

Art Objects by Justine of the Colette is Dead, Co.

"The gap between art and life never existed for Colette, and even now that she's pronounced dead and resurrected herself as Justine, there isn't much of a gap between art and death either. For the past decade, Colette has been celebrated as a walking art performance, though in her official installations she's generally reclining on a divan or luxuriating in a bathtub, certainly not walking. A true original, Colette has entered her fantasies to create a phenomenon that's art, fashion, theater, and attitude.

Colette's unique aesthetic is exotic, erotic, passive, and yet aggressively, or as she puts it, "deadly" feminine. She has reached back to her Tunisian roots to embody the oriental mystique of those beguiling North African beauties who captivated Delacroix and other French Romantics. Colette has several times acted the roles of well known personages from French 19th Century paintings in her tableaux performances.

But despite her fluency in the art and fashion of the 19th Century, one can be sure that Colette doesn't hover in a time warp. As evidenced by the name of her art band, Justine and the Victorian Punks, she delighted in mixing haute style with the latest in adversary culture. This combination of dreamy elegance and street flash is Colette's trademark. She has shed some of her fine laces and silks to sprawl amid art trade refuse in a dealer's booth at the Basel Art Fair, and put on a similarly outrageous performance in the vitrine of a Paris gallery. Yet in addition to bringing such elite settings down to earth, Colette's ruched silks, mauve pillows, and mysterious back-lighting have transformed crumbling warehouse lofts into ethereal wonderlands. This effect was achieved most spectacularly in Colette's own fabled living space. She's an alchemist as well as an artist.

*As Colette has become increasingly renowned in art circles, she's watched her ideas filter into the products of designers, decorators, and others in the commercial world. This prompted Colette to begin using the commercial world as her medium. In her 1978 performance, *The Last Stitch*, she declared herself dead, arranging to be born again as Justine, the executor of the late artist's estate. She cleverly manages the "inheritance" and like Picasso's heirs, develops parts of the legacy into commercial ventures. An energetic entrepreneur, Justine has since produced a record album, designed a fashion line for Fiorucci, and arranged with Sakowitz, a Texas department store, to feature her \$37,000 custom made bed as a centerpiece of their Christmas catalog.*

This seemingly naive and flighty fantasy character has taken on the commercial arena, breaking through the art world's academic boundaries to become a paid contributor to popular as well as art culture. Justine the beautiful dreamer has become a "Reverse-Pop" artist, exploring the channeling of art ideas through commercial media instead of framing commercial images for art world consumption. After a career of ignoring the gap between art and life, perhaps Justine will now succeed in dissolving the already ill-defined gap between art and commerce."

Jeffrey Deitch