



ARTSPACE
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This exhibition presents selections from the Yale University Art Gallery's Allan Chasanoff Book Art Collection, gathered from the 1960s to the present, alongside eight new commissions conceived and produced in 2014 for the galleries at Artspace. The historic Collection re-envisioned the book as sculpture, and serves as both counterpoint and inspiration for the new works. The commissions were selected via an open call, which challenged artists to submit proposals that both deconstruct the concept of the book, and take the state of Connecticut as a starting point.

In the midst of a digital era that prioritizes the speed and ease of communication, the Chasanoff Collection points to ways in which image and form can replace words and still operate fluidly as language. Objects from the collection are strikingly physical; they privilege process and technique with an encyclopedic approach that Allan Chasanoff has described as "books under pressure." The works are chopped, pounded, pureed, molded, and reformed. They are baked, burned, jarred, shredded, bound, powdered, wrapped, and kneaded into new solids. In fact, the collection is so fascinated by physical treatment that the violent reanimation often renders the book's contents illegible. As a result, the collection may be read as a clever art historical querying of the status of a literary work that is conceptually and literally deconstructed.

The eight commissions echo the Chasanoff Collection in examining the physical limits to what can be identified as a book. Several artists explode the concept further, presenting book-as-environment or book-as-total-surround. Others mutate the book, evoking the evaporation of literature in our Kindle and e-book era. Several take a historical approach, retaining the notion of a book as a vessel for presenting a critical argument or narrative. The commissions reference a range of sociopolitical issues specific to Connecticut, including environmental, industrial and legal topics. Personal histories and family lineage intertwine through many, adding an intimate note. Juxtaposed with the Chasanoff Collection, which offers precedent and context, these new commissions come together to meditate on the evolution of the book in the here and now.

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