



shape and trajectory, growing increasingly wonky, until they reach the far wall and dissolve into an indecipherable mess of intercepting lines, spinning circles, and symbols, much like the tornado that lifted the desks in the middle of the classroom. What starts off organized and regulated explodes in a million directions. But this is not to say that the classroom has failed its students. We can see from the substantial volumes on the shelves that students have learned about geography, math, presidents, wars, and the California Missions.

Of course, many pieces of American history are not incorporated into textbooks or lesson plans, but they are nonetheless passed down generation after generation—they're just a bit less visible. In a hidden corner of the classroom, behind the bookshelves, we find a secret vault of Post-it notes. Written by past students, the notes offer peer-to-peer words of wisdom: "Ride or Die," "It's hard having a kid," "Stop Snitching," "The teacher knows your handwriting," and "To go bombing you have to be ready for anything. Take enough supplies to last you the night or whatever."

Speaking of "bombing," the graffiti and doodling covering the desks offer another way for peers to communicate with each other and future generations—initials etched

into the surface, proclaiming everlasting love for a classmate, for instance, or not-so-flattering caricatures of a teacher. What would become of chimps if they knew how to use graffiti and Post-it notes?

—Amber Whiteside

#### BRONX, NEW YORK

##### "Informed by Function"

##### Lehman College Art Gallery

What if art and craft were truly thought to be equal? "Informed by Function," Lehman College's fine exhibition of works that cross the boundary between art and the domestic object featured pieces whose approach encompasses furniture, design, and architecture in addition to sculpture. The artists in this large group show inventively commit themselves to constructing one-off artifacts of the imagination, freely playing with notions of sculpture that are, as the title asserts, "informed by function." The sheer variety—and technical expertise—of these works made the exhibition a welcome respite from shows like "Unmonumental" at the New Museum, which offered an anti-formal, anti-art deliberately marked by an absence of dexterity.

Marc Andre Robinson's 15-foot-high circle of found objects (mostly wooden chairs) forms a striking, giant loop created specifically for the space; the pieces of furniture are held together

by traditional joinery. Francis Cape's *Alma* (2003) consists of a blue wall with a short, right-angled extension. Behind the façade, we can see the make-up of its support, which charmingly incorporates a built-in chair. The wall, painted an international Klein blue, references Modernism, as well as the quieter pleasures of craft. Ivan Navarro's *Black Electric Chair* (2006), a work made with black neon light, references Bauhaus design, but its title evokes torture and death; in a room of its own, the purple outline of the piece seemed more than faintly sinister.

Jean Blackburn's *Serviette* (2002), an upholstered chair with holes opened through the seat, bears many marks of decoration: thread, dish towels, sheets, napkins, and lace have been applied to the surface, resulting in a crazy quilt of covered forms that makes for an arresting sculpture. Forrest Myer's *Parker* (2008), a remarkable chair made of steel wire with a black, oxidized patina, looks as much like an expressionist, three-dimensional drawing as it does a functional seat. *Still Life* (2007), by David Baumflek, consists of a tall tower of white tables with artificial fruit at the top. Reaching to the ceiling, the sculpture revealed the fruit through a mirror that reflected the image down toward the viewer. Friedrich Kunath's readymade, *Where in the world are you now*

##### Installation view of "Informed by Function."

(2007), places half of an upright piano against a mirror, which doubles and completes it; the keys play passages from Glenn Gould's recital of Bach's Goldberg Variations.

Generally, the functions of these objects were eclipsed by their existence as art, giving a slightly surreal cast to the entire presentation. *Hybrid III* (2006), Pedro Cruz-Castro's fanciful table, is supported by crazily bent hooves, which add a humorous, organic element. The lighting above Madeline Weinrib's *Persian Illusion*, a delicate gouache on mirror, reflected the work's flower motif onto the wall. The pattern, on both the work and the wall, showed how an elegant presentation may be made with the simplest of materials. Hisae Ikenaga's untitled wall relief, really a drawing made of cut carpet strips, describes a ladder, bookshelves, a bed, and a table. These images balance on each other as they build a pyramid up the wall. William Stone's *Mixed Metaphors* (2006), composed of pine, oak, and paint, is a six-foot-tall ladder with two steps in its middle. A nice visual pun, *Mixed Metaphors* sums up how artifice can transcend the limits of its particular medium, once imagination elevates the object beyond the scope of its materials.

—Jonathan Goodman