



Marionette, Longhi I, 1926
Entwurf: Alexandra Ekster
Ausführung: Nechema Szmuskowicz
Auftrag: Peter Urban Gad
Material/Technik: Holz; Textil; Zinn; verschiedene Kunststoffe
53 × 36 × 36 cm
Eigentum: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK

The Russian avant-garde artist Alexandra Ekster (1882–1949) conceived the puppets she designed for a film as moving sculptures. She created aesthetic interest with contrasting surface textures and added moving metal parts to produce kinetic effects in the light.

The film by Danish filmmaker Peter Urban Gad, which was never made, was set alternately in seventeenth-century Venice and New York in the 1920s. Alexandra Ekster, a successful painter in the Cubo-Futurist style and an experienced stage and costume designer, originally received an order for forty marionettes. After long years of commuting between cultures, she had finally settled in Paris for good in 1924, where she taught at Fernand Leger's Académie Moderne. The eight marionettes in the collection of the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich embody characters in the commedia dell'arte tradition and are distinguished by grotesque helmets or deep black masks like those Ekster had seen in the carnival scenes by the Venetian painter Pietro Longhi—which is where the figures got their name. The puppeteer Nechama Szmuskowicz (1895–1977) translated Ekster's designs into three-dimensional

figures using everyday materials. She made the joints as flexible as possible using balls and textile links, fulfilling Ekster's wish to generate an enhanced kinetic experience by combining the puppeteer's calculated movements with the random motion of the freely hanging elements. Ekster's marionettes manifest a delight in experimenting with color, volume, and light, without any ambition to merely create an illusion of reality. (Sabine Flaschberger)

<https://www.eguide.ch/en/objekt/longhi-i/>