



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

For Immediate Release



Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *Memorial To Useless Things*, 1998, wooden mausoleum. Installation view at Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: A Collective Memory, SAF Art Spaces, Al Mureijah. Image courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: A Collective Memory

November 23, 2013 - February 23, 2014

Building I, SAF Art Spaces, Al Mureijah, Sharjah Heritage Area

Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) presents ***Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: A Collective Memory***, an exhibition that traces the life and work of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov. American artists born in the Soviet Union, their work fuses elements of the everyday with those of the conceptual. While often rooted in the Soviet social and cultural context in which they lived, their work attains a universal significance that contemplates failed utopias around the world. The exhibition was opened by SAF President and Director **H.E. Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi** and was attended by **H.E. Abdullah Al Owais**; Chairman of the Department of Culture and Information in Sharjah, **H.E. Ahmad Burhaimah**; Director of Theatre Department at the Department of Culture and Information in Sharjah, **H.E. Ahmed Bin Rakkad Al Amri**; Director of Sharjah International Book Fair, **Denis Douvneau**; Director of Institut Français and the Cultural Counsellor at the French Embassy in the UAE, **Haegue Yang**, Fashion Designer **Rick Owens** and **Michelle Lamy**.

Works in the exhibition include a series of paintings from '*Four Paintings About Freedom*', *Suprematist Painting which turn out great*, *With my respect to my Teacher Charles Rosenthal*, as well as two installations: *Memorial to Useless Things* and *The Blue Carpet*.

Whilst describing *Memorial to Useless Things*, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov stated: "...because they are useless for whom? For somebody else. They always hold memories, and everything that is useless for somebody is always useful for another person. It is a memory, its part of your life. Nothing is useless in reality. We have another memorial, *Memorial to Unknown People*, so that's from the same category. It is a very deep idea of the memory because a huge monument is a memory of the society, of history now.

But if we do not have personal memories, and memorials to personal memories, there is no history of personal life.”

The Blue Carpet is an installation where visitors remove their shoes and enter a space that is covered by a large blue carpet with geometric designs. Small-scale drawings and texts in frames have been placed against the walls along the entire perimeter of the room. Visitors must sit or lie on the carpet in order to view these works, creating a sense of informality and intimacy. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov stated: “It is about two levels. Usually we look at the artwork at eye level. In this case it is on the floor, so in order to look at it you have to lie down and be on the same level as the art...you have to lower yourself down to be with it, you are still in the sky, but you see reality around you.”

Following the exhibition opening was a film screening of *future past perfect* by Carsten Nicolai and a performance entitled *cyclo.* by Ryoji Ikeda and Carsten Nicolai that took place at Mirage City Cinema in SAF Art Spaces. Both Ryoji Ikeda and Carsten Nicolai were participants in this year’s edition of Sharjah Biennial where Ikeda performed *datamatics [ver.2.0]* and, using the pseudonym ‘alvo noto’, Nicolai performed *Univrs* which included a special appearance by Ryuichi Sakamoto. The screening and performance were part of the SAF exhibition *I Look To You And I See Nothing* on view until February 16, 2014 at Building P and J in SAF Art Spaces.

About the artists:

Ilya Kabakov (b.1933 Dnepropetrovsk, Soviet Union)

After studying at the VA Surikov Art Academy in Moscow, Ilya Kabakov began his career as a children's book illustrator in the 1950s . He was part of a group of Conceptual artists in Moscow who worked outside the official Soviet art system. In 1985, Kabakov had his first solo exhibition at Dina Vierny Gallery, Paris. In 1988 he began working with his wife Emilia and from this point onwards, all their work was collaborative in different proportions according to the specific project involved. Today Kabakov is recognized as the most important Russian artist to have emerged in the late 20th century.

Emilia Kabakov (b. 1945 Dnepropetrovsk, Soviet Union)

Emilia Kabakov attended the Music College in Irkutsk in addition to studying Spanish and literature at Moscow University. In 1975 she moved to New York where she worked as a curator and art dealer.

The work of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov has been shown widely including in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington DC, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Documenta IX, at the Whitney Biennial in 1997 and the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. In 1993 they represented Russia at the 45th Venice Biennale with their installation *The Red Pavilion*. The Kabakovs have also completed major public commissions throughout Europe and have received a number of honours and awards, including the Oscar Kokoschka Preis, Vienna in 2002 and the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, Paris in 1995.

About Sharjah Art Foundation:

Sharjah Art Foundation brings a broad range of contemporary art and cultural programmes to the communities of Sharjah, the UAE and the region. Since 2009 SAF has built on the history of cultural collaboration and exchange that began with the first Sharjah Biennial in 1993. Working with local and international partners, we create opportunities for artists and artistic production through our core initiatives that include the Sharjah Biennial, the annual March Meeting, residencies, production grants, commissions, exhibitions, research, publications and a growing collection. Our education and public programmes focus on building recognition of the central role art can play in the life of a community by promoting public learning and a participatory approach to art. All our events are free and open to the public. Sharjah Art Foundation is funded by the Department of Culture and Information, Government of Sharjah.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Sharjah Art Foundation

Maitha Al Jassim

Public & Media Relations Officer

Tel: +971-6-544-4113, ext. 25

E: maitha@sharjahart.org

t +971 6 544 4113 | f +971 6 544 7797 | PO Box 19989 Sharjah, UAE website |
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