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Pussy Riot Icon Artist Fined

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One of several posters by a member of the Pussy Riot punk band drawn in the style of an icon.

Three months after icon-like posters portraying members of the all-female punk band Pussy Riot appeared on Novosibirsk streets, a local artist has been fined for "desecrating venerated symbols."

Artyom Loskutov was ordered to pay 1,000 ($30) rubles Friday for two pictures depicting masked Pussy Riot band members as the Virgin Mary that were posted on advertisement stands in the city, Interfax reported.

He was acquitted for a third picture at a hearing Saturday because police didn't find his fingerprints at the scene, Loskutov told Interfax.

Loskutov did not admit guilt at the hearings and said he would appeal Friday's court decisions.

He first revealed that he would face administrative charges in connection to the posters with court documents posted to his blog Thursday.

"Several individuals and organizations, including the Novosibirsk Russian Orthodox Church, did not believe in the miraculous appearance of the icons and demanded that the prosecutor's office and the [regional police center for combating extremism] deny the fact that a miracle happened, as well as find the artist and person who ordered the art," Loskutov wrote.

The artwork, which portrays a woman wearing bright colors and a mask in Pussy Riot's signature style, appeared in several locations around Novosibirsk on the night of March 11.

The posters bear a strong resemblance to an icon of the Blessed Virgin, with Jesus depicted as a girl with pigtails and the letters "SVBD PSRT" in the corner of the picture, which Loskutov said stand for "free Pussy Riot" (svoboda Pussy Riot).

Three of the punk band's members have been in police custody on charges of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred" since an impromptu performance in Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Human rights groups have denounced the continued detention of the women, who could face up to seven years in prison if charged and convicted.

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