

# Grimshaw Convicted for Obscene Kite

Fifth Estate Collective

1967

The infamous Grimshaw kite case has reached its first conclusion, with an astounding miscarriage of justice.

The case, as you may recall, concerned a kite, made out of an American flag, with the inscription: “Fuck America—Go Fly a Kite” and an Egyptian peace eye symbol. The kite was hanging from a light fixture in *The Sun* office, 4863 John Lodge.

In court Friday June 30 Gary Grimshaw, co-editor of *The Sun* was found guilty and sentenced to 15 days in the Detroit House of Correction and \$150 or 15 more days and one year’s probation for “displaying an obscene drawing.”

The trial (to use a slightly hackneyed, but still apt, phrase) made a mockery of justice.

The high point of the trial came when the arresting officer perjured himself. He claimed to have seen the kite from the street, come in, talked to Grimshaw, called in, cut down the kite, and made the arrest. No mention was made of the seven other officers who were on the scene (with the exception of a couple of allusions to the arresting officer’s partner).

No mention was made of the fact that the kite was facing the back wall of the office. No mention was made of the fact that the officer’s partner, who was in the back of the room, drew the arresting officer’s attention to the kite, after he had come inside. No mention was made of the fact that the difference in light intensity from the outside (bright sun) to the inside (dimly lit) would have made it veritably impossible without the use of binoculars, to see the kite from the street.

Plus the fact that since the “obscene” word was in black, against a dark blue background, and almost impossible to read in an evenly—lit room from a distance of 6 or 7 feet, let alone from the sidewalk which was at least 22 feet from the light fixture.

But enough of that. That will all come out in the appeal. Along with the fact that the original motivation for putting the inscription on the kite was an act of protest against the use of the American flag in a 15-cent kite design. But, one supposes that the kite manufacturer had a clearer conception of what America has come to mean than the artist did.

## Related

“Grimshaw not Obscene,” FE #81, June 12–25, 1969.

“Gary Grimshaw 1946–2014,” FE #391, Spring/Summer 2014



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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/34-july-15-31-1967/grimshaw-convicted-for-obscene-kite>  
Fifth Estate #34, July 15-31, 1967

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