

## Document Citation

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# MAN HOUSE

7C 4:30 pm Friday, March 7

USSR

**ЭЛИТА**

(Aelita)

1924. Black & White. 1.33 format  
84 min.

A silent film with organ accompaniment by Gaylord Carter.

With Russian intertitles and spoken English translation by Anneliese Goldman.

*Director:* Yakov Protazanov/*Screenwriters:* Fyodor Otsep, Alexei Faiko / *Cinematographers:* Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky, E. Schöneman/*Principal Cast:* Valentina Kuinzhi, Nikolai Tseretelli, Konstantin Eggert, Yulia Solntseva/*Production Company:* Mezhrabpom Russ

Well established as a film director before the October Revolution, Protazanov fled to Paris where he continued to work in the sizeable Russian émigré film community that enjoyed a brief vogue in France during the late Teens and early Twenties. Returning to Russia in 1924 at the invitation of the Russ film collective, he promptly directed *Aelita*, a science-fiction fantasy in which Los, an engineer living in Moscow, dreams of Aelita, the Queen of Mars, and builds a spaceship to take him to her. This fanciful story told in an ambiguous manner is most remarkable for its use of Constructivist sets and costumes in its Martian sequences. Created by Alexandra Exter, who had been influenced by Tatlin and Malevitch in her set designs for Moscow's Kamerny Theater, Victor Simov, who headed an experimental design studio within the Moscow Art Theater, and Issac Rabinovitch, a specialist in agitprop decor, these avant-garde Constructivist designs glorify formal abstraction and simplification instead of photographic realism and are a vivid reminder of the brief period in which revolutionary art seemed the natural ally of revolutionary politics.—*Marshall Deutelbaum*

