

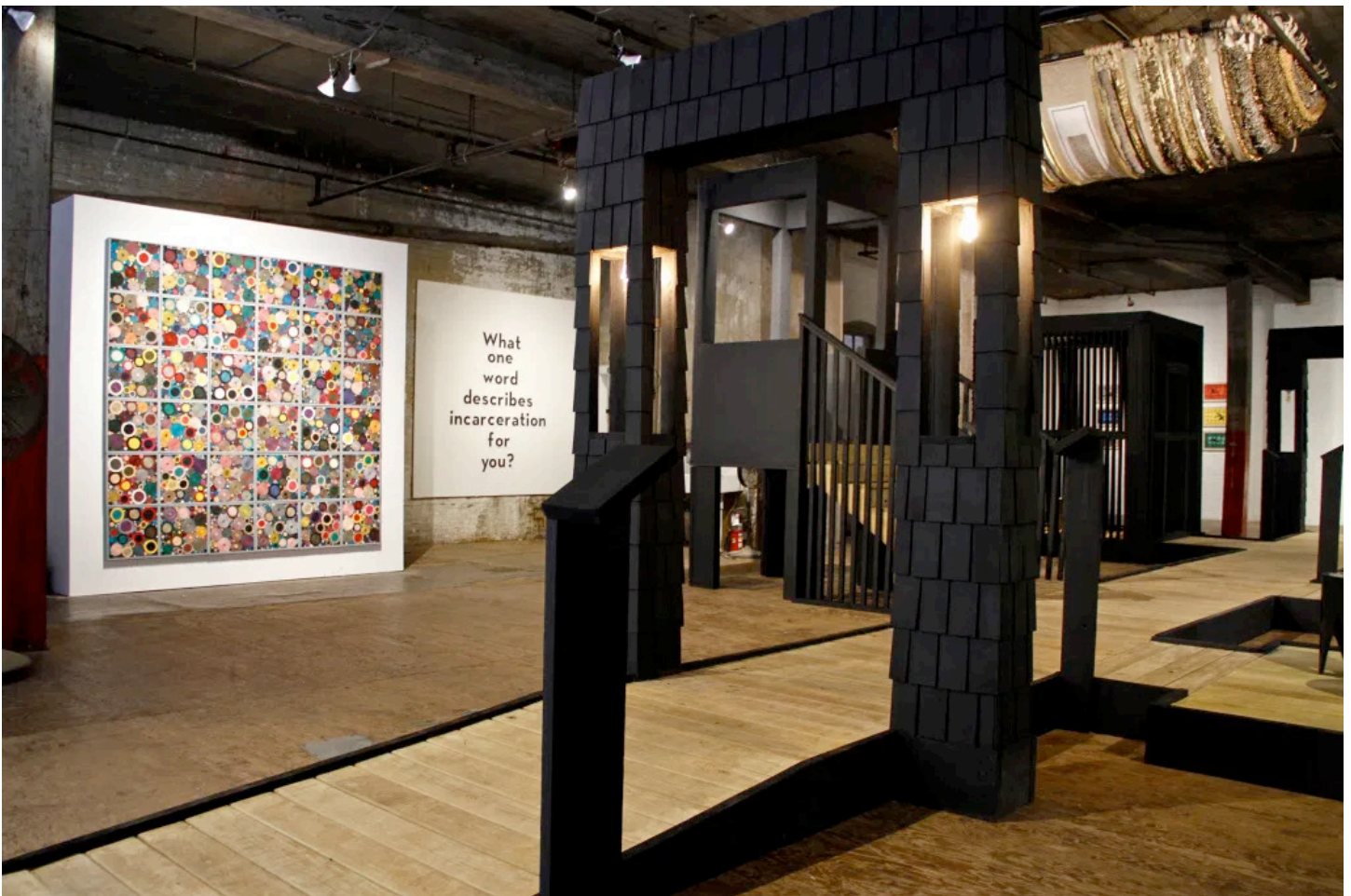
# COOL HUNTING®

## Artists Steven + William Ladd's Collaborative Work with Incarcerated People

At The Invisible Dog Art Center, "The Other Side" exhibition overwhelms with powerful art and intention

By: David Graver  
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For the last nine years, New York-based artists [Steven and William Ladd](#) have collaborated with inmates from the NYC Department of Corrections as part of their acclaimed practice. [The Other Side](#), the brothers' enrapturing exhibition at Brooklyn's [The Invisible Dog Art Center](#), is the first solely dedicated to this transportive body of work and the stories behind it. To step into the exhibition is to witness the power of collaboration and creativity, and the pain of the prison system in the US.



# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY

“In 2012, our friend Cecilia worked on Rikers Island where there are 10 jails,” the brothers tell us about the origin of this work. “The Robert N Davoren Complex (RNDC) used to house adolescents, and was the most violent on the island. We’d told her about a recent visit, making art with students at a local school. She said, ‘Many of the students from that school end up institutionalized or incarcerated at RNDC. Would you be interested in coming to Rikers?’ Cecilia is a badass who did a lot to make it happen. It was the beginning of our years-long dedication to sharing our art practice with inmates of the NYC Department of Corrections.”



RNDC was just the start of powerful, shared experiences and cathartic art. “Over the years we’ve worked in other jails, like Rosie’s—an entire jail of women,” they continue. “One of the first experiences was electric. Twenty-five women collaborated on an artwork and gathered around to brainstorm the title. The colors of the materials we had brought in were the same tones as the uniforms of the women, so they started off there and built rapidly... ‘Green, Sentenced, Prison, Incarcerated, Freedom, Freedom, Freedom,’ and then everyone erupted in applause and started chanting, ‘Freedom! Freedom!’ One woman cried out, ‘Put your hands together on the work,’ and 25 women of all different ages and backgrounds put their hands on top of the artwork and chanted ‘Freedom!’” At that moment, one of the women looked at the Ladd Brothers and told them, “I’ll never forget you.”

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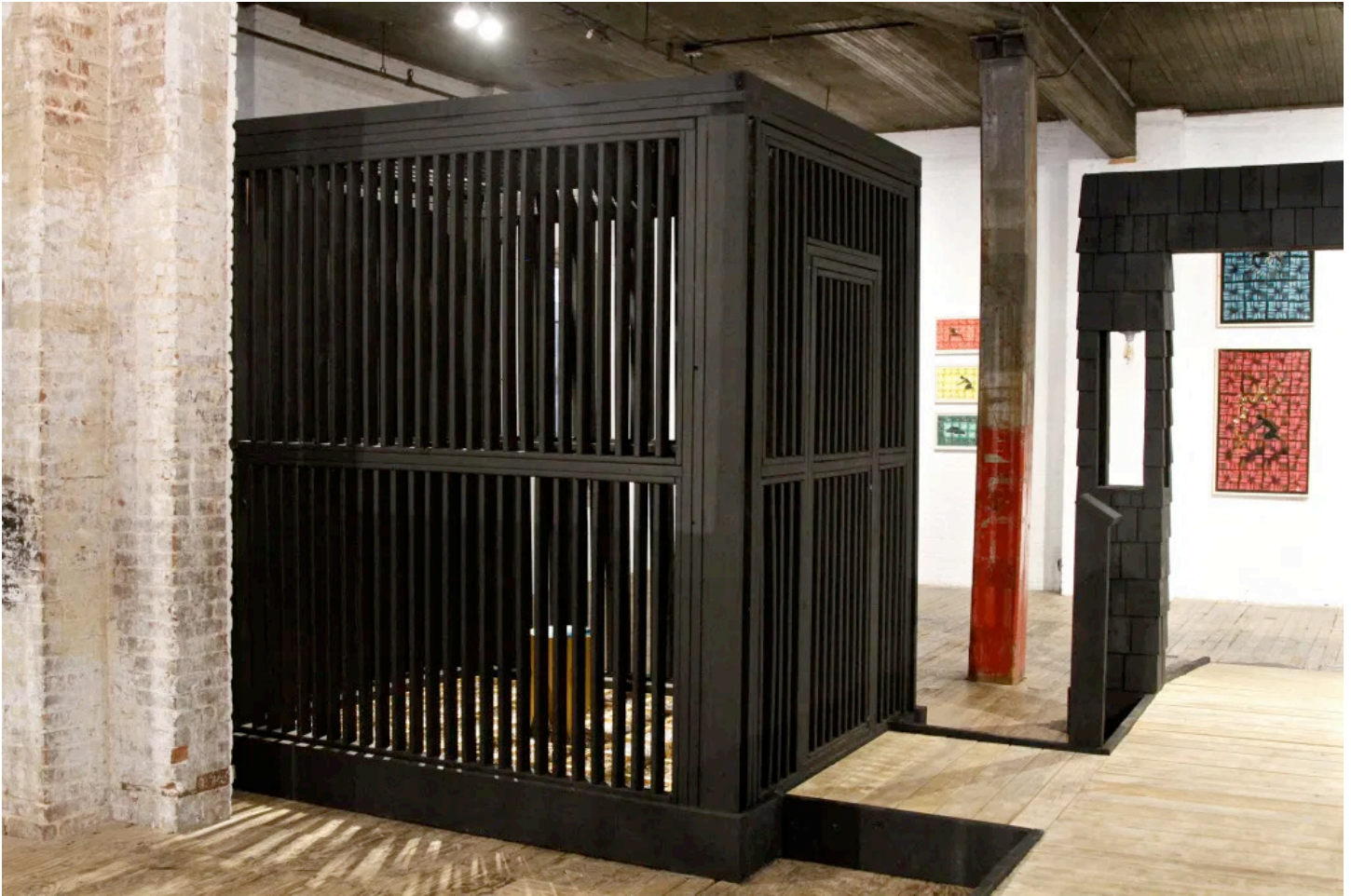
As for how they feel entering the exhibition, today, the artists' experience aligns with that of the audience. "It's overwhelming," they tells us. "We've put so many years into this project and to see it all come together like this is amazing. More than anything we're motivated to continue this work. We are energized by not only the incredible responses from the DOC staff and inmates, but by the transformation in our art practice."

# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



“This exhibition has taken our artwork in new directions that will have longterm effects throughout both the engagement and art-making aspects of our practice,” they say. COVID-19 also had an impact. “For example, because in-person interaction wasn’t possible this year, we shifted the collaborative aspect of the work to inmates contributing through text. Combined with contributions from the outside community, it resulted in our largest ever text-based collaborative artwork. We want to build on this work, and keep engaging people that right now, especially, can benefit from it the most.”

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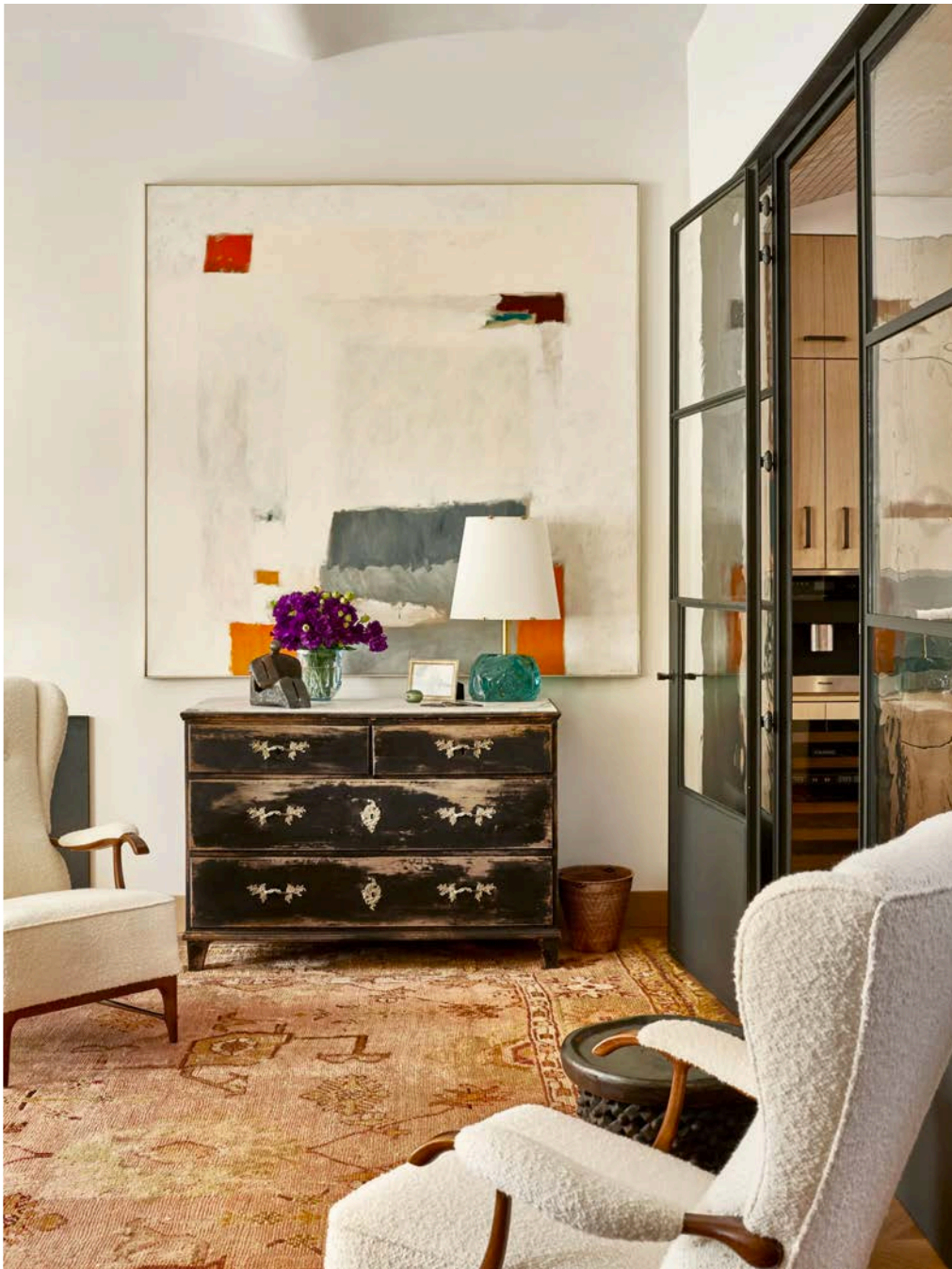
The Other Side—co-presented by French Institute Alliance Française (FIAF) and Cristina Grajales Gallery—runs through 7 November. For those not yet ready to enter an art space (and those outside of NYC), the Ladd Brothers have also produced a virtual walk-through of the exemplary exhibition.

# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



This nook, dedicated to practicing meditation, has touches of leather, from the chrome-framed chair to the Mauritanian rug from RW Guild. The hanging light from The Future Perfect is made from banana fiber; the lantern is from designer Tonino Negri.

# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



A painting by Giorgio Cavallon is poised between the kitchen and the living room. This corner is filled with Scandinavian furniture, including the chairs, in alpaca, and the commode, which was sourced from Dienst + Dotter. The bold-colored lamp is from designer Roberto Rida.

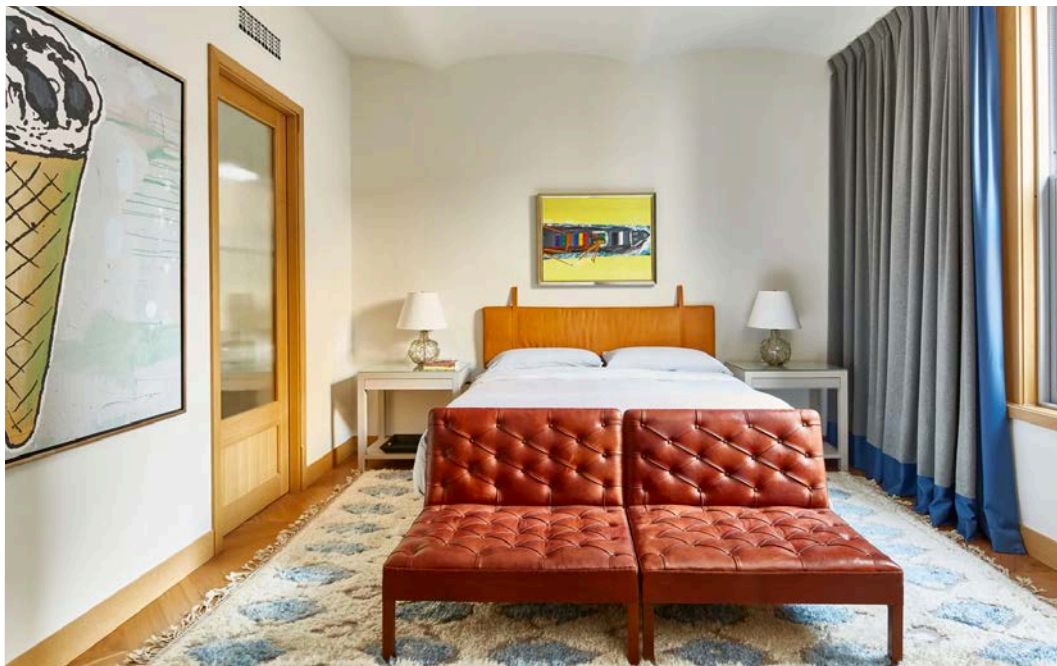
# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



Even the home office packs a punch, thanks to the Haas Brothers' La Brea Brad Pitt mammoth rug. Antique pieces like the Portuguese cabinet have been blended with modern ones like the Oka desk. The hanging light from designer Jeff Zimmerman is made from handblown glass.



# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



The guest bedroom is home to leather accents: the antique Danish chairs and the headboard from The Citizenry. The art includes Ice Cream Cone by Donald Baechler and Yellow by Malcolm Morley. The custom curtains feature a blend of fabrics—cashmere from Holland & Sherry and wool from Angela Brown Ltd.—and the rug, in alpaca, was sourced from ALT For Living.

# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



Khandwala likes to reserve the bold hues for the bathrooms. For this one, he chose Farrow & Ball's Arsenic, which contrasts with the mirror's blue-glass frame. The towels come from Nancy Stanley Waud Fine Linens.