

SUMMARY

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TOTAL KITSCH AND EMPTY ABSTRACTION. ON THE VITALIJ KOMAR AND ALEKSANDER MELAMID'S SOCIOLOGICAL PAINTING PROJECT *THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

The aim of the article is to analyze the famous artistic and sociological experiment conducted in 1993 by two Russian artists living in the USA, Vitalij Komar and Alexander Melamid, and the attempts to explain it made by philosophers of art, environmental aestheticians, ethologists and evolutionary psychologists. The experiment was titled: *The People's Choice* and involved creating "favorite images" of societies in 14 countries based on the results of surveys conducted in them. From the analysis of the discussions surrounding the project by Russian artists, a conclusion emerges that calls into question the classical view of the necessary separation of aesthetic phenomena from other spheres of human axiology, and allows us to consider non-aesthetic values as an element of the continuum of: utilitarian, emotional and aesthetic values. It also directs our attention towards evolutionary explanations, emphasizing the universal nature of aesthetic categories (*aesthetic universals*) and the influence of the evolutionary history of the human species (phylogeny) on the tastes dominant in societies across cultures and times.