

PRESS RELEASE

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov

I Sleep in the Orchard

5 December - 14 February 2009

SPROVIERI

27 Heddon Street London W1B 4BJ

Sprovieri Progetti is pleased to exhibit the installation *I Sleep in the Orchard* by Ilya & Emilia Kabakov. This is their fourth exhibition at the gallery in London.

I Sleep in the Orchard is one of the rooms in an imaginary mental institute. This Institute has a completely different approach to insanity compared to regular clinics. In mental diseases doctors see the manifestation of a powerful creative impulse. The way for defeating insanity is found in creating a pleasant atmosphere for the manifestation of creativity. Each patient works with doctors over the realization of an idea- project in his/her room. In this room, separated from the rest of the space through barriers that divide the space of the 'spectacle' from that of the 'viewer', the patient created the project called *I Sleep in the Orchard*. Eliazarova's story tells us about her traumatic removal from an idyllic countryside life and into the life of the city inside a communal apartment, which she would share with eight other families. A suicide attempt would lead her to be hospitalized in the Institute.

The story of the patient could be a metaphor for an artist such as Ilya Kabakov, whose only way to express his creativity was to be removed from the Russian reality; in his case he "removed" himself emigrating to the United States in 1987. As Joseph Bakshtein says: " [...] what is depicted is simply a model of the contemporary art world where each patient - artist represents some direction in art, and the doctors, in essence are curators providing a place for each of them".

Installation as art since the late 1960s, became a focus for innovative and combinatorial capacities. Ilya Kabakov has been a pioneer of this new genre with the 'total installation': total because it is comprehensive and it integrates painting, sculpture, writing, music, voices and sounds, but, above all it constitutes an image of the world, a "model of the world". He also defines installations, which he believes are also rooted in Duchamp's readymades, as non- artworks but as being reality itself. Through his installations he tries to lead the visitor into a state of semi-illusion or semi- dream, making him recognize a familiar banality but still being a stranger within it. Because of his primary attempt of communication, Kabakov includes text in his installation, as to demand the spectator's attention and permit reflection. Kabakov's installations are intended to initiate a reflective process by touching and recalling hidden memories through the familiar. Hence, "the loss of the spectator's attention is the end of the installation".

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The exhibition also includes a recent painting (*The Apples are Ripe*, 2008), which is part of the ongoing series *An Alternative History of Art: C. Rosenthal, I. Kabakov, I. Spivak*. These are three fictitious artists invented by Kabakov, in order to construct an alternative history of Russian painting of the 20th century. The painting, which depicts four characters pleasantly walking in the countryside, is supposedly painted by Charles Rosenthal (1898 – 1933) in the social realism style. He is living at the beginning of the century and, in spite of living in a period of wars and catastrophes, he is the one, among the three, who still has hopes for the future. Kabakov, in both the installation and the painting, uses imaginary characters avoiding direct self-expression and creating further displacement in the viewer.

Ilya Kabakov (Ukraine, 1933) and Emilia Kabakov (Ukraine, 1945) are the most important living Russian artists. They had their first retrospective simultaneously in three different venues in Moscow: the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, the Garage exhibition centre and the Vinzavod centre (September 2008). Their work has been exhibited in all major international venues as The Museum of Modern Art in New York (1991), the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (1995) and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1995); as well as the most significant surveys of contemporary art as Documenta in Kassel (1992), the Venice Biennale (1988; 1993; 1997; 2001; 2007) and the Whitney Biennial in New York (1997). Their work features in all major public collections worldwide, among them: Tate Modern, MOMA and Centre Georges Pompidou.

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