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## Billionairess Elena Baturina Intends to Showcase Mediterranean Art in Cyprus



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### [Taarek Refaat](#)

In 2023, [BE OPEN Art](#) launches a new format of regional competition to support emerging artists worldwide. BE OPEN Regional Art is designed to support those whose art best represents. Artists get selected by BE OPEN expert community team to represent the artistic tradition of a certain region, their cultural and ethnic identities, and will be offered support and greater visibility.

Next year, Cyprus may host an exciting inaugural art exhibition organised by an international humanitarian initiative [BE OPEN](#). Its founder and ideologist Elena Baturina, a successful businessperson and investor by trade, talked to us about the new art programme as well the reasons and aspirations behind her philanthropic initiatives in general.

**- Art exhibitions tend to be one of people's most favourite cultural events. What sort of art should we expect to be seeing?**

An actual art exhibition is something we have not been able to hold for quite some time – because of COVID and busy sustainability agenda that BE OPEN has been occupied with for the last four years, so we are very excited about this opportunity as well.

This exhibition will become a culmination of the first three-months long stage of our new arts programme – BE OPEN Regional Art. It is a competition for emerging artists, aimed to support those whose art best represents their regional, cultural and ethnic identities.

**- How will the decision be made, what art goes into the exhibition?**

Sure, the regional selection of artists and their artwork will be performed by the team of experts that curate BE OPEN Art, our online art gallery. With the beginning of year 2023, they will start selecting those of the young artists who best represent the artistic tradition of a certain region. For our first stage, we will focus on the Eastern Mediterranean region that includes such countries as Cyprus, Turkey, the Greek Dodecanese islands, and the countries of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Egypt.

**- How many stages will there be in the programme overall?**

We intend to run the programme for two years - each regional stage lasts 3 months; therefore we will be able to cover 8 regions, with a winner named for each of them. After this one, the focus of the competition will move to the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Central Africa at the end of the year.



**- What perks and prizes should the selected artists and the winner in particular expect from you?**

The regional winners will be awarded a money prize of EUR500, and will be celebrated publicly and in media. All the participating artists will be featured in BE OPEN Art online gallery, of course. Moreover, an art exhibition is a perfect way to showcase their talent to the wide public – it will help artists gain visibility, and provide a platform for them to speak to the media and potential patrons.

**- Can you explain what BE OPEN Art is, and why it was set up?**

BE OPEN Art is an online gallery of contemporary art created with the ambition to provide emerging artists around the globe with an opportunity to showcase their work to the world of art professionals and collectors. BE OPEN Art especially welcomes authors who do not have their own resources, patronage and promotional opportunities: graduates, self-taught artists, artists with a deprived background.

Every month our expert team selects 20 new artists for the gallery, and then using online voting we name the Artist of the Month and the Artist of the Year and award the latter with a money prize.

**- Is there a particular focus in the art that you promote with your gallery?**

First and foremost, BE OPEN Art selects artists at an early stage of their career and those who emphasize social consciousness, philosophical meaning and the aesthetical solutions for the wrongs of the contemporary world, such as inequality, lack of diversity, environmental issues, and consumerism. In a way, the project sees its mission in looking for the new influencers in the art scene, and invites everyone to contribute to this process.

**- In the age of globalisation, why do you think it is important to support cultural identities?**

While selections are done for BE OPEN Art, we communicate with hundreds of emerging artists globally, and discuss their aspirations and the difficulties they have to overcome to actually make their passion for creativity their profession. We see great interest in the art market in unique cultural traditions and visual representation of regional identities. Yet, it has also become obvious that in some regions gaining visibility for a young artist may be a much harder task than in the others.

That is why BE OPEN will focus on areas with less developed art market, to support those artists. BE OPEN Art will facilitate them in getting deserved attention and an opportunity to have their say in the art and therefore affect lives of people who appreciate it.

**- Why is supporting emerging talent so important for your foundation?**

The whole ethos of BE OPEN consists in promoting creativity and freedom of thought in all areas of people's lives. Creative thinking is what has allowed us to evolve technically and scientifically, and move to a more humane, understanding and diversity embracing society. I believe that creative expression through arts and design is a great value and inspiration for all of us.

**- Are art exhibitions an indispensable part of your own cultural life?**

I miss public events, I admit. Being able to discuss things you love with other people directly, see their reaction to art, share impressions and emotions it evokes in us – that is precious. We are exploring the possibility of running our inaugural art exhibition in Cyprus in particular, as I am personally very attached to the island and its people, and its location is perfect for representing the Eastern Mediterranean.

**- Will you be willing to involve any local organisations in the project?**

Sure. We have first addressed the Presidential office and the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to present our project and the exhibition scheduled for the 2nd quarter of the year, and we are totally open to discussing the best ways of enriching Cyprus's cultural agenda.