



The Book about Xu Bing's Book from the Ground

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Although the pictogram-only narrative in Xu Bing's *Book from the Ground* can be read by anyone, there is much more to the story of Xu Bing's wordless book than can be gleaned from icons alone. This companion volume to *Book from the Ground* chronicles the entire project, mapping the history of Xu Bing's novel creation from inspiration to exhibition to publication. In the 1980s, Xu Bing created *Book from the Sky*. Using garbled and nonsensical faux-Chinese characters, this installation expressed Xu's doubts about written language and provoked questions about the Chinese language. Thirty years later, with *Book from the Ground*, the artist expresses his hope for a single, universally understood language. Inspired by airport signs that communicate instantaneously through images--directing a temporary community of modern nomads where to eat, shop, sit, and find a bathroom--Xu began to collect images, icons, and logos from which he could construct a story. This book describes Xu's research, showing notebook pages and bulletin boards full of clipped-out images; offers commentary by the artist and discussions of reading, alphabets and languages; documents, with text and photographs, exhibitions and installations connected to the work (including a *Book from the Ground* pop-up concept store); provides a list of works; describes Xu's "icon lab"; and "translates" Xu's pictographic narrative into English.

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