

## THE ARTIST GROUP PG – VIDEO WORKS

The Group *PG* was founded in 1998. It now consists of Ilya Falkovsky, Alexey Katalkin and Boris Spiridonov. *PG* is a play on words that can be interpreted differently, for example as "Hydrant", "Hand Grenade" or "Criminal Group". The group activity is multifunctional. It publishes its own magazines and post-cards, releases musical albums, makes comics and performances. *PG* combines various artistic activities in "multimedial comics", installations combining photography and graphic art with video and music. Their main topics are the cruel realities of daily life, but it is ironically reflected through a lyric approach of Moscow psychedelic culture. The artists play the roles of Russian mass media characters: gangsters, Chechen extremists, street hooligans, subculture representatives. In the poster series "Glory to Russia!" they refer to explosive topics in Russian society, for instance the numerous cases of fatal abuse of conscripts in the Russian army, the corruption of the Russian administration, the Chechen War and the power politics of the Russian petroleum industry.



Ilya Muromets, 2006, video, videostill

Part of the Text: *Accomplices. Collective and Interactive Works in Russian Art of the 1960s – 2000s.* Moscow 2005, p. 120.

**Art Laboratory Berlin:** How do you become interested in the topics you later work on?

**PG:** Every sort of injustice and intolerance attracts our attention. In this matter we don't think only about social injustice, but simply cases of prohibitions of things we like, such as drugs and sex.

**A.L.B.:** What sort of injustice do you mean exactly?

**PG:** For us the greatest injustice is the discrimination and violence against those who are smaller and weaker. When the degree of injustice in the society starts to go above a certain level we take this as a theme in our work. We try to take the role of a social thermometer, if one can say that.

**A.L.B.:** What role do irony and cynicism play? When I first saw your works several years ago, I found it difficult to differentiate between its superironic distance and overidentification.

**PG:** We consider irony simply as a way, to communicate to the contemporary art viewer, who is not able to deal with statements of direct pathos.

**A.L.B.:** How do you work as a group? Who takes what role?

**PG:** At the beginning of our collaboration we distributed specific responsibilities. This differentiated us from other artist groups. *PG* was the Trojan horse, in which we were able to enter the art scene. Katalkin was responsible for negotiations, PR, card playing and design. My responsibility was protection, debt collection and texts. Boris covered military intelligence, espionage, pickpocketing and editing. The meaning of our cooperation is to be able to react immediately to every violent sociocultural situation. In the course of a conscious maneuver of deception we later exchanged roles. Everything got mixed up over time. Today each of us tries out new fields, in which he earlier felt unsure and tries to learn new things.

**A.L.B.:** Which role do Russian myths and tales play in your works?

**PG:** An essential one. It is for us like roots in Reggae. Before we go to war, we get our energy from these sources – just like the legendary heroic knights of the Russian sagas Ilyusha (Muromets), Alyosha (Popovich) and Dobrynya (or Boryan). The similarity to our names has a strong symbolic meaning for us.

**A.L.B.:** Who are you going to war against? Who is your enemy?

**PG:** Our opponents are all the reactionaries, who set up barriers and prohibitions, and then who divide the power between themselves.

**A.L.B.:** Do you consider yourselves as political artists?

**PG:** Yes, we do consider ourselves as political artists, but rather in an aesthetic sense. We call that "political psychedelic", more or less. To change life and the world, one must first change certain things in consciousness; first in your own. We are trying to expand the borders of this consciousness.

Questions: Sandra Frimmel/ Answers: Ilya Falkovsky  
Translation from Russian to German: Sandra Frimmel  
Translation from German to English: Regine Rapp

**Selected solo exhibitions 2006** *Muse*, Broadway Gallery, New York | *Brothers*, Gallery Reflex, Moscow **2005** *Kavkaztrance*, Galerie Irigui, Paris | *Mad Cells*, Gallery Reflex, Moscow **2003** *Do You Have Some?*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

**Selected group exhibitions 2007** *I Believe*, Vinzavod, Moscow **2006** *Permanent Exhibition – XX Century*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow | *Art Moscow*, Central House of Artist, Moscow **2005** *Pusto – Street Festival of Video Art*, Art Strelka, Moscow | *Accomplices. Collective and Interactive Works in Russian Art of the 1960s – 2000s*, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow | *Russia 2*, Central House of Artist, Moscow **2004** *Bubble. Comic Strip in Modern Art*, Guelman Gallery, Moscow | *International Contemporary Art Biennial of Sevilla (BIACS)*, Sevilla