

Spazio -1  
Lungolago, Riva Caccia 1  
CH 6900 Lugano  
www.collezioneolgiati.ch  
info.menouno@lugano.ch

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**Ilya & Emilia Kabakov**  
**The Kabakovs and the Avant-Gardes**  
18 September 2016 – 8 January 2017  
Spazio -1. Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati

A project by Ilya & Emilia Kabakov

Press conference: Friday 16 September, 11 a.m.

Opening: Saturday 17 September, 6 p.m.

**Press release**

Lugano, July 2016

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**Spazio -1 Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati will host, from 18 September 2016 to 8 January 2017, an exhibition dedicated to Ilya & Emilia Kabakov entitled “The Kabakovs and the Avant-Gardes”. For the event the pair of artists will dialogue with the historical avant-garde works in the Olgiati collection. The exhibition takes place one year before the major retrospective of the Russian artists’ work to be held at the Tate Modern in London in October 2017.**

“Ilya & Emilia Kabakov. The Kabakovs and the Avant-Gardes” continues along the path the Spazio -1 has set for itself, and comes right after the exhibition dedicated to Italian artist Giulio Paolini (September 2015) and the themed exhibition *Sulla Croce* (March 2016). This new project stems from a personal relationship that began to grow many years ago between the collectors Giancarlo and Danna Olgiati and the two artists, for whom three significant works were already represented in Spazio -1 in 2012. As always, this new exhibition will be accompanied by a new installation of the Collezione Olgiati including works hitherto unseen.

The exhibition relates seven works by the two great Russian artists with twenty-six paintings and drawings of the early-twentieth-century historical avant-gardes in the Collection: from Russian Cubo-Futurism to Suprematism and Constructivism, by way of Italian Futurism and European Abstraction, Spazio -1 offers a very special intellectual conversation. Visitors will be able to view five large-scale paintings, a sculpture, and an installation by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, alongside some of the greatest names of the historical avant-gardes, including Russian artists Malevic, Kandinsky, and Rodchenko, Italian Futurist artists Balla, Boccioni, and Severini, and European Abstract artists Léger and Schwitters.

The exhibition design conceived specially by Ilya Kabakov for Lugano is a remarkable tribute by the artist to art history, with which he dialogues relentlessly, and in particular to the Collezione Olgiati, with which he shares specific choices and comprehensive visions. The Kabakovs' works will be displayed all around the walls of Spazio -1, while the paintings of the historical avant-gardes will be mounted on temporary walls placed diagonally in the central area of the exhibition space; these walls will form a grid occupied at the centre by a cross-like structure that is clearly a nod to Suprematism. Paintings that represent European Abstract Art's finest output are thus englobed in an installation that is the work of one of the most famous names in contemporary art.



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Beyond any chronological or genre-based division, the exhibition triggers off a temporal short-circuit, an important synthesis that tells of art and of history, of the great social and cultural systems of the past century, and of the successive fragmentation of our complex present.

The exhibition catalogue *The Kabakovs and the Avant-Gardes* will include a critical essay by Robert Storr, curator of the New York MoMA from 1990 to 2000, and curator of the 2007 Venice Biennale, as well as a text by the Italian art critic Ada Masoero, an interview to the Olgiatis by Bettina Della Casa, and the colour reproduction of all the works on display. Casagrande Editore, Bellinzona. Fr. 36.- (exhibition price Fr. 29.90.-).

## Ilya & Emilia Kabakov

Ilya Kabakov was born in Dnepropetrovsk, in the USSR, in 1933. He studied in Leningrad and, from 1945, in Moscow, where he attended the Art Institute and the VA Surikov Art Academy. In the 1950s and 1960s he worked as an artist and illustrator, dedicating himself to painting and elaborating the first of the theories that would fuel Muscovite Conceptualism. In 1987 he fled from the Soviet Union and settled in Graz, Austria, where he began a new phase in his career concerning multiple international projects based on the idea of the "total installation." In 1988 he began working with the artist Emilia Lekach, who was to become his wife in 1992. Born in Dnepropetrovsk in 1945, Emilia attended the Music College in Irkutsk as well as studying Spanish language and literature at Moscow University. She immigrated to Israel in 1973, and moved to New York in 1975, where she worked as a curator and art dealer. The two artists began working together in New York in the mid-1990s, continuing with and renewing the artistic research that Ilya had begun in the previous years.

Kabakov's works are filled with personal experiences and political myths: drawings, paintings, performances, and installations merge narratives and illustrations on a single metalinguistic level. Ilya's installations, as well as the ones he made later with Emilia's collaboration, bear witness to the birth of the Soviet regime and its decadence, and they express the profound contradictions within Soviet society.

The Kabakovs regularly show their works in the most prestigious museums and galleries around the world. In October 2017 the Tate Modern in London will host a major retrospective of their work.

Kabakov has received numerous awards and acknowledgements, and is currently the most famous Russian artist; he is also listed among the ten most important artists in the world according to the prestigious periodical *ArtNews*. Thanks to his unsurpassable ability to codify and interpret the Soviet conscience, he was the first Russian artist in the second half of the twentieth century to achieve the role of art-star in the art system.

The Kabakovs live in Long Island, New York.

## List of Avant-Gardes artists

Giacomo Balla  
Umberto Boccioni  
Fortunato Depero  
Alexandra Exter  
Natalija Gončarova  
Vassilij Kandinskij  
Michail Larionov  
Fernand Léger  
Kazimir Malevič  
Filippo Tommaso Marinetti  
Michail Matjusin

Michail Menkov  
Ljubov Popova  
Enrico Prampolini  
Aleksandr Rodčenko  
Olga Rozanova  
Luigi Russolo  
Kurt Schwitters  
Gino Severini  
Mario Sironi  
Ardengo Soffici  
Varvara Stepanova



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## Spazio -1. Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati

The Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati is part of the museum circuit of MASI Lugano, Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana. Spazio -1 is located next to LAC Lugano Arte e Cultura and it hosts over 200 masterpieces that range from the 1950s to the present. The Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati contemporary art collection, which was loaned to the City of Lugano in 2012, is open to the public. The way it is installed changes periodically based on temporary shows dedicated to the works of the artists included in the collection.

### Information

#### Where

Spazio - 1  
Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati  
Lungolago Riva Caccia 1, 6900 Lugano  
+41 (0) 58 866 42 30 (Mon - Fri)  
+41 (0) 91 921 46 32 (Fri - Sun, when open)  
info.menouno@lugano.ch  
www.collezioneolgiati.ch | www.masilugano.ch

#### Hours

Friday - Sunday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Exceptional opening hours: from Tuesday 20 to Thursday 22 September 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

#### Admission free

### Cultural mediation

+41 (0)58 866 42 30  
lac.edu@lugano.ch

### Press contacts

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Through the merger with former Swiss insurer Nationale Suisse in 2015, Helvetia expanded its art collection, continuing a seventy-year tradition of collecting Swiss art. New acquisitions of contemporary Swiss works of art concentrate on paintings, photography and sculpture.

The Helvetia collection currently contains over 1,700 works by 400 artists, and has been shown numerous times in national and international exhibitions.

In order to additionally promote young Swiss art, since 2004 the insurer has been awarding contemporary artists with the Helvetia Art Prize annually presented in connection with the Basel based art fair LISTE.

These activities at Helvetia are complemented by the company's Artsponsoring division, which supports theme-based partnerships with important Swiss museums, where projects concerning the restoration and conservation of artworks are being sustained. Starting in 2016 and running for three years respectively, specially branded "Helvetia Digitization Projects" are taking place in the Ernst-Ludwig-Kirchner-Museum Davos, the Kunstmuseum Luzern, the Kunstmuseum Bern and the Kunstmuseum Basel, thereby enabling these museums to experiment with new forms of exhibiting their holdings. [www.helvetia.com](http://www.helvetia.com)

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