



Laurie Simmons

PHOTOGRAPHY

L AURIE SIMMONS' originality becomes clearer with every show she has, as does the poker-faced wit of her work. The big photographs in her latest exhibition, at Metro Pictures, remind us a bit of Busby Berkeley and a bit of Claes Oldenburg, but they are true to Simmons. They include the social critique that's built into all her work, but she doesn't hit you on the head about the nature of our consumer culture so that you feel lectured at. Instead, she drapes a giant alligator purse, say, or a huge camera over a model or a mannequin; the figure disappears underneath the objects, so only the legs stick out. These pictures have a wonderful mixture of fantasy, reality, exaggeration, and understatement. The exhibition also includes another aspect of this photographer's work—Simmons' remembrance of things past. Here she's showing twenty-five old publicity shots of female ventriloquists and their dummies. Simmons has been working with the ventriloquist theme for some time now, and this installation is touching, and spellbinding.