

Artist Statement — 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of Artists in Michigan Prisons

Artist Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I BEGAN CREATING AT AN EARLY AGE, SUPPORTED MOSTLY BY MY MOTHER AND MATERNAL AUNTS. BY MY TEENAGE YEARS I WAS ENTERING AND WINNING REGIONAL AND STATE COMPETITIONS IN MONOCHROMATIC AND POLYCHROMATIC ILLUSTRATION AND IN OIL PAINTING. I WENT TO COLLEGE TO STUDY ENGINEERING AND TOOK ONE PAINTING COURSE AND ONE ART HISTORY COURSE AS ELECTIVES BUT AM OTHERWISE SELF-TAUGHT. I SERVED SIX YEARS IN THE MILITARY, EARNED TWO UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES, AND STARTED A FAMILY AS A YOUNG ADULT SO MY ABILITY TO PRIORITIZE CREATIVITY SUFFERED, THOUGH I DID SERVE SEVERAL YEARS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR ARTS IN THE PARK (DANVILLE, IL) AS MARKETING DIRECTOR, VICE-PRESIDENT, AND PRESIDENT. I AM A TRUE ENGINEER SO MY WORK IS NOT WHAT SOME MAY CONSIDER "CREATIVE" (THOUGH I DO TAKE PAINS IN DEVELOPING MY COMPOSITIONS), BUT I REVEL IN THE TECHNICALITY OF MY PROCESS. I FEEL MY BRAIN IS FULLY ENGAGED WHEN I WORK, AS WELL AS MY EYES AND HANDS. ONE OF THE POSITIVE THINGS TO COME FROM MY INCARCERATION IS THE REDISCOVERY OF MY PASSION FOR ART. I ONLY JUST BEGAN THIS PROCESS OF RE- DISCOVERY TWO YEARS AGO AND IN THAT SPAN OF TIME HAVE CREATED NEARLY FIFTY INDIVIDUAL PIECES, A RATE OF ONE PIECE NEARLY EVERY OTHER WEEK, ON TOP OF WORKING AND PROGRAMMING. WHEN I BEGAN WORKING TWO YEARS AGO I WAS WORKING EXCLUSIVELY IN GRAPHITE BUT HAVE OVER TIME INCORPORATED INK, COLORED PENCIL, CHALK AND OIL PASTELS, WATERCOLOR, AND A COUPLE PROPRIETARY MEDIUMS. THE WAY MY TECHNIQUE HAS EVOLVED AND GROWN HAS TAKEN ME BY SURPRISE AND BEEN ENJOYABLE TO EXPLORE. I GUESS MY PROCESS AND TECHNIQUE IN HERE ARE AN EXPLORATION OF HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS (IT CAN BE A CHALLENGE TO GET GOOD QUALITY MATERIALS AND TOOLS), AND AT PRESENT I USE MY ART MOSTLY AS A WAY OF SHOWING MY GRATITUDE AND LOVE TO MY SUPPORT NETWORK — EVERYTHING I CREATE IS A GIFT FOR A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER. I WISH I HAD MORE NOTICE AND TIME TO PLAN OTHER PIECES FOR THIS EXHIBITION BECAUSE MY PROJECT LIST IS NOW BOOKED MONTHS IN ADVANCE. THE PIECE(S) I'M SUBMITTING ARE INTENDED AS CHRISTMAS GIFTS BUT I WOULD BE HONORED TO HAVE THEM BE SELECTED. WHEN OTHERS SEE MY WORK I HOPE THEY EXPERIENCE A BIT OF JOY OR ENTHUSIASM, MAYBE INSPIRATION TO PICK UP A PENCIL AND TRY TO CREATE SOMETHING OF THEIR OWN. I HAVE ACTIVELY MENTORED A HANDFUL OF PEERS OVER THE YEARS AND CAN ATTEST TO THE CHANGE IT CAN CAUSE; HAVING THE ABILITY TO DO SOMETHING POSITIVE ALL ON ONE'S OWN IN A SEA OF SUCH NEGATIVITY AND UNCERTAINTY CAN BE VERY POWERFUL. IF THE PUBLIC SEES MY WORK I HOPE IT GIVES THEM PAUSE TO CONSIDER THEIR PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT WHAT THEY EXPECT TO ENCOUNTER WITH THE TERMS "PRISON" AND "INCARCERATION." IT RETURNS SOME OF MY HUMANITY.