

## **Vladimir Tatlin, “The Work Ahead of Us” (1920)**

The foundation on which our work in plastic art—our craft—rested was not homogeneous, and every connection between painting, sculpture, and architecture had been lost: the result was individualism, i.e. the expression of purely personal habits and tastes; while the artists, in their approach to the material, degraded it to a sort of distortion in relation to one or another field of plastic art. In the best event, artists decorated the walls of private houses (individual nests) and left behind ... a variety of ridiculous forms.

What happened from the social aspect in 1917 was realized in our work as pictorial artists in 1914, when “materials, volume and construction” were accepted as our foundations.

We declare our distrust of the eye, and place our sensual impressions under control.

In 1915 an exhibition of material models on the laboratory scale was held in Moscow.... An exhibition held in 1917 presented a number of examples of material combinations, which were the results of more complicated investigations into the use of material in itself, and what this leads to: movement, tension, and a mutual relationship between.

This investigation of material, volume and construction made it possible for us in 1918, in an artistic form, to begin to combine materials like iron and glass, the materials of modern Classicism, comparable in their severity with the marble of antiquity.

In this way, an opportunity emerges of uniting purely artistic forms with utilitarian intentions. An example is the project for a monument to the Third International...

The results of this are models which stimulate us to inventions in our work of creating a new world, and which call upon the producers to exercise control over the forms encountered in our new everyday life.

## Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner, "The Realistic Manifesto," 1920

Above the tempests of our weekdays,

Across the ashes and cindered homes of the past,

Before the gates of the vacant future,

We proclaim today to you artists, painters, sculptors, musicians, actors, poets ... to you people to whom Art is no mere ground for conversation but the source of real exaltation, our word and deed.

The impasse into which Art has come to in the last twenty years must be broken.

The growth of human knowledge with its powerful penetration into the mysterious laws of the world which started at the dawn of this century,

The blossoming of a new culture and a new civilization with their unprecedented-in-history surge of the masses towards the possession of the riches of Nature, a surge which binds the people into one union, and last, not least, the war and the revolution (those purifying torrents of the coming epoch), have made us face the fact of new forms of life, already born and active.

What does Art carry into this unfolding epoch of human history?

Does it possess the means necessary for the construction of the new Great Style?

Or does it suppose that the new epoch may not have a new style?

Or does it suppose that the new life can accept a new creation which is constructed on old foundations?

...

The attempts of the Cubists and the Futurists to lift the visual arts from the bogs of the past have led only to new delusions ...

...

Neither Futurism nor Cubism has brought us to what our time has expected of them.

Besides those two artistic schools our recent past has had nothing of importance of deserving attention.

...

We say ...

Space and time are re-born to us today.

Space and time are the only forms on which life is built and hence art must be constructed. ...

...

*The realization of our perceptions of the world in the forms of space and time is the only aim of our pictorial and plastic art.*

*In them we do not measure our works with the yardstick of beauty, we do not weigh them with pounds of tenderness and sentiments.*

*The plumb-line in our hand, eyes as precise as a ruler, in a spirit as taut as a compass ... we construct our work as the universe constructs its own, as the engineer constructs his bridges, as the mathematician his formula of the orbits.*

*We know that everything has its own essential image: chair, table lamp, telephone, book, house, man ... they are all entire worlds with their own rhythms, their own orbits.*

...

We do not look for justification, neither in the past nor in the future.

Nobody can tell us what the future is and what utensils does one eat it with....

We assert that the shouts about the future are for us the same as the tears about the past: a renovated day-dream of the romantics. ...

Today is the deed.

We will account for it tomorrow.

The past we are leaving behind as carrion.

The future we leave to the fortune-tellers.

We take the present day.