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L.A. artist plans to blanket the county with artistic tents, if homeless issue doesn't improve

Sarah Reingewirtz February 28, 2020



A homeless man packs up his bedding during artist and social activist Ed Massey's unveiling of his art tents on Friday, February 28, 2020 at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and 26th Street in Santa Monica where his 7' sculpture of a homeless man has been showing for months. Massey, who is known for his large public art projects, plans to give 5,000 of his art tents to those in need in Los Angeles if homelessness does not improve in the next year. (Photo by Sarah Reingewirtz, Pasadena Star-News/SCNG)

“Humans should not be living in tents.” Those words came from a man who plans to hand out 5,000 tents — each of them a work of art — if the homeless crisis doesn’t ease in Los Angeles in the next year.

“We’ve thrown up our hands, we can’t just leave our most fragile in the community to die on the streets,” said Los Angeles artist and social activist Ed Massey while unveiling prototypes of his artistic tents at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and 26th Street in Santa Monica on Friday morning, Feb. 28.

Nearby, two homeless men went about their morning routine after sleeping in the open against the former Home Savings and Loan building that now houses Surefoot Custom Ski Boots.

The three tents on display were in eye-popping colors with repeating patterns. One was hand-painted by Massey, who is known for his large public art projects, the other two were prototypes that cover an actual camping tent.

Homelessness is not a new subject for the artist who made a seven-foot sculpture 22 years ago depicting a man he met who was carrying a blanket and a super-sized beverage. It’s been displayed on the same corner since last November.

Massey says he is driven to blanket the county with his art tents because homelessness is the community’s No. 1 issue and he is frustrated by the worsening problem.

“We are going to become the art tent capital of the world,” he added. “It’s pretty pathetic.”

