

Prisoners' Inventions



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Imagine that your house spans six by nine feet, your mattress is just two inches thick, you are known to your neighbors by an identification number, and items most consider crucial to everyday existence are outlawed. How do inmates in prisons like this throughout the United States make such lives bearable? In 2001, the artists' collective Temporary Services asked an incarcerated artist named Angelo to share with them the ways in which inmates adapt to their confinement. Angelo responded with over one hundred pages of meticulously detailed ink drawings and text. The resulting compilation, "Prisoners' Inventions", is a unique guide to prison life, covering subjects ranging from how to cook a grilled cheese sandwich in a locker to how to chill a soda using a toilet. Many of the documented items - such as cigarette lighters, condoms, even alarm clocks - are considered contraband, and Angelo includes anecdotes describing their creation and use. Already featured in "Playboy", "Harper's", "Le Monde", and on "This American Life", "Prisoners' Inventions" provides powerful testimony to the creativity of those "on the inside."

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