



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

**For Immediate Release**  
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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

**SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION PRESENTS TWO MAJOR EXHIBITIONS ON VIEW  
THROUGH FEBRUARY 2014 -- *ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV: A COLLECTIVE MEMORY*,  
AND *I LOOK TO YOU AND SEE NOTHING***

***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 opening was attended by SAF President and Director **H.E. Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi** as well as **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 Douveneuve**, Director of Institut Français and the Cultural Counsellor at the French Embassy in the UAE; **Haegue Yang**, Artist; and **Rick Owens** and **Michelle Lamy**, Fashion Designers.

Works in the exhibition include a series of paintings from “*Four Paintings About Freedom*,” as well as the works *Suprematist Paintings 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 which invites visitors to 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)

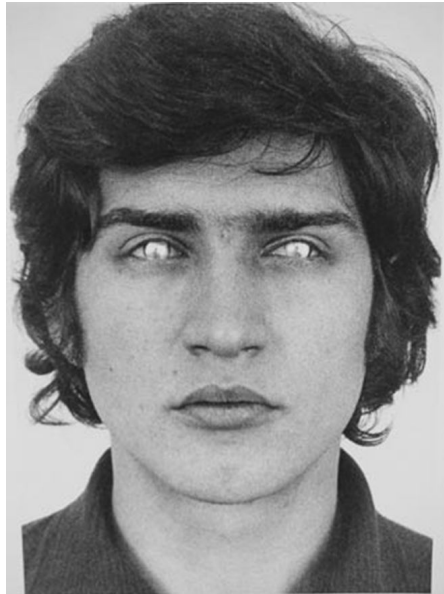
After studying at the VA Surikov Art Academy in Moscow, Ilya Kabakov began his career as a children's book illustrator in the 1950s. He was part of a group of Conceptual artists in Moscow who worked outside the official Soviet art system. In 1985, Kabakov had his first solo exhibition at Dina Vierny 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 45<sup>th</sup> 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.



Giuseppe Penone  
*Rovesciare i propri occhi (To Reverse One's Eyes)*, 1970  
Photograph: Paolo Mussat Sartor

***I Look To You And I See Nothing***

**November 16, 2013 – February 16, 2014**

**Building P & J, SAF Art Spaces, Al Mureijah, Sharjah Heritage Area**

**Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF)** presents *I Look To You And I See Nothing*, an exhibition that features immersive sound environments, light installations, and contemplative spaces that explore the boundaries of the viewer's perception. Curated by Olivier Varenne and Nicole Durling, *I Look To You And I See Nothing* was co-organised by the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Tasmania, Australia and Sharjah Art Foundation. Participating artists in this exhibition include Mathieu Briand, Sophie Calle, Shezad Dawood, Gino de Dominicis, Ivana Franke, Fabien Giraud, Kurt Hentschläger, Ryoji Ikeda, Terence Koh, Anish Kapoor, Teresa Margolles, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Giuseppe Penone, Raphael Siboni, Lawrence Weiner, and Gregorio Zanon. This exhibition will be held in Building P and J at SAF Art Spaces from November 16, 2013 to February 16, 2014.

Also part of this exhibition is a monumental light installation by Japanese artist Ryoji Ikeda who presented an audiovisual concert at this year's Sharjah Biennial, which received more than 80,000 visitors through its duration. For the first time in the Middle East and for a few nights only, the site specific installation entitled *spectra* was on view at Flag Island Sharjah on November 15, 16, 21, 22, and 23, 2013. After previously been shown in major cities including Amsterdam, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Hobart in Australia, Nagoya in Japan, and Paris; the Sharjah iteration of this installation included 49 custom-made xenon lights arranged in a grid

pointing skyward. The artwork formed a monumental column of light from sunset to sunrise. The powerful light was projected thousands of metres as it reached the Earth's stratosphere and was visible in Sharjah as well as neighbouring Emirates. This interactive installation allowed visitors to walk through the lights at ground level, looking up at the clouds, listening to the waves of sound washing over them. Even though Ikeda's cutting-edge digital technology is informed by mathematics of the utmost precision, every individual's experience of this work is entirely different.

*I Look To You And I See Nothing* presents a series of interactive works including Kurt Hentschläger's *ZEE*; an installation filled with fog so dense that the space seems boundless and the disoriented visitor feels almost weightless. Strobe lights illuminate the fog in an evenly dispersed manner, creating kaleidoscopic three-dimensional structures in constant animation whilst an ambient and minimal soundscape connects to the imagery. Gregorio Zanon's *Music in the Room* is an interactive work that includes 10 tablets and a small set of piano samples, and the viewers will become a part of the composition as they move around the work. Shezad Dawood will present *New Dream Machine Project*, an immersive kinetic light sculpture that is designed to emit hypnotic light waves towards the audience.

Anish Kapoor's *Imagined Monochrome* is designed to give the participant an experience of monochromatic colour while receiving a massage. Italian sculptor and conceptual artist Guiseppe Penone will present a striking portrait entitled *Rovesciare i propri occhi (To Reverse One's Eyes)*, which depicts him wearing mirrored contact lenses he had custom made, rendering him blind and offering the viewer his sight instead. The multi-sensory elements that are included in the works cause a series of events that gather in the viewer's mind, questioning the "real," and reconfiguring our own physical world. Experiences are synthesised within the viewer's own brain and each individual's experience is a component where the viewer becomes a part of the exhibition.

#### **About the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA):**

MONA—the Museum of Old and New Art—is Australia's largest privately owned museum. Built into the banks of the Derwent River, the unique subterranean museum showcases David Walsh's collection: more than 200 artworks, antiquities and ethnographic pieces. The collection ranges from Egyptian funerary objects to some of the world's most thought-provoking contemporary art. As well, Mona has mounted a series of groundbreaking exhibitions since opening, including "Theatre of the World," currently showing in Paris.

Since opening in January 2011, MONA has welcomed almost one million visitors. The beautiful 3.5-hectare site, just north of Hobart, also includes a Library, the Moorilla winery, Moo Brew microbrewery and eight contemporary accommodation pavilions.

**About Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF):** 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, SAF creates opportunities for artists and artistic production through core initiatives that include the Sharjah Biennial, the annual March Meeting, residencies, production grants, commissions, exhibitions, research, publications, and a growing collection. SAF's 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.

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For more information on SAF and its programmes, visit [www.sharjahart.org](http://www.sharjahart.org).

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