

# A Supposed Direction of Gravity

WORDS **ELLEN KNUDSON** / ASSOCIATE IN BOOK ARTS, SPECIAL AND AREA STUDIES COLLECTIONS

PHOTOS **JAY FOX**



2023/2024

**COFFEY  
RESIDENCY**

FOR BOOK ARTS

**UF** George A. Smathers  
Libraries  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

The artist's book *A Supposed Direction of Gravity* was created by residency artist Jay Fox. The artwork analyzes and questions the authority and intent of another text, *Natural History, General and Particular (Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière)*, Count De Buffon, Volume I, 1781 (574 B929hEs).


During Mr. Fox's research in the Special and Area Studies collections during Fall 2023, he discovered this book and was struck by the author's perspective that provides support to many theories of natural history that were prevalent at the time of writing, but also discredits evidence-based facts.

As an historical object that has been handled by people over time, a blend of intention and negligence have captured the shape, textures, and weight of bookmarks, pressed flowers, folded pages and other physical interactions with the book, all of which are legible should one stop and notice. These indentations serve to frame and interrupt the fantastic claims of the author and become evidence of use that relate the quiet truths of the book's utility and the physical world.

Mr. Fox puts his attention to the physical markers, allowing them to take precedence over the theories. The text of *Natural History* is then interpreted as poetry and becomes another type of world-making device. *A Supposed Direction of Gravity* includes a slim book to be used as a tool for citation that is paired with the main text to decode and provide meaning to Buffon's text. This tool is shaped to the border of the main book and actively works to contain and reason with the original text while experimenting with styles, notation, and shorthand for the developed narrative. The covers of the book are made of steel plates embossed with the title and covered in blue book cloth which is gently sanded to expose the letters beneath. This, too, speaks to the nature of utility found in objects and in the physical world.

The artist's book *A Supposed Direction of Gravity* and the reference text *Natural History, General and Particular* are part of the Special and Area Studies Collections in the University of Florida Libraries.

The artist book was printed and bound by Jay Fox during the 2023-2024 Marjorie S. Coffey Residency in Book Arts at the University of Florida. Exploration and research occurred in the special collections at the George A. Smathers Libraries in the Fall of 2023. Printing and construction of the book was completed at the University of Arkansas, Fort Smith in the Book Arts Studio.

Initiated in 2015, The Coffey Residency program provides an opportunity for a selected artist to access materials from the Special and Area Studies Collections (SASC) at University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries as the impetus for the creation of an editioned artists' book. During the residency, the artist has the chance to interact with the collections, librarians, curators, faculty, and students across the university. Production of the project involves periodic consultation with the facilitator of the program, Ellen Knudson, Associate in Book Arts. 

*The Coffey Residency artist for 2024/2025 is Russell Maret.*

*You can read more about this artist here: <https://russellmaret.com/>.*

*Past residency artists and their books can be explored at the website*

*for The Coffey Residency for Book Arts: <https://coffeyresidency.domains.uflib.ufl.edu/>.*

