

Anna Andreeva
Works 1953–1980
December 12, 2024 – January 25, 2025

Anna Andreeva (1917-2008) was a leading designer at one of the most prestigious state textile factories in the Soviet Union, the Red Rose Silk Factory, named after Rosa Luxemburg. Andreeva created hundreds of designs for scarves and fabrics, but her aspirations for the autonomy of art constantly undermined the rigid, oppressive political system. Born near Tambov, about 400 kilometres southeast of Moscow, she studied textile design at Vkhutemas, the famous radical avant-garde art school of the early Soviet era. When she joined the Red Rose Silk Factory in 1941, Anna Andreeva was a young artist, influenced by modernist ideas and ever striving to justify her art in a scientific, if not mathematical sense. She was interested in the relationship between the aesthetics and the material structure of textiles produced by the repetitive process of creating patterns (the irreversible nature of a pattern). Her patterns show no figuration whatsoever and are entirely abstract. These include the geometric cubes of Little Cubes, fabrics featuring assorted combinations of numbers, as well as ornaments inspired by cybernetics, the fashion theory of the time, which appear to cite algorithmic structures – patterns far ahead of their time. Andreeva even pioneered a design that can be likened to a QR code, as early as 1968. Such designs in particular required considerable justification before they could go into production, as abstract art was considered decadent in the former Soviet regime. For some of her abstract designs, such as the overlapping zigzags in the “Electrification” series produced from the 1960s to the late 1970s, Andreeva initially had to invent her own narratives in order for them to be accepted by the state censorship authorities. This particular design was initially rejected as “pure abstract propaganda” and it was only when the artist argued that electricity was one of the central pillars of Soviet development that the design was approved and eventually went on to be used for prestigious projects such as the interior design of the state radio building in Moscow.

Patricia Grzonka