

MSU BROAD

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The MSU Broad Art Museum Presents Exhibitions Addressing Mass Incarceration

East Lansing, MI – The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad Art Museum) is opening six exhibitions addressing issues of mass incarceration in the US during the fall of 2021. The roster of exhibitions includes the critically acclaimed traveling exhibition *Per(Sister): Incarcerated Women of the United States*, which originated at the Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, and an accompanying major exhibition, *Free Your Mind: Art + Incarceration in Michigan*. It also includes *Silenced: Voices from Solitary*, an exhibition presented in partnership with Zealous, featuring stories of those who have experienced solitary confinement firsthand, and two exhibitions highlighting work created by youth through the Youth Arts Alliance, *Exposure to Light: Pinhole Photography* by youth residing in correctional facilities and *Making Space: Designing Youth Futures* by youth aging out of the foster care system. An exhibition entitled *Connections, New Beginnings: Artists in Transition* featuring the work of artists in the Linkage Project, a program of the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) that affirms the creativity of adults who have returned from incarceration, will open across the street at the MSU Broad Art Lab.

An opening celebration for all of these exhibitions will take place on Sept. 9, 2021.

“As we emerge into a ‘new normal’ from this global pandemic that made evident that we, as a society, are interdependent and ‘only as strong as the weakest,’ it is important to build

awareness around the challenges faced by our most vulnerable communities. Poverty, trauma, substance use dependence, experiencing sexual violence, and experiencing caregiver violence are, in part, complex issues impacting the 2 million individuals and 52,000 youth currently in the US incarceration system,” said Mónica Ramírez-Montagut, director of the MSU Broad Art Museum and former director of the Newcomb Art Museum. “Our fall exhibitions explore the root causes of mass incarceration in the US, a country with one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, and the conditions before, during and after encounters with the justice system as expressed by impacted individuals themselves. These stories, once overlooked, are stories of introspection, survival and resilience.”

Per(Sister) explores mass incarceration in the US through art inspired by the interviews of thirty formerly incarcerated women of Louisiana—the state known as the “Prison Capital of the World.” Co-curated in partnership with formerly incarcerated women, *Per(Sister)* seeks to build awareness of the crucial issues that impact women before, during, and after incarceration.

“The themes and topics addressed in *Per(Sister)* are not only as timely as they were when they were presented at Newcomb, but are even more urgent in a post-COVID world,” said Miriam Taylor, interim director at the Newcomb Art Museum. “The necessary reminder of what women endure before, during, and after interaction with the carceral system in America is a critical issue—one that deserves revisiting as we collectively imagine and act to create a better future.”

The exhibition shares stories of loss, hope, despair, triumph, and persistence in a variety of forms, demonstrating simultaneously the universal struggles faced by communities impacted by incarceration and the personal resilience of each woman featured. This presentation will also include follow-up from several *per(sisters)* to highlight changes in their lives since the exhibition first opened at the Newcomb Art Museum in 2019.

Per(Sister) was curated under the leadership of Mónica Ramírez-Montagut with curatorial assistance from Laura Blereau and production assistance from Miriam Taylor. It was developed in equal partnership with *per(sisters)* Syrita Steib and DolfINETTE Martin with additional support provided by Operation Restoration and Women with a Vision in New Orleans. For this exhibition at the MSU Broad Art Museum, curatorial assistance is provided by Dalina A. Perdomo Álvarez, curatorial assistant, and Jasmine Jordan. Support for this exhibition is provided by the Eli and Edythe Broad endowed exhibitions fund.

Presented in tandem with *Per(Sister)*, *Free Your Mind* presents artwork created by individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated in Michigan. The exhibition explores the fundamental issues that shape conversations around incarceration today, and invites us to consider the role art-making plays in prisons as a liberating force. It centers on four key topics of inquiry: Michigan’s length of sentencing and overcrowding in prisons; the impact of incarceration on women; youth incarceration; and the dangers of COVID-19.

Free Your Mind is co-curated by Steven L. Bridges, senior curator and director of curatorial affairs at the MSU Broad Art Museum, and Janie Paul, senior curator and co-founder of the

Prison Creative Arts Project at the University of Michigan. Support for this exhibition is provided by the Eli and Edythe Broad endowed exhibitions fund.

The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad Art Museum) connects people with art through experiences that inspire curiosity and inquiry. Presenting exhibitions and programs that engage diverse communities around issues of local relevance and global significance, the MSU Broad Art Museum advances the University values of quality, inclusion, and connectivity. Opened on November 10, 2012, the museum was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid and named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift.

Michigan State University has been working to advance the common good in uncommon ways for more than 150 years. One of the top research universities in the world, MSU focuses its vast resources on creating solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, while providing life-changing opportunities to a diverse and inclusive academic community through more than 200 programs of study in 17 degree-granting colleges.

Image: *Per(Sister): Incarcerated Women of Louisiana*, installation view at the Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 2019.

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