

## Artist Statement:

"Doc" Collison

### Compassion;

Mixed Media – Modeling Paste, Gel Medium, Wood, Glue, Paper- - 2024 ~ 300 hours

In 2020 during the Pandemic and a scorching hot July morning. Old man Willie, (a lifer) fell getting ready for the day's prison factory work. Willie at 80 years old, was my friend and cell mate usually keeping to himself and suffered his captivity without much fuss.

Willie had an old heart that struggled when forced to work harder due to the extreme high prison temperatures. Despite many other states having A/C for their prisoners, Michigan has no air conditioning for Michigan prisoners – only for the staff offices, which guarantees inhumane suffering for those over the age of 50+ years old.

On this fateful morning, Corrections Officers, (represented by the Angel of Mercy) holds Willie to render aid and lifesaving efforts.

Officer's Chaffer and Ayotte, are highly respected officers that demonstrated mercy, kindness and would listen to prisoners with empathy and professionalism that many officers just refuse to do. It's a common archaic mentality of "bread and water" that is encouraged within the older officer ranks that still exists today. This is expressed on my work with Shackles on the dying prisoner.

During their efforts to help Willie, Officer Chaffer was seen weeping. Ayotte performed CPR and Willies' heart was restarted and transported to the hospital where he succumbed to his death.

Rejected long ago by his family, suffering incarceration as an older frail man, he struggled to survive decades of utter loneliness, isolation and despair with no hope of love, or freedom. Despite what people may say, **A prisoner's worst fear is to die alone.**

Willie was spared that fate not from his family or other inmates, but from corrections officers that set aside biases like; "They are the enemy, don't make eye contact crap", and instead, treated Willie with love, humility and dignity as he lay dying and breathing his last breath in their arms.

### *My thoughts;*

I labored over this idea for 2 years before making this sculpture. It has heavy influences from Michelangelo's "Pieta" although very different in subjects and shapes, it still retains the theme of Mercy. This work took an enormous amount of planning and persistence to see completed.

It is my first sculpture and I enjoyed the journey and its deep emotional costs.

I hope to bring to this exhibit that which has not been seen before in prison sculpture... **Compassion.**



God Bless You!

*"For artists; it's the love of the labor"*

## The Charcoal Washbears

Cat# 24-05-89-1D

Charcoal on Hot Press Paper 12x 15 in Black Mat Frame 2024 ~ 40 hours

The result of a challenge made by my fellow inmates. For the last several years, I've confined myself to the study and teaching of oil painting. The most common form of art inside a prison is charcoal on paper. It's cheap and in most cases the most affordable for prisoners. Where prisoners only make about 1 or 2 dollars a day, many treat the harms of confinement through art. So there are many talented drawing artists found inside a prison. Many of them are tattoo artists.

Like most men in prison, we love to challenge each other to either do more, or we try to one up each other. Egos simple as that. The thought that we are the best inside prison, drives many and I have actually heard others brag about how they are so good they describe themselves with comments like; "I'm a God with a pencil" imagine that... Pencil Gods! I simply giggle, DJ and Vargas (Now free men) were some of the best artists MDOC has seen. I would have loved to see their reaction with silly comments like that.

What many people never see with my development of painting, is the hours of prep work drawing out my "Next Painting Project" with charcoal pencils. I have noticed that one set of skills seemingly enhance the other skill set. I tend to think that as artists we are tuned to the tonal values of our paintings, therefore it would seem logical that it would translate well into charcoal arts.

So the story goes on... a few wanted to hold / teach a regular drawing session in our art studio that I coordinate, they assumed that I did not have those skills. Being an older instructor type, I entertained the idea and made some suggestions for the class daily lesson plans at which they seemed alittle surprised and put-off. So in order to settle this misplaced attitude, I ask them to find the most complicated picture they could find in our art library.... Needless to say they met my request with just that, a work of nature with 3 raccoons perched on a tree. Clearly this would require really advance charcoal skills and a high level of detail. I accepted the challenge and let them know that when I'm done with it, that I do not want hear anymore from the doubting Thomas's or the naysayers.

- In prison, it is a "put up or shut up" world. But, when you put up... respect usually follows.

Therefore, this is my mic drop to that challenge. It was fun and amuzing to see the expressions of disbelief on the men's faces. One even thought I used paint for the whiskers. It take's patience, each one drawn out and filled in, much like the fur.

The staff has allowed me to fame this in a Mat Frame to size for a 16x20 glass frame. This image is based on a 1992 painting titled "The Washbears". I chose to enhance and change the eye sets and few other things. Charcoal limits the artist to black and white tones and contrasting effects that sometime works better than color. I feel this is one of those works that do that.

I hope you enjoy this work as much I did making it.



*"For Artists; It's the love of the Labor!"*

## Grand Haven Lighthouse

Oil on linen on Masonite 20x35 2024 ~ 140 hours

A picture I could not walk away from! I was struck with the challenge to recreate the contrasting intensity of the sky, and Lake Michigan. Famous in its double structure and running pier lights. The lighthouse of Grand Haven stand guard signaling the Great Lakes Maritime fleet.

It proved to be a challenge to then build a craft-frame for this painting. I placed three hanging holes which are reinforced with wood in the back of the frame for ease of hanging.

The Grandeur of the western Michigan sky at sunset is breathtaking... the real goal was to replicate the actual sky in a photorealist manner. In painting clouds an artist cannot over-focus on the detail but, you must not under-focus on them either. There seems to be a sweet spot where simplicity meets complexity, and when I see that the note of the colors and light feels right, it leaves a great feeling of achievement to me.

This painting reads very well in any room, meaning family friends and visitors will be sure to instantly start a conversation about the setting and beautiful execution of the painting. It has a strong room presence!

## Upon Pain of Imprisonment

Oil on Canvas 18 x 24 2024 ~ 160 hours

This art is based from part sculpture and part my imagination.... To convey the many emotional elements of despair, hopelessness, the tortured and racing minds that cannot rest! The loss in his eyes. The golden teardrops of hurt and pain rest upon his face. Behind him the mechanics of imprisonment, solitary confinement, utter isolation without knowing when or if it will ever really end.... Nobody can understand this unless they actually been there... As a last resort to end this pain, suicide is now on the table. Human contact by staff is nearly non-existent, and then it's usually cold, cruel and unforgiving.

The cogs of his mind connecting to his door lock... if you weren't mentally ill going in, you will be mentally harmed coming out. Welcome to the hell of institutionalization! Here you are feed like an animal and if you're really a good boy, you might be allowed a family visit for only 2 hours... and be sure to let your family know to bring some quarters to feed the vending machines... Remember the petting zoos we use to visit? Put a quarter in the machine and turn for the feed... then watch the magic begin! Like visiting starving 3<sup>rd</sup> world humans in a cage ... we gobble up anything we can get that they won't let us normally have. – not even a simple cola. Get up everyday, go to work or pay the price of more punishment – the prisoner is only left with part of his soul. His face, half gone ... only remnants of his past self remains in his mind...

My past and my inter being is being stripped away to irrelevance... exactly the way our handlers want it.



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