects, developed by various representatives of the avant-garde, active in Hanover at the beginning of the 1920s, but it also investigates the long-lasting legacy of that period, and its impact on the museum's discourse, especially in regards to Dörner's term of the "living museum" and El Lissitzky's "imaginary spaces" where the art experience was meant to become more personal, intense, and multidimensional, fitting the life of a new, modern man, inhabiting a constantly changing world, full of contrasts. Conceived as an institutional self-portrait of a prophetic artist, The New Man, The Announcer, The Constructor consists of the archival materials and historical positions, set up in a confrontation with the deconstructive and revisionist reading of the modernist paradigm by the contemporary artists."

White page remains empty in times of global dispersion. Hinauf und zurück. (Failed) project for a revolution. Anabasis in ruins.

I am grateful for your trust and generosity.

Sincerely Yours,

El



El Lissitzky, The Constructor (self-portrait), 1924, Silver gelatine print on paper (photomontage), 11.3 x 12.5 cm

**1890**  
Born November 23rd in Pochinok, Smolensk

**1909**  
»Enrolled at the Polytechnic University in Darmstadt to become an engineer (Architect). Learned about art by wandering through Europe, likewise in Paris«

**1914**  
»Outbreak of the First World War; returned to Russia«

**1916**  
Founding of the Kestner Gesellschaft at Königstraße 8 in Hanover

**1919**  
»Invited by Marc Chagall for a professorship at the architecture faculty and graphic workshops of the Vitebsk art academy. Shortly after me Kazimir Malevich joins as well.«

**1921**  
»Appointed head of faculty of architecture at the VKhUTEMAS school in Moscow«

**1922**  
»During my temporary stay in Berlin, I published the journal "Veshch" (Object) together with the writer Ilya Ehrenburg.«

»My first interaction with the group around Wassily Kandinsky, László Moholy-Nagy, Sophie Küppers and Eckart von Sydow at a Dada evening in von Garvens Gallery in Hanover«

Regular visits to the joint studio of László Moholy-Nagy and Kurt Schwitters and the beginning of an intensive exchange of ideas

Comes to Hanover and receives support from Eckart von Sydow and Alexander Dörner, (both members of the Kestner Gesellschaft), and is accommodated in the villa of Kestner Gesellschaft co-founder Herbert von Garvens

Starts spending a lot of time with his future wife Sophie Küppers, the widow of the director of the Kestner Gesellschaft Paul Küppers, who died in January 1922, and her kids

**1923**  
»I am given space for my studio on the third floor of the Kestner Gesellschaft«

»First solo exhibition at the Kestner Gesellschaft at the same time as Max Burchartz«

Lecture on new Russian art on March 6th and on modern Russian art on June 16th to accompany the exhibitions

Sophie Küppers: In 1923, Lissitzky gave a lecture on new Russian art at the Kestner Gesellschaft. I rehearsed with him beforehand, because his harsh pronunciation and confusion of articles sometimes made him difficult to understand. The bourgeois audience, for whom much of what Lissitzky presented was completely new territory, followed his witty explanations as if spellbound. One was stirred by the newness that this Russian artist brought with him from the land of revolution

»Despite the difficult circumstances of inflation, the Kestner Gesellschaft, under the editorship of Eckart von Sydow and the help of the bookseller and publisher Ludwig Ey, manages to produce the first portfolio of my print works. The inaugural "Kestnermappe" carries the title "Proun". After its great success, the "Figurinenmappe" followed in the same year, as well as other portfolios by the artists Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Kaus, Martel Schwichtenberg, Willy Robert Huth and László Moholy-Nagy«

»Production of a photogram for Kurt Schwitters Dada magazine "Merz" together with Vilmos Huszar«

»Autumn 1923 severe illness, requiring an immediate sanatorium stay in Switzerland, pulmonary tuberculosis«

**1924**  
»In Brione near Locarno, I produce the "Nasci" issue of the "Merz" magazine with Kurt Schwitters and I work with Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber Arp on the "Kunstisimen"«

»Design of advertising for the Hanoverian company Pelikan«

**1925**  
»With Emil Roth's technical help, the project of the "Wolkenbügel", a skyscraper on three pillars planned for Moscow, was created«

»Forced to leave Switzerland. Back in Russia in June. In Moscow—professorship at the faculty for interior design and furniture at VKhUTEMAS«

Sophie Küppers organises a Lissitzky exhibition in Dresden and the "Mondrian—Paris, Lissitzky—Moscow, Man Ray—New York" exhibition in Munich

**1926**  
»My most important work as an artist began: the creation of exhibition architecture«

»At the International Art Exhibition in Dresden, my "Demonstrationsraum" (demonstration room) is shown«

»Along with my work for exhibitions, I have also worked a great deal as a book designer and with photomontage. This is because I can do such work even when my health forces me to stay in bed«

10th anniversary of the Kestner Gesellschaft, exhibition of Hanoverian artists, with Lissitzky's works included

**1927**  
»Sophie and I marry in Moscow. Before that, we sell most of the art possessions and store the rest in the Provinzialmuseum Hanover, which is run by Alexander Dörner«

»Design of the "Cabinet of Abstraction" for the Provinzialmuseum in Hanover, commissioned by Dörner after he saw my "Demonstrationsraum" in Dresden«

**1928**  
»Appointed by a governmental decision to be chief artist of the Soviet Pavilion at the International Press Exhibition in Cologne. The international press praised it as a great achievement of Soviet culture«

**1930**  
»Last visit to Hanover. Return of some works which were kept in the Provinzialmuseum«

»My son Jen Lissitzky was born«

**1932**  
»I have been a permanent contributor of designs for the journal "USSR Under Construction". I also design posters, some of which have been reproduced in magazines at home and abroad. I write about questions concerning art and architecture in addition to several books«

**1936**  
Dismissal of the director Justus Bier and forced closure of the Kestner Gesellschaft

**1937**  
The works stored in the Provinzialmuseum are confiscated, designated as "entartet" (degenerate); displayed in the Haus der Kunst in Munich as a propaganda deterrent, destroyed or moved. Among them "Proun S.R." and "Proun Black Cross" by El Lissitzky

**1941**  
»Many newspapers from around the world have reported on my books. Ignoring my illness at the moment, I hope to be able to create something for the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution«

On 30.12. El Lissitzky dies of pneumonia.

**1948**  
The Kestner Gesellschaft reopens in Warmbüchensstraße

**1966**  
El Lissitzky Retrospective celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Kestner Gesellschaft

\*Lissitzky's own notes

Curator Adam Budak  
Assistant Curators Robert Knoke, Alexander Wilmschen

Front cover  
Cover design ItYt, Hannover

Back cover  
Graphic based on El Lissitzky's letterhead, 1924-1925, letterpress on paper, 27,8 x 21,5 cm

We sincerely thank all the artists in the exhibition and the public and private lenders

ahlers collection, Bröhan Design Foundation, Van Abbemuseum, Kulturstiftung Sachsen-Anhalt und Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale), Sammlung Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Sprengel Museum Hannover, Tecta

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We sincerely thank the galleries

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Thank you Medea Stabbert

VAN ABBE MUSEUM

Galerie Thomas Derda

THE N E X T ENTERPRISE

DER RAUM IST FÜR DEN MENSCHEN DA — NICHT DER MENSCH FÜR DEN RAUM - 1923

MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI/ WILLI BAUMEISTER/BEASTER/ JOHANNA BILLING/ MARTIN BOYCE/ MAX BURCHARTZ/ HEINRICH DUNST/ THE NEXT ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTS/ FERNANDA FRAGATEIRO/ ASSAF GRUBER/ JOHN WOOD AND PAUL HARRISON/ LAJOS KASSÁK/ MARLENA KUDLICKA/ MARYSIA LEWANDOWSKA/ EL LISSITZKY/ FELIPE MUJICA/ LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY/ PAULINA OŁOWSKA/ LÁSZLÓ PERI/ PRINZ GHOLAM/ FLORIAN PUMHÖSL/ SUSANNE SACHSSE/ WIELAND SCHÖNFELDER/ KURT SCHWITTERS/ KATJA STRUNZ/ NIKOLAI MICHAÏLOWITSCH SUETIN