

CENTER for EXPERIMENTAL LECTURES

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<http://experimentallecures.org>

Any Three Ingredients Makes a Margarita, Or, Margaritas, Avant-garde for the Proletariat

by Travis Boyer

Hey y'all how's it going? I'm not used to talking into a mic... I'm really excited to be here, it's really beautiful tonight. So, thank you Gordon and Nick and everybody. So, I'm going to present a lecture in a slide show format, and some video maybe as well, but my understanding of an experimental lecture series was that we weren't necessarily to come here to talk about our own artwork or give a slideshow about the progress of that. More it was an opportunity to talk about some things that you've been thinking about, or something that you would want to share in this kind of setting. So I just want to offer a disclaimer for my own talk, which is that basically these are some ideas and images and stuff that I've been looking at and thinking about, and I'm not really wanting to present them as if they settle into some sort of conclusion, or even, there's some historical things, but actually I'm not interested in drawing a line from one history to another, more sort of a compression of multiple histories and really it's up to you to think whether they're interesting or valid or whatever. Also the text that I reference, I have it here and you can totally look at it at your leisure. So with that I'll begin.

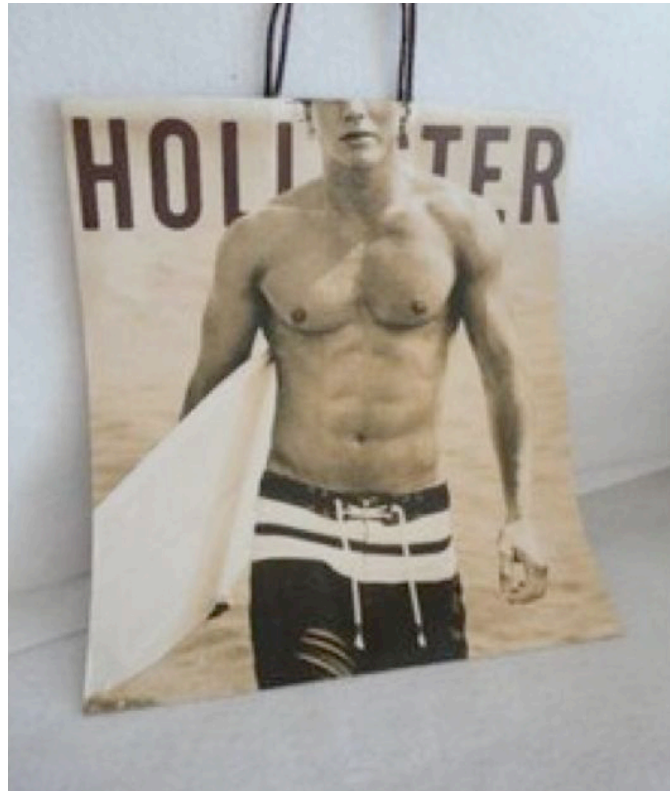
I'm going to show this video first; this is by an artist named Cyprien Gaillard.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Cities of Gold and Mirrors*, 2009, viewable at <https://vimeo.com/51359790>



So there's that video. So something that I was interested to talk about and something that I've been thinking about is, a couple things. I think a lot about the inherent performativity that's in a lot of vocations and jobs, and especially jobs that people in my generation and in my culture do, and how, you know, sometimes we're very explicitly asked to take on these performative roles in those jobs. And I was thinking about these Hollister and Abercrombie employees, and how they're not called sales associates or anything like that, they're called models, and the environment that they work in has a lot of loud music and cologne and reinforces a certain aesthetic. And actually this picture was from a Times article, there was a moment when, I guess there was a bed bugs outbreak at one of the, I think it was at Hollister.



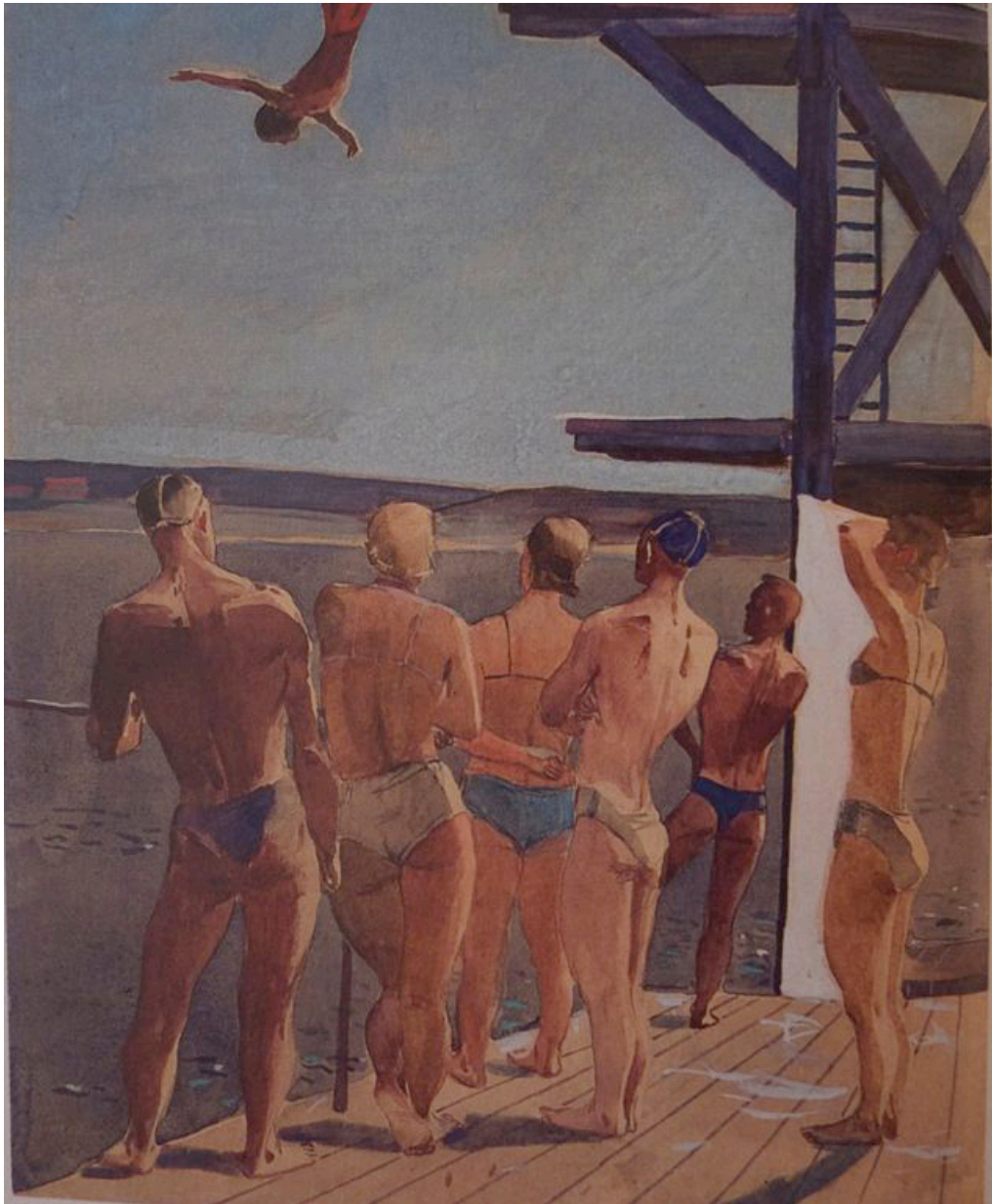
And I always find these bags really intriguing when you're on the subway and you see these kids with their moms and these sexy bags. And they're kind of really sturdy bags as well, they're almost like cardboard, pretty heavy duty, and the image quality is really pretty sharp. And something that I like about it too is that it kind of reinforces this—I like how the face is cropped out, and the chest is a kind of a chest-face. And I think chest-face is something that's worth thinking about, that in some ways we try to control our face-face, but then, I don't know, there's something really direct about the chest face. So, there are these people's bodies, and they're used to sell shirts, but they're are shirtless.



So, then I want to talk about this Russian painter named Alexander Deineka. He's a pretty interesting character, because he was a state supported painter all through the time of Stalin, and I had a productive mis-read of the work. I learned more about it later, but I really enjoyed how it's considered socialist realism, but everybody has this kind of really beachy aesthetic, and it often looks more like Huntington Beach, California, than what I would imagine Russia to be like, (I've never been to Russia.)



This is kind of a female version of that same painting. You can see, that's the gutter of the book; and always these kind of industrial cues, in the background. Something else I grew to appreciate about these paintings is how they sort of vacillate between being more like a painting and more like an illustration. And he also does tons of illustrations that are for various types of causes and things.



But I think he's a little bit shy actually about painting faces, like you can see these characters their faces are pretty blurred out. Sometimes the faces are illustrative but he is actually really good at painting butts, and they take on a really surprising kind of detail. And it's not uncommon in these paintings for all the almost all of the figure to either not be facing you, or, similar to the Hollister ad, have the face cropped or blurred, or maybe one will be illustrated. Something to note about this period of time is that in a way these images could seem kind of fascist,

but I think that what they were aiming at was to talk about the proletariat body being more and more like a machine. That rather than express some racial or trans-historical idealized body, somehow being related to Greek or Roman traditions of body images, I think it was about looking immortal, like a machine. So in addition to thinking about work and thinking about becoming like a machine, I was also thinking a lot about leisure time. If you're a machine...here's these three boys from the back. This is called *Young Pilots*, and often times in these paintings, the figures are always checking out new aircraft or interacting with vague technologies.



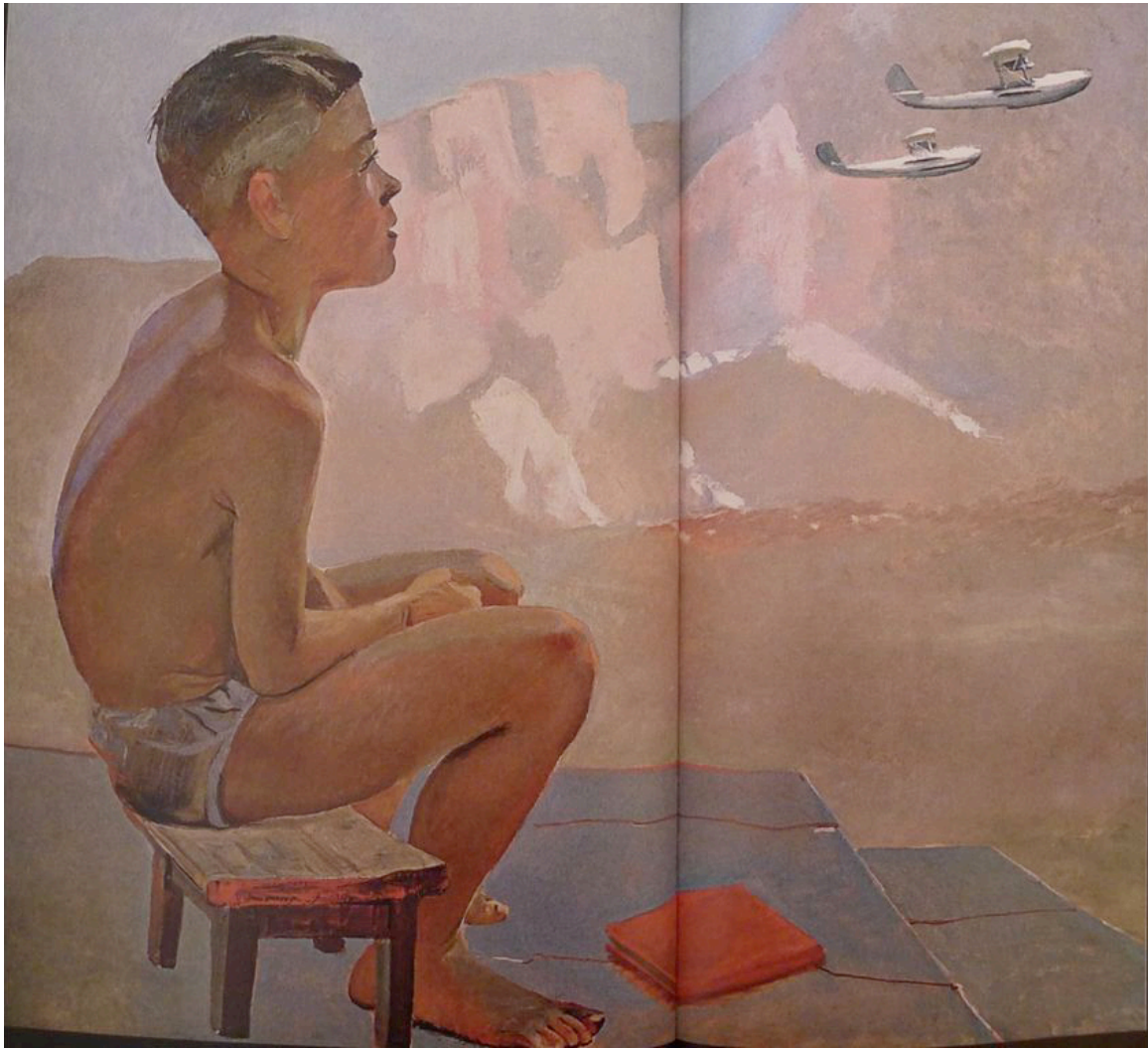
And, I couldn't help but be struck by how similar a lot of them are—even this kind of diagonal that appears so much in these kinds of paintings—to Corona ads and these kinds of things. I think that Corona has this interesting mystique, it's working man's vacation beer. You are at the beach by drinking it.



And I also find it really beautiful graphically. There's a bar that I walk by sometimes in Cuernavaca outside of Mexico City, that's been recently painted, and it has these soft plaster walls that are a little heavier at the bottom than at the top, and it's just a line struck like that with the dark blue on the bottom and the white on the top and the Corona label painted into it, and those double swing doors, and I'll miss a bus, because it's so beautiful, you just want to stand there and look at it. Anyway, I always like how these bottles are on vacation and doing stuff.



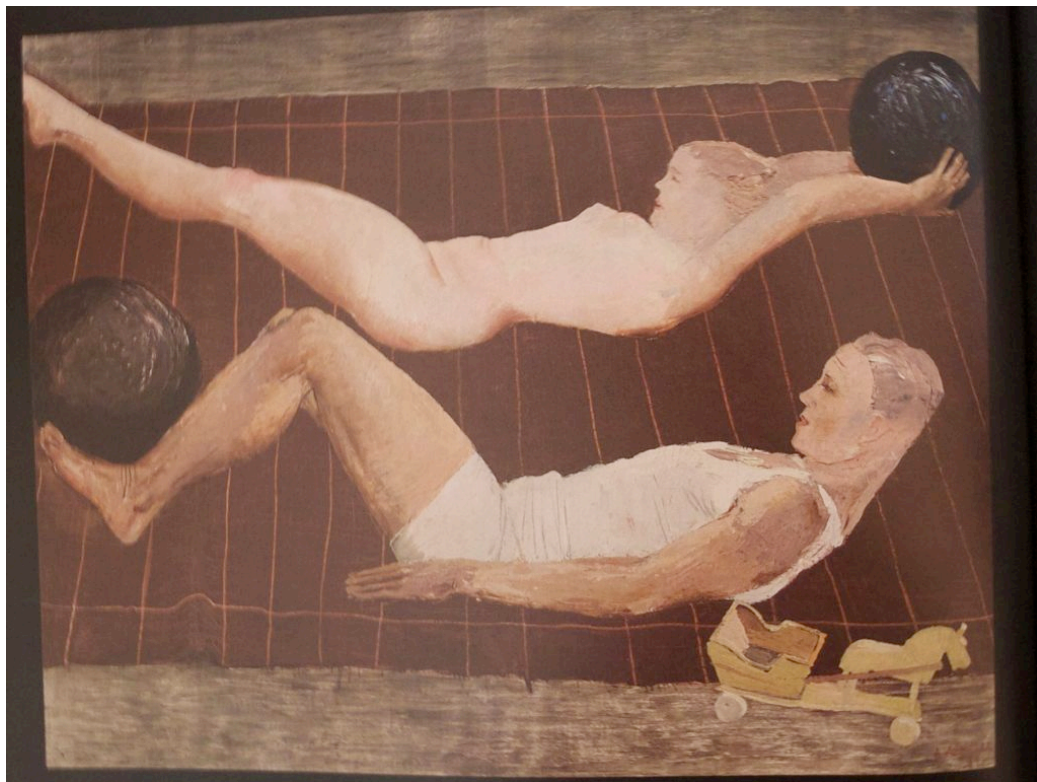
And it's really similar to me—this sailor admiring a diver.



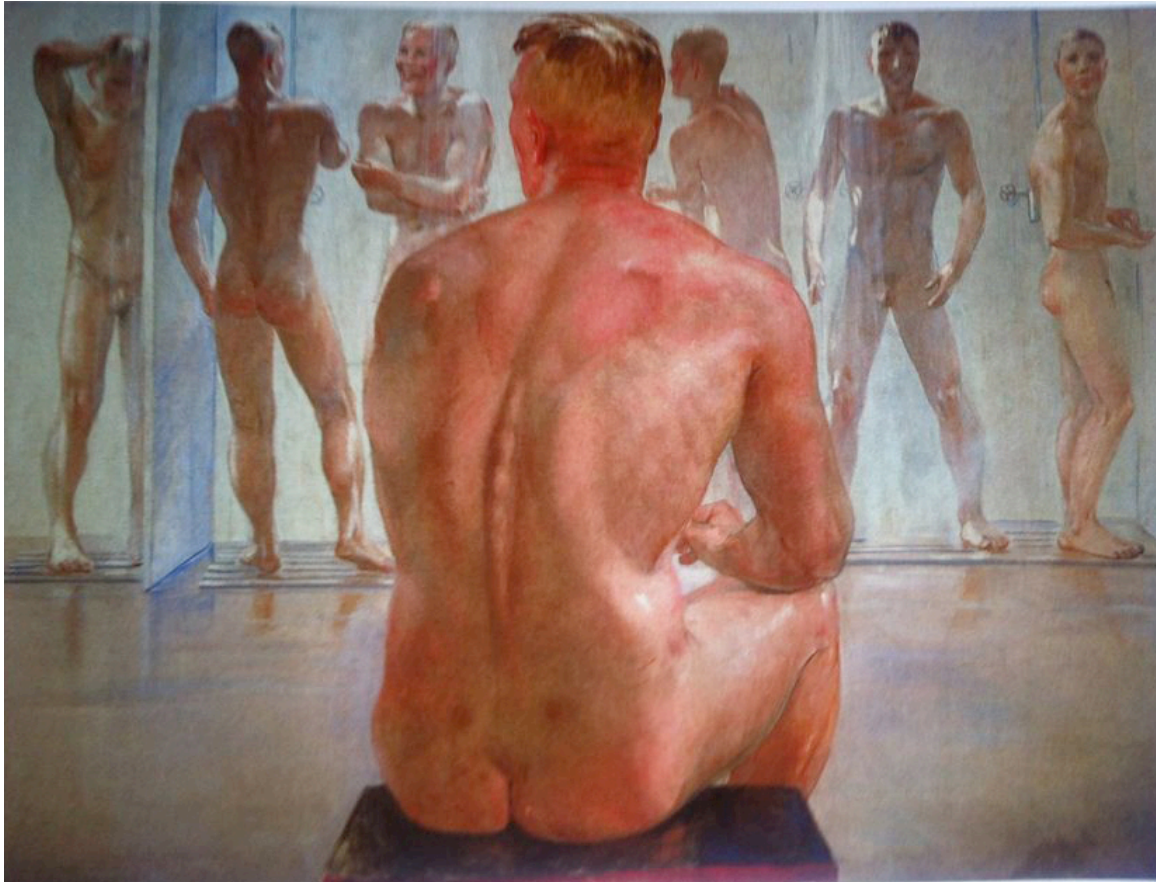
Also, the Olympics were going on around the time that I was looking at these. And these haircuts, everybody has these really tight haircuts. It's always something I notice about men's fashion magazines, just from my point of view, the clothes don't really change that much, it's more the fresh haircuts that really makes it fashiony. And these little guys:



I think this scene is really weird. I'm looking at this statue with these cinder-block tits and these guys on bikes.



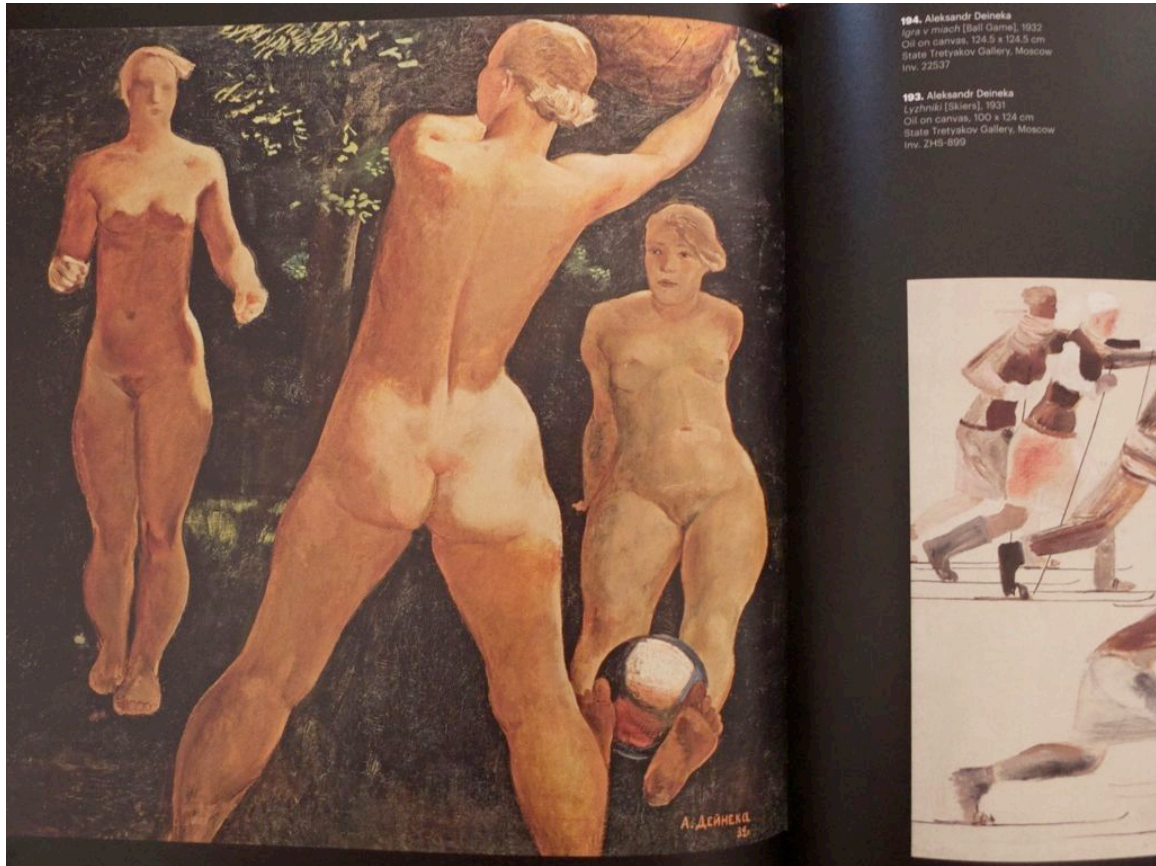
Here's a couple at home, and he's really into the medicine balls. I think there was this prescribed idea about how to be a healthy person. It doesn't show up great in the projection, but the man's face is pretty well illustrated, but from edge of the eye straight back the woman's face it more blurry in this way that he does. I also like this weird toy, maybe there's a kid somewhere, he's off at the state daycare.



This one's really interesting too. I feel like at this moment a lot of these things are aspirational, like none of these places had really been built or implemented in many places, so they're talking about community centers and jobs and showers and stuff that don't quite exist yet. But more than that I'm interested in how completely invulnerable these characters look, like you can't imagine them ever getting sick or dying or anything like that, or aging. And again, he's really good at painting butts, both the guy all the way to the right-hand side and the one that's got his back fully turned, they're really articulated in this way. And then you have this butt-face in the foreground in the main figure there's these two dots, and I get it that maybe those are dimples or something but it's really like a face. Also I think these compositions relate more directly than you might think to the really hard-core geometric experiments that the Constructivists were doing. If you wanted to you could even think about that he's sitting on a black square.



This one's kind of weird because I don't necessarily understand what's happening. Oftentimes he has these women in, for the time, relatively short skirts, and they seem pretty thin, and all these guys are racing, maybe she's interested in one of them, but it also seems like maybe she's in a completely different space. And they're sort of generic, the guys. I'm interested in shirtlessness as a kind of fashion. Years ago, one of my good friend's who's also an artist, AK Burns, we used to have this party maneuver. It was called shirtless intervention. And basically you would sort of test the waters, to see if the party was really about to get, you know, good, good music everybody was feeling really good. And then the two of us would take positions on either side of the room, and if you take your shirt off...if it's just one person, then it's like oh yeah it's just that person or whatever, but then if you look and it's like there's a dude and a girl this is going to be a shirtless party, OK, so it kind of sparks more people to do it. But we don't really do that anymore.



More medicine ball playing, and terrific butts. And again, maybe the most articulated face is the butt that's in the center. Her face is more this blurred out style, and her face is nice, it's actually quite illustrated, if you look at it it's sort of drawn in.



I think this is this really ingenious composition.



And thinking about the body as a machine, I was struck by this car, I was in Portland Oregon and I saw this car and really liked it, and it's kind of similar.



And this woman again in the kind of Huntington Beach setting. And she has this kind of full flesh blur that goes out to the side, which I think is really strange.

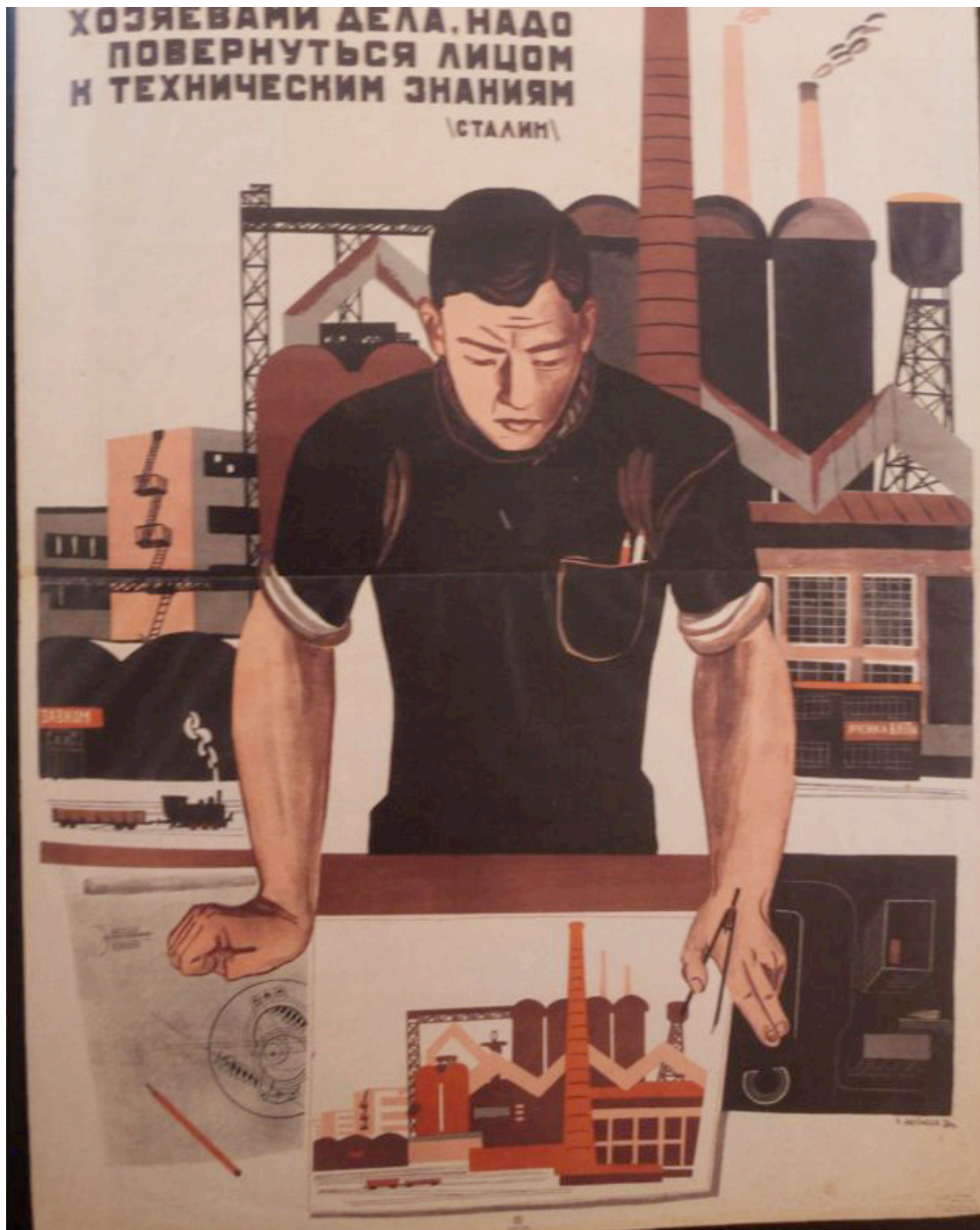


This is an example, this is a little more of a teacher-y moment in the lecture, but this is an example of propaganda that was being distributed. And you can see the woman on the left-hand side, she has the bourgeois body, and she's surrounded by this crappy lampshade and curtains and she has this pleated skirt, and that's a very

impractical use of fabric, pleating eats up a lot of fabric. And they've shown her body to be a little extra lumpy, and she has lipstick and a purse. And then they cool proletariat girl with her fist and more streamlined outfit, and she's surrounded by vague industrial things.



As are these women at work. But again it's kind of strange, this is meant to be at a textile factory, but it's really idealized, and they're labor looks kind of superficial, and they're all barefoot, and again in these silk-chiffon looking slips that don't seem very warm.



So, more analysis...this dude with his one pocket tee. Also what I was really struck with was how he has a working hand and a thinking hand. This hand that's sort of tough with the miniature choo-choo next to it and the other hand is like, I don't know what you call that a compass or something—men are concerned—look at his face, men are worried about stuff.



So this is actually the artist. This is Alexander Deineka. And, aside from the bunchy socks, this guy looks like someone I would know. I have those shorts, my apartment essentially looks like that. He's older than me and his

body is different, and he has definitely nailed the—you know, it's good combo of real-face and chest-face. The socks are a little, I would have...I don't know.



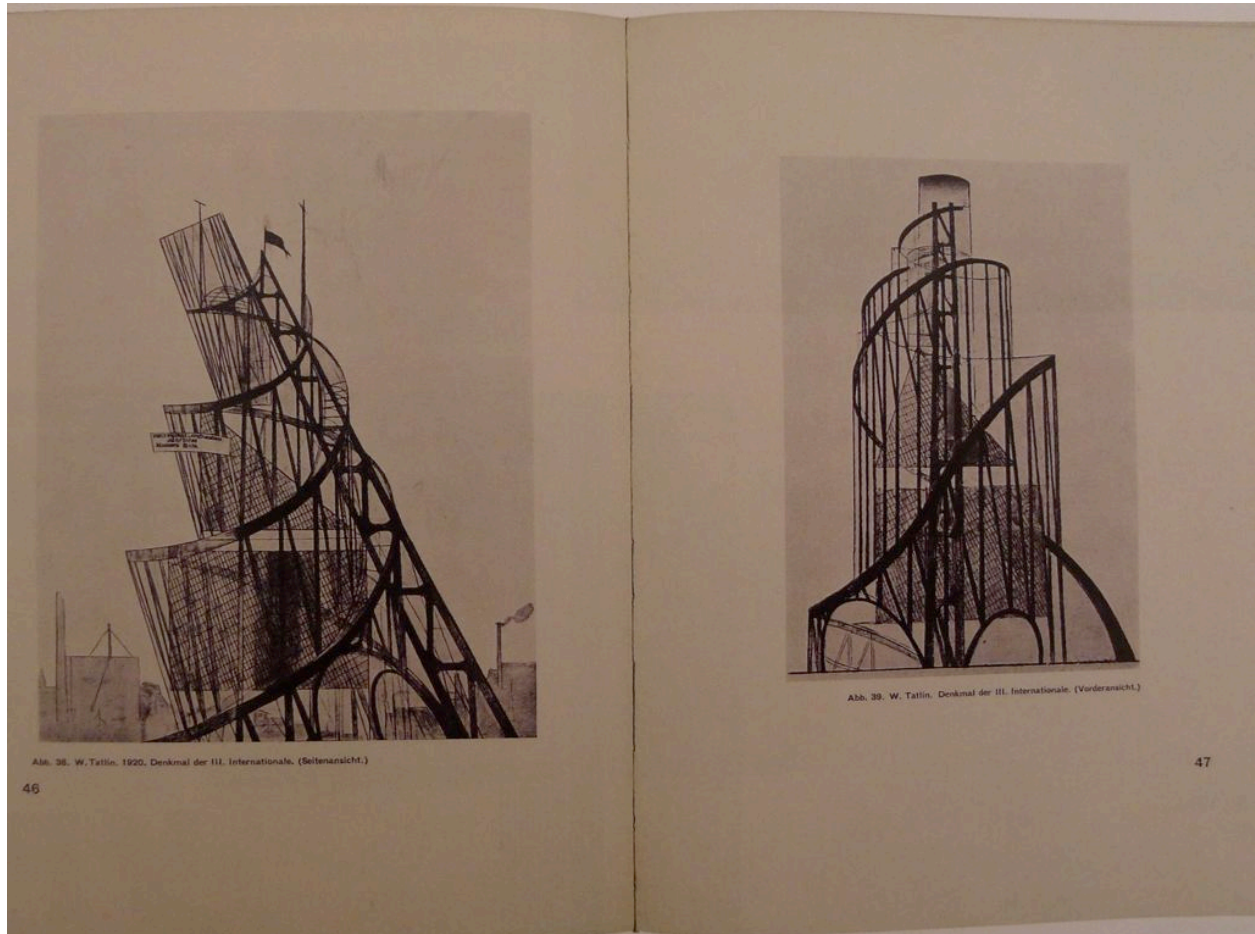
Those are my shorts, just to show, they're almost the same.



So thinking about these dudes, and then thinking about—this is black Friday at an Abercrombie and Fitch.



I don't know that these guys seem oppressively intellectual, but there is kind of this weird space between their heads and their bodies. You analyze them and there's this mechanicalness of the bodies and the faces—they seem mismatched or something. I don't know if that's true for everyone. Or, the age of the face is different than what the body would suggest, or they seem tougher, or sweeter, or smarter. Those sandals, look at all those sandals.



So, this is Tatlin's tower. I just put this as a quintessential example of this moment in Russian art history.



And then, these are these margaritas. I've been doing margarita performances this year, and I do think that there is something very mechanical about some of the ways that—I mean, I come from Texas—I couldn't get a good slide of it, but one of my colleagues at Bard this summer built these beer bong things, it has funnels and tubes and it's on some scaffolding, and I think that there are ways that the way that we consume beer and margaritas is also this mechanical response to the body.



I didn't invent these kinds of cocktails, they're traditionally called bulldog margaritas. And there is something—I mean, look at that. And these women drinking them.



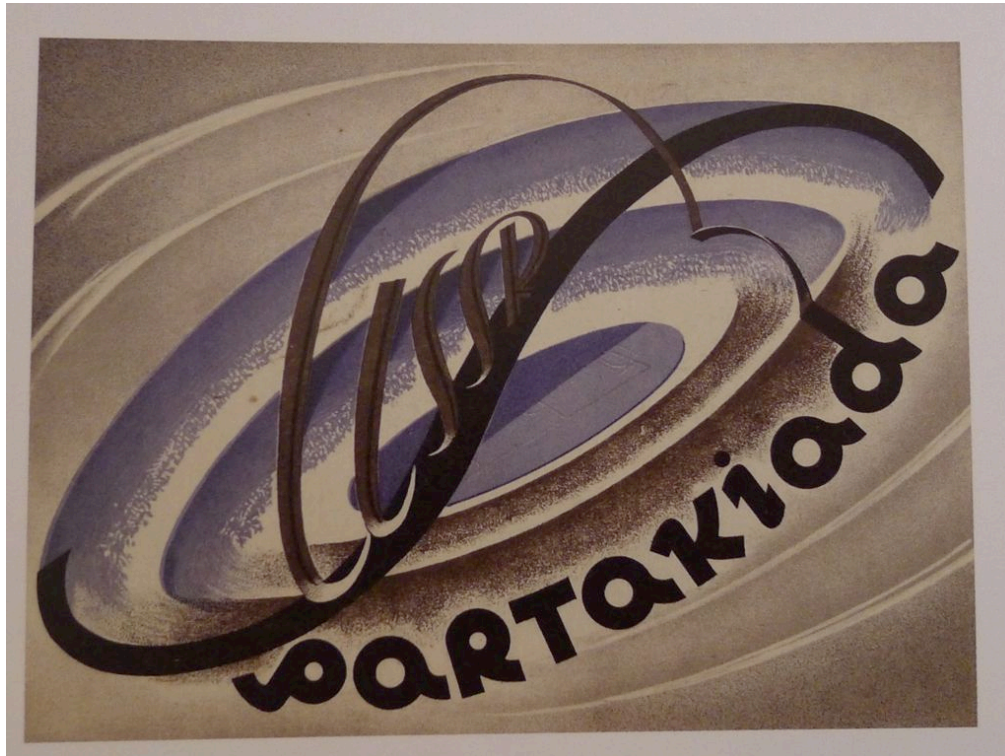
It seems funny, but also there's something very immediate about it—it's very charged.



So, just to acknowledge the mechanics of it—the beer never overflows, it gurgles back up into the bottle some, and you can jostle it around in there, but it just mixes and you drink it from the bottom.



My friend drinking one who I thought looked like a Deineka painting in that moment.



I just will offer this as a small example of how I think this design kind of looks like margaritas. These salted rims and sort of circular motion. When I started making them I thought that bulldog didn't make any sense as a name so I call them Thunderbird Margaritas.



I like these planes and looking at air shows. And I think that looking at air shows, like the way these people in the paintings, it has less to do with war in a way. I actually think these people are amazing performers, the way they make these plans sixty nine in the air and stack on each other.





So, anyway, that's the conclusion of my talk.



Does anyone have any questions, or comments, or recipes?

I'll just keep talking...I've been really interested in the idea that any three ingredients could make a margarita, and I've been asking people to submit different types of margaritas.

R. E. H. Gordon: Oh yes, what was the name of the talk?

Travis Boyer: What was the name of my talk? Oh well, it was sort of a question mark—any three ingredients makes a margarita, that was the name of my talk or, it was actually an option, it was an email thing, there was an option that it could have been whether margaritas were a type of avant garde sculpture from the proletariat. But, my favorite margarita recipe so far that's come has been water, other water, and tequila. I really liked that one.

Audience member: When was the painter you referred to painting?

Travis Boyer: So, he actually had a really long career, twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, and fell in and out of favor at different times, but worked pretty consistently. And also, I didn't include them in the talk, but made some amazing mosaics as well.

Audience member 2: What was his name?

Travis Boyer: Alexander Deineka, and there's a great catalog from a show that was of his work in Spain fairly recently.