



Charles Dellschau

*Thomas McEvilly, Roger Cardinal, James Brett, Thomas D. Crouch, Barbara Safarova, Randall Morris,
Tracy Baker-White*

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In the fall of 1899, Charles A.A. Dellschau (1830-1923), a retired butcher from Houston, embarked on a project that would occupy him for more than 20 years. What began as an illustrated manuscript recounting his experiences in the California Gold Rush became an obsessive project resulting in 12 large, hand-bound books with more than 2,500 drawings related to airships and the development of flight. Dellschau's designs resemble traditional hot air balloons augmented with fantastic visual details, collage and text. The hand-drawn "Aeros" were interspersed with collaged pages called "Press Blooms," featuring thousands of newspaper clippings related to the political events and technological advances of the period.

After the artist's death in 1923, the books were stored in the attic of the family home in Houston. In the aftermath of a fire in the 1960s, they were dumped on the sidewalk and salvaged by a junk dealer. Eight made their way into the collections of the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Witte Museum and the Menil Collection; the remainder were sold to a private collector. Dellschau's works have since been collected by numerous other museums including the American Folk Art Museum, the High Museum, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Like the eccentric outpourings of Adolf Wölfli, Henry Darger and Achilles Rizzoli, these private works were not created for the art world, but to satisfy a driving internal creative force. Dreamer, optimist and visionary, Charles Dellschau is one of the earliest documented outsider artists known in America. This first monograph on Dellschau includes an essay by art critic Thomas McEvelley, an essay by critic Roger Cardinal of the University of Kent, a text by James Brett of the Museum of Everything in London, an essay by Tom Crouch of the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Air and Space, an essay by Barbara Safarova and a biographical overview by artist and independent curator Tracy Baker-White.

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