

Newcomb Art Museum's exhibition 'Per(Sister)' opens in New York

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'Per(Sister)' presents works from more than 30 artists based on the personal stories of 30 formerly and currently incarcerated women. It aims to look beyond the statistics and bring their stories to light as a way to comprehend the injustice of the criminal justice system in the U.S. (Image courtesy of the Ford Foundation Gallery)

Continuing the success of its New Orleans run, Newcomb Art Museum's exhibition [*Per\(Sister\): Incarcerated Women of Louisiana*](#) - which was [awarded the 2019 museum exhibition of the year by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities](#) - will celebrate its recent opening at the Ford Foundation Gallery in New York City with an opening reception on Monday, March 2 at 6 p.m.

The exhibition, which was on view at Newcomb Art Museum in spring 2019 and at the Tulane School of Public Health in fall 2019, explores one of the most critical issues of inequality and injustice currently facing the nation through the lens of a population often overlooked. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, Louisiana currently has the 19th-highest rate of incarcerated women in the world.

"We are grateful to the Newcomb Art Museum, persisters, partners and artists in the exhibition

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who give voice to the crisis of the carceral state of this nation and specifically highlight the impact of incarceration on women,” says Ford Foundation gallery director Lisa Kim. “Female incarceration gives an unfortunate summary of the multiplicity of injustices and the deep generational impact on the most vulnerable communities.”

Per(Sister) originated at the museum under the leadership of director Monica Ramirez-Montagut, assisted by curator Laura Blereau. It was developed in equal partnership with Syrita Steib and Dolfinette Martin with additional support provided by Operation Restoration and Women with a Vision.

The exhibition presents works from more than 30 artists based on the personal stories of 30 formerly and currently incarcerated women as interviewed by museum staff. *Per(Sister)* aims to look beyond the statistics and bring their stories to light as a way to comprehend the injustice of the criminal justice system in the U.S.

“This is the result of what happens when directly impacted women are supported in leadership roles,” says Martin. “Not only are we telling stories of trauma but we are living breathing proof of what healing women looks like. Our ability to connect through pain has allowed us to soar to heights of triumph that systems thought impossible!”

The exhibition is divided into four sections that explore the causes of female incarceration, the impact of incarcerating mothers, the physical and behavioral toll of incarceration, and the challenges of and opportunities for reentry for formerly incarcerated women.

These themes bring together diverse works — including voice recordings, photographic portraits, informative illustrations, sculptures, paintings, songs, and performances— to create an exhibition that incorporates the voices of the persisters and artists while highlighting statistics collected from the Vera Institute of Justice, Prison Policy Initiative, the Sentencing Project, the Bureau of Justice Statistics and others. Individuals from Tulane’s faculty and students, individuals directly impacted and community stakeholders contributed time and knowledge to the exhibition.

“It is truly an honor for us to be able to share the stories of our most vulnerable communities and bring awareness to their lived experiences,” Ramirez-Montagut said. “Equally important is to showcase the expertise of the more than 100 individuals who participated in the creation of this groundbreaking exhibition which became a platform for civic dialogue and community building. We are tremendously thankful for the Ford Foundation to offer their art gallery as a platform to continue the important work demonstrated in *Per(Sister)*.”

Opened in March 2019 at the Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice in New York City, the Ford Foundation Gallery aims to highlight artwork that wrestles with difficult questions, calls out injustice and points the way toward a fair and just future.

Per(Sister): Incarcerated Women of Louisiana will be on view at the gallery through May 9. For more information, [click here](#).