

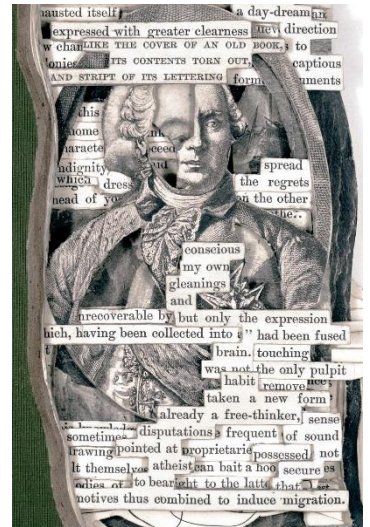
Brian Dettmer

Dodo Data Dada

September 8 - October 15, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 8, 6-8 PM

P·P·O·W is pleased to present *Dodo Data Dada*, Brian Dettmer's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Dettmer has a longstanding interest in the physical book and its ever-changing status in our contemporary world. The exhibition title, *Dodo Data Dada*, references a medium nearing extinction, examines how information is communicated, and connects Dettmer's practice to the Dadaists' tradition of commenting on language, media and technology through the use of found materials. By dissecting and deconstructing the printed page, Dettmer looks at the way in which books have lost their authority in our digital age, and proposes a new way of understanding these texts.



With *Dodo Data Dada*, Dettmer turns his attention to reference books, including full sets of mid-century encyclopedias and turn-of-the-century political tracts, excavating them to "expose a mass of fragmented and disjointed associations". Dettmer employs a subtractive process, sealing the book and then removing pages to connect disparate ideas—restructuring meaning on the printed page, while offering "a holistic saturation of new paths for exploration." As Dettmer says, "When books become sculpture the codex becomes a palimpsest, a material to question the structures and perspectives of the past while pondering the uncertainties of the future." Presenting books as artifacts one might encounter in a natural history museum, Dettmer offers a novel reframing of these now outdated objects.

Among the works on view will be *The American Statesmen*, a series of sculptural works created from early 20th Century political texts. With these works Dettmer has excavated pages of the book, 'editing' them to reveal images of the founding fathers presented alongside each other. Reflecting on the tremendous and tumultuous change in our current political landscape, Dettmer exposes the slippery nature of language while mirroring the distorted rhetoric presented to us by politicians and the media. This idea is further asserted in *The American Adventure*, a sculptural work composed of a set of books published in 1927 of the same title. Through Dettmer's process, fragmented headlines are revealed that could have easily been drawn from recent news stories: "at Charleston, North... had killed," "Chicago still in the mid," "two opposing interpretations of America," "the foreigners had been swept out of the country."

Among several encyclopedic pieces in the exhibition is *Universal Ruins*, a full set of 25 volumes of the 1954 edition of *The Universal Standard Encyclopedia*. Combined as a grid that appears to be in a state of collapse, the work serves as an elegy to the lost role of encyclopedias and the intellect and affluence they once connoted. "References become ruins, defeated fragments fractured from the passing of time or the forced violence of a new regime," says Dettmer. "The past authorities have been toppled and the format has changed. The narrative is broken into bits and bytes, textures and sounds. But language always finds a way to drip in new directions to create new connections." Through these works Dettmer calls into question the shifting nature of the single authoritative voice, looks at how new ways of sending and receiving information overturn the idea of authorship, and encourages us to question the meaning of past narratives and absolute truth.

Brian Dettmer (b. 1974, Chicago IL) lives and works in New York. He has been the subject of solo exhibitions at numerous institutions including the Hermann Geiger Foundation, Cecina, Italy, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta, GA and the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Virginia Beach, VA. His works have been exhibited internationally in shows at the Museum of Arts and Design, NY; The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC; The San Jose Museum of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA; The Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL; The High Museum, Atlanta, GA; and the Perez Art Museum, Miami, FL among others. Dettmer's sculptures can be found in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, DC; The Art Institute of Chicago Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, IL; The High Museum, GA; and the Yale University Art Gallery, CT. He has lectured at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK and The New York Public Library, New York, NY and given a TED talk for the TED Youth conference in 2014. Dettmer's work has been featured in several publications and programs including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Art News*, *Modern Painters*, *Wired*, *The Village Voice*, *Harper's*, *CBS News* and *NPR*.