

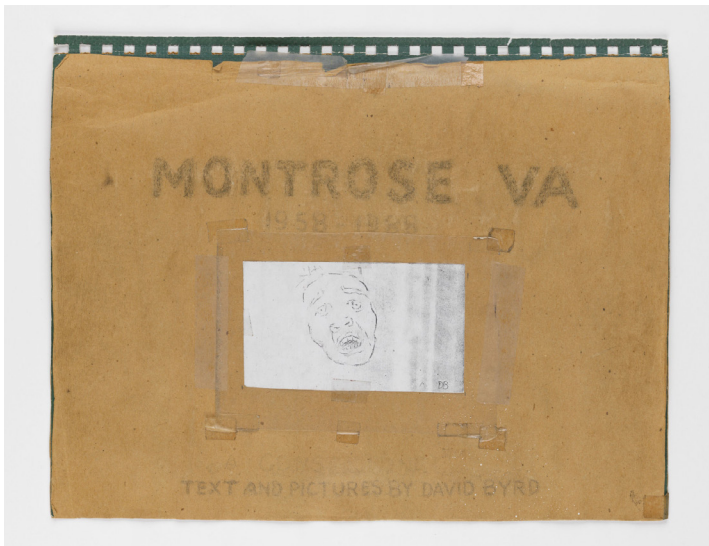
# The New York Times

## Five Art Books to Read This Summer

As the art world mulls whether a return to “normalcy” should be its goal, publishers mine the archives of artists who found their own counterpaths.

By Brett Sokol

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Original cover of “Montrose VA 1958-1988” by David Byrd. David Byrd Estate, New York; via Anton Kern Gallery, New York



One of David Byrd's drawings of the patients from his book “Montrose VA 1958-1988.” David Byrd Estate, New York; via Anton Kern Gallery, New York

The painter [David Byrd](#) (1926-2013) had the kind of career trajectory most artists dream of — a solo show with the pioneering Seattle gallerist Greg Kucera, followed by an equally acclaimed show at New York’s White Columns, and then representation by the blue-chip [Anton Kern Gallery](#) — as long as you ignore the seven decades before his being discovered in upstate New York. It’s also a cruel iteration that artistic talent often has little to do with timely recognition. During that period, Byrd worked as an orderly on the psychiatric ward of the Montrose Veterans Affairs hospital in Westchester. [Montrose VA 1958-1988](#) is a complete replica of a handmade book Byrd created to document his 30 years there, drawing his patients in various states of despair and confusion, or all too rarely, moments of transcendent peacefulness. To call it a sketchbook doesn’t begin to do justice to Byrd’s draftsmanship, or to the otherworldly quality he brings to rendering his patients’ inner lives on the page.