

CRISTIN TIERNEY

Omaha World-Herald

Short takes: Performance artist visits Nebraska to retype Cather novels

Marjie Ducey

Apr 10, 2022 Updated Apr 14, 2022



Tim Youd retying William Faulkner's "The Sound and The Fury" at Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak, in Oxford, Mississippi.

ROBERT JORDAN/OLE MISS COMMUNICATIONS

Partnering with the Cristin Tierney Gallery in New York, the National Willa Cather Center is pleased to announce a series of performance art pieces by Los Angeles-based artist Tim Youd.

During April and May, Youd is retyping three of Willa Cather's novels in their entirety on location in Nebraska: "O Pioneers!", "The Song of the Lark" and "My Ántonia." These will be the 72nd, 73rd and 74th performances from the artist's 100 Novels Project.

Youd will be in residence in Red Cloud from April 10 to 28, where he will retype the "The Song of the Lark."

"We are honored that the National Willa Cather Center and Red Cloud will be one of three Nebraska locations for artist Tim Youd's '100 Novels' project. His use of a period typewriter to retype an entire classic novel is a unique kind of performance art," marketing coordinator Catherine Pond said. "The punch of each letter and word becomes its own moment, conjuring the original work in real time, while honoring the writer's process."

Residents and visitors will have the opportunity to watch and experience his unique art form when he types at various settings in and around Red Cloud, including at several of the Cather-related historic sites.

Youd last week retyped "O Pioneers!" while hosted by the Willa Cather Archive at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After his Red Cloud residency, Youd will retype "My Ántonia" in Omaha from May 1-10 in partnership with Joslyn Art Museum.

Like Youd's previous 100 Novels performances, all three books will be retyped on the same make/model typewriter used by Cather and in locations related to her novels. When retyping, Youd types all the words of the novel onto one page (which is backed by a second sheet) by running it repeatedly through the typewriter. The words become illegible, and the accumulated text becomes a rectangle of black ink inside the larger rectangle of the white page.

CRISTIN TIERNEY

Upon completion, Youd separates the two highly distressed pages and mounts them side-by-side in diptych form. This performance relic thus becomes a formal drawing, a representation of two pages of a book. The novel is present in its entirety, yet the words are completely obscured.