

Artist: Victoria Helena Mihatovic

Title: *Monolith 16.9.3*

Abstract:

The prison industrial complex has diverted government funds from education to a highly lucrative for-profit incarceration system. It has become a monolith. The large and impersonal political, corporate, and social structure regarded as intractably indivisible and uniform. It currently costs the state of California over \$70,000.00 a year to keep an inmate in what are known as SuperMax prisons. Some people have been kept in these solitary cells for over twenty-five years on speculative charges only. In the meantime, the California University system has as little as \$6500.00 per student in annual funding. The priorities of our government have shifted from educating our future population to a for-profit corrections system. This system will be represented by a formidable nine foot tall by five foot wide steel sculpture, *Monolith 16.9.3*.

Narrative:

Corrections funding has quadrupled in California since the 1980s, while university funding has been cut by 50 percent. The state allocates \$60,000 per inmate and, at its highest expenditure, only \$10,879 per student. Under the Governor of California's proposed 2014-15 spending plan, General Fund spending on state corrections (\$9.6 billion) would be 80.4 percent higher than the level of state General Fund spending on CSU and UC combined (\$5.3 billion). Statistically, 1 in every 108 Americans is in jail or prison. The United States has the world's highest incarceration rate, with 5% of the world's population and holding 25% of the world's prisoners. Combining the number of people in prison and jail with those under parole or probation supervision, 1 in every 31 adults, is under some form of correctional control. Even with the increase in spending on prisons, recidivism has not decreased. Rehabilitation services in prisons were drastically cut in the 1980s, while Special Housing Units, also referred to as solitary confinement, increased. These are also referred to as SuperMax prisons. Some prisoners have been in solitary confinement for over a decade and others up to 25 years without human contact. Juveniles are also being placed in solitary, many that have disabilities, both physical and/or mental. Studies have shown the detriment of these incarceration methods and the international community has deemed solitary confinement cruel and unusual punishment. Pelican Bay prisoners in Northern California have filed a class action lawsuit against the prison for inhumane conditions after instigating a hunger strike in prisons across the state. Prisoners suffer severe mental trauma and are given no rehabilitation or transition services in these for-profit establishments.

Description:

With the temporary sculptural installation of *Monolith 16.9.3*, a large steel rectangular structure will appear to grow out of the ground on the SSU campus alluding to the great disparity between the university and corrections systems. Fashioned after a prison cell door, with a 5 foot width and 9 foot height, *Monolith* imposes itself upon the viewer without sanction. Rather than a completely solid form, the monolith will include two apertures of 3 feet by 2 inches perpendicular to each other. The viewer is invited to look through this negative space to ponder on the lack of light and isolation faced by the thousands incarcerated in the United States.

Environment, Installation, and Maintenance:

The placement of *Monolith 16.9.3* is also taken into consideration with the need to have it facing east and west between the Student Center and Ives Hall to allow for sunlight without building interference. This would also provide a shadow that will be at 8 feet at least twice a day, indicating the floor size of a prison cell. As the sun rises and sets, the apertures will become a conduit of light battling to shine through the large steel mass, similar to the natural light inmates struggle to see twenty minutes a day. The United States and California flags will also be seen in a direct line through one aperture when facing west. The sculpture will have steel supports extending underground into cement. The surrounding mulch will show an even greater possibility of the object growing out of the ground and a permanent bench that is already near the site will allow the viewer to sit with the piece directly in front of them.

Plan of Work:

March 23-25: Construction of *Monolith 16.9.3* will begin with the purchase and delivery of raw steel and cutting it to size.

March 27-April 9: Building of framework, welding and grinding.

April 12-18: Attaching steel sheet to frame, welding and grinding.

April 19-24: Patination process of completed structure.

April 29: Install involving forklift. Will require assistance of SSU Facilities.

April 30-May 17: Any necessary maintenance that may occur.

May 18-19: Removal of piece involving forklift. Will require assistance of SSU Facilities. Restoration of site to previous condition.