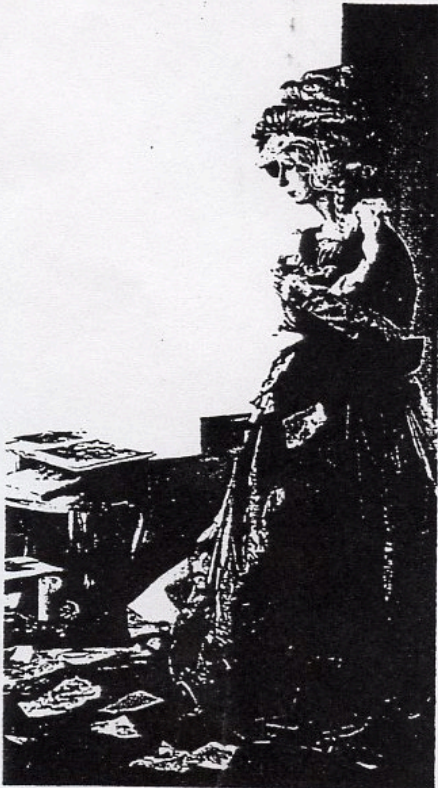


Colette at Kim Foster

Colette has assumed numerous guises over the past three decades, changing her persona with her locale. In the "Berlin Salon" she was, and still is, Mata Hari; in Munich she was Countess Reichenbach; returning to New York in the mid-'60s, she became the proprietress of "The House of Olympia." In New York in the late '70s Colette staged her own death. She resurrected herself as Justine,



Colette: Installation view of *Olympia mannequin sculpture*, 1999; at Kim Foster.

poseur extraordinaire and "American" entrepreneur, creator of "Justine" products, rock star with The Victorian Punks, and interior and fashion designer.

Olympia, in the form of a life-size mannequin sculpture, arrived on May Day as muse-in-residence to Chelsea. She brought with her an encapsulated history of her creator and alter ego, Colette. In an exhibition of photo-documents and installations dating from 1970 to the present, Colette recorded her momentary residencies in sites ranging from Fiorucci's window

to the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian galleries.

On display were framed photos of *Clearance Sale* (Paris, 1977), the artist wearing her *Beautiful Dreamer* uniforms of tufted silk (1980), and *Colette as Marie Antoinette* (Lausanne, 1995). Near the windows at the back of the gallery was an installation called *The Living Library in the House of Olympia*; it was stuffed with books, catalogues, Justine's products (an LP of pop songs and Colette dolls) plus souvenirs from the House of Olympia (snow domes with photos of recent performances inside, CDs, a music video, T-shirts). On the windowsills stood clay flowerpots with reliefs of Colette's head.

The esthetic sensibilities in the three decades of work on view

— were extraordinarily diverse, ranging from the ostentatiousness of the artist's silk-draped installations and pastel Belle Epoque costumes to punk antics to a photo of a performance in which, clad in black, Colette takes aim with her pistol down the length of a white banquet table at an ominous crowd. Her recent performances were documented in large sepia photographs of the living Olympia, in white dress, hat and gloves, standing on her pedestal, on display in international art museums. Despite the diversity of the material on view, the exhibition worked to create a coherent portrait of a beautiful dreamer. —Richard Stephens