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# A Library of Unreadable Things: “The Art of the Book” at Seager Gray Gallery

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AN HOUR AGO

For nine years running, [Seager Gray Gallery](#) has presented “[The Art of the Book](#),” an annual, bibliophilic exhibition that transforms the space into a library of sorts—where none of the books can be read. No settling into a good book here. The 26 artists participating in this year’s iteration of what the gallery calls a “labor of love,” celebrate, explore, and complicate the experience of reading, and our relationship to books, by breaking every good librarian’s rules. They have cut, torn, bent, folded, molded, painted, and otherwise transformed books into an inventive assortment of objects, sculptures, and wall pieces, which promise to unsettle, and, ultimately, enrich our understanding of these valued sources of knowledge and pleasure.

Beginning with the basics, [Renee Billingslea](#) provides viewers not necessarily with a dictionary, but with *Dic-Shoe-naries* (2013). She has carved a pair of dapper men’s loafers out of Webster’s tome, whose absurdly high soles emphasize the huge number of words in reference volumes. In keeping with the content of the books she alters, [Barbara Wildenboer](#) slices guides for gardening and to the flora in her native South Africa into thriving, plant-like pieces in her “Dark Paradise” series (2013). The pages of texts with titles like *The Gardener in South Africa* appear as tendrils, whose delicacy belies their strength: pushing their way through binding, they grow wildly beyond the cover’s edges, flouting the would-be gardener’s efforts to tame nature. [Andrew Hayes](#), on the other hand, bends books to his will in his minimalist wall-mounted sculptures, *Union* and *Furrow* (both 2014). Combined with pieces of steel, the books are molded into gracefully curving, abstract forms, with the word-speckled edges of their layered pages serving as a softer foil to the hard surfaces they hug.

[Doug Beube](#), whose *Kylix Series: Reason S* (2014), a chopped-up copy of *The Dreams of Reason*, is included in the exhibition, once described his approach to each of the books with which he works as archeological or medical. “Like a physician or an archaeologist,” he stated, “I am driven to examine it, to dissect it, to cut it open, to dig into it.” As are all of the artists in *The Art of the Book*, who take us deep beneath the covers.

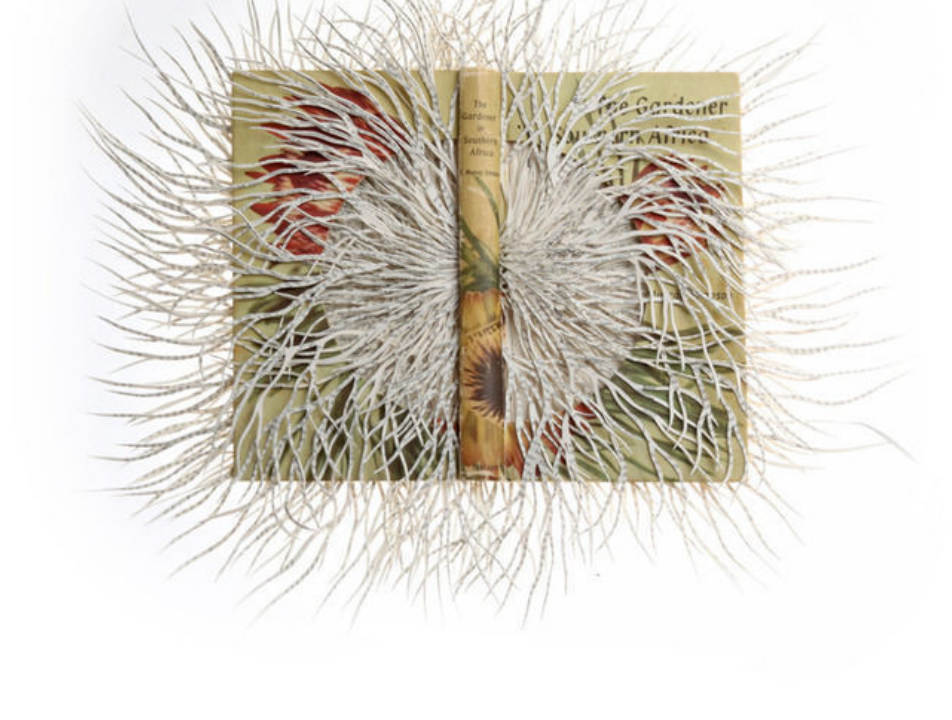
*“The Art of the Book” is on view at Seager Gray Gallery May 3–June 1, 2014.*

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Renee Billingslea  
*Dic-Shoe-naries*, 2013  
Seager Gray Gallery  
\$2,000

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Barbara Wildenboer  
*Dark Paradise II*, 2013  
Seager Gray Gallery  
\$3,000

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Barbara Wildenboer  
*Dark Paradise I*, 2013  
Seager Gray Gallery  
\$3,000

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Andrew Hayes  
*Union*, 2014  
Seager Gray Gallery  
\$3,200

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Andrew Hayes  
*Furrow*, 2014  
Seager Gray Gallery  
\$2,800

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Doug Beube  
*Kylix Series: Reason S*, 2014  
Seager Gray Gallery  
\$2,800

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## ARTISTS MENTIONED IN POST



RENEE BILLINGSLEA



BARBARA WILDENBOER



ANDREW HAYES



DOUG BEUBE

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Ivan Ratowsky's Spontaneous Dualities, Painted on Tequila Paper©

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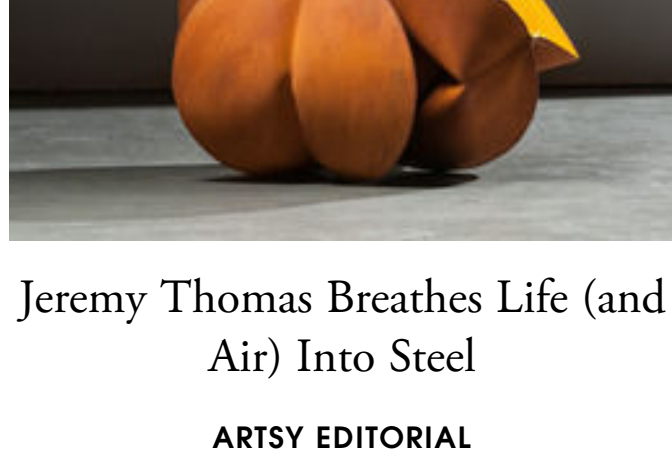
The Beauty of the Basics, and Radical Innovations, at Christopher-Clark Fine Art

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Nature's Elements Marshalled Into Exquisite Forms

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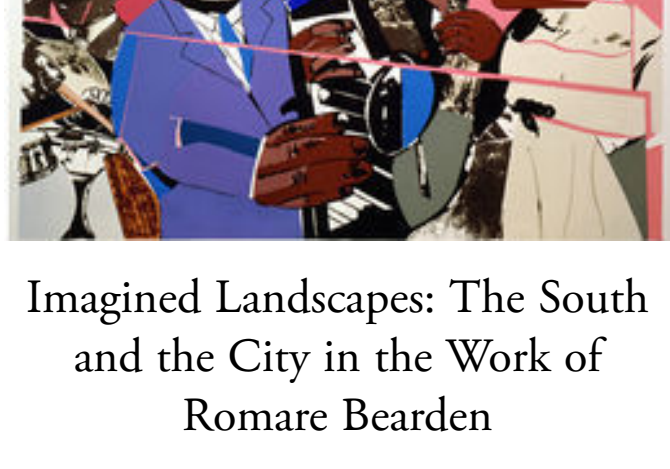
Jeremy Thomas Breathes Life (and Air) Into Steel

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Maison Gerard's Benoit F. Drut, Expert in 20th-Century Art Deco

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Imagined Landscapes: The South and the City in the Work of Romare Bearden

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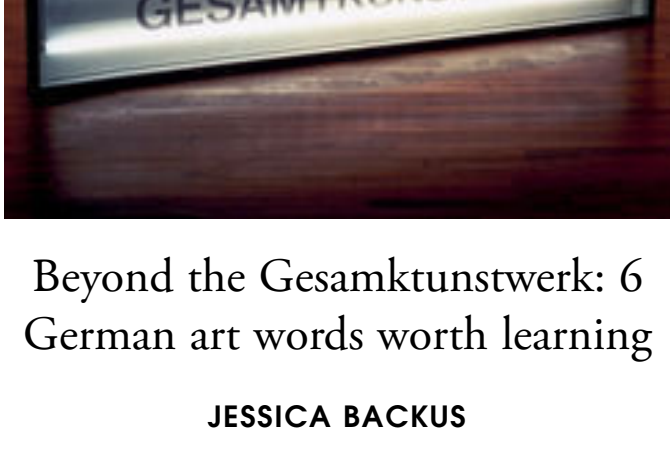
The Many Sides of Ed Ruscha

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JESSICA BACKUS



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