



Woman Charged in Art Basel Stabbing Attack Takes Plea Deal

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Miami-Dade Corrections

Siyuan Zhao

The woman charged in a bloody attack at Art Basel last December was in court Thursday. The art show turned into a crime scene when she pulled an X-Acto knife out and began stabbing a complete stranger.

The suspect faced a judge Thursday on charges of attempted murder. The victim, wanting her voice to be heard, phoned in from hundreds of miles away. She also wrote a letter asking the judge for mercy for the woman that nearly killed her.

24-year old Siyuan Zhao will soon be headed to China after taking a plea deal Thursday. Those who witnessed the bizarre and bloody scene thought it was performance art, but it was a crime scene.

The victim spoke to the court through a phone call from New York where she lives. She agreed to the plea deal the attorneys had worked out with Zhao saying she doesn't want her attacker to suffer by serving a prison sentence.

"I think I have a better understanding of her state of mind," said Seo Young Shin, victim.

That state of mind, according to her doctors, was insanity. Zhao pleaded guilty to attempted second-degree murder with a deadly weapon. She got no prison time because she is severely mentally ill.

"She felt that ISIS was going to be at Art Basel to destroy the art," said Dr. Lean Melnick, psychiatrist.

So she attacked the victim, a total stranger, who she thought was an ISIS agent.

Zhao has a history of mental illness and violent behavior. She attacked a doctor while in treatment at Jackson Memorial Hospital and tried to kill several birds used in the pet therapy program.

Part of Thursday's agreement also guarantees that she leave for China Thursday night. Shao will board a plane at 8 p.m. and will never be able to return to the United States.

"[She'll] be able to resume her life, continue on her path to treatment for her mental illness," said Howard Srebinick, defense attorney.

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