

Culture

Reinventing art

By **Kristina Aleksandrova**
 The St. Petersburg Times

More than 100 artists from 22 countries will exhibit their work at the Manezh Central Exhibition Hall from Saturday for the 18th Festival of Experimental Art.

This time, the organizers have decided to focus visitors' attention on video art.

"Every year we try to focus on one specific type of art, because we want to demonstrate global trends in art," said Larisa Skobkina, the festival's curator.

"For example, we have already held festivals dedicated to installations and photography. Today, video art is extremely popular; it features in all the leading exhibitions and festivals of modern art. Some artists are even abandoning traditional art forms and starting to express themselves using video," she said.

Four video artists from Italy will show their films. Torino video festival prize-winner Bena Gayan Maris will show his philosophical film "The Purpose," Annamaria Pugliese will present "How far do you see?" and Alberto Magrin will show his "Concert."

The captivating video "The Mirror" by fellow Italian artist Francesca Fini is an unusual take on "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and the Greek myth about Narcissus. The heroine is an undressed woman who finds a mirror ball. She admires herself in the looking glass. While she is playing, her body becomes covered with small pieces of glass, until finally she dies.

Another video by the same artist is "Cry me." Described by Fini as "a radiography of the soul," it was performed by the artist herself. She holds a screen in front of herself, and viewers see an animation showing the author's alter-ego.

"Not everybody will understand this form of art, because viewers have to be prepared to interpret it," said Skobkina. "Of course, these films will seem strange to some visitors. But our objective is to teach people to appreciate modern art."

According to Skobkina, there is a lamentable lack of homegrown talent using the medium of video art.

"Unfortunately, video art isn't popular in our country at the moment. Only one artist from Russia will be exhibited," she said.

The organizers have prepared a broad performance program. The Oslo artist Ane Lan depicts female suffering in his work "Pacto feminium" ("The art of suffering,") which consists of seven photos. Lan, dressed as a woman, shows difficult situations every woman can face: rape, prostitution, mental illness, marriage or the loss of a child. Lan will also show an unusual musical performance titled "Sirkel," accompanied by musicians.

The main aim of performance art is to drag the spectator into the action and liberate the audience. Monica Kokh's dance project "VIS-A-VIS" was launched at the festival in 2008 and has already shown its program in the U.K., Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia and Hungary. This year, master classes in dance have been organized, which the artists refer to as "open rehearsals." The small hall of the Manezh will also host famous dancers from Switzerland, Italy and Finland as well as from St. Petersburg, who will hold a series of master classes.

St. Petersburg dancer Lyutsiya Khabibullina will give visitors the chance to take part in her interactive audiovisual performance-installation "Interpolation."

In contrast to the video artists, there will be many performers and dancers from Russia. Marina Konovalova will "write letters" to Chekhov during her dance "Three Sisters 120 Years Later," and three Russian theaters: Plantation, Forest House and Performance Laboratory have prepared a joint appearance.

The fact that it is a festival of experimental art does not mean that traditional art forms are excluded. The exhibition will comprise a large number of graphic works, paintings and installations by artists from Turkey, Germany, France, Iraq, Finland, Canada and other countries.

The Festival of Experimental Art runs from Saturday through Aug. 16 at the Manezh Central Exhibition Hall,

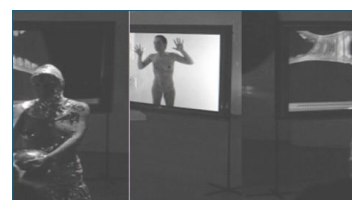
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For The St. Petersburg Times

Artists from all over the world are exhibiting their work at the Manezh exhibition hall from this weekend as part of the 18th Festival of Experimental Art. The art on display will range from dance installations to graphic works.



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Francesca Fini's video "The Mirror" reflects the theme of "The Picture of Dorian Gray."



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A still from Alberto Magrin's "Concert."