



continent, which seek to produce high-quality exhibits of cutting-edge art in museum-standard spaces. 'We also put a lot of work into the publications, as these are all that survives of the exhibitions,' she adds.

As with Materkova, de Weck's enthusiasm for her project is infectious. A curator by training, she describes the circumstances that led to her running her own space as 'a series of lucky incidents'.

'It is a way for my family and me to give something back, so, yes, it is motivated by a certain amount of idealism, but also by professionalism,' she says. 'But, ultimately, if people realised how much fun it is to get up in the morning and do what I do, they would never think of opening a commercial gallery.'

Many not-for-profit galleries have benefitted from the boom years of the past decade, which have resulted in individuals amassing enough money to fund their own projects. But, as boom turns to bust, will these galleries be able to survive on individual largesse, fundraising and the occasional government or lottery grant? More interestingly, what role are they likely to play?

One argument is that, as commercial galleries tighten their purse strings and, for now, stop taking punts on

unproven artists, not-for-profit galleries will provide an increasingly important platform for emerging talent. Some will be introducing graduates from art schools, others – as is the case with both Calvert 22 and Parasol unit – will be introducing foreign artists to British audiences for the first time.

De Weck believes that the recession – traditionally a time of heightened creativity – will give not-for-profit galleries the opportunity to provide a vehicle for the artists who are not being snapped up by commercial galleries, while, at the same time, giving them a chance of attracting the best staff.

She says: 'Ultimately, I think that the downturn will be positive for not-for-profit galleries. In the boom-time, the commercial galleries had lots of financial possibilities and were able to offer higher salaries. It will now become easier for the non-commercial foundations to compete for staff.'

The legions of artists who would otherwise have no means of reaching a wider audience will certainly be hoping that not-for-profit galleries are a good deal longer-lasting than Michelangelo's snowman.

calvert22.com; parasol-unit.org ♣



Top Nonna Materkova, founder of Calvert 22. Above 'Do you need a doctor?' by Alexander Tinei, from Calvert 22's summer exhibition