



ART



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DEATH ROW INMATES MAKE THEIR OWN MEMORIALS

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Some memorials are literal; a coffin-sized prison shoe on a grassy hill or large-scale scrap metal flowers. Others are more conceptual or political, taking on race, prison reform and the death penalty itself. Each prisoner recounts his own reality, his own attempts at grappling with his fate.

While capital punishment is an important political issue, the duo of professors understand the complexity of the exhibit. Taking on death row means taking on a complicated mix of guilt, humanity, and acceptance as the majority of the inmates have committed heinous crimes.

Imagine knowing when you're going to die. How would you like to be remembered?

That's the question that surrounds "Life After Death And Elsewhere," an exhibit currently showing at [apexart](#) in Soho. The exhibit is a showcase of the work of death row inmates from **Riverbend Maximum Security Institution** in Nashville, Tennessee. Organized by two art professors from Nashville, **Robin Paris** and **Tom Williams**, "Life After Death And Elsewhere" takes on the toughest questions possible as the still-alive inmates make memorials to the lives they know they're losing.

"After executing only six people in 55 years, the State of Tennessee's current administration has scheduled more than 10 prisoners to die in the near future," the professors explain on apexart. "Recent litigation about the drug cocktail used in lethal injections has slowed down this campaign, but many of these men are facing imminent death. In light of these foreboding developments, they hope these memorials will demonstrate that they are more than merely convicts condemned to execution."



Abu Ali Abdur'Rahman, G'dongalay Berry, Ron Cauthern, Gary Cone, John Freeland, Harold Wayne Nichols, Derrick Quintero, and Declichio Besh ("Ironhawk"), Model for a Monument to the Executed and to Those Who Died Awaiting Execution (for Legislative Plaza in Nashville), 2015, Clay



Abu Ali Abdur'Rahman, Landscape, 2015, Mixed media

"None of this should diminish our feelings for murder victims and their loved ones," the professors write. "The crimes that precipitated these convictions can never be undone. Any gestures of remorse or restitution on the part of the guilty will never measure up to the losses they have inflicted on others. Capital punishment, nonetheless, creates a perverse incentive for silence. Speaking openly about their cases could jeopardize attempts to overturn their death sentences, and this makes public contrition difficult, if not impossible. The works in this show are also subject to these constraints".

Whatever your opinion on capital punishment, being allowed a glimpse into the mind of the condemned is rare and important. In a country that values the individual voice, the voice of those on death row is one that's often ignored.

The exhibit is open until October 24th at apexart in Soho.

Photos via [apexart](#).