What to the Prisoner is the 4th of July?

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Title
What To The Prisoner Is The Fourth Of July?

Presentation type
A (Performing and Visual Arts - presentations and/or discussions)

Summary
In my performative-lecture presenting recent works created with materials charged through the history of their production, I will connect how we capture people in images with how we capture people politically. The lecture format for me is half jeremiad and half manifesto speculated by visual media. The body of research I will focus on has been developed through the use of materials produced with prison labor. Through these works, the connections between how we portray people and the stories within our materials will tell the story of democracy’s holes and language gaps. The ghost in the text rears its head. The life or death of any system relies upon the metaphors it puts forward; we must then wrestle with democracy’s metaphors. To create a democratic and equitable system, we must attend to how the images and stories we create produce our future.
WORKS
First As Tragedy, Second As Farce (Work Still #1)

2017

Archival pigment prints
78" x 44" | 44" x 24.75"

These prints take Marx’s maxim and uses it to think about the repetition of representation of those incarcerated.
The group portraits of the directors of the three largest corporations that own and administer private prisons in the United States were produced through a process of photographic layering developed by Francis Galton. With this process Galton (an early figure in Eugenics) believed that the typical face could be captured through averaging the images of Jewish men or criminals, for example.
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Disassembled prisoner produced American flags 6' x 8'

The text embroidered into the flag is adapted from Frederick Douglass, and asks “What to the prisoner is the Fourth of July?” The tapestry is produced from the red stripes of disassembled American flags. These flags were produced by prison labor in the state of Ohio.
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Infinite Sleep

Prisoner Produced Pillows
12” x 18” x 135”

A pillar created from 32 textured vinyl covered pillows produced by and for those incarcerated.
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24 frames from the conviction of Clarence Earl Gideon. This conviction is subsequently overturned giving those on trial a right to an attorney.
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You May Choose

Prisoner produced off-set prints

12” x 18” (Limitless)

This series of limitless take-away off-set prints was produced by those incarcerated at the Pickaway Correctional Institution in Orient, Ohio. The prints retain the material charge and weight of their history, as each viewer takes a print they wrestle with the issues of our contemporary system. The prints ultimately implicate all of us in the prison industrial complex. Once we have this knowledge we must choose how one should act.
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Digital Projection (Black and White, Silent), Custom Software

The film, The Defiant Ones (1968) has been slowed down so that it will take 150 years to play through. This is packaged as a custom application that plays only where we are in the film.