PRESS RELEASE

RUSSIAN ARCHITECT SERGEY KUZNETSOV WINS THE 2026 EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE

Former Chief Architect for the City of Moscow, Artist, and Urban Planner is Celebrated and Awarded for his Visionary Accomplishments with "Europe's Highest Prize in Architecture" at "The City and the World" Athens Symposium and gala dinner adjacent to the Acropolis this September 18.

The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies have named Sergey Kuznetsov, co-founder of the high-profile Moscow office of SPEECH and former Chief Architect for the City of Moscow as the 2026 Laureate of Europe's highest award and distinction for his artful endeavor in shaping modern urban design, large-scale public spaces, private commissions, and building standards in the City of Moscow.

This year's European Prize for Architecture has been bestowed to the 49-year-old architect, artist, theorist, and urban planner who epitomizes the revival of a more socially engaged architecture.

From 2006-2012, he served as a pioneering partner in SPEECH Tchoban & Kuznetsov, along with Sergei Tchoban and then as City Architect of Moscow from 2012 to 2026, designing two decades of outstanding, award-winning buildings and urban planning projects in Moscow and surrounding cities in the Russian Federation.

He resigned as Moscow's Chief Architect in April of 2026.

Currently, he works as Architect of the Future at VEB.RF and as a Managing Partner at Strelka KB—a major Russian strategic planning and consulting firm specializing in spatial urban development, city economics, and architectural master planning.

"It was his work at SPEECH," states Christian Narkiewicz-Laine, architecture critic and president/CEO of The Chicago Athenaeum, "that launched him into the vanguard of contemporary Russian architecture and won critical acclaim for prominent projects that are formed by emotional intelligence, informed by empathy for the human experience, and calibrated to shape how architecture is felt over time."

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"At SPEECH and as Moscow's Chief Architect, he has undertaken projects of different scales that span from public spaces, cultural and educational institutions, transport infrastructure, sports facilities, large-scale urban developments, and high-rise architecture."

"Throughout, he understands materials and construction, but also the importance of poetry and the power of architecture to communicate on many different levels, demonstrating a consistent interest in combining technological innovation, expressive architectural form, and the human experience of the city."

"Mr. Kuznetsov is one of those rare architectural practitioners who lives, works, and breathes as a visionary architect, artist, and urbanist, demonstrating the highest calibre of creative genius."

"His projects have a remarkable sense of wonder and revelation; he fully understands the innovative way of creating, not just the end-product of a typical building or project, but one of great architecture," Mr. Narkiewicz-Laine continues.

And many great examples in his career have followed.

Together with Mr. Tchoban, also a Laureate of The European Prize for Architecture in 2018, Mr. Kuznetsov worked as a team with Igor Chlenov at SPEECH on the Residential Building Within the Sadovye Kvartaly Complex (2014) in Moscow.

The "Sadovye Kvartaly" (Garden Quarters) residential complex is organically integrated into the urban fabric of Moscow's historic Khamovniki District; four residential blocks are situated along the banks of a restored pond. A preserved brick industrial building designed by architect R. Klein—featuring five-meter-high windows framed by white surrounds—dictated the primary construction material: brick, complemented by glass and light-colored stone. The residential building was designed with a distinctive folded façade, offering a modern interpretation of the use of brick, a traditional material.

For the Luzhniki Grand Sports Arena Reconstruction (2017) in Moscow with Sergei Tchoban and Igor Chlenov of SPEECH, Mr. Kuznetsov prepared the city's principal stadium for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, while preserving its historic architectural envelope.

The project combined the conservation of the stadium's recognizable exterior, originally designed by Aleksandr Vlasov, Igor Rozhkin, Nikolai Ullas, and Andrey Khryakov (1955-1956), with a completely renewed interior, infrastructure, and spectator experience. The 1950s façade wall was retained as well, due to its architectural value, and was later reconnected to the new building.

Likewise, the Palace of Water Sports (2012) in Kazan, Russia by Sergey Kuznetsov and Sergei Tchoban at SPEECH features a wave-like dynamic wooden roof and a façade made of blue glass and brushed stainless steel. Three hinges of laminated wood arcs from a pair of curved crossbars are used as bearing elements here, forming a structure resembling lancet arches traditional in Tartar architecture.

Apertures between wooden frames on the façade, looking onto the river, the butts of the building and 5-story vertical openings in the main façade are filled with stained-glass windows. In addition to glass, stainless steel panels, processed by grinding, were used in the façades. This geometric design of alternating matte and glossy stripes is reminiscent of ripples of waves on the surface of water.

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The Actor Galaxy Multifunctional Complex (2014) in Sochi, Russia by Sergey Kuznetsov with Sergey Tchoban, Igor Chlenov, Pavel Shaburov, Anna Mashkova, Vyacheslav Kazul at SPEECH is a 26-story complex, situated on the grounds of the "Actor" sanatorium—a facility renowned during the Soviet era—occupying the site's upper terrace.

The significant change in elevation directly influenced the building's architectural composition: its floor plan resembles an elongated droplet that appears to "trickle" down the slope.

The dynamism established by the plan extends to the complex's silhouette; tapering toward the sea, "Actor Galaxy" steps down in height at each level, entering the city skyline in a striking arc.

An unquestionable masterpiece from this same collaboration is the Museum for Architectural Drawing (2013) in Berlin, Germany by Sergey Kuznetsov and Sergei Tchoban at SPEECH for the Tchoban Foundation Museum für Architekturzeichnung.

A powerful structure from a distance, it is remarkably humane and inviting.

The building is a four-story solid corpus with a glass floor stacked on top. The profile of the four floors is reminiscent of casually piled-up blocks. Its closed surface is detailed with strong magnified fragments of architectonic sketches in relief form. The line drawings (original drawings by Pietro Gonzaga and Angelo Toselli were used) and the color of the cast concrete refer to the purpose of the building as a place for exhibiting architectural drawings.

The façades of the four lower blocks are made of concrete and its surfaces are covered with relief drawings with architectural motives, repeating on every level and overlapping each other as sheets of paper. This artistic touch is supposed to emphasize the function and contents of the exposition in the Museum architectural look.

To emphasize the cubic shape of the building, the façade is illuminated by only two spotlights mounted in the ground. Through the effect of the grazing light, the architectural reliefs become particularly visible at night. An inner circumferential band of light illuminates the glass floor on top of the museum. The thematic approach of continuous light lines is represented in all parts of the museum.

A later project completed by Mr. Kuznetsov with SPEECH includes: The Tolmachevo Airport Terminal C (2023), Novosibirsk, Russia, which is organized around a continuous glazed envelope and a dramatic structural interior with large-scale columns and atriums.

In addition to his work as an architect, his work as a skilled artist and draftsman has been an integral part of Mr. Kuznetsov's architectural practice; he has produced sketches that have a Piranesi-like dizzying effect and an otherworldly representation of reality.

In Research Cluster of Bauman Moscow State Technical University (2024, developed by Sergey Kuznetsov in cooperation with the TPO Pride team) and Leningradsky Railway Station (2026, along with Ivan Grekov, Ildar Ibragimov and Alexey Kuznetsov, with Maxim Kozlov responsible for the mosaics), his "liberal" approach—a kind of Rococo flamboyance—provides a fertile imagination for some extraordinary post-Romantic fantasy ruins.

His artistic work is based primarily on watercolor and architectural sketching and is closely connected with his observation of cities, landscapes, and buildings.

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"Ultimately," states Mr. Narkiewicz-Laine, "Mr. Kuznetsov possesses the extraordinary promise of a most golden future."

Each year, The European Prize for Architecture is awarded jointly by The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies and The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design to architects who have made a commitment to forward the principles of European humanism and the art of architecture.

The European Prize for Architecture is not a "lifetime of achievement award," but rather serves as an impetus to support new ideas, to encourage and foster more challenge-making and forward-thinking about buildings and the environment, and to prompt the pushing of the envelope to obtain an even greater, more profound result.

The Prize also honors the commitment and achievements of the best European architects who have determined a more critical, intellectual, and artistic approach to the design of buildings and cities.

Previous Laureates include: Bjarke Ingels (Denmark), Graft Architects (Germany), TYIN Architects (Norway), Marco Casagrande (Finland), Alessandro Mendini (Italy), Santiago Calatrava (Spain/Switzerland), LAVA Laboratory for Visionary Architecture (Germany), Manuelle Gautrand (France), Sergei Tchoban (Russia/Germany), Henning Larsen Architects (Denmark), Wolfgang Tschapeller (Austria), Francine Houben and Dick van Gameren of the Dutch firm Mecanoo (The Netherlands), Christoph Ingenhoven (Germany), Ayse Mücella Yapici, Tayfun Kahraman and Can Atalay–three imprisoned Turkish architects and champions of human rights, and querkraft architektur (Austria).

Last year, the European Prize for Architecture was given jointly to Patrik Schumacher of Zaha Hadid Architects (Germany/United Kingdom) and Suad Amiry (Palestine).

Born in Moscow in 1977, Sergey Kuznetsov attended secondary school No. 329 and then studied at Moscow Architectural Institute (MARCHI), Department of Residential and Public Buildings, where he got a Diploma in Architecture in 2001 specializing in residential and public buildings.

In 2000, he became partner and general director of architectural studio SLK-Proekt until 2006.

From 2006 to 2012 he was the managing partner of the architectural association SPEECH Tchoban & Kuznetsov in Moscow—the firm he co-founded together with Sergei Tchoban.

In 2010, he participated in the project Russia Factory for the exhibition of the Russian pavilion at the 12th Venice Architecture Biennale.

In 2012 for the 13th Venice Biennale, he was co-curator with Mr. Tchoban for the exhibition i-City / i-Land—the award-winning architectural exhibition concept explicitly designed to showcase the master plan of the Skolkovo Innovation Center.

The project utilized an interactive, technology-driven installation to present Russia's "Silicon Valley" to the world, earning a Special Mention from the Biennale jury.

Mr. Kuznetsov is also the Chairman of the Architectural Council of Moscow–a standing collegial consultative body to the Moscow City Committee for Architecture and Urban Planning. The Council's work is aimed at making the decisions on key urban projects widely open to the public.

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He also heads the Skolkovo Urban Planning Council and the Moscow Architectural Council and serves as the curator of the "Creative Environment and Urbanism" section at the St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum.

What really sets Mr. Kuznetsov apart is his commitment to large-scale urban planning.

By decree of the Mayor of Moscow No. 681-RM on 20 August 2012 Sergey Kuznetsov was appointed as the Chief Architect of Moscow, the First Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Architecture and Urban Planning of Moscow.

In his position, he was one of the youngest senior officials in the Moscow Government, assuming the role of the capital's Chief Architect at the age of 35.

Starting in 2012 as Chief Architect, Mr. Kuznetsov developed a deep understanding of both architecture and civil society, as is reflected in his writing, his activism, and his designs primarily in urban planning.

With the idea that the role of the architect is now being challenged to serve greater social and humanitarian needs, Mr. Kuznetsov has clearly, generously, and fully responded to the challenge.

He has engaged with politicians, architects, residents, local authorities, and builders, in order to obtain the best possible results for the benefit of the people and the society his projects serve.

During his first year in office, over 20 competitions in urban planning projects were held under his auspices, including an international competition for the design of The National Center for Contemporary Art (2013) in Moscow, which was won by the Irish firm of Heneghan Peng Architects, but was cancelled due to a lack of funding.

Another global competition, Zaryadye Park with Concert Hall (2013) in Moscow is one of the most internationally recognized projects associated with Mr. Kuznetsov's tenure as Chief Architect of Moscow that transformed a prominent site adjacent to the Kremlin into a new type of public landscape.

The winning concept, led by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Hargreaves Associates, Citymakers, and Russian partners Vladimir Plotkin of TPO Reserve as designers of the Pavilion, introduced a new model of "wild urbanism," combining diverse landscapes, public infrastructure, and cultural facilities within the context of the dense historic city.

The main feature of the park is its facilities hidden under the landscape, while the park itself is divided into four climatic zones: forest, steppe, tundra, and floodplains. Another feature of the new park is a picturesque view of the Kremlin, which visitors can enjoy from the Soaring bridge over the Moskva River. The bridge is a thin airy V-shaped structure with a large outward extension above the water. The bridge protracts 70 meters without a single support.

"As the head of the design team," expressed Mr. Kuznetsov, "I can state with full confidence that we have succeeded in translating the concept of 'natural urbanism' into an innovative platform for the symbiosis of the natural and the artificial, and in finding a formula for preserving biodiversity within an urban environment."

The resulting project has created a rich environment of lively, interesting, and welcoming spaces in the City of Moscow.

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A more recent competition that is nearing completion in 2028 under Mr. Kuznetsov's auspices is the ZIL Metro Station (Biryulevskaya Line) in Moscow won by Ivan Grekov of Kamen Architecture Bureau and artist Maxim Kozlov, which pays tribute to Moscow's industrial heritage.

The exterior references the Soviet era's manufacturing heyday at the former Likhachyov (ZiL) plant, where the line begins. Inside, the platform zone features brushed stainless-steel cladding on columns and ceiling, dark heat-treated natural granite floors, and a signature mosaic art panel along the track walls.

From 2014-2026, Mr. Kuznetsov led one of his most ambitious projects for the Development of the Moskva River Embankments, which is one of his leading accomplishments as City Architect.

Historically, the areas along the Moskva River had remained largely underdeveloped; only one period stands out for significant work on both the embankments and the river's locks within the city limits: the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal.

Consequently, the riverbanks were characterized by neglected zones, garages, and a mix of residential and commercial developments.

Mr. Kuznetsov sought to completely reverse this situation, launching a unifying design program to integrate these dead urban areas into the redeveloped city's active life for residents and visitors alike.

With an understanding of the importance of the aspirations of the inhabitants and their active participation and investment in a project, as well as good design, he has contributed to the creation of new opportunities for an urban renaissance of the city.

Mr. Kuznetsov's inventive approach enlarges the traditional scope of the architect and transforms the professional into a universal figure with the aim of finding a truly collective solution for the built environment.

Another project, the N.V. Sklifosovsky Research Institute of Emergency Medicine in Moscow (2028) by Sergey Kuznetsov and Kamen Architecture Bureau is a modern medical complex spanning over 120,000 square meters set to open on the grounds of Bolshaya Sukharevskaya Square in Moscow.

The facility is designed to integrate state-of-the-art medical care technologies—including cutting-edge equipment, optimized logistics, and advanced operational standards—while increasing the clinic's total floor area by 50 percent.

The new facility will consist of five blocks, with the two dedicated to treatment and diagnostics serving as the dominant structures. All five blocks will be interconnected, "touching" one another.

The layout is driven by the specific nature of medical workflows and the need for operational efficiency, allowing related specialized departments to be situated on the same level.

The complex's main façade forms a unified architectural composition facing the park and the Strannopriimny Dom—the historic building housing the Research Institute for Emergency Medicine.

The space between the blocks is designed to create a striking entrance feature, topped by a light installation in the shape of a pulsating heart that symbolizes the energy of life.

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In the Leningradsky Railway Station Reconstruction (2026) in Moscow by Sergey Kuznetsov, the building was extensively restored including the 19th-Century façade by Konstantine Thon, while doubling usable passenger space, increasing seating capacity and introducing digital navigation systems. Updated typography and visual design elements were developed by Art.Lebedev Studio.

In 2021 and at a completely different scale, Russian Quintessential is an architectural art object created by Mr. Kuznetsov for the Archstoyanie Festival in 2021, in Nikola-Lenivets.

The project is a compact, futuristic inhabitable structure shaped as a large suspended tube, combining experimental engineering, contemporary materials and an explicitly artistic architectural statement.

Through this project, the architect explores the question of what contemporary Russian architecture might be and how ideas of quality, innovation, and cultural identity can be expressed through form and technology.

One Mixed-Use Complex (2025-2030) in Moscow is one of Mr. Kuznetsov's most recent, prominent high-rise projects. Developed together with architect and former classmate at MARCHI, Dmitry Sukhov at Genpro Architects & Engineers and for Moscow developers MR Group, the soaring skyscraper introduces a distinctive, tour-de-force sculptural form into the skyline of Moscow City.

The approximately 379-metre, 90-story tower combines residential, office, retail, and public functions. Its architectural concept is based on the continuous interaction of two vertical volumes, creating a distinctive silhouette and a strong visual identity.

About this project, Mr. Kuznetsov notes: "Architecture can be silent, or it can speak. This project speaks loudly; it is emotional. It is about movement, form, and a loop that connects sky and earth, business and living space, the rational and the emotional."

"It is a way to demonstrate what a vertical city can look like: light-filled, biophilic, vibrant, and human-centric."

With its completion set for 2030, Moscow will see the rise of a tower destined to become not just a building, but a new architectural landmark for the city.

The One Tower won a 2026 International Architecture Award from The Chicago Athenaeum.

"For the inspiration he provides through his example and his contributions to architecture, art, and humanity past and future, Sergey Kuznetsov is the recipient of the 2026 European Prize for Architecture," concludes Mr. Narkiewicz-Laine.

The formal ceremony and gala dinner for what has come to be known throughout the world as Europe's highest honor for architecture will be held at a Gala Dinner at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece—the birthplace of Western Architecture—on Friday, September 18, 2026.

Ticket information is available through The European Centre's Museum in Athens at +30/210 342 8511 or in the U.S. at +1/815-777-4444 or by email at konstadina@europeanarch.eu.

An exhibition on Mr. Kuznetsov opens at The European Centre (74 Mitropoleos Street) in Athens that same evening.

For more information and press photographs, contact: Ms. Konstadina Geladaki, Director of Communications, Contemporary Space Athens at konstadina@europeanarch.eu

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Sergey Kuznetsov. The Chicago Athenaeum Archives.

About The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies (www.europeanarch. eu) is dedicated to public education concerning all aspects of the built environment - from entire cities to individual buildings - including the philosophical issues of arts and culture that ultimately give the final shape to design. A high emphasis exists on contemporary values and aesthetics, conservation and sustainability, and the theoretical exploration and advancement of art and design as the highest expression of culture and urbanism.

About The Chicago Athenaeum (www.chi-athenaeum.org) is a global nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide public education about the significance of architecture and design and how those disciplines can have a positive effect on the human environment.

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