



Creating Contemporary Art Museums in the Post-Soviet Space

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The recent years have seen a veritable boom in post-Soviet museum restructuring, renovations, additions, master-plans, new interior designs, architectural concepts and competitions that meet advanced international standards. From Riga to Vilnius, from Moscow to St. Petersburg, post-Soviet art museums are developed by renowned international architects (e.g. Rem Koolhaas, Lord Norman Foster, Frank O. Gehry, Zaha Hadid). Slogans such as PermBao – an acronym of the Ural capital Perm and Bilbao – signal the increasing significance museum developers and political planners are attributing to museum buildings as a catalyst for urban renewal in a broader context. In 2010, United Russia, Russia's ruling party, adopted the cultural policy declaration "Cultural alliance" in an attempt to foster sustainable contemporary art and museum structures in major cities throughout the Russian Federation.

The project examines the complex interrelationship of art, economic capital and political clout in the post-Soviet states. The topical focus is on the process of institutionalizing contemporary art in already existing and in newly created museums, in galleries and new art venues as well as on transforming museums into contemporary, internationally competitive art institutions. It will comprise research on patrons and politicians who are backing contemporary art – be it as members of the federal, regional or local cultural bureaucracy, as part of the culturally active members of the new economic elite or as individual proponents. Chronologically, the period of 1991-2011 will be covered, including an overview of the fundamental measures laid earlier during perestroika. Geographically, it will focus on the Russian Federation, with special consideration of the general post-Soviet development.

The proposal is conceived as a follow-up project to Post-Soviet Art Museums in the Era of Globalization, finished in 2011 and funded by FWF. This preceding study analyzed the transformation of post-Soviet museums with the end of Communism, covering a broad ge-

ographical range (Baltic States, Ukraine, and Russia). It resulted in a major conference and publication output – covering museological changes (such as the re-integration of once tabooed avant-garde, modern, non-conformist and religious art), the varying regional development as well as the general restructuring of art museums.

By focusing on the contemporary art museum development, the projected study will conquer new terrain. It will draw on rare empirical data (much of it in Russian) and a broad comparative framework (partly accumulated during the previous study). It will combine approaches of various disciplines – museum and cultural studies, theories of distinction – and contribute to the knowledge of international research focuses such as Global Art + Museums, ZKM Karlsruhe. The results will be discussed in academic exchange and made available as a cross-disciplinary comprehensive study, published according to Open-Access-requirements.

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