

Art Pops: Abramovich Glitzes Up His Digs

By [Lena Smirnova](#)

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Russian celebrities hustled to increase their assets this week, adding brand new award nominations to their resumes and filling their coffers with expensive conceptual paintings.

If you happen to be one of Russia's richest men, it seems only fitting that you would want your home decorated with the works of Russia's most expensive artists. Roman Abramovich certainly seems to agree.

The yacht-loving billionaire and his artistic girlfriend, Dasha Zhukova, bought 40 works by conceptualist artist Ilya Kabakov, who holds the status of the most expensive living Russian artist. Abramovich spent a reported \$60 million to buy eight albums of pencil drawings from Kabakov's "10 Characters" series as well as some pieces from his "Holidays" collection.

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A Russian writer got an honor that is usually bestowed, well, not on Russian writers. Vladimir Sorokin, a postmodern writer from Bykovo, in the Moscow region, made the list of 10 finalists for the Man Booker International Prize when the nominees were announced on Jan. 24.

That made Sorokin the first Russian writer to be included on the list, and a surprising choice at that. The chairman of the Booker judging committee commented to The Daily Telegraph about the nominees, saying, "Good God, they're obscure."

Both Sorokin and fellow nominee Yan Lianke from China have been censored in their home countries. One of Sorokin's works, "Day of the Oprichnik," described the Russia of 2028, complete with a tsar in the Kremlin and a "Great Russian Wall" to separate the country from its neighbors.

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Pussy Riot will face off against David Bowie and Barack Obama. The British music magazine NME nominated the controversial group for its annual awards in the Hero of the Year category, where they will compete with the eclectic singer and the American president.

The group's short performance in Christ the Savior Cathedral also got them a nomination for "Music Moment of the Year." Here, they will compete with the opening ceremony for the 2012 Olympic Games and the Rolling Stones concert in London. The awards will be presented Feb. 27.

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Popular television host and "foreign journalist" Vladimir Pozner continued to get himself in hot water this week over last month's critical statements about the State Duma. Pozner, who in addition to his Russian citizenship also has American and French passports, used a local pun to call the Duma a fool in his discussion of the controversial adoption ban.

Several Duma deputies retaliated by sending him a letter complaining about his discrediting remarks, and they threatened to ban him and other foreign reporters from state television. Meanwhile, Channel One was forced to reveal Pozner's salary to prove that he wasn't getting paid more for his two extra citizenships. The station assured United Russia party members that his salary is fairly modest compared with others'.

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Flamboyant ballet dancer Nikolai Tsiskaridze was questioned in relation to the acid attack on Sergei Filin, the head of the Bolshoi Theater's ballet troupe. Some suspect Tsiskaridze, who was openly disgruntled with Filin's management, of involvement in the Jan. 17 attack.

The theater's general director, Anatoly Iskanov, defended his prime dancer but added that the outcome will depend on the police investigation.

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