

The Power of Pictures

Early Soviet Photography

Early Soviet Film

FAMILY GUIDE



Introduction

The photographs and films in this exhibition were made in the early days of the Soviet Union. During this period in the 1920s and '30s, the government used photography and film as tools to persuade the Soviet people to live and act as the government saw fit. Just as the images you see on TV or in

magazines today do not always show real life, the photographs on view do not necessarily reflect the reality of everyday life in the Soviet Union. Despite the Soviet government's influence on such artists, the images do present the creative styles and new techniques of the photographers who took them.

Lines, Shapes, and Shadows

Begin on the second floor. Take a left as you exit the elevator and a left down the hallway. Take your first right to enter the exhibition. Find a photograph in this room that captures your attention.

These photographers were creative and explored unique ways to capture images. Often, the pictures they created focused on the shapes, lines, and shadows in a scene.

What shapes do you see in this photograph? Do they have straight and clean edges, or are they curved or delicate?

How would you describe the lines you see? Are they wavy, long, thick, or thin?

Do you notice shadows in this photograph? Do they take up most of the image or just a small part?

How do the images in the photograph seem different from what you would see in real life?

Find a shadow either in the Museum or outside. It can be a shadow cast by an object, a building, or your own body. In the box below, sketch what you see using simple shapes and lines.

Buildings, Transportation, and Machines

In the next gallery, find a photograph that includes a building, a mode of transportation, or a machine.

Describe what you see to your grown-up.

Where do you think the photographer was standing when he or she took this picture? Is the photographer positioned above, below, in front, or to the side? How can you tell?

Can you imagine standing next to the structure in the photograph you selected? Do you think you would feel large or small? Why?



People and Places

Explore the rest of the exhibition and choose an image that shows a person or a group of people.

What is happening in this scene?

Can you tell what kind of place this is? What makes you say that?

Describe one of the characters. What does this person look like? What is he or she doing?

In the space below, write a sentence from the point of view of this character. Based on what you see in this photograph, what might the character be thinking?

COLOR AND COLLAGE



In the last gallery of this exhibition, take a moment to look at the various film posters.

Do you notice any similarities to some of the photographs you have seen? How are the posters different from the photographs?

When you are back at home, create your own poster design. Think of a subject you would like to explore; for example, your family, your favorite kind of music, or your city. Look through old magazines and newspapers, and cut out images and words to represent these ideas.

Collage and paste your materials onto a larger piece of paper. Use colored pencils or crayons to add bold color inspired by the posters in the exhibition. Like the Soviet artists, experiment with layering, cutting, and arranging the images.

Congratulations on completing the family guide for *The Power of Pictures: Early Soviet Photography, Early Soviet Film*. We hope you enjoyed the exhibition!

Visit TheJewishMuseum.org/Families for more information on Family Programs.

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Cover: Alexander Rodchenko, *Stairs*, 1929–30, gelatin silver print. Sepherot Foundation, Vaduz, Liechtenstein. Artwork © Estate of Alexander Rodchenko (A. Rodchenko and V. Stepanova Archive) / RAO, Moscow / VAGA, New York, image provided by the Sepherot Foundation

Inside right: Arkady Shaikhet, *From Downstairs, New Apartment at the Usachevka Housing Complex*, Moscow, 1928, gelatin silver print. Nailya Alexander Gallery © Estate of Arkady Shaikhet / courtesy of Nailya Alexander Gallery.

Above: Semyon Semyonov-Menes, poster for *Turksib*, 1929, lithograph. Collection of Merrill C. Berman



5th Ave at 92nd St, NYC
TheJewishMuseum.org
212.423.3200

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