

# Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

## Komar & Melamid

### Business as Usual

January 7-February 11, 1984

#### SOTS-ART

The work of Russian artists Komar & Melamid quotes liberally from the history of Western painting as well as from the 'classic' Socialist Realism of the late 40's and 50's. Their 'history' paintings are targeted at contemporary subjects: politics, art, culture, myths and themselves. Under the guise of old master paintings and other media, the social historians, Komar & Melamid, create their own nostalgic version of history.

Komar & Melamid began their irreverent work under the banner of "Sots-Art," a Soviet version of Pop Art, which they invented while living in Moscow in the early 1970's. Many of the first "Sots-Art" works were smuggled out of Russia for two New York exhibitions at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in 1976 and 1978. In 1978, the artists were allowed to emigrate to Israel, and one year later they resettled in New York.

Some of the paintings in the current exhibition continue Komar & Melamid's 'homage' to the life of Stalin. Earlier works have included Portraits of World Leaders (Begin, Brezhnev, Callahan, Carter, Giscard d'Estaing, and Sadat) painted with their right ears cut off in homage to Van Gogh. The artists have also claimed responsibility for assaults, earthquakes, plane crashes, natural and unnatural disasters in a 'Terrart' series. In 1979, they built a life-size guillotine dedicated to humanity, painted classical portraits of dinosaurs and created heroic American 'Sots-Art' posters composed of magazine advertising images.

#### SOULS

As enterprising capitalists, Komar & Melamid founded 'Komar & Melamid, Inc.', a corporation engaged in the buying and selling of human souls, parodying Faust as well as corporate, evangelist America. Upholding the American values of honest trade, Komar & Melamid are now prepared to honor their business contracts of 5 years ago. At this exhibition, owners will have the opportunity to reclaim unsold souls at a special last chance 'Close Out Sale'. This going out of business sale is a testament to the failure of their first capitalist venture. Souls not reclaimed or sold will be donated to a worthy cause.

Works by Komar & Melamid are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Metropolitan Museum, NY; the Guggenheim Museum, NY; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; and the Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

The public is invited to the opening Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>. A reception for the artists will be held from 5 to 7 PM that evening. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 5 to 6 PM.

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