

# QUARTZ

**Access a database of 70,000 books banned around the world going back to 1575**

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Soon the world will have a massive physical monument to censorship.

This year, Argentine artist Marta Minujín will open an installation built from books, all of which were banned around the world at some point in history. The “Parthenon of Books,” a re-creation of her 1983 installation in Buenos Aires, will be unveiled in June at art festival documenta in Kassel, Germany.

Minujín and her team worked with researchers from the University of Kassel to identify book bans of regimes past. [The resulting list](#), which will help books be vetted for the installation, names around 72,000 forbidden titles going back to the 1500s.

The list, last updated in January, highlights extensive censorship in Nazi Germany, 18th-century Austria, and the Soviet Union, and draws on a huge list of banned books kept by the Catholic Church from 1559 to 1966.

It would be “simply impossible” to create a comprehensive list for all regimes for all of time, says Florian Gassner, who co-leads the project. But the list does contain a fascinating smattering of censorship attempts from the rest of the world:

In China where the state continues to censor political discourse, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll was also restricted in 1931.

In the 1970s, books by Karl Marx and Fidel Castro were banned in Argentina, as well as *El Principito* (*Le Petit Prince*) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. During the country’s period of extensive censorship in the 1970s and ’80s, the government banned a host of children’s books, including those of icon María Elena Walsh, whose songs and poems criticized the dictatorship.

During the 1940s, Canada restricted Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, while the Soviet Union banned George Orwell’s *1984*. The University of Kassel database also shows that

in 1870s United States, Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* were both banned from sale for their obscene material under the Comstock Laws.

The project aims to collect 100,000 books to build the installation. Anyone can [donate books](#) for consideration, but only those legal in Germany will be included.