

Festival of Contemporary Russian Jewish American Culture

Sunday, March 5, 2017
Center for Jewish History
15 W 16th St., New York
11am-5pm

Concert with Svetlana and the Delancey Five: 8pm

Co-Hosted by American Jewish Historical Society and Center for Jewish History

RSVP is required at rsvp@ajhs.org

*In honor of the publication of the special edition of East European Jewish Affairs,
"The New Wave of Russian Jewish American Culture"*



The Festival of Contemporary Russian Jewish American Culture will open with remarks from:

- Rachel Lithgow, AJHS executive director
- Iliia Salita, president and CEO of Genesis Philanthropy Group
- Dr. Anna Katsnelson, guest editor of the special edition and adjunct assistant professor at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University
- Dr. [David Shneer](#), co-editor in chief of *East European Jewish Affairs* and the Louis P. Singer Chair in Jewish History at the University of Colorado

The remainder of the day will consist of three panel discussions on current issues in the field of Russian Jewish American cultural production, literature and visual arts.

The first panel, "The Scholars" (11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.), will be moderated by Anna Shternshis, co-editor in chief of *East European Jewish Affairs* and author of the recently released *When Sonia Met Boris: An Oral History of Jewish Life under Stalin*, from Oxford University Press. Panelists will include:

Baruch Beckerman, Bar Ilan University
Anna Katsnelson, Columbia University
Maggie Levantovskaya, Santa Clara University
Jeffrey Taylor, Western Colorado University
Karolina Krasuska, University of Warsaw
Inga Veksler, Rutgers University

The second panel, “The Writers: (1:30-3 p.m.), will be moderated by Anna Katsnelson. Panelists will include:

Anya Ulinich, prize winning author of *Petropolis* and *Lena Finkle’s Magic Barrel*; deputy art director, *Forward*; original art featured on the journal’s cover
[Eugene Yelchin](#), acclaimed author of *Breaking Stalin’s Nose* and *Arcady’s Goal*, whose visual art is featured in the journal
[Ellen Litman](#), author of *The Last Chicken in America*, associate professor, of creative writing at Connecticut College, whose original short story appears in the journal
Polina Barskova, acclaimed poet and scholar, associate professor at Hampshire College, whose original poem is featured in the journal
[Julia Loktev](#), a filmmaker, whose work includes *Moment of Impact* (1998) and *Day Night Day Night* (2006), an interview with whom appears in the journal

The third panel, “The Visual Artists” (3:30-5:30 p.m.), will be moderated by Nick Underwood, managing editor of *East European Jewish Affairs*. Panelists will include:

Alina Bliumis, photographer and author of the book *From Selfie to Groupie*; her work is included in the journal
Yuliya Levit, photographer whose [Speak Memory](#) project explores stories of Russian-speaking Jewish World War II survivors
[Artem Mirolevich](#), acclaimed painter, whose work is featured in the journal
[Yevgeniya Baras](#), New York based artist, who held a solo show *All Inside Itself, Close* at the Nicelle Beauchene Gallery and whose paintings are featured in the journal
Misha Korosty, New York based painter, whose work is featured in the journal

In between panel discussions, attendees will experience visual slideshows of the featured artists’ work. The conference portion is free and open to the public. RSVP is required at rsvp@ajhs.org

The festival will culminate with a musical performance (8-9:30 p.m.) by [Svetlana and the Delancey Five](#). Svetlana is a recognized New York City-based vocalist, songwriter, and arranger. Tickets for the concert are \$25 for general admission, \$15 for students, seniors and AJHS members, and \$36 at the door. Tickets are available for purchase through the [American Jewish Historical Society](#).

Participants Biographies:

The Scholars

Baruch Beckerman, Department of English Literature and Linguistics, Bar Ilan

University, Ramat Gan, Israel

Baruch Beckerman was born in St Petersburg, in the former Soviet Union, and emigrated to Canada at a young age. He studied English literature with Steve McCaffery, and Jewish studies with Sara Horowitz at York University; and completed his MA with a thesis on modern Jewish literature supervised by Mark Shechner and Henry Sussman at State University of New York, Buffalo. He is currently pursuing a PhD in English with a focus on recent Russian Jewish American fiction, at Bar Ilan University in Israel.

Anna Katsnelson, Harriman Institute, Columbia University

Anna Katsnelson immigrated to New York from Leningrad in 1989 when she was 10 year old. In 2011 Anna received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Texas at Austin. In 2007-2008 Anna was a Fulbright IIE Scholar to Brazil. Anna teaches at the Harriman Institute at Columbia University and in the English Department at Medgar Evers College, CUNY. Anna writes about theater for *The Forward*. She is finishing her first novel.

Karolina Krasuska, American Studies Center, University of Warsaw, Poland

Karolina Krasuska is an assistant professor in the American Studies Center at the University of Warsaw, Poland and a member of the research group "Literature and Gender" in the Institute for Literary Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences. She is the author of a monograph examining modernist poetry from a transnational, gender-oriented perspective *Płeć i naród: Translokacje* [Gender and nation: translocations] (Warsaw, 2012) and a co-editor and co-author of the pioneer *Encyklopedia gender* (Warsaw, 2014). She is also the Polish translator of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (*Uwikłani w płeć*, Warsaw, 2008). Her newest publication is a co-edited volume (with Andrea Petö and Louise Hecht), *Women and the Holocaust: New Perspectives and Challenges* (Warsaw, 2015). Currently, she is working on a project on gendered modes of twenty-first-century Jewish American fiction.

Margarita Levantovskaya, Dept. of English, Santa Clara University, USA

Margarita Levantovskaya is a scholar of Russian-Jewish culture, US immigrant fiction, and diaspora theory. She currently teaches at Santa Clara University. Maggie completed a PhD in Literature at the University of California, San Diego in 2013. She has taught a wide range of courses at UCSD, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Lafayette College, from Russian language to graduate seminars in Translation Studies.

Jeffrey Taylor, Western Colorado University, Gunnison, CO, USA

Jeffrey Taylor is the Grosland Associate Director for the Master in Gallery Management and Exhibits Specialization at Western Colorado University. He is also currently the Leon Levy Fellow at the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Collection. Previously he taught at SUNY Purchase and the International Business School of Budapest. He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Hungary, 1990–2. He received his PhD from the Central European University in comparative history. His first book, *In Search of the Budapest Secession: The Artist Proletariat and Modernism's Rise on the Hungarian*

Art Market, 1800–1914, was published by Helena History Press in 2014. Taylor is currently working on his second book, *Visual Arts Management*, to be published in 2017 by Routledge for their Mastering Management in the Creative and Cultural Industries series.

Inga Veksler received her Ph.D. from the Anthropology Department of Rutgers University in 2014. Her dissertation, “‘We Left Forever and into the Unknown’: Soviet Jewish Immigrants’ Experiences of Transit Migration,” grew out of her own family’s experience of transit migration from Odessa through Austria and Italy during six months in 1989.

The Writers

Anya Ulinich, prize winning author of *Petropolis* (2007) and *Lena Finkle’s Magic Barrel* (2014); deputy art director at the *Forward*; her original art is featured on the journal’s cover. **Anya Ulinich** is a contemporary [Russian American](#) novelist, graphic novelist, and short-story writer. In 2007 The [National Book Foundation](#) named her a 5 under 35 honoree.

[Eugene Yelchin](#), is an acclaimed author, painter, illustrator, and conceptual artist whose visual art is featured in the journal. Eugene has written and illustrated the Young Adult novels: *Breaking Stalin’s Nose* (2011), *Arkady’s Goal* (2014), and *The Haunting of Falcon House* (2016). Eugene’s illustrated novel *Breaking Stalin’s Nose* won the Newbery Honor Award in 2012. Eugene was born in Leningrad in 1956 and emigrated from the USSR in 1983.

Ellen Litman grew up in Moscow, Russia, where she lived until 1992. After a career as a software developer she took up writing full time, receiving an MFA from Syracuse. She is the author of *The Last Chicken in America* (W.W. Norton 2007) and *Mannequin Girl* (W.W. Norton 2014). Her stories have appeared in *Best New American Voices* 2007, *Best of Tin House*, *American Odysseys: Writing by New Americans*, *Dossier*, *Triquarterly*, *Ploughshares*, and elsewhere. She is an associate professor of Creative Writing at the University of Connecticut.

Polina Barskova, acclaimed poet and scholar, associate professor at Hampshire College, whose original poem is featured in the journal. Polina Barskova, was born in Saint Petersburg, on February 4, 1976. She received her BA in classical languages (Greek, Latin) from St Petersburg State University and her PhD in Russian literature from the University of California, Berkeley. Her scholarly publications include articles on Nabokov, the Bakhtin brothers, early Soviet film, and the aestheticization of historical trauma, primarily, culture of the Siege of Leningrad (1941-1944). She has also authored eight books of poetry and one book of prose in Russian. Three books of her poetry in English translation were published recently: *This Lamentable City* (Tupelo Press), *Zoo in Winter* (Melville House Press), *Relocations* (Zephyr Press).

Julia Loktev is a filmmaker known for her three critically acclaimed feature films *The Loneliest Planet* (2011), *Day Night Day Night* (2006) and *Moment of Impact* (1998). She

was born on December 12, 1969, and lived in Chernaya Ryeckka, Leningrad, with her parents Leonid and Larisa Loktev until December 1978, when they immigrated to the United States, settling in Loveland, Colorado. Julia received a B.A. from McGill University and an M.F.A. from the New York University Graduate Film School. She lives in Brooklyn and was interviewed for the journal.

The Visual Artists

Alina Bliumis, photographer and author of the book *From Selfie to Groupie*. Alina Bliumis is a New York-based artist, born in 1972 in Minsk, Belarus. She graduated from Ahremchik's Republican College of Art in Minsk in 1998; received her BFA from the School of Visual Art in 1999 and a diploma from the Advanced Course in Visual Arts in Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy in 2005. She currently lives and works in New York with her partner, artist Jeff Bliumis.

Yuliya Levit and **Marina Eybelman** photographers whose [Speak Memory](#) project explores stories of Russian-speaking Jewish World War II survivors. Yuliya Levit is a documentary and lifestyle photographer. Yuliya was born in Moscow, and studied Computer Science at Russian State University for Humanities. Back in the day, when she was helping her father develop film under the red light and watched photographs come to life, she knew that eventually she would become a photographer. It took some pretty sizable detours through mathematics and computer science, but ultimately she ended right where she wanted to be and couldn't be happier. Marina Eybelman grew up and went to school in Moscow, in what was then the Soviet Union. In college, Marina studied Jewish Literature and Eastern European Jewish folklore. The Speak Memory project resonated with Marina in a powerful way when she heard about it in 2013 and she instantly jumped on-board. This, capturing the memories and experiences of the passing generations has been something Marina was interested in all along.

[Artem Mirolevich](#), born in 1976, in Minsk, Belarus has participated in over 100 solo and group exhibitions worldwide, his work is included in the journal. He also curated and co-curated numerous art projects in galleries, museums and public spaces. Since 2012 Artem Mirolevich is a founder and CEO of Russian Pavilion – organization devoted to showcasing and promoting artists from Russia, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Baltic regions during leading international contemporary art fairs in U.S.A., Europe and Asia. As of May 2015 Russian Pavilion had ten exhibitions, and showcased over 80 artists.

Yevgeniya Baras has a BA and MS from the University of Pennsylvania (2003) and an MFA in Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2007). Yevgeniya is represented by Nicelle Beauchene Gallery. Her paintings are small heavily worked abstractions; they are a result of a series of involved actions: sewing, carving wood, embroidery, framing, but always buried in oil paint. The paintings are a search for archetypal symbols that may be buried inside the collective psyche, as well as an exploration of assigning symbols to her investigation of the human condition.

Michael Rabin Korosty is an American artist, born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1973, whose work is featured in the journal. Michael Rabin Korosty owns and runs "the STUDIO" Fine Art Gallery, located in the Brighton Beach area of Brooklyn. Jewish themes are a constant presence in his work, and free-hand drawing, combined with digital processing has been at the core of his approach to graphic arts since 1994.

The Moderators

Anna Shternshis is the Al and Malka Green Associate Professor of Yiddish studies and director of the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. She received her doctoral degree (D.Phil) in Modern Languages and Literatures from Oxford University in 2001. Shternshis is the author of *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923 - 1939* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) and *When Sonia Met Boris: An Oral History of Jewish Life under Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). She is the author of over 20 articles on the Soviet Jews during World War II, Russian Jewish culture and post-Soviet Jewish diaspora. Together with David Shneer, Shternshis co-edits *East European Jewish Affairs*, the leading journal in the field of East European Jewish Studies.

Nick Underwood, a recent Ph.D. in History with a Graduate Endorsement from the Program in Jewish Studies at CU-Boulder, published his first peer-reviewed journal article "[Dressing the Modern Jewish Communist Girl in Interwar Paris](#)" in a special issue of [French Politics, Culture & Society](#). Nick is the Project Manager for the [Digital Yiddish Theatre Project](#) and serves as Managing Editor for [East European Jewish Affairs](#).