

## Libro de Artista Interview a Nicholas Jones



The Flinders Lane studio Nicholas that shares with jewellery designer [Marcos Davidson](#)

I'll admit it. I have a tendency to get over-excitable in certain circumstances. I just can't contain my enthusiasm if I feel genuinely inspired by something or someone. In fact, it has been brought to my attention that I have a habit of **gushing** if I encounter someone I truly admire. Ouch. BUT in my own defence, *this time* it's seriously warranted.

I first saw the work of [Nicholas Jones](#) recently when Natalie profiled him on [Daily Imprint](#)... I was immediately taken with his stunningly delicate sculptures made of beautiful old books. Nicholas contacted me after I left a comment on Natalie's post, and he kindly agreed to an interview for this site. I was lucky enough also to visit Nicholas at his studio in Flinders Lane in the city last week... I think 'kid in a lolly shop' would be an accurate description of my excitement.

Nicholas' work is truly stunning. The delicate cuts and folds, the attention to detail, the mathematic intricacy of such a repetitive creative process... the soft, faded colours of the bookcovers, and the gently yellowed surface of each aged page....

Nicholas was such a charming host on the day I visited his studio. He answered all of my inquisitive questions patiently and thoughtfully, and encouraged me to handle his delicate works, even though I was initially nervous to touch them! I feel so lucky to have had the chance to chat with Nicholas first-hand about his work, and to have been invited to visit his treasure trove of a studio. Wow.

See. Gushing.

**Tell me a little about your background - what did you study and what path led you to what you're doing now?**

I come from a fine art sculpture background, studying from 1995- 1997 at the VCA. For the majority of my course, I made work from the expected media such as bronze, aluminium, clay, wood etc..., but when I got to my final semester, I started experimenting with books and found paper as a potential sculptural material. One of my lecturers, Elizabeth Presa had been working with folded books, wax and mixed media

and these were media I empathised with. The more I read about deconstructivist theory as expounded by Jacques Derrida and the Baroque and the Double Fold, by Deleuze and Guattari, the more I started to feel that my chosen medium had relevance. The idea of divesting a book of its utilitarianism and forcing it into the realm of the surreal and futile was confounding and enticing at the same moment. Books become objectified rather than useful and beautiful, rather than taken for granted. The Japanese theory of Wabi Sabi also inspires me greatly and the notion that nothing is perfect holds a great deal of weight.

**What have been some of your recent projects/exhibitions? Which galleries/shops can we find your work at?**

At the end of last year, I decided to dedicate myself full time to making my Art work for at least a year, or as long as I can survive without any money! This has forced me to chase after opportunities rather than taking the usual Rastafarian notion of “Soon come” to the extreme. I have shown work at Craft Victoria consistently for the past six years or so and a lot of interesting projects have sprung out of this. Last year I had a major show at Australian Art Resources in Southbank and a small show at Third Drawer Down in St Kilda. I have also shown at Perth Institute of Fine Art, The State Library of Victoria, Westspace Gallery, Australian Galleries and many other galleries.

**How would you describe your artistic style? How has this style developed over time?**

I would describe my artistic style as book sculpture, although it has been referred to as altered book making, book surgery and other things. It has developed very organically over time. I have let the ideas come out very naturally, rather than using too much force. I make work at a reasonable pace, but I realise that if I try to work too quickly, the subtlety of the process is lost. Also, I can sometimes cut myself if I rush!



Another shot of Nicholas' latest work in progress... can't get enough of his fantastically messy desk!

**There's been a lot of discussion recently about the distinction between art and craft. What category would you say your work falls into? How would you distinguish between art and craft?**

I know this argument very well, but try not to get caught up in the politics of the Art/Craft divide. I have always aimed to make beautiful, interesting objects and if

people say that it is Craft, rather than Art, I have no problem with it. Craft is such a nebulous and all encompassing notion; from doilies and baskets, to ceramics and knitted scarves. There is also a utilitarian notion attached to much Craft such as vases, tea cosies and beanies. My work has no utilitarian value. It is made purely to be displayed and enjoyed.

**Which designers, artists or creative people you look up to or are inspired by?**

I have always been inspired by the work of artists such as [David Mach](#) and [Buzz Spector](#). Large scale installation work which questions the notion of space and content. I studied with [Ricky Swallow](#) and always enjoyed how his work has evolved over the past ten years. Sharing a studio with Jeweller, [Marcos Davidson](#) is wonderful as he is extremely knowledgeable about many styles of art and is a great problem solver.

**What does a typical day at work involve for you?**

I work in the studio five or six days a week, usually from 10 am until late, depending on what needs to be done. I spend a fair bit of time on the email, the phone and running around. I will often travel out to the suburbs to look through secondhand bookshops to find interesting books. Also I have the wonderful Basement Books just around the corner in Elizabeth St. I will try to do at least some cutting, tearing or folding every day to mix it up.



Nicholas with a collection of pieces

**What are you most proud of professionally?**

I am proud professionally each time I sell a work or get invited to be a part of an exhibition. Making work is very gratifying in itself and now that I have been doing it full time, it is getting so much more enjoyable; less stressful. I was interviewed on the Sunday Arts show on Channel 2, which was a highlight and being written up in magazines and books is always fun.

**Where do you find inspiration?**

I find inspiration all around me. From the patterns in nature, seed pods, shells and nests, to music, other Art, conversation, food, drink, everything. Inspiration is everywhere, it

is just a question of coaxing it out! It can sometimes be quite shy!

**What's the best thing about your job?**

.....Don't have one!.....

**And the worst?**

..... Don't have one! .....

**What would be your dream project?**

My dream project would involve a very large collection of books being at my disposal to arrange them in a strange manner in a European setting like a 12th Century church or 18thC French palace...something like that!

**What are you looking forward to – professionally or personally?**

I am looking forward to having a solo exhibition of recent works at the new Sydney Gallery, [Pablo Fanque](#), in Paddington. I always work better when I have a deadline.

## Melbourne Questions –

**Best and Worst things about having your studio in the CBD?**

The best thing about having a studio in the city is that I am close to everything. Bookshops, galleries, record shops etc... I have lots of friends who work at cafes and shops in town, so there is a strong social network. The worst thing about the Flinders lane area is that there are people who stand in clumps outside like a bunch of tourists and I can be a little grumpy at times. People blocking the street does not sit well with me.



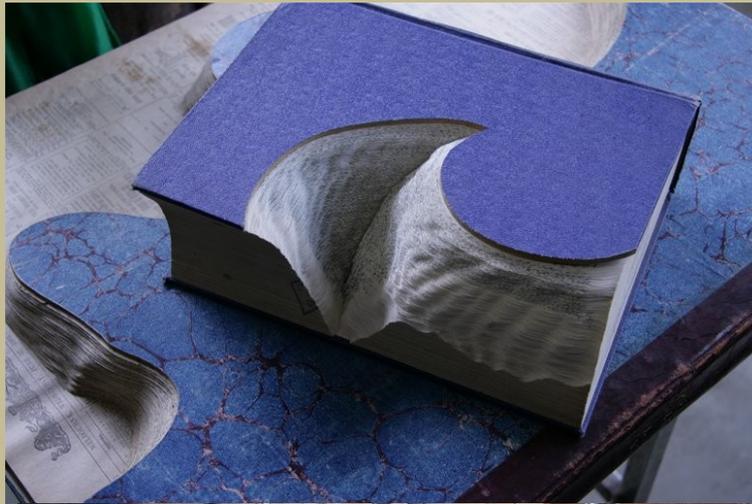
Nicholas Jones / Marcos Davidson Studio



my favourite piece... isn't it beautiful?



Work in progress on Nicholas' desk



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