

Burned Book 1/8

ARABIC

Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz

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Always seeking to make work that embodies the viscerality of violence rather than depicting it, I set aside my recent work with shattered plaster to start burning books for this project. I burnt books in many languages and subjects, finally selecting eight: in English, Arabic, Russian, German, and Chinese—all languages that would have been represented on al-Mutanabbi Street on March 5, 2007. The randomness of my choices echoes the randomness inherent in all bombings, and in every act of cultural destruction throughout history. The chaos and indifference from the blast on March 5, 2007 in Baghdad was no different: it covered the sky with thick black smoke and then, soon, came *“thousands of small gray ashes—pieces of paper, books, newspapers—floating down from the sky.”** After the burning came the need for burial, the need to memorialize each book by giving it its own enclosure, a coffin lined not with satin but with open sky, a suggestion of future and possibility. When partially closed, the boxes bring to mind the shape of a new book. Unshrouded, the mute books become corpses requiring protection and commemoration. Unable to read them any longer, we honor them with labels marking the day of their demise. As though they were important.

* *Persis M. Karim, as described by an eye witness.*

This unique object is part of a series of eight, each of which contains one burnt paperback book, touched with traces of oil and/or acrylic paint and preserved with Polyvinyl Acetate Glue. The boxes are hand-made by Mary McCarthy. They are lined with archival pigment prints scanned from snapshots taken by the artist in Wyoming, U.S.A. in 2000, and printed on Rag Photographique, 210GSM. Each box is made using Brown Umber Asahi Book Cloth from Talas over Davey board. Text designed by Shawn Semmes.

Burned Book 2/8

GERMAN

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Burned Book 3/8

ENGLISH

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Burned Book 4/8

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Burned Book 5/8

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Burned Book 6/8
RUSSIAN/ENGLISH

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Burned Book 7/8
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Burned Book 8/8

CHINESE

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