

PRESS RELEASE

ILYA KABAKOV

25 November 2000, 7.30 p.m. Lia Rumma Gallery Naples, Via Vannella Gaetani 12

tel. 0817643619, fax: 0817644213, e-mail: liarumma@fin.it website: gallerialiarumma.it

The gallery is open to the public on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, from 4.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m., on other days by appointment.

The installation "The sick child" by the Russian artist Ilya Kabakov will be displayed in the Lia Rumma gallery in Naples will host. Kabakov has reconstructed an apartment within the gallery comprising two small rooms. The first room, which one enters through a narrow door, represents a small *petit bourgeois* drawing room furnished with traditional objects, rather ordinary and out of fashion: an old armchair, an old bookcase, an old table with a faded tablecloth.

The spectator continues towards the second room with the impression that there was nothing happening in the first room and nothing to see. One finds oneself facing a white curtain which divides the room. By moving the curtain, one comes into the second part of the room. In the middle of the room there is a bed with a pillow and a duvet; beside the bed is a plain chair, while on the other side is the main object in the installation: a puppet theatre lit from the inside, with moving puppets. The movement is accompanied by music and voices. The spectator can sit on the chair or even on the bed and watch the show. Clearly the theatre is for the sick child. The reassuring and composed atmosphere is designed to disappear rapidly.

Kabakov was born in 1933 in the Ukraine. His artistic training took place in Moscow. For a long period he earned his living as an illustrator of children's books. Simultaneously he dedicated himself to painting in ironic imitation of the style of official culture and, in many cases, placed beside them written texts which further accentuated their ambiguity. In 1970 he began to make albums of drawings. These were followed from the beginning of the 1980s by his first installation projects which were smuggled abroad and were assembled by others.

In 1991 Ilya Kabakov, together with his wife and close collaborator Emilia, moved to New York where he still lives and works. He developed the concept of "total installation" and since then has devoted himself completely to making large works set in rooms in which he continued to use mainly ideas contained in his albums or part of the albums. "Total installations" is characterized by a theatrical quality. By placing every single detail at the service of the complete illusion, it tries to create situations where the spectator acquires information through immersion in an atmosphere in which illumination, sound, the presence (often overwhelming) of visual elements and reading material combine in a form of continuity.

The conditions of individual and community life in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, frequently referred to by Kabakov, are told with precision and attention to detail but also extend, more generally, to emblems of the human condition and combine a dramatic sense of history with a critique not lacking in irony.

Kabakov's work has appeared both in numerous exhibitions and in the form of permanent installations in institutions, museums and galleries throughout the world. These include MOMA, the Jewish Museum and the Ronald Feldman gallery in New York, the Hirshom Museum in Washington, Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation of Marfa, Texas, the Centre Georges Pompidou at Paris, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyons, "Documenta IX" by Kassel (1992) and the following year in the 45th Venice Biennale (where he represented Russia), the "Whitney Biennial" in New York (1997), and numerous other exhibitions.

In 1999 he exhibited in the Contemporary Arts Center 'in Japan, at the Amsterdam Fonds Noor de Kunst, the Duke University Museum, North Carolina, the Museum of Contemporary Arts 'in Chicago, the Whitechapel Gallery in London and the Cantieri della Zisa in Palermo.