In the last five years, the word ‘glamour’ has arisen more and more frequently in the frame of Russian mass media, culture, and even politics. In pop culture and mass media, this notion connotes the spheres of glossy surfaces, representing glory, beauty and success.

However, in Russia ‘glamour’ has transformed itself into an omnipresent style, decorating Russian capitalism and its turbulent development as well as the media images of the state. Initially, Russia drew upon the models of the American culture of glamour, which has long been a global mass-media commodity. Now it seems that Russian glamour has surpassed the source that it imitates, and has become an almost ontologised component of society. In contrast, for the Western European way of life glamour preserves its charm only as an *accompaniment* to actual ‘living’, and is sustained chiefly by the mass media. In the zone of extreme prosperity, the seductive lustre of glamour is blunted by the history of particular tastes and the norms of civil society, as well as by the fact of bourgeois consciousness in general being at a more developed stage.

The interface of the contemporary post-industrial European bourgeois lifestyle doesn’t accept ostensible and direct images of glamour.

It should also be noted that there is a marked difference between capitalism and bourgeois consciousness. Despite the fact that in Western Europe the bourgeoisie has been developing alongside the development of capitalism (while in Russia, capitalism even up to the contemporary moment can quite easily do without the bourgeoisie), bourgeois consciousness cannot be reduced to the amount of property. Rather, it presupposes an
elaborate and sophisticated subjective taste as its chief value, as theorised by Kant and inherited as a philosophical legacy by the bourgeois Western citizen-subject.

If the categorical imperative keeps civil society within the bounds of general social rules, ‘sublimity’ as defined by Kant is realised by through the transgression of these rules. The Kantian principles of aesthetic judgement enable cultural continuity on the one hand, and on the other, catalyse innovations in art and technologies. All these together mould the lifestyle of Western European upper-middle class.

Therefore the sphere of entertainment, which in fact is the sphere of desires, can saturate itself with more cognitive objects than are apparent through the act of simply consuming mass-media products and succumbing to the images projected through advertising.

It is not the evidence of capital that matters, but cultivated taste, the capacity for aesthetic differentiation and the tools to reinforce this capacity, acquired through ensuring that capital circulates in particular ways in the cultural domain. In fact, this discriminative aesthetic is the most expensive commodity today.

As a matter of fact, the formal archetypes of such space are the private spaces of high taste and innovations, where a bourgeois subject is a mini-sovereign in his private aspiration towards gnoseological perfection and privileged self-reflection.

In the bourgeois milieu, glamour is exclusive, something for private consumption, but the attributes of subtle glitz coalesce to augment the pleasures of connoisseurship.

II. Glamour as Equality
In Russia, ‘glamour’, as a particular external attribute or aura of style, has a specific origin, which will be discussed later in this essay.

Soviet rationale was theoretically based on the principle of equality – applied not only in the context of jurisdiction and civil society but also in relation to material and immaterial values, as well as in relation to the public domain. This enabled, on the one hand, the collectivisation of all individual achievements; and on the other, enabled the projection of the idea that individuals could access these collectivised images and objects. If there was anything that underwent radical transformation during the 70 years of Soviet power, it was the apparently complete ousting of bourgeois consciousness (seen as a mechanism claiming the territory of the ‘private’) from the Soviet ideology.

Today, despite the growth of capital and the decline of the socialist regime in Russia, the ousted/suppressed bourgeoisie has not yet appeared, though there are in place the prerequisites for its re-emergence. This is because capital in Russia has not yet created the social layer capable of sorting out and hierarchically arranging desires, according to categories and costs.

Meanwhile, we should also remember that ‘glamour’ is not the same thing as ‘luxury’. Rather, it is the sign of luxury, acquiring its specific attributes as a signifier through the schema of mass-media distribution.
Due to the residual ideology of equality, as well as to the reflexive inability to reshape behaviour according to new patterns of social hierarchy, glamour (although proclaimed as the mode of eligibility) is consumed with the help of mass-media in the regime of availability to all. Obsession with consumption, often to abusive limits, is characteristic of the upper and middle classes, as well as the extremely poor, and including the provincial populations who live in precarious conditions.

The absence of bourgeois consciousness in post-Soviet Russia is an indication that differentiation in terms of values and culture between the different social strata – the former proletariat, the residents of remote provinces, the ‘cognitariat’ that forms the labour pool producing immaterial goods for the digital economy, as well as the privileged representatives of the new Russian mode of capital – has not yet taken place.

There is a somewhat inexact supposition that the schizophrenic obsession with glamour and the images that embody this attribute, even within the milieux that by definition cannot afford to participate in the ‘glamorous’, can be explained by the restricted right to private property that was mandated during the Soviet regime.

The true reason for the current obsession with glamour should in fact be sought, on the one hand, in the fact that most citizens in post-Soviet Russia are unable to decondition themselves of the reflex that claims all citizens have equal opportunities and can stake equal claims; and on the other hand, the fact that state economics is massively dependent upon natural resources. In order to manage, process and sell the commodities manufactured from these resources, one only needs a few influential social types. The most successful of these are the politician, the businessman, the pop star, the model. The rest of the population functions as an abundant human resource pool, in general required predominantly as potential customers, or specifically required as an electorate every four years. Thus, there are two approaches to what is offered by the omnipresent sign ‘glamour’. Either one rejects what the mass media constructs and projects as ‘reality’ – since in actuality one is unable to access or consume the images of economic paradise; or one plunges into simulacra, trying to mimic the images of success, prosperity and beauty as faithfully as possible, within one’s limited means.

The 1990s were the period of liberalisation at all levels in Russia – in politics, art, economics, means of production, trade. This liberalisation bore a capitalistic inscription. Social ‘justice’ was interpreted as the individual right to become prosperous; efforts in this direction were seen as ‘just’ and deserving. The problem now lay in the fact that the logic of equal freedoms in the market, and freedom to acquire and thus privatise public property, came along with the undeclared creation of a powerful financial elite of secret investors and proprietors.

In the contemporary moment, everything that is not representative of large-scale capital is considered, in public opinion, to be the opposite of that glamorous surface – i.e., trash, affliction, the characteristics (in this opinion) of many Russian provinces. According to this opinion, escape from such poverty and stagnation is possible only through the cheap imitation of valorised signifiers of glamour.
Thus, today we observe the collision between two paradigms – the persistent, unconscious fixation on the idea of equality/equal access asserted by the Soviet regime, and its complete absence in the current post-Soviet political and social framework. Glamour thus represents the dose of equality that is possible to experience for the majority of citizens, within the radical and expanding rupture in the post-Soviet *socium*. Glamour and its vehicles – mass show business and the mass media in general – are the communicative strands between stratified social layers that cannot otherwise be united, through either contemporary events, culture or politics, except for the residual unconscious memory of egalitarianism from the Soviet past.

The remedy against succumbing to debilitating socioeconomic conditions, against feeling abject and abjected, is to identify with virtual images signifying either glamour or power. The concept of equality is thus transposed onto different coordinates in a context where citizens have not yet internalised the existential fact of inequality, even while they live it – for they simultaneously inhabit the phantasmic world of equality promised and constituted by glamorous images.

Of course it is predominantly for ‘The Poor’ that glamour turns out to be the unconscious reflex of equality. Television is the main source of entertainment they can actually afford. Through this medium, they automatically find themselves in the commodity-saturated realm of gloss, elitist propaganda and kitsch.

On the one hand, glamour in the zone of poverty is evidence of the colonisation of this territory with fantastic, inaccessible images of dreams, encouraging their imitation and consumption. But since the consumption *itself* is something inaccessible, being often a fantastic desire, achievement of this imaginary ideal becomes an almost heroic attempt. The bricolage beauty objects composed from the Chinese and Vietnamese handicraft copies of glitz images are obtained through enormous efforts engaging belief, struggle and creativity. The expense at which these glamorous images are obtained by the residents of remote Russian provinces make the perception of and craving for such images fundamentally different from their consumption by nouveau-riche proprietors. For the poor, the media images of glamour – as well as the objects constituting the language of glamour and the desired possibility of consuming them – acquire an ontological dimension. The glamorous image becomes the *ideal* image, the image of beauty in a quasi-Platonic sense.

In contrast to glamour as strategy for the protagonists of its representation and production, glamour for the poor is thus the embodiment of the Ideal *regardless* of the aesthetic particulars of style or form. Such strife to obtain the beautiful is not aware of the imperatives of taste, and is not amenable to the logic of Kantian aesthetics. Within bourgeois logic, such exclusion of taste may be explained as the absence not only of financial means, but also of knowledge and education.

In his play *Black Milk* (2004), outstanding Russian playwright Vassily Sigarev offers a good example of the symbolic value of an inaccessible commodity that should at all costs be obtained, or else substituted by some counterfeit. The protagonists of the play are a
married couple travelling through Russian provincial villages to sell defective toasters made in Taiwan. One village they come to consists mainly of alcoholics. There is neither any production there, nor agricultural activity; life is confined to the survival of residents through the selling and buying of vodka. The toasters cost 300 roubles ($12) each, a very large sum for the village residents; some families spend all they have to buy this unnecessary gadget that contributes nothing to their lives. Nevertheless, in the end everybody has bought the object...

It may at first seem that what makes the sale so successful is marketing and advertising knowhow that works like propaganda; the newcomers seduce the villagers into purchasing the toasters. But in fact this is not the case. A toaster, an alien object, infiltrates the villagers’ reality via television from its source in mass-media virtual projections. Although mass media is now regularly haunting even this remote area through TV screens, its images are still experienced as a completely unreal. When such images present themselves, the objects they signify, despite or perhaps due to being alien, immediately become so intensely real within the receiving consciousness that there is a powerful and inevitable urge to approximate and even to own them.

It should also be noted that all this happens in the conditions of the minimum of property among the village residents – i.e., they own practically no private property, and this is the only fact ensuring equal status among the villagers. Even so, this mode of survival-based equality doesn’t presuppose any form of democratic communication among the residents; such communication is possible only when residents mutually subscribe to a shared value system. A toaster – a glamorous object of the imaginary reality – now having received embodiment as a desired consumer item – brings equality to the point of represented commonality, albeit a counterfeit one.

Thus we observe an illusory leap from the literal absence of private property to the symbolic presence of the impossible ideal object. This leap enables one to see ‘glamour for the poor’ as potentiality, as signification that paradoxically remains empty even as it imposes a strong material/emotional effect; leaving out and overlooking bourgeois consciousness without even making an attempt to understand what it might be. In this disturbing gap between the non-possession of property and the media-fuelled compulsion
to grasp the ideal object glimmers the possibility of equality – that ignores the differentiated values of bourgeois connoisseurship and refuses to wait until the emissaries of culture, good taste and state policy come to educate or upgrade people. The schizophrenic strategies of capitalism and its resilient mass-media interface are experienced here as the ontology of hope.

III. Glamour for the ‘Chosen’

*Why should one show off something that one can’t afford? People buy prestigious things hoping that nobody notices the absence of their status…*

Ksenia Sobchak⁴ [on the practice of wearing cheap diamond fakes]

The new rich, meanwhile, are now experiencing as everyday reality the glamour-laden commodities that in the early 1990s were only present in the imagination of this class. With the materialisation of these dreams of a glamorous life, it is to be expected that such privilege will be discursively confirmed in cultural domains.

Thus, a new prosperous layer of Russian society (the result of accumulated capital) gradually discloses within itself the demand not only for the commodities of fast consumption, but also reclaims its interest in culture and art. Until recent times there has been no open demand of this kind on behalf of the middle- and upper/proto-bourgeoisie. As soon as such a demand manifested, the new galleries and art foundations began to appear. This new proto-bourgeoisie is still unable to produce any expert judgement, being short of information on contemporary art and having very modest knowledge about culture.

Naturally, the already existing actual artistic spheres were obliged to react at some point to such a challenge. Many artists began to cooperate with the ‘glamour’ galleries and foundations, and also began to produce works that imaged the aspirations of the new ‘elite’.

The aspirations of the new elite are quite eclectic. Let’s track what follows the imaging of expensive commodities, travel and interiors. Today, it cannot be a symbolic intervention or political critique through signification, as was possible and practiced in the mid-1990s. What remains is a mixture of mysticism, fantasy, esoterics, often the elements of trash
(since there is so much of it around), and images of the decadent abuse of luxury – some kind of exclusive trip through the spaces of individualist, egocentric divinity. If there is no knowledge about art, if drugs do not catalyse inspired states, and if self-education does not seem that attractive, the further stage of ‘enrichment’ can only be the struggle to articulate one’s own charismatic exclusiveness, projecting oneself till one becomes a conspicuous protagonist in the new elitist arena – the terrain of contemporary art. In other words, to run an exclusive boutique of ‘art’, or that constituted by solipsistic self-assertion.

In February 2007, well-known Russian artist and former actionist Oleg Kulik curated the exhibition titled I BELIEVE at the Moscow Biennale. Kulik claimed a new artistic trend and defined it as a mode of religiosity. The project was supported and produced by the Ministry of Culture and the Mayorate. Despite numerous prognoses, the exhibition did not become the panegyric of state power or official Orthodox values, but was rather curated as a show enabling the viewer to experience the hallucinatory and the supra-normal, using images characteristically associated with psychedelic drugs and the acid night-club spaces of the early 1990s. Kulik repeated that he wanted to represent the deepest core of each artist, to show how an artist’s esoteric and mystical states could be translated into an artwork; the project was about the ‘purification’ of the artist’s soul through its ‘demonstration’ (this is today actually possible only in the realm of mass media; it is the pop star who publicly bares the ‘soul’).

The space chosen for the exhibition itself – a former wine-factory, which offered something between a dark atmospheric cellar and the strident intimacy of an acid rock club – claimed to be an alternative to the sanitised gallery interiors of Western contemporary-art venues. However, the point here is not the questioning of positive or negative attitude to esoterics. The issue is to locate, identify and describe the consumer of such a product.

A large segment of the 1990s generation – Generation “P”, according to writer Viktor Pelevin (the “P” in the title of this novel stands for “Pepsi” as well as “PR”/“Potreblenie”, which translates as “consumption” in Russian) – in the conditions of the post-Soviet market economy had to move away from artistic and intellectual projects and focus instead on making money.

In today’s era of oil-centred economies, the money of this generation has acquired a relative stability and is functioning in different spheres – politics, big business and culture. This is evident in contemporary Russian cinema: advertising companies are now making films with the help of new oil money, and such films usually overflow with conventional glamour images.

The glamorous signifiers of prosperity, supposedly equally accessible to all, are not sufficient for this social layer. They yearn for the chance to express their creative potential, and nurture a nostalgia for the artistic milieu of the early 1990s – bohemian underground elitism, backed by the liberal intelligentsia, the class that was actually the bearer of the demand for the Western mode of prosperity during the Soviet regime. Such an audience resents the actionist phase of the 1990s as well as conceptual criticism that dominated the
middle of that decade; they relate to that art of 1990s which formed the bohemian entertainment of decadent intelligentsia, and desire its resurgence.

Instead, the cultural terrain hosts the projection of alternative esoterics, purchased with laundered money. This moment is marked by the fact of the financial elite, or sponsors of art, being increasingly prepared to assimilate bourgeois standards in the interest of establishing a cultural interface, accompanied by its own set of critics. The 'expert' community which already exists, and which was successful in the 1990s, is not satisfactory for the new proto-bourgeois audience of today, because of its intellectualised, politicised and leftist orientation.

It is the same zone – of ‘glamour for the chosen’ – that Viktor Pelevin describes in his latest book, *Empire V* (2006). In this narrative, the elite are no longer humans but vampires. Exploiting people’s yearning for success, prosperity and glamour, these ‘chosen’, divine vampires suck from people the substance called *bablos*, an essence received from money circulation. During this process, esoteric mysteries are revealed to them and they ascend further in terms of spiritual perfection. Their means of such ascension is not any sacrificial or meditative procedure – it is a metaphysical equivalent of money. Here, Pelevin’s vision of dystopia paradoxically corresponds to the transcendentalist impulse of bourgeois consciousness.

In Pelevin’s meta-narrative, the concept of cosmic and metaphysical infinity, the idea of God and of divinity, are illusory: their function is to stimulate humans into aspiring for self-affirmation. All speculation about metaphysical realia and God, and abstract thinking as such, is just an instrument to calibrate the increases in the amount of money made. And according to Pelevin, glamour is a form of “prestigious consumption taking place to show off in the realm of spirit”. 
When Pelevin’s ‘chosen’ – the vampires – imbibe bablos from human bodies, they feel like gods. The analogue is obvious: money and the aura of glamour can transform one into the Divine, the Chosen. In addition, Pelevin’s account most interestingly presents God as a collateral effect of preying upon people for bablos, an existential activity that provides the chosen with the sublime sensation of being God-like. The mode of absolute self-realisation is therefore equivalent to a subjective state of individual sovereignty, which is given the name “God”. (At the vernissage of the I Believe exhibit, curator Oleg Kulik claimed that he, as a human, has experienced the sensation of feeling God-like.)

IV. State ‘Glamo-Modernism’
Along with these two phenomena (glamour as a mode of equality/glamour for the poor, and glamour as a mode of transcendence/glamour for the elite), there exists another project competing for space in the cultural domain – a kind of ‘state formalism’. Or in other words, the project of so-called ‘sovereign democracy’, in which the state tries to appropriate large-scale business as well as culture, to be financed by the new bourgeoisie, under state supervision.

In this undertaking, the bourgeoisie as a class will not be able, unlike Kulik, for instance, in the I Believe exhibition, rely on quasi-bohemian jouissance, on the struggle for totalised and autonomous sovereignty, but will have to – together with the representatives of culture, science and art – visualise dominant signifiers of the nation state and develop these into a sponsored iconography.

In many state-supported institutions, the issues of criteria in art, literature and culture are already on the agenda. These projects seem to be quasi-academic: for instance, ‘Territory’, the festival of contemporary poetry and contemporary music; the Moscow Biennale, quite a number of editorial programmes; lecture series by internationally renowned philosophers Slavoj Žižek and Giorgio Agamben on the invitation of the government. The ideological thrust seems to be directed at confining the radical potential of the discourse of hitherto subversive political technologies within the parameters of academic convention.

In other words, all those images that spring from the phantasms of individual sovereignty – the show-business star, the artist, the oligarch, the politician, even the President – are thus subordinated to the charismatic image of the state itself, in a new formulation. The state becomes the principal source of growth in economics, business, religion, art, the source of resuscitation in morals, the saviour who will offset entropy, and the bearer of the idea of non-xenophobic, thus ‘civilised’, nationalism.

Accordingly, the signifiers of luxury, entertainment and glamour are all directed to serve this new entity, the ideological synthesis of all material and ideal values – state glamour.

Thus, before our eyes, subversive postmodern methodologies are being reconverted, as part of state policy, into the ‘modernist’ paradigm.

Why do we associate these ‘national’ cultural strategies with modernism?
In order to answer this question, it may be necessary to ask another one: What is important in modernist art?

Answer: The art itself, its autonomy, its self-preservation through the over-emphasis on aspects of form.

Take the case of the major exhibition of contemporary Russian art held in Miami in 2007, designed within the conceptual territory of modernist formalism. Eugenia Kikodze, a curator of the Miami show, later adopted the category of ‘Urban Formalism’ for works exhibited at the Moscow Biennale. Or take the latest formalist works by artist Anatoly Osmolovsky, which proclaim the tautology of form and transmute quotidian objects (bread, walnuts, tanks) into abstract shapes by means of format variations. These are instances of the drastic shift from Osmolovsky’s boldly political avant-garde art of the 1990s to the museum- and gallery-oriented cultural products of the contemporary moment, draped in their quasi-modernist framings.

A modernist artist may be nauseated by reality, but he/she doesn’t revolt against it: instead, he/she articulates it as form only, without or with minimal content. Let’s imagine, for instance, that there was explosion on top of a hill, with soldiers killed there; but if one commits to a purely objective aesthetic logic, one may see the devastated hill as the potential form of a sculpture, abstracted from the harrowing reality. What matters here is the immanence of form in relation to itself. But the strict minimalism of this act takes place due to form being inflated to become the equivalent of everything. Likewise, those aspects that ‘mean’ in glamour imagery are not the luxury objects in themselves, but their effects and aura; the signs of luxury, referring to themselves as proofs of the total accomplishment of glamorous aspiration. This manifestation of glamour can be defined as the over-determination of the material object, the deliberate apotheosis of its form (through depth and surface collapsing into each other).

In the Greek myth of the Golden Fleece, the pelt of a ram, covered with gold sand, symbolises wealth, divinity and the power of the state. The object is not actually made of gold, but is completely clad in the sign of gold appropriated in order to project the effect of substance. Images of glamour seduce because they refract and radiate lustre as if it were emanating from within, as the essence of a commodity, while it may just be dispersed on the surface.

A similar over-determination characterises the political concept of ‘sovereign democracy’, which may be defined as democracy plus its unacknowledged potential for manipulation. On the one hand it is an oxymoron; on the other, it may well manifest as a valid political reality. Namely, democracy should not be sovereign, but everybody knows that it often happens to be sovereign. In such cases, sovereignty becomes the superimposed attribute, the self-referential and ‘glamorous’ sign of democracy that, due to its open declaration of this negative component, confirms the ‘genuine’ form of democracy – which, however, is sovereignty, rather than democracy; the signifier, rather than what it signifies.
Form plus something other than form – that will only turn out to be emptiness and refer back to this very form, thereby proving any interpretation around the form to be tautological. Quite a concept of modernism. To understand the state as a diktat of empty form that moulds any political content in its own ‘glamorous’ image enables us to direct all the references to such empty form.

But what purpose does such state modernism serve?

It may be that the exaggerated function of the state is the supporting and disguising surface for the further moulding of a positive image of the future bourgeoisie. In other words, the political project of the form-obsessed ‘modernising’ state is a device for the smooth and painless configuration of a collective culture of voluntary inequality – one that apparently enables the bourgeoisie, for whom glamour is a mode of subjective transcendence, to meld their tastes with those of the poor, for whom glamour is a way of deflecting the squalor that is their existential reality. The glamo-modernist cultural policies of the state should achieve this ‘democratic’ goal much more successfully than either mass media or individual bohemian producers of postmodern images of glamour.

Notes
1. In his Critique of Judgement (1790), Kant investigates the sublime, stating: “We call that sublime which is absolutely great”. He distinguishes between the “remarkable differences” of the beautiful and the sublime, noting that beauty “is connected with the form of the object”, having “boundaries”, while the sublime “is to be found in a formless object”, represented by a “boundlessness”. He considers both the beautiful and the sublime as “indefinite” concepts, but whereas beauty relates to the “Understanding”, sublimity is a concept belonging to “Reason”, and “shows a faculty of the mind surpassing every standard of Sense”. A “supersensible substrate”, underlying both nature and thought, is where true sublimity is located. For Kant, morality can be summed up in one, ultimate commandment of reason, or imperative, from which all duties and obligations derive. He defined an imperative as any proposition that declares a certain action (or inaction) to be necessary. A hypothetical imperative would compel action in a given circumstance. A categorical imperative would denote an absolute, unconditional requirement that exerts its authority in all circumstances, both required and justified as an end in itself. It is best known in its first formulation: “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critique_of_Judgement
2. See, for instance, “The Individual in Post-Soviet Socium”, in Social Sciences, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2000), where historian German Diligensky argues: “It is customary to define the society of ‘real socialism’ with its institutional, cultural and socio-psychological specifics as ‘collectivist’. Many have been writing about the collectivist character of the Soviet socium – both critics and apologists of socialism. In recent years, however, a tendency has been gaining momentum to interpret Russian collectivism not as a heritage of socialism but as an inherent and stable feature of the national character and culture; and to describe it, correspondingly, not by ‘foreign’ (Marxist) terms but by words borrowed from the archaic Russian vocabulary, such as obschina (commune), sobornost (conciliarism), etc. Not only national-patriotic and communist ideologists, but also the authors of some academic treatises see the obschina principle as the
fundamental constant of Russian mentality, which makes it incompatible with the individualist values and way of life of Western 'market' society. In modern political and cultural discourse, juxtaposition of 'individualist' (Western) and 'collectivist' (socialist or, generally, 'Eastern') societies has acquired the status of a quasi-axiomatic truth. Diligensky adds, "At the same time, in modern sociological literature this hackneyed juxtaposition of collectivism and individualism as basic characteristics of social and cultural systems has been under much fire..." See http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/socsci/socsci_00dig01.html

3. Ksenia Sobchak, also known as 'Kremlin's cover girl' and the 'Russian Paris Hilton', is the daughter of a former governor of St. Petersburg who was one of the fiercest critics of the Soviet Union in Gorbachev's times. A wealthy socialite heiress, she hosts Dom-2, Russia's most successful reality TV show. She recently launched Vse Svobodny (All Are Free), a youth movement. See http://www.telegraph.co.uk/fashion/main.jhtml?xml=/fashion/2006/07/23/stksenia23.xml

4. According to the Moscow Biennale website:
   "One of the tasks the organisers of the I BELIEVE project wish to accomplish is to persuade artists to get away from the vanities of daily pursuits and search their hearts. It is high time for us to take a look at man and the world not from the perspective of the latest fashionable philosophy, but through the eyes of someone who believes in life in all its manifestations, which is a radical departure from the conventional outlook of modern art. Let us dust off our ideals.
   "What is the mystery of being?
   "What in this world strikes you with awe?
   "What is the locus of the Inconceivable and Ineffable, which leaves you speechless when you meet with it?
   "What foundations do your spirit and soul rest upon?
   "This exhibition should be a step toward changing the status of modern art in society, an attempt to move away from elitism toward direct emotional contact with everyone, whether an artist or a viewer. This contact will not be based on abstract ideas but on the perceived presence of something extraordinary and unknown, which unites all of us, living creatures".

5. Contemporary Russian author Viktor Pelevin's works use the language of Western postmodernism and science fiction as well as pop-Buddhism, Eastern mysticism, Japanese Manga comics and ironic-nostalgic socialist-realist parody, while acknowledging the tradition of Nikolai Gogol and the 1920s avant-garde. The publication history and reception of Pelevin's work epitomises the shift in Russian literary culture from a journal- and critic-led process to a consumer-led market.

Interviewed in 2002 by Leo Kropywiansky, Pelevin comments: "The evil magic of any totalitarian regime is based on its presumed capability to embrace and explain all the phenomena, their entire totality, because explanation is control. Hence the term totalitarian. So if there's a book that takes you out of this totality of things explained and understood, it liberates you because it breaks the continuity of explanation and thus dispels the charms. It allows you to look in a different direction for a moment, but this moment is enough to understand that everything you saw before was a hallucination..."
See http://www.bombmagazine.com/pelevin/pelevin.html

6. An avant-garde artist in this case is not just reworking existent forms, but also moulds new forms for the world's future.

7. This episode is quoted in the war diary of 23-year-old Anri Gaudier-Brjeshka, a French sculptor and close friend of Ezra Pound. Recruited by the French army, he was killed in World War 1.
8. In Greek mythology, the golden fleece is that of the winged ram Chrysomallos. It is a central image in the tale of Jason and his band of Argonauts, who set out on a quest for the fleece in order to place Jason rightfully on the throne of Iolcus in Thessaly. According to the legend, Athamas, king of the city of Orchomenus, took as his first wife the cloud goddess Nephele by whom he had two children, the boy Phrixus and the girl Helle. Later he married Ino, the daughter of Cadmus. Ino was jealous of her stepchildren and plotted their deaths. Nephele’s spirit appeared to the children with a winged ram whose fleece was of gold. Riding on the ram, the children escaped over the sea; Helle fell off and drowned, but the ram took Phrixus safely on to distant Colchis. Phrixus then sacrificed the ram and hung its fleece on a tree in a grove sacred to Ares, where it was guarded by a dragon; it remained there until taken by Jason. The ram became the constellation Aries.