

10 October (Association of Artistic Labour): 'Declaration'

The group October was formed in Russia in 1928. It constituted a kind of umbrella organization for those artists who had earlier been associated with the avant-garde, who were committed to the production of new forms of art as part of the construction of a new socialist society, but who were simultaneously aligned against what was fast becoming the actually dominant trend in post-revolutionary art: namely the figurative realism of the AKhRR, in effect the forerunner of Socialist Realism. The notable feature of the Declaration is its mobilization of the term 'realism' precisely against what it sees not as an adequate form of realism at all but as a conservative harking back to the past. Yet on the other side, while declaring in favour of rational and constructive approaches, the group renounce the abstract industrialism and technicism into which some among the avant-garde had fallen. Rodchenko, Stepanova, Lissitsky, Klucis and Deineka were all represented in the October group's only exhibition, held in Moscow in June 1930. Other members included the film director Eisenstein; the architect-designers Gan, Ginsburg, the Vesnin brothers, and the German Hannes Meyer who was expelled from the Bauhaus in 1929; and the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera who became a member during his time in Russia in 1928. The group was disbanded in 1932 after the government decree on the reconstitution of competing artistic groups into a single Artists Union (see IVb11). The Declaration was originally published in *Sovremennya arkhitektura* (Contemporary Architecture) no. 3, March 1928, pp. 73-4. It is translated in Bowlit, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde* (op. cit), from which source the present version is taken.

At the present time all art forms must define their positions at the front of the Socialist cultural revolution.

We are profoundly convinced that the spatial arts (architecture, painting, sculpture, graphics, the industrial arts, photography, cinematography, etc.) can escape their current crisis only when they are subordinated to the task of serving the concrete needs of the proletariat, the leaders of the peasantry, and the backward national groups.

In participating consciously in the proletariat's ideological class struggle against hostile forces and in supporting the rapprochement of the peasantry and the nationalities with the proletariat, the spatial arts must serve the proletariat and the working masses in two interconnected fields: