

Section Guide

WALLS TURNED SIDeways

ARTISTS CONFRONT THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

23 January – 19 April 2020



Ashley Hunt, *Degrees of Visibility*, 2010-present. Multimedia installation. Dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

This exhibition is organized under the two overarching themes of “ground” and “figure.” Ground analyzes the prison as institution. Figure explores how individuals move through the criminal justice system as they experience profiling, arrest, processing, incarceration, and exit from prison. The artworks on view are not necessarily grouped sequentially, so please use this guide to read more about the thematic sections.

GROUND

The Ground section of the exhibition features artworks that explore the relationship between the prison and other institutions, including museums, zoos, asylums, and hospitals, in order to reveal similarities between these places and the prison system.

PROFILE

Entry into the criminal justice system happens through the process by which one is profiled as a criminal and targeted for arrest. Artists in this section focus on questioning and challenging assumptions that lead to profiling. Suzanne Lacy collaborated with youth who had been profiled in Oakland, California to create artworks challenging the police, community, and young people to question their ideas about why teenagers are assumed to have criminal intentions. Similarly, Dread Scott, collaborating with youth in New York City, addressed how racial profiling is inherent to the stop-and-frisk program. Jenny Polak, on view on the media wall in the Aidekman Arts Center, focuses on the ways immigrant communities are targeted.

ARREST

The artists in this section highlight the complex role police officers play in our public consciousness and respond to recent citizen deaths due to encounters with the police. Shaun Leonardo and Carl Pope mobilize the form of the memorial to create a space for a community to grieve lives lost at the hands of the police. Autumn Knight’s performance enacts the moment of arrest, while Josh Begley’s algorithm-driven website visualizes the sites where arrest has resulted in death. Conversely, Danny Giles and Chris Burden focus on the perception of police officers.

PROCESS

Following arrest, a series of procedures associated with due process of the law move a person through the court system and trial process. The artists in this section highlight the complexity and variety of viewpoints that arise through the assignment of guilt or innocence. Sam Gould enlisted comic book artists to illustrate the interrogation process. Andrea Robbins and Max Becher's photographs reveal the entanglement of church and state in the physical space of the court house. Jamal Cyrus examines how the media distorts and influences public opinion.

INCARCERATE

A prisoner's time within carceral institutions is governed by regulations that also extend to their community of family and friends. The artists in this section present perspectives on incarceration from their experiences of being in prison or as the family member of an incarcerated person. Sherrill Roland emphasizes time through the accumulation of marks on a cell wall, while Deana Lawson visualizes time passing in a series of photographs taken during prison visitation hours. In *Men Who Swallow Themselves in Mirrors* (2017), Sable Elyse Smith situates a personal meditation on her relationship with her father within the larger structure of time-based media, the time of the prison, and the frequency with which black masculinity is rendered criminal in moving images.

EXITS

For many, exiting the physical structures of prison does not equal freedom. Rather, the institutions of the courtroom, jail, and prison are the physical manifestation of a system that still governs a criminalized person's life even after they leave these spaces. Artists Gregory Sale and Laurie Jo Reynolds work with people who have histories of incarceration to reframe their experiences and prepare them for the future. Tirtza Even collaborates with people who were tried as adults when they were teenagers and sentenced to life in prison; similarly Sarah Ross and Damon Locks worked with older adults who were given long-term sentences. Both scenarios mean that the incarcerated person likely will die in prison before the terms of their sentences will be considered for parole. Artists Richard Kamler, Mark Menjivar, Luis Camnitzer, and the collaborative Lucky Pierre lay bare the reality of the death penalty by using the last meal and final words of executed men as materials for their artworks. The exhibition ends with the extraordinary story of Anthony Papa, who leveraged his artwork to secure his release from prison.