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Solyanka State Gallery Hosts Animation Festival

By Alex Labrom

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The Linoleum animation festival, on till Sept. 9, features 80 works from 30 different countries. The gallery is open till midnight on Fridays for visitors.

The Solyanka State Gallery is currently hosting the 7th Linoleum international animation festival, displaying a range of genres and styles from cartoons to stop motion as the gallery looks to establish a network of cultural links for the promotion and development of the world of animation.

This year's slogan is "Anti-Social Networks," described by one of the organizers of the festival, Anastasia Melchenko, as a "modern and mysterious motto ... but not necessarily a rigid theme."

"Online there are social networks, such as Facebook, Vkontakte and MySpace. Instead we have Anti-Social Networks to encourage the public to come together here as a cultural community," she said.

The slogan is not necessarily meant as an umbrella term to connect the program of films and was even chosen before the entries were finalized.

The full program of this exhibition includes 80 works from thirty different countries, all on show at the gallery. The animations can be anything from a couple of minutes to half an hour long, and this international group of student and professional animators comes from Russia to the United States, and Israel to Bangladesh.

"The international program is one of the most exciting aspects of the festival," Melchenko said. "It is the first time that most of these animations are being shown in Russia."

The Dutch animation "Year Zero" created by Mischa Rozema, is a disturbing and shocking portrayal of an all too realistic post-apocalyptic world, where weapons and slaughter are commonplace.

In contrast, the Russian stop motion work "I Look & Move" is a much simpler yet colorful and feel-good piece, which more resembles an iPod advert, following a pair of trainers messing around in an urban setting and causing mischief wherever it goes.

At the closing ceremony on Sept. 9, the winning animations, chosen by a panel of experts, including producer of the Linoleum festival Mikhail Tsarev, will be announced.

But it is not just up to the jury; everyone has a say. The festival is laid out across the gallery's various exhibition halls and each visitor is given a scorecard on which they record their favorite animation in each hall. This voting system will then go towards deciding the overall winners.

Away from the competition, there is also a program of guest animations. One section of this featuring a host of young Russian animators is presented by the crowd-sourcing platform citycelebrity.ru, a kind of artistic database with the aim of promoting unique, hidden talent.

Every Friday evening the Solyanka State Gallery organizes events targeting both those in the industry and amateur animators.

Recent ones include presentations on American and European animation and a master class on stop motion given by Teeter-Totter Tam, creators of "I Look & Move."

The festival runs till Sept. 9. Solyanka Gallery, 1 Solyanka Ulitsa. Metro Kitai-Gorod. www.solyanka.org. +7 (495) 621 5572.

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