



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## CELL SIGNALS

Reframing and Resisting Mass Incarceration

Curated by Pete Brook

**Artists:** Adam Chin, Jodi Darby, Robert Gumpert, Eddie Herena, Wray Herbert-King, Brandon Tauszik, Pendarvis Harshaw, and the Free Mind Collective.

**Exhibition:** April 9 – June 13, 2020

**Opening Reception:** Thursday, April 9, 2020, 6 - 8 pm

### SAN FRANCISCO (February 18, 2020) – SF

Camerawork is pleased to announce our upcoming exhibition *Cell Signals*, which will be on view April 9—June 13, 2020. Curated by writer and educator Pete Brook, *Cell Signals* brings together visions from within U.S. prisons and jails to address the role of images in our understanding of incarceration in America. Through visitation hacks, repurposed archive reels, collaborative portraiture, cellphone pics and prison newspaper coverage, *Cell Signals* peers upon the growing and changing uses of both artistic gesture and networked, image-technologies within American security, prisons and homeland culture.



*Image courtesy of Eddie Herena*

Creative interventions—such as participatory exchange, GIFs, anti-documentary and modified AI machine learning—challenge our established frames on crime and justice. Works by imprisoned and free-world artists, allow for new access to old and persistently contested issues that shape the public debate on mass incarceration. Ultimately, *Cell Signals* seeks to test what we know of our prisons and provide a platform for fresh dialogue.

*This exhibition is generously supported by the Bernard Osher Foundation, Dr. Janet Mohle-Boetani, and Dr. Philip Sager.*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### Adam Chin

In his series *Front and Profile*, photographer Adam Chin forces archival mugshots through an AI neural network he modified in order to render side views from front, and vice versa. Shimmering and uncanny, Chin's silver gelatin prints ask audiences to consider the implications facial recognition has on privacy and the ethics of artificial intelligence as a surveillance tool.



Image courtesy of Adam Chin

### Jodi Darby

Commissioned especially for *Cell Signals*, Jodi Darby's single screen video art piece *Carceral Sales Event* brings together intersecting clips of prisons as they are fictitiously depicted in commercials, movie footage, and documentary reportage. Darby's work raises questions about who is charged with gate-keeping media-generated images of prisons and prisoners, and asks viewers to question how close these representations are to the reality of prison life.



Image courtesy of Jodi Darby

### Robert Gumpert

Over the course of 14 years, photographer Robert Gumpert visited the jails of San Francisco County to make portraits of, and record interviews with, prisoners. While preparing for these portrait sessions, Gumpert made test-shots of the room to check his light settings. These test-shots became a peculiar archive of the instructions, dogma, lessons and affirmations delivered to county jail residents. First on a chalkboard, then bare plaster, and later a whiteboard on rollers, much of the text originates from bible study, therapy groups, anger-management, AA, and life-skills training. *Sin Is*

*The Problem. Sin Is The Blame* is an unadorned look at the interiors, messaging and programming in the San Francisco County Jail system.

### Wray Herbert-King

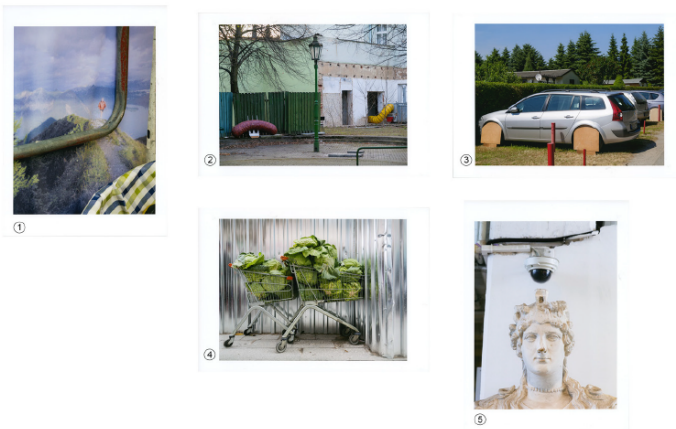
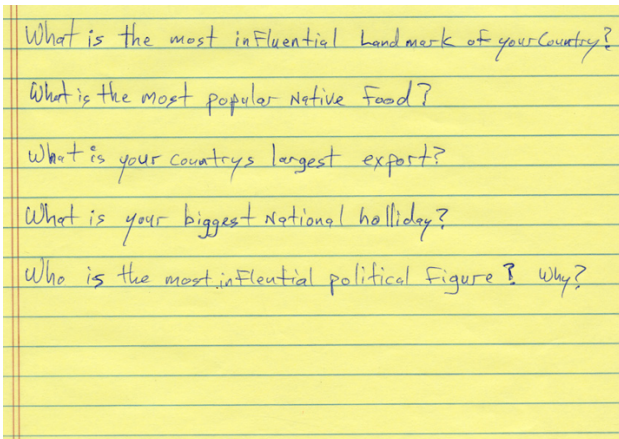
Artist Wray Herbert-King uses footage and images from virtual visitations in his project *State Between*. Over a 12-month period, Herbert-King and his friend Dennis collaborated on a cheeky portrait project producing thousands of images. These poignant, funny, resistant, and mundane, out-studio screenshots insist upon shared creativity over virtual visitation feeds that are intended to distance and depersonalize.

### Eddie Herena

Throughout the final four years of his incarceration, Eddie Herena worked as a photographer for the *San*

*Image courtesy of Robert Gumpert*

*Quentin News*, the inmate-produced paper at San Quentin State Prison. Self-taught on the job, Herena covered a variety of activities -- sports games, arts programs, reconciliation groups, ribbon cuttings, to name a few. His photos also captured the process of image-making itself capturing frames with rode mics, TV crews, steady cams, and documentary film teams. More than any other image-maker, Herena witnessed San Quentin's very unique, outward-looking presentation of itself. Selected from an archive of over 17,000 images, the photographs presented in *Cell Signals* will be exhibited for the first time on gallery walls for new public appreciation.



*Image courtesy of the Free Mind Collective*

### The Free Mind Collective, Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI)

*Answers without Words* (AWW) is a collaborative project jointly conceived and created by Anke Schuettler and the men of CRCI (The Free Mind Collective), a minimum-security facility located in Portland, Oregon. Through *AWW* men at CRCI were invited to formulate questions for artists around the globe. The artists responded to the queries with photographs. And through weekly photo workshops, the men at CRCI made photographs to describe the details of their

lives. In its product, *AWW* delivers images to raise awareness of mass incarceration. The call-and-response challenges prisoners' expectations (and even stereotypes) of foreign countries while allowing them to dispel some of the hard clichés placed on them as convicted individuals.

### **Brandon Tauszik and Pendarvis Harshaw**

*Facing Life*, a collaborative multimedia project produced by Brandon Tauszik and Pendarvis Harshaw, chronicles the experiences of eight individuals released from California's prisons following the reassessment of California State law. In recent years, California's criminal justice reforms have alleviated some prison overcrowding. In doing so, thousands of men and women—once sentenced to life and having already served decades behind bars—are headed home. *Cell Signals* will exhibit Brandon Tauszik's documentary GIFs with Pendarvis Harshaw's interviews following these "lifers" return to an unfamiliar world where they face challenges such as technological illiteracy, competitive job markets, and the housing crisis. This project was made possible with support from the Pulitzer Center.



*Image courtesy of Brandon Tauszik*

### **ABOUT THE CURATOR**

Pete Brook is a writer, curator and educator focused on prisons, photos, and power. In 2008, he founded the website [Prison Photography](#) to bring together research and writing that unpacks issues of procedure, visibility, distribution and art in imagery as it emerges from the U.S. prison system. Pete has curated multiple exhibitions, including *Prison Obscura* (2014-2016) that brought together images about mass incarceration that were created outside of the documentary tradition. His writing has been published by *Aperture*, *The Atlantic*, *ICP*, *The Marshall Project*, *Time*, *Truthout*, *Wired* and others. In 2018, Pete was awarded the W. Eugene Smith Fund's Howard Chapnick Award and a grant from the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting for his work teaching the History of Photography in San Quentin State Prison. Pete is an instructor at California State University, Sacramento.

### **ABOUT SF CAMERAWORK**

Founded in 1974, SF Camerawork's mission is to encourage and support emerging artists to explore new directions and ideas in the photographic arts. Through exhibitions, publications, and educational programs, SF Camerawork strives to create an engaging platform for artistic exploration as well as community involvement and inquiry.