



## **WALLS TURNED SIDEWAYS Artists Confront the Justice System**

### **LOCATION**

Aidekman Arts Center / Medford  
Tisch Family Gallery  
Koppelman Gallery

### **CONTACT**

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January 23 – April 19, 2020

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 23, 6-8pm

**Featuring work by artists including Luis Camnitzer, Chris Burden, Tirtza Even, Andrea Fraser, Ashley Hunt, Kapwani Kiwanga, Autumn Knight, Deanna Lawson, Trevor Paglen, Sable Elyse Smith, and Martin Wong that address the criminal justice system, mass incarceration, and the prison-industrial complex.**

Tufts University Art Gallery announces the Northeast debut of the exhibition *Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System*, a comprehensive look at how contemporary artists over the past forty years have created work related to the criminal justice system. Representing a range of contemporary art production made in both the studio and social realm, *Walls Turned Sideways* includes artworks that take social justice issues as a subject matter; and position the prison and court systems as structures for dismantling through institutional critique.



The title of the exhibition *Walls Turned Sideways* comes from a quote by political activist, academic, and author, Angela Davis: “Walls turned sideways are bridges.” The exhibition hopes to serve as a bridge or connecting conduit for conversation, contemplation, and change. This exhibition recognizes the artist as a figure capable of changing society and the works featured in the exhibition are extraordinary in both their scale and in their ambition to mobilize by bringing visibility to offenses within the justice system.



The justice system in the United States is complex; as a result, artists tend to tackle one component at a time. *Walls Turned Sideways* utilizes the work of artists to construct a dynamic and nuanced portrait of the prison-industrial complex according to how people move through the criminal justice system including the courtroom and trial, and onwards toward incarceration. Once incarcerated there are three potential ways one can exit the physical structure of the prison: a life sentence that guarantees death inside the institution, the death penalty, or the possibility of reentry into society.

The exhibition poses the questions: What is the social role and responsibility of the artist in times of political urgency? What functions can only art and artists fulfill in the social and political landscape? Moreover, the exhibition considers the relationship between the museum and the prison, focusing on their shared history of collection. *Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System* asks: If the museum is the repository for all that society values, how is the prison the repository for all society seeks to disown?

For this exhibition at Tufts University Art Galleries, TUAG is partnering with Tufts University Prison Initiative of Tisch College of Civic Life (TUPIT) to develop collaborative programming and highlight the activities of the program. TUPIT brings Tufts faculty and students together with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, corrections staff, educators, and scholars of criminal justice to facilitate creative and collaborative responses to the problems of mass incarceration.



*Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System* is organized by the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and curated by Risa Puleo. The presentation at Tufts University Art Galleries is organized by Abigail Satinsky, and it is presented in partnership with Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University. The exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue that includes essays by curator Risa Puleo, theorist Che Gossett, and other contributions by Elizabeth Alexander, Jimmy Baca, Evan Bissell, Andy Campbell, Chicago Torture Justice Memorials, David Joselit, Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo and Sable Elyse Smith, Isamu Noguchi, Robert Morris, Theodore Kerr, Cameron Rowland, Jared Sexton, Rashad Shabazz, Shawn Michelle Smith, and Rebecca Zorach, amongst others.

*Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System* is made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The catalogue accompanying the exhibition is made possible by support from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston and a grant from the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation.

## EXHIBITION ARTISTS

Andrea Robbins and Max Becher | New York, New York  
Josh Begley | Brooklyn, New York  
Chandra McCormick and Keith Calhoun | New Orleans, Louisiana  
Luis Camnitzer | New York, New York  
Jamal Cyrus | Houston, Texas  
The Estate of Chris Burden | 1946–2015  
The Estate of Martin Wong | 1946–1999  
Tirtza Even | Chicago, Illinois  
Andrea Fraser | New York, New York  
Maria Gaspar | Chicago, Illinois  
Danny Giles | Chicago, Illinois  
Sam Gould | Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Michelle Handelman | Brooklyn, New York  
Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia | Brooklyn, New York  
Suzanne Lacy with Julio Morales and Unique Holland | Los Angeles, California  
Ashley Hunt | Los Angeles, California  
Richard Kamler | San Francisco, California  
Kapwani Kiwanga | Paris, France  
Autumn Knight | New York, New York  
Deana Lawson | Brooklyn, New York  
Shaun Leonardo | Brooklyn, New York  
Sarah Ross and Damon Locks | Chicago, Illinois  
Lucky Pierre | Chicago, Illinois  
Mark Menjivar | San Antonio, Texas  
Trevor Paglen | New York, New York  
Anthony Papa | New York, New York  
Mary Patten | Chicago, Illinois  
Jenny Polak | New York, New York  
Carl Pope, Jr. | Indianapolis, Indiana  
Laurie Jo Reynolds | Chicago, Illinois  
Sherrill Roland | Raleigh, North Carolina  
Gregory Sale | Phoenix, Arizona  
Dread Scott | Brooklyn, New York  
Sable Elyse Smith | Brooklyn, New York

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Risa Puleo, independent curator, has previously held positions as Guest Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas and Curator-in-Residence at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska where she curated the exhibition *Monarchs: Brown and Native Artists in the Path of the Butterfly*. She has worked on exhibitions presented at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts; Charlotte Street Foundation, Kansas City, Missouri; ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas; Franklin Street Works, Stamford, Connecticut; and the Leslie-Lohman Museum in New York, New York. Puleo holds Master's degrees from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College and Hunter College's Art History program (both New York, New York), and is a student in the Art History doctoral program at Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois. She has written for *Art in America*, *Art Papers*, *Art 21*, *Asia Art Pacific*, *Hyperallergic*, *Modern Painters* and other art publications.



## **PUBLIC PROGRAMMING**

### **Opening Reception & Conversation**

Thursday, January 23, 6-8pm

AIDEKMAN ARTS CENTER / MEDFORD

Public conversation with curator Risa Puleo and participating artist Autumn Knight

### **Symposium**

Thursday & Friday, March 5 & 6

MEDFORD

Participating artists in dialogue with scholars, activists, and formerly incarcerated people on issues of mass incarceration and experimental educational initiatives. Produced in collaboration with Tufts University Prison Initiative of Tisch College of Civic Life.

## **ABOUT TUFTS UNIVERSITY ART GALLERIES**

Housed within a research university and an art school, the Tufts University Art Galleries engage with artists, scholars, and works of art to provoke discourse around cultural and social contexts. Through exhibitions, programming, research, and collecting, we create a pedagogical platform for the Tufts community and wider publics.

Tufts University Art Galleries operates from two main gallery locations:

Aidekman Arts Center / Medford

40 Talbot Avenue

Tuesday—Sunday, 11AM-5PM

Closed Mondays and university holidays

SMFA at Tufts / Boston

230 Fenway

Monday—Saturday, 10AM-5PM

Closed Sundays and university holidays

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