

Belle Lopes deconstructs how powerful messages transmitted by the TTI become embodied beliefs about oneself and one's place in the world. With diagrams reading like matter-of-fact instructional posters, Lopes charts the learnings that result from common TTI practices such as: physical restraint, forced sedation, and solitary confinement. In her digital painting *Messages Received*, large arrows point at the central figure. "You cannot be trusted" the arrows insist, "Best not to resist." In *Too Much to Hold Alone*, the figure is slumped over, no longer able to carry the weight of her emotional burdens.

TTI programs, like all carceral systems, are premised on the idea that removing someone from society will teach proper social functioning. Lopes' work highlights this incongruence and the impossible expectations it creates for survivors after being released. Flung back into the world, survivors are now supposedly prepared for adult life and its responsibilities. "So you want me to be an adult now?" the artist asks sardonically.

Arlis Mroczek's artwork combines text and imagery to explore themes of subjugation. Her mixed media collage *Immobilized* is a visual depiction of mechanical



Arlis Mroczek, *A Hell of A Drug*, 2023, Prescription bottles in lock box, Dimensions variable

restraint. The word "still" repeats throughout, referencing a common refrain from program staff to "stay still" while holding someone down. The concept of restraint is further explored in Mroczek's piece *Hell of a Drug*. Here the artist presents a locked box containing prescription bottles with customized labels. "Take one to not trust yourself" a label reads. "Take one to question nothing" reads another. TTI programs often employ powerful psychotropics as chemical restraint. While youth must literally swallow the pills they are given, the work is emblematic of institutional indoctrination. Young people must also swallow the bitter pill of the program itself, absorbing its ideology in order to survive.

Mroczek's work speaks of transcending trauma into purpose and renewal. In the self-portrait *A Farewell to the Place that Tried to Break Me*, the artist stands in front of a (now shuttered) residential program she attended as a teenager. She faces the camera with a defiant expression and holds her middle finger high in the air declaring: "What hurt me the most has become the thing I draw my values from... being a kinder person than those who tried to break me." While basking in the joy of her freedom, the artist fuels her pain into a better way of being.

The Corrections was born out of my work as a grassroots organizer, and the inclusion of my own artwork (Sam Fein) is intended as an act of solidarity. *Inflammatory Observations: Stupid Shit People Say to Survivors* is a text-based piece displaying common responses TTI survivors receive when describing their experiences. The responses are encased in plexiglass, suggesting the signage found on the walls of psychiatric hospitals. The piece speaks to a wider culture of victim-blaming and denial that allows systemic oppression to continue unchecked.

The dissonance between perception and reality is further explored in *A View From Inside*, a piece I created with assistance from the exhibiting artists. An erected tent—a reference to wilderness programs where children sleep outdoors for months—displays a series of banners sourced from TTI advertisements. The banners flaunt picturesque campuses with beaming youth and uplifting messages. They are held up by zip ties, a tool used to restrain youth when they are being transported. Viewers are invited to zip themselves inside the tent, the space becoming a barrier that replicates confinement. A slideshow projects photographs of the artists when they were teenagers in the TTI, reminding us of how young adolescents truly are.

The Corrections is a form of creative activism and expands beyond the exhibition space with a protest at the Massachusetts State house. The Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC), located in Canton, Massachusetts, uses remote-controlled devices to deliver painful electric shocks to disabled children as a form of behavioral conditioning. Activists are urging lawmakers to support bills that would ban the use of aversive practices that cause physical pain. The protest is a sobering reminder that the exhibit

Advertisement, WWASP, Date unknown, Ink on paper, 8 in. x 7 in.

does not reflect memories from a bygone era, but is grounded in present-day atrocities.

The Corrections confronts viewers with uncomfortable truths about society's ongoing use of surveillance and confinement to "correct" behavior. The exhibit challenges our assumptions about who is entitled to inhabit civil society and who "deserves" removal. It also empowers survivors to publicly share their truth and resist the institutions attempting to silence them. TTI programs go to great lengths to discredit survivors, dismissing allegations of mistreatment as "attention-seeking" or "exaggerated." The dominant narrative of the TTI has been constructed by the industry itself, not by the individuals who lived through it. Reclaiming one's narrative is an act of defiance, a bold declaration that we are here and no one else will tell our story for us.

Sam Fein
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Open Call Exhibition

The Corrections is on view May 20 - June 17, 2023 at The Foundry, Point Gallery
101 Rogers St
Cambridge, MA 02142 USA

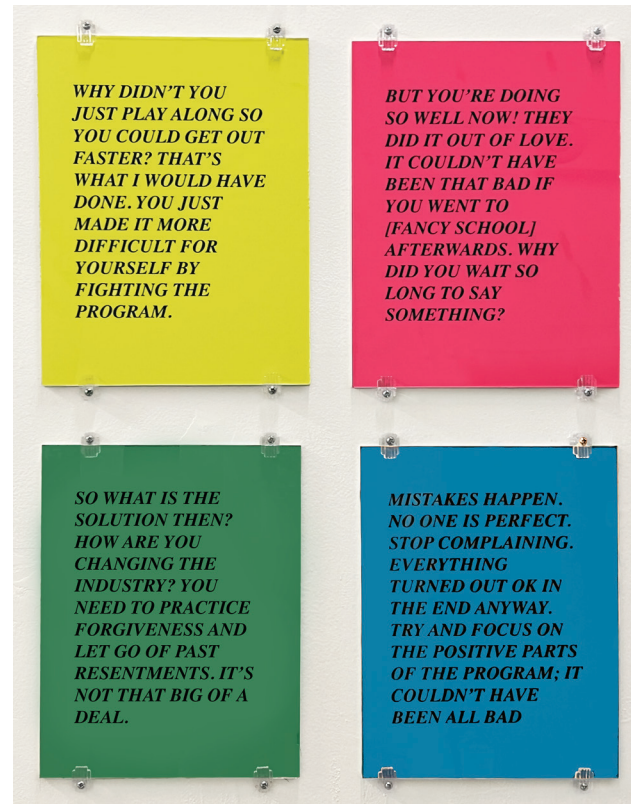
Opening reception: May 20, 4-7 pm

Stop the Shock JRC protest will be held May 22, 12-5 pm on the Boston Common, across from Park Street Station

#BreakingCodeSilence #ISeeYouSurvivor



Arlis Mroczek, *Sparkle and Shine for Safety!!!*, 2022, Collage on paper, 6 in. x 8 in.



Sam Fein, *Inflammatory Observations: Stupid Shit People Say to Survivors*, 2023, Ink on paper with plexiglass, Dimensions variable