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Fundamentalists storm Albany's Humanist Center Painting on exhibit July - Aug. 9, Reception Aug. 9

ALBANY, N.Y. – This July, more than 100 religious fundamentalists stormed the headquarters of the Institute for Humanist Studies, a nonprofit organization that promotes secularism.

Fortunately, these fundamentalists are painted on a 14-foot by 8-foot canvas. The massive painting, titled "American Fundamentalists (Christ's Entry into Washington in 2008)", by Los Angeles-based painter Joel Pelletier will be on display at the Institute now until Aug. 9. The artwork is on a national tour.

The immense acrylic on canvas painting, which presently fills the main lobby of the Institute's "Humanist Center", depicts more than 100 contemporary American fundamentalists—including religious, political and corporate leaders. The work revisits a famous 19th century painting, "Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889," by Belgian artist James Ensor.

"Many fundamentalist operatives are stealthy and work behind the scenes. Thanks to the artist's research, we can now look these people in the face...although this is the probably the safest way to be in the same room with all of them," said Duncan Crary, director of communications of the Institute for Humanist Studies.

"American Fundamentalists" is a statement about the power of art, America, religion, politics, war, economics and the news media. Its purpose is to ask questions and raise awareness about the influence that fundamentalists hold over our policymakers.

"Fundamentalists are anti-American. They are threatening your freedom to believe what you want," Pelletier said. "Is this the direction you want the country to move in? I don't."

On Aug. 9, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., the Institute for Humanist Studies will host a wine and cheese reception with a talk by the artist. Dr. Tim Gordinier, the Institute's public policy director, will give a brief overview of the First Amendment and the history of church-state separation. The event is co-sponsored by the Capital District Humanist Society. The Institute is located at 48 Howard Street in downtown Albany.

The reception is open to the public, but an r.s.v.p. is required by phone or email. Call 518-432-7820 ext. 207 or email: Info@HumanistStudies.org, with "RSVP" in the subject line. The painting may be viewed by appointment only. Call or email the Institute to make an appointment.

Signed posters (24" x 36") are available for \$12 at the Institute or via the artists' Web site.

For information and digital photos of the painting, visit: www.americanfundamentalists.com. For information about the Institute for Humanist Studies, visit: www.HumanistStudies.org

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