

# Lecture 1: Art in Prison: Theory & Practice

## Introduction to the course

This class is designed to introduce students to an area of contemporary art often called, Socially Engaged Art (Social Art Practice, Social Practice, etc.) and the circumstances surrounding Prisons in America.

After investigating each individually, we analyze how Socially Engaged Art is being used in prisons to provide therapy and life enhancement to those incarcerated while providing advocacy, bringing attention to injustices within the system.

This lecture gives an introduction into the topic and what we will be examining. You are required to write a one page annotation of the lecture to show you understand the intention and process of the class.

Readings are designed to support and expand the lecture and topics reviewed.

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## Introduction to the course

We use this website ([www.barbarayontzatstac.com](http://www.barbarayontzatstac.com)) as a source for:

1. Video messages from me
2. Weekly lectures and topics
3. Readings
4. Videos or other links
5. Assignments
6. Grading rubrics

The website is set up in three columns. The far left column is composed of links to artists, articles, projects, etc. to support you. This column will become valuable as you find your area of interest and subject for final project. Assignments are not located in that column.

The middle column is composed of weekly lectures and links we would be viewing if this were an on-site class.

The far right column has your homework, readings, links, etc. for the following week.

# Lecture 1: Art in Prison: Theory & Practice

## Introduction to the course

Your assignment for each week is located in the far right column. In most instances you will annotate the lecture and all links to articles.

In this class, an annotation is basically a written document (usually ½ page to 1 page depending on the instructions) that summarizes the main points presented.

Your annotations will be composed in one document and emailed to me in a file with your name like this:

Yourname\_week1

You can send it in GoogleDocs, Word or Pages. I cannot edit a PDF file. NO PDF files will be accepted.

# Lecture 1: Art in Prison: Theory & Practice

## Why this Course exists.

As I mentioned in my video link, I was asked to design this course by our Provost, Dr. Murray in 2014. At that time I was teaching in the Art Department at STAC but had been also working with a group of men at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution in Nashville, TN since the summer of 2013.

As I split my time between NY and TN, teaching at STAC and working in the prison, I became more and more interested in issues related to how and why so many people are incarcerated in this country and how I, an artist, could help.

So, the course is a natural outcome of my own interests and I hope you will find it interesting as well.

Because the website has been used previously, it is in constant revision. Your lectures, links and instructions will be posted the weekend prior to the week we begin. Do not plan to work ahead, except on longer papers and projects. The site may not be updated appropriately.

# Lecture 1: Art in Prison: Theory & Practice

## Why this Course exists.

So, here is a little taste of what we will be discussing:

1. A short history of Art, focusing on the social aspects.
2. The beginnings of what we call Social Practice Art.
3. A short history of Prisons, including an examination of race, class and gender.
4. Contemporary artists and educational theories that work with special populations.
5. Social realities, including the criminal justice system, that set the stage for incarceration.
6. Particular ways the arts can help.
7. Other ways to help.

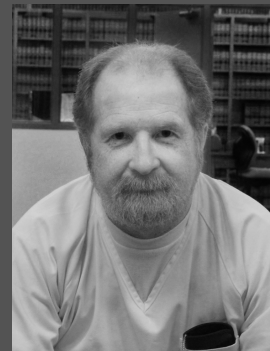
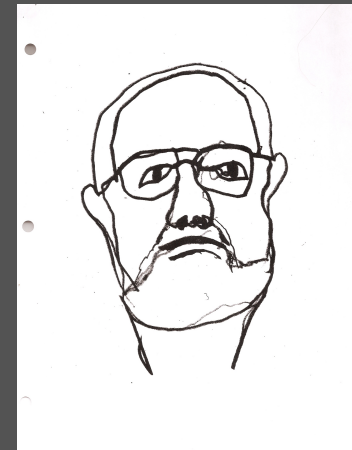
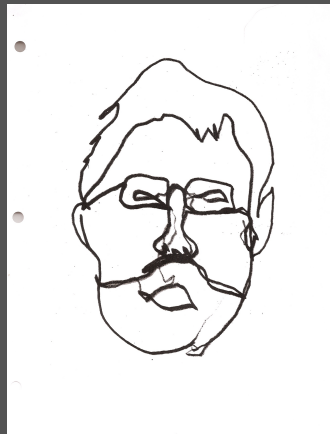
# Lecture 1: Art in Prison: Theory & Practice

## First thing

The first thing I've asked you to do is to answer some questions regarding our subject. These will be sent to me with your assignment this week.

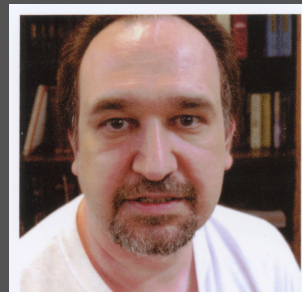
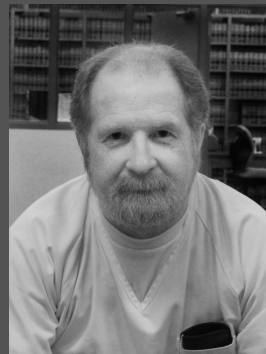
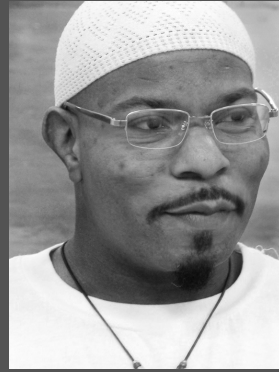
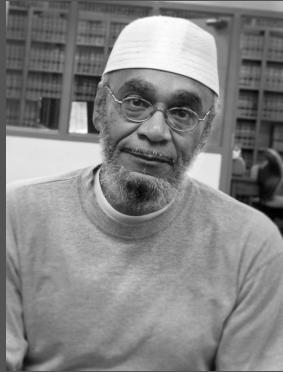
Next week I will introduce you to the men in my art class at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution.

In fact, here are some contour line drawings we did in class several years ago.



Here is an introduction to the project I'm working on:

This project began with a simple idea; four artist educators together with a group of student artists would collaborate with a group of 11 prisoners to create artworks for the period of the summer. It has lasted 6 years.





Based on the idea of reciprocal education, two collaborative projects emerged from the first discussions between insiders and outsiders:

1. Surrogate Projects &
2. Collaborative Drawing Projects

Surrogates consisted of a list of activities the men in Unit 2 identified as things they would like to do if they were able to be outside. The list was then distributed among those in our outside group and we enacted them. Most activities are documented in photographs.

Request:  
*Research the cost of  
incarceration compared to  
education.*

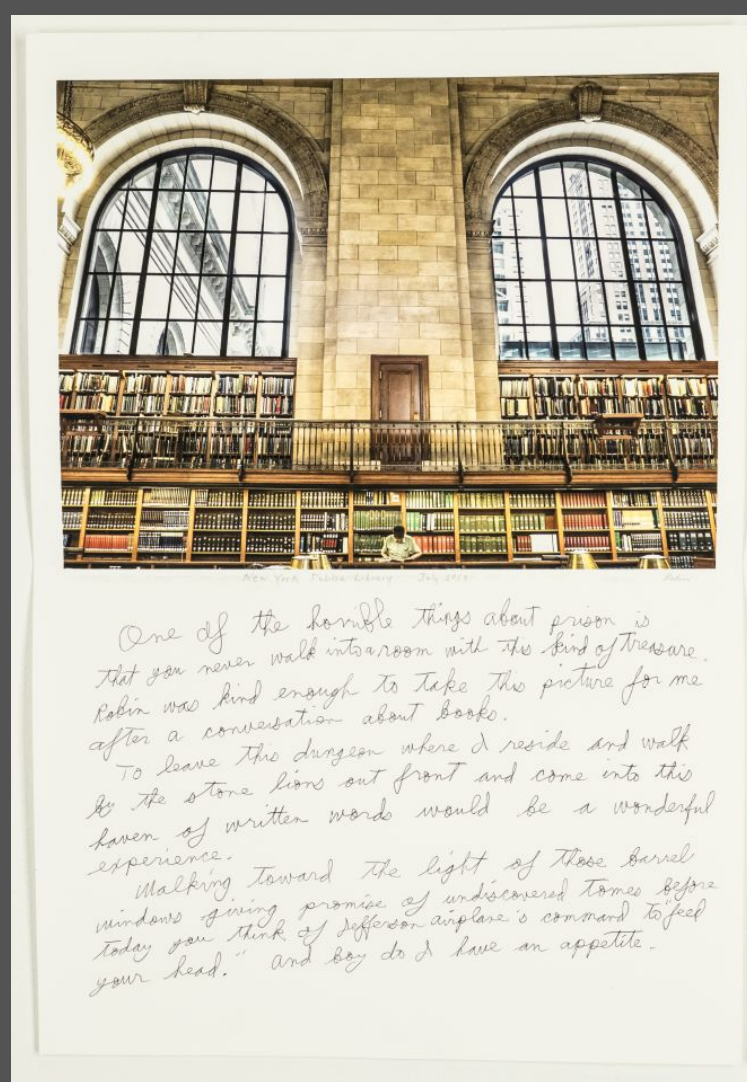
Holly Carden and Josh  
Ungurait Surrogate project  
for David Duncan: Death  
Row Fact Sheet







*Look at the night sky.  
I haven't seen the night sky in 25 years.*  
Robin Paris for Harold Wayne Nichols



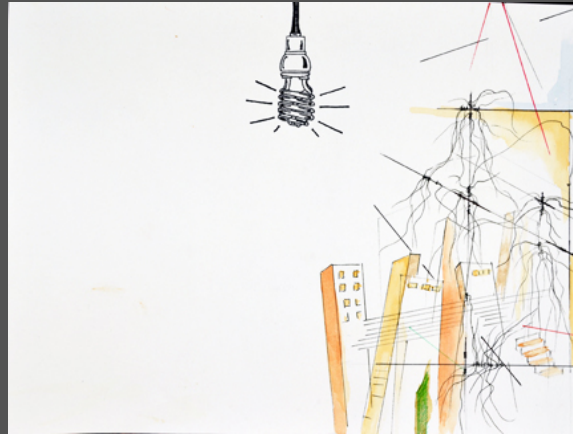
*Go to a library and enjoy the books.*  
Robin Paris for Gary Cone (Unit 2 librarian)

## The other project we did together was: 2. Collaborative Drawing

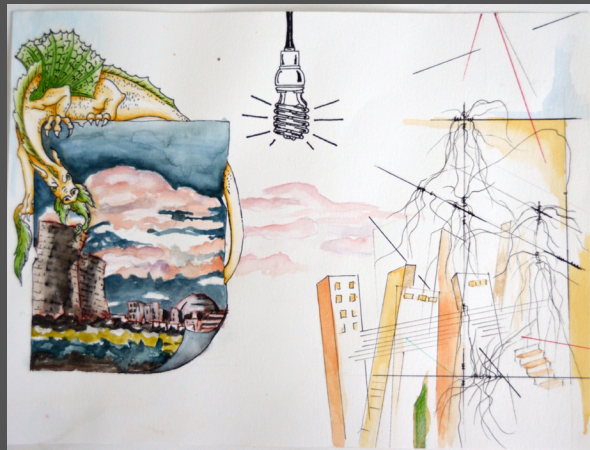


Harold Wayne Nichols presented me with this drawing.

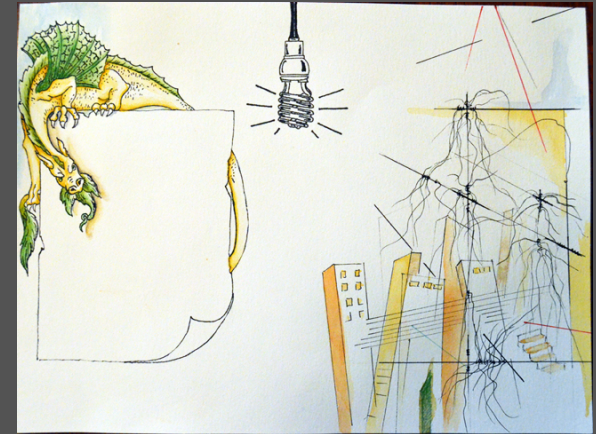
## The other project we did together was: 2. Collaborative Drawing



I added the buildings and lines radiating off his light bulb.



I responded.



Wayne added the dragon and page.



The finished drawing. Wayne wrote:  
*Even though Barbara and I never discussed what the other would or had done. I do not believe the piece could have turned out better if we had collaborated directly.*

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We have had a number of art exhibitions of this work, including one here at STAC in 2016.

I have also given many lectures and presentations to various organizations about this project. In 2014 Professor Chayet (Criminal Justice) and I co-presented on this topic at a conference at Molloy College.

While my career has been in the Arts, working with those who are incarcerated has brought me into direct contact with many social issues affecting people with few resources.

Many social justice issues such as:

Education

Law enforcement

Equity of resources

Mental health (or mental illness)

Inequality

Racism

Sexism

And more.

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Because this class is rather large for an on-line class. And because I like to have students doing research and presentation, I will be dividing up the class into working groups at about the third week.

Doing collaborative research means that everyone doesn't have to read everything. You will be responsible for some of the readings and then share with others.

More about this as we go.

Then, as for assignments. Just to reiterate— you will have readings, links, videos or other information to read and annotate every week. You will usually have a lecture from me as well.

Twice in the semester, you will compile these annotations into a more cohesive analysis paper based on a question or issue I give you.

The final assignment is a project and paper you will share with your group.



## Lecture 1: Art in Prison: Theory & Practice

Throughout the class you will learn more about these men, and some others who have left our group, and including several who have left death row.

So, now you have a small taste of what we are doing and I hope some understanding of our process.

On-line courses can be challenging if you haven't done one.

The biggest problem students have is in not keeping up. Sometimes because we are not face-to-face each week, you can forget you even have the class. You will have an assignment every single week.

Check your website on Monday morning and your email on Friday or Saturday.

Make sure to review your syllabus and course outline.

Welcome and have a great first week.