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Exhibition:

RED!!! Russian – American XXI c. Visions

February 1 – March 10, 2017

Atrium Gallery, Mason Hall (#35 on [Campus Map](#))

Artists' Discussion:

Wednesday, February 15th, 1:30pm with special guest Vitaly Komar, Art & Design Building (#4 on [Campus Map](#)) Room 1007

Closing Tea/Reception:

Sunday March 5th, 3-5pm, Atrium Gallery, Mason Hall (#35 on [Campus Map](#))

About the Exhibition

George Mason University is pleased to exhibit the artworks of New York-based Yevgeniy Fiks and DC-based Mark Kelner, two artists who explore the culturally symbolic and politically charged scenarios of their Russian – American roots.

RED!!! features different critical approaches by the artists to Soviet ideologies, imagery and themes. With contemporary use of photography, installation, painting and printmaking, Fiks and Kelner capture the essence of recent social, cultural, historical and political spectacles.



About the Artists

Fiks presents two series of works founded on different “micro-historical narratives” of the Cold War era. In his series, *Homosexuality is Stalin's Atom Bomb to Destroy America* and *Joe I Cruising Washington*, the artist creates scenarios that take us back to the Red Scare and queer-phobic days of the 1950s. He re-visits the McCarthy witch-hunting days and its tendency to purge homosexuals from government posts by labeling them as “security risks” – vulnerable to being blackmailed by Soviet agents. Ironically, the Communist Party USA also expelled gay members for fear of blackmail and likelihood of becoming informants to the Feds. On the Soviet side, gays were prohibited from membership in the CPSU until

the 1990s where homosexuality was criminalized under Stalin and stigmatized as “capitalist degeneration.”



Kelner builds bridges between Russian and American cultures in which he was raised, using words and appropriated images to realize his notions of a post-Soviet reality. For Kelner, “the meanings of what is American and what is Russian take on both familiar and alien characteristics.” In his series, *Moscow-Made American Born*, Kelner traces the contrast of visual symbols and social systems that defined both cultures and their respective art histories. For example, in *Stalinbucks* (2012), the now ubiquitous Starbucks logo is morphed into a silhouette of Stalin’s portrait, merging two cultural icons. This play on ideas and symbols returns to Kelner’s work repeatedly as he merges history and popular culture, most recently in his series devoted to the works of Ilya Kabakov, one of today’s most internationally respected Russian artists, and quotes from popular US movies.

Whether associations conjure images of sacrifice, farce, danger or courage, *RED!!!* encourages viewers to focus on the implications of re-examining the history of the Cold War in contemporary terms.

About the Special Guest

Vitaly Komar is an internationally recognized Russian-born Conceptualist artist. He began cooperating with Alexander Melamid in 1973 and collaborated with him until 2003, when the two separated to pursue individual work. Komar currently resides in New York City, United States, and has had solo exhibitions at the Moscow Biennale, Galerie Sandmann (Berlin, Germany) and Ronald Feldman Fine Arts (New York).

The exhibition will be held in The Atrium Gallery in Mason Hall on the George Mason University Fairfax, VA campus. Mason Hall is open to the public everyday from 10am-5pm. For more information, please contact: Dianne Beal, guest curator, 202-957-1401 or Donald Russell, 202-213-6272.

All events free and open to the public. Paid parking in Shenandoah Parking Deck (#43 on [campus map](#))

About the Fine Arts Gallery at George Mason University

The Fine Arts Gallery at George Mason University is committed to the presentation of innovative new art and creating a forum for active dialogue, research, and engagement with contemporary visual ideas and artistic practices. Located in the School of Art (SOA) on the Fairfax campus of George Mason University, the Fine Arts Gallery offers a diverse program of exhibitions by emerging and established contemporary artists, thesis exhibits by current MFA candidates, and a semi-annual SOA undergraduate senior exhibition.

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