



The Center for Book Arts, founded in 1974 and based in New York City, is dedicated to preserving the traditional artistic practices of book-making, as well as exploring and encouraging contemporary interpretations of the book as an art object.

FEBRUARY 15, 2012

Wednesday Exhibitions: Ethan Shoshan's Miss Piggy



Miss Piggy, Ethan Shoshan's *Strange Birds*

One of the main goals of the exhibition program at the Center For Book Arts is to help expand our understanding of book arts. Ethan Shoshan's *Strange Birds*, a Featured Artist Project open until March 31st, is a great example of how that can play out.

A blend of the visual and aural, Shoshan invited a group of 31 collaborators to each submit an object that represents something personal and significant to its owner. He then interviewed each participant in the project, capturing the story behind each object. His installation consists of the 31 objects given to him by their owners, and an audio guide which stores each interview. Visitors to the gallery can then read his installation as an audio book.

One of my favorite objects in *Strange Birds* is an old Miss Piggy doll, owned by Brian 'Soignes' Wilson. Though the stuffed pig is old and dirty, she is dressed for a ball: wearing a gown, pearls, and elbow-length gloves (along with a glamorous hairdo and shoes), Miss Piggy is supposed to be beautiful. Shoshan spoke to me about this object once and the significance of it being Miss Piggy. Pigs generally bring to mind something dirty, rolling in the mud; the stereotypical pig is not someone you would picture in high society. Yet this doll is just that, a pig breaking conventions and running counter to the stereotype, showing how a pig can be gorgeous, elegant, even sexy. Shoshan said that for the owner, it was his way of viewing his own identity as a queer, black male. Wilson, through Miss Piggy, learned that did not have to adhere to the stereotypes applied to him, he could succeed, he could be strong, confident; he didn't have to be (in his own words) "at

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the bottom of the food chain." Miss Piggy will be who she is, and Wilson says she taught him to be himself. After all, she is not just a pig, "but a pig in pumps."

Shoshan's exhibit has this object and more, each coupled with an audio track that shows the connection between people and objects, the little things that change us and have meaning. Weaving together forgotten histories, memories, and embodied experiences, *Strange Birds* is an affirmation of life and its lessons.

*Ethan Shoshan will be giving an artist talk on this exhibition on **Wednesday, March 21st**, at **6:30pm**. There is \$10 suggested donation/\$5 members*

-Christina Squitieri

Have any stories about your favorite (or least favorite) piece of book art, either in our exhibition or somewhere else? Want to give us suggestions or comments? Comment on this post, email us at info@centerforbookarts.org, visit us on Facebook ([/centerforbookarts](#)) or follow us on Twitter ([@center4bookarts](#)). Can't wait to see you there!

Posted by [Center for Book Arts](#) on Wednesday, February 15, 2012

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