



Installation view Lissitzky-Kabakov, Van Abbemuseum, 2012. Incl. Box with Garbage (1983) and 16 Ropes (1986). Photo Peter Cox

01/12/2012 – 28/04/2013  
Opening: Saturday, 01 December 2012  
15:00

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## LISSITZKY – KABAKOV utopia and reality

Artists: El Lissitzky, Ilja and Emilia Kabakov

Curator: Charles Esche

The Van Abbemuseum asked the artists Ilja (1933) and Emilia (1945) Kabakov to organise an exhibition of their work together with that of El Lissitzky (1890–1941), as guest curators. For the 'Lissitzky – Kabakov' exhibition they made an extensive selection from their own work and that of Lissitzky. It is the first time that the oeuvres of these famous 20th-century Russian artists are being presented together. Bringing together Lissitzky and the Kabakovs completes the circle which started with the revolutions in the early years of the twentieth century and finished with the upheavals of 1989. The confrontation between early Soviet

Lissitzky - Kabakov includes:

- Lissitzky - Kabakov: educational activities
- Lissitzky - Kabakov: family programme
- Lissitzky - Kabakov: school programme

art and that of the later Soviet era presents opportunities for a better understanding of the art and culture of the intervening period.

### The Exhibition

The Lissitzky - Kabakov exhibition will take place on two floors in the new building of the Van Abbemuseum and is designed by the Kabakovs. The first floor and the seven halls on the second floor each have their own theme and a different aspect of the works of Lissitzky and Kabakov is compared every time. In addition to works from the collection of the Kabakovs and the Van Abbemuseum, there will be loans from the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, the Guggenheim Museum in New York and Centre Pompidou in Paris, as well as from a number of private collections. Some of the Kabakovs' installations have also been recreated for this occasion. The exhibition is part of [NLRF2013](#), the Dutch – Russian year and travels to the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and the Multimedia Art Museum (MAMM) in Moscow in 2013.

Looking forward with hope and looking back with melancholia and humour

Traditionally the artist has been seen as someone who holds up a mirror to the society he lives in. But art is also assigned the role of showing us a new world. In this exhibition these two functions of art are played out against each other in many different ways. Lissitzky's enthusiasm for the revolution and his involvement in the new social order is present everywhere in the exhibition. In contrast, we constantly come across the Kabakovs' melancholic but also humoristic representation and interpretation of the conditions in the late Soviet era. The mother country of both the artists had become a place where the rhetoric of progress had run aground on the everyday reality of life in that society. Nevertheless, it proved possible to re-emerge from this twilight zone.

### Catalogue

There is a detailed catalogue available in Dutch and English for the exhibition, with an in-depth article by the Kabakov experts, Professors Boris Groys and Robert Storr, an imaginary interview with Lissitzky by Professor John Milner, an expert in avant garde Russian art, and an interview with Ilya and Emilia Kabakov by the Russian artist and publicist Anton Vidokle. All the works in the exhibition are shown in colour, arranged in accordance with the themes in the exhibition. Finally, the book contains an illustrated image biography of the artists. This cassette is also available in [our webshop](#).

### Mediation

In cooperation with different partners we offer a broad range of educational activities, an entrance to all visitors to both the exhibited art as well as the society from which it originates.

There is a [special Lissitzky - Kabakov website](#) about the Soviet era available for visitors at home on the computer, in the museum with your own smartphone or by means of the available iPads. You will be introduced to the Soviet era and can choose their own way in via different speakers. For example, Henk Kern (lecturer in Russian history at the University of Leiden) talks about the political and social history of Russia. For personal experiences, one can listen to seven citizens from former Soviet states who can take them along with them in their stories. The third, more intuitive way of getting to know the Soviet era is by listening to the soundscape made by music expert Frank de Munnik. We invite you to add your own experiences and anecdotes.

In the [family programme](#) Lissitzky's Figurines are coming to life in a DIY tour. From January these figures will be present in person during the special theatre tour through the halls (every Sunday at 11.30 and every first Thursday evening of the month at 19.30). Every third Saturday of the month there is a special Family Art Club between 14.00 and 16.00.

The artist group Connecting provides for small workshops during the exhibition. [Here](#) you can find the programma.

We organise a special programme of Soviet films in cooperation with the EYE Amsterdam film museum. [Here](#) your will find the programme.

More Russian art and culture: tips from our neighbors (Dutch)

On Monday 28 January 2013, the National Theatre performs 'Drie Zusters' at the [Park Theatre](#) in Eindhoven, by the Russian writer Anton Chekhov. On Wednesday 1 May '[De Kersentuin](#)' will be performed. The plays are in Dutch.