

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2010

THE WEEK AHEAD

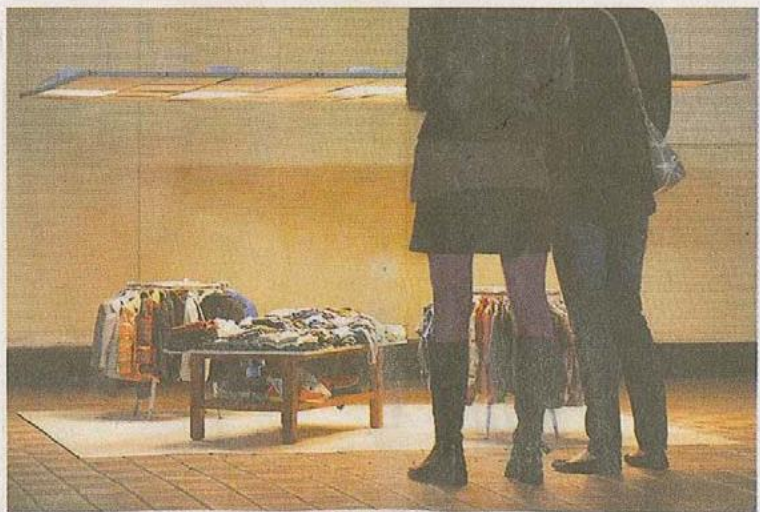
JULY 18—JULY 24

Art

Holland Cotter

CHARLES LEDRAY, who has a 20-year retrospective at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, is one of our most distinctive artists, and one our best. He came of age an era dominated by Conceptual and performance art, though his work consists almost entirely of objects scrupulously assembled by hand, childlike in scale, adult in sensibility. From the early 1990s come miniature versions of city sidewalk sale displays: hundreds of tiny books, paintings, shoes, shirts and videocassettes of gay pornography arranged on handkerchief-size blankets. That piece, painstakingly thought out and obsessively labor-intensive, gives the retrospective its title: "Charles LeDray: Workworkworkworkwork."

A multidisciplinary of extraordinary range, Mr. LeDray immersed himself in ceramic making in the late 1990s to create "Oasis," an installation of 2,000 cups, pots and bowls, no two alike and none more than an inch or two tall. Exhibited together in a vitrine, they suggest the excavated remains of a dead pint-size culture. The Boston show marks the United States debut of one of his most ambitious recent projects, "Mens Suits." Three years in the making (2006-9), it's a simulation in miniature of a secondhand haberdashery with hundreds of recycled items for sale: suits hanging on racks, sports shirts folded on tables and neckties displayed in neat pinwheel formation. Mr. LeDray's art is as monumental in concept as art gets, and it's all about trying to give the child within some sense of control in an overwhelming world. The exhibition arrives at the Whitney Museum of American Art in November. Through Oct. 17, (617) 478-3100, icaboston.org; \$15.



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SPERONE WESTWATER, NEW YORK

"Mens Suits," one of the works in the retrospective "Charles LeDray: Workworkworkworkwork," at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston.