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The Museum of Modern Art

FIRST RETROSPECTIVE OF WORKS OF THE STENBERG BROTHERS TO TRAVEL TO FOUR INTERNATIONAL VENUES

The Largest Graphic Design Retrospective Ever Organized at MoMA Features Some 80 Works from the 1920s and 1930s

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
May 16-July 26, 1998

MAK, Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna
September 15-November 22, 1998

Kulturhuset, Stockholm
January 30-April 11, 1999

Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles
May 31-August 21, 1999

The first retrospective of the works of Vladimir (1899-1982) and Georgii Stenberg (1900-1933), prominent designers and colorful figures of the Russian avant-garde, will be shown at four venues on an international tour that runs through August 1999. Organized by The Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition will travel to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (May 16-July 26, 1998), MAK, Vienna (September 15-November 22, 1998), Kulturhuset, Stockholm (January 30-April 11, 1999), and the Armand Hammer Museum and Cultural Center, Los Angeles (May 31-August 21, 1999).

Organized by Christopher Mount, Assistant Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, the exhibition comprises some 80 objects, including 65 movie and propaganda posters, studies for these and other posters, magazines and journals, and a small selection of the Stenbergs' early Constructivist drawings. It is the largest graphic design retrospective ever organized by MoMA.

"The Stenberg Brothers' bold and innovative designs influence the graphic arts to this day. We are delighted to be able to share the Stenberg Brothers' achievements with these four institutions," said Glenn D. Lowry, Director of The Museum of Modern Art.

The Stenbergs were born in Moscow to a Swedish immigrant father and a Russian mother, and were teenagers during the 1917 Revolution. Like many of the artists of the Bolshevik period, the Stenbergs abandoned the fine arts in favor of the functional arts soon after the Revolution. By the early 1920s they were collaborating on their most significant accomplishment, the advertising posters designed for the newly burgeoning cinema in Soviet Russia, which they continued to produce until Georgii's death. "These works merged two of the most important agitational tools available to the new Communist regime: the cinema and the graphic arts," writes Mr. Mount in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition. "When combined, they created a revolutionary new art form."

Although these works were created to promote films to the general public, they are extremely sophisticated, representing an uncommon synthesis of many of the philosophical, formal, and theoretical elements of the Russian avant-garde. The brothers' knowledge of film theory, Suprematist painting, Constructivism, and theater, as well as their skill in the graphic arts, was essential to the genesis of the posters.

Characterized by compositional dynamism and inventiveness, the posters are radical even by today's standards. The Stenbergs understood such elements as implied movement, expressive typography, scale juxtapositions, and severe color contrasts, all of which they pioneered in their designs. As Vladimir wrote, "we employ everything that can make a busy passerby stop in their tracks."

Stenberg Brothers: Constructing a Revolution in Soviet Design opened at The Museum of Modern Art (June 10-September 2, 1997) with the cooperation of the Ruki Matsumoto Collection, Tokyo, and is made possible by a generous grant from Laboratory All Fashion Art Co., Ltd. The exhibition is travelling outside the United States under the auspices of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Publication: *Stenberg Brothers: Constructing a Revolution in Soviet Design*, a 96-page fully illustrated catalogue published by The Museum of Modern Art, accompanies the exhibition. Distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, and overseas by Thames and Hudson, Ltd., London, the book is available in the MoMA Book Store for \$19.95 (paperbound).

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