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Moscow's Only Contemporary Art Fair Arrives at Gostiny Dvor

By Ruth Moore

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This year's Cosmoscow art fair will be held in Gostiny Dvor, a historic former indoor marketplace near Kitai-Gorod. **Cosmoscow**

Russia's only international contemporary art fair opens its doors at Gostiny Dvor on Friday. Now in its fourth year, Cosmoscow is out to prove that contemporary art in Russia's is not only vibrant and creative, but also collectable.

The architecturally domineering 18th-century marketplace — just a stone's throw from Red Square — will showcase the work of more than 100 contemporary artists over the weekend. The aim? To encourage international and local collectors to take an interest in the Russian contemporary art, and to forge stronger bonds between the Russian and international contemporary art markets.

Last year the event — which showcased artwork from 34 international galleries — attracted

14,000 visitors. This year participants include London's Frameless Gallery and the One Gallery in New York.

With only a portion of these visitors intending to buy, Cosmoscow has been careful to position itself as a destination for all art lovers, regardless of the size of their checkbooks. As such, the fair includes a specially curated exhibition of artworks from private collections "Collector's Eye," a children's program and a number of art talks and lectures over the weekend.

"The non-commercial and parallel events are integral parts of our annual programming. They play crucial role in making our guests see the big picture of contemporary art world beyond traditional art market boundaries," said Margarita Pushkina the Founding Director of Cosmoscow, in an interview with The Moscow Times.

Russian artist Svetlana Shuvayeva has been selected as the 2016 Artist of the Year. Her work entitled "Fabric" from the "Crowd Character" series will used as the fair's visual identity over the course of the weekend, while visitors will be able to enjoy a special project commissioned by Cosmoscow.

One of the highlights of the non-commercial program will be the "Off White" charity auction in benefit of the children's charity the Naked Heart Foundation. Supported by Christie's, this years auction will highlight the best photography from emerging artists including Polina Kanis, Andrei Bogush and Erwin Olaf.

The fair will also host a video art program, featuring some of the country's best emerging artists. Visitors can see projects such as Olga Kroytor's eery "Burnt Room, " which explores themes of extinction and decay, and Sasha Pirogova's "The Queue," where fragments of the eponymous novel by Vladimir Sorokin are accompanied by ritual motion within an infinite loop.

Alongside projects at the fair, a substantial parallel program by Cosmoscow includes landmark exhibitions such as a Stephan Balkenhol retrospective at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art and a solo exhibition from Valery Koshlyakov, one of Russia's best-known contemporary artists, at the Museum of Russian Impressionism.

By presenting up-and-coming Russian artists to an international crowd, Cosmoscow hopes to engage in a dialogue between artists, galleries and art lovers from Russia and further afield.

Cosmoscow runs Sept 9-11 at Gostiny Dvor. 4 Ilyinka Ulitsa. Metro Ploshchad Revolyutsii. cosmoscow.com.

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