Emergence: Art from Inside
Displayed on Campus

The Prison Education Program is excited to announce our upcoming art exhibit, *Emergence: Art from Inside*. The exhibition features work by twenty artists incarcerated at Oregon State Penitentiary and Oregon State Correctional Institution – both in Salem, Oregon – and youth from the Serbu Youth Detention Center in Eugene. The exhibition is a collaboration between the Visual Arts Team and the UO Prison Education Program.

Work in the show ranges in medium from wood, to pastel, acrylic and even carved soap. The exhibition will be on view through June in the Erb Memorial Union’s Adell McMillan Gallery on the UO Campus. Read the show statement and see the art on Page 4.

Scholarship Fundraiser Continues

T-Shirt Sales Benefit Inside Scholarships

As part of an effort to improve access to higher education in Oregon prisons, the Prison Education Program has begun a scholarship fund to assist inside students with the costs associated with college classes. The scholarship fund will support both continuing and new inside students who face financial barriers to participating in PEP programming.

To contribute to the scholarship fund, we are continuing to sell t-shirts featuring the Prison

See T-Shirts, Page 2
First PEP Programming at Oregon’s only Women’s Prison


discussion on Sandra Cisneros’ The House on Mango Street in early April, the PEP held a book discussion about the story of a boy coming of age and how that story can change depending on who is reading it and from what perspective. We discussed how this book may engage readers emotionally. We talked about the different versions of the story and how they related to our own experiences. We discussed themes in the book and how they related to our own lives. This discussion was open and engaging. PEP facilitators encourage open discussion in the workshops.

We are grateful to speak to our incarcerated and campus-based students in Oregon, and to hear their personal interests with an open and engaged discussion on the broad topic of Philosophy. Discovery Group talked about the history of philosophers and the importance of asking questions about the world around you. We emphasized that philosophy isn’t necessarily a highly academic or intellectual subject, but instead it allows us to think more critically about society and gives us an opportunity to see the world from other people’s perspectives. Thinking philosophically helps to improve our communication and problem solving skills.

In relation to our lesson on Philosophy, Discovery Group facilitated a conversation about the story of The Ship of Theseus. In the metaphysics of identity, the ship of Theseus is a thought experiment that raises the question of whether a ship—standing for an object in general—that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object. The students at Serbu all had wonderful contributions to the conversation. Some students were questioning how much of an item needs to change before it is no longer the same item. Is it all of it? Or the first piece? Another student pointed out that he believed he is still the same person, even as his body continues to grow and change.

We look forward to our next chance to engage with the women there!

Discovery Group gets philosophical with youth at Serbu Detention Center

Throughout Winter term, Inside-Out alumni have facilitated lessons at Serbu Youth Detention Center two to three times a week. The youth there choose the topics and together we have learned about Surreal Art, Groundhog Day, optical illusions, the life cycle of butterflies, the issue of endangered turtles and interesting architecture around the world.

We also held an engaged discussion on the broad topic of Philosophy. Discovery Group talked about the history of philosophers and the importance of asking questions about the world around you. We emphasized that philosophy isn’t necessarily a highly academic or intellectual subject, but instead it allows us to think more critically about society and gives us an opportunity to see the world from other people’s perspectives. Thinking philosophically helps to improve our communication and problem solving skills.

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Side by Side Partners with Al Kennedy High School

During Winter term, Side by Side facilitated two workshops at Al Kennedy Alternative High School in Cottage Grove; these workshops focused on goal setting and cultural awareness. During Fall Term, Side by Side brought Al Kennedy students to the University of Oregon campus for a tour and fun, icebreaker activities. Since last term we brought the students to UO, this term a group of Side by Side volunteers travelled to Al Kennedy and facilitated workshops with all of the student cohorts at the school.

T-Shirts: Scholarship

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Shirts are available for $15 - with an option for added donation - and can be purchased using cash or check. Sizes small – XXL in either grey with black design or black with white design are available. To purchase a shirt, email: insideout@uoregon.edu.

Inside students interested in applying for the scholarship should request an application by mail from:

Shaul Cohen
Prison Education Program
University of Oregon Department of Geography
1321 Kincaid St.
Eugene, OR 97403
Considering Identity in The House On Mango Street

BY RACHEL / OUTSIDE STUDENT

In early April, the PEP held a book discussion on Sandra Cisneros’ The House on Mango Street at Columbia River Correctional Institution in Portland. The twelve inside students, three currently enrolled PEP-alumni and two graduated PEP alumni from Portland attended began by discussing ties to names, home lives, and cultural upbringing in our communities.

During partner and small group discussions we discussed themes in the book and how they related to our own lives. Themes we discussed were community, gender, poverty, and shame. We talked about nicknames, if we had any, and if so how they have shaped our identity differently from our given names. We discussed how this book may have been different if it had been written about a boy coming of age and how that would affect the main character’s struggles to adjust to dealing with emotions. We talked about the different experiences we have had as preteens, walking the line of adulthood and childhood and how our gender shapes what is expected of us during that transitional time.

We discussed what it means to escape poverty, but then to go back and build up one’s community. When considering the idea of escaping poverty and building a new life, we talked about how that translates to getting out of prison and building a new life and community.

At the end of our discussion, we closed by talking about who we would give this book to in our own lives and the answers were largely daughters, sisters, brothers, and others coming of age in our lives. This discussion was thought-provoking and connected the book to all of us in personal ways. Some of us had read the book before, and the discussions we had caused us to look at the book in a new light. The energy and openness in the room was amazing.

UO Prison Education Program Seeks Oregon’s Legislative Support through New Senate Bill 949

BY EMILY / OUTSIDE STUDENT

On April 1st, the PEP headed to the Oregon State Capitol to testify in support of Senate Bill 949, which would provide state funds to support our work. Another bill, SB 777, would create a Task Force to study the impact of education in Oregon prisons.

We were delighted by the supportive testimony by Senator Lew Fredrick – who attended the PEP’s graduation ceremony at OSP in June 2018 - and Senator Michael Dembrow, who attended an Inside-Out course’s closing ceremony at OSCI. Both spoke warmly of the work we do, and the impact it has in prisons and for Oregon more broadly.

PEP Director Shaul Cohen spoke to the growth of our program over the past years. Outside student and PEP intern Julie shared the perspective of an outside student who was able to pair her personal interests with an in-person experience, and how this has impacted her career aspirations. We had hoped to be joined by former Inside student and ACE member Trevor, but he had another speaking engagement. PEP Coordinator Katie instead spoke to the commitment and growth she has witnessed in Inside students and the way we hope our work impacts folks in the prisons we work in even beyond the classrooms.

We aren’t sure when we will hear about SB949, but regardless of the decision we are grateful to speak to our elected officials, and to hear enthusiasm for our work.

MISSION STATEMENT

The UO PEP creates educational opportunities for incarcerated and campus-based students in Oregon with a range of traditional and innovative programs, and supports them in their effort to learn, lead, and contribute to the wider community.

GET INVOLVED!

Join Side by Side & Discovery Group!

insideout@uoregon.edu
for more information!
Emergence: Art by Inside Students on View through June

Emerge, verb
Pronunciation: /ɪˈməːdʒ/ 1. To come forth into view; to pass out, issue, from an enclosed space, area of obscuration, etc.

The work in this exhibition emerges from a space of interiority. Quite literally, the work passes out through the gates of the two Oregon correctional facilities where it was created into the outside world. Likewise, each piece flows forth from the internal experiences of the artist who created it – who is incarcerated in one of these facilities.

In biology, quantum physics and systems theory, emergence is understood to characterize movement or action in which a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Emergent theory follows the line of thinking that one individual change can prompt larger change. Many of the artists in this exhibition note the potential which art making has – brushstroke by brushstroke, line by line, piece by piece – to change an individual’s life trajectory, in this case while incarcerated.

Style, subject and formal strategy also emerge as through lines across the work. Despite showcasing pieces by over twenty artists created at two separate correctional facilities, representations of the natural world, portraiture, and reflections on culture emerge as axes along which the work is clustered. Emergent theory considers the ways in which a complex whole emerges from simple parts. While the works in this exhibition are far from simple, together they flow as a cogent and complex whole despite being created and collected without definitive thematic guidelines. The exhibition itself is emergent in that its works organize themselves together into a complex whole greater than their individual sum.

The goal of bringing these pieces together is to offer a venue for the work and talent of incarcerated artists to emerge into a space of higher education. Likewise, to offer a glimpse into the common threads and variations that emerge across work being created inside, with an opportunity for incarcerated artists to describe what art making means to them.

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