

## THE MAGIC OF BIBLICAL NAMES AND THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE. 2016-2023

### THE BIBLICAL NAME LIKE A HEAVENLY CONSTELLATION

Images of biblical names and the names of the Old Testament, live in amazing visual and semantic forms. If they are viewed in the Russian avant-garde system, then they are clearly very close to the ideas of constructivism and reminiscent “Prouns” – the structures of El Lissitzky. In the plastic reality of Goncharenko, biblical names become weightless and quite clearly move into the area of space hover. They hang out in the higher strata of the noosphere as a constellation, or a UFO, and “destroy the parachute of the celestial sphere”, as said by Kazimir Malevich, emphasizing the inseparability of man from space. In their organic sound and figurative meaning, the names are naturally-connected. They create a special world where tenderness, spirituality, and, at the same time, stability reign. They are filled with harmonic relationships, can be seen as a musical score, and can be read as a great text.

Alex Goncharenko precisely captured the spiritual essence of the feminine biblical name in his composition “Rachel”, designed it as the organism of a constantly born new life, pointing to its origin – the male rib.

The name is an ancient symbol, as the eternal archetype of origin runs through all world cultures. It is associated with the most dramatic events in history and has a universal ability to form new types of communication. Determining the path of our spiritual and social reality, it creates harmony in a world in which harmony and balance are still at issue.

*Vitaly PATSYUKOV,*

an Art Critic, curator, and corresponding member of the Russian Academy of arts. 2017

- THE IDEA OF THE PROJECT is to combine the style of the Russian avant-garde and calligraphy Jewish name. Goncharenko created six graphic compositions about the biblical forefathers and foremothers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah).
- As the project progressed, images of biblical names were transformed from a graphical plane into 3D models of galactic stations. In 2019–2023, the artist made four station models. He is planning a digital project with space textures.
- "The idea of calligraphy of a name, a talisman is very close to me. I started making graphic sheets of amulets for relatives and friends. This is how my NEW SERIES “The Magic of Calligraphy of a Name” appeared."



Abraham | אברהם . 2016  
Biblical Names Series  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



Sarah and Jacob | שרה ו יעקב . 2016  
Biblical Names Series  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



Rebecca | רבקה . 2016  
Biblical Names Series  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



Alef | א . 2016  
Biblical Names Series  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



Isaac | יצחק . 2016  
Biblical Names Series  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



Galactic Station Isaac. 2019-2020  
Biblical Names Series  
3D sculpture. Plywood, fluorescent acrylic, metal  
110 × 90 × 30 cm

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Lea | לֵאָה . 2016  
Biblical Names Series  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



Galactic Station Lea. 2019  
Biblical Names Series  
3D sculpture. Plywood, fluorescent acrylic, metal  
115 x 80 x 25 cm



Itay | יִתְיָא . 2016  
Series "The Magic of Calligraphy of a Name"  
Paperboard, fluorescent acrylic, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



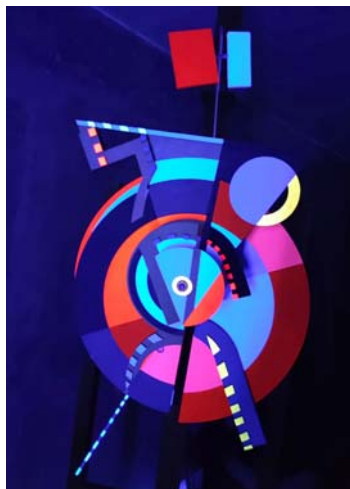
Lior | לִיאוֹר . 2016  
Series "The Magic of Calligraphy of a Name"  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
58,5 x 41,5 cm



Hana | חַנָּה . 2016  
Series "The Magic of Calligraphy of a Name"  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
58,5 x 41,5 cm



Rachel | רַחֵל . 2016  
Biblical Names Series  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
59 x 41,5 cm



Galactic Station Rachel. 2021  
Biblical Names Series  
3D sculpture  
In UV



Nali | נָלִי . 2015  
Series "The Magic of Calligraphy of a Name"  
Paperboard, tempera, pencil  
60 x 60 cm



Alef Station. 2023  
Biblical Names Series  
3D sculpture. Plywood, fluorescent acrylic, metal  
90 x 65 x 42 cm



Magic Alef Ball. 2023  
Biblical Names Series  
Plywood, fluorescent acrylic, lacquer  
H 15 cm. In UV

## THE MAGIC OF BIBLICAL NAMES AND THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE (on works of Alex Goncharenko)

Twenty two letters (of Hebrew alphabet) are the basis (of Universe).  
Our Lord inscribed them, engraved them, purified them, changed them and has made out of them the soul of every creature and, also, of everything that would be created.  
The "Book of Creation" (Sefer Yetzirah), ch.II, mishna V<sup>1</sup>.

All my professional life as a palaeographer studying Jewish written tradition I live as in the aura of Hebrew letters. When I started thinking about what to write in this article, great number of citations, Biblical maxims and sentences as well as different professional associations connected to the letters of Hebrew alphabet came to my mind. However, I want to begin this essay with absolutely not scientific, private memories. Several years ago I happened to visit Shaare Zedek (Gate of Mercy) hospital in Jerusalem. I went there to visit a patient but at some point to satisfy curiosity of the tourist, decided to walk through the building. Walls in hospitals are usually decorated with neutral background paintings (as a rule it is some rural scenery or sketches of streets of some tiny town). I was really shocked that in Gate of Mercy hospital facsimile copies of different Jewish manuscripts hanged on the walls of a long corridor through which crowds of visitors, nurses and patients were constantly moving.

For a long time I've wandered in this long corridor and studied pictures on the walls. In some cases I've recognised and sometimes did not recognise the handwritten fragments and so I've read explanatory texts. I was really amazed by the very choice to decorate hospital walls with Jewish medieval manuscripts. As a result I talked with a manager who was responsible for this decision. His answer struck me, and I remember it still. He said, "We came to the conclusion that no painting soothes and pacifies the patient so as harmony of the letters that form the biblical text."

New works of St.Peterburg-Moscow artist Alex Goncharenko represent, in my opinion, an example of a very complicated harmony of Hebrew letters with artist's geometric constructions, colours and lines of their "perpendicular flight" into the space. It was very interesting for me to deliberate how inner connection between the characters and fates of Biblical forefathers and foremothers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecah, Rachel and Leah) and the chosen by the artist combinations of flat surfaces and geometric constructions could be traced in these works. Strongly pronounced supermatic nature of the "Magic of Biblical names" cycle give viewer wide-open field for apprehension.

Professor *Shimon M. YAKERSON*, PH.D. (history),  
Head of the semitic and hebraistic studies department, Saint-Petersburg University,  
Leading researcher, Institute of Oriental manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences 2016

<sup>1</sup> The text of one of the earliest Jewish mystical writings e.i. the "Book of Creation" (circa third century) is not always amenable to unambiguous interpretation. But I as a palaeographer think that it contains a hint of changing the shape of Hebrew letters. Hebrew letters that are used today, originated on the basis of the Aramaic alphabet around the IV-III centuries BC, and in the preceding period of Jewish history a different one was used, which evolved directly from Phoenician typeface. In modern scientific terminology it is called "paleohebrew letter".



Classes for junior groups of the Center for Museum Pedagogy of the Engels Art Gallery at the exhibition "Collider. New Vanguard. Alex Goncharenko". ART STUDIO, 11/21/2021.  
Photo in the VK group: <https://vk.com/engelsartgallery>

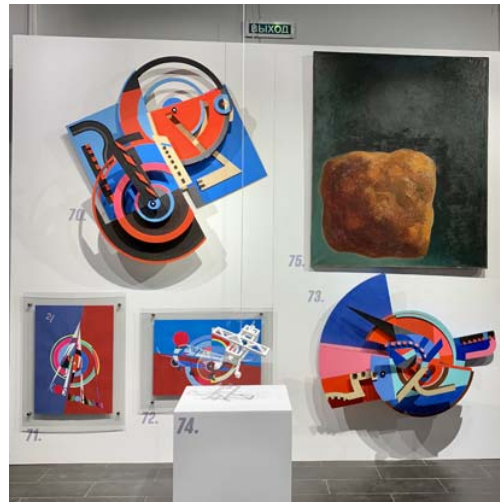
### THE PROJECT PARTICIPATED IN EXHIBITIONS

- Personal Exhibition Of Alex Goncharenko "New Vanguard: Time Displacement". All-Russian Decorative Art Museum, 2022, Moscow, Russia. Catalog
- Collider. New Vanguard. Alex Goncharenko. Saratov State Radischev Art Museum, Engels Art Gallery, 2021-2022, Engels, Russia. Catalog
- Flying like a Dream. State Central theater Museum named after A.Bakhrushin, 2021, Moscow, Russia. Catalog
- New Reality. On the 100th anniversary of UNOVIS. New Tretyakov Gallery, 2020, Moscow, Russia
- About Laziness. ARTPLAY, 2019-2020, Moscow, Russia
- Geometry in the culture of XX–XXI centuries. To the centenary of the Bauhaus. NCCA, 2019-2020, Moscow, Russia
- International Fine Arts Symposion. Art Colony Olaszliszka'2019. Eastern Europe Modern Art Gallery and International Sculpture Park, 2019, Olaszliszka, Hungary
- Joint exhibition of artist Alex Goncharenko (RU) and sculptor István Ézsiás (H). Gallery of the University of Óbuda "Donát Bánki - Art Industrial", 2018, Budapest, Hungary
- Art in Process. RUB (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), 2018, Bohum, Germany
- Silk Road. NCCA, 2017, Moscow, Russia
- Magic of Names. NCCA, 2017, Moscow, Russia

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Geometry in the culture of XX–XXI centuries. To the centenary of the Bauhaus. 2019-2020. NCCA. Moscow, Russia



Flying like a Dream. 2021 State Central theater Museum named after A.Bakhrushin. Moscow, Russia



<http://www.visit-city.com/exhibitions/new-reality/> New Reality. On the 100th anniversary of UNOVIS. 2020. New Tretyakov Gallery. Moscow, Russia



Collider. New Vanguard. Alex Goncharenko. Saratov State Radischev Art Museum, Engels Art Gallery, 2021-2022, Engels, Russia  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/869264053959913>  
<https://gtrk-saratov.ru/v-engelsskoj-kartinnnoj-galeree-gotoviyatsya-k-otkrytiyu-neobychnoj-vystavki/>



Magic of names. Project presentation. On July 04, 2017 NCCA. Moscow, Russia

<http://www.ncca.ru/events.text?filial=2&id=4218>  
[youtu.be: https://youtu.be/BZEA3lm9P3o](https://youtu.be/BZEA3lm9P3o)



About Laziness. 2019-2020. ARTPLAY. Moscow, Russia



Personal Exhibition of Alex Goncharenko "New Vanguard: Time Displacement". All-Russian Decorative Art Museum, 2022, Moscow, Russia