

# [LIST PROJECTS] Gordon Hall

As a sculptor, performer, and writer, Gordon Hall examines the relational, personal, and political effects of the ways we relate to objects and to each other. Using both abstract forms and carefully reconstructed copies of found objects, the artist asks how we might use such things and how they solicit bodily engagements from us. Ultimately, Hall's interests are in the social and political dynamics of these exchanges. The intentional, specific, and enigmatic objects created are both provocations to performance and allegories for an ethics of relationality. Both the sculptural objects and the performances that occur with and adjacent to them explore possibilities for an engagement with space, time, and objecthood that seeks to model alternative futures.

*The Number of Inches Between Them*, the exhibition on view at the List Center, continues a body of work in which Hall creates replicas of found, one-of-a-kind pieces of furniture. The replicas refer to objects Hall has encountered by chance and feels a magnetic attraction to, furniture that the artist wants to investigate physically through remaking. *The Number of Inches Between Them* doubles a geometric stone bench happened upon in a friend's grandparents' yard in 2016. Hall replicates the bench twice—once fully reconstituted to be identical to the original bench, and a second time disassembled into its component parts. All aspects of the object—its design, tactile quality, material, history, and the narrative of its maker—become implicated in the reanimation of the bench in a second life as sculpture. Here, Hall recovers the life of Dennis Croteau, a largely unknown artist who designed and fabricated the original bench shortly before passing away from complications relating to AIDS in 1989. A movement piece using the bench is performed by Hall and a group of Boston-based performers midway through the exhibition. The two sculptures in the exhibition are accompanied by a takeaway poster featuring an image of the original bench where it sits today, with an undeliverable letter from Hall to Croteau printed on its reverse.

The title of the work originates from a quote by late artist Scott Burton, whose own concrete benches are permanently installed just outside of the Bakalar Gallery. Burton was a sculptor, performance artist, and prolific writer who came to prominence in the 1980s, primarily recognized for making works that are both sculpture and furniture—his granite and bronze furniture pieces are now found in major public art collections around the world. Here at MIT, Burton designed the settee, bench, and balustrade in the atrium of the Wiesner Building, home to the List Visual Arts Center galleries. Burton's radical belief that formalism can and should be social, personal, and accessible underscored his life and work.<sup>1</sup> Like Croteau, Burton also passed away from AIDS-related complications in 1989.

Burton once said of the experience he desired for the seated audiences of his *Behavior Tableaux* works, "...what I want people to become aware of is the emotional nature of the number of inches between them." This consideration of distance and proximity runs throughout Hall's exhibition: the precise number of inches between each panel of the assembled bench, the distance between the replica benches and the original bench, between the assembled bench and the disassembled bench, between the bench and the performers, and between subsequent generations of artists who were not able to interact during their lives.

1. David J. Getsy, "Introduction: The Primacy of Sensibility," in *Scott Burton Collected Writings on Art & Performance, 1965–1975*, ed. David J. Getsy. (Chicago: Soberstone Press, 2012).

## Bakalar Gallery April 17 – May 20, 2018

All three artists extend a generosity, if not simply in the act of producing artworks that provide a chance for rest, but in framing how we engage with art and with one another. In creating a space of repose, *The Number of Inches Between Them* supports us in being present with those who no longer are. Hall produces a bench in this lineage—considering vulnerability and care, the broader history and politics of support, and the structures that dictate the choreography of our bodies as we engage with the built world.

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Gordon Hall (b. 1983, Boston, MA) lives and works in New York.

*List Projects: Gordon Hall* is curated by Yuri Stone, Assistant Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

### PUBLIC PROGRAMS

#### Performance

**Saturday, April 28, 3 PM**

A conversation with art historian David J. Getsy will follow the performance.

**All programs are free and open to the general public. RSVPs are required.**

For more information about this event and to RSVP, visit: [listart.mit.edu/events-programs](http://listart.mit.edu/events-programs)

### SUPPORT

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MIT List Visual Arts Center  
20 Ames Street, Building E15  
Cambridge, MA 02139

[listart.mit.edu](http://listart.mit.edu)

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### Gordon Hall

April 17 – May 20, 2018



COVER *The Number of Inches Between Them* (detail), 2017

Pigmented cast concrete, color poster multiple, performance

Performers: Mary Bok, Gordon Hall, Alan Crichton, Del Hickey, Susan Schor, Millie Kapp, and Chris Domenick

Courtesy the artist

ABOVE *The Number of Inches Between Them*, 2017

Pigmented cast concrete, color poster multiple, performance

Performers: Mary Bok, Gordon Hall, Alan Crichton, Del Hickey, Susan Schor, Millie Kapp, and Chris Domenick

Courtesy the artist



MIT List Visual Arts Center