

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

VITALY KOMAR

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THREE-DAY WEEKEND

JUNE 18 – JULY 29

Vitaly Komar will exhibit new works based on the theme of the *Three-Day Weekend*, a symbol of the peaceful coexistence of different peoples and different concepts of faith and spirituality: Friday for Muslims, Saturday for Jews, and Sunday for Christians. The artworks – paintings, stained glass panels, and collages – are based on the form of the mandala, traditionally associated with unity, healing, and meditation, and are intended to promote the concept of the Three-day Weekend.

Several mandalas contain a mirror, and one has a hole that can accommodate the spectator's face, which can then be photographed, allowing the viewer to establish a personal connection with eternal symbols of spirituality. During the exhibition, the artist invites those who find value in these concepts to receive a signed Polaroid mandala portrait as a gift.

The artworks combine personal, historical, and spiritual references. The series stems from two Post-War photographs that had been superimposed in the artist's memory: the legendary image of the Yalta Conference, which depicts Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, and another triple portrait, of Komar's family, taken when he was six. Both record what the artist calls *Fragile Unities*. The peaceful aspirations of the conference were followed by the Cold War, and his parents' Jewish/Christian marriage dissolved in divorce. Komar never saw his father again. The photographs are collaged with revered religious shapes, including the Christian cross, the Jewish Star of David, and the Muslim crescent, which in turn are intertwined to create a complicated celestial geometry.

Themes of passing time and nostalgia permeate the exhibition. Reoccurring images include an hourglass and a Jewish cemetery in ruins. Symbols of state power that have been used to divide groups – the hammer and sickle, the American eagle – recall the ironic iconoclasm of SOTS ART, established with his collaborator Alex Melamid at a time when dissident artists in the former Soviet Union had dreams of visionary alternatives to totalitarianism.

As part of the longtime collaborative duo, Komar and Melamid, Komar describes his first solo exhibition as a new departure and deeply personal. In an artist's statement, he writes: *The search for spirituality in art, begun by Kandinsky during the flowering of the Russian avant-garde, was interrupted first by Stalin, and later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, by the advent of the capitalist free market. I never imagined that my artist friends and I would be transformed from the so-called avant-garde of spiritual and intellectual life to the avant-garde of real estate. At the beginning of the 21st century, both in Russia and in the West, we have gained much, but have forgotten much too, just as I had forgotten my childhood photograph.*

For almost thirty years, the Feldman Gallery has represented Komar & Melamid, including their first exhibition of work smuggled out of the Soviet Union in 1976.

To be photographed by Vitaly Komar with the mandala, please make an appointment with Lyndsay Skeegan at the gallery (212) 226-3232.

There will be a reception Saturday, June 18 from 6 – 8. Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10 – 6. Monday by appointment. In July, the gallery will be open Monday – Thursday 10 – 6. Friday 10 – 3. For more information, contact Laura Muggeo (212) 226-3232 or Laura@feldmangallery.com.