

CRISTIN TIERNEY

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Los Angeles-based artist Tim Youd uses the same typewriter for each performance on which a chosen author composed his or her book. His first book – Hunter S. Thompson’s novel “Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas” – was re-created using an IBM Selectric. **Cristin Tierney**

Gallery Contributed

ORANGE COUNTY

You can watch this artist’s odd ‘devotional’ to creative writing in Chapel Hill

BY TAMMY GRUBB

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CHAPEL HILL

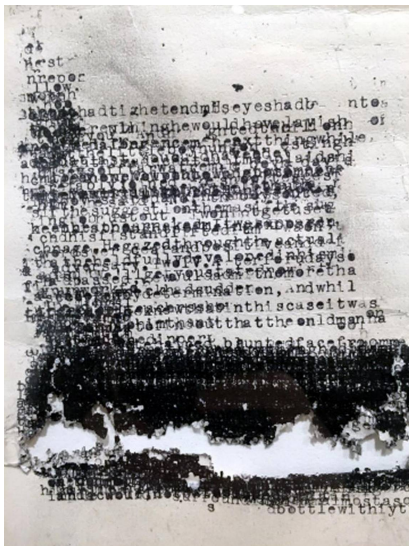
Can you experience a book more deeply by re-creating its words in a place that inspired the author?

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That's the question performance artist Tim Youd will explore through Dec. 10 as he brings his "100 Novels" project to the UNC-Chapel Hill campus. The 10-year project has taken Youd to over 50 locations in the United States and Europe over the last five years.

In each location, Los Angeles-based artist retypes the words of a chosen novel on two sheets of paper using the same make and model of typewriter that the author would have used. His work has taken him to many locations, including the historic homes of some authors, such as William Faulkner's Rowan Oak in Oxford, Mississippi; and Virginia Woolf's Monk's House in Rodmell, Sussex.

Youd places two sheets of paper together, feeding them into the typewriter, the ink saturating the top sheet with each pass through the mechanism and bleeding through to the undersheet.



A sheet from Tim Youd's re-creation of Flannery O'Connor's "The Violent Bear It Away," created in 2016 at Andalusia farm – O'Connor's childhood home – in Savannah, Georgia.

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The performance is a devotional that envelops the artist and viewers in the clicking of keys, the return of the typewriter's carriage and the quiet whir of paper feeding the machine, he said, "to experience deep engagement with the book."

Youd's first performance, featuring an IBM Selectric, was the re-creation of Hunter S. Thompson's novel "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas."

Thompson, in his own time, typed the words to F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" and Ernest Hemingway's "Farewell to Arms" to know how it felt to write in the way those authors did.

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“As I have come to understand the project, it is at its heart an effort to be a truly good reader every time I sit down, and to become a better reader as I continue to move through the entire 100-novel cycle,” Youd said. “Most people have had the out-of-body experience that occurs during the course of an engrossing read. It is a transportation to a higher plane of consciousness, and I think may be equivalent to a religious ecstasy.”



Los Angeles-based performance artist Tim Youd displays the finished re-creation of a famous book.

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As he closes each book, Youd separates the sheets and mounts them side-by-side, creating a diptych sometimes with one page covered in a dark rectangle of ink and other times with the page hanging in tatters. The second page captures only glimpses of the words.

“This diptych serves as a formal relic, containing the repeated rectangle within the rectangle geometry present in two pages of an open book,” Youd said of his project. “The entire novel is present, but entirely illegible.”

He will use his two weeks in residence at UNC this month to retype all 442 pages of the Daphne Athas 1971 novel “Entering Ephesus,” which recounts the lives of three young sisters who move to an all-black Southern town during the Great Depression.

Athas taught fiction writing and stylistics in UNC’s Creative Writing program from 1968 until she retired in 2009.