



Concrete is another running theme in the exhibition. A dirty, plebeian material that most people want nothing to do with, it is nevertheless constantly underfoot, is formed into foundations or building blocks, and fixes innumerable things in place. It is also highly transformative, going from soft and dry to heavy and wet and, finally, to hard and smooth. The qualities of concrete are perfectly congenial to LeDray's project, both practically and metaphorically. In *The Alsen Twins* (2015-17), two miniaturized bags of Portland cement, complete with their manufacturer's label, stand next to each other on a row of appropriately scaled cinder blocks. Both bags are full, but one has a leather belt cinched tightly around its "waist". This hilarious couple recalls Jasper Johns' pair of Ballantine Ale cans cast in bronze, with some of the same underlying jokes about same sex relationships, but LeDray's piece is much funnier.

Another piece, *Free Public Library* (2015-19), has well over a hundred miniaturized books scattered on a section of concrete sidewalk with a stone curb. Full of delightfully bizarre conjunctions, the stacks and groupings of titles form mini-narratives or dissertations. One stack goes: "Les Fleurs du Mal," "The Atlas of Meat Inspection Pathology," "The Black Camel," "Pottery of the Europeans," "Black Figure Vases," "Free and Female," "The Strange Life of Objects," "The Ultimate Cat Book." It is a world of culture and obsession thrown out on the curb.

The value of the abandoned, discarded and ignored is another ongoing theme for LeDray, picked up in several pieces like *The Janitor's Closet* (2016-18), a roughly half-scale section of pegboard with a beautifully made mop hanging on a hook. The stains from the wet mop run down the wall to the moldy, dirty section of pegboard at the bottom, part of which has broken away to reveal piles of lint on the framing behind. This piece is near *Do Not Enter (Red Carpet)* (2018), again a more or less half-scale red carpet with stanchions at either end. Notions of class, hierarchy, privilege and access bounce back and forth between these two pieces. The conflict is somewhat relieved by a set of meticulously copied, antiquated "Ex Libris" bookplates on the wall nearby invoking the public commons of the library and the solitary or communal pleasures of reading or being read to. LeDray is remarkable in the way he handles all of these themes with such a light hand, but with laser like focus and precision. And it is all undergirded with a quiet awareness of vulnerability and mortality as set forth in *Life Vest, Hotel Manhattan* (2018), an outdated kapok life vest with its nearly hidden inscription, "Inspected and Passed 9 2EW"

Charles LeDray, *Life Vest / Hotel Manhattan*, 2018. Fabric, thread, twill tape, Kapok, paint, varnish, brass, steel, patina, firescale, wood, wax, embroidery floss, 13-7/8 x 8-1/4 x 6-1/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Peter Freeman, Inc.

Charles LeDray, *Free Public Library*, 2015-2019. Paper, cardboard, fabric, thread, acrylic paint, ink, acrylic varnish, acrylic gel medium, brass, patina, bubble gum, glass, metal, wire, wood, cement board, cement, granite, glue, fiberfill, Mylar, 10-1/8 x 97-1/8 x 50-1/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Peter Freeman, Inc.