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The collapse of the Russian Empire and the advent of the Soviet regime brought fundamental changes in all areas of culture, even visual arts. Varvara stepanova was a lithuanian female artist born on November 9, 1894. Stepanova contributed to the constructivist movement and worked in Russia. She passed away on May 20, 1958. In the early 1920s in Russia, abstract art was a testing ground for ideas that would assure change in the society. In 1928, Stepanova designed a unisex sports uniform with geometric strokes that would accentuate the movement of the athlete. It had bold lines, a boxy shape, utilitarian design and bold colour contrasts. Her design was part of a constructivist movement whose desires was to revolutionize society. During this time artists used their skills and imagination for architecture, urban space, clothing, graphics and social activism. As stated on the MoMa website, “Constructivism”—the name that Stepanova and her fellow travelers gave to the new art—“is movement away from representation and contemplation toward activity and production”.

Stepanova’s design has a quality of sustainability. When it comes to fashion sustainability it is linked to garments. Garments can be reused several times if it’s well taken care of. Depending on the history behind the piece and who made it, the worth of it becomes a lot more. During this time stepanova was designing environmental issues but what was at stake for the constructivists was human sustainability. A society that is equal to all. We see this message in stepanovas design because the sportswear was made for both men and women. I imagine that during those times this was something new for the country. It could be that in some way stepanova was responding to the avant garde movement.

Being avant garde involves new artistic methods, or experimenting with new techniques in order to produce better art. Just like avant gardes radical nature and the fact it challenges existing ideas, stepanova did the same when she decided to design a piece that could be worn by both men and females. Stepanova rejected bourgeois fashion because she did not want to promote consumerism or signal gender and class differences therefore she created a piece that was never before seen. A topic like this must have been very controversial. In today's world we see a lot more people open to men wearing pink or painting their nails but back then it was seen as “weird or strange”. Although a majority of people have become a lot more accepting now, there are still people who are against this idea and aren't willing to wear something that a woman can wear or do. We can also see that the sports clothing pieces look a lot more modern, like something you could find nowadays and this is what avant garde was about as well. The website tate has an article on the avante garde movement which states that “The notion of the avant-garde enshrines the idea that art should be judged primarily on the quality and originality of the artist’s vision and ideas”. This being said, we can bring up the fact that stepanova design was known for sustainability which led to garments being used. During this time it was important for the people to know they were well taken care of and that they were respected so i suppose her main purpose was to ensure good quality clothes that would accommodate to their needs. For example her sporting clothes was something anyone could wear because it was comfortable and easy to move in. her clothing design responded to how the body moves in space and each designed to accommodate the wearer.

Avant garde was also known to promote radical social reforms which was evoked by Saint Simonian Olinde Rodrigues. Rodrigues would say to artists to "serve as [the people's]

avant-garde" (wikipedia), which meant that art was the fastest way to social, political and economic reform. Constructivists' aim was similar as well because they wanted to create a change in society through art. Like many artists during the avant garde movement who created work to convey a social political message, constructivist artists also looked for ways to influence people in the dream of a modern world where men and women could work productively, side by side, in an egalitarian society. Composition became construction and artists became artist-engineers. Both movements aim to create something a lot more modern and I believe they have a lot of connections and similarities to each other.

## **Work cited**

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