

Kandinsky Prize Nominees Displayed at Udarnik Theater

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The Kandinsky Prize has always been broad in scope, seeking to both crown the very best project from Russia's vibrant contemporary art scene and anoint future greatness by shining a spotlight on an up-and-coming artist. An exhibition of nominees in this year's "Project of the Year — Young Artist" and "Project of the Year" competitions, which opened Thursday at the Udarnik cinema, is no less ambitious and allows viewers to track the future trajectory of Russian art.

The exhibition divides the 20 pieces in the main competition and the 17 young artists' projects into broad categories that attempt to capture the issues on artists' minds, the objects in their lives and the memories in their souls. Set up by Italian curator Antonio Geusa, the ground floor is entitled "Reality as Document" while the collection of works in the basement is called the "Memory and Dreams Space." The Udarnik's second-floor cinema hall holds "Bigger than Life," a collection of larger installations with abstract ideas and can also be seen from the theater's balcony, labeled "About Cinema and Not Only."

The exhibition's setting in a former movie theater is fitting given the abundance of film incorporated into the nominees' work. Perhaps following in the example of 2012 Kandinsky prize co-winner AES+F and 2012 young artist awardee Dmitry Venkov, pieces on all four floors and roughly half of the nominees between the two competitions feature video projections. Two of the nominees, Yevgeny Granilshchikov's unlit basement sound installation "Escape" and Taisiya Krugovykh's "Cinema for Migrants," both use rows of real theater chairs to drive home associations with the movies, while others combine video with physical installations.

One project, the young artist Yelena Artemenko's "Comfortable Protest," displays an infomercial advertising a backpack for socially active citizens that can double as a placard or a chair and comes equipped with a balaclava and a first-aid kit. The work combines video with another theme running through the nominees' work — especially on the ground floor — the Russian opposition movement and President Vladimir Putin. Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe's photos in the Project of the Year competition, from his series "Remember about the gas!" see the artist dressed up as both President Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in a conversation between the two.

The Kandinsky Prize, given by the ArtChronika Foundation's jury of international experts and curators, will award the Project of the Year winner 40,000 euros (\$53,000) and the most promising young artist 10,000 euros (\$13,250) at a ceremony in December. The winners and finalists are normally exhibited in major European cities.

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