

INCARCERATION NATION

THE US PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

December 14, 2018 - February 10, 2019





ReflectSpace
Downtown Central Library

222 E. Harvard St.
Glendale, CA 91205
Mon-Thurs 9 am - 10 pm
Fri-Sat 9 am - 6 pm
Sun 12 pm - 6 pm
818-548-2021
reflectspace@glendaleca.gov

INCARCERATION NATION

THE US PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

December 14, 2018 - February 10, 2019

Artists

Josh Begley
Alyse Emdur
Ara Oshagan
Shiela Pinkel
Mark Strandquist
Jack Morris
David Williams

Curators

Ara & Anahid Oshagan

Cover: Pelican Bay SuperMax State Prison, California
from *Prison Map* by Josh Begley

INCARCERATION NATION **THE US PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

ReflectSpace gallery is launching its first exhibit exploring issues around the criminal justice system in the U.S. Titled, Incarceration Nation: the US Prison Industrial Complex, the artwork aims to highlight the prison industrial complex and brings together works by contemporary artists, collaborations, archives, prisoner-made art, and technology to speak to these statistics in unexpected ways.

The statistics of the U.S. prison system are staggering. While the US has 4.4% of the world's population, the prison system houses 22% of the world's prisoners. It is by far the highest of any industrialized nation in the world—5 times higher than Canada and Europe and 4 times higher than Mexico. On any given day nearly 2.3 million people are held in more than 6,000 incarceration facilities across the country. That comes to 1 in every 100 adults. There are 6 million people on probation or parole and 70 million with criminal records.

The cost of all this to taxpayers: nearly \$80 billion per year.

Touching on issues as diverse as prison geography and prisoner-made portraits, letters and images from inside, art by the formerly incarcerated, resistance-art and virtual reality (VR) installation, *Incarceration Nation* subverts normative behind-the-prison-bars imagery to bring a more nuanced and collaborative consideration of the cost of our massive and brutal Prison Industrial Complex.

Artists in *Incarceration Nation*: Josh Begley, Alyse Emdur, Ara Oshagan, Shiela Pinkel, Mark Strandquist, Jack L. Morris and David Williams. Also on display will be a virtual reality experience of incarceration produced in collaboration with teens in juvenile hall.

Incarceration Nation is indebted to the work of Pete Brook and his exhibit "*Prison Obscura* (2014-16) Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Hurford Center for the Arts, Haverford College" for inspiration and direction.

PRISON LANDSCAPES

ALYSE EMDUR

Prison Landscapes is a monumental collection of photographs of prison inmates representing themselves in front of visiting room backdrops. Such backdrops, often painted by talented inmates, are used within the prisons as portrait studios. As inmates and their visitors pose for photos in front of these idealized landscapes they pretend, for a brief moment, that they are someplace else. The photographs are given to these visitors as gifts to take home and remember the faces of their loved ones while they are incarcerated.

Prison Landscapes explores this little known and largely physically inaccessible genre of painting and portraiture seen only by inmates, visitors, and prison employees. Created specifically for escape and self-representation, the idealized paintings of tropical beaches, fantastical waterfalls, mountain vistas, and cityscapes invite sitters to perform fantasies of freedom.

Prison Landscapes offers viewers a rare opportunity to see America's incarcerated population, not through the usual lens of criminality, but through the eyes of inmate's loved ones. The collection was inspired by a photograph I found of myself at age five posing in front of a tropical beach scene while visiting my brother in prison. Since discovering this first portrait in my own family album in 2005, I have invited hundreds of prisoners to send me photographs for inclusion in this collection.



Woodbourne Correctional Facility, New York, 2005

Alyse Emdur is an interdisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles, California. Her drawings, paintings, videos, and photography based projects use earnest humor to face loneliness, existential crisis, social struggle and the desire to escape. In 2013, Emdur published the acclaimed photography book "Prison Landscapes". Her work has been featured in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Los Angeles Review of Books, Artforum.com, Huffington Post, the Atlantic, BBC News, Wired Magazine, Art in America, Modern Painters, Cabinet Magazine, Vrij Nederland Magazine, Art Papers Magazine, and Foam Magazine. Emdur is a graduate of the Cooper Union and holds an MFA from the University of Southern California. She currently teaches Photography History at Chaffey College and Drawing at California State University, Long Beach.



H. Lee (6-11-09) 2

Received your letter today dated 5/23/09. Thank you for taking time to write me. Love to have a copy of the book. It must be paperback though...

People do often forget we inmates are people, not crazed serial killers. We have families, children, hopes and dreams. Most of us just made mistakes and bad choices.

I really appreciate you seeing me as a human. Me myself, by the way, a kind, caring person who misses my family. My three sons are growing to men without me. My youngest will graduate High School in 2012... Proud of the men they're becoming without me.

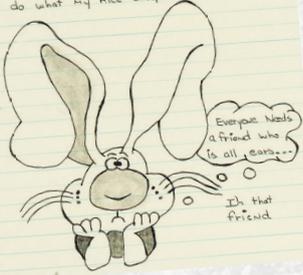
I'm going to include a couple poems, you might want to use them in some way...

And a little of my art work here you get a laugh you know Lee, out of all the things I've lat, I miss my mind the most. ☺ smile

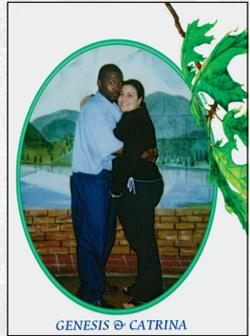
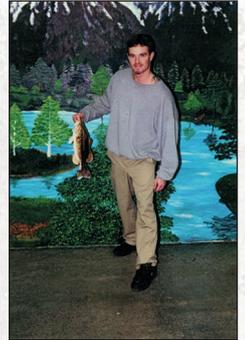
what reason is here convinces me that society is wrong when it throws away the Key. Penitentiaries in this country are little more than workhouses; the human beings inside these walls often lose whatever remaining fragile humanity that they had left when they entered

when you hear stories like stories of hope and inspiration and amazing turnarounds... lety considers the men who populate prisons as partly one, but not all. They just keep building prisons and ig them... this prison there answer to control is the big re considers. They've killed three inmates since on me with force. Crazyness all around here...

I'll just do what my Rice crispies tell me too.



Polaroids, letters, envelopes from inmates, collected by Alyse Emdur





By Romeo
©2015

*David Earl Williams is an African American artist currently on death row in San Quentin State Prison, where he has been since 1992. Because his mother committed suicide when he was seven and his father was in and out of prison, he spent his youth with relatives who physically and sexually abused him. His only respite from this life was to look at art books in the library and to draw. He was first placed in youth detention in his teens and since he was twenty has almost continuously been incarcerated. He thinks of his artwork as his children, a vehicle for his love, pride in black identity and his concerns. His work can be found in the book *The Art of David Earl Williams*, Lulu.com.*

DAVID WILLIAMS

THE PRISON MAP

JOSH BEGLEY

Prison Map is not a map -- it's a snapshot of the earth's surface, taken at various points throughout the United States.

The United States is the prison capital of the world. This is not news to most people. When discussing the idea of mass incarceration, we often trot out numbers and dates and charts to explain the growth of imprisonment as both a historical phenomenon and a present-day reality.

But what does the geography of incarceration in the US actually look like? *Prison Map* is my attempt to answer that question.

The project came about in a Data Representation class with Jer Thorp at NYU. It begins from the premise that mapping the contours of the carceral state is important. A number of people and organizations have done excellent work in this regard. Among them are the Prison Policy Initiative and Prisoners of the Census. Over the past few years, they have culled together a database of seemingly mundane but hard-to-locate information: the latitude and longitude of every carceral facility in the United States (currently with the exception of WA, WV, WI, and WY). Their locator tool, which aims to identify correctional facilities counted in the 2010 census for the purposes of accuracy and redistricting, is the first database I know of to include state and federal prisons alongside local jails, detention centers, and privately-run facilities.

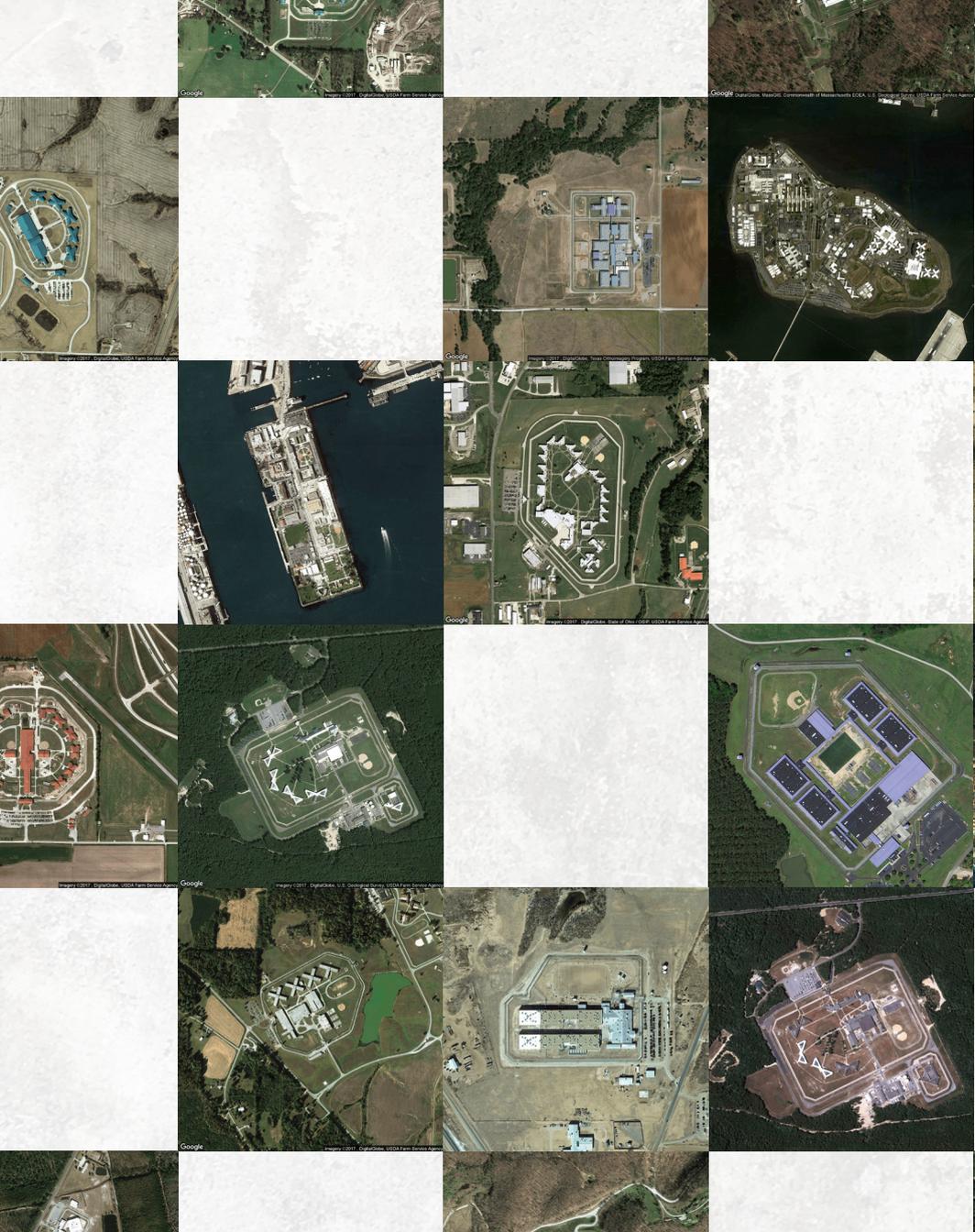
When using the tool, however, it was hard for me to get a sense of volume -- what does it mean to have 5,000 or 6,000 people locked up in the same place? What do these carceral spaces look like? How do they transform (or get transformed by) the landscape around them?

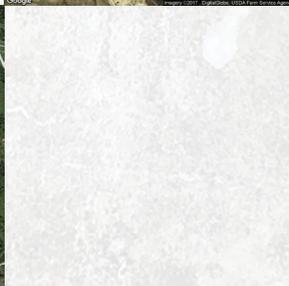
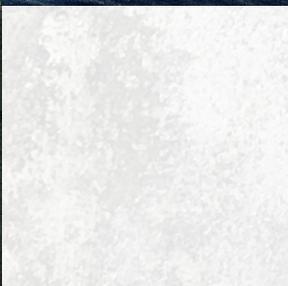
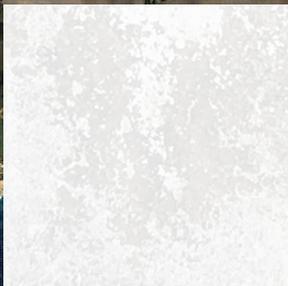
In order to begin answering some of these questions, I started playing with satellite imagery. The Google Maps API allows you to pass any latitude and longitude into its Static Maps service, and it will return an image of that particular location.

Prison Map is an archive of all 4,916 facilities in the US.

Josh Begley is a data artist, app developer and filmmaker based in Brooklyn, New York. He is the creator of *Metadata+*, an iPhone app that tracks United States drone strikes. Begley is the director of two short films, *Concussion Protocol* (2018) and *Best of Luck with the Wall* (2016), both produced by Academy Award-winning director Laura Poitras. His films have screened at the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Met Breuer, the New York Film Festival, and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

Currently the Data Artist-in-Residence at First Look Media, Begley's work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Atlantic*, and at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. He teaches at Columbia Law School.







In 2001, I saw a catalogue of the items that prisoners make in California prisons for PIA, Prison Industrial Authority. They ranged from utilitarian objects that prisoners can use to upscale office furniture. I also found that the California State University system and the California Polytechnic State University systems as well as all government offices, both state and local, are required by law to purchase their office equipment from PIA.



Since 1973, all of my work has been about making visible the invisible in nature and in culture. Initially, I used many light sensitive emulsions and technologies to reveal the infinite potential for form in nature and the landscape of my imagination. After 1980, as I became increasingly concerned about the growth of the military industrial complex, my work included themes related to the nuclear industry, foreign military sales and the destructiveness of war.

Most recently I have done a large body of work about the growth of incarceration in the US and the loss of civil liberties. I think of my work as "Site Unseen" and have titled them using this term: "Site Unseen: Light Works"; "Site Unseen: Incarceration"; "Site Unseen: Museum Guards"; "Site Unseen: The Garment Industry"; etc. In this way, not only do I reference realities we normally can't see, but I invite viewers to imagine their own.

PRISON INDUSTRIAL AUTHORITY
SHIELA PINKEL

A POOR IMITATION OF DEATH ARA OSHAGAN

When the handcuffs are placed on Duc, he is most worried about his dad. Brutal visions are floating in his mind: fierce beating, extension cord whipping, screaming, blood. Duc is not worried about the handcuffs. He is worried about what his dad might do to him when he gets out.

Duc is 16 years old. He is the son of Vietnamese working-class immigrants. Home life is unstable and sometimes violent. When not racked by depression, Duc does well in school. But sometimes he gets into fights and is sent home. There, he must face his dad's wrath. He attempts to run away from home, suicide even. The psychological evaluation is positive, stressing the likelihood of Duc outgrowing his problems.

Duc and his two buddies are cruising down a back alley looking for a car. Duc is driving. They find the car. Suddenly, gunfire explodes from the back seat. Their car slams into the other car. Duc jams into reverse and they flee. No one in either car is hurt.

Handcuffed Duc is still more worried about what his dad might do when he gets out.

It is Duc's first offense. He is held at Juvenile Hall but tried as an adult in adult court. Initial charge is assault with a deadly weapon. Then first-degree attempted murder. No gun shot residue is found on Duc nor any of his prints on the gun. But gang enhancements are added and he is charged with 35 years to life. Duc now starts to worry about the handcuffs.

A 27-year deal is on the table. Tried as an adult he can't talk to his parents who sit within sight in the courtroom. From a payphone, in his holding cell, he calls one of his instructors from Juvenile Hall. What should he do? Accept to go to prison

for 27 years? Wait for another offer? Go to trial?
Duc is 17 years old.

When convicted on all counts and sentenced to 35 years to life, he is no longer worried about his dad. He won't even be up for parole until 2031 when he is 48 years old. And his dad a frail old man—if still alive. His mind is an empty vessel. He is floating away. He thinks: *I am human just like everyone else. I like to read. I like to write. I want people to love me for me. To sit down with me and just get to know me and talk to me. I'm not a lost cause...*

A Poor Imitation of Death is a layered and collaborative narrative about Duc. It is also about Peter, Anait, Liz, Efrain, Nancy, Sandra, Mayra: all youth in Los Angeles' Juvenile Hall and prisons across the state of California. And all collaborators in this telling of their own stories: in their own authentic voices, handwriting and drawings.

Ara Oshagan is a Glendale based photographer and installation artist working internationally focused on disrupted and marginalized communities. Born in Lebanon, his family fled the Civil War and his art reflects the experience of transnational and ambiguous identity. Recent works include "Keepers of the Narrative", focused on the Korean Comfort Women at Reflectspace and iWitness, a large scale public art intervention at the Music Center and Grand Park in downtown Los Angeles. He has spoken about his art extensively at venues such as TEDx in Yerevan, Armenia and The Annenberg Space for Photography's IRIS Night. He is the author of two books, *Fatherland* and *Mirror*. His works are in multiple public and private collections.



Liz, 21 yrs old, Chowchilla State Prison, 2001

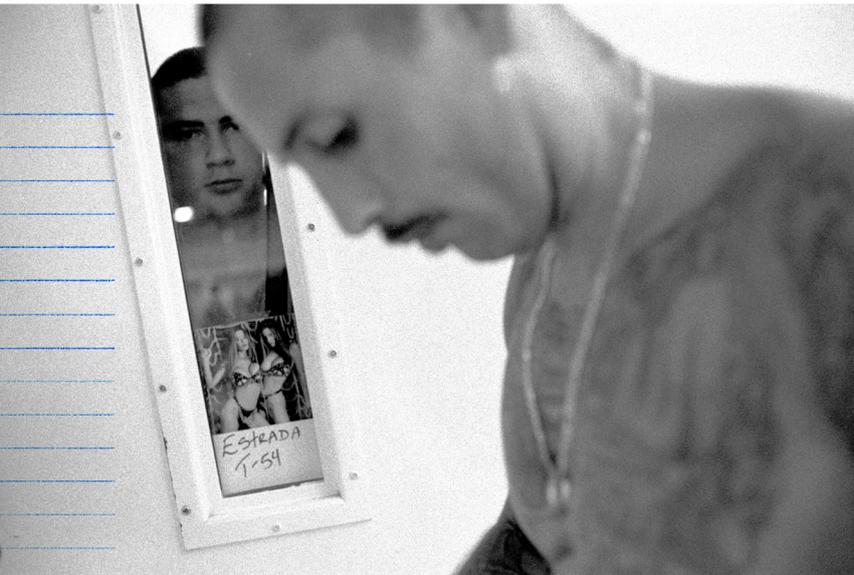
What
What kin
When has
When the
and we
of death

<A New Life>

My life, a tangled, disorganized, web of distrust and lies. No shame, no guilt, just my own welfare. I've looked deep into my father's eyes, bypassing truth, not knowing that he knew the falseness of my words. My crooked days of sin have finally caught up with me - let them take their toll, for nothing, not even Satan himself can break my will to live ~~because~~ ~~the~~ of righteousness; because the evil get what they fear, and what scares me the most is my father's death.

Peter, 19 yrs old, Ironwood State Prison, 2002

comes from nothing?
nd of change comes from solitude?
anything new grown from complacency?
days have been stripped of their meaning and purpose
exist only in physicality life becomes a poor ~~last~~ imitation



JACK L. MORRIS



Bird, 2005

Jack L. Morris is a Latino man, who after being placed in youth authority facilities during his teens, was incarcerated in solitary confinement in Pelican Bay from 1992 - 2015. In order to stay sane he began to write poetry and in 2000 began to make drawings which reflect his vivid imagination and his pride in identifying with Mayan and Aztec culture.

In 2016 he was released to Ironwood Medium Security Prison and a year later he was released from prison. Today he travels throughout the United States talking about his experiences and helping recently released people adjust. The books "The World of Jack L. Morris" and "Incarceration: My Story" can be found at Lulu.com. A play "I'll see you in my dreams" by Oona Hatton, San Jose State University, based on his letters to Sheila Pinkel, will be mounted at San Jose State University in the spring of 2019.



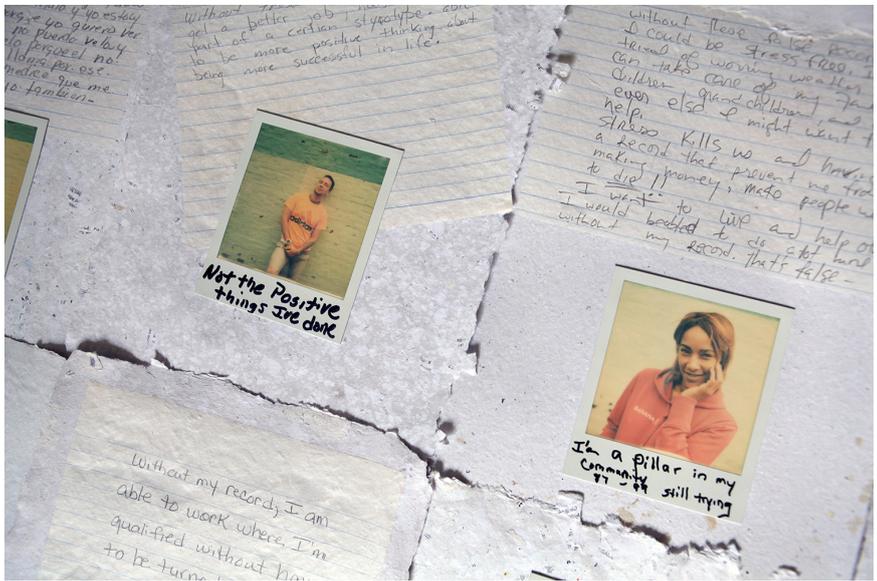
PEOPLE'S PAPER CO-OP
MARK STRANQUIST & COURTNEY BOWLES

Beginning in 2014, the People's Paper Co-op (PPC), and ongoing program at the Village of Arts and Humanities, looks to those in reentry as the policy experts our leaders and systems need to hear from most. Twice a year the program provides paid fellowships to a cohort of formerly incarcerated individuals to create exhibits, media campaigns, and public events focused on destroying stereotypes, transforming social services, and advocating for policies that can keep people free.

This exhibition features an ongoing collaboration with civil rights lawyers (who provide free, community based expungement services) where fellows co-design a series of arts integrated legal clinics. At each clinic, PPC Fellows set up art installations, share their stories, and lead interactive arts workshops that ensured the clinics are as peer-led, trauma informed, and generative as possible. The clinics are made possible through partnerships with Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity and Community Legal Services.

After lawyers work with each clinic participant (beginning the process of clearing or cleaning up their criminal records), participants work with PPC Fellows, to tear up their criminal records and put them in blenders to create new, blank sheets of handmade paper. Participants then embedded writing ("Without my criminal record, I am...") and a Polaroid portrait (a 'reverse mug shot') into the new, blank sheet of handmade paper.

Faith Bartley is the lead fellow.



What if we asked incarcerated youth to be our What might we learn about keeping our schools community safe, free, and whole?

Lift Us Up, Don't Push Us Out! is the newest exhibition and mixed-reality experience by Performing Statistics (a project of ART 180), that connects incarcerated teens at the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center with artists, legal experts, and policy advocates to radically reimagine Virginia's juvenile justice system. This year's exhibition places attention on the school system, highlighting the ways our school system pushes students out and into the school-to-prison pipeline.

This past summer the teens worked with filmmakers, muralists, photographers, poets, radio producers, Richmond's local community print shop Studio Two Three, and others to create a documentary film about the school-to-prison pipeline, interactive audio installations that use human touch to activate stories from youth in the system, and more.

By combining some of the oldest storytelling methods (spoken word) with the most emerging technologies (virtual and augmented reality),

ur teachers? ols and

the teens use a multitude of creative skills to amplify their voices and dream of a more just world.

After this exhibition, the teens' art and advocacy materials will spend the year touring across the state (to schools, museums, police departments, public spaces, and beyond) to spark dialogue and activate communities around the causes, impacts, and alternatives to the school-to-prison-pipeline.

The Performing Statistics team includes: Gina Lyles (Program Manager), Dorothy "Dee Dee" Miller (Advocacy Coordinator), Mark Strandquist (Creative Director), and Trey Hartt (Project Director).

This program is supported by the Robins Foundation's Community Innovation Grant, the Art for Justice Fund, and PolicyLink's Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development Initiative. Atlas exhibitions are supported by the Allan and Margot Blank Foundation.

LIFT US UP, DON'T PUSH US OUT
MARK STRANQUIST & COURTNEY BOWLES



Police officer and youth experience "Pull Us Up, Don't Push Us Out" Virtual Reality program

Mark Strandquist has spent years using art as a vehicle for connecting diverse communities to amplify, celebrate, and power social justice movements.

The media campaigns and immersive exhibitions he directs have helped advocates close prisons, pass laws, train an entire police force (Richmond, VA), and connect the dreams and demands of communities impacted by the criminal justice system with tens of thousands of people.

Mark has received multiple awards, fellowships, national residencies, and reached wide audiences through the NY Times, the Guardian, NPR, the Washington Post, PBS News Hour, VICE, and many others. He currently co-directs the People's Paper Co-op in Philadelphia, PA, and the Performing Statistics project in Richmond, VA. In 2016, he and his partner Courtney Bowles were awarded A Blade of Grass fellowship for Socially Engaged Art and an Open Societies Moving Walls grant to begin the Philadelphia Reentry Think Tank.

More info at: www.nomovement.com

Courtney Bowles is an artist, educator, and community organizer who uses art as a vehicle for connecting diverse communities to amplify, celebrate, and power social justice movements. Her projects combine organizing strategies and urgently needed services, with collaborative, poetic, and performative actions that connect diverse and often antagonistic actors (abolitionists, police departments, service providers, and those impacted by the system). She currently co-directs the People's Paper Co-op and received A Blade of Grass Fellowship for Socially Engaged Art to co-found the Reentry Think Tank in Philadelphia.

ReflectSpace Gallery

Curated by Ara & Anahid Oshagan



ReflectSpace Gallery at Glendale's Downtown Central Library is a new hybrid exhibition space designed to explore and reflect on major human atrocities, genocides and civil rights violations. Immersive in conception, ReflectSpace is both experiential and informative, employing art, technology and interactive media to engage viewers on an emotional and personal level. ReflectSpace highlights the past and present of Glendale's communal fabric and interrogates current-day global human rights issues.



This catalog is made possible with the generous support of the Glendale Library Foundation.



The Glendale Library Foundation believes in expanding knowledge, exploring opportunities, and enriching lives through an outstanding public library. The Glendale Library Foundation was established in 2014 in response to a bequest from the estate of Robert Seiden. Committed to enhancing the Glendale Library's benefits to the community, the Foundation seeks additional donations to support equipment, programs, and special staffing needs in the ReflectSpace gallery and the Library's other inspiring spaces.



Back cover: David Williams, "Self-Portrait", Ink on paper, 2004

