

LEF collective, “Whom is LEF alerting?” (1923)

This is addressed to us. *Comrades in Lef!*

We know that we, the “left” master-craftsmen, are the best workers in today's art. Up to the Revolution we piled up highly correct draft-plans, clever theorems and cunning formulae, for the forms of the new art.

One thing is clear: the slippery, globular belly of the bourgeoisie was a bad site for building.

During the Revolution we amassed a great many truths, we studied life, we received the task of building a very real structure for the centuries ahead.

A world shaken by the booming of war and revolution is difficult soil for grandiose constructions.

We temporarily filed away our formulae, while helping to consolidate the days of revolution.

Now the globe of the bourgeois paunch exists no longer. Sweeping away the old with the revolution we cleared the field for the new structures of art at the same time. The earthquake is over. Cemented by spilt blood the USSR stands firmly.

It is time to start *big things*. *The seriousness of our attitude to ourselves is the one solid foundation /or our work.*

Futurists!

Your services to art are great; but don't dream of living on the dividend of yesterday's revolutionary spirit. Show by your work today that your outburst is not the desperate wailing of the wounded intelligentsia, but a struggle, laboring shoulder to shoulder with all those who are straining towards the victory of the commune.

Constructivists!

Be on your guard against becoming just another aesthetic school. Constructivism in art alone is nothing. It is a question of the very existence of art. Constructivism must become the supreme formal engineering of the whole of life. Constructivism in a performance of shepherd pastorals is nonsense. Our ideas must be developed on the basis of present-day things.

Production artists!

Be on your guard against becoming applied-artist handicraftsmen.

In teaching the workers learn from the worker. In dictating aesthetic orders to the factory from your studios you become simply customers.

Your school is the factory floor.

Formalists!

The formal method is the key to the study of art. Every flea of a rhyme must be accounted for. But avoid catching fleas in a vacuum. Only together with the sociological study of art will your work become not only interesting, but necessary.

Students!

Avoid giving out the chance distortions of the dilettante striving for innovation, for the “*dernier cri*” of art. The innovation of the dilettante is a steamship on the legs of a chicken.

Only in craftsmanship have you the right to throw out the old.

Everyone together!

As you go from theory to practice remember your craftsmanship, your technical skill.

Hackwork on the part of the young who have the strength for colossal things, is even more repulsive than the hackwork of the flabby little academics.

Master and students of "Lef!"

The question of our very existence is being decided. The very greatest idea will perish if we do not mold it skillfully.

The most skillful forms will remain black threads in blackest night, will evoke merely the annoyance and irritation of those who stumble over them if we do not apply them to the shaping of the present day, the day of revolution.

Lef is on guard.

Lef is the defender for all inventors.

Lef is on guard.

Lef will throw off all the old fuddy-duddies, all the ultra-aesthetes, all the copiers.