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Time Out New York / Issue 594: February 15–21, 2007

Review

David Hammons

★★★★★

[L&M Arts](#), through Mar 10

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In a gallery whose Upper East Side location and wealthy clientele make it a symbol of affluence, David Hammons (in collaboration with his wife, Chie) caustically questions the values of the culture of privilege. Six fur coats hang on antique dress forms, their backs defaced, as if by animal rights activists. Yet the damage seems to correlate with techniques favored by several artists the gallery has shown in the past: Yves Klein's fire, Pollock's paint splatters and Basquiat's graffiti. Such artists exemplify the reduction of avant-garde objects to decorations for the bourgeoisie; the obvious jab in the Hammonses gesture is at a society that prizes status symbols over substance.

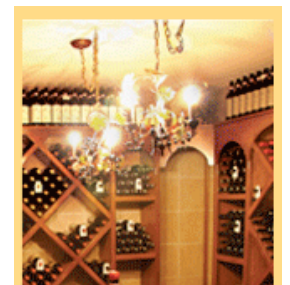
But in suggesting there's a troubling dichotomy when an artwork is coveted simply as a trophy, the Hammonses call into question deeper issues related to the market. The dress forms, for example, can be read as emblems of the seamstresses and tailors who labor in the garment industry.

In financial terms, the coats are far more valuable as an artwork than as luxury goods. Yet the project is not for sale, according to the gallery (nor are images available to the press). The fact that the Hammonses are opting not to commodify their piece—at least for the time being—lends it even greater cachet for hopeful collectors; if scarcity creates value, then unattainability is golden. This conundrum is just one of many raised by this estimable show. — *Joshua Mack*



Exterior view of L&M Arts
Photograph courtesy L&M Arts

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