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## East Germany Secret Police Art To Go On Sale In Miami

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A woman places a rose at the Berlin Wall memorial in Bernauer Strasse after a ceremony marking the 26th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, in Berlin, Nov. 9, 2015. Photo: REUTERS/Hannibal Hanschke

A three ton, 65-foot-wide stained glass mural created in early 1980s for the East German secret police headquarters can be yours for \$21.4 million. The art piece, which will be put for a sale at a temporary exhibition space in Miami next week, was discovered recently in a shipping container by art historian Thilo Holzmann, an art historian and dealer whose uncle bought it in 1990, the New York Times reported Tuesday.

“I knew about it all these years, but for all these years, I, like everyone else, was forgetting what was forgotten,” Holzmann told the Times.

The 10-foot-high glass wall was reportedly commissioned in 1979 by Erich Mielke, then the head of the Ministry of State Security, and was placed in a general purpose room in the agency’s compound, which has now become the Stasi Museum. According to the Times, the art piece has the communist hammer and sickle symbol and is pigmented with precious metals, including 55 pounds of gold.

Artist Richard Otfried Wilhelm was commissioned to make the mural. He was the chief master of glass for public works in the German Democratic Republic. He had titled his work “Revolution: Frieden unserem Erdenrund” (Revolution: Peace to the Whole World).

After the demolition of the Berlin wall, the Stasi headquarters were shut down in 1990. Following this, the agency's belongings were sold through the Deutsche Reichsbahn, the state railroad company.

“[The mural] was a kind of custom to make stained glass memorial things in East Germany ... What struck me as odd is that it was in the Stasi headquarters and that there is no specific reference to the secret work, intelligence activities or the conspiracies which they indulged in,” he said. “That would make it more valuable,” William Melching, an expert in German Cold War history at the University of Amsterdam, told the Times.

Melching, however, questioned the price asked for the art.

“Maybe a couple of hundred thousand euros, but millions is a bit ridiculous,” he told the Times.

The art piece will go on sale next week at a temporary exhibition space in Miami and will coincide with the Art Basel Miami Beach contemporary art fair, slated to open on Dec. 1.