

## PRESS RELEASE

**Ilya and Emilia Kabakov**

*The White Cube*

21 October – 21 December 2005

**SPROVIERI**

27 Heddon Street London W1B 4BJ

Sprovieri is pleased to present the third exhibition of works by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov.

### ARTIST'S TEXT – Concept and Description of the installation

In the exhibition, stands a white cube that is 2.66 metres tall. Each wall has a width of 2.8 metres. The surface of the cube is very smooth, shiny, and is covered with white enamel.

There are ladders on two sides of the cube, so that the viewers might ascend and stand there. On the top surface of the cube, right in the centre, there is a small sailing ship on a plate filled with water. Instructions to ascend the ladder and blow in the directions of the ship's sails are given. The winner will be the one of the two "opponents" who will first move the ship to the opposite side.

The essence of the installation is that the viewer, ascending the stairs to the top, expects to be able to look downward into the cube and see something there. Instead what he finds in front of him is a smooth surface and a children's game. Also, the 'white cube' is erected in a low dwelling, then the top edge will wind up close to the ceiling and it will be rather dark in this interval.

The 'effect' of this installation will work especially well when two people coincidentally and simultaneously ascend the two ladders. Then each one will see his protagonist at the other end of the cube, ridiculously squeezed between the edge and the ceiling.

There is a metaphor at the base of this installation: there is something very important very close to us, we can 'almost touch it,' but we cannot attain it, despite expending our efforts to do so.

There are, of course, other 'overtones'. Among others, is the concept familiar to all art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century of the 'white cube'. Having been born and gotten its start in the Suprematism of Malevich, it gradually became the signifier of the space of the museum of the modern art, a nominal concept and image of the Bauhaus and in American Minimalism.

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In the installation proposed here, this cube functions as a paraphrase of this idea as the very same white space, only turned inside out and placed askance inside the gallery, as a ridiculous object. And people, of course, walk around not inside of it, but on the outside: there is an empty box inside another box. There is one empty cube inside another. This combination appears both intriguing and profound, but boring. The other objects or paintings present in this same place impart the irony, meaning, life and dismissal of this profoundly. It's as though they don't notice this cube, like tiny animals don't notice an elephant. But the presence of this 'white elephant' is not at all indifferent for the perception of these other such 'normal' (in the sense of commensurable human dimensions) objects. They get lost and lose their meaning in its presence. Because the cube is of such size in the room, it is not part of the architecture, the interior, but it is also not an object, it is something strange, incomprehensible and because of its white colour and reflecting surface, it is even a little bit mystical...Perhaps Malevich would be quite pleased with such a relative...

The ladders, of course, also add a little to the intrigue. Should I ascend or not? Make the effort or not? Is it risky at my age? And when I crawl to the top, won't it look stupid and won't I be in a ridiculous position?

But what if there really is something there, and I will be rewarded if I do climb up there?

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov are showing concurrently an exhibition, The House of Dreams, at the Serpentine Gallery from October 19<sup>th</sup> 2005 until January 8<sup>th</sup> 2006.  
[www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org)

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