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# HUCK'S PICKS

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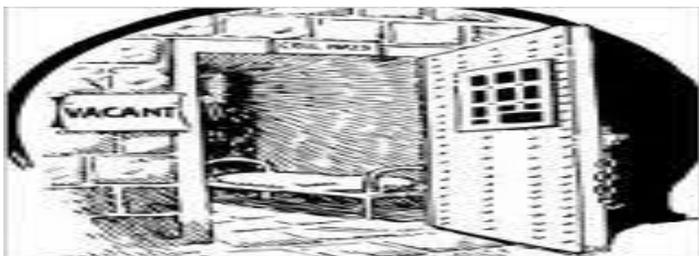
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## Prison Artists and Their Work

In a unique take on prison art and artists, the Prisons Foundation in Washington, D.C., has compiled a stunning display of 56 imprisoned artists and their works, many of which have been displayed in galleries and exhibits, both locally and nationally. And yet, as notable as this book is on that account alone, the accompanying text makes it one worth remembering even more.

In their own words, the artists describe both the work depicted and themselves as artists, who they are and what motivates their work. The styles and media are as varied as the artists themselves, often dictated by arbitrary regulations inside the prisons, but even the most severe constraints cannot shackle the creative energies of the men and women in this array. Ricardo Ayala, for example, is inspired by his love for his wife and children. Ronna Baer, imprisoned for 23 years, paints to "fill the void" with creativity instead of destruction. Lynda Baker treats the theme of the racism that is still endemic in America but often glossed over by social niceties. And the list continues, each entry bringing the reader/observer closer to the artists' underlying humanity and the courage it took to create these pieces under the most constraining conditions.

This catalogue of artists, their works, and their self-expression is a must read for anyone interested in demonstrations of courage and talent, as well as for the casual observer who rarely gives a thought to the hearts and minds of the men and women behind the bars that keep only their bodies captive. As this collection shows, their souls fly freely.



## Walking the Walk in Idaho

*Teresa Bentley's Photo Essay Showcases Prisoner Talents*

Teresa Bentley's photo essay, "Prison Art from H.A.V.O.C.," provides an impressive look at some prisoner-created works of art, most with a Native American motif. The pieces represent a broad spectrum of remarkable talent, everything from paintings and drawings to ceramics and leather works. Also included are tapestries, tote bags, knitted items of clothing, a clock, and even a toy windmill. A few pictures show the artisans at work as well as displays of the results on sale to the public. As anyone familiar with prison artists knows, the talent found behind prison walls is equal to if not better than that encountered in many retail outlets, and Teresa's presentation confirms that ability and dedication to craft.

H.A.V.O.C. is an acronym for Help A Victim of Crime, a project of New Leaf, Inc. in Boise, Idaho. Created to provide compensation and restitution for injuries or losses sustained during the commission of a crime, it coordinates sales of prisoner-made items to the public. The project simultaneously provides those artists with opportunities to use their creative abilities on their way to becoming productive members of the community.

Unfortunately, Teresa tells us that the program no longer exists. Again, for those of us who have been there and done that, the demise is no surprise, reflecting the same myopic approach that has doomed similar programs. But as Teresa shows us in her photo essay, the work was first class, as surely are the men and women who produced it.

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***Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future. Oscar Wilde***

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