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***Prison Obscura* at the Clark Humanities Museum Sheds Light on Incarceration**

CLAREMONT, CA (August 21, 2014) — No country in the world incarcerates a higher percentage of its population than the United States. In fact, more than 2.2 million people are currently locked up in the U.S.—a number that has more than quadrupled since 1980. But the lives lived behind bars are often invisible to those on the outside. *Prison Obscura*, an exhibition curated by Pete Brook, sheds light on their experiences and the prison-industrial complex as a whole by showcasing rarely seen surveillance, evidentiary, and prisoner-made photographs. Brought to Scripps College by the Humanities Institute as part of a semester of programming this fall on the theme of Silence and offered in collaboration with the Core Curriculum in Interdisciplinary Humanities, the exhibition is on view at the Clark Humanities Museum from Sept. 2 through Oct. 17. Brook will also present “Prison Silences,” a public lecture for the Humanities Institute on Oct. 2 at 4:15 p.m. in Garrison Theater at the Scripps College Performing Arts Center. A reception will follow from 5:30 to 7 p.m. inside the exhibition in the Clark Humanities Museum in the Bette Cree Edwards Humanities Building at Scripps College.

Prison Obscura, which comes to Scripps following its successful run at the Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery at Haverford College last spring, builds the case that Americans must face these images to grasp the proliferation of the U.S. prison system and to connect with those it confines. It encourages visitors to ask why tax-paying, prison-funding citizens rarely get the chance to see such images and to consider what roles such pictures play for those within the system. Alyse Emdur’s collected letters and prison visiting-room portraits from across the nation and Robert Gumpert’s recorded audio stories from within the San Francisco jail system provide an opportunity to see, read and listen to subjects in the context of their incarceration. Juvenile and adult prisoners in different workshops led by Steve Davis, Mark Strandquist and Kristen S. Wilkins perform for the camera, reflect on their past, describe their memories, and represent themselves through photography. *Prison Obscura* moves from these intimate portrayals of life within the prison system to more expansive views of legal and spatial surveillance in such works as Josh Begley’s manipulated Google Maps’ API code and Paul Rucker’s animated videos, which offer a “celestial” view of the growth of the prison system.

Pete Brook is a freelance writer and curator based in San Francisco. He writes and edits Prison Photography (prisonphotography.org), a website analyzing imagery produced within and about prisons with a focus on the prison industrial complex in the United States. Brook holds a master's degree in Art History from the University of St. Andrews and a master's degree in Art Gallery and Museum Studies from the University of Manchester; he has curated shows for Seattle's Vermillion Gallery, Holland's Noorderlicht Gallery, New York's Photoville, and Belgrade's Kulturni Centar Belgrada. He writes regularly for Raw File, the *Wired* photography blog, and is working on a book about the history of prison photography in the United States, forthcoming from Silas Finch.

Founded in 1986, the Humanities Institute at Scripps College presents lectures, films, exhibitions, conferences, and other events each semester on a thematic topic related to the humanities. A distinctive aspect of Scripps' program is that a select group of students participates each semester as Junior Fellows, attending events and taking part in a seminar that hosts prominent scholars, activists, and artists who contribute to the Institute's programming. In Fall 2014, under the direction of art history professor Juliet Koss, the Humanities Institute will explore the theory and practice of silence: voluntary and coerced, solitary and communal, literal and metaphorical. In addition to *Prison Obscura*, public lectures, seminars, films, and performances will take place in connection with the theme of Silence and in collaboration with such signature campus programs and spaces as the Core Curriculum in Interdisciplinary Humanities, the Scripps College Academy, the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, and the Claremont Colleges Library.

The Clark Humanities Museum is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information on *Prison Obscura* or other Humanities Institute programming, please call (909) 621-8237 or visit scrippscollege.edu/hi.

Prison Obscura is a traveling exhibition curated by Pete Brook and made possible with the support of the John B. Hurford '60 Center for the Arts and Humanities and Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery at Haverford College, Haverford, Penn. Support for its presentation at Scripps has been provided by the Scripps College Humanities Institute and by the Core Curriculum in Interdisciplinary Humanities at Scripps College.

Scripps College was founded in 1926 by Ellen Browning Scripps, a pioneering philanthropist and influential figure in the worlds of education, publishing, and women's rights. Today, Scripps is a nationally top-ranked liberal arts college and women's college with approximately 950 students, and is a member of The Claremont Colleges in Southern California. The mission of Scripps College is to educate women to develop their intellects and talents through active participation in a community of scholars, so that as graduates they may contribute to society through public and private lives of leadership, service, integrity, and creativity.