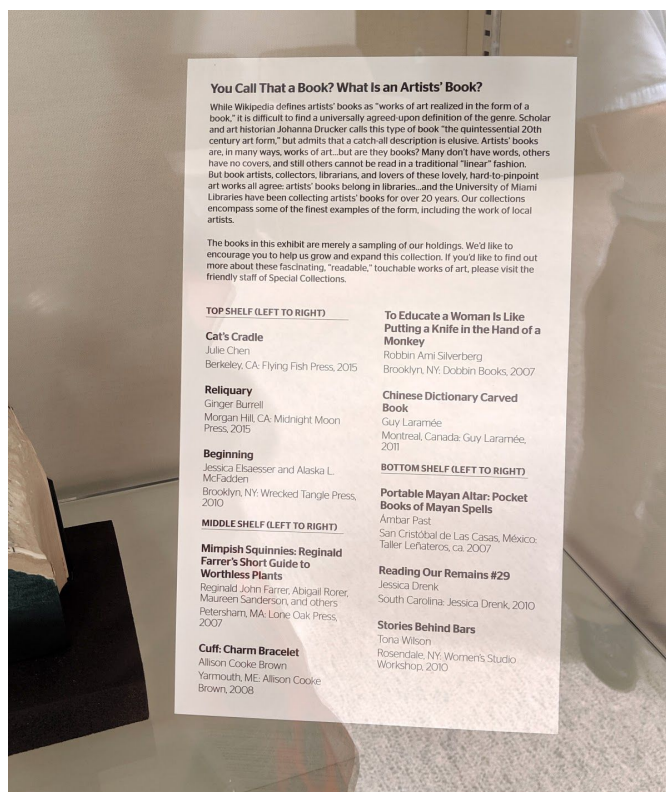


Reflection: Victoria Valdes (vevagency.com)

Kislak Center, Home of Special Collections and University Archives University of Miami Coral Gables, FL

As the “Home of Special Collections,” the first exhibit highlighted in the Kislak Center lobby is a unique “book” collection, titled, *“You Call That A Book? What is an Artists’ Book?”* It is a fitting entrance positioned collection, as an example of the many types of books the Kislak Center has collected over 20 years, being *“fascinating, “readable,” touchable works of art.”* (Kislak, 2019)



The collection highlights the unconventional aspect of artists' presenting stories in creative mediums. The pieces in this collection tell a story by including text, but also physically representing text in a concrete structure.

"While Wikipedia defines artist' books as 'works of art realized in the form of a book,' it is difficult to find a universally agreed-upon definition of the genre. Scholar and art historian Johanna Drucker calls this type of book "the quintessential 20th century art form," but admits that a catch-all description is elusive. Artists' books are, in many ways, works of art... but are they books? Many don't have the words, others have no covers, and still others cannot be read in a traditional 'linear' fashion." (Kislak, 2019)

The exhibit's significance portrays a new way to look at books, as all not being in a traditional linear text format. Take photo books for example, while they have images, they may not have text, but are still considered books? These are the kinds of questions that this exhibit sparks in viewers.

The exhibit does utilize new technology, defined as, "techniques, skills, methods, and processes used in the production of goods or services or in the accomplishment of objectives." (Wikipedia, 2019) While it does not utilize digital technology, this is a technological innovation from the formal presentation of text by displaying words in a non-linear fashion.

Public historians should be interested in this exhibit, as it opens the field of traditional communication to new formats, and educates on various forms of text expression. The exhibit is timeless, as presenting classical pieces such as a dictionary transformed into a mountain landscape, and eggs that can 'speak', bringing to life pieces that are otherwise viewed only through the traditional lens if these physical objects did not have text or sculpted format.

While this presentation of text in art may not be 'new', as artists' have been doing it over the years, the fact that the Kislak Center is portraying this type of art form as an alternate form of 'books is new to the general public space. It can help shape the wider public's understanding that books do not have to be traditionally formatted to still tell a story, "as a picture says a thousand words," so do these collection pieces illustrate this.