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A sentimental Journey

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A Few Notes on A Sentimental Journey, in medeas res, and the set of all sets that are not sets of themselves.

I began producing these small architectural models after the housing crisis, an event in which I am intimately involved. In 2008 I abandoned my house in upstate NY. The bank hasn't yet foreclosed on it, although I stopped paying the mortgage almost a year ago. They have sent me a lot of mail, most of which I haven't opened. Now I have an apartment in Greenpoint that I use as both a home and a studio. The models are a response to these events. They are modern architecture, closer to Frank Lloyd Wright or Bauhaus architecture than the house I lived in, although the detail report for the house listed its style as "country contemporary". I was thinking of Martin Kippenberger's architectures made from shipping palettes. Someone told me they reminded them of Thomas Schütte's little buildings. I was also thinking of socialist buildings from the DDR, and referring to those in hopes of impressing my German girlfriend. She doesn't even like the DDR though, I am the one with the "Ostalgie". She likes Kippenberger though, and she is a good socialist.

I was also making pieces I called "Floor Plans" and "Property Lines" out of the same types of material as the sculptures. They are shaped metal pieces that hang on the wall, like Knoebel. Originally I was going to pair them up with the sculptures, but I decided I wanted a greater disparity of material between the sculptures and paintings. So I kept them separate and decided they would just be metal shapes. Or maybe they will remain property lines.

I call the large collages "Super-Supplementals" because they are almost completely made out of supplemental material, ie; notes pertaining to other works, drawings and photographs regarding other works, posters for events that are over, receipts for art materials, notes from ex-girlfriends, parking tickets, a special t-shirt, letters of reprimand from my landlord and the administration of the university where I teach, drawings from assignments I gave my students, packaging, etc. etc. It is a bit like a T.S. Elliot poem.

The humorist George Carlin describes a house as a "pile of stuff with a cover on it". So then I decided to make the little architecture into compressed versions of the collages, by filling them with the same kind of materials I had used in the collages. I put all my old sketchbooks in there, artworks by myself and others, and many other special things that I had been saving for years. Some people were surprised to see me incorporating some of these things into my artworks, and I told them they were being fetishists. Actually, I am not so tough. Going through all these old memories made me very emotional. I am a very sentimental person. My apartment is pretty empty now, although I have a seemingly infinite supply of "stuff", much of which is packed away in a storage space upstate. Sometimes I had to change the stuff to make it fit into the sculptures, cutting it into pieces, or compressing it in other ways. There was something digestive about that process, which reminded me of Dieter Roth.

Here, in A Sentimental Journey, you are treated to an intimate view of my papers both public and private. Perhaps in rifling through my drawers, you will be charmed by the drawing of a squid I made when I was eight years old. My father was pretty attached to it.

Justin Lieberman, 2011