

# CURATING

## In Residence, Incarcerated: Regina José Galindo's America's Family Prison

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Artist residencies are an institutional model of art production responsible, in part, for the transnational circulation of artists and their work. That such residencies both produce and are produced by international geopolitics must be sited within a larger discussion of the mechanics of curatorial practice—especially because residency programs have widely variable curatorial structures. To highlight this entanglement among artist, institution, and curator, I will be focusing here on the set of circumstances that brought Guatemalan performance artist Regina José Galindo to Artpace's International Artist-In-Residence program in San Antonio, Texas. The work she developed while in residence during Summer 2008 provides an opportunity to consider the limitations and power relationships inherent in many artist residencies by situating them in proximity to the carceral conditions that Galindo, in fact, highlights in her work, thereby exposing these relations to view.

Invited to the Artpace residency by guest curator Franklin Sirmans (who was at the time curator of modern and contemporary art at the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas) Galindo's performance, entitled *America's Family Prison*, involved incarcerating herself, her husband, and their child in a rented mobile prison unit for twenty-four hours, overlapping with the exhibition's opening night.<sup>1</sup> She realized this work during a staggering peak in US incarceration rates, and as new forms of detention were being pioneered for asylum seekers, specifically the growth of privately run family detention facilities such as the T. Don Hutto Residential Center (formerly known as T. Don Hutto Correctional Facility) in Taylor, Texas—only two hours' drive northeast of Artpace.<sup>2</sup> When exhibited today, *America's Family Prison* exists as mediated documentation, an hour-long video of accelerated surveillance footage of the Galindo family's time and activities in the cell.

Galindo's performance critically engaged the particularities of her temporal and geographical (dis)placement—as I'll describe, this is one of the hallmarks of artist residency programs—but also implicitly pressurized the ideological positioning of residency institutions, and, to a certain extent, curatorial practice writ large. In producing an artwork referencing the for-profit prison industrial complex within the context of a non-profit artist residency program in the United States, Galindo's work reroutes the procedures governing

state-sanctioned temporary workers—like those applied to international artists participating in such programs—by highlighting the deep asymmetries of US immigration policy and practice. If, as we are often reminded in texts about curatorial practice, the term *curate* itself (coming from the Latin *curare*) suggests “care” as the ideological heart of curatorial work, *America’s Family Prison* forges an alternate vision. Galindo’s project highlights how residencies and their curators rely upon the displacement and temporary delimitation of a participating artist’s movements as a precursor for creative productivity; this is especially evident within Artpace’s model, where curators, who share a similar status to artists as temporary workers, are distinctly *not* in residence.

Artpace’s model relies upon salaried staff to identify guest curators (independent or institutionally affiliated elsewhere), who, in turn, choose three artists at different geographical scales—local/regional, national, and international. The chosen artists are invited to take up residence at the institution in a small cluster of apartments located in the building. While in residence they are expected to produce new work for a single-room culminating exhibition, an event that also marks the end of their residency. As hinted earlier, while the artists are required to be in residence, the guest curators are not. Their curatorial labor is primarily focused upon the completion of three tasks: the initial selection of artists; the curator’s ongoing conversations (limited or robust) with the artists, aiding in the conceptual or practical development of the new artwork; and the completion of three short essays addressing the work created by each artist. Unlike other residencies that might have an in-house curator/curatorial department, or that otherwise split up curatorial duties among an array of staff positions, Artpace utilizes an ever-changing roster of extrinsic curators who by default are the most mobile workers during the residency period, in this particular triangulation of organization, artist, and curator.

I should admit before going any further here that I am caught up in this system, too; I am drafting this text while serving as the guest curator for the Summer 2022 round of artists’ residencies at Artpace. As an institutionally affiliated scholar who also works as an independent curator, I consider part of my curatorial work to involve the researching and engagement of the histories of the institutions with which I work. Sometimes the fruits of this research come out in a public program or publication (such as this), or sometimes they simply add to my understanding of the business of meaning-making within a particular context. Either way, I am directly implicated in the argument I make here about curatorial practices and their relation to carceral logics. Just as Galindo’s work places the conditions of residency and detainment near one another, so too will this chapter seek to operate through adjacencies, limning out histories of artists residencies, migration policies, and an analysis of the triangulation of artist, curator, and institution.

## In Residence

Although they play an important role in the complex institutional ecosystem producing and exhibiting art, there is not yet a holistic history of artists’ residencies as specific and dedicated institutions temporarily supplementing, and sometimes supplanting, other spaces in which artists might make work—such as an artist’s studio. In place of that project, which would handily surpass the scope of a chapter such as this, I want to sketch the outlines that such a history might cover, listing some of its key institutions in Europe and North America.

Artist residencies must be understood as being indebted to a range of art institutions such as academies and schools (largely in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) as well as global exhibitions/festivals and artist colonies (both from the mid-nineteenth century onward). In Europe, rural locales some distance from putative art centers—for example, the forests blanketing the Barbizon area 60 kilometers from Paris—played host to an ever-fluctuating number of artists in the 1800s. These seasonal and yearly gatherings of

self-selected artists, sometimes sustained over the course of generations, were prototypical of the US idiom of the form, which was cemented by early twentieth-century artist colonies in the rural Northeast: Byrdcliffe (New York), Yaddo (New York), and MacDowell (New Hampshire). In each of these cases artists would spend a loosely defined amount of time on the premises to pursue “seclusion, serenity, and communion with nature” (Heartney et al. 2003, 11). Relying on Enlightenment conceptions of the restorative power of nature, specifically nature’s capacity to revive one’s mental and/or physical health, these colonies were not usually permanent residences for those who sought their benefits but temporary destinations. Institutions of the 1930s and 1940s such as Banff School of Fine Arts (Alberta, Canada), Black Mountain College (North Carolina), and Skowhegan (Maine) carried more explicitly pedagogical aims—defining themselves in terms of schooling. Therefore, they often had more focused aims in terms of artistic production, even if these aims were experimental. Perhaps the most influential of such programs after mid-century were the residencies developed by the Studio Museum in Harlem (Manhattan) in 1968 and the WorkSpace program at PS1 (Queens) in 1971, now known as the National and International Studio Program. Both were attached to newly constituted art institutions in New York City’s boroughs, and each had a general mission of giving institutional support to underrecognized artists. Each was also conceptualized as working in tandem with an extrinsic and broader program of curator-driven exhibitions and educational initiatives. Several art residencies founded in the 1980s and 1990s—such as the Headlands Center for the Arts (Sausalito, California, 1982), Akademie Schloss Solitude (Stuttgart, Germany, 1990), the ARCUS Artist-in-Residence Program in Moriya, Japan (Moriya, Japan, 1994–2018), and Artpace (San Antonio, Texas, 1995)—broke with this model, offering invited artists housing as well as the financial resources to spend on the production of new work, sometimes with the expectation that whatever was produced would be exhibited on-site (and thereafter credited). From the 1990s until now the form has expanded in myriad ways—residencies can now be nomadic (Caribic Residency, founded in 2008), remote (Lenka Clayton’s ingenious Artist Residency in Motherhood, in 2012), and/or originating in institutions not primarily dedicated to art such as the residency architected by artist Charles Lindsay and astronomer Jill Tarter at SETI Institute, an organization dedicated to searching for extraterrestrial life in the universe in 2010.

Even in the aforementioned brief history of residency programs, the keen reader will note the array of differences among these examples, suggesting a taxonomic fuzziness as to what, exactly, constitutes an artist residency program. Indeed, there is broad variability across many factors including but not limited to: an institution’s focus, objectives, and cohesion, as well as its capacities and expectations for on-site exhibitions of residents’ work after their residency period has ended. But the one foundational principle nearly all these share is a reliance on a geographic displacement of artists from their home(s) or usual place(s) of residence.

Most of these residencies do not have full-time, dedicated curatorial staff, but instead rely upon ever-changing juries of curators, artists, and other organizational stakeholders to discern which artists will be selected from a pool of applicants. Organization staff—program directors, facilities managers, educators, and communications professionals—are therefore responsible for the day-to-day operations of the residency, including the institutional wrangling and artist-focused tasks that might otherwise fall to curatorial staff: development and allocation of budgets, spatial planning, programming, and writing/speaking about any given work or group of works.

Returning to geographic displacement, this defining feature is key to the challenge artist residencies have offered, historically and today, to participants who want to break away from centuries-old, early modern understandings of the artist’s workshop/studio—supplanting the workshop/studio is the locus of artistic activity and curatorial interface, and insisting, instead, that artists *bring their studios to institutions*. This shift in the circuits of

art's production underscores broader conceptual shifts regarding the position of the artist as peripatetic and post-studio. Michael Haerdter, the first president of Res Artis—a networking organization for residential art centers and artist residencies—sums up the historical necessity of such institutions in supporting work that had yet to find purchase in the mainstream institutions of art:

The new artist, the newcomer in the arts, is a man or a woman in the international scene, the international world, working as an interventionist ...: for art *in situ*, for *arte povera*, for performance art, for installation art, of course—all these new ideas at the time. And the idea of interactive, cross-border working ... and mobility—the artist moves around the world, this was an important basis for the development of artist residencies (Haerdter 2018).

The “interventionist” and “nomadic” status of the artist here—a person assumed to be amenable to being uprooted from their daily life, and who will be expected to be productive under such conditions—has been historically undergirded by patriarchal biases, as men were not generally beholden to the otherwise feminized tasks of raising children and/or providing direct, daily care for family members. Such visions of a “nomadic elite,” as surmised by Carol Becker, conflict with “the disenfranchised poor who travel because they are desperate to improve their conditions” (Becker 1999, 27). And it is this very distinction that Galindo's performance for Artpace troubles by situating herself and her family as detainees.

Technically, international artist residencies are possible because of the construction, maintenance, and mutation of a broader governmental apparatuses allowing for guest worker visas. While these vary internationally, the guest worker program in the United States is worth understanding in some depth to give historical context to the mechanisms whereby international artists, curators, and other cultural workers are permitted to live temporarily in residence in the United States—the most basic requirement for most artist residencies. Guest worker visas were prototyped, in part, on the Bracero Program, which accepted over four million temporary agricultural workers from Mexico over the years of the program's existence (1942–1964), powering the agricultural production of the Southwest United States. Less than a decade after the end of World War II, and undergirded by anti-communist/anti-Semitic rhetoric, the US Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which authorized a new nonimmigrant visa category, the H-2 Visa, designating the subcategories H-2A for agricultural workers and H-2B for all others. In the decades since new subcategories have been legislated and put into place—the J-1 visa, for example, is the product of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, existing to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange.” Importantly the J-1 visa was to be administered by the US Information Agency (USIA) and not the (then single) agency dedicated to immigration, marking out a space for educational and cultural workers—scholars, professors, trainers/trainees—who were given exception from the purview of immigration authorities. These divisions are important to understand because they articulate difference at the bureaucratic level, between the guest worker and the migrant or asylum-seeker—which I will focus on in the second half of this essay.

The Q-1 visa, which was obtained to bring Regina José Galindo to Artpace in 2008, was a program established in 1982 responding to perceived lapses in the oversight of the J-1 visa program, specifically relating to potential visa holders' employment at theme parks (Johnson 2012, 922). It was Disney—a for-profit media and entertainment conglomerate—that picked up on this lacuna in congressional intention and proposed the new category of visa, for a temporary cultural worker whose role was to share the “history, culture, and traditions of the country of the alien's nationality” (Johnson 2012, 922). Unlike the J-1 visa, the cultural transactions of the Q-1 are framed in an almost ambassadorial way. It is no coincidence that at the time Disney was opening EPCOT Center in Orlando, Florida, stylized to

exist as a permanent world's fair. Likely a cost-cutting measure, Disney hoped to staff EPCOT's eleven pavilions with workers from the represented countries. Just as Galindo's performance offers a challenge to the notion of being "in residence" by situating herself proximate to structures of incarceration, *America's Family Prison* also offers a substantive subversion of the stated internationalist ideals of the Q-1/ "Disney" visa program: instead of appearing as an ambassador for Guatemala's history and culture, Galindo's performance and video reverses the engagement by illuminating the privatized brutalities of refugee family detention within the United States.

In an era defined by an ever accelerating global neoliberalism, residencies for non-US citizens come to implicitly and explicitly replace the meager efforts of national, state, and local governments to support artists and those institutions dedicated to artists, serving as proxies for a much wider, state-sanctioned project of intercultural/international exchange.<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in contrast to "fellowship" programs such as the Fulbright Program, which is administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs under the Department of State. In other words, artist residencies form a key component of how the nonimmigrant, temporary residency of artists and of curators is situated within the United States.<sup>4</sup>

And this situation is not unequivocally progressive, nor necessarily to the benefit of artists' livelihoods. David Hodge and Hamed Yousefi, cognizant of the absence of governmental infrastructure for art, argue that "residency culture exemplifies a general trend within the international scene toward the internalization of precarity, opportunism, and especially individualization into art practice" (Hodge and Yousefi 2015). Curators and adjudicators of residency programs must understand their actions within this frame, as participants in an intensifying neoliberal system established on precarity—and the prestige of residency programs aids in occluding this fact, presenting awarded residencies only as professional achievements. Within the residency format, commitments to artists (in terms of provided housing and/or studio space and/or materials and/or money) are only ever temporary, and ultimately reserved for a limited number of recipients who can articulate such need vis-à-vis the intersection of their individuated art practice and the broader goals of the granting institution. By contrast, individual curatorial interlocutors for residency programs, in this case Franklin Sirmans, are usually not required to be in residence, and may only be present for an initial visit, an exhibition's opening, and/or an additional program. Still, there is an important role that a curator or jury plays in selecting artists who might be likely to be self-reflexive about these conditions within their projects. Sirmans, for example, chose a cohort of artists—Galindo, Margarita Cabrera, and Rodney McMillian—for whom power relations and resistance is a unifying attribute. One of the unique features of Artpace is its charge to curators to produce short essays addressing each artist's project and practice, an aspect that makes curatorial framing apparent. In the context of jury-driven artist residencies such motives may be more opaque. Artpace's commitment to fostering the discourse around any given artist's work distinguishes its program from most other residencies, ideally fostering a closer relationship between artist and curator in the development (or, at the very least, interpretation) of the work.

In the best-case scenario the potential drawbacks described earlier are counterbalanced by more immaterial benefits for artists: the possibility of deepening or expanding one's artistic practice and the instantiation of networked relationships with other artists and curators (who might then program them into other exhibitions and feeding a notion of an artist's incipient "celebrity").<sup>5</sup> In fact, this latter benefit was accorded to Galindo, whose work was also programmed into Sirmans's group exhibition *NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith*, an exhibition that examined spirituality and ritual in contemporary art (see Sirmans 2008). The residency is therefore understood as a temporal, ideological, and geographic zone of exception from artists' daily lives and realities but also as a networked stepping stone for wider recognition and dissemination of their art.

Understanding these histories of artist residencies and the conditions governing the travel of temporary, nonimmigrant cultural workers in the United States, Artpace continues to exist as an

innovative model of an artist residency program.<sup>6</sup> ArtPace (as the institution's name was initially stylized) features triannual rotating "rounds," each composed of three artists: one from Texas; one from elsewhere in the United States; and one from outside of the country. Certain cases (potential, virtual) such as artists from US unincorporated (read: colonial) territories like Guam and Puerto Rico, as well as indigenous artists, do not neatly fit into this scaled schematic of territorial governance or sovereignty, a schematic left to the curator of each round to parse. In the first years of Artpace's existence these cohorts would be assembled by a small group of "curators, artists, and museum directors," on a bi-annual basis (Pace and Russell 2015, 57). During this period of Artpace's existence, once a year an individual curator would be tapped to choose the artists of a single round. Such was the case for Artpace's opening round of artists in the Spring of 1995, which was comprised of the artists Jesse Amado, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Annette Messager (representing the local, national, and international, respectively), all chosen by Robert Storr, curator in painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York at the time. In tapping Storr, Artpace signaled its capacity to attract curators whose participation in a loose international system of exhibitions—and sometimes this moment in the 1990s and 2000s is referred to as the biennialization of art and exhibitions—confirmed them as arbiters of then-current "globalized" art networks. By 2002, and in line with a popular rising sentiment of curators as creative auteurs, Artpace streamlined their curatorial model by leaving behind the notion of the curatorial jury. In addition to Sirmans, Artpace selected Lauri Firstenberg, the founder and then-curator at LAXART in Los Angeles, CA, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, who was working at the Serpentine Gallery in London at the time, as the curators for the remaining rounds in 2008, neatly mirroring the local, national, and international categorizations for artists, respectively. Similar to the notion of "globalized" art networks referred to earlier, this structure did not (and does not) necessarily imply a heterogeneity in curatorial *or* artistic approach to an historically European gallery/museum structure of display, nor did it mandate coverage from particular areas (the Global South, Africa, and the Arctic, just to name a few) that have long been neglected by that same Eurocentric worldview.

## Incarcerated

Early in her residency period Galindo spoke with Riley Robinson, then studio director (at the time of writing, he is now Artpace's director), about developing an installation and performance inspired by the architecture and practice of state-ordered executions in Texas. In the Artpace archives there exists a sketch of what this installation was to look like: a wall and glass partition installed at the back of one of Artpace's cavernous galleries with rows of seating arranged in front—an approximation of the death chamber in the Huntsville Unit, where all death row prisoners in Texas are executed. For the performance on opening day Galindo was to be placed on a gurney behind the glass and sedated with the first of three shots used by the state of Texas according to their lethal injection schedule, the state-sanctioned method of execution used since 1977, following the discontinuation of death by electric chair, and public hanging before that. Although the component of the injection Galindo was to be subjected to would only sedate her, no doctor could be identified willing to participate in the performance. At the time the eighteen state-ordered executions in Texas accounted for nearly 50% of all such procedures nationwide; and no other state executed more than four individuals per annum (see Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty 2008, 1). Galindo's proposed performance bears some resemblance to earlier works by the artist such as *valium 10ml.* (2000), in which she was sedated in a gallery at the Museo Ixchel in Guatemala City.

During her time in residence, Galindo also completed an altogether different work, which did not wind up going on display. This was a performance for video entitled *Let's Rodeo* (2008). The work is comprised of video footage of the artist attempting to ride a rented

mechanical bull for ninety minutes, growing ever more exhausted by the effort. In the video, Galindo is thrown, over and over again, from the spinning, bucking mechanical bronc, landing each time with a percussive *thud* onto a mat resembling a giant Texas state flag. Each of these performances, one a non-starter and the other completed but unexhibited, sought to engage with issues and symbols of Texas—the artist’s new, temporary place of residence.

Conceptually related to her initial idea in terms of its reference to Texas carceral systems, Galindo ideated the performance that became the only exhibited work of her Artpace residency as she was researching recent protests in Texas concerning the detainment of refugee migrant families predominantly (but not exclusively) from Central America at the T. Don Hutto Residential Center, which, as noted, was formerly a medium-security prison. Migration was a growing subject of interest to Galindo, as the year prior to the artist’s residency in San Antonio she had completed *Curso de Supervivencia para Hombres y Mujeres Que Viajarán de Manera Ilegal a Los Estados Unidos*, a survival course organized by the artist to teach a group of ten migrants from Guatemala the skills necessary to navigate their way to the United States (Silvana Editoriale 2011, 229).

The practice of family detention received the US government’s stamp of approval due, in large part, to the tectonic changes to national immigration and security apparatuses in the wake of the coordinated terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11).<sup>7</sup> US immigration policy has historically been applied asymmetrically, arguably since the first immigration and naturalization procedures were established in 1790, and later efforts such as the Page Act of 1875, which denied citizenship to migrant women and unfree laborers from “China, Japan or any Oriental country.”<sup>8</sup> This and every subsequent immigration law explicitly or implicitly relies upon a designated agency or agencies to enforce their terms, as well as a concomitant carceral system to detain those deemed to have broken US immigration law. Yet, in the years after 9/11, overburdened immigration courts meant that many migrants who were not from Mexico were allowed to live within the United States for the time between their apprehension and their hearing in immigration court.

A particularly notable moment in this history came in May of 2006, when President George W. Bush addressed the nation from the Oval Office on the topic of immigration reform, calling for an end to the practices described earlier, which he and others in his administration pejoratively termed “catch and release.”<sup>9</sup> If this was unacceptable to the administration then an alternate plan for these migrants was needed, and nearly a month after his May 2006, President Bush articulated a (not so) novel solution—detention:

And the way you end it is, you build more detention facilities. See, part of the problem was we didn’t have a place to hold these folks. And so now I’m working with Congress to increase the number of detention facilities along our borders, to make sure that when we catch somebody from a place other than Mexico, there’s a place to hold them until such time as we send them back to their country (Bush 2006).

By the time Bush spoke these words two detention facilities had been expressly set aside to detain non-Mexican migrant families with children: the Berks County Residential Center in Pennsylvania (opened 2001) and the T. Don Hutto Residential Center, which had only recently changed its name and purpose. When Hutto had originally opened its doors in 1997 it was, as noted, called the T. Don Hutto Correctional Facility. It had been built and was being operated by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), a private corporation that continues to do business today under the moniker CoreCivic. Hutto wears its for-profit prison provenance with pride, as the facility’s namesake is one of the three co-founders of CCA—Terrell Don Hutto, whose background as a warden at the Ramsey Unit “prison farm” (a once segregated, African-American prison operation situated across five former plantations) and as head of Arkansas’ Department of Correction gave him operational insight into the prison industrial complex and a nuanced understanding of the future

possibilities for private corporate actors in that system (Woodward 2020).<sup>10</sup> Since its founding in 1983 CCA has undoubtedly been the preeminent actor in the ongoing privatization of US prisons—a central force in perpetuating and expanding a multi-billion dollar market for making profit off of the incarceration of people. Such contracts to build and operate prisons are lucrative propositions for companies like CCA, with contracting counties often paying a dollar amount per person incarcerated, per day. The financial incentives for the private prison sector and their shareholders therefore is to keep more inmates for longer and as cheaply as possible. It is no wonder given these financial incentives that CCA/CoreCivic facilities have been subject to numerous reports and lawsuits concerning human rights abuses (see Mattera et al. 2003).

It wasn't until months after its reopening as a family detention facility that non-governmental groups gained access to Hutto. In a 2007 joint report called "Locking Up Family Values" authored by Women's Commission for Refugee Women & Children (now Women's Refuge Commission) and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, the totality of poor conditions at Hutto came to public attention, including the following aspects of the facility: its setting (a barely disguised former prison with all the trappings), processing (those detained wore prison uniforms), accommodations (inadequate room furniture such as cribs, constant and disruptive headcounts, and no toys allowed in cells), food (extremely short times to eat meals and depressing, repeating weekly menus), as well as consistently inadequate access to medical care, education, and legal counsel (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and Women's Refuge Commission 2007, 63–64). It doesn't take a no scholar to understand the importance of play in a child's daily life, and yet dedicated recreation time for detained families in Hutto was relegated to just one hour a day during the week, and was non-existent on the weekends. The report consolidated a slew of claims made by and on behalf of those families detained at Hutto and documented the awful conditions inside. Resulting vigils and protests outside the facility by prison abolitionists and immigration advocates, lawsuits filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, and sustained press attention all played a part in the eventual closure of Hutto as a family detention facility in 2009 under the Obama administration (even as the practice of family detention continued and expanded, as previously mentioned). This report and those like it were important guides for Galindo and Sirmans, whose essay explicitly pointed to the egregious conditions and history of the Hutto facility.

Galindo's work was made amid this swelter of activist organizing to bring attention to the human rights abuses of the Hutto facility. The artist and staff of Artpace sourced and rented a mobile prison cell from Sweeper Metal Fabricators Corp., an Oklahoma-based manufacturer of road cleaning equipment, as well as detention architecture and furniture. A brochure for the company resides in Artpace's archives and cheerily proclaims on its back cover: "we are sweeping the nation with quality detention products" (Sweeper Metal Fabricators Corp. 2008). This statement is accompanied by a graphic map of the United States, black arrows dynamically spurting out of Oklahoma and landing in nearly every part of the country. Inside the brochure one learns of the company's bespoke design services, control and locking systems, and the full variety of furniture (wall-mounted bunks, privacy shields, institutional desks, and pistol lockers) that Sweeper specializes in producing. Galindo exhibited the cell, and the trailer used to transport it, in the middle of her dedicated exhibition space. In asking the institution and curator to acquiesce to its rental and eventual use, Galindo places both in the uncomfortable position of jailer—seemingly directly countervailing the curatorial imperative to care for the artist and their work. For Sirmans's and Artpace's efforts Galindo gifted each with a cast-bronze replica of the cell door key—an overt acknowledgment of their roles (see Figures 35.1). The cell Galindo/Artpace/Sirmans rented contained a double-bunk bed, a crib, a metal toilet/sink combo, a small table and chair, and a wall-mounted shelf. Two narrow vertical windows were built into the back end of the cell, complementing the single narrow vertical window on the cell door. The door also featured a horizontal opening, used by Artpace staff to deliver meals to Galindo and her family.





FIGURE 35.1 Installation view of Regina José Galindo's *America's Family Prison* at Artpace, San Antonio, Texas, 2008. Courtesy of the Artpace, San Antonio, and Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City.



FIGURE 35.2 Regina José Galindo, *America's Family Prison, llave de prisión familiar*, 2008. Photo: Karmadavis. Courtesy of the Artpace, San Antonio, and Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City.

While photos exist of the Galindo family's time in the cell, the subsequent video created by Galindo documents this time in a more sustained way (Figure 35.2). The video begins, as per its timecode, at 1:38 a.m., with the Galindo family entering the prison cell and closing the door behind them. From there the video quickly cuts to 8:51 a.m., when Galindo

and family wake. Throughout the day Galindo, her husband, and infant daughter live their lives to the best of their abilities. They make their beds, read, and play together. They eat meals pushed through the metal slot in the prison door, drink coffee, and go to the bathroom. The accelerated footage gives a restless, kinetic energy to the video, collapsing time and yet making its duration more pronounced. Around 4 p.m. Galindo sits down with a pad of paper and makes a sequence of three drawings of her family, which are then installed on a series of metal hooks above the toilet. Throughout the course of the video other people—Artpace staff and gallery visitors during the day and evening opening—appear as brief flashes darkening the thin strip of window on the cell door. Galindo’s positioning of the camera—on the ceiling and facing the entrance to the cell—makes us aware of both her family’s movements and the spectacle of their imprisonment/residence within the context of an artist residency. The video fades out at 8:55 p.m., insinuating that performance continued beyond the temporal bracketing of the tape (see Figure 35.3).

It is important to note how the artist’s performance departed from the conditions that migrant families at Hutto endured, if only to insist upon avoiding a strict equivalency between the two. Such a reading would ignore the privileged statuses of the artist (and curator) as consenting and mobile parties. First, and perhaps most obviously, Galindo’s performance was brief, with the period of detention known and consented to beforehand. Galindo’s performance did not include the family leaving the cell for common areas, waking up for intrusive head counts, or many of the other indignities experienced by those detained in Hutto. Galindo also incorporated items such as stuffed animals/toys and drawings that were expressly not allowed in Hutto’s cells.

If Galindo’s performance pointed the finger at US detention and immigration policies and practices, it was likely in the service of the cultural exchange that guest worker visa programs were founded upon. Here’s the artist, speaking generally about creating work outside of Guatemala, summarizing how her work might function as a “bridge” of understanding:

In my work, I start from Guatemala. I want to show the history of my country: what is not said; what is said; what is denied; what is hidden; what is a lie. Also, I am interested in inquiring beyond my country. I want to show that death is the same in Guatemala and the United



FIGURE 35.3 Regina José Galindo, *America’s Family Prison*, 2008. Video (color, silent), 54 minutes 49 seconds. Courtesy of the Artpace, San Antonio, and Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City.

States, or Russia. The individual's pain is the same in the Third World as it is in the First World. I think, I create, and I work because art is a human bridge that allows us to make those connections between different sites, between different individuals (Galindo 2015).

I would argue that Galindo's bridging of different sites happens here in the psychogeographic (dis)continuities between the residency and the detention facility—and operates at the risk of conflating the two. Galindo's pains of self-incarceration might have just as much to say about opening oneself up to being "curated" as about the human rights abuses happening at the Hutto facility. Such an individuated experience of the artist's suffering is meant to synecdochally speak to large-scale societal harms—and art is surmised as the point of transfer and elaboration.

*American Family Prison*, as well as the curatorial parameters and political realities that delimit and illuminate its potential meanings, serves as a broad indictment of US immigration policies and practices, specifically the detention of refugee migrant families during the end of George W. Bush's presidential administration. In my imagination these heinous practices would have ended in the wake of Galindo's searing performance, yet family detention continued apace, was expanded under the Obama administration, and further intensified by President Donald Trump, who authorized the agencies under his authority to separate and detain children away from their families beginning in 2018—ten years after Galindo's Artpace performance. As of this text's writing in mid-2022, 1,324 (35%) of children separated from their families have yet to be reunited under Joe Biden's presidential administration (see Department of Homeland Security 2022). Galindo's work can be read in ever-new ways under these shifting and still dire conditions, turning the legal imperatives governing international artists' programs such as Artpace, where international artists residing temporarily within the United States are meant to illuminate some aspect of their country of origin for the express edification of US audiences and institutions, into curatorial questions. In this context, Sirmans, as curator, and Artpace, as institution, broker the terms under which Galindo's critique of carceral systems is rendered—a critique that implicates institution, curator, and perhaps Western art institutions writ large alike. That both Sirmans and Robinson were given bronze-cast keys to the cell that held Galindo and her family insinuates that the line between jailer and liberator is a thin one and that, even in the most progressive of art spaces, the traditional modes of museological addressed—here manifested through the key's materiality—still hold.

## Notes

- 1 Sirmans selected Margarita Cabrera (El Paso, Texas) and Rodney McMillian (Los Angeles, California) as the other two artists in residence. While each of these three artists produced work worthy of sustained attention, I focus here on Galindo because of her enduring ability to distill societal acts of violence in elegantly iconic performances in which she often appears as both "victim" and "mastermind." As Galindo has noted: "In my work, it seems, superficially, very easy to locate the victim. I am the victim. But when you do a deeper analysis, you understand that as well as being the victim, I was also the mastermind of the action."
- 2 The specificity of the Hutto facility is embedded within the artist's own description of *America's Family Prison*, published in a survey catalogue of her work from 2011. After beginning with a quote from Michel Foucault ("What is fascinating about prisons is that, for once, power doesn't hide or mask itself; it reveals itself as tyranny pursued down to the smallest details"), the artist describes the work: "I rent a family-sized cell from a company that offers all types of products and services to the private-prisons industry in the United States. Taking T. Don Hutto's family cells as my model, I adapt it and live in it with my daughter and husband for 24 hours. When we come out, the door remains open and the cell is shown as a work of art" (Galindo 2011, 244).

- 3 For those interested, Lisa Duggan's entry on "Neoliberalism" in *Keywords for American Studies* provides the most succinct summary of the major tenants of neoliberal economic, political, and cultural policies as those in the service of a "utopian ideology of 'free markets' and minimal state interference, ... slashing state social services and supporting global corporate interests," with the "cultural project of building consent for the upward redistributions of wealth and power that have occurred since the 1970s" (Duggan 2020, 182).
- 4 According to the European Union's *Policy Handbook on Artists' Residencies*, such programs are an "invaluable adjunct to short-term cultural exchanges," and have a duty to foster and "build bridges between countries and cultures contributing to cultural diversity" (OMC Working Group of EU Member States Experts on Artists' Residencies 2014, 9).
- 5 Such growth is difficult to quantify, but residencies that offer financial support and access to additional resources over a long term—one might think here of CORE Residency program in Houston, Texas, which supports artists with studio space, a monetary stipend, and a schedule of seminars and lectures from visiting artists and curators—are far more likely to achieve these goals. Other residencies, such as the one administered by the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, give residents direct and focused access to experts in clay and metals (via its close relationship with the plumbing manufacturer, Kohler Co.), and the residency requires no previous experience with these materials.
- 6 Though the origin story behind Artpace is a fascinating one, I'll refer readers to the detailed recounting in Pace and Russell (2015).
- 7 After 9/11, the US Congress enacted these changes via the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which, among other things, dissolved the agency long-tasked with the adjudication and enforcement of immigration laws—Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). INS's authority was subsumed within the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and further parsed over an asymmetrical terrain of sub-agencies, all freshly constituted as well: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). I'd recommend consulting this brief timeline to get a sense of INS's historical roots in the xenophobic policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Alien Contract Labor laws (1885, 1887), to the agency's founding in 1933 and its subsequent expansions/contractions in its programs and directives. I'd recommend consulting the following brief timeline to get a sense of INS's historical roots in the xenophobic policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Alien Contract Labor laws (1885, 1887), to the agency's founding in 1933, and its subsequent expansions/contractions in its programs and directives (USCIS History Office and Library 2012).
- 8 The Page Act of 1875 (Immigration Act), 43rd Congress, Sess. II, Ch. 141, available at: <https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1875Immigration%20Act.pdf>, accessed on May 24, 2023.
- 9 A common critique advanced by the Bush administration was that the "vast majority" of migrants allowed to live within the United States were likely to miss their court hearing, effectively migrating without the express approval of US authorities. While not statistically insignificant, the scale of such failures to appear were overstated by the Bush administration (and subsequent conservative/Republican administrations).
- 10 One of Hutto's infamous appearances in US jurisprudence is *Hutto v. Finney* (437 US 678), which decided against Hutto, ruling that incarcerated people could not be placed in punitive isolation for more than 30 days or denied a bunk, that cells could not be overcrowded, that discontinued the use of "grue"—a baked slurry of meat, potatoes, vegetables, eggs, and margarine (also called Nutraloaf or Prison Loaf)—as a punitive measure. All of these practices were endemic in the Arkansas prison system under Hutto (and many reappeared in litigation against the Hutto family detention facility). This marked the first time an inmate brought suit and won out over a correctional facility.

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