



Solitary Confinement

An artists' book and installation by Beldan Sezen, Brooklyn, NY

2020, edition of 11, oil-sticks, wood, Misu paper, \$5,500

Dimensions: 24 x 24 x 1 inch (folded book)
14 X 14 feet (unfolded book)
2 X 2 X 6 feet (hanging sculpture)

Collections: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

Solitary Confinement is an artists' book that not only discusses the issue of involuntary incarceration but demonstrates a form of confinement that readers/visitors can experience for themselves. The book sculpture is a 2 x 2 feet wide book which, when unfolded, is 6 feet high. The thin yet strong, almost translucent paper turns the pages into walls symbolizing the remoteness from civilization. One is surrounded by the outer world which is out of reach. The longing for a connection is kept alive only by memory.

Artist's Statement

The past eight months have confronted us with a form of confinement that I couldn't have imagined a year ago when I proposed this exhibition to the Hall of Fame Gallery at Bronx Community College. I wanted to create a book to demonstrate solitary confinement. I've met people who were confined by authoritarian forces. I've listened to their stories, their attempts to explain how it feels, what it does to you when you are isolated and your ability to move when your own free will is taken away.

We entered the Covid era with the notion that we'll make it through – that there was a certain time limit for our collective confinement, for our restricted lives – a month or two, tops. Now it's been almost a year and we simply don't know when this will end. New York City's boroughs morphed into villages. Physical contact during the height of the lockdown wasn't safe. Those who live alone had to face an inner space in which they could reside with no one other than themselves. We have entered a realm of uncertainty by living with a limitation that is not only geographical or physical, but also psychological – an in-between space to which we have to adapt daily, with new rules and new unknowns.

By now we all have experienced a fraction of a form of confinement, knowing all too well the effects this kind of limited movement has on us. "That's not living," a friend of mine stated in frustration. It's not. Now, just simply translate this notion into the form of punishment called solitary confinement – a practice in our prisons that we as a society continue to permit to those who need to demonstrate their power and will. – Beldan Sezen, 2020

Video links - <https://vimeo.com/476690544>, <https://vimeo.com/476691313>



