

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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September 9, 1980

KOMAR AND MELAMID
WAKE UP AMERICA

September 13 – October 11

Gallery Hours: Monday-Saturday 10-5:30

The highly acclaimed Russian dissident artists, Vitaly Komar and Aleksandr Melamid, have turned their wry satirical wit to American mythology. The works presented in this exhibition, all done in the two years that Komar and Melamid have lived in New York, reflect the witty and biting humor for which this two-man team has become world famous. The political, religious, and social themes of American life are subjects for their critical scrutiny.

In 1978 the artists founded Komar and Melamid Inc., for the purpose of buying and selling human souls. The following year an auction was held simultaneously in New York and Moscow where American souls (including Andy Warhol's) were auctioned off. The complete records of the corporation will be exhibited and the public is invited to purchase souls, or to sell their own.

Also in the exhibition are a series of posters celebrating the revival of American patriotism in a style reminiscent of Soviet propaganda posters and American advertising. One poster exhorts Americans to press "Onward to the Final Victory of Capitalism".

Ancestral Portraits, a series of three paintings. Is Komar and Melamid's quixotic version of the currently popular vogue of returning to one's 'roots'. The dinosaurs which we are accustomed to seeing as fossils in museums are shown in life-size bust portraits painted in the tradition of 17th century family portraiture.

In the piece, Everything is Ready, a 9-foot wooden cross is erected, complete with hammer, nails, and rope. An 'icon' accompanying the cross shows the artists with hammers in hand and exclaims "Everything is Ready".

For the first time in America a full size working Guillotine will be presented. In keeping with the democratic traditions of American society, Komar and Melamid are offering this guillotine for public, rather than official governmental use.

Censored in Russia for its satirical attacks on Soviet society, their early work was smuggled out of Russia for their first two New York exhibitions at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, both of which received international press coverage. The artists, after some difficulty, were allowed to emigrate to Israel in 1977 where they continued their work. They settled in New York in 1978.

This is Komar and Melamid's fourth exhibition at the Feldman Gallery and their first showing of works done exclusively in the United States. The exhibit will be on view from September 13 through October 11. The public is invited to meet the artists at the opening Saturday, September 13.