



## THE ARTISTS OF THE PGISHOT

REGINA KHIDEKEL

*The Pgishot* (Gatherings) is a group of St Petersburg artists who began gathering together to explore their Jewish identity by studying Torah and Jewish texts. Since then, they have travelled to Israel for artistic exploration as well as to Jewish historical places in the former Pale settlements and they often meet together to celebrate Jewish holidays.

Among them are Aron Zinshtein, Alexander Rokhlin, Anatoly Zaslavsky, Robert Lotosh, Boris Borsh, Alla Pogorelskaya, Alla Davidova, many of whom are recognised internationally. These artists are united by their unique Leningrad schooling and technique and by their struggle for individual expression against the bureaucratic rigidity in the Soviet years, as well as by delayed recognition and the late discovery of their ethnic roots.

These artists also share a belief that the traditional practices of painting, sculpture, and craft have not been rendered obsolete by new media. Rather, these traditional practices remain a powerful vehicle for expression, utilising both irony and playful eccentricity.

Based on the tradition of modernism in both Europe and Russia, and the presence of contemporary art movements, The Pgishot could be seen as part of the St Petersburg Neo-Expressionist school. The attentiveness of the The Pigshot to painterly culture and its approach to subject matter are influenced by an older generation of artists, in particular, Josef Zisman, whose paintings awakened a sense of Jewish sensibility.

The Pgishot made its mark on the Russian art scene in 2001 with the opening of an exhibition called *The Creation and The Works*, which showcased works based on their study of the Book of Genesis. Since 2001, The Pgishot has had annual exhibitions in St Petersburg and Israel.

The first exhibition of The Pigshot in the US was curated by Regina Khidekel at the Russian American Cultural Center (RACC) in New York in 2006. The works shown at this exhibition and more about the artists can be found on: [www.americanjewishculture.com/Exhibitions/Family\\_Album\\_-\\_Jewish\\_Artists\\_from\\_St.\\_Petersburg/](http://www.americanjewishculture.com/Exhibitions/Family_Album_-_Jewish_Artists_from_St._Petersburg/)

Above left: Anatoly Zaslavsky *Family on the Bridge*, oil on canvas  
 Above right: Anatoly Zaslavsky *The Sixth Day*, 2006, Oil on canvas  
 Right: Aron Zinshtein, *Psalm*, 1991, Oil on canvas  
 Images courtesy of the Russian American Cultural Center

**TWO WRITERS BORN IN ST PETERSBURG AT JEWISH BOOK WEEK THIS YEAR**