

Artist Statement — 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of Artists in Michigan Prisons

Artist Name: Fernando Villareal

I've been incarcerated for 15 and a half years, but I'm not in prison, despite being taken away from family and friends. I've learned how to appreciate life and smell the flowers. When it seems like the walls are closing in on me and taking my breath, I run to my art work. Once I sit down and start working on a project, I get laser focused and the world around me melts away, and nothing else matters. When I'm working on a project, I'm creating something from nothing, I'm hearing the laughter of others and picturing the smiles on their faces. If I'm able to stop and smell the flowers in a place like this, then I hope that everyone in society will do the same. Maybe my art work can be their flower.

Sincerely  
Fernando Villareal