



**Staatsbibliothek  
zu Berlin**

Preußischer Kulturbesitz

**Department of Early Printed Books**

## **Russian Artists**

As part of its collection of Artistic Books the State Library holds more than 250 livres d'artistes created by artists from Russia or of Russian origin. As book and art objects these works surpass conventional genres and constitute an autonomous form of art which unites completely different forms of expression and artistic techniques.

The interplay of language and image is one of the characteristic features of artists' books. In the shape of albums, booklets, elaborately designed prints or book objects textual, visual and object-related elements enter into a creative dialogue. Thus, well-known literary or poetical works or even works of the artists themselves in combination with graphics, painting, print, collage and other forms of three-dimensional book design constitute a *Gesamtkunstwerk* entire in itself.

The contemporary Russian artists' books are rooted in the Russian avant-garde of the early twentieth century, when artists for the first time were experimenting with such cross-border forms of expression. Since the 1990s many artists in and outside Russia have been cultivating the genre of the *livre d'artiste* with increasing intensity. Many of them exhibit strong links to the book art of the Russian avant-garde. But also many artists in their works intensively broach the issue of the legacy of soviet ideology with its visual worlds and everyday aesthetics.

The majority of the State Library's acquisitions in this field come from this highly productive and multifaceted, post-soviet phase of Russian artists' books. Beside works of famous international artists such as Michail Karasik or Viktor Goppe, the library's collection focuses very much on artists of Russian origin who live in Berlin and contribute with their art to the city's cultural life, such as Tamara Ivanova and Michael Bensman.