

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION

BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE PRISON,  
THE ARTIST'S QUEST FOR FREEDOM CONTINUES



ORIGINAL ARTWORK BY ROBBY WIRRAMANDA

THE STEVE JAGGI COMPANY and ATHABASCA FILM in association with RUBY RED FILMS  
present an ALEX SIDDONS INDEPENDENT production THE ART OF INCARCERATION  
music by THEO MCMAHON editor VICTOR PAOLINI director of photography JESSE GOHIER-FLEET  
executive producer STEVE JAGGI ALEXANDROS OUZAS SPENCER MCLAREN  
produced by ALEX SIDDONS KYLIE PASCOE  
written by ALEX SIDDONS CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN ROBBY WIRRAMANDA directed by ALEX SIDDONS  
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THEARTOFINCARCERATION.COM



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ServeChilled

The producers acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia



# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## PRESS KIT

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Directed by Alex Siddons

Written by Christopher Austin, Robby Wirramanda, Alex Siddons

Produced by Kylie Pascoe, Alex Siddons

## BILLING BLOCK

THE STEVE JAGGI COMPANY and ATHABASCA FILM in association with RUBY RED FILMS

present an ALEX SIDDON INDEPENDENT production THE ART OF INCARCERATION

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## TECHNICAL

GENRE	Documentary
COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION	Australia
YEAR OF PRODUCTION	2021
RUNNING TIME	74 minutes
LANGUAGE	English
FORMAT	4k Dolby Vision HDR
RATIO	16:9
AUDIO	5.1 Surround

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## SYNOPSIS

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### LOGLINE

Seen through the eyes of indigenous prisoners at Victoria's Fulham correctional centre, *The Art Of Incarceration* explores how art and culture can empower First Nations peoples to transcend their unjust cycles of imprisonment.

### SHORT SYNOPSIS

Seen through the eyes of Indigenous prisoners at Victoria's Fulham Correctional Centre, *The Art Of Incarceration* explores how art and culture can empower First Nations peoples to transcend their unjust cycles of imprisonment. This narrative documentary humanises the over representation of Indigenous Australians within the prison system, and provides an insight into the inmate's quest for cultural identity and spiritual healing as they prepare for the annual 'Confined' exhibition and life on the outside.

### SYNOPSIS

Seen through the eyes of Indigenous prisoners at Victoria's Fulham Correctional Centre, *The Art of Incarceration* is an award-winning documentary that explores how art and culture can empower First Nations people to transcend their unjust cycles of imprisonment.

This narrative documentary both analyses and humanises the over representation of Indigenous Australians within the prison system, whilst seeking answers and striving toward solutions.

From deep inside Victoria's Fulham Correctional Centre the artists complete their works whilst painting the audience a contemporary insight into the deeply ingrained incarceration epidemic of Australia's First Peoples.

The film is an uncompromising insight into the inmate's quest for cultural identity and spiritual healing as they prepare for the annual *Confined* exhibition and life on the outside.

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

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Seen through the eyes of Indigenous prisoners at Victoria's Fulham Correctional Centre, *The Art of Incarceration* explores how art and culture can empower First Nations people to transcend their unjust cycles of imprisonment.

Following three main artists at different stages of their artistic development and 'rehabilitation' (both within the eyes of the system and within their own introspective consciousness), this narrative documentary both analyses and humanises the over representation of Indigenous Australians within the prison system, whilst seeking answers and striving toward solutions.

Christopher Austin is a proud Gunditjmara Keerraaywoorrong man who has spent 37 years within the youth and adult prison system. His offending behaviour began with minor offenses and eventually escalated to armed robberies. Troy Brabham is a Wemba Wemba man who has spent 9 years within the prison system. His offending behaviour is centred around violence and drug and alcohol addiction. Robby Wirramanda is a Wergaia man who served a 4-year in prison sentence for drug trafficking.

The film is an uncompromising insight into the inmate's quest for cultural identity and spiritual healing as they prepare for the annual *Confined* exhibition (facilitated by Not For Profit organisation The Torch) and life on the outside.

The film clearly and profoundly explores greatly misunderstood issues such as cultural disconnection, inter-generational trauma, addiction and institutionalisation.

The *Confined* exhibition represents a middle ground between prison and society, providing the inmates with "experiences that no one can take away from us, no matter how dark the times get".

*The Art Of Incarceration* was conceived out of a strong friendship between filmmaker Alex Siddons and Robby Wirramanda. Together with Christopher Austin - whom Alex met within the Indigenous unit of Fulham prison – they began a 16-month process of filming hundreds of hours of life inside the prison - and out of it. More recently, Uncle Jack Charles has joined the team (and his old friends) to lend his voice to an issue he feels very passionate about.

*The Art of Incarceration* will start the conversation that Australia has neglected for far too long.





## ART IN PRISONS

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The main objectives of organised art programs throughout the prisons revolve around the improvement of self-esteem, rehabilitation, education and providing a trade and tools for artists to use upon release. Giving inmates an opportunity to be re-educated, to reflect on past experiences and get them thinking on how they're lives will change upon release.

In Melbourne, The Torch provides Indigenous inmates with art supplies and mentoring and run an annual exhibition "Confined" where artists can sell their pieces.

In Sydney's Long Bay gaol, the Boom Gate Gallery and Malabar Art Unit deliver professional training in a wide variety of artistic mediums and display the art in a public gallery.

J Block Women of the Art Project was conducted at the Darwin Corrections Centre and provides a simple and practical form of self-expression, proving a valuable form of rehabilitation.

Hopefully, *The Art of Incarceration* will inspire other Australian states and Territories to incorporate art in its various forms to help with the rehabilitation process, and to give all Australian inmates a future on the outside.

*"When we're in prison, there's not much you can do, but this program lets the world see what you're doing, so that we're not forgotten. It passes the time, keeps me connected to our culture, and the way to stay connected is through our art and the stories behind them."*

~ Robby Wirramanda | Wergaia

*"In the past I was a crook, you know, a jail bird, but now I'm an artist. My daughter is so proud of that. I never used to think of myself that way."*

~ Christopher Austin | Gunditjmara Keeray-Woorroong

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## THE INSPIRATION

### ROBBY WIRRAMANDA

Wergaia

Robby Wirramanda represents his bloodlines in Wergaia, Wamba Wamba, Barapa Barapa, Wadi Wadi, Dhudhuroa and Nyeri Nyeri. He is a former champion fighter who reconnected with his passion for art during his 6 ½ year prison sentence for drug trafficking. Robby is a symbol of strength and hope to many inmates due to his success as an artist/singer/songwriter and his unrelenting dedication to culture, community and family.

Following the production of the film, Robby made global head-lines and coined the now famous #toostrongforyoukaren hash tag after an incident with a neighbour whilst he was painting in his garage went viral. Amidst all this, Robby continues to create and had his first solo exhibition at Melbourne's prestigious Metro gallery in late 2020. Robby continues to emerge as a leader through his ongoing work on programs for Aboriginal justice and economic development. His latest project is the establishment of the WALPA WINAKA FOUNDATION for culturally appropriate alternatives to imprisonment for Indigenous Australians.

[Lake Tyrell Arts](#)

### CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN

Gunditjmara Keeray-Woorroong

From being raised on a mission to being made a ward-of the state and incarcerated from the age of 12 for being 'uncontrollable', the injustices of Australia's colonial history are seen inextricably within Christopher's narrative.

Highly institutionalised at a young age, the longest Christopher spent outside prison as part of society was just 9 months.

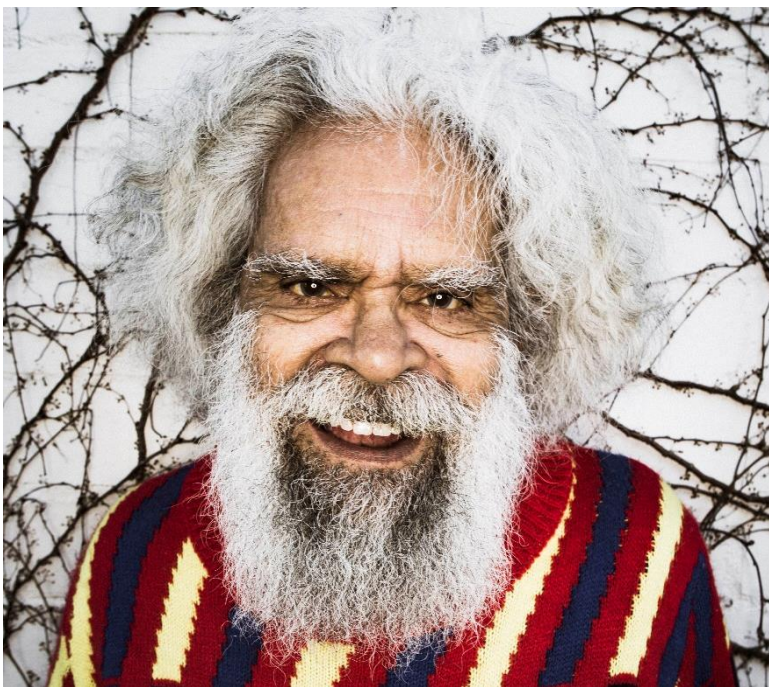
Through Christopher's new direction as an artist and his desire to forge a lasting connection with his four-year old daughter, Christopher is attempting to break free from his 37-year cycle of incarceration.

Christopher's story of resilience and strength has inspired many and in a remarkable turn of events Christopher has now been granted unique access to work as an Indigenous mentor/art teacher back inside the Victorian prison system.

[The Torch](#)



# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## JACK CHARLES

Boonwurring Dja Dja Wurrung

Uncle Jack Charles is a national treasure, an award-winning actor, Aboriginal elder and activist. But in his 77 years he has also been homeless, a heroin addict, a thief and a regular in Victoria's prisons.

A member of the Stolen Generation, Jack has spent his life in between acting gigs, caught in the addiction/crime/doing time cycle.

Today — no longer caught in the cycle — he lives to tell the extraordinary tale of his colourful life and brilliant career.

*"Who would have thought we would survive to tell the story."*

~ Jack Charles

## TROY BRABHAM

Wemba-Wemba

Through art, Troy attempts to reconcile his violent past and gains an enhanced sense of hope for when he is 'eventually freed'.

Troy is astonishingly intellectual and his introspective journey through the narrative is every bit as compelling as it is deeply tragic.

**AND ALL THE OTHER ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT  
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN CAUGHT UP IN THE  
JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND WHO HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES  
INCARCERATED EITHER NOW, OR IN THE PAST.**

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## THE CREATIVE TEAM

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### ALEX SIDDONS

Writer/Director/Producer

Alex Siddons is a Melbourne based Writer, Director and Producer. He is a self-taught filmmaker who has been telling stories since the dawn of his existence however most notably through his role as Head Producer at PLGRM Media.

Alex's film works include The Busker, The High School Lawyer and The Saints of St Kilda - his controversial insight into the infamous Gatwick Hotel. His early works predominantly consisted of narrative driven documentary content and gained praise from the likes of The Guardian, The Huffington Post, the ABC and The Age.

In 2016, Alex met indigenous artist Robby Wirramanda and a strong friendship was formed. After learning about the art in prison program, Alex left PLGRM and together with Christopher Austin - whom Alex met within the Indigenous unit of Fulham prison - the unlikely trio began a journey to document and tell the story of art inside one of Victoria's most notorious prisons.

Today, Robby and Chris consider Alex as part of their family and this mutual love and respect is reflected in the film's journey.

| [IMDB](#)



# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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This is a film that was created through a series of extraordinary friendships.

I found the story through a painting that I was gifted. The painting was created inside the Indigenous unit of Fulham prison in Gippsland, Victoria.

A few months later I met Robby Wirramanda- an Indigenous artist who had recently been released and had attended Fulham during his sentence. I can still see him walking toward me. Completely staunch and unflinching. It was as if he was carved from stone.

I told him about the painting, my vague idea about a project focusing on the invisible story of the rising Indigenous incarceration epidemic that plagues Australia.

The painting led me back to the art room in which it was created. Inside the Gippsland based prison I arrived to speak with the Indigenous artists about the potential film project. Walking through the gate and into the yard I learnt very quickly to keep my head down. There the inmates stood, clothed in

green and ruled by an unspoken code that is governed by stance and silence.

I was taken to meet Christopher Austin, the Elder within the Indigenous unit. He's been inside the system since the age of 12.

I discussed the prospect of exploring the artists and their journey toward the Torch's Confined exhibition. We spoke of shooting this film like a movie and less like a documentary.

'We're Blackfella's in jail. Nobody cares about us. This is a chance for our story to be told'. Chris's words stayed with me as he gate closed behind me.

These early moments conjured a 6 year journey that has become the enduring and exhausting process of creating *The Art of Incarceration*.

For all its commentary, for all its enormity, for all that it seeks and strives, once boiled down to its most fundamental and essential compounds, this is a story created through friendship.

The story found me. No, we found each other.

~ Alex Siddons | Director

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## KYLIE PASCOE

Producer

Kylie Pascoe is an Australian producer with a strong background in strategic marketing. With a 20 year career in film and TV, Kylie has created innovative marketing campaigns alongside several Hollywood Studios, and managed the release of over 35 feature films and series.

In 2014, Kylie took over as Festival Director of the Gold Coast Film Festival establishing three of their flagship events and paving the way for it to become Queensland's largest screen culture event. While In Queensland, Kylie production managed two documentary series, produced a short film and was invited to sit on the Bond University Film and Television scholarship judging panel.

In 2016, Kylie moved to Victoria and redefined her career as a Producer in which time she has produced a documentary for broadcast and co-produced ten feature films and series for international release. Kylie also sits on the board of the Castlemaine Documentary Film Festival.

| [IMDB](#)



## THEO MCMAHON

Co Producer/Composer

Theo McMahon is a film producer, VCA graduate student and proud Bundjalung man with extensive experience in sound design, composition, live performance, as well as a Bachelors Degree in Performance Design. The projects he has undertaken simulate politics and art and are broad in scope and technicality.

Currently, Theo's creative output as a composer is focused on First Nations narratives. His sound installation at the Dirty Dozen Gallery for YIRRAMBOI'S 2019 Barring Yanabul exhibition interrogated the relationship between contemporary practices and First Nations identities. These ideas are currently directing him as an artist.

He is currently collaborating on a development with the Art Centre Melbourne for an inclusive creative performance space for all First Nations people.

| [IMDB](#)



# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

*The Art Of Incarceration* was created by a group of passionate independent filmmakers, who wanted to spotlight the invisible story of the rising Indigenous incarceration epidemic that plagues Australia.

The film's key subjects - Robby, Chris and Troy were all at different stages within their artistic development and 'rehabilitation' (both within the eyes of the system and within their own introspective consciousness), so it was important to show not only their successes, but also the struggle they faced - and continue to face - each day.

Getting into the prison itself was a challenge, and had it not been for the supportive teams at Corrections Victoria and The Geo Group, the film may have remained just an idea.

Over a five-year period, the story developed as new collaborators joined the effort, and the small creative team spent tireless hours filming in one of Victoria's toughest prisons.

When an early rough cut of the film was shown at the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival and took out the Best Australian Feature Documentary

award, *The Art Of Incarceration* began to gain momentum.

Expressions of interest from Exhibitors to screen the film in cinema appeared and Athabasca Film came on as distributor, giving the project the injection of inspiration (and resources) to go back into post production for an additional 11 month period.

In December 2020, the film re-emerged with a new edit, sound design and grade, alongside a new artwork sequence created by artist and co-writer Christopher Austin, and the introduction of Uncle Jack Charles as the film's Narrator. Like the subjects of our story, the film itself has undergone an incredible journey.

The whole creative team are incredibly passionate about this film and are thrilled to share it with the world on the Netflix platform. It is also our wish that this film be shown in prisons, schools, universities and in remote communities, so that the message of hope, reconnection with culture and an alternative option to incarceration can be spread far and wide.

~ Kylie Pascoe & Alex Siddons | Producers

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION



## JESSIE GOHIER-FLEET

Director of Photography

Jesse Gohier-Fleet is a young Australian DOP whose eye catching work on music videos and other content, includes natural tones and a unique moody darkness. With a dedication to narrative storytelling that belies a strong background in visual arts, Jesse has gone on to shoot for a range of different directors.

His commitment to poetic cinematography makes him the go-to guy for content with a strong emotional core.

Jesse is based in Melbourne, Australia.

| [IMDB](#)

## VICTOR PAOLINI

Editor

Victor Paolini is a Melbourne-based freelance Editor, Colourist and Cinematographer. After beginning his career in Melbourne's thriving music scene, he quickly made a name for himself filming, producing and editing event content and live music videos.

Intrigued by the storytelling ability of film, Victor joined PLGRM Media allowing his narrative experience to grow across a broad range of projects and stories. His editing credits include *The Pot Doctor*, *The Frozen Frontline* (Ukraine) and *The Last Man Standing*.

Victor now works independently, editing commercial content for the likes of Telstra and Victoria University, as well as selected music videos for bass music artists, such as DRS and Cern.

| [IMDB](#)



# THE ART OF INCARCERATION

## CREDITS

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director

ALEX SIDDONS

writers

ALEX SIDDONS

CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN

ROBBY WIRRAMANDA

producers

ALEX SIDDONS

KYLIE PASCOE

co-producers

ROBBY WIRRAMANDA

THEO McMAHON

executive producers

STEVE JAGGI

ALEXANDROS OUZAS

SPENCER McLAREN

associate producers

VICTOR PAOLINI

CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN

KELLY SON HING

director of photography

JESSE GOHIER-FLEET

edited by

VICTOR PAOLINI

original score by

THEO McMAHON

narrator

JACK CHARLES

Opening sequence artwork

CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION

artists

(in order of appearance)

TROY BRABHAM

JACK CHARLES

CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN

ROBBY WIRRAMANDA

cultural advisor ROBBY WIRRAMANDA

Script Consultant DR MARCELLE TOWNSEND-CROSS

CHRIS KEELER

STEVIE WAPPETT

production assistants JACKSON WAYINLARR WIRRAMANDA

HICKSON MARNDARR WIRRAMANDA

GRAYSON KAIDEN WIRRAMANDA

additional camera TESSA MANSFIELD-HUNG

LACHLAN WRIGHT

ZOE COLDHAM

JOEY KNOX

sound recordist DAVID LAURITSEN

NICHOLAS PANGRAZZI

additional sound JACK PIPER

consulting editor KEN SALLOWS

production accountant REEL WORLD FINANCIAL SERVICES

stills photography LACHLAN WRIGHT

BEN TARLINTON

TESSA MANSFIELD-HUNG

post production services by

SERVE CHILLED

post production supervisor EMILY TATHEM

post production coordinator CHARLEY WIGNALL

colourist CALEB DE LEON

Original Colour ABE WYNEN

image artist CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN

vfx artist NICHOLAS DEVIN

sound designer and dialogue editor BENJAMIN VLAD



# THE ART OF INCARCERATION

## songs

"BLACK MAN, BLACK WOMAN"

Composed by Robby Wirramanda

Performed by Robby Wirramanda

"COMING HOME, AGAIN"

Composed by Robby Wirramanda

Performed by Robby Wirramanda

"MELANIE KOLY"

Composed by George Farrar

Performed by George Farrar

"BREATHING STILL"

Composed by George Farrar

Performed by George Farrar

"CINEMATIC AMBIENCE"

Composed by George Farrar

Performed by George Farrar

## thanks

THE TORCH

FULHAM CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

THE GEO GROUP AUSTRALIA

CORRECTIONS VICTORIA

ARCHIE ROACH FOUNDATION

## special thanks

MELINDA SIDDONS

JACKIE WIRRAMANDA

KIM McGRATH

AMELIA AUSTIN

MICHAEL McMAHON

MICHAEL McMAHON

JULIE DONALD

THE WESTWOOD FAMILY

ELISE MARC

THE PAOLINI FAMILY

FRANCK GOHIER

CHRIS KEELER

PHILIP GOSLIN

UNCLE MARK GRIST

JACK CHARLES

CATHERINE ANDREWS

KRISTIAN CONNELLY

SASHA CLOSE

LEXIE GREEN

LYNDON STONE

MITCH ZIEMS

KENT MORRIS

SUSANNAH DAY

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION

ANTHONY JAMES  
CHRIS JAMES  
CHARLIE SELMAN  
TOM CANTWELL  
EDUARDO BOZZOLA  
GREG COOK (COOKEY)  
THE CROFT FAMILY  
THE CANTWELL FAMILY  
THE GRIFFIN FAMILY  
JACK LATIMORE  
MORGAN SAMPSON  
ANDRE CARDOSO  
ALISTAIR FAHIE  
AMELIA HOEY  
THOMAS LIGHTFOOT  
BILLY RIDDLE  
PHILIP MUNNINGS  
FRANK MINCONE  
JIM SANDERS  
TONY SIDDONS  
SAM SIDDONS  
PHOEBE SIDDONS

The environment was considered in all aspects during the making of the film.

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Filmed in Victoria and post-produced in Queensland, Australia

The Producer acknowledges the support of Screen Australia through the Producer Equity Program

# THE ART OF INCARCERATION

Financed with the assistance of



ANZ distributor



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