

St. Petersburg's Russian Museum Opens 'Postponed' Show of Timur Novikov and the New Academy

July 20, 2023



Russian art critic Igor Dudinsky (R) looks at an art work of Timur Noikov at the 2016 Cosmocosw international contemporary art fair. **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

On Wednesday July 19 several Russian media [reported](#) that the head of the St. Petersburg Russian Museum, Alla Manilova, cancelled a show dedicated to the late artist Timur Novikov's works, which was set to open the next day. The show, which reportedly includes more than 80 works by Novikov and other artists, was fully mounted and ready for the opening. It was set to run from July 20 until September 25.

Alla Manilova, who had been Deputy Minister of Culture, was appointed director of the Russian Museum in April of this year. She replaced Vladimir Gusev, who headed the museum for 35 years.

Oleg Maslov, a professor at the New Academy of Fine Arts that was founded by Novikov in 1989, [told](#) RBC media that the exhibition had been "prohibited" personally by the Museum

director.

On Thursday the Russian Museum press service reported that the exhibition was not cleared to open because it did not meet museum standards. The service cited the lack of glass cases for costumes and the inclusion of only two paintings by Novikov from the Museum's own extensive collection of the artist's works.

The curator of the show, Alexander Borovsky, who heads the New Trends department of the museum, [told Fontanka.ru](#) that "there aren't any political issues here... We've shown Timur hundreds of times — we have, as has the Hermitage, and the Tretyakov Gallery, and the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art... These are just technical issues."

Timur Novikov was born in Leningrad in 1958 and became one of the leaders of the non-official arts movement in the city and country starting in the late 1970s. He founded the New Artists group in 1982 and the New Academy of Fine Arts in 1989. He worked in theater, television, film and the visual arts, and was one of the best-known cultural figures of the era. His neo-academicism celebrated classicism and the human body.

The show includes paintings, sculpture, video-art, computer graphics and fashion.

Borovsky told journalists that the issues preventing the opening of the show could be handled in "one or two days."

At present there is no mention of the show, current or upcoming, on Russian Museum [site](#).

In April 2022 the [Tretyakov Gallery closed](#) a show of works by émigré artist Grisha Bruskin for "technical reasons" less than a month after it opened.

Update July 27, 2023:

A week after it was to open, the show admitted visitors on Wednesday, July 26. There was no official ceremony. Curator Andrei Borovsky, who had explained that there were "technical issues" with the show that needed fixing, [told](#) a correspondent from Fontanka.ru that he had addressed those issues, including the requirement to include works from its own collection. "At the request of the administration I fixed the exhibition, and it's no worse," he said. "We chose the same artists, mostly [using works] from the museum's collection. No one touched [Olga] Tobreluts, or Kostya Goncharov, or Bella Matveyeva. All of these artists are in the exhibition."

But it appears that "revealing" works by those artists had been replaced by less revealing works in the museum's collection. And a textile donkey's genitals were covered, Borovsky said, "to protect us from idiots" who write complaints about anything that they find morally objectionable. "There are two ways to exhibit that work," Borovsky said, "Revealing and concealing. We chose to conceal."

The show will run until September 25. More information can be found in Russian on the museum site [here](#).

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