

The Concordian.

Arts

Making a case for research-based art

by [Lorenza Mezzapelle](#) November 5, 2019



Angela Grauerholz explores the significance of the artists' book

"Culture is linked to the book." This set of words stands alone in a vibrant red font against a vast white wall. The phrase is broad, it can be interpreted in many ways. The words are small and the gallery space at Artexite, in downtown Montreal, appears empty.

The Empty S(h)elf is the first part of a new series by Angela Grauerholz, a Montreal-based graphic artist and designer, and co-founder of Artexite. The works create a dialogue surrounding the purpose of books and research in relation to the artist's relationship with books and libraries. The title *The Empty S(h)elf* refers at once to two notions: the empty library, one of Grauerholz's fears for the future in an increasingly digital age; and the empty self, the idea of the "inner void."

Through the accumulation of experiences, texts, readings, writings and the various aspects of the book, Grauerholz explores the process of its construction, in conjunction with the

development of oneself that occurs as a product of these gathered experiences and collected knowledge.

Scattered phrases and citations in a red font take up three of the four stark white walls. Another wall is filled with images of books, architecture, maps, graphs and visuals, much resembling a giant inspiration board. Footnotes and references line the bottom half of each wall.

In order to read all the words and see the images, the viewer must make their way around the room, crouch down and stand on their toes. A zine featuring an accompanying essay can also be found at the reception. The necessary interaction creates a relationship between the viewer and the work as they literally walk through the artist's research process.



The project, which began as a result of an archival file for Grauerholz's project *Reading Room for the Working Artist*, investigates primarily the idea of the self from an archival perspective. In an accompanying essay bearing the same name as the exhibition, Grauerholz writes, "The words 'writing' or 'author' have become synonymous in my mind to 'creating, making (art), thinking,' etc."

References attributed to renowned novelists and philosophers Umberto Eco, Jorge Luis Borges, Marshall McLuhan, Michel Foucault and Aristotle are among the gathered writings and documents. Through these, Grauerholz explores the creation of the text and a foundation for visual art.

Much like artist Adam Pendleton's *Black Dada Reader*, a collection of texts about African-American culture and aesthetics that inspired his artistic work, *The Empty S(h)elf* is an archive. It's a series of collected documents kept to demonstrate a record and information about the book, the library and the individual.

Similar to the artist's chosen references and phrases displayed throughout the space, the content in the books is up for interpretation. Their significance will differ greatly from one person to the next, impacted by one's personal and collective experiences and histories.

The Empty S(h)elf is Grauerholz's assemblage of the items that demonstrate the importance of the text, and the significance of research-based art as a tool to display and communicate her interest in the use of the artist's book.

***The Empty S(h)elf* is on display at Artexpte, at 2 Ste-Catherine St. E, Suite 301, until Jan. 25, 2020. The gallery is open Wednesday to Friday from 12 to 7 p.m., and Saturday from 12 to 5 p.m.**

Photo by Cecilia Piga.

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