

Torlarp Larpjaroensook's Bookshelf

In *Bookshelf*, Chiang Mai-based artist Torlarp Larpjaroensook exploits the familiar vocabulary of reference in order to explore its limitations when applied to the artistic realm. Larpjaroensook goes to the very seams that bind the contemporary canon: the art books proclaiming who is influential, collectible, and worthy of full-color reproduction. In a meticulous act of forgery, Larpjaroensook has crafted thirty wooden blocks that replicate the physical dimensions of the original anthologies, and then rendered their covers in high-detailed painting. Rather than the sleek plane of coffee table books, Larpjaroensook imposes the tangibly uneven, albeit untouchable, texture of oil paint. Reams of pages are reduced to grayscale brush strokes. Larpjaroensook's books forgo function in favor of contemplation. The same rigor apparent in the rendering is revealed in the underlying concept: he gives us the covers and asks us to judge.

Larpjaroensook forces the viewer to consider not what these books contain, but rather what they represent. By stripping them of their function, Larpjaroensook transforms others' inventories of art into artworks of inventory. Entire catalogues of contemporary art becomes his own creation. By reproducing, he approaches authorship.

Equally provocative is the notion of ownership. A bookshelf is an apparatus of accumulation. Larpjaroensook displays a particular industry of art consumption: art that is meant to be consumed through for-profit publishing. Consumers are brought quickly abreast of "art now" by acquiring these widely distributed catalogues—yet does accumulation guarantee appreciation? Larpjaroensook confronts this consumerism by objectifying the books that objectify the art. His forgeries are painstakingly handmade and singular, in diametric opposition to the mass production of the original art books. Unlike the models they depict, the books' position in Larpjaroensook's library both resists and complicates their distribution.

Conceptually, Larpjaroensook's work mimics the superficiality of his subject matter: both the books and the shelf provide a shallow survey of the art world, bolstered not by depth of content but by the illusion of comprehensiveness. What is the effect of substituting a two-dimensional representation of the art world in place of its chaotic, uncollected magnitude—its true contents? Despite their abundance, Larpjaroensook's books confess their functional and symbolic dearth. This deficiency challenges the public who gleans the

benefits—whether information or acknowledgement—of these tomes in the privacy of personal libraries.

By taking up the mechanism whose acquisition propagates legibility, credibility and a place in the contemporary canon, Larpjaroensook asks the books' readers and his work's viewers where—at the end of a shelf?—are the limits of art's objectification.

Ellen Adams

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