Press Release

Exhibition

Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System
August 25, 2018–January 6, 2019

HOUSTON, TX (June 20, 2018)—The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is pleased to announce its upcoming exhibition Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System, the largest and most comprehensive museum presentation to investigate the criminal justice system in the United States. Presented through the eyes of more than thirty artists, with works spanning the past forty years, Walls Turned Sideways is organized by Guest Curator Risa Puleo. CAMH will host an opening reception on the evening of Friday, August 24 from 6:30–9PM, with the exhibition remaining on view through Sunday, January 6, 2019.

Walls Turned Sideways features work by artists from across the nation that addresses the criminal justice system, mass incarceration, and the prison-industrial complex. Representing a range of contemporary art production...
made both in the studio and the social realm, the exhibition includes artworks that take social justice issues as a subject matter; and position the prison and court systems as structures for dismantling through institutional critique. The artworks in the exhibition are extraordinary for the scale and ambition by which they mobilize in order to bring visibility to offenses within the justice system.

*Walls Turned Sideways* recognizes the artist as a figure capable of changing society and poses the questions: What is the social role and responsibility of the artist in times of political urgency? What functions can only art and artists fulfill in the social and political landscape? Moreover, the exhibition considers the relationship between the museum and the prison, focusing on their shared history of collection. *Walls Turned Sideways* asks if the museum is the repository for all that society values, how is the prison the repository for all society seeks to disown?

The justice system in the United States is complex; as a result, artists tend to tackle one component at a time. *Walls Turned Sideways* utilizes the work of artists to construct a dynamic and nuanced portrait of the prison-industrial complex in the United States according to how people move through the criminal justice system. The conditions of being profiled as a criminal makes one more susceptible to arrest. Once arrested, one moves through a set of procedures related to due process, including the courtroom and trial, and onwards toward incarceration. After incarceration there are three potential ways one can exit the physical structure of the prison: a life sentence that guarantees death inside the institution, the death penalty, or the possibility of reentry into society.

The title of the exhibition *Walls Turned Sideways* comes from a quote by political activist, academic, and author, Angela Davis: “Walls turned sideways are bridges.” The exhibition hopes to serve as a bridge or connecting conduit for conversation, contemplation, and change.

### Exhibition Artists

- Andrea Robbins and Max Becher | New York, New York
- Josh Begley | Brooklyn, New York
- Zach Blas | London, United Kingdom
- Chandra McCormick and Keith Calhoun | New Orleans, Louisiana
- Luis Camnitzer | New York, New York
- Jamal Cyrus | Houston, Texas
- James Drake | Santa Fe, New Mexico
- The Estate of Chris Burden | 1946–2015
- The Estate of Martin Wong | 1946–1999
- Tirtza Even | Chicago, Illinois
- Andrea Fraser | New York, New York
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About the Curator

Risa Puleo is the Guest Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas. In 2017, Puleo was the Curator-in-Residence at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska where she curated the exhibition *Monarchs: Brown and Native Artists in the Path of the Butterfly*. She is currently working on exhibitions that will be presented at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts; Charlotte Street Foundation, Kansas City, Missouri; ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas; Franklin Street Works, Stamford, Connecticut; and the Leslie-Lohman Museum in New York, New York. Puleo holds Master's degrees from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College and Hunter College's Art History program (both New York, New York), and has been accepted into the doctoral program in Art History at Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois.
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She has written for *Art in America, Art Papers, Art 21, Asia Art Pacific, Hyperallergic, Modern Painters* and other art publications.

**Publication**
CAMH will produce a significant catalogue to accompany *Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System*. The catalogue is being published by the Miami-based non-profit [NAME] Publications, under the editorial direction of Natalia Zuluaga, Lucie Steinberg, and Gean Moreno. The publication includes a forward by CAMH Director Bill Arning, essays by curator Risa Puleo, theorist Che Gossett, and other contributions by Elizabeth Alexander; Jimmy Baca; Evan Bissell; Andy Campbell; Chicago Torture Justice Memorial; Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo and Sable Elyse Smith; Laurie Jo Reynolds and Stephen Eisenman; Nicole Fleetwood; Michel Foucault and others in conversation; Sam Gould; Unique Holland; Ben Jones; David Joselit; Theodore Kerr; Chaédria LaBouvier; Suzanne Lacy; Roger Lancaster; Shaun Leonardo; K.Tsianina Lomawaima; Shoshana Magnet; Sarah Ross and Erica R. Meiners; Gean Moreno; Robert Morris; Robert Nelson; Isamu Noguchi; Otabenga Jones & Associates; Anthony Papa; Cameron Rowland; Jared Sexton; Rashad Shabazz; Shawn Michelle Smith; Daniel Tucker and Rosten Woo; and Rebecca Zorach. Artists’ projects in the exhibition and social realm will be documented with full-color images and interpretive essays and include the artists’ voices in interviews and statements. The overall scope and comprehensive material featured in the accompanying catalogue promises to serve as a lasting scholarly document for the exhibition.

Publication design is being completed by Stacy Asher and Aaron Sutherlen, who are faculty in the School of Art, Art History & Design at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Exhibition Support**
*Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System* is made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The catalogue accompanying this exhibition is made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston and a grant from the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation.

**Public Programs**
This selection of events are free, open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, unless otherwise noted. Seating is limited. Please check CAMH.ORG for the most current information.
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**Opening Reception | Walls Turned Sideways**  
Friday, August 24, 2018 | 6:30–9PM  
Celebrate the exhibition opening. Complimentary beverages available for select membership levels from 6:30–8PM.

**In Conversation | Guest Curator Risa Puleo**  
Saturday, August 25, 2018 | 2–3PM  
Join Guest Curator Risa Puleo, for a gallery walk-through of *Walls Turned Sideways*.

**Talk | Lines in the Landscape with Josh Begley**  
Thursday, September 13, 2018 | 6:30–7:30PM  
What does the geography of white supremacy look like? In this talk, Josh Begley one of the artists included in the exhibition *Walls Turned Sideways*, will speak broadly about his artistic practice, specifically focusing on ways of visualizing race, data, and representations of violence in the United States. This program is hosted at CAMH in partnership with AIGA Houston.

**Workshop | Words & Art**  
Saturday, September 22, 2018 | 12:30–1:30PM  
Join us as we explore *Walls Turned Sideways* using prompts, group discussion, and your imagination. Participants delve deeply into the exhibition through stories and poems. This workshop is open to all writing levels.

**Performance | Open Letters with Mark Manjivar**  
Rothko Chapel | 1409 Sul Ross Street, Houston, TX 77006  
Wednesday, October 10, 2018 | 7–9PM  
A socially engaged project inviting Texas communities to explore capital punishment by responding to open letters written by death row inmates. Register at rothkochapel.org. Space is limited.

**Community Day**  
Saturday, October 20, 2018 | 2–5PM  
Come explore current exhibitions using writing prompts, meditation exercises, and find resources from community partners and organizations.

**Reading | Words & Art**  
Thursday, November 1, 2018 | 6:30–7:30PM  
Houston-based authors and poets share new works inspired by the exhibition *Walls Turned Sideways*. 
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Open Studio | Safe Space
Saturday, November 3, 2018 | 2–4PM
Design a 3D replica of a safe space inspired by artists in the exhibition Walls Turned Sideways. What does a safe space look like to you?

Performance | Scriptwriters Houston
Thursday, December 6, 2018 | 6:30–8:30PM
Scriptwriters Houston will present a series of ten-minute plays selected through a competitive process. The site-specific productions are inspired by and set within the current exhibitions. Small audience groups will experience the plays as they move through the Museum. Register at CAMH.ORG. Space is limited.

CAMH Mission
The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is a leading destination to experience innovative art. CAMH actively encourages public engagement with its exhibitions through its educational programs, publications, and online presence. Always fresh, always free.

General Information
The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston’s Museum District. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 10AM–7PM, Thursday 10AM–9PM, Saturday 10AM–6PM, and Sunday 12PM–6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.