

Artist Says Flag Artwork is Pro-American

East Hampton gallery files police report after receiving a harassing phone call regarding exhibit.

By Taylor K. Vercsey | June 26, 2012

A new East Hampton art show incorporating the American Flag evoked outrage from many, but the artist behind the show said that the work wasn't meant to be anti-American.

"Concerns about our economy led me to use flags and gold in this exhibition, while my wall painting backdrop is intended to convey global economic turbulence," said **Andrew Schoultz**, a San Francisco artist known for his cultural commentary and murals. "I take great pride in America and this work is wholeheartedly pro-American," he said in a statement the gallery released on Tuesday.

The solo show "Ex Uno Plura," or "from one, many," opened at the Eric Firestone Gallery on Newtown Lane on Saturday and runs through July 7. It makes use of the flag in various ways — gold paint drips down one, for instance.

But, it was a painted flag that was hung on a gallery-owned flagpole outside that seemed to anger people the most. Dissenters claimed the art desecrates the American Flag.

"For the past 10 years I have worked with icons and symbols to create narratives addressing social, economic, and political issues. My intention is always to open a dialogue about these issues," Schoultz said. "While a viewer may misinterpret the intention of an artist, I encourage the conversation and debate that may result." JA Forde, a representative for the gallery, said the flag that was on the flag pole is not on display in the gallery. "It was only intended to be on display for the opening and stayed up a bit longer when the ropes broke during removal," he said. The other paintings in the show incorporate flags made in China, he said.

The gallery owner filed an aggravated harassment complaint with East Hampton Village police on Sunday at 4:25 p.m., after his employee had received a threatening phone call in reference to the current exhibit.

The caller allegedly asked, "Do you guys have glass insurance?" When the employee inquired why the caller was asking such a question, the unknown man on the other end said, "The Fourth of July is coming up soon and things can get rowdy around here," according to the police report.

The owner requested increased patrols. The incident report was turned over to the detective squad. The flag that had been hung the pole was down by Monday, according to Village Administrator Larry Cantwell, who said the village was concerned about it being placed up there. "My instinct was to make a plea, to inform him that what had been done to the flag was not in line with the flag protocol," Cantwell said referring to the gallery owner. "We didn't have to because the flag was already gone," he said.

He added that the village recognized the artist's has rights to create whatever he'd like.

Source: <http://easthampton.patch.com/articles/artist-says-flag-artwork-is-pro-american>