



# ART ANGELS

*Russian contemporary art is attracting the attention of a group of brilliant and beautiful young women collectors. As RORY ROSS discovers, they are also both passionate and increasingly expert*

NONNA MATERKOVA SMILES, shakes her glamorous blonde head and says: 'Russians like a challenge,' adding cryptically: 'If they don't have challenges, they create them themselves.' With her furs, heels, jewellery and cheekbones, Materkova (42) looks like she could pose a considerable challenge to anyone trying to get the better of her. She looks like she has stepped off a film set located in snowy, romantic St Petersburg where gallant cavalry officers twirl fiery countesses round candlelit ballrooms. Or off a catwalk or oligarch's superyacht or private jet. But these days gallerists come in many glamorous guises. In fact, Materkova is a brilliant economist and successful financier from St Petersburg, who was talking to me while sitting incongruously in a student café in Shoreditch, in insalubrious east London, talking about her present challenge, Calvert 22, her not-for-profit contemporary art gallery dedicated to Russian and east European contemporary art. Materkova is a new entrant to skies that are becoming