

# **MAYAKOVSKY: MAN OR MYTH?**

## **THE MAYAKOVSKY CENTENNIAL 1893 - 1993**



ALEXANDER RODCHENKO, PORTRAIT OF VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY, 1924, COURTESY WALKER, URSITTI & MCGINNISS

**APRIL 13 - MAY 21**

**CURATED BY WALKER, URSITTI & MCGINNISS**

**LEHMAN COLLEGE ART GALLERY** BEDFORD PARK BLVD. WEST BRONX NEW YORK



## ABOUT MAYAKOVSKY

Mayakovsky, Vladimir Vladimirovich  
Born: Bagdadi, Georgia, July 19, 1893  
Died: Moscow, April 14, 1930

Mayakovsky was the central figure of the Russian Futurist movement and the premier artistic voice of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. According to Russian-American critic Marc Slonim, Mayakovsky was among the most read poets in the Soviet Union; between 1917 and 1954, his works sold more than 23 million copies in Russian and in 51 languages of the U.S.S.R. Mayakovsky has also had a large impact on world literature and has been translated into more than a hundred foreign languages.

His father was a Georgian forester of noble ancestry, and his Ukrainian born mother was a teacher. Mayakovsky was an intellectually precocious child with an early appreciation of literature, coupled with an indifference to schoolwork. After his father died in 1906, the impoverished family moved to Moscow, and he joined the Bolshevik cause two years later. As a teenager Mayakovsky was repeatedly arrested for underground activities including organizing a jailbreak by political prisoners, for which he served a six-month prison term.

After his release from prison, Mayakovsky entered the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture to study painting. There he met Russian Cubist painter David Burliuk, who introduced him to the avant garde in the visual arts and poetry, and organized and produced Futurist road shows that toured Russia before 1917. Wearing outrageous costumes and often a yellow tunic that became his trademark, Mayakovsky soon became the most popular poet-performer in the group.

In poetry he celebrated urban life and a hope for humanity in a utopian future. He was a modernist and an original. His poetry was startling in its use of rhythm and hyperbolic imagery in a verse that spoke often of unrequited love. His poems were meant to be read aloud—some say they shouted. Favoring first-person constructions, he cultivated a booming, earthy voice in contrast to the sentimental patrician poets and the verbally vague symbolists. While the speaker in Mayakovsky's poetry is vital and heroic, he is also a tragic figure who is first rejected, then destroyed, by the cause and the individuals he loves.

Mayakovsky was considered too individualistic by the culturally conservative Lenin, though one of his best poems is *V. I. Lenin*. During the 1920s, Mayakovsky traveled widely, including several visits to Western Europe and a visit to Mexico and the United States in 1925. During his stay in Manhattan, Mayakovsky met and fell in love with the Russian emigrée Ellie Jones, with whom he had a daughter, Patricia J. Thompson (born June 15, 1926), now a professor at Lehman College of The City University of New York.

Toward the end of the decade, however, it became more difficult for Mayakovsky to obtain permission to travel, and some of his works were criticized and later suppressed, including his satirical plays *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse*. The poet's struggle with the increasingly repressive regime clouded the last years of his life. He committed suicide on April 14, 1930, under circumstances that are still open to dispute.



## EXHIBITON CHECKLIST

### Vladimir Mayakovsky

*Rosta*, 1920  
lithograph on paper  
Courtesy Merrill Berman

### Unknown Photographer

*Portrait of Mayakovsky*, ca 1918  
gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Unknown Photographer

*Lenin*, ca 1918  
vintage gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Still from the film,  
*The Young Lady & The Hooligan*, 1918  
vintage gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Cover Design New LEF*, 1928  
vintage litho proof  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Rezinotrest Defends*, 1923  
Advertisement for Galoshes made by the State Rubber Trust  
vintage gelatin silver print, hand painted with gouache  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Man With Watch*, 1924  
Advertisement for watches at GUM department store  
vintage litho print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Portrait of Mayakovsky*, 1924  
vintage gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexei Gan

*Poster for Mayakovsky Exhibition Twenty Years of Work*, 1930  
lithograph on paper  
Courtesy Merrill Berman

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Advertisement Journal LEF*, (Portrait of Osip Brik), 1924  
gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Cover Design for the Prospectus of the First Issue of LEF*, 1923  
vintage lithograph  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Gustav Klutis

*Untitled* (Stalin with Politburo), 1935  
altered photo montage  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Books* (Poster Design for State Publishing House Gosizdat), 1925  
lithograph printed by Rodchenko-Stepanova Archive in 1961  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Rodchenko

*Portrait of Vladimir Mayakovsky*, 1924  
exhibition print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### David Burliuk

*Portrait of Elly Jones*, 1925  
drawing on paper  
Courtesy Patricia J. Thompson

### A. Alland

*Mayakovsky With David Burliuk & Sons in New York*, 1925  
contemporary gelatin silver print from original negative  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Vladimir Mayakovsky

*Elly Looking Daggers At Mayakovsky*, 1925  
drawing on paper  
Courtesy Patricia J. Thompson

### Unknown Photographer

*Mayakovsky in New York*, 1925  
vintage gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Unknown Photographer

*Portrait of Isaiah Khurgin*, ca 1924  
contemporary gelatin print  
Courtesy Mael Faneberg

### A. Alland

*Mayakovsky in New York*, 1925  
gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Vladimir Mayakovsky

*Elly in the Window*, 1925  
drawing on cardboard  
Courtesy Patricia J. Thompson

### Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia Thompson with Portrait of Mayakovsky at W.U.M. Gallery, New York*, 1989  
oil on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Alexander Lavrentiev

*The Unfinished Monument to Lenin*, 1991  
gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia & Roger Thompson, Mayakovsky Square, Moscow*, 1991  
sepia toned gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia & Roger Thompson, Mayakovsky Gravesite, Novodevichy Memorial Park, Moscow*, 1991  
watercolor on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia & Roger Thompson, Mayakovsky Museum, Former Flat Vladimir Mayakovsky*, 1991  
gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

### Christopher Ursitti

*Portrait Veronica Polonskaya, Moscow*, 1991  
oil on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.



Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia Thompson & Alexander Lavrentiev, Interview for Russian TV, Moscow, 1991*  
watercolor on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Christopher Ursitti

*Varvara Rodchenko, Video Message on the Occasion of Patricia J. Thompson's First Visit to Moscow, 1991*  
gelatin silver print taken off TV  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Alexander Lavrentiev

*Patricia J. Thompson & Varvara Rodchenko with Portraits of Vladimir Mayakovsky & Alexander Rodchenko, Flat of Rodchenko Family, Moscow, 1991*  
gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia J. Thompson, Lenin Hills, Moscow: Still from Documentary on Russian TV, 1991*  
watercolor on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia & Roger Thompson, Still from State TV Program Good Morning Moscow, 1991*  
watercolor on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Christopher Ursitti

*Patricia J. Thompson, Mayakovsky Museum, Still from Russian TV, 1991*  
watercolor on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Christopher Ursitti

*Irina from Murzilka Magazine with Portrait of Gorbachev, State Committee for Women and Children, Moscow, 1991*  
sepia toned gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Christopher Ursitti

*Home of Mael Isaevna Faneberg - Samoilova (Daughter of Isaiah Khurgin), Moscow, 1991*  
watercolor on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Alexander Rodchenko

*Portrait Mayakovsky (with his puppy Shotik), 1924*  
vintage gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

Christopher Ursitti

*Portrait of Yelena Vladimirovna at Home in New York, 1990*  
oil on gelatin silver print  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti, McGinniss, Inc.

#### STAFF

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Alexander Rodchenko, *Portrait of Vladimir Mayakovsky, 1924*,  
Courtesy Walker, Ursitti & McGinniss