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Russian Artist Fined for 'Extremist' Toy Doll With Prison Tattoos

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Vasily Slonov / VK

A controversial Russian artist has been fined for his art piece of a toy doll covered in criminal tattoos.

Vasily Slonov was charged with "public demonstration of prohibited symbols" over the art piece, a round-bottomed doll modeled on the traditional Russian *nevalyashka*.

The Central District Court of Krasnoyarsk in Siberia ordered Slonov to pay a fine of 1,000 rubles ($10) and to destroy the doll.

One of the doll's tattoos was an eight-pointed star that the authorities deemed to be a symbol of AUE, a vaguely defined youth criminal movement whose name stands for "*Arestantsky. Uklad. Edin*," or "Prison. Order. Universal."

AUE is banned in Russia as an extremist organization.

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Slonov told the Krasnoyarsk-based news website Prospekt Mira that the case was a "simple misunderstanding."

The doll had been part of an exhibit of "GULAG Toys" displayed and sold at the Krasnoyarsk Novotel that opened at the end of September. Other items on display included quilted bears and baby pacifiers made with barbed wire.

The court hearing took place on Oct. 4 but the court's ruling was not made public until several weeks later.

Exhibitions of Slonov's work have a history of being censored by the authorities. A 2013 exhibit of satirical posters about the 2014 Sochi Olympics led to the firing of a museum director.

In February 2022, his painting depicting popular cartoon characters such as Mickey Mouse with altered genders led security forces to dismantle an exhibition, allegedly due to complaints of "LGBT propaganda."

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