

Camhi, Leslie
"An Artist's Library Lovingly, Painstakingly Reproduced"
The Village Voice.
December 3, 2003. p. 87

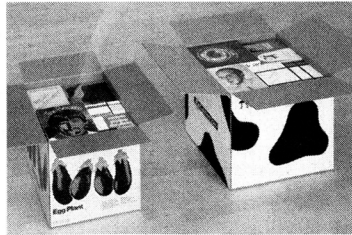
LUHRING
AUGUSTINE

531 West 24th Street
New York NY 10011
tel 212 206 9100 fax 212 206 9055
www.luhringaugustine.com

An artist's library lovingly, painstakingly reproduced

STEVE WOLFE
LuhringAugustine Gallery
531 West 24th Street
Through December 20

Years ago, I amused myself by arranging the contents of my library as if following the seating plan for a dinner party—juxtaposing authors with something in common. Immanuel Kant made eyes at Ad Reinhardt, Sappho cozied up beside Colette, and Samuel Beckett sat in a corner and glared at everyone. The artist Steve Wolfe has spent far longer hours contemplating the inner lives of paperbacks and hardcovers. His three-dimensional, astonishingly faithful, trompe l'oeil replicas of books from his personal collection endow these humble, shop-worn volumes with talismanic power and influence.



Courtesy of the artist and LuhringAugustine

Steve Wolfe's *Untitled* (1996–97)

Wolfe's work is both a self-portrait and a snapshot of a generation. Anyone of a certain age and sensibility—primarily modernist, with camp and Francophilic tendencies—will probably own quite a

few of the editions so lovingly (and painstakingly) reproduced here. The Abrams monograph on Mondrian is slightly off-kilter (too much time spent leaning on the shelf); Raymond Chandler's *Farewell My Lovely* appears so well thumbed that it's falling apart. The Vintage paperbacks of Proust, faded in Wolfe's fake sun, bear the imprint of years passing. How long did it take to re-create them? Would the time have been better spent reading them? Not at all—for like Proust's oeuvre, these sculptures acknowledge, with a deep melancholy, that life is short and culture infinite.

To a medieval scribe, the book was an allegory of the Word made Flesh—its divine message trapped in a necessarily imperfect body. Something of that devotional spirit (in addition to the ghosts of Duchamp and Warhol) is at work here. And I was pleased to notice that the guard on duty was reading two books: Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell* and Nabokov's *Speak, Memory*. Bohemia lives on. **LESLIE CAMHI**