



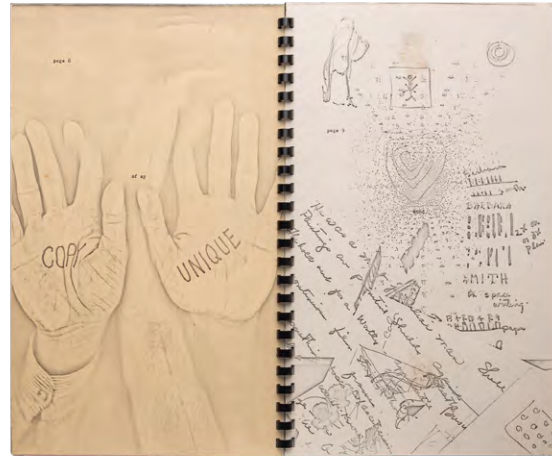
Center for Book Arts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Craft & Conceptual Art:

Reshaping the Legacy of Artists' Books

On view:  
April 15 – June 18, 2023  
at San Francisco Center  
for the Book



Barbara T. Smith  
*Coffin: In Self Defense* (1967)  
Courtesy the artist  
and The Box, Los Angeles  
Photo: Luis Corzo

**SAN FRANCISCO** – *Craft & Conceptual Art: Reshaping the Legacy of Artists' Books*, curated by Megan N. Liberty, reconsiders the early history of artists' books. In the history of art, craft and conceptual art are often placed at odds. Craft emphasizes the materiality of the object, while conceptual art emphasizes the dematerialization of the object. But artists' books offer a unique merging of these premises in the book's status as a conceptual, tactile, and often ephemeral object. Successful artists' books blend the craft of its making with a conceptual premise in which the idea of the book—sequence, repetition, and audience activation—is essential to its meaning.

*Craft & Conceptual Art: Reshaping the Legacy of Artists' Books* revisits this early history, focusing on the intertwined legacies of book art centers and other institutions across the US whose primary goal has been to teach the craft practices of book arts and related practices of distribution and collecting. Tracing the foundation of book art organizations across the US—including, Center for Book Arts in 1974, Printed Matter and Franklin Furnace in 1976, Minnesota Center for Book Arts in 1983, and San Francisco Center for the Book in 1996—this exhibition shows craft and conceptual art not to be opposites, but rather two ends of the spectrum of book art practices.

The exhibition focuses on art book production beginning in the mid 1960s and work that was exhibited from 1973-1996, drawing a line

from the first cited US exhibition of artists' books at Moore College to the founding of San Francisco Center for the Book, charting the legacy of bookmaking across the US, including a range of artists, from Liliana Porter, Howardena Pindell, and Suzanne Lacy, to Barton Lidice Beneš, Sas Colby, and Betsy Davids. *Craft & Conceptual Art* sheds new light on both ends of the sliding scale between craft and conceptual art, allowing us to better understand the growing field of artists' book production.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring additional contributions by Sur Rodney (Sur), David Senior, Kayleigh Perkov, and Tara Aisha Willis, and a selection of reprinted historical texts.

Artists in the exhibition include Francis Butler, Sas Colby, Betsy Davids, Mirtha Dermisache, Alison Knowles, Gordon Matta-Clark, Benjamin Patterson, Howardena Pindell, Ed Ruscha, Clarissa Sligh, and Barbara T. Smith (among others).

This exhibition has been organized by the Center for Book Arts in New York; lenders to the exhibition include Center for Book Arts, Harvard University, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and Archive, Minnesota Center for Book Arts Artist's Book Archive, and Otis College of Art and Design.

#### EXHIBITION TITLE

*Craft and Conceptual Art: Reshaping the Legacy of Artists' Books*

#### WHERE

San Francisco Center for the Book  
375 Rhode Island Street, San Francisco, CA. 94103 [sfcb.org](http://sfcb.org)

#### WHEN

April 15 – June 18, 2023  
SFCB gallery hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 10 am – 5 pm

#### OPENING RECEPTION

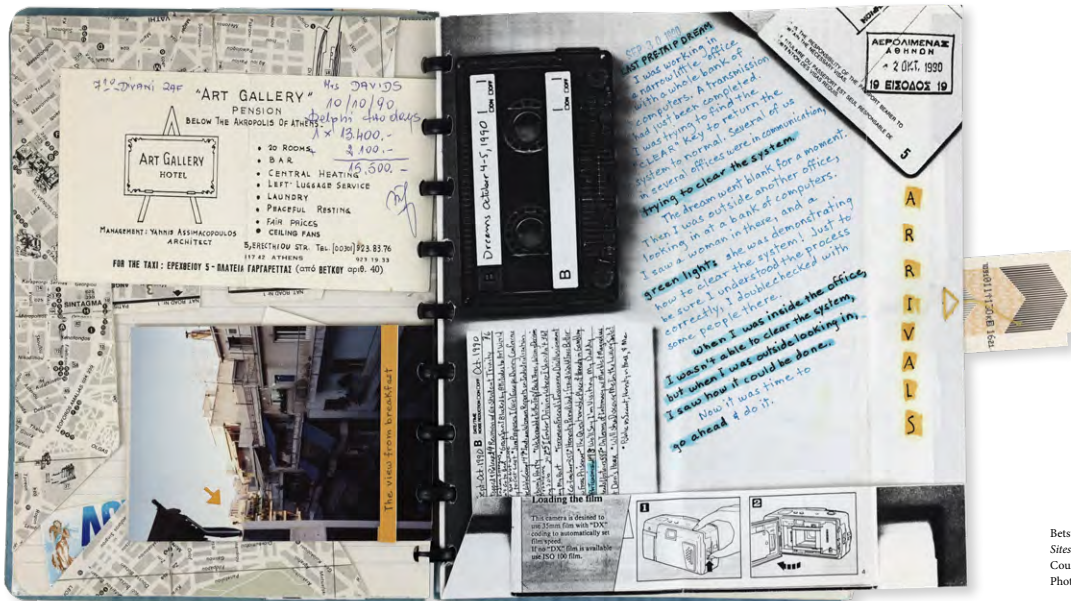
Friday, April 21st, 6 – 8 pm

#### TICKETS

Admission is free.

For further information or press photographs, please contact

Jennie Hinchliff, Director of Exhibitions and Artistic Programs:  
[exhibitions@sfcb.org](mailto:exhibitions@sfcb.org)



Betsy Davids  
*Sites and Passages* (1992)  
 Courtesy of the artist  
 Photo: Von Span



Reginald Walker  
*Hagazzusa* (1985)  
 Courtesy of Gerard  
 Charrier

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