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Democracy Dies in Darkness

In the Galleries: Recto/Verso – A Pandemic in Codex by Matt Leedham

Review by Mark Jenkins

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Matt Leedham's "Open/Closed," part of his "Recto/Verso" exhibit. (Matt Leedham)

When the pandemic forced the globe-hopping photographer Matt Leedham to stay home, he curled up with a good book — one he made himself. The Virginia artist collected some of his pictures into a volume, in the process educating himself about Asian handmade paper and European bookbinding techniques. Some of the results are on display in “Recto/Verso,” a Multiple Exposures Gallery exhibition that takes its title from the front (or right) and back (or left) of a leaf of printed paper.

Several copies of the book are on display, opened to pages that juxtapose such rhyming photos as “Open/Closed”; a rectangular cavern portal that reveals sky beyond (verso); and a stone-framed doorway blocked by a pile of rocks (recto). Leedham didn’t restrict himself to a single format, though. The show also includes photo-based scrolls, an extremely horizontal “accordion book” and multiple 3D “tunnel books” that allow the viewer to gaze past outer images to view partly concealed inner ones.

Leedham doesn’t identify his photos’ locations, but language sometimes offers a clue: Two tunnel books feature signs in Thai and Japanese, respectively. The Japanese text is next to a set of rail-car windows behind which the photographer has inserted sweeping outdoor scenes. Exterior becomes interior — or verso becomes recto — in Leedham’s wittily jumbled tableaux.

Matt Leedham: Recto/Verso, A Pandemic in Codex Through Oct. 2 at [Multiple Exposures Gallery](#), Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria.