

Title: Iurii Annenkov: Mimesis in Visual and Verbal Portraiture

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**Abstract:**

Iurii Annenkov is perhaps best known for his illustrations to Aleksandr Blok's epic poem of the Russian Revolution, *The Twelve* (1918). However, Annenkov continued to engage with that period both in *Portraits* (1922), which compiled his images of the early Soviet creative intelligentsia, and *A Diary of My Encounters* (1966), which gathered his memoirs of the same. Annenkov's works in both visual and verbal media might be defined as portraiture, a genre intimately connected to the task of mimesis – and Modernist reconceptualizations of mimesis as such. His images of Evgenii Zamiatin, Anna Akhmatova, and others reflect the mimetic challenges of Cubism (the expression of individual personality through/despite geometric abstraction) and collage (the repurposing of newspapers, photographs, and other “real-life” materials in multimedia compositions). His memoirs of Maksim Gor'kii engage both the utopian Soviet future to which the author's public image was connected – and the modest, melancholy sentiments that Gor'kii expressed in private conversations and correspondence. In short, Annenkov's works routinely simultaneously seek fidelity to outward appearances and fidelity to inner character, typically in self-contradictory ways. Annenkov's works suggest that the reconceptualization of mimesis is a pivotal feature of early Soviet culture, and that the inherent tensions of mimetic representation are best resolved – or at least best expressed – through a dialectic interaction between verbal and visual media.