

# Jail Wall Drawings and the Role of Artistic Creativity in Community Reintegration\*

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## **Abstract**

*This essay features photographs of some interesting artwork discovered on the interior of a vacated county jail in Indiana. The artwork suggests that the human desire for creativity is strong even against the constraints of jail cell confinement. As opposed to something destructive, the artwork should imply an opportunity to strengthen efforts aimed at offender reintegration. A review of the literature suggests that artistic activities are rarely used in prisoner reentry programs and community-based corrections but receive strong support from practitioners and researchers. As part of a comprehensive approach designed to meet a variety of individual needs, creative activities may help released prisoners and community sanctioned individuals become more seriously involved in reintegration programs, more engaged in conventional activities, and therefore less likely to re-offend.*

## **About the Author**

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## **Jail Wall Drawings and the Role of Artistic Creativity in Community Reintegration**

### **Introduction**

This essay features artwork drawn throughout the interior of a vacant county jail in Indiana. I was invited by the county's police chief to come to the jail and quickly document the artwork before it was to be washed away. Under my supervision, the drawings were photographed by a student photographer in October of 2002--right after the population had been moved to a new jail. Most of the drawings were located in lock-up and holding cells, with a few located in day-use areas and corridors. Most of them were created with pencil and pen ink, but some were made with unknown sources of color or just by scraping. We do not know how long each drawing was there, but most would likely have been drawn in recent years, as the interior walls were last painted roughly ten years prior to the jail's closing.

Unfortunately, despite aggressive efforts, none of the artists could be located for interviews. Individually, all we can know for sure about them is their sex. Males and females were of course segregated into different units. Drawings by women were scarce, mostly because only about twelve women were there at any given time. Also, a female cell tended not to have nearly as much graffiti as a male cell. Therefore, we were not able to get many photographed female drawings. The women's drawings from the jail are featured in Yogan and Johnson's (2006) analysis of gender differences in the art. Except for the rose in Figure 12, all of the drawings in this essay were created by men.

Some information about the jail population as a whole was available. The Chief estimated that the recent inmate population in the old jail (totaling about 250) was about 80% White, 10% Black, and the remaining 10% consisted of Hispanic or Latino/a and

“other.” Although Blacks made up a rather small proportion of the jail’s population, they appeared to be over-represented, making up less than 1% (0.9) of the county’s population in the year 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). Hispanics or Latino/as were not as disproportionate, making up almost 5% (4.8) of the county’s population in 2000 (92.2% of the county is white) (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). However, racial representation in the jail could not be accurately examined because many detainees lived outside of the county, including a neighboring county with a much higher minority population.

It is fairly evident that alterations and additions to artists’ work were commonly made. With many images it is apparent that one person produced them, but with others, it is hard to tell how many were involved. Therefore, some of the images, or clusters of images, have layered and/or altered meanings. While not relying on original work, these changes too express sentiments, which may echo, elaborate, or oppose the viewpoints of the original artists. Or, the combination of the addition(s) and the original work may “say something” that transcends each contributing artist or author. While residents made these marks on their temporary living environments over time, they may have been expressing their own views on perceived themes introduced or addressed by previous contributors.

As the following examples of artwork will show, the jail’s art addressed a variety of themes. Popular themes included Christianity, community, pop culture, humor, and love. However, many of the jail’s drawings exhibited controversial themes having to do with horror, evil, death, and violence. They contained imagery that, without careful consideration and taken out of context, could be misperceived as “anti-social” expression, thereby discounting their aesthetic value. Regardless, all of the types of artwork from the

jail—whether they seem frightening, pleasant, or harmless—speaks to the persistence of the human need and capacity for creative expression.

**The Artwork**

Figure 1: Prayer

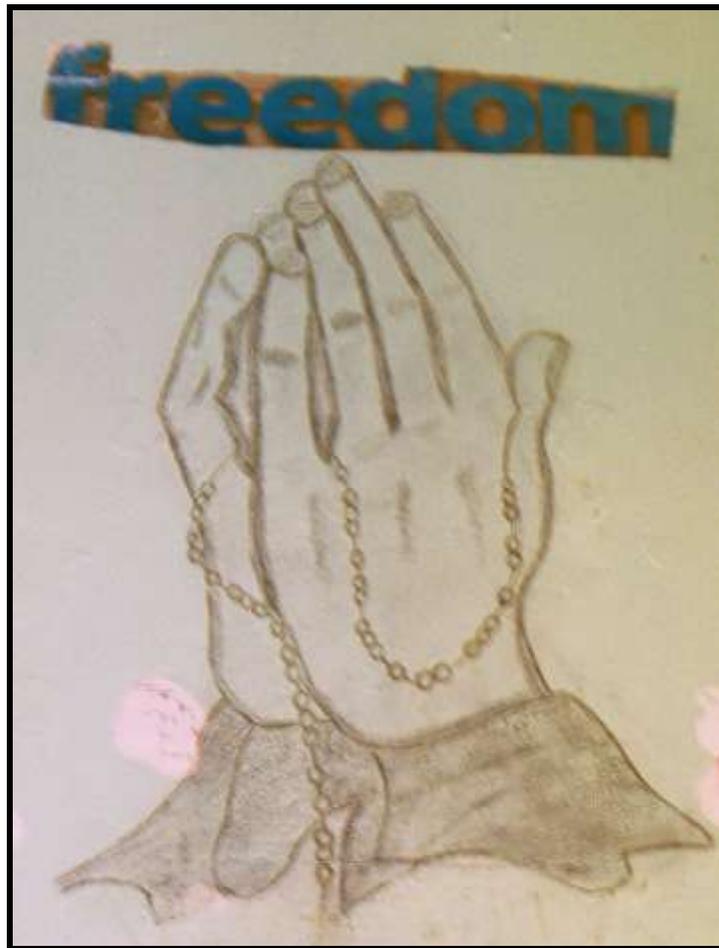
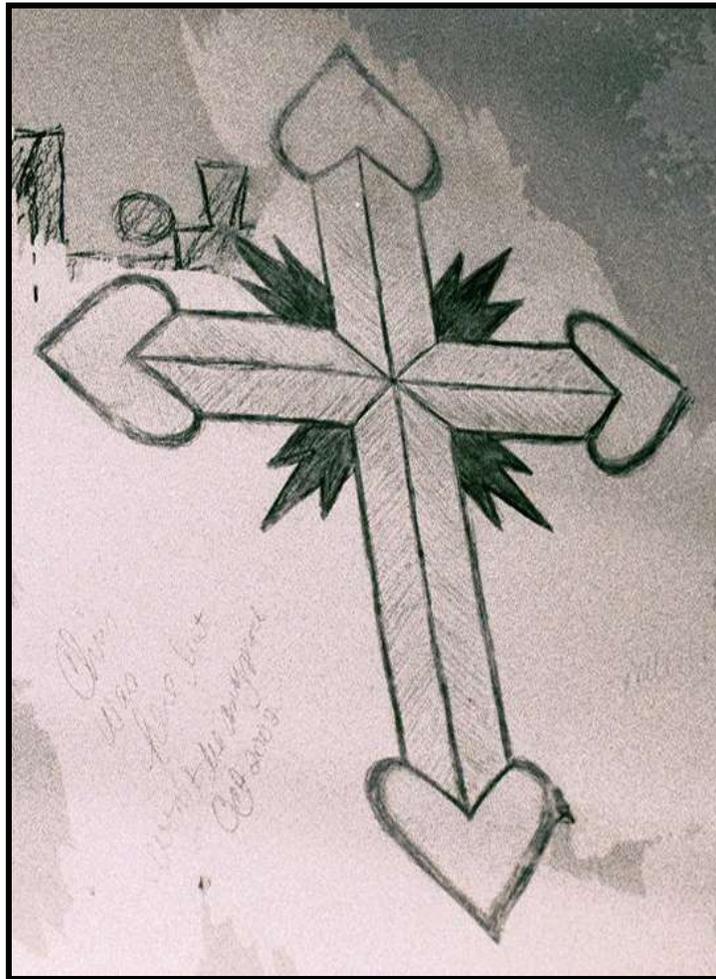


Figure 2: The Cross



Figures 1 and 2 are examples of the jail’s many Christian drawings. The Cross in particular was one of the most frequently used symbols. In his analysis of jail wall art, Hanes (2005) too found the Christian cross to be one of the most frequent images, and interpreted them to be a symbol of redemption and atonement. It is easy to be skeptical about the authenticity of the religious faith of someone in trouble with the law, especially in cases involving prisoners who “find religion”--the suspicion being that one is faking religiosity in order to get a break. Hopefully this collection of drawings will not be received so pessimistically. One’s religious affiliation cannot be discounted simply

because one is in trouble with the law and may somehow gain sympathy through religious expression. An argument can be made that the compelling expressions of religiosity in the jail are genuine, meaning that the artists accept Christian beliefs and values as deeply as anyone not involved with the system. It is important to recognize here that the artists did not construct their images for the authorities. They drew them privately and secretly (against rules), for themselves (and perhaps for other detainees as well). Therefore, it would be difficult to argue that they were just putting on a show with their religious work. It is also important to keep in mind that the artists were in jail, not prison, or death row specifically. Possibly, they were never found guilty of anything or may not have been in very serious trouble with the law. In general, it does not seem likely that many of the artists experienced the incentive to use the “finding religion” strategy. They probably did not “find religion” in jail—they probably already had it.

Figure 3: Downtown



Some of the jail’s artists addressed their communities in some way. The scene in Figure 3 for instance depicts an actual downtown area. A few of the officers at the jail confirmed that some of the downtown businesses named in the drawing existed at some point, and one still exists. The drawing tells some kind of story with the squad car and K-9 Unit (with lights flashing) arriving at the scene—a bust perhaps, and/or it could be expressing the cliché association between cops and donuts (racing to “Donut World”). While the drawing may or may not insult the police, it does not appear to be unflattering to the city’s downtown.

Figure 4: Bathroom Sink



Figure 5: “Fridge”

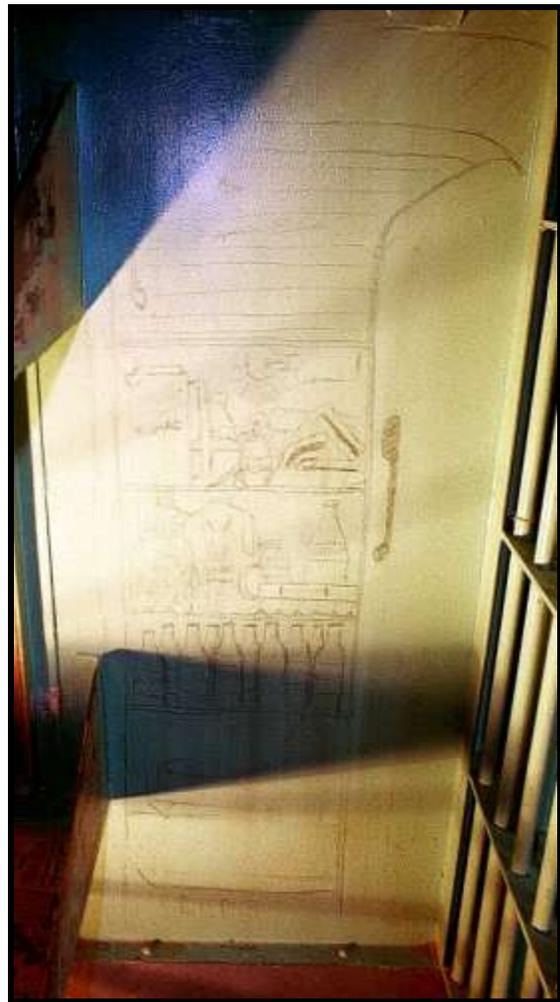
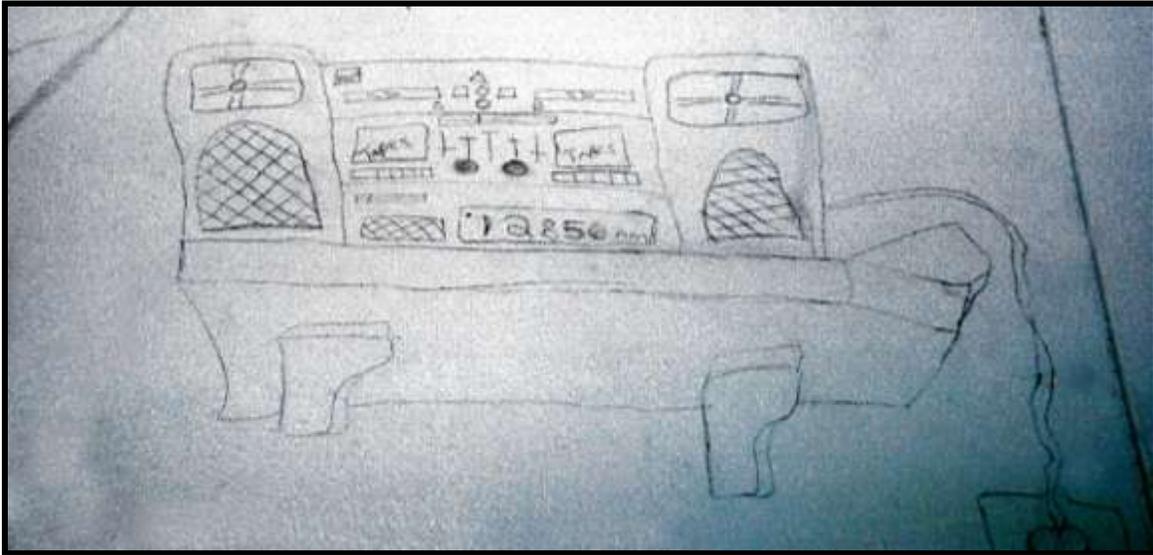


Figure 6: "Tunes"



All three drawings in Figures 4 through 6 were located in one cell. They were joined by a stove (displayed in Yogan and Johnson 2006). In some way, the artist was addressing the theme of "home." It is possible that he was expressing his desire for being home, as opposed to being institutionalized-- to make him self "feel more at home." It is also possible that he intended the drawings to be playful and/or humorous.

Figure 7: Homer

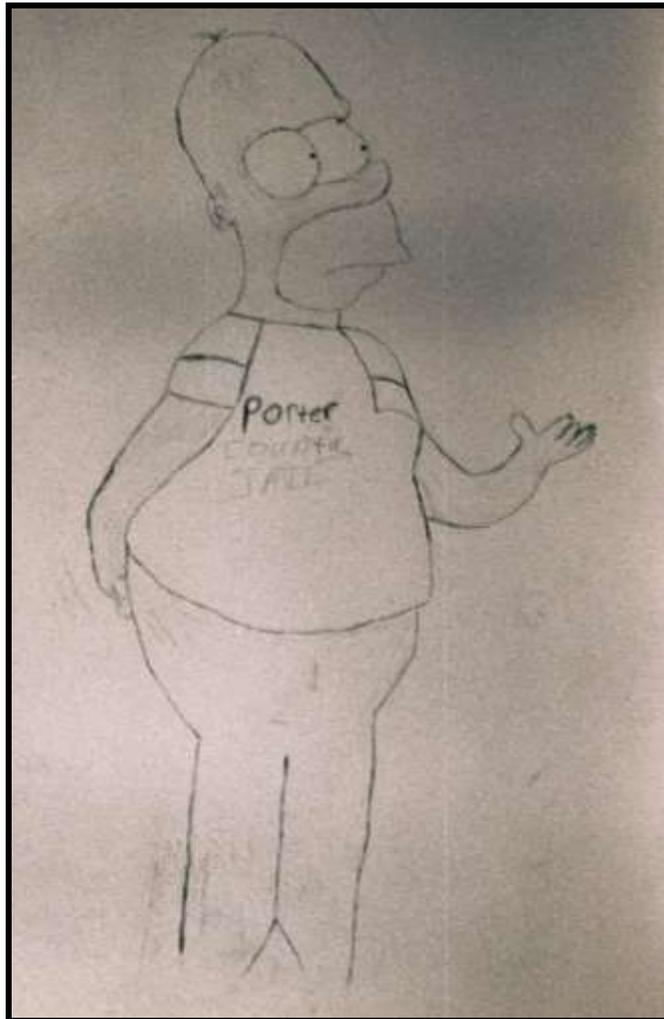
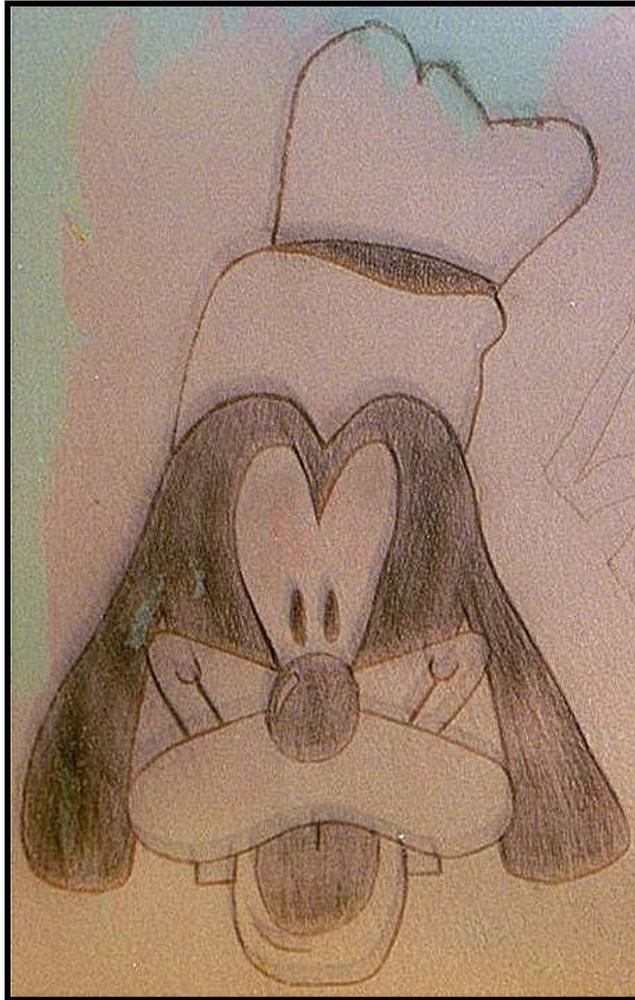


Figure 8: Goofy



In addition to the amusing home interior drawings in Figures 4 through 6 and pop culture drawings such as those in Figures 7 and 8, there were some clever statements written throughout the jail. “Ring For Service” was written around the end of a nut and bolt on a steel door that could resemble a push button. A newspaper article heading—“How I Spent My Summer Vacation” was pasted onto a cell wall. And “Exit” was written above an air duct screen in one of the holding cells. And a dartboard was

scratched into the paint on a wall in a day room with the words “Club Tavern” written underneath.

Creating and responding to humorous stimuli provides us with an opportunity to feel good and engage in pleasant interaction with others. Simply put, humor is an emotion. In his article on the use of humor in prison, Terry (2005) explains that humor assists persons in adapting to and surviving incarceration. Humor allows prisoners to satisfy the need to express emotion without violating a value system (the “inmate code”) that requires the prisoner to appear invulnerable. Any expression of pain would indicate weakness on the part of the prisoner, which may invite other prisoners to mistreat him. Being funny, on the other hand, suggests that the prisoner is in control of his situation, even though he himself is being tightly controlled (by the authorities). Incarceration does not dissolve human emotions and the need to express them. Most prisoners never stop experiencing feelings like uncertainty, fear, sadness, hopelessness, etc. Through humor, the prisoner can express complaints that many of us would express in an overtly anxious manner, such as the tough breaks that he has had in life (sad stories) and dissatisfaction with how he is treated by others (gripes). Largely by mocking the circumstances that impinge upon their autonomy and sense of self-worth, humor allows prisoners to cope with their lack of power to improve their situations without appearing powerless (Terry 2005).

The pressure to adapt to an inmate code is likely higher for persons who are facing longer stays in jail (at least longer than a few days) or especially if moving on to prison. Terry (2005) explains further that to ensure validation from other prisoners, one may acquire a “convict identity”—a self definition based on acceptance of and adherence

to the inmate code. He must act in such a way that convinces others that he lives by the code, which largely involves creating the illusion of his invulnerability. However, incarceration does not dissolve the identities developed and maintained outside of prison. These “home” identities can promote the expression of emotions deemed unacceptable, so they may be seen as detrimental to survival in prison. Because humor is used as a proxy for other emotions that signify vulnerability, it helps the prisoner develop and maintain a convict identity that is useful for prison survival. Terry (2005: 339) writes, “Thus a convict identity, and its facilitation through humor, can be seen as nothing more than a mask that acts to keep one’s normal or home identity hidden not only from the view of others but also, perhaps of even more importance, from oneself.” Because of the social psychological functions of humor in prison, the development and maintenance of a convict identity doesn’t necessarily edge out identities developed and maintained outside of prison: “Humor acts to bridge the gap for convicts between the two contrasting worlds; the world outside prison walls and the world within” (Terry 2005: 346).

Figure 9: Scary Faces



Figure 10: Monsters



Figure 11: Skulls



On the other hand, horrific themes were also very popular in the jail. There were many drawings of frightening and monstrous figures, and the skull in particular was one of the most frequently used symbols. Some of them looked a great deal like “tattoo art.” Figures 9 through 11 are examples of this kind of work. On the surface, these drawings may affirm stereotypes about the “evil” inclinations of criminal offenders and attest to their disconnection with mainstream society, but as I will soon argue, they should not. These kinds of themes and styles are also very much a part of mainstream art and entertainment.

## **Discussion**

### ***The Artwork in Perspective***

The fact that the jail's artwork is, technically, "graffiti" is not of primary concern here. The creativity and expressiveness evident by the drawings are more important than where the artists drew them. The term graffiti suggests illegitimacy and may imply the inconsideration of or intent to vandalize the property of others as a major motive and/or way to get a point across. We cannot know that the jail artists had anti-social intent when they created their images. They may have been driven by creative desire, and the interior of the jail was the only "canvas" that they had at the time. In his analysis of jail wall artwork, Hanes (2005) pointed out that such creative expression helps inmates endure the harsh conditions of jail and maintain their sense of humanity.

Does a piece of artwork, itself, tell us something important about the artist who created it? Does it at least reveal a subject that is on the artist's mind? If so, what might the jail's collection of artwork say about its artists? Do the drawings evoke an image of an anti-social offender—some kind of "incorrigible criminal"? Or do they look like they could have been created by "good people"—nice, friendly, caring, funny, etc.? Could any of them just as easily been drawn by a son or daughter, brother or sister, mother or father, husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend, neighbor, or friend? The jail's artists drew about many different subjects, which show that they, like the general population, have diverse creative interests. A person in trouble with the law is easily one who is attached to the community and mainstream social institutions, and lives mostly the same as anyone not in trouble with the law. Therefore, it should be no surprise that incarcerated artists also created a great deal of work expressing mainstream sentiments of

spirituality, community, home, and popular culture. Considered carefully, their artwork may stand as evidence that they conceive of community through culturally mainstream frameworks, not as community “outsiders,” and as members of a deviant counter-culture.

I do not mean to suggest that system-involved artists will usually draw “nice things.” Many of the jail’s drawings contain imagery that many people would find disturbing, and therefore may appear to defy mainstream attitudes, values, and beliefs. A knee-jerk reaction may associate them with “a criminal mindset” and fuel a fictitious perception of the average offender as a mysterious outlaw who lives “on the dark side.” A careful consideration of three points should counter a perception of the jail’s “spooky” artwork as criminal expression.

First, it is important to note that a dichotomous distinction between criminal and non-criminal cannot be made in general, for at least three reasons. *One*, “crime” is a politically defined concept not an objective classification of behaviors that are innately similar (murder and underage drinking are both crimes, for example). The sociology of deviance (Becker 1963; Erikson 1964; Kitsuse 1964) shows us that what makes many offenders “criminal” is that they defied norms that have become state enforced, not that they have engaged in behavior that is innately socially harmful. In fact, the legitimacy of some our laws, such as those against drugs and prostitution, are widely contested. Thus, a person in jail may simply be a “law violator” and not, essentially, one who harms others in an absolute way. *Two*, many if not most people who are *not* in trouble in the law have engaged in some form of illegal behavior, and even those in trouble with the law likely spend most of their time behaving legally. And *three*, sometimes, the pertinent difference between one who is locked up and one who is not is that one got caught, more than the

quantitative and qualitative differences in their behavior. *Therefore*, it should be seen that criminality exists in degree and social circumstance, “shades of gray” and societal reaction often separate criminal from non-criminal, and the differences are not always as crucial as they seem (and may often be more imagined than real). One should not assume then that persons in trouble with the law will express more anti-social than pro-social sentiments, while persons not in trouble with the law will express more pro-social than anti-social sentiments.

Also, it cannot be assumed that the more disturbing images were drawn by disturbed persons who are serious offenders. For one thing, the crimes for which the artists are accused are not known. Many could be in jail for first-time offenses that are fairly minor and forgivable, or they could be innocent. In pondering the significance of this kind of art, prejudices must be held in check. It is known in advance that the art was technically drawn as “graffiti” by persons locked up in jail. Since this was against rules, viewers may be reluctant to perceive the drawings as legitimate art--some may be predisposed to interpret it as peculiar, and maybe even pathological, expression. One might fallaciously reason that if “criminals” drew the art, then it must express and reveal anti-social tendencies. But it is important to remember here that alleged offenders also created images that fit into mainstream artistic themes popularly associated with the “non-criminal” (religion, community, and popular culture). Certainly, one would not argue that these kinds of drawings reveal deviant tendencies. Further, it cannot be assumed that the artists meant something anti-social, trivial, or unintelligent with the disturbing imagery they used in their drawings. Some may have been presenting elaborate social critique and/or expressing popular, maybe even noble, sentiments. As

Ferrell's (1996) study on urban graffiti shows, illicit artwork too can make very elaborate and sophisticated political and cultural statements.

Lastly, even the more "appalling" images can be associated with mainstream society. When compared to various forms of artistic expression (mainstream and alternative) not connected with incarceration—the collection of jail art may appear to be very much like the kind of work that gets created "on the outside." It is not necessary to have been in trouble with the law to express artistic themes such as horror, violence, death, and substance abuse—themes often expressed through mainstream mediums (television, film, the internet, theatre, paintings, photography, music, tattoos, etc.). It is likely that some artists not in trouble with the law create images similar to those in this collection. If the jail's art was drawn somewhere else, most people would probably not be able to assume that most of it was drawn by someone in trouble with the law. In fact, many of the drawings may not have been inspired by the fact that the artist was in jail. The interior of the jail may have been the artists' only available medium at the time with which to express ideas unrelated to, or extending beyond, their trouble with the law. Incarcerated artists may actually prefer to portray life outside of jail or prison because they are using art as an escape from prison life and are trying to maintain some kind of connection to the outside world (Baroody-Hart and Farrell 1987). This essay takes the position that although the artwork was created in jail, with some defiance or disregard of authority, it is not a form of "jailhouse art"—it is not apparent that much of it speaks of the pressures, deprivations, and perceived injustices associated with being incarcerated.

On the other hand, there can be times when an alarming drawing, such as one depicting a violent act, could be a sign that the creator is a potential danger to oneself

and/or others. In these cases, however, artwork is an important therapeutic tool. In terms of immediate safety, disturbing drawings can alert authorities to intervene. But in therapy, they can allow a client to safely and harmlessly express thoughts, feelings, and fears that are difficult or inappropriate to put into words (Gussak and Virshup 1997). In other words, shocking artwork can allow one to “vent.”

Creating illicit artwork in jail is nothing new. Artwork created spontaneously under detainment existed long before “prison art” became widely recognized as a viable category of art in western countries and was “legitimated” through correctional programs such as work, vocation, education, and therapy (Cardinal 1997; van der Hoeven 1988). Various forms of prison or jail art have likely been around since the creation of jails and prisons, and long before. Throughout the ages, wall drawings and carvings, small handmade items, tattoos, and other creations have existed in other detainment environments such as gladiator barracks, medieval dungeons and oubliettes, prisoner of war/internment camps, concentration camps, and insane asylums (Cardinal 1997). Captives have proven to be quite resourceful throughout history (Cardinal 1997; Riches 1994b), not only using alternative drawing materials like pen ink and makeshift carving tools to create wall art and tattoos, but also crafting objects (symbols, sculptures, toys, replicas, etc.) from materials like clothing and other fabrics, meat bones, wood, matchsticks, straw, paper, playing cards, and even bread dough. As with current works of prisoner art, earlier themes dealt with the same ideas expressed by non-imprisoned artists--the broader social, cultural, political, and aesthetic concerns of the time--in addition to the more immediate concerns of imprisonment, with some expressing protest and feelings of discontent and others more mundane or benign everyday matters

(Cardinal 1997). With such a long tradition of art production, in stealth or as a part of programs, it seems that “creativity and artistic expression are naturally inherent in correctional settings” (Gussak and Ploumis-Devick 2004: 35).

The human will to be creative is strong even against the suppressive conditions of incarceration (Hall 1997; Ursprung 1997). Art therapist Will A. Ursprung (1997: 13) writes, “The incarcerated artist’s need to synthesize ‘new’ artistic materials in response to a desolate, restrictive and often debilitating environment speaks to the wonders of creative expression and the resiliency of the human spirit against major odds.” The artwork from the small county jail in Indiana too speaks to the ability of human creativity to resist strong suppressive conditions. As Hanes (2005) pointed out in his analysis, the presence of jail wall art indicates a high degree of self-directedness, resourcefulness, and adaptability. Expression provided autonomously by incarcerated individuals against jail rules suggests that they have a strong desire for creative autonomy and outlets for expression. This kind of “will” can be seen as an opportunity to help individuals and the community more than as a problem of control.

Simply by creating their work, the jail wall artists reveal their desire (and ability) to engage in a conventional, widely respected and appreciated human activity—*art*. Going deeper, their choice of subjects suggests that many of them are quite interested in (and perhaps very appreciative of) mainstream culture and social institutions. The drawings presented in this essay are fine examples. They address the social institutional themes of religion (Figures 1 and 2), community (Figure 3), and home (Figures 4 through 6), as well as the popular cultural themes of humor (Figures 7 and 8) and horror (Figures 9 through 11). This suggests the potential for rehabilitation—a chance to build and

strengthen relationships between community-sanctioned or re-entering individuals and the community through involvement in creative activities. It is possible then that the artists are still very much a “part of the community” and as such, are still inclined toward its conventional norms and values and systems of support and control. For example, the Christian drawings suggest a therapeutic opportunity, to help one explore and cultivate one’s own spiritual orientation. Therefore, in considering the broader significance of the jail’s art, one practical implication to be made is that artistic activities should be incorporated into correctional programs aimed at reintegration.

***Conclusion: Implications for Community Reintegration***

Persons in trouble with the law, like anyone else, have a strong desire to be creative and autonomous, and a need for outlets for expression. Creative activities may be more intentionally and aggressively used as ways to locate and develop bridges between formally sanctioned individuals and the community. Ex-prisoners and community sanctioned individuals may become more seriously involved in re-integrative programming if opportunities for creative expression are provided. This in turn may boost programs’ potential to facilitate re-entry and community correction, and thus to reduce re-offending. As far as public safety is concerned, communities have a vested interest in the lives of released prisoners and community-sanctioned individuals. The avoidance of acts harmful to others would obviously be an important part of one’s harmonious fit with the community. There is a need in corrections to find and develop innovative integration strategies and techniques. While rehabilitation programs geared toward cognitive-behavioral change are showing promise, more attention is also being

given to alternative approaches to integrating offenders into the community (Elliott-Marshall, Ramsay, and Stewart 2005).

Criminal sanctioning itself has not been shown to reduce recidivism, probably because it does not respond to individuals' criminogenic needs (Bonta 1996), and conventional approaches to offender reintegration appear to be quite limited in effectiveness. Released prisoners receive little preparation and assistance prior to and during reentry (Austin 2001), and they face many obstacles: the "shock" of suddenly going from a routine controlled environment to the "streets," lack of money, finding a job, the lure of drugs, and the tight restrictions of parole and intensive supervision programs (Austin and Irwin 2001). Programs during incarceration are either absent or ineffective in promoting successful community re-entry (Austin 2001). Those that exist may be ill-conceived, under-supported, and do not get prisoners actively involved in the program itself and the entire transitional process (Lanier 2003; Richards and Jones 2003; Ross and Richards 2002).

Ill-conceived attempts at community correction and victim-offender reconciliation may be nothing more than "community punishments" (Richards 1998) which actually facilitate an offender's entry or return to incarceration—what Richards and Jones (1997, 2003) term the "perpetual incarceration machine." The conditions of parole, probation, and restitution can be unrealistically high, disabling rather than enabling ex-prisoners and probationers in their efforts to negotiate reintegration and refrain from re-offending (Richards 1998; Richards and Jones 1997, 2003). Halfway houses are often guarded correctional institutions, rather than community homes, that may remove nearly all of the ex-prisoner's income for housing and mandatory services (Ross and Richards 2002).

Some alternatives to prison and jail were not even created for the purpose of community reintegration. Intermediate sanctions such as intensive supervision, house arrest, and electronic monitoring are intended more to control and punish offenders at a lower financial cost and do not appear to be effective at reducing recidivism (Dean-Myrda and Cullen 1998; MacKenzie 2006). These problems contradict the intentions of community corrections. Contemporary wisdom dictates that community sanctions should foster autonomy and self-efficacy in order to empower individuals to make pro-social choices. After all, they are the key players in forming and/or repairing bonds with the community and finding behavioral alternatives to offending. Creative autonomy and freedom of expression are empowering, and the inclusion of a creative component could be part of a broad effort to empower clients in working toward reintegration.

Despite the problem of recidivism, it would be overly pessimistic to believe that “nothing works.” Some programs show successful outcomes and others show promise, while it is many *conventional* strategies that do not appear to work (Gendreau 1996; MacKenzie 2006; Palmer 1994). Some programs may fail because they are not properly implemented, not because they are based on weak models and theory (Bonta 1996; Gendreau 1996; Harper, Man, Taylor and Niven 2005; MacKenzie 2006; Palmer 1994). Also, there is evidence that failures in corrections are exaggerated. Some states recently experienced reductions in re-incarceration rates (Austin 2001), and crude recidivism rates can be deceptive in that they include re-arrests for less serious offenses and technical violations (Newbold 2003). Perhaps only a modest amount of optimism is needed to believe that attempts to reintegrate offenders and ex-prisoners are still worth the effort. As with any program aimed at reducing re-offending, art programs would need

cooperation from everyone working in the correctional setting to be properly implemented and effective (Day and Onorato 1989; Mackie 1994; Riches 1994a).

The use of art in corrections had more of a tradition inside of prisons. In *Cellblock Visions: Prison Art in America*, Kornfeld (1997) displays many fascinating works of prisoner art and makes a strong argument on behalf of the value of prison art education programs. Gussak and Virshup's (1997) anthology text, *Drawing Time: Art Therapy in Prisons and Other Correctional Settings* also features some fascinating art and makes a strong case on behalf of prison art therapy. Despite their recent decline, correctional art programs receive overwhelming support in the literature. The use of artistic activities in prison has several benefits to therapy and personal growth (Gussak 1997; Liebmann 1994), education (Williams 2003), institutional management and safety (Riches 1994b), and to society in general (Riches 1994b; Williams 2003) including reduced recidivism (Gussak and Ploumis-Devick 2004; Williams 2003).

For released prisoners, the reintegration process ideally begins during incarceration--rehabilitation programs should help prepare them for eventual community re-entry (Elliott-Marshall, Ramsay, and Stewart 2005). A study of over 4,000 male and female California state prisoners showed that increased time spent in prison-based therapeutic community treatment predicted increased participation in aftercare as well as decreased returns to custody during a 12 month period, and that increased time in aftercare too predicted decreased 12-month returns to custody (Burdon, Messina, and Prendergast 2004). Also, the "Life Skills Project"—a multi-agency program in Florida that works with participants from jail to aftercare/reentry—showed some reduced recidivism as well as favorable cognitive, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. The

program's curriculum included many topics, including self-development, communication skills, interpersonal relationship development, stress management, and accessing community resources (Jalazo 2005). Any of these topics could incorporate creative activities. While such programs offer aftercare to clients who received treatment during jail and prison, they can also help foster and maintain community integration for individuals sanctioned directly in the community.

The use of artistic activities in community corrections is a non-instituted, but not new, idea. Prison art therapists Eileen McCourt (1994) and Marian Liebmann (1994) incorporated art therapy into their work as probation officers in the United Kingdom. Many of the art-therapeutic benefits available to incarcerated clients are also available to those sanctioned in the community. Liebmann (1994) allowed some probationers to confront issues such as their offending behavior and past traumatic experiences by drawing out what they were unable, unwilling, or too afraid to say verbally, such as giving accounts of their offenses and their consequences, and how they have been harmed in their lives. Art and craft programming has also been included in the package of educational and therapeutic services offered in day programs (Mackie 1994). Art programming, then, not only has the potential to help released prisoners function in the community, it also has the potential to maintain and improve social integration for alternatively sanctioned individuals.

Aesthetics-enhanced integration programs would provide outlets for creative expression that may increase a formally sanctioned person's stake in conformity and foster ties with the community. During reintegration, or in maintaining integration, other issues such as becoming educated, getting or retaining a good job, and having access to

health care are of tremendous concern. It is important to increase access to legitimate opportunities, by boosting human and social capital, if we are to steer one away from seizing illegitimate opportunities. Being well educated/trained, gainfully employed, and healthy characterize a productive member of society. However, an individual also has other needs for successful re-entry, such as shelter and moral support (Ross and Richards 2003). Integrated, or, “multi-modal” programs that address a variety of offender needs such as personal development and mental health (in addition to education, training, and employment) are being targeted as more promising correctional approaches (Elliott-Marshall, Ramsay, and Stewart 2005; Harper, Man, Taylor and Niven 2005; MacKenzie 2006). For example, a program in California that provided literacy training, employment services, housing assistance, and substance abuse treatment--the Preventing Parolee Crime Program—showed some reduction in re-incarceration and parole absconding (Zhang, Roberts, and Callanan 2006). Enjoying a creative life may be one of the many needs for re-entering or remaining in the community, especially for individuals who lack experience engaging in creative activities. Therefore, artistic programming should receive serious consideration for inclusion in integrated/multi-modal programs.

Released and community-sanctioned individuals also have the need to creatively interact with and contribute to the community. People in general are integrated into their communities in several ways, not just economically and legally. We are also aesthetically tied to the community. We paint, draw, sculpt, write, collect and sell antiques, participate and shop in arts and crafts fairs, go to concerts and operas, dance, sing karaoke and perform at “open-jam” or “open-mic nights,” recite and listen at poetry slams, go to museums, go to cultural arts centers, perform and view street performance

art, go to films and the theatre, “trick-out” vehicles, landscape yards and plant flowers, cook and eat gourmet food, and many other intellectually and emotionally pleasing activities. Are these not important in life—promoting individual happiness as well as community connectedness? Involvement in these kinds of activities form, and result from, ties with the community, and they are important types of the pro-social alternatives to illegal behavior that are expected of participants in correctional programs.

The talent exhibited in many of the jail drawings shows that the artists can make valuable aesthetic contributions to the community, even if simply through appreciation, patronage, and hobbies. (It is likely that many do not have an interest in being a highly skilled artist.) Programs could address a wide variety of interests in addition to visual art, including but not limited to poetry, personal narratives and short stories, spoken word, singing and music, dance, crafts, topiary, horticulture, landscaping, culinary arts, and many other possibilities. Certainly some can make a financial living from their art. After all, some prisoners and ex-prisoners have even been able to achieve mainstream popularity and historical recognition (Cardinal, 1997). Therefore, aesthetic life need not be separate from economic and educational domains; with guidance, education, and training, some formally sanctioned individuals could put their creative talents to use in vocational and artistic careers. Both the production and appreciation of aesthetically appealing stimuli, done professionally or passively, constitute mainstream activity that connects individuals with others through common interests and goals. As a part of needs assessment, perhaps in-depth interviews could be conducted to determine how clients can become more engaged in aesthetically pleasing activities and pursue their interests in communal involvement.

Alternative holistic, multi-systemic models designed to create individualized support are better prepared to cultivate the aesthetic interests of clients. Presently, a “wraparound” approach to community corrections accommodates the creative interests of clients. Wraparound models are individualized comprehensive plans that integrate multiple treatment approaches and recognize the interactive, interdependent nature of social systems and their resources. They treat the client as a partner in identifying and activating individual strengths, determining needs and directions, drawing from familial and community resources, and achieving treatment goals (Reed and Leavitt 2000). As proponents of wraparound services, Reed and Leavitt (2000) identify “organizations that provide leisure options” as a community resource for women in community corrections, mentioning enjoyment of leisure time as an important long-term goal of system-involved women. They point out: “Many have no leisure activities that do not expose them to environments that trigger behaviors that got them into trouble with the criminal justice system” (84) and argue:

Engaging in one or more of the arts is especially useful for many women—both in terms of satisfaction and also as an aid for surfacing and expressing long-buried memories and feelings. These include poetry reading and writing, journaling, and participating in drama clubs (which can do community presentations to raise awareness), various forms of arts and crafts, and music or dancing. Food preparation and sewing classes can meet women’s needs to be creative and to acquire new skills. Creative individuals, working alone or as parts of arts or music associations, may be willing to sponsor or provide some activities, sometimes as an integral component of wraparound services. (84-85)

Exploring and encouraging client interests in aesthetic activities falls neatly into the role set of a case manager in wraparound services: “They must broker services and differences across corrections and community settings and between service sectors in the community. They often advocate for the client’s best interests, and act as counselors,

teachers/consultants, service providers, and cheerleaders” (Reed and Leavitt 2000: 18). Some clients will have creative abilities as one of their strengths that could be put to use in their treatment, or more passive involvement in aesthetic activity could still be a very important interest that a client wishes to pursue in “determining needs and directions.” While Reed and Leavitt (2000) articulate how wraparound services meet the particular needs of women, they hold that the approach may be modified and extended to treat men in community corrections as well.

Persons deeply involved with the criminal justice system, or in trouble with other powerful authorities, tend to have many needs and likely face several obstacles to living successfully in mainstream social institutional settings. Many released prisoners, for instance, are under-educated, stigmatized, and not used to living on the outside. Therefore, it is difficult for them to gain ample employment as well as function in a variety of social settings (Austin and Irwin 2001; Pollock 2004). Individuals with disrupted ties to the community can have quite a bit of trouble finding much to look forward to when trying to reintegrate, at least at first. But it is important for them to maintain optimism in forming and/or maintaining ties with the community and seeking out pro-social activities—to not “give up.” Engaging in aesthetically pleasing activities could be something to look forward to, especially during hard times. Everyone needs to be able to make creative contributions to the community in order to feel like a part of that community. Creative activity, such as art, is one avenue through which communities can reach out to members experiencing marginalization.

Figure 12: Rose (from one of the female cells)



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