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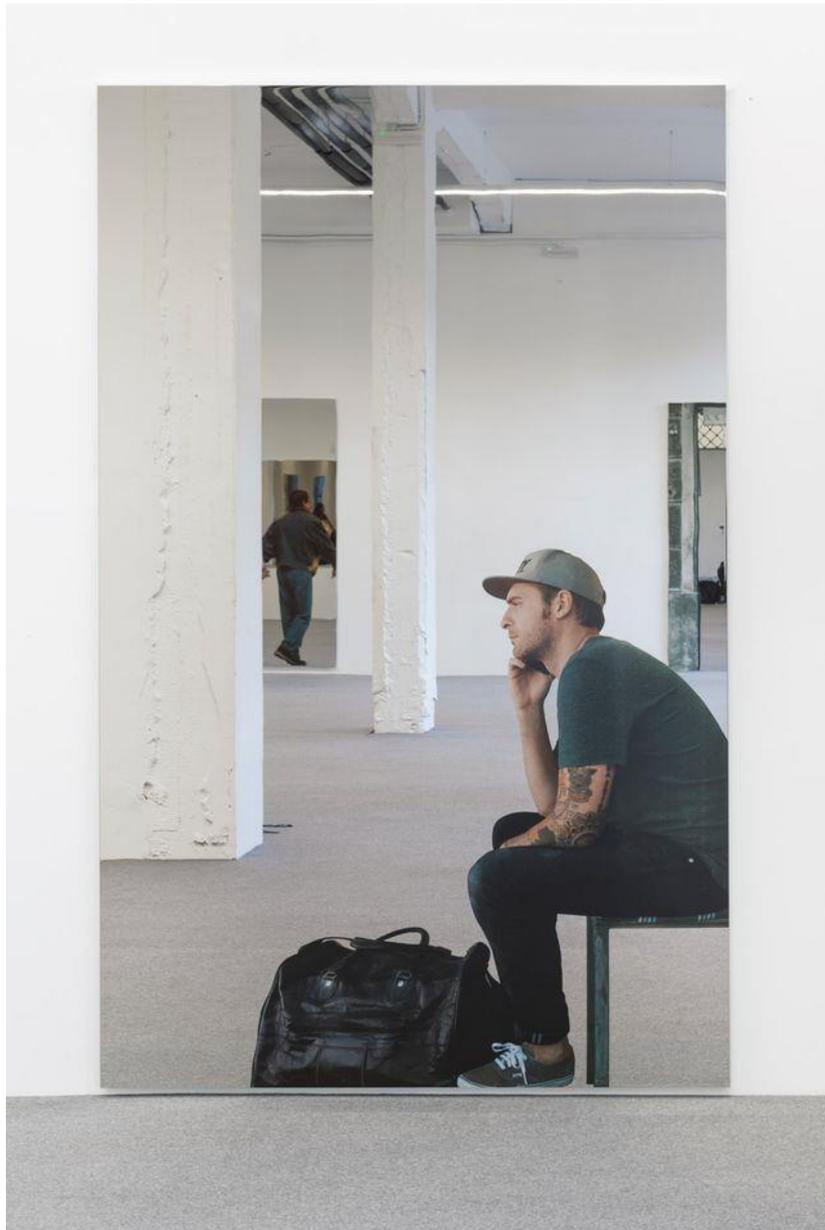
THE ART NEWSPAPER

Russia's only international art fair tackles tricky topics

Cosmoscow's public programme will explore 'the crisis of faith in expertise' in the art market

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Michelangelo Pistoletto's Smartphone – uomo seduto che telefona (2018) Giorgio Persano Gallery

Despite the Kremlin warning of foreign influence undermining Russia in response to continuing free election protests in Moscow, Cosmocosw, Russia's only international art fair, is pursuing an increasingly cosmopolitan profile and taking on tricky topics in its public programme. The theme is "Who knows better—the problematics of expertise in the art market".

Simon Rees, formerly the director of Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in his native New Zealand, has been appointed the fair's art director while the writer and former senior curator at Deutsche Bank, Alistair Hicks, has joined its advisory board. Such ambassadors, says Margarita Pushkina, the fair's founder, will help to build more presence for Cosmocosw on the international art scene.

"I think that the 'Global North', ie the developed world that includes Russia, is suffering a crisis of faith in expertise – thanks largely to the rise of the internet and the empowerment of social media," he says. "Younger people might not want to forgo their yoga class and dress up and go to a cocktail event to make art small talk as a prelude to buying a photograph. They'd be happier buying on their handheld device at midnight." And in that world, he asks, what is the role of the museum director, curator, art historian or philosopher?

This year's Cosmospow will feature a focus on seminal artists of the 1960s to 80s, including Michelangelo Pistoletto, shown by Giorgio Persano from Turin, and avant-garde artists of the Eastern bloc, including Dmitry Prigov, Julije Knifer and Mangelos, brought by Galerie Frank Elbaz from Paris. Meanwhile, Tallinn's Temnikova & Kasela will highlight Kris Lemsalu, who is representing Estonia at the Venice Biennale.

Unusually, Cosmospow releases revenue figures and, according to research conducted by the analysts InArt, sales at the fair in 2018 totalled €1.3m, up 6% from 2017, with 90% of galleries revealing their sales figures, up from 75% in 2017.