



Clockwise from far left: Elena Baturina, founder of the Be Open foundation; designs by this year's entrants Jonathan Michie, Sophie Mingoia and Harry Booth

# DESIGNING THE FUTURE

How a new art and design venture hopes to identify and encourage the creative leaders of tomorrow

**E**lena Baturina, an entrepreneur, philanthropist and the only female billionaire of Russian origin, has teamed up with the Society of British & International Design (SBID) to start a £35,000 competition for UK art and design graduates. Baturina is the founder of the Be Open foundation, a social and cultural enterprise that aims to bridge the gap between today's experts in the worlds of art, design and architecture, and the young leaders of tomorrow.

The new Designed for Business competition is open to UK university students in their final year. Entries from the five categories – Interior Design, Interior Decoration, Fashion, Art & Design, and Product Design – closed at the end of August and now judges, including trustee of the Design Museum Sebastian Conran; international managing director of Christie's Education Jane Hay; and programme director at Central St Martins Hywel Davies, will select the winners. One student from each category will receive a prize of £1,000, while the overall winner will be handed a cheque for £30,000.

"When I was president of the construction company Inteco, I was lucky enough to work with architects such as Ricardo Bofill, Hadi Teherani and Norman Foster," says Baturina. "Working with people who have architecture and design at the very core of their lives is a great inspiration. No matter how different their ideas, there is always the same constructive force behind them, an urge for 'better', for 'growth', for pushing the definition of 'good' a little further.

"I strongly believe in the potential of the young, creative generation and their ability to look at the world with fresh eyes to find solutions no one has found before. That is why it's vital to give them all the support they need to bring their ideas to fruition. The aim is not to create material objects or simply to increase the number of members, but to support, publicise and help realise ideas that will change the world for the better.

"I grew up in a Moscow family that was far from rich, but our neighbours, colleagues and friends all supported each other, and I grew up understanding that mutual respect and willingness to help each other whenever possible are essential to strengthen communities, society and nations as a whole."

Baturina is a trustee of The Mayor's Fund for London, the official social mobility charity of City Hall that works to empower young Londoners with skills and opportunities, and is vice president of Maggie's, the UK charity that offers free, practical, emotional and social support to people with cancer.

The self-made businesswoman, now worth \$1.2bn, sold her stake in Russian construction giant Inteco after two decades at the helm. Her commercial interests now encompass hotels in Ireland, the Czech Republic and Russia, renewable energy interests in Italy, Greece and Cyprus, a construction company in Germany, and commercial and residential property in the EU, the US, Kazakhstan and Russia.

● To learn more about the Be Open foundation and the Designed For Business award, go to [beopenfuture.com](http://beopenfuture.com)