TRANSFORMATION: FROM THE ART INSIDE

October 30, 2021 – February 20, 2022
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Cover: Eduardo Morales, *Sustainability*, detail, 2021
acrylic and watercolor on canvas, 24 x 18 inches

Catalogue design: Marni Kaldjian, www.marnikaldjian.com

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INTRODUCTION

*Transformation: Art from the Inside* is an exhibition featuring works by incarcerated artists that reflects their personal transformation and restoration through visual expression. Founded by retired Stillwater correctional officer Antonio Espinosa, Art from the Inside (AFTI) is an organization that empowers incarcerated people to use art as an outlet for emotions while creating a platform for dialogue about the complexities of our criminal justice system through exhibitions of their work.

*Transformation* reflects how art can help people imagine new ways of being and recognize our power to change. A documentary, produced by Barbara Wiener for Art From the Inside, features the stories of incarcerated artists in Minnesota. Lennell Maurice Martin and Roberto Lopez-Rios, two of the artists featured in the documentary, have work on view in the window galleries on 4th and Robert streets at the Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M). To learn more about the organization, use the QR code to watch the Art from the Inside documentary video.

[QR code]

Art From the Inside was founded in an effort to initiate healing processes for the Stillwater prison following the tragic loss of correctional officer Joseph Gomm.

Photographs of the artwork featured in the exhibition were taken by Kimani Beard. The original artworks reproduced here will be on view at nearby Creators Space—along with additional artwork created by Art from the Inside artists—from November 5–30, 2021. Creators Space is located at 218 7th St. E, in downtown Saint Paul, Minnesota.

An installation of the artwork featuring vinyl reproductions at the M was curated by Kylie Linh Hoang as part of her curatorial fellowship, a position partially funded by the Minnesota Historical Society. Kylie is a public historian and curator, and she believes in the transformational power of storytelling and placemaking through exhibition. The M is located at 350 Robert Street North in Saint Paul, Minnesota.
**ART FROM THE INSIDE**

Art from the Inside gives incarcerated artists the opportunity to express themselves through art—giving them a visual voice. AFTI will be exhibiting their art in the community with the hope to inspire community dialog about the complexities of our criminal justice system.

Art from the Inside  
www.artfromtheinsidemn.org  
artfromtheinsidemn@gmail.com | (651) 321-4903

**MINNESOTA MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**

Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M), based in Saint Paul, has evolved and adapted over the course of its history dating back to the 19th century. Recognizing that art is a tool for facilitating understanding across differences, the M is dedicated to amplifying the power of art and artists who represent diverse perspectives, identities, and lived experiences.

First introduced as an innovative way to present engaging exhibitions while remaining closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the M will continue to exhibit work in its window galleries as well as in the skyway, virtually, and at partner facilities, in anticipation of commencing construction work on the final phase of the M’s facility.

Minnesota Museum of American Art  
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Saint Paul, MN 55101  
mmaa.org | info@mmaa.org | (651) 797-2571
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The artists contributing to *Transformation* are incarcerated in Minnesota state correctional facilities in Stillwater and Shakopee.

Stillwater is a men’s facility that emphasizes restorative justice programming and educational opportunities for the incarcerated. Art classes are available on a limited basis and some of the work included in *Transformation* is the product of those classes. Other featured artists created their work independently.

Shakopee is a women’s facility that provides gender and trauma-informed programming as well as educational opportunities. Due to the size of the facility, Shakopee is not able to provide an official art class to its population. Despite the lack of formal training, Shakopee’s artists innovatively explore themes of radical change with courage and grace. These artworks explore how circumstance coincides with choice by considering the duality of enduring trauma while aspiring towards personal growth and fulfillment.

*L.L.*

*Peregrine Falcon* detail, 2021
beadwork, dimensions variable
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With nothing to do in prison and no money, all I had was an old paint brush and a pen, time, and the desire to learn something positive inspired me to create and keep living through ART. Art inspires me to change. It made me hopeful and restored faith in myself. ART is my present and my future. My way of life. Freedom behind bars. “ART IS POWER.”

**A.R.T.**

_The Comedy of Politics_, 2021  
ink on paper, 24 x 18 inches

_The Comedy of Politics_, 2021  
ink on paper, 24 x 36 inches
ALICIA MOHRLAND

Art is huge to me. It helps express and gets things out of my head and onto paper. Art is something you can always start over or re-do, it is a second life full of endless chances. I have transformed myself many times throughout my life. Going through adoption at a young age, becoming a young mother, and now going through the journey of prison. I am looking forward to my next stage of transformation. My hope for transformation is that one day people will be more comfortable, confident, and accepting of change. Not only in their own lives but the world.

Pride, 2021
colored pencil on paper, 9 x 12 inches
Art is everything to me. Some days it’s the only way I survive. Sometimes it inspires me to keep going, while others it is the only way I am able to express myself.

[Here, I’ve created] a transformation tree of life! Starting at the roots are the pain, the problems, and what I would typically hide from people around me as a younger girl. Then, the trunk is myself growing up: the good, bad, and ugly. Once growing older, recognizing my mistakes, knowing myself a little bit more, I can grow and transform to what I want to be as a positive person in the future. Growing out big and strong also beautiful. And it all became possible from hidden truths and pain I’ve finally let go of.

My Tree, 2021
colored pencil on paper, 11 x 15 inches
Transformation tree

I grew up in a home where the focus was on the present. People were living from day to day, with little thought to the future. I was a child growing up in a world where I was constantly trying to prove myself to others. I was made to feel that I was not good enough, that I was not worthy of love or attention.

As I grew older, I began to realize that I was not the only one who was struggling. Many young people were going through the same thing. I knew that I had to find a way to break free from the cycle of pain and pain.

I turned to art as a way to express myself. I started to draw and paint, using my emotions to create something beautiful. It was a way for me to connect with the world around me and to find a sense of peace.

As I continued to draw, I realized that my art was not just for me. It was a way for me to share my story with others. I started to use my art to help others who were going through the same thing. I began to use my art to give hope and to teach others that they are not alone.

I continue to use art as a tool for transformation. I believe that everyone has the power to change their life for the better. I encourage everyone to find their own way to express themselves and to use that expression to help others.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story.
AMANI FARDAN

Transformation comes in many ways, it is necessary to grow and develop, otherwise you remain stagnant and die. Wildfires are destructive but they’re also transformative, changing landscapes and bringing new life. Getting locked up as a juvenile, I was thrown into the adult system and had to learn fast and adapt to a strange and hostile environment. I changed, and not in a good way. As I’ve matured, I’m able to recognize and work on what I don’t like about myself, transforming myself into the person I need to be. My hope is to be there for my family and those around me, adding to their lives instead of taking away.

*From the Ashes*, 2021
colored pencil, oil pastel, and graphite on paper, 18 x 12 inches
Transformation to me means having the mindset to transform your mindset to live a more fulfilling life by striving to have obtainable goals. I have transformed by coming to Shakopee and having a 198-year sentence. I was in abusive relationships and I was really broken, I felt defeated, I had a lot of sorrow, I felt shame, I felt guilt. I went through PFA (Protection from Abuse) and I worked hard and, in my thinking, and applied myself to reach goals to better myself. I had an identity. I feel strong and courageous. I didn’t stay stuck in my abuse but I broke free and I transformed into a woman that now helps other women that feel the same way I did. It’s like a butterfly, we have to go through stages in our life.

**ANGELINA OMARA**

*Life of Pain to Happiness and Restoration*, 2021
colored pencil and marker on paper, 10½ x 13½ inches

*The Path of Pain to Complete Freedom*, 2021
colored pencil on paper, 14½ x 10¾ inches
198 YEARS
ABUSE PAIN
PEACE JOY
RESTITUTION

[Image of a drawing with a woman and a cross, flowers, and a broken heart]
Transformation means to find a better way of life, to live in peace, not war. Everyone should be treated equally. Everyone makes mistakes. Only a select few better their life. I find peace of mind reading the Bible. I draw for the reasons of passing time and to think about life and helping people when possible.

Billy Bailey

Transformation

Jesus as a Child, 2021
ink on cloth, 13½ x 13½ inches

Descended into the Clouds to Heaven, 2021
ink on cloth, 13¾ x 13¾ inches

Last Supper, 2021
ink on cloth, 13½ x 26 inches
Art is something very important in my life. It’s a passion that I have had since I was a child. To take a piece of paper, canvas or wood and make it into something only you can see what it is, is beautiful. And what can be more beautiful than building something with these hands.

Transformation means to me trying every day to be some better version of yourself. I have transformed my way of thinking and took the time to reflect on myself and my actions as a father, son, and husband, and wanted to change to be better in every way. My hope for this transformation is that people can see my free self as an artist, person, and a father.

*Change Within*, 2021
graphite, pen, paint, and colored pencil on paper, 12 x 16 inches
My artwork are my kids! Since I can’t have any, my art is the best I have to contribute to the world. It serves to transform and bring needed conversation or wordless acknowledgement through shapes, color, subjects and hidden messages. Like children, I hope they can pass on the best of me while I’m gone.

Transformation doesn’t always start out completely positive. A lot of times once transformation forces itself out of necessity it starts out as anger, rage and depression. It’s okay to acknowledge that as long as you use that constructively to make yourself and/or the situation better. If mistakes were made during the initial phase of a negative response, it’s important to make restorative efforts and pick up from there to become what you need to for improvement. Even when nature destroys it gets used as a chance to start over. My hope is that by making an example of a transformation of myself maybe it can lead greater society into a social transformation of one enlightenment, not a 2-party struggle.

*Spring Recompense*, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 14 x 18 inches

*She did this*, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 14 x 18 inches
D. GOELZ

To me, transformation is like having two seeds. Imagine that one of them lands on the hard, concrete sidewalk where it is left to bake in the scorching sun. Then picture the other seed falling into a moist, dirt-filled crack where it germinates, sprouts, and blooms into a beautiful orange flower for all to admire.

All of us, I believe, would like to change from our old, negative, habits and traits into a new, positive, productive, citizen.

Transformer, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 inches

Pharaoh’s Tomb, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches
My faith is the inspiration behind all of my art. I got into knitting to make hats and other items to donate to those in need. The ability to provide for others whether through a gift or financial help allows me to put my faith into work. This motivates and inspires me to design beautiful fabrics full of my heart and love and to make them as skillfully as I am able. Constantly getting better.

I have been transformed by the renewing of my mind in Christ. He has redeemed me and transformed me from a murderer to a lover, a thief to a giver, full of despair to full of hope, filled with death to filled with life, from division to unity, from sing to forgiven, from a life of pain and anger to an abundant life filled with His presence. My hope for transformation is [that] all who are burdened and heavy laden would find the same.
EDUARDO MORALES

Art allows me to maintain my composure as a young man, be able to reflect and ponder about endless subjects occurring around me, other prisoners, and around the world. Art is a reflection of pain and a longing for color in a colorless correctional system. I use the mediums that are available or accessible to me. Resources are not greatly attainable in prison all the time.

Looking outside my cage at the barbed wire window wondering what living truly feels like, what eating fresh food really tastes like, what fresh air really smells like [inspires me to create].

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Fruit of our Labor, 2021
pastel on paper, 25½ x 19¾ inches

Sustainability, 2021
acrylic and watercolor on canvas, 24 x 18 inches
Merriam-Webster states that transformation means to change in structure, appearance, or character. That is a huge base to work with. It could be negative or positive, but hopefully we all tend to strive for a positive transformation in all aspects. In my life, at this point, I focus more on a mental and emotional positive transformation, although I work on a physical transformation each day. For so long I applied my talents to the wrong things, and now I’m focusing on using my transformation powers to apply them to the right things. Just like my artwork, The Missing Pieces, you can see me putting together a puzzle of my family on top of my brain, allowing me to see what’s most important in my life for me to focus my transformation powers on. In my artwork, The Last Breath, I am showing the transformation of life to the next stage through the “Grim Reaper” process.

*The Missing Pieces*, 2021
graphite and colored pencil on paper, 11⅜ x 18 inches

*Last Breath!*, 2021
graphite on paper, 8½ x 11 inches
I enjoy my daughter’s art more than my own. I taught her at 6 yrs. old and she is way better than me! [Transformation] means growth, improvement. I have learned to appreciate human kind and life to the fullest! My hope for personal transformation is to live to 120 years, if God allows me, and to lead all to the light.

FAWN THOMAS

Confinement, 2021
marker on paper, 12¾ x 19¾ inches

Freedom, 2021
marker on paper, 12¾ x 19¾ inches
Transformation: A thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance.

Character: The quality of being an individual.

Perspective: A particular attitude towards, or way of regarding, something; a point of view.

Spirit: The non-physical part of a person that is the seat of emotion and character.

My interpretation on change in physical form to me would first start with creating an awareness to change the perspective of my spirit. Because it is so easy to confuse emotion with fact, that it affects how one would carry themselves as an individual, appearance or attitude. Change is an everyday practice and a hard lesson in awareness.
[Art is] a form of meditation, it takes my mind somewhere else completely. Transformation means becoming something new, defeating your demons. No longer casting old shadows but shining God’s light.

Sirens, 2021
graphite on paper, 9 x 12 inches
[Art is] a way of telling a story without using words. It allows the viewer to creatively participate by projecting meaning from their own processor. Provoking thoughts is always important. The subject is something that is a bit of a mystery and very complicated. I don't understand it. I hope you enjoy the picture.

*Psych*, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches
Art is an escape for me from the negativity or prison life. It allows me to channel my energy in a therapeutic sense. I’ve been incarcerated for 10-½ years and I’m so thankful that I have been transformed spiritually. Prison life can be so dark and negative at times and the only way that I could find light was through God. God has helped me fight through the trauma of my past and the shame of coming to prison. I know I will continue to have trials and tribulations but with the love and strength of Christ I will continue to move forward and not let the evil one crush my spirit. Only with Jesus have I been able to find freedom and peace in prison.

Prison Peace, 2021
mixed media, 44 x 42 inches
JEREMIAH LOEB

[When I was asked why I create, I thought]...The picture just jumps out and I have to do it.

*Tintoretto’s Miracle of the Slave*, 2021
watercolor on canvas, 28 x 22 inches
I decided to make a piece of art about how my belief in God has transformed me to kill my addiction to alcohol. Alcohol has played a big part in my life that took time away from me. I will never get back by being in prison and away from my family. I put a chain with a lock around the bottle because I have felt chained to drinking for so long. I made the key for the lock an AA symbol because AA will be the way I can stay free from alcohol. The praying hands and the rose with water in color because my life is so much brighter and full of color now that I have the will to stop drinking.

Death of my Pain, 2021
charcoal, ink, and pastels on paper, 11 x 14 inches
My traditional Native American culture inspires me and its many teachings that impact my life in so many ways.

What transformation means to me is to be rejuvenated, restored, renewed. It is to be at your best, changed self from within your inner being and learning new ways to live a productive and healthy life. Having a strong sense of awareness and growing stronger day by day. It is progress, not perfection.

Wolf Track, 2021
beadwork, dimensions variable

Spirit Within, 2021
colored pencil and beads on paper, 9 x 12 inches
My description of Transformation is; for instance, this necklace here that you see in front of you now. This necklace started out as plain, ordinary, rocks but with some time, care, and patience they are transformed into a beautiful piece of jewelry that can be enjoyed and worn for many years. It's the same way with people. With some time, patience, and care, we too can change and transform into better, more socially responsible citizens in the community.

It all starts within oneself.
When I draw, I am at peace. My mental health inspires me to create art because when I’m experiencing anxiety or depression, I know of only one thing that will pull me out of it. Art. Transformation means taking yourself to a new and better place, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Changing. I have transformed my life by accepting responsibility for my crime and making the decision to never return to the streets. My hope for transformation is a new and better life.

Death, 2021
colored pencil on paper, 8½ x 11 inches

Life, 2021
colored pencil on paper, 8½ x 11 inches
Hi, my name is Kelly James Ehrhorn. Everyone knows me by Chaos, though. I’ve been drawing since before I can remember. I love art – I’m drawn to it because it is a way I can take my pain and anger, all my depression, all my internal chaos and create a whole new reality out of it, using just a pen or pencil and piece of paper.

[One of my pieces] shows my hands reaching from the flames protecting my heart which holds a portrait of me and my wife. In the flames are demonic faces to show a life of violence and hate left behind in the past. On my hands are broken handcuffs, showing how this love I have now has freed me from a life of misery and condemnation. This picture in all just shows how any true transformation happens from within one’s heart and can usually only be motivated by love, no matter what form that love takes. For me, that love is my wife and marriage. I’m a very lucky man. I’m blessed with an amazing woman who has inspired me to be the best man I can, even though she met me at my worst.
Yarn is not the common medium, yet the creativity in the stitchwork is endless... Every thing I am able to create is functional, useful. It brings me joy to see someone wear a sweater I made or cover up and keep warm with a blanket I’ve knitted.

My hope for transformation is to live out my faith in my new positive habit of knitting sweaters, hats, scarves, mittens, and blankets for people in need. Like in the bible verse of Galatians 6:2 “Bear one another’s burdens and in this you fulfill the law of Christ.” My hope is day by day to transform my selfishness into selflessness, to consider others before myself and try to make more positive impacts on people's lives.
Family, friends, and art going for a good cause are a few of the things that can inspire me. Inspiration really may come from anything but knowing that people enjoy looking and enjoy having my art means a lot to me. Our loved ones and our futures depend on our transformation no matter what our goals, motivations, or inspirations may be. It was once said that, "From out of darkness there can be light." That I know to be true and for that I AM truly grateful. We can’t be afraid of growth, because that’s what may make you a better man, for not only yourself but also for the people you love and the people that mean so much to you.

_Have Faith in Us and Believe_, 2021
ink and watercolor on paper, 16 x 12 inches

_Two Souls, One Heart_, 2021
ink and watercolor on paper, 9 x 12 inches
I’m inspired to create art to try and make my mom happy. Transformation to me means changing who you are because of your life experiences. I have transformed into a person I never thought I would have to. The hopeful thing about transformation is that no matter what you become you can always transform into something else.

**Dragon**, 2021
beadwork, 3 inches

**Peregrine Falcon**, 2021
beadwork, dimensions variable
Past experiences inspire me to create art because I have been through a lot... [C]reating art is what I love and see in my future. Transformation to me is... something or someone changing for the greater good. My transformation began by learning myself and becoming humble, respectful, and less violent. In two years when I get my second chance in life, I pray and hope to transform into a family man that has a positive influence in my community.

**Untitled, 2021**
acrylic on canvas board, 16 x 20 inches
As an artist and a visionary, it is important for me to be able to bring my visions to light with any tools available to me, so I take the opportunity to practice and master all mediums including computers to generate digital art. I love the simplicity and versatility of graphite and charcoal drawing, but I also love to paint with color, oil, acrylic, watercolor, color pencil and pastel.

Art, visual art, music, and literature, are all tools to communicate and express ideas, communication keeps people connected. As human beings, we are innately creative beings. The love and beauty of life inspires me to create art to connect with people. Also, the pain people feel when overwhelmed by depression, oppression, poverty and other social conditions. Artists have the unique ability to create things that identify and acknowledge that pain and inspire hope. It is a powerful gift.

**Lennell Maurice Martin**

*Inspiration for a Nation*, 2021  
mixed media, 11 x 14 inches

*Love is Golden #1*, 2021  
acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

*Love is Golden #2*, 2021  
acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

*Love is Golden #3: Pure Gold*, 2021  
acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches
Art has a pretty big role in my life because it is a way that I can express myself in a positive and productive way. That way I am not getting in trouble. I grew up on a cow and crop farm, and I miss it so much so I paint them to remind me of what I am missing while I am in prison. It's a way to keep my mind focused on my release date and not doing anything to keep me from it!

When I came to prison, I was a happy go-lucky kind of spirit. Since the last 8 years, I have grown more jaded and no longer care about people that I don't know. I realize this and it makes me mad at myself because I know I am only seeing the worst humanity has to offer. As time goes on, I really hope to address this issue and get back to my old self again. This is why I have started to make art, to transform my thinking and help me rediscover the beauty in this world and the opportunities my country has to offer. Also, making art is very therapeutic and calming to the soul!

*The Transition*, 2021
acrylic on canvas board, 28 x 22 inches
NATHAN MEYER

I want the world to see and feel what I hear and feel. Drawing, painting, and tattooing unrestricts my perception and frees my consciousness. I have transformed from the addicted to the sober way of thinking. I hope that all can see the Death of one thing can lead to the rebirth of another thing.

*Rush to Happiness with Diligence*, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 14½ x 11 inches
I started [drawing] last March and I try to at least doodle or sketch every day. It’s an escape and it helps to relieve stress. I’ve had time to reflect and make changes in my heart and mind. I hope to never stop improving and be a large part in my family and community.

*The Phoenix*, 2021
graphite on paper, 9¼ x 12 inches
Art is my passion, the part of me that can only be expressed by projecting it through colors and shapes, taking a physical form for the world to see. A role in my life that links me to my past, as I create in the moment for the future to leave remnants of myself long after I am gone.

Nature, time, and human beings are constantly transforming. Society as a whole transforms the norms that change throughout our lives. To me the most important transformation takes place when someone becomes autonomous and true to themselves beyond any type of outside influence, allowing them to reach their full potential. Funny thing is that at the stage in life before reaching such transformation, one must allow the embracement of an entire community to understand one’s self.

**Embracement**, 2021
ink, charcoal, and acrylic on paper, 22½ x 15 inches

**Barriers**, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 inches

**Coatlicue**, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 inches
Art is a way of articulating my expression without words. Art is a major role in every aspect of life. For art is the needle to the record player in my veins. My pain and passions inspire my creativity. Some of the most painful experiences and passionate events help me create. I have transformed my inner conversations from shaming myself to having compassion with my past and patience with my presence. My hope for transformation is commitment to love self and others. I hope that we all transform fear into courage, pain into passion, and anger into Grace.
My whole life has revolved around art and creating! Ever since I could remember, I’ve always been drawing, painting, or using my hands to create. I’ve been a tattoo artist since I was 19, but mostly I enjoy art because it makes my immediate environment brighter. In my life I struggle with depression and anxiety, so you can imagine that being in prison isn’t ideal for positivity in my life, so I use my art as a form of escape. I create by using my feelings as an anchor for the art, sometimes it’s dark and gloomy and other times it’s light and full of life, but every time it involves transformation to better my situation. I just hope that my art portrays that transformation and those that view my art can obtain their own form of change to better their lives as well.

**SHANE SPICER**

_Eyes on the World_, 2021  
colored pencil on canvas board, 17 x 13 x 4 inches

**The Monarch**, 2021  
pastel on paper, 20 x 25 ⅜ inches

**Beautiful Sadness: #1 Chaos**, 2021  
acrylic on canvas board, 24 x 18 inches

**Beautiful Sadness: #2 Serenity**, 2021  
acrylic on canvas board, 24 x 18 inches
[This piece shows] the heartbreak I went through; finding a solid foundation through self-growth. This piece shows direction in growth and solid foundation. Having your anchor to hold through life’s chaos. Transformation to me is the change I made to become the man I am today. I came from not caring about life, myself, or anyone else to living for my son to help him grow to manhood. My hope is becoming a man my son and family can be proud of.

_Broken Trust_, 2021
graphite and ink on paper, 11 x 14 inches

_Destination of Growth_, 2021
graphite, ink, and watercolor on paper, 11 x 14 inches
Transformation to me looks like, “change of or for a difference.” I have transformed because, by me now knowing the truth, the choice to “choose” right. My heart, mind, spirit have changed. It is a liberation, set free to appreciate life. To walk in the truth, not to just be alive but to actually live life. To share my life’s experiences with those around me and passing through my life’s journey. Giving and receiving love, joy of all God’s creation. Continue to learn and grow. Respecting my freedom and to keep in mind I don’t have to be incarcerated to have lots of freedom. It’s how I choose to live my life here on Earth. Afterwards I pray in faith to be able to enter that final place called Home, beside the Lord’s throne.
My pain and struggle inspires me to create art. Art is an escape and a way to face my demons head on. I have learned to count my blessings and have a mindset that trial and tribulation breed motivation to dig deep, face the nitty gritty grimy stuff and focus and lean on a power greater than myself. My hope for transformation is that it is so big and bold that someone, even if it is just one person, can draw their hope and strength from my struggle.

As a young man, I never thought about how my actions affected those around me. I was selfish, ignorant, full of rage and insecurities. I treated people as if they were temporary vending machines. I was a lost little cub. Going through my struggle and opening my eyes I have been able to look at some things, face my demons, and become humble. My morals and values and priorities have changed, my love of self shines outward, and is a beacon of hope for those still lost. I’ve grown and matured into the likes of a confident tiger.

**Baby Cub Lost**, 2021
graphite on paper, 12 x 9 inches

**Confident Tiger**, 2021
graphite on paper, 12 x 9 inches
[I want] to be recognized for something positive. Also, if I’m being honest, just to do something if not for anything other than to impress myself. I’ll leave you with this thought, if you can connect with my art and it can stir your mind a bit, then I'm happy with that. As the theme of my piece will reflect the power the mother of pearl possesses. This work was purely memory and imagination. I wanted to test myself as I hope more people will strive to as a source of motivation. I've seen the depths of life and hope that others don’t have to find their own transformation.
Being incarcerated, I find a way to work with what I have, and pencil is what I had. I use art to remove myself from the chaos in my life, also because it is something I enjoy that benefits me and my mental health. It’s also good for meditation. I have transformed by learning how negative past experiences have impacted my life, how to move past those experiences and learn to use them to become a better person physically, mentally, and emotionally. My hope for transformation is to continue my growth and break free from my past and live in a new life with healthy relationships and positivity.
When I first came to prison I left two daughters in the world. I could paint them pictures but I feel Dad’s homemade stuffed animals mean more. Whether I make the art for myself or someone else to send to their kids or girl I can see the joy in them. They tell me after how much the kid or girl loved it, how it brought smiles to them. After making an ugly mistake, I love that I can bring some kind of beauty back to it.

I find the opinion of “convicts,” [and] “prisoners,” is the same as lions. Scary, violent, aggressive. So, my goal with the project is to show lions can be sweet, secure, even cuddly. If I can transform an image of an absolute beast maybe it will at least start a conversation about what a prisoner could be.