

# Exhibit proves books can be more than words

By Julie A. Blakley  
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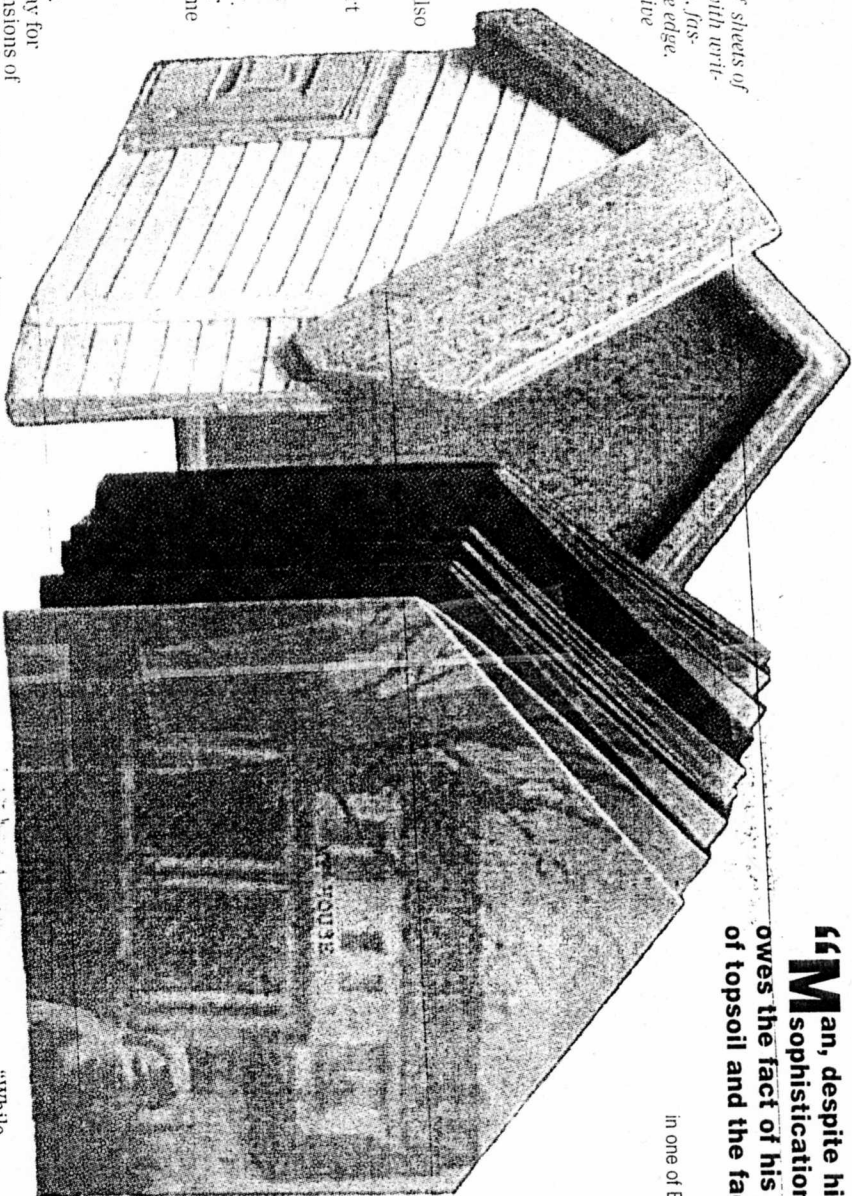
**THOMASVILLE** — *A number of sheets of paper, parchment, etc. with writing or printing on them, fastened together along one edge, usually between protective covers.*

Sometimes, a book can be more than its definition. A new exhibit at the Thomasville Cultural Center proves that books can do more than speak to people through words. They also can speak to them through form.

A collection of 19 art books, all lettered and constructed by female artists and poets, is on display at the cultural center through May 17. Curator Gybert Coker said this is the first time art books have been shown there and that her goal with this exhibit was to expand the way people view bound sheets of paper.

"This is another way for people to look at expansions of forms of expression," said Coker, adding that books don't have to be practical tools for disseminating information. They can, she said, be works of art.

Book themes include death, war, nature, gambling and food and even take on characteristics of the biographical novels that fill book



**"Man, despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication and many accomplishments, owes the fact of his existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains."**

Anonymous  
In one of Beth Lee's books on display at the cultural center now

She enjoys making art books, she said, because it combines bookbinding, calligraphy, painting and printmaking. She does design work on the side.

The theme of Beth Lee's book titled "Spring Haiku" is carried throughout the work, even down to the cover, one of handmade paper that contains bits of turnip.

"It just seemed very springy," said Lee about her choice of covers.

The book, she said, involved an experiment with pigments. All paints used are handmade. A haiku about nature dominates each page.

Lee, 45, said while paintings are looked at all at once, a book is looked at over time. That's one reason she's drawn to creating art books.

"It's a different sort of medium," said the Tallahassee, Fla., resident.

Her second book in the exhibit is a tall one that takes its theme from this anonymous quote: "Man, despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication and many accomplishments, owes the fact of his existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains."

The accordion-style book contains a strata of rock upon which the words flow like grass. She said the idea behind the book is that people have a tendency to ponder their importance but that we are all really "hanging on by a blade of grass."

"People talk about how we're destroying the earth, but we're destroying our ability to live on it," she said. "The earth will still be here. It's not the earth that's so fragile. It's us."

To contact reporter Julie A. Blakley, call (229) 226-2400, ext. 225.

## IF YOU GO

- What: Display of 19 art books created by female artists and poets
- Where: Thomasville Cultural Center, 600 E. Washington St.
- When: The books will be on display through May 17.
- Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday
- Information: 226-0588 or [www.tccarts.com](http://www.tccarts.com)

store racks these days. Take, for example, Susan Hensel's "My House" made with toner, paper, putty and paint. Contained in a box made of heavy paper that looks like a house is a collection of memories that have faded over time. The memories printed on paper flow into each other, said Coker, just as memories in one's mind assemble, collide and float away.

"It becomes more than a book you read," said Coker about the work that includes photographs of the artist and a house that act as a backdrop for the text. "It's like a sculpture."

Nancy Ruth Leavitt lives in Stillwater, Maine. Her book in the show — "A Road Alphabet" — is dedicated to the wonder of the open road and focuses on travel and adventure. A simple lavender cover opens to reveal calligraphy and splashes of paint on paper — pigment depicting a road that leads toward a mountain and the sun.

"While you are preparing to go on a journey you own the journey," wrote Leavitt, 49, in the book.

"But after you have started, the journey owns you."

The books contains a "stream of consciousness" poem, said Leavitt in a phone interview. And the road, she said, is a recurring theme in her work.

"I've painted thousands of roads," she said. "The image of a road is really a metaphor for all kinds of things."

One thing for which it's a metaphor is travel, said Leavitt, actual or internal.

Leavitt said the late 80s involved a lot of travel for her. Fond of landscapes, she started taking pictures of roads and painting them as she was driving.

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