

January 16–February 24, 2007

# Captive Audience

25 minute video begins with the date of the inmate's execution, and ends with the meal's contents as listed on the website. The volunteer is shot from above in black and white, with ambient sound retained. Instructions given to the volunteers are minimal: —Please be quiet and respectful. —Eat as much or as little as you want. —Don't look up at the camera. —Don't make loud noises or jiggle the table. —If you are done before the time is up, just sit and wait. —Someone will come get you after 25 minutes. The project starts with meal number 1: T-bone steak, French fries, catsup, Worcestershire sauce, rolls, peach cobbler, and iced tea.

[www.luckypierre.org](http://www.luckypierre.org)

## S.O. Work Group

The S.O. Work Group was formed to study and respond to the recent political and cultural phenomenon of the sex offender. They write: "Recognizing that both sex offenders and the public policy intended to control them are misunderstood, the S.O. Work Group is developing several projects to promote informed and productive dialogue about S.O.s and their classification, registration, and restriction." *Captive Audience* includes two projects by the S.O. Work Group: —S.O. *Bulletin* This is the prototype for a publication planned to give sex offenders and their families a venue for discussing the sex offender categorization and registry, and how it impacts their treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration. S.O. *Bulletin* will be compiled and distributed with the oversight of therapists. —*Where Did They Come From? Where Are They Going?* This introductory workshop will provide facts, analysis and testimony about sex offenders in the US. The workshop takes place at Gallery 400 on February 24, 2pm. (RSVP preferred to [info@sobulletin.org](mailto:info@sobulletin.org).)



## Mary Patten

Through video, photograph and writing, Chicago-based artist and activist Mary Patten has long explored the personal and political spaces shared between people in prison and their lovers and supporters on the outside. She describes her 2007 work *Contraband* as: "A grid of polaroids, drawing, ephemera, hand-written

and 'found' text, all bearing traces of prison visits and correspondence between 1985 and the present. Lists of what is considered 'contraband,' and therefore disallowed from visits, personal packages, and mail—from the predictable (weapons, pornography) to the implausible and absurd (body hair)—combine with more elliptical notions of what is prohibited, or considered dangerous. Unspoken words, self-censored gestures, and withheld touch all work in semi-conscious and unacknowledged ways as the dispersed, peripheral agents of repression."

[www.urn.org/Prisissue/patten.htm](http://www.urn.org/Prisissue/patten.htm)



## Prison Blues®

As the Prison Blues website states, "The Prison Blues® brand was established by Inside Oregon Enterprises, a division of the Oregon Department of Corrections. It was started with a federal government grant funded by drug money seizures, and as a plan to defray incarceration costs in the

state of Oregon. The state conducted a thorough study determining that Oregon Manufacturers would not suffer from a Prison Garment Industry.

The Prison Blues® factory was created in 1989 to manufacture jeans, yard coats, and work shirts made by and for Oregon inmates. Marketing began to fuel interest in Prison Blues® products that translated into

more work opportunities for more inmates to work in the factory making our authentic, prison-made blue jean brand.

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution is a medium-security state prison located in Pendleton, Oregon, housing about 1,500 inmates. Our workers view the Prison Blues® Garment Factory as a departure from everyday prison life. They work in a modern, spacious facility. They are not forced to work in the factory. Most have waited on long waiting lists for an opportunity to get the coveted jobs."

In addition to the clothing worn by inmates throughout Oregon, Prison Blues® manufactures a commercial product line of jeans, jackets, work shirts, sweatshirts, T-shirts, and hats available to the public. For *Captive Audience*, Prison Blues® has contributed sample garments and promotional literature. Prison Blues® products are sold throughout the US, Japan and Europe.

[www.prisonblues.com](http://www.prisonblues.com)



## Stop Prisoner Rape

Three posters and postcards are included to represent the Los Angeles-based organization Stop Prisoner Rape (SPR). In the group's mission they write: "A national 501(c)(3) human rights organization, SPR works to put an end to sexual violence against

men, women, and youth in all forms of detention. To achieve this goal, SPR seeks to: engender policies that ensure government accountability for prisoner rape; change ill-informed and flippant public attitudes toward sexual assault behind bars; and promote access to resources for survivors of this type of violence."

SPR's poster and postcard ad campaign was developed pro bono by the advertising agency McKinney and Silver. These images were posted on billboards and publications in California as well as inside the state's prisons, "making it clear to inmates and corrections officials alike that all people deserve to be protected against sexual violence, even when they are incarcerated." [co-executive director Lovisa Stannow]

[www.spr.org](http://www.spr.org)

Gallery 400  
400 South Peoria Street  
Chicago, IL 60607

312-996-6114 tel  
312-355-3444 fax  
<http://gallery400.aa.uic.edu>

Gallery Hours  
Tuesday-Friday 10–6  
Saturday 12–6

*Captive Audience* is supported by the College of Architecture and the Arts, University of Illinois at Chicago, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. The Daryl Gerber Stokols and Jeff Stokols Voices Series Fund provides general support to Gallery 400 programs.

## We're Number 1!

Having the largest prison population in the world isn't really something to buy a giant celebratory foam finger over; however, this is the state of our correctional crisis in the United States.<sup>1</sup> As a BBC report from April 2006 points out, at any given time more than 2.1 million Americans are in jail.<sup>2</sup> With about one in 140 Americans currently incarcerated, it is increasingly common to know someone in prison or to have had the experience of being incarcerated. In many demographics, individuals have multiple family members in prison—sometimes in the same institution—as well as assorted friends and associates.

With this in mind, *Captive Audience* presents art, social initiatives, correspondence, and cultural objects that allow viewers to contemplate our relationship with prisons and prisoners in nuanced, reflective and imaginative ways. Focusing on the United States but featuring one key example from the United Kingdom, *Captive Audience* includes:

Art, cultural, and written materials produced directly by, or with prisoners that frame or reveal their condition

Artists' projects by practitioners on the outside that incorporate the voices and concerns of prisoners, or ask viewers and participants to imagine themselves, or their friends and family members, in prison

Objects and services designed specifically by and for prisoners that people on the outside can use to comprehend specific aspects of prison life

*Captive Audience* looks at not only contemporary examples, but at older materials, such as record albums recorded by prisoners during the 1970's when far more prisons had the funding or philosophies needed to support the programs that made these recordings possible.

A number of individuals were instrumental in realizing this exhibition. Scott Rigby of the Philadelphia-based group Basekamp was an active collaborator in generating the initial exhibition proposal. All of the artists in the exhibition have been exceedingly thoughtful, patient, and have offered great insights along the way. Angelo, a friend of seventeen years, has been particularly generous with relaying his knowledge and experiences of prison over the years. Additional thanks go out to Gallery 400, all of the organizations and program participants, and to Gretchen Schulfer for generously volunteering donating design work for the exhibition, including this brochure.

Marc Fischer, Curator, January, 2007

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Kelly's comic panel in the 2006 year-end issue of *The Onion* for providing the foam finger image in relation to this statistic.

<sup>2</sup> "The world's biggest prison system" Matthew Davis, BBC News, Washington, 7 April 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4858580.stm>

## Artists, Participants and Exhibition Materials

### Prison products designed for inmate use



A broad array of products has been designed in response to institutional safety concerns and the desire to control inmate behavior in prisons. Toothbrushes with exceptionally short handles, flexible handles, or designs with no handle at all that fit over an inmate's fingertip, have been created to prevent inmates from turning the handle into a knife. Electronics with clear plastic casings are used to prevent inmates from hiding contraband inside their radios or the bases of their hot pots. Personal mirrors are created in a variety of designs that are either indestructible or impossible to use as a weapon when broken.

Companies like ATD-American Co., Bob Barker (no relation to the TV game show host), Jack L. Marcus, and PX Direct manufacture and distribute products for institutions (and sometimes people who want to play prison on the outside). Many manufacturers such as the sneaker maker Vans create product lines designed for prison issue, such as shoes with Velcro straps for inmates on suicide watch or in prisons that do not allow shoelaces. *Captive Audience* includes a variety of products made for American prisons, as well as a selection of restraint devices that are currently employed in the U.S. A collection of British prison phone cards from Her Majesty's Prison Service has also been included; they are a form of currency that enables inmates to use phones where coins and cash do not circulate.

Most of the objects on display can be worn or handled by visitors. Please ask the gallery attendant for assistance.

[www.atdamerican.com](http://www.atdamerican.com)  
[www.bobbarker.com/webguest/bAboutUs.asp](http://www.bobbarker.com/webguest/bAboutUs.asp)  
[www.jlmarcuscatalog.com](http://www.jlmarcuscatalog.com)  
[www.pxdirect.com](http://www.pxdirect.com)

### Friends Beyond the Wall

"Are you tired of seeing you and your family in dozens of photos taken in the Visiting Room over the years...all with the same old boring Visiting Room backdrops?" asks Friends Beyond the Wall, a business that provides an affordable service to prison inmates and their families. The organization allows inmates' families to send in visitation room photos of prisoners with their loved ones. The service then creates a composite photo by extracting the people from the visiting room and placing them into a more desirable location of the customers' choice. Alternate locations include extravagant houses, a gazebo in an outdoor setting, a resort, or the option of standing together behind a luxury sports car. Friends Beyond the Wall gives inmates and their families the opportunity to imagine life before, after, or instead of prison.

[www.friendsbeyondthewall.com/pbtw/photos.html](http://www.friendsbeyondthewall.com/pbtw/photos.html)

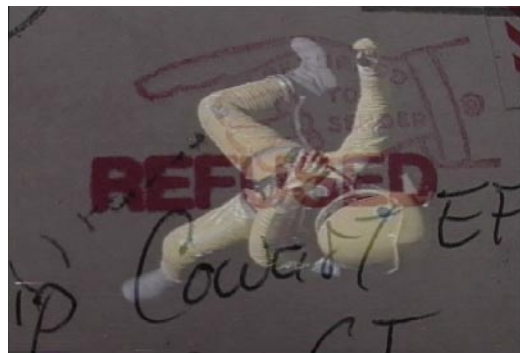


### Chicago County Fair

This Chicago-based art/activist/research network connects groups and individuals for innovative action and dialogue. Among their ongoing projects is a letter-writing effort that includes every inmate at Tamms Supermax Prison in Tamms, Illinois. About the first installment in their new photo series *Coming Home*, CCF writes: "These photographs offer a glimpse into an alternate universe where sex offenders who have taken full responsibility for their actions are given

a welcome back party upon their return from prison and are supported in building a new life." Additional installments of these documentary-style tableaux are planned for other cities. The photos have the banal quality of stock photography catalogs, as if, alongside anonymous images of businessmen shaking hands, there could exist a category called "Coming Home From Prison." The images lend serenity to a major life event that, in real life, if made public at all, might be a fraught and hysterical situation.

### LJ Reynolds

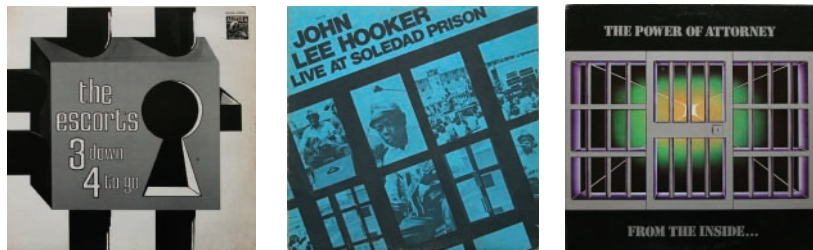


LJ Reynolds' single channel video *Space Ghost* compares the experiences of prisoners and astronauts, using popular depictions of space travel to propose certain themes about incarceration: the sense of time as chaotic and indistinguishable, the displacement of losing face-to-face contact, and the sense of existing in a different but parallel universe with family and loved-ones.

This over-arching metaphor offers a perspective on the border between the inside and the outside. Physical comparisons such as the close living quarters, the intensity of the immediate environment, and sensory deprivation soon give way to psychological ones: the isolation, the changing sense of time, and the experience of earth as distant, inaccessible and desirable. The analogy also bleeds into the world of the symbolic where media representations hold astronauts and prisoners in an inverse relationship to one another: the super-citizen vs. the super-predator. Astronauts, ceaselessly publicized, are frozen in time and memory whereas prisoners, anonymous and ignored, age without being remembered.

The end of the video introduces the notion of the "phantom zone" (taken from *Superman*) to describe incarceration as an in-between space, a no-man's land, or a warehouse. A letter from an inmate explains how the space-time continuum can become reconfigured in prison: "The time really goes by fast here. You can do years in prison and it seems like no time at all. That's because you don't remember any of the time you did. And that's because there's nothing to remember."

### Phonograph records recorded by inmates and/or in prisons

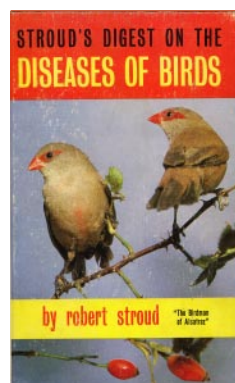


American prisons have been the site of numerous compelling musical bands, recordings and concerts. In the 1940s Alan and John Lomax made extraordinary field recordings in Mississippi of "Negro prison work songs" that document a lost tradition of singing while doing brutal physical labor. In the 1960s Bruce Jackson made similar prison work song recordings at several institutions in Texas.

In addition to these documentary records, there have been a number of albums made by prisoners working with record labels and producers on the outside who, in cases like the soul group The Escorts, recorded their voices at the prison and then added instrumentation using studio musicians on the outside. In the case of a band like Graterford Prison's *The Power of Attorney*, inmates were allowed to leave the facility and taken to outside studios where they recorded records under the watch of an armed guard. The late James Brown, who learned to sing in reform school, was instrumental in helping *The Power of Attorney* release a 1974 record on Polydor, Brown's own label at the time. In more extreme cases, inmates have recorded vocals over the telephone during calls made to collaborators on the outside.

Another type of record is the prison concert album. Here, an artist from outside comes into the prison to play for the inmates; the most famous examples of this are the two albums Johnny Cash released of concerts at Folsom and San Quentin prisons. Glen Sherley, an inmate at Folsom, sent Johnny Cash a cassette of his song "Greystone Chapel" previous to Cash's visit. To Sherley's great surprise, Cash performed his song when he played and recorded a concert at Folsom. Prison concert albums are often riveting. The performers commonly select songs with relevant lyrics that will be moving to the audience; the prisoners' cheers, shouting, or boos activate these albums in poignant ways. The concerts are sometimes disrupted by official announcements from the prison administrators. These albums become a way through which prison populations of particular places and times enter our homes—if only through their recorded voices in the crowd.

This exhibition includes records from a variety of genres including Blues, Soul, Country, Rock, Gospel, Work Songs, Classical, Rap, Funk, and Comedy. You can hear examples from many of these records at three listening stations, each with a different selection of tracks.



### Robert Stroud "The Birdman of Alcatraz"

While in prison for murder, with additional time added for killing a guard, Robert Stroud (1890–1963) was able to have two widely-distributed books published on the subject of bird diseases and even ran a bird breeding and medication business from his cell. In 1955, Thomas Gaddis wrote a sympathetic biography on Stroud, which was adapted in 1962 for the highly popular John Frankenheimer film, "Birdman of Alcatraz". The film had broad international success; however, Stroud himself was never permitted to see it. Burt Lancaster's portrayal of Stroud endeared

the inmate to many who signed petitions in theater lobbies in favor of his release or parole. The real Stroud was far more disagreeable and an enormous disappointment to those admirers who turned up in court at his parole hearing. Frankenheimer's film inaccurately shows Stroud breeding and caring for birds from his cell at Alcatraz. In fact, Stroud pursued these activities at United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth in Leavenworth, Kansas and had abandoned them by the time he was

transferred to Alcatraz. While at Alcatraz, Stroud wrote a history of the U.S. Prison system that the Prison Bureau reviewed and prohibited from being published. At age 72, after having spent 54 years of his life in prison, Stroud died while incarcerated at the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners at Springfield, Missouri.

Robert Stroud remains a figure more known in his filmic portrayal than for the actual details of his life and work. *Captive Audience* includes Stroud's books as well as two biographies and materials from Frankenheimer's film.

### Angelo



Angelo, who prefers to go by this single name, has been incarcerated continuously in several California prisons for the past eighteen years. He is the author of the book *Prisoners' Inventions* (published 2003, WhiteWalls) in collaboration with the group Temporary Services (Brett Bloom, Salem Collo-Julian, Marc Fischer). Exhibitions of *Prisoners' Inventions*, some including a full size model of Angelo's prison cell built from his meticulous measurements, have been presented throughout the US and Europe.

Angelo's primary creative endeavor has been to make drawings of narrative situations in ballpoint pen and sometimes colored pencil on paper. Many of these drawings are suggestive of the prison experience in metaphoric, historical and psychological ways through images of captivity or deprivation. Scenes of power, domination, a lack of privacy, and suppressed or restricted desires are commonly displaced to other times and cultures. In many of these drawings people prey on each other in front of crowds, face public scorn and humiliation, or are forced to perform slave labor or otherwise compromise their humanity and individuality.



### David F.

David F. was a New York-based inmate that curator Marc Fischer corresponded with between 1993–94. He is represented in *Captive Audience* through excerpts from his letters that are printed in a free booklet and a wall text. David's highly articulate and darkly humorous writings cover a wide-ranging array of topics including suicide, Western attitudes toward death, drug use, methods of scamming money from women through the mail, his encounters with infamous prisoners like David Berkowitz ("The Son of Sam"), and his pessimistic views on the reform potential for

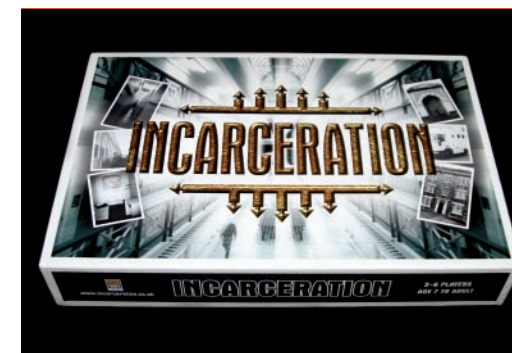
both himself and those incarcerated with him. David died in prison in 1999. The cause of his death is unknown. However, in his letters David spoke of his determination to commit suicide before the turn of the millennium in order to avoid becoming physically or mentally infirmed while serving out a life sentence.

### Stephanie Diamond



New York-based artist Stephanie Diamond has created a new version of an ongoing project called *It Would Look Like...* in which she distributes specific statements to participants and asks them to continue the statements with their own words. Diamond uses the responses as a guide to select images from her extensive archive of around 100,000 of her own photographs. The selected images are hung in a grid format on the gallery wall and are accompanied by the statements used to select the images. For *Captive Audience*, Diamond asked friends, family, strangers, artists, and friends of friends to respond to the statement, "If I were to go to prison, and I could only bring one photograph with me, it would look like..." Diamond received over 100 responses. Diamond first initiated this project, with a different question, to Rikers Island inmates. When access to prisoners and prison bureaucracy created insurmountable hurdles, Diamond's project became what it is today.

www.stephaniediamond.com



### Risk-Takers Ltd.

The prison board game *Incarceration* was developed in the United Kingdom by three prisoners (Terry Coss, Errol Malcolm, and Lee Spencer) who met while serving brief sentences (together they served a total of three years). The men devel-

oped the game and a business plan for its production and release while they were doing time. Upon release they formed the company Risk-Takers Ltd. and *Incarceration* was released in 2000. The object of the game is to negotiate the various hazards and difficulties of prison life and the legal process in order to obtain release. The game is intended for children age seven and up and can be played by 2–6 players.



### Lucky Pierre

In its 10-year history, Lucky Pierre has created numerous events, videos, installations, gallery shows, performances and copious writings in the U.S. and Europe. Current members of the group are: Jeffery Kowalkowski, Tyler Myers, Michael Thomas, and Mary

Zerkel. Their project in *Captive Audience*, *Final Meals*, is a video installation of volunteers eating meals requested by Texas death row inmates. The piece is based on the Texas Department of Criminal Justice website, listing the last meal requested by each prisoner executed by the state since December 1982. Lucky Pierre prepares each meal according to its description and then videotapes a volunteer eating the meal. The piece has been in progress since 2003; to date 145 of the 378 presently listed meals have been prepared and videotaped. Each