

Art Books

20 Best Art Books of 2020

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the *Brooklyn Rail*, our editors and writers have selected our favorite art books from the past year. Many of the titles reflect a year spent mostly at home, often in isolation. What follows is a selection of what kept us company during this difficult year, kept us thinking and dreaming about art and language, and kept us rethinking what looking and reading can and should be.

Constance DeJong

(Hunter College Art Galleries, 2020)

Bound from two discrete softcover books paginated in opposite order and cased in a deep red slipcover, the catalogue for DeJong's retrospective at the Hunter College Leubsdorf Gallery (where she has taught for decades), *Constance DeJong* is not only meant to be read in various ways, but rather, like much of her work, to orient us towards the true dissonance of reading itself. A pioneer in literature, video, sound and performance art, DeJong has worked with time, space, sound, and—most of all—language, since she emerged in the downtown scene in the late '70s. Themes from her works (sleep and sleeplessness, time and atemporality, silence and noise) pull one through the texts here: in addition to DeJong's previously unpublished *In a Cabin* (2017), contributors include Lucy Ives, who compares her spoken words to "bits of architecture;" longtime collaborator Tony Oursler, who calls her work a "multiverse;" and her own niece and nephew-in-law who relay the singular experience of watching their aunt perform. This retrospective has yet to open to the public, postponed like the innumerable blithely laid and doomed plans for 2020, but *Constance DeJong*—a constellation of ideas manifest in an object—points to the show's many readings. —*Anna Tome*

