

# SHIP OF TOLERANCE

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*“Human beings are members of a whole,  
In creation of one essence and soul.  
If one member is afflicted with pain,  
Other members uneasy will remain.  
If you’ve no sympathy for human pain,  
The name of human you cannot retain.”*  
-- Saadi, Persian poet, 12th century --

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## PROGRAM SUMMARY



**The mission** of the Ship of Tolerance is to educate and connect youth of different continents, cultures, and identities together through the language of art.

The Ship of Tolerance has been traveling around the world since its initial launch in Siwa, Egypt in 2006. It was done in Venice, St. Moritz, Sharjah, Miami and most recently in Havana, Cuba. We are planning to unveil the Ship in New York next spring as a culminating event for the project. New York being the melting pot of cultures and identities offers a unique opportunity to make it an unforgettable event for the city. The ship will be placed in the water in Dambo Park with its sails stitched together from paintings of hundreds of local schoolchildren from different ethnic and social backgrounds, and will convey a message of tolerance and hope. By participating in the creation of this ship children will learn about respecting different cultures and ideas while appreciating how they differ from their own. In short, through this creative process they will both demonstrate and gain a vibrant lesson in tolerance.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



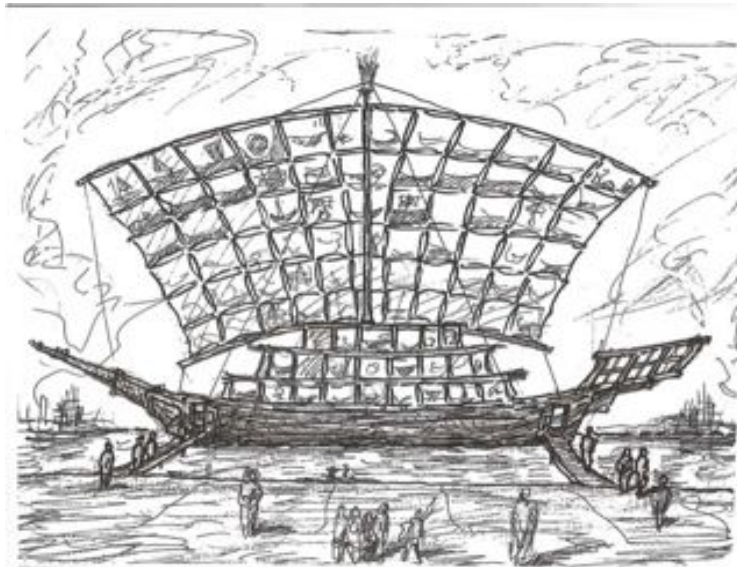
### **Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, co-creators:**

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov are globally recognized as the premier artists to emerge from the Soviet Union and major figures on the international art scene. In 2008 they were awarded the Praemium Imperiale, established by the Emperor of Japan to honor the fields that the Nobel Prize does not cover. "Art News" magazine named them among [the] top 10 living artists.

Their work is regularly exhibited in leading international museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington DC, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. In 1993 they represented Russia at the 45th Venice Biennale with their installation The Red Pavilion. The Kabakovs have also completed many important public commissions throughout Europe and have received a number of honors and awards, including the Oscar Kokoschka [Prize], Vienna, in 2002 and the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, Paris, in 1995.

Ilya Kabakov has been making installation art since 1984. Working with Emilia Kabakov, he has become one of the medium's most important practitioners and theoreticians. He is a leading figure of the Russian art movement of the 1980s known as "Moscow Conceptualism." Kabakov was born in 1933 and lived in the Soviet Union until coming to the West in 1988. Emilia Kabakov was born on 1945 and came to the New York in 1975 where she worked as a curator and an art dealer. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov have been working together since 1989. The live and work in Long Island, NY.

## HISTORY



The first Ship of Tolerance was built in 2005 in Siwa, Egypt to engage children and young adults in active discussion surrounding tolerance in their daily lives. Participants were given vivid exposure to different cultures and ideas, while creating personal, and often thought-provoking works of art. These drawings and paintings were later sewn together to form a mosaic sail, which was mounted atop the ship. The construction of the ship itself was part of the performance, with New York student carpenters working under the guidance of master carpenters from Manchester, London.

The Kabakov's recreated the project in Venice, Italy in 2005 for the Venice Biennale and in St. Moritz, Switzerland in 2009 where it has received a prestigious Cartier Award for the best art project of the year. In November 2011 the Ship of Tolerance was built in Miami in conjunction with Art Basel Miami and followed by Havana, Cuba in May 2012. It was unveiled during Havana Biennale and was the first public project of this scale by an American artist to ever be allowed by both Cuban and American governments.

The project has garnered global media coverage and tremendous attention in each host country's news and cultural outlets. The Ship of Tolerance has become a unique symbol in each host country's collective consciousness, a symbol that changes with each new launch according to the unique political and cultural reality of each setting. Created in New York the Ship of Tolerance is bound to generate a large public interest and a new and stimulating interpretations for the Kabakov's vessel.

## FULL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



The project will begin with an outreach to schoolchildren ages 6 to 12 to discuss the meaning of tolerance and the merits of other cultures, races, and ideas. For three weeks they will work with local artists and art teachers to expand their own cultural, creative, and academic horizons. At the end of the workshop children will create the paintings that will be used for the ship's sails.

Children will have an opportunity to view the ship's construction and meet the young student carpenters who will be involved in construction of the Ship. Paintings created by the children will be strung together to form a giant sail, which will be hoisted atop the just constructed ship that will be on a platform to allow it to be placed in the water. The entire process will take 3-4 weeks, and during that time, hundreds of visitors each day will come by to admire the construction, learn about the project, and be inspired by its message.

Materials and brochures about the project will be available for the visitors to understand the purpose of the project and learn ways in which they can be involved. Teen ambassadors will be on site each day to answer questions from visitors and give guided tours of the ship during construction.

Upon construction the ship will be placed in a prominent location in Dumbo Park. The ship's launch will be the project's climax—the ship and its colorful sails will be dramatically illuminated and will be launched into the night -- a semaphore of hope and tolerance for the world beyond. The launching ceremony will culminate in a

party with all participating children, their friends and family and members of the community, press and general audience.

As part of the opening we are planning to have a concert that will involve talented young musicians from all of the participating countries playing together. Music is a universal language and children can speak it very well. Five talented children from every location where the Ship of Tolerance took place will be chosen to travel to New York to participate in the music program. This would be crucial part of the experience with performances and improvisation sessions where kids from different countries can play together and share their talents.

## IMPACT



This project will allow children of different ethnic and social-economic backgrounds to create something together, that, in spite of their differences, will be something bigger than the direct participating artists; an event of monumental beauty that will inspire human unity.

The Ship of Tolerance will give thousands of children the opportunity to create and celebrate a monumental accomplishment together. They will learn about tolerance, the arts, and what it means to respect other cultures.

The ship's construction and launch will entail:

- ❖ *The direct participation over of 2,000 children in creating the sails.*
- ❖ *An opportunity for children from 7 countries to create and perform music together*
- ❖ *Dozens of teenagers as Ambassadors to the project.*
- ❖ *1,000+ visitors per day viewing the construction.*
- ❖ *Large numbers of public attending the opening and visiting the ship*
- ❖ *Possibility of educational programs run in association with the Ship of Tolerance*



# The amazing Technicolor dreamboat

Emilia Kabakov: 'art has replaced religion'

**By Nick Hackworth**

12:01AM GMT 19 Nov 2005

[Comment](#)

## **Two leading Russian artists took a novelty to the Sahara - a ship with a painted sail. Nick Hackworth watched its launch**

By any measure, it was a strange affair. Last month, a large group of people gathered on the shore of a small salt lake in Siwa, a remote oasis in the Sahara desert, to witness the maiden voyage of a 20ft sailboat made from reeds and palm leaves.

More than 300km from the nearest river, this modest stretch of water in Egypt has never before been graced by a vessel of any kind. Not that this boat could float. Buoyed by inflatable pontoons hidden beneath the surface, the ship was a work by [Russia's most famous and influential living artists, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov](#).

Mixed in among the crowd of several hundred schoolchildren from the local Berber community was a select group of wealthy, international art collectors and their young families. Siwan children clustered around the Western adults, fascinated by the men's expensive cameras and the women's elegant clothes.

A team of teenage trainee engineers from Manchester had been drafted in to build the boat. One Mancunian, proudly sporting a Manchester United tattoo on his chest, warily eyed an Egyptian boy wearing a spanking-new Arsenal T-shirt with "Henry" stencilled on the back.

Kabakovs' Cuban project provokes US government in election year  
American children allowed to travel to Havana only after last-minute appeal

By Charmaine Picard. News, Issue 236, June 2012 Published online: 30 May 2012

The children's orchestra performs in Havana as part of the Ship of Tolerance project  
A project by the artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov during the 11th Havana Biennial was nearly derailed when the US Department of the Treasury denied the artists the necessary public performance and exhibition licence that would allow five US children to travel to Havana, saying the project was "not consistent with the current US -policy on Cuba".

**See also:**

- [An exile's return to Cuba](#)

"We had help from senators, congressmen and people in the art world trying to find out why we were denied the licence," says Emilia Kabakov, who trained as a classical pianist in the Soviet Union before becoming a visual artist. According to the Kabakovs, their application had been sent to the US Department of State for further review because their project was seen as politically sensitive and would receive international attention as part of the Havana Biennial. A government official, who declined to be named for this article, says the state department was afraid that the American children would be used for political propaganda by the Cuban government. "Our argument to the state department was if the US doesn't allow the children to come, then we will have a political situation," Emilia Kabakov says.

"Russian children are free to come but Americans are not. We live in a free country, so why can't we bring this message to Cuba?" After winning an appeal, the Kabakovs' Ship of Tolerance opened at the Oratorio San Felipe Neri in Havana on 10 May, with a classical music concert performed by children from the US, Russia and Cuba. Under the US trade embargo in force since 1963, American citizens can only travel to Cuba with organisations that are licensed by the treasury department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (Ofac). According to Ofac, the estimated number of US travellers to Cuba in 2011 was around 390,000. When asked about the review process, Jeff Braunger, of the treasury department, says by email: "Licensing determinations are based on whether the applicant has satisfied the licensing criteria and will be engaging in activities that fall within the scope of current US policy." Once the Kabakovs learned that their application had been denied, in mid-April, the artists immediately organised and filmed a concert with American children, preparing a video that could be shown alongside the live classical performances of their Russian and Cuban counterparts. They also appealed against the decision, and just seven days before the opening of their exhibition in Cuba, they received word that their licence had been approved by the treasury department. The children's concert took place before the unveiling of the installation at the Castillo de la Real Fuerza on 11 May. Five-hundred Cuban children participated in the project, making paintings on the subject of tolerance that were sewn together to create the sail for the 66-foot-long by 23-foot-wide wooden ship, which was built on-site by a team of carpenters from Manchester College, UK, and

local student carpenters from the Escuela Taller (workshop school) in Havana. The installation will remain in Cuba as a gift from the Kabakovs. When asked what the project meant for the Cuban people, the director of the biennial, Jorge Fernández, says: "It represents hope. If the children of our three countries can work together, it's a lesson for adults." The Russian ambassador to Cuba, Mikhail Kamynin, was less circumspect in his response saying: "We have to be tolerant of the political regime that exists, we have to respect the will of the people of sovereign countries; it's not by accident that only three countries, the United States, Israel and the Marshall Islands, voted against the UN resolution to end the embargo." Russia and the US government both have chequered relationships with Cuba. While Cuba received annual subsidies worth around \$5bn from their Cold War ally before the fall of the Soviet Union, many who lived through the "special period" in the early 1990s when the Russian government withdrew economic support came to view their former benefactors as traitors and occupiers. As for the US, the economic embargo continues to make everyday living difficult. Although President Obama reinstated people-to-people travel licences for cultural exchange in January 2011 and also increased the dollar amount family members are allowed to send back to Cuba, economic conditions remain bleak for the 11 million on the island, where the average income is just \$20 per month. Miami-based Cuban-American who back the embargo have a strong lobby in Congress, and during this election year it is unlikely that President Obama will loosen restrictions further as Florida is a swing state.