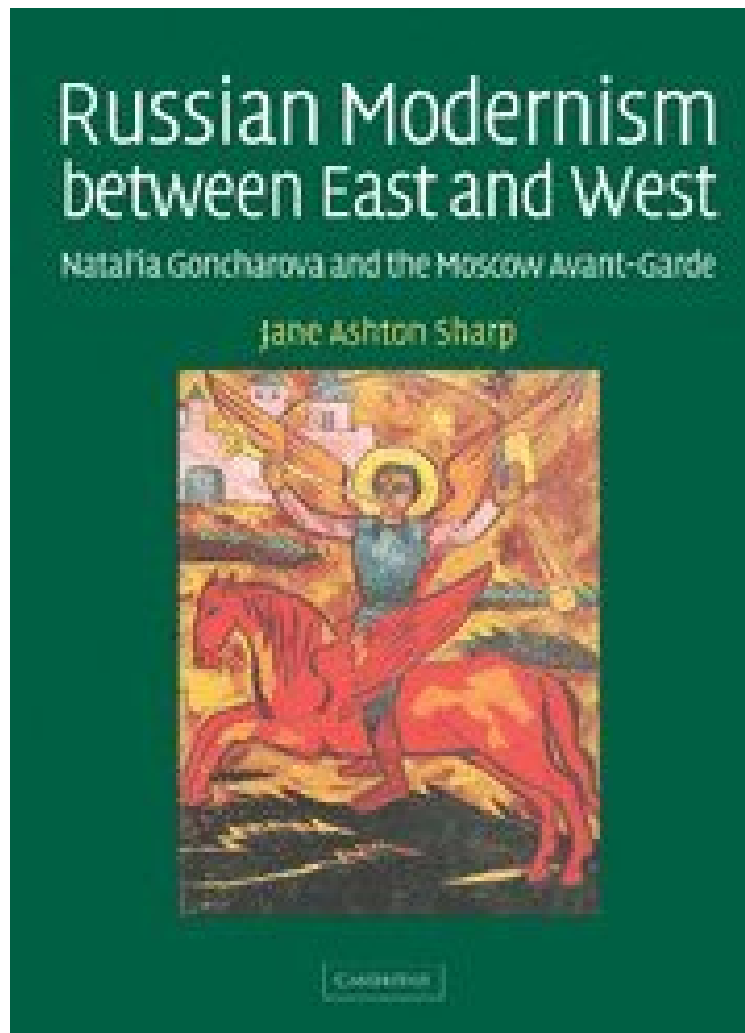


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## Russian Modernism between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde

Jane Ashton Sharp

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**Jane Ashton Sharp : Russian Modernism between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russian Modernism between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Seamless art and life By S. Smith-Peter This well-written, interesting, and beautifully designed book deals with the career of Natal'ia Goncharova, one of the main modernist artists in Russia. Jane Ashton Sharp provides an impressive overview of the scholarship on Goncharova and puts forth her own interpretation of the artist's work as providing a new way forward for Russian art via a synthesis of East and West. As

Sharp notes, "Goncharova managed her identity by recognizing and activating existing stereotypes, including that of Russia as Orient and the decorative as feminine." This "strategy for reclaiming agency" (p. 4) runs through Goncharova's work, according to Sharp. Like Dostoevsky, Goncharova was Asia in Europe and European in Asia. By bringing together these various influences, a new synthesis was to emerge that would provide Russia with artistic leadership of Europe. I was impressed by how Sharp places Goncharova into a really wide-ranging cultural context, bringing in much history and historiography, rather than in a narrow art history exploration of artistic influences. The chapter "Orientalisms" could be read with profit by those interested in Russian imperialism more broadly. Goncharova also drew upon regional artistic traditions to create her modernist art. (pp. 171, 199) This connects with the work by M. Umbach in *Vernacular Modernism*, which traces links between regional forms and modernism. Sharp emphasizes the cyclical nature of Goncharova's work, which brings into question the idea of stages of development of an artists' work. Goncharova saw her work as parallel with the seasons, which for her meant winters in Moscow and summers at her country estate. The cycles of nature were a powerful influence on Goncharova's thinking and art. Goncharova valorized the copy and felt that the object did not have a unique aura. Sharp writes of Goncharova's "insistence on the significance of the copy, and rejection of the fetish of originality." (p. 265) This is interesting, although it's a bit disturbing. Recently I read *Treasures into Tractors*, which traces how the Soviets sold off a great deal of their cultural heritage during the 1930s. They were also very influenced by the same idea. It seems, then, that the Soviet idea of object fetishism, or that the object isn't unique, came from intelligentsia sources. Goncharova wrote, "Eclecticism? I don't understand it. Eclecticism is a patchwork quilt, all seams. When the seam disappears -- it's mine." (p. 221) In addition to having illustrations of what seems to be all of Goncharova's work, extant and not extant, the book also includes appendices with Goncharova's own artistic statements. This is an interesting and beautiful book those interested in artists, women artists, and Russian artists should take a look at. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Robert Motherwell Award By Anne D. Sharp Jane Ashton Sharp won the 2007 Robert Motherwell Book Award, given yearly by the Dedalus Foundation for her book *Russian Modernism between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde*. The award recognizes outstanding publications in the history and criticism of modernism in the arts, and comes with a cash prize. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Excellent study on post-modern Russian art By P. H. van Raalten "Russian Modernism between East and West" gives a complete and description of the influence of Natal'ia Goncharova on her Muscovite colleagues. Best book on this subject!

This book reconstructs the efforts of avant-garde artists, primarily Natal'ia Goncharova and her Muscovite colleagues, to reclaim Russia's 'Eastern' cultural heritage. Before the First World War, art addressed a crisis in self-representation that was a consequence of Russia's dual cultural legacies, Asian and European. This text represents Goncharova's leading role in this project, both as a spokesperson and a painter. The animated and often polarizing debates concerning the cultural identity of contemporary art were often preceded by Goncharova's practices that react to a critical tradition that, for at least a decade, had accused the radical 'left' Muscovite artists of failing to create a national tradition.

"A complex and erudite book, providing extensive primary material...The physical qualities of presentation and formal presentation of the text, notes, bibliography, index, and the copious illustrations are exemplary, and the book is a substantial contribution to scholarship on the Russian avant-garde." -Alison Hilton, *Slavic* "...a welcome addition on this subject!...Sharp expertly conveys the complexity of Goncharova's work and that of her dialogue with her sources...She successfully addresses the contemporary binary view of the "civilized" West and "barbarian" Russia...*Russian Modernism between East and West* is an important publication that not only redresses the lack of a current scholarly English monograph on Goncharova, but also advances considerably our understanding of the Russian avant-garde." - Cheryl Kramer, *Women's Art Journal* "Sharp's achievement-illuminating fascinating aspects of both Goncharova's work and Russian Modernism-is truly colossal." - Alina Orlov, Independent Scholar About the Author Jane Sharp is Associate Professor of Art History at Rutgers University where she teaches art of the 20th and 21st centuries, and acts as Research Curator of the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union at the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers. Though recent publications have focused on Soviet unofficial art, she has authored numerous articles on the prerevolutionary avant-garde. In 2007, *Russian Modernism between East and West: Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde* won the Robert Motherwell Prize from the Dedalus Art Foundation. She is currently curating an exhibition of Moscow Conceptual art for the Zimmerli Art Museum, and preparing a book manuscript on abstract painting in the Soviet Union after the Thaw.