

Image credit: Cloud Iron by Lissitzky, courtesy of Van Abbemuseum

imagine moscow: architecture, propaganda, revolution

15 March – 4 June 2017
the Design Museum

The exhibition explores six unbuilt architectural landmarks in Moscow from the 1920s and 1930s following the Russian Revolution

Featured projects include the Palace of the Soviets, planned to be the world's tallest building, and Cloud Iron, a network of horizontal skyscrapers

Marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution, *Imagine Moscow: Architecture, Propaganda, Revolution* explores Moscow as it was envisioned by a bold generation of architects in the 1920s and early 1930s. Featuring rarely seen material, the exhibition outlines an idealistic vision of the Soviet capital that was never realised.

Focusing on six unbuilt architectural landmarks located near Moscow's Red Square, the exhibition explores how these schemes reflected changes in everyday life and society following the October Revolution. Large-scale

architectural plans, models and rarely seen drawings are placed alongside propaganda posters, textiles, porcelain and magazines of the time; contextualising the transformation of a city re-born as the new capital of the USSR, and the international centre of socialism.

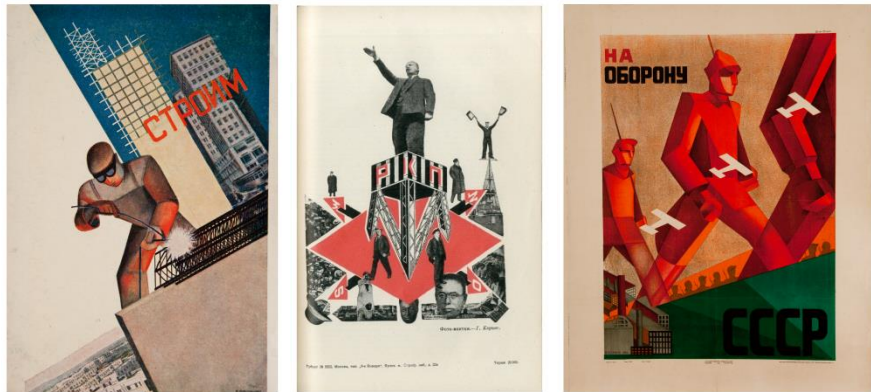


Image credits: Valentina Kulagina, *We Build*, 1930's, *Ne boltai! Collection*; Gustav Klutssis, Photomontage, lithography on paper, 1924, *Ne boltai! Collection*; Valentina Kulagina, *To the Defence of the USSR*, Poster, 1930, *Ne boltai! Collection*

In the search of a new future, architects aimed to reinterpret the old idea of the city through new symbolism, new monuments and new institutions – creating factories, theatres, communal housing and ministries. These dream-like projects suggest an alternative reality for a series of sites around the city, offering a unique insight into the culture of their time. Each project introduces a theme relevant to life and ideology in the Soviet Union: industrialisation, urban planning, aviation, communication, communal living and recreation.

Alongside the six unbuilt architectural case studies, the exhibition features a dedicated room to the geographical and ideological centre of this new Moscow, the Lenin Mausoleum. The display includes the architectural designs of Aleksey Schusev's Mausoleum as well as the rarely seen competition entries submitted by both professional designs and the public.

Eszter Steierhoffer, curator of Imagine Moscow said: 'The October Revolution and its cultural aftermath represent a heroic moment in architectural and design history. The designs of this period still inspire the work of contemporary architects, and the radical ideas in the exhibition remain highly relevant to cities today. Imagine Moscow brings together an unexpected cast of 'phantoms' – architectural monuments of the vanished world of the Soviet Union that survive in spite of never being realised.'

Presented through plans, models, reproductions and projections; the six unrealised projects on display are Nikolai Ladovski's Communal House (1920), EL Lissitzky's Cloud Iron (1924), Ivan Leonidov's Lenin Institute (1927), Nikolai Sokolov's Health Factory (1928), three competition entries for the 'Narkomtiazhprom' building by the Vesnin brothers, Ivan Leonidov and Konstantin Melnikov (1934-1936), and Boris Iofan's winning entry for the Palace of the Soviets (1932). The projects are placed in context with objects of art and design by Vladimir Klutssis, Alexander Rodchenko, Valentina Kuliguna, Yakov Chernikov and many others.

- With its striking futuristic aesthetic, '**Cloud Iron**' by **Lissitzky** set out to create a series of eight lightweight horizontal skyscrapers. Lissitzky's plan addressed Moscow's most pressing urban problem of overcrowding and the inadequacy of public transport. The eight buildings were to directly connect office and living space on the upper floors with new tram and metro stations on the lower floors. Inspired by Lissitzky's artistic concept of the 'Proun space', 'Cloud Iron' represented a move from the canvas to the real world for the designer and artist.
- The most well-known scheme in the exhibition is **Iofan's** winning entry for the **Palace of the Soviets** competition. The ultimate monument of Soviet power at the time, the project was set to become the tallest building in the world, beating the Empire State Building in New York. Topped with a 100m statue of Lenin, the project was conceived to replace the demolished Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, located close to the Kremlin. Construction started in 1937 but was soon terminated due to the German invasion in 1941. Its steel frame was repurposed for fortification and bridges, and the foundations were turned into the world's largest outdoor swimming pool. In 1995 the Cathedral was rebuilt to the exact look and specification of the previous version as if nothing had changed on the site.
- **Leonidov's Lenin Institute** was a monumental library and planetarium with the aim to congregate all human knowledge and to educate the new Soviet man. The circular volume of the building was designed to enclose an auditorium, while the gravity defying tower served as motorised book storage. Utilising the most advanced engineering and technology of the time, the complex was to be linked with Moscow via an aero-tram, and connect to the rest of the world via a powerful radio station.
- Similar to other constructivists, **Sokolov's** work in architecture explored the theories of the 'living cell'. His highly expressive graphic plan for the **Health Factory** proposed a retreat on the coast of the Black Sea. The project consisted of individual capsules for isolated rest and a communal hall for eating and other collective activities. Sokolov's proposal promoted productive rest as a key element of the economy and the values of the new Soviet society.
- **Ladovski's Communal House** became one of the earliest and most iconic symbols of the Soviet idea of communal living that aimed to revolutionise traditional family structure, and to transform the role of the female in society. Utilising the shape of a spiral, Ladovski's design merged individual living units into a united space, and alluded to the symbolism of progress.
- The **Narkomtiazhprom** was intended to house the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry. The large-scale building would have occupied a site of just under 10 acres directly opposite the Lenin Mausoleum. The design competition received numerous entries, mainly from Soviet architects. While there was no winning

design selected, the architectural proposals by the **Vesnin brothers, Leonidov, and Melnikov** are outstanding examples of a new typology of architecture that alludes to the new industrial landscape of the Soviet Union.

The exhibition brings together large-scale reproductions of architectural drawings from the Schusev Museum of Architecture (MUAR) with original drawings and artworks, magazines, news reels and applied art objects. Imagine Moscow features loans rarely seen in the UK from the Ne Boltai! Collection in Prague, the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Alex Lachmann Gallery in Cologne, the Tchoban Foundation in Berlin, the Collections of the British Library and other private collections.

#ImagineMoscow

Ends.

PRESS ENQUIRIES:

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OPENING TIMES AND TICKET INFORMATION:

Open daily 10:00 – 18:00 (last admission 17:00)

Adult £10

Student/concession £7.50*

Family (1 adult + 3 children) £17

Family (2 adults + 3 children) £24

Child (6 - 15 years) £5

Children under 6 years free

Members free

Exhibition design team:

Kuehn Malvezzi and Kellenberger-White

All six projects will be presented through an innovative exhibition design organized around the spatial diagram of a spiral, a highly symbolic architectural form of the time. Large scale environmental graphics create a sensory experience that transports visitors back in time to look at the future of the imaginary city of Moscow.

Exhibition catalogue:

Imagine Moscow publication will be available at the Design Museum Shop during the exhibition. The publication includes a curatorial introduction as well as newly commissioned essays by Richard Anderson, Deyan Sudjic, a historic text by EL Lissitzky and a number of colour illustrations reproduced from the exhibition, designed by stsq.

The Imagine Moscow publication will cost £12

designmuseumshop.com

Curatorial team:

Exhibition Curator: Eszter Steierhoffer

Curatorial Assistant: Eleanor Watson; Curatorial Research Assistants:
Kristina Ailane, Helen Ilka, Constanza Larach, Anya Smirnova, and Olga
Vaigatcheva

Exhibition features loaned object from:

Ne Boltai! Collection, Prague

Galerie Alex Lachmann, Cologne

Tchoban Foundation, Berlin

Vladimir Tsarenkov, London

Alexander Kushaev, London

Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

Cotsen Foundation for Academic Research, Los Angeles

Annely Juda Fine Art, London

Drawing Matter, Somerset

Cambridge University Library, Cambridge

The British Library, London

AntikBar, London

Schusev Museum of Architecture (MUAR), Moscow

Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), Moscow

Public programme at the Design Museum:

Imagine Moscow: Lectures on Russian design

Tuesday 21 March, 18:15 – 19:30

Adult £10, student/concession £7.50, members £5

An evening course running between March and May exploring the history of
Russian modernity, propaganda and new frontiers in Russian design.

Delivered in partnership with GRAD Gallery.

Design on Film:

Revolution – New Art for a New World

Thursday 30 March, 18:00 – 22:00

Adult £10, student/concession £7.50, members £5

Author and academic Christopher Frayling interviews Margy Kinmonth and
discusses her film, Revolution - New Art For A New World. The event
includes a screening of the film and coincides with the museum's Imagine
Moscow exhibition.

About the Design Museum:

The Design Museum is the world's leading museum devoted to architecture
and design, its work encompasses all elements of design, including fashion,
product and graphic design. Since it opened its doors in 1989 the museum
has displayed everything from an AK-47 to high heels designed by Christian
Louboutin. It has staged over 100 exhibitions, welcomed over five million
visitors and showcased the work of some of the world's most celebrated
designers and architects including Paul Smith, Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Ive,
Miuccia Prada, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray and Dieter Rams. On 24
November 2016, The Design Museum relocated to Kensington, west
London. Leading architectural designer John Pawson has converted the
interior of a 1960s modernist building to create a new home for the Design

Museum giving it three times more space in which to show a wider range of exhibitions and significantly extend its learning programme.

designmuseum.org | newdesignmuseum.tumblr.com