

# NEWS RELEASE October 15, 2008

FRED JONES JR. MUSEUM OF ART  
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA - NORMAN  
CONTACT MICHAEL BENDURE, Public Relations Officer, 405-325-3178, mbendure@ou.edu  
FAX: 405-325-7696  
www.ou.edu/fjjma

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Author Shteyngart, Artist Komar to Speak at OU Oct. 22, 24**

NORMAN – Two important Russian émigré figures -- an award-winning novelist and a popular conceptual artist -- are appearing at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art on the University of Oklahoma Norman campus. Gary Shteyngart and Vitaly Komar are scheduled to address the campus and community during free, public lectures Wednesday and Friday, Oct. 22 and 24, respectively.

Beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the art museum's downstairs Mary Eddy and Fred Jones Auditorium, each guest will give a public presentation in conjunction with the Oklahoma Scholar-Leadership Enrichment Program's seminar, "Russian Émigré Artists in the Context of American Culture." The class explores the contributions Russian artists and writers have made to American culture over the course of the last century.

Scheduled from Oct. 22 to 26, the seminar is taught by Catherine Nepomnyashchy, director of the Harrisman Institute of Columbia University. The series is sponsored by the University of Oklahoma Friends Of the College of Arts and Sciences (FOCAS) Lecture Series.

"We are very excited to host Komar and Shteyngart, two figures who represent President Boren's mission to bring culturally relevant people and art to the university, the museum and the community," said Ghislain d'Humières, director of the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art.

Gary Shteyngart is the author of two satiric novels that depict Eastern European start-up capitalism and mafia structures in the 1990s: *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* and *Absurdistan*. His works have won the Stephen Crane Award for First Fiction and the National Jewish Book Award for Fiction as well as many other honors. He is widely considered one of the most important young novelists in America today.

During his public presentation on Wednesday, Shteyngart will read a passage from his latest novel, *Absurdistan*, and answer questions from the audience.

Vitaly Komar, along with his longtime collaborator Alexander Melamid, is the founder of the Soviet Sots-Art Movement and a renowned conceptual artist. One of Komar and Melamid's best-known recent collaborations revealed significant relevance to the study of marketing. In the 1990s, the artists began conducting telephone polls to determine what the kinds of paintings were most and least likely to appeal to the public in various countries around the world. They then created canvases based on the results of their research and published both the images and information about the surveys in the book *Painting by Numbers*. This artistic project is widely recognized as a seminal exploration of the intersection of consumer culture and the world of high art.

For his public presentation on Friday, Komar plans to talk about the *Painting by Numbers* project.

The OSLEP seminar falls into place as the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art unveils "American Artists from the Russian Empire," an international exhibition examining the impact of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian immigrant art. The exhibition, which opened Oct. 4, remains on display through Jan. 4, 2009, before traveling to St. Petersburg, Moscow and San Diego.

Both lectures are co-sponsored by FOCAS; the Barbara B. and William G. Paul Enrichment Fund; the James H. and JoAnn H. Holden Enrichment Fund; OSLEP; the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art; the Price College of Business; the School of International and Area Studies; the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Linguistics in the College of Arts and Sciences; the Joe C. and Carole Kerr McClendon Honors College; and *World Literature Today*.

The museum's Web site is [www.ou.edu/fjma](http://www.ou.edu/fjma). Information and accommodations on the basis of disability are available by calling (405) 325-4938.

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