



# Artist demands action on homeless crisis - Santa Monica Daily Press

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Artist and social activist Ed Massey has never been afraid to use art to bring awareness to the social ills of society.

After recently unveiling a 7-foot sculpture depicting a homeless man in Santa Monica, the famed artist is once again working on a project related to homelessness. But this time, it's one that Massey hopes he never has to complete, distributing 5,000 colorful tents across the area.

Massey visited Santa Monica on Friday to showcase a prospective installation that could result in thousands of colorful tents speckling the streets of Southern California havens like Malibu, Santa Monica, Brentwood, Bel Air and others if community leaders do not address the “core issues” of homelessness in the next 12 to 15 months.

“Tents like these are very much the iconic image of what men, women and children see day-to-day here in the Los Angeles area because homelessness is one of our biggest social inequities in the United States and state of California,” Massey said. “These tents are similar to the ones that men and women unfortunately sleep out in the streets every day. They’re sleeping on pavement, on cement and that’s not where humans need to be — especially in 2020.”

Like a fish who is out of water, Massey said, people don’t belong on the cold streets and there are plenty of opportunities for the general public to take action to fix the problem.

“I mean, we’re the ones who are in control,” he said. “This has been going on for decades so people have asked me, ‘Well, don’t you think it’s your government’s issue?’ No, it’s really the people’s issue because the government will listen to what the people are requesting and demanding. That’s how social change happens.”

Massey said he often hears complaints of needles, fecal matter and items of trash on local streets, which are problems that he believes could be solved through an increase in housing services.

“There are empty school lots, ships and even the General Services Administration, which I think is the largest landowner in the country,” Massey said, mentioning he will shelve the project if there is tangible progress made in the coming months.

“But if not, then I plan to find an underwriter who will allow me to transform the streets of L.A. into a colorful tent capital of the world by distributing upwards of 5,000 tents to the homeless,” which would replace the monotone tents and encampments that are often seen on the streets today, Massey said, describing how all 5,000 art tents could be set up in 7 to 10 days and would visually transform public spaces and business districts.

“It will be a symbol of monumental civic failure spanning years,” Massey said, “but if there are already going to be tents on the streets, why not give them a design that will be a more welcomed view for the public and hopefully the tents’ inhabitants.”

As “outlandish” as the idea may seem, Massey notes it’s even more outlandish to think the current approach of solving homelessness is a better option.

“The art tents alone may not improve the day-to-day situations facing the homeless on the street, but they will birth new colorful vistas, which will make neighborhoods, public spaces and business districts more visually appealing until we can put an end to people having to sleep on the streets,” Massey said. “I’ve never rooted against a project of my own before and I really

hope I'll be able to focus on something else instead. But I'm more than willing to go through with everything if that's what it will take to get some help for those who need it."

*brennon@smdp.com*