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Old Gold & Black

NEWS

Artist And Typewriter Find Temporary Home In ZSR

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Friday, November 17, 2017

Over the course of the past week, the clicking sound of a typewriter — unfamiliar to modern students — has pierced the silence in Z. Smith Reynolds Library.

Sitting at the welcome desk near the main entrance, artist Tim Youd has been retyping a novel.

This retyping is a performance piece, which goes in tandem with the current exhibition at Hanes Gallery, *Movable Type*. The performance piece is a part of Youd's 10-year long project, *100 Novels*.

"I'm retyping 100 novels over a 10-year-period," Youd said. "The books have to be typed by the author. I retype each novel on the same make and model typewriter that the author used and in a location that's somehow related to the novel or to the author."

According to Youd, he prepares to retype a novel by reading them ahead of time. For Youd, this gets at the purpose of the project.

"At it's core, [this project] is this exercise in good reading and trying to be a better reader," he said. "I'm closely reading the book. I annotate it as I go along and take notes. I'm really trying to be all the way in on the novel, so I make sure I'm retyping a novel I can learn more from."

A notable aspect about this project is that Youd retypes the novel on one piece of paper, with a second sheet behind it. When he fills up the page with type, he replaces the same page back into the typewriter.

"When I'm done, I take the two sheets out and lay them side-by-side in what would be called a diptych form," Youd said.

A diptych is an object with two flat panels connected at a hinge.

As Youd continues typing, the paper becomes more worn.

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“What happens to the paper is dependent on the length of the novel and the type of machine. [The rollers] were made out of rubber and get rock hard after sitting in an attic for 50 years,” Youd said. “It’s like putting a piece of paper on a rock and smashing it with a rock — there’s no give. It really beats on the paper.”

Occasionally, Youd has to fix the sheet of paper.

“It gets patched and repatched and repatched again so that it can stay in at least enough shape so that I can keep going,” Youd said.

Currently, Youd is retyping *The Land Breakers*, a novel by John Ehle, who currently resides in Winston-Salem.

“[Ehle] was good enough to loan me his actual typewriter for two months,” Youd said. That’s the first thing you see when you walk into the exhibition at Hanes Gallery.”

In addition to Ehle’s typewriter, the *Movable Type* exhibition is a survey of the 52 novels that Youd has typed so far. The main portion is 14 finished diptych pieces. For each novel that Youd completes, there is a completed diptych. On each diptych, “the entire novel is present, you just can’t read it,” Youd said.

As to why he chose Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Youd has previous connections with Wake Forest. This past May, Youd performed a piece at Casa Artom, the Wake Forest house on the Grand Canal in Venice, he said.

“[The performance piece in Venice] happened because the gallerist who represents me in New York, Cristin Tierney, is a Wake Forest graduate,” Youd said. “She wanted to have me perform there, so she talked to Paul Bright, the director of the Hanes Gallery, and told him about the project. He brought me over to Venice, so I did a Patricia Highsmith novel that’s set in Venice.

Youd said that, with *The Land Breakers* being roughly 350 pages, the retyping will take close to 100 hours. He started last Tuesday and expects to be completed either on Saturday evening or Sunday mid-morning.

Retyping an entire novel might appear tedious, but Youd finds it just the opposite. A recent night upon returning home after a long day of typing, Youd said he felt extremely tired. However, he was not wary about his project.

“All I could think about was how excited I was to get back here to start typing the next morning,” he said. “The author, John Ehle, came with his wife to see me doing the performance and took me to lunch. I can’t get bored on a day like that.”