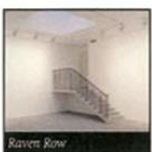


Two new non-profit spaces for London

Private foundations say recession is the perfect time to launch their pioneering projects

RAVEN ROW: CHAMPIONING THE INTERNATIONAL AND THE OVERLOOKED



As speculation mounts about gallery closures and reduced funding across the art world, it is rare and somewhat comforting to hear of a

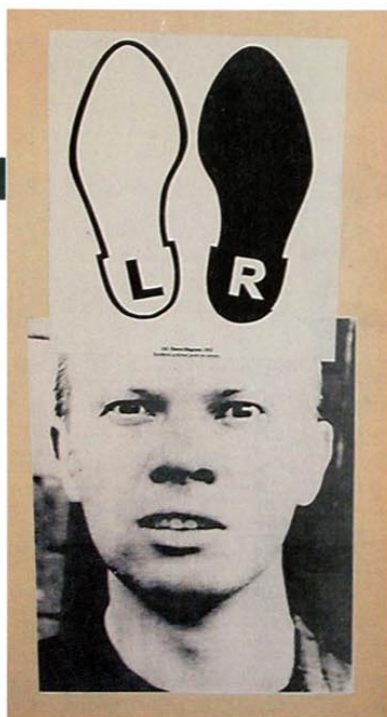
new contemporary art space opening with a 20-year plan. But that's exactly what Alex Sainsbury, son of politician and philanthropist Sir Tim Sainsbury, is planning for Raven Row, a new not-for-profit space in London's East End.

Privately funded, the gallery shows contemporary artists who have somehow escaped London's attention. "I'd like to work with artists whose work would be kind of teased out of a commercial gallery context," says Sainsbury. "I think the emphasis is clearly going to be on a lot of international artists who are not seen here." Currently on show is an exhibition of work by Ray Johnson, an unsung American Pop artist and mail art pioneer who died in 1995. This is followed in May with an installation by Thomas Bayrle.

Housed in two 18th-century Huguenot silk shops that had been standing empty for 10 years, the whole renovation cost £1.8m. Despite the hefty price tag, Sainsbury is confident that it is the right time to open a gallery space in London. "It's potentially a very fruitful time to operate a non-profit space," he says. "A recession is often a time of reflection in the art world – a bit of navel gazing – and perhaps the non-profit sector is the best to work with."

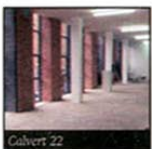
Sainsbury suggests that not having to answer to external funding agencies will allow Raven Row to remain flexible in its projects. "It could behave like a non-profit space which is a very small political space," he says, "or a German kunstverein, which is a curated medium-sized space, or a kunsthalle with museum-style exhibitions. It can vary its programmes to work with all those models." Whatever form Raven Row takes in the future, Sainsbury says it must stand out from the commercial gallery crowd. "It must do something distinctive to justify itself," he says.

● Ray Johnson, Raven Row, London, until 10 May, www.ravenrow.org



Ray Johnson's 1992 collage *Untitled (Long-Dance Diagram with Ray Johnson)*

CALVERT 22: BRINGING THE LATEST IN RUSSIAN AND EASTERN EUROPEAN ART TO LONDON



The London art world's romance with Russia continues to blossom this spring with the opening of Calvert 22, the first not-for-profit

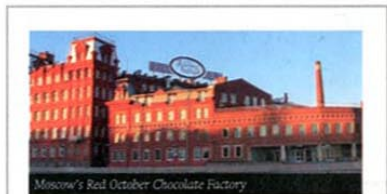
foundation specialising in Russian and central and eastern European art to hit the capital. Based in Shoreditch, East London, it is the brainchild of Russian art collector and economist Nonna Materkova, who has lived in London since 1999. "The idea came after I had lived here long enough to recognise that many people still have this scary image of Russia as a big bear," says Materkova. "Russia is not perfect, but there is a younger generation of very talented Russian people doing wonderful things in art."

The other preconception Materkova hopes to tackle is that of the wealthy but tasteless

collector. "There is a perception of a new breed of collector, who likes dazzling and tasteless things and they are coming and buying everything without understanding," she says. "But that is a very small part of Russia. There is a bigger level of people who are much more serious about collecting."

Materkova has a strong team behind her, with Jane Neal, a specialist in Romanian art, overseeing the curatorial programme and Joseph Backstein, organiser of the second Moscow Biennale, also on board. During the first year a mixture of established and emerging Russian artists will be presented. First up is *Past Future Perfect*, curated by David Thorp, which will include works by Alexander Brodsky, Leonid Tishkov and Stanislav Volyaslovsky. "Eventually we would like to broaden the programme to include eastern and central European art," says Neal, "but for this year we will establish the brand by showing Russian art."

● *Past Future Perfect*, Calvert 22, London, 13 May–16 Jun, www.calvert22.com



Moscow's Red October Chocolate Factory

Meanwhile, in Moscow

British show opens collector's space

Collector Maria Baibakova has opened a new space for contemporary art in Moscow's historic Red October Chocolate Factory. The first show at Baibakov Art Projects is *Natural Wonders*, featuring 20 London-based artists including Ryan Gander and Idris Khan. Baibakova says she wants to develop a local appetite for contemporary art. "The Russian public is extremely well-educated and used to going to museums," Baibakova says, "but they don't engage with contemporary art. For them art is either valid or not valid and they have rejected contemporary art as not valid. During the Soviet era, the goal was to relay the message of communism, and the most effective way to do that was through monumental sculpture or realist painting, so the message would be immediately understood. Communists didn't want people to think for themselves, but conceptual work is always up for interpretation. The viewer has the chance to bring his or her perspective to the work."

● www.baibakovartprojects.com

Leonid Tishkov's *The Knitting* (2002), detail

