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Ah, the life of an artist

By *Charray Reilly*

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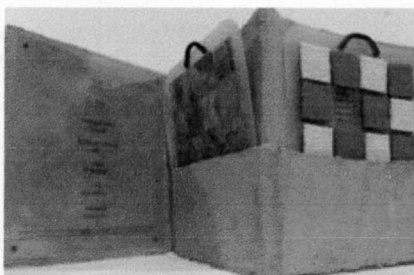
Is it a book? Is it art? Core New Art Space's juried show is proof that definitions won't constrain the possibilities of what can and will be produced under this umbrella structure.

Art students should be familiar with artists' books, especially since classes are offered here on campus to specifically explore this phenomenon; most major libraries (including Denver Public) usually include these transgressive pieces amongst the collections of their literary-based brothers and sisters. The Core show is yet another addition to our community displays, but when dealing with artists' books, audiences can rightfully assume they will find innovation in every observation.

Alicia Bailey was the juror for the show. "There's always bias when you're asked to judge something," she admits. "And I do have my biases." Bailey's judgments, however, were based less on personal preference and more on composing a show that exhibited variation, originality and clarity. "So many entries," she wrote on her juror's statement, "lacked clarity in one of two main areas: 1) what idea the maker was concerning themselves with, and 2) why did the maker choose this format over another to present their idea."

Tara O'Brien's piece, "Documentation," exemplifies Bailey's ability to decipher a well-executed entry: it is "book" of Plexiglas pages filled with soil and seeds, some beginning to sprout grass. "Tears," a mixed media book by Deborah Horner, is an assemblage of patchwork wool, leaves, canvas, copper, wood, acrylic and words dedicated to the seasons and the loss of her sister. Horner, who taught the artist's book class at Metro, says, "I wanted to show it wasn't just for me. But I was indulgent." The piece, which began as a project to reacquaint her with her studio after her experiences with the tragedy, took Horner about three months to complete, and required multiple stages of reading, writing and creating.

Some exhibits focused on the personal while others focused on ... panties? Susan Hensel's "The Panty Symphony" is an astounding amalgamation of images, original poetry and music dedicated to unmentionables; tiny cards printed with songs of underwear exaltation hide inside each page. Though Hensel's book doesn't display any bra burning, "Seed Mix" by Rachel Melis heats up the show all on its own, especially for its political relevance this close



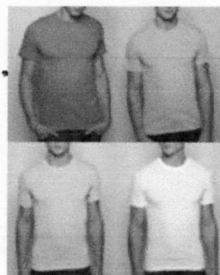
Pieces in the show Book+Art=? are meant to question if books are art and if art can be books.

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 - ☞ not as cool as lizards.
 - ☞ None of the above.