

# 5 Art Novels to Read This Summer

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## A Rock, A River, A Street by Steffani Jemison

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Steffani Jemison—an artist you may recognize from recent biennials like Greater New York, Counterpublic, and the Whitney Biennial—recently made her fiction debut. In this short novella, a protagonist gives up speaking for several years. But in inner monologues, she reflects on quotidian urban experiences, then imagines mining them for artworks, leaving their meaning and significance implied. Elsewhere, she reflects on things that sound evocative, but clarifies when they are not: “I ignore the flickers around the edges of my vision, which sounds poetic,” Jemison writes, “except that they are probably rats.” The narrator, an aging runner forced to slow down, is observant, curious, and imaginative. She convincingly infers details about the lives of strangers she encounters on subways and in grocery stores. It’s a compelling record of an artist processing the world around her.