

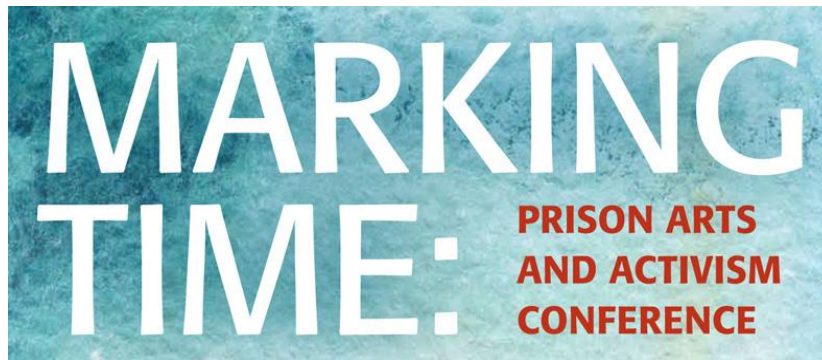
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Note: Photos related to this release may be downloaded from:

<http://irw.rutgers.edu/programs/199>

Institute for Research on Women to host Groundbreaking Prison Arts Conference and Multi-Site Art Exhibition, October 8-10, 2014



(New Brunswick, NJ, October 6, 2014) In August 2009, Ojore Lutalo was released from a New Jersey state prison after serving a 28 year sentence, including two decades in solitary confinement. During the years of his incarceration, Lutalo turned to art to help him get through the seemingly endless days and nights. Using text and images clipped from newspapers, Lutalo created a moving series of collages depicting his life behind bars. Stark and impressive, his art reveals the vital importance of creative expression and art-making for the millions serving time in United States prisons. Lutalo's art will be displayed as part of a multi-site art exhibit held in conjunction with the Institute for Research on Women's *Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism Conference*, in New Brunswick, NJ on **October 8 – 10, 2014**

Lutalo's use of art to communicate is not an exception. From photographs taken in visiting rooms to hand-etched illustrations in prisoner-written newsletters, art is an important vehicle for incarcerated people to convey their experiences. Lutalo is not be the only artist whose work is displayed as part of the multi-site exhibition, which can be viewed at **Alfa Art Gallery, Rutgers Art Library, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Heldrich Hotel, New Brunswick Public Library, and the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers** for most of the month of October. Other contributing artists include Dean Gillespie, an artist exonerated through the work of the University of Cincinnati's Innocence Project after serving 20 years in prison for crimes he did not commit. Gillespie creates miniaturia, and four of his pieces, including a model of a dinette created from cigarette wrappers, will be on display in the Rutgers Art Library. Jesse Krimes, another formerly incarcerated artist, is displaying his epic *Apokaluptein: 16389067*, a work created from smuggled prison bed-sheets and newspaper clippings, at the Zimmerli Museum at Rutgers-New Brunswick. The New Brunswick Public Library will show photography by Ron Levine, whose work focuses on a rapidly increasing demographic group among prison populations – the elderly and aging – as well as a

selection from Family Crisis Services' *More Than a Rap Sheet: The Real Stories of Incarcerated Women*, featuring photographs of incarcerated women in Maine, accompanied by their poetry. Alfa Art Gallery will host *Prison Obscura*, presenting rarely seen photography created by prisoners, the Heldrich Hotel will show the abstract paintings of formerly incarcerated artists Jaso Nomo and Gilberto Rivera, and artist Mark Strandquist will install his public art project *Windows from Prison* on the Eagleton Lawn at Rutgers as part of the program.

In addition to art on display at six locations across Rutgers campus and the City of New Brunswick, the program will include two days of film screenings in the Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Conference Room (162 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, NJ).

“Art serves as an expressive tool, a means of political protest, and a creative survival strategy for many who are incarcerated,” said Dr. Nicole R. Fleetwood, the conference lead organizer who is writing a book about art made in prisons. “It also helps to challenge the dehumanization of the incarcerated. There is a huge gap between the dominant public perception of prisoners as lacking in value and their humanity and productivity. Prisoners are individuals who dream and envision brighter futures and who are cherished by families on the outside.” The conference accompanying the art exhibit includes three days of panels, workshops, lectures, poetry readings, performances, films, and presentations by artists, activists, scholars, and community groups. Reginald Dwayne Betts, poet and author of *A Questions of Freedom: A Memoir of Learning, Survival, and Coming of Age in Prison* and *Shahid Reads His Own Palm*, will give the keynote address.

The conference and exhibitions are free and open to the public. Please see the attached calendar for the *Marking Time* conference and exhibitions schedule. For more information, visit irw.rutgers.edu or email the Institute for Research on Women at irw@rci.rutgers.edu.

This program is made possible in part by a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations in this program do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. This program is also made possible by the generous support of the Puffin Foundation Ltd. *Prison Obscura* is a traveling exhibition curated by Pete Brook and made possible with the support of the John B. Hurford '60 Center for the Arts and Humanities and Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery at Haverford College, Haverford, PA. Organized by the Institute for Research on Women, the conference and multi-site exhibition co-sponsors include: Alfa Art Gallery; American Friends Service Committee's Prison Watch Program; Art Library-Rutgers New Brunswick; Associate Campus Dean of Douglass Residential College; Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities; Department of American Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick; Heldrich Hotel; Department of History, Rutgers-New Brunswick; Institute for Women and Art, Mountainview Program; New Brunswick Public Library; Office of the Chancellor of Rutgers-New Brunswick; Office of the Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers-New Brunswick; Prison Creative Arts Project at the University of Michigan; PUEG Center at UNAM (National University of Mexico); Rutgers-Camden Center for the Arts; School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers-Newark; William James Association; Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers-New Brunswick.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1) On Wed, Oct 8 at 7:30pm, the keynote address will be delivered by **Reginald Dwayne Betts**, poet and author of *A Question of Freedom* (Avery, 2009) and the poetry collection *Shahid Reads His Own Palm* (Alice James Books, 2010). Betts was sentenced to an adult prison at the age of 16; during his nine year sentence, he began writing poetry. Since his release, he has garnered many awards for poetry and has been an advocate for reforming juvenile incarceration and sentencing. Betts is a 2010 Soros Justice Fellow and 2011 Radcliffe Fellow. He is currently completing his J.D. at Yale Law School.
- 2) On Friday night, **Women On Our Own**, a Connecticut-based a capella group of formerly incarcerated women will perform.
- 3) **Dean Gillispie** will speak on Thursday, October 9. Gillispie spent 20 years in a prison in Ohio (wrongful conviction) before being exonerated through legal advocacy by the University of Cincinnati's Innocence Project. While in prison, he began creating incredible miniatures of Americana and nostalgia: <http://lqreportingtoyou.com/index.php?page=display&id=143>
- 5) The **Judy Dworin Performance Project** will offer a dance workshop on Thursday, Oct 9. The dance group has been developing its outreach to those affected by incarceration since 2005. Its programming began with a yearly performance residency at York Correctional Institution for women and now also includes a weekend for mothers and their children at York; an in-school and after school outreach to children with parents in prison including a small high school mentoring component; and, most recently, professional arts training and performance opportunities for women returning to the community from prison
- 4) **Ojore Lutalo** spent over 20 years in solitary confinement in NJ. While in prison, he began to make collages using newspaper coverage of mass incarceration and prisoners' rights. For many years, he sent these collages to the American Friends Service Committee's Prison Watch Program. Eventually the nonprofit was able to get him released. He has a collection of hundreds of collages made during this time and that he continues to make.
- 5) **Michelle Handelman** will screen her amazing video installation *Beware the Lilly Law* about the experience of transgender prisoners in U.S. prisons: <http://www.michellehandelman.com/performance/lilly-law>
- 6) **Jaso Nomo**, a formerly incarcerated artist, drove his large paintings from South Carolina to have them included in the exhibit. His work will be on display at the Heldrich Hotel
- 7) Curator and artist **David Adler** will present from his prison backdrop and prison collection as well as his experimental video, *Potlatch* about an arts and dance festival of the same name at a prison in Colorado: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/arts/design/the-charged-art-of-prison-paintings.html?pagewanted=all>
- 8) **Mountainview Program**, a group of Rutgers students who have spent time in NJ youth detention centers for felony convictions, will perform *Tales from the Cell* on Friday, October 10 [in the same program as Women on Our Own]

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9) On Thurs, Oct 9, photographer **Deborah Luster** will speak on her gorgeous photo series *One Big Self: Prisoners of Louisiana*:

http://deborahluster.com/one_big_self

10) Artist **Jesse Krimes'** *Apokaluptein:16389067* at the Zimmerli Museum. The collage consists of 39 panels (prison bed sheets), made over a 70 month period using confiscated materials:

<http://www.zimmerlimuseum.rutgers.edu/machaver-gallery/jesse-krimes-apokaluptein16389067-0#.VC7oe0tqwds>

11) **Mark Strandquist** will install his public art project *Windows from Prison* on the Eagleton Lawn at Rutgers as part of the program:

<http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/07/23/windows-without-prison-bars/?php=true&type=blogs&r=0>

Art Exhibition Dates:

Alfa Art Gallery

Prison Obscura Exhibition

In collaboration with Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery and Campus Exhibitions and curator Matthew Seamus Callinan

Dates: Oct 7, 2014 - Nov 1, 2014

Gallery Hours: Tues- Sat 11am-6pm

Free Admission

Art Library-Rutgers

Paintings, backdrops and photographs by a range of artists

Dates: Oct 1, 2014 – Oct 31, 2014

Hours: Mon - Thurs 8:30 am - 10 pm; Fri - 8:30 am - 5 pm; Sat 10 am - 5 pm; Sun 2 pm - 10 pm

Free Admission

Eagleton Lawn

Mark Strandquist's *Windows from Prison* (public art exhibition)

Dates: Oct 7 - 26, 2014

Hours: all day

Free Admission

Heldrich Hotel

Paintings, prints, and photographs by a range of artists

Dates: Oct 1- Oct 31, 2014

Gallery Hours: Normal business hours

Free Admission

New Brunswick Public Library

Paintings, lithographs, and photographs by a range of artists

Dates: Oct 1-Oct 26, 2014

Hours: Mon – Thurs 10 am to 9 pm; Fri & Sat 10 am to 5 pm; Sun 1 pm to 5 pm

Free Admission



Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers-New Brunswick

Jesse Krimes: Apokaluptein:16389067

Dates: Sept 2, 2014- Dec 14, 2014

Museum Hours: Tues- Fri 10am-4:30pm; Sat-Sun noon-5pm; Art After Hours: First Tuesdays (open to the public), Tues, Oct 7, 5pm-9pm

Free Admission