

**Dispatch #13, Komar & Melamid**  
*Volatile [redux] Art, Books and Editions*  
August 12, 2020



**Komar & Melamid**

*Death Magazine*

Screen-printed book, spiral bound, 12 silkscreens dated October 1991-September 1992, stamped, numbered and signed by artists, edition of 250, 18.5" x 15.5", Self-published, 1991-92 \$1,500.

**To purchase respond to this email...**

**Vitaly Komar:** Born 1943 in Moscow, Russia (former USSR). Lives and works in New York, United States of America.

**Alexander Melamid:** Born 1945 in Moscow. Lives and works in New York.

Vitaly Komar (1943) and Alexander Melamid (1945) are born in Moscow.

They attend and graduate from the Stroganov School of Art and Design (1967).

Their first joint show, Retrospectivism, appears in the Blue Bird Caf  (Moscow, 1967).

"Even if only one of us creates some of the projects and works, we usually sign them together. We are not just an artist, we are a movement" (from artist's statement).

During the late 60's and early 70's, Komar & Melamid found the movement that they call Sots Art, a unique version of Soviet Pop and Conceptual Art, which combines the principles of Dadaism and Socialist Realism. During these years, they also work on Post-Art, pioneering multi-stylistical images prescient of post-modernism, which will become popular in the 80's. They collaborate on various conceptual projects, ranging from painting and performance to installation, public sculpture, photography, music, and poetry. They also collaborate with other artists, for example, Douglas Davis, Fluxus member Charlotte Moorman, Andy Warhol, among others.

In 1973, they are expelled from the Youth section of the Soviet Artist Union. In 1974, they are arrested during a performance in a Moscow apartment show and later their works, along with the works of other nonconformist artists, are destroyed by Soviet authorities at the open-door "Bulldozer Show." By 1978 they are living in New York. Their first show in the West is at the Feldman Gallery (New York, 1976), and their first individual museum show is at the Hartford Athenaeum (Harford, USA, 1978).

In the 80's, they continue developing their Sots Art (Nostalgic Socialist Realism Series, May 1st Installation at the Palladium Disco) and Post-Art (Diary Series, Anarchistic Synthesis Series, Bayonne, N.J. Series). They are the first Russian artists to receive funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, and are also the first Russian artists to be invited to the Documenta 8 (Kassel, Germany, 1987).

They devote their projects in the 90's to iconoclasm (Monumental Propaganda, American Dreams), democracy and elitism by statistics (People's Choice), and ecology (Ecollaboration with Animals, Asian Elephant Project). Komar &

Melamid's most recent projects are devoted to art as a religion and to the synthesis of irony and spirituality (Van Gogh Art Ministry, Symbols of the Big Bang and Nostalgic Nonconformist Art, a project in progress).

They can be found in Oxford's Dictionary of 20th Century Art; The Penguin Concise Dictionary of Art History; Art Since the 40's; Bildende Kunst im 20 Jahrhundert; and Phaidon's The 20th-Century Art Book.

Selected individual exhibitions: Museum of Modern Art (Oxford, 1985) and Museum of Decorative Art in the Louvre (Paris 1985-1986); NGBK (Berlin, 1987); Brooklyn Museum of Art (New York, 1989); Museum of Modern Art (Cologne, 1997); Kunsthalle Vienna (Vienna, 1998); Venice Biennial (Venice, 1999); Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art (Japan, 2003); Yeshiva University Museum (New York, 2002-2003).

Selected Public Collections: Guggenheim Museum (New York), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), Museum of Modern Art (New York), Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Albertina (Vienna), Museum Ludwig (Cologne), San Francisco Museum of Art.

- REF: <https://www.komarandmelamid.org/chronology.html>

### **Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid**

Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid are Moscow-born artists who emigrated to Israel in 1977 and then to New York in 1978. The two artists first collaborated on a joint exhibition entitled Retrospectivism in Moscow in 1967, and from 1972 started signing all their works with both names, regardless of whether they were made collaboratively. They continued to collaborate until the early 2000s, referring to their work as 'not just an artist, but a movement'. Komar and Melamid are the founders of Sots-art (socialist art), a critical, nonconformist, conceptual form of pop art, based on the appropriation and subversion of socialist realist iconography and street propaganda, creating humorous, often grotesque, posters, paintings and banners. Both artists took part in the notorious 'Bulldozer Exhibition' held in a vacant plot in Moscow's Belyayev in 1974, which showcased nonconformist art by Moscow avant-garde artists that was swiftly destroyed by the authorities with bulldozers and water cannons.

- REF: <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/ey-exhibition-world-goes-pop/artist-biography/komar-and-melamid>

---

### ***Volatile [Redux]***

All information is believed correct but not guaranteed. All items are in good, or better, antiquarian condition unless noted otherwise. Additional condition information and photographs are available upon request.

To purchase respond to this email...

#### **Inquiries to:**

Peter Huttinger  
Volatile [redux]  
5038 Gray Road  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45232 USA  
513-328-0100

[huttinger@cinci.rr.com](mailto:huttinger@cinci.rr.com)

[www.volatilebooks.com](http://www.volatilebooks.com)

