

# John David O Brien



From Left to Right:

*BookLedgeBiblioTecaA / BookLedgeBiblioTecaA*, 2015-18  
acrylic paint and ink on wood panels, with silver halide  
Lambda Durst prints on Fujicolor Crystal archive matte  
paper and mounted on 3mm Dibond, one of a group of three  
Courtesy of the artist.

*BookLedgeBiblioTeca / BookLedgeBiblioTeca*, 2017  
wood, paint, books  
Courtesy of the artist.



## Artist's Statement of Work:

*BookLedgeBiblioTeca* is a 360-degree reflection on the concept of library, the house of books. The reflection concerns the book object, the library space, the book container. Books and libraries are designed, photographed, assembled, studied, cataloged many different ways to explore these same concepts. The investigation therefore exceeds the first idea of the book as a container for words and messages. The books are English and Italian with an allusion to the articulated culture of the author who, in the vertical choice of his work, seems to adhere to the idea that wisdom can be reached by climbing step-by-step, *per gradus ad Parnassum*.

For this exhibition there are two works from a series called *BookLedgeBiblioTeca*. This title fuses the words book, with knowledge, with the Italian word for library (*biblioteca*). The word for libraries in Italian actually literally means the case for books. So, for the more three-dimensional sculptural work the mounting of different book fragments as a three-part ascending of column in which both English-language and Italian language books are interspersed, transforms books from being vehicles of knowledge and language to being actual physical things.

The images in the two-dimensional work in the exhibition, *BookLedgeBiblioTecaA* (one of a group of three: A, B and C), draw on photographs and line drawings from different libraries. They are both real libraries that the artist photographed in person and there are other library images that are real but that he took from historical photographs that he modified.

In all of these modes of working, O'Brien's interest in the series is to explore books as a less univocal kind of entity, to open them up as a kind of an archaeological site in which their physicality, their materiality and their various usages are put on simultaneous display. Far from revealing the obvious or merely useful aspects of books, O'Brien finds that this kind of excavation reveals how books are truly not just one thing with one usage. It is in that kind of wonderful mixing of levels that art creates a unique kind of glossary of how objects (like books) in the world, surround and affect us.

## Biography:

O'Brien's long-standing interest in art, such as printmaking and artist books, and in places such as archives and libraries has fueled a large number of his artworks in time. In part, this is due to his education starting in Urbino, Italy, at the then *Istituto Statale di Arte di Urbino*, also known as *La Scuola del Libro* (the School of the Book), and in part due to his great interest in books. John David O'Brien has degrees in studio art an (MFA) from the USC, with an emphasis in 3D work, an (AA.BB.) degree from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma, Rome in drawing and decorative arts, a (Magistero) degree from the Istituto Statale D'Arte di Urbino, Urbino, Italy for printmaking and was qualified as a Master Printer by the Calcografia Nazionale (National Etching Institute) in Rome, Italy. He was the recipient of a California Community Foundation Artist Fellowship in 2012, a City of Los Angeles Artist Grant in 1998 and a Fulbright Research Grant in 1994. He has had solo and group exhibitions in Los Angeles, Rome and New York among other locations since 1980.

