This System Has Failed Us

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Kate Bickhardt

Artist Statement

When I go to a courtroom the only color I see is orange. I don’t want to talk down to people. The projection is level to the floor. There are 2,500 napkins. They are the people, the garbage, and the repetition of the excess, and my hope of giving them importance. There are roughly 2,500 people in the Orleans Parish Prison on any given day, but the system is bigger than them. It’s more consuming and this is not nearly the amount of napkins it would take to represent the people in even just one state's carceral system. The space is empty. There are so many people that couldn’t be here. This isn’t about white guilt. This is a reflection of what I have seen, reformed and repurposed to be better understood. The system has failed us. But it hasn’t failed me, and I’m the system. I make art because I can’t change those truths without acknowledging them.
It’s that when you try to reason with yourself whether what you’re doing is right