

ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV

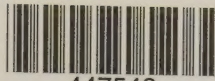
NOT EVERYONE WILL BE TAKEN INTO THE FUTURE



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Ilya and Emilia Kabakov

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Edited by Juliet Bingham

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Ilya and Emilia Kabakov:

Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future

Tate Modern, London

18 October 2017 – 28 January 2018

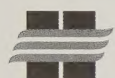
The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

20 April – 29 July 2018

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6 September 2018 – 13 January 2019

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with additional support from Mr Roman Abramovich

The exhibition is organised by Tate Modern in collaboration
with the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg and the
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

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Ilya and Emilia Kabakov have collaborated together since 1989.
Works created before this date, by Ilya only, are indicated as
such in the corresponding captions.

For the models illustrated, two dates are provided. The first is
the date the concept was initiated, the second is the model's
production date.

Excerpts from the writings of Ilya Kabakov (IK) are reproduced
throughout the book, selected by Matthew Jesse Jackson.
Sources for these quotations are given on p.216.

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FOREWORD

When Tate Modern first opened in May 2000, the Kabakovs' powerfully oppressive 'Total Installation' *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)* 1990 was placed at the heart of the collection displays. It recounts the memoirs of Ilya Kabakov's mother and her tragic life during a turbulent period of dramatic societal change spanning the 1917 Revolution through the rise and fall of the Soviet Union. Tate Modern is delighted to be showing *Labyrinth* for a second time, now as part of the first major museum exhibition in the UK of the Kabakovs' work, coinciding as it does with the 100th anniversary in October 2017 of the Bolshevik Revolution. The title of the exhibition, *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future*, is drawn from Ilya's response to a study on the Russian abstract artist Kazimir Malevich, published in a 1983 issue of the underground magazine *A-VA*. In his writing, Kabakov poetically imagines Malevich as a headmaster selecting students for summer camp – an allegory for those artists who will (or will not) be taken into the future, a theme further illustrated in the exhibition through the use of fictional characters and in the installation of the same name, which features discarded paintings strewn across a railway platform as a train disappears into the distance.

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future explores this pioneering couple's place in the international story of conceptual art, charting the artists' journey from Ilya's role as an unofficial artist in Moscow working under the radar of the Soviet authorities, through to his settling in the West in 1987, and subsequent collaboration with Emilia. They are now widely known for their large-scale installations which draw upon the visual culture of the former Soviet Union and narrative traditions of Russian literature, often addressing universal themes such as utopia and the human condition. In London, the exhibition unfolds across ten rooms and over 1,200 square metres in the Eyal Ofer Galleries at Tate Modern, and features over 100 works in a range of media, including paintings, drawings, albums, models and installations.

This timely exhibition and catalogue would not have been possible without the close collaboration of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, whom we thank unreservedly for their dedication, warmth and vitality. Juliet Bingham, Curator, International Art at Tate has conceived the exhibition in close dialogue with the artists, supported by Assistant Curator Katy Wan, both of whom have brought great creativity and commitment to the project.

This major exhibition is organised in collaboration with the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, and the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, and the exhibition travels to our institutional partners in Russia in 2018. We are thrilled to be working closely with Mikhail Piotrovsky, General Director of the State Hermitage Museum, Dimitri Ozerkov, Director, Department for Contemporary Art, the State Hermitage Museum, and Zelfira Tregulova, General Director, the State Tretyakov Gallery, and their teams. We have been fortunate to be able to draw upon loans from private and public collections for this exhibition. We have been touched by the enthusiasm of so many individuals to lend their treasured works for such an extended period and offer them our deepest gratitude. We are also indebted to the public collections for making available iconic works from their holdings.

Without the generosity and enthusiasm of forward-thinking supporters, such ambitious exhibitions as *Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: Not Everyone Will Be*

Taken Into the Future would not exist. I would like to thank Leonid Mikhelson sincerely for his vision, and Novatek for generously supporting the exhibition. I would also like to extend my thanks to Roman Abramovich in this regard.

This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the UK Government Indemnity Scheme. We would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity, and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

Frances Morris
Director, Tate Modern

NOT TO BE DRAWN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibition would not have been possible without the dedication of artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, who welcomed us on many occasions to their Long Island studio and, in particular, to Emilia, whose frequent and tireless global travels always included a stopover at Tate Modern. At the meetings they attended, we have appreciated the contributions of Viola Kanevsky and Niccolò Sprovieri.

We are grateful to those museums and institutions who have championed the Kabakovs across the years and lent seminal works to this exhibition: the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, New Brunswick; Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen; MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna; Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

These loans have been augmented by works borrowed from private collections, including: Elchin and Dilyara Safarov; Bukhtoyarov Family Collection, London; Olga Filatova Collection; Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London–Paris–Salzburg; Tsukanov Family Foundation; and others who wish to remain anonymous. Many thanks go to the various galleries and consultants who assisted in facilitating loans: Sandy Heller and Chloé Geary at Heller Group, LLC, New York; Vladimir and Mikhail Ovcharenko at Regina Gallery, Moscow; Michael Jerch at Ruth|Catone, New York; and the auction house Phillips, London.

We offer our sincere gratitude to Novatek for their generous support and enthusiasm for this exhibition. We are also grateful to Mr Roman Abramovich for his support of the show.

In order to realise this timely project, we are incredibly fortunate to be collaborating as tour partners for the first time with the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg and the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. At the State Hermitage Museum we are grateful to General Director Mikhail Piotrovsky, General Director, for his dedication to the exhibition. He has been excellently supported by Dimitri Ozerkov, Director of the Department for Contemporary Art, and Natela Tretruashvili, Contemporary Art Department. At the State Tretyakov Gallery, we are delighted to work with General Director Zelfira Tregulova, whose commitment to the project has been infallible. She has been brilliantly assisted by Tatiana Gubanova, Head of the International Relations and Exhibitions Department, and Elena Charkseliani, Coordinator of the Exhibitions Department.

We are indebted to the insightful contributions of our catalogue authors: Kate Fowle, Chief Curator for the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow; Boris Groys, Global Distinguished Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University and Senior Research Fellow at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, Germany; Matthew Jesse Jackson, Associate Professor of Art History in the Department of Visual Arts and Art History, University of Chicago; Rod Mengham, Reader in Modern English Literature at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Jesus College; Dimitri Ozerkov, Director of the Department for Contemporary Art, the State Hermitage Museum; and Robert Storr, artist, critic and curator. Their texts unpack the many complex facets of the Kabakovs' work and bring new perspectives to their practice. Enhancing the essays are the short texts on the works themselves and a chronology and bibliography authored by Katy Wan,

Assistant Curator, Tate. Excerpts of Ilya's writings selected by Matthew Jesse Jackson illuminate the works. We are grateful to Alyssa Bacon for transcribing the many inscriptions. The contemporary book design is the work of Sarah Krebietke and David Tanguy at Praline, who we have greatly enjoyed working with. We would like to thank translator Bryan Karetnyk and Jenny Wilson for copy-editing. Tate's Publishing team, led by Publishing and Commercial Director John Stachiewicz, and Editorial Manager Jane Ace, worked diligently to accomplish the successful realisation of this catalogue. We are grateful to Project Editor Emma Poulter, who has been unfailingly dedicated to the project. Picture Researcher Deborah Metherell and Deputy Production Manager Roanne Marner have provided invaluable support.

Any exhibition of this scale and ambition relies upon the combined efforts of many colleagues across the museum. From the start, Frances Morris, Director, has been a champion of the Kabakovs and their exhibition. At Tate we have benefited from the advice of our curatorial colleagues Achim Borchardt-Hume, Matthew Gale, Rachel Kent, Helen Sainsbury, Natalia Sidlina and Dina Akhmadeeva. Carol Burnier Magno has been invaluable in managing the complex network of international loans, transportation and insurance, while Alyssa Bacon has provided vital administrative support. On Tate's installation team we are grateful to Phil Monk, Justina Budd, Richard Install and Ryszard Lewandowski for their skills and expertise, supported by external fabricators Sam Forster Contemporary Art Services. Elisabeth Andersson, Yunsun Choi, Charity Fox, Annette King, Elizabeth McDonald and Betty Sacher have provided crucial guidance from the beginning of the project on all matters of conservation – particularly with regards to Tate's own work *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)*. Throughout the project, Barry Palmer, Marcus Dickey-Horley, Tracey Ferguson and Sandra McLean have been generous with their time and knowledge in the areas of security and visitor experience. We are grateful to Minnie Scott and Simon Bolitho for their guidance on interpretation. In Tate's development department, Emily Magnuson and Emily Bowen have excelled in their fundraising efforts. Emma Double and Sara Chan have led an excellent press campaign, and Georgina Ramkoleea and Leyla Tahir have managed the marketing and digital promotion of the exhibition with great enthusiasm and aplomb. Soraya Chumroo and Mark Crowley created a distinct and original graphic identity for the exhibition, and Joseph Kendra has put together a stimulating public programme. We would also like to express our gratitude to Alessandra Serri in copyright and legal, and many more colleagues than can be named fully here, in photography, external relations, and visitor experience.

We thank the artists' assistant Igoris Markovas for his tremendous support throughout the exhibition research, preparation and installation; Katrin Ridder for kindly coordinating the shipping of the works from the Kabakovs' studio, and the online platform Fine Art Biblio which has been a useful supplementary resource for images and information about the artists and their works.

Finally, we would like to offer our immense appreciation to Ilya and Emilia Kabakov for their tireless dedication to all aspects of this project, from concept discussions to the layout of the catalogue, and for sharing their unique practice, which we are delighted to be able to bring to Tate's audiences.

Juliet Bingham

Curator, International Art, Tate

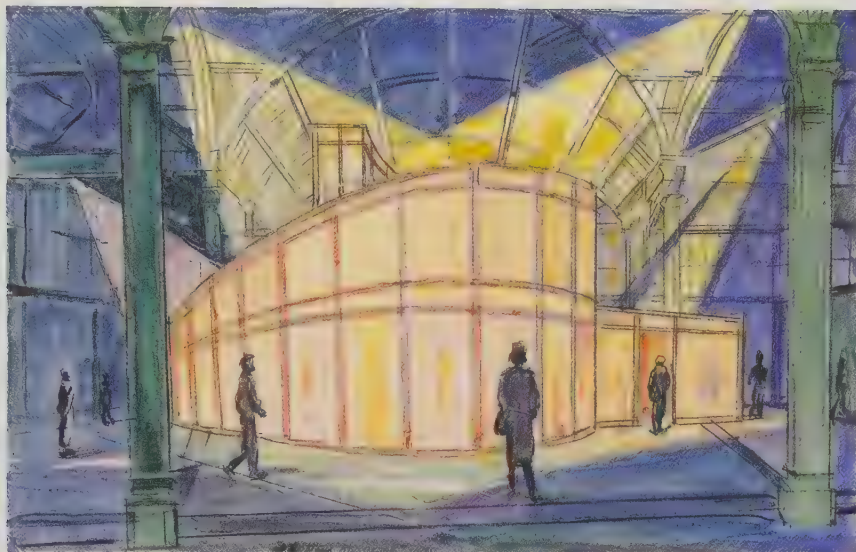


INTRODUCTION

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov have worked together since the late 1980s, animating vast spaces with their complex large-scale projects and immersive installations. Soviet-era communal apartments, endless unkempt corridors, abandoned spaces, unfinished building projects, bare and cluttered rooms, archives, reading rooms, toilets and dilapidated museums are the created environments in which their utopian narratives unfold. Many revolve around fictional characters, including humble, unknown artists, and their dreams and thwarted aspirations. Numbering almost two hundred works to date, these 'Total Installations', which invite the spectator to become an active participant and performer, have become the artists' most pioneering and distinctive form of artistic expression. Often these works reflect on power and control, oppression, destruction and the ultimate failure of the Communist utopia. *The Communal Kitchen* 1991, for example, on permanent display at Musée Maillol, Paris (fig.45), tackles the microcosm of communal living in the former Soviet Union, with all its attendant tensions, power struggles, lack of privacy, suspicion and banality. The installation is an underground, chapel-like space, filled with paintings, kitchen utensils, labels suspended from strings containing the dialogue of bickering tenants, lists detailing everyday life in the Soviet communal apartments, and the recorded sounds of arguing residents. In contrast, the monumental, illuminated, spiral building, *The Palace of Projects* 1998 (fig.2), houses miniature plans for sixty-five utopian projects. Existing as a museum of dreams, it poses a different set of questions about art and its potential to change and improve the world.

Ilya Kabakov and Emilia Lekach were both born in Dnepropetrovsk in the former USSR, now Ukraine, in 1933 and 1945 respectively. Having emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1973, Emilia, a professional musician, eventually settled in New York and worked as a curator and art adviser before embarking on projects with Ilya. Ilya remained in the Soviet Union until his first visit to the West in 1987, aged 54. After living and travelling in Europe and America, he eventually settled in New York in 1992, the same year he married Emilia. Both experienced life during the years of de-Stalinization in the late 1950s and 1960s and Nikita Khrushchev's attempts at reforming the Soviet state during the so-called 'Thaw' years. Over the thirty-year period prior to leaving his home country, Ilya established his own artistic practice within the context of Soviet Russia. Here artistic practices were required to adhere to the main canons of Socialist Realism – the official style, which held a cultural monopoly from the mid-1930s to Perestroika – with its imagery of heroes and heroines of the revolution, workers and political meetings.¹ Accordingly, Ilya's 'unofficial' art, which took a critical and ironic stance, was created under the radar of the authorities. He developed this work in parallel to his 'official' role as a graphic artist and children's book illustrator, working as an Artists' Union member for the state publishing houses. He was at the centre of the underground movement which emerged in the early 1970s in Moscow, including fellow artists Erik Bulatov, Oleg Vassiliev and Viktor Pivovarov, and which came to be known as 'Moscow Conceptualism'. Leading a double life, outwardly conforming to the prescribed Soviet reality, and with no possibility of exhibiting freely in Moscow, Ilya and his close circle of artist-friends and associates became their own audience and critics. As Ilya has commented: '... we wanted to analyse the

1 Ilya and Emilia Kabakov in their studio, 2014



2 Concept drawing for *The Palace of Projects* 1998 (see figs 18-19). Drawing dated 1995

language of Soviet civilisation, the banal, everyday language of the system . . . we felt like observers in our own country, like ethnologists . . . we ourselves were members of a different club than that of everyday Soviet life, but we were also a part of that life.’² It was with his early experimental works—which drew upon the historic avant-garde, Soviet Socialist Realism, the Russian literary tradition of the nineteenth century, and the conceptualism of unofficial art in the 1970s and 1980s—that Ilya laid the foundations for the immersive installations that he would later go on to produce with Emilia in the West.

Ilya’s early output consisted mostly of drawings and small paintings, with a few large-scale works such as *Head with a Balloon* 1965 (p.109) and *The Boy* 1965 (p.107). He questioned the authorial status of painting, creating works with banal subject matter that challenged art’s claims to the sublime. Paintings as objects in their own right and, after his move to the West, as constitutive elements of his installations, have been a central feature of Ilya’s practice. His early portraits, still lifes and landscapes such as *The Bush* 1961 (p.98) were painted in the style of Cézanne and were followed by painted reliefs, such as *Cubes* 1962 (p.101), which refer to 1920s Russian constructivism. He moved toward conceptual art in the mid-1960s in his paintings such as *Soccer Player* 1964 (p.102) and ‘picture-objects’ including *Hand and Ruisdael’s Reproduction* 1965 (p.104). A device which Ilya developed in his paintings from the late 1950s onwards was the use of fictional characters, or ‘personnages’, masking his own self and taking on various guises with which to depict life in the Soviet Union. From around 1966, one of the characters which Kabakov adopted was that of the artist who worked for the ZhEK—the bureaucratic housing administration for the Soviet state, whose regulations controlled everyday life for Soviet citizens. His ‘object-paintings’ typically depicted banal subject matter and contained dialogue in official lettering posing absurdist questions and responses, with the object of discussion—a fly or a nail—mounted in the centre of the work. The panels from the 1980s containing kitchen utensils were incorporated into installations on the subject of the Soviet communal kitchen. Mimicking ZhEK-signage panels, the *The Answers of an Experimental Group* 1970–1 (pp.116–7) presents a confusion of opinions and observations through the dialogue of sixteen characters. In this and subsequent works, Ilya included fictional viewers within the work itself. With biting satire, *Sobakin* 1980 (p.120) takes the form of a typical Soviet bureaucratic questionnaire. Among Ilya’s

close-knit group of Moscow artist-friends, questions around the primacy of painting itself versus the 'realism' of officially sanctioned Socialist Realism were rigorously debated. Ilya adopted another 'personage' – that of the untalented Soviet artist – in narrative paintings such as *Nikolai Petrovich* 1980 and *Tested!* 1981 (pp.118 and 121), and the later series of *Holiday* paintings from 1987 (pp.124–7). Imitating and satirising the genre of Socialist Realist paintings commissioned for propaganda purposes, Ilya's works commented on the position of the 'little man' in Soviet society, referencing the defeated literary characters who appear in the works of Soviet authors such as Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Anton Chekhov.

Kabakov's use of fictional characters and narrative is most clearly articulated in his groundbreaking *Ten Characters* 1970–4, each a form of illustrated 'album' reminiscent of Soviet propaganda albums or portfolios designed throughout the 1930s by El Lissitzky and Aleksandr Rodchenko. Each of the ten 'albums' is made up of loose-leaf pages, with drawings and texts presented in watercolour and coloured pencil. Referred to by the artist as 'theme-myths', these albums combined illustration, literature and theatrical



3 Ilya Kabakov *Agonizing Surikov*
1970–4

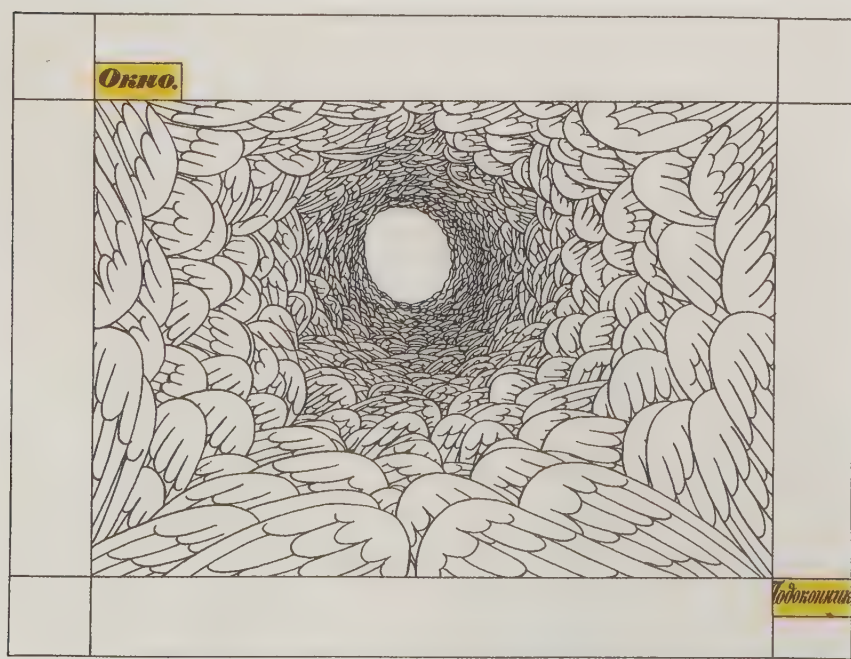
Ink and coloured pencil on paper
mounted on card

Page from album 4 of *Ten Characters*
50 pages, 51.5 × 35 (each sheet)

Private collection

performance. They were designed to be viewed and read while the pages were turned, and were 'performed' by Ilya in his studio to small groups of trusted friends. Each album features a fictional Soviet character, most of whom are isolated and lonely, and revolves around their life-story and their hopeless dreams. The 'characters' represent artists, the albums their artworks, and each is accompanied by the fictive commentaries of imagined friends and casual observers, who represent the 'viewers' of this unofficial art. Like the work of the classic heroes from Russian literature—Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol—they feature the life-story of a 'small man, possessed by big ideas'. The albums weave in references to the history of modern art—from Kazimir Malevich's black square to surrealism and abstract expressionism. The first album, *Sitting-in-the-Closet Primakov* (pp.92–3), describes how a child seeks sanctuary in a dark cupboard, imagining how he could fly above the city and disappear into the sky: his last dying thoughts are presented as philosophical 'word-objects'. In album 3, 'Generous Barmin' attempts to control reality by naming things in lists, believing that monotony will lead to spiritual transcendence. The partial view of the world experienced by 'Agonizing Surikov' in album 4 is gleaned only by looking through a small hole: he overcomes his abstract 'visions' by fading into white (fig.3). The life of 'Decorator Maligin' in album 8 is confined to the edges and corners, as if existing in the centre were too dangerous (fig.9). Ultimately, each character vanishes into the cosmos. The final album, *The Looking-out-the-Window Arkhipov*, gives the most clear depiction of a dying character and his perceptions, lying on his bed and gazing at a line-drawn universe (fig.4).

Ilya realised his first small-scale installations in his Moscow studio in the 1980s, such as *Little White Men* 1983, *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* 1985 (pp.150–7) and *16 Ropes* 1984/1994 (p.158). These works were witnessed only by his close group of artist-friends and associates. In *Little White Men*, miniature figures cut out of white paper were attached to ropes stretching across Ilya's studio towards the window, later realised as *I Catch the Little White Men* 1990 (pp.174–5). Taking the subject of political repression through allegory, the little white figures reappear again in the paintings of



4 Ilya Kabakov *The Looking-out-the-Window Arkhipov* 1970–4
Ink on paper mounted on card
Page from album 10 of *Ten Characters*
50 pages, 35 × 51.5 (each sheet)
Private collection



5 *Under the Snow # 4* 2004

Oil paint on canvas

249 × 185.5

Private collection, Galerie Thaddaeus
Ropac, London-Paris-Salzburg

the installation *Three Nights* 1989 (pp.164–71). Here the monoculars through which visitors are encouraged to peer, in order to see these little characters, provide access to a parallel, secret world. The absent artist, and the notion of abandoned space and flight into the cosmos coalesce in *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* (pp.150–7). The occupant of this tiny residence has heroically catapulted himself into space, leaving behind the shabby remnants of his life, including the Soviet posters that cover his walls and that fuelled his personal dreams of escape, rather than achieving their intended collective utopian message. The metaphor of flight is one to which the Kabakovs repeatedly turn: the sky as a route to escape, disappearance, cosmic flight and angels in different guises, and the search for wisdom and happiness.

It was with the multipart installation *Ten Characters* at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York in 1988 that Ilya was first able to bring this form to a wider public. Although sharing the same title as the earlier albums, this installation presented actors who appeared to be alter egos of the artist, rather than the earlier literary heroes of the albums. Presenting ten separate rooms arranged as if in a Soviet-era communal apartment, the installation imagined the lives of ten lonely and unfulfilled Soviet residents – from an untalented artist and a

composer, to a man who collected the opinions of others, and a hoarder of rubbish. None of the characters is actually present, just the remnants of their lives indicating their dreams and despair. *Incident in the Corridor Near the Kitchen* 1989, not yet an immersive 'Total Installation', consists of two paintings of Cézannesque landscapes, disrupted by pots and pans which are mounted on the surface of the canvases (pp.162–3). Suspended objects, from frying pans to tin cups, which appear as if flying through the air, hang in front of the works. The installation relates to the Kabakovs' 'communal' series of works, which are a metaphor for the nightmarish, repressive spaces in which it was impossible to live. Ilya's shift from painting to 'Total Installation' enabled the viewer to enter inside the work, to be completely immersed within the experience, to be transported to a new reality. At the heart of this exhibition lies *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)* 1990 (pp.42–51, 176–9), a claustrophobic maze-like environment, leading in a double spiral to a small space at the centre containing rubble and an audio recording of the artist singing melancholic Russian romance songs. The walls contain the haunting memoirs of Ilya's mother, charting her poignantly tragic life.

The title of the exhibition *Not Everyone Will be Taken Into the Future* and the work of the same name—a train departing from a railway platform that is strewn with discarded paintings—signals fundamental questions posed by the artists concerning the relationship to the past, the artist's place in society, the value of art and the future reception of an artist's work (pp.186–9). The model of the installation *Where is Our Place?* (pp.200–1) similarly points to these concerns. Thematically, Ilya's works have grappled with the position of the 'unofficial' artist in the former Soviet Union, drawing upon his own artistic past, which was bound up with the utopian promises of the Soviet Union and ultimately with the failure of the Communist project and its loss of relevance.

Since the early 2000s, Ilya has returned to painting as an object independent of the installations, no longer created by 'fictitious characters' or pseudonymous artists, such as in the *Alternative History of Art: Rosenthal, Kabakov, Spivak*, but authored by himself. Existing as bodies of related paintings, these series act as if windows into the past—either the actual Soviet past or deep memories reconfigured in the artist's imagination. The white expanses in *Under the Snow* 2004–6 (fig.5 and p.128) are ruptured by holes out of which faces peer or scenes of Soviet parades are partially depicted, the snowy ground acting as a metaphor that covers layers of memory. In the series of paintings *The Collage of Spaces* (p.133), the avant-garde technique of collage is merged with the aesthetic of Socialist Realism so that fragments of Soviet propaganda imagery are overlaid, as if collaged, onto the smiling faces in the scenes beneath. The *Appearance of the Collage* (pp.134–5) paintings further highlight the illusory nature of the technique by joining disparate portraits together in disturbing compositions which sit awkwardly together. *Vertical Paintings*, and *Two Times* (pp.137, 139, 146–9) splice together different figurative elements, conjured from memory, from classical art history and from allegorical painting of the Baroque period, with fragments of visual culture of the Soviet era. This collision of time periods and layering of realities suggests multiple interpretations and history as an unresolved process.

Ilya's practice shifted when he moved to the West, partly in response to the Western audience's reception of his work. His installations, created in conjunction with Emilia, have come to embody a commitment to humanism and hope. Today, he and Emilia live and work in the North Fork of Long Island, New York State, overlooking the tranquil waters of the Peconic Bay. Their home and studio is constantly active, with an endless stream of friends including



6 *Ship of Tolerance in Zug*
Kunsthhaus Zug 2016

curators, scholars, artists and collectors making the journey east of New York to be greeted by their lively conversation and warm hospitality. During visits over the past few years to discuss this major survey exhibition, Ilya always began his early mornings painting in the studio before conversing in the afternoons. Emilia, a whirlwind of energy, was constantly negotiating and juggling a dozen or so projects, including the re-staging of the *Ship of Tolerance* (fig.6) in various European cities from Zug to Rome. The workshop was full of scaled-models of realised and unrealised installations being assembled for an exhibition in Washington DC, and drawings were being catalogued for a show in Tokyo. On a number of occasions, the artists' assistant obligingly installed various configurations of recent paintings in the huge on-site gallery adjacent to the main house. The Kabakovs' vitality is palpable and their creative output continues to be considerable. In late spring 2017, in conversation with Ilya and Emilia in their studio, we spoke about the installation *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future*, the title of which we chose for this exhibition. Emilia commented:

'All artists wonder if they are worthy of being included in the history of art. Even if they reject the museum system, they still dream about being in the museum collection. Ilya's childhood was very harsh. For him, the museum was the place to which you could escape, be protected, and where no one could find, harm or punish you. In this sacred place you are surrounded and protected by the history of art, by the fantasy of other artists. You are free to create your own fantasy world. Ilya's world and work are based and built on fantasy and on the history of art. I, on the other hand, very early in life, somehow learned to combine both reality and fantasy and to live in both. My fantasy world is always close to and coexists with reality. Our life is very much based on this combination: I am trying to make reality seem like the realization of fantasy, or, maybe, a continuation of fantasy, where there is no place for real, everyday situations and problems. Our life consists of our work, dreams and discussions. We are lucky: we manage to transform reality into fantasy and permanently stay there.'



THE BEAUTIFUL FUTURE IS EMPTY

Try as one might, it is impossible to ‘game’ history. At best philosophers, ‘theorists’ and social scientists are like so many blind men and women with more or less well-trained, more or less sensitive fingers groping an elephant in order to describe it. Given the limitations of such expertise it is no wonder that their power to predict what the elephant will do next is extremely limited: which banana on a tree it will reach for, which direction it will step – and therefore which of these experts it will knock over, or tread on, or even crush. They have no real idea whence a mouse capable of stampeding it will approach the skittish pachyderm. It is hubris to believe otherwise. And, as we are constantly reminded, the gods are merciless when punishing mortals possessed by such vanity.

In less archaic, more scientific terms, let’s just say that the panic-inducing mouse is equivalent to the fragile butterfly whose undetected movements trigger delayed chaos in the universe of which it is but an infinitesimal part. And we, who it seems must contend with spiralling, expanding chaos, can count on only one thing: that no one who arrogates to him- or herself the authority to foresee the future or shape its parameters and set its course according to preconceived ideas or ordained ideals will get things right. Some major events (tempests, droughts, famines, plagues) or the sheer willfulness of self-proclaimed agents of the ‘inevitable’ compounded by the catastrophic inattention of their followers – blind know-it-alls leading blind true-believers – or else some apparently random minor occurrences, the spasms of rodents and insects chief among them, will unfailingly and irrevocably alter the unfolding of history as we have been told it must occur.

Lately we’re being taught this lesson anew – in ‘The East’ as in ‘The West’, which is to say on both sides of an ill-defined and fundamentally artificial geopolitical divide that continues to bedevil understanding on both sides. According to the Manichean maths of the postwar power equation, Moscow was – despite growing competition from its former ‘frenemy’ Peking – the *de facto* capital of ‘The East’ and the historical fountainhead of International Communism. Its antitheses, New York (business) and Washington (politics), were the dual centres of Capitalism and Liberal Democracy. During the long, reciprocally damaging Cold War between these global adversaries, stability – which in many ways meant stasis or at best stunted advancement – was, by default, the order of the day. Confrontations during the Berlin Blockade (1948–9) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) harrowingly demonstrated that attempts at dramatically rewriting this equation risked global conflict, if not global annihilation.

Since the 1950s and 1960s Americans and Russians have both learned the hard way in Afghanistan and other hotly contested locales in the Middle Eastern theatre of this endless Cold War – a war by proxy that has continued unabated since long after the USSR dissolved. ‘Stuff happens,’ to quote the terse summary of a famously mistaken gamer of events, Donald Rumsfeld. Why? Because there are butterflies flapping their wings everywhere you look. Or, more to the point, considering that we are reflecting on Ilya and Emilia Kabakov – the two most consequential artists to emerge from Russia since the 1920s – there are flies beating their wings and causing turbulence. Or, perhaps, the disturbance is triggered by one of the numerous elephants that Ilya Kabakov

7 Ilya Kabakov *Self-Portrait* 1962
(detail). See p.99

has drawn, an elephant stampeded by a mouse that has overturned an apple cart, scattering its contents in dozens of unforeseen directions.

If this text thus far has a whimsical, storybook tone, it is in the spirit of the artists themselves. For Ilya Kabakov began his creative life, and first made his name, as an illustrator of children's books in Moscow in the Khrushchev era of the early 1950s through the mid-1960s. And, in line with the basic premise of this piece, who guessed that Nikita Khrushchev, once the hardest of hardline party chiefs in Ukraine, would have spearheaded radical de-Stalinization? Yet Khrushchev's tenure as party boss featured alternating currents of timid liberalisation and abrupt authoritarian backlash, of fitful 'progress' and rigid retrenchment. Among many things, his was the era of Sputnik and Yuri Gagarin, of the so-called *stilyagi* (Soviet hipsters, many of them offspring of the most privileged sectors of the Soviet elite, or *nomenklatura*), of the literary 'Thaw', which took its name from a novel by old-school Soviet cultural bellwether Ilya Ehrenburg but was thereafter epitomized by the poems of Yevgeny Yevtushenko and the stories of Alexander Solzhenitsyn published in the state-sponsored organ of carefully managed intellectual openness *Ogonyok* (Little Flame).

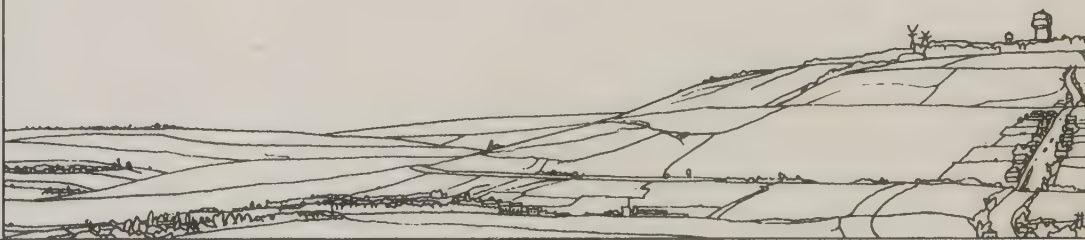
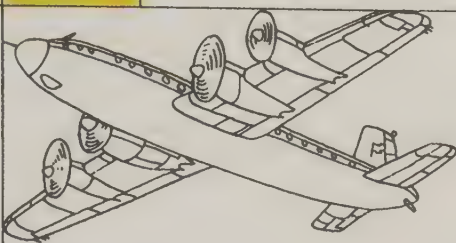
It was also a period of stern repressions when 'too much' freedom was demanded or spontaneously claimed. Such was the case of the 1957 ban of Boris Pasternak's revisionist historical novel *Dr Zhivago*, which in turn precipitated the rise of *samizdat* (that is to say self-publishing). *Samizdat's* visual arts equivalent consisted of rare guerrilla shows, such as the famous *Bulldozer Exhibition* of 1974, so named because earthmoving equipment commandeered by the police overran the site where the show was mounted on the outskirts of Moscow. Early examples of performance art also mysteriously appeared and disappeared at the periphery of the city. One group, Collective Actions, was led by Andrei Monastyrski and involved the occasional participation of Ilya Kabakov, along with that of his old friend Eric Bulatov. Meanwhile Apt Art—or apartment art—flourished in exhibitions organised in the flats of non-conformist artists of every imaginable aesthetic persuasion and style.

Overt political challenges to Soviet power were almost unheard of and when they occurred they were quickly, sometimes brutally, dealt with. That was notably true of military crackdowns on the 1956 uprisings in Hungary and Poland, not to mention the constant and invasive presence of the KGB in the lives of Soviet citizens. In 1963, conservatives displeased by his rollercoaster rule deposed Khrushchev and replaced him with two of their own, Alexei Kosygin and Leonid Brezhnev, who presided over a long period of increased repression, social calcification and economic stagnation, lasting until Brezhnev's death in 1982.

This was the dreary, deprived and inherently dangerous context in which Ilya Kabakov's aesthetic was formed. This was the reality that materialised after the glorious mirage promised by dialecticians and militants of the heroic phase of the October Revolution had dissipated. It was the cluttered *tabula rasa* left by mesmerisingly abstract futurism as it degenerated into grimly prosaic Socialist Realism.

Against that background Kabakov shunned membership of the upper echelons of the Soviet creative hierarchy by sidestepping an education in traditional painting and sculpture, since their aim was to celebrate the history and achievements of the USSR. Instead he opted for and excelled at the less exalted vocation of illustrator because in that capacity he could safely develop his own visual language and think his own thoughts at a safe remove from the centre of attention, where culture and politics converged and too often clashed. Free from the burden of imagining a more perfect version of Soviet

Окно.



Удодоконик

И. Кабаков 1970 г.

society than actually existed, he was also able to examine the shambles of everyday life around him and to fill it with fanciful figments of his imagination. In short, he was at liberty to delve into the illusions, deceptions and contradictions of his situation by means of the oldest of ruses used to elude authoritarian sanction: telling tales, spinning paradoxes and attracting a sympathetic but otherwise unsuspecting audience with Aesopian fables.

Kabakov's first fully realised body of work created a new genre within the broad category of Apt Art. That *oeuvre* consisted of some fifty-two albums, of which the core was ten boxed portfolios, each in turn consisting of dozens of sheets of hand-inscribed texts and hand-illuminated pages that in sequence portray symbolic 'characters' dialectically described by multiple narrators, none of whom has complete knowledge of their subject and all of whom have distinctively divergent viewpoints. Each of these alter egos personifies an aspect of Kabakov's predicament, as well as that of Soviet citizens generally, and together they extend the literary tradition of allegories and parables established by Ivan Krylov, Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy and Daniil Kharms into the visual arts.

Formally speaking, *Ten Characters* 1970–4 and the other albums were a direct derivation from the work that Kabakov produced for his 'day job'. (Incidentally, among the many titles that he embellished was *Dr Aybolit*, an adaptation of Hugh Lofting's *Dr Dolittle* by Korney Chukovsky, a leading children's author, translator, poet and friend of Pasternak.) Leitmotifs that appear in

8 Ilya Kabakov *The Looking-out-the-Window Arkhipov* 1970–4

Ink on paper mounted on card
Page from album 10 of *Ten Characters*
50 pages, 35 × 51.5 (each sheet)
Private collection



several albums—as well as in Kabakov’s early, decidedly makeshift, overtly unprofessional, and subtly or not so subtly tongue-in-cheek ‘paintings’ (his 1962 self-portrait as a Gagarin-like cosmonaut mocks both old master mannerisms and new masters-of-the-universe propaganda, see fig.7)—are especially pertinent to the artist’s subsequent development. Emblematising his avoidance of the limelight, Kabakov frequently concentrated on figures hugging the edges (*Untitled* 1974, p.89) or hiding in the corners of the pictorial space (*The Decorator Malign* 1972, fig.9), in the middle of which he has left a gaping void. This void haunts all of his subsequent two-dimensional and three-dimensional work; it is a void hollowed out by the failure of revolutionary ideology to deliver on its claims. An additional dimension of Kabakov’s aesthetic—the fourth dimension, time—was presaged by his performative presentation of the albums, which entailed the artist placing them on an easel and reading them aloud to invited guests in his Moscow loft.

The completion of *Ten Characters* left Kabakov at a fork in the road, aesthetically, though he was unable to explore the furthest, most radical reaches of one path—installation—until after he had left the Soviet Union in 1988, roughly a year before the utter collapse of the Russian Communist society that much of his work simultaneously encapsulated and satirised. During much of this interlude Kabakov poured his ideas into paintings and reliefs. The majority are strikingly graphic, in keeping both with his illustrational background—although he dispensed with the filigree and calligraphic line that had made him famous as an official book artist and focused on wry pastiches rather than earnest

9 Ilya Kabakov *The Decorator Malign* 1972

Ink and coloured pencil on paper mounted on card

Page from album 8 of *Ten Characters* 72 pages, 35 × 51.5 (each sheet)

Private collection

emulations of the painterly styles he invoked (Rembrandt van Rijn, as in the *Self-Portrait* just mentioned, Paul Cézanne, Kazimir Malevich and, among bland but bombastic Party painters, Sergei Gerasimov and Isaak Brodsky) – and with the formatting of lists and rules posted in collective housing units and other public buildings.

The Answers of an Experimental Group 1970–1 thus incorporates the look of bureaucratically organised life with the dialogic practices of classic Moscow Conceptualism with which Kabakov was closely associated when he arrived in ‘The West’ (pp.116–17). Paired with the grid of the left-hand side, which has been elegantly lettered with the enigmatic replies of sixteen ‘participants’, is the blank wall of the right side, to which have been attached actual objects – Duchampian ‘ready-mades’ of proletarian simplicity and banality – whose mysteries the respondents attempt to explain.

Some works have an uncanny, almost science-fiction quality: *The Boy* 2000 reprises an earlier version of 1965 (p.107), as if it were a template for ‘The New [Soviet] Man’ in an early development state, while later works created while Kabakov was still in Soviet Russia, such as *Tested!* 1981 (p.121) and *By December 25 in Our District...* 1983 (p.123), are deliberately enervated renditions of conventional Soviet iconography. Paintings such as *Holiday # 1, # 2, # 6 and # 8* (1987, pp.124–7) appropriate festive depictions of Soviet society, covered with collaged paper flowers – meagre materiality versus impossible idealism? – and revisit such motifs and strategies, while post-millennial montages of masterpieces in the Hermitage and other Russian museums, combined with clips from Soviet magazines – *Two Times # 17, # 20, # 22 and # 24* (fig.10 and pp.146–9) – showing happy workers of every description, would seem to be *memento mori* of an ageing exile for whom the past is more bitter than sweet.

Between these episodes of painting, by a man who was suspicious of the medium’s privileges in the 1960s and declared it altogether anachronistic in the 1980s, come a number of astonishing, unexpected and unprecedented installations. At this juncture, we may double back on an issue raised previously, namely the pronounced literary aspects of what Kabakov calls ‘Total Installation’, and then enlarge upon the ramifications of the adjective ‘total’. From Robert Rauschenberg’s ‘Combines’ of the late 1950s to Kabakov’s *The Answers of an Experimental Group* twenty years on, the DNA of installation art was inherent in the attachment of objects from the real world to surfaces traditionally opened up by painters into worlds within and beyond the picture plane. Continuing in the whimsical vein with which this essay began – chaotic butterflies, flies and mice included, not to mention the elephant in the room which was the lumbering clumsiness and destructiveness of the Party – imagine, then, that the implicit wall on which the text appears to the left of *The Answers of an Experimental Group* and the explicit wall from which the clothes hanger is suspended on the right opened up in both directions to additional panels, and that they in turn opened up into still other panels that enclosed the space of the viewer like a cell, or, as they multiplied, like a catacomb or labyrinth (see fig.27 and pp.42–51 and 176–9). Alternatively, suppose that individual sheets from *Ten Characters* morphed into gatefolds that similarly enveloped the reader even as they grew like the mushroom-infused pages of *Alice in Wonderland*. *Incident in the Corridor Near the Kitchen* 1989 (pp.162–3) almost diagrams this transformation. In essence, it bodies forth the formal logic and the structural genesis of Total Installation. Mental space is fleshed out as physical space and animated by the artist in collaboration with the participant observer. There the air castles of fairy tales become housing units of a fatally flawed socialist utopia and then, inexplicably, flip back again and recover their phantasmagorical guise to the accompaniment



of beating angel wings (flies transfigured?). There incomplete stories told by unreliable narrators become walk-on stages for forensic dramaturgy or sites for the archaeological exploration and partial reconstitution of a lost Empire that we know from the start never existed except in facsimiles manufactured and sold by the State.

In the most literal sense, *Ten Characters* as albums were reimagined and reconfigured as the same number of rooms for the 1988 exhibition *Ten Characters* at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York. Mounted the year Kabakov settled in 'The West', it was also the year he began a collaboration with New York-based émigrée Emilia Lekach Kanevsky that resulted in an extraordinary flowering and proliferation of his work worldwide. *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* 1985 (pp.150–7), epitomises this quantum leap, while also demonstrating that Kabakov was primed to make it in Russia before he actually did so.

Steeped in anti-literary biases of American formalism as preached by Clement Greenberg from the 1940s through the 1960s, and elaborated upon in the 1970s and 1980s by acolytes such as Michael Fried who railed against the 'theatricality' of installation, the art public in the United States had trouble grasping the true nature and magnitude of what Ilya Kabakov had done

10 *Two Times* # 24 2016
Oil paint on canvas
216 × 240
Private collection

on his own and what the couple were doing right before their eyes. Radically altering the aesthetic dynamics of modernism and postmodernism to allow for storytelling, the Kabakovs' contribution joins that of Philip Guston, Mike Nelson, Cindy Sherman and countless other contemporaries or near contemporaries working in every medium who foster the art of unreliable narrators, 'speaking in tongues' in an ambiguously phrased conditional sense.

Nevertheless, audiences elsewhere have been more receptive. Consequently the Kabakovs have been ubiquitous internationally in large-format exhibitions such as Documenta and the Venice Biennale, and fitfully visible back in Russia where they were the subject of a multi-venue retrospective in Moscow that included the Pushkin Museum where only a few years earlier the longstanding Soviet-era director had dismissed the artists as a 'flash in the pan'.

They are anything but that. The Kabakovs' staying power has proven to be remarkable, especially given that their 'career' in 'The West' began in the middle of Ilya Kabakov's artistic life, the first thirty years of which passed almost without notice in the 'corners' and 'margins' of the Soviet void. His leap from there to the white-hot centre of the cosmopolitan art world has been correspondingly remarkable and fraught with perils, inasmuch as his wariness of the tendency of such places imploding into black holes is as well founded in 'The West' as in 'The East'. Several factors argue for the conviction that the Kabakovs' long-term standing is fundamentally unimpeachable and as permanent as anything can be in this awesomely polymorphous but ultimately ephemeral world.

The degree to which the dialectic between painted spaces and artfully coded and self-evidently fictive Total Installation—installations which betray their own artificiality as deftly as they expose the lies behind the utopian dreams they model—adds many mansions to the multi-chambered house of international modern and postmodern art. By the same token the Kabakovs' insistence that fiction and illusion are as basic to conceptual art as formal logic or linguistics—the tap roots of its major European and North American tendencies—not only pushes aside culturally specific taboos handed down by the prophets of mid-twentieth-century North Atlantic formalism, it also opens horizons for emerging artists everywhere.

Finally, the fact that so many of the Kabakovs' recent hypothetical drawings and realised installations have as their point of departure a longing for transcendence by means of fantastic machinery, divine intervention or visionary *bricolage*—absent Jacob's direct assistance would-be angels must contrive their own ladders to Heaven—tells us that even as the hopes for Total Revolution expired in the misery and petty antagonisms of communal kitchens, Total Installation keeps alive the poetics of hope. It does this by providing a space where temporary structures imbued with human aspirations, yet wonderfully rich in human folly, can be conceived and given the provisional substance they require for us to see them clearly, think about them unhurriedly, and identify with them as much as our own aspirations are congruent with them in one or more aspects, leaving incongruencies as opportunities for discovery and/or reverie. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov have outlived the Soviet Union in which they were born, as has their work, but their imaginations harbour vestiges of dreams deferred, and their multifarious, multifaceted, polyvalent art makes the impossible manifest.

Ольга Марковна Крышка Машенька Рогова*



Примечание

* Деревня Новые Вязьмы
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** Станция Козельцы
Крымская область

THE ELIMINATION OF UTOPIANISM IS YET ANOTHER FORM OF UTOPIANISM

‘The elimination of utopianism[,] alas, is also yet another form of utopianism. The creation of projects, project thinking, the formulation of all kinds of utopias is immanently inherent in us, in our consciousness, and furthermore, it rests as a stimulus and as a basis for any of our actions as long as we remain human beings.’ Ilya and Emilia Kabakov¹

It is important to remember that Ilya and Emilia Kabakov received formal educations in music and art in the Soviet Union which were highly conventional; educations grounded in a worldview that pre-dated the eruption of the avant-garde into the cultural sphere. As such, the Kabakovs are among the very few contemporary artists who can look at a painting like Raphael's *La belle jardinière* 1507 and see such a work not as a quaint relic from a disappeared art historical past, but as something vital, something even magical; as a source of otherworldly aesthetic energies (fig.12). Within the Kabakovs' own art there thus exists a traditionalist sensibility: an abiding commitment to the veneration of past cultural achievements, to harmony, to beauty, to monumental simplicity, to a profound desire to entice and please viewers, rather than shock or alienate them. In this sense the Kabakovs would no doubt be comfortable producing work from inside an art historical time machine, leaping from one period and place to another, and this is one of the reasons why an atmosphere of fantasy, timelessness and storytelling sometimes surrounds their art. This is also why their art may look ‘childish’ to some, rather than ‘child-like’, or it may even appear to be an art of sentimentality, rather than about sentimentality, but don't be fooled by surface appearances: artists who matured in the Soviet Union tend to be practised at the art of deception, at those tactics of dissimulation and masquerade that allowed one to navigate the USSR's duplicitous daily life. ‘Authenticity’ is a noun that rarely crosses the Kabakovs' lips.

All of that being said, the Kabakovs are also keenly aware that one does not choose the time and place of one's creativity. One inhabits a particular slice of Earth at a particular moment; so the challenge—the drama, one might say—of the Kabakovs' art can be seen in their wrestling with the spirits of newness and transformation (spirits that have brought devastation and disorientation so often during the last century), while still recalling the past without disabling nostalgia. How to respond in our time to Raphael's remarkable portrait of natural beauty and maternal affection; to the artist's orchestration of light, colour and line? I would suggest that a work such as Ilya Kabakov's 1990 installation *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)* aims to do precisely this, though one might be forgiven for not recognising this fact (pp.42–51, 176–9).² That is, the Kabakovs know very well that one cannot simply redeploy the techniques of Raphael. Such an approach would be artificial, and—despite the artists' best intentions—the work would function as kitsch. The Kabakovs' art understands this dynamic implicitly. In the given case, the work argues that one must perform a kind of psychic translation of Raphael's sensitivity to atmosphere, colour, composition and light, and, in this way, the installation's shoddy, poorly painted, half-lit corridor, outfitted with wall-mounted, framed pages recounting the troubled

11 Ilya Kabakov *Olga Markovna Kryshka*
1965
India ink and coloured pencil on paper
26 × 16
Private collection



life of Ilya Kabakov's mother, strives to evoke the essential qualities of Raphael's work, but in a traumatic, claustrophobic, cloistered idiom. This strategy creates a space redolent of maternal affection, but one also filled with a cacophonous chorus of displacements and repressions. Or, in a modulated psychological register, consider the Kabakovs' outdoor public installation piece *The Rice Fields* 2000, located in the Japanese countryside (fig.15).³ Here the pair 'frame' a sculptural ensemble with passages of poetry that have been installed on a hillside, evoking the visual world of Nicolas Poussin's famous bucolic landscapes, as well as his devotion to poetry, all without overtly imitating a Poussin canvas. In other words, we see that the art of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov is repeatedly defined by its kinship to established art historical narratives and its desire to revisit this canon within the structures of the contemporary art world.

Of course, there is another side to the Kabakovs' activities—an orientation which dates back (at least) to the 1960s in Moscow. This is what might be called their engagement with the avant-gardist sensibility, their ongoing dialogue not only with great works from the distant past, but also with the complex evolution of twentieth-century visual art in Russia, the Soviet Union and the West. As a student at Moscow's prestigious Surikov Institute of Art in the 1950s, Ilya Kabakov continually confronted the discrepancies and deficiencies of the Soviet public sphere, its vexed non-intersection of words and deeds, and its explicit prohibition of certain modes of art-making. Paintings such as Fedor Shurpin's *Morning of Our Native Land* 1948, a work that depicts a god-like Joseph Stalin surveying the collectivised landscape, dominated Kabakov's official pedagogical instruction (fig.13). Such explicitly Socialist Realist canvases presented faux mythological images designed not only to inspire the Soviet people to heroic feats, but also to underscore the government's absolute ideological mastery, its ability to enforce a compulsory visual code utterly divorced from Alfred Barr's conception of twentieth-century art.⁴ By the time Kabakov became a full member of the Artists' Union in the mid-1960s, nakedly propagandistic images such as Shurpin's had given way to mellow, more painterly renderings of 'everyday life under developed socialism', but even these later, more innocuous works pointed to an extremely conflicted local artistic

12 Raphael *La belle jardinière* 1507

Oil paint on wood

122 × 80

Musée du Louvre, Paris

13 Fedor Shurpin *Morning of Our Native Land* 1948

Oil paint on canvas

167 × 232

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

14 (Ilya Kabakov) *Landscape with a Barge*, 1972 2002

Oil paint on canvas

89 × 138

Private collection

15 *The Rice Fields* 2000

Permanent installation, Echigo Tsumari Japan

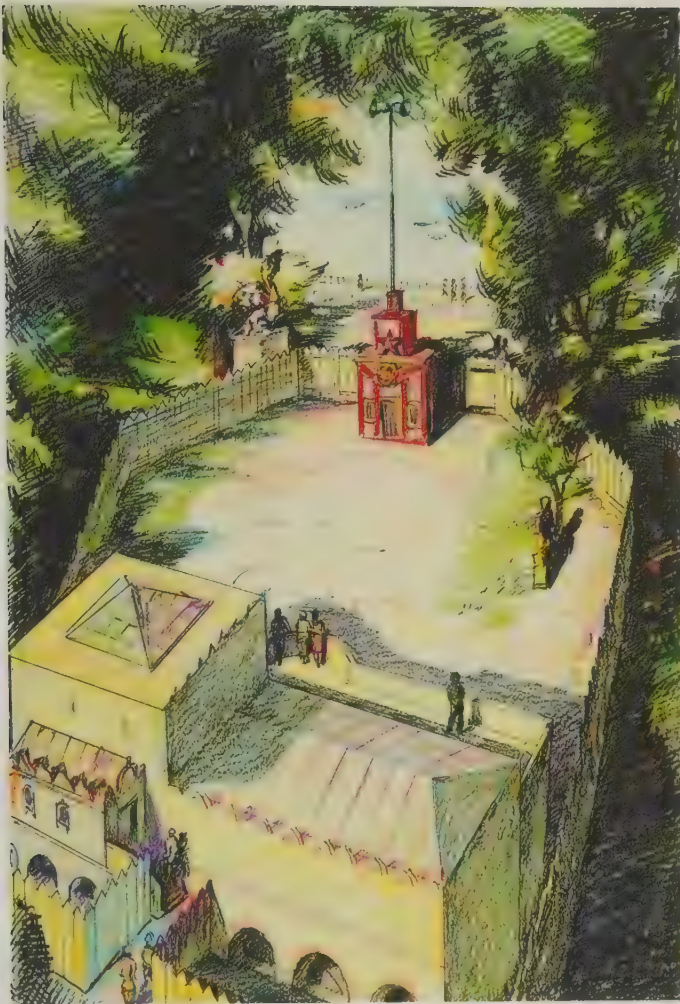


heritage, as they owed allegiance both to established Socialist Realist orthodoxy, as well as to the most advanced painting of the early twentieth century, particularly the art of Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso.

Such evocations of modern art's underlying genealogy appear with renewed conviction in many of Ilya Kabakov's paintings of the past two decades. A work such as (*Ilya Kabakov*) *Landscape with a Barge*, 1972 2002 (fig.14) ostentatiously combines painterly effects drawn from nineteenth-century Russian landscape painting, and early twentieth-century masters of abstraction such as Kazimir Malevich, as well as standard boiler-plate renderings of postwar Socialist Realism. And here, at the juncture of these disparate, competing visual languages, we reach a crucial moment in the trajectory of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's art, the point at which the canon, the history of modern art and the visual culture of Socialist Realism meet. One can also detect this multi-sided back and forth in much of Ilya Kabakov's work preceding his settling in the West in 1988. In his drawings, albums and paintings, beginning in the early 1960s, the artist frequently repurposes the rational, linear, broadly 'utopian' logics of works by artists from the first years of the Soviet era, such as Aleksandr Rodchenko or El Lissitzky, to produce jumbles of grotesque bodies and compendiums of errant human calculation.⁵ Similarly, in works of the 1970s, Kabakov reinterprets the secular productions of Soviet Constructivism as ethereal representations of vaguely spiritual things: angels' wings, or humans suspended in mid-flight. In this way, Kabakov's art prior to his move to the West repeatedly undoes the futuristic, communistic visions of the Soviet avant-garde, turning them into odd *mélanges* of a nineteenth-century past, a Socialist Realist present and an (abandoned) avant-garde future.

One could say that this conflicted terrain also offers the crucial departure point for the exhibition at Tate Modern. Engineered to coincide with the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution, *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future* is described in advance publicity as being 'deeply rooted in the visual culture of Soviet society, yet speaking equally to universal themes'. Above all, the exhibition aims to explore 'the theme of failed utopia'. All of this makes perfect sense, of course. The Kabakovs' wide-ranging 'Total Installations', as they unfolded throughout the 1990s and 2000s, came to be seen in most quarters as a giant, serialised verdict on the Soviet Union, with the USSR playing its accustomed role as 'failed utopia'.⁶ However, over time comes the realisation that we may have been associating this art with a single utopian project when in fact it is much bigger than this, much more all-encompassing. In retrospect, it may be that the twentieth century as a whole represents the utopia that has truly failed us.

The Kabakovs' art invariably discloses a world shot through with traumas big and small, and, on this score, one might argue that there are two basic kinds of trauma: avoidable and unavoidable. There are the traumas that you bring on yourself, with your plans and designs, and the ones that come at you like a tractor-trailer jumping a highway median. In the Kabakovs' art there is always much more going on than a simple, straightforward fable of victimhood (a trauma of the second sort). Instead, there is always a note of tragic ambition, of a desire to attain some enriched sense of our shared humanity that pushes one beyond the everyday into a zone of psychological distress (a trauma very much of the first sort). In this landscape of acute traumas, this über-Kabakovian world, it is hard to imagine things ever going right, even if they probably should; and, in this sense, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's art always exists problematically within the tidy, well-managed venues of the international art world. While the artists seek the material support of these institutional actors, their art tends

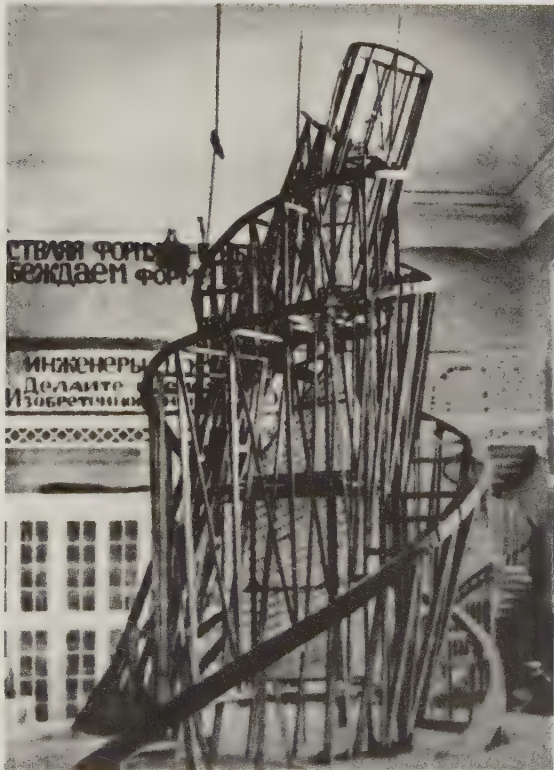


to distort and disrupt the neutral framing of the gallery and museum beyond all recognition, as occurred at the 1993 Venice Biennale where Ilya Kabakov presented *The Red Pavilion*, an agit-prop structure installed on the grounds of the Russian Pavilion behind what appeared to be a deserted worksite (figs 16–17).⁷ Passers-by naturally assumed that the entire area around the pavilion was under construction, its grounds off-limits to visitors, and this is a typically Kabakovian stratagem: the artwork in a very literal way makes it impossible for the art institution to function correctly, and, as a result, the artwork actually stops public enlightenment from coming to pass. In this way the Kabakovs' art articulates—to quote a publicity blurb about the duo—‘an ever-changing, ambitious project designed to reintegrate contemporary art into the public imagination, to challenge art's viewers to become utopians without any allegiance to any particular utopia’.⁸

It can be argued that we see the most persuasive expression of this sensibility of ‘utopianism without utopia’ in the total installation *The Palace of Projects*—a massive work that openly models itself on Vladimir Tatlin's famous design for a *Monument to the Third International* 1920 (figs 18–19). The Kabakovs' palace itself, in turn, is filled with would-be utopian plans and designs to transform the world for humanity's benefit, some of them not so bad, some completely misguided. For example, in a section of the installation titled *How Can One Change Oneself?* the viewer runs into a text that insists that they ‘... make two wings, using the sketch that is appended to the project, and also

16 Ilya Kabakov's concept drawing for *The Red Pavilion*. Drawing dated 1993

17 Ilya Kabakov *The Red Pavilion*, with musical arrangement by Vladimir Tarasov, 1993. Installation view, Russian Pavilion, 45th Venice Biennale. Museum Ludwig, Cologne



18 *The Palace of Projects*
Installation view at The Roundhouse,
London 1998

19 Vladimir Tatlin *Monument to the
Third International* 1920

leather straps for attaching these wings on your back (p.184). After this, stay alone in your room (this condition is fairly important, for both the productivity of the impending activity, as well as to avoid undesirable reactions on the part of your family) and put on the wings, and sit in silence without doing anything for 5–10 minutes. After this, you should go about your usual chores without leaving the room. After 2 more hours you should repeat this initial pause again. After 2–3 weeks of these daily procedures, the effect of the wings will begin to manifest itself with greater and greater force.⁹

What these instructions point to—and what the Kabakovs' project as a whole underscores—is the importance for the artists of the realms of pedagogy and learning; of collective activity geared toward mutual self-improvement rather than the mere pursuit of entertainment. As such, Kabakovian installations typically engineer rather downbeat atmospheres, pursuing a melancholy that frequently pulls the Kabakovs toward childhood, toward the supposedly ameliorative communal activities located in dormitories, hospitals and schools.¹⁰ This orientation is plain to see in the large permanent installation *The Deserted School or School # 6* 1993 located at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas. When entering this work, one exits the high desert of west Texas to penetrate into the dilapidated chaos of an abandoned Soviet-era school. The sense of intense psychic estrangement that one feels as one walks through these decaying, irrelevant rooms, these spaces ostensibly dedicated to a multicultural, multigenerational quest for benevolent, universal human edification, provokes—at least in this viewer—an emotional response so visceral that the installation might very well be viewed not so much as an example of compelling, yet idiosyncratic ethnography, but rather as a stirring monument to the degradation of the utopian impulse.

Sometimes, the composition of a painting takes time to settle in the eye; the same may be true for the hundred years that have just passed. For me, the Kabakovs' art allows us to see more clearly all of the things that we have lost over the course of those years, as well as all of the things that we never could have had; and learning to discern the difference between the two may be the ultimate instruction to be discovered within the art of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov.



20 *The Deserted School or School # 6*
Installation view in the disused army
barracks, Chinati Foundation, Marfa,
Texas 1993. Collection of Chinati
Foundation



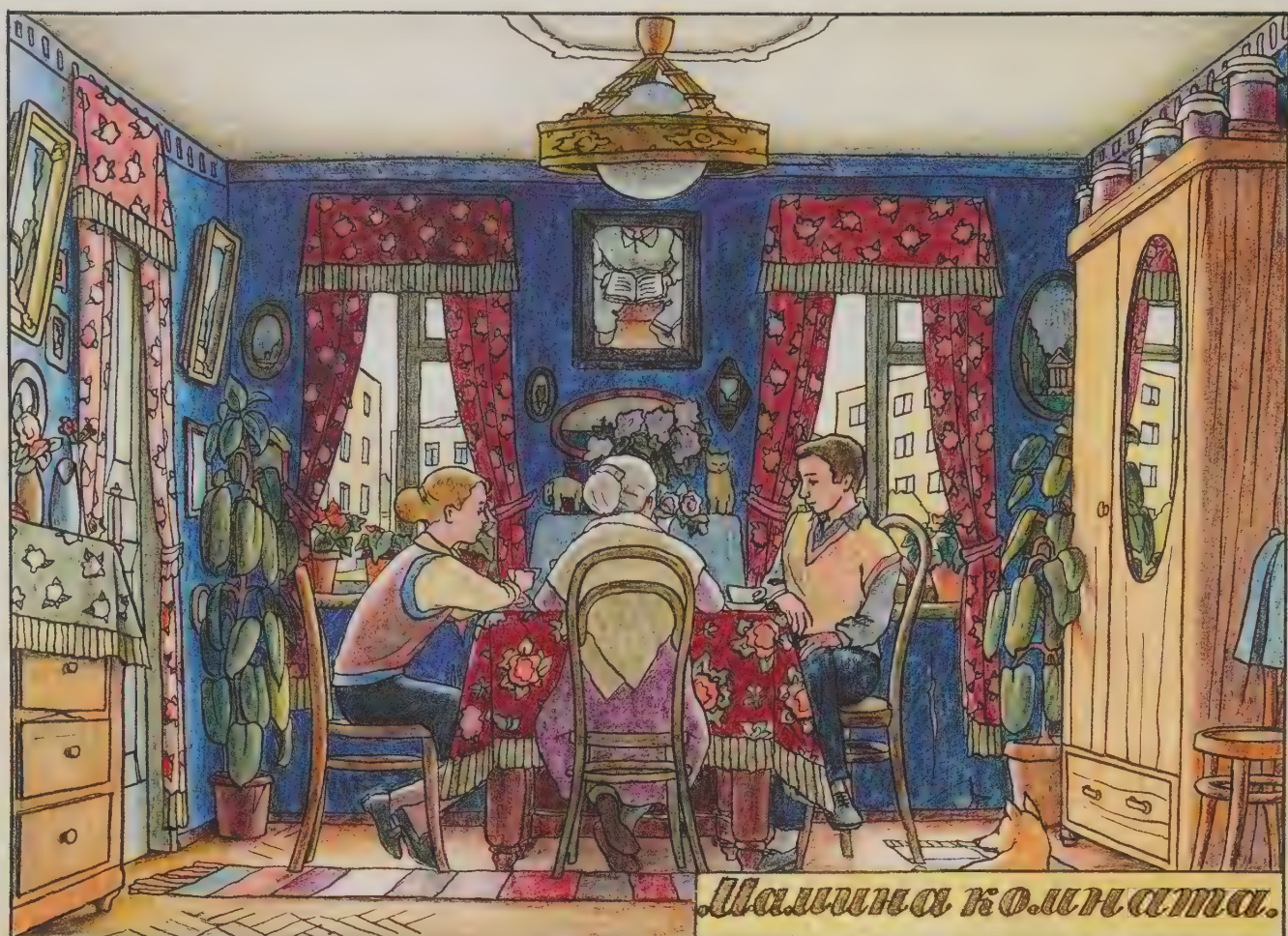
RE-INVENTING AUTHORSHIP

A retrospective exhibition of Ilya Kabakov's artistic work inevitably raises the following question: does the artist Ilya Kabakov really exist? Throughout his whole artistic career Kabakov has presented himself as a curator, biographer and historian who is occupied with showing the works of other artists. Of course, it was Kabakov himself who invented their identities, painted or drew their works, and wrote their texts. However, it would be a great simplification to say that the protagonists of Kabakov's albums and installations serve merely as masks for their true author. Rather, they realise certain attitudes, options and aspirations that Kabakov can identify with—but not completely. The fictional authors to whom Kabakov delegates his works are 'naïve' in a way in which Kabakov is not. They produce or collect images and objects 'for themselves'. They do not think about the gaze of the other—about the way in which their works can be seen, perceived and interpreted by this gaze. But it is precisely what Kabakov pretends to do: to install and situate in a public space works that were not originally made for exhibition. In his albums and installations he creates a tension between these two gazes: the gaze of the artist and the gaze of the spectator. These two gazes are never supposed to meet. The commentaries that Kabakov provides for his exhibitions always inform the visitor that these exhibitions are taking place after the alleged death of the fictitious artists/protagonists.

This strategy of pseudonymity is well known from the history of literature. Here Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa are the most famous examples. In the art context there is no such established tradition. Indeed, our whole art system is based on the notion of authentic individual authorship. However, the 1970s and 1980s were a time of intense discussion about the 'death of the author', as well as critique of the modernist claims of artistic novelty and originality. These discussions were started by Maurice Blanchot, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault primarily in the context of literary studies, but later they were extended to the art world. Insight into the non-subjective, anonymous functioning of literary and artistic language was combined here with recognition of the growing domination of technological image reproduction over individual artistic production. The work of Ilya Kabakov was a reaction to this crisis of authorship, but it took a somewhat different turn in comparison to the works of many of his Western colleagues. At that time the 'death of the author' was used by many theoreticians and artists as a starting point for critique of the figure of the 'artist-genius'. This critique saw the celebration of 'creative individuals' as a feature of institutional and commercial practices dominating the Western art world. Thus the crisis of authorship took a form of institutional critique.

However, the protagonists of Kabakov's installations are not famous artists but, rather, obscure, isolated lay practitioners who never achieved any institutional acceptance or success on the art market—and, in fact, never had such success as a goal. Serving as models for Kabakov's characters were his Soviet colleagues who practised their art outside the official state institutions. In the Soviet Union of that time, the artists who did not follow the guidelines of Socialist Realism remained under the radar of public attention and recognition. Kabakov therefore does not so much criticise the institutionalised cult of the

21 Ilya Kabakov presents album 2 *The Joker Gorokhov* (from the series *Ten Characters* 1970-4) in his studio, Moscow, 1979



И. Кабаков 71.

artist as express the fear that—due to the absence of institutional recognition—a body of artistic work risks being irretrievably lost. During his life in the Soviet Union, Kabakov was able to experience directly how divided, controversial and ideologically charged the concept of authorship could be. At that time he simultaneously worked as a highly successful illustrator of children's books within the official system of Soviet culture, and as an independent, unofficial artist outside the system. This caused a deep rift in his sense of identity because his artistic practice was defined by two quite distinct notions of authorship. It was in the early 1970s that Kabakov first realised that the central artistic issue for him was one of authorship, with his series of albums that appeared under the common title *Ten Characters*, developed between 1970 and 1974.⁴

Each of these albums is a book of loose sheets depicting in images and words the fictional biography of an artist living on the margins of society. The images in the albums are to be interpreted as the visions or works of their particular 'artist-heroes'. All the images bear inscriptions commenting from the perspective of the various friends and relatives of each artist. The final image in every album is a sheet of white paper announcing the death of the hero. Each album then concludes with several general résumés of the artist's oeuvre, voiced by further fictitious commentators, who, one presumes, reproduce the views of the art critics entrusted with the final evaluation of the artist's legacy. The visions and obsessions driving the heroes of these albums are of an altogether private nature. Their pictures capture these private visions without

22 Ilya Kabakov *Sitting-in-the-Closet*
Primakov 1972

Ink and coloured pencil on paper
mounted on card

Page from album 1 of *Ten Characters*
47 pages, 51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Centre Pompidou, Paris (see pp.92-3)

laying claim to being 'art' in the modern sense. Besides, the artistic execution of these pictures relates back to the conventional aesthetics that mark the typical illustrations found in Soviet children's books; following almost seamlessly in the tradition of nineteenth-century illustrated books, this was a style that Kabakov, as noted above, fluently mastered. These somewhat nostalgic, outdated aesthetics further emphasise that this is the work of lay artists who are striving to find expression for their modest, personal dreams beyond the influence of modern art movements. Moreover, the comments made by outsiders and added to these pictures offer evidence of the various misunderstandings to which any form of art is necessarily exposed—particularly in the eyes of contemporaries.

Starting with *Ten Characters*, Kabakov repeatedly focused on the mixture of hope and fear that fills the hearts of artists as they wait for the as-yet unknown viewer, the future context and the possible fate of their works. There is a hope that a different, future viewer might possibly understand their oeuvre better than their contemporaries, and maybe even accord them the due respect, love and esteem. But there is also anxiety at the prospect of some new and unknown future viewer who might, on the contrary, completely ignore the work or regard it as trash, with at best a certain sentimental value for the author and his immediate entourage—but not for anyone else. Kabakov offers an emotional description of this situation in one of his later texts:

'For almost thirty years the life of an unofficial artist was spent inside a locked and sealed world. All this time unofficial artists and authors were barred by strict political, ideological and aesthetic censorship from exhibiting or publishing their work... Caught in this virtually "cosmic" isolation, artists in these circles had to be entirely self-reliant and depend on one another to perform the roles that others should have played: viewers, critics, experts, historians and even collectors. It was inevitable that such a situation would lead to a deformation of the criteria defining the quality of a work. What did these pictures or concepts signify to the disinterested world outside, what did they signify not just to us, their inventors, but also to other people? This agonising question hung like the sword of Damocles over all those who for years had worked in the absence of objective criticism, or—perhaps worse—encountered nothing but the well-meaning approval of friends and family'.²

Kabakov's first major installation in the West was called *Ten Characters* (shown in 1988 at the Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York). When it came to deciding how he should best exhibit his work in the West, Kabakov was entirely consistent in falling back instantly on the old idea of fictitious authorship that he had developed at the beginning of the 1970s in his albums of the same title. The individual artworks that were put on display in his New York installation had been mainly created in Russia, and then distributed among ten different fictitious authors—whereby each figure was given an imaginary biography, presenting them as lonely, withdrawn individuals who practised their art in the seclusion of small rooms. This approach demonstrates how Kabakov's installations are rooted neither in performance art nor post-minimalist site-specific art, unlike most of his Western colleagues, but rather in narrative literature—or, more precisely, the novel. Every installation by Kabakov tells a story—almost always the same story about an isolated soul living in an uncomfortable, menacing environment. These almost baroque installations offer a programmatic contrast to the 'white cubes' of minimalist and conceptual installations. They play a game of light and shadow with the viewer's gaze, drawing attention to the



difficult issues raised by prying into other people's private lives and going through the intimate trash of their existence—but they also emphasise the pleasure of such voyeuristic incursions into the darkness of hidden intimacy. Art here is seen as the disclosure of private junk, which in fact ought to be protected from the dazzling light of the public gaze. Yet it is precisely this disclosure of intimacy that renders the whole thing interesting. It is no accident that the entire installation space of *Ten Characters* was made to look like a typical Soviet communal apartment in which former residents had left behind some nondescript trash that should really have been cleared away.

While the person living in each of the rooms is cocooned within his own private dreams, all the characters live together in one apartment. This is a case of communication without communication, of a closely knit daily life led in total inner isolation. For Kabakov the Soviet communal apartment is a paradigm for the place where the individual is exhibited, exposed and disclosed to the gaze of others. In the extreme intimacy of the shared apartment the entire visual space becomes a battlefield in the struggle to dominate the gaze. Being able to observe others is just as important as concealing and shielding oneself from their scrutiny.

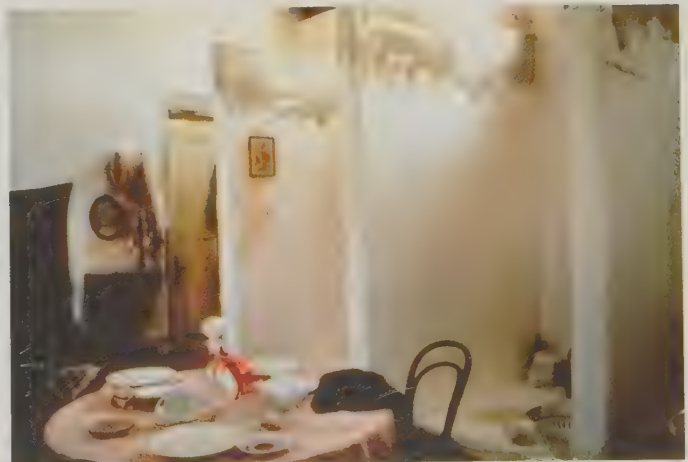
Thus the communal dimension turns everyone into an artist—as well as a work of art. In a communal apartment each of the inhabitants is imputed to be the author of the image of himself he presents to the others; and, as the author, each person can be relentlessly called to account for any flaws in their 'self-image'. Hence, in a dystopic manner, the Soviet communal apartment manages to achieve the utopian vision of Joseph Beuys: everyone must become an artist! So it is no accident that all the residents in Kabakov's communal apartment are artists—and by the same token, his communal apartment also

23 *NOMA or The Moscow Conceptual Circle*. Installation, Kunsthalle, Hamburg 1993 (with 12 rooms for the members of the Moscow Conceptual Circle, which included artists, philosophers and writers such as Dmitri Prigov and Boris Groys)

acts as a metaphor for the 'art community', the communal life shared by artists in our society. Indeed, what else is a museum or a major exhibition if not a communal apartment in which various artists, who may never have heard of one another before and who each aspire to very different goals and interests in their art, are herded together at the will of a curator appointed by society? In this manner, artists are forever encountering each other within the imposed intimacy of a shared context—together with often unknown, even hostile, neighbours.

The utopian, ideal model of such a community of lonely individuals was proposed by Kabakov in his installation *NOMA or The Moscow Conceptual Circle*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, 1993. Here the space was constructed in a way that reminded the visitor of a monastery or a hospital. This time the protagonists of the exhibition were not fictional characters but real members of the circle of Moscow conceptualists. Each one was represented by a room with a bed, a table, two chairs and a selection of artworks or texts on the walls. This ascetic space plunged the visitor into a harmonious and serene atmosphere—the ideal place for private meditation and serious conversation. Tension and conflict were not possible because all the protagonists were supposedly absorbed in their own art and writing production. Tension only emerges when the public emerges. This tension between public and private spheres is particularly visible in Kabakov's installation *The Toilet*, which he constructed for Documenta IX in Kassel in 1992 (figs 24–5, pp.190–3). In outward appearance, this toilet, erected by Kabakov as a detached building in the courtyard outside the Fridericianum palace, is reminiscent of the standard, more than primitive and highly uncomfortable public toilets which can still be found in the south of Russia. Yet the interior of this toilet building was furnished to look like private lodgings, similar to a typical family apartment. The family concerned was apparently leading a peaceful, carefree existence inside a public toilet—a fact that Kabakov did not overly dramatise. In his own commentary on this installation, Kabakov recalls an episode from his childhood: for a short while his mother had to live in the (disused) toilet of a boarding school. At the same time, however, this installation is an ingenious commentary on the Documenta itself. As in every major international exhibition, self-contained booths are constructed, even within the enormous space inside the Fridericianum, each of which is designed as a private space for the artist to install whatever he wishes however he likes. Visitors to the Documenta are entitled at any time to enter any of these booths for a short while—and then to leave again once they have answered their aesthetic call of nature.

24-5 *The Toilet* 1992
Installation, Documenta IX, Kassel,
Germany. Collection Stedelijk Museum
voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium
See pp.190-3





All of Kabakov's installations address the same question, to which the artist returns time and again in an almost obsessive way: 'What is left?' What remains after the death of a human being, of an artist, of a particular civilisation—such as, for example, the Soviet civilisation? In this respect, the most characteristic response is Kabakov's installation *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* 1985. The protagonist of the installation apparently built an apparatus that was capable of catapulting him straight from his bed into outer space. The experiment evidently worked, because all we see is the room the man used to occupy. The walls of the room are plastered with Soviet posters designed to communicate a sense of historical optimism. Inside the room we see the bed and the remains of the apparatus, along with some technical drawings showing how the apparatus functioned. A section of the ceiling—directly above the bed—has been destroyed. It was through this hole that the man shot out into space. Visitors cannot enter the room, but they can look into it from a small vestibule outside. On the walls of the vestibule there are texts describing the event from the point of view of the man's neighbours and acquaintances. There is thus only one conclusion to be drawn from the disappearance of the body, namely that this is evidence that the man really was physically transported into outer space, just as the disappearance of Christ's body was regarded as proof that the resurrection really had taken place.

So the answer to the question 'what is left?' that Kabakov gives is very materialistic: material traces, remnants and vestiges of human existence. It might be a collection of garbage (as in the installation *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* 1988, later realised as *Objects of His Life* 2005, pp.158–61) or an empty canvas and a chair (as in the installation *The Man Who Flew into His Picture* 1988). In all cases the status of the material traces and remnants remains unclear: should they be included in art history or should they be discarded as purely personal, culturally irrelevant garbage? This uncertainty dominates almost all of the installations that Kabakov produced in the 1990s. However, with his project *An Alternative History of Art* (which he started at the end of the 1990s and developed in collaboration with Emilia Kabakov through the 2000s), he shifts his attention to painting. *An Alternative History of Art* presents paintings created by three fictional characters who have allegedly been overlooked by standard, canonical art history. At first glance it seems that the question concerning the status of the material remnants and vestiges finds its answer here because these remnants seem to continue in the well-established painterly tradition. However, in the context of this project, Kabakov uses his own name 'Ilya Kabakov' as a pseudonym (fig.26).³

Kabakov's paintings presented in the installation incorporate quotations and stylistic elements from the art of Soviet Socialist Realism—the art that still has no canonical, museographed status inside the contemporary art system. In other words, 'Ilya Kabakov' operates here as a 'Soviet artist', which he was not during the time he spent living and working in the Soviet Union. Thus his later art, too, remains at least half-pseudonymic. Kabakov answers the 'death of the author' by the fictionalisation of the figure of the author. Even if the author is dead 'in reality', he or she can acquire after-life in the context of art.

26 (Ilya Kabakov) *A Ski Outing*, 1973
2003
Oil paint on canvas
186 × 290
Private collection



ON *LABYRINTH* (*MY MOTHER'S ALBUM*)

Labyrinth (My Mother's Album) is one of Ilya Kabakov's earliest installations. Comprising a spiralling, fifty-metre-long corridor that contains the life story of his mother, it was first presented in New York in 1990, one year after she passed away. At that time the work set new precedents in the artist's concept of 'Total Installation' through its all-encompassing structure, transporting the visitor from the museum environment into an immersive space of psychological drama.¹ However, it also constitutes an exception in Kabakov's oeuvre, in that it is one of the few works directly related to his personal history.

The characters that usually appear in Kabakov's work—from the Untalented Artist and the Garbage Man (who never threw anything away), to the various people who live in the communal apartments that are named in his paintings, and even the old man in *My Grandfather's Shed* 1997—are fictional. The artist has described them as 'experiments in biography', invented or extrapolated from personal experience to communicate the convoluted ironies and realities of Soviet society.

Kabakov even sees himself as a character, as he suggests in his book *The Text as the Basis of Visual Expression* (2000), in which he titles two sections 'How...' and 'Where I became a character of myself'.² To survive in the Soviet Union, the artist says, everyone had to adopt a number of personas for work, for society, for family and for friends. Life was 'like a theatre in which you played many roles'.³ As a reflection of this, his installations, albums and paintings generally establish a theatre in which his absent actors insinuate a drama that fuels the viewer's imagination. *Labyrinth*, however, is no theatre play. While the installation has dramaturgy, for Kabakov his mother—Bertha Urievna Solodukhina—never became a character through which he could develop flights of fantasy.

According to both Emilia and Ilya Kabakov, Solodukhina was the most intensely 'real' person in the artist's life, representing everything that could, and did, go wrong in the Soviet Union: 'For me she is an image of constant misfortune that I couldn't change,' he has said.⁴ The helpless feeling he had as a boy, unable to protect his mother from poverty and homelessness, never left him. This continuous anxiety, coupled with the vivid impressions gleaned from her personal accounts—'of a life told in simple words that turn a soul inside out'⁵—informs *Labyrinth*:

'When I think about that world in which my mother's life passed, about the condensed image of it, what arises in my imagination is a long and semi-dark corridor which is twisted like a labyrinth, where behind each new turn, behind each bend, there is not a bright exit glimmering in the distance, but just the same grubby floor, the same gray, dusty, poorly painted walls illuminated by weak, 40-watt light bulbs.'

As with many of his works, Kabakov has written extensively about *Labyrinth*, vividly describing both the atmosphere and the content of the installation:

27 Ilya Kabakov *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)*. Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York 1990





'the ceiling is cracked in many places and is supported by wooded boards, the floor hasn't been swept for a long time, soot-covered light bulbs that barely emit any light hang from the ceiling. And as in any communal apartment, there are many doors. A new door is revealed behind every turn of the corridor; some of them are tightly shut, others are slightly open so that you could go through them with some difficulty. The upper part of the corridor and ceiling are painted gray, the lower part, as in ordinary "communal" places, is covered with an unpleasant red-brown paint. Photographs, texts, and cut outs from postcards are hanging in frames and pasted on wallpaper along one side of the entire length of this corridor, approximately 50m.'

29-30 Framed collages #1 and #2, from *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)* 1990

The outcome of this monotonous, unkempt detail, when realised in physical form, is an environment that conveys a sense of quiet desolation and claustrophobia.

There are seventy-six framed works installed along one side of the long corridor. The background of each comprises salmon-pink and grey patterned wallpaper glued onto brown backing-board. Against this wallpaper are black and white photographs, trimmed by hand, mounted top centre on green, beige, blue or purple craft paper, and outlined in coloured pencil. Taken by Kabakov's uncle, Yuri Grigorevich Blekher, who was a professional photographer, some of the images are of Moscow, but most depict quotidian views of Berdyansk, a coastal town in south-east Ukraine on the Black Sea, where Blekher and his wife Riva (Kabakov's maternal aunt) lived, and where his mother moved to in 1959, after her retirement. Underneath each photograph are two labels, handwritten in pink and blue pencil. The one on the left states 'Memoirs of my

28 (opposite) Detail of doorway from *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)*. Installation view at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York 1990

Mother'. The other names Blekher as photographer and titles the image, occasionally also noting a location and date (figs 29–30).

About two-thirds down the wallpapered background, to the right, is a rectangular piece of beige craft paper. Attached to this are typed notes – chronological fragments of Kabakov's mother's memoir – perched above a narrow block of two or three small, colour-coordinated fragments cut from 1950s Soviet postcards. At the very bottom, on the right, is a third handwritten text, which repeats the words 'Mum's biography' on each collage. The overall effect is something like a scrapbook, or album (figs 31–2).

The result of such a seemingly artless, yet carefully orchestrated configuration of elements suggests the loving compulsion of a person who wanted to ensure that no detail was lost, but who had no expectations that anyone else would pay attention. For Kabakov the authenticity of the materials – mostly sourced in Moscow – is paramount to the integrity of the work: 'The atmosphere of the misery and hopelessness of existence was already contained in these boards. It is only exacerbated and emphasised by the atmosphere of the communal corridor...'⁶

The first typed fragment is dated 22 January 1982. Solodukhina would have been 80. It begins: 'Dear Son! You asked me to write down the story of my life. I have decided to grant you your request...' From there the fragments tell the story of her own parents, who were orphans who grew up together in the province of Vilensky (now part of Minsk, Belarus), spoke Yiddish but little Russian, and married when they reached legal age. They subsequently moved to Donetsk (then Yuzovka) in the Ukraine with their young daughter (Solodukhina), escaping the 'beatings' of the 1905 pogrom by hiding in the house of the police chief. In spite of the implied drama of the narrative, the language remains matter-of-fact and focuses on domestic realities: 'they didn't argue, but I felt there really wasn't a closeness between them. My mother devoted all her affection to me. She dressed me like a picture, even beyond her means. My father was a sickly man...'

This brief introduction – which unfolds over the first three framed works in the installation – sets the tone that runs throughout. As the reader moves along the winding corridor, Solodukhina's biography describes the arduous realities experienced by three generations of her working-class Jewish family during a particularly perilous era, from pre-revolutionary Russia, through the First World War, the 1917 Revolution, the Second World War, and the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, up to the beginning of Perestroika in the early 1980s.

As the story continues, we learn that rare highlights of Solodukhina's childhood include brief periods enlivened by lodgers in the family home, whether actors or a lonely old man who took an interest in her studies. She enters a private gymnasium in 1910 despite the family's lack of money, dreams of becoming a doctor but confesses, 'I didn't have any special aptitude. I got some "C"s,' adding, 'but I always got excellent marks in behaviour', and eventually graduates in 1920 – from what had become a post-revolutionary Soviet 'vocational school' – with a diploma.

A year later she embarks on a somewhat carefree adventure with friends, taking the newly established train route from Zhdanov (now Mariupol), in south-east Ukraine, to Moscow, where she hopes to enroll in the medical institute. But, after ten days of travel, the group discovers that the People's Education Commission is not accepting applications at that time. Too frightened to stay in Moscow, they set off back home the next day and Solodukhina takes a job as an accountant at the port. This was during the 1921–2 Russian famine, which killed an estimated five million people, including – we learn from the

31-2 Details of the photograph and typed notes and wallpaper which appear in framed collage #29, from *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)* 1990

memoirs—her father, who died of starvation in January 1922, and her mother, who died of Asian cholera a few months later. Solodukhina, aged twenty, became the guardian of four emaciated siblings. Earning very little money and living in a tiny, furniture-less, damp, two-room apartment, the young woman eventually had a nervous breakdown.

Thanks to the generosity of an admiring stranger—she writes, ‘At that time I began to receive poems from a person that I didn’t know. They weren’t very good but were full of sympathy for my unhappy lot’—Solodukhina received money for treatment and was sent to a sanatorium. There she met a man from western Ukraine, who continued to visit her during vacations, until one day his advances suddenly stopped: ‘I don’t remember the reason for this. But it seems that he was trying to force me to sleep with him.’ Shortly thereafter she describes how one of her co-workers persuaded her to rent out her bedroom to a young man who was in the city to set up a private factory: ‘Soon we became husband and wife. Nothing changed in my life. He paid me 10 roubles for the apartment as before, and I fed him a little out of that money, though not very well.’

Solodukhina soon becomes pregnant, but her new husband is unwilling to have the child and so she undergoes an abortion: ‘Of course, things didn’t go smoothly. I had an inflammation and was ill for a long time. Four years went by before I got pregnant again, and then I told him that I wanted the child. I was 31 years old. I had a healthy child, he screamed terribly at first, but it turned out he was crying from hunger. I was a bad mother and didn’t have enough milk. But more about that later.’

This entry—announcing Ilya Kabakov’s arrival—appears in frame #29, just under halfway through the sequence (fig.32). What then follows are wearying revelations of juggling a job and motherhood in a loveless marriage with an angry man who brings little income into the home and eventually walks out on the family. Yet, these miseries are softened by Solodukhina’s love for her son and her steadfast dedication to his future: ‘Yes, his aptitude for painting was discovered in nursery school. He drew better than the other children. In 1940 he entered school. [...] He was an “A” student. He passed into the second grade and then the war started.’

At this time the family was evacuated to Samarkand, in the Northern Caucasus, and a young Kabakov was enrolled at a local school. Frame #42 tells us that the burgeoning artist took it upon himself to sign up for the Leningrad Art School, which was also evacuated to Samarkand during the lengthy Siege of Leningrad. But, shortly after he begins his studies, the institution is moved once again. Solodukhina explains that ‘the enemy was repulsed and they started to re-evacuate organisations and educational establishments. The question was now what to do about my son’s school. My son insisted on going with them, but I couldn’t let him go alone. He was 10 years old. Then my son suggested I go to work at the school and go with him.’

From Samarkand, the pair moved to Zagorsk (near Moscow) for a year and lived in a monastery before moving to the capital, where Kabakov lived in the school dormitories and Solodukhina did everything she could to remain living close by to him. Lacking official work papers, she transferred from one increasingly menial job to the next until she found employment back in Zagorsk, in a linen warehouse. Unable to rent an apartment legally in Moscow she moved around frequently—as we learn from her writings—from the relative security of a dormitory that housed thieving museum janitors and a cot in a disused bathroom, to three chairs in a war invalid’s room, a ‘half a door placed on two crates’, and a trunk in a damp basement. Nonetheless, she indicates her

purpose was always fulfilled: each day she would see her son after work and bring him food.⁷

Eventually, in 1959, when Solodukhina was ailing and Kabakov had been graduated for two years, he used the proceeds from illustrating his first children's book to buy her a small house—albeit without running water—in Berdyansk, where her only remaining sister lived. Twenty-four years later, in 1983—a year after Solodukhina started writing about her life—the artist managed to buy her a small apartment with full amenities, where she lived with her widowed sister. She died four years later.

Kabakov describes his mother's memoirs as 'a touching and agonising story about a life full of endless suffering, of appearing and disappearing hopes'.⁸ His mother's perspective on her own fate seems less consequential, however, as is evident from the seventy-sixth and last text:

'I continue my notes. Life is going normally, nothing in particular is happening. I received a letter from my son. Times are changing. They now pay attention to his work. There was an exhibit at the Artists' Union. It's good that he gets satisfaction from his work. My friends whom I used to meet for a cup of tea have died. Our circle is no more. Soon my time will come. That's how it should be. But I am satisfied with my life. After the hard past I have now acquired peace and happiness. All the hard things are forgotten, they lose their intensity, and only the present peace is happiness.'

She signs this final note, 'Your loving Mama'.⁹

Although Kabakov often includes texts in his work, Solodukhina's memoir is one of the very few that he has not written.¹⁰ As such, it lacks some of the twists of comedy and irony that enliven the artist's tales of Soviet life. But, at least these last words to her son offer some consolation to the reader, after the unrelenting hardship of her life's story. This glimmer of optimism is met with one other, which takes the form of an indignant letter apparently written by Kabakov's mother to Leonid Brezhnev—then General Secretary—in 1981. In it she audaciously pleads with the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to help resolve the never-ending bureaucracy that lies between her and a fully functional apartment: 'I have always tried to do everything within my power for people and the state, and yet in my old age I encounter such callousness and insult,' the letter says.¹¹

These bold words, however, constitute the only fictional text in the work, included in the album rather than the installation. Written by Kabakov, they comprise the one moment where he allows his perspective to be inserted directly into the narrative. On the one hand the artist is mocking the blind conviction common to his mother's generation, who believed that there was always someone 'up there' who could save the situation, if you could just reach them. On the other, he elevates Solodukhina's life to one that has significance. While the scenario of an old lady writing to Brezhnev may be absurd, the letter reads as a perfectly logical and fitting request based on her lifelong commitment to her family and country. Similarly, in creating such an elaborate environment as *Labyrinth* for his mother's memoirs, Kabakov places immense importance on them. But, overall, as if to underscore the 'insult' that the artist (writing as his mother) describes in the letter, the installation is structured to induce tedium: 'Instantaneously the viewer understands there won't be anything besides the "paintings" and that he is as free to walk as quickly as he wishes along the corridor,' writes Kabakov.

Labyrinth is at once a moving environment capturing the realities of Soviet life and a deliberately drab installation that provokes boredom, or perhaps even mild irritation. At the same time the structure is intended to create a different kind of tension, as Kabakov elaborates: 'Two configurations of movement are extraordinarily important in this installation: First the corridor winds inward, towards the center, and then it unwinds, departing from the center to the exit. It's as though there was an inhalation and an exhalation, which the viewer easily feels.'¹²

This sensation is also enhanced by a sound element—Kabakov's voice—emanating from a cupboard-sized room at the centre. The artist is singing Russian romance songs—a genre, known for its sentimentality, that emerged in the nineteenth century—with lyrics that are often about loved ones who have passed away. The singing and humming are barely discernible at the entrance, but get louder as the monotony of the framed collages sets in. Although the tune stays mostly the same, Kabakov slips from the lyrics of one well-known song to the next.¹³ Singing in Russian, at various stages he speeds up the tempo, or changes the tune. Listening closely, it is possible to hear him coughing, fidgeting, yawning and moving the microphone. This spontaneity gives the impression that it could be a live performance. But, on reaching the little room from which the sound comes, the viewer realises it contains nothing other than junk and a suspended tape recorder. In keeping with the story of his mother's life, Kabakov establishes a potential that amounts to nothing, and we leave the centre of the labyrinth to be reunited with the monotonous procession of frames once again as the sound starts to fade.

When Solodukhina passed away in 1987, Kabakov was 53. That year, he took his first trips to the West and re-established a friendship with Emilia Lekach Kanevsky, a Russian émigrée of (then) fifteen years' standing, who would become his collaborator and wife.

In early 2016, nearly three decades after the Kabakovs had settled in New York, I met with them there to discuss *Labyrinth*. While conferring on the difference between this installation and those based on fictional characters, I learned that it is one of only three—all produced in the late 1980s and 1990s—that were based on Ilya Kabakov's personal history, and all feature Solodukhina.¹⁴ The conversation then turned to the question of why Kabakov regarded himself as a character. In ruminating about this fact, the artist admitted that, 'In the end, as long as I was living in the Soviet Union, I didn't know who I was. Even when I left I was still playing these characters, until Emilia gave me the possibility to be who I am.'¹⁵

Listening to these words, my entire perception of *Labyrinth* shifted. In the 'dimly lit' corridor we are given a rare glimpse of Kabakov in plain sight. To embrace that this installation is devoid of actors is to be given an extraordinary window into a reality that underpins the artist's usual 'experiments in biography'. We are made witness to facts that have been camouflaged in a lifetime of elaborate fictions.



WITHDRAWN



THE ARCHAEO-FUTURES OF ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV

A very significant proportion of the output of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov has consisted of blueprints, sketches, plans and maquettes. The projecting of work to be made in the future is an integral part of their activity, and perhaps even the core of their activity. Ilya Kabakov has described his daily routine as starting from a 'virtual-tour in the head', an imaginative exploration of the scope of an idea that might or might not be realised physically. Those projects that are given material form are thought of as little more than 'reproductions' of the work of the mind.

There is something inevitable about this quite fierce insistence on the work of the imagination when viewed in the light of its origins in Soviet *samizdat* culture.¹ Ilya left Russia for good in 1987 when he was already 54 years old, having spent decades working with few opportunities to exhibit in public, and even fewer possibilities of creating large-scale installations. The first of his installations given physical embodiment is actually about an absent body. Kabakov constructed *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* 1985 in his own Moscow apartment (pp.150–7). This witty and beguiling work concerns a man who can neither be seen nor heard because he is entirely a product of the imagination: a figment of the artist's imagination, but also the creature of his own imaginings. Kabakov placed a large catapult in the centre of the room, and dug a large hole in the ceiling to suggest the flight path of his human projectile, who appears to have been carried aloft by his own theory that space is permeated by sheets of energy travelling in waves: space travel becomes entirely possible if one can only judge the correct moment to be catapulted upwards. The action of the catapult is one expression of the desire for acceleration that unites the Kabakovian oeuvre. And space travel provides a scenario in which acceleration through space is simultaneously acceleration through time. The technological space race of the postwar era is all about catching up and overtaking the other side of the ideological divide. For the Kabakovs, this scenario has wider implications of a desire to catch up and overtake history itself, with roots reaching back into early Soviet culture. *Fulfill the First Five-Year Plan in Four Years* 1933 is the title of a work by Varvara Stepanova (1894–1958), now on display in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The title catches echoes of both punitive Stakhanovite excess and the desire for a more idealistic transformation of present-day conditions.² It is one of the distinctions of the Kabakovs' work that a bitter scepticism about the former does not efface the psychological need for the latter.

The desire to leave the present, which one suspects of lagging behind the true pace of history; the desire to be catapulted into the future in order to make up the deficit and even surpass the progress made elsewhere—this desire is always fatally compromised in the Kabakovian imagination by nostalgia, by a memory that selects only those parts of life that once gave hope; a memory that obscures the reasons to abandon hope. But what of the mentality that forgets nothing; what of the memory that is bowed down by having to drag everything behind it? The installation *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* 1988 discloses such a mania, for such is how it seems to the other inhabitants

34 *Manas*, Venice Biennale 2007



of the communal apartment at the centre of the scenario described in the textual components of the artwork (pp.158–61). In this fictional setting, one of the rooms is occupied by a hoarder who has classified and archived all the garbage generated in the course of his life. He is also the author of the revealing manuscript 'The Dump', found in his room and read by the Senior Tenant, who has organised a break-in during the hoarder's absence. This document includes an early formulation of the Kabakovian attitude towards the action of cultural memory during the Cold War:

35 *We Are Living Here*, with musical arrangement by Vladimir Tarasov, 1995. Installation view, Centre Pompidou, Paris 1995

'A dump not only devours everything, preserving it forever, but one might say that it also continually generates something: this is where new growths appear, new projects, ideas, a certain unique enthusiasm arises, hopes for the rebirth of something, though everyone knows that all of this will just be covered over with new layers of garbage.'

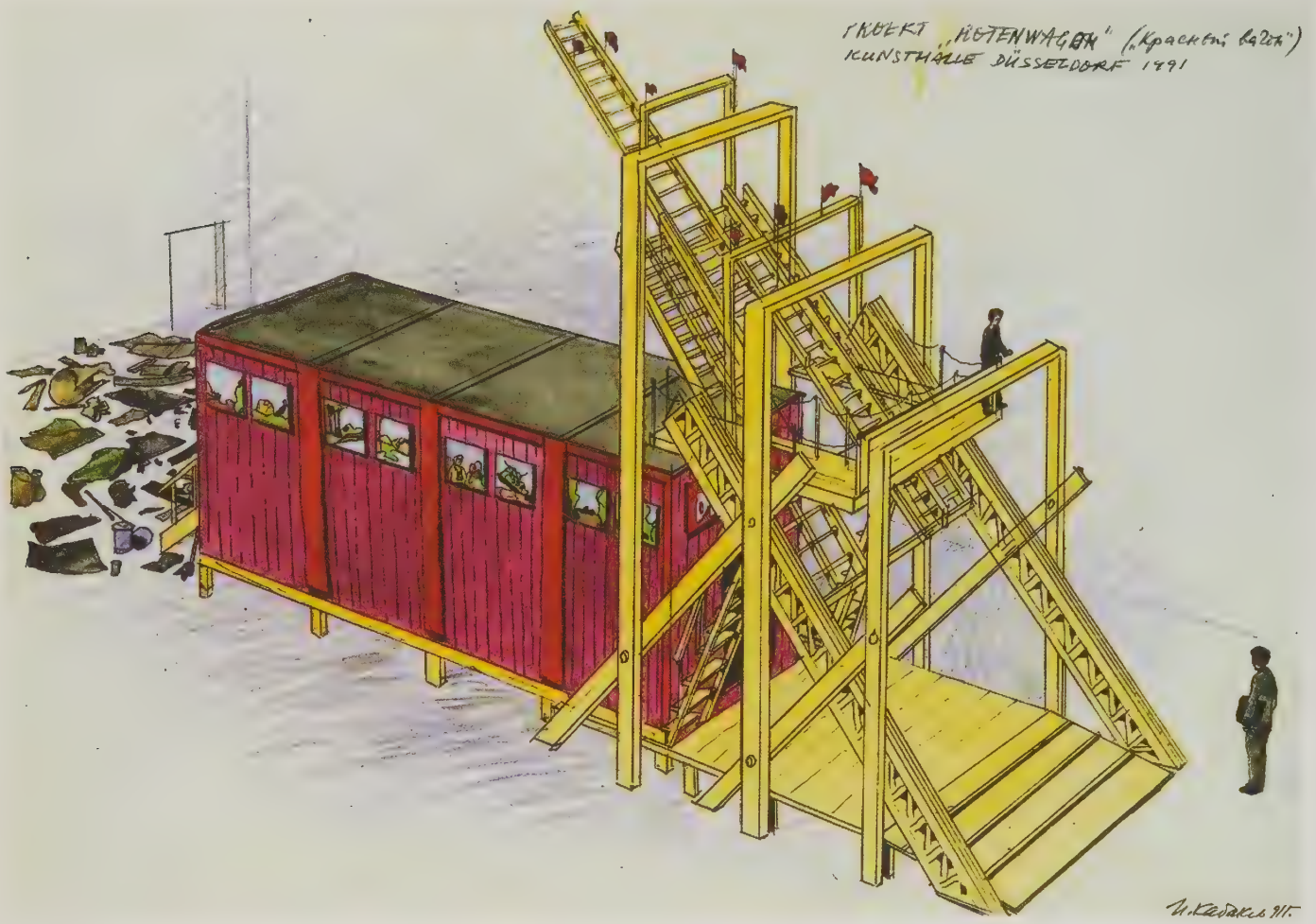
The default position of every new plan for the future is its built-in obsolescence. The future becomes an archaeological specimen or, rather, a series of such specimens embedded in successive strata of failed pipe dreams. 'The Dump' also describes a nearby building project that has been under construction for eighteen years; it resembles a ruin rather than an emblem of modernity and embodies a strange temporality in which possible futures are no more than shadows thrown by decaying remnants of the past.

Perhaps the most spectacular, and immersive, version of the ruin under construction was the large-scale installation *We Are Living Here* 1995, which consisted of part of the lower section of a grandiose architectural edifice surrounded by several nondescript trailers (fig.35). There was no suggestion that any construction work had taken place for a very long time, and the trailers clearly intended as interim accommodation for the building workers had all been re-purposed as dormitories, canteens, nurseries, libraries, and even one- and two-room apartments. The temporary arrangements had clearly become permanent, while the building intended to last had barely got off the ground. The trailers had been customised to join one to another, so that visitors to the installation followed a long horizontal trail through a variety of spaces. It was as if the idea of a rite of passage had been translated into a literal passageway, where life had stagnated instead of moving on. The neglected foundations of the building intended to soar vertically to a great height had become instead an ironic monument to the in-between.

There are a large number of re-purposed living spaces in the Kabakovian oeuvre, the most arresting being *The Toilet* 1992, first installed as part of Documenta IX in Kassel (figs 24–5). The exterior of the building housing this installation gives no indication that it is anything other than a public convenience, but the interior is furnished in every respect like a Russian two-room apartment. There are tables, chairs, dressers, cookers, bed-settees and all the paraphernalia accumulated during a life in the Soviet era. The viewer's first reaction to this is one of shock and momentary embarrassment at having intruded into the interior of someone else's life—a domestic interior that would ordinarily be marked by a history of personal taste and individual preferences—until it becomes obvious that most of the articles on view are standardised and indistinguishable from the contents of millions of equivalent spaces. This is in effect another garbage heap, housed in a building where one normally goes to evacuate waste on a daily basis. It is a place of repetition, of mechanical functions, where what happens tomorrow will be no different from what happened yesterday.

Closely related to the trailers of *We Are Living Here* is *The Red Wagon* 1991, perhaps the most poignant and concentrated expression of time-reversal in a series of installations haunted by a sense of historical dislocation (fig.36). The wagon itself is a wheeled vehicle that is clearly going nowhere; like the trailers, it has become static. And it restricts the movement of viewers who, once they have climbed the few steps to the interior, find themselves in a very confined space, with no option but to sit on the bench provided. There, the painted surface of the interior provides an illusion of both spatial and temporal depth, with its panoramas of futuristic cities featuring small flying machines effecting communication between upper and lower levels of habitation (fig.37). The archaic, wooden, rustic-looking wagon is a container for techno-dreams and fantasies of progress that have been side-lined by history.

Alongside the stalled and often barely begun architectural projects, the Kabakovian oeuvre includes many paintings that appear unfinished. This incompleteness is designed for several related reasons. In the paintings of the *Under the Snow* series (fig.5 and p.128), large areas of the canvas are left blank. The anecdotal content of these works, which deploy a style and subject matter immediately suggestive of Soviet Socialist Realism, is thus tantalisingly partial. We feel that a crucial part of the visual information has been obscured: either deliberately, which would be in keeping with the culture of censorship during the Soviet period, or arbitrarily, because the imagery has been covered by snow. But snow is both a familiar natural phenomenon in Russia and a



substance that has acquired symbolic properties. In the snow-bound landscapes of nineteenth-century painting, Russia appears frozen and deadlocked, in an endless winter of the spirit, which is what gives the concept of a thaw such resonance in twentieth-century culture. Ilya Ehrenburg's 1954 novel *The Thaw* cemented the connection between the melting of snow and the dissolving of Stalinism, and the name was applied to the subsequent period of liberalisation under Khrushchev. But this did not last, and Kabakov's paintings seem to hover in a limbo where the snow might be either advancing or retreating. Their subject matter provides only glimpses of the ideological idealism behind five-year plans for a future now in the deep freeze. But there is a wistfulness about this depleted archive of dreams, an unreasonable longing for what might just have been possible. All the most persuasive images of the future are retrograde.

The Kabakovs' enormous installation of paintings *An Alternative History of Art* proposes a relationship between history and art that is not so much an alternative to art history as a revisionary concept of history itself. In this alternative to the developmental history of art, the successive stages of twentieth-century painting are represented by three generations of artists: Charles Rosenthal, Ilya Kabakov and Igor Spivak (figs 26, 38–9). All are fictitious inventions of Kabakov himself, who has produced three separate bodies of work and then combined them in a single conceptual experiment. Soviet Socialist Realism, Modernist Experimentation and Postmodern Fragmentation are made to coexist in a giant temporal collage in which none is given a presiding role or allowed to eclipse the significance of the other two. Each one

36 Concept drawing for *The Red Wagon* 1991. Musical arrangement by Vladimir Tarasov, 1991



is given a formative role in the construction of Russian cultural identity, and this depends on their interaction; not on their replacement of one another in a process of mutual occlusion that is constantly alluded to in the gaps and absences punctuating the exhibition.

The Kabakovs have wrestled repeatedly with the mechanics of history, resisting chronology by sustaining the memory of utopian longing alongside the anticipation of elegiac memory; gauging the convergences and divergences of shared and individual memories and desires. The experience of viewing *An Alternative History of Art* gives rise to a sense of temporal slippage, as the signifying systems of different phases of cultural history are collapsed into one another. It is as if the viewer has to tune into different wavelengths in order to find a clear signal, which is only ever fleeting and perhaps illusory. Clarity is always in another place, it seems, or another time, evading capture. Only a system that connects all times with all places at the same time and in the same place would be adequate to the task.

In 2002, the Kabakovs installed *A Universal System for Depicting Everything* in Göppingen Kunsthalle. This consisted of several albums whose pages were displayed on the walls of a large exhibition hall, proposing to convey in two dimensions the principles of a system for depicting objects in four-dimensional space. Spatial relations were to be seen from all sides at once, and temporal relations from all points in time. The sample images were suggestive of time-space distortion, being variously elongated, compressed or swollen, like visual correlates to the condensations and displacements of dream-work. According to the commentary to Album IX, the fourth dimension makes itself apparent in the deformations of real space occasioned by our desires—in which case, it might be said that the entirety of the Kabakovian oeuvre should be thought of as four-dimensional, because of its constantly renewed search for the means to embody the complex time-space relations of political desire.

Such a project resists the conventional authority of historical time. The only creatures who exist outside of historical time are imaginary beings, like angels. There is a preponderance of angels in Russian religious art; the basement of the State Tretyakov Gallery is filled with them. And saints who remain unfledged in the West are metamorphosed in the Russian Orthodox imagination by the addition of wings. Angels are all-seeing and all-knowing, like the prophetic poetry that Pushkin envisions as the gift of a six-winged seraph. The fantasy of flight is what motivated Ilya Kabakov's first installation, *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment*, but the home-made equivalent of cosmonautics has been succeeded by other flights of the imagination, mostly around the

37 *Panorama of the Future* 1991

Oil paint on canvas

235 × 750

State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

figure of the angel. In the majority of such cases, there is never any question of actually taking flight, except in one's dreams. In the sculptural installation *How To Make Yourself Better or How To Become an Angel* 1999, the sphere of operations is quite severely confined. In a crowded room not much bigger than a closet, the dreamer takes flight mentally with the aid of strap-on wings. In the associated work *How Can One Change Oneself?* 1998 the angelic wings are bespoke, but they cannot be flexed and extended (p.184). They are rigid and doubly impractical, never intended to be anything more than stage props for the flight of the mind.

The Kabakovs' many reveries on the subject of angels seem to hover in the region of Benjamin's 'Angel of History', whose face is turned towards the past: 'Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling ruin upon ruin and hurls it in front of his feet ...a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress'.³ Many of the Kabakovs' installations that look back on the history of Soviet civilisation reproduce the effects of a pile of debris—or dump of garbage—growing skyward, and they view askance the catastrophes wreaked in the name of progress. They take shape as simulacra of the bad designs, substandard materials and shoddy workmanship of a culture that failed to produce a workers' paradise, but their angelic figures represent an idealism that looks beyond the movement of time. It is only because humanity cannot imagine existence under these terms that it associates such perfection with the future—since nothing in the past has succeeded in bringing it about.

38 (Ilya Kabakov) *Before the Exam*,
1973 2003
Oil paint on canvas
160 × 250
Private collection





The Kabakovs' response to the backward-looking 'Angel of History', caught up in increasing despair, is the forward-looking individual of *How To Meet an Angel* 1998 (fig.40), stretching every sinew in his attempt at the fingertip transfiguration—Michelangelo-style—seemingly on offer from a graciously condescending angel who happens to be cruising past. The idealist does not look behind him, does not see or does not remember the unreliable and rickety substructure of his dreams; he has reached the acme of home-made theory, the do-it-yourself kit of ideas that has never worked when the plan has been collectivised. His is a backyard utopia, a domestic paradise, not streamlined, not gleaming, not technological, the product of an individual resourcefulness, a trial-and error accumulation of the best of intentions.

The installation *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future* 2001 is in fact the reprise of an idea outlined in a text bearing the same title but written in 1983 (pp.186–9). This was a first-person account of a dream, in which the narrator returns to his schooldays, remembering the feeling of excitement at the prospect of a Young Pioneer summer camp. The excitement is tinged with fear that he will not be chosen to take part, since the headmaster has announced that only the best pupils will be allowed to go. The future is a summer camp, a real paradise, but only true pioneers will reach the destination. Within the dream is a parallel narrative about Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935), the suprematist artist whose work was so far ahead of its time that it could only make sense in the culture of the future, perhaps after the artist's death. Malevich exemplifies the trajectory of all avant-garde art, whose intelligibility to the public is always delayed until it has acquired the patina of a specimen

39 (Igor Spivak) *Ballet Performance*
1995 2004
Oil paint on canvas
188 × 262
Private collection



in a museum. Kabakov's memory of the past consisting of a dream about the future is both recapitulation and re-direction of this journey. It is haunted by the possibility, probability even, that the time-warped art produced by the East-West divide of the Cold War era will never communicate; will always arrive at its destination too early or too late. The 2001 installation which borrows the title used twenty years earlier has exchanged the tense uncertainty of the earlier work for a desolate certainty. The train to the future (like the train to a summer camp) has already departed. Anyone in a position to see the last carriage with its digital message has been left behind, and this must include both the viewer of the installation and the artist (Kabakov) who has painted the pictures strewn in its wake. The endless renewal of the message stretches the present moment into what seems an eternity and intensifies the empty feeling that comes from being overlooked. The installation contextualises this feeling within a network of personal and cultural memories and desires. Is it a work that has reached the status of a museum piece, or is it reaching past us into the future? The messages that reach us from the work of the Kabakovs sometimes seem like radio signals still travelling through space long after the station of origin has ceased transmission.

40 *How to Meet an Angel* 2009.
Permanent installation on the facade
of Mentrum Clinic, Amsterdam, the
Netherlands. See also pp.182-3



ILYA KABAKOV AND THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE

In the middle of the twentieth century, the Russian avant-garde—famous today the whole world over—was largely forgotten and poorly studied. Our understanding of it as an internationally significant artistic phenomenon has come about only during Ilya Kabakov's lifetime. When the first serious studies of artists belonging to the movements of the 1910s and 1920s—rayonism, suprematism, futurism and Velimir Khlebnikov's futurianism—appeared, Kabakov was already an established master. Academic recognition of the Russian avant-garde has grown in parallel with Kabakov's life history.

By the time Kabakov had begun to think of himself as an artist, the officially approved art form in the Soviet Union was Socialist Realism in its more or less original manifestations. This genre incorporated ideologically correct depictions of Communist values, such as the movement of the proletariat towards an optimistic future, the unification of peoples and peace on the planet, as well as heroic iconography from the history of the Soviet Union, all painted or sculpted by means of realistic imagery. The great inner freedom that is so prevalent in Kabakov's works from the 1960s—so outwardly consonant with the avant-garde in pure geometry (as in his *Balls* series, 1960s); in absurdism (*Horse* 1967, p.82); in dismemberment of bodies (*Measuring the Weight of Varnometer* 1961); in centralising minor subjects (*The Meat Grinder* 1965, fig.42); and, of course, in the presentation of endless schedules—in fact harks back to his rejection of Socialist Realism and to the aesthetic of the 'Khrushchev Thaw', the ten years of relaxation of censorship and repression after Stalin's death, rather than to some legacy of the avant-garde, which was initially little known to Kabakov. 'During my studies, I was unfamiliar with it,' he confirmed in one interview. 'The avant-garde was a forbidden zone, [...] an anomaly, we didn't belong to this formalistic conception of art.'¹

Kabakov's oeuvre seems to originate from an entirely different source—from the very essence of drawing, from a need for visual 'speech', from the production of meaningful artistic forms—be that in the landmark work *Machine Gun and Chicken* 1966 (fig.43), in which a rifle and images of poultry form a strong but paradoxical artwork that looks like a child's drawing and references both a shooting range and an omelette, or in his many illustrations for children's books.² Unlike many unofficial artists of his day, Kabakov did not give free rein to pure forms, releasing them into the wild, nor did he become a slave to them. In other words, he successfully avoided the temptation of becoming an abstractionist. He also avoided several other trends shared by the Moscow school: in the first instance, the predominance of the visual and symbolic (this aspect, so characteristic of unofficial art, was also in part inherited from the avant-garde); in the second, the solemn formulism of Soviet slogans (such as 'Proletariat of the world, unite!' or 'The People and the Party are one!') that the Moscow school inherited from official art. Relatively early in his career, Kabakov opposed all this with a free and all-encompassing narrative that did not, as it were, force anything, but at the same time troubled the viewer with the very fact of its presence. In his art, Kabakov created texts and appropriated conversations in equal measure: his 'method' was to raise language from the

41 *Holiday # 11* 1987

Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas
216 × 156

Private collection



everyday to the artistic. Words became symbols of an artistic narrative: no longer did they belong to a text as such. In 2009, Kabakov criticised Kazimir Malevich for 'text-mongering' – for the fact that Malevich, incapable of writing well, 'wasted whole chunks of his life jotting down what was going on in his head', adding: 'I, luckily, do not suffer from that ailment.'³

The texts gathered by Kabakov are an integral part of his visual range, collectively forming a single language of utterance. The art critic Amei Wallach believes that Aleksandr Rodchenko's 1968 Moscow retrospective may have played a role in the emergence of Kabakov's narrativity.⁴ However, this is plainly, unequivocally and chiefly due to Kabakov's well-established love of reading, which is based on his understanding of the Russian intelligentsia's consciousness as broadly literature-centric. He himself often analyses this, underscoring the uniform connection of his visual images to literary texts that are alive in culture. Despite animated, almost daily (and nightly) discussions about art in Moscow with other artists and writers such as Erik Bulatov, Boris Groys, Joseph Bakshtein and Dmitri Prigov, which Kabakov recalls with fondness even now, he never succumbed to the general timbre of Moscow art. His works reveal none of the 1960s' pretentiously complex searches for meaning, none of the 1970s' torturous attention to form, nor any of the 1980s' gloomy melancholy around Russian madness. From today's perspective, it is evident that Kabakov systematically created a complex individual project – one which, against the background of successive directions in Russian art, may now seem archaic, or comic, or excessively 'pathetic', but it still remains, *in toto*, entirely original, consistent with itself, and whole. It is as though from the very outset, as a child, Kabakov hid himself away in a household closet, shutting himself inside, turning on a light and immersing himself entirely in his own inner world. In this sense, his escapist installation *In the Closet* 1997 (fig.44) may serve as a characteristic symbol of his whole approach to art. Inside the closet, by torchlight, is his world (and his alone), which contains his books, his pencils and, most importantly, his own thoughts and opinions.

42 Ilya Kabakov *The Meat Grinder* 1965
Coloured pencil on paper
31.2 × 28.8
Museum Ludwig, Cologne

43 Ilya Kabakov *Machine Gun and Chicken* 1966
Tempera and filler on Masonite
113 × 102 × 56
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

From within you can hear everything going on in the world outside, and you can experience it all.

For the enjoyment of this inner solitude, it was possible to endure any pretence and any formal adherence to slogans. Kabakov recalls his relationships with other children in his childhood boarding house, adjusting to them, mimicking them, joking around.⁵ 'I had the role of the class clown,' he said in one interview. 'This weird animator was always there inside me.'⁶ It was with this outward congeniality and camaraderie that Kabakov paid (and continues to pay) for the arcane freedom of his inner world; for the right to be left alone, quite deliberately, in private—in solitary travel, reading and reflection.

For Kabakov, living a life between two poles—that of the social being and that of the individual—gradually became inseparable from the process of creation, and ultimately merged with it. Unlike Salvador Dalí, however, Kabakov did not turn himself and his life into a work of art; on the contrary, he managed to show that any exhibition of life may be arranged according to the rules of art. And it is in life's most banal forms that this is especially apparent.

Kabakov's individualism, of course, is not about 'the artist himself'. In intellectual circles the convention was always to speak of oneself in the third person. Thus Kabakov creates figures, *dramatis personae*, fantastical characters with strange attitudes and fates, and also, somewhere behind the scenes, countless makers of kitchen-sink remarks, that fill pictures with flies, balls and graters. In the same way, there also appear fictitious artists, who ostensibly relay the art. It would be easy to assume that behind their image stands the

44 Concept drawing for the installation *In the Closet* 1997. Drawing dated 1992



Soviet model, created in the 1920s, of the anonymous artist who works for the common cause of both the Party and the government. Many works of the Russian avant-garde period are anonymous; indeed, stating the identity of the artist was deemed unnecessary in the perfected, standardised future of the great utopia. Soviet man, as with the average man, was doomed in principle to conventional thought, whether on an everyday or a deeply personal level. It is curious that this was later confirmed by the groundless accusations of conformism that were levelled against Kabakov: these originated from those same people who think in clichés and follow well-trodden paths, and to whom, needless to say, individualism is abhorred. Kabakov the artist, on the other hand, embraces a wide range of polar attitudes and artistic means, which he has created. It is all, at one and the same time, both him and not him. He seems to realise that even his own life, in all its manifestations, is subject to the irreconcilable laws of art. Both rejoicing and suffering, he analyses himself as the exemplar of a certain kind of artist who has passed through biological and historical selection.

This analytical individualism, dictated by the search for inner freedom, is of course in part consonant with the artistic pursuits of early avant-gardists –Wassily Kandinsky, Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova, for instance. Yet it is just as alien to Proletkult, Constructivism and montage theory—all of which grew out of the avant-garde—as it is to the national Socialist Realism: each is ultimately and unequivocally collectivist in its zeal. In Gustav Klutsis's collages, in Aleksandr Rodchenko's parades, in the palaces of culture and the communal houses, in the 'Palace of the Soviets' project, there are no individuals: everyone is supposed to be a mere standardised part of the human mass populating the metropolis. Figures of official Soviet art are not real: they are material, 'cannon fodder', the necessary props populating the superhuman architecture. It remained only for postwar Soviet Socialist Realism to carry on this anti-individualism. From the end of the 1950s, the officious figures that appear in Soviet propaganda reliefs and canvases gradually acquire more expressive faces that begin to smile. Yet these smiles—though they may aspire to the timeless grandeur of classical Greek statues, devoid of emotion—remain anonymous in their standardisation.

It is precisely this anonymity, this lack of distinctive features, this impersonality of the avant-garde that the inner Kabakov opposes—with his literary underpinning and strict humanistic moral code, and with his stringent artistic introspection. In the spaces of his installations, the presence of a person is always implied: the installations 'work' only when an individual visitor appears in them; they work for the visitor and on the visitor. Kabakov sees the viewer as an individual, for it is the individual, nurtured by the artist, who is encouraged to follow him in his example and to make sense of that entire society that survived the avant-garde and is now living among its post-utopian ruins.

Over the course of time, the viewer has come to be understood by Kabakov as the principal actor in his art. 'For me, the viewer is a deified individual,' he remarked in 2009. 'He is almost a god. [...] Firstly, he's right; secondly, he knows everything.'⁷ The viewer is the principal addressee of the installations and the artist's alter ego. He is an imaginary, ideal judge, who will eventually put things in order and decide who is truly worthy to go forth into the future. This ideal visitor who comes to exhibitions has been successfully cultivated by Kabakov since the mid-1980s as the main character in his work. He forces the visitor to think, look, compare and, most importantly, move around this most precisely calibrated environment of rooms and installations. While



creating these, Kabakov spends a considerable amount of time writing complex instructions and carefully monitoring their execution. Having said that, he denies this exigence, reducing everything to the simple tricks of his trade: 'It is only a semblance of exactingness. I know the reference points of cognition: [...] a person, [...] in fact, sees only three points, which are so carefully constructed that he falls into a visually organised net. Thus a gypsy holds a caftan, covering the holes with his hands while displaying the sequins [in order to sell it]. Crafting a "work" involves the same skill in covering the holes.'⁸

From a deliberate state of self-immersion, cloaked by the continual generation of artistic narratives, arises a crucial point: Kabakov's approach to realising the whole. In the external language of the narrative, this is expressed in his 'Total Installation'. Its laws are created by the artist himself: it is foremost a unique space in which the viewer, by some quirk of fate, finds himself, and which will begin to act on him entirely. Kabakov knows what will happen to the viewer's perceptions during the process of movement. In this regard he is similar to the designers of the Russian avant-garde. It is unsurprising that his early installations, *Two Windows (Two Tables)* 1998 and *The Communal Kitchen* 1991 (fig.45), are specifically likened to Soviet teaching aids, which directly, clearly and concisely explain the structures of phenomena – in all their total absurdity. Then, however, a miracle happens: the alogism of *How to Meet an Angel* (fig.40 and pp.182–3), *The Palace of Projects* (figs 2, 18) and other works begins to predominate over the logic of constant artistic creations of previous years, leaving space for the unknowable and unexplored. This 'poetry' should undoubtedly be analysed in the context of Russian utopian *proektantstvo* ('planning' or 'projecting'), which dates back to the movement's founding myth.

Proektantstvo is a strange yet important Russian word that unites Kabakov's art with one of the principal vectors of the avant-garde. In recent

45 *The Communal Kitchen* 1991.
Permanent installation at Musée
Maillol, Paris

years Kabakov has created projects that consist of minutely planned buildings, cities and even whole systems of thought that cannot be realised in principle. This was also the case for the avant-gardists (up to a certain point, somewhere in the middle of the 1920s), who actually believed that their ideas would become a reality. This *proektantstvo* is based on the power of creativity and the free play of fantasy, which have traditionally nourished Russian artistry—from Potemkin villages and ‘Manilovism’⁹ to the political ideas of the Khrushchev Thaw.

Russian *proektantstvo* shuns tradition. It is replete with the idea of negation. Memory is alien to it. In Kabakov’s reading, working with memory is only in part the artist’s lot: no ordinary man, no god, no higher power, but only the artist is endowed with the ability to see, remember and invent the world in its various manifestations, which includes creating the world of the future. It was for the requirement of memory that museums of art were created, which the Russian futurianists subsequently rejected – not demanding their destruction, like futurist founder Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, but still desiring to cast ‘from the ship of modernity’ all unnecessary cultural ballast. Kabakov is conceptually a museum artist. For him the museum is a sacred place of finality, conclusion, tone-setting and eternal absolution. He creates his paintings with an eye to how they will look in a museum setting—that is, in eternity, among paintings by other artists. The museum’s concept of preserving great works of art within memory, and the solemn act of displaying them to contemporaries, may also perhaps be understood as a part of utopian *proektantstvo*: at some point in the future, in an ideal museum, great canvases will be hung and enlightened people will attend, as at a temple, in order to contemplate them and, in so doing, further illuminate their wonderful futuristic lives.

Here Kabakov again involuntarily comes into contact with futurianism. The roots of his utopian post-futurism must undoubtedly be sought in the Russian avant-garde—in El Lissitzky’s skyscrapers, Vladimir Tatlin’s tower (fig.19), Velimir Khlebnikov’s proclamations—in which the decrees of a world government are projected onto clouds, and the speed of cosmic bodies hurtling in infinity decides every fate. However, as already mentioned, all this came to Kabakov not by direct artistic descent, but through the prism of the Soviet Union’s all-encompassing utopian project, which harnessed futurism and, as a result, destroyed it. It was not the forms and figures of avant-garde paintings (which are absent in Kabakov), but rather their theoretical basis—principally Russian cosmism—that was initially close to his conceptions.

An important aspect of the phenomenon that was the Russian avant-garde was the creation of new forms and relationships. Kazimir Malevich, Ilya Chashnik, Lyubov Popova and Olga Rozanova created remarkable formal constellations, fantasies rendered through an assortment of lines, shapes, volumes and colours. Early Kabakov is absolutely removed from this idea. He studies the ruins of utopia, the daily reality of bygone futurism—which came into being in the form of a communal kitchen. He is concerned with existing relationships and accepts them with Roman equanimity, tirelessly relaying the sordid banality of everyday life through high style. It is in this post-futurism – which permeates Kabakov’s oeuvre as a whole, as well as a number of his principal themes in part—that he is in tune with the Russian avant-garde.

For Kabakov the avant-garde, with which he became familiar only later, was yet another confirmation that the essence of art revealed by him was true. The avant-garde served the beginning of the utopia’s construction, whereas Kabakov trawls through its ruins. In his seminal work *The Red Wagon* 1991 (fig.36), Kabakov demonstrates three periods in the development of the Soviet project – the futurist leap, the Stalinist stagnation and the chaotic graveyard. The



three-part installation constitutes one unified whole: a wooden staircase that refers to the constructivist style of the 1920s, a wooden train carriage painted in red-brown with propaganda paintings in Socialist Realist style hung on both sides of the vehicle, and a pile of construction material and other detritus left from the installation building process. It is only at the end of the utopian building process that there comes an opportunity to look back and see the whole project in its entirety. This wholeness – an all-encompassing opening up of the world through the artist's gaze – is seemingly one of the fundamental aims of Kabakov's art.

One further significant outward affinity with the avant-garde may be found in Kabakov's utopian usage of flight. The figures in his albums dating from the years 1970–4 fly over a city (*The Flying Komarov*, pp.94–5), form an eight-pointed star mid-air in one of the halls of the Hermitage (*The Joker Gorokhov*) and dissolve amid a cityscape (*The Decorator Maligin*). They fly into paintings, and into the cosmos more generally – as in the renowned installation *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* 1985 (pp.150–7). Those artworks, soaring and dissolving amid a white cosmic weightlessness, which begin in the series *The Flying Paintings* 2009, also seem to be on the same subject (figs 46–7). All this cannot but recall the utopian flights of the Russian avant-garde – Tatlin's *Letatlin* and El Lissitzky's Prouns hovering in the air, which are ultimately linked to Nikolai Fyodorov's cosmism and Vladimir Vernadsky's theory of the noosphere, later called utopian, that described humans as an integral part of the cosmos, and contemplated the future of human ideas surviving in the cosmic sphere of human thought that was analogous to the biosphere and

46 *The Flying # 19* 2009
Oil paint on canvas
282 × 189
Private collection

47 *The Flying # 8* 2009
Oil paint on canvas
224 × 165
Private collection

atmosphere. However, Kabakov is interested in the everyday life of the utopian project. He examines the forms in which the revolutionary ideas of the Russian avant-garde were embodied in reality.

This reality consists of endless lists and diagrams, as in *Communal Kitchens*; of an enormous quantity of junk saved 'on the off-chance that it will come in handy' (*The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, pp.158–61); and of the banal configuration of living spaces in the format of enter/exit, life/death, and so forth. The Russian avant-garde is distinctive for its virtual absence of mythologising; strictly speaking, figures such as Lenin appeared in it only much later. There is no mythology in Kabakov's works either. He does not construct his own 'artist's world', as was customary in the twentieth century and is fashionable now in the twenty-first; rather, he makes the world artistic, from which one need only select the most essential elements.

It is in this connection with unnamed mythology that his major work *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future* (see pp.186–9) may be read: the installation relates to a text of the same name (1983) and begins with the appearance of the rigid figure of Malevich.⁴⁰ The installation is permeated with a sense of perpetual selection – one that is natural, Darwinian, suprasocial, historical, universal and, ultimately, cosmic. The artist relays the fact of selection, but it is enacted by some anonymous power, which Kabakov, as though in a mirror, attempts to distinguish in his ideal viewer. The artist truly believes in some higher process of qualification, in some utopian super-humanitarian justice, a 'Hamburg reckoning', as Kabakov himself often says, after Shklovsky.⁴¹ This

48 Ilya Kabakov *The Calf* 1970
India ink and coloured pencil on paper
19.2 × 27.5
Private collection



Kabakov, Ilya

qualification will put everything in its rightful place and will reward whoever is truly worthy. The problem here lies only in the fact that the artist Ilya Kabakov himself is simultaneously both taken and not taken into the future, for not only have his paintings left on a departed train, but they also remain on the platform. He is, at one and the same time, both a winner and a loser. As though the auteur in his own auteur's theatre, to take Boris Groys's apt definition,¹² Kabakov remains, as it were, in the wings; 'estranged', in Shklovsky's terminology. In other words, he does not reveal himself to the world by coming out of his own closet. Such an approach distinguishes Kabakov from the contemporary Western art scene, which is oriented towards auteurship, but it also brings him closer to the history of Russian art with all its quests and blights, with its sense of anonymous longing—and with history, which virtually came to an end with the utopian explosion of the Russian avant-garde.

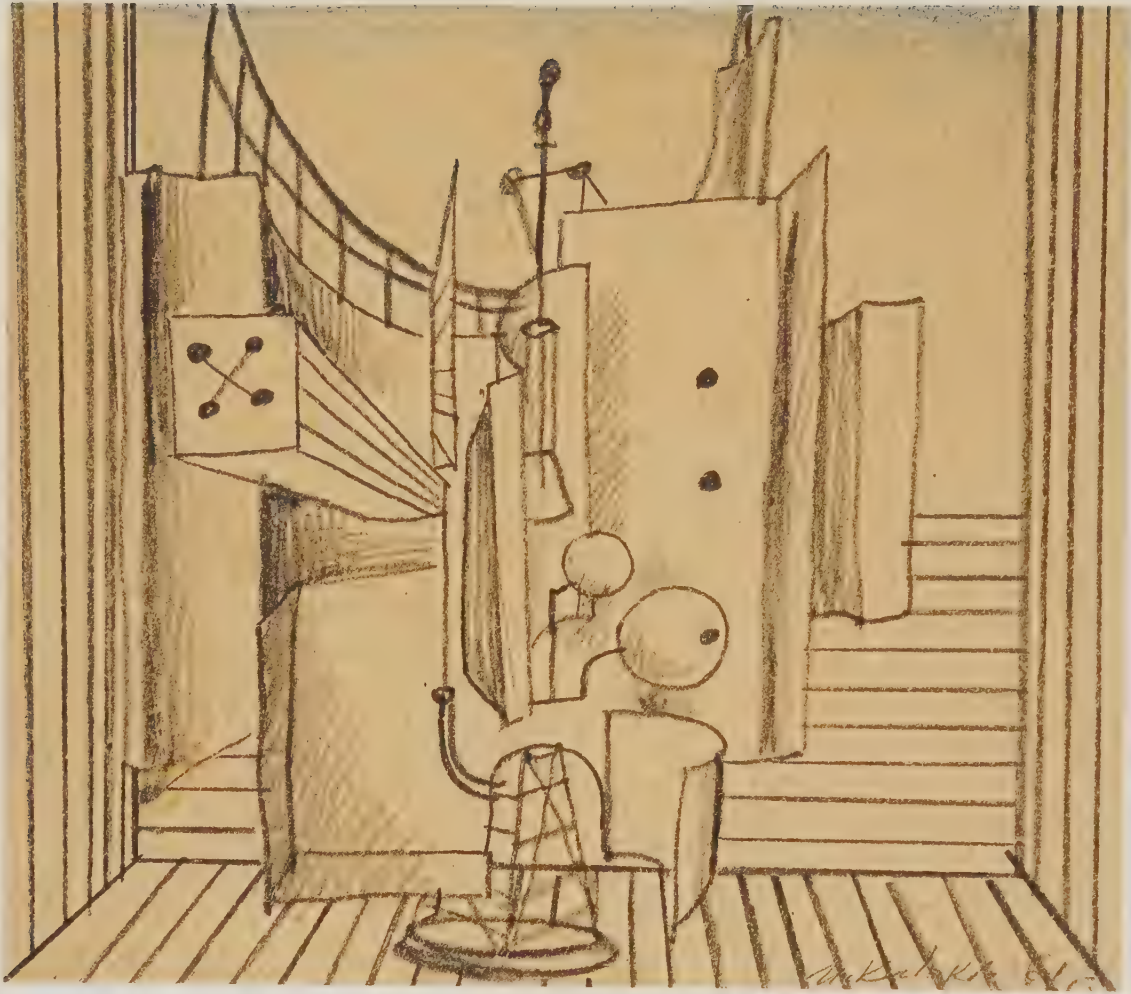
The conclusive approach of the 'Hamburg reckoning' allows Kabakov to be infinitely free in his fantasies, serenely creating a multitude of new and unique techniques. The riot of fantasy, justified by a higher aim, allows him not to separate art from life. As a result, by the end of the 1980s he had managed to identify an array of artistic themes that would become popular in contemporary art only on the cusp of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Besides the integration of narrative into the visual arena and into the precepts of total installation, we may note the Soviet butchers' diagrams that as early as the 1970s led Kabakov to images of cut-up calves—for example, the drawing *The Calf* 1970. So, too, the dots and sweet wrappers of the 'holiday paintings'—for instance, *Holiday # 8* (p.127) or *Holiday # 11* (fig.41), both 1987, which are prototypes of the multicoloured minimalism of the so-called 'dot painting' that is now well known.

Yet Kabakov is interested not in an empty visual image, but in the narrative that permeates it. It is the narrative—which is elevated to an unusually high level—that demands the complete removal of the artist from both the depicted and the narrated. Kabakov is not in thrall to his subjects, but nor does he despise them. He seems to float above the fray, removing himself to the sidelines in order to frame the completed painting, whose artist (or artists) may also become a part of the overall narrative—as in the project *Alternative History of Art*, which concerns fictitious artists including the characters Rosenthal and Spivak. In a series of museum rooms, Kabakov created his 'alternative' version of the roll call of artistic names. This linear art history showed the development by generation, from master to disciple and so forth. It held a strong reference to the official Soviet prototype, with its focus on progress, but it was totally fake. Such a narrative is open to every viewer, and with a hint of enlightened ecstasy (within the bounds of the modest artist's anonymity) Kabakov seeks to reveal it to everyone.

Not everyone, however, is able to penetrate the essence of the narrative: some will merely remain standing on the other side of a rural fence, peering in at the bright lights of the museum though never crossing its threshold. This metaphor, resonant of late Kabakov, speaks to the main feature of his post-futurism—a self-deprecating humour that makes up for an absence of unabashed optimism. The artist who studies the ruins of the utopian project lives both in the past and in the present. He looks to the future with hope, although he cannot demand of himself any sense of self-assured ease when dealing with living memory.



THE WORKS



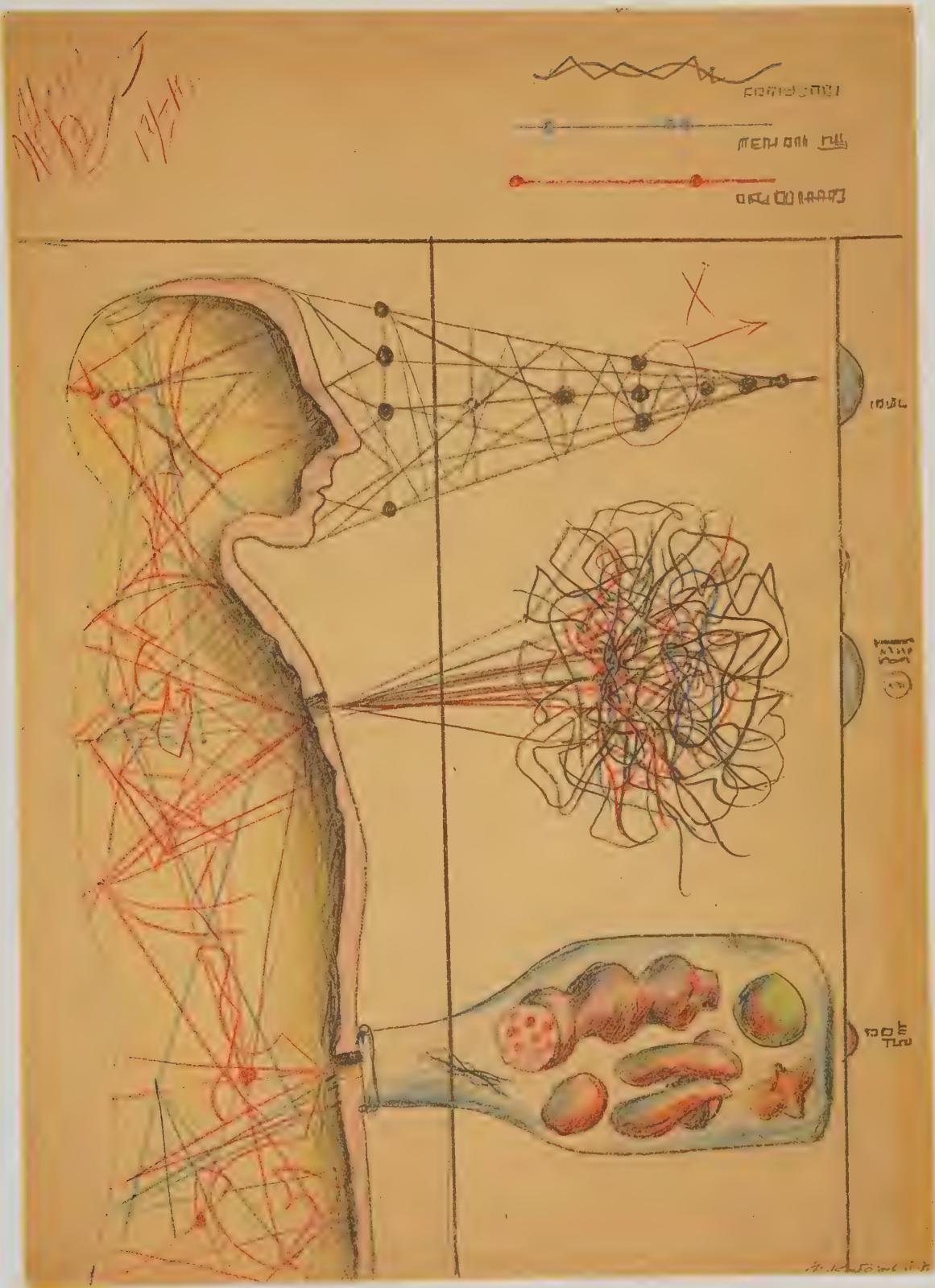
Ilya Kabakov *Monument* 1961
 Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
 11 × 12.3

Between 1951 and 1957, Ilya Kabakov undertook studies in graphic design and book illustration at the V.I. Surikov Art Institute in Moscow, which he applied towards a career as a children's book illustrator. However, in secret he was compelled to create works on paper that contravened the tasteful and restrained drawings he created in his day job. Kabakov has stated that he had no interest at the time in the aesthetic quality of these images, which were always simply drawn in graphite, coloured pencil and ink.

Although Kabakov's earliest drawings fall into three self-described categories—the absurd, the bureaucratic, and drawings with inscriptions—there is a general randomness in their subject matter and style. Kabakov has himself stated

that their lack of 'stylistic integrity' was a private form of rebellion against Soviet society's insistence upon individuals working generically in both attitude and artistic style.

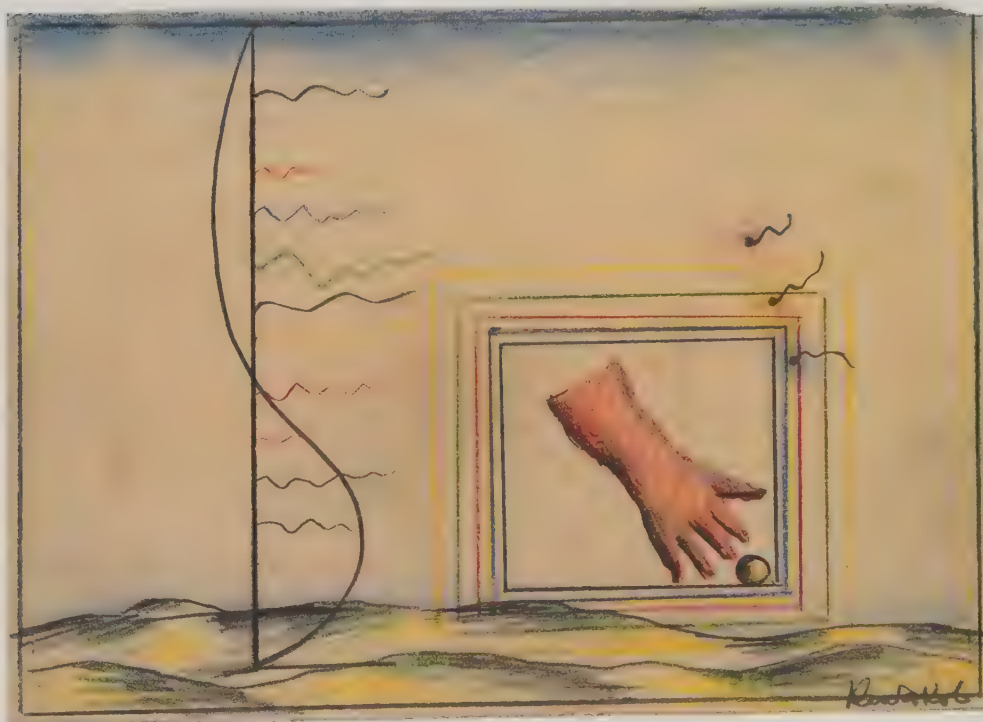
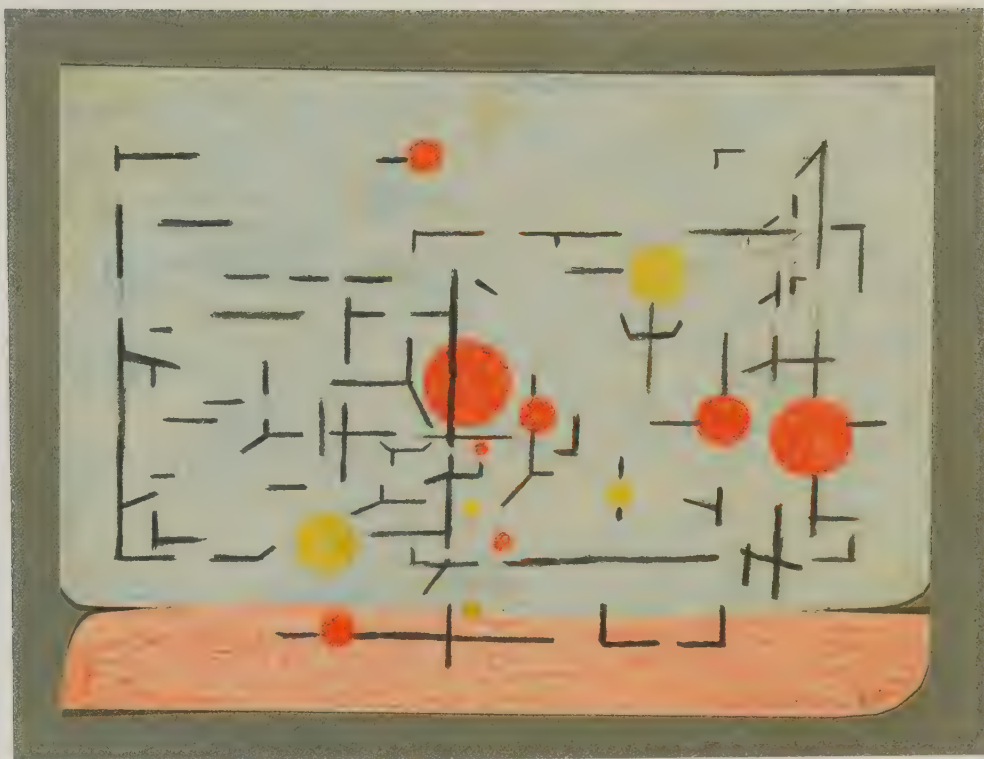
One of the few shared characteristics, however, is the emphasis on white space. While there are obvious visual associations with the use of white space in Kazimir Malevich's suprematist painting (a style which was conceived as one that all artists would aspire to) in Kabakov's drawings the arrangement of compositions, frequently with figures hovering around the edge, is intended simultaneously to suggest emptiness and light emanating from the middle of the composition.



Ilya Kabakov *Human: Mind, Soul, Body* 1961
 Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
 39.5 x 28.5

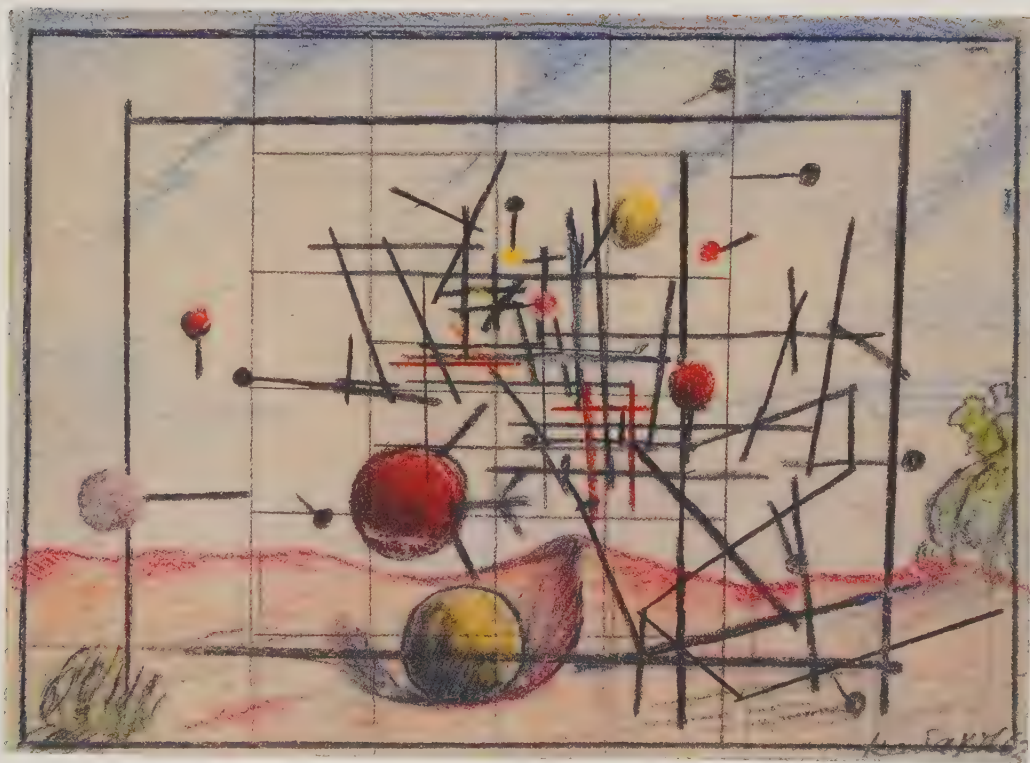
'The most interesting aspect of the 1960s was the special atmosphere of underground artistic life that was present, like a thick infusion, in all of the basement studios and tiny rooms of the artistic bohemia. Existence was made up of a crazy, intense sense of "them" ("they" were the bosses, employers and managers), who were perceived as an alien, hostile and dangerous species of people who lived "upstairs", in the official "other" world; below that world, in a close community, loving and respectful, lived another world, a special tribe "under the ground of life". This climate of community was very characteristic for the life of these artists, poets, jazz musicians, and writers, who seemed by lucky happenstance to have met in a single stratum of Moscow at that time. There were no daily grind concerns, the meetings and conversations dealt only with artistic or poetic issues.'

IK, 1982-4



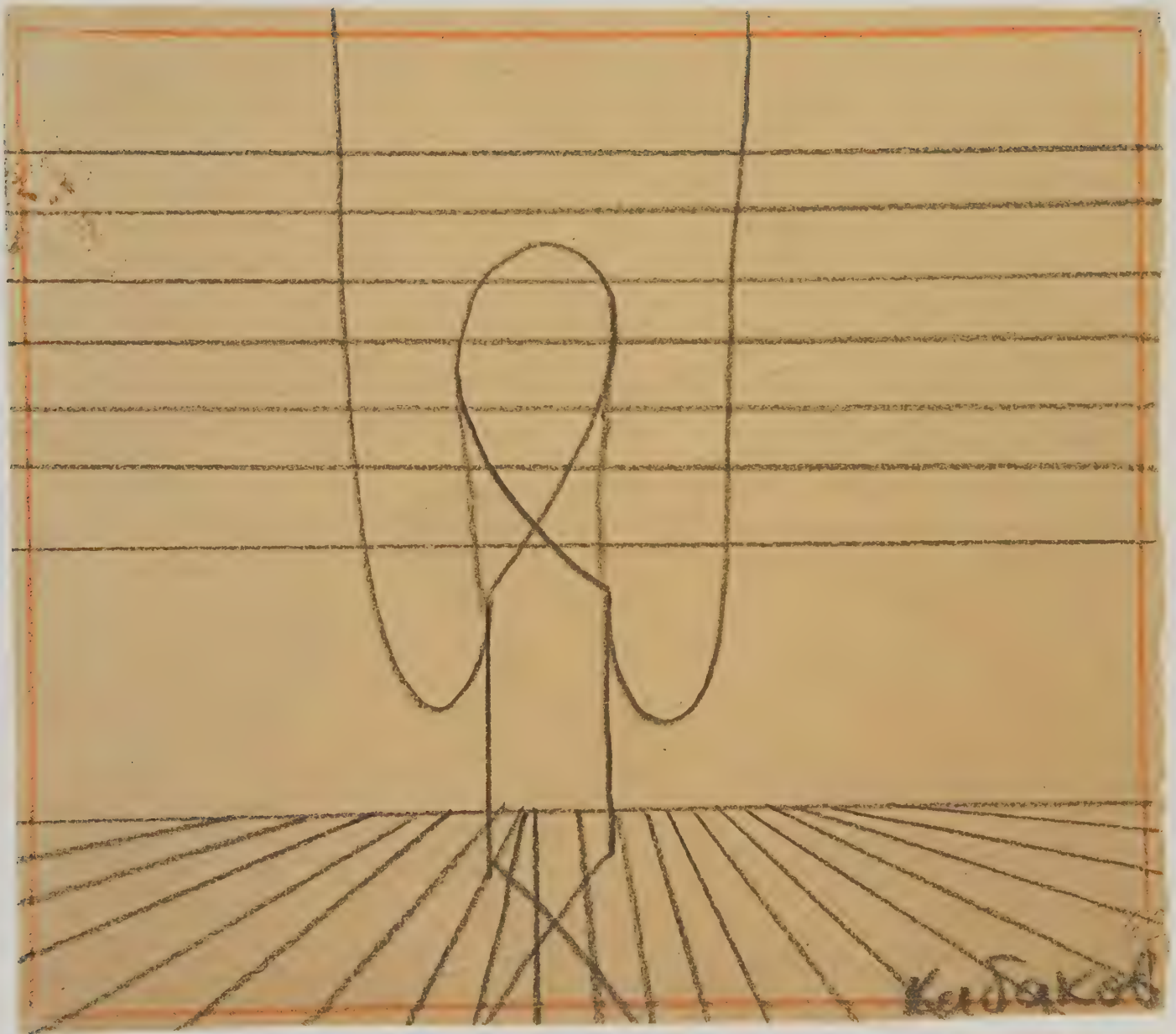
Ilya Kabakov *Abstract Drawing* 1962
Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
14.9 × 20.4

Ilya Kabakov *Untitled* 1962
Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
14.5 × 20



Ilya Kabakov *Untitled* 1962
Coloured pencil on paper
12.4 × 17.8

Ilya Kabakov *Untitled* 1962
Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
9.8 × 13.5



Ilya Kabakov *Abstract Composition* 1962
Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
12.3 × 14

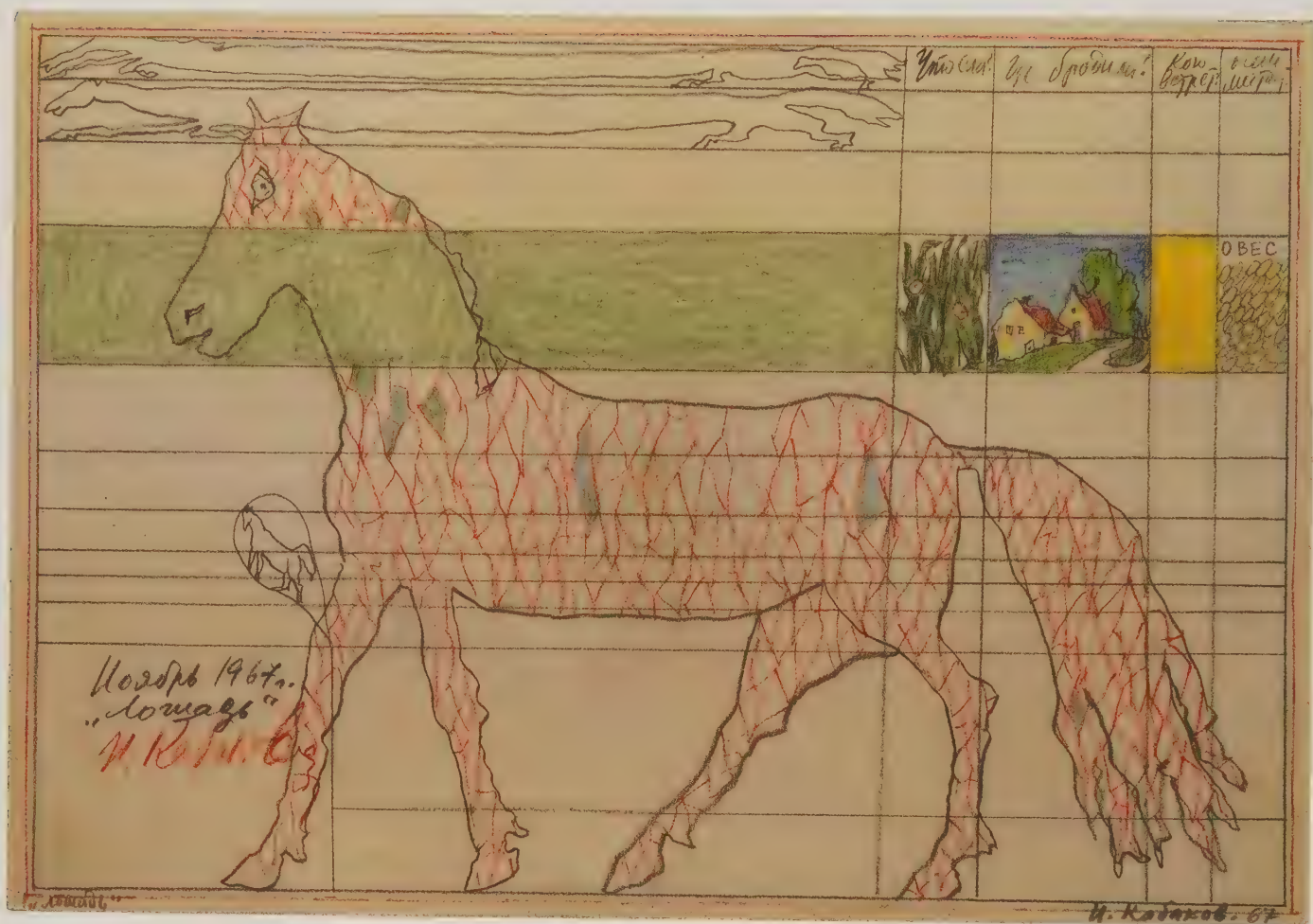


Кабаков

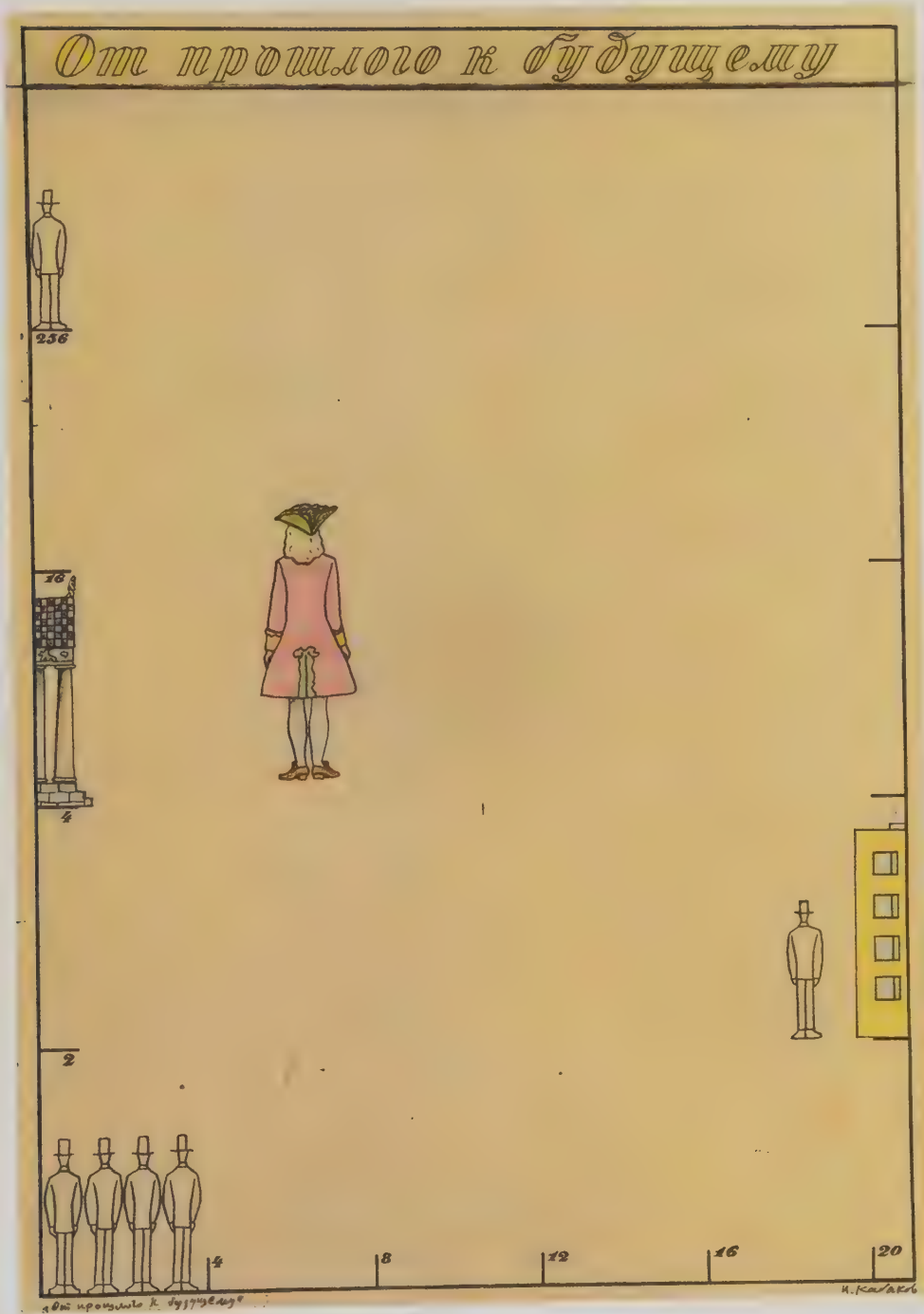
Ilya Kabakov *Pipe, Stick, Ball, Fly* 1966
Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
13.7 × 19.3



Ilya Kabakov *Composition Nr. 1* 1966
Coloured pencil on paper
30.5 × 27.8



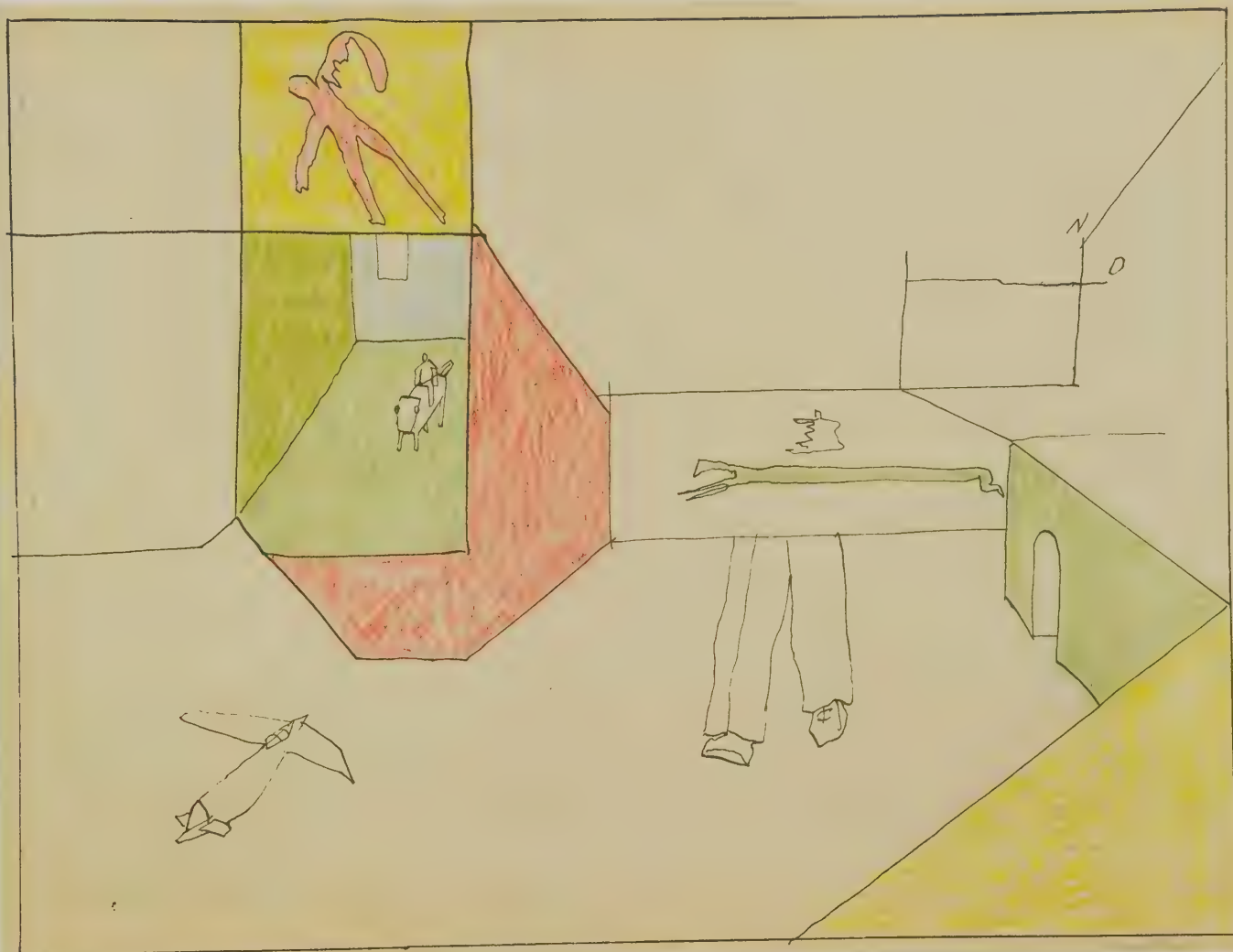
Ilya Kabakov *Horse* 1967
 Graphite and coloured pencil on card
 20.8 × 30



Ilya Kabakov *From the Past to the Future* 1968
 Graphite and coloured pencil on card
 32 × 22.5

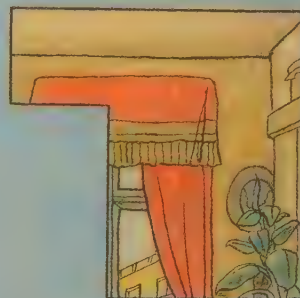
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№/№	Фамилия Имя Отчество	Фрукты	Вес	Присутствие	
1	Иван Трофимович Сергеев	морковки	120г		
2	Инокентий Федорович Осадный	морковки	120г		
3	Ирина Борисовна Горюхов	морковки	120г		
4	Израиль Семенович Толмачевский	огурец	80г		
5	Илья Карпович Маркович	морковки	175г		
6	Марк Борисович Дронов	огурец	100г		
7	Софья Борисовна Залотая	морковки	120г		
8	Анна Лукинична Щипачева	огурец	100г		
9	Василий Николаевич Егоров	пальматор	250г		
10	Борис Антонович Перев	перец	85г		
11	Ирина Александровна Веринская	морковки	120г		
12	Алексей Ильич Тихомиров	морковки	122г		
13	Зинаида Абрамовна Там	тарелка			
14	Зав. фруктовым магазином	Левий Иосифович Марков*			
Примеч.	* морковки		Всего:		

Ilya Kabakov *Untitled* 1968
 Coloured pencil and ink on card
 29.8 × 21.6



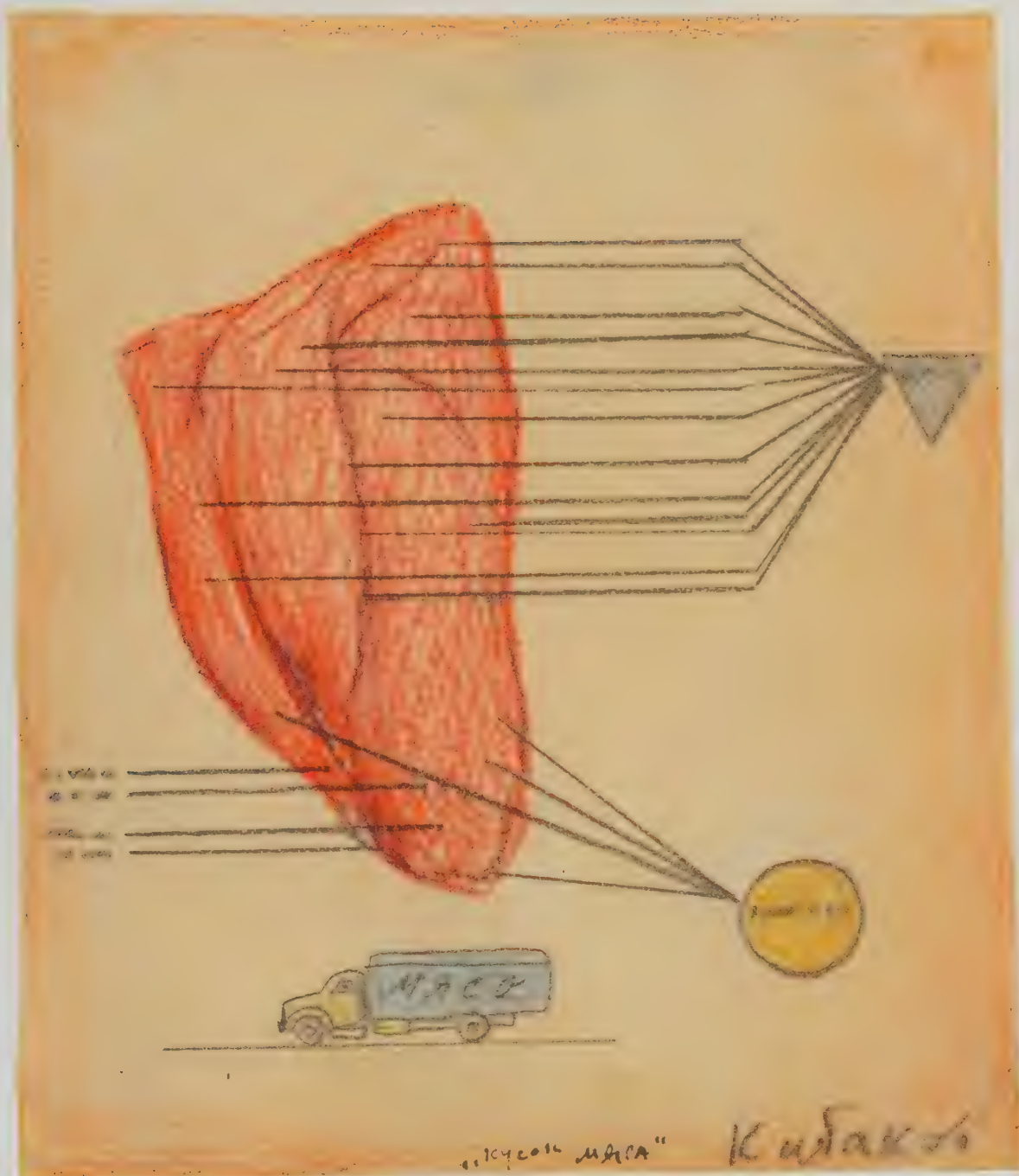
Ilya Kabakov *Space* 1969
Ink and coloured pencil on paper
22.6 × 29.7

Воссејановије по сфраг-
менју погнучо карјину!

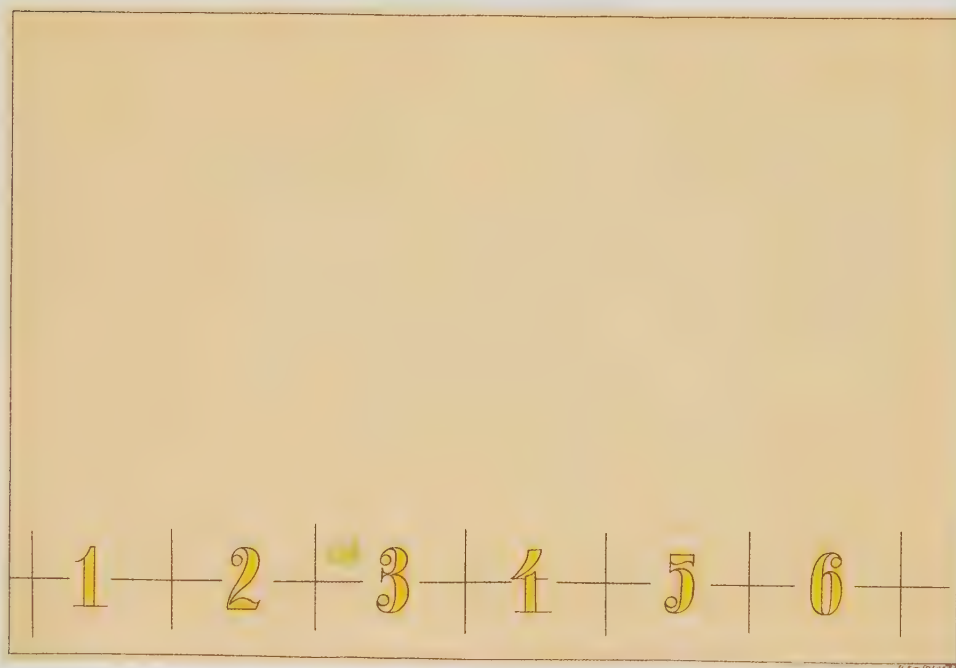
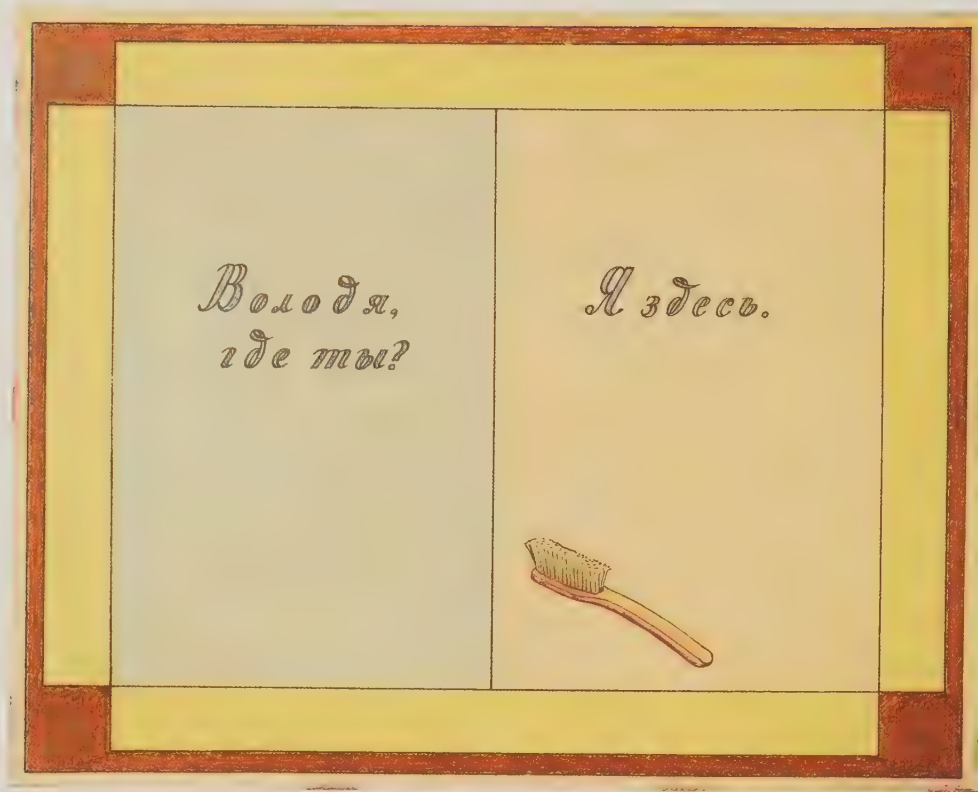


Kabakov 70r

Ilya Kabakov *Untitled* 1970
Coloured pencil and ink on card
20.3 × 27.3



Ilya Kabakov *A Piece of Meat* 1971
 Coloured pencil and ink on paper
 32.4 × 29.2



Ilya Kabakov *Toothbrush* 1972

Graphite and ink on paper

20.3 × 26.7

Ilya Kabakov *Numbers* 1973

Coloured pencil and ink on paper

35 × 50



Ilya Kabakov *Untitled* 1974
Ink and coloured pencil on paper
21 x 29.5



Ilya Kabakov *Ten Characters*. Installation view, part of *Ilya Kabakov: Operation Room (Mother and Son)* at The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway 1995

Ilya Kabakov *Ten Characters* 1970-4
Ink and coloured pencil on paper mounted on card
Dimensions variable

Ilya Kabakov's earliest use of fictional personas appears in his *Ten Characters* albums—a series of narrative drawings made from 1970–4 that each depict a different persona or attitude towards Soviet society. Each album is named after a particular character who embodies a strategy for survival within a totalitarian regime: *Sitting-in-the-Closet Primakov* simply denies the situation through isolation, while *The Mathematical Gorsky* attempts to apply rationality and intellect; *Anna Petrovna Has a Dream* represents mental escapism, whereas *The Flying Komarov* departs Earth in order to find solace in a community of celestial beings.

Drawing may be seen as a foundation of storytelling, and this essence elevates these works to a status that straddles art and literature, a quality that is heightened when the drawings are displayed literally as albums that the reader activates by turning the pages. The small scale of these works on paper is evidence of their production within the confines of the Moscow studio where they were surreptitiously made and shown to a small group of sympathetic peers.

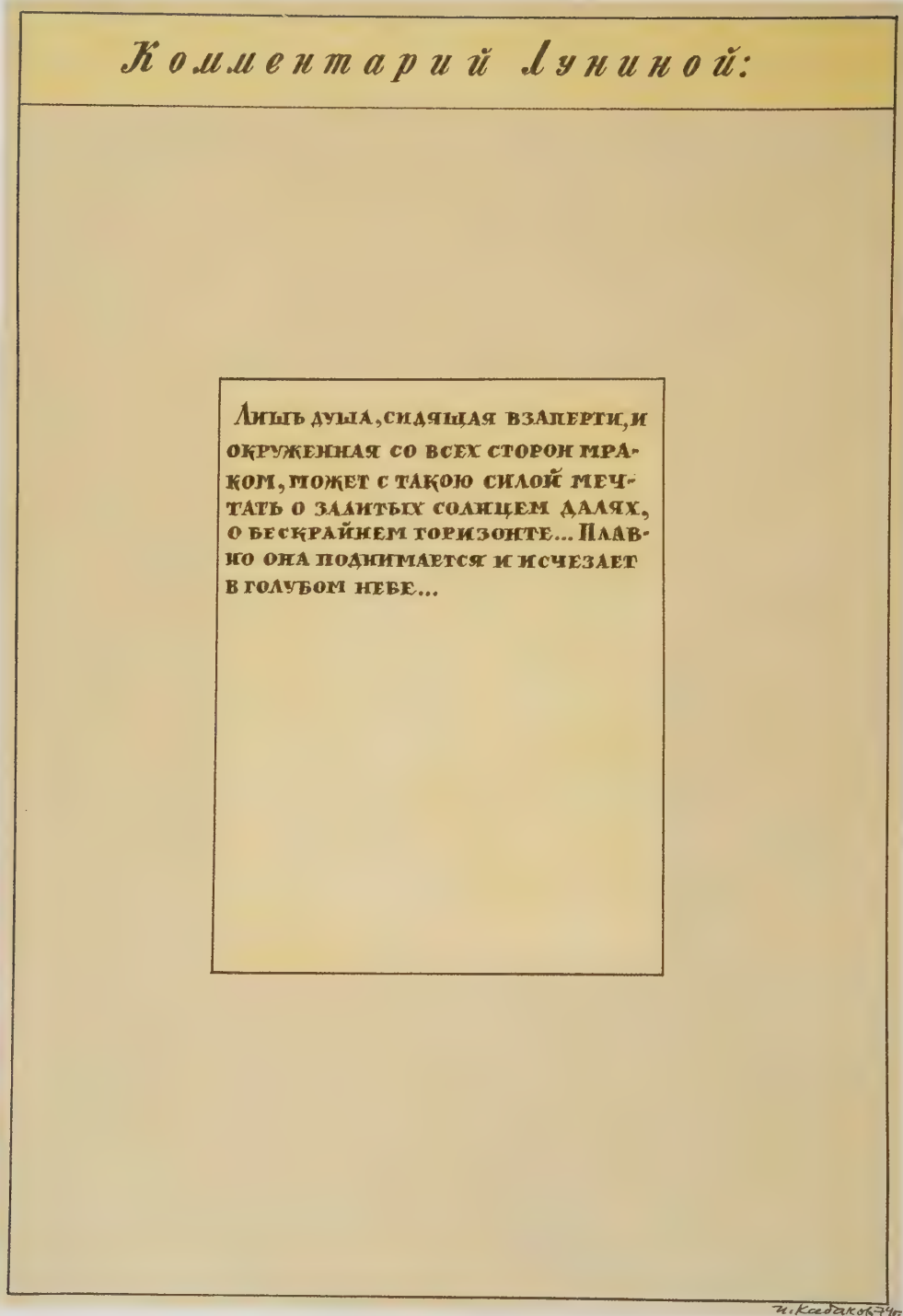
'I began making drawings one after the other and putting them next to each other. Suddenly, I realized that I could put two more between five and six to stretch out the story, I could add one before the first one, in other words, the whole "feel" of the albums arose and defined itself in those weeks [in 1970]. I consider that period the birth of the album technique as a genre. I used the "Flying" series to test out all the "directing" of the albums: plot, intrigue, length of the series, speed of movement through the whole album given the speed of examining each picture separately; from those two times, two speeds — of the whole album and each page — comes the point, the spice, of the album as a "temporal" genre; the discovery of the "residual" interest after looking at an individual page, the commentaries to the picture, which picks up that "residual" interest.'

IK, 1982-4

Ilya Kabakov *Sitting-in-the-Closet* Primakov 1972 (album 1)

Ink and coloured pencil on paper mounted on card

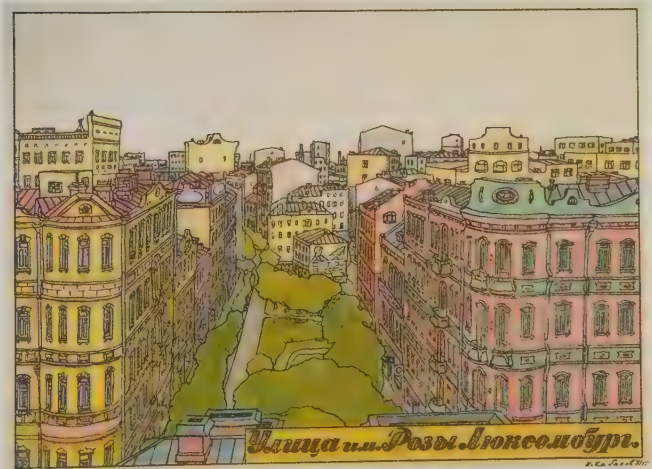
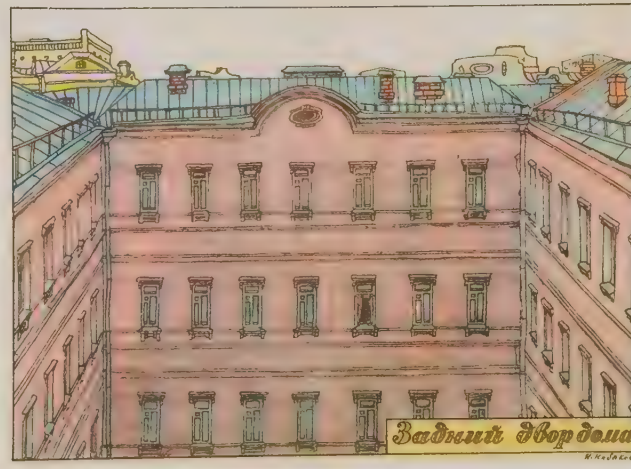
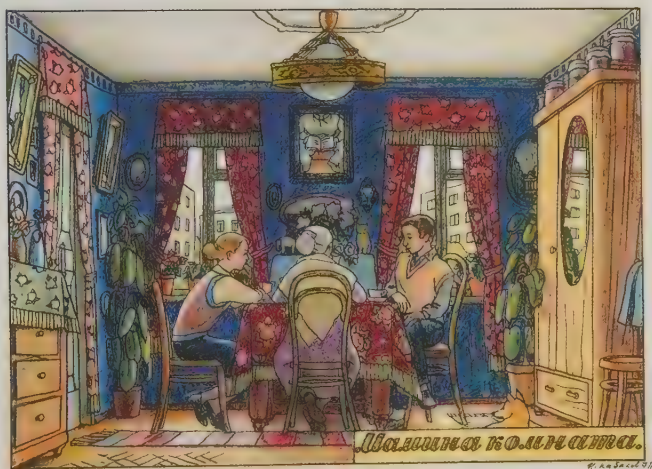
47 pages, 51.5 × 35 (each sheet)



Title page

Commentary by Primakov:

When he was just a small child he started to climb into the closet and hide there. He dragged all of his toys there too. He made something like a bed from an old pillow and a jacket...



Inscriptions:

Page 5:
In the closet

Page 16:
The open closet

Page 17:
Mother's room

Page 18:
The backyard of our house

Page 19:
Rosa Luxemburg Street

Page 23:
Bagdasarsky Region

Ilya Kabakov *The Flying Komarov* 1970 (album 6)
 Ink and coloured pencil on paper mounted on card
 32 pages, 51.5 × 35 (each sheet)



Inscriptions:

Page 6:

'EARLY IN THE MORNING' the first 'fliers' can be seen above the city. But they are not 'going about their usual business' – the air is fresh and clear and quiet all around...

Page 11:

Others, 'FOR THE SAKE OF A JOKE', catch passing airplanes by the wings.

Page 12:

Or, 'HAVING GATHERED A FEW BIRDS' into a team, some quickly rush about in the pure cool wind, turning their faces toward the hot sun...

Page 13:

'FLOATING ABOVE THE SEA', catching sight of slow-swimming schools of fish in its transparent water, they fish for salmon, tuna and marlin fish, or catch coots, fat and pale pink in the sun.



Page 15:
 'IN THE EVENING' everybody is already down on the darkening ground. In the last rays of light, however, you can see those who are still returning from faraway journeys, carrying wares from faraway lands, objects the purpose they often fully do not understand.

Page 17:
 During 'Big Holidays', everybody 'SOLEMNLY HOLDING HANDS' forms an enormous resounding ring. They slowly revolve and a slow, orderly choral drifts about in the morning air (the holiday begins at six o'clock in the morning); it is a multivoiced chorus of women's, men's and children's voices.

Page 23:
 But the majority simply 'BECOME TRANSPARENT'.

Page 24:
 And soon it is impossible to see 'ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY BIRDS' in the air.



Inscription, page 14:
 LEV GLEBOVICH'S 'JOKES'
 HAYSTACK NEAR THE VILLAGE OF GILLYARY

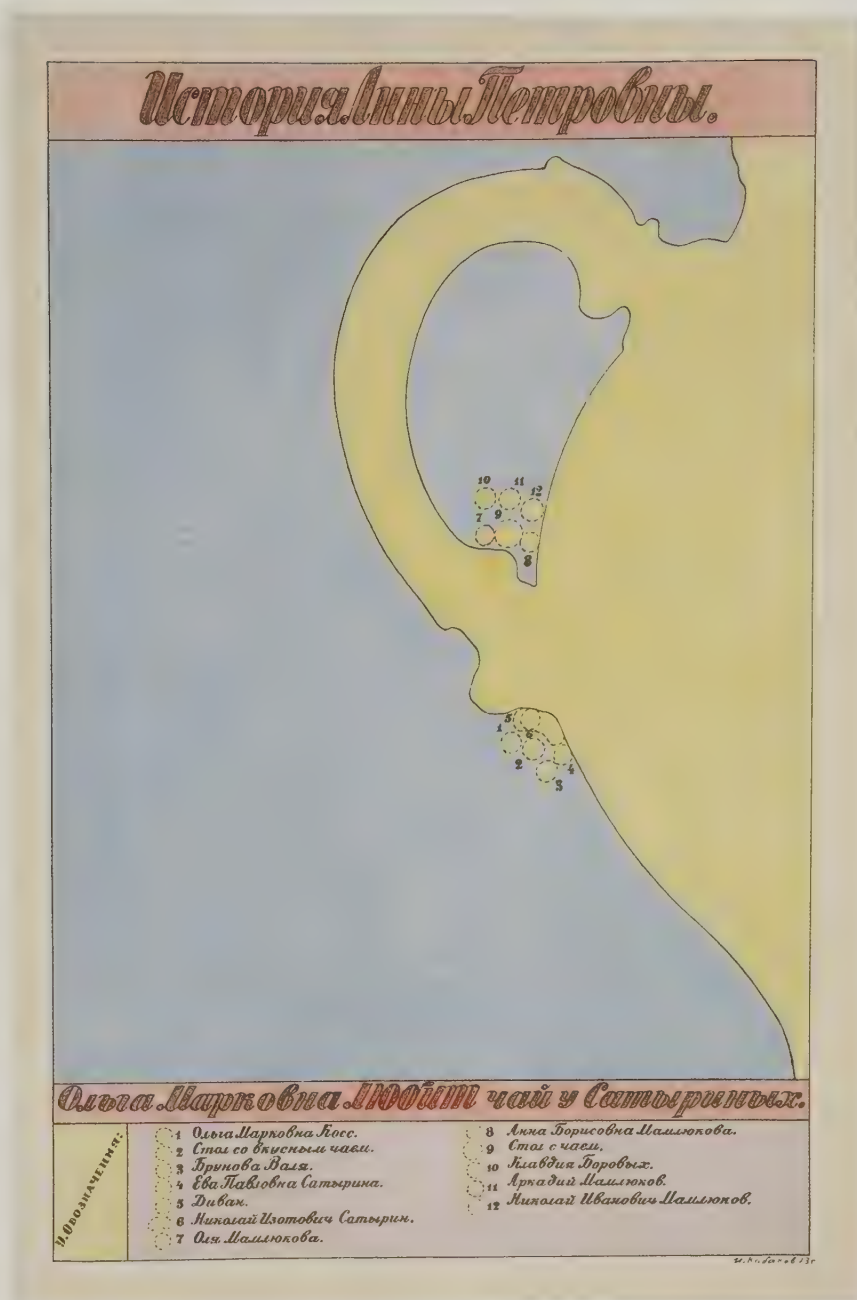
Note: In the middle of June 1934 around noon the following occurred in the village of Gillyary. The peasants were finishing a big haystack after mowing when suddenly everyone saw

a similar haystack descending upon them. Everyone was very frightened, especially those standing at the top. But the descending haystack suddenly fell to pieces, and everyone who was standing there was covered with freshly mown, fragrant hay. No one noticed the moment when the haystack appeared, everyone was busy working.

Ilya Kabakov Anna Petrovna Has a Dream 1972 (album 5)

Ink and coloured pencil on paper mounted on card

32 pages, 51.5 × 35 (each sheet)



Inscription, page 6:

ANNA PETROVNA'S STORY

Olga Markovna LOVES to have tea at the Satyrins'

Legend:

1. Olga Markovna Koss
2. Table with good tea
3. Brunova, Valya
4. Eva Pavlovna Satyrina

5. Couch
6. Nikolai Izotovich Satyrin
7. Olya Mamliukova
8. Anna Borisovna Mamliukova
9. Table with tea
10. Klavdia Borovich
11. Arkady Mamliukov
12. Nikolai Ivanovich Mamliukov



Ilya Kabakov *The Bush* 1961

Oil paint on canvas

51 × 70

During the summer of 1956, Ilya Kabakov visited the studio of Robert Falk, formerly a member of the Jack of Diamonds avant-garde collective that had staged exhibitions in Moscow from 1910 until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. The group revered the post-impressionistic paintings of Paul Cézanne, whom they held in high regard as the instigator of cubism and other stylistic innovations in European painting. By the time of Kabakov's visits, Falk was living in relative isolation in the Moscow suburbs, having been ostracised by the Soviet authorities for both his Jewish identity and his refusal to paint in the Socialist Realist style.

Cézanne's influence is apparent throughout Falk's work, and, as a consequence, the expressionistic paintwork

of Kabakov's *The Bush* and *Self-Portrait* may be perceived as a nostalgic recall to this earlier moment of freedom in artistic experimentation. The latter is perhaps one of the few authentically autobiographical works in Kabakov's oeuvre and was made during the period when he began his extracurricular artistic activity, outside of his state-sanctioned career as a children's book illustrator. They also serve as a visual counterpoint to the deliberately crudely rendered works that Kabakov would shortly go on to make, as a form of revolt against the predominantly Socialist Realist style of painting that was officially approved and actively encouraged by the Soviet state.



Ilya Kabakov *Self-Portrait* 1962
Oil paint on canvas
60.5 × 50.5

Ilya Kabakov *Cubes* 1962
Oil paint and enamel on wood
93.6 × 41.4 × 17.5

Cubes is the first of what Ilya Kabakov has referred to as *kartiny-predmety* ('picture-objects') – works that resist the simple categories of painting and sculpture. Its construction out of several layers of unevenly shaped wood indicates the meagre availability of resources to artists working outside of the state-approved system. However, instead of undermining its status as an artwork, the crudeness of the materials and paintwork implies a degree of audacity in the face of an authoritarian regime. An added ambiguity comes in its mixture of abstract and figurative elements: the three-dimensional, brightly coloured geometric shapes recall the Proun graphic designs of El Lissitzky, whereas the tiny houses that appear on the bottom right-hand side of the work are suggestive of a contrasting folk or 'naïve' aesthetic.





Ilya Kabakov *Soccer Player* 1964
Oil paint and enamel on Masonite
56 × 70

Ilya Kabakov has described *Soccer Player* as one of his earliest conceptual paintings. Within the dominant area of turquoise blue is the outline of a striding figure; yellow circles confirm the title's description and our reading of the image as being that of a football player. The image is complicated by the partial view of a rural landscape scene and a label in distorted Cyrillic which reads 'Uglich'—an ancient town in the west of Russia that forms part of the 'golden ring' of historic cities

surrounding Moscow. The painting's innocuous imagery and harmonious colours belie the fact that Uglich is known for being the setting of a still-functioning hydroelectric station which was constructed by prisoners of the Gulag, or forced labour camps. Kabakov reveals this paradox of signs, in which an image that might at first sight appear banal may in fact represent something far more sinister.

'What else can I say about those "painting-objects"? At the time I called it "absurdism". In 1970 when [the French collector] Dina Vierny first saw them, she called it "Russian pop art".'

IK, 1982-4



Ilya Kabakov *Hand and Ruisdael's Reproduction* 1965
Textile relief, print on paper, wood, oil paint
and enamel on plywood
120 × 150 × 15

As with other of Ilya Kabakov's early 'object-paintings', *Hand and Ruisdael's Reproduction* slips between categories, being neither sculpture nor purely painting. The dismembered hand gives form to the phrase *prilozhit' ruku* (to attach one's hand), which is a Russian colloquial expression meaning 'to add one's signature'. As if this slippage has not been enough to destabilise our understanding of the work, the hand is placed alongside a reproduction of a seventeenth-century landscape painting

by the Netherlandish painter Salomon van Ruysdael—which has oddly been selected over a work by his more famous nephew, Jacob van Ruisdael. This juxtaposition of significant movements in art history—the Dutch Golden Age, surrealism, and modernist assemblage—undermines the perception that art should strive towards a singular goal of Platonic beauty, and instead elevates other movements that celebrate subjectivity and lived experience.



Ilya Kabakov *Pipe, Stick, Ball and Fly* 1966
 Ceramic, textile reliefs, oil paint and enamel
 on plywood
 130 × 180 × 20

The object-painting *Pipe, Stick, Ball and Fly* is a work that complements the aesthetic and conceptual experiments undertaken concurrently in American pop art and Italian *arte povera*, both of which Kabakov came to know second-hand through critics and collectors who had seen such works overseas. Intrigued by these tendencies, Kabakov hypothesised what an artistic response to the quotidian visual culture of the Soviet Union—which was severely restricted under the

authoritarian government—might look like. This lack of a flourishing image culture is conveyed not only through blank space and an economy of objects, but in the ‘real’ elements of the plywood and pipe that in themselves had to be scavenged or surreptitiously acquired. The artist has likened this process to detective work, adding a performative element to a work which is deceptively perfunctory in its appearance.

Ilya Kabakov *The Boy* 1965

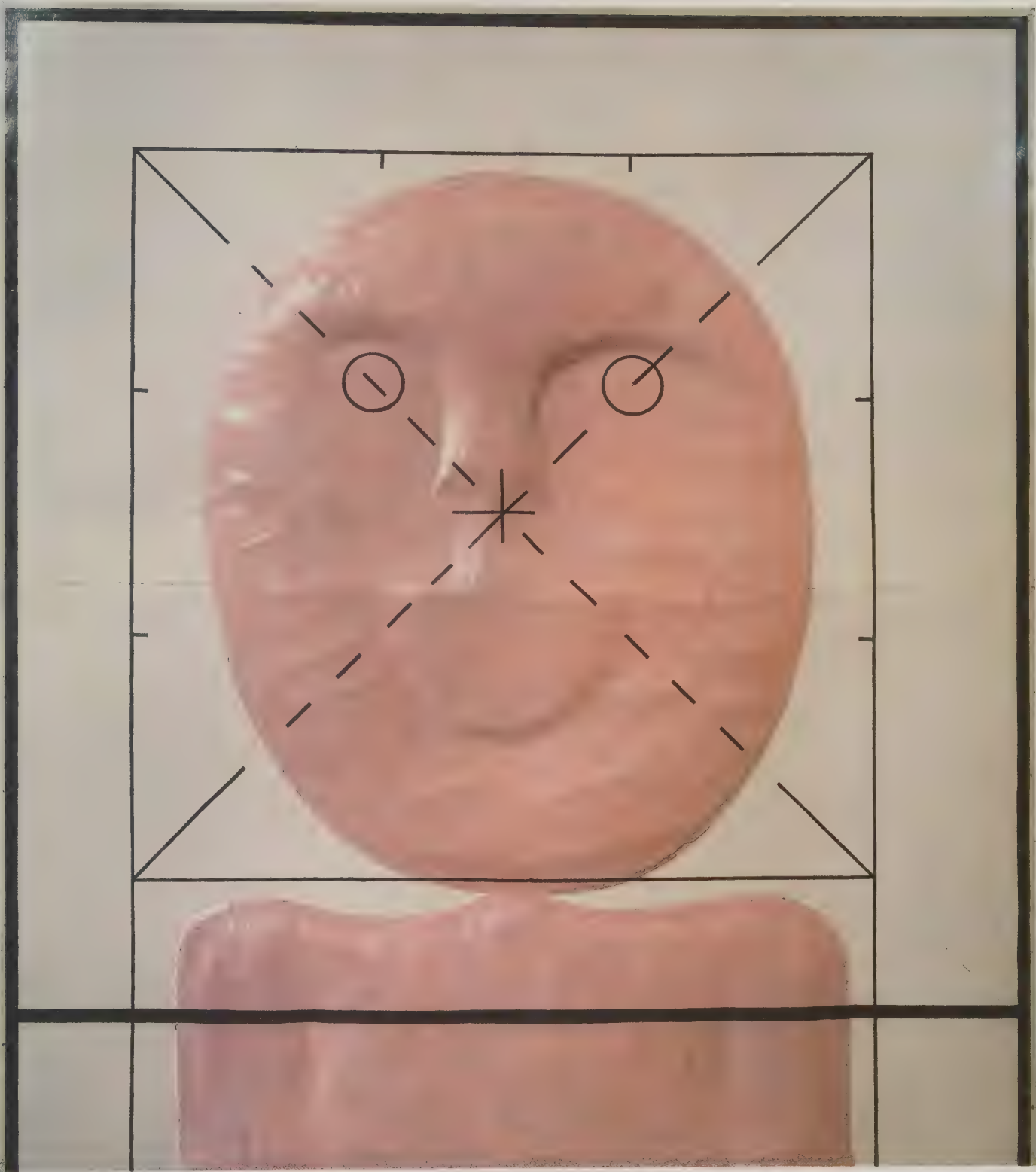
Oil paint, enamel and textile relief on Masonite

186 × 160 × 12

Created in 1965, *The Boy* and *Head with a Balloon* (p.109) were presented alongside *Hand and Ruisdael's Reproduction* (p.104) at a joint exhibition in 1968 alongside works by Erik Bulatov at the Bluebird Café—a creative hub that was monitored by the KGB. Kabakov's monstrous figures, his first unofficial works to be presented in public, were a stark contrast to the graphic precision of Bulatov's paintings.

Kabakov has specifically described *The Boy*, imprisoned as he is within geometric lines, as a revolt against the idealised depiction of human proportion in Leonardo da Vinci's drawing *Vitruvian Man*, a work which has acquired iconic status and inspired generations of artists since it was created in Renaissance Italy at the end of the fifteenth century. Rendered in anaemic shades of pink, Kabakov's Boy questions the representation and legacies of the aesthetically marginalised, who don't conform to the proletarian archetypes shown in classical art and political propaganda.

Kabakov has a tendency to revisit his works and created a new version of *The Boy* in 2000.



'[F]or me these "things" represented a concentration of distinctive psychological feelings. I felt as if pushed, squashed into that world, filled with mystery and emptiness, where everything was suspended in silent, uncomfortable anticipation. Everything was pushed into that world only halfway, as if into a suitcase that won't close.'

IK, 1982-4



Ilya Kabakov *Head with a Balloon* 1965
Textile reliefs, plaster, oil paint
and enamel on Masonite
150 × 120 × 12

Ilya Kabakov *The Queen Fly* 1965
Oil paint and enamel on Masonite and wood
48.5 × 60 × 6

The fly has been an enduring symbol across Ilya Kabakov's career. It bears negative connotations in its unremarkable appearance and attraction to rubbish, and yet it also embodies the miracle of flight. In *The Queen Fly*, Kabakov suggests a hierarchy within this species, honouring the insect with a portrait of sorts, in which its abstracted form is flanked by diamonds.

This is the Sky, This is a Lake, This is the Sea (p.112) also forces the viewer to confront culturally held preconceptions. Far from being a work of abstract minimalism, the painting bears Cyrillic labels in each corner that offer us divergent opinions on what the expanse of blue might represent.

Another provocation can be found in the painting *Six* (p.113). The reference to a dice is almost too obvious, the caption spelling out the number thrown. Yet the usefulness of the painting's subject matter is negated by the elongated shape of the support: a dice of these proportions would be ineffective. The image therefore alludes to art's perceived uselessness, or the notion of 'art for art's sake'.

Embarking on conceptual painting in the 1960s proved to be difficult for Kabakov, not only in avoiding the attention of the authorities, but also in sourcing appropriate materials. These paintings are rendered on Masonite—a type of hardboard that was often used in the construction of walls and floors. This use of 'poor' materials, as opposed to oil paint on stretched canvas, suggests a strategy of self-effacement, inviting us to consider the value in content over form—especially when seen in the context of paintings treasured by museums and other state institutions.





Ilya Kabakov *This is the Sky, This is a Lake, This is the Sea* 1970
 Oil paint and enamel on Masonite
 125 × 197

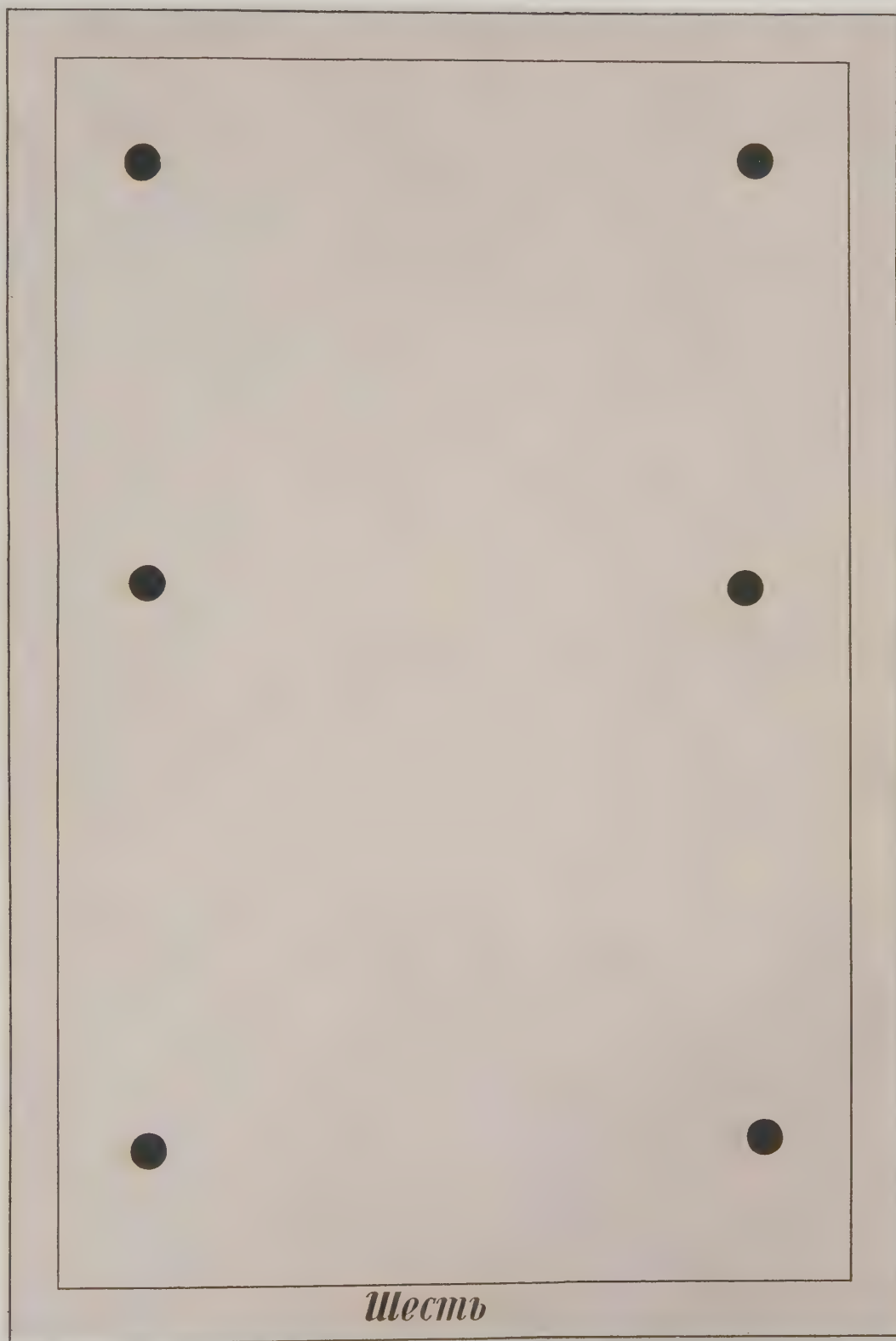
Inscription:

Anna Sergeevna Tropina:
 This is a lake.

Nikolaj Adamovich Borev:
 This is the sea.

Sergej Mikhailovich Levtschuk:
 This is the air.

Lidia Borissovna Sekh:
 This is the sky.



Ilya Kabakov *Six* 1981
Oil paint and enamel on Masonite
160 × 100

Ilya Kabakov *The Answers of an Experimental Group*

1970-1 (overleaf)

Oil paint, enamel and mixed media on board

145 × 305 × 12

Kabakov's incorporation of textual elements in his works invokes both high and low aspects of culture, be it in the everyday street signage of the Soviet Union, the grand narratives of the Russian literary tradition, or the semiotic game-playing of artists such as Marcel Duchamp or René Magritte.

The Answers of an Experimental Group marked a shift in Kabakov's output, it being a conceptual work that activates the viewer, forcing them to interpret the text and its relationship with the adjacent objects. Its creation was instigated by challenging attempts to exhibit art at the Bluebird Café in 1968 and on Maslovka Street in 1970, and was intended for display only to the small group of artists and intellectuals who were invited to Kabakov's Moscow studio. The script is in the style of the 'ZhEK' (*Zhishchno-Ekspluatatsionnaya Kontora*) – rent-collectors and caretakers of urban apartment buildings. As with assemblage works that were being created further afield in the United States by artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Joseph Kosuth, the objects Kabakov affixed to the support reflected the materials that surrounded him: a broom handle and coat hanger are evidence of what passed for consumer culture in Soviet society at that time.

Nikolai Petrovich (p.118) combines what appears to be a fragment of a landscape painting with an excerpt of a mundane story about a man who departs for an expedition. His anxieties regarding the journey are expressed in first-person remarks and repetition, this being a tautological strategy of many notable Russian writers including Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

In *Sobakin* (p.120), the left half of the composition lists the particulars of a fictional individual called Sobakin, whose last name derives from the Russian word for dog (*sobak*). The visual manifestation of this appears on the right half of the work, its small and unremarkable appearance mirroring the nature of the text – a bureaucratic survey in which the emotional complexity of a human life is diminished to a brief summary of one's job and qualifications.

'The text in these paintings is not just the written word, but speech, spoken words. This expression in sound, which belongs to a concrete person, whose full name is often written right there as well, creates a special effect when the phrase is read: we hear it, but we do not see who is saying it. But the authenticity and abruptness of those words creates the feeling that the speaker is somewhere nearby. A substitution occurs, the illusion of the reality of the person we do not see but hear well and thus the written can substitute for the object. There is still one more quality of spoken words. They are incredibly "spacious". Indeed, people are continually surrounded in their daily lives by a heaving sea of pronounced words...'

IK, 1982-4

Николай Павлович Малышев:
Здесь я повешу свой новый плащ.

Николай Аркадьевич Кривов:
Этот паровоз я купил для Володи.
моего сына.

Александр Алексеевич Косс:
Гвоздь забил моя жена, Бриуханова
Анна Алексеевна.

Анна Борисовна Городовина:
Я ничего не понимаю.

Володя Малышев:
Гвоздь можно легко вытаскивать.

Элина Марковна Ямпольская:
Надо поехать за дровами, дрова
совсем кончились.

Леночка Синицына:
Палка не похожа на палку.

София Тихоновна Солодова:
В этом году нужно обязательно
поехать к Ане и взять с собой Женю.

Карп Вениаминович Сорин:
Раньше здесь была автомашина.

Глеб Александрович Шугаев:
Я бы убрал палку, она плохо нарисована
и здесь не нужна.

Алексей Дмитриевич Лисицын:
Я бы повесил здесь на эту вешалку
какой-нибудь костюм.

Борис Павлович Наколцов:
Мне тоже кажется, что не хватает
какого-то предмета.

Александра Мироновна Льбова:
Это побидило, остатки какого-то
психологического события.

Иван Анатольевич Сасакин:
Это символы: угроза, отсутствие чего-то
псевдодвижение и фиктивное жилище.

Соня Подобед:
Здесь изложена программа уклонения,
сокрытия.

Анна Владиславовна Лешко:
Мне не кажется, что знакомая система
без пластики даст картину.

Inscription:

Answers of the Experimental Group at Pavlov. RSKS

Nikolai Pavlovich Malyshev:

I will hang my new raincoat here.

Nikolai Arkadievich Krivov:

I bought this steam engine for Volodya, my son.

Alexander Alekseevich Koss:

My wife, Briukhanova Anna Alekseevna,
pounded in this nail.

Anna Borisovna Gorodovina:

I don't understand anything.

Volodya Malyshev:

This nail can easily be pulled out.

Elina Markovna Yampolskaya:

We have to go for firewood, there is no more firewood at all.

Lenochka Sinitzyna:

The stick doesn't look like a stick.

Sofia Tikhonovna Solodova:

We definitely have to visit Anja this year and take
Zhenya along.

Karp Venjaminovich Sorin:

There was an automobile here earlier.



Gleb Alexandrovich Shukhaev:

I would remove the stick, it is poorly drawn and isn't needed here at all.

Aleksei Dmitrievich Lisitzyn:

I would hang some sort of suit here on this hanger.

Boris Pavlovich Nikolaev:

I, too, think that there is some sort of object missing.

Alexandra Mironovna Lvova:

Apparently, these are the remains of some sort of psychological event.

Ivan Anatolievich Sisakyan:

These are symbols: a threat, the absence of something pseudo-motion and fictitious effort.

Sonya Podobed:

Summarized here is a program of deviation, concealment.

Anna Vladislavovna Leshko:

It doesn't seem to me that a sign system without plasticism renders a painting.



нам и тихий, серый, холодный осенний день. Лошадь была уже запряжена, а Николай Петрович все медлил и никак не мог выйти. Поездка его не путала, к новому пути он был совершенно равнодушен и не думал ни о холодной ночи, ни о грязи, ни о тряске и других обычных неудобствах.

— Ну что, поехали? — голос его попутчика, местного агронома, тоже Николая, звучал слегка хрипловато после холодной ночи. Да и сам Николай Петрович тоже чувствовал себя не совсем хорошо.

— Уже холода наступают, а я из дома выехал в одной рубашке и пиджаке, хорошо, что плащ взял на всякий случай, — подумал он. — Чорт бы побрал эту погоду, никогда не знаешь, какой будет, да и вообще, видно, с летом придется распрощаться!

— Да, поехали, — сказал он и со вздохом поднялся со скамьи. Дверь со скрипом отворилась и он, пропуская вперед агронома, увидел за его спиной уже порозовевшее небо, двор, окраину деревни, спускающуюся вниз по косогору дорогу и такой знакомый и уже прискучивший ему за все эти годы вид. В телеге, смеясь, выдвигаясь среди остального, лежал старенький холодильник, который хозяин их ночлега, пользуясь случаем, просил Николая Петровича подбросить в соседнюю деревню к свояку.

Николай Петрович работал здесь уже давно, сменил много профессий, и сейчас, уже в должности старшего инспектора лесхознадзора, ехал по вызову в Усолье-Верхнее, где, по звонку района, "необходимо было его срочное присутствие" и где ждал его уже третий день, но куда из-за плохой дороги и поломки телеги он никак не мог попасть.

— В эти края бы да дорогу приличную! Хотя бы такую, как между Вышгородом и Халупиным, — с привычной досадой подумал он. — Цены бы этим краям не было. Эх, да что говорить! — он даже поежился, вспомнив про Желудевую падь, между Березовым и Аутовинным, которую им предстоит еще сегодня проехать и в которой увязали все без исключения телеги, лошади и даже машины, а в прошлом месяце так застрял трехосный самосвал, что его с грузом вытаскивали два трактора, после того, как он простоял там целую неделю.

— А после прошедших в эти дни дождей, что там теперь? — с тоской подумал Николай Петрович, но тут же решил ни о чем таком не думать, а, по обычной своей манере, вспомнить что-нибудь приятное. А оно было и совсем недавно.

Приятное и даже радостное было вот что: дочь Николая Петровича, Маруся, поехавшая в Красноярск, выдержала экзамен и поступила в сельскохозяйственный институт. А сколько хапоот было с этой Марусей! "Мой характер!" с удовольствием подумал Николай Петрович, вспомнив, сколько неприятностей всем им всегда доставляла "упрямый" марусин характер. Стоит только вспомнить, каких споров, слез и уговоров стоило всей семье ее решение переехать в Красноярск и держать экзамен в "сельскохозяйственный". "Что тебе работы мало здесь, в районе?" кричали на нее мать и сестра. "Где же ты там жить-то будешь, ведь ни одной родной души не будет рядом!" вторила им бабушка. Николай Петрович лишь об-

Inscription:

It was a quiet, grey, cold autumn day. The horse was harnessed, but Nikolai Petrovich kept stalling and could not bring himself to go out for anything. The trip did not frighten him. In fact, he was totally indifferent to the new journey, and he was not thinking about the cold night, the mud, the bumpiness, or any of the other usual discomforts.

‘So, are we going?’ asked his travelling companion, a local agronomist, also called Nikolai, in a slightly hoarse voice after the cold night. Nikolai Petrovich didn’t feel all that well either. ‘It’s getting cold already, and I left the house in only a shirt and a jacket. Good thing I brought a raincoat, just in case. Damn this weather!’ he thought. ‘You never know what it’s going to be like. Well, I guess it’s time to say goodbye to the summer.’

‘Yeah, let’s go,’ he said and with a sigh stood up from the bench. The door opened with a squeak and, letting the agronomist out first, he saw the already pinkening sky, courtyard, village outskirts, the road winding down the mountain and the view so familiar and already tedious to him after all these years. In the wagon, looking silly among the other things, lay an old refrigerator, which the landlord of their lodgings, taking advantage of the opportunity, asked Nikolai Petrovich to deliver to his brother-in-law’s house in the next village.

Nikolai Petrovich had worked here for a long time, changing his profession often, and now, as a senior forestry inspector, had been called to Usolya-Verkhnee, where his presence was needed immediately, and where they had been waiting for him three days already. Because of the bad road and the wagon breaking down, though, he had been unable to get there.

‘If there were only a decent road in these regions! At least like the one between Vyshgorod and Khalupin,’ he thought with his usual annoyance. ‘Then they would be perfect. Ah, why talk about it?’ He even squirmed a little as he remembered the Zheludovsky Ravine between Beryozov and Lugovinov which they still had to cross today and in which all waggons, horses, and even vehicles, without exception, bogged down. Last month a tri-axled dumptruck became so stuck that even two tractors had difficulty dragging it out after it had sat there for a whole week.

‘After the rains these past few days, what will it be like now?’ thought Nikolai Petrovich melancholically, but right there he resolved not to think about such a thing, and instead, in his usual manner, think about something pleasant. And that something pleasant had happened not all that long ago.

Pleasant, and even joyful, was the following: Nikolai Petrovich’s daughter, Marusya, who went to Krasnoyarsk, passed her examination and entered the agricultural institute. How many problems there had been with this Marusya! ‘She has my character’, mused Nikolai Petrovich with pleasure, recalling the many unpleasantries Marusya’s ‘stubborn’ nature had always brought them. He had only to remember the many arguments, tears and persuasions the whole family had been through with her decision to move to Krasnoyarsk and take the examination for the ‘aggie’ institute. ‘What’s the matter, there’s not enough work for you here in our area?’ her sister and mother had yelled at her. ‘Where will you live? You won’t be among your own kind there!’ echoed her grandmother. Nikolai Petrovich only ...

Ф И О.	Собакин Петр Николаевич			
Родился:				
Родители:	Собакин Николай Артемьевич. Собакина Фекла Игнатьевна.	Место рождения:	Рязанская губ. Межевской волости село Черные Грязи, позже село Покровское Горобской вол.	Дата рождения:
				12 Февраля 1901 года. (25 Февраля 1901 года по новому стилю).
Учился и работает:				
Учился:	Дата:	Работает:	Дата:	Место работы:
Вяземское начальное приходское училище	1915г.	Кочегар Машинист	1921г. 1925г.	ст. Кашира Павловск ж.д. ст. Сенки Петровск ж.д.
Вяземский путевой рабочий	1935г.	Ст. диспетчер сложной пути	1936г.	ст. Синельниково II
Киевский институт инженеров транспорта	1949г.	Пом. нач. станции Начальник стани. Зав. отделом МПС УССР (отд. перевозок)	1945г. 1946г. 1957г.	ст. Кумы, Киевской ж.д. ст. Кумы, Киевской ж.д. Киев, МПС УССР
Дети:				
Собакин Петр Петрович.	1927г.	Металлург-оператор первой разряда		Канинский Металлургический комбинат
Собакин Иван Петрович.	1930г.	Инженер-конструктор		Московско-курское металлсоюзединение
Собакина Ирина Петровна.	1941г.	Старший лаборант. кандидат технических наук		Киевский завод синтетических волокон «Володарского»
Примечание:	Блужащий оператор. "Текстильной промышленности и промышленности синтетических материалов."			

Собака



Ilya Kabakov Sobakin 1980

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite

210 x 300

Inscription (left side):

Parents

Sobakin, Nikolai Artemevich

Place of Birth

Ryazanskaya Province, Mezevsk middle region,
Black Dirt Village later called Pokrovskoe Village

Date of Birth

12 February 1901

Parents

Sobakina, Fekla Ignatievna

Place of Birth

Gorovskaya region

Date of Birth

25 February 1901 (new style)

Studied

1915 Vyazemsk Parochial School

1935 Vyazemsk Rail Faculty

1949 Kiev Institute for Transportation Engineers

Worked

1921 Stoker, Kashira Station, Pavlovsk RR

1925 Machinist, Senky Station, Petrovskaya RR

1936 Station Dispatcher, Sinelnikovo II Station

1945 Deputy, Kury Station, Kiev RR

1946 Station Chief, Kury Station, Kiev RR

1957 Department Director MPS of UkSSR

(Cargo Departement), Kiev, MPS of UkSSR

Children

1927 Sobakin, Peter Petrovich, Metallurgist-operator,

Kaninskij Metallurgical Plant

1930 Sobakin, Ivan Petrovich, Constructor engineer,

Moscow-Kursk Metal Assoc.

1941 Sobakina Irina Petrovna, Senior Lab Worker, PhD in

Technology, Kiev Factory of Synthetic Materials, Volodarskogo

Inscription (right side): Dog



Таблица VIII Раздел XIX

И. А. Лехин

Выставка «Индустрия социализма» 1936г.

ПРОВЕРЕНА!
(НА ПАРТИЙНОЙ ЧИСТКЕ)

Присуждена
ПЕРВАЯ ПРЕМИЯ и ДИПЛОМ
Всесоюзной Сельскохозяйственной
Выставки

17 973

Ilya Kabakov *Tested!* 1981

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite

260 × 380

Socialist Realism was a genre of painting that came to prominence in the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Typified by its idealised and optimistic portrayals of proletarian life and leisure, it also became one of the few forms of art approved by the Soviet state, which understood the power of images among such a large population with varying degrees of literacy.

In *Tested!*, the visual language of Socialist Realism is appropriated to undermine its claims to authenticity. In the painting's central image is a study of a previously existing work from 1936 by a forgotten Socialist Realist painter whose work Kabakov once encountered in a book. The scene shows a woman being handed back her Communist Party membership card, presumably after successfully convincing the seated officials of her allegiance to the political regime. The context

of the printed page on which the image was found is evidenced by the caption that is included in Kabakov's composition. Kabakov's mother would have been subject to similar interrogations in her lifetime, and so the celebratory nature of the painting suggests a distortion of the truth.

Inscription:

Plate no. 8, department 19

Exhibition of Socialistic Industry 1936

I. Alechin

Tested!

(The Cleaning of the Party)

First prize and diploma of the Soviet Agricultural Exhibition.

Ilya Kabakov *By December 25 in Our District ...* 1983

Wood and metal objects mounted on oil paint and
enamel on Masonite

260 × 380 × 24

By December 25 in Our District ... portrays a scene of utopian potential, where a tower block overlooks an industrial wasteland that awaits a new construction project. The reality of human labour is suggested with the addition of two shovels that are affixed to the surface of the painting. Additionally superimposed is Cyrillic text—a list of promises to build new buildings, including homes and municipal spaces, all of which will ostensibly be completed by 25 December 1979. By virtue of the artwork being dated four years after this point and the construction scene being shown in a state of disarray, it is implied that these are the unfulfilled promises of a utopian society.



Inscription:

By 25 December 1979 in our district will be constructed

1. Twelve apartment houses, streets and places on 142,000 square metres for 18,300 inhabitants
2. 168 houses for one or two families on 8,500 square metres for 1,280 inhabitants
3. Six communal and educational houses on 7,500 square metres with 2,200 places
4. Two boarding schools on 2,600 square metres with 880 places
5. One cinema and 5 clubs for 2,600 persons
7. Five kindergardens and other places for children

8. Library with reading room and 160 reading places
9. Two stadiums and 3 sports fields
10. A public bath house with a laundry
11. Six dining rooms with 2,000 seats
12. Two restaurants with 1,000 seats
13. A hospital with outpatients' clinic
14. A health centre
15. Two parks and two squares with open swimming pools
16. Four canteens with a supermarket
17. Two repair services
18. 44 km asphalt roads
19. The house of books



Ilya Kabakov *Holiday # 1* 1987
 Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas
 100 × 160

The fictional artist responsible for the 'Holiday' paintings is a minor official artist painting in the style of Socialist Realism, who at one point receives a commission to produce a series of works intended for display in a suitably grand setting, such as a municipal building or government office. When the commission is cancelled, the works are neglected in storage for many years. The artist rediscovers them and decides to reinvigorate them. However, short of imagination and

materials, he settles for frivolous adornment in the form of sweet wrappers. At a glance they resemble flowers blooming on the canvas, but they are essentially a trite upgrade that fails to improve upon the prosaic images beneath. The work is not only a commentary on how the criteria of what makes for 'good' art is politically charged and subject to change, but also raises a question as to the fate of those artists who fall out of institutional favour.



Ilya Kabakov *Holiday # 2* 1987
Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas
100 × 160



Ilya Kabakov *Holiday # 6* 1987
Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas
100 × 160



Ilya Kabakov *Holiday # 8* 1987
Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas
100 × 160



Under the Snow # 2 2004
Oil paint on canvas
160 × 249

White space occupies a significant role in Russian art, not only in relation to suprematist painting, but also in terms of the swathes of snow that blanket many parts of Russia during the difficult winters. Empty spaces are also a hallmark of Ilya Kabakov's earliest drawings, and hint at censorship or a repression of content.

In the series *Under the Snow*, the fragments of 'reality' that break through may be interpreted as memories of an actual Soviet past. As such, the work might be read as a visual

summation of the ways in which we recall and repress memories of a traumatic history. This possibility is shared in the *Kanon* paintings, where the simple grid encourages thoughts of whether there might be further narratives to be uncovered with the lifting of each 'tile'.

According to Kabakov, whose paintings comprise their own teleology, *Kanon* and *Under the Snow* form one group of works unified by the themes of whiteness and reality.



Kanon # 4 2007
Oil paint on canvas
282 × 189



The Window Into My Past 2012

Oil paint on canvas

198 × 272

The painting *The Window Into My Past* represents a triple-layered memory for the artist. The image depicted at the centre of the composition is Ilya Kabakov's 1981 painting *Tested!* (p.121), which now resides in the collection of the Ludwig Forum in Aachen, Germany. A depiction of a work by a minor artist from a forgotten book, *Tested!* is in itself once removed from the original source, and is bestowed an elevated status and new meaning in Kabakov's appropriation of it. Within this

work, it is the centrepiece for a scene of the artists' 2004 monographic show at the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, which bears the characteristics of a Kabakov exhibition in the form of walls painted to evoke those of a communal apartment, and desks set out so that visitors may peruse books relating to the works on display. As such, *The Window Into My Past* stands for a timeline of memories in Ilya Kabakov's life, with painting monumentalising these otherwise ephemeral moments.

'A huge number of artists appeared [in the 2000s] who simply didn't know that they were the heirs of the traditions of modernism. The artists of the next generation had not been brought up with the history of art, the academic art school had stopped teaching modernism as a sacred tradition, and it became known that modernism was a type of mass media, and in that sense it was no longer distinguishable from design. The boundaries that had been clearly marked in the past no longer existed. There was high and low, and the high turned more frequently to the low for resources. But as long as the concept of high art remained, even pieces of garbage and lumps of rock took on new characteristics. As soon as the high stopped existing, everything became horizontal and flat, losing the criteria of good and bad, quality and not quality, and so on.'

IK, 2009

The Collage of Spaces # 6 2010

Oil paint on canvas

162.5 × 185.5

Memory and the challenges of recalling past moments are recurring themes in the Kabakovs' work, and the two 'collage' series of paintings allude to this through the use of layering.

The Collage of Spaces is a series of large-scale paintings in which glimpses into narrative scenes of people talking or observing events 'off-stage' are superimposed onto similarly mundane tableaux or landscapes. In the manner of a collage, these ruptures are made to look like torn pieces of paper that have been glued together.

Works in *The Appearance of the Collage* series (overleaf) are similar in their visual fragmentation, but they usually combine no more than two different scenes. There is a greater emphasis on administrative life, whether it be in the form of council meetings or official portraits.

In both series of works, vision and reality are central themes. *The Collage of Spaces*, in particular, explores the limits of our visual perception by deliberately blurring the distinction between background and foreground. The Kabakovs also make reference to the Italian Renaissance painter Tintoretto, whose work is characterised by complex compositions in which multiple events are seen to unfold within one tableau. As such, *The Collage of Spaces* interrogates the ways in which paintings constitute part of the storytelling tradition. *The Appearance of the Collage*, meanwhile, has a contrasting aim, with Ilya Kabakov describing these works as 'thin two-dimensional films'.





The Appearance of the Collage # 8 2012
Oil paint on canvas
188 × 272



The Appearance of the Collage # 10 2012

Oil paint on canvas

203 × 272

Vertical Painting # 4 2012

Oil paint on canvas

284.5 × 190.5

The *Vertical Paintings* series is a group of works in which one or more scenes are overlaid on top of each other. The imagery can be traced back to cut-outs from Soviet propaganda magazines and, in rotating them from their original orientation, Kabakov encourages us to reflect on the role of composition as a carefully considered artistic device, as important as any other element of an image. In *Vertical Painting # 4*, for example, the dynamic gesture of the raised hand is still politically charged, regardless of context.



'When I started drawing images, I understood immediately that they were quotations from various styles. I didn't care whether they were high style, established in art history, or crap in the form of stands, Soviet receipts, and bureaucratic papers. It was all the same to me. This is a very important moment that I want to stress: I did not have gradations of high and low art. I could not find the point where art was when I basically did not know where art was hidden. And I still don't. But I understand perfectly well that you can use any material, from Rembrandt to a bottle label. My omnivorousness, and mainly, my indifference to the quality of the images, sliding all along the scale from painting to messes or bookkeeping accounts, still elicits an inexplicable reaction from people who see it.'

IK, 2009



Vertical Painting # 12 2012

Oil paint on canvas

284.5 × 180



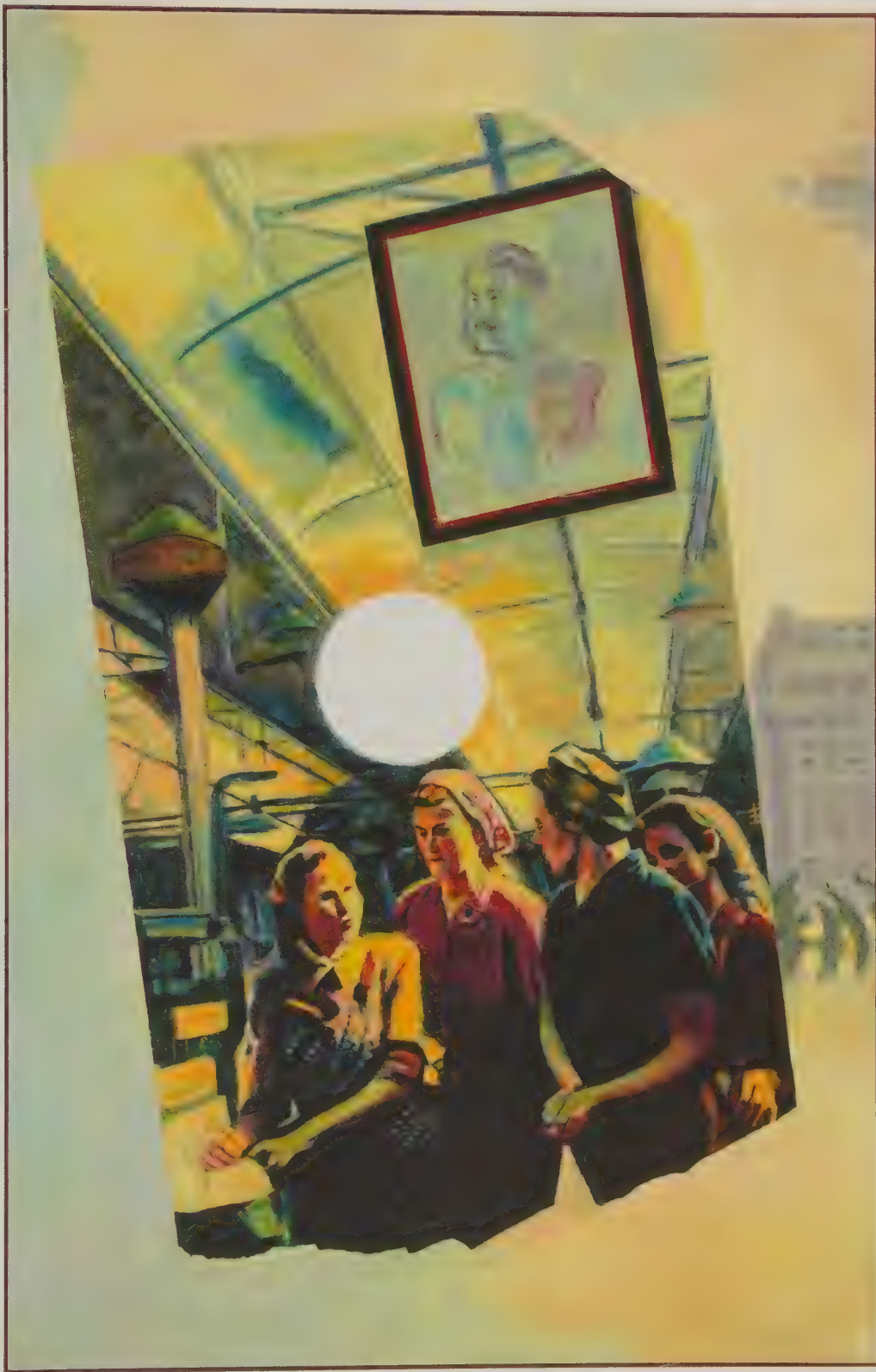
Dark and Light # 9 2013

Oil paint on canvas

277 × 254

Darkness and light have been persistent tropes throughout Kabakov's practice, from his earliest drawings through to his most recent painting works. In the paintings *Dark and Light # 9*, *The Four Paintings about the Sun # 4* and *Two Observers # 2 Diptych (Right Part of the Diptych)* (overleaf), the surface of the painting stands in as a prism through which images from the past have become distorted or idealised. The fragmentary nature of the compositions emphasise the idea that the mind

is selective in its memory-making, with certain details subject to erasure or consigned to the rubbish heap of repressed or forgotten recollections. *The Colorful Noise # 8* (p.142) takes this concept to the other extreme of amnesia, in which individual memories can only be fleetingly recalled – represented here as fragments almost amidst the chaos of colourful dashes of paint, in itself reminiscent of the formless white noise of a television screen.



The Four Paintings about the Sun # 4 2013
Oil paint on canvas
262 × 168



The Colorful Noise # 8 2014

Oil paint on canvas

284.5 × 190.5



Two Observers # 2 Diptych (Right part of diptych) 2014

Oil paint on canvas

268 × 168



The Six Paintings about the Temporary Loss of Eyesight (They are Painting the Boat) 2015

Oil paint on canvas

112 × 196

The series *The Six Paintings about the Temporary Loss of Eyesight* reflects a two-fold concern about painting and perception. The first is the anxiety of an ageing artist, who may or may not be afflicted with deteriorating vision. In the Kabakovs' work, this is represented by small dots which are evenly spread across the surface of the painting. The dots also represent an obscuration of the event, and tangentially reference pointillism, a painting technique developed by Georges Seurat and Paul

Signac at the end of the nineteenth century, in which many small dabs of paint of different colours are applied to a flat surface, which then constitute a whole and coherent image when viewed from a distance. Within the Kabakovs' oeuvre, the dots are reminiscent of the *Holidays* series of paintings, which imagines a fictional artist's efforts to revitalise previously made works (pp.124–7).



*The Six Paintings about the Temporary Loss of
Eyesight (The Scene at the Square) 2015*

Oil paint on canvas

112 × 196



Two Times # 10 2015
Oil paint on canvas
190.5 × 284.5

Paintings in the *Two Times* series overlay imagery from seemingly disparate sources: upon first inspection there appears to be a heavy reliance on Baroque painting—Arcadian landscapes by Nicolas Poussin, for example, or classical and religious narrative scenes by Peter Paul Rubens or Caravaggio. The other genre is that of people going about their ordinary

business during the Soviet period, such as Young Pioneers on their way to school, or people waiting for the Moscow Metro. The conceit is that these are all made-up scenes created from conflated memories and, due to the lack of distinction between background and foreground, they possess equal status in the artist's imagination.



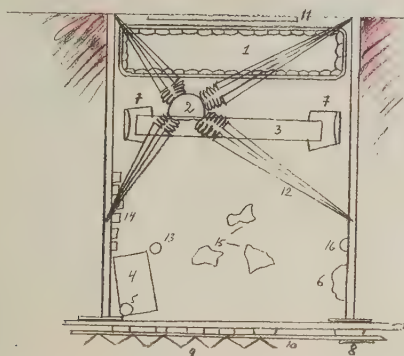
Two Times # 17 2015
Oil paint on canvas
284.5 × 190.5



Two Times # 20 2016
 Oil paint on canvas
 212 × 284.5



Two Times # 22 2016
Oil paint on canvas
216 × 240



- 1 - Крест-раскладушка
- 2 - Канатный
- 3 - доска для отката
- 4 - Лакот-гарда
- 5 - Лакот
- 6 - Канат
- 7 - Канат
- 8 - Канат
- 9 - Канат
- 10 - Канат
- 11 - Канат
- 12 - Канат
- 13 - Канат
- 14 - Канат
- 15 - Канат
- 16 - Канат

(3)
THE MAN,
WHO FLEW
INTO SPACE
FROM HIS
APARTMENT

Concept drawing for *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment*
1985. Drawing dated 1985

Ilya Kabakov *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* 1985
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable

The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment was created over a period of three years and was one of the only installations to be staged within the limited space of Kabakov's Moscow studio. The work was first presented outside of Russia in 1988 at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York as part of a multi-part installation called *Ten Characters*, a life-sized version of the character studies that Kabakov previously explored in his album works.

Upon entering a vestibule, the viewer encounters a doorway that has been incompetently boarded up, thereby offering a view into what seems to be the living quarters of a communal apartment—a form of domestic residence that still exists today in densely populated urban areas of the former Soviet Union, in which multiple households share the same

cooking and washing facilities in overcrowded conditions. This room, eclectically decorated from floor to ceiling with propaganda posters, has been left in a state of disarray, the protagonist having achieved his dream of leaving his apartment forever by way of a catapault that has launched him through the ceiling. A written text presented in the vestibule gives witness accounts from the neighbours, who, despite living in such close proximity with one other, admit that they are not on intimate terms with the man. The installation therefore suggests a tension between the different ambitions championed by the Soviet Utopia, where the dream of space travel is used literally to escape the supposed romance of communal living.





(previous page and above) *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment*. Installation views at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York 1988

Text in the installation:

The lonely inhabitant of this room, as becomes clear from the story his neighbour tells, was obsessed by a dream of a lonely flight into space. In all probability, he realised this dream of his, his 'grand project'.

The entire cosmos, according to the thoughts of the inhabitant of this room, was permeated by streams of energy leading upward somewhere. His project was conceived in an effort to hook up with streams and fly away with them. A catapult, hung from the corners of the room, would give this new 'astronaut', who was sealed in a plastic sack, his initial velocity. Further up, at a height of 40–50 metres, he would land in a stream of energy through which the Earth was passing at that moment as it moved along its orbit. The astronaut had to pass through the ceiling and attic of the building. With this goal in mind, he installed powder charges and at the moment of take-off from the catapult, the ceiling and roof would be wiped out by an explosion, and he would be carried away into a wide-open space. Everything took place late at night, when all the other inhabitants of the communal apartment were sound asleep. One can imagine their horror, fright, bewilderment. The local police were summoned, an investigation began, and the tenants searched everywhere—in the yard, on the street—but he was nowhere to be found.

In all probability, the project, the general nature of which was known by the neighbour who told the investigator about it, was successfully realised.

Knowing the age-old history of the Russian dream about flight and about life in space, it is not difficult to include this installation, 'The Room', in a long series of similar projects among which one could cite the ideas of Fyodorov and Tsiolkovsky. It is particularly important to consider that aspect of these theories whereby the cosmos is represented as entirely suitable for human existence, for migration from Earth, which by that time—the time of space migration—will turn out to be excessively overpopulated. In connection with this, I would like to mention that the project was predetermined by this condition. But in correlating his situation with the idea of the resettling of the human race at first to nearby planets and then all over space, won't we arrive at an ideally pronounced and all-penetrating principle of communality, realised on one end of the spectrum in an overcrowded apartment in a four-storey building, and on the other in infinite space?

In this regard, we should turn our attention to three types of objects located in the room of the inhabitant. These exist there permanently and, without a doubt, they pushed him to the realisation of his concept.

Here we are talking about, in the first place, posters with which he wallpapered his room, not having the opportunity to acquire simple wallpaper. These posters are hung in three tiers, and in their arrangement it is not difficult to see three

mythological levels of existence: the highest level is of the gods, the middle level (so to speak), is of real life, its everydayness, and the lower or third level is of the nether regions, hell, which coincidentally or not has turned out to be composed of red posters.

The second object is the painting, which someone gave to the inhabitant of the room. It depicts the solemn moment of take-off into space by the Spassky Tower of the Moscow Kremlin. All of this takes place on Red Square, which is represented in incomprehensible dimensions which do not correspond to reality: virtually the entire population of the country is there. In this way, the flight into the sky of the main tower of the country acquires universal proportions.

Finally, the third object which can be seen in the dishevelled room is a model, standing to the left of the door and illuminated by an electric light bulb, of the city block where the 'traveller's' building is located. A metal ribbon is attached to the roof depicting the trajectory of his future flight. Here, in this crudely constructed landscape with a bright blue distance and sky with large white clouds, isn't there some sort of strange, piercing note resounding in the consciousness of the 'one who flew away', when he in his loneliness thought out his plan at night and simultaneously bade farewell to the Earth and to the place where he was at the moment? Wasn't this model, illuminated by a light bulb, an image of the entire Earth to which he had already bid farewell in his imagination and which he looked at from above and as though from the side?

NIKOLAEV'S STORY

I didn't know him well... He arrived two years ago, having been recruited for a construction job. He was given a room in our communal apartment. Where he worked, I don't know. I was his neighbour. His room was to the right of mine. He never visited me, and he let others into his room reluctantly. I don't know if he has anyone, he always lived alone. Two fellows sometimes came to see him. One of them brought the painting which is hanging in his room. When he moved in, he remodelled his room. He couldn't get his hands on any wallpaper so he covered everything with posters which he bought. He said it would be cheaper that way.

Our communal apartment is large, twelve families. We live in a four-storey building, on the top floor. Almost every day for a few months he went to the attic. The neighbours asked what he was doing there, but he almost never talked to anyone, and almost never used the kitchen, even though his door was just opposite it. He would only put the teapot on to boil.

I dropped in on him about six months ago—his room was full of scattered blueprints, some of them were glued right to the wall. I thought that they were for the building site where he worked. On a table in the corner stood a model of our block, our street, and you could see our building. I asked

him why there were metal bands attached to the model and leading upward from the roof of our house. He suddenly said that it was the trajectory of his future flight...

He lived very poorly, without any furniture, and he slept on a folding cot without a sheet...

He felt, as he told me, that he wasn't quite an inhabitant of Earth, as though he had been born not here at all, and that not waiting for death, he had to leave for there, where, according to him, he should be...

I'll tell you a little about his 'grand theory'.

He imagined the entire Universe to be permeated by huge sheets of energy which 'lead upward somewhere'. These gigantic upward streams he called 'petals'. The plane of movement of the galaxies, stars and planets does not correspond to the direction of the energy of these petals, but intersects them, periodically passing through them. Thus, the Earth together with the Sun periodically crosses through one of these enormous 'petals'. If you knew this precise moment, then you could jump from the orbit of the Earth onto this 'petal'—i.e. you could enter, join, this powerful stream of energy and be whirled upward with it.

He told me that he knew, that he had calculated this moment. It only lasts a short time, about twelve minutes. He kept that day a secret. But to enter that stream you had to give your body an initial movement, momentum, so that a departing force would pick you up. For that initial thrust he counted on the energy of the field of the moon and two heavenly bodies—Sirius and Pluto—which at that very moment would add the necessary pull as a result of special cosmic cones.

For this transfer to the 'petal', he thought up his project. He realised it on April 14, 1982 in the middle of the night...

To realise his plan for departure, he decided to build a catapult in his room, which would give him the initial velocity at the moment of take-off. But his calculations, it would propel him to a height of 40 metres above the Earth, where he would enter the sphere of action of the energy of a 'petal'. He fastened four extension wires made of thick rubber in the two corners and at both sides of the room. Stretching them, he attached the catapult to a hook screwed into the floor. The lock mechanisms on the hook were supposed to release the saddle of the catapult suddenly. But at the moment of take-off, he also had to pass through the ceiling of the room, the attic and the roof of the building. For this he installed powder charges along the entire perimeter of the ceiling and roof, so that at the moment of take-off the ceiling and part of the roof above the room would be ripped away by an explosion and thus release him into open space.

He kept from me the hour and date when he would carry out his plan, and therefore at the moment of explosion I wasn't in his room. But it seems to me that someone must have been there to help him get into the space sack and to release the locks on the catapult. The space sack was made of clear

plastic and was intended to protect the body in the open cosmos and for traveling in the 'petals'. In the sack there were provisions, an oxygen tank, navigation instruments and other equipment...

STARTSEVA'S STORY

I was sleeping when suddenly there was a terrible explosion nearby, as if the building were crumbling. I ran out into the hallway dressed like I was. All the neighbours ran out too, in their night clothes. There was smoke pouring from his room, some sort of steam and the smell of something burning. His door was completely destroyed, hanging by the hinges. Inside the room everything was surrounded by smoke, some sort of machine was hanging from belts. The entire ceiling was blown away, you could see a hole, and there was also an enormous hole in the roof. There was wind and rain and everything was rattling, water was pouring in on the floor through the hole. Nikolaev climbed up to seal everything with plywood at least...

GOLOSOV'S STORY

A car arrived immediately from the nearby police station. They started to search for him all over the block—maybe he was lying somewhere or had fallen—but they didn't find him anywhere... Maybe he really did fly away, that sort of thing happens.

Some of the papers and drawings were taken by the investigators. The junk in the room was thrown out—here it is, a part of the plywood from the attic where he was busy doing something, with some kind of blueprint glued to it...

The repairmen from the ZhEK (housing maintenance committee) nailed boards over the door so that no one could enter or touch anything. But curious outsiders continually come by, moving the boards and peeking between the cracks... And the model on the table still stands, as it was, under the lamp, just like it did when he was still here...

Exterior view and boarded-up doorway in *The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment*. Installation view in Kabakov's Moscow studio 1985

(overleaf) Boarded-up doorway from installation in Ronald Feldman Fine Arts 1988



'My first installations appeared in 1985 (*The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment* in my studio) and afterward, when I moved abroad, there were only installations. When the installations required drawings, texts, or paintings, I did them especially for the given installation. In principle, they could have been shown as independent paintings, but in fact, they were participants in the installations.'

IK, 2009





Ilya Kabakov *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* 1988
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable

The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away was included as one of Ilya Kabakov's *Ten Characters* at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York, 1988, and now resides in the collection of the Nasjonalmuseet in Oslo, Norway. In 2005, a variation of this installation was realised and entitled *Objects of His Life*.

The installation, comprised of numerous display cases of personal effects and trash objects presented in a communal apartment setting, imagines a fictional character whose existence is reduced to the things he owns—however banal

and ephemeral they might appear. These are presented as though they are artefacts in an archaeological museum, with each exhibit labelled accordingly, right down to the tiny pieces of trash that would ordinarily be discarded. As with the earlier painting *Sobakin* (p.120), Kabakov questions whether the complexity of any individual's existence and personal experiences can be adequately reflected in material objects or institutional records.



(above) Installation view from *Ten Characters* at
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York 1988

(opposite) Ilya Kabakov Concept drawing for *16 Ropes*
1984. Drawing dated 1995



И. Кабаков 95гг.

(above) Ilya Kabakov Concept drawing for *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* c.1995

(opposite) Installation view of *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo 1995





Concept drawing for *Incident in the Corridor Near the Kitchen* 1989. Drawing dated 1988

Incident in the Corridor Near the Kitchen 1989
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable

Part of a series of installations by Ilya Kabakov on the theme of the communal apartment, *Incident in the Corridor Near the Kitchen* represents the culmination of tensions that have arisen in an overpopulated living space, where communality has been imposed rather than chosen. A multitude of pots, pans and other kitchen utensils hang in mid-air, giving the impression that time is suspended and at any moment these objects might fall in a loud, clattering heap on the floor, which is covered in broken-down cardboard boxes. This discord is in

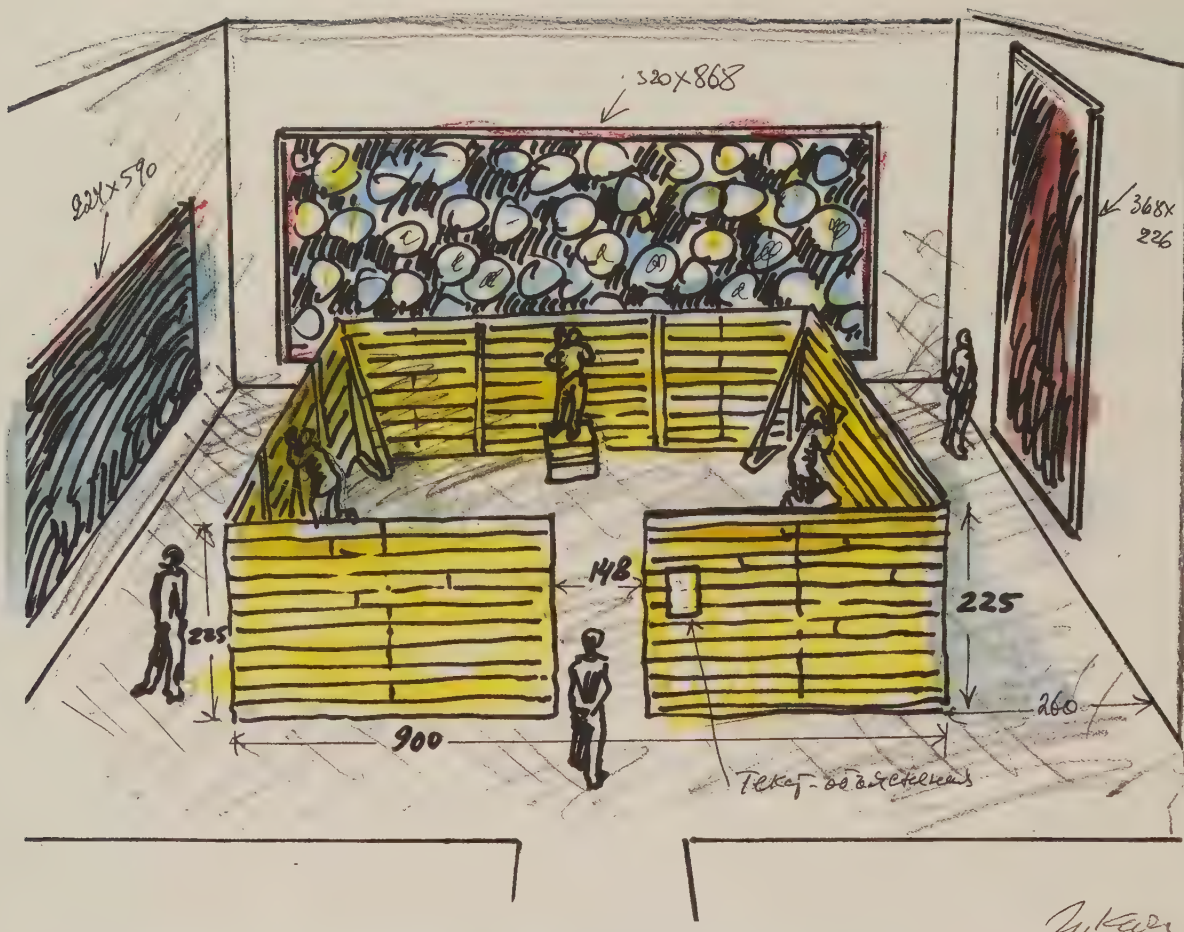
jarring contrast to the backdrop of idyllic landscape paintings, which might be simulacra of windows to the outside world. The presence of a music stand, on which a written account of the event is displayed, situates the spectator in the position of a conductor, who faces an invisible orchestra of communal apartment residents. The parameters of the space are suggestive of a stage set, and underline the expansive nature of Kabakov's installations, which refer to a wider cultural tradition of literary narrative and theatre.



Incident in the Corridor Near the Kitchen.
 Installation view at Galerie de France, Paris 1989

Text in the installation:

When Olga Yakovlena went out to get water in the morning, she saw a lot of pots, frying pans and mugs freely fluttering about like birds in the still dark space of the communal corridor, and a few little white people were standing quietly on the brand new flying pot which belonged to Igor Subordin from the corner room.



(above) Ilya Kabakov Concept drawing for
Three Nights 1989

(opposite) Installation view of *Three Nights*
in Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin 1997

Ilya Kabakov *Three Nights* 1989
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable

The limits of visual perception are explored in the installation *Three Nights*, in which the spectator is presented with three very large paintings, each one being a perspective on the night, whether it be a starry sky or a nocturnal insect. However, they cannot be enjoyed in their entirety since they are obscured by a screen. The viewer must resort to telescopes, which are directed at small apertures through which can be seen magnified images of little white men.

In describing this work, Ilya Kabakov has cited Nikolai Gogol's 1842 short story *The Overcoat* as being a key

reference point. Its protagonist is a lowly bureaucrat, and the narrative follows his dismal and futile attempts to navigate the social and administrative systems of nineteenth-century St Petersburg, encountering unsympathetic, hostile and even violent responses from the people around him. The sense of hopelessness and being carried by the crowd has long been a preoccupation for the Kabakovs; this work is an homage to the members of the chorus who are easily overlooked.





Ilya Kabakov *Painting #1 for the installation Three Nights* 1988

Oil paint on canvas

320 × 380

Text in the installation:

In 1978 in the Voronezh Picture Gallery during an examination of one of the three paintings by the common name *Three Nights* (the paintings arrived in the Museum in 1938, and it has been impossible to establish either the name of the artist or the genuine title of the works; the title *Three Nights* was given conditionally), details were accidentally discovered in its upper part that until that time had not attracted attention to themselves. These were figures of small white people, no larger than one centimetre in size. It was suggested that such creatures might also turn out to be on the other two paintings. In fact, a thorough examination of the paintings *Night #2* and *Night #3* affirmed this, which was recorded by a photograph at that time, in the autumn of 1978.

During an examination of the paintings in 1982, the location of the white figures had shifted from their original place by 40cm. Continual observation of the little figures has been conducted from that time and their new location is specifically recorded.

21.1.1985

Deputy Director

Voronezh Picture Gallery (Voronov)

Scientific Secretary of the Museum (Ignatiev)





“ОТЧЕГО ТЫ ПЛАЧЕШЬ,
ГЛУПЫЙ ТЫ МЕДВЕДЬ?”
“КАК ЖЕ МНЕ, МЕДВЕДЮ,
НЕ ПЛАКАТЬ, НЕ РЕВЕТЬ?”

БЕЛЫЙ Я, НЕСЧАСТНЫЙ.
СИРОТА,
Я НА СВЕТ РОДИЛСЯ
БЕЗ ХВОСТА.

ДАЖЕ БЕСПРИЗОРНЫЕ.
ДРАННИКОТЫ-
КВЕРХУ ЗАДНРАЮТ
РВАННЫЕ ХВОСТЫ.

ТОЛЬКО Я, НЕСЧАСТНЫЙ
СИРОТА,
ПО ЛЕСУ ГУЛЯЮ
БЕЗ ХВОСТА.

ДОКТОР, ДОКТОР,
МЕНЯ ТЫ ПО
ХВОСТИ ПОС
БЕЛОНУ ПР

Ilya Kabakov *Painting #2 for the installation Three Nights 1988*

Oil paint on canvas

224 × 590

Text on Night #2:

‘Why are you crying?

Oh, silly bear!’

‘Why wouldn’t I yell,

Why wouldn’t I cry?

Poor me, sad,

Unhappy orphan.

I came into this world

Without a tail.

Even homeless

And abandoned cats

Hold their mangled tails

In the air.

Only I, poor

Orphan,

Walk in the forest

Without a tail.

Doctor, good Doctor,

Have pity on me,

Quick, sew a tail

To miserable me.

Good Doctor Aibolit*

Started to laugh.

The doctor says to

The silly bear:

Look, in that case,

I have photographs.

All the tails are in front of you,

Choose one.

Here is the multi-coloured

peacock’s fan

Which blazes grandly.

Here is the mouse’s tail,

Thin like string.

That we don’t notice.

Here is the fox’s bushy tail.

And one, glittering black

Of a horse.

The little reddish tail

Of the squirrel

Sparkling of a golden fire.

It takes a little time

To sew a tail

But be careful, bear!

Don’t regret it

After your wedding!’

*Aibolit = ‘Ouch, it hurts.’

Менялся добрый
тор Айболит.
Кому Медведю
тор говорит:

"Вот, гляди, на этот случай
Фотографии со мной:
Все хвосты перед тобой.
Выбирай себе любой."

Вот лаванна яркий веер
Жарким пламенем горит,
Вот зверюшкой ивыный,
Незаметен он на вид.

Вот анисы хвост пушистый.
Жулик-черный хвост коня,
Белки хвостик золотистый.
Поанный рыжего отня.

Хвост примить себе неадамо.
Но смотри, Медведь,
Чтобы после свадьбы,
Вару не пожать!"



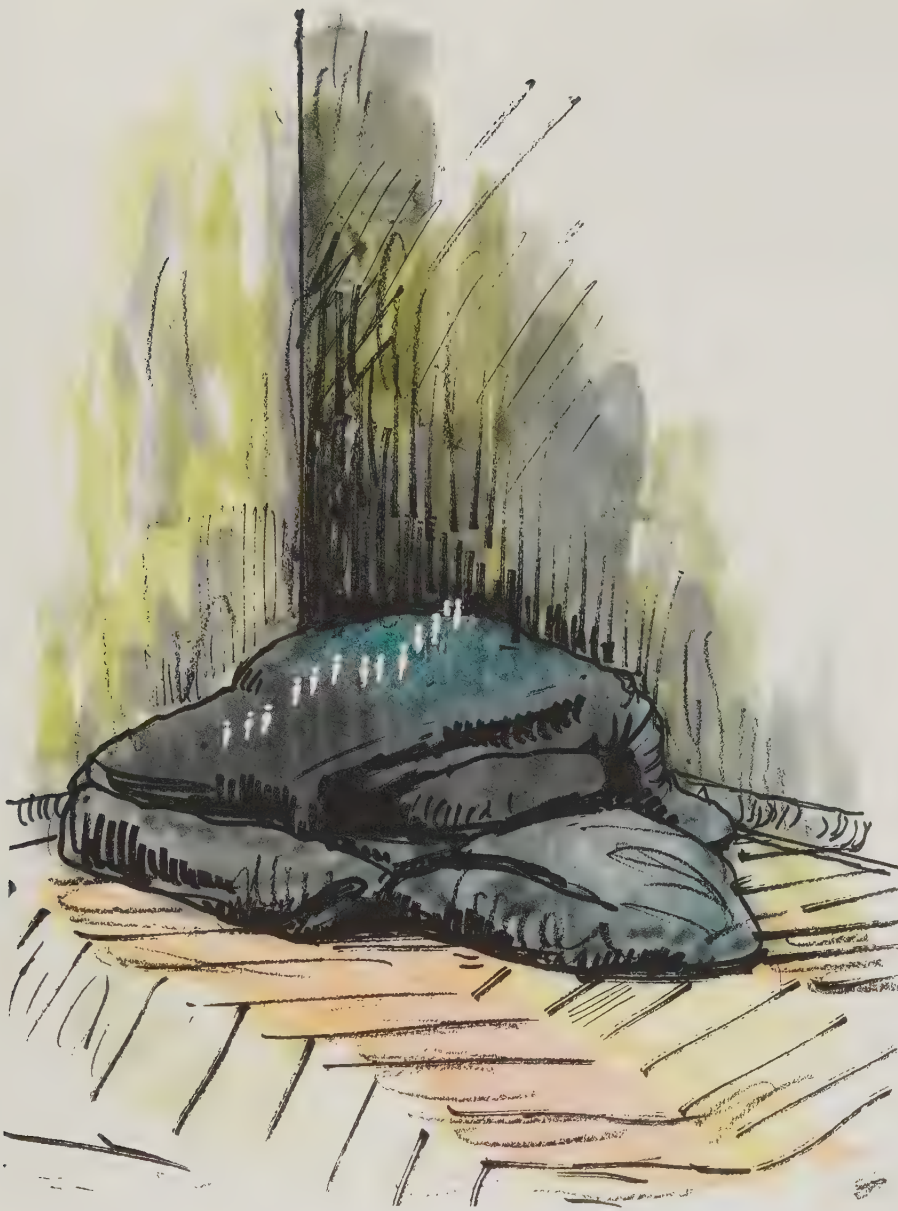
Detail of Painting #2



Ilya Kabakov Concept drawing for the installation
Three Nights 1989



Ilya Kabakov *Painting #3 for the installation*
Three Nights 1988
Oil paint on canvas
366 × 226



Concept drawing for *Trousers in the Corner* 1989.
Drawing dated 1988

Ilya Kabakov *Trousers in the Corner* 1989
Textile and paper
Dimensions variable

The sculptural installations *Trousers in the Corner* and *I Catch the Little White Men* (pp.174–5) both feature the motif of the little white men—minuscule paper cut-outs suggesting a parallel world beyond that which can be observed with human eyes. Both giants and tiny people appear throughout the Kabakovs' work and, although they bear obvious comparison to the citizens of Lilliput described in Jonathan Swift's eighteenth-century novel *Gulliver's Travels*, they stand more generally for the inconsequential existence of the majority of individual

human beings who go unmentioned in historical tomes, and perhaps even resemble lost souls.

Ilya Kabakov has stated that the little white men refer to his childhood experiences of the shabby conditions of the school dormitories in which he stayed as a child. The little white men additionally represent Kabakov's early memories of playing with toy soldiers, underlining the universality of child's play in which narrative impulses are cultivated at an early age in the form of such toys.

Project: *Someone Keeps Showing Up in the Corner*

'Ever since childhood I have held the conviction that in addition to us, i.e. people, animals, birds and fish, inhabitants of our Earth which are all normal and well-known to everyone, that on our planet there may also turn out to be other beings, but totally accidentally and only temporarily, temporarily since they belong to a completely different civilisation, they are inhabitants of completely different worlds. And a number of times, in my very earliest childhood - and this is one of my strongest childhood memories - I saw 'them', these aliens, but from afar, in the corner of my room. Twice again in my life this happened when I was moving into a new house, and there again during a storm - I saw them again but much closer, like little white men walking one behind the other in formation ... For a minute it seemed to me that they were the souls of those who had died, souls without their bodily shells. Two years ago I saw them again on my old trousers which I didn't need any more and therefore I had tossed into the corner so I could throw them away later. My little men appeared a number of times during the night and even in the morning, from behind these trousers, but they never went down to the floor... I took the trousers with me to work in order to clarify whether this appearance was connected with the trousers, and at work I tossed them into a corner. The little men appeared here too, and didn't leave for a whole six minutes! I didn't tell anyone about my discovery, except for my neighbour at the office whose desk was next to mine and with whom I was very friendly... Unfortunately, the trousers in the corner started to attract the attention of the whole office, and with the help of my friend I had to find another place in the scientific research institute, where similar research was being conducted, and where my observations of my 'beings' were, and to help me with that I have been given an entire group of qualified collaborators and a large laboratory. Maybe we will soon be able to answer the questions: Who are these aliens? What are they doing here? Can we communicate with them?'

IK, work begun on the project 18 March 1986

Project: *They're in the Cabinet (see I Catch the Little White Men, overleaf)*

Sedykh's Story

'A long time ago I worked at the "institute for the study of creativity" with various "authors" on the problem of the observations of creativity in the early stages of its discovery. In no way had I ever noticed any signs whatsoever, even the smallest, of creativity in myself. So the case of the discovery of creativity completely accidentally in my case is all the more interesting, as is the rapid and clear appearance of it as occurred in my case. I was working on the realisation of Sizov's "Project". We wouldn't move an inch, sometimes standing still for hours, waiting for the appearance of the "little white men". Often our many hours of waiting produced no results. Therefore, in contrast to Sizov, I set for myself the task not only to see but "to catch", not to "let go" the "little white people". This happened a year ago, and that moment must be considered the time of the beginning of the realisation of my own "project", my transition from collaborator to "Author", and in terms of research on creativity - the observation of its transition from the latent, hidden phase to its active phase.

My "Project" includes the building of a cabinet of a specific construction with special glass, as well as the creation in it of a special polarised light. According to my supposition, the "little white men" should, while crossing through that glass reservoir with a special air filling, linger a while and move around in its field. The first experiments conducted with the first cabinets built according to my design brilliantly confirmed my supposition. The "little white men" started to linger in it, some of them changed the direction of their motion, others changed the position in their group. However, a great deal of work was still required in terms of the shape, height and length of the cabinet in order for it to fulfil its role in steadily "delaying" the "little white men". Total darkness also turned out to be necessary, as well as silence around the apparatus.'

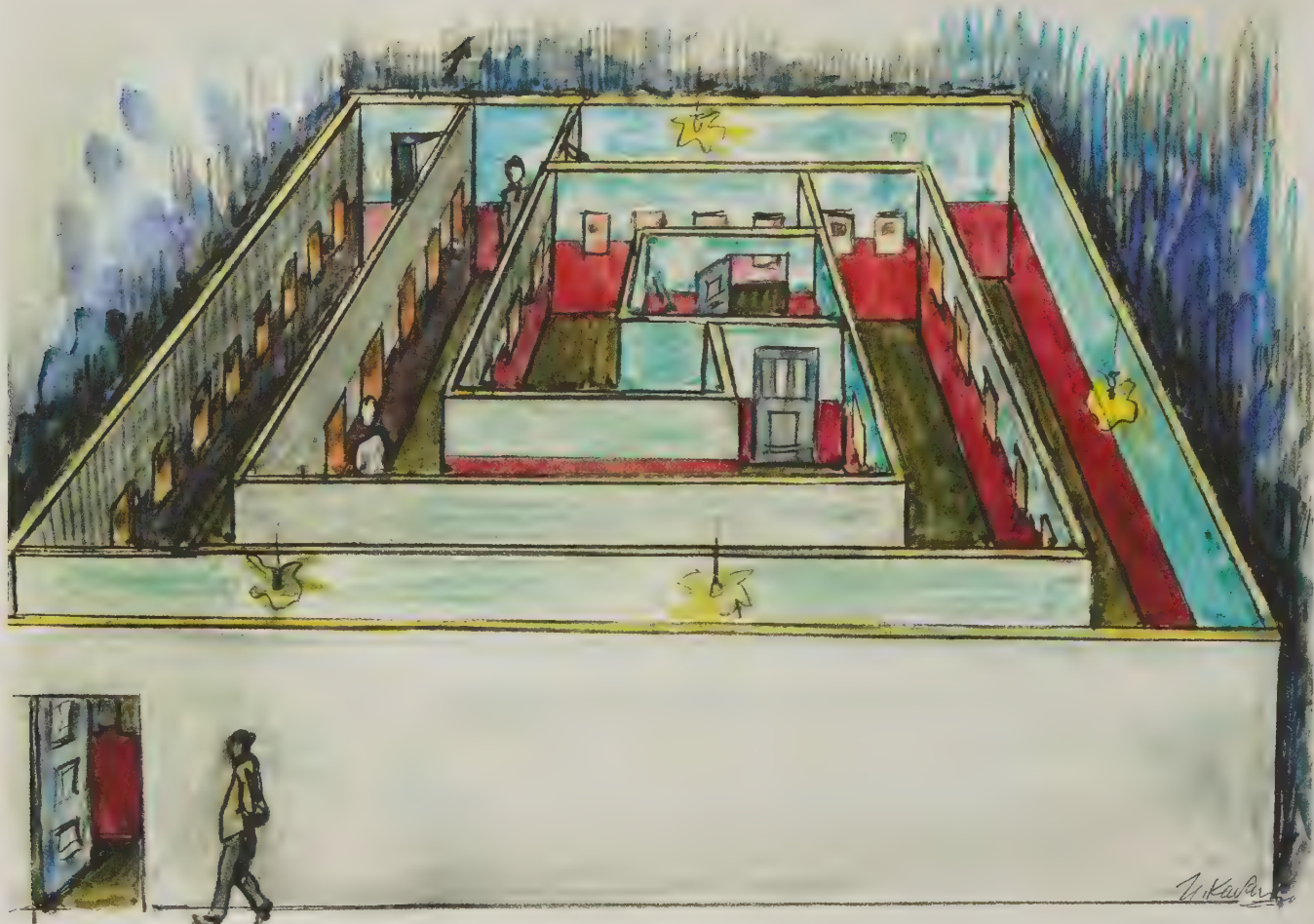
IK, work begun on the project October 1989



Concept drawing for *I Catch the Little White Men*
1990. Drawing dated 1995



I Catch the Little White Men 1990
Wood, glass, paper, wire and lights
208.3 × 162.6 × 83.8



Concept drawings for *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)*
1990. Drawings dated 1990 and 1994 respectively

Labyrinth (My Mother's Album) 1990
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable

In 1992–3, Ilya Kabakov presented a series of lectures on the 'Total Installation'—an immersive artwork through which the spectator's experience becomes the focus of the artwork through carefully controlled conditions including lighting, sound and space. *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)* is one of the few autobiographical works by the artist in this Total Installation mode. The viewer happens upon the work as if by accident, passing through an innocuous door in a conventional gallery space. Within the maze-like structure are corridors decorated in the dreary style of communal apartment buildings; on the walls hang seventy-six framed album pages. As the viewer progresses through the installation they are able to read an autobiographical account of the life of the artist's mother, Bertha Urievna Solodukhina. These pages are each accompanied by innocuous photographs depicting Soviet leisure time, taken by Ilya's

uncle, which jar next to the harrowing anecdotes of poverty, hunger and exploitation.

As the viewer approaches the centre of the installation, a recording of the artist singing Russian romance songs becomes louder. This type of music would have been popular during Ilya's youth, but here the songs are half-remembered, as demonstrated by the halting manner in which they are recited. The installation is at once a tribute to the artist's mother, who sacrificed so much to allow him to endure and succeed, and a metaphor for repressed traumatic memories through which architectural spaces can serve as a prompt or marker.

Labyrinth (My Mother's Album) was first exhibited at Tate Modern in 2000 as part of the museum's opening displays, shortly after which it was acquired into Tate's permanent collection.

The Always closed door

Здесь
затворная
дверь.



here, on the ceiling of the room, the plaque
is placed.

Здесь на потолке
"Колос" - установка
рек. аппаратура
с микрофоном

"Колос" поет
увлеченно, радостно
The voice is singing / and rejoices



U. Kaden 9/15

Labyrinth, My Mother's Album

Dear son!

You asked me to write down the story of my life. I have decided to grant your request. I am beginning on 22.1.1982. I am 80 years old.

Before I talk about myself I must first talk about my family. I kept my father's certificates and papers for a long time, where it is noted that he is a native of the small town of Trab of the Otopyansky region of the Vilensky province; he was a petty bourgeois. I don't remember any documents about my mother. My parents were orphans when they were taken in by a childless old couple. I also kept photographs of these old folks for a long time—they were foster relatives. When my father and mother grew up, my mother was given away as a servant, my father as a tailor's apprentice. When they reached legal age, they married. They were totally different from one another. My father was closed, not talkative, he knew his work and the synagogue. He hadn't been taught Russian. He could only sign his name in it. My mother was only literate in Hebrew, she loved reading novels. I remember her bent over a book, dreaming, she loved to dress nicely. She wore high heels. She curled her hair, that was fashionable then. I admired everything about her, and tried to be like her. I remember how she would dress me all in red. That was her favorite colour. I went out more often with my father. But he didn't talk much to me, we would walk around in silence, he would say: 'the spoken word is silver—the unspoken is gold'. I would also take walks with my mother when she wasn't busy with housework. She was very attached to me. The thing is, that before me she had a deformed boy who didn't live very long and died. I was the second child, and after me another son died in infancy. My parents lived peacefully, they didn't argue, but I felt that there really wasn't a closeness between them. My mother devoted all of her affection to me. She dressed me like a picture, even beyond her means. My father was a sickly man. He had a bad stomach, and mother cooked for him separately. He often vomited after eating. He never went to the doctor. Mother protected him from bad food when she could. When I was three I remember myself in the city of Donetsk (formerly Yuzovka), where my parents moved. They were in Yuzovka during the pogrom of 1905, but since they were living the mouse of the police chief, they escaped the beatings. I remember Yuzovka all covered with soot, you could wear a white dress only once and it was covered with coal soot. Father got a job in a dress store, and we lived modestly. Father wasn't a first-class tailor, he worked from patterns, he would bring his work home. He would bring home alterations, he was conscientious about his work. But very slow. I got this trait from father. Both my

Labyrinth (My Mother's Album). Installation view
Tate Modern, London 2000



mother and father taught me—there is no need to hurry, the main thing is to do your work conscientiously. Unfortunately, this didn't serve me in life. It was always necessary to hurry. Especially when I started to work, but I'll talk about that later. The doctors advised father to leave Donetsk because of the climate, and we moved to the city of Zhdanov (formerly called Mariupol). Here we lived in various apartments, but I especially remember one apartment on Nikolaevsky Street. We rented one room to actors since we lived close to the theatre. What wonderful people the actors were: how they decorated the room with different knick-knacks. They didn't stay long on tour and were replaced by others. They all loved me, and would leave me souvenirs to remember them by. But then the period of actors stopped, I was very sorry about this, and a lonely man, not young, an old bachelor, moved into the room. He was very attentive to my mother and to me. He brought me chocolate from work every day without fail. All of them had wrappers of a military man from different troops. I collected these wrappers and I had an entire troop that I liked to play with. This tenant often invited mama and me to go to the movies with him. By that time a son was born, Matthew. He was born with a birth defect. Both of his feet were turned out and he couldn't stand. Thus began our constant trips to doctors, local and those in the capital. Nothing helped. Only one elderly professor recommended leaving everything to nature, and in fact his legs gradually began to straighten out, and he began to walk normally. It's true, he did wear down the outside of his heels, but that didn't matter. Our tenant bought him various toys, too. The time approached for me to start studying. It was decided to hire a tutor to prepare me for school. There were two gymnasia in town. One was state owned and named after Maria Fedorovna, the other was private and named for V.I. Ostoslavskaya. My mother insisted on enrolling me in the private gymnasium where I would receive a better education. You had to pay for the right to study, but that didn't bother mother. And so, I learned my ABCs, even though this wasn't necessary since I was entering the first preparatory grade, there was still one more preparatory grade and then eight elementary grades. There were two different eighth grades, a general education one, which gave one the right to teach the elementary grades, but one had to pass the exam given at the men's gymnasium; and a special one where Latin was studied and this gave one the right to enter the medical institute.

I dreamed of becoming a doctor and therefore I entered the special eighth grade. But more about that later. I was an average student. I didn't have any special aptitude...

'In Samarkand I lived with [my mother], but later, when the Leningrad Academy and its school was evacuated to Zagorsk, I lived in the dormitory in Zagorsk. Then I moved to the Moscow Art School, and all that time, mother kept renting "corners". Thus the homelessness was double — it was not only me, but my mother: I knew that my mother had nothing, ever, that she was suffering for the sake of being with me, that she had no *propiska* [permission to live] in Moscow, and that she was there illegally, sleeping in her coat so that if the police came to check, she could say she was merely visiting friends. This is a very sad story, described in "Album of My Mother". This leads to an incredible psychic load on a person. Living in the dorms, I fully blended in to the horrible collective of boarding school kids. It's a different animal from a school kid.'

IK, 2009



Concept drawing for *How to Meet an Angel* 1998

Model for *How to Meet an Angel* 2002

Wood, metal, wooden figures and transparent thread
Dimensions variable

The theme of flight and, by virtue of this, escapism, appears throughout the Kabakovs' works, whether it be in the opposing forms of flies or angels. The figure of the angel is of particular interest to the Kabakovs, in being an enduring symbol that has appeared throughout art history, and in its identification as a stateless being that is free from earthly and bureaucratic constraints. In the context of the Soviet Union, defection was strictly prohibited, and the Kabakovs' move to the United States came only after early failed efforts to migrate or undertake projects abroad, with numerous interferences by the state authorities.

Text in the installation:

HOW TO MEET YOUR ANGEL

An encounter with your angel in real life appears to be virtually impossible. But that is far from the truth. All that is necessary

is to recall that this encounter can take place in extreme circumstances, and especially at critical moments in a person's life. And, it is within our powers to create the situation for such an encounter.

On a large empty space, best of all in a distant rural place, the erection of a very tall ladder vertically upward is begun. The ladder should reach a height of 1,100 metres. Today's materials (light alloys) permit the creation of a structure with the necessary durability and stability. A person who has resolved to ascend to the top of the ladder should be prepared to spend more than two days to do so. However, once he is near the top he finds himself high above the clouds, alone in conditions of wind and inclement weather; he thus creates – it will absolutely arise – that crisis moment when, upon the request for urgent help, the appearance of an angel will turn out to be inevitable.





How Can One Change Oneself? 1998
Feathers, leather and ink on paper
109 × 142

The Angel Over The City 1998
Wood, plaster, textile and light bulb
63.5 × 51 × 51



Model for *The Three Angels* 2012

Wood

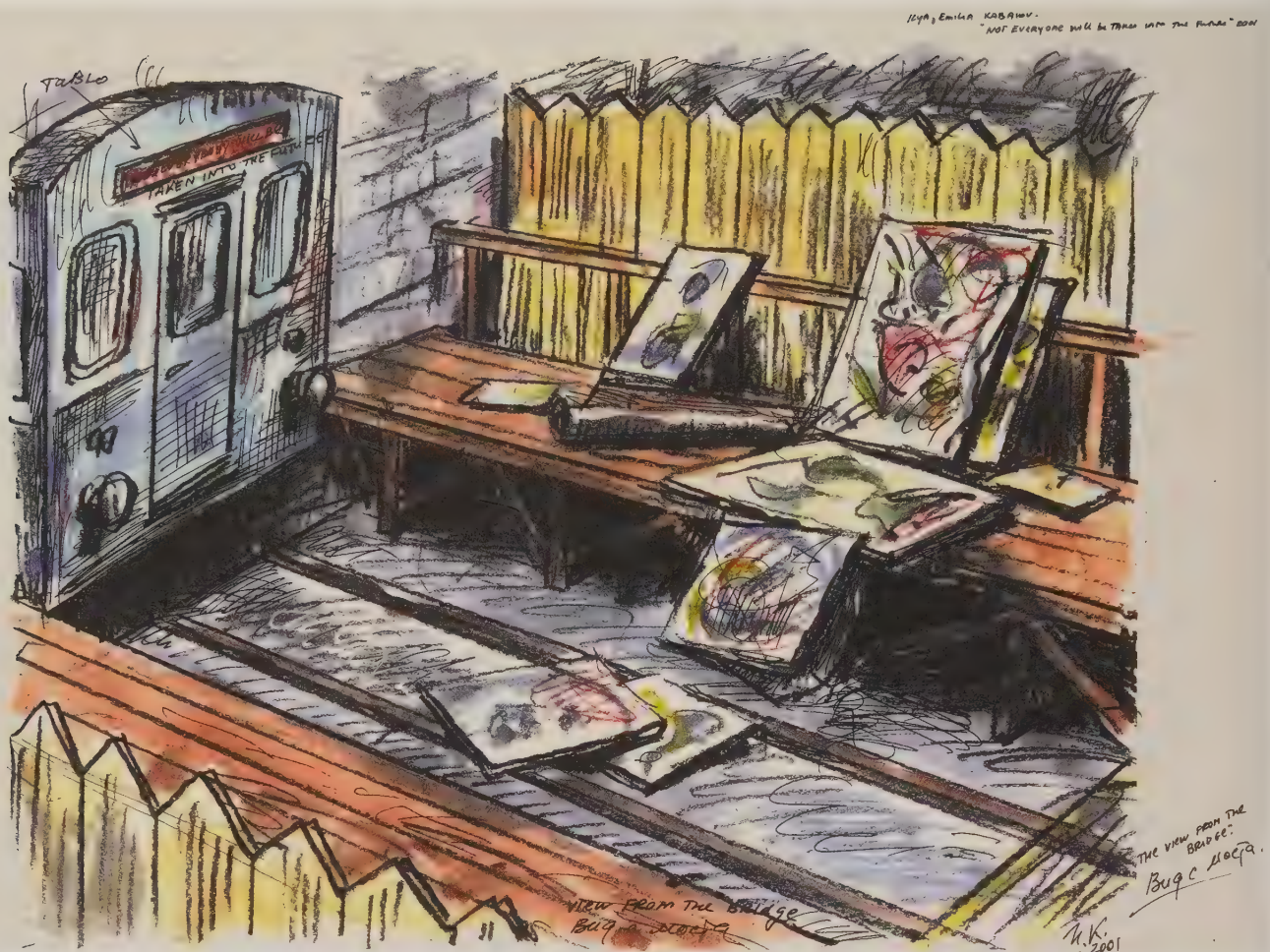
59 × 106 × 86.5

Model for *The Five Steps of Life* 2000/2012

Textile, plaster and wood

99 × 82.5 × 82.5





Concept drawing for *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future* 2001. Drawing dated 2001

(opposite) Installation view at the 49th Venice Biennale 2001

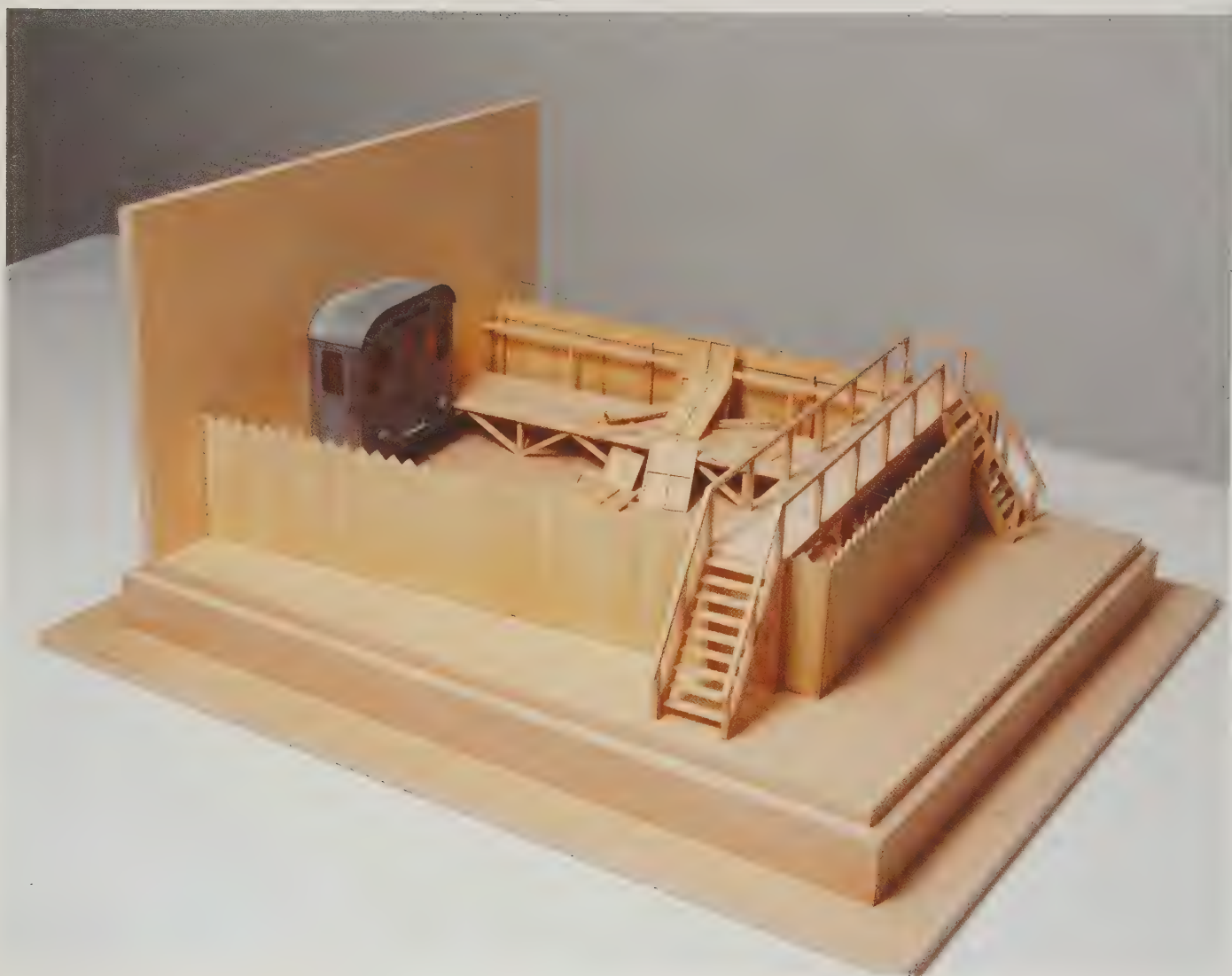
Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future 2001
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable

First exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2001, this installation is constructed to give the illusion of a railway train receding into the distance. An LED sign on the departing side ominously reiterates the title of the installation in red lettering; on the station's platform lie discarded paintings.

In 1983, Ilya Kabakov was a participant in an artist survey about Kazimir Malevich that was published in the underground journal *A-YA*. In Kabakov's poetic contribution, he imagines a nightmarish scenario in which the legacy of Russian artists,

writers and composers is allegorised as a selection process for a Young Pioneer summer camp. Sharing its title with the installation *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future*, the essay alludes to the fate of those artists whose names are omitted from art history or whose legacies are forgotten, due to their work falling out of institutional favour or being repressed by a totalitarian regime. Giving form to this idea, the artwork uses the conditions described in Kabakov's writings on the Total Installation to impress upon the viewer this brutal reality.





Model for *Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future*
2002

'NOT EVERYONE WILL BE TAKEN INTO THE FUTURE

You don't even know what to say about Malevich. A great artist. An inspirer of terror. A great boss.

The headmaster of our school, a very stern, fierce man, said as spring and the end of the year approached: "Only those who have deserved it will go to the school's Young Pioneer camp for the summer. The others will remain here."

Everything broke apart inside me.

Everything depends on the boss. He can - I cannot. He knows - I do not know. He knows how - I do not.

We had many bosses at school: headmaster Karrenberg, head of studies Sukiasyan, the poet Pushkin, head of military studies Petrov, the artists Repin and Surikov, the composers Bach, Mozart, Tchaikovsky... And if you didn't obey them, if you didn't do what they said or recommended, "you will remain here."

NOT EVERYONE WILL BE TAKEN INTO THE FUTURE

This chilling sentence contains the primordial division of all people into three categories, like children:

1. He who will take.
 2. He who will be taken.
 3. He who will not be taken.
- ... I shall not be taken.

A great, epoch-making picture appears in my imagination:

1913. Europe. A high mountain. Not even a mountain, but a kind of plateau. A small knot of grim people is standing at the very edge of the plateau, where it falls away like a sliced-off piece of cheese. Before them, right at their feet, where the land, going downhill, breaks off, a sea of mist is spread out. How are they to go forward and to where? Behind the group of leaders stands frightened, huddled humanity, at a respectful distance in order not to interfere with the conference. What will be the leadership's decision? Silence. A great historical moment.

If one draws close, trembling all over, to the small, elevated meeting, there, among the other great helmsmen, one sees Malevich. Calm. Self-controlled. Fully prepared for the immense responsibility that has fallen to his lot.

He recommends that they go on, straight at the sky. He regards the edge of the precipice at his feet as the end of the past life. The entire past history of mankind, all its affairs, its art has ended right here and now. The "old" land has ended. Ahead is the

"new" land, the breath of the cosmos, a new class of being. He is totally gripped by this new spirit, of which he himself is the embodiment. At this great moment the horizon is opened up for him in both directions. The future is clear and so, therefore, is the past. He has completely mastered the old existence and knows it, has squeezed it in his fist. There it lies, fallen quiet, wrinkled, a small square on his broad palm. There will be no repeat. Ahead is only the "Other".

A few will go with him into this new, precipitous world. These "new men" will live in the future, closely united around their teacher, given wings by his spirit, his ideas. How is this select company to be penetrated? How is a ticket to be bought for the departing train? There is a system of tests for this, which will determine your preparedness for spiritual flight. If, for those left, a square is simply a square and five coloured rectangles are five rectangles, then, for those who have grasped the new spirit, have entered into it, these are signs of the new spiritual space, the gates beyond which lie the "new land", the koan whose solution is on a new, unprecedented plane.

The "new men", in touch with the new life, will have their work there: to mark the "new" (formerly old) land, the "earthlings" (former people) and their "planettes" (former homes), their clothes, furniture and utensils with supreme signs, imbuing everything with energy, as it were, so that nothing on this planet and on all the others, whatever there may be in the cosmos, shall remain without the vivifying force of supreme consciousness.

"It's finished here - go ahead."

Well, and what will happen to the "unpromising" citizens left? One more recollection from my schooldays. I lived in a dormitory at school. When the headmaster said, at the assembly I have already mentioned, that not everybody would go to the Young Pioneer camp, but only the best, one of the pupils asked quietly whether he could stay in the dormitory for the summer.

"No." the headmaster replied. "The dormitory will be closed all summer for repairs and it will be forbidden to stay there."

...To sum up:

The way ahead is with Malevich alone.

But only a few will be taken - the best. Those whom the headmaster chooses - HE KNOWS WHOM.'

IK, 1982



The Toilet 1992

Wood and textiles

63 × 153 × 78

Given the sheer size and complexity of many of the Kabakovs' installations, the making of preliminary architectural models forms an essential part of the planning process. This step enables the artists to visualise the works as a coherent whole, in line with Ilya Kabakov's writing on the 'Total Installation'. This writing is comparable with the German classical composer Richard Wagner's philosophy of the Gesamtkunstwerk ('the complete work of art'), which he used to expound his intention that music and drama should be fully integrated within opera if it is to have a profound effect on the spectator. However, unlike Wagner's spectacles, the Kabakovs' total installations do not aim to seduce the viewer. Instead, they elevate the ordinary subject—whether it be the anonymous eternal emigrant, or the humble toilet.

In 1992, the Kabakovs were invited to participate in Documenta IX, a quinquennial exhibition held in Kassel and

curated that year by Jan Hoet. The Kabakovs' contribution consisted of a concrete structure with separate male and female entrances, thereby indicating the building's purpose as a public toilet. Upon entry, international audiences were shocked to discover the interior decorated with domestic furniture and keepsakes, as if to indicate that the 'toilet' had been long inhabited by an anonymous resident. The level of detail to which this supposed dwelling was furnished was intended to indicate that the homeowner had stepped out temporarily, and would return to this normality soon. The art historian Svetlana Boym posited that the work is emblematic of the artists' practice – creating characters who endure inhospitable environments, while at the same time rendering the familiar strange and uncanny.



(opposite and above) Concept drawings for *The Toilet*
1992. Drawings dated 1993

'With literary metaphor, everything is clear. But only your intuition can suggest what a metaphor of a visual nature can be. You can create a compact image that will work as a metaphor. For example, *The Toilet*, which we did at Documenta, was a successful visual metaphor, because it has incredible banality and stupidity in the first place. To wit: it is the story of how Soviet people live in a toilet. The people who did not understand that this was a metaphor thought it was an ethnographic object. For instance, in Germany, I was asked what percentage of the population lives in toilets. I replied that before Perestroika it was 80 per cent, and now it was almost 100 per cent. No one was surprised. The other question asked by every other visitor was: is this the rule for people living in toilets in the Soviet Union that the men's toilet is for the dining room, study, and room for the elderly, and the women's toilet is for the children's room and bedroom? That was the way we had planned out the rooms. This was the limit of the curiosity among "normal" Western viewers, which naturally roused the ire of Russian reviewers (the article was called "We Do Not Live in Toilets" and was a furious attack on the émigré who slanders his homeland and makes money on its suffering). But a certain part of advanced people understands that this is a metaphor, that life in general is shit, but we live in it and nothing can be changed. But I repeat, for the outside observer, the meaning of the metaphor vanishes. All people talked about were the ethnographic details of Russian life, which had to be accurate because a Russian artist had made the installation. This is the traditional colonial effect at work, that we Westerners are complex and subtle people, but the savages from Russia to Cuba can only depict their lives, tell stories like Sinbad the Sailor about where they live.'

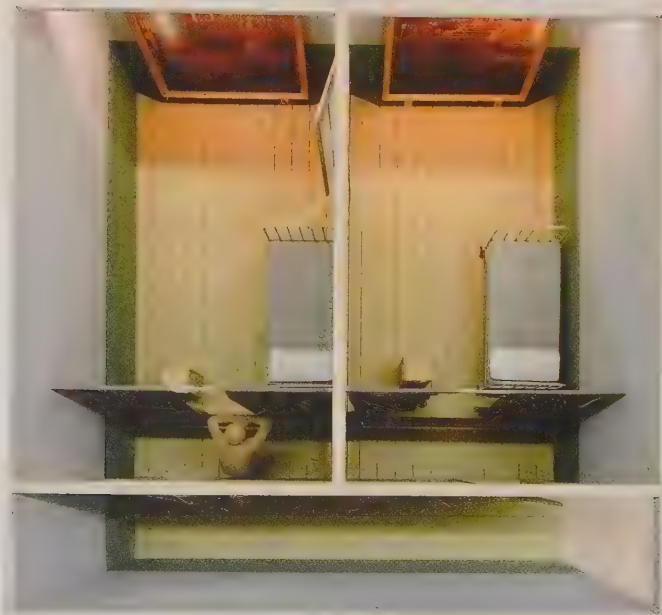


Exterior and interior views of the
model for *The Toilet* 1992



Model for *Healing with Paintings* 1996/2017
Wood and print on paper
42 × 95.7 × 82

(opposite) Painting for the installation
Healing with Paintings 1996







Concept drawing for *The Vertical
Opera* (Guggenheim) 1998



Model for *The Vertical Opera* (Guggenheim) 1998/2008
 Wood, paper and light bulb
 98 × 133 × 85.5

The distinctive rotunda of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York is the proposed setting for an ambitious opera on the history of Soviet Russia. The Kabakovs' concept utilises the vertical space of the structure, which the audience observes from the balconies. Mythologies pervade the production, from architect Frank Lloyd Wright's modernist

vision, to the narrative that gives an account of classical heroes and muses. Each of the levels of the rotunda stands for a different chapter in this musical epic: 'Ante-Revolution', 'Revolution', 'Soviet Times', 'Perestroika' and 'Finale (Post-Perestroika)'.



Model for *Inscriptions on the Wall (Reichstag)*

1998/2000

Paint on wood

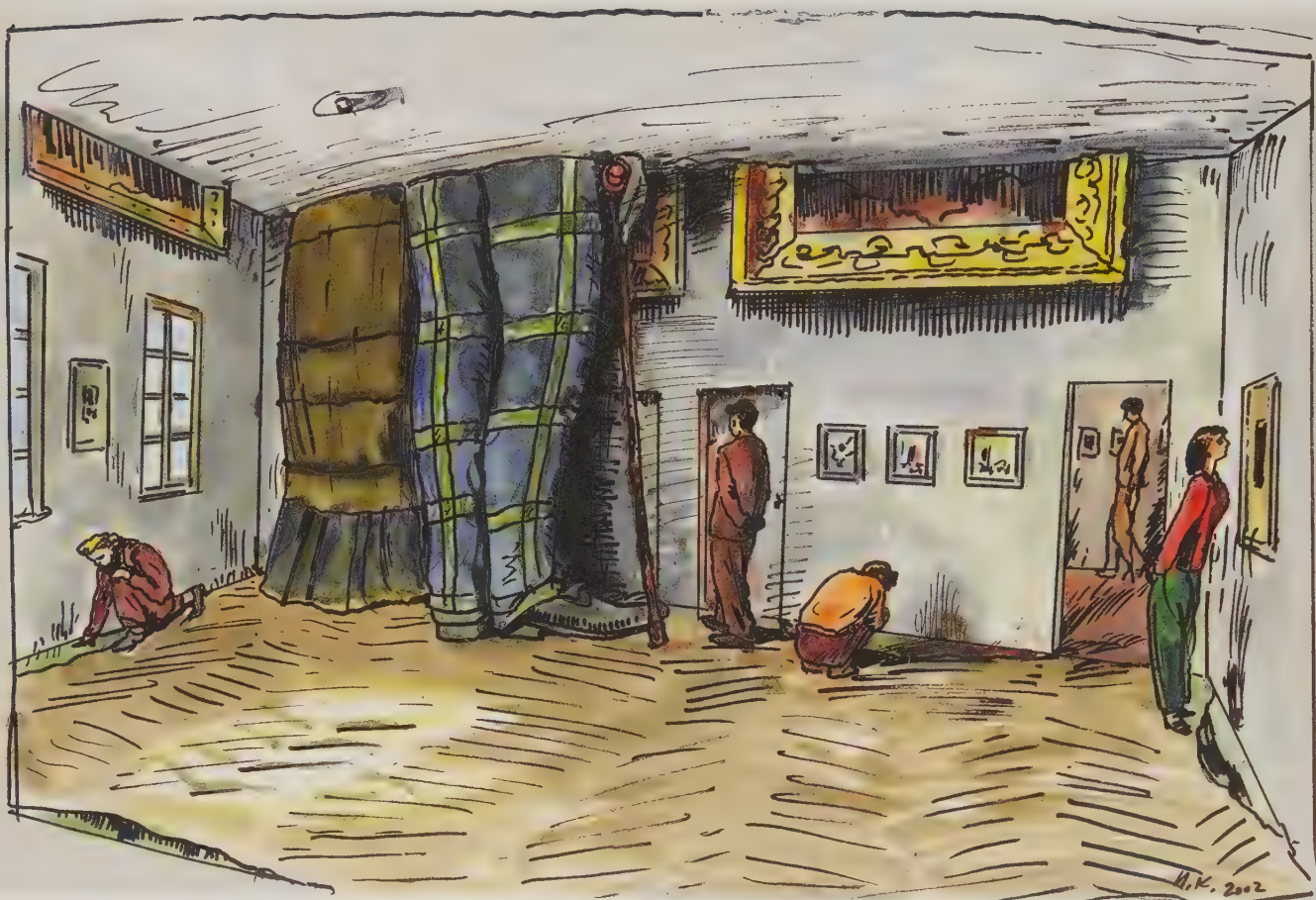
80 × 106.5 × 55.5

In 1945—the year of Emilia Kabakov’s birth—Soviet soldiers seized the Reichstag, the historic former meeting place of the German imperial government. Elated at their victory, they overwhelmed the walls of the historic edifice with Cyrillic markings, leaving their names and those of their hometowns, and expressions of their hopes and feelings, and hatred for Fascism. More than fifty years later, several artists were invited

to propose an artistic intervention in the Reichstag. The Kabakovs’ unrealised plan was to frame and light some of the surviving inscriptions to memorialise those minor players in the historical narrative and bring into view those markings that would otherwise remain invisible.



Concept drawings for *Inscriptions on the Wall*,
project for the Reichstag, Berlin 1998



Concept drawing for *Where is Our Place?* 2002



Model for *Where is Our Place?* 2002/2017

Wood, paper and light bulbs

71 × 114.5 × 114.5

The installation *Where is Our Place?* imagines two exhibitions occurring simultaneously within a single art gallery, neither of which are fully perceptible to human eyes. The first is an imposing presentation of old master oil paintings in thick gilt frames which can only be partially seen, since they are above head height and ascend into the ceiling. The second is a display of contemporary photographs and accompanying poetry shown at eye level. Adding further intrigue to this

scenario are two types of viewers—the giants, whose presence is evidenced by giant legs dressed in fashionable attire, and subterranean beings, whose world of rolling hills and lush landscapes is just about visible through windows in the floorboards at the edges of the gallery. This play on perspective highlights that enduring phenomenological concern, in which everything appears relative to one's own personal experience of the world.



Concept drawing for *The Arch of Life* 2015



*The Man Climbing Over the Wall. Model for
a sculpture (The Eternal Emigrant) 1995/2004*

Plaster and wood
63.5 × 96.5 × 74.5

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

pp.11–17

1. *Perestroika* is translated as ‘restructuring’. It is associated with the programme instituted in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s to restructure Soviet political and economic policy.

2. Ilya Kabakov *Catalogue Raisonné I. Paintings 1957–2008*, Museum Wiesbaden and Kerber Verlag Bielefeld 2008, p.17

THE ELIMINATION OF UTOPIANISM IS YET ANOTHER FORM OF UTOPIANISM

pp.27–33

1. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *Dvorets proektov/Der Palast der Projekte/The Palace of Projects*, Essen 2001, p. 191.

2. Ilya Kabakov, *L’album de ma mère/My Mother’s Album/Album meiner Mutter*, Paris 1995.

3. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *The Rice Fields*, Tokyo 2000.

4. Alfred H. Barr Jr., founding director of New York’s Museum of Modern Art, offered perhaps the most influential and enduring genealogy of modern art’s development with his groundbreaking 1936 exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*. See the now famous accompanying catalogue of the same title (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

5. For background on Ilya Kabakov’s career in the Soviet Union, see Matthew Jesse Jackson, *The Experimental Group: Ilya Kabakov, Moscow Conceptualism, Soviet Avant-Gardes*, Chicago 2010.

6. On the concept of ‘Total Installation’, see the instructive lectures in Ilya Kabakov, *Über die ‘totale’ Installation/O ‘total’noi’ installiatsii/On the ‘Total’ Installation*, Ostfildern 1995.

7. Ilya Kabakov, *The Red Pavilion: Installation* (Venice: Venice Biennale, 1993).

8. The Slought Foundation, ‘Total Installation, Public Project’, at https://slought.org/resources/total_installation, last accessed 15 April 2017.

9. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *Dvorets proektov/Der Palast der Projekte/The Palace of Projects*.

10. These are not coincidentally the same spaces treated throughout Michel Foucault’s diverse writings on institutions, subjectivity and power, beginning with his 1961 study *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Paris: Plon, 1961).

RE-INVENTING AUTHORSHIP

pp.35–41

1. Discussed in greater detail in B. Groys, ‘Ilya Kabakov – Der Künstler als Erzähler’, in Ilya Kabakov, *Am Rande*, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Bern 1985, p.6 ff.

2. From Ilya Kabakov’s preface to Paul R. Jolles, *Memento aus Moskau*, Cologne 1997.

3. Ilya Kabakov, Emilia Kabakov et al., *An Alternative History of Art: Rosenthal, Kabakov, Spivak*, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland 2005.

ON LABYRINTH (MY MOTHER’S ALBUM)

pp.43–51

1. *Labyrinth (My Mother’s Album)* was first presented at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, from 6 January to 3 February 1990. The show was titled *He Lost His Mind, Undressed, Ran Away Naked* and consisted of a two-part installation, with the second work titled as the show. For further information on Kabakov’s concept of ‘Total Installation’, see Ilya Kabakov, *On The Total Installation*, Ostfildern 1995.

2. Ilya Kabakov, *The Text as the Basis of Visual Expression*, ed. Felix Zdenek, Cologne/Hamburg 2000; see pp.271–3 for an overview of how and when Kabakov first became a character of himself.

3. Extracted from an unpublished, transcribed interview between the author and Emilia and Ilya Kabakov, in Mattituck, New York, on 29 January 2016.

4. Ibid.

5. This quotation and the following two extracts are taken from ‘Installations’, in Ilya Kabakov, *My Mother’s Album*, Paris 1995, pp.254–5.

6. Ilya Kabakov, ‘Commentary’, in *The Text as the Basis of Visual Expression*, p.372.

7. According to Emilia Kabakov, there was never enough food provided at the school, hence Solodukhina’s food packages, but Kabakov lived in fear that the other students would catch him and his mother and make fun of them. Always hungry, and not wanting to offend his mother, he would hide in a closet to eat the food she provided.

8. From Ilya Kabakov’s introduction to *My Mother’s Album*, pp.7–8.

9. All quotations and extracts from *My Mother’s Album* are taken from the translated transcription supplied to Tate on acquiring the work in 2002.

10. The other texts not written by Kabakov are letters from the inhabitants of a communal apartment, which appear in a series of collages titled *Complaints from the Inhabitants of Communal Apartment*, produced in 1994. These collages became part of an installation, *The Corridor of Two Banalities*, realised in collaboration with Joseph Kosuth for the Center of Contemporary Art in Warsaw, also in 1994.

11. *My Mother’s Album* was first produced as an album in 1987, and this was later integrated into the installation *Mother and Son* first shown at the Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma 1990. The letter appears in the book of the album: *My Mother’s Album*, Flies France, Paris 1995. The letter also appeared in the first version of the installation at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in 1990 (as described by Amei Wallach in *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, New York 1996, p.82).

12. Ilya Kabakov, ‘Commentary’, in *The Text as the Basis of Visual Expression*, p.372.

13. Fragments include songs such as ‘I Dreamed of a Garden’, ‘Go Away, Go Away Forever’, ‘No, He Didn’t Love Me’, ‘On Meeting You’ based on the popular poem by Fedor Tyutchev (1803–73), and ‘The Night was Shining’ based on a poem by Afanasy Fet (1820–92).

14. The first was *My Mother’s Album*, as previously noted, initially created as an album in 1987 and then integrated into an installation *Mother and Son* (1990). The second – *My Mother’s Life* (1989) – includes a second version of the memoirs that differs slightly in length from the content published in the book *My Mother’s Album*. Both *Mother and Son* and *Labyrinth*

installations are included in Kabakov's large-scale, as yet unrealised project *Monument to a Lost Civilization*, in 'Section F: The World of Memories'. This project was first presented as a concept with models and plans in Palermo in 1999. The third autobiographical work, *And I Was Like You*, was produced in 1998 for the museum café of Galerie der Stadt Esslingen. It is a photographic portrait of Kabakov's mother towards the end of her life, with a text in the first person, written by Kabakov. From 2010 Solodukhina appears again, but in paintings, with her sister and brother-in-law (Kabakov's aunt Riva and photographer uncle, Yuri Blekheř), with Kabakov's father's sister (Aunt Busia), and with Emilia's grandparents (Sonia and Joseph Levine), in a series of works called *They Are Looking*. *Painting 01 'THEY ARE LOOKING'*; *Painting 02 'MOTHER, AUNT RIVA, AUNT BUSIA'*; *Painting 03 'MOTHER, AUNT RIVA, AUNT TANIA'*; and *Painting 04 'MOTHER, AUNT SONIA, UNCLE JOSEPH'*. Emilia and Ilya Kabakov appear together in a series of paintings titled *Dark Painting #1, #2 and #3* 2010 and a triptych called *Dark Painting with Cuts* 2011.

15. Interview, Mattituck, 29 January 2016.

THE ARCHAEO-FUTURES OF ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV pp.53–61

1. 'Samizdat culture': when dissidents had to operate in covert ways to evade Soviet censorship.
2. A 'Stakhanovite' is a worker in the former Soviet Union who was exceptionally hard-working and productive.

3. Walter Benjamin, 'Ninth Thesis on the Philosophy of History', 1940

ILYA KABAKOV AND THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE pp.63–71

1. Dimitri Ozerkov, interview with Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, in *Utopiia i realnost: El Lisitskii, Iliia i Emiliia Kabakovy* [Utopia and Reality: El Lissitzky, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov], State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg 2013, p.47.
2. Ilya Kabakov, in *Orbis Pictus. Children's Book Illustrator as a Social Character*, Tokyo Shimbun, Tokyo 2007.
3. Ilya Kabakov and Mikhail Epshtein, *Catalogue*, Vologda 2010, p.142.

4. Amei Wallach, *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, New York 1996, p.57.

5. Kabakov and Epshtein, *Catalogue*, pp.245–6.

6. Dimitri Ozerkov, interview with Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, in *Utopiia i realnost*, p.47.

7. Kabakov and Epshtein, *Catalogue*, p.330.

8. *Ibid.*, p.135.

9. The term (Rus. *manilovshchina*), derived from the name of a character in Nikolai Gogol's novel *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842), has come to denote a peculiarly Russian blend of idle daydreaming, smug complacency and starry-eyed idealism.

10. Ilya Kabakov, *V budushchee voz'mut ne vsekhi. Teksty*, pp.442–4.

11. *The Hamburg Reckoning* (*Gamburgskiy schet*) is the title of a 1928 collection of articles by the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, which alludes to a wrestling competition that was supposedly held in Hamburg. The gruelling annual contest reputedly took place behind closed doors in order to prevent match fixing, and so the term has come to be synonymous in Russian with objective, unbiased evaluation.

12. Boris Groys, 'Teatr avtorstva ili total'nye installatsii Il'i Kabakova', in *'Sluchay v muzee' i drugie installatsii. Katalog vystavki*, State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg 2004, pp.57–8.

CHRONOLOGY

Katy Wan

1933

Ilya Kabakov is born on 30 September in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine (former Soviet Union) to Joseph Kabakov and Bertha Urievna Solodukhina. His mother is raised in impoverished circumstances, having lost her father to starvation in the Holodomor famine, and her mother to cholera. His father is a metalworker. In the years that follow Kabakov's birth, twelve million people will die in the Stalinist Purges—a period of systematic executions, forced labour and widespread persecution.

1940

Kabakov begins his primary school education.

1941

Following the invasion of German troops into the Soviet Union, Kabakov's father enlists in the Soviet Red Army, choosing not to return to his family once the war is over. Kabakov and his mother are forced to flee east before finally settling in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

1943

Kabakov and a schoolmate hear a rumour that there are paintings of nude women on view at a local art school, and break into the building at night to try and see them. When Kabakov is caught by one of the teachers, he claims to be merely interested in the art. He is asked to submit some drawings and is subsequently admitted to the preparatory school of the Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture of the All-Russian Academy of Arts, which has temporarily relocated from Leningrad (present-day St Petersburg) to Samarkand. When the invading German armies are defeated at the end of the year, the school makes preparations to return to Leningrad.

1944

Kabakov and his mother travel to Zagorsk and settle at the seminary of the Holy Trinity Monastery and Cathedral, which dates back to the fourteenth century.

1945

Emilia Lekach is born on 3 December in Dnepropetrovsk to Klara and Gregory Lekach. She is a distant relation of Kabakov on his father's side.

Kabakov commences his studies at the Art School of Moscow, being among the intake of 'talented' children. He resides at the school as a boarder but his mother, being without a permanent home and wishing to stay close to

her son, is often forced to take up illegal residence in non-domestic spaces including, at one point, a disused public toilet.

1947

Kabakov first encounters works of Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, and the writings of William Shakespeare, Honoré de Balzac, Jean Racine, Pierre Corneille, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoy. However, the following year heralds a new era of cultural repression when the Communist Party's Central Committee on Music denounces the compositions of both Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev.

1951–7

Kabakov completes his studies at the Art School of Moscow and is successful in his application to study Graphic Design and Book Illustration at the V.I. Surikov Art Institute. His classmates there include Erik Bulatov and Oleg Vassiliev, both of whom are to become lifelong friends.

1952–8

Lekach, a gifted pianist, undertakes studies at the Music School, Moscow.

1954

The death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 instigates the 'Thaw' and an improvement in Soviet diplomatic and cultural relations with the rest of the world. In the year that follows, Kabakov uses a stipend from his studies to explore the Crimean coastline.

1955

Kabakov makes ends meet by unloading railway wagons by night, until he implores an editor at a children's book publishing house to grant him a commission. He is eventually assigned G. Lupsjakov's *The Green Inkstand* as his first project. He excels in this role and begins the monotonous routine of queuing with other illustrators to secure new commissions. Due to the ongoing censorship of the time, all illustrators conform to the same generalised, stylistically mundane and inoffensive subject matter.

1956

This period marks the beginnings of Kabakov's activity as an 'unofficial' artist in Moscow: he makes work clandestinely for a small and sympathetic audience of fellow artists and intellectuals, including Vassiliev and Bulatov. Kabakov pays a visit to the elderly artist Robert Falk, who lives in the rural suburbs of Moscow as a social outcast, having been denounced

by the Soviet authorities. That summer Kabakov travels to Moldavia to see the remaining *shtetls* (Jewish towns) which have survived bombardment by both the Nazi and Stalinist regimes.

For his graduation project, Kabakov creates illustrations based on Sholem Aleichem's epic *Wandering Stars*, which was first serialised in a Warsaw newspaper in 1911. It gives the account of two Jewish lovers who are divided by circumstance, but encounter each other once again after having migrated to the United States.

1957

Kabakov marries his first wife, Irina Rubanova. In the summer, he is inspired to apply the modernist techniques he has observed in Falk's paintings but, disappointed by these early efforts, destroys them before anyone can see them.

1958

Lekach and her family attempt to leave the Soviet Union but are stopped at the airport. Her parents are arrested and Emilia and her sister are placed with their grandparents in Dnepropetrovsk.

1959

Kabakov becomes a member of the Graphics section of the Moscow branch of the Artists' Union (MOSSKh). He does not apply to be a state-approved fine artist, which is restricted to a narrow range of subject matter—the glorification of the Soviet State, and portraits of party leaders and proletarian archetypes. The same summer, the American National Exhibition is staged in Sokolniki Park, Moscow, where examples of American industrial design are exhibited alongside artworks by Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning.

1960

Birth of Kabakov's daughter Galina.

1961

Kabakov's first *dush* ('shower') drawings. He receives regular commissions to work on the popular science journal *Znannie-sila* ('Knowledge is Power').

1962

Kabakov's first *kartiny-predmety* ('picture-objects') appear—works that combine painting and three-dimensional elements.

1962–6

Lekach continues her studies at the music colleges in Irkutsk and Dnepropetrovsk.

1965

Following an exhibition in Italy of his 'shower drawings', Kabakov is banned from seeking illustration commissions for four years and instead practises under a pseudonym. The drawings are viewed as symbolising the failures of the Soviet State. He starts to participate in informal, private debates around art, music and literature at the Bluebird Café on Staropimenovsky Lane—a hub for creatives and intellectuals that is monitored by the KGB.

1966

Lekach marries Gary Kanevsky, after graduating from her conservatoire in Dnepropetrovsk.

1967

In January, Kabakov's unofficial art is reproduced in print for the first time in *Znannie-sila*—it is a depiction of a cyclist in a geometric composition. Paradoxically, later that same year he is denounced in the national newspaper *Sovetskaia Kul'tura* ('Soviet Culture') for producing 'decadent bourgeois art'.

Kabakov purchases a sixth-floor attic space at 6/1 Sretensky Boulevard. It will serve as his studio for the next two decades.

1968

Kabakov displays his work publicly for the first time in a two-night 'exhibition' at the Bluebird Café, alongside his friend Eric Bulatov. On the first night, he shows the works *Hand and Ruisdael's Reproduction*, *The Boy* and *Head with a Balloon*; for the second, he displays the drawings *Menus*, *Heads*, and *Geometric Compositions*. The presentation confirms Kabakov's status among his peers as an unofficial artist.

Kabakov spends the summer avoiding the attention of the authorities by quietly continuing his children's book illustration work and making trips to Bulatov's *dacha* (summer house). His marriage to Irina ends.

1969–72

Kanevsky undertakes studies in Spanish Language and Literature at the University of Moscow, condensing a five-year-long course into half the time in the hope of imminently leaving the Soviet Union.

1970

In January, Kabakov attempts to stage a large exhibition of his drawings at an Artists' Union-owned lithography studio on Maslovka Street, but only learns of its cancellation when he finds

the works scattered on the floor of the space, a day after hanging them. To avoid harassment from the Soviet authorities he declines to participate in further exhibitions in the Soviet Union for more than a decade.

Kabakov begins work on a series of ten albums, each of which tells the story of a different character in a juxtaposition of text and image. It is from these narrative works on paper that his use of ventriloquism and fictional personas will arise – a defining characteristic of his oeuvre.

1972

Kabakov is a founding member of the Sretensky Boulevard Group, so named because all of its participants' studios are based in the same central Moscow neighbourhood. Participants include the poet Dmitri Prigov, the artists Bulatov, Vassiliev, Victor Pivovarov and, later, the critic and art historian Boris Groys.

At the end of the year, Kabakov and a number of his friends visit the Staraya Ladoga House of Creativity – a former Russian royal residence and centre of state-approved artistic activity.

1973

As part of the 1970s aliyah (mass migration of Jewish people to Israel), Kanevsky is granted an exit visa and, upon its issue, is given just five days to leave the Soviet Union. Kabakov takes her and her daughter to the train station, gifting her a set of drawings to sell in case she is ever in financial need.

Dina Vierny, a French art dealer and former model for Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard and Aristide Maillol, visits Moscow. She invites Kabakov, Bulatov and Oskar Rabin to contribute works to an exhibition in Paris.

In the autumn, Kabakov marries the philologist Victoria Valentina Mochalova.

1974

The *Ten Characters* albums are completed in their entirety. Kabakov performs readings of the work in his studio to small invited audiences.

Kabakov is invited by Rabin to present work in the *Bulldozer* exhibition, a defiant display of unofficial art. However, Kabakov declines since he doesn't believe such actions will make an impact or bring about change.

1975

Kanevsky is living in Miami, with two small children.

1976

Collective Actions is founded by Nikita Alekseev, Georgy Kizevalter, Andrej Monastyrski and Lev Rubenstein. Along with other nonconformist artists, the group collaborates on conceptual

performances deep in the Russian countryside. Kabakov is an early attendee of these happenings.

1978

A-VA, a magazine covering new tendencies in Russian underground art and published in Paris by Igor Chelkovsky, features a critical analysis of Kabakov's work by Boris Groys.

After moving to New York, Kanevsky starts work as an antiques dealer specialising in Fabergé and Russian silver.

1979

Groys coins the term 'Moscow Romantic Conceptualism' in *A-VA*, differentiating it from the conceptualist tendencies that have emerged in Western Europe and North America. The term is later historicised as 'Moscow Conceptualism', of which Kabakov is considered to be a key player.

1983

Emilia Kanevsky divorces Gary Kanevsky.

1984

Claudia Jolles, who will become a prominent Swiss curator and art critic, visits Moscow while on a university field trip where she calls upon both Kabakov and Bulatov. She encourages her diplomat father, Paul Jolles, also to visit the artists when he is in the city on government business. Upon his return to Switzerland, he shows photos he has taken in Kabakov's Moscow studio to Jean Hubert Martin, Director of the Kunsthalle Bern.

1985

Claudia Jolles and Martin travel to Moscow to meet with Kabakov and propose an exhibition of his work in Bern.

Kabakov begins work on his first immersive installation *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*.

1986

As the words *glasnost* ('openness') and *perestroika* ('restructuring', or political reform) enter the vocabulary of Soviet society, a touring monographic exhibition of Kabakov's work is presented at the Kunsthalle Bern, Galeries de la Vieille Charité in Marseille, the Kunstverein für Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf, and the Centre National des Arts Plastiques in Paris. However, Kabakov is denied permission to leave Moscow. On the day that the exhibition opens in Bern, Kabakov and a group of his friends go into the forest and cut a red ribbon suspended between two trees, by way of marking this historic moment from afar (however, they do not account for the time difference and are in fact several hours premature of the actual vernissage in Switzerland).

1987

As interest in Kabakov's work in Europe picks up momentum, he prepares for further exhibitions in Lucerne, Switzerland, and Graz, Austria. In October, he travels to Vienna for a fellowship at the Graz Kunstverein. At the age of 54, it is the first time he has left the Soviet Union.

1988

Following the death of his mother in Berdyansk, Kabakov returns to Russia to organise her funeral. Upon his return to Vienna, he meets the American dealer Ronald Feldman, who invites him to stage an exhibition in New York. Kabakov is unexpectedly successful in securing a visa to travel to the United States.

Kabakov goes to New York and resumes contact with Kanevsky, who is now working as a curator and adviser for a private collection. They begin working together on artistic projects. His multi-part installation *Ten Characters* is presented as an exhibition at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in April.

Kabakov receives a grant from the French Ministry of Culture to spend a year in Paris; he presents the installation *Three Nights* at the Galerie de France.

1989

Kabakov's work is shown in solo presentations at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, Kunstmuseum Bern, and the Venice Biennale.

The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment is included in *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou, curated by Jean Hubert Martin. This is a major polemical exhibition showing international tendencies in contemporary art, and attempts to give equal prominence to artists of all different nationalities.

1990

Kabakov's first monographic exhibition in the United States is presented at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC. Further exhibitions of Kabakov's work follow throughout the USA, Italy, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and Spain.

1991

Kabakov's installation *The Bridge* is included in the exhibition *DISlocations*, curated by Robert Storr at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It is the first time that the museum gives credence to the medium of installation as an art form in its own right. Kabakov's work is displayed alongside Bruce Nauman's video work *Anthro/Socio*, and Louise Bourgeois's motorised sculpture *Twosome*. December marks the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

1992

Kabakov and Kanevsky purchase a loft in the Tribeca neighbourhood of New York City. She becomes Emilia Kabakov when they marry later that year, and together they travel to Kassel in Germany to present *The Toilet* at Documenta IX, curated by Jan Hoet. The installation—a replica of a Soviet-era public toilet with an interior styled like a domestic dwelling—is received with both consternation and acclaim by international audiences.

Ilya Kabakov presents a series of lectures on the 'Total Installation' at the Städelschule, Frankfurt. The lectures are translated into English by Emilia Kabakov.

1993

Ilya Kabakov produces some of his most ambitious installations, some of which are as big as entire exhibition spaces. These include *The Big Archive* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and *NOMA* at the Kunsthalle Hamburg. In April, Ilya Kabakov receives the Max Beckmann Prize from the mayor of Frankfurt, Germany. The Kabakovs are selected to represent Russia at the 45th Venice Biennale; that summer they present *The Red Pavilion*, which features a musical arrangement by Vladimir Tarasov.

1995

We Are Living Here is exhibited at the Centre Pompidou where it takes up the entire first floor and basement level of the museum. Ilya Kabakov is awarded the title of Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French government, for his contribution to culture. His lectures on the 'Total Installation' are published in a trilingual edition of English, German and Russian by the German publishing house Hatje Cantz.

1995–8

The Palace of Projects is commissioned by the London-based arts organisation Artangel and exhibited at the Roundhouse in Camden.

1996

The Kabakovs move from Tribeca to Long Island.

2000

The Happiest Man is presented at the Jeu de Paume, Paris.

2001

Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future is shown in the main *Arsenale* exhibition of the 49th Venice Biennale.

2002

Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)—Ilya Kabakov's most personal work, which gives an account of

his mother's life—is shown in the opening displays of Tate Modern in London. It is acquired into Tate's permanent collection shortly afterwards.

Ilya Kabakov is awarded the Oskar Kokoschka Prize in Vienna.

2005

The Ship of Tolerance is presented in Siwa, Egypt. In the years that follow it will go on to be shown in various locations around the world, including Cuba, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

2008

Ilya Kabakov's 1982 painting *The Beetle* sells at Phillips de Pury for £2.93 million, setting the auction record for the most expensive artwork by a living Russian artist.

The Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow presents as its inaugural exhibition a monographic show of works by the Kabakovs, featuring *The Alternative History of Art* and *The Red Wagon*, the latter of which is subsequently acquired by the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg.

The Kabakovs are awarded the Order of Friendship from the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, and the Praemium Imperiale for Sculpture by the Japan Art Association.

2013

The Kabakovs receive gold medals and become academics of the Russian Art Academy, Moscow.

2014

The Strange City opens at the Grand Palais in Paris as part of the Monumenta series—a biannual commission of immersive installations that are exhibited in the main hall of the historic building.

The Kabakovs are awarded the medals and title of Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the Ministry of Culture in France.

2017

The major touring exhibition *Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future* opens at Tate Modern, London before travelling to the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg and the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow the following year. In the autumn, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC presents a Kabakov survey – twenty-seven years after hosting the first Kabakov exhibition in the United States.

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Ilya & Emilia: Under The Snow (exh. cat.). Ed. Fernando Francés, Riitta Valorinta, Kurt Wettengl. Cologne: Walther König 2007.

Boris Groys, Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment. London: Afterall 2006.

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov: Installation and Theatre (exh. cat., Versicherungskammer Bayern, Munich). Munich and London: Prestel 2006.

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov: The Thaw (exh. cat.). Otegem: Deweer Art Gallery 2006.

An Alternative History of Art: Rosenthal, Kabakov, Spivak (exh. cat.). Cleveland, Ohio and Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag 2005.

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov: The House of Dreams (exh. cat.). London: Serpentine Gallery 2005.

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov: Project for the Demonstration of Archive. Cologne: Walther König 2005.

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: The Utopian City and Other Projects (exh. cat.). Ed. Thomas Kellein and Björn Egging. Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld 2004.

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov. We Are Free! (exh. cat.). Moscow: Stella Art Foundation 2004.

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov: Where is Our Place? (exh. cat.). Tokyo: Mori Art Museum 2004.

'Incident in the Museum' and Other Installations. Ed. Thomas Kellein and Björn Egging. Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld 2004.

The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment (exh. cat.). Moscow: State Historical Museum 2004.

My Kabakov (exh. cat.). Moscow: Stella Art Gallery 2004.

Verbal Photography: Ilya Kabakov, Boris Mikhailov and the Moscow Archive of New Art (exh. cat.). Text by Margarita and Victor Tupitsyn. Parque de Serralves: Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves 2004.

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov: Where Is Our Place? (exh. cat.). Milan: Charta 2003.

Ausgestellt, Vorge stellt VI: Ilya Kabakov (exh. cat.). Marl: Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten 2002.

Ilya Kabakov: Children's Books and Related Drawings 1956–1987 (exh. brochure). Marfa, TX: Chinati Foundation 2002.

Ilya Kabakov: Universal System for Depicting Everything (exh. cat.). Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag 2002.

Ilya & Emilia Kabakov: Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future. Materialien zur Installation. Salzburg: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac 2002.

Ilya Kabakov: Die 60er und 70er Jahre: Aufzeichnungen über das inoffizielle Leben in Moskau. Ed. Peter Engelmann. Vienna: Passagen-Verlag 2001.

Ilya Kabakov: Public Projects or the Spirit of a Place. Texts by Giairo Daghini, Giacinto Di Pietrantonio, Boris Groys and Angela Vettese. Milan: Charta 2001.

The Palace of Projects (exh. cat.). Essen: Stiftung Industriedenkmalspflege und Geschichtskultur 2001.

20 Ways to Get an Apple Listening to the Music of Mozart: Installation (exh. cat.). Columbus, OH: Columbus Museum of Art 2001.

A World Within a Space (exh. cat.). Zürich: Kunsthalle Zürich 2001.

Ilya Kabakov: The Arriving Archive (exh. cat.). Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag 2000.

Ilya Kabakov: 50 Installationen (exh. cat.). Bern: Kunstmuseum Bern 2000.

Ilya Kabakov: 1969–1998 (exh. cat.). Text by Amei Wallach. Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Center for Curatorial Studies 2000.

Ilya Kabakov: Drawings (exh. cat.). Hannover: Sprengel Museum Hannover 1999.

Ilya Kabakov: Life and Creativity of Charles Rosenthal (exh. cat.). Text by Eriko Osaka; interview with the artist by Yusuke Nakahara. Mito: Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito 1999.

Ilya Kabakov: Monument to a Lost Civilization (exh. cat.). Milan: Edizioni Charta 1999.

Ilya Kabakov: The Old Reading Room (exh. cat.). Amsterdam: Vossiuspers 1999.

Ilya Kabakov: El palacio de los proyectos (exh. cat.). Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía 1999.

Ilya Kabakov: Der Rote Wagon (exh. cat.). Nuremberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst 1999.

They Are Looking Downward. Tokyo: Dora Arts 1999.

The Boat of My Life (exh. cat.). Champagne, IL: Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion, University of Illinois 1998.

I. Kabakov: The Palace of Projects (exh. cat.). London: Artangel 1998.

Ilya Kabakov: Der Metaphysische Mensch (exh. cat.). Bremen: Kunstverein 1998.

Ilya Kabakov, 1964–1983: Stimmen hinter der Tür (exh. cat.). Leipzig: Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst 1998.

Ilya Kabakov: 16 Installaties / 16 Installations (exh. cat.). Antwerp: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst 1998.

Ilya Kabakov: Träger des Goslarer Kaiserrings am 17 Oktober 1998 und zur Ausstellung im Mönchehaus-Museum für moderne Kunst Goslar (exh. cat.). Goslar: Kulturressort der Stadt Goslar 1998.

Ilya Kabakov: Treatment with Memories (exh. cat.). Berlin: Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof 1998.

Ilya Kabakov: Zeichnungen / Tekeningen / Drawings (exh. cat.). Hannover: Sprengel Museum Hannover 1998.

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: The Children's Hospital (exh. pamphlet). Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art 1998.

Ilya Kabakov: The Reading Room (exh. cat.). New York: Guild Hall of East Hampton 1997.

Ilya Kabakov: Der Lesesaal: Bilder, Leporellos und Zeichnungen / The Reading Room: Paintings, Leporellos and Drawings (exh. cat.). Hamburg: Deichtorhallen 1996.

Ilya Kabakov: Music on the Water. Cologne: Walther König 1996.

Ilya Kabakov: Sjøppelmannen (exh. cat.). Oslo: Museet for Samtidskunst 1996.

Ilya Kabakov: Stimmen hinter der Tür. Leipzig: Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst 1996.

Ilya Kabakov: Storyteller (exh. cat.). Greve: Portalen 1996.

Sur le toit / Op het Dak / On the Roof (exh. cat.). Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts 1996.

Amei Wallach, *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away.* New York: Harry N. Abrams 1996.

Le Collectionneur (exh. cat.). Paris: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac 1995.

Ilya Kabakov: C'est ici que nous vivons / We Are Living Here (exh. cat.). Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou 1995.

Ilya Kabakov: Installations 1983–1995. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou 1995.

Ilya Kabakov: Ein Meer von Stimmen: Eine Neuerwerbung der Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung und Werke aus der Zeit von 1965 bis 1993 in Schweizer Sammlungen (exh. cat.). Basel and Cologne: Museum für Gegenwartskunst; Walther König 1995.

Ilya Kabakov: The Rope of Life and Other Installations (exh. cat.). Frankfurt: Museum für Moderne Kunst 1995.

Ilya Kabakov: Zubia (exh. cat.). Bilbao: Sala de Exposiciones de Rekalde 1995.

Ilya Kabakov, On the 'Total' Installation. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag 1995.

The Boat of My Life: My Mother's Album: The Golden Underground River (exh. cat.). Grenoble: Le Magasin, Centre National d'Art Contemporain 1994.

I. Kabakov: The Communal Kitchen, Installation (exh. cat.). Paris: Fondation Dina Vierny / Musée Maillol 1994.

Ilya Kabakov: 5 Albums: Installation Operation Room (Mother and Son) (exh. cat.). Helsinki: Nykytaiteen Museo 1994.

Ilya Kabakov: The Boat of My Life. Salzburg: Salzburger Kunstverein 1993.

Ilya Kabakov: Dans la Cuisine Communautaire: Nouveaux documents et matériaux (exh. cat.). Paris: Galerie Dina Vierny 1993.

Ilya Kabakov: Grand Archive (exh. cat.). Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum 1993.

Ilya Kabakov: Incident at the Museum or Water Music (exh. cat.). Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art 1993.

Ilya Kabakov: NOMA oder Der Kreis der Moskauer Konzeptualisten (exh. cat.). Hamburg: Hamburger Kunsthalle 1993.

Ilya Kabakov: NOMA oder Der Kreis der Moskauer Konzeptualisten (exh. cat.). Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz Verlag 1993.

Incident at the Museum or Water Music. New York: Ronald Feldman Fine Arts 1992.

Illustrations As A Way To Survive (exh. cat.). Kortrijk: Kanaal-Art Foundation 1992.

Ilya Kabakov (exh. cat.). Rome: Edizione Galleria Sprovieri 1992.

Ilya Kabakov: In Memory of Pleasant Recollections (exh. cat.). Otegem: Deweer Art Gallery 1992.

Ilya Kabakov: Das Leben der Fliegen (exh. cat.). Cologne and Stuttgart: Kölnischer Kunstverein; Hatje Cantz Verlag 1992.

Die Kunst des Fliehens: Dialoge über Angst, das heilige Weiss und den sowjetischen Atommüll. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag 1991.

Ilya Kabakov: Targets. Vienna: Galerie Peter Pakesch 1991.

Directions: Ilya Kabakov, Ten Characters (exh. brochure). Text by Ned Rifkin. Washington DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden 1990.

Ilya Kabakov: 7 Ausstellungen eines Bildes (exh. cat.). Kassel: Kasseler Kunstverein 1990.

Ilya Kabakov (exh. cat.). Text by Ilya Kabakov. Amsterdam: Appel Foundation 1989.

Ilya Kabakov: Ausstellung eines Buches (exh. cat.). Berlin: DAAD 1989.

Ilya Kabakov: Die Kommunalwohnung (exh. cat.). Zürich: Kunsthalle Zürich 1989.

Ilya Kabakov: Que sont ces petits hommes? (exh. cat.). Paris: Galerie de France 1989.

Ilya Kabakov: 10 Albums, 10 Characters (exh. cat.). London: Riverside Studios 1989.

Ilya Kabakov: 10 Characters (exh. cat.). London and New York: ICA in association with Ronald Feldman Fine Arts and Untitled II 1989.

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Ilya Kabakov: Ten Albums (exh. cat.). Frankfurt: Portikus 1988.

Ilya Kabakov: Ten Characters (exh. cat.). New York: Ronald Feldman Fine Arts 1988.

Ilya Kabakov: Vor dem Abendessen (exh. cat.). Graz: Grazer Kunstverein 1988.

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Kabakov (exh. cat.). Paris: Galerie Dina Vierny 1985.

Jean-Hubert Martin, *Das Fenster: der aus dem Fenster schauende Archipow.* Bern: Benteli 1985.

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Ostalgia (exh. cat.). Texts by Massimiliano Gioni, Ekaterina Degot, Boris Groys, et al. New York: New Museum 2011.

Total Enlightenment: Conceptual Art in Moscow, 1960–1990 (exh. cat.). Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag 2008.

Nonconformists: The Second Russian Avant-garde 1955–1988: The Bar-Gera Collection (exh. cat.). Bratislava: Slovenská Národná Galéria: Syntesia 2008.

Wonder: Singapore Biennale 2008 (exh. cat.). Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore 2008.

Think with the Senses, Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense: La biennale di Venezia 52 (exh. cat.). Venice: Marsilio Editori 2007.

Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970 (exh. cat.). London: Tate 2005.

Russia! Nine Hundred Years of Masterpieces and Master Collections (exh. cat.). New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 2005.

The Russian Patient: Ilya Kabakov, Oleg Kulik, Dmitry Prigov, Tatiana Liberman, Gosha Ostrezov, Timur Novikov (exh. cat.). London: Freud Museum / White Space Gallery 2002.

La Biennale di Venezia 49: Plateau of Humanity (exh. cat.). Venice: Marsilio Editori 2001.

Ilya Kabakov, Boris Groys, Pavel Pepperstein Zuger Gespräch (exh. cat.). Zug: Kunsthau Zug 2001.

Between Cinema and a Hard Place (exh. cat.). London: Tate 2000.

Herausforderung Tier. Von Beuys bis Kabakov (exh. cat.). Karlsruhe: Städtische Galerie 2000.

12th Biennale of Sydney (exh. cat.). Sydney: Biennale of Sydney 2000.

Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950–1980 (exh. cat.). Queens, NY: Queens Museum of Art 1999.

Biennale di Venezia: Future, Present, Past: 47th International Art Exhibition (exh. cat.). Venice and Milan: La Biennale di Venezia / Electa 1997.

Inside: Louise Bourgeois, Robert Gober, Mona Hatoum, Gary Hill, Ilya Kabakov, Annette Messager, Lucas Samaras (exh. cat.). Seattle: Henry Art Gallery 1997.

1997 Biennial Exhibition (exh. cat.). New York: Whitney Museum of American Art 1997.

EV+A 1996: The Twentieth Annual Exhibition of Visual + Art (exh. cat.). Kinsale, Co. Cork: Gandon Editions 1996.

Tennisottelu: Ilya Kabakov & Pavel Pepperstein (exh. cat.). Pori: Pori Art Museum Publications 1996.

Universalis: 23. Bienal Internacional São Paulo. São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo 1996.
Art as Witness: '95 Gwangju Biennale (exh. cat.). Gwangju: Gwangju Biennale Foundation 1995.

4th Istanbul International Biennial, New Orientation. The Vision of Art in a Paradoxical World (exh. cat.). Istanbul: Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts 1995.

From Gulag to Glasnost: Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union (exh. cat.). Ed. Alla Rosenfeld and Norton T. Dodge. New York: Thames & Hudson / Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum 1995.

Ilya Kabakov / Joseph Kosuth: The Corridor of Two Banalities (exh. cat.). Warsaw: Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski 1994.

Ivan Chuikov, Ilya Kabakov, Vadim Zakharov (exh. cat.). Otegem: Deweer Art Gallery 1994.

La Biennale di Venezia: 45th Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte (exh. cat.). Venice: La Biennale di Venezia / Marsilio Editori 1993.

Documenta IX (exh. cat.). Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz Verlag 1992.

Carnegie International 1991 (exh. cat.). Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art 1991.

Dislocations (exh. cat.). New York: Museum of Modern Art 1991.

Ilya Kabakov, John Scott (exh. cat.). Toronto: The Power Plant 1991.

Ilya Kabakov, Michail Grobman: The Beautiful Sixties in Moscow (exh. brochure). Tel Aviv: Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery 1989.

Post-Utopia. Paintings and Installations by Soviet Conceptualists: Bulatov, Kabakov, Komar & Melamid (exh. cat.). Dartmouth, MA: South East Massachusetts University Art Gallery 1989.

Erik Bulatov, Wladimir Jankilewski, Ilya Kabakov, Oleg Vassiliev (exh. cat.). Dresden: Die Kunstsammlungen 1988.

Ausstellung Moskauer Künstler: Jankilevskij, Kabakov, Štejnberg (exh. cat.). Bielefeld: Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung der Universität Bielefeld 1985.

Russian New Wave (exh. cat.). Text by Margarita Tupitsyn. Mechanicsville, MD: Cremona Foundation 1981.

New Art from the Soviet Union: An Exhibition of Non-Conformist Art from the 1960s and 1970s (exh. cat.). Mechanicsville, MD: Cremona Foundation 1979.

La nuova arte sovietica, una prospettiva non ufficiale (exh. cat.). Venice: La Biennale di Venezia / Marsilio Editori 1977.

Nonkonformistische russische Maler: Sammlung A. Gleiser (exh. cat.). Brunswick: Braunschweig Kunstverein 1975.

Progressive Strömungen in Moskau, 1957–1970 (exh. cat.). Bochum: Bochum Museum 1974.

Avant-garde: Moscow-73 (exh. cat.). Text by Dina Vierny. Paris: Galerie Dina Vierny 1973.

Die Russische Avantgarde in Moskau heute (exh. cat.). Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska 1970.

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'Ilya and Emilia Kabakov.' *Art Studio America: Contemporary Artist Spaces*. Interview with the artists by Hossein Amirsadeghi. New York: Thames & Hudson 2013.

Boris Groys. *History Becomes Form: Moscow Conceptualism*. Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press 2010.

Talking Art: Interviews with Artists Since 1976. London: Art Monthly / Ridinghouse 2007.

Angels of History: Moscow Conceptualism and its Influence. Text by Joseph Bakstein and Bart de Baere. Brussels: Mercatorfonds 2005.

Pressplay: Contemporary Artists in Conversation. London and New York: Phaidon 2005.

Ilya Kabakov, foreword to *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art Since the 1950s*. Ed. Laura Hoptman and Tomas Pospiszył. Cambridge, MA: Museum of Modern Art 2002.

EXHIBITED WORKS

The works listed below are those which appear in the Tate Modern exhibition—exhibited works may vary across venues. Works are organised into category of artwork, and chronologically within each category. Page references to the works illustrated are given at the end of the entries.

WORKS ON PAPER

Human: Mind, Soul, Body 1961

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
39.5 × 28.5
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
p.75

Monument 1961

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
11 × 12.3
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
p.74

Abstract Drawing 1962

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
14.9 × 20.4
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
p.77

Untitled 1962

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper 14.5 × 20
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Donation Ludwig
p.77

Untitled 1962

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper 9.8 × 13.5
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Donation Ludwig
p.78

Untitled 1962

Coloured pencil on paper 12.4 × 17.8
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Donation Ludwig
p.78

Abstract Composition 1962

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper 12.3 × 14
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
p.79

Composition Nr. 1 1966

Coloured pencil on paper 30.5 × 27.8
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Donation Ludwig
p.81

Pipe, Stick, Ball, Fly 1966

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
13.7 × 19.3
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Donation Ludwig
p.80

Horse 1967

Graphite and coloured pencil on card 20.8 × 30
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Donation Ludwig
p.82

From the Past to the Future 1968

Graphite and coloured pencil on card 32 × 22.5
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Donation Ludwig
p.83

Untitled 1968

Coloured pencil and ink on card 29.8 × 21.6
Private collection
p.84

Space 1969

Ink and coloured pencil on paper 22.6 × 29.7
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
p.85

Untitled 1970

Coloured pencil and ink on card 20.3 × 27.3
Private collection
p.86

A Piece of Meat 1971

Coloured pencil and ink on paper 32.4 × 29.2
Private collection
p.87

Toothbrush 1972

Graphite and ink on paper 20.3 × 26.7
Private collection
p.88

Numbers 1973

Coloured pencil and ink on paper 35 × 50
Private collection
p.88

Untitled 1974

Ink and coloured pencil on paper 21 × 29.5
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
p.89

ALBUMS

Facsimile editions of the original albums are exhibited as part of the Tate Modern show. In the entries listed below the date for the original album is given first and is followed by the date the facsimile was created. In this catalogue, the original editions are illustrated.

Agonizing Surikov 1970–4 / 1995

Print on paper (facsimile), 50 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection

Anna Petrovna Has a Dream 1972 / 1996

Print on paper (facsimile), 32 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection
p.97

The Decorator Maligin 1972 / 1996

Print on paper (facsimile), 72 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection

The Flying Komarov 1970 / 1994

Print on paper (facsimile), 32 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection
pp.94–5

The Joker Gorokhov 1972 / 1997

Print on paper (facsimile), 40 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection
p.96

The Looking-out-the-Window Arkhipov 1970–4 / 1994

Print on paper (facsimile), 50 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection

The Released Gavrilov 1970–4 / 1997

Print on paper (facsimile), 43 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection

Sitting-in-the-Closet Primakov 1972 / 1994

Print on paper (facsimile), 47 pages
51.5 × 35 (each sheet)
Private collection
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PAINTINGS

The Bush 1961

Oil paint on canvas 51 × 70
Private collection, Switzerland
p.98

Cubes 1962

Oil paint and enamel on wood 93.6 × 41.4 × 17.5
Collection Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University. Museum Purchase, purchased with funds donated by Norton Dodge and Nancy Dodge
p.101

Self-Portrait 1962

Oil paint on canvas 60.5 × 50.5
Private collection
p.99

Soccer Player 1964

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite 56 × 70
Private collection
p.102

Hand and Ruisdael's Reproduction 1965

Textile relief, print on paper, wood, oil paint and enamel on plywood 120 × 150 × 15
Private collection
p.104

Head with a Balloon 1965

Textile reliefs, plaster, oil paint and enamel on Masonite 150 × 120 × 12
Private collection
p.109

The Queen Fly 1965

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite and wood 48.5 × 60 × 6
Private collection, Switzerland
p.111

Pipe, Stick, Ball and Fly 1966

Ceramic, textile reliefs, oil paint and enamel on plywood 130 × 180 × 20
Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Loan from Ludwig Stiftung
p.105

This is the Sky, This is a Lake, This is the Sea 1970

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite 125 × 197
Private collection, Switzerland
p.112

The Answers of an Experimental Group 1970–1

Oil paint, enamel and mixed media on board 147 × 305 × 12
Private collection
pp.116–17

Nikolai Petrovich 1980

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite 260 × 190
Private collection
p.118

Sobakin 1980

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite 210 × 300
Elchin and Dilyara Safarov
p.120

Tested! 1981

Oil paint and enamel on Masonite 260 × 380
Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen
p.121

By December 25 in Our District ... 1983

Wood and metal objects mounted on oil paint and enamel on Masonite 260 × 380 × 24
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de Création industrielle. Purchased through the Hoffmann Foundation, 1986
p.123

Holiday # 1 1987

Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas 100 × 160
Tsukanov Family Foundation
p.124

Holiday # 2 1987

Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas 100 × 160
Private collection
p.125

Holiday # 6 1987

Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas 100 × 160
Private collection
p.126

Holiday # 8 1987

Oil paint, enamel and paper on canvas 100 × 160
Private collection
p.127

The Boy 2000

Oil paint, enamel and textile on plywood 186 × 160 × 12
Private collection, Moscow / Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
1965 version, p.107

Under the Snow # 2 2004

Oil paint on canvas 160 × 249
Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg
p.128

Kanon # 4 2007

Oil paint on canvas 282 × 189
Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg
p.129

The Collage of Spaces # 6 2010

Oil paint on canvas 162.5 × 185.5
Bukhtoyarov Family Collection, London
p.133

The Appearance of the Collage # 8 2012

Oil paint on canvas 188 × 272
Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg
p.134

The Appearance of the Collage # 10 2012

Oil paint on canvas 203 × 272
Private collection
p.135

Vertical Painting # 4 2012

Oil paint on canvas 284.5 × 190.5
Private collection
p.137

Vertical Painting # 12 2012

Oil paint on canvas 284.5 × 180
Private collection
p.139

The Window Into My Past 2012

Oil paint on canvas 198 × 272
Private collection
p.130

Dark and Light # 9 2013

Oil paint on canvas 277 × 254
Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg
p.140

The Four Paintings about the Sun # 4 2013

Oil paint on canvas 262 × 168
Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg
p.141

The Colorful Noise # 8 2014

Oil paint on canvas 284.5 × 190.5
Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg
p.142

Two Observers # 2 Diptych (Right part of diptych) 2014

Oil paint on canvas 268 × 168
Olga Filatov's Collection
p.143

The Six Paintings about the Temporary Loss of Eyesight (They are Painting the Boat) 2015

Oil paint on canvas 112 × 196

Private collection

p.144

The Six Paintings about the Temporary Loss of Eyesight (The Scene at the Square) 2015

Oil paint on canvas 112 × 196

Private collection

p.145

Two Times # 10 2015

Oil paint on canvas 190.5 × 284.5

Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus

Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg

p.146

Two Times # 17 2015

Oil paint on canvas 284.5 × 190.5

Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus

Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg

p.147

Two Times # 20 2016

Oil paint on canvas 212 × 284.5

Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus

Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg

p.148

Two Times # 22 2016

Oil paint on canvas 216 × 240

Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus

Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg

p.149

INSTALLATIONS

16 Ropes 1984 / 1994

Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable

Private collection

Concept drawing, p.158

The Man Who Flew into Space From His Apartment 1985

Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de Création industrielle.

Purchased 1990

pp.150–7

Box of Garbage 1986 / 1995

Wood and mixed media. Dimensions variable

Private collection

Incident in the Corridor Near the Kitchen 1989

Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable

Private collection

pp.162–3

Three Nights 1989

Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable

Private collection

pp.164–71

Trousers in the Corner 1989

Textile and paper. Dimensions variable

Private collection

Concept drawing, p.172

I Catch the Little White Men 1990

Wood, glass, paper, wire and lights

208.3 × 162.6 × 83.8

Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus

Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg

pp.174–5

Labyrinth (My Mother's Album) 1990

Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable

Tate. Purchased 2002

pp.43–51, 176–9

The Angel Over The City 1998

Wood, plaster, textile and light bulb

63.5 × 51 × 51

Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus

Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg

p.184

How Can One Change Oneself? 1998

Feathers, leather and ink on paper 109 × 142

Private collection. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus

Ropac, London - Paris - Salzburg

p.184

Objects of His Life 2005

Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable

Private collection

Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into the Future 2001

Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable

MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Art /

Contemporary Art. LHG 1948 / 2001, permanent

loan Geyer & Geyer Collection, Vienna.

pp.186–9

MODELS

For the models two dates are provided.

The first is the date the concept was initiated; it is followed by the model's production date.

All concept models are made by Alois Ellmauer and Mario Hober.

Model for *The Toilet* 1992 / 2017

Wood and textiles 63 × 153 × 78

Private collection

pp.190–3

The Man Climbing Over the Wall. Model for a sculpture (*The Eternal Emigrant*) 1995 / 2004

Plaster and wood 63.5 × 96.5 × 74.5

Private collection

p.203

Model for *Healing with Paintings* 1996 / 2017

Wood and print on paper 42 × 95.7 × 82

Private collection

pp.194–5

Model for *How to Meet an Angel* 1998 / 2002

Wood, metal, wooden figures and transparent

thread. Dimensions variable

Private collection

pp.182–3

Model for *Inscriptions on the Wall (Reichstag)*

1998 / 2000

Paint on wood 80 × 106.5 × 55.5

Private collection

pp.198–9

Model for *The Vertical Opera (Guggenheim)*

1998 / 2008

Wood, paper and light bulb 98 × 133 × 85.5

Private collection

pp.196–7

Model for *The Arch of Life* 2000 / 2014

Wood, textile and light bulbs

49 × 146 × 83

Private collection

Concept drawing, p.202

Model for *The Five Steps of Life* 2000 / 2012

Textile, plaster and wood 99 × 82.5 × 82.5

Private collection

p.185

Model for *Where is Our Place?* 2002 / 2017

Wood, paper and light bulbs 71 × 114.5 × 114.5

Private collection

pp.200–1

Model for *The Three Angels* 2012

Wood 59 × 106 × 86.5

Private collection

p.185

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