

COLETTE

**Rempire
Dorsky**

Colette may be said to represent the eternal gamine. She is the art world's mischievous urchin in search of shelter in the lap of luxury. Taking on various guises, she recycles a series of literary and historic female personae: De Sade's Justine, the writer Colette, Mata-Hari, Olympia, and François Boucher's blond odalisque, playing variations on the courtesan, seamstress, femme fatale. She identifies with such women of reputation not to attract gentlemen callers or protectors but rather to mock these relationships.

Colette's delightful and crazily inventive exhibition at Rempire amounted almost to a retrospective and displayed the relics and props of her various incarnations, tableaux, and environments. Included were adorned and altered photographs, a vitrine full of curiosities, sculpture, draperies, and costumes. The centerpiece was a pink confection of a bedroom set, including wall panels of gathered silk, a cracked mirror, a vanity, hanging costumes, and a canopy bed. All that was missing was the slop pot, the maid, and the lady herself—in the person of Colette, who normally appears in her installations. On the silk coverlet lay a framed and retouched reproduction of the odalisque, lying naked on her belly and propped up on some pillows. One can imagine her sighing, "Why isn't New York Paris?" For all the mocking humor, in Colette's absence a certain gloom pervades her tawdry trousseau—the kind one feels in a vintage clothing store or at an estate sale.

Nearby at Dorsky, a series of her painted photographs was on view. The images were large,

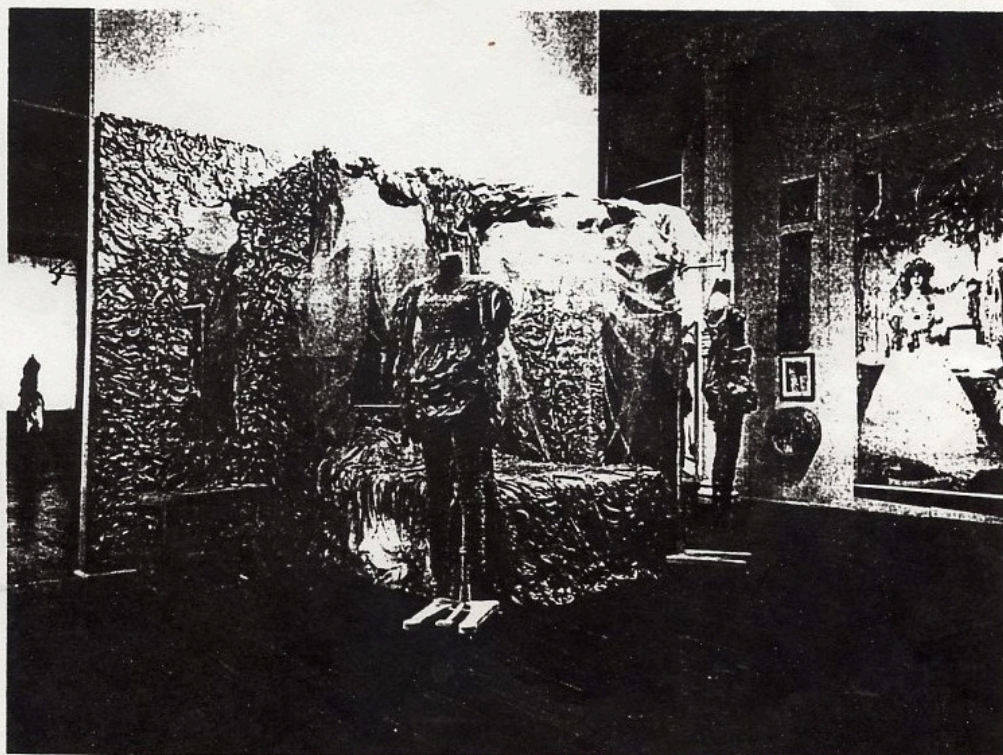
grainy, and lightly brushed with a metallic pastel palette. Costumed dolls with light-bulb heads stood in for Colette and company in a reenactment of the rituals of her melancholy theater. —Christopher Sweet

REMPIRE

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Colette, *Fragments of the Living Environment*, 1970-83, installation view. Rempire.

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