



# THE BODY IN TIME

A PRINTED MATTER PUBLICATION  
BY SARA JORDENÖ

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**IT'S BEEN DAYS,** it's been months. It takes four to eight seconds for something swallowed to move down into the stomach, where it could remain as long as four hours.

The food tray is one of the few objects he is allowed to touch. It is a blow-molded, seamlessly constructed meal delivery system, designed by a company that specializes in corrections. It is available in three colors (Gray, Mocha, Brown). In a procedure referred to as "tray passing", it is inserted through the cell door opening. Keeping the tray in the cell between meals is not allowed.

After brushing the teeth, dental plaque begins to develop within six hours. The light fixtures are never switched off, and no daylight enters the windows. The food trays mark the hours. All areas are subject to 24-hour surveillance.

A breath lasts about five seconds: two seconds of inhalation and three seconds of exhalation. A knee jerk takes about four tenths of a second to complete itself.

He is allowed one hour of exercise per day. This activity takes place in an isolated cage somewhere inside the building. One day it is announced that he has violated the rules by practicing martial arts in his cell. He has performed "unauthorized gestures", which results in the withdrawal of the right to family visits for three months.

The body loses water through the skin (from simple diffusion) at the rate of a half-quart per day. The body loses water from the lungs by the same amount, in the breath.

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**THE BUILDING IS** located on Park Row in downtown Manhattan, close to City Hall. A group of people gathers in front. The organizers are late. After waiting for 20 minutes, I take this photograph. A woman comes up to me, asks my name. She tells me about a man who is being held in solitary confinement in this building, awaiting trial. The woman is part of a group who protests by holding a candlelight vigil on the sidewalk outside the building each week. As we're leaving, an older woman with a colorful hat approaches us, asking if we're part of the demonstration. We shake our heads; we're merely on a Manhattan prison tour. "They have her locked up in there!" She gestures towards the building. Confined inside windowed white booths, the guards appear to perform only minimal movements.

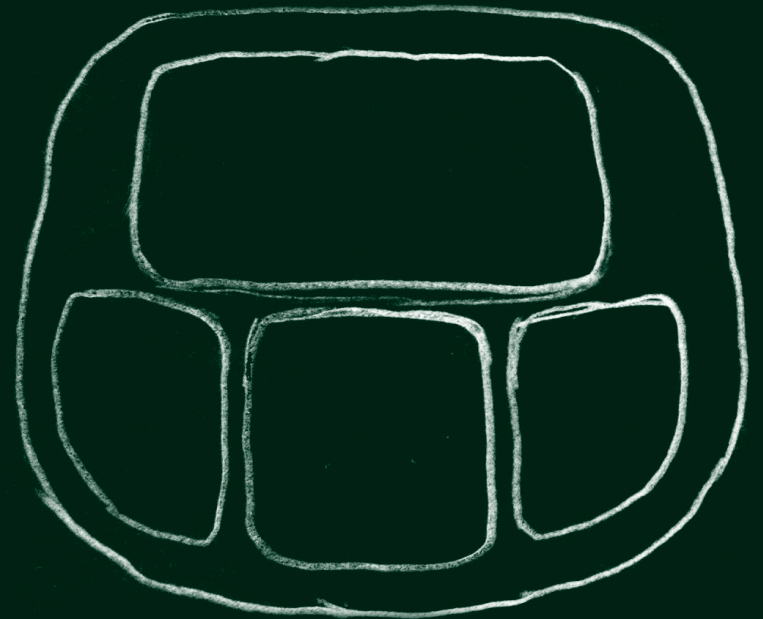
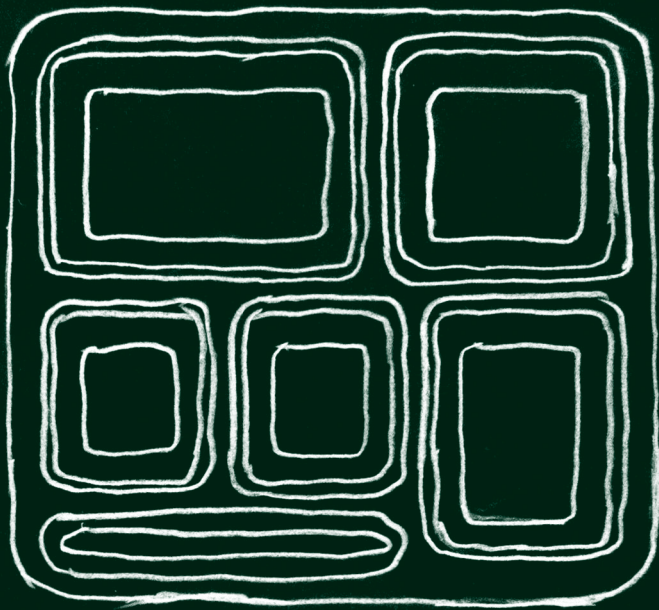
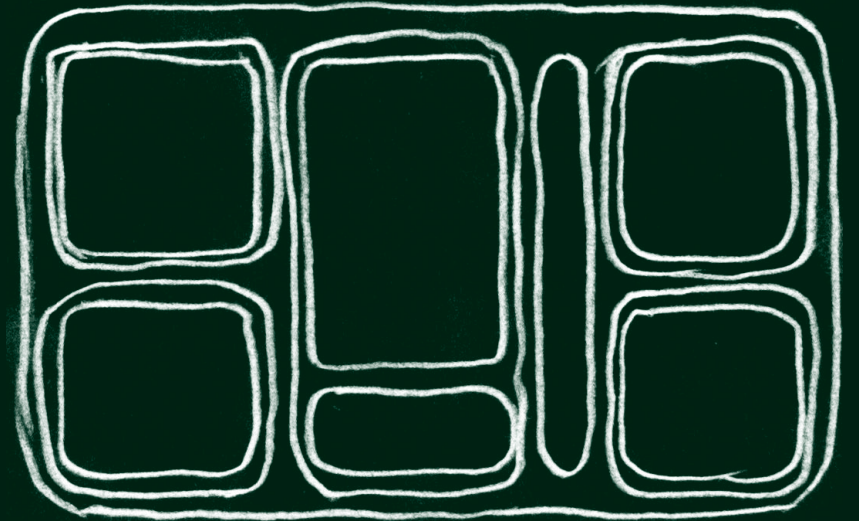
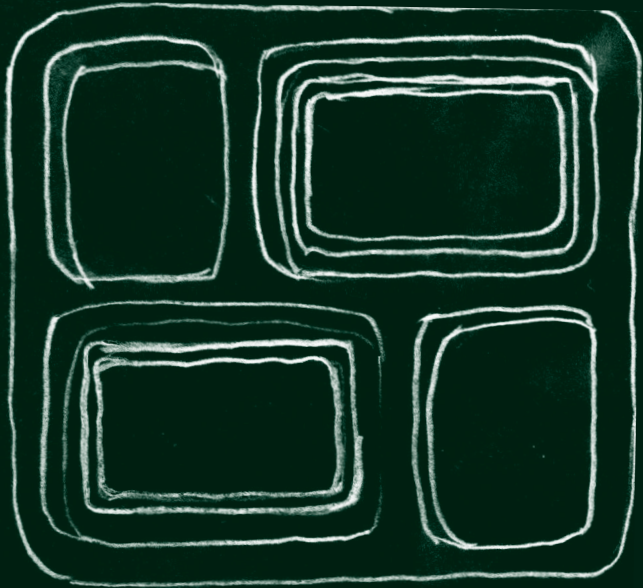
Amnesty International has called for a review of the conditions in the Special Housing Unit (SHU) of the federal Metropolitan Correctional Center, New York, NY. The unit, known as "MCC 10th Floor South", is comprised of six cells where prisoners are confined alone for 23 or 24 hours a day and are not allowed any contact, including speaking, with other inmates. The outside window in each cell is reportedly glazed over so that there is no view and very little natural light. All meals are taken in the cells. Most prisoners have been placed under Special Administrative Measures (SAMs), which impose severe restrictions on communication with the outside world. Some prisoners have spent months or years in the unit, awaiting trial. Family visits are limited to one person every other week and cannot involve physical contact.

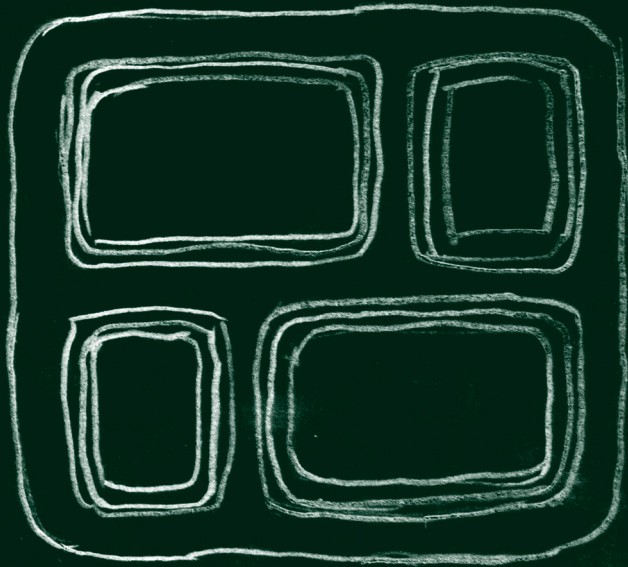
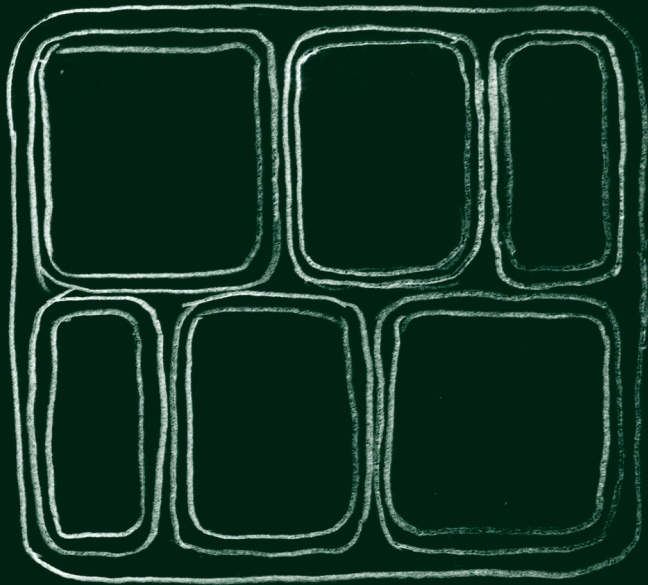
Her student, the terrorist. She speaks of silence. SAM does not only apply to the incarcerated. Any person permitted to visit a person under SAM is legally forbidden to talk about conversations they had with the incarcerated, to describe the meeting or pass messages to the outside. An incarcerated person under SAM is not allowed to have any contact with the media. An incarcerated person under SAM is not allowed to make phone calls. An incarcerated person under SAM is allowed a maximum of three pieces of paper per week to be used for letter writing. Letters sent to the incarcerated, after removal of sensitive information, are transferred to a transparency sheet and projected onto the grey walls of his cell.

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**EVERY MONDAY NIGHT,** they organize a protest. The guards allow their presence as long as they stay on the sidewalk. At night the area empties out, becomes desolate. They are a group of people chanting, singing to a building, to the person in the small booth on the opposite side of the street.







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**CORRECTIONAL TABLEWARE IS** not a big market, and there are only a few companies competing for the customers. Historically the prisons were using stainless steel utensils. After every meal, they had to count every utensil and if any piece was missing, the facility had to be locked down until it was found. The plastic flatware was difficult to use as a weapon.

There are many interesting materials. The insulated trays stack one on top of another. The tray is used to keep food hot or cold for up to one hour. The flatware slot separates the hot food from the cold. Some facilities wanted a narrow tray that would fit through the slot of a cell door.

The manufacturing process for the trays vary. Some companies use blow molding, which is similar to blowing a balloon. Others use injection molding where liquid plastic is poured into a mold and then cooled. A special machine is used to seamlessly weld the pieces together so the tray cannot be torn apart and altered.



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**I'M USED TO** living next door to her. A knock on the door, early in the morning. "Good morning, Cookie!" We'll be together all day. When they locked her up, a piece of me was gone. And today I feel like I get that piece back. Even though I've been going to see her, it's not the same.

She got her name changed in jail and everything. The two years she's been in there, she's done a lot. She's done a lot of things people out here haven't done yet. I was surprised that she did not let prison get her down. The first time I went to see her I was a butch queen. A boy. I had a moustache. When I got in, they had cut all her hair off, and she had a moustache. And we just looked at each other's facial hair. It was hard for me to go up there, so it took me a year to see her again. Then I was already into my transition. I was standing with my back to her and when I turned around she said: "Oh my God! You look so fab! I can't believe it. You just had facial hair and now you look like a complete woman."

This facility is horrible. The CO's are so rude and disrespectful. Not even because you being transgender, they're disrespectful to everybody. "Go to Goodwill and buy a shirt, you can't wear that shirt. I can see your undergarments. The shirt is too small. Go get a big baggy shirt. Your jeans are too tight."

I'm outside waiting for you like I said I would.

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**THE MOST DIFFICULT** thing about being incarcerated is being yourself. You have so many people who criticize you. “This is a man’s jail. You can’t do this. Walk this way, don’t walk this way.” They see corrections officers doing it, so the inmates follow along. You have to be strong. Never let a person see you sweat. Time and time again I have cried. It was the worst experience, me coming into the prison system. I was so used to having hair on, nails done, just being the female that I want to be. And I couldn’t do that where I was. I’ve always been me. That will never change, but the way I wanted to live, I couldn’t do it. For two years, it was very difficult.

I figured that, since I’m here, why don’t I do something useful for myself? If I weren’t there I wouldn’t have time to change my name, to take hormones. Maybe these years it could be different. I’m not going to be the first to start it in jail, but for young people like me, I could be the first. A lot of girls like me in prison, they don’t know how to go through the ropes. I did a lot of research. I wrote a lot of letters to different agencies, like the Sylvia Rivera Law Project and FACES, to give me feedback. How can I change me? What could I do better for me? I felt like changing my name would be a start.

The hormone situation, it was very... You had to have taken it in the street to be able to take it in prison. Before I got locked up in January 2010, I’d been working with the HEAT program where I started on low doses of hormone. That was a process too. The doctors were like “you have to do this, and this, and this.” I don’t care what I have to do. This is the treatment that I’m getting.

When people don’t know you, you have to let them get to know you. People are so judgmental; they go by what they see. I think I show people. I think me personally, and I’ve heard this plenty of times, I grab the system.



Sara Jordenö is a NYC based Swedish visual artist and documentary filmmaker. Using film, photography, drawing and experimental poetry, Jordenö aims to work through historical and contemporary narrations around issues of authorship, labor, real and imaginary queer spaces and the habitual acts of everyday life. While being a resident at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace program in 2010-2011 she started working on a series of works about urban life in New York City, titled "Time and Motion Studies". This in turn prompted her to enter collaborations with people in other fields than contemporary art. [www.jordeno.com](http://www.jordeno.com)

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