ACTIVITIES

View the portraits of Camilo Cruz and Kristen S. Wilkins. For each image, use your body to mimic the gestures the subjects make.

View the exhibition, and then consider what sounds or music you would choose as a soundtrack for the work. Perform or record the soundtrack in the gallery with a group of friends or classmates.

Jason Metcalf uses portraits of incarcerated individual’s last meals to prompt us to consider the importance of food in our lives. Please draw a picture or take a photo of your favorite meal. Consider the emotional and psychological importance of your choice.


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ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Inside/Outside: Prison Narratives and DESEGREGATE, DISIMANTLING ISOLATION brings together contemporary artists who are examining our nation’s prison system with a special focus on the system of control through the use of solitary confinement and death row; the value of an education in the penal system; and how art has been incorporated into systems of rehabilitation.

QUESTIONS FOR VIEWING

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a term we use to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems. Does the work presented in Inside/Outside alter your understanding of the prison industrial complex in the US? Why or why not?

Essays by student inmates from the California Institute for Women mine personal and universal themes. Pull a short 2-3 sentence excerpt from one of the essays and write a short reaction paper to it.

Audio recordings of the women reading excerpts from their essays accompany the written work in the exhibition. After listening to the recordings, write a short reaction to the impact of reading and listening to the women’s writings. Was one media more impactful to you? Why?

Confiscated objects were provided by Henry Diaz. What is the significance of these objects in relationship to the work on view in Inside/Outside: Prison Narratives?

A number of artists mine the death penalty in their work. Compare and contrast the work of two of these artists: Jason Metcalf, Amy Elkins, and Alyse Emdur.

Sheila Pinkel looks at the system of production of material goods in the US prison system. Have you seen any of those products in your classroom or your home?

Alyse Emdur uses authentic artifacts from prison artists along with authentic painted backdrops. Consider authenticity in her work. Why do you think it’s important for Emdur to use the “real thing” in her installation?

Sandow Birk paints bucolic California landscapes in the style of early 19th century paintings of the American West. Included in his idealized landscapes are depictions of prisons found in California. Why do you think Birk paints in this way and frames the architecture of the prison grounds in the manner he does?

Mabel Negrete’s work occupies The Project Space. Negrete identifies as an artist and founder of CNS – the Counter Narrative Society. She also cites “collaborators” in her work. After viewing her installation, who do you think she’s referring to as “collaborators” and why do you think it’s important for her to credit those who collaborate? Do you think she considers you the viewer as a collaborator? Why or why not?

Much of the work presented in Inside/Outside is photographic in nature. Why do you think photography is such common medium for artists looking at incarceration?

ESSAY PROMPTS

Write a well-researched paper on the history of incarceration in the US looking at one specific population. Choose to focus on our aging inmate population, LGBTQ-identified inmates, or youth offenders.

Research AB-109 and write a summary of the bill and the ramifications to communities inside and outside of prison walls. Do you think that AB-109 was a just bill? Why or why not? Include your opinion in the summary.