

CRISTIN TIERNEY



Tim Youd, "James Dickey's Deliverance (Screenplay)", 2022. (Courtesy of Cristin Tierney Gallery)

Tim Youd transforms literature into art at Atlanta Contemporary

By Deanna Sirlin – July 23, 2024

Georgia Retyped, Tim Youd's exhibition at the [Atlanta Contemporary](#) is part of the artist's 10-year project of retyping 100 novels. Youd had typed 81 novels by the time the exhibition opened. During the first two weeks of the current exhibition, Youd retyped Tayari Jones' [An American Marriage](#) in the gallery on three typewriters: a Smith-Corona Silent, a Smith-Corona Flat Top and a Smith-Corona Silent Super, bringing his count to 82 novels retyped.

Youd retypes the entirety of his source texts on a single sheet of paper backed with another sheet. Going over the same sheets repeatedly creates a minimalist blackened rectangle on the top sheet, whose partner is the embossed relief that records the pressure of the keys on the second page.

Youd retypes books in geographic locations related to them, sometimes at historic authors' homes. The works at the Atlanta Contemporary are related to the South: The

CRISTIN TIERNEY



Tim Youd, materials for retyping of Tayari Jones' *An American Marriage*.

retyped novels (and one screenplay) are by [Carson McCullers](#), [James Dickey](#) and [Flannery O'Connor](#). Youd retypes the books using the same make and model of typewriter that the author used. By retyping *An American Marriage* in the gallery, Youd is connecting to a living Atlanta writer (Jones grew up in Cascade Heights, graduated from Spelman College and currently teaches at Emory University). Jones used three different Smith Corona typewriters to write her novel, each typewriter having a different voice, and Youd is following suit.

The relics of Youd's performances are the retyped works presented as framed diptychs. The ink-covered sheet and the page embossed by the keys hitting through the top paper onto the next sheet are shown side by side. Youd's titles cite the author and the book or screenplay — for example,

Dickey's *Deliverance* (2022). This diptych was typed on a pressure-sensitive Fuji film that records traces of Youd's typing in a red hue. In this work, the text is obscured, but the tactility of typing the words is revealed, like a rubbing that divulges the touch of the artist. The intimacy of this remnant of the performance is akin to reading the text.

In Youd's diptych of McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* (2018), the two vertical sheets presented side by side are layered with ink.

The one on the right is a saturated inking caused by typing McCullers' entire text over the same small page. On its companion embossed page, the text is illegible, but a gentle horizontal linework that looks like graphite rubbings that vary in intensity is in conversation with the page blackened with typewriter ink. The typed page of the diptych Flannery O'Connor's *The Violet Bear* (2016) has been typed over so many times that pieces have disintegrated. In its broken state, the page has the look of a leaf from an ancient manuscript.

Watching Youd type is like watching traditional artists draw. He types with great speed but also with dexterity, like a dance, as his fingers move around the keyboard. Seeing Youd type a book, one understands that the relationship between the words and the physicality of typing is a way of seeing the text, that the artist absorbs the author's words by retyping them on the same type of machine the writer used.



Tim Youd retyping Tayari Jones' *An American Marriage*, Atlanta Contemporary, June 22, 2024. (Photo by Stanchez Kenyata)

CRISTIN TIERNEY

The way he delves into the text parallels the way a representational artist experiences the landscape while drawing it. Youd's hands on the typewriter provide another way for Youd to see and read the text. He documents his performance by wearing a GoPro video camera on his chest to capture his typing. He does not read the text aloud; only his typing and the ambient sound of the gallery are the soundtrack. After the hundredth book is typed, Youd will edit this video into a new artwork.



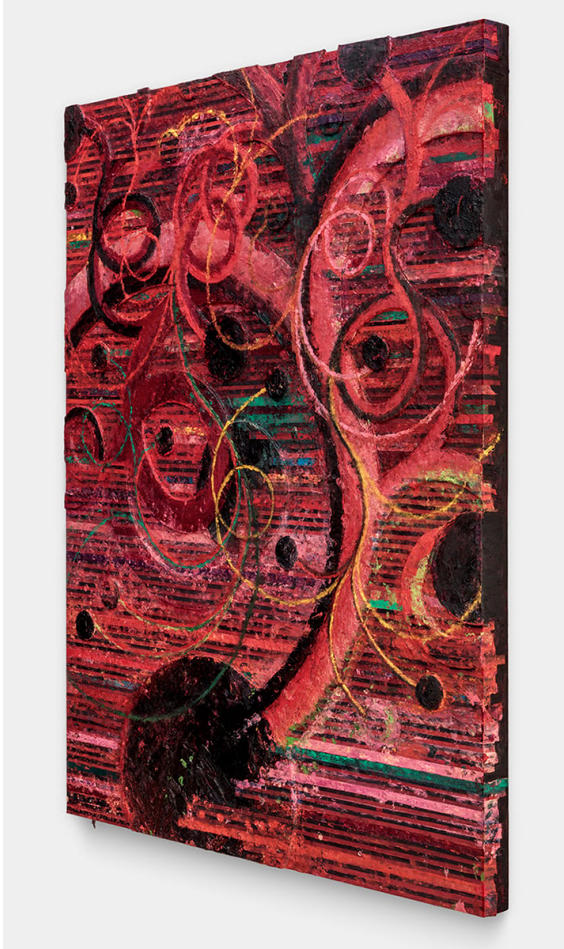
Tim Youd, "Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*, 2018.

The performative and durational aspects of this artist's work are significant. Youd's acts of retyping in public for hours on end resemble endurance performance. His entire project of retyping 100 novels is a marathon process of connection and engagement with the texts and authors.

In addition to the diptychs, there are works made from typewriter ribbons that have been collaged and painted on panel and large-scale oil pastel drawings on panel of these ribbons in a tangle of loops and swirls. The most recent of these works is *Recognitions* (2024), whose hues are primarily the red and black colors of typewriter ribbons.

Youd will return for the last two weeks of the exhibition when he will retype O'Connor's short story collection, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, beginning at O'Connor's Milledgeville farm, [Andalusia](#), and concluding at the Atlanta Contemporary. The pages of Jones' *An*

CRISTIN TIERNEY



Tim Youd, *Recognitions*, 2023. (View from side)

American Marriage, which he typed at the Atlanta Contemporary, will stay in the typewriter through the closing of the exhibition on October 6.