

the Boulevard Ring in Moscow. Lissitzky argued that as long as humans cannot fly, moving horizontally is natural and moving vertically is not. Thus, where there is not sufficient land for construction, a new plane created in the air at medium altitude should be preferred to an American-style tower.

Rossella Biscotti's work in this room refers to 'Dead Minorities' captured in the census.

Room 7

Núria Güell | *Stateless by choice. On the prison of the Possible (Spain and Ireland, 2015)*

Núria Güell uses her artwork for political and social activism, believing that art holds the power to make us question what is socially assumed and culturally normalized, in order to being able to rethink ourselves (as a society). This project was conducted while on residency at IMMA during 2015 and in Barcelona. It documents the process and legal attempts of the artist to actively give up her Spanish nationality and to become stateless.

As Güell explains, "Nationality is conceived as the quality that infuses to a person the fact of belonging to a national community and that is organised as a State. The project emerges from my mis-identification with the structure of the Nation-State, and from my refusal of the construction of the self in relation to national identity since I consider it is fictional and imposed".

Güell worked with a lawyer to study Spanish and European legislation, concluding that there is no possibility for the loss of nationality by choice, only by punishment. She has started a legal dialogue with the State in order to achieve the condition of statelessness by choice and documentation of that process is included in the installation.

Basement

Victory Over the Sun

El Lissitzky created his series of architectonic figures after seeing a production of *Victory Over the Sun*, the futuristic Russian opera with music by Mikhail Matyushin and costumes/stage designed by Kasimir Malevich. Premiered in St. Petersburg in 1913, the opera's libretto was written by radical sound poet Aleksei Kruchenykh in the linguistically experimental and symbolic Zaum language. Paired with Malevich's set design and costumes, this pro-technological phonosemantic opera inspired Lissitzky to recreate figures of the opera's main protagonists as Suprematist automatons. A portfolio of ten large colour lithographs showing the main characters was published in Hanover in 1923. Lissitzky's ultimate vision was to recast the opera as an electromechanical show with mechanical puppets. Much like his *Proun* series which affirm the possibility of new utopian architectural forms, without explicit plans for their construction, his 'Victory' drawings imply the geometrical choreographies of constructivist automatons for the coming utopian machine age. The movements of figures are suggested by using shifting axes, multiple perspectives and directional signifiers.

This wall vitrine once again indicates the breadth of the artist's international network and interests acting as a working designer on books such as Alexander Tairoff's *Das entfesselte Theater* (The Theater Unbound), 1923, and *Die Kunstismen* 1925 (The ISMs of Art) which he co-authored with Hans Arp, creating a history of modern art that runs from 1914 – 1924.

Rossella Biscotti's work in this room refers to 'Acquired Nationalities' captured in the census.

Talks & Events Programme

Gallery Discussion | El Lissitzky: The Artist and the State

Thursday 30 July, 11am - 12noon, Garden Galleries, IMMA

Exhibition Curators, Sarah Glennie, Annie Fletcher and Catherine Morris lead a gallery discussion on the new exhibition of works inspired by Russian artist, designer, teacher and theorist El Lissitzky.

Sarah Pierce, Performance | Gag: a performance for three actors

Garden Galleries, IMMA

Intermittent scenarios will be performed throughout the exhibition space using gesture and voice. These scenarios are based on the Irish Cultural Revival during the late 19th and early 20th century.

Saturday 12th September, 2 – 4pm

Saturday 19th September, 2 – 4pm

Saturday 26th September, 2 – 4pm

Saturday 3rd October, 2 – 4pm

Lecture + Roundtable Discussion

Saturday 17 October, 3 – 5.30pm, Lecture Room, IMMA

On the closing weekend of *El Lissitzky: The Artist and the State*, Dr Catherine

Morris presents a lecture on her research into the work and ideas of the key revolutionary figure of Alice Milligan in the early years of the 20th century.

This will be followed by a discussion addressing Lissitzky's enthusiasm for the revolution and the relevance of his ideas for contemporary artists and society, as Ireland approaches the centenary of 1916.

Participants include: Rossella Biscotti, Núria Güell, Sarah Pierce, Annie Fletcher, Sarah Glennie and discussion moderator, Mick Wilson (Researcher, Valand Academy, the University of Gothenburg). A closing reception follows this event.

Reading Room

Floor 3, Garden Galleries, IMMA
Featuring special editions and rare publications on loan from Van Abbemuseum Library, Eindhoven.

Opening hours:

Tuesday – Saturday

11.30am – 1pm and 1.30 – 3.30pm

Sunday and Bank Holidays

12noon – 1pm, 1.45 – 3pm, 3.20 – 5.15pm

Booking is essential for all talks.

For a full programme of talks and free tickets visit www.imma.ie

For further information contact Sophie Byrne, Assistant Curator, Talks and Lectures, IMMA. email: sophie.byrne@imma.ie; Tel: + 353 (0)1 6229913.

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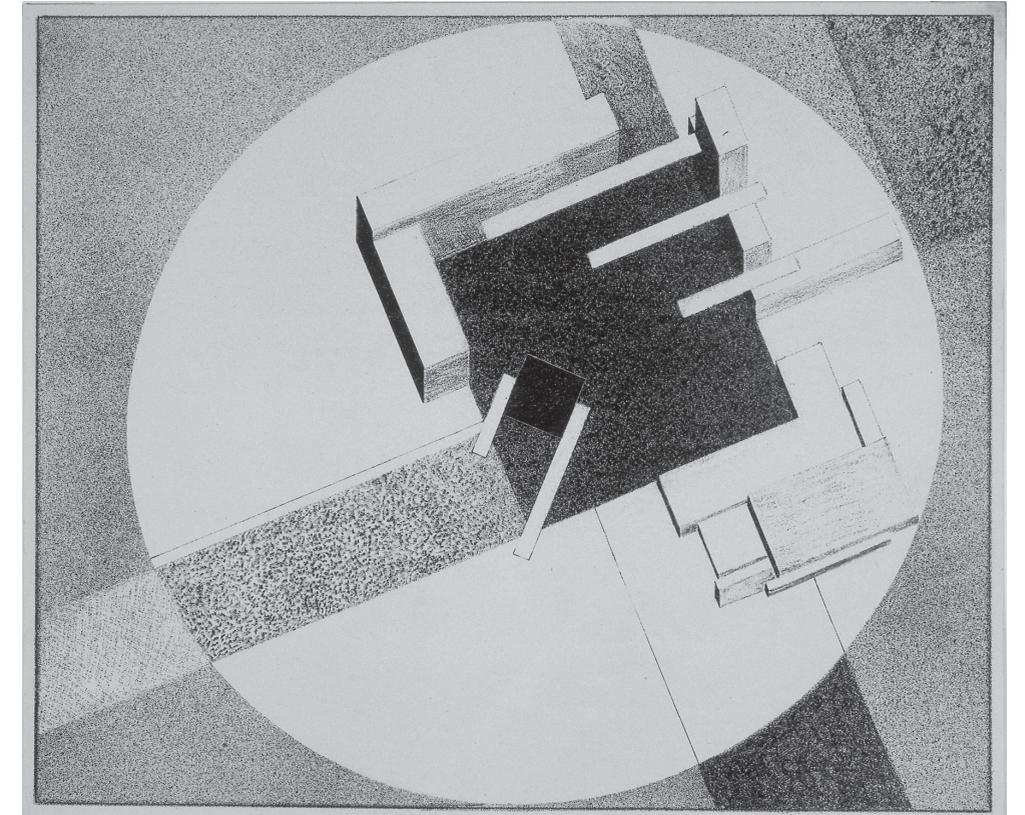
Image credit: El Lissitzky, *Proun 1E Die Stadt*, 1919-1921; lithograph on paper; 23.3 x 28.3 cm. Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands. Photo: Peter Cox

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IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
GARDEN GALLERIES
30 JULY – 18 OCTOBER 2015

EL LISSITZKY: THE ARTIST AND THE STATE

WITH ROSSELLA BISCOTTI, MAUD GONNE,
NÚRIA GÜELL, ALICE MILLIGAN,
SARAH PIERCE & HITO STEYERL



On the approach of the centenary of Ireland’s Easter Rising and the subsequent establishment of the new Republic, IMMA presents *El Lissitzky: The Artist and the State*. The exhibition reflects on the artistic and cultural community that gave voice to a new image for the emerging state and a visual language for its politics, placing this local reflection within a broader global consideration of the role of artists in the imagination of emergent states of the early 20th century and a contemporary reflection on the task of the artist in relation to civil society.

The exhibition brings together a significant body of works from the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, by El Lissitzky (1890–1941), one of the most influential artists of the 20th century. El Lissitzky was an enthusiastic supporter of the Russian Revolution; for him, the construction of the Soviet Union meant the opportunity to break away from traditional constraints. He used it to develop visions of a collective aesthetic of the new world, which he then embodied in his artworks. These works are shown in the context of archive material referencing the work of Irish nationalist poet and writer Alice Milligan (1865–1953) and her collaborator Maud Gonne (1866–1953). The exhibition explores their parallel visions of the activated artist central to the imagining of a new state. Lissitzky and Milligan both envisaged their creative practices as tools for social and political change, although realizing this through very different aesthetic languages and strategies. What becomes clear is the conviction and active participation in the task at hand: the artist as active in the formation of the new world order.

A contemporary counterpoint to the historical narrative is provided by the work of four artists—Rossella Biscotti, Núria Güell, Sarah Pierce and Hito Steyerl—whose work, in different ways, reflects on the position of the artist within contemporary society. Núria Güell and Rossella Biscotti directly address our position as individuals within the mechanics of the state, while Pierce questions the task of the artist (both past and present) in addressing any kind of cohesive experience in civil society. Hito Steyerl will exhibit two works, each of

which reflect on the important history of the Russian Avant Garde while pointing towards more contemporary concerns within today’s digitized and militarized global context.

Room 1

Hito Steyerl | *Red Alert*

Red Alert refers to a famous constructivist work, three monochromes by Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Pure Red, Pure Yellow, Pure Blue* by which Rodchenko proclaimed the end of painting. Red Alert translates this work into video, the assumption being, that of these three primary colours only the red one is left. This red being Homeland Security Red (red is the highest alert register indicating an imminent terror attack). The canvas has been exchanged with vertically hung computer monitors showing the limit of video, since the moving image has to be frozen in order to translate it into a painting format.

In her recent practice, Steyerl focuses on the term ‘circulationism’ as way of understanding the contemporary potential of art and the image. She suggests, “What the Soviet avant-garde of the twentieth century called productivism – the claim that art should enter production and the factory – could now be replaced by circulationism. Circulationism is not about the art of making an image, but of post-producing, launching, and accelerating it.”

Entrance Hall

Rossella Biscotti

Rossella Biscotti’s new work *10x10* brings together three different histories to think about modern data processing and contemporary profiling. These three works interspersed through the exhibition question how statistics and quantitative analysis not only apparently represent us, but how such illustrations may also hide cognitive bias hidden in contemporary profiling methods and other supposedly objective displays for information.

Biscotti began her research by revisiting Herman Hollerith’s (1860-1929) development of an electromechanical machine designed to speed the collection of the 1890 US Census. This machine vastly increased the speed by which the

census could be counted and allowed the government to quickly tailor specific queries. In this work, Biscotti links this history of the Brussels 2001-2006 census information of the city to create these patterned textiles. Although seemingly precise and objective, Biscotti discovered a potential bias in the way the Brussels data set was collected; queried individuals are still asked to answer yes/no binary questions that follow a hierarchical flow-chart wherein a yes/no answer to a given question leads to a different line of questioning. As such, the parameters of these fields can force a profile for the data even before its collection.

Biscotti focused on how the census sought to group each person around the family unit which their household represented, i.e. if an inhabitant was married or if they had children. But when a household is not based on such normative structures, the model becomes conflicted. These minority representations form the data points which Biscotti used to program a computerized Jacquard loom to weave patterns based on these ‘irregularities’.

Room 2

El Lissitzky | Children’s Books

About 2 Squares is Lissitzky’s first children’s book to use abstract *proun* forms to create an allegory of the recent revolution. “The book tells the story of two squares, one red and the other black, who join forces to shatter chaos and establish a new order.” Lissitzky encourages children to act out the story using basic materials at hand. Similarly, *4 Operations* (1928) includes a note to children: “this is how to use letters to put together every kind of arithmetical method - try it yourself!”. *4 Operations* uses typography to create characters while mathematics provides the action by dramatising revolutionary principles . For example, worker, peasant and Red Army soldier are added together to make three comrades or a variety of letters representing different national subjects all together equal СССР (USSR).

Room 3

El Lissitzky | *Prouns*

In 1919, El Lissitzky created the first of his *Prouns* (an acronym for Project for the Affirmation of the New). These abstract geometric compositions were inspired by architectural ideas such as a bridge or city. Lissitzky proclaimed in 1920, “The artist constructs a new symbol with his brush. This symbol is not a recognisable form of anything in the world – it is a symbol of the new world which is being built upon and exists by way of the people”. Prouns became a system of colour, shape and line, but also deployed such forms into social space, similar to how Constructivism sought to merge art and self though mass production and industry.

Sarah Pierce | *Gag*

Sarah Pierce’s work consists of an installation and a series of short performances throughout September. Both the installation and performance relate to themes within the development of tableaux performance as a political tool used by artists Alice Milligan and Maud Gonne.

Sarah Pierce

The title of Pierce’s work, *Gag*, refers to the historic outlawing of the Gaelic language, a loss of speech, censorship, and the silence of the tableaux. Pierce has responded to the use of Celtic mythology within the tableaux as a way to seek a ‘new’ language in theatre that would resonate politically throughout the country. It is a strategy that on the surface counters the language of revolution seen in the works of their European and Russian counterparts - and this contrast informs *Gag*.

The starting point for the installation is an archive of debris which has direct reference to both the immediate past and the ‘historical’ present. In the lead-up to the exhibition, the unused scraps and remnants from the de-installation of the previous exhibition and the current exhibition were amassed in the gallery and kept. This material presence conveys the reality of taking apart, building and presenting that runs through the ideas of revolution and nation-building — and here Pierce views the exhibition as a

compressed allegory for what it means to move from one ‘time’ to another. During September, actors will use the installation to make performances involving devised exercises, directed by Pierce.

Sarah Pierce

Maud Gonne, bringing performances of Milligan’s tableaux to Dublin. Milligan’s tableaux deliberately referenced the imagery used in the popular republican press (illustrated here) in order to evoke a democratic understanding of the emerging Irish national identity. Although little documentation exists of the tableaux, beyond the photographs shown here, contemporary reviews and letters give a sense of the powerful impact of the tableaux on the audience and the resourceful way in which they were produced using lists of instructions and materials at hand, strategies echoed in Sarah Pierce’s work *Gag*. Of particular note are two reviews written by Arthur Griffith and Maud Gonne respectively in which the role of the tableaux as powerful tools of nationalist propaganda becomes clear.

Sarah Pierce

Sarah Pierce