

Ksenya Samarskaya named TDC's first-ever MD



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Type Directors Club (TDC), a global typography organisation and authority on typographic excellence, has appointed designer, strategist, and educator Ksenya Samarskaya to serve as its first managing director in the club's 75-year history.



Ksenya Samarskaya becomes Type Directors Club's first managing director

Samarskaya will work alongside Carol Wahler, long-standing TDC executive director, to expand on TDC's programming and support for the typographic community. TDC merged with The One Club of Creativity, a nonprofit organisation for the global creative community, in 2020.

We chat to Samarskaya about being appointed as the first-ever MD of TDC which was created in 1946.

■ ***Congratulations on being appointed as Type Directors Club's first MD! How are you feeling about it?***

Thank you! It feels like we're at the start of a pretty interesting and inspiring journey. On multiple levels: for me personally, for the TDC, and where we're at within the global typographic culture as a whole.

■ ***How and when did this come about?***

It was a very organic process—there was just a moment when all of the arrows happened to line up.

I've been part of, and close to, the club for almost 17 years now. I came out of chairing the design competition two years ago to be asked to help redesign it based on the conversations I was facilitating in the judges' room. During that redesign, I became part of more of the discussions that the Advisory Board was having, and it just kind of grew from there.

I've been very fortunate to have an incredibly warm and enthusiastic welcome all around, and from the existing executive director, Carol Wahler, from the leadership at The One Club for Creativity, Kevin Swanepoel and Yash Egami, and from the leadership on our Advisory Board.

■ ***Could you briefly tell us about your career?***

Yeah. Typographically, I started designing type at Hoefler & Frere-Jones in New York in 2007, followed up by working on the type team at Apple in 2012. Well, there's always a before — we've all been dealing with type and lettering since we first learned how to read and write — but that's when it was maybe more official when there was a pivot.

Directly from those experiences, I launched my own design practice, Samarskaya & Partners. We were half branding shop, half type design studio, and I felt like that ability to work from both sides gave us a unique edge. We intimately knew what kind of type was missing from the market that our designs craved, and when we wanted something we couldn't find — we could just go right ahead and create it.

■ ***What will your new role entail?***

I've been tasked with driving TDC's brand and vision; managing marketing and partnerships; overseeing operations, heralding TDC's annual typeface design, Communication Design and Ascenders competitions, as well as launching new initiatives. There's a lot that's in store, and behind-the-scenes, that I'm incredibly excited about.

■ ***What excites you most about taking on this role?***

A sense of obligation. This isn't an opportunity the type community has often had, for someone to really be there to advocate for them, to explain what's going on to those on the outside, to foster certain dialogues and uplift new ways of thought.

There are wonderful organisations bringing people together or showcasing work and criticism in rich ways, but there's still a level above that — where it really breaks out above the industry or reaches across the industry in a truly global way, that the TDC is uniquely positioned to foster.

■ ***What do you love most about your career, the industry and what you do?***

It enriches the world, without doing harm. It really is an industry that doesn't do harm — which sounds low-level but is actually fairly unique. I came into it from working in an environmental nonprofit just before, in 2005–2006, and it was something I was actively thinking about even then. There's no dedicated resource extraction, no sweatshops, no carbon dumping, no child labour. And it connects people across the globe while bringing beauty, richness, and an enhanced ability for them to communicate who they are. What could be better?

■ ***What are your biggest career highlights?***

I always say the ones coming next, and I absolutely feel that stronger than ever now.

■ ***What approach will you take in your role as MD going forward?***

I really want to move into the current day, in terms of everything that comes out of the TDC being an open dialogue. Less of a one-way media space that tells people or broadcasts events from a platform, but more of a space that centres around the

facilitation of conversations. You'll see this in our event programming, in the way our competitions are redefined and positioned, in our new initiatives, and slowly shifting in all sorts of other ways both large and small.

🍷 ***I believe you're launching new initiatives, could you share more?***

We are, but I don't like talking about things before they're ready to fly. So I would just say, follow us online ([Instagram](#), [Twitter](#)), sign up for our newsletter, set up your alert notifications — and expect to be seeing great things, and to be thinking about type more than you ever have before.

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