

Newcomb Art Museum to open exhibition on incarcerated women

January 14, 2019 11:00 AM Barri Bronston

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The Life Quilt, 2018, features the names of 107 women serving life sentences in 2017 in Louisiana and was produced by The Graduates. Full credits can be found at persister.info. (Photo courtesy of Newcomb Art Museum)

An art exhibition that intimately examines the experiences of currently and formerly incarcerated women in Louisiana by sharing stories of loss, hope, despair, survival, triumph and persistence opens Saturday, Jan. 19 at Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University.

Titled [*Per\(Sister\): Incarcerated Women of Louisiana*](#), the exhibition runs through July 6 and features works from more than 30 artists across America, including New Orleans artists MaPó Kinnord, Lee Diegaard, L. Kasimu Harris, Devin Reynolds, Jackie Sumell, Carl Joe Williams, Keith Duncan and Cherice Harrison-Nelson among others.

The exhibition will be accompanied by such [programs](#) as panel discussions, film screenings, interpretive performances and concerts.

Nationwide, women's state prison populations have grown 834 percent over the past 40 years, with Louisiana currently having the 19th highest rate of incarcerated women in the world, according to the Prison Policy Initiative.

"For a museum looking to address social justice issues through the lens of the arts as Newcomb does, and being aware of Louisiana's recent reputation as the 'incarceration capital of the world,' it seems only reasonable to look into the prison industrial complex given that it is one of the most critical aspects affecting our immediate communities," said museum director Monica Ramirez-Montagut.

"The objective of this art exhibition is to informally educate our students and museum visitors on the issues that have made our state infamous and address the tremendous lack of awareness and basic knowledge on the human experience of the justice system."

Per(Sister) seeks to educate and build awareness of the crucial situations arising before, during and after incarceration. Stories are shared in a variety of forms demonstrating the universal struggles faced by communities impacted by incarceration as well as the personal resilience of each woman featured.

The exhibition is divided into four sections that explore the root causes of female incarceration, the impact of incarcerating mothers, the physical and behavioral toll of incarceration and the challenges and opportunities for reentry for formerly incarcerated women. The four themes bring together more than 30 works, including voice recordings, photographic portraits, illustrations, sculptures, paintings, songs and performances, and serve as an entry point into each woman's story.

Per(Sister) was created and developed by the Newcomb Art Museum with consultants Syrita Steib-Martin and Dolfinette Martin of Operation Restoration, a nonprofit group that helps newly released women transition back to society. Women with A Vision, a social justice nonprofit and Andrea Armstrong offered further

support. Tulane School of Architecture students contributed to the design and content of the exhibition.

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Monica Ramirez-Montagut, director of Newcomb Art Museum