



Model of the Monument to the Third International

Vladimir Tatlin

On display

Title/Description: Model of the Monument to the Third International

Artist/Maker: Vladimir Tatlin (Designer)

Born: 2011

Object Type: Outdoor sculpture, Sculpture

Materials: Composites, Steel

Measurements: Approx. 10 metres

Accession Number: 31504

Credit Line: Donated by the Royal Academy of Arts, 2012

Monument to The Third International, more commonly known as 'Tatlin's Tower', is a remarkable utopian structure that has continually inspired artists, designers and architects. Designed by Vladimir Tatlin (1885 - 1953), the tower is truly iconic and is considered a seminal piece of Modern art.

This large-scale model of Tatlin's Tower was designed by the distinguished British architect Jeremy Dixon, assisted by Chris Mullan for the Royal Academy, London. It was built for the 2012 exhibition, *Building the Revolution* and shown in the Academy courtyard. In 2017, after careful re-fabrication it was re-installed at the Sainsbury Centre and situated in the Sculpture Park.

Tatlin's own model, known from archive photographs is long destroyed. Three other existing small-scale models of the tower are held in the collections of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC. Dixon's large-scale model was the most ambitious attempt to realise Tatlin's unbuilt design. As well as studying photographs of the model built by Tatlin (now destroyed), Dixon incorporated elements from Tatlin's original design drawings. At over 10 metres high and constructed mainly in steel, the height and scale (1:40) gives a sense of the immense scale and ambition of Tatlin's original design. It is by some way the most ambitious attempt to recreate his (unbuilt) masterpiece.

Tatlin was one of the most important artists of the Soviet avant-garde and specifically a utopian vision of Constructivist Art. This movement looked to create a socially motivated art that fused architecture, art and design, in order to improve people's life's in line with the idealism and optimism of collectivised society. He is most famous for the design of the Tower, which he began in 1919. He was commissioned by the Soviet government to design a headquarters of the Third International, a communist organisation that promoted global communism. Tatlin planned the Tower to straddle the river Neva in St Petersburg as a symbol of modernity and Soviet national pride.

The tower was intended to be 400 metres high and straddle the river Neva in St Petersburg. Tatlin had seen the Eiffel Tower in 1913, which at 300 metres was the tallest structure in the world. This was to be significantly taller, to celebrate the Russian revolution but also as symbol of technological advance brought about the Soviet State.

The main framework was to consist of a twin helix spiralling on a steel frame, forming an incline similar to the angle of the earth's axis (23.5%). It would contain four giant geometric structures, one above the other, which would rotate at different speeds. They would have different functions. At the base of the structure, a drum designed as a venue for lectures, conferences and legislative meetings. This would complete a rotation in the span of one year. Above the drum would be a smaller pyramid, housing executive activities and completing a rotation once a month. Further up would be a cylinder, which was to house an information centre, issuing news bulletins and manifestos via telegraph, radio and loudspeaker, and would complete a rotation once a day. At the top a hemisphere for radio equipment. There were also plans to install a gigantic open-air screen on the cylinder, and a further projector which would be able to cast messages across the clouds on any overcast day. Visitors would be transported around with the aid of mechanical devices.

Dixon incorporated these geometric shapes into his design to give an overall impression of the structure. The Tower has been placed next to the Sainsbury Centre building, on the elevated plateau overlooking Lasdun's ziggurat campus buildings. The campus architecture of Denys Lasdun and Norman Foster relates to the structure and aesthetic spirit of the Tower. It has been positioned with these relationships in mind. It is an icon of Modernism and reflects the spirit that created the University campus during the 1960s. The Sainsbury Centre positioned the Tower in consultation with Norman Foster and Jeremy Dixon.

This large-scale model is one of a number of works related to Russian Avant-garde art, design and architecture in the Sainsbury Centre Collection. It was donated to the Sainsbury Centre by the Royal Academy of Art in 2012.

Calvin Winner, November 2020

Provenance

First commissioned by the Royal Academy of Arts on the occasion of the exhibition 'Building the Revolution' from 29 September 2011 until 22 January 2012.
