

PRESS RELEASE

JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY is proud to announce *Ex Libris*, an exhibition of New Orleans-based collage artist **Michael Pajon**. For his fourth solo exhibition at the gallery, Pajon unveils his latest series of mixed media collages with hand drawing. The exhibition will be on view in the main gallery 29 March – 27 May with *First Saturday Gallery Openings* on **1 April** and **6 May** (in conjunction with Arts District New Orleans' fundraiser *Jammin' on Julia*) from **6-9pm**.

Pajon says of his practice. . .

An Ex Libris or bookplate is a small label or stamp that denotes ownership of a book. A mark of provenance, it can be as elaborate as a custom printed seal bearing an allegory or motif with a decorative flourish reflecting the principles or interests of the books owner, or as simple as an institutional stamp or hand written inscription. Above all my source materials, antique books, are by far the most integral to my artistic practice, including volumes of heavily illustrated books on Natural History, Physiology, Fairy Tales, Folks Tales, History and Botany to name a few. Many covers of these antique tomes are adorned with beautifully embossed typeface with flourishes of filigree and ornamentation. Others offer luscious symmetrical images and illustrations designed to lure buyers and hint at the content of its pages. Often by the time I come upon them they are heavily weathered with failing bindings and torn and yellowed pages, a shade of their original form, their purpose aged and obsolete.

Two years ago, shortly after my last exhibit at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, I suffered a catastrophic injury. I am truly very lucky to be writing this today. Though as devastated as my body had so suddenly become, my spirits remained intact with the help of my partner, my family, and the incredible network of friends and fellow artists who supported me through an extremely dark and painful time in my life. Within the first month I went from being confined to a bed to using a wheelchair. A couple of months later and I was up and walking with a cane. As I recovered I chipped away at new work thanks to a make shift studio my friends helped set up. The pain sapped my energy and much of my focus so I sat with a lot of work in various states of completion. I was thrust into a state of being very aware of my body. I could no longer sit and sift through materials for hours on end and fatigued easily. As time passed I got stronger and more capable of managing my pain. A faucet turned and focus began to trickle in.

This body of work is a product of my recovery and is a testament to the healing power of creativity. Making these pieces enabled me to take ownership of the pain and transform it into something beautiful. Many pieces reference the body and pay homage to my doctors and to healers of all kinds. They contain symbols of growth and renewal and speak to mending the sick and the broken. Others are steeped in the labors, obstacles and journeys of mythological figures in various states of their chimeric forms. Gods and Goddesses with the hubris, raw emotion and fallibility of man, embodied as a reflection of our imperfect world. Their landscapes inhabited by tricksters, demons and spirits with sinister intentions, the day-to-day manifestations intended to hurt or distract us from our path. There are symbols and signs of cruel and beautiful fate, sisters tugging at the strings, taking a measure of thread.

Albeit disjointed as a whole, this work is of books, their spines broken, their innards exposed, manipulated and reformed and stamped with my Ex Libris. Fruits of the past breaking down to become fertilizer for my soil and sown into all that blooms from it.

Michael Pajon attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a focus in printmaking. Eventually gravitating to the graphic nature of the medium that closely resembled the comics he loved, he worked closely as an assistant/studio manager to renowned artist Tony Fitzpatrick. During this time he started making assemblages of the bits and pieces he had accumulated from alleys, junkshops, and thrift stores, slicing up old children's book covers and rearranging their innards into disjointed tales of Americana.

Pajon's work has been exhibited in various venues worldwide, including the Illinois State Museum (Chicago, IL), Chicago Cultural Center, Prospect 1.5 curated by Dan Cameron (New Orleans, LA), Adam Baumgold Gallery (New York, NY), Nau-haus Art Space (Houston, TX), Mobile Museum of Art (Mobile, AL), Dishman Art Museum (Beaumont, TX), and Acadiana Center for the Arts (Lafayette, LA). His work has been shown in numerous art fairs including VOLTA New York, VOLTA10 (Basel, Switzerland), Miami Project, Art on Paper (New York, NY), Nova Art Fair Bridge London, Aqua Art Fair (Miami, FL), Next Art Fair, Chicago, IL, Texas Contemporary Art Fair (Houston, TX), Art Market San Francisco, and the Seattle Art Fair.

Pajon has been featured in *Forbes*, *Installation Magazine*, *Kolaj Magazine*, *Basler Zeitung*, *Daily Serving*, *Where Magazine*, *Juxtapoz*, *ArtInfo*, *Artlyst*, *New City*, *Artnet*, *Artslant*, *Oxford American*, *Gambit Weekly*, *The New Orleans Advocate* and *Pelican Bomb*. His work appears in numerous public and private collections including International Collage Center (New York, NY), 21c Museums (Louisville, KY; Cincinnati, OH; Bentonville, AR; Durham, NC), Purchase College, the Francis H. Williams Collection (Wellesley, MA), and Thomas & Dathel Coleman.

For further information, press or sales inquiries please contact the gallery director, **Matthew Weldon Showman**, at matthew@jonathanferraragallery.com or at the gallery +1.504.522.5471. Please join the conversation with JFG on Facebook (@Jonathan Ferrara Gallery), Twitter (@JFerraraGallery), and Instagram (@JonathanFerraraGallery) via the hashtags #MichaelPajon, #ExLibris, and #JonathanFerraraGallery.

