

**Title:** Aleksei Surkov and Territorial Consciousness in the Soviet Interwar Period  
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Modes of representing space in the early Soviet period leading up to World War II have consistently attracted scholarly attention in recent years, both because of the formal innovations that characterized this period and for the functions they were meant to fulfill. Media and performance arts exploded with experimentation following the October Revolution in 1917, resulting in novel technical possibilities for spatial representation. At the same time that culture producers dealt with the highly polemicized questions of art's function and form that these technical possibilities provoked, many of them grappled with the civic task of finding ways to use those techniques to represent the Soviet land as a new polity, autonomous from the inheritances of the Russian Empire it had replaced. Though this cultural imperative was often expressed in terms of the productive potential of diversity and novelty, this was often under vocal suspicion as too close to the pleasures of imperialist exoticism. Attempts to represent diversity and the vast scale of the Soviet political project while avoiding such pitfalls—particularly before the trope of the Great Family stabilized under postwar high Stalinism—may have had a significant impact on how specific aesthetics of space emerged from the general directives of Socialist Realism in the thirties.

This paper will focus on the transitional period of Soviet literary history preceding the establishment of Socialist Realism as the official creative method of the Soviet Union, centering on selected works from Aleksei Surkov's first volume of poetry, *Zapev* (1930), and allusions he draws to his contemporaries. Through his artistic polemics with other poets and the aesthetic eclecticism of his representation of the Civil War, Surkov produces an aesthetic landscape that can be considered a prototype of particular spatial relations that characterized the socialist-realist thirties.