

18-Carat Gold Phone Hits the Moscow Market

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The phone, which will cost \$57,400 in a limited edition, may show others that you are wealthy but will not allow you to e-mail or browse the Internet. **Sergei Karpukhin**

It doesn't do e-mail, the Internet, have a camera, games or GPS navigation, but a new mobile phone from Denmark is literally solid gold.

Danish retailer Aesir said it hopes to sell its \$57,400, limited-edition 18-carat gold phones to Moscow's fashion-forward elite. The phone, which took three years to develop, is "not a play thing," company founder Thomas Jensen said, sipping a gin and tonic on the rooftop of one of the city's premier hotels.

It features no extra applications: No e-mail, games, camera or GPS navigation, but its target clients are the ultra-wealthy, who have staff to manage their calendars and chauffeur them around town.

“It’s a collector’s item. People are used to collecting, say, watches, while designer phones is a practically empty niche,” Jensen said.

The firm says it will design a new phone every 18 months and produce no more than 5,000 of its classic model, sold for 42,000 euros in gold and 7,250 euros (\$9,867) in stainless steel.

“Moscow is becoming a booming contemporary art city. At first people here had only money, but now they have style. Their spending is more intellectual and sophisticated,” said Mathias Rajani, Aesir’s chief commercial officer.

Several of Denmark’s richest families, including the owners of toymaker Lego, invested in developing the blocky, streamline phones, designed by Yves Behar.

Luxury market analysts see Aesir’s designs as an alternative to high-end, gem-encrusted mobiles by Nokia’s British mobile subsidiary Vertu, costing from \$6,500 to \$72,500.

Russia’s ultra-rich may well plunk down thousands to flaunt Aesir’s gold mobiles, art market investment expert Natalya Legotina said.

But she doubted that the phones would become collector’s items.

“It could find a place in the Russian market but definitely not in the cultural elite circles, which favor new smartphone models,” said Legotina of British consultancy Art Market Research.

“It will interest Russian oligarchs and their girlfriends as well as businessmen whose social circles demand accessories that act as class indicators,” she said.

Aesir, which is rolling out models in Cyrillic and Chinese, generated buzz with its glitzy promotion in Moscow last week.

“This phone is amazing — the innovations behind it are also great,” said Russian tycoon Vadim Dymov, who owns meat-packing plants in Moscow and has several conceptual art projects.

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