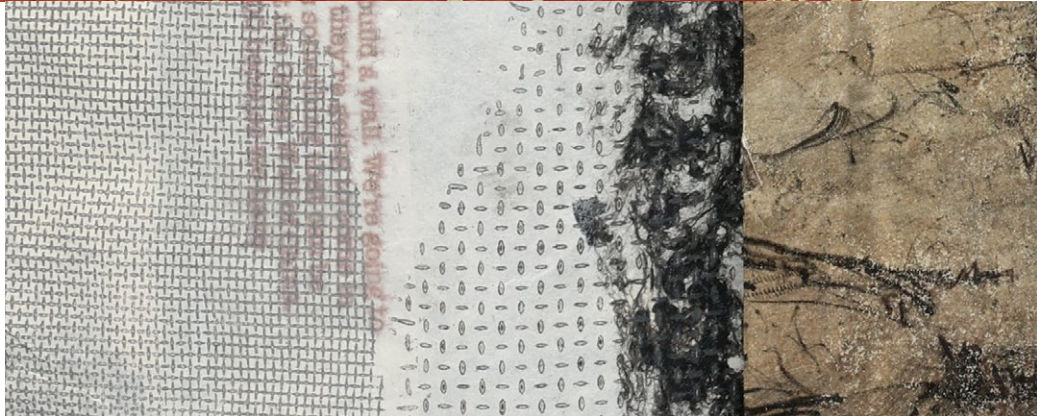
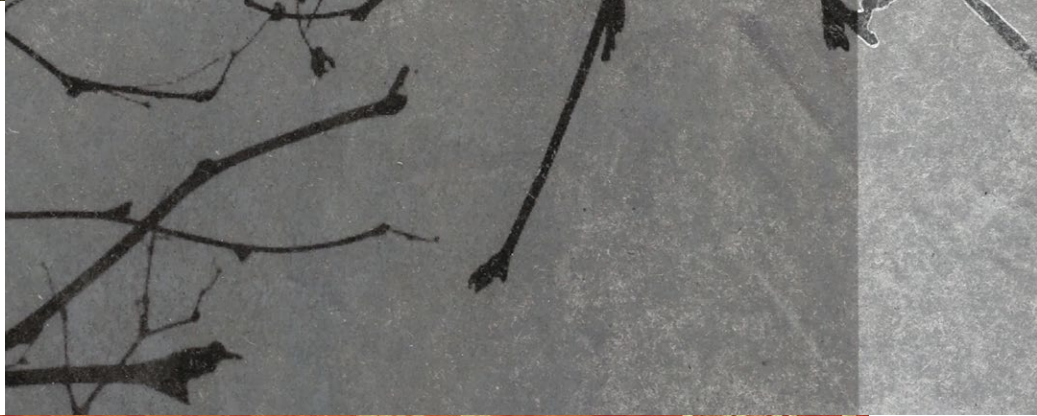
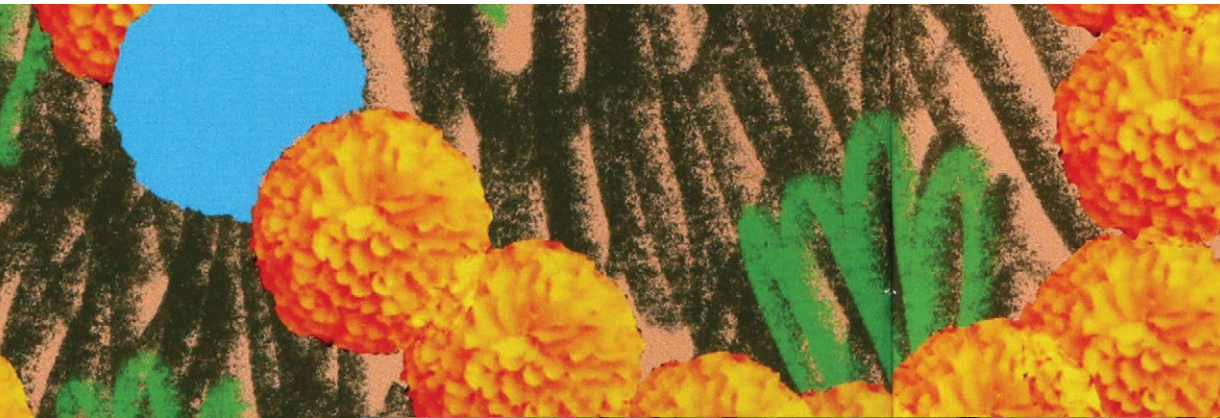




WHO IS AMERICA AT 250?

Artists' Books on the State of Democracy



WHO IS AMERICA AT 250?

Artists' Books on the State of Democracy

CURATED BY

Betty Bright, Mark Dimunation,
Maymanah Farhat, Yuka Petz, and Ruth Rogers

ESSAYS BY

Betty Bright, Mark Dimunation, Yuka Petz,
and Ruth Rogers

FOREWORD BY

Jennie Hinchcliff

San Francisco Center for the Book
San Francisco, California, 2025



This book is published by the
San Francisco Center for the Book
on the occasion of the exhibition
Who Is America at 250?
Artists' Books on the State of Democracy
at San Francisco Center for the Book,
January 17– March 8, 2026

Exhibition Curators: Betty Bright,
Mark Dimunation, Maymanah Farhat,
Yuka Petz, and Ruth Rogers

ATH
EN
AE
UM

Boston Athenaeum
March 30–May 16, 2026

MINNESOTA
CENTER FOR
BOOK ARTS

Minnesota Center for Book Arts
June 12–August 16, 2026

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in
part, including photographs, in any form (beyond the
copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the
U.S. Copyright Law and except for reviewers for the
public press), without written permission from San
Francisco Center for the Book.

Catalog and Exhibition Design:
Takayo Fredericks

Photography and Videography by:
Von Span

Set in Tangent

Printing and Binding:
Autumn Press, Berkeley, CA

Cover:
Tipping Point, Art Hazelwood

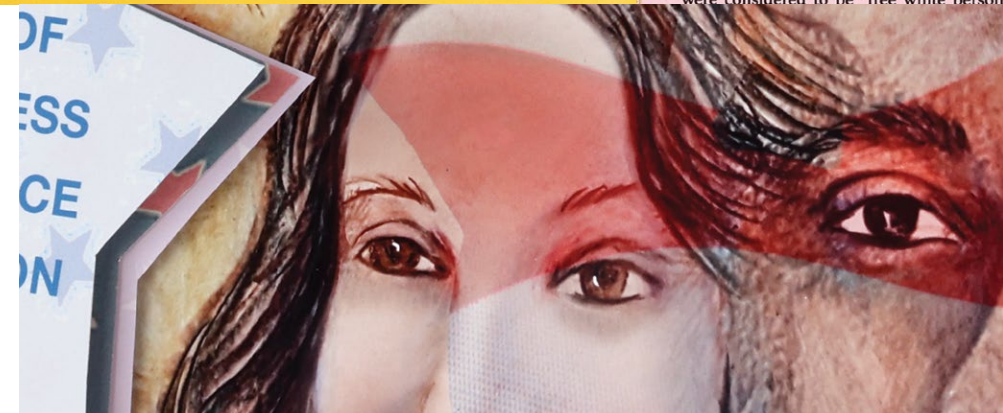
Frontispiece:
Top to bottom: *Flowers of Pakistan*, Sana Masud;
Blight, Gabby Cooksey; *Borderbus*, Felicia Rice;
Kakotopia, Robbin Ami Silverberg

Opposite:
Top to bottom:
She Feels Your Absence Deeply, Golnar Adili;
Calling All Denizens, Kimi Hanauer;
Our Social Skin: Independence Day, Robin Holder;
Riverine, Sara White

ISBN: 978-1-929646-27-2

©2025 by San Francisco Center for the Book
375 Rhode Island Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
www.sfcbook.org

A portion of the purchase price of this exhibition
catalog helps fund the operation of the
San Francisco Center for the Book, a 501(c)(3)
nonprofit organization.



WHO IS AMERICA AT 250?

Artists' Books on the State of Democracy



To view page-through video of each work, scan this QR code

Foreward

Jennie Hinchcliff

6

Hope in the Dark:

**Artists' Books on the
State of Democracy**

Betty Bright

8

**JUSTICE
EQUALITY
RIGHTS
RESISTANCE**

20

**BELONGING
MEMORY
COMPASSION
VOICE**

46

**TRUTH
AWARENESS
RESPONSIBILITY
QUESTIONING**

72

**HOPE
POSSIBILITY
TRANSFORMATION
VISION**

96

**"More than a Pride We
Inherit": Artists' Books
Giving Witness to the
American Experience**

Mark Dimunation

42

**Unknown,
Overlooked, Overdue**

Ruth R. Rogers

68

**Witness : Parse:
Interrogate : Embody :
Humanize : Liberate**

Yuka Petz

92

Artist index

116

Curator Bios

117

Acknowledgments and Thanks

118

Foreword

JENNIE HINCHCLIFF

As the Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs at the San Francisco Center for the Book, I have had the honor of working closely with Betty Bright and the curatorial team on *Who Is America at 250? Artists' Books on the State of Democracy*. I have also had the opportunity to work directly with many of the artists included in this exhibition—either through exhibiting their work, related public programs, or ongoing conversations that extend beyond the gallery. This project has been shaped through collaboration at every level, and this catalog reflects that shared process.

I first worked with Betty in 2020 on *Reclamation: Artists' Books on the Environment*, an exhibition that—like all exhibitions—was the result of years of planning, coordination, and care. Conceived well before its opening at SFCB in June 2021, *Reclamation* ultimately came into the world at a moment none of us could have anticipated: amid a global pandemic that forced communities, institutions, and individuals to reckon with vulnerability and responsibility. That experience underscored how exhibitions, though carefully planned, are inevitably shaped by the moment in which they are encountered.

In late 2022 (November, to be exact), Betty once again approached me with the idea for a new exhibition—one that would examine how book artists and printers are reflecting on the United States as it approached its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary. From the outset, *Who Is America at 250?* was envisioned as an expansive project: a collaboration that would hold many voices, resist a single narrative, and encourage viewers to question their own assumptions about what it means to be American.

The timing of this exhibition is significant and it isn't coincidental. The U.S. semiquincentennial invites commemoration, but also asks for reflection. In this moment, we are being called not only to look back

at our country's founding ideals, but to consider how those ideals are interpreted, challenged, and reshaped by the lived experiences of our country's communities and citizens. The artists included in *Who Is America at 250?* respond directly to this moment using the medium of the book—print, structure, text, and physicality—to explore not only our country's history, but also questions of identity, belonging, dissent, and hope.

Each work in the exhibition offers a distinct perspective of the artist who created it; taken together, these works remind us that the American experience is not singular. It is layered and deeply personal, often shaped by geography, memory, and circumstance. At the same time, *Who Is America at 250?* offers points of connection and a collective desire to understand where we have been and where we might go next.

As *Who Is America at 250?* travels to the Boston Athenaeum and on to the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, it functions as an invitation. The works ask viewers not only to look, but to reflect—to recognize differences, to sit with complexities, and to consider their own place within an ongoing national story. This catalog extends that invitation beyond the gallery. Through essays and documentation, it serves as an ambassador for the exhibition, preserving a snapshot of the hopes, contradictions, and questions that shape being American in this moment. Taken together, the works suggest that personal engagement remains central to how the American experiment continues to be examined and reimagined.

Jennie Hinchcliff

Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs,
San Francisco Center for the Book

Hope in the Dark: Artists' Books on the State of Democracy

BETTY BRIGHT

...American patriotism, at its best, [has] a uniquely critical and self-questioning character. America may be the only country where the question “what is it to be an American?” is a continual topic of discussion. To question America is not to be un-American, but part of being an American. What is American history but a series of debates over the meaning of our national identity? Such a dialogue is, to my knowledge, non-existent in any other country.

Steven B. Smith, *Reclaiming Patriotism in an Age of Extremes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2021), 67.

Who and what is America, as we mark our semiquincentennial? Steven Smith reminds us that there is no one America, and that questioning and debate are fundamental to the American character. More than ever, the identity of America is in flux and under pressure or outright attack. Rather than retreat, artists have created works that touch upon memory, place and ritual to carry us into reflection on the critical issues faced by America in a manner that provides depth and perspective, and hopefully prompts conversation and clarity.

MEMORY

You row forward looking back, and telling this history is part of helping people navigate toward the future. We need a litany, a rosary, a sutra, a mantra, a war chant of our victories. The past is set in daylight, and it can become a torch we can carry into the night that is the future.

Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (Chicago: Haymarket, 3rd edition, 2016), xxvi.

Memory and its chronicler, history, are increasingly under assault, obfuscated through distraction or denied altogether through compromised news sources. Four works consider America's identity as it is informed by memory and wider historical forces.

Sana Masud's *Flowers of Pakistan* marks her mother's passing and the resulting inheritance of a plot of land in Pakistan. The convergence of deep loss with the gain of property triggered Masud's introspection. She explores memories of her complicated relationship to a land and a heritage largely unknown to her, through the flowers of Pakistan. The book is digitally printed in vibrant colors, with photographs of the flowers accompanied by the artist's vibrant marks. In an image early in the book, Masud includes blue disks within her depiction of flower necklaces. Her rendering represents a childhood misunderstanding, hearing “pool” when her parents described a flowered necklace they would bring back from Hajj, the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Masud's depiction revisits that misunderstanding, and so marks both a treasured memory as well as the distance from her familial heritage.



Flowers of Pakistan
Sana Masud



She Feels Your Absence Deeply
Golnar Adili

Golnar Adili's *She Feels Your Absence Deeply* adapts a puzzle block format to capture memory's instability. Adili grew up in Tehran, where her family returned in 1979 after the revolution. However, her father fled Iran a few years later due to his activism, and Adili only reunited with him when she moved to the U.S. for college. After his death, Adili selected materials from her father's archive from that two-year period. The playful puzzle block format recalls a time when innocence and political threat converged for Adili. Twelve wooden blocks align into a grid to reveal recognizable images (such as her mother's black-and-white passport photo), but can also reassemble into visual fragments, like memories that lose clarity and disperse over time. The blocks are held within a travel-sized portfolio, ready for flight.

Andrea Shaker interrogates her heritage in *Performing Bayt; a series of wearable books in fragments (Mother Tongue)*. Shaker is an Arab American artist of an ongoing series of wearable books. The work examines the interstices of *bayt*, between her home space in America and her family's historical home village in Lebanon, where she visited in 2017. The Arabic word, *bayt*, references one's physical home, the people who make up one's sense of home, and migration, the movement of diaspora that shaped her family. Her palm-sized, circular accordion books are letterpress-printed with brief poems and fragments from her photographs, but reduced to pattern, like memories that remain just out of reach. Shaker gathers these intimate works into vintage film cases, pocket-sized and ready to be carried on the body, close at hand.

Alisa Banks invests *History of a People* with sensorial richness to create an embodied history that operates on multiple levels. In the work's deluxe edition, a crocheted crown shape is braided and embellished with cowrie shells and hair, its form based on African architecture and tribal crowns. A reader removes the crown (opens the book) to find a round wood base topped by a wood disk with six wells, each containing a glass vial (or chapter) that holds one of Banks's custom-formulated scents. Each scent responds to a period in African American history: Roots, Journey, Arrival, Harrow, Protest, and Visioning. Harrow, for example, calls to mind fieldwork, burning wood, iron and sugar, during the period of enslavement on plantations. Directed by scent, *History of a People* invites an expansive reading, as Banks's olfactory narrative transports a reader from the African diaspora to contemporary African American culture.

PLACE

We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands, but also for our relationship to the world. We need to restore honor to the way we live, so that when we walk through the world we don't have to avert our eyes with shame, so that we can hold our heads up high and receive the respectful acknowledgment of the rest of the earth's beings.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 195.

The more that environmental stressors disrupt and threaten the lives of Americans, the increasing importance is the role played by works that involve readers and discourage retreat from critical information and context.

Keri Miki-Lani Schroeder's *Consume*, for example, memorializes five bird species that were hunted to extinction for food, for feathers, or as a result of expanding agriculture. Inkjet and pochoir prints of her pen-and-ink drawings are presented in an accordion structure, each print in a frame, suggestive of a family's treasured photo album. Texts tell the story of each bird's threat and ultimate disappearance. Schroeder's tenderness in rendering the birds encourages readers to devote time and attention to recalling these lost species. The deluxe edition's clamshell box holds an original drawing, as well as, strikingly, a "gifted duck wing," evoking fascination for the miracle of flight, and represented by a familiar species — as once were, tellingly, some of the extinct species here, such as the passenger pigeon and the Carolina parakeet.

The substance of anthracite coal invests the content and material presence of Andrea Krupp's *Coal and Other 4-Letter Words*. Krupp applied layers of hand-brayer carbon black in acrylic medium and powdered graphite to produce a burnished black surface on the page. Krupp's "coalish" wordplay

appears in off-white boxes that float against the black. In one opening, six words appear in groups of two: Soot to Body, Pore to Dust, and Seep to Lung. The single words seem to emerge from darkness into the light to bear witness to the countless lives that labored underground.

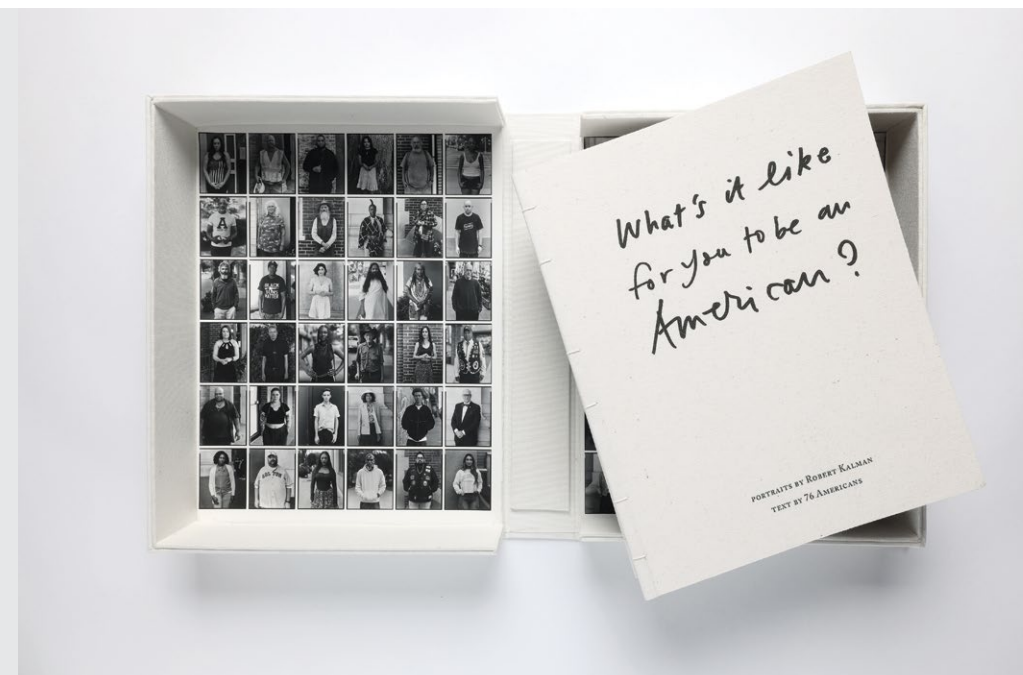
A river's unrelenting power over human-made barriers directs *Concrete Uncertainty*. Colleen Lawrence visited the Mississippi River Basin Model in Jackson, Mississippi, an abandoned outdoor scale model built by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1940s to prevent the Mississippi River from altering its course, which became evident in the early 1900s. She was struck by the concrete waterways and piles of steel mesh folded into accordions that mimicked the sediment when the river model was in use. Those structures led to erosion, thwarting the efforts of river control. The book's accordion emulates that structure, and incorporates shaped pages and flaps that suggest an undulating effect similar to shifting ground or a river's current. Lawrence created translucent papers from pigmented and unpigmented flax and abaca pulp, in colors conveying shifting earth, sand, and water. Her texts carry an explanation of the project and her poetry written in homage to the generations that have lived alongside the river.

Sara White's *Riverine* explores a different, responsive relationship to a river by the individuals who live in and with the "batture" along the margins of New Orleans. The batture encompasses the shifting environment located between a human-made levee and the Mississippi River. An accordion structure with fold-outs and sewn-in pamphlets captures the batture's lush environment of light-struck colors of the south, in the photographs and drawings of industrial and private structures, flora and fauna. Printed from photopolymer plates and linoleum on handmade cotton-abaca paper, texts discuss the batture and its residents, past and present, who live in a fluid relationship to ideas about ownership and control. Here, the river resets her boundaries as needed, in a place that defies the controls that characterize most human relationships to nature.



Riverine
Sara White

*What's it like for you
to be an American?*
Robert Kalman



IDENTITY

The first lesson history teaches us is that nothing is inevitable until it happens... We should acknowledge... that future generations would never forgive us if we gave up while there was still the possibility of change, no matter the odds. We must hear their voices in our dreams and heed them in our decisions.

Paul Rogat Loeb, ed. *The Impossible Will Take a Little While; Perseverance and Hope in Troubled Times* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 16.

An increasing number of Americans are confronting forces that diminish or deny fundamental American values. Robert Kalman struggled with confusion and despair after the January 6, 2021 insurrection in the U.S. Capital. A photographer, Kalman was compelled to launch what became a country-wide journey to ask those he encountered a single question: *What's it like for you to be an American?* The completed book holds 77 portraits from Kalman's 8 x 10-inch large-format camera. Each black-and-white portrait faces that person's handwritten response. Together, the stories and portraits create a chorus of American voices joined in their identification of America as a home for freedom, although they vary as to whether those freedoms are secure or not. For example, Alaa Farghli calmly faces the camera, a city street blurred behind him. He writes: "To live as an Arab-American is to live within externally imposed contradiction[s]. In a land of freedom and self-determination, my narrative is dictated by others. To be physically visible, yet rendered statistically invisible. To have two national identities, but creating a separate identity, that is, or is not, both Arab and American."

Shana Agid's *Forgeries* questions the imposed systems and mechanisms of authority that determine borders of all kinds, in three passport-sized booklets. Subtle imagery from pressure prints accompanies the texts along with see-through effects from page piercings. The booklet titled *Forge* references both forgery and the act of forging, and incorporates pressure prints within a visual vocabulary. The other two booklets, *Land / Water* and *Bodies* also carry Agid's letterpress-printed texts. A heightened, poetic narrative repeats, "I learned," while questioning expectations of belonging, ownership, and borders, including threats of violence depending on a subject's identity. For example, in *Bodies*: "I learned. Bodies exceed expectations. Bodies can become conditioned to cross, to hide, to become objects of transport and vessels in and of themselves."

Tia Blassingame's *Black: a Handbook*, from her *Handbook* series, operates on several levels. Blassingame's poetry addresses contemporary and historical Black experience along with the subtle patterns and washes of her paste papers. Unlike the lighter colors of paste papers that she employs in other *Handbooks*, the range of dark browns in *Black: a Handbook* references the skin tones of the African diaspora. Ten poems are digitally printed on folded, unbound sheets and housed within a lidded wooden box. Each of the folded sheets comprises a chapter, with clear and compelling poetry like a cry from the heart. For example, Blassingame's voice in the book's first chapter, titled *HUMAN*, begins, "I'm convinced I AM HUMAN. Nothing you can say or do will sway me or erode my conviction."

Tatana Kellner and Ann Kalmbach's *Whereas we Declare*, carries text from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) proposed to the United Nations by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1948, shortly after WWII's horrors of the German concentration camps. Kellner and Kalmbach establish the book's historical foundation by reproducing the UNDR preamble as annotated by Roosevelt on the book's inside covers (the full text, including a list of the countries that signed it, appears at the end of the book). Freely-drawn imagery accompanies statistics in varying typography and in two colors. Texts include excerpts from the UDHR; for example, "No one should be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile," which faces an image of a fist extended in front of two monolithic rectangles, suggesting lockdown.

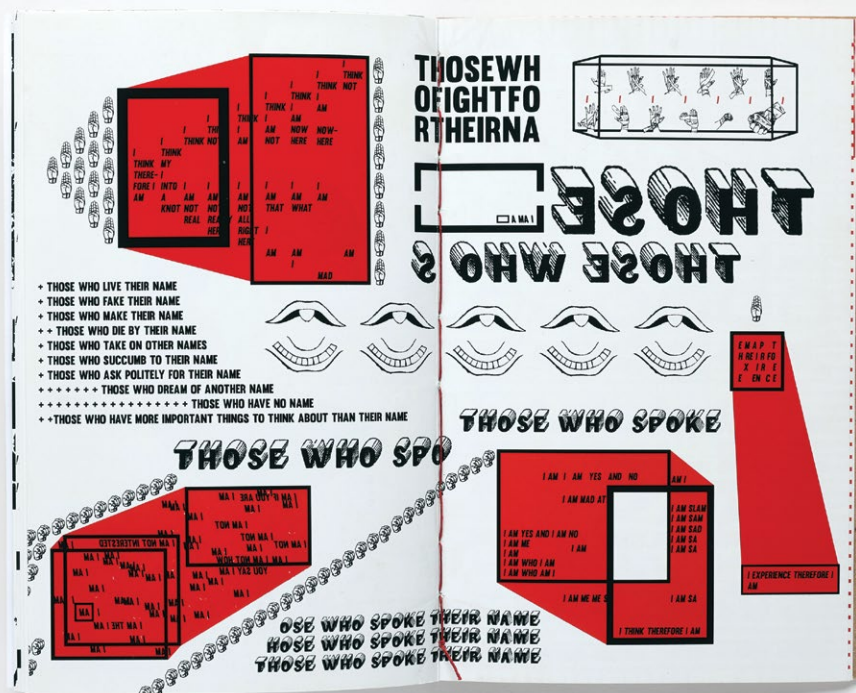
Art Hazelwood's *Tipping Point* also calls out the destructive forces undermining the tenets of democracy, along with the rising tide of belief systems that threaten democratic checks and balances. Many of the book's twenty-nine satirical screenprint images paint a dire portrait of the ills assailing America and the world, which include economic inequality, xenophobia, fascism, and environmental disaster. Figures of moneybag-headed capitalists wreak death and destruction in their path, their gigantic scale overwhelming those below who scatter for survival. As the title indicates, the tipping point has arrived. Ultimately, *Tipping Point* suggests a hopeful future if people act, as in an image titled, "Resistance from Below," in which demonstrators push back against armed forces, the statue of liberty canted at an angle behind them.

When closed, Beth Theilen's sculptural work, *The Tower Book*, resembles a guard tower such as in the San Quentin high security prison. When opened, the writings and imagery by her students (prisoners at San Quentin State Prison and the California Rehabilitation Center), place a human face on issues around incarceration and equity in what has been called the prison industrial complex. *The Tower Book* emerged from a collaboration between the art program at the prison and the now-disbanded Women's program at the Rehabilitation Center, in Norco, California. The work transforms from an observation tower to reading platforms as each of the structure's four sides opens out into a shelf that holds a booklet of student writings along with their linoleum prints. One opening pictures a man feeding pigeons; above him on a lintel panel a pigeon flies free of the barbed wire, while on another panel, staring eyes peer through a crack in a fence.

Robbin Ami Silverberg of Brooklyn, New York, and Kim Berman of Johannesburg, South Africa, produced *Walls of Kakotopia*, which depicts fences, walls, and barriers from Robben Island, Palestine, and the United States. Silverberg's embedded and pulp-painted Dobbin Mill papers incorporate heavily-worked surfaces. "Kakotopia" suggests a state in which the worst possible conditions exist in government and society. Silverberg and Berman's renderings of barbed wire and fencing, portrayed in drypoint, monopoint, and collage, repeatedly shift a viewer's perception from the layered patterns and textures, into a recognition of the book's disturbing content. Texts include definitions of walls, lists



The Tower Book
Beth Theilen



This Land Is My Land
Thad Higa

of government expenditures, texts about corruption, and quotations by President Donald Trump. Readers page forward and back to explore the varying visual relationships in the book's French-door structure with sewn-in pamphlets, while reflecting on the proliferation of walls and how they define and restrain movement of all kinds.

Thad Higa's, *This Land is My Land*, responds to the rising tide of racism, anti-immigration rhetoric and xenophobia, by, in effect, flipping the script. Higa mines the weaponized language of hate groups to divulge the relationships between American exceptionalism, white supremacy, and capitalism's manifestations as seen in shopping malls, graveyards, and land trusts. The book is materially and visually assertive, with an exposed coptic binding of raw book boards that holds six signatures of cheap papers, some of them torn or otherwise distressed. Numerous fold-outs and striking graphics in (primarily) red and black animate the reading experience and slow a reader's tempo, a strategy that supports the absorption of disturbing, even repulsive content.

Higa incorporates texts of fictionalized voices portraying a white nationalist perspective. For example, on one opening, FREEDOM dominates the opening, the single word reading vertically. A blue badge-like disc in the lower right proclaims: I WANT THE FREEDOM! Small red badges scatter across the bold type; at first glance they resemble bullet holes. On closer inspection they too carry texts that complete the sentence, such as, "to

make my own reality!" and, "to shut u the hell up." Photographic pages are layered with symbols that Higa found on the Anti-Defamation League's Hate Symbol Database. The tactile and visual richness of Higa's design encourages a forward progression through the book, educating and raising a reader's consciousness of a pervasive threat to democracy.

Ellos Quiénes Son? [Who Are They?] by Nabil Gonzalez, evokes the fear and grief of xenophobia with images of haunting beauty. Five folios carry Gonzalez's restrained monoprints, whose colors suggest the harsh desert landscape that migrants must endure on their trek to the border. Each folio represents a Texan border town that has seen an increase in illegal immigration traffic, and which Gonzalez names and indicates through its mapping coordinates – these places exist; these people are real. The folios act as sleeves that hold a print, with a round circle cut into each folio, with burned edges that generate unease.

For example, the Brownsville folio window frames a drawn and collaged scene of a silhouetted figure walking down a twisting path through foliage and rockface. Below is a quote from Gonzalez's conversations with migrants: "Lo mas importante es proteger a mi esposa y mi hija de 2 años." ("The most important thing is to protect my wife and my 2-year-old daughter.") The prints can be partly removed from their folios to uncover a second, hidden roundel, in which landscape details have dropped away. Here, three figures occupy a desolate zone defined solely by shadows. The figures are anonymous, but not as a means of dismissal. Gonzalez wants readers to recognize the countless lives passing through these five towns, to imagine each family's drive to escape from dangerous or intolerable living conditions. The hidden drawings, revealed by the reader, capture the immigrants' emotional suffering, with no way back, only forward, toward refuge.

The second work, in contrast, spills across an accordion-fold structure in a riot of vibrant color. *BORDERBUS* by Felicia Rice publishes a lengthy poem by former U.S. Poet Laureate, Juan Felipe Herrera. The poem takes place on a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bus, in which two women, detained while trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, are being transported to a detention center. The women speak in Spanish and English, and convey the terror facing those desperate to enter America. Rice creates a layered visual landscape in *BORDERBUS*. For example, on an opening dominated by greens, a photograph of a fenced enclosure pictures individuals peering out, suggestive of a detention center. It is barely discernible, printed in deep green. A repeating fingerprint motif in an exploded scale overlays the photo in a slightly lighter green. Over that, line drawings of the women's portraits face one another. Poetry in small type and in silver ink runs from the left page across the gutter and to the right, dipping down to end in large type that calls out, "a dónde vamos," and in smaller type below: "where are we going."

RITUAL

That, I think, is the power of ceremony. It marries the mundane to the sacred. The water turns to wine; the coffee to a prayer.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 37.

Two artists claim a spiritual identity that reflects and empowers their individual heritage and circumstances. Both artists' works engage ritual while also speaking against the forces of discrimination and American colonialism. Their books offer a point of entry of spiritual practice and ritual, inviting a reader to consider a point of view in a reflective state.

For example, Jocmarys Feliciano invests her book, *Canalización Ancestral de Borikén, Areyto de liberación* with a voice for her island home. *Borikén* is the Aboriginal name for Puerto Rico. The title in English reads: "Ancestral Channeling, Areyto of Liberation". Areytos are ceremonies or rituals held for different reasons by the Taino people, the Indigenous people of the Caribbean. Feliciano printed the book's text in Spanish with photopolymer plates, along with images from her stencil that was initially used as a watermark, and inspired by the connectivity that occurs when fibers coalesce into paper. The evocative image appears alone, or repeated in different inkings and placements on a page, while the disclaimer calls out (in English translation): "I am the result of imposed Christianity / where God is outside of me / I had culture before / I was an extension of what you call God / now I live in fear / my power has been silenced by your false superiority...."



*Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted*
Gino Romero

After protest, grief moves toward hope. Halfway through the book, the reader encounters gauze paper that Feliciano painstakingly created in three layers. It inhabits the center spread, as a pause for healing and renewal. The gauze pattern is also pressure-printed on the book's endsheets, like a therapeutic embrace of the Areyto ritual. Beyond the trauma of historical atrocities and the imposition of a Christian and Eurocentric frame, Feliciano reclaims agency: "...my speech is poetic / it's true to my connection with nature / it inhales as I think / it exhales as I speak."

Gino Romero's *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (an altar)*, (2024), shapes a personal religious practice from their living archive. Romero's altar is informed by historical ephemera and Queer, Trans, and Latinx experience, along with reflection and research into memory, nostalgia, and mourning, as informed by their Venezuelan heritage. Rituals serve as archives in which material culture fuses with a petitioner's prayers or declamations; here, rituals also support a means to call out injustices in Venezuela's ongoing humanitarian crisis, the effects of colonialism, and anti-Queer discrimination. Romero's altar is housed within a lavender box, which includes a rolled scroll: "My First Will and Testament (hopefully not my last)." In it, Romero details wishes for their death rites (often ignored in the Queer and Trans communities) with a note that the impetus for making a will at a young age is due to the fact that life expectancy for a Trans person of color is 35.

Also included is a folded bookwork in flower form, *I Couldn't Afford Flowers so I Made These Instead II*, a palm-sized (5 x 5-inch) paper-folded flower with a votive candle in its center. Associations with origami invite handling — removing each of the upper circle of petals (pages) reveals Romero's handwritten texts. The flower consists of bolivares, the Venezuelan currency whose hyperinflation has led to political instability, shortages of essential goods, and widespread poverty. Unable to return home for the funerals of his aunt and uncle because of the ongoing crisis, one text reads: "I couldn't bear the thought of not at least leaving flowers." The material of paper subtly references a lack of permanency, and a custom in which burning writing acts as a means of communicating with one's ancestors.

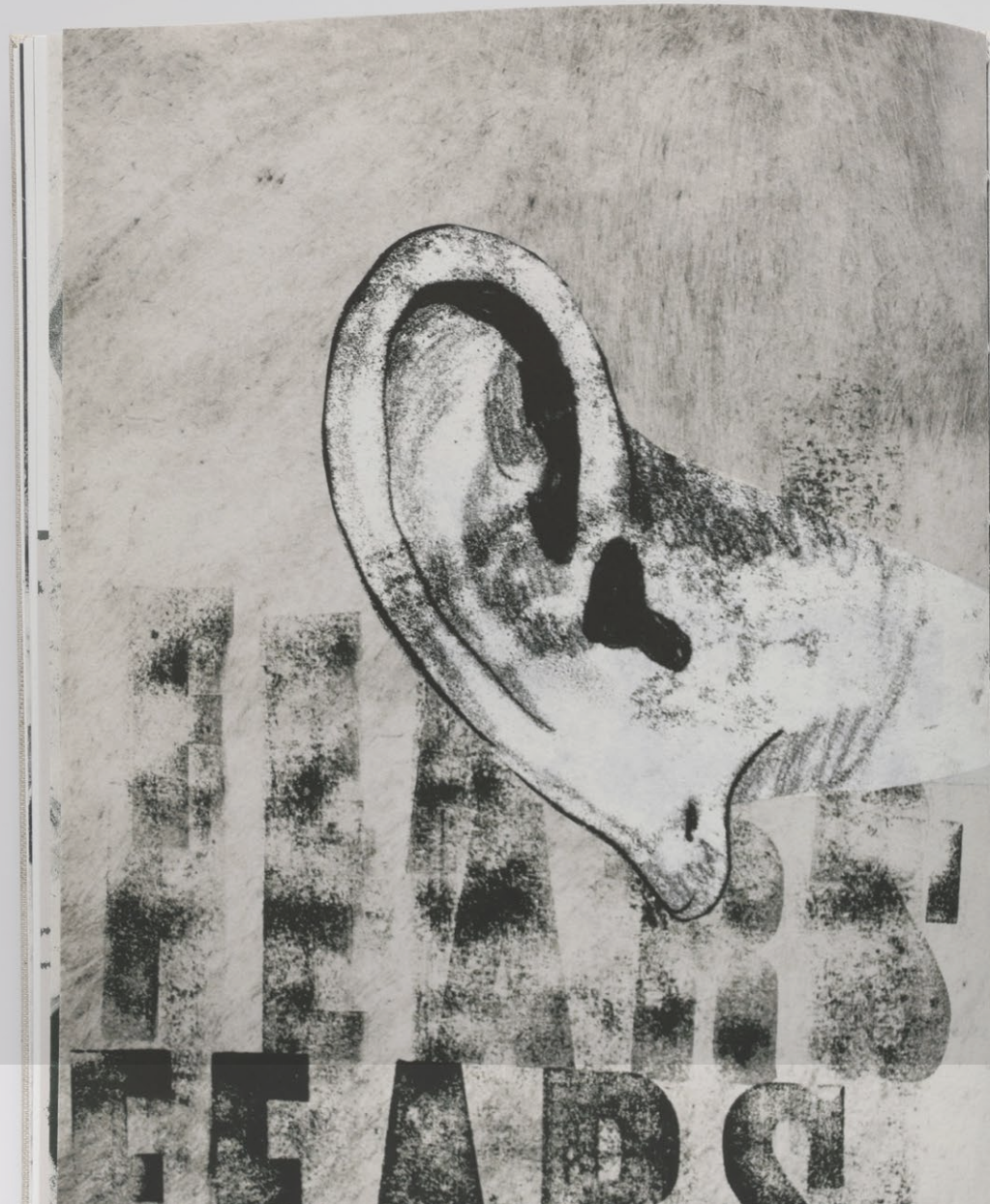
FINDING LIGHT (nothing is inevitable until it happens)

Hope is a fluid and fragile entity; like water running downhill, it can easily be diverted to disperse into a hundred streams that dissipate into the ground. In this manner, an increasing number of Americans are defending their values by speaking out against disinformation and fear-mongering.

Who is America at 250?: Artists' Books on the State of Democracy offers a means to resist despair and instead listen to this community of voices, to declare what is true, and to walk forward together through dark times. The strength of these artists' books is that they take us out of distraction and into a slower, focused pace, to reflect, perhaps rethink, and hopefully restore our faith that the future is long, our efforts matter, and true American values will endure.

JUSTICE EQUALITY RIGHTS RESISTANCE

The works in this group expose the frictions embedded in American democracy: who is granted visibility, whose language dominates, and which narratives persist. Through interrogation, testimony, and visual disruption, these artists harness the book form to confront power—both its bureaucratic machinery and emotional cost.



EVERYONE HAS
THE RIGHT TO
LIFE, LIBERTY
AND SECURITY
OF PERSON.

Forgeries (2024)

Shana Agid / Rind Press

Edition size: Variable, on request and as needed. Each set of three books is unique.
Dimensions: 4.75 in. x 3.75 in. x .5 in (banded together); individual volumes: 4.75 in. x 3.75 in.

Materials and structure: Three hole pamphlet stitch with fold outs; Letterpress, relief print, mixed media.

The books "Bodies" and "Land / Water" are made with pressure prints and letterpress text. "Forge" incorporates the paper plates originally used for the images in "Bodies" and "Land / Water," combined with letterpress text. The books are similar in size to a standard passport.

Loan courtesy of the artist

Forgeries is a set of three small passport-like books that questions the production of authority to mark bodies, land, and papers as "real." The books consider how what we learn and unlearn shapes what we know. *Bodies* and *Land / Water*, made with letterpress printed text and pressure prints, explore the construction and effects of borders and resistance to them. The third book in the set, *Forge*, is made of the plates used for the pressure prints, representing acts of forging and of forgery, referencing the materiality of things from and through which the violence of borders is made, evaded, and pulled apart.

— SA



275 Holidays (2017)

Ben Blount

Additional artists: Aaron Kohl: Custom made box; Swift Impressions: Printing

Dimensions: 7 in. x 7.5 in. x 5 in. (box);
6 in. x 6 in. x 4.5 in. (text block)

Materials and structure: 368 leaves
housed in custom made wooden box

Loan courtesy of the artist



This work is inspired by a comment a white female coworker made several years ago on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: “If we had a day off every time a Black man got shot we would never go to work.”

This 2017 calendar presents each day a Black man was murdered in Chicago in 2016 as a holiday. Each day of the calendar lists the names of the Black men that were murdered in Chicago on that day in 2016. The 535 Black men are 72% of the total number of people murdered in Chicago in 2016. The most Black men killed on one single day is seven on August 8, 2016.

— BB

Report US: Volume 1 & Volume 4 (2015)

Eileen Boxer

Additional artists: Lee Marchalonis: Bookbinding; Robbin Ami Silverberg: Endpapers; Data coding: Julia Geist

Edition size: Unique
Dimensions: Volume 1: 11 in. x 8.25 in. x 4 in. (closed);
11 in. x 16.5 in. x 4 in (open);
Volume 4: 11 in. x 8.25 in. x 5 in. (closed); 11 in. x 16.5 in. x 5 in (open)

Materials and structure: Laser print on Hiromi Asuka paper, hand bound and sewn. Blood (cow) and wheat-paste painted on cloth on board, waxed fixed. Endpapers handmade by Robbin Silverberg with Kremer Irgazine Ruby pigment unfixed with denatured alcohol. Hand-tied head and tail bands.

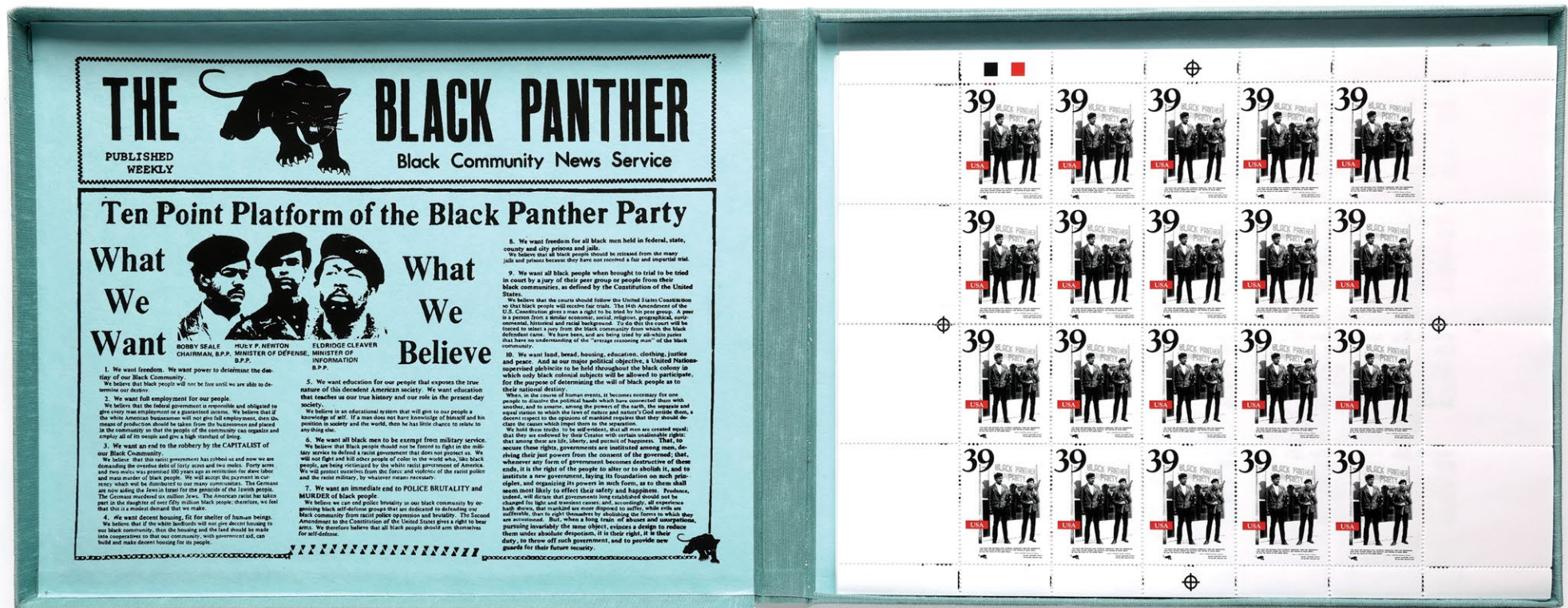
Loan courtesy of the artist



The scale of gun violence in America today is shrouded by irregular reporting and dispersed data. Struck by the quotidian ubiquity of newsworthy events that involved guns, and the vivid poetry of factual accounts, I set out to compile and edit every retrievable report with 2015 data, and assemble them into a book form to create a tangible volume of record...*Report U.S.* is not about politics. This project is about people, families, communities— it's about the fabric of our society.

— EB





The Black Panther Party Stamp Book (2021)

Kyle Goen

Edition size: 100
Dimensions: 9.5 in. x 11.75 in. x .875 in.
(clamshell box); individual stamp sheets:
8.5 in. x 11 in.

Materials and structure: Portfolio of 25 different artist stamp sheets, printed on dry gum adhesive paper with pinhole perforation. Housed in a clamshell box screen printed with the Black Panther Party logo. Interior of the clamshell box is screen printed with imagery from The Black Panther, a weekly newspaper published by the Black Panther Party.

Loan courtesy of Wellesley College, Special Collections (Wellesley, MA.)



Inspired by Public Enemy's "Fight the Power," Kyle Goen's *Black Panther Party Stamp Book* is a portfolio of artist stamp sheets highlighting key figures in the Black Panther Party. Goen's use of the postage stamp format as both a commemorative tool and a subversive methodology aligns with his broader studio practice and activist work. In a world where postage stamps are often dismissed as quaint visual ephemera, *Black Panther Party Stamp Book* compels viewers to pause, reflect, and reconsider.

—JH, SFCB



Ellos ¿Quiénes Son? highlights five of the largest border cities and ports of entry along the Texas–Mexico border. In recent years, these cities have experienced a rise in immigration and increased Border Patrol presence. The book uses a color palette inspired by the desert landscape to evoke the harsh conditions migrants endure on their journey toward a better life. Each of the five drawings includes a quote that captures a brief glimpse of this difficult passage.

—NG

Ellos Quienes Son? (2023)

Nabil Gonzalez

Edition size: Unique
Dimensions: 16 in. x 25 in. x 1 in.
(closed); 16 in. x 50 in. x 1 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Side sewn binding with interior “pocket” pages. Each interior page holds a single original drawing with Xerox transfer text; Techniques used include monotype, charcoal, and Xerox transfer on Stonehenge paper.

Loan courtesy of Special Collections,
University of Arizona Libraries,
Seligman Fund



Whereas, We Declare (2018)

Ann Kalmbach & Tatana Kellner / KaKeART

Edition size: 40

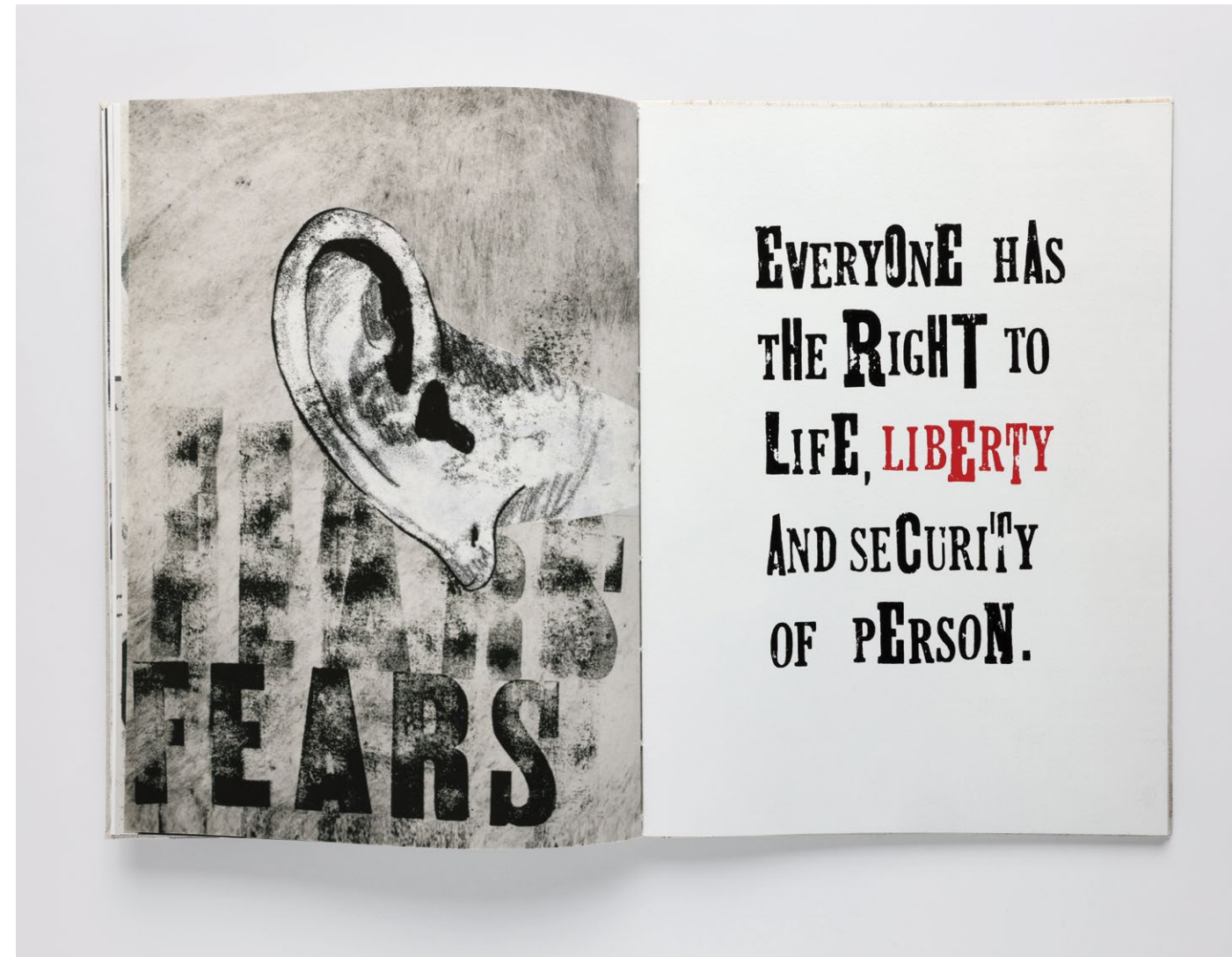
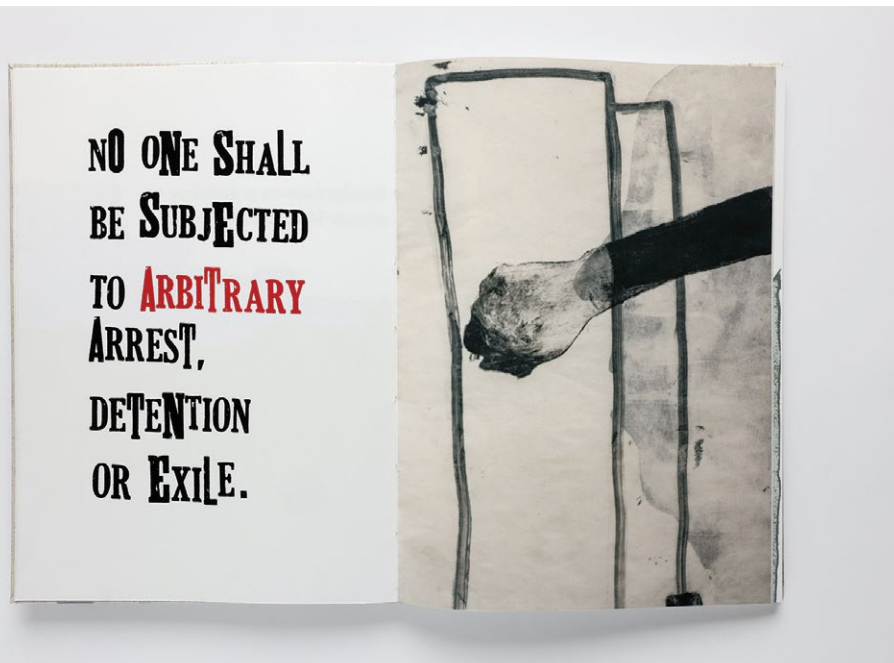
Dimensions: 13 in. x 9 in. x .5 in. (closed);

13 in. x 18 in. x .5 (open)

Materials and structure: Coptic bound in hard covers;
Silkscreen and digitally printed on Somerset Book (paper)

Loan courtesy of the artists

Whereas, We Declare compiles the text from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), proposed to the United Nations by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1948, with drawn images and statistical information about immigration. These texts celebrate accepting immigrants to the USA as historically essential to defining the nation, both by enriching the cultural horizons and contributing significantly to science, industry, and the humanities. Themes of imposed boundaries and borders run throughout the book's imagery; the inside covers are the UDHR preamble annotated by Roosevelt. —AK and TK



BORDERBUS is a rendering of one long poem by Juan Felipe Herrera. The poem takes place on a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bus. Two women have been detained while trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, and are being transported to a detention center. They speak in English and Spanish, whispering to avoid the attention of the guard. The text is embedded in prints by the artist/publisher and interpreted in audio recordings of the poem. — FR



BORDERBUS (2018)

Felicia Rice / Moving Parts Press

Additional collaborators: Poem written by Juan Felipe Herrera;
Introduction written by Carmen Giménez Smith

Edition size: 34 standard copies, 8 deluxe copies
Dimensions: 8 in. x 13 in.; when open: the work extends to 204 inches

Materials and structure: Letterpress and relief printing, Accordion
book structure; the work houses a USB drive, which contains two audio
versions of the poem, "Borderbus."

Loan courtesy of the artist

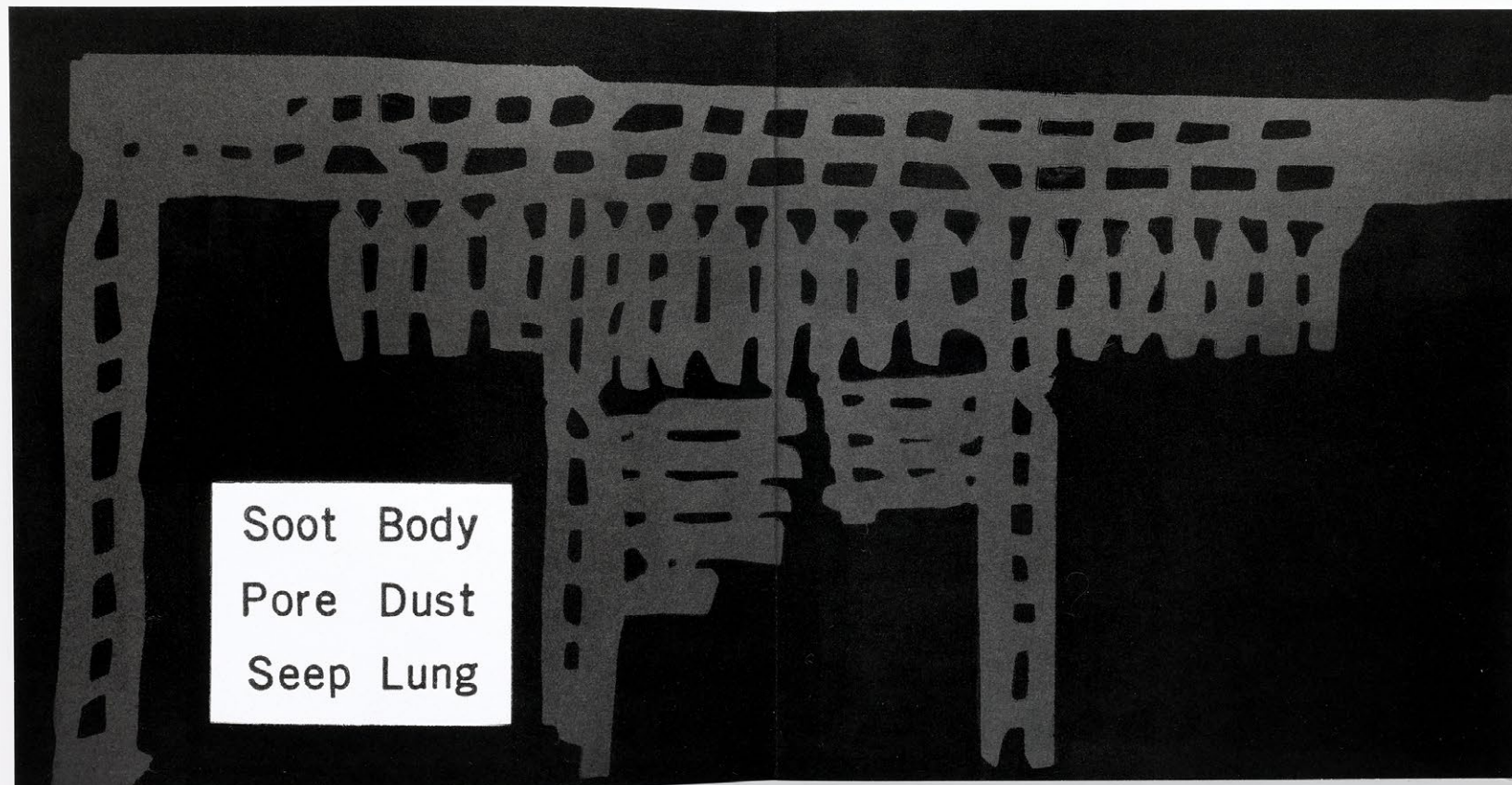
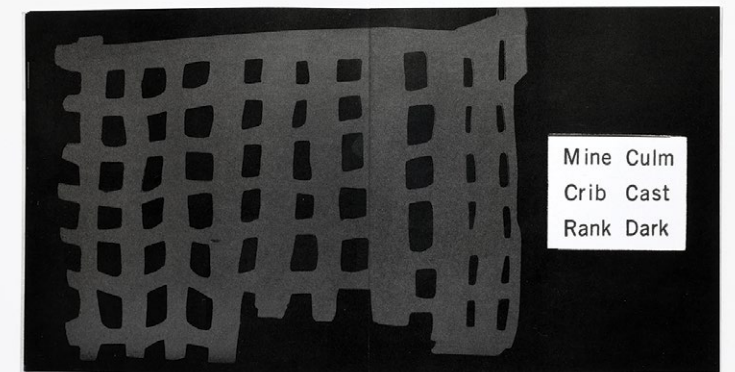
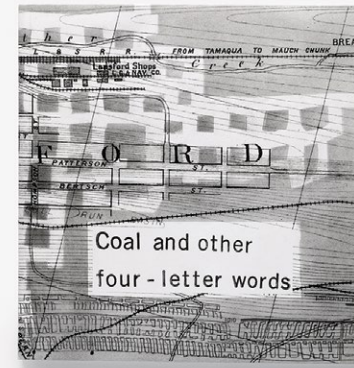
Coal and Other Four Letter Words (2019)

Andrea Krupp

Edition size: 10
Dimensions: 6.5 in. x 6.5 in. (closed); 6.5 in. x 13 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Drum leaf binding, limp paper case;
Stencils with graphite, soot, acrylic medium. Text is rubber
stamped and laser printed.

Loan courtesy of the artist



Coal and humans move through vastly different scales of time, through cycles of generation and disintegration that intersect, miraculously, in the here-and-now. Thinking through coal, and all of Earth's materials, helps us re-calibrate our own sense of belonging within the vast, miraculous planetary system of which we are a part, and on which everything depends.

— AK

Walls of Kakotopia (2019)

Robbin Ami Silverberg / Dobbin Books

Additional artist: Kim Berman

Edition size: Variable edition of 8

Dimensions: 14.5 in. x 11.25 in. 1.25 in. (metal slipcase);
14.5 in. x 11 in. x 1.25 in. (closed); 14.5 in. x 22 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Triple pamphlet French Door structure housed in an etched metal slipcase; Drypoint, monoprint, collage & drawing on embedded & pulp-painted Dobbin Mill papers. Texts by the artists & from online dictionaries

Loan courtesy of Wellesley College, Special Collections (Wellesley, MA.)



'Kakotopia' is a state in which the worst possible conditions exist in government and society. This book is an exploration of the severe shortcomings of our governments (the United States & South Africa) through our combined artistic styles in print and paper, re-interpreting present-day visual landscapes of fences, walls, barriers of all sorts. The book contains definitions of the meaning of 'wall', lists of government expenditures, embedded texts about corruption, and quotes from Donald Trump. The triple pamphlet French-door structure allows for a myriad of presentations and enhances this non-linear exploration of our corrupt states.

— RAS

(January 6, 2021) (2022)

Tyler Starr / Wobble Press

Additional artist: Britt Stadig Studio -
Bookbinding, foil stamping, and custom
enclosure

Edition size: 20, with 5 artist proof copies
Dimensions:
10.25 in. x 12.75 in. x 2.25 in. (clamshell box);
9.25 in. x 12 in. x .875 in. (book, closed),
9.25 in. x 24 in. x .875 in. (book, open)

Materials and structure: Hardcover case binding housed in clamshell box with tunnel component and additional foil stamping; Pigment prints on Moab Entrada Rag Bright 190 gm coated with Moab Desert Spray. Archival painting of page edges.

Loan courtesy of the artist



Flags, Placards, and Illicit Climbers of the Capitol Insurrection (January 6, 2021) is based on hours of scouring January 6th footage for images of rioters scaling walls to flank security on the Capitol Grounds. For context, a survey of the flags and placards carried by participants shed light on their affiliations and ideologies, including those aligned with far-right extremist movements and conspiratorial views of the election. A critical contribution to this project comes from the open-source intelligence community, who organized extensive amounts of January 6th footage on websites to assist the FBI with crowdsourcing the identification of perpetrators. This project acknowledges the importance of archival work and the power of open-source intelligence to uncover facts.

— TS



“More than a Pride We Inherit”: Artists’ Books Giving Witness to the American Experience

MARK DIMUNATION

A persistent theme in the American experience is the ongoing reassessment of the democratic impulse, a consistent questioning of the promise of American democracy. Whether this consideration be a quiet reflection or a strong opposition, the vital nature of the American democratic experience is that it is constantly pondered and safeguarded. As the nation approaches a significant anniversary of its founding, such expression becomes a requisite part of the celebration. People seek to weigh their own experiences and to ponder issues that seem to fly in the face of the American promise. For some, artists’ books have become the vehicle to amplify these concerns. Form and content can conspire to register an experience at a visceral level. Through typography, illustration, material, or format, artists can bring their concerns forward in a discernible fashion. Some turn to the direct and immediate visual impact of their work to impart their message. Others rely on text and presentation. Still others incorporate their message into a more universal narrative and visual approach. As the items in this exhibition indicate, the artist’s book has become a direct and meaningful conduit for various ruminations on the meaning of American democracy.



In his *Three Constitutions*, book artist, typographer, and author Russell Maret addresses this issue directly with his take on the reception of the American Constitution. Responding to the increasing social and political conflict surrounding him, Maret sought to test the mettle of those zealots whose very behavior seemed to contradict the constitution that they claimed to guard so righteously. Political behavior had reached a pitch that belied the sense that people had actually read the constitution. In response, Maret produced three versions of the document. The largest presents the full text of the Constitution and its amendments set in a challenging typeface that though difficult to read, is ultimately legible. It is put forward as the monumental text, unadorned but demanding to be read attentively. The other two versions reflect the prevalent selective reading to which the document is often subjected. In one volume, the text is heavily redacted such that its meaning is altered, obscured, or entirely obliterated. In the remaining volume, the text is sent through a translation program—from English to Esperanto to Russian to Chinese and back to English. The revised text strays from its original meaning and joins the other two volumes in representing to Maret the “cynical, ineffectual state of political discourse in America.”

Artists Ben Blount and Eileen Boxer employ strong graphic devices to make their messages heard. Blount, a Detroit-born artist, designer and letterpress printer, places great faith in the power of the printed word. His bold, typographic works often vividly and directly address race and identity in America. His *275 Holidays* was prompted by a complaint overheard by a friend about Martin Luther King Day: “If we had a day off every time a black man got shot, we would never go to work.” Rather than incorporate his response into a larger diatribe about racism, Blount flipped his perspective and instead used the moment to underline the humanity and loss experienced with each victim of gun violence. Research produced a list of every black man murdered in Chicago in 2016. From this emerged a 2017 calendar commemorating as holidays the death of all 275 of these victims. Large single-day pages of the familiar desk calendar are boldly printed in red, listing the names of those men who died that day. The boxed pages include a title page broadcasting the original comment about Martin Luther King Day. Accompanying this is a broadside wall calendar for the year, highlighting the numerous holidays on the grid and featuring an entire listing of the names memorialized. It is a profound and visually arresting example that demonstrates the power of content and format in the making of an artist’s book.

In a similarly direct and dramatic manner, Eileen Boxer documents in material fashion the “unbridled epidemic” of gun violence in America. She compiled the daily individual reports of incidents and assembled them “into a tangible and visually evocative account of this shameful history.” She did so in the most direct and striking fashion, producing two versions of her *Report US*. The first is a boxed set of 31 plain white volumes, each representing one day in the month of January 2015. Each page reports a single incident of gun violence. The text is presented without editorial

or poetics – just straightforward reportage. The size of the volume is dictated by the number of incidents for that day. All total, there were 3,136 incidents of gun violence in the month of January 2015. The second and larger, version of *Report US* represents each week with a massive volume. The bindings are wrapped with cloth dyed in cow's blood. The bright red endpapers are treated with an unfixed pigment that transfers to the reader's fingertips when touched. Each time the volumes are read, the pages become further sullied by red fingerprints, "mirroring the theme of bleeding and the exponential nature of this violence." Both versions of the work require that the reader hold and reveal the individual moments of violence. We are more than just viewers, for the nature of the problem is in our hands.

Maria Pisano has long been a strong and consistent voice in the fight for social justice. In *Via Dolorosa: from Sea to Shining Sea* she lays out directly the path of suffering experienced by immigrant families, especially their children. Highlighting the persistent push to build a wall, Pisano decries the impact this has on immigrant families. The book itself unfolds into a wall; the herringbone accordion construction opens out to a long panel, with one side depicting the border along the Rio Grande, populated with symbolic migrants and asylum seekers. The reverse side presents a wall of panels, the first emblazoned with Emma Lazarus' welcoming embrace of those seeking safe harbor. Pisano juxtaposes this to the plight of "deleted families," chronicling the devastating conditions and harsh realities faced by children who are separated from family and country, their struggles plastered on the book's figurative wall that divides them.



Via Dolorosa: From Sea to Shining Sea
Maria Pisano / Memory Press

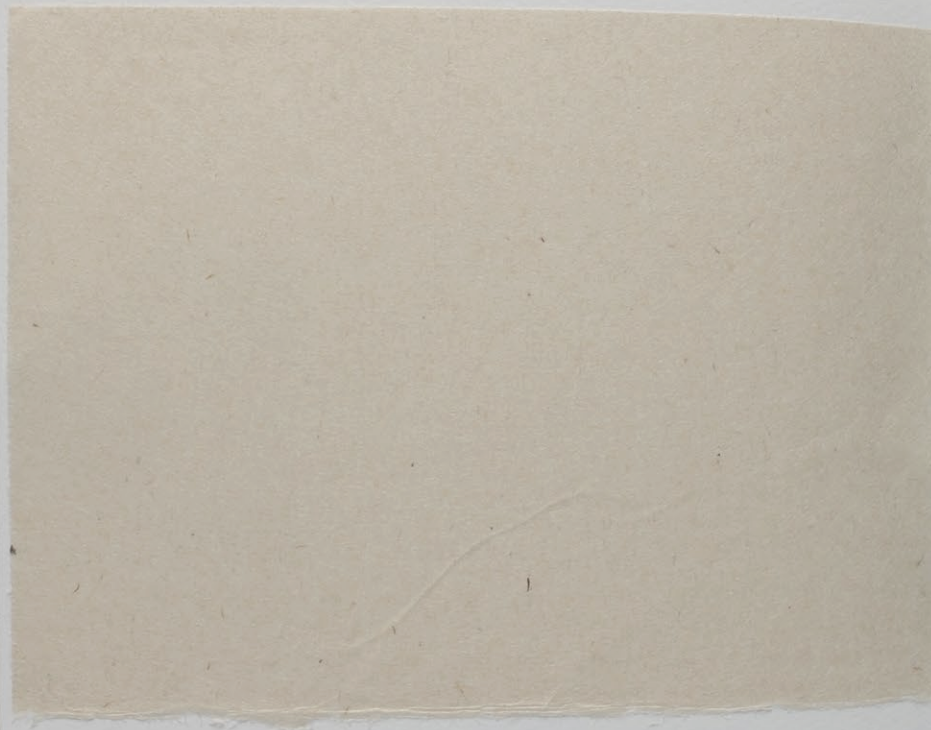
Beldan Sezen's work addresses the issues of poverty, disability, war, social justice, and community in America. She reads these issues through the intimate lens of her own experience as a recent resident of this country, speaking to the values that are the very foundation of American democratic society. "My main intention," Sezen notes, "is to share what I observe and to offer questions and hopefully conversation, inspiration to think." It is fitting, then, that in *Home of the Brave* Sezen approaches the perceived disparity in experiencing the American dream as a conversation between two voices, the WE voice in black capital letters and the individual voice in red. Seeing "whiteness" as an addiction, Sezen envisioned an intervention and pondered America entering a rehab. A conversation emerged, with one voice embracing the language of AA, admitting a moral responsibility and offering amends. At the side runs the commentary of the individual. The point of this, Sezen warns, is not to point fingers and lay blame, but rather to "talk openly about complicities and heartbreak for a false dream." "It takes bravery to face and admit one's addiction and helplessness. *Home of the Brave* asks us the people for just that."

Robin Holder, a New York-based artist, often turns to the visual to expose the failure of American democracy. In *Our Social Skin*, Holder uses the metaphor of clothing—outfits or costumes—to mask the reality of experience of certain social issues. The piece is a series of ten books, shaped as familiar items of clothing, each dressing up a particular federal holiday. The conflicts within are only exposed once the object is opened or unfurled. A military vest representing Memorial Day pops open to reveal portraits of those who have suffered unfairly by US military aggression. An Independence Day t-shirt exposes the hypocrisy of the celebration. Next to a flag-festooned torch of liberty is a multi-racial crowd of Americans. At the corner is an emblem reading: "So are you against immigration?" Each piece of clothing issues Holder's indictment of the American democratic experience and the idea that it is shared freely and equally.

The effort to combine social awareness with a sense of urgency and compassion drives many of these artists. An extraordinary record of the experience of the Covid pandemic, *American Crow – Report from the Quarantine*, was created by Gaylord Schanilec. In the midst of his pandemic quarantine in rural Wisconsin, Schanilec created a spontaneous poem-like record of Covid related events. What emerged was more than a journal of the quarantine. It became a reconsideration of the promise of America. "Tossed by the relentless jolts of the news cycle, what began as a simple rumination on death evolved into a volume of illustrated concept journalism." Schanilec tracked the ongoing world-wide death toll over time, the tally interrupting his take on the American approach to the dilemma. Images of the crow family of birds – Corvid – propelled a poem which addresses the killing of George Floyd and the exposure of American racism. Ruminating on the constitution and the demise of the American spirit, Schanilec closes with Amanda Gorman's inauguration poem. "Being American is more than a pride we inherit, it's the past we step into and how we repair it." The effect is fleeting, delicate, and transparent. One moves through the piece cautiously and deliberately, making this, along with the other works exhibited here, a memorable meditation on the challenge to the American democratic impulse.

BELONGING MEMORY COMPASSION VOICE

To belong is to be remembered, to feel seen. This group of works turn inward—toward memory, care, and contradiction—asking questions that resist fixed answers. The book becomes a vessel for recording what might otherwise be erased: the rhythmic quiet of quarantine, ancestral grief, bodily trauma, celebrations tinged with inequity.



98

She Feels Your Absence Deeply (2021)

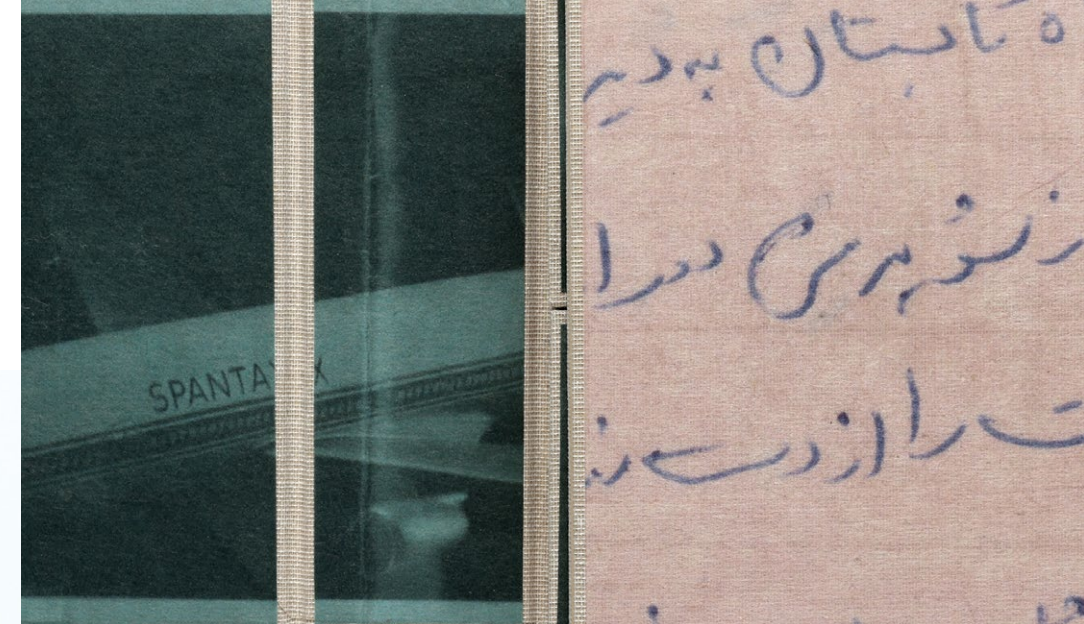
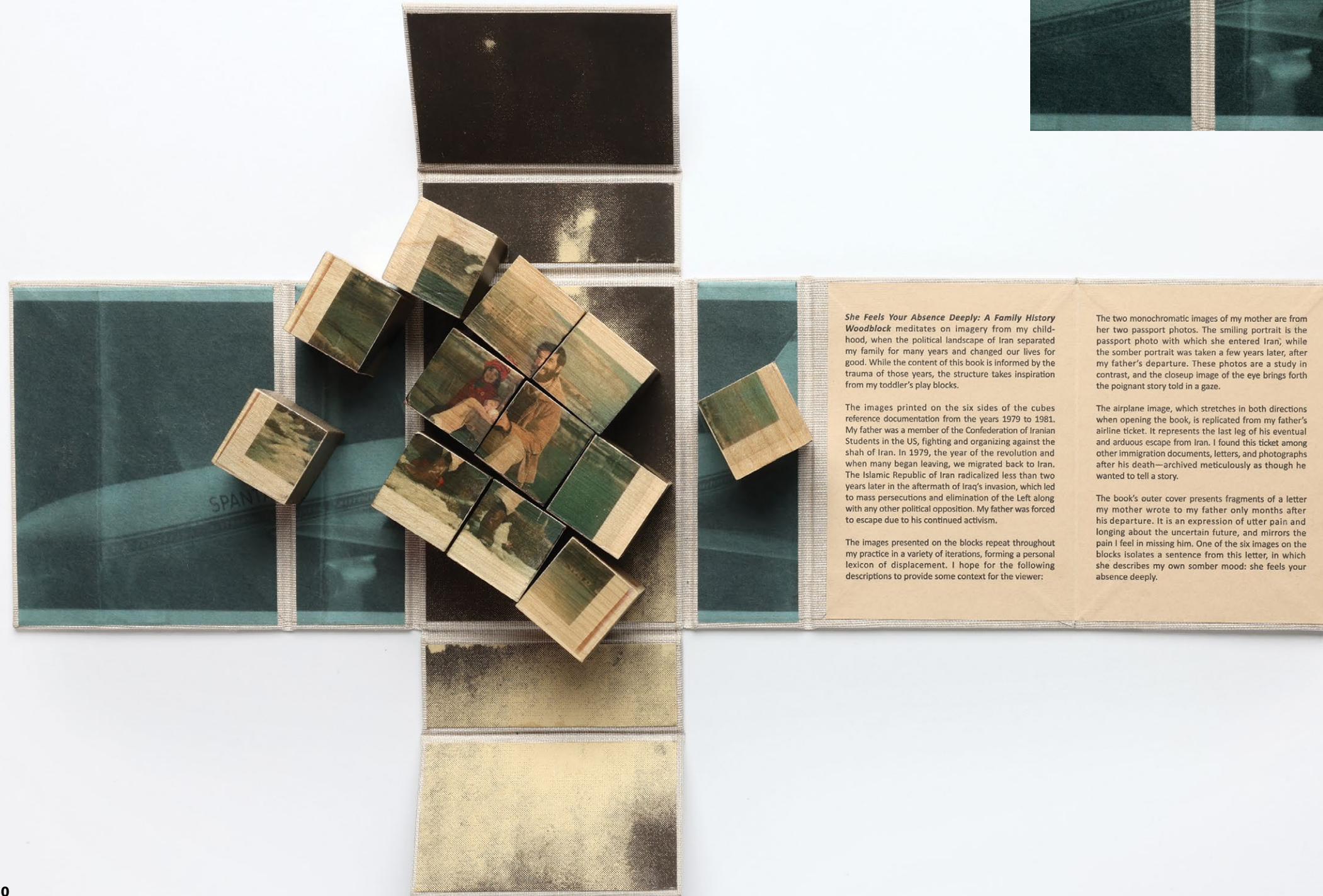
Golnar Adili

Edition size: 50

Dimensions: 3.25 in. x 4.25 in. x 1.75 in. (closed)

Materials and structure: Hardcover folio structure which encases a set of blocks; Inkjet, lithography, silkscreen, foil stamping

Loan courtesy of Women's Studio Workshop, Rosendale, NY



She Feels Your Absence Deeply: A Family History Woodblock meditates on imagery from my childhood, when the political landscape of Iran separated my family for many years and changed our lives for good. While the content of this book is informed by the trauma of those years, the structure takes inspiration from my toddler's play blocks.

The images printed on the six sides of the cubes reference documentation from the years 1979 to 1981. My father was a member of the Confederation of Iranian Students in the US, fighting and organizing against the shah of Iran. In 1979, the year of the revolution and when many began leaving, we migrated back to Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran radicalized less than two years later in the aftermath of Iraq's invasion, which led to mass persecutions and elimination of the Left along with any other political opposition. My father was forced to escape due to his continued activism.

The images presented on the blocks repeat throughout my practice in a variety of iterations, forming a personal lexicon of displacement. I hope for the following descriptions to provide some context for the viewer:

The two monochromatic images of my mother are from her two passport photos. The smiling portrait is the passport photo with which she entered Iran, while the somber portrait was taken a few years later, after my father's departure. These photos are a study in contrast, and the closeup image of the eye brings forth the poignant story told in a gaze.

The airplane image, which stretches in both directions when opening the book, is replicated from my father's airline ticket. It represents the last leg of his eventual and arduous escape from Iran. I found this ticket among other immigration documents, letters, and photographs after his death—archived meticulously as though he wanted to tell a story.

The book's outer cover presents fragments of a letter my mother wrote to my father only months after his departure. It is an expression of utter pain and longing about the uncertain future, and mirrors the pain I feel in missing him. One of the six images on the blocks isolates a sentence from this letter, in which she describes my own somber mood: she feels your absence deeply.

She Feels Your Absence Deeply utilizes materials from Adili's archive of letters, photos and printed matter once owned by her father. The collection spans from 1979, when her family migrated back to Iran from the US, and continues through 1981, when Adili's father escaped Iran for fear of persecution due to his activism.

—from the artist's website



Black: A Handbook (2022)

Tia Blassingame / Primrose Press

Edition size: 40

Dimensions: 10 in. x 7 in. x 1.5 in. (box); enclosed pamphlets: 8.375 in. x 5.5 in.

Materials and structure: 11 folded folios and colophon housed in custom built Formica box with lid; Handmade paste papers partially dyed with persimmon juice, ash, iron oxide, and indigo

Loan courtesy of Wellesley College, Special Collections (Wellesley, MA.)

Despite pandemic exhaustion and varied stressors or maybe because of them, making this edition was strangely calming. This handbook was inspired by artworks, my family, nature, but above all by the strength, perseverance, audacious artistry, and unparalleled creativity, dignity, humanity, and journey of a people who push forward against all efforts to the contrary.

—written by the artist, from the book's colophon





Body of Evidence (2020)

Artist: Ana Paula Cordeiro

Edition size: 9

Dimensions: 16 in. x 8 in. x 2 in. (closed);
16 in. x 16 in x 2 in. (open)

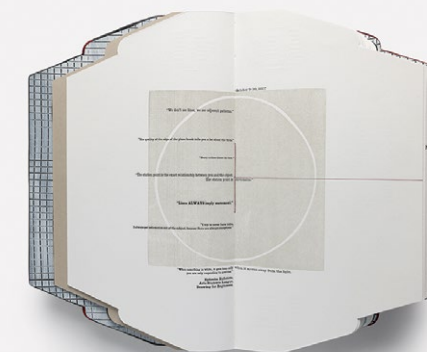
Materials and structure: Quarter leather binding incorporating letterpress, screenprint and alternative photo-processes. The book is bound on meeting guards with full leather lacunose panels on the front and back covers. Tree bark and mother-pearl inclusions.

Loan courtesy of the artist



Body of Evidence is an artist book instigated by how after the 2016 election (but never once before) people attempted to leverage my immigration status as compensation for their white fragility. The book was printed in red & blue over white, with black and various shades of gray. It is shaped as an envelope with flaps open, folded lengthwise. By design, it is unable to stand on its own. The text is made of excerpts from personal journals about my experience of 20 years as an immigrant artist, supplemented with quotes from Rebecca Solnit, Emily Dickinson, William James, Agnes Martin, and Fernando Pessoa.

—APC



11033 (2022)

Ibe' Bulindfa Crawley / IBé Arts Institute

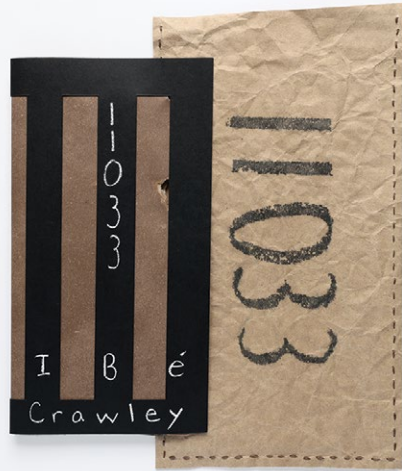
Additional artists: Ceramics: IBe' Crawley and Rachel Dubicki;
Handmade Paper: Aurora Brush, Marissa Perez,
Amani Rodriguez, IBe' Crawley, and Chris Petrone

Edition size: 52

Dimensions: 9 in. x 6 in. (closed); 9 in. x 12 in. (open)

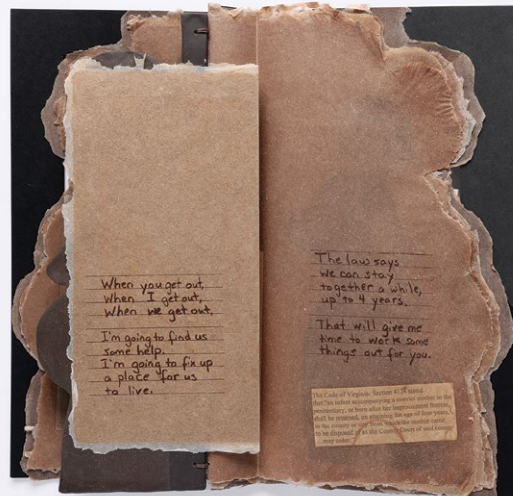
Materials and structure: Five hole pamphlet stitch with sculptural ceramic centerpiece, housed in handstitched paper bag; Book covers are Colorplan Ebony Black 350gsm, the textblock paper is pigmented handmade flax. Interior pages utilize handmade paper, pulp painting, embedded research documents, clay silhouette, screen printing and letter press. The book's bag is a blend of handmade kozo, cotton, and pigmented abaca pulp.

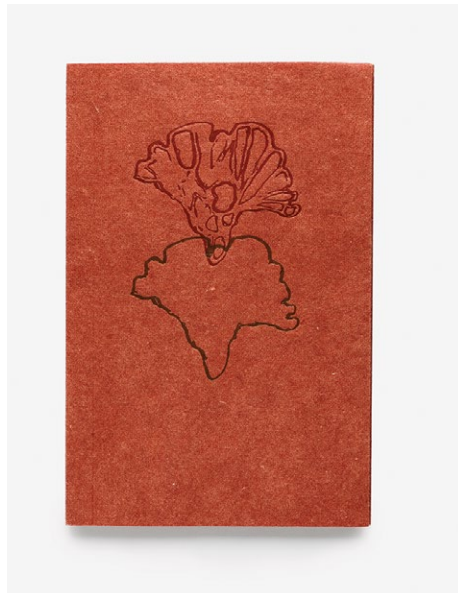
Loan courtesy of the artist



11033 is a poetic narrative, in the form of an artist book. The structural form and archival artifacts depict one woman's trauma and resilience. The text is a letter from the main character Mary Morst, a pregnant mother serving time for murdering her husband in 1914. In the letter to her unborn twin children, she pleads for a pardon (forgiveness) for the circumstances of their birth. The embedded documents verifies that she is pardoned and released from prison by the state of Virginia.

—IBC





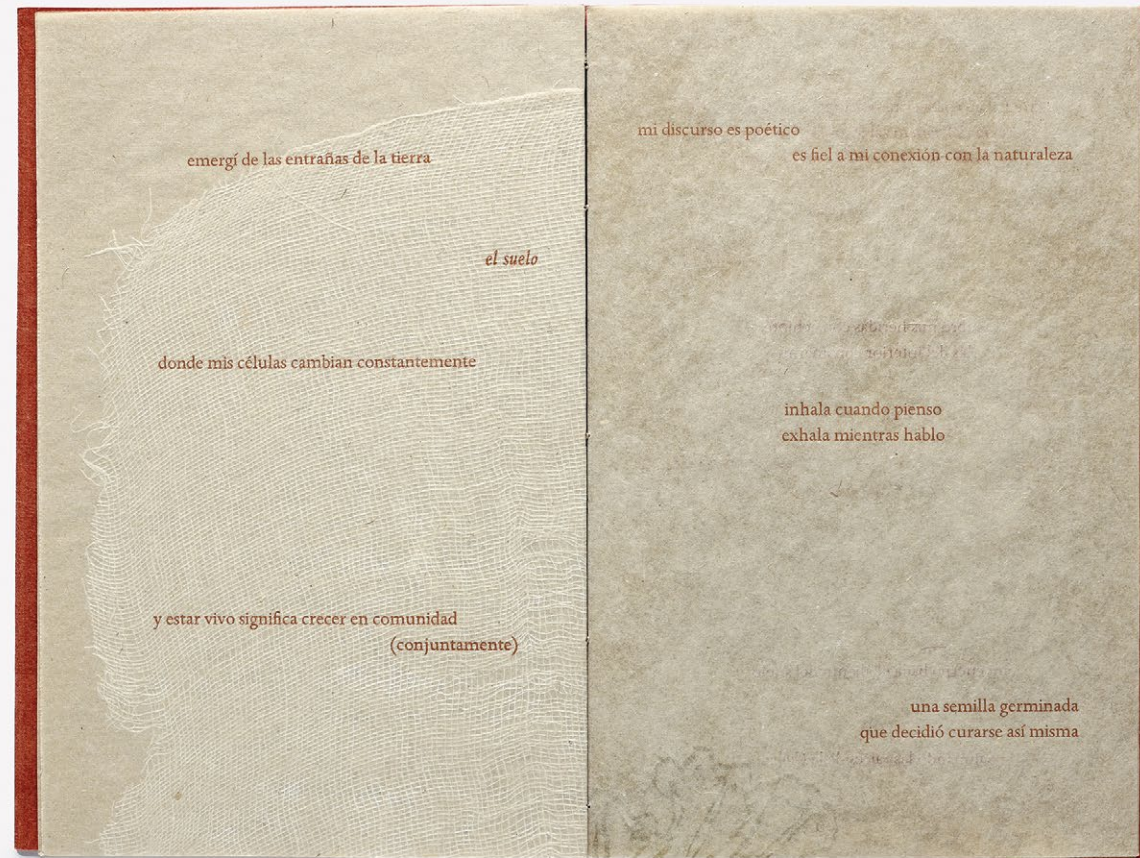
Canalización Ancestral de Borikén, Areyto de liberación (2021)

Jocmarys Viruet Feliciano

Edition size: 22
Dimensions: 8.5 in. x 5.5 in. x .25 in. (closed);
8.5 in. x 11 in. x .25 in. (open)

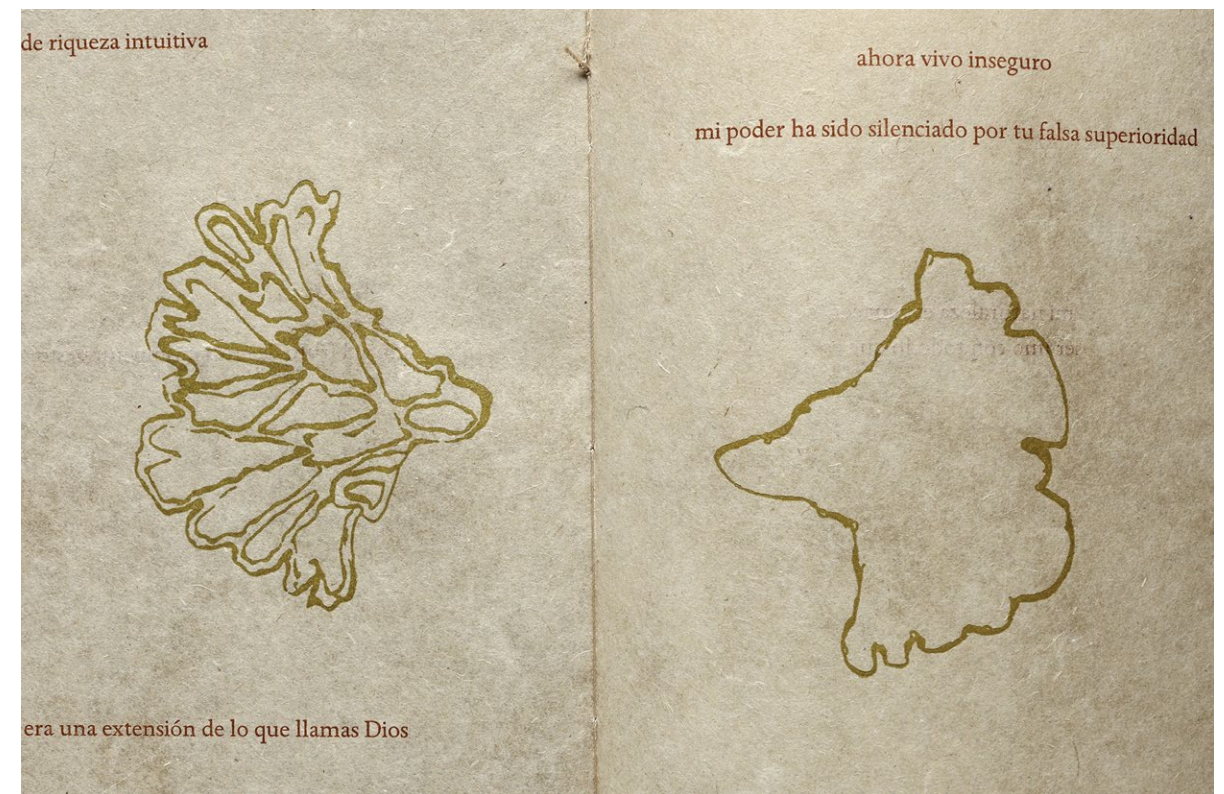
Materials and structure: Link stitch in a handmade paper case; Images are printed from photopolymer plates, pressure printed endsheets; Handmade paper used for the book's covers was produced by the artist and is a mixture of flax, unbleached abaca, and cotton.

Loan courtesy of the artist



This book is a space for Puerto Ricans to reconnect with their ancestry. The reader of this book seeks to decolonize their own mentality and history to find their own grace without depending on Christianity, the religion of the colonizer. This book opens a space for an *Areyto*, a ceremony that offers healing, rooted in the land. The title of the book represents the land itself providing the strength needed, while detaching from grief, a feeling of inferiority, and colonial control. *Canalización* translates as the act of channeling and *Borikén* or *Borinquen* is the indigenous name of Puerto Rico. *Canalización Ancestral de Borikén, Areyto de liberación* is a space for liberation and healing in book form.

—JVF



I conceived this project when I was nominated for a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship. While developing my Fellowship proposal I became intrigued with how our national holidays reflect various aspects of who we are. This is a group of handmade artist books question status quo assumptions of cultural, social and racial identity as referenced in our ten official federal holidays. *Our Social Skin* is part of my social justice inquiry.

—RH



**Our Social Skin:
Thanksgiving Day (2015)**

Robin Holder

Edition size: 5
Dimensions: 12 in. x 9 in. (closed);
24 in. x 9 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Unique artist book structure in the shape of indigenous Shoshone dress; Archival pigment print, fabric, archival card stock, additional embellishment.



**Our Social Skin:
Independence Day (2017)**

Robin Holder

Edition size: 5
Dimensions: 11.25 in. x 8.75 in. (closed);
11.25 in. x 16.5 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Unique artist book structure with three-hole pamphlet book attached to the verso; Canson paper, archival pigment print, press on lettering
Both works loaned courtesy of the artist



American Crow: Report From Quarantine
(2021)

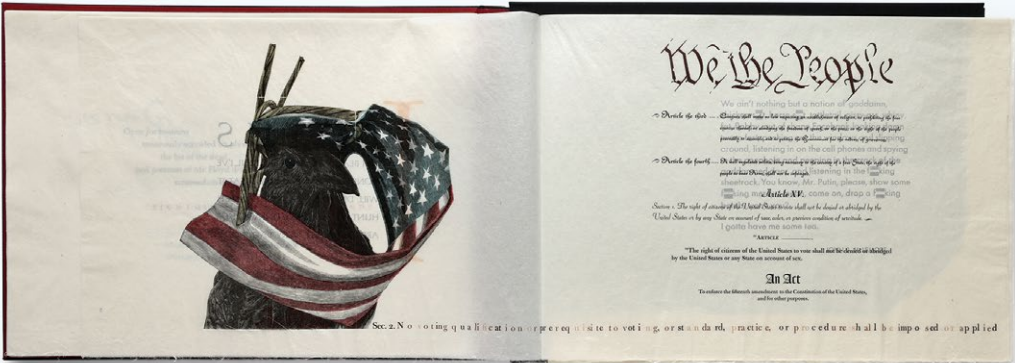
Gaylord Schanilec

Additional artists: Matthew Lawler Zimmerman /
Studio Alcyon – Binder

Edition size: 88
Dimensions: 9.5 in. x 12.33 in. (portfolio, closed);
19.5 in. x 38 in. x .875 in (portfolio, closed);
9.25 in. x 12.25 in. (individual leaves, closed)

Materials and structure: 7 loose sections contained in a black
chitsu case; Printed on French folded gampi papers, with
text typeset in various typefaces. Three multi-colored wood
engravings and various other elements engraved or cut in
wood by Gaylord Schanilec.

Loan courtesy of the artist



During the first week of March 2020, as the novel COVID virus blossomed in Manhattan, people from all over the world were gathered at the Lexington Avenue Armory, and across the street in the basement of the Saint Vincent Ferrer Church, to buy and sell books. Though the virus was on everyone's mind, few refused to shake hands, and there were no masks. A week later, when I returned to the Midwest, the storm had struck. The list of the dead was growing dramatically—everyone was masked—and everyone stood at a social distance...almost everyone.

I returned to rural Wisconsin where I found a matted crow feather in the wake of receding snow on the floor of Glen's Woods, and Glen had been dead for years. I made an engraving of the feather, set a few lines of type and printed, but the result did not feel right—it felt rushed and unresolved. I was feeling jumpy, like a needle across a scratch. I decided to embrace that feeling. Tossed by the relentless jolts of the news cycle, what began as a simple rumination on death evolved into a volume of illustrated concept journalism. —from the artist's website





Consume (2020)

Keri Miki-Lani Schroeder / Coyote Bones Press

Edition size: 5
 Dimensions: 11.5 in. x 7 in. x 3 in. (box);
 9 in. x 2.75 in. x 1 in. (book, closed);
 9 in. x 27 in. x 0.5 in. (book, extended)

Materials and structure: Accordion book, duck wing, and original illustrations in clamshell box; Illustrations are pen and ink drawings, scanned and digitally reproduced for the accordion book. Paper is Fabriano Ingres and Caba, with Asahi bookcloth.

Loan courtesy of the artist



Consume memorializes five bird species that have been hunted to extinction for food, feathers, or to expand agriculture: the Passenger Pigeon, Heath Hen, Hawaiian O'o, Great Auk, and the Carolina Parakeet. This box set includes an accordion book variation with text and illustrations about the birds and the methods of mass hunting that led to their extinction. Illustrations in the book are printed from original pen and ink drawings. Each clamshell box contains one of the five original drawings in a flap-enclosure, and a gifted duck wing.

—KMS

The Tower Book (2007)

Beth Thielen

Additional artists: Created in collaboration with the incarcerated artists of the Women's Program at the California Rehabilitation Center, in Norco, California, the men from San Quentin State Prison and their printmaking instructor, Katya McCulloch

Edition size: 30

Dimensions: 8 in. x 8 in. x 14 in. (base);

5.75 in. x 4.75 in. x .5 in. (book, closed);

5.75 in. x 9.75 in. x .5 in. (book, open)

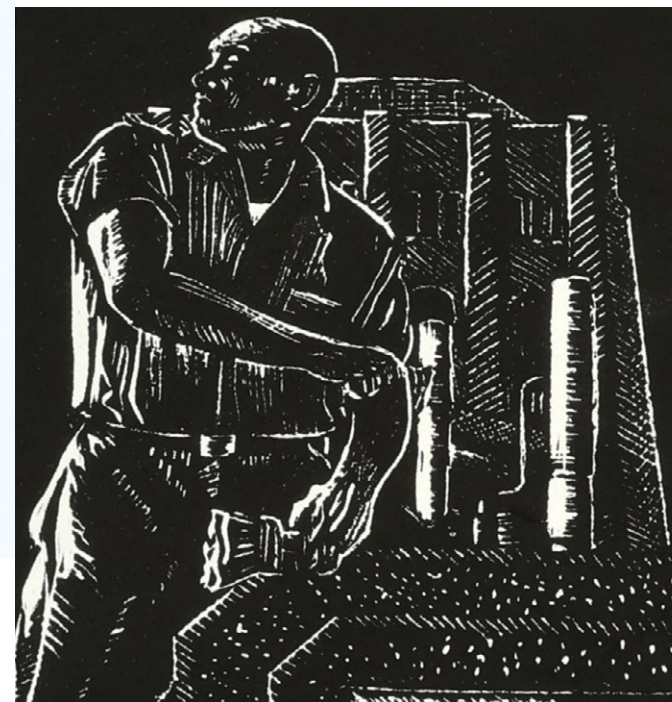
Materials and structure: Modified four book box structure; Hard cover, three hole pamphlet stitch binding; imagery consists of linoleum block prints with text

Loan courtesy of the artist



This is the only book edition of its kind. It is a collaboration between the art program at San Quentin and the now disbanded Women's Program at the California Rehabilitation Center, in Norco, California. I've been teaching in the California prison system since 1985...My primary interest has been to provide art classes to women in prison. By using the "craft" of book arts, I've been able to draw into the program many women who might not otherwise investigate art. Through private funding, I purchase the best materials I can find...The value of the materials reflects the value I place in my students. I bring the best to encourage the best and they never fail me. It's amazing how simple and true this formula is.

—BT





The Last Green Book (2022)

Nia Easley

Additional artists: Maria Dunaevsky - photographer

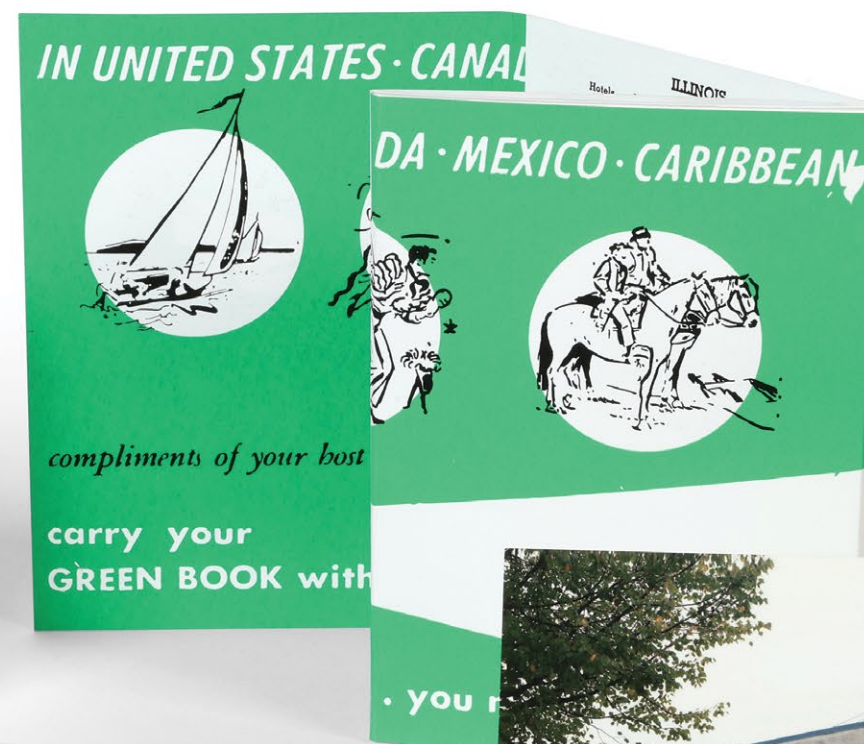
Dimensions: 6.25 in. x 4.33 in x .25 (closed);
6.25 in. x 8.75 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Screenprinted wrapper
containing set of 10 offset printed postcards

Loan courtesy of the artist

This set of postcards highlights ten of the fifty-five locations listed for the 1962 edition of the Chicago *Green Book*. The highlights from our community over half a century ago are now nearly entirely replaced by empty lots and vacant buildings. A few notable exceptions include Mollison Elementary School and Malcom X College. These postcards are a testament to our story. Over the course of the pandemic, I worked with my friend Maria Dunaevsky to photograph almost all of these listings in Chicago with a Hasselbald 500CM.

—NE

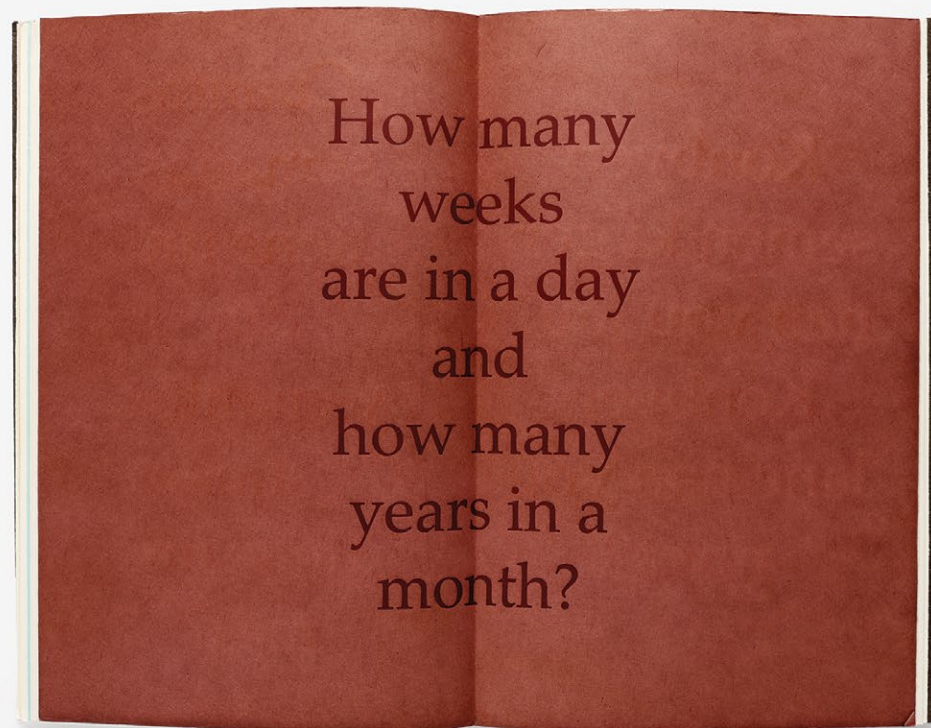


Unknown, Overlooked, Overdue

RUTH R. ROGERS

Who tells our nation's story? Through what medium? Who is included? Beyond the original founding documents of our nation, the recorded speeches, and the authorized textbook accounts of our nation's history, the artist book is an alternative form of truth-telling. Unknown and overlooked lives are vividly real in these works. Some are quiet, and whisper their stories in fragmentary and self-contained volumes. Others are imposing and sculptural, appropriating familiar images and language to provoke us to re-assess what we know. Together, they present the viewer with a vast and complicated answer to the question: "Who is America?"

Individual histories are ephemeral and often lost. Aurora De Armendi's *Libro de las Preguntas/A Book of Questions* (2014), addresses people she met while detained in Guantanamo Naval Base as a young refugee. "Which word or color comes to your mind when you think of the time you worked with or alongside the employees? What lessons did you learn there? Do you wish you could erase your memories?" Printed in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, all spoken in the base, the personal questions drift to poetics.



*Libro de las Preguntas/A
Book of Questions*
Aurora De Armendi

"Where is the center of the sea? Why do the waves never go there?" "How many weeks are in a day and how many years in a month?" Armendi calls the book a "gesture of memory and reconciliation." By interrogating everyone at GTMO—Haitian and Cuban detainees, soldiers, social workers, and doctors, she reveals the person, not their assigned identity. It turns out 'question' is a fraught word with Anglo-Saxon origins as complex as our country's. It derives from "inquest," "conquest," and "acquire."

Immigrants facing hostility in the U.S. is a recurring theme in artists' books. Ana Paula Cordeiro narrates her twenty-year path as a Brazilian immigrant in this country in *Body of Evidence* (2020). While Armendi's *Book of Questions* handles our common humanity, Cordeiro's individual story is told with personal detail. She states her motivation bluntly in the colophon: "The book was instigated by nationalism. The book was instigated by racism. The book was instigated by patriotism."

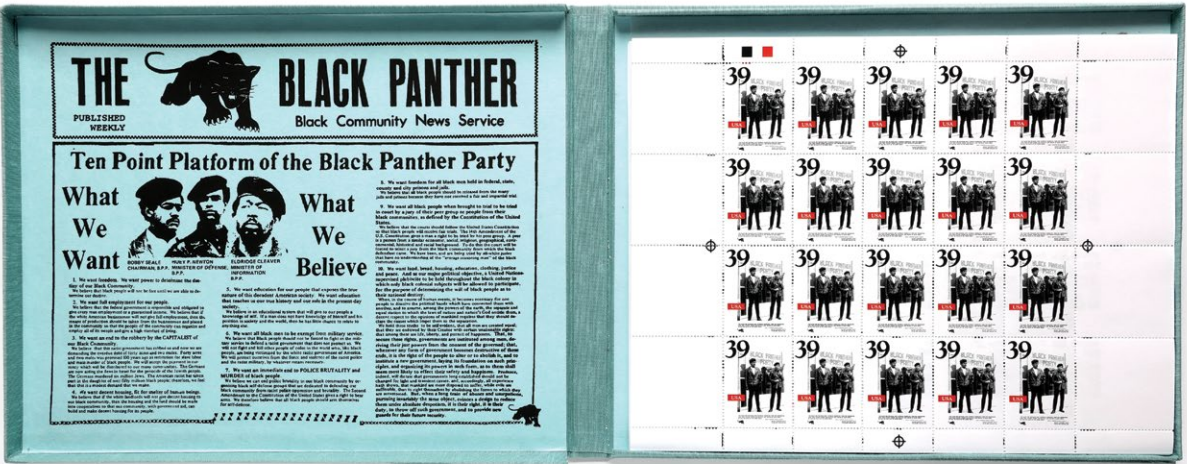
Cordeiro reprints text messages from worried family members in Brazil, journal entries about ICE raids nearby, and photographs of her Manhattan immigrant neighborhood. She pays special homage to Emily Dickinson, with recurring use of red ink marks and flattened envelopes. In fact, the book's large envelope shape prevents it from standing on its own. This is significant.

Every aspect of the book's design is intended to obscure, delete, and censor information. Parts of the text are folded or blacked out to hide names and places. Tension and evidence mount. There are loose papers, forms, grant applications, and letters of personal support. Frantic cell phone messages to family communicate anxiety. *Body of Evidence* builds a case for the author to stay in this country, culminating in a lengthy colophon that includes many personal details. But what if this legal document could implicate her? Cordeiro bound the colophon pages so they can be removed from the envelope that holds them. Without that page, the book could be any immigrant's story.

Paradoxically, the small edition of 10 copies is luxuriously bound in leather inlaid with mother-of-pearl, a reference to the status of books in antiquity. They were reverential objects, protected from harm by thick boards and precious ornament. It follows that she protects her story with hand labor and care—for it is the story of multitudes. And like humankind, the book cannot stand alone.

Artists' books can be subversive. They challenge the viewer with unusual materials or format, such as Kyle Goen's *Black Panther Party Stamp Book* (2021). It contains a history of the movement, presented in a boxed set of U.S. postage stamps, with interchangeable loose pages. Goen comments:

The Black Panther Party Stamp Book
Kyle Goen



“The Black Panther Party Stamp Book was in part a corrective response to a lyric from Public Enemy’s legendary song “Fight the Power”, which first appeared on the soundtrack to Spike Lee’s 1989 film *Do the Right Thing*.” In that song, one line was the inspiration: “Most of my heroes still don’t appear on no stamp.”¹

Stamps are tiny propaganda posters, with outsized power to influence the image a nation projects. But who is honored and who is overlooked? Readers may recognize the widely circulated press photographs from the 1960s Black Panther Party Movement. Each of the 25 sheets in the portfolio holds 20 different 39 cent stamps, on perforated adhesive paper. Images of people and events associated with the Black Panther Movement still resonate with political fervor and hope. What student of American history can forget the famous photos of Angela Davis, Bobby Seale or Huey Newton, with fists raised in the Black Power salute? As large as these activists were in real life, they are even larger when reduced to a tiny national stamp. It is a leveller— conferring gravitas equal to any presidential portrait or monument.

¹ Chuck D, Public Enemy, “Fight the Power”

Goen’s belated recognition of overlooked agents of change invites contemplation. How many young men were killed before the age of thirty for the cause of racial justice? What were the names of the five brave women who protested outside the courthouse to Free Huey Newton? Here they are, immortalized in stamps, along with the Ten Point Platform of the Party printed alongside. Point Number 10 is a reminder of their unfinished work: “We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.”

Our nation’s founding document is imperfect. Omission was the starting point for Jan Owen’s *Mending the Stars and Stripes* (2020). By juxtaposing articles of the U.S. Constitution and its amendments with the handwritten letters of women whose voices were omitted, her 32-page calligraphic book carries a weight belied by modest appearance. Its formal penmanship on handmade paper, cross-stitched with red and gold thread and cut appliqués convey the feeling of a colonial relic from a lady’s sewing box. Domestic work is tedious and never done. Threads are left hanging. It is personal.

Owen was inspired by the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, which ensured the right to vote, regardless of sex. She includes quotes by Susan B. Anthony, Ida Harper, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass, along with a map of the U.S. that shows the dates of each state’s adoption of Women’s Suffrage. Owen also addresses events after the 19th Amendment, including the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, the Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act of 1943, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The final page bears two cross-stitched names: “Ruth,” for Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died during the book’s production, and “Kamala,” for Kamala Harris. The mending and amending continues.

In spite of its archaic cursive script, Abigail Adams’ memorable plea to her husband could have been written today: “I desire you to remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could.” Power is the common theme of all four of these books. Not only the power to silence and control individual lives, but the power of purpose, memory, and hope. When we read them and understand their message, that power is ours.

TRUTH AWARENESS RESPONSIBILITY QUESTIONING

Rather than proclaiming truth, the works in this group sit with uncertainty. They reveal how narratives are constructed—through omission, distortion, repetition—and how identity itself can be a form of inquiry. The act of questioning, these artists suggest, is both civic and poetic.



Beyond New Orleans, houses begin
leggier, sky opens up beneath them.
time grows from ground to bed. Chil
cars park alongside pickup trucks in the
doubts hold up houses, suspended over a
Today, the river remains on its side of the wall

**Libro de las Preguntas / A Book of Questions /
Yon Ti Liv Kesyon (2014)**

Aurora De Armendi

Edition size: 10

Dimensions: 11.5 in. x 7.25 in. x 1 in. (closed);

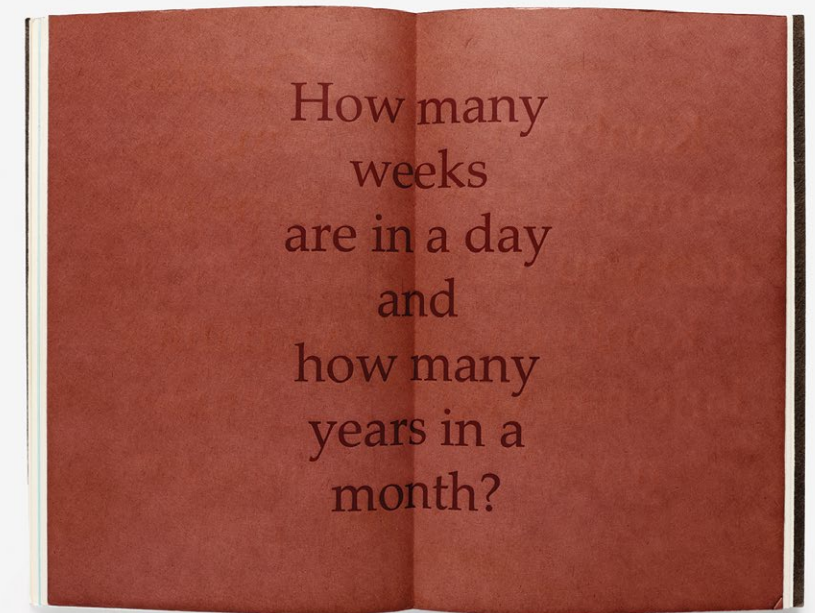
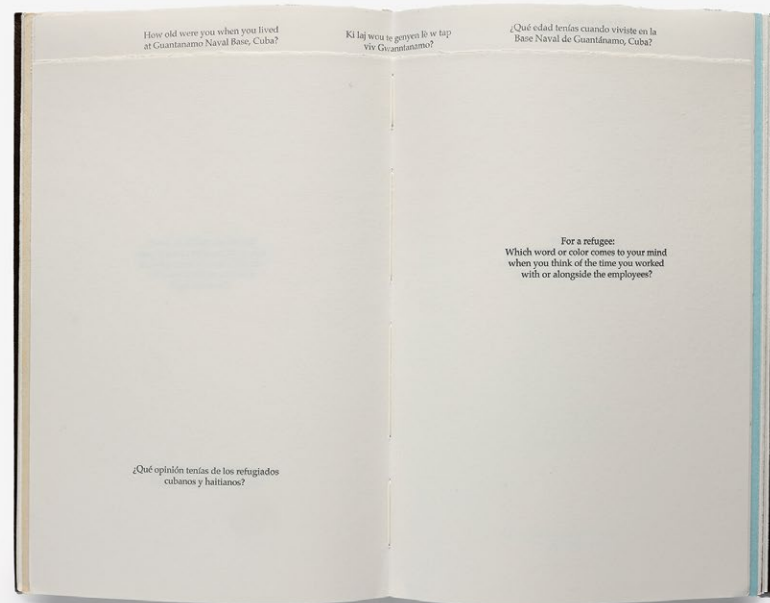
11.5 in. x 14.5 in. x 1 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Z-Fold Flat Back with Turns-in;

Cover Paper: Cave paper, fabric from US military uniform,

Slip case: Binders board, fabric from US military uniform

Loan courtesy of the artist



In the early 1990's, Haitian and Cuban refugees were detained in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba under the supervision of the American military. *A Book of Questions* is comprised of queries directed toward three groups of people (Haitian detainees, Cuban detainees and GTMO employees, including soldiers, physicians and social workers) whose paths intersected during a specific moment in GTMO's history. It is a gesture of memory and reconciliation, to remember together. De Armendi initially wrote the questions in Spanish and then translated them into Haitian Creole and English.

—from the artist's website

Blight (2020)

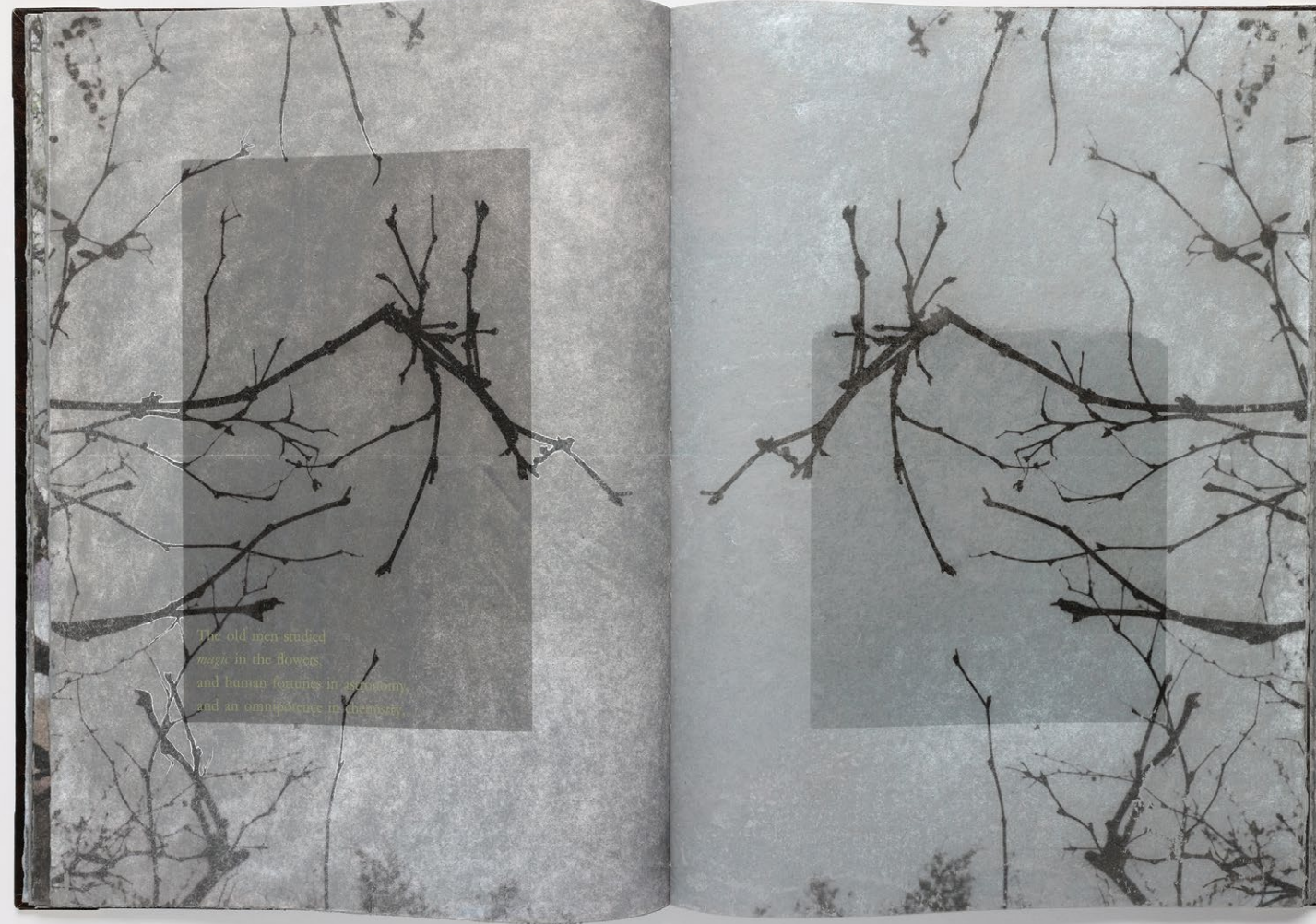
Gabby Cooksey

Edition size: 28

Dimensions: 13 in. x 9.5 in. x 0.5 in. (closed);
13 in. x 19 in. x 0.5 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Modified case binding housed in a clamshell box; Handset letterpress printing, photo transfers, and silkscreen printing. Materials used include acrylic paint, gouache, gold foil, brass corners; Kozuke Japanese paper used for the text block and Hook Pottery Paper used for the cover.

Loan courtesy of the artist



Ralph Emerson wrote the poem, "Blight", in July of 1843. He spoke out on climate change and the ways we could shift course by not blindly following others...I took some liberties with Emerson's poem, surrounding his words with photographs captured at Owen Beach in Washington State on a rainy winter day in 2019...Emerson's words of anger and disappointment at environmental destruction only resonate more with our current climate of melting glaciers and raging fires. As we continue to twist the kaleidoscope, I remain optimistic we will find a way to rearrange these fragments and improve the view for future generations.
—GC



In the Dark (2024)

Anne Covell

Edition size: 10, with 2 additional artist's proofs

Dimensions: 6 in. x 15 in. (leather wrapper); 15.5 in. x 4.75 in. 1.875 in.

Materials and structure: Girdle book structure bound over double raised cords and laced into wooden boards with sewn endbands. Boards are covered in black suede with brass embellishments, text pages are waxed black pigmented overbeaten abaca paper made by the artist.

Loan courtesy of the artist



In the Dark explores the complexities of grief and reconciliation when justice remains out of view. Using redactions from the Mueller Report as a placeholder for the ongoing miscarriage of justice in American politics, these pages hold space to ponder what information has been lost or may never be known. They are a place to turn inward, sit with grief, feel the weight of one's own anger, and in time contemplate a way forward. More than 1/3 of the 448 page Mueller Report includes redactions. *In the Dark* contains each of these pages hand cut in documented order with nearly 1,000 redactions in total.

—AC



This Land Is My Land (2023)

Thad Higa

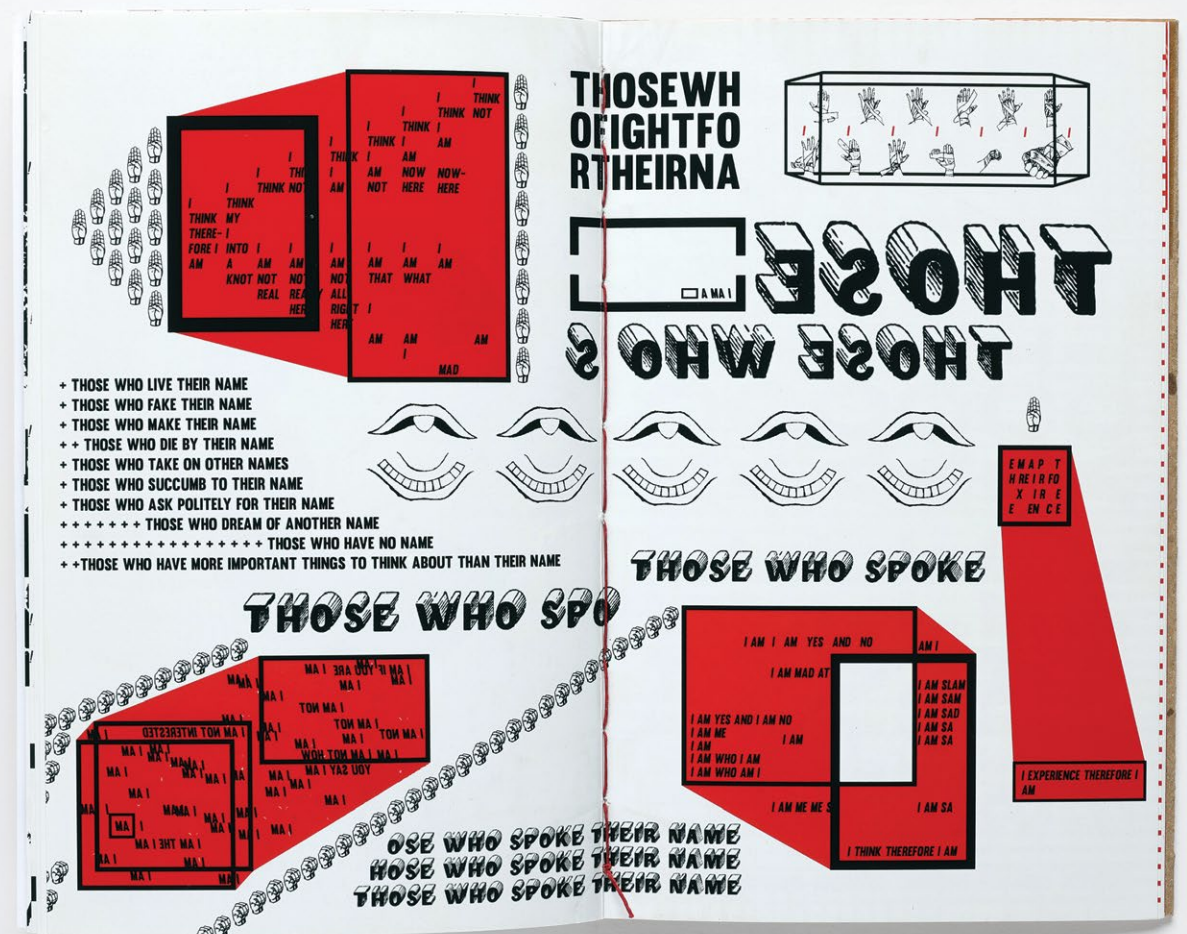
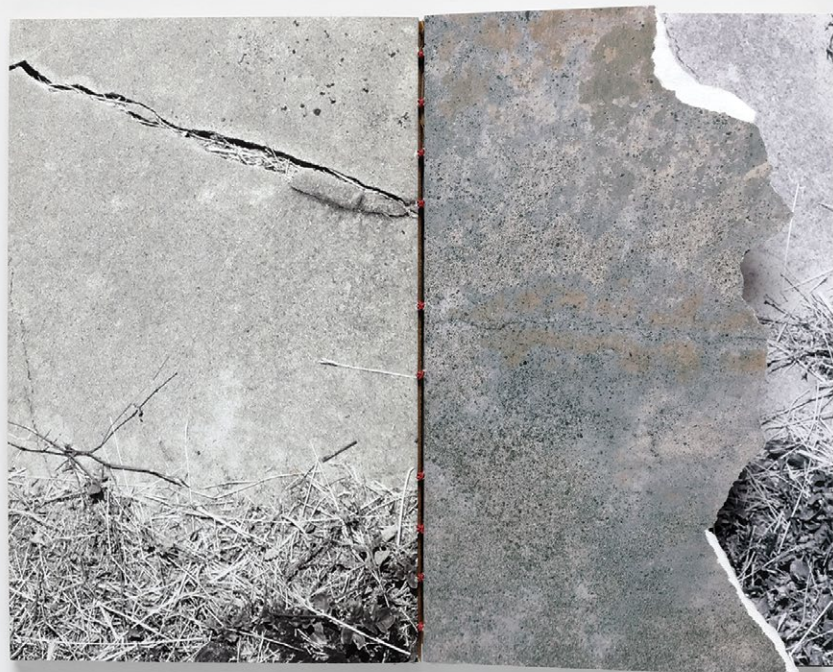
Edition size: 50
Dimensions: 8.5 in. x 5.75 in. x .875 in. (closed);
8.5 in. x 11.5 in. x .875 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Coptic bound, digitally
printed with multi-page foldouts; Acrylic paint,
packing material, packing tape

Loan courtesy of the artist

This book is a fictional narrative of the headspace of current day white supremacists, nationalists, accelerationists, and their sympathizers in America. It is an attempt to see and know the many activities and contradictions of hatred, bias, cynicism, and conspiracy rooted in propagandized words and symbols... This book makes use of different types of cheap papers, physically torn pages, and two multi-level foldouts... It must flaunt its ordinariness; thus its naked book boards with packing tape, exposed spine, printer paper mixed with a cheap glossy photo paper, and facsimile rips caked on broken sidewalks.

—written by the artist, from the book's colophon



What's it like for you to be an American?
(2025)

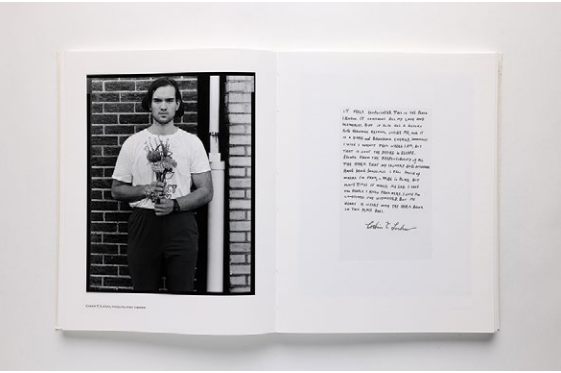
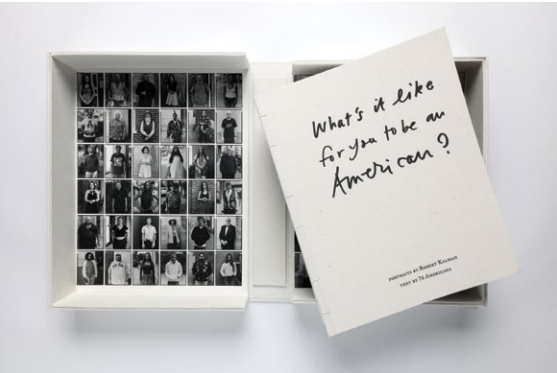
Robert Kalman

Additional collaborator: Preface written by Rasheed Newson

Edition size: 21
Dimensions: 14 in. x 11.5 in. x 2.5 in. (clamshell box);
12.25 in. x 10 in. x 1.75 in. (book, closed),
12.25 in. x 20 in. x 1.75 in. (book, open)

Materials and structure: Handmade book of archival inkjet prints housed in a clamshell box; Coptic binding.

Loan courtesy of the artist



I set out across the country to learn what Americans think about their national self-identity during this historic time, traveling 20,000 miles to do so. I made nearly 500 formal portraits of everyday Americans with a large format, eight-by-ten inch view camera, and asked each of them to respond in writing to the question, "What's it like for you to be an American?... This handmade edition collects the portraits and thoughts of 76 representative Americans.

—RK

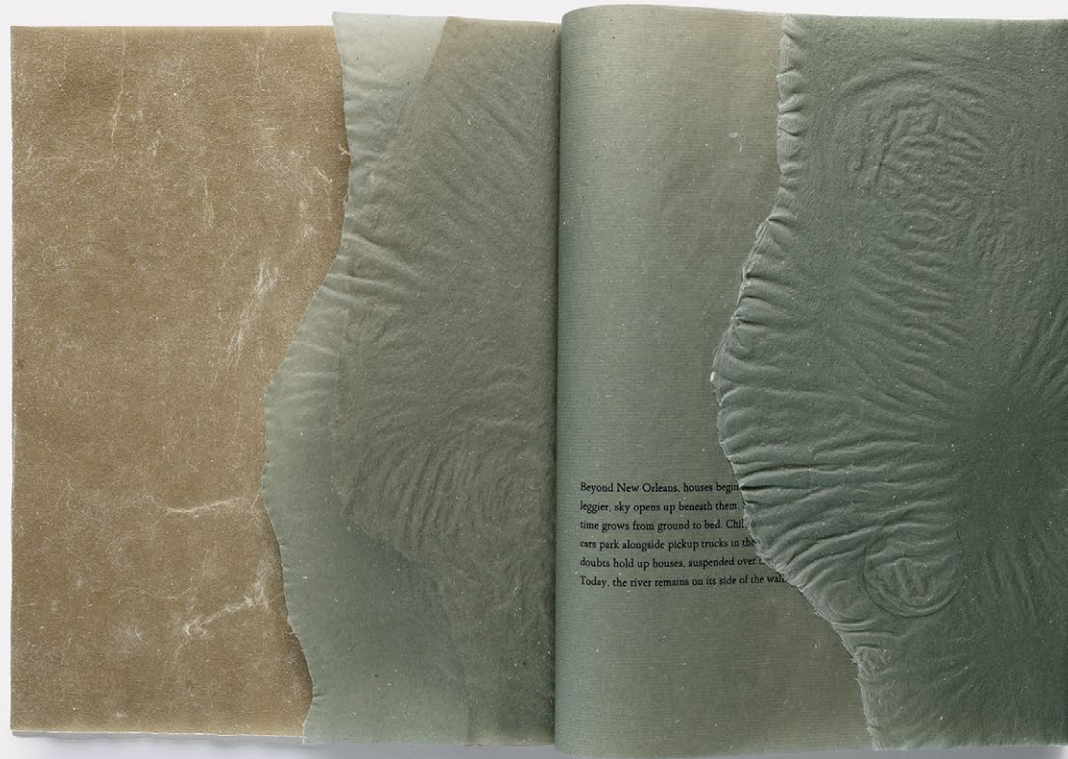
Concrete Uncertainty (2020)

Colleen Lawrence

Dimensions: 10 in. x 8 in. (closed); 10 in. x 50 in. (open)

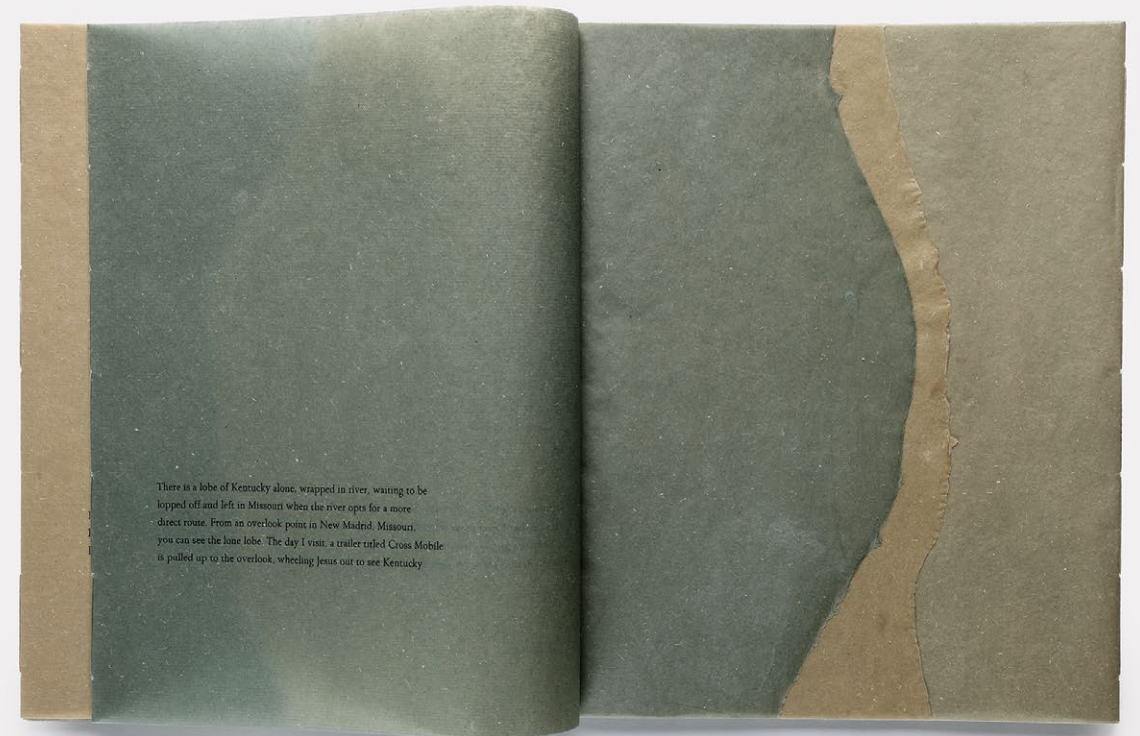
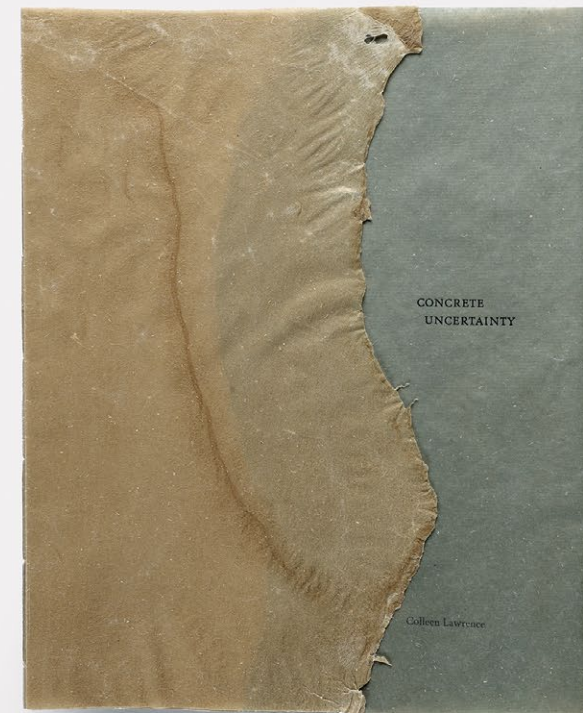
Materials and structure: Sewn accordion structure using shaped handmade flax/abaca papers; letterpress printed using handset type

Loan courtesy of the artist



Concrete Uncertainty explores our desire for control. Inspired by “Louisiana’s Disappearing Coast” by Elizabeth Kolbert in *The New Yorker* and John McPhee’s *The Control of Nature*, the book itself is an experiment in control. The text wends its way through rising and receding water, and the impossible promises we make. Starting in the mid-1900s, the Mississippi River wanted to change course, as it is wont to do. The Army Corps of Engineers decided that wasn’t going to happen, and built a concrete structure called Old Control that, for now, keeps the river on its current course.

—CL





Three Constitutions (2021)

Russell Maret

Additional artists: Sarah Moody – Printer, Amy Borezo – Binding design, Shelter Bookworks – Binder

Edition size: 87 copies, 3 artist proof copies
 Dimensions: 15.75 in. x 11.25 in. x 2.625 in. (drop spine case, closed)
 15.75 in. x 37 in. x 2.625 in. (drop spine case, open);
 Coptic bound volume, under plexiglass lid: 14.75 in. x 10.125 in. x .75 in;
 Modified sewn boards binding: 10 in. x 7.125 in. x .375 (closed)

Materials and structure: Three volumes housed in a drop spine case;
 Printed on Zerkall Book and Twinrocker Handmade papers; two case
 bound volumes and single folio housed together in three-panel grey
 cloth drop spine box, with the folio enclosed in a plexiglass vitrine.

Loan courtesy of the artist

Three Constitutions is my response to [political events of November 2020-February 2021] and the culture that bred them. The large volume contains the full text of the U.S. Constitution and its twenty-seven amendments. It is set in a typeface that, though difficult to read, is legible once one becomes accustomed to its forms. The texts of the two smaller volumes were arrived at via the two most prevalent modes of constitutional interpretation: algorithmic skewing and selective redaction. The text of the volume titled “Constitution. United States.” was arrived at by feeding the Constitution and amendments through Google Translate; the volume titled “Constitution [redacted]” was set in metal type and subsequently redacted by physically turning key words and phrases over and printing the underside of the type. The resulting text is not the hopeful re-write I would conceive; it is intended to reflect the cynical, ineffectual state of political discourse in the United States.

—RM

Via Dolorosa: From Sea to Shining Sea (2019)

Maria Pisano / Memory Press

Edition size: Open edition
Dimensions: 12.25 in. x 10 in. x 2 in. (closed);
when open: the work extends to 65 in.

Materials and structure: Flag book structure; Acid free corrugated board, binder's board, acrylic paint, laser print images. Children drawings in the book were scanned and printed on various pages and back cover, including on the page with the New Colossus poem by Emma Lazarus.

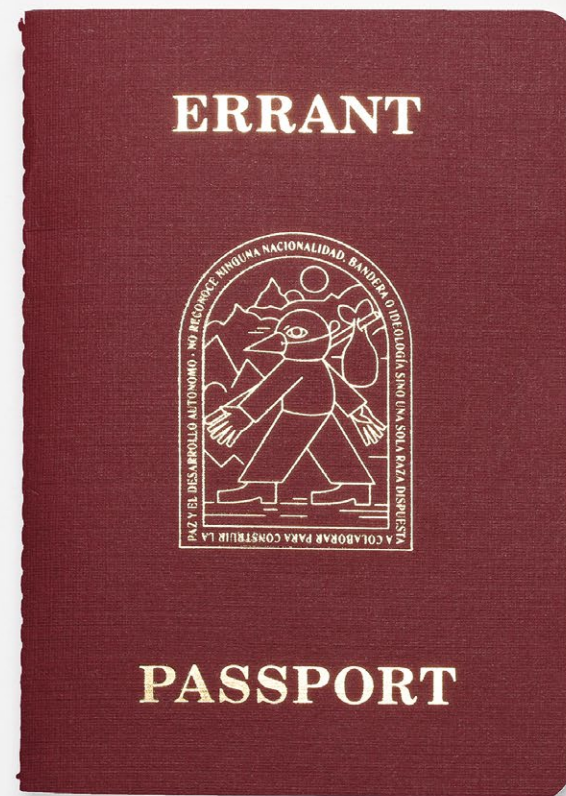
Loan courtesy of the artist



Via Dolorosa: From Sea to Shining Sea covers a particular disturbing period of the four years -2017 thru 2021- of our country under the Trump administration, whose focus on restricting immigrants from the US/Mexico border, became a battle cry for hate and self-serving aggrandizing. The book showcases the government's prejudices and policies that were enacted which desecrated our laws, human rights and the environment in the pursuit of building a more impenetrable "beautiful" border wall.

—MP





Errant Passport (n/d)

Alan Sobrino / Errant Press

Additional collaborator: Editorial design by Plan Scusi

Edition size: Open

Dimensions: 5 in. x 3.5 in. (closed);
5 in. x 7 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Machine sewn with foil embossing on front cover

Loan courtesy of San Francisco Center for the Book

Errant Passport is a conceptual essay about borders. The passport allows the carriers to choose their names but states a single place of birth for all humans: planet Earth. It includes 16 Visas, each with a QR that links to books and videos about borders as an invitation to a more critical and informed debate. This book started as an essay promoting open borders, but in the middle of writing it, I realized there was no debate; the evidence to support open borders is already massive. The real discussion has more to do with how we understand the world. This book represents my views: borders are imaginary lines drawn by fear.

—AS



Witness : Parse: Interrogate : Embody : Humanize : Liberate

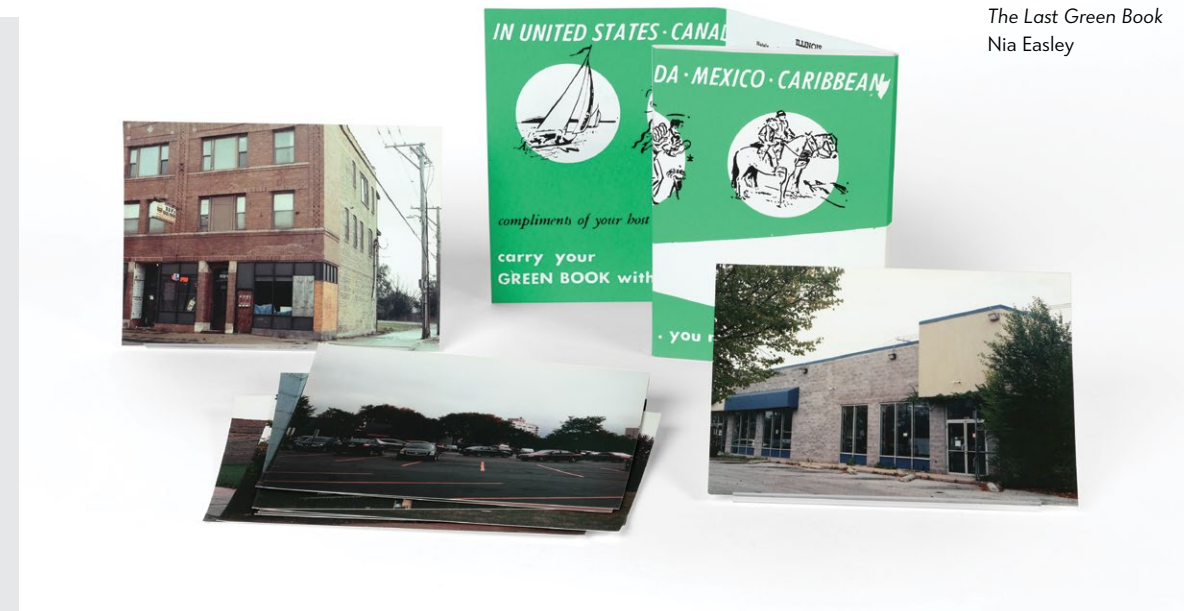
YUKA PETZ

America at 250 is an age of abundant and fast flowing information. Our access to data, stories, and records is vast. However this moment also seethes with misinformation and outright erasure.

Concerns about the validity of information are elevated by technological advances and the callousness and malevolence with which individuals and administrations in power obscure, manipulate, or delete archives and data. The long view of global history has seen similar actions across many generations and governments, but in the United States, it is unprecedented. We slip further into dangerous, even deadly, territory.

At the time of writing, eight months into Donald Trump's second term, government organizations have deleted or modified over 8,000 web pages and approximately 3,000 datasets. These changes are heavily ideological, removing anything connected to DEI, transgender and gender-identity issues, environmental justice, vaccines, the January 6 attack on the United States Capitol, and more—too much to fit within the 1,200 word count of this essay.

The artists' books in this exhibition offer detailed and thought-provoking insights into the state of our country as it relates to our people, democracy, justice, and more. Most engage directly with original source material, drawing out underrepresented voices and layered perspectives. These works underscore the critical importance of documentation, stories, and freedom of information toward maintaining our union and recognizing the value of every life within it. While by no means an exhaustive or definitive list, the following six books offer robust models for actions we all can take with data, archives, and source materials to create narratives that speak truth and reveal us to ourselves.



WITNESS

In *The Last Green Book*, Nia Easley directly observes and physically engages with historic data. Collaborating with photographer Maria Dunaevsky, she visited Chicago addresses listed in the 1962 edition of the *Green Book*. During this era of Jim Crow laws and open and legally sanctioned discrimination against Black and non-white people, the entries in the annual *Green Book* travel guides helped motorists locate businesses that were Black-owned or relatively friendly African American customers.

Keeping us in the vernacular of travel, Easley's *The Last Green Book* presents ten of those sites on picture postcards. Aside from a couple of exceptions, we see the overwhelming majority of these sites are now vacant lots, fields, parking lots, and unoccupied buildings. The postcards are stark and sobering documentation of the American disinvestment in Black-owned businesses and communities in the sixty years between Green's and Easley's publications.

PARSE

Flags, Placards, and Illicit Climbers of the Capitol Insurrection, by Tyler Starr, examines the clothes, bodies and symbols carried on January 6, 2021. To develop this book, Starr scoured hours of video footage from the insurrection found on volunteer-run, open-source intelligence websites—the same sites that aided the FBI in identifying perpetrators through crowdsourcing.

Removing the figures from environmental contexts, Starr reduces them to a sociological study or a collection to be analyzed and compared. We can see in these bodies the coordination and physical exertion to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power at the Capitol, as well as the performative aspects of their fashion. Isolated and re-grouped by Starr, the flags and signs provide context to the motivations and ideologies of the rioters,

notably coming from far right extremist movements, conspiracy theories, and white nationalist aligned militias. Starr’s layouts present more than mere data. The floating figures are arranged to emphasize the disturbing and distressing motives of the rioters that day.

INTERROGATE

Calling All Denizens, by Kimi Hanauer, compiles the research from Hanauer’s participatory project that aimed to cooperatively imagine the new political practice of denizenship, as an alternative to citizenship. Formatted as a toolkit, it equips the reader with a manifesto, screen-printed flag, resource book, workshop plan, and pencil.

Hanauer investigated how the American court system, through race-based exclusion and identity-erasing assimilation, historically insulated who gains citizenship. The primary documents and summaries in the resource book bring us into Hanauer’s personal research and craft a focused interrogation of the inherently racist and exclusionary grounds used to deny citizenship. While these legal documents became outdated after racial qualifications and the jargon “free white aliens” were removed from immigration law in 1952, the prejudices they cemented are still widely practiced.

The letterpress-printed manifesto uplifts demands for the abolition of citizenship, borders, and nation-states. Written in the form of a question rather than a definitive statement, it reflects Hanauer’s commitment to foregoing band-aid solutions in favor of creating expansive and transformative spaces for dialogue and inquiry.

EMBODY

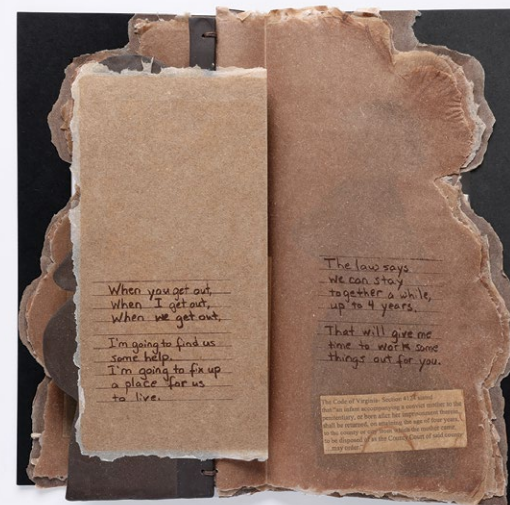
Anne Covell’s *In The Dark* examines the shape and weight of erasure in relation to ongoing miscarriage of justice. The book portrays every page of the Mueller Report that contained redacted material. Covell cut the redacted portions out of black handmade abaca paper, leaving vacancies where we would find black bars in the original report.

Each page turn is a confrontation with what is missing and may never be known.

The girdle book binding, historically used for portable religious texts for the wealthy, is designed to be worn on the body so as to be always accessible. The structure is a contrast to the inaccessibility of information in the report. The book manifests the complex burden of constantly carrying and navigating consequential yet inaccessible information.

HUMANIZE

11033, by IBe’ Bulinda Crawley illuminates the story of Mary Morst, an African-American woman imprisoned in the Virginia State Penitentiary in 1912 for murdering her husband. Pregnant when she entered confinement, she soon gave birth to twins.



11033
IBe' Bulinda Crawley /
IBe Arts Institute

11033 contains distinct layers of narrative on and in the handmade paper and clay pages shaped in a pregnant woman’s silhouette. An “official” story takes the form of archival documents, such as newspaper clippings and prison records, embedded in the handmade flax papers. These are the facts according to public record, but Crawley intentionally obscures them, embedding them in handmade paper.

Visual dominance is given to the printed words on the pages. Composed by Crawley, this fictionalized letter from Morst to her unborn children conveys the depths of a mother’s love, concerns, and joy.

Crawley’s body of work highlights people who are under or narrowly represented in the larger cultural narrative, particularly centering African American women. Morst’s story exists in the public record because of her relationship with the penal system. In *11033*, however, Crawley redirects us to an empathetic and humanizing counter-narrative to those archival documents.

LIBERATE

Errant Passport, by Alan Sobrino, combines artists’ books, performance, and resource sharing in the familiar form of a government issued passport. Emphasizing the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this official, non-official document can be issued to anyone. Passport holders are members of a single human race, knowing no nationality, flag, or ideology and acknowledge that all borders are imaginary lines, inscribed by fear.

QR codes are printed at the bottom of the sixteen pages with space for visas. Each goes to an unabridged resource highlighting specific arguments and ideas about borders and barriers. Drawn from Sobrino’s research, he makes them available so the reader can be further informed and engage in knowledgeable debates on the topic. Building on the passage of people that a passport traditionally represents, offering this wealth of information reflects a call to the free and unhindered movement of information.

HOPE POSSIBILITY TRANSFORMATION VISION

Emerging from uncertainty, these works imagine futures shaped not by inevitability, but by choice. Transformation here is tactile—seen in processes of repair, ritual, and reclamation. Some pieces mourn; others dream boldly. Together, they remind us that envisioning change begins with the act of noticing: what must end, what must be held, what can be made new.





Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (an altar)
(2024)

Gino Romero

Additional artists: Bel Andrade: Fabricator for 3D prints, Audrey McKenzie: Screen printer

Edition size: 13

Dimensions: 8 in. × 10 in. × 3 in. (box)

Materials and structure: Boxed set of 10 artist books, marigold petals, lavender, a match, wooden box, paint. (see other materials / techniques for each book's information)

Loan courtesy of the artist



This box set is an altar for me. These books are part of my spiritual practice. They are letters to the dead, talismans for the future, research to connect with my ancestors. They are all part of my personal syncretic practice. I have found a lot of comfort within these books. I hope they may provide some comfort or some learning for the reader.

—GR



History of a People (2023)

Alisa Banks

Edition size: 10
Dimensions: 10.5 in. (height) x 8.5 in. (diameter)

Materials and structure: Round wood stand with 6 glass bottle inserts with a crocheted and beaded cover;
Materials used include wood, glass, plastic, yarn, hair, paper, cowrie shells, cotton, indigo, thread, graphite, and aromatics.

Loan courtesy of the artist

Structural materials (for this work) were chosen for their historical and cultural significance, particularly indigo, cowrie, and hair. The overall form is based on architecture and tribal crowns, with the thought of their continued evolution over time and distance. Scents are interpretations of events that denote specific time frames: Roots, Journey, Arrival, Harrow, Protest, and Visioning. Each chapter is denoted by an Adinkra, a system of icons used to communicate proverbs or history. Adinkra were used widely by the Asanti and continue to be recognized throughout the diaspora.

—AB



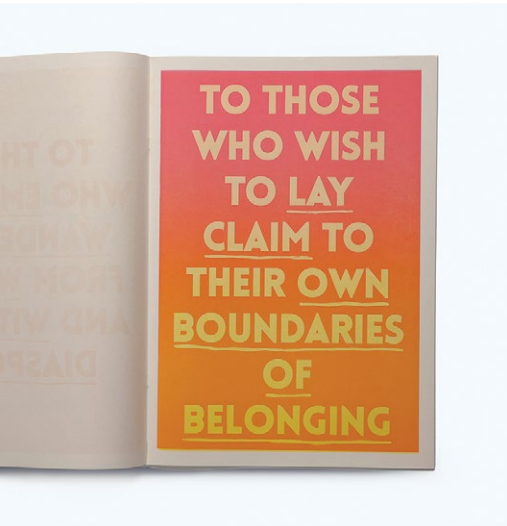
Calling All Denizens (2019)

Kimi Hanauer

Edition size: 50
Dimensions: 13.5 in. x 8.5 in. (Resource Book), 17.5 in. x 12 in. (Manifesto),
17.5 in. x 12 in. (Banner)

Materials and structure: Perfect bound (Resource Book), Pamphlet
(Manifesto); Letterpress and digital printing, silkscreen.

Loan courtesy of Women’s Studio Workshop, Rosendale, NY



Largely inspired by *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* by Ian Haney Lopez, this book delves into the history of immigration and naturalization policy in the U.S., focusing on racial prerequisite laws which limited citizenship to “free white aliens” until 1952. It includes summaries of the 52 court cases that challenged these laws, honoring the individuals who questioned the racialized nature of American citizenship. *Calling All Denizens* explores the notions of “from within” and “from without” as they pertain to the nuances of citizenship, sovereignty, migration, exile, and diaspora. In response to a history of race-based exclusion from citizenship and identity-erasing assimilation in the U.S., this project gives rise to a more compassionate, ethical, and genuine vision of a liberated society.

—KH

Tipping Point (2021)

Art Hazelwood

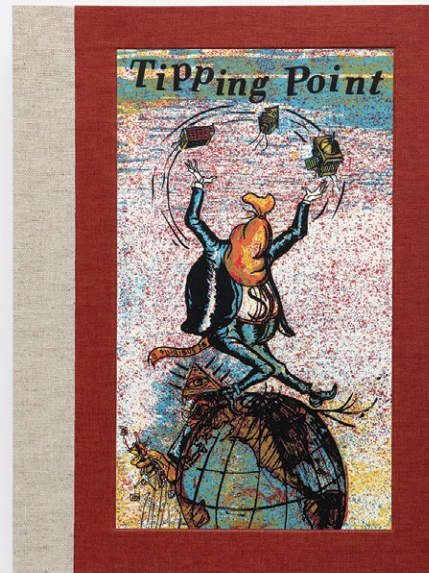
Additional artists: Asa Nakata: Book binding and design

Edition size: 25

Dimensions: 12 in. x 9 in. x 1.375 in. (closed);
12 in. x 18 in. x 1.375 in (open)

Materials and structure: Drumleaf binding with interactive pull down mechanical on the final page of the book; silkscreen prints by Art Hazelwood

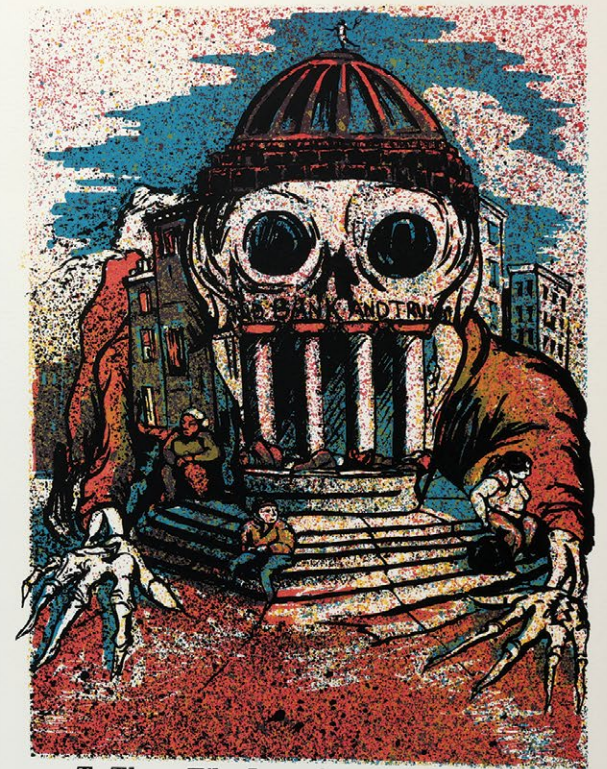
Loan courtesy of the artist



The order is rapidly fading



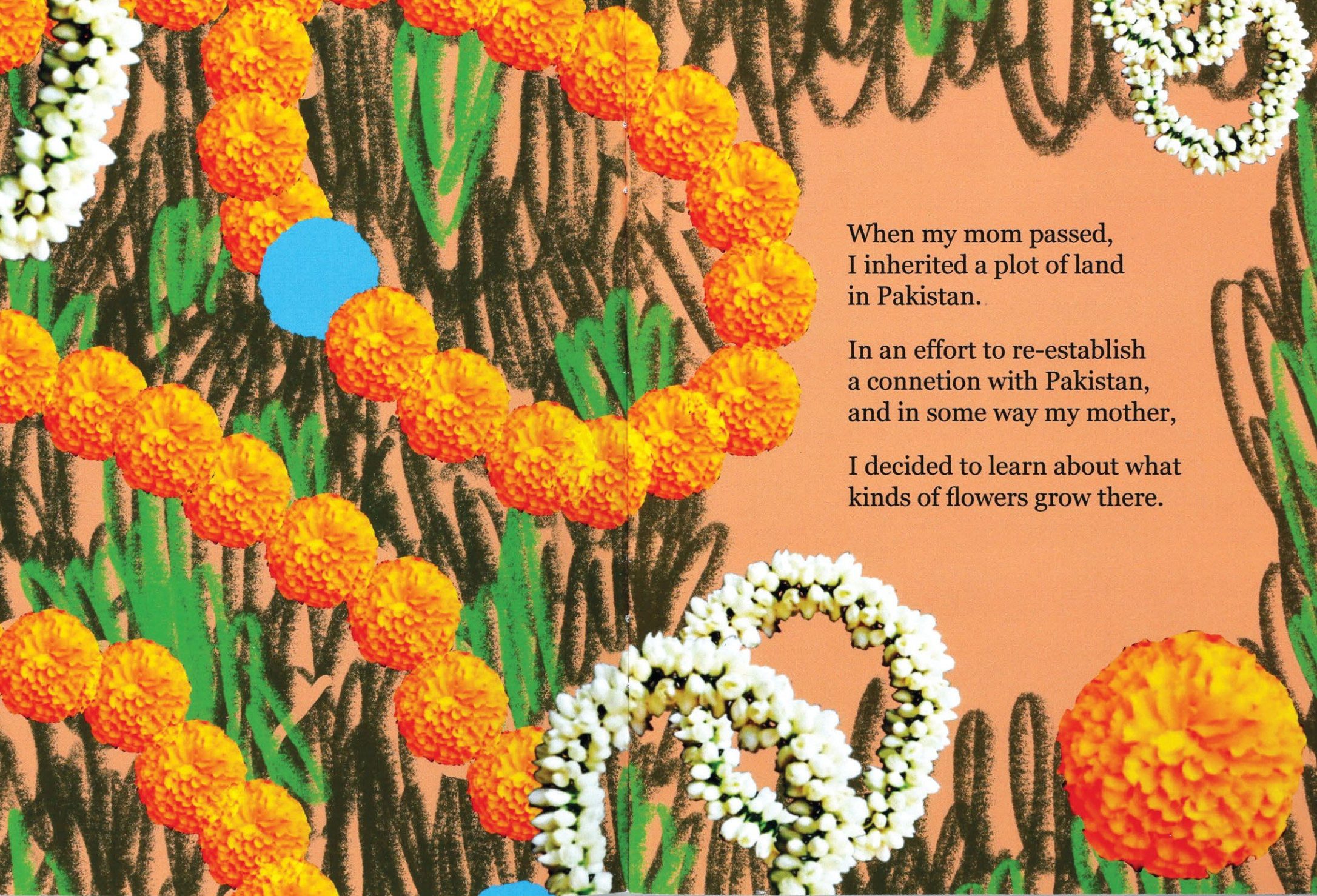
Woe To Those That Make Unjust Laws



To Those Who Issue Oppressive Decrees

Conceived just before the pandemic, this artist book of twenty-nine screenprint images spanning forty four pages was put into book form with the skill and design of Asa Nakata. The moneybag-headed capitalist, the one-eyed pyramid dollar, and the Klan mask are used here as shorthand for the destructive powers arrayed against the people and the planet at this critical moment of economic inequality, racist xenophobia and environmental disaster. But a growing alternative power is also at play. It's a power that can challenge the fascists if only the sleeping giant can arise to overthrow these forces and create a world that embraces all life. The big punch in the end is a moveable guillotine - leading to hours of fun decapitating capital. *Tipping Point* uses satire to make its point but the goal is to move towards a vision of transformation, a tipping point to something better.

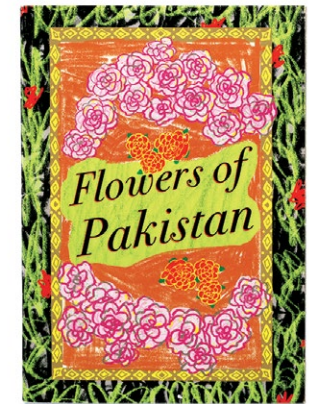
—from the artist's website



When my mom passed,
I inherited a plot of land
in Pakistan.

In an effort to re-establish
a connection with Pakistan,
and in some way my mother,

I decided to learn about what
kinds of flowers grow there.



Illustrated and written by Sana
Masud, *Flowers of Pakistan* asks
what it means to inherit land in
a country you do not live in.

—from the artist's website



Flowers of Pakistan (2022)

Sana Masud

Edition size: 200

Dimensions: 7 in. x 5 in. (closed); 7 in. x 10 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Staple bound; digitally printed

Loan courtesy of the artist

Mending the Stars and Stripes (2020)

Jan Owen

Edition size: Unique
Dimensions: 11 in. x 6.5 in. x 1 in. (closed);
11 in. x 13 in. x 1 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Sewn binding with 2 signatures, hand lettered text; Handmade paper by Kate Fairchild, hand/cross stitch text, ink, gouache and acrylic paint.

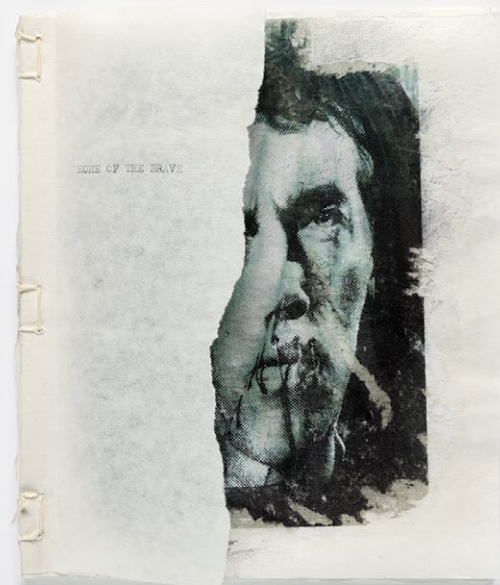
Loan courtesy of Wellesley College, Special Collections (Wellesley, MA.)



This book celebrates the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage. The assorted handmade papers are rough, gaudy and fun...The text includes words by Abigail Adams, Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, alongside the laws that evolved about the slow but determined effort for voting rights. To mimic the threads embedded in the papers, I cross- stitched the names Abigail and Martha at the beginning and Ruth and Kamala at the end.

—JO





Home of the Brave (2019)

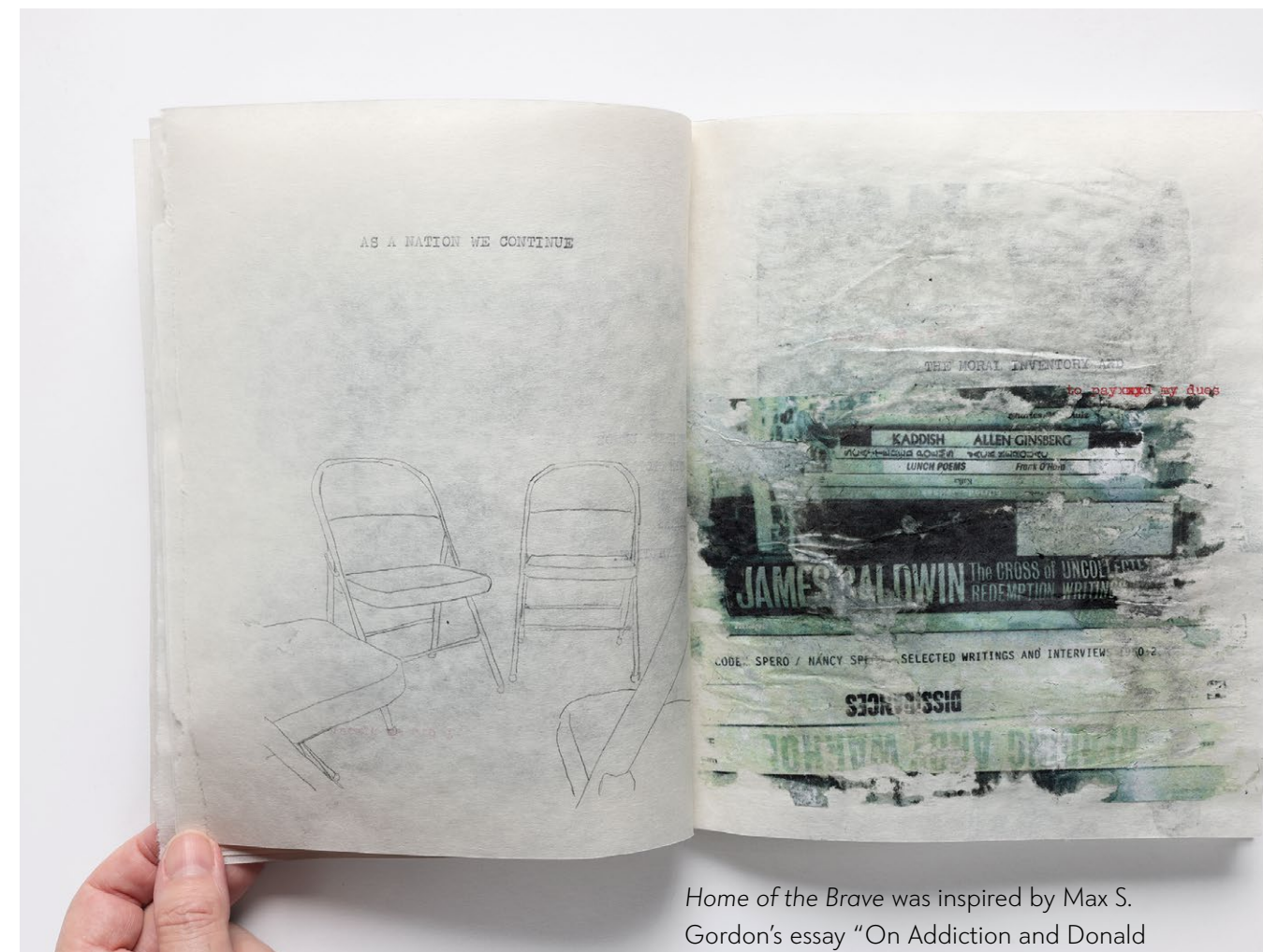
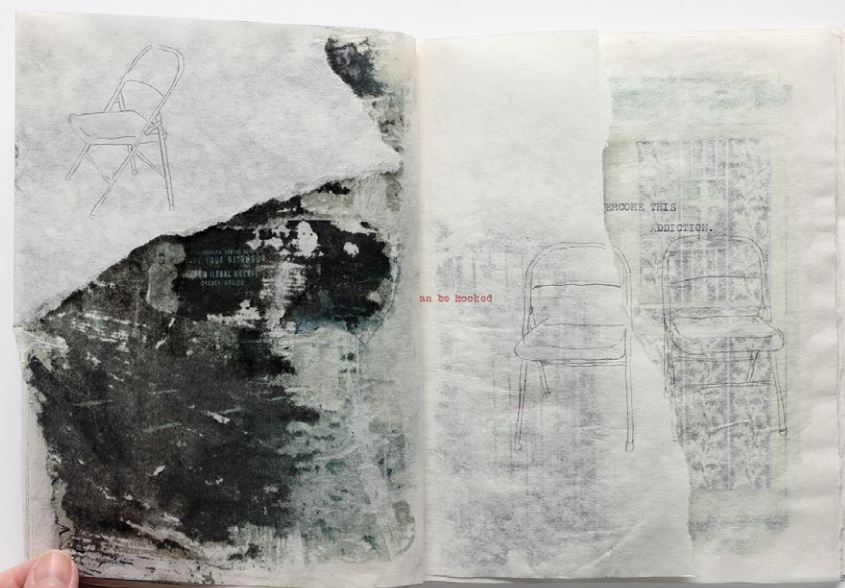
Beldan Sezen

Edition size: 15

Dimensions: 8.5 in. x 7 in. x .08 in (closed);
8.5 in. x 14 in. x 0.8 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Handsewn side stitch
binding; Photo transfer, pencil, typewritten text
on butcher paper.

Loan courtesy of the artist



Home of the Brave was inspired by Max S. Gordon's essay "On Addiction and Donald Trump." What if America entered rehab? To talk openly about complicities and heartbreak for a false dream is a true challenge when pointing fingers to the perpetual 'other' is key in maintaining a status quo. It takes bravery to face and admit one's addiction and helplessness. *Home of the Brave* asks "we the people" for just that.

—BS

**performing bayt:
mother tongue (2022)**

Andrea Shaker

Additional artists: Keith Taylor -
Platinum/Palladium prints

Edition size: Unique
Dimensions: Eight circular books of
variable lengths, diameter: 2 inches.
Vintage Photographic Case:
2.25 inches in diameter, 3 inches tall.

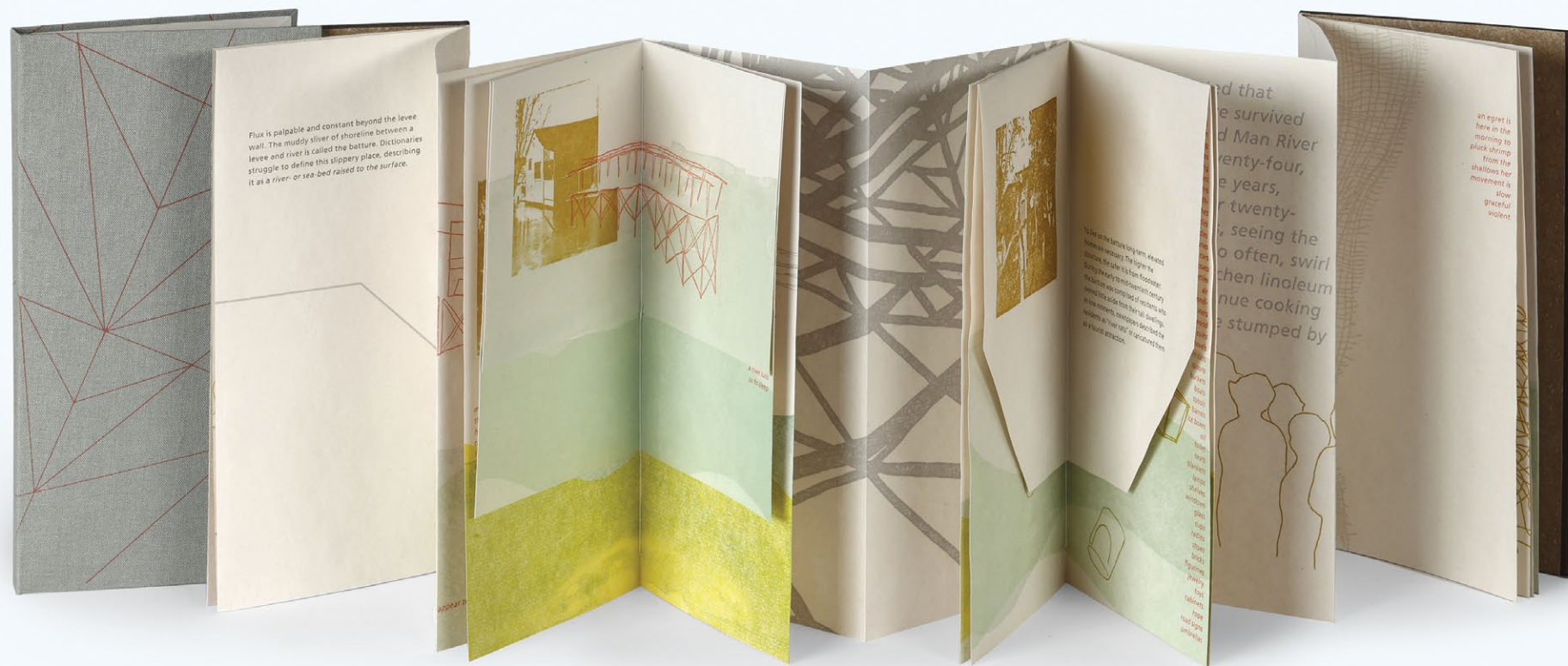
Materials and structure: Accordion
book structure with platinum/
palladium printed text and
photographs. Books are housed in
a vintage photographic case.

Loan courtesy of the artist



performing bayt: mother tongue is an ongoing series of wearable books in fragments. Writings reflect on the embodiment of home and homeland and the role of the photograph in the (re)imagining of bayt (Arabic for home). The photographs are fragments of images created within domestic spaces in Lebanon, including within the artist's ancestral home. *performing bayt: mother tongue* specifically addresses the loss of one's mother tongue through generational migration, diaspora and assimilation and the role of language in constructing spaces and experiences of belonging and (un)belonging.

—AS



Riverine (2016)

Sara White / Alluvium Press

Edition size: 35
Dimensions: 8 in. x 4 in. x 1 in. (closed);
8 in. x 8 in. x 1 in. (open)

Materials and structure: Accordion book
structure with additional foldouts, housed in
slipcase; Letterpress and pressure printing,
handmade cotton-abaca paper

Loan courtesy of Jennie Hinchcliff

Riverine is an artist's book and fragmented essay about a riparian landscape in New Orleans, LA called the "batture." Accompanied by letterpress imagery and textures of industrial structures and nature inhabiting this landscape located between the man-made levee and Mississippi River along the margins of the city, the book's text shifts and flows with each page-turn. It pays homage to communities that have existed on the batture in homes on stilts throughout history and the liminal experience of living in a place that is neither water nor solid ground, undefinable and always changing.

—from the artist's website



Artist index

Alphabetical by last name:

Adili, Golnar 3, 10, 48
Agid, Shana 14, 22
Banks, Alisa 11, 100
Blassingame, Tia 14, 50
Blount, Ben 24, 43
Boxer, Eileen 26, 43
Cooksey, Gabby 76
Cordeiro, Ana Paula 46-47, 52, 69
Covell, Anne 78, 94
Crawley, Ibe’ Bulindfa 54, 94, 95
De Armendi, Aurora 68, 74
Easley, Nia 66, 93
Feliciano, Jocmarys Viruet 18, 56
Goen, Kyle 28, 69, 70
Gonzalez, Nabil 17, 30
Hanauer, Kimi 3, 94, 102
Hazelwood, Art 14, 96-97, 104
Higa, Thad 16, 80
Holder, Robin 3, 45, 58

Kalman, Robert 13, 82
Kalmbach, Ann & Kellner, Tatana 14, 20-21, 32
Krupp, Andrea 11, 36
Lawrence, Colleen 12, 72-73, 84
Maret, Russell 42, 43, 86
Masud, Sana 9, 106
Miki-Lani Schroeder, Keri 11, 62
Owen, Jan 71, 108
Pisano, Maria 44, 88
Rice, Felicia 17, 34
Romero, Gino 18, 19, 98
Schanilec, Gaylord 45, 60
Sezen, Beldan 45, 110
Shaker, Andrea 10, 112
Silverberg, Robbin Ami 15, 38
Sobrino, Alan 90, 95
Starr, Tyler 40, 93
Thielen, Beth 15, 64
White, Sara 3, 12, 114

Curator Bios

Betty Bright, Ph.D., is an independent writer, curator and historian who specializes in the contemporary art of the book. Recent involvements include contributions to *Materialia Lumina: Contemporary Artists’ Books from the CODEX International Book Fair* (2022), and her essay, “Paper, Wood, Cloud & Nail: the im/measurable (Book) Art of Karen Wirth,” for the artist’s retrospective catalog, *Building / Books: Karen Wirth* (2025). Bright’s interests include craft’s evolving identity, the intersecting realms of art and the body, and artistic vehicles for social issues.

Mark Dimunation has been active as a librarian and curator in the rare book and book arts communities for more than four decades. After previous appointments at Berkeley, Stanford, and Cornell, Dimunation recently retired after 26 years as Chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division at the Library of Congress.

Maymanah Farhat is a curator whose work is focused on underrepresented artists and forgotten art scenes. She has curated exhibitions for the Center for Book Arts (NY), San Francisco Center for the Book (CA), the Arab American National Museum (MI), Art Dubai, and Beirut Exhibition Center, and has written widely on twentieth and twenty-first-century art and artists’ books, contributing essays and chapters to edited volumes, artist monographs, and museum and gallery catalogs. She currently teaches at California State University, Fresno.

Ruth R. Rogers is the Laura Daignault Gates class of ‘72 Curator of Special Collections at Wellesley College, where her work focuses on the evolution of the book as material culture, visual communication, and artistic form. As lecturer in the Art Department, she teaches a hands-on seminar on the History of the Book, and hosts courses throughout the curriculum in the interdisciplinary area of book studies. In her writing and teaching, most recently at California Rare Book School, she advocates for developing standards and approaches for building institutional collections with artists’ books.

Yuka Petz is a visual artist whose creative practice is centered around language, paper, and letterforms. She also writes and hosts the *Artist’s Books Unshelved* video series for the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art and teaches youth and adult book arts workshops around the country. Yuka is committed to collaborative and community-oriented projects that increase the accessibility of book, print, and paper arts.

Acknowledgments and Thanks:

Betty Bright and the *Who Is America* curatorial team would like to thank:

On behalf of the curatorial team (Mark Dimunation, Maymanah Farhat, Yuka Petz, Ruth Rogers, and myself), I would like to thank the participating artists in *Who is America at 250*. The inception of the show began with and has been directed by a commitment to raise up artists’ voices during this chaotic period in the United States. With the recognition that this exhibition can represent only one community of voices about America today, the curatorial team honors the courage, clarity of voice, and creativity of all artists who continue to work under increasing pressures and, in some cases, despite threats of persecution.

We also thank the San Francisco Center for the Book (especially Jennie Hinchcliff, Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs). This exhibition could not have happened without SFCB’s leadership support since the project’s beginnings in 2022, and which has extended to this catalog and the show’s national tour. Many thanks to the site hosts in the tour: from SFCB, the exhibition traveled to the Boston Athenaeum, and then to Minnesota Center for Book Arts.

Our thanks as well to Inge Bruggeman and The CODEX Foundation, which joined SFCB as a co-sponsor of the project. CODEX generously devoted one day of its 2026 Symposium (concurrent with the CODEX International Biennial Book Art Fair), to discussion of the themes and works in the show.

Curatorial research included the review of recent printed and online resources such as catalogs, journal articles and book reviews, as well as visits to book fairs and countless conversations with artists. In addition, Yuka Petz thanks Cynthia Sears, Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, and Catherine Alice Michaelis, for providing access to many key works, and Betty Bright thanks artist and writer Aimee Lee for her suggested readings and resources.

Jennie Hinchcliff and the San Francisco Center for the Book would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the individuals and institutions who have been instrumental in bringing *Who Is America at 250?* to life.

To our lending and hosting partners:
We are deeply grateful to Wellesley College and Ruth Rogers; Faythe Levine and the Women’s Studio Workshop; and the University of Arizona, Tucson for generously loaning works to the exhibition. Our thanks also go to Anika Schneider (Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs) and Minnesota Center for Book Arts as well as John Buchtel (Curator of Rare Books and Head of Special Collections), Lily Sterling-Thompson (Special Collections Registrar and Exhibitions Manager), and the Boston Athenaeum—all of whom have been exemplary partners to work with. The collaboration and care shown by your organizations have shaped the exhibition’s presence at their respective venues.

To the WIA250 curatorial team:
Thank you for offering a timely and powerful vision—one that shaped the project’s direction and invites all who encounter the exhibition, in its many forms, to participate in the ongoing work of shaping a more inclusive and shared American experiment.

To Betty Bright:
Your insight, generosity, and clear-eyed interpretation brought depth to this project at every twist and turn. Thank you for your unwavering support, thoughtful engagement, and wise counsel throughout the process of bringing *Who Is America at 250?* to life.

To our creative team:
Sincere thanks goes to Takayo Fredericks for her stunning identity and catalog design, which shaped the exhibition’s visual presence and to Von Span for his elegant photography and videography of the exhibition’s works.

Finally, to the exhibiting artists and the many individuals who contributed their time, energy, and expertise—thank you. Your work, your voices, and your commitments are what give this project its heart.

Board of Directors of the San Francisco Center for the Book:

Becky Cook | David Faulds | Margaret Miller | Judy Nadler |
Beth Redmond | David Senior | Ellen Sheffield |
Duff Axsom, Emeritus | Curtiss Taylor, Emeritus

Mary Austin and Kathleen Burch | Founders, San Francisco Center for the Book

SFCB Staff:

David Owens-Hill : Executive Director
Jennie Hinchcliff : Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs
Chad Johnson : Studio Director | Resident Instructor
Sarah Songer : Program and Studio Manager
Katie Smith : Operations Manager
Josephine Madhok : Director of Development
Alisa Nascimento : Studio Coordinator
Sam Fricke : Visitor Services Associate

About San Francisco Center for the Book:

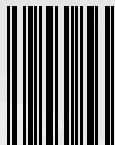
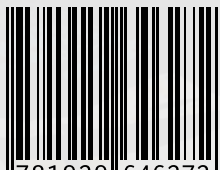
Located in San Francisco’s Potrero Hill neighborhood, San Francisco Center for the Book (SFCB) fosters the appreciation of books as art and craft through exhibitions, workshops, and public programs. Established in 1996 by artists Mary Austin and Kathleen Burch, SFCB serves as a vital hub for artists, printers, and the wider community to explore the traditions and evolving practices of creating artists’ books. SFCB’s studios, classrooms, and gallery support hands-on learning and creative exchange across disciplines such as letterpress printing, bookbinding, and printmaking. Through a strong commitment to education and artistic innovation, SFCB advances the understanding of the book as a dynamic form of expression that connects history, craftsmanship, and contemporary art.

San Francisco Center for the Book
375 Rhode Island Street, between 16th and 17th Streets
San Francisco, CA. 94103
www.sfcb.org



ISBN 978-1-929646-27-2

90000>



9 781929 646272