

Document Citation

Title	Aelita
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Futurism (Art) Constructivism (Art)
Film Subjects	Mezhplanetnaia revoliutsiia (Interplanetary revolution), Komissarenko, E., 1924 Aelita, Protazanov, Iakov Aleksandrovich, 1924

Aelita

Aelita is a strange, somewhat loose-jointed narrative that tells a tale of interplanetary love and intrigue set against the background of post-Revolutionary social problems and the vicissitudes of daily life.

Aelita's reputation has rested in large part on the unique qualities of its Martian décor and costuming. The highly stylized use of geometrical forms in the settings mirrors the artistic productions of the Suprematists. The see-through skeletal form of some of the costumes is a direct reference to Constructivist sculpture. The telecommunications equipment used by the Martians to spy on planet Earth has remarkable similarities to Tatlin's three-dimensional constructions of glass and metal.

The formalist geometricization of props and costumes reappears in the lighting strategy; patterns of light and dark play against each other in a fashion reminiscent of German Expressionism. Indeed, much in these sequences invites comparison with Fritz Lang's **Metropolis**.

There is no question that the film's science-fiction dimensions appeal to the Futurist, indeed utopian orientation of the avant-garde. Yet the ideological message is a caution against the embrace of unrestrained utopianism. The film is a kind of wish-projection, a desire to escape from the social problems of bureaucratization, petty thievery, materialism, and the personal problems of family life and fears of infidelity. Mars appears as the answer, the site for an interplanetary revolution. Yet in the end, fantasy is rejected in favor of the construction of a utopia here on Earth and a return to the more prosaic responsibilities of social reconstruction.

All of the avant-garde and much of the filmmaking community enthusiastically embraced the tenets of Futurism and its unquestioned faith in the ability of technology to transform both social structure and human consciousness. The ideological problem implicitly touched upon by **Aelita** (and, in later years, other areas of Soviet science-fiction) is at what point does faith in the future become self-defeating utopianism.

