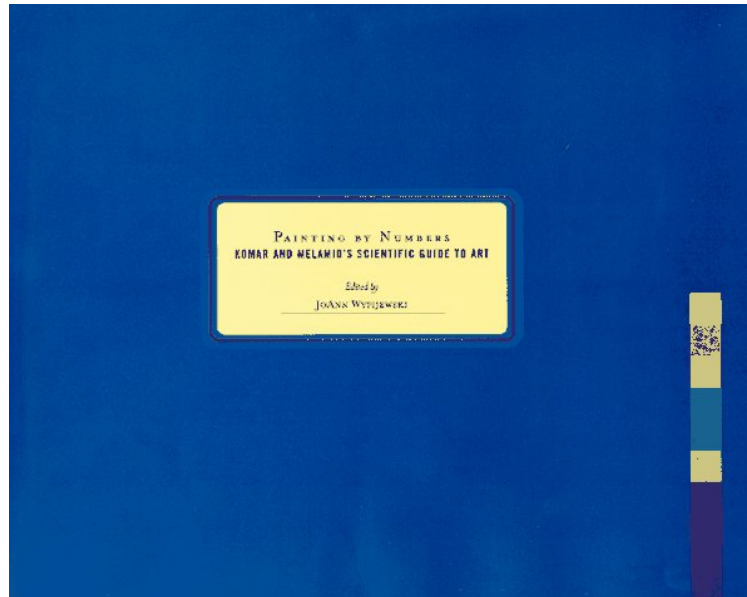


(Pdf free) Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art

## Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art

*From Farrar Straus Giroux (T)*  
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**From Farrar Straus Giroux (T) : Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art:

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Look into Tastes in Art By hamsterdance This book will get anyone thinking about what qualifies as "art". Have you ever gone to a modern art museum or picked up a modern art magazine and wondered "how can anyone call that art?" Well this book will get you thinking about questions like that. Using scientific polling methods 2 Russian immigrants canvassed the U.S. to find out what the average American considers art. The results are exactly the kind of works most working modern artists or their patrons would be dismayed over. Get this book. It is a fascinating and entertaining read. One interesting note from the book - the editor of The Nation said that when they published the results of this poll it drew an avalanche of reader mail. It generated the largest reader response of anything they'd published in the history of that magazine to date. Several newspapers interviewed owners of prominent NYC art galleries as well as some prominent artists. All of them were horrified by the results of this poll. One commentator sniffed the poll just proves Americans are boors when it comes to art - preferring only the safest, most banal subjects. What is interesting is that the book shows the results of this poll were duplicated in many other countries around the globe. Countries as diverse as Kenya and Iceland showed their own polls duplicated the preferences of the average American - i.e. a liking for landscapes with peaceful blue skies. The book reproduces in full the entire questionnaire used by the polling company along with an interview with Momar and Kelamid. The two Russians also gained notoriety by creating pictures of each countries most-preferred and least-preferred paintings. Each painting had the canvas divided up to match the percentages shown in the poll that respondents wanted (or didn't want in the case of the 'Least Preferred' paintings). Thus if the poll showed 65% preferred landscapes with a blue sky then 65% of the painting surface had a blue sky. Interviews as well as commentary on the nature of art and what this might mean also fill the book. There is even a chapter by one of my

favorite modern-day philosophers - Arthur C. Danto (I have several of his books). He asks the question "Can It Be The 'Most Wanted Painting' Even if Nobody Wants It?" The results in this book lead to many questions. Not the least of these is 'what is art?' and 'what does this say about human nature?'. One article from the Jan/Feb 2002 issue of American Spectator illustrates this problem very well. It seems a few months ago a very famous photographer was holding a one-man exhibit at a London gallery. He is quite famous for the nauseating and offensive subject matter of his work. That night he gathered together the cigarette butts, empty paper cups, and other assorted trash from the opening-night party and "artfully" arranged it in a pile in a corner and took a picture of it. The pile was promptly announced by a London art-critic to be worth at least 5K (in pounds). Unfortunately, someone forgot to tell the janitor that night that the pile was art, not trash. So you can guess the ending of this story. I recount this to make a point. That is, this book will shed some light on why so many people have trouble - even the U.S. Supreme Court - on saying exactly what Art is. Get this book. It is fun and fascinating look into not only the tastes in art around the world but also a window into the science of polls and polling.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating and absorbing!

By Hiram Gmez Pardo Venezuela Are our senses previously designed conditioned respect our artistic tastes? , or better still is there a source of genetic origin that really predisposes us before the artistic fact ? The question looks so absorbing that really invites to rethink and restate ourselves several premises; the environmental conditions, for instance, must be determinant. Think about in the fact the nest of three of the most important religions (Christian, Jew and Mussulman) were founded in dessert (maybe you think it was a mere casualty, but i really don't) while the Protestant movement and Lutheranism arouse from places in which the four seasons completed its cycle naturally. This circumstance surely made propitious conditions for a major discussion of ideas, keeping in mind if you were not agree you might migrate (an unthinkable possibility in a desert). This is the final outcome of a series of interviews in several countries about what the people wants to see in their pictures. According Melamid the uniformity of the results suggests a genetic trace. "In every country the favorite color is blue and in almost everywhere the green occupies the second place. In everywhere they wanted outdoor scenes with wild animals, water, trees and some people." So, on the basis of this invaluable observation, they depicted the most requested image in every country. That is why this book is so worthy to read, because it states us a plausible chance to other questions. Don't miss it.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Laugh, a Guide and a Result to be proud of...

By Peter Villevoye After 10 years, I bought the book. I visited the exhibition of the paintings in Rotterdam (Netherlands) back in '97 and was pleasantly shocked by this project and the results. The book was out of stock then, but the surprising results kept haunting my head for a decade. Now I finally have the book and it still makes me laugh. Although the whole project has an entertaining dosis of irony, it can be a guide in understanding art and demographics - oh well, it can even help you design for the masses ! Lastly, I think every Dutch designer should buy this book or maybe it should be governmentally issued to every Dutch citizen. Why ? Just look at the very last pages of the book. I understood that the "Holland" results came in too late to be submitted to the edited content of the book. But fortunately Komar and Melamid decided that this outcome deserved a very special place, like a well kept secret that defies the other 200 pages... I'm proud to be Dutch !

With the help of a professional polling firm, ex-Soviet art critics Komar and Melamid discovered that what Americans really want in art, regardless of class, race, or gender, is exactly what the art world disdains--a tranquil, realistic "blue landscape". Komar and Melamid provide a comic and profound discussion of art in our time. Full color art throughout .

.com Since the days of the ancient Greek philosophers, people have asked the eternal question "What is beauty?" It took the insight of Russian artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid to apply modern scientific principles to this problem and finally to produce an answer. Using polls conducted by telephone in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, Komar and Melamid were able to determine what each country wanted to see in a painting, and what was least likely to please the public. They then produced canvases based on their polling, creating the most and least wanted paintings in the world. The results are not only funny, they are also oddly disturbing. Almost every nation had the same preferences: people wanted landscapes, and did not want abstract art. Only one nation bucked the trend, but you'll have to read the book to find out which. Painting by Numbers has more insight into art and commerce than any 10 dry studies of aesthetics, and is one of the most significant documents on popular taste ever produced--plus it's a laugh riot. And that, Plato, is beauty.

From Library Journal In December 1993, the Russian emigre art collaborators Komar and Melamid began a statistical market research poll to determine America's "most wanted" and "most unwanted" paintings. Since then, the whimsical project has spread around the world. Polls in the United States, Ukraine, France, Iceland, Turkey, Denmark, Finland, Kenya, and China revealed that people wanted portraits of their families and always "blue landscapes." After conducting research, the pair paint made-to-order works that meet the wanted (landscape) and unwanted (abstract) criteria; they follow up with town meetings as virtual performance pieces. This intriguing and serious volume documents issues raised by the conflict between high art and popular taste. The best reading is an interview with the artists, whose gift of gab bounces around Marxism, Stalinism, God's inscrutability, Wagner, "Sears style," and the crisis of ideas in art. The project has been debated in the Nation and recorded in art magazines, and this summary volume is highly recommended for all contemporary collections.

?Mary Hamel-

Schwulst, Towson State Univ., Md. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. The book is not so much a statement as it is a litmus test, a Rorschach test, an act of provocation. It will not give comfort to anyone's preconceptions about art: whatever attitude you bring to the book will be subject to alteration by the end. It makes the art world look silly, yes indeed, and it is equally a trap for demagogues who purport to articulate popular standards. Art may be a commodity for some, Komar and Melamid say, but the imagination that makes it possible is no one's monopoly. -- The New York Times Book , Luc Sante