Two groups of off-white concrete panels of varying geometric shapes are the sole occupants of the small gallery in Gordon Hall’s exhibition at the MIT List Visual Arts Center. Some lean against the wall while others are assembled into a structure resembling a fort or bench. These two sculptures are each other’s double; one an unconstructed version of the other, a replica of a bench-cum-artwork by the late, little-known artist David Croteau, which Hall first encountered in a friend’s yard in New Jersey. The sparse exhibition also includes a poster that visitors are invited to take — a photograph of Croteau’s poster that visitors are invited to take.


By Dana Kopel

MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge

Hall first encountered in a friend’s yard a little-known artist David Croteau, which he worked with furniture forms (he made the benches in the List Center’s atrium), as does Hall, as a means of thinking about the body relationally: how bodies move through space and become legible (or not) through interaction. In a conversation after the performance with art historian David Sretby, Hall reflected that “every piece of furniture conjures a ghost — a body that uses it.” That ghost or absence feels especially palpable in this exhibition, as it traces not only the physical space between people and things, but also the temporal gap that separates those of us present from Croteau, Burton, and countless others lost to AIDS — and the grief and longing that rest there.

By Keith J. Varadi

Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

Benjamin Reiss’s exhibition “Package Factory (Natural Marriage of Natural Resources)” is simultaneously one of excess and refinement, genuine in its ingenuity and sardonic with its sincerity. What you see is what you get, but in order to get it all, you must seek it all. The show centers around an eponymous Seneca tribe (1768–1867), a multitiered wooden structure housing an epic game of chutes and ladders. On the upper circuit, playfully primary-colored epoxy clay miniatures work together in the first scene of a staged simulation of a total industrial complex — agriculture, health care, infrastructure, technology, and transportation are all illustrated along the infernal descent. The figures lift, carry, and unload various widgets and wares; we see where the items are going, but to what end and why? Equal parts plastic army toys and corporate pharma logos, they conceivably embody the coalescence of military and commercial interests in the first-century globalization. On the next tier down, more doodled dudes engage in futile exercises, lowering cottony cloudlike “dream products” with cables, setting them on a circular railroad track to nowhere, reminiscent of the holiday season at an outdoor mall. On the ground level, carrots and tomatoes are peeled and planted, and even turned into baby carrots.

There is an impressive DIY sensibility to the packaging and the wonder of the film work that has created, with everything seemingly handmade by hand, aside from the two slightly warped hula hoops that function like planetary rings around a cartoonishly chaotic echoscape. Reiss mocks the brand of Marxism taught in art schools, while concurrently critiquing the capitalism that controls so many of the current creative decisions of these programs’ graduates.

By Paris-based editor and publisher Alice Overduin

In 1962, Wolfgang Stoerchle (1944–1976) filmed and photographed his horseback journey from Toronto to Los Angeles. Though documented for personal record, Stoerchle later dubbed his expedition a monumental performance. Such self-mythologizing is peppered throughout the artist’s compendium of exhibitions, which includes painting, sculpture, performance, fictional news, and video. Tragically, a car accident cut his life short at the age of thirty-two. In lieu of a warranted museum survey, Overduin & Co.’s recent exhibition, astutely curated by Paris-based editor and publisher Alice Duncan, is as ambitious and institutional as it is. After muddling forays into painting and sculpture, Stoerchle began leaning toward performance and was soon drawn to video. It was through this medium that the artist hit his stride, exploring its potential as both an archive of performance and a conduit for technological experimentation. Happily, the Overduin show was largely dedicated to this facet of Stoerchle’s output. Particularly noteworthy was Crowning out of clothes (1970–72), in which the artist set up an interconnected series of cameras and monitors, creating a mise-en-abye of registration, display, and re-registration through which the audience could observe and participate in the artist’s thoughts and experiences.