

AUGUST 24-31 2005 | **TIME OUT LONDON 57**

Vitaly Komar

Matthew Bown *West End*

By combining the days of rest celebrated by Muslims, Jews and Christians (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) Vitaly Komar proposes to create a three-day weekend, not only to make the work-

ing week shorter but also to encourage the peaceful coexistence of different faiths (yes, that should do it). To that end, he has made a series of 'Universal Mandalas' – forms based on ancient spiritual symbols – by collaging together historical and personal images. In one picture, a photograph of himself as a child with his mother (a Jew) and father (a Christian) partly conceals a picture of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at the 1945 Yalta conference. Composed of interlocking circles, another image has a painting of an ET-like creature at its centre.

It's not hard to see where this work is coming from. Komar's parents split because of religious differences; he is a Soviet emigré living in the States; his long and fruitful artistic partnership with Alex Melamid came to an end last year. Clearly, he's wearied by all these divisions. What's missing here, though, is the satire that was central to (for example) the 'Most Wanted' and 'Least Wanted' works, which Komar and Melamid painted after conducting international polls in which they discovered a depressingly universal predilection for bucolic landscapes. Or the pastiche encapsulated in his early painting 'On Reading Shvarts' (also on show here), which depicts a hero riding out to do battle, waved off by his damsel.

Martin Coomer



"Later I understood why the photograph of the Yalta Conference had attracted me"