

# Annual {Ink}arcerated art exhibition returns to Arizona Center May 15

**Doctoral students dedicate months of work to gallery filled with artwork by incarcerated individuals, with proceeds going to scholarship for system-impacted individuals**

By Ayrel Clark-Proffitt, ASU News  
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For Alexis Klemm and Madeline Boersma, “ink season” begins in the fall.

Every October since they began working on [{Ink}arcerated: Creativity Within Confinement](#), an annual art exhibit featuring the work of incarcerated individuals, the pair mentally prepare for a long journey — in some cases, literally.

Over the next few months, Klemm and Boersma, doctoral students in ASU's [School of Criminology and Criminal Justice](#), log thousands of miles dropping off art supplies at correctional facilities across Arizona, then returning to each one to pick up completed works of art.

The completed works are then curated into a final exhibition, which this year will take place May 15 at the Arizona Center. The event, a partnership between ASU's [Center for Correctional Solutions](#), housed within the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, and the [Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry](#), will feature 365 new paintings, drawings and sculptures, all created by incarcerated artists.

Launched in 2017, proceeds from the {Ink}arcerated exhibition go toward the [Center for Correctional Solutions Scholarship](#) that supports the higher education of system-impacted individuals and their families.

“A lot of people participate because they're artists, and they want to create art, but through conversations and in written messages about the artworks, we see so much motivation and inspiration to participate coming from contributing to this

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## If you go ...

**What:** {Ink}arcerated: Creativity within Confinement art exhibition

**When:** 6–10 p.m., Friday, May 15

**Where:** Arizona Center, 455 N. 3rd St., Suite 1130 (first floor), Phoenix

**Cost:** Free; [RSVP online](#)

**Tickets:** Paid early access from 5–6 p.m. is available for up to 50 patrons. Purchase early access tickets for \$75 at [Eventbrite](#).

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scholarship fund,” Klemm said.

While attendees see a polished show, complete with coordinated display walls, museum lighting and discerning art connoisseurs, Klemm and Boersma know firsthand how much work went into it.

As managers of the {Ink}arcerated program, they are responsible for overseeing the creation and delivery of art supply boxes, meeting with incarcerated individuals at the facilities to answer questions, picking up the final pieces and finally preparing the exhibition space. Along with volunteers, the pair put in long days picking up and installing the gallery walls, drilling holes, hanging lights and last-minute shifts of artwork for aesthetic appeal.

Given their dedication, it is easy to forget that Klemm and Boersma are not professional curators or gallery directors, despite their years working with {Ink}arcerated; Klemm has led the effort since 2023 and Boersma became co-lead last year. Both volunteered for the program before taking charge.

The art exhibition is managed along with all of their commitments as doctoral students. Boersma is taking a full class load. Klemm successfully defended her dissertation prospectus in early May. Both conduct research on behalf of the Center for Correctional Solutions.

The time they dedicate to “ink season,” as they call it, is worth it, they said.

“I absolutely love everything about Ink and the work we do, even when it feels a little bit overwhelming. It’s often a good overwhelming,” Klemm said.

This year, 17 correctional facilities across Arizona participated in {Ink}arcerated, including a youth facility for the first time. Boersma said that she saw a larger selection of metal and wood art compared to previous years. Among the paintings and drawings are depictions of portraits, landscapes and sports imagery. In addition, almost a third of the artwork fits the theme of American pride, just in time to coincide with the nation’s 250th anniversary this summer.

“I feel like every year we have a painting titled ‘Arizona Skies,’ but the veteran and American pieces are definitely the biggest category this year,” Klemm said.

As the crowds line up to enter the gallery on May 15, Klemm and Boersma know they will still be hustling, taking care of last-minute details that slipped through the cracks. But as they look around and see the beautiful art, the success of the exhibition and the families of the artists, they can settle in, appreciate their accomplishment and engage with the attendees.

“Sometimes the artists dedicate their pieces to their families. That’s one of my favorite things,” Boersma said. “There’s something really special when that person shows up, and we’re waiting for them to get to their family member’s artwork and see that it was dedicated to them.”

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The School of Criminology and Criminal Justice is part of the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions.

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*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

## Main image



Attendees at the 2025 {Ink}arcerated: Creativity within Confinement art exhibition discuss works and watch a live painting by artist Jason Lacewell (left). ASU file photo

## Text image(s)



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No caption