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Architect Norman Foster Quits Moscow Project

By The Moscow Times

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British architect Norman Foster and his architectural firm have backed out of a $670 million project for the reconstruction and expansion of Moscow's State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts.

Moscow's chief architect Sergei Kuznetsov demanded last week that Foster play a more active part in the project and come to the capital within a month, The Art Newspaper reported.

However, Foster and Partners, who in 2009 won the tender to reconstruct the Pushkin Museum, insist that they left the project more than two months ago because they were not invited to do any work, Vedomosti reported.

Kuznetsov said earlier that Moscow was ready to start a new tender if Foster and his London-based firm could not come to Moscow.

Museum director Marina Loshak, in turn, noted that the project's deadlines remained the

same, and work should be completed by 2018.

Foster planned to combine the buildings of the Pushkin Museum into a single museum space of 15 buildings, including the two new constructions. The project would have more than doubled the total area of the museum, increasing it from 49,600 square meters to 111,500 square meters, at an estimated total cost of 22 billion rubles ($667 million).

Former director Irina Antonova, who led the Pushkin Museum from 1961 until July, greatly admired Foster's architectural style, which can be seen in major cities from Astana to Frankfurt.

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