



Colette: *Love in the Closet*, 1992, mixed mediums, 114 by 92 by 15 inches; at Rempire.

Colette at Rempire

Since the early 1970s, the multi-medium visual, performance and conceptual artist Colette has assumed the roles of famous attractive women (Ophelia, Justine, Mata Hari and, most recently, Olympia); vamped or slept in baroquely festooned settings; and made videos, window displays, living sculpture and photographs of herself in various guises. Her name has become synonymous with shirred satin and droopy tulle, but her métier more broadly employs the entire cultural fabric, with which she continually refashions herself. From the late '70s through the mid-'80s, in her various personae, Colette re-

corded a hit rock album, marketed a Fiorucci fashion line, designed a lavish bed for the Sakowitz department store, and created sets and costumes for the Berlin Opera. She is now regarded as being ahead of her times with these early forays into popular and consumer culture and her self-parody and ultra feminine/feminist historical revisionism. Colette's strategies and styles have been expanded by such '80s artists as Jeff Koons, who, dressed in a pre-art-world Wall Street suit, made a cameo photo appearance here (and whose recent Sonnabend show featuring Cicciolina was amusingly called to mind by Colette's presentation).

Titled "Love in Ruins—The Artist & Her Muse," this exhibition combined performance art, multi-medium art works and the music of Wagner to render, as high camp, European aristocracy and the artist's own career and past relationships. She skewered the male artist/female muse tradition as well. At the show's opening, its closing and randomly during its run, Colette performed silently, in costume, in her "storage closet," an enclosed room full of props just off the back gallery. Leaving the door slightly ajar (making viewers feel like Peeping Toms), she posed, mannequin-like, before a mirror in a wedding

gown; rummaged among various boxes and art works; or just sprawled, doll-like, on the gallery floor.

Displayed in the front gallery were pretend artifacts from a body of work called "The Secret Lives of Count & Countess Reichenbach, Munich-N.Y. 1986-1991." Ostensibly from an ancestral Bavarian castle, these wall reliefs include photographs of the artist posing seductively for the camera and a young man gazing smittenly at her. The reliefs are adorned with Colette's signature assortment of junk, plastic fruit, gold spray paint and fancy fabrics, all combined in decadent, fading glory. In *Love in the Closet*, a large wreath of tattered and swagged pastel fabrics studied with hidden lights framed a photo of a nude Colette (a.k.a. Olympia), in the role of the courtesan, smiling coyly at the viewer. Half-hidden behind her, the love-lorn count reclined. There were also amusing parodies of female muses—Colette as Frida Kahlo and as the risqué 19th-century German princess Victoria von Preussen—and a wall full of fake record covers that document an amazing number of contemporary art and music stars, mostly male, who have played the muse in Colette's continuing baroque theater of art and life.

—Ann Wilson Lloyd