

Cosmoscow Foundation for Contemporary Art Announces Winners of the First “Curator of the Year” Competition

2026

The Cosmoscow Foundation for Contemporary Art has announced the results of its “Curator of the Year” competition. The new initiative aims to recognize the professional achievements of curators and their contribution to the development of the contemporary art sector. Following the decision of the competition’s Expert Council, all five nominees were named laureates: *Elena Kamenskaya, Ildar Galeev, Yulia Aksenova, Marina Bobyleva, and Nadezhda Plungyan.*

The Cosmoscow Foundation for Contemporary Art was established in 2017 to provide systematic support for, develop, and promote contemporary art in Russia. The “Curator of the Year” competition is part of this mission and will be held annually as part of the Foundation’s “Supporting Artists’ Creative Freedom and the Production of Artworks and Projects” program.

“Curators today are architects of the cultural landscape. They create context, generate new meanings, and serve as a link between artists and audiences, shaping projects as cohesive statements. The curatorial field plays an important role in the dialogue between society and art, building bridges that enable audiences to engage with artworks and artistic ideas,” said Anastasia Ivanova, Director of the Cosmoscow Foundation for Contemporary Art.

The initiative has no age or medium restrictions and is open to professionals with experience in developing projects in a variety of formats, from exhibitions to festivals. The winners were selected by members of the competition’s Expert Council, which includes key figures from the Russian art community: Irina Saminskaya, Head of Projects at the Winzavod Foundation for Contemporary Art; Maya Kowalski, curator, co-founder of Terminal A Contemporary Art Center and the Konturn graphic art fair; Kirill Maevsky, curator, co-founder and Program Director of Smena Center for Contemporary Culture; and Irina Sedykh, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the OMK-Uchastie Charitable Foundation and founder of Vyksa Festival.

“At a time of an extreme shortage, if not complete absence, of professional awards in contemporary art, I am delighted to see any initiative aimed at recognizing the efforts of those who make a significant contribution to our understanding of contemporary artistic practices in Russia. These sentiments are especially relevant when it comes to curators — key figures within the art system who shape the way we, as viewers, interact with art, discuss it, and understand it. We are confident that the recipients of the Cosmoscow Foundation’s inaugural ‘Curator of the Year’ award embody a wide range of thoughtful, engaging, and visually compelling approaches to presenting art, asserting their vision as an important component of the audience experience,” said Alexey Maslyayev, curator at the Cosmoscow Foundation for Contemporary Art.

Winners of the 2026 “Curator of the Year” competition:

- Elena Kamenskaya — PhD in Art History, author of research on the history of 20th-century culture and art and a specialist in the work of Russian émigré artists. Her projects have been presented at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, the VMS Museum in Vyksa, and other institutions.
- Ildar Galeev — curator, art historian, art critic, publisher, and collector of paintings. He specializes in Russian art of the first half of the 20th century, including the “Leningrad School,” the work of Nikolai Fechin, the “Kazan avant-garde” of the 1910s–1920s, and Central Asian art of the 1920s–1950s. He has authored and edited more than 40 publications on artists and photographers.
- Yulia Aksenova — in 2021, she received the Innovation Award in the “Project of the Year” category for the exhibition Laboratory of the Future. Kinetic Art in Russia. Her selected curatorial projects have been presented at Performa in New York, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, the State Tretyakov Gallery, Manege Central Exhibition Hall, the Museum of Moscow, and other institutions.
- Marina Bobyleva — curator, including of the artistic residency program at GES-2 House of Culture, and educator. She has curated numerous exhibitions and projects at Triumph Gallery, as well as museums and exhibition venues in cities across Russia. Her selected projects include exhibitions at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, the State Tretyakov Gallery, the Museum of Moscow, the Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, and other institutions.
- Nadezhda Plungyan — PhD in Art History, independent curator, and recipient of the Andrei Bely Prize in the “Humanities Research” category. Plungyan is the author of numerous academic publications and has developed projects at the Museum of Russian Impressionism, the Museum of Moscow, and other institutions.

The winners of the competition received grants from the Foundation in support of their professional activities.

The Cosmoscow Foundation plans to hold the initiative annually. In the future, the format and competition mechanism will evolve: the Expert Council will select one laureate from a shortlist put forward for a public vote.

Cosmoscow Foundation for Contemporary Art

The Cosmoscow Foundation was established in 2017 as a natural continuation of the nonprofit activities of the Cosmoscow International Contemporary Art Fair. Its main goal is to provide systematic support for contemporary art in Russia, support emerging artists, and promote the development of philanthropy in the country. The Foundation operates across three key areas: supporting artists' creative freedom, advancing education in contemporary art, and expanding museum collections.

<https://foundation.cosmoscow.com/>

Foundation initiatives:

Artist of the Year

The initiative aims to support artists' creative freedom. Experts invited to join the selection council nominate outstanding artists, from whom the Cosmoscw Foundation's Board of Trustees selects a winner. The winner is given the opportunity to develop a new project and present it at the fair to a broad audience. The 2025 "Artist of the Year" was the art group PROVMYZA.

Museum of the Year

The program focuses on collaboration with museum institutions. The Cosmoscw Foundation acquires works by contemporary Russian artists and donates them to the "Museum of the Year," while also supporting the reorganization and modernization of existing collections and the restoration of artworks. The nominated museum traditionally presents a special project at the fair.

The 2025 "Museum of the Year" was the Ploshchad Mira Museum Center.

Institution of the Year

"Institution of the Year" is an annual Cosmoscw Foundation program. The "Institution of the Year" is selected through a competition, after which the Cosmoscw Foundation funds the institution's art project for presentation at the fair.

"Collector of the Year"

The initiative aims to promote collecting as a means of developing Russia's contemporary art sector, while creating opportunities and favorable conditions for recognizing individual contributions to the development of the art market.

The 2025 "Collector of the Year" was Natalia Opaleva.