



For Immediate Release

Date: December 16, 2003
Exhibition: **Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: *The Empty Museum***

Dates: January 11 – April 11, 2004
Reception: January 11, 2004, 2 – 5 pm
Gallery Hours: Thursday – Monday, 11am – 6 pm
Admission: \$5 suggested donation

Media Contact: Michele Snyder
T: 718 361 1750 x 114
F: 718 786 9336
E: msnyder@sculpture-center.org

SculptureCenter
44-19 Purves Street
Long Island City, NY 11101

Phone
718 361 1750
Fax
718 786 9336

info@sculpture-center.org
www.sculpture-center.org

New York - SculptureCenter is pleased to present the North American premiere of *The Empty Museum* by internationally acclaimed artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov. *The Empty Museum* is a room-sized installation that makes the exhibition space itself an object of our contemplation. The exhibition will be on view January 11 – April 11, 2004. An opening reception will take place on Sunday January 11th from 2 – 5 pm.

The Empty Museum perfectly replicates a painting gallery in a classical museum with dark red walls, wood moldings and benches for quiet contemplation. On the walls, where one would expect paintings to hang, are pools of light, as if the paintings had just recently been removed. Bach's *Passacaglia*, written for the organ, resounds loudly. An ambiguous state of construction or demise presides but the overall effect is one of calm and contemplation. The replacement of paintings by music and light draws connections between the space of the museum, the concert hall and the cathedral. As with many Kabakov installations, the room functions metaphorically as both a manifestation of social institutions and a container within which imagination and creativity endure. Taking the museum as metaphor, the work invites us to reconsider the status of the work of art, and the institutions that house it.

Known as the leading figure of the Russian art movement of the 1980s known as "Moscow Conceptualism" Ilya Kabakov, is considered one of the most important artists of his generation. His "total installations" have depicted the gloomy bureaucratic and communal environments of Soviet life while celebrating the survival and strength of the human spirit.

Although oftentimes melancholic, these are spaces that tell stories of poetic innocence and fleeting contradictions; places where longing coexists with imagination.

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A 1957 graduate of the Surikov Art Institute in Moscow, he later became involved in the Sots-Art movement, a combination of Socialist Realism and American Pop Art. Kabakov moved to Paris on a French government scholarship in 1991 and relocated to New York shortly thereafter. He and his wife, Emilia, a music graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, have been working in close collaboration since 1989. Together, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov have created more than 160 installations for major museums and have produced several works for public spaces around the world. The Kabakovs' most recent exhibition in New York was *The Palace of Projects* at the Lexington Avenue Armory in July 2002. They will have their first New York gallery show since 1997 at Sean Kelly Gallery from January 30 – March 6, 2004.

***The Empty Museum* Public Programs: Performance Series "Music for an Empty Museum: Contemporary Composers Respond"**

In conjunction with Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's exhibition, this two-part performance series presents cutting-edge contemporary acoustic and electronic composers who respond to *The Empty Museum* with new music.

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's project at SculptureCenter challenges the museum's function as a container for art: music has infiltrated itself into the sanctity of the classical museum space, replacing one type of contemplation for another, the loss of one type of euphoria and "aura" is translated into another. Removed from the concert hall, Bach's *Passacaglia* composition for organ becomes an invisible presence in the gallery, one that provides a reinvigorated livelihood and a new kind of "spirituality" to an emptied space.

In a time of active inter-disciplinarity, the challenge of replacing the visual experience with an aural one within the context of a classical museum space finds significant contemporary relevance. Pursuing SculptureCenter's focus on the practices and approaches of contemporary New York artists, "Music for an Empty Museum" presents new voices inspired by the Kabakovs' project.

This performance series asks emerging composers to address the ways in which music can inhabit a classical museum gallery. Kabakovs' "empty" environment becomes an open-ended container that invites contributions from younger generations of artists.

Saturday, February 28, 4:30pm, Free with paid admission to SculptureCenter

David Grubbs and Todd Reynolds

David Grubbs (Drag City, Blue Chopsticks) has been releasing music since 1982, combining his guitar playing with electronic and concrete sounds. A co-founder of the widely-acclaimed duo *Gastr del Sol* with Jim O'Rourke, he has also collaborated with artists Doug Aitken, Angela Bulloch, and Stephen Prina.

A co-founder of the string quartet *Ethel*, Todd Reynolds is a violinist experimenting with new forms of composition, improvisation, electronics, and performance through solo work and collaborations with *Bang on a Can*, Phil Kline, Steve Reich, and John Zorn, among others.

Saturday, March 6, 4:30pm, Free with paid admission to SculptureCenter

Richard Chartier and William Basinski

Sound artist Richard Chartier (12k/LINE, trente oiseaux) addresses the blurry line between sound and silence through his electronic compositions and installations. William Basinski (Raster-Noton, Dutro) has been called the "Marcel Proust of modern music" for his minimal yet melodic fragments. Their response to *The Empty Museum* includes a world premiere live performance of their new collaborative works to be released in January on *Spekk* (Japan).

This exhibition is funded in part by the generosity of The Cora Initiative at The Annenberg Foundation.

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For information or photographs, please contact Michele Snyder at 718 361 1750 or msnyder@sculpture-center.org.