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Russian Theaters Could Face Fines For 'Offended Feelings'

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Andrei Makhonin / Vedomosti

Russian theaters and museums could soon face fines for failing to "protect visitors' feelings" at controversial exhibitions.

New proposals to protect Russia's "high moral values" could be submitted to Russia's parliament for approval within a few months, Russian tabloid Izvestia reported Monday.

The legislation has already been marked as a secular extension of Russia's existing legislation to "protect the feelings of religious believers."

Designated "social spaces" such as galleries, theaters and exhibition halls would be asked to outline moral "rules of conduct" for guests and artists, Izvestia reported. If an exhibition or performance is deemed to have broken the rules, then those responsible would face a penalty such as a fine.

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The reports follow a series of high-profile protests and scandals in Russia's cultural sphere.

A Moscow exhibition by controversial American photographer Jock Sturges was closed in September after protests from conservative activists.
Members of the nationalist
group "Officers of Russia" blocked the entrance to Sturges's show at The Lumiere Brothers' Center for Photography and accused the artist of
exhibiting child pornography.

A photography exhibition dedicated to the conflict in Ukraine
was also vandalized at
Moscow's Sakharov Center for Human Rights just days later.

Russian film has also attracted controversy. Alexei Uchitel's upcoming movie "Mathilde" faced condemnation from Orthodox activists for its portrayal of Tsar Alexander II's love affair with a ballerina. Cinemas across the country have also complained of state pressure to show state-sponsored movies at the expense of Hollywood blockbusters.

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