

INTRODUCTION

Interrupted Life: Incarcerated Mothers in the United States is an exhibition of eight linked installation pieces examining the facts, experiences, policies and politics of incarceration in this country today. Curated by the renowned author and scholar Rickie Solinger, the exhibition seeks to educate the community about the realities of incarceration, especially its impact on mothers and their children. Some of the artworks in the exhibition were made by inmates. Unique and unprecedented, *Interrupted Life* has been hosted by over 100 college and university galleries and premiered at a women's prison, the California Institute for Women in February 2006.

Interrupted Life highlights the realities of women's experiences as they try to sustain relations with children and family on the outside, struggle for healthcare, fight to define and achieve basic rights, deal with irrational sentencing systems, and consider how to remake life after prison. One artwork contains these shocking statistics:

One out of every 109 women in America is incarcerated, on parole or probation. Incarcerated women are among the poorest people in America. Two-thirds have less than a high school education.

Together, these powerful artworks are an intense and visceral examination of life behind bars for women living in a country with the highest incarceration rate in the world. These expressive installations underscore the failures of imagination and policy that have too often underwritten our current prison system.

On behalf of Kean University, I thank Rickie Solinger for her efforts in creating and organizing this exhibition, and the artists for generously sharing their most vulnerable selves. For the installation of this show, we are grateful to our gallery assistants Diana Palermo, Kelly Murphy, Tazwell Saltzer and Afieya Kipp. Special thanks go to Kean University President Dawood Farahi, Vice President Mark Lender, and Holly Logue, Acting Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. We appreciate their support for the growing exhibition program and for this opportunity to investigate the important issues surrounding incarcerated women. Generous financial assistance for *Interrupted Life* has been provided by The Ford Foundation.

Neil Tetkowski
Director of University Galleries