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Susan Compton

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Susan Compton : Russian Avant-Garde Books 1917-34 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russian Avant-Garde Books 1917-34:

Illustrated throughout with examples from the British Library's extensive collections, and with a narrative chronology, *Russian Avant-Garde Books* is an important survey of Russian design and literature of the 1920s and 1930s. It emphasizes continuity with the preceding Futurist years and explores the development of graphic design and photomontage in books and journals about theater and architecture as well as in collections of poetry and prose by avant-garde writers, including the Constructivists. From the February Revolution of 1917 to the Soviet Writers' Conference of 1934, the Russian book was at the forefront of avant-garde movements, notably Mayakovsky's LEF - "Left Front of Art. With inventive typography, the use of photomontage, and graphic styles rivaling political posters, "worker artists" set commercial standards in the design of book covers that have rarely been surpassed. Among the best-known authors whose early books are represented here are the poets Pasternak, Kruchenykh, and Kamensky; the linguists Brik and Shklovsky; the filmmakers Eisenstein and Vertov; the theoretician Arvatov; and the artists Zdanevich, Rodchenko, Stepanova, and Lavinsky. Susan Compton is an art historian and curator. She is author of *The World Backwards: Russian Futurist Books 1912-16*, which remains the standard reference on Russian avantgarde books of that period.

From Library Journal By the mid-1930s the idealism and energy of Russia's 1917 revolution had been crushed, and the dreary conformity that ruled official Russian arts to the mid-1980s had become policy. Censorship dictated form as well as content, by and large holding Soviet artists to 19th-century realistic norms. In this sequel to her survey of earlier avant-garde book design, *The World Backwards: Russian Futuristic Books 1912-16* (British Museum Pubs., 1979), Compton again uses the British Library's extensive collection to trace the illustration and format of books on Russian literature and theater. She lucidly outlines groups, traces individual careers, and explores the graphic arts' uneasy pact with the state. The book, if not exactly avant-garde in design, is admirably organized, and the illustrations serve as a delightful reminder of the rich heritage the new Russia can now choose to utilize.- Mary F. Zirin, Altadena, Cal. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.