

# *PCAP NEWS*

*August 2019*

The PCAP newsletter aims to keep incarcerated artists, writers, and performers informed of what the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is doing and how to be involved. If you know someone who would like to receive this newsletter, please have them write to us.

# A Note from the Director

by Ashley Lucas

The recent and coming months have brought and are bringing many exciting changes to PCAP. This summer we had a wonderful crew of interns from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama at the University of London. The visiting students led theatre and music workshops across the state in Saginaw Correctional Facility with Veterans, at the Michigan Reformatory in Ionia, and at Thumb Correctional Facility in Lapeer. They also worked with youth in Detroit and at Vista Maria. Amy, Grace, Valentina, and Stefania are all graduate students earning master's degrees in applied theatre and criminal justice, the only program of its kind in the UK. They spent seven weeks with us in Michigan this summer learning about what we do at PCAP and leading workshops. We thoroughly enjoyed their company and learned a great deal from them.

I recently returned from the latest installment of the PCAP Brazil Exchange Program. For three weeks in May and June, Professor José Casas and I led a group of thirteen PCAP students. We visited two cities—Florianópolis and Rio de Janeiro—and did theatre work in prisons, hospitals, and favelas (struggling neighborhoods). This was the sixth year of our ongoing collaboration with university programs in both of these cities, and as usual, we had a very meaningful set of experiences during our time together. We look forward to continuing these collaborations in the 2020-2021 school year, after a one-year break in our international programming.

For the 2019-2020 school year, I have been awarded a writing fellowship from the University of Michigan's Institute for the Humanities. I am very grateful for this opportunity to finish my work on a book that I have been researching and writing for the last six years. My book is very much related to the work that we do at PCAP, as it deals with theatre programming in prisons around the world. It will be called *Prison Theatre: Performance and Incarceration*. This fellowship that I have received is designed to give me a year to focus on nothing but writing. I will be in residence at the University of Michigan, writing and meeting each week with a group of other professors and graduate students who also have the fellowship. This also means that I will not teach my classes or serve as PCAP's Director for this school year, from September 2019 to April 2020. I will likely not see as many of you as I would regularly see during this fellowship year because I will not be visiting prisons or workshops as I normally would. This does not mean that I have forgotten about you. Writing and publishing this book will enable me to garner broader attention for prison arts programming around the world and hopefully will help in our ongoing efforts to bring more attention and resources to PCAP. In essence, I am taking some time away from my duties at PCAP to try to do something that will ultimately benefit our organization in the long run.

In my absence, PCAP will be in good hands. PCAP's staff Vannessa Mayesky, Mary Heinen, Graham Hamilton, and El Chen will all continue in their roles in the PCAP office. Phil Christman and Cozine Welch will continue to run the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*, and Cozine will also co-teach both of my PCAP classes next year. Lecturer and former PCAP student Becca Pickus will co-teach the Atonement Project class in the Fall and we are hiring an instructor for the Theatre & Incarceration class in the Winter semester. The other PCAP faculty members will continue to teach their regular classes with workshops in youth facilities and prisons: Sarah Messer (creative writing) and Isaac Wingfield (photography). Professor Eugene Rogers and his graduate students will be doing a class this school year that will send a music workshop to Saginaw Correctional, and the Out of the Blue Choir and other music groups from our university will continue giving performances in the PCAP Concert Series which started last year. My administrative duties will be taken over by the incredibly competent Nora Krinitsky, who is both a lecturer at the university and the Program Director for the Carceral State Project. I and the PCAP staff have already been working closely with Nora throughout this school year, and I am very impressed with her and grateful for her leadership during the year that I will be away.

Should you need to get a hold of me in the year that I am away, you can still write to me at the PCAP office. I will be on campus and receiving my mail. I remain available to write parole letters for those of you whom I know personally. If you have general questions about PCAP programming, please direct them to the PCAP staff or Nora Krinitsky.

I will miss you and the many beautiful PCAP events where I tend to see you throughout the school year. I look forward to returning in a year's time with renewed energy and resources to support our programming long term.

# *Hello from the Interim Director*

by **Nora Krinitsky**

I am honored and delighted to serve as the Interim Director of PCAP for the 2019-2020 school year while Ashley Lucas is enjoying a much-deserved writing fellowship! I have been at the University of Michigan since 2010, when I began my graduate studies in the Department of History. I am a historian of the 20th-century urban United States and in 2017 I completed a dissertation about policing and crime control politics in Chicago. I will take over Ashley's administrative duties at PCAP and work to support its many programs this year, including academic courses, workshops, the literature review, the Linkage Project, and the *Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners*. I'm especially excited to get to visit workshops, performances, and art selection trips and enjoy the creative work of our PCAP facilitators, participants, and artists. Over the past year, I have gotten to know a number of the PCAP staff members and community members. I have been working closely with them over the past month as I transition into the role of Interim Director.

In addition to my role as Interim Director of PCAP, I am also the Project Director of the University of Michigan Carceral State Project, an interdisciplinary collaboration that brings together faculty, students, staff, and community members to examine, research, and advocate on issues related to mass incarceration, policing, immigration detention, and criminal justice. The Carceral State Project formed in the Winter semester of 2018 when a small group of faculty convened to build support for related research and programs at the University. We hosted a public symposium series during the 2018-2019 academic year, which featured six panel discussions on topics ranging from criminalization and surveillance to confinement and prison abolition.

All of our symposium panels were comprised of community members, activists, and organizers. We were also lucky to have several PCAP alums serve as panelists, including Martin Vargas and Cozine Welch. These events were hugely popular on our campus and in the surrounding community and every one drew a standing room only crowd.

In July, the Carceral State Project submitted a major grant proposal to the University of Michigan to fund its first major research initiative, Documenting Criminalization and Confinement. Our agenda is to chronicle experiences of those impacted by criminalization and confinement and to challenge the policies and discourses that have propelled those processes--particularly in racially and economically vulnerable communities--in the city of Detroit, the state of Michigan, and across the United States. The initiative comprises six interrelated research projects designed and conducted by teams of faculty, students, staff, and community partners. PCAP is an integral component of this research initiative; over the past 30 years, PCAP has amassed an enormous archive of art and other records from incarcerated people and returning citizens in the state of Michigan. It is one of the most important avenues for us to understand and document those experiences. The research team that focuses on PCAP will work to update its digital art archive and catalogue correspondence from the PCAP office and literature review. Other Carceral State Project research teams will collect oral histories from impacted communities, catalogue images of carceral spaces, conduct research on the history of policing, investigate experiences of reentry, and examine immigrant detention, among other research tasks. Provided our grant is successfully funded, we will begin this project in September 2019 and we anticipate that there will be a number of ways for PCAP participants to contribute to this project. I look forward to updating you all soon about those opportunities and our progress!



## *Linkage Project*

Would you like to stay connected with PCAP after you come home? The Linkage Project offers workshops, cultural field trips, connections to PCAP's campus community, and the opportunity to build a network with other artists, writers, and performers. If you would like to participate, please write to Vanessa Mayesky when you have a release date or email [pcaplinkage@umich.edu](mailto:pcaplinkage@umich.edu) after you come home.

# *U-M Prison Creative Arts Project Sells \$27,000 in Artwork*

by **Fernanda Pires**

ANN ARBOR—Artists in Michigan prisons will receive about \$27,000 in sales from the *24th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners*. The exhibit is one of the largest exhibitions in the world of work by artists who are incarcerated, organized by the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP).

This year, the show highlighted the work of 575 artists from 27 facilities in Michigan. It brought 672 paintings, sculptures and three-dimensional works created in prison to the public realm. A total of 2,300 pieces were submitted.

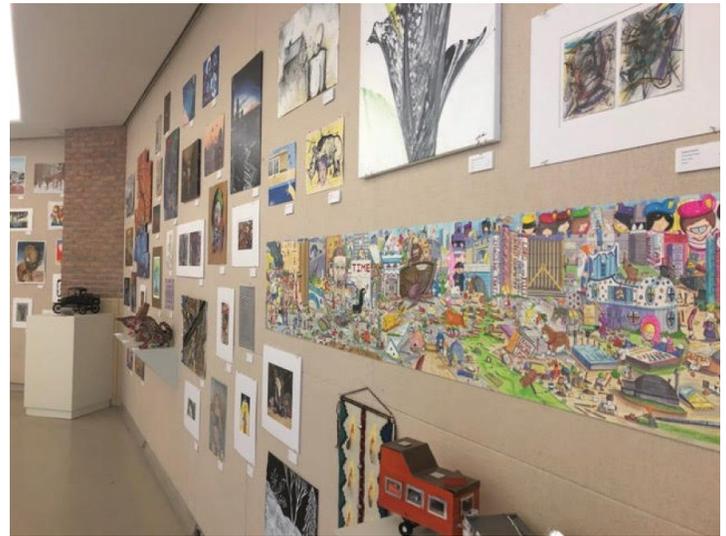
The show featured a diversity of both artists and artistic choices. Artists ranged in age from 18 to 80, men and women from across the state with diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. There was a broad array of artistic media and subject matter, including landscapes, portraits, prison scenes, and political statements.

"I have been curating this exhibit for twenty five years and I am always exhilarated to see the artists work and to talk with them on our selection visits. I am in awe of their resilience and ingenuity," said Senior Curator Janie Paul.

Paul started the annual exhibition in 1996 with her husband, and PCAP Founder, Buzz Alexander. A community-based artist and emeritus professor at the University of Michigan whose primary focus is the capacity of visual meaning-creation as a vehicle for social change, Paul has been bringing art from prisons across the state to campus each year.

Half of the 670 pieces were sold in two weeks, with proceeds going directly to the artists. Last year, the show, supported by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the Art for Justice Fund, a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, generated \$24,580 in sales.

"I think we've put on the best exhibition in PCAP's history, but this year I think the art and all of the events connected to the exhibition were truly extraordinary," said PCAP's Director, Ashley Lucas. "I feel humbled and grateful to be a part of this exhibition because we get to see such extraordinary talent and beauty that so many others never know exists."



## *Pulling Strings to Get Into Prison*

by **Ricardo Ferrell**

The Ethos String Quartet from the University of Michigan traveled to Ionia this afternoon to perform before approximately 50 prisoners and staff in the prison's chapel. The quartet performed some amazing pieces beginning with a magnificent 18th-century classic from the Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart collection, which had the sound of being conducted in an Orchestra Hall. The musicians brought a different style of music much to the amazement and delight of most everyone present. The quartet's rhythm and connection complimented each other's musical talent in ways only a musically inclined individual could truly appreciate.

The Ethos String Quartet, the likes of Ali, Cecilia, Chihiro, and Nathaniel all were working them strings in each piece - at times prompting inadvertent hum alongs by some in the audience. The applauding was ear ringingly loud and the musicians gleefully showed their appreciation by returning huge smiles in reception of the crowd applauds. The Ethos name for the quartet is quite fitting and on point with its meaning, "The distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, and guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution."

## *Pulling Strings to Get Into Prison cont.*

The awesome and magnificent performances by the ESQ brought with them an inner peace and shared it with us through their heart felt ensembles. Quartet member Ali, mentioned having a sense of storytelling, which correlates with the music she makes. It is evident that Ali's classical music and storytelling is both moving and thought provoking. Some of the other pieces besides the Mozart joint that were performed are: Divertimento I, Noturno, Ashokan Farewell, and Simple Symphony. During another performance Ali suggested that we all join in by creating a six word story, a technique that Ernest Hemingway made quite famous, which she learned in composing music with her viola. The six word stories were done impromptu by the following inside creators:

"These sounds are not my own" - Ronnie W., "Beautiful minds at work and play" - Alrelio E., "A mother's love raising children blessed" - Efraim G., "Goodbye cold winter spring has arrived" - Joshua K., "Beauty can build me up" - R.F., "Hear the love in the cello" - R.F.

Some of the guys equated the Tango piece from an episode of Tom & Jerry. The number was performed by the quartet without any of their bows, using only their fingers, the piece had everyone engaged. The ESQ delivered remarkable style, perfection, and grace, making the event all the more enjoyable and memorable with everyone in attendance. Cecilia shared that her inspiration in the pieces she performs is usually done with a sense of love. Nathaniel invited us to applaud to their pieces at anytime (during or after). Ali & Chihiro were great in their ability to elicit laughter from the group in each session. All present in the two 50-minute sessions, absorbed the sounds of the strings of the quartet and gave standing ovations after some of the performances. Joshua K., a participant in the lively audience, said "All four gave so much personality to their individual instruments and the experience was wonderful." So, if anyone was to ask, who's pulling strings to get into prison, you would only need to look at the Ethos String Quartet and assess their awesome display of working the strings of the viola, violin and cello to not only get inside a prison, but to hold the attention of prisoners with their unique style of play.

Special thanks to Ali, Cecilia, Chihiro, and Nathaniel, who make up the four members of the amazing Ethos String Quartet. And to Ashley Lucas, PCAP's awesome director for creating these fantastic events.

Acknowledgements & thanks to: Warden Gregory Skipper; Deputy Warden Fredeane Artis; ADW Jim Dunigan; Spec. Acts. Dir. Myken Breedlove; Chaplain Craig Curtis; and Corrections Officer Gentry for their help in making this a successful event.



## *Literary Review*

The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is accepting submissions of creative writing—fiction, poetry, essays, or memoir) of up to 4,500 words (ten typed pages) for *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*. The next pieces selected will appear in Volume 12, appearing in 2020. Writers are notified 8-10 weeks after submissions are received. Submissions will be received at this address throughout the year.

Thank you for your outstanding pieces of writing that you have submitted thus far. We strongly encourage you to continue in this creative process and send us any and all of your work.

PCAP at LSA Residential College  
ATTN: Phil Christman  
701 E. University Ave. Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1245

Please submit the following information with your written work:

- Your legal name (so we can communicate with you by mail);
- Your name or pen name as you'd like it to appear in the journal, if that's different than your legal name;
- Your MDOC ID number;
- Your current address;
- A short paragraph about yourself/your writing that will be published alongside any accepted piece

# Calendar

## August 2019

*25th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners* call for art mailed to MDOC prisons

Rolling submissions for *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*, vol. 12

## September - December 2019

Weekly creative arts workshops

Art selection visits for *25th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners* at MDOC prisons

Annual Art Auction, December 7th, 6:30 p.m., Michigan League, Ann Arbor

## About PCAP

### Mission Statement

The Prison Creative Arts Project brings those impacted by the justice system and the University of Michigan community into artistic collaboration for mutual learning and growth.

### Contact Us

PCAP at University of Michigan  
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www.prisonarts.org

### PCAP Faculty

Nora Krinitsky, Interim Director  
Margaret Burk, Jose Casas, Phil Christman, Joseph Kemper, Ashley Lucas, Sarah Messer, Becca Pickus, Eugene Rogers, Cozine Welch, Jr., Isaac Wingfield

### PCAP Staff

El Chen, Graham Hamilton, Mary Heinen,  
Vanessa Mayesky

### PCAP Special Projects Staff

Fernanda Pires, Rudy Thomas, Cozine Welch, Jr.

### Annual Exhibition Curators

Janie Paul, Senior Curator  
Alyssa Baginski, El Chen, Dominique Cornitcher,  
Nelly Emlaw, Graham Hamilton, Charlie Michaels,  
Jason Wright