

STATION

Dane Lovett

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Think of the artist studio as the household hall-table, a platform where objects are left in order to be moved onto another location, a transitional space where many items linger for a moment of indecision, remembrance, or spectacle. Here we leave things just obtained; and as they are walked into the permanency of a home, here they are left to await their locational fate. 'They' are new magazines and newspapers that are to be taken on the tram the following day; a set of keys, a scarf or gloves; a vase with an arrangement of flowers that you wish to be the first thing your visitors see; a timeless family picture or a precious object from your travels overseas that will remain in the backdrop of the assemblage of transitioning bits and pieces for ever.

Melbourne based painter Dane Lovett's practice directly relates to this relationship with transitional and permanent objects—to the contents of his artist studio. His practice is that of an archivist, collecting and cataloguing objects of interest, and by proximity the personal inspirations which they hold for him. Lovett's practice has had a long relationship with objects, his familiar figurative yet formless paintings of flower filled vases sitting atop a record or beside a Roland synthesiser have played with the very traditional stereotypes of still-life painting, infused with pop-cultural iconography. This lineage throughout his work is a direct reference to personal taste, which is of course attached to those things he is surrounded by. Lovett's new series of paintings and stoneware works have been brought about by an influential progression held within each new object that comes into the studio and some which leave a legacy by remaining there. These works show novel inspirations in New York City Modernism and mid-twentieth century Japanese graphic design, whilst still comprising of familiar references to music—albeit maybe a different sound, and draping flowers.

The most notable accession to Lovett's studio is a subtle one, a 105 x 148 mm postcard of American artist Frank Stella's colour lithograph *Sinjerli Variation III*; a 1977 work made up of semi-circular shapes pieced together by symmetrical repeating grids. This lithograph by Stella can be seen recreated and reinterpreted in two of Lovett's paintings and one of his sculptures, quickly becoming symbolic for Lovett, fashioned in his works as something of an individualised logo. This small rectangle of inspiration—for now—lives with folded tape on its back attached to the studio wall, a location from which it very well may move when no longer to the taste of the artist, or when inspiration is derived from another transitioning object.

It would be fair to say that most people can relate to this transitioning state of objects, for example when regarding their accumulated books and records. For the studio artist whose workspace acts as a home away from home they often find themselves fighting between both spaces. Equally, they are perpetually in and out of feeding inspiration; when looking at Lovett's paintings you are simultaneously being provided with his present taste in music. Design elements from record sleeves are picked up and plastered as the background of the painting, like a billboard to the painted objects in the foreground. These featured elements of design are similarly derived from the books in transit within the artist studio, with clean simplistic shapes taken from design publications by the likes of Japan's mid-twentieth century pioneer Yusaku Kamekura. Lovett's continued exploration of objects in flux has resulted in his practice venturing out and embracing three-dimensions; his long-standing

practice of painting the contemporary still-life appears to have evolved into a desire to re-craft the still-life objects previously drawn upon.

In our contemporary artistic climate, the studio finds itself metamorphosing to and for the qualities of the artist—some used as spaces of mass production, more factory than studio. In the case of Lovett, his contemporary practice holds onto traditional models of both studio practice and painting. An easel technique infused with Modernist styles and contemporary culture, a practice representative of artistic and personal evolution, picking up new things and leaving behind others, transitioning between taste and developmental desires, towards new techniques and mediums. Lovett's representations of transitioning personal belongings allows the viewer an entry point to grasp the inner workings of the artist, as Frank Stella states: "what you see is what you see."¹ The artistic practice of Lovett divulges what he sees, allowing the viewer to see the very same—a passing object or a permanent source of inspiration within the artists studio.

—Jack Willet

¹ Solomon, 2003: Deborah Solomon, *Frank Stella's Expressionist Phase*, New York Times Online, p.1, May 4, 2003
