GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRESENTS:
ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV. HOW TO MEET AN ANGEL

June 6–February 12, 2020

This summer Garage will present How to Meet an Angel, an installation by the conceptual artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, which will be built outside the Museum. The most recognizable Russian contemporary artists on the international scene, the Kabakov duo are known for their paintings, objects, albums, books, models, drawings, and total installations—highly detailed spaces that recreate a particular scene or phenomenon.

In Moscow, the artists will present How to Meet an Angel for the first time. This large-scale installation inscribed into the landscape consists of an intricate ladder supported by several structures and rising into the sky. On the ladder a modestly dressed figure is visible, with hands extended toward the sky in the hope of meeting an angel. The figure may be waiting in vain, but as the audience will learn from the performative part of the project—created specifically for the show at Garage—the encounter is possible.

This romantic scene presents a theme that is recurrent in the duo’s work: a small human creature trying to break away from their frail and predictable world. The installation also addresses another element that can be found in many of the Kabakovs’ works: the idea of flying, of which two polar incarnations can be found in the images of a fly—that most trivial creature from the reality of Soviet communal living—and an angel, a pure celestial being representing an unattainable, mystical world.

With this project, the duo and Garage continue their long history of collaboration. In 2008, an exhibition by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov was the Museum’s inaugural show in its first home, the Melnikov Bus Garage, and in 2013 the artists presented the project The Ship of Tolerance on the Pioneer Pond by the Museum’s temporary pavilion, designed by Shigeru Ban. In 2018, to mark Ilya Kabakov’s 85th birthday, Garage produced a documentary on the life and work of the artists.

About the artists

Ilya Kabakov (b. 1933, Dnepropetrovsk) is the most acclaimed contemporary artist from Russia, one of the key figures in the history of Moscow Conceptualism, and the inventor of the total installation. After graduating in drawing from the Surikov Institute in Moscow in 1951, he worked as an illustrator of children’s books and magazines. In the 1960s, he started working with other techniques and produced the first works that would define Moscow Conceptualism. In the 1980s, Kabakov began making installations reflecting on Soviet communal life, the best-known being The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment (1982, Centre Georges Pompidou), which was the first of his total installations (large-scale projects that involved working with large spaces). In the late 1980s, Kabakov became active on the European and American art scenes. His wife, Emilia Kabakov, became his permanent collaborator.

Emilia Kabakov (b. 1945, Dnepropetrovsk) studied at the Moscow Central Music School from 1952 to 1958, and in music colleges in Irkutsk and Dnepropetrovsk from 1962 to 1966. From 1969 to 1972 she studied Spanish and Literature at Moscow State University. In 1973, Emilia emigrated to
Israel, and later moved to the United States in 1975. Ilya and Emilia have worked together since 1989 and have been married since 1992.

The artists live and work in the USA. In Russia, they have had solo exhibitions at the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (2003, 2018); Multimedia Art Museum Moscow (2003, 2013); the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (2004, 2013, 2018).

GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art is a place for people, art, and ideas to create history. Through an extensive program of exhibitions, events, education, research, and publishing, the institution reflects on current developments in Russian and international culture, creating opportunities for public dialogue, as well as the production of new work and ideas in Moscow. At the center of all these activities is the Museum’s collection, which is the first archive in the country related to the development of Russian contemporary art from the 1950s through the present. Founded in 2008 by Dasha Zhukova and Roman Abramovich, Garage is the first philanthropic organization in Russia to create a comprehensive public mandate for contemporary art and culture. Open seven days a week, it was initially housed in the renowned Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage in Moscow, designed by the Constructivist architect Konstantin Melnikov. In 2012 Garage relocated to a temporary pavilion in Gorky Park, specifically commissioned from award-winning architect Shigeru Ban. A year later, a purpose-built Education Center was opened next to the Pavilion. On June 12, 2015, Garage welcomed visitors to its first permanent home. Designed by Rem Koolhaas and his OMA studio, this groundbreaking preservation project transformed the famous Vremena Goda (Seasons of the Year) Soviet Modernist restaurant, built in 1968 in Gorky Park, into a contemporary museum.

Garage is a non-profit project of The IRIS Foundation.

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BMW GROUP RUSSIA

BMW Group has had a presence in the art world for many years thanks to its BMW Art Car project that lists artists like Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella, and César Manrique among its participants. Since racing driver and art enthusiast Hervé Poulain invited Alexander Calder to paint the first car in 1975, some of the world’s biggest artists have created nineteen unique designs based on the company’s models. BMW Group is also a long-time partner of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and has organized long-term projects in collaboration with Tate Modern in London and the National Gallery in Berlin.

Garage helps to promote art and culture and inspire millions of people to discover new things. For BMW Group, which celebrated its centenary in 2016, the partnership with Garage is a wonderful opportunity to support contemporary art. Starting from 2017, BMW Group supports one of the Museum’s main programs, offering Art and Technology grants to contemporary artists.
UNIQLO

UNIQLO designs functional, innovative, and affordable apparel. The LifeWear line’s DNA is high quality, simplicity, longevity, and trendiness regardless of a person's lifestyle or style.

As part of the strategic partnership between UNIQLO and Garage, a series of special events and activities are held. Garage and UNIQLO have launched UNIQLO Free Friday Nights, continuing the tradition of free admission for all visitors every Friday evening at such key art institutions as MoMA in New York and Tate in London. Garage visitors can enjoy free admission to all exhibitions every Friday between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Garage Lounge Zone opened at the UNIQLO Atrium store, Moscow, in 2017. Customers can immerse themselves in the art world with books and magazines about art, fashion, and contemporary culture. The zone is also a space for free lectures and master classes, as well as special projects by Garage.

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Ingosstrakh is the Official Insurance Partner of Garage Museum of Contemporary Art for the second year running. For Ingosstrakh, the partnership with Garage is an important stage in expanding cooperation with leading museums in Russia and across the world. The company insures the artworks exhibited and, jointly with the Museum, implements a wide range of special programs for visitors.