

Art show

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speaks volumes

writer Jennifer Bartlett

Books hold special places in people's lives. We all have our favorite editions, dog-eared and worn, that we lend only begrudgingly to our friends. It is not only the words, but the physical volume.

This week, in anticipation of Literary Sojourn, an annual gathering of authors in Steamboat, an exhibit titled "The Book As Art" will be on display at the Depot from Sept. 8 to 30. There will be an opening reception on Saturday, Sept. 12, from 5 to 7 p.m.

The display will take license with the word "book." Bound volumes, covered in leather with gold lettering, will not be found. Instead, viewers will be looking at books taken to another level. There will be collages, figures, even things with an architectural bent.

Art is visual, but sometimes words come into play on the canvas. Two of the artists on display at the Depot had been incorporating words and markings into their art, so the movement to making books was a natural.

"I'd found I had an inability to communicate ideas in a way that other people could understand. It became clear I had to use words," said Susan Hensel, an artist in East Lansing, Mich.

Hensel has had a long love affair with books and reading, starting out with writing bad poetry in her younger years, she admitted.

"I'm a passionate reader. My house groans with books," she said.

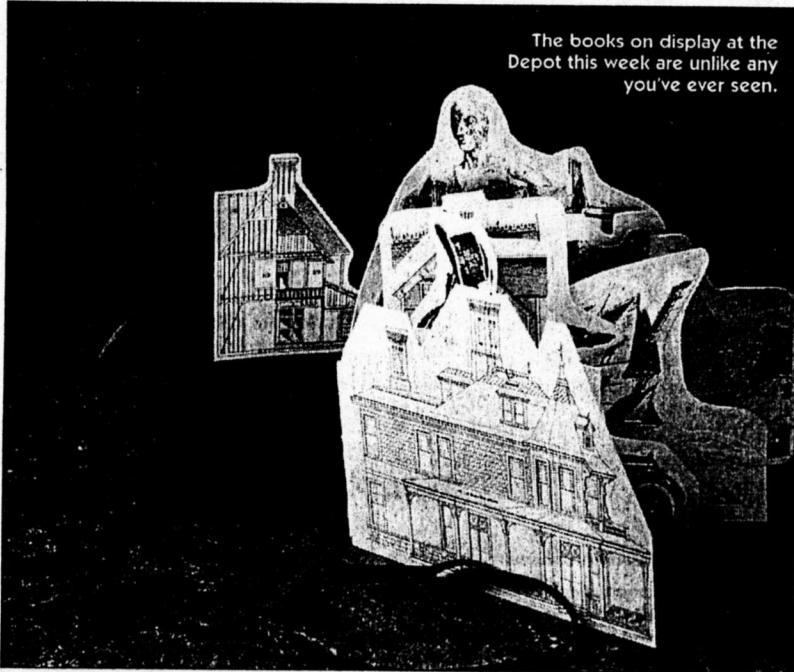
Hensel had been working in clay, when she started making paper as a hobby. She eventually took a course which was the beginning of book-making for her. She now makes books full-time, which is a rarity.

"When I took that course, I never touched clay again," she said.

She first bound a simple Japanese book and that also changed things for her.

"I felt like my universe changed. I went through a whole paradigm shift. I thought 'I can actually make a book,'" she said.

For Pati Scobey, she looked at the book as more intimate than a painting. You can hold it in your hand, touch it, feel it. She went from printmaking that already had



The books on display at the Depot this week are unlike any you've ever seen.

narrative etchings on it to making books.

"I get a real special response. The book is intimate, it is held. It is between the viewer's eyes and the object that's being held, rather than being on the wall," Scobey said, who lives in Concord, Mich.

Each artist has themes running through their designs.

"I'm interested in a creation that will make people think, that will make them ask questions," Hensel said. She often included "issues of conscience" in her work.

She also has some sentimental work. "My House" is an accordion-shaped house that follows Hensel in an imaginary tour of her childhood house, but also plays on her memories of her mother.

"It turned into memories of my mother. There were certain things I didn't remember about my mother," she said.

Scobey focuses on transformation and change, many that echo her personal journeys, she said.

"A book can be a journey. There are different journeys in my life at pivotal points," she said.

The exhibit is sponsored by Chez Nouse.

The Book as Art Workshop "The Magical Mechanics of Pop-Up Books" with Bonnie Stahlecker will be held on Sept. 13.

Call Bud Werner at 879-0240 for more information. Seating is very limited.

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