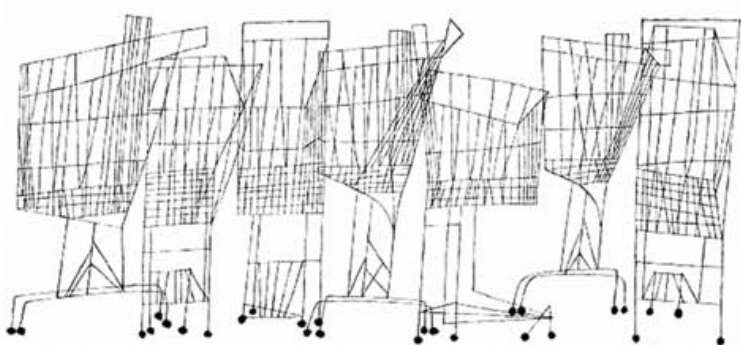


Russia Looks West

An exhibition of graphic art from the United States has become a tremendously popular attraction in the central Asian city of Alma-Ata, the capital of the Soviet Union republic of Kazakhstan.

In the first two days more than 17,000 Soviet citizens, most of them in their teens or early twenties, came to see a gay collection of funny American posters, preposterous ads, colorful book covers, and abstract prints.

The exhibition is a study in calculated disorder, diversity, and uninhibited gaiety. It has been designed to show what happens in a society where an artist, whatever his talents happen to be, is free to let his imagination run in any direction he wants and the message is getting across.



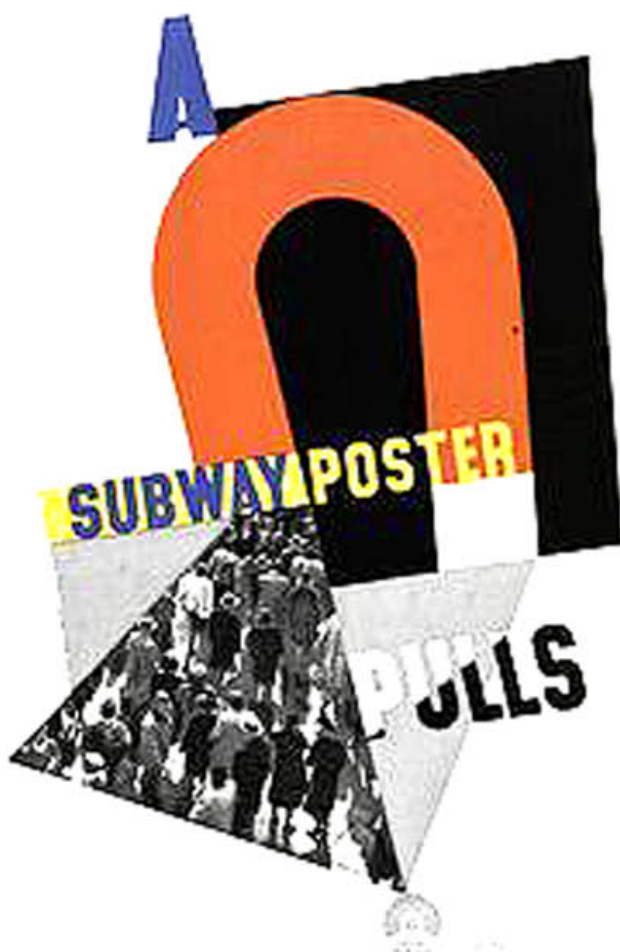
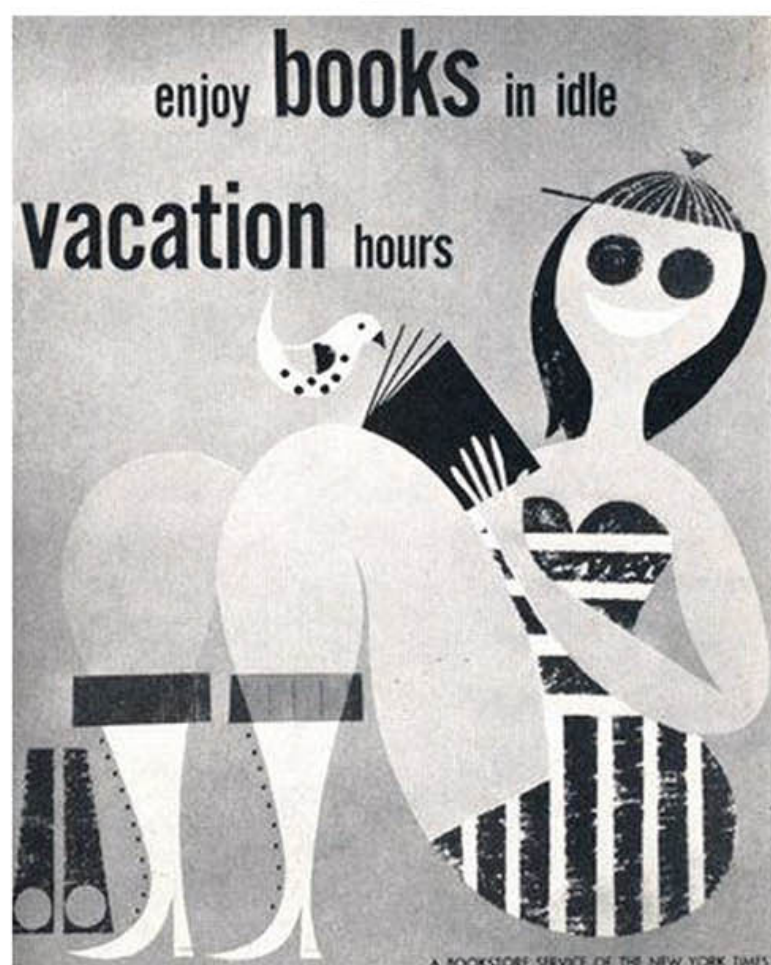
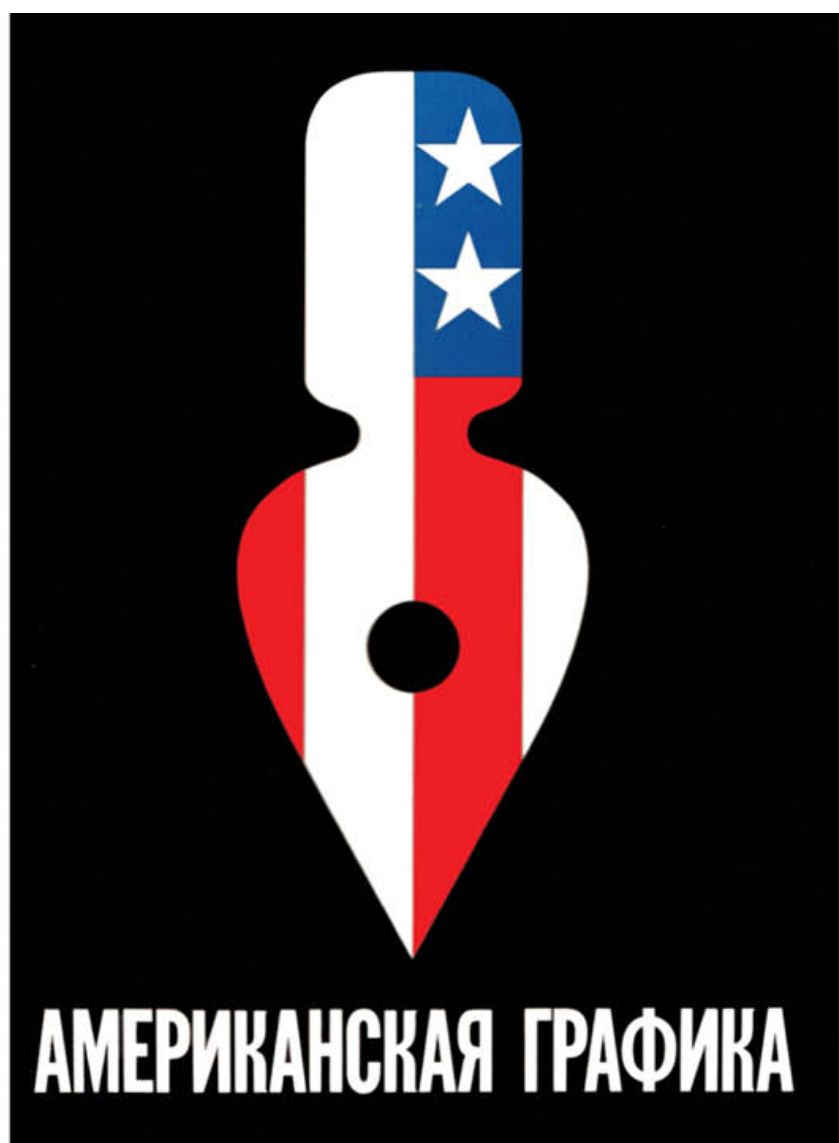
Two of the works featured in the show appear on this page. *Bags for Purchases* is an abstract by Ben Shahn, which shows shopping carts, a rare commodity in Russia.



The line illustration by Louis Silverstein was done originally for a travel advertisement.

"You mean you're really allowed to paint like this, and nobody says anything?" one of the visitors asked.

"I am against abstract art," a middle-aged man declared after having seen



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Jack Masey of U.S.I.A. (left) was pictured escorting Khrushchev and Bulganin into an earlier exhibit.

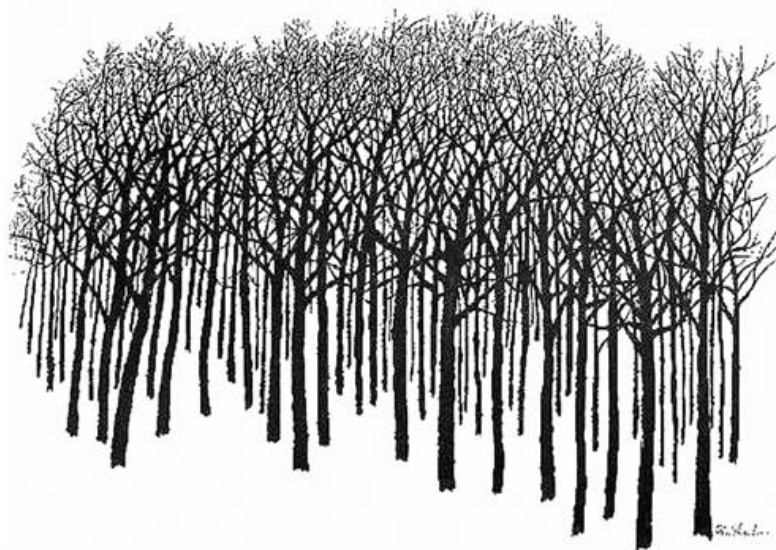
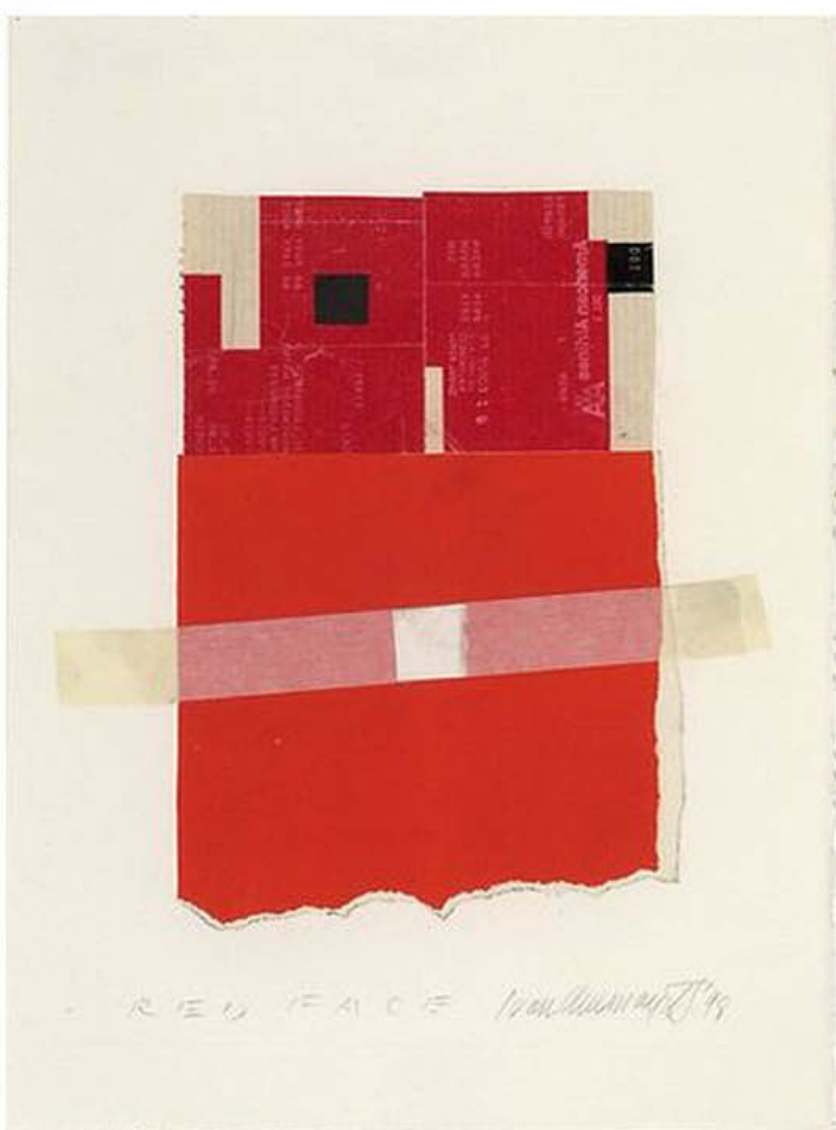
it all. Then he added, "I've bought tickets for the next two weeks."

Like all the others, he carried off a portfolio of prints and brochures given to each visitor. By the end of this week, American abstract prints may be pinned to the walls of 50,000 homes of Alma-Ata and the central Asian farmlands around it.

The size of the crowds came as a surprise to Jack Masey of the Exhibits Division of the United States Information Agency. He expected a sizable turnout but not the more than one thousand every hour who have been pouring in since the show opened.

Alma-Ata, fewer than 200 miles from the Chinese border, is the exhibition's first stop. The next scheduled stop is also in the southern part of the Soviet Union.

Much of the excitement of the opening days centered on Russian-speaking young Americans who are guides. American exhibitions in the Soviet Union have been using such guides, mostly students of Russian literature at American universities, for the last four years. The guides in front of the abstract prints were the most embattled.



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“What would you say if they painted you like this?” Oresta Szeparowycz, a young New Yorker was asked in front of an abstract portrait.

“There are all sorts of people, and they shouldn’t all be made to look beautiful,” she answered.

A young Kazakh woman looking at an abstraction titled “Vis-à-Vis” suddenly exclaimed, “There I see that line now, there’s something there.”

“An experiment,” Oresta answered.

“Looks like noodles,” a woman said.

“I thought blini [Russian pancakes],” declared her husband, as they walked away shaking their heads.



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