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## Stuart Servetar ART



### The Deal of the Art: Malling the Museums

ART SHOPS HAVE PROLIFERATED WITHIN the mega-museum, and in small not-for-profit spaces as well. From the exalted Metropolitan Museum to the alternative Exit Art/First World, everyone's got one—and if they used to have one, now they have two or three or more. MOMA and the Jewish Museum, to name two, have outlet shops next to their main branches, while the Met has 15 shops nationwide. At the downtown designer museums—the Museum of African Art, the New Museum and the Guggenheim Soho—you have to go *through* the shop to get to the collections. Some visitors never get that far.

The museum shop is now the subject of a spoof, so you know it's definitely a *thing*. Sam Wiener's show at the Alternative Museum through June 25 (594 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts.) ambitiously calls itself *Art Depot: An Exhibition Which Satirizes the Museum Gift Shop and the Commodification of Art*.

It successfully does both. Almost *too* successfully. According to Andrew Perchuk, museum curator, "It took Sam 18 months to prepare this show, and in that time most museum stores have outstripped the parody."

The main gallery of the Alternative Museum has been filled with slickly-made art products, simply displayed and packaged in generic cardboard boxes a la Home Depot.

The consumer browses through an inventory that includes *Pony Expresso*, a mailbox in the form of the horse in Picasso's *Guernica*; *Rockabilly & Rockabilly Jr.*, rocking hippos based on the Met's mass-produced copy of an ancient figurine; *Déjeuner sur l'Astroturf*, *Reglued Schnabel Plates* (available in bridal patterns); and just in time for summer, Rob Ryman and Ad Reinhardt t-shirts (white-on-white and black-on-black respectively).

Like a Letterman monolog, the quality laughs just keep coming. And to make sure you get the joke, each item and its allusions are explained in user-friendly prose and mounted in clear, unbreakable lucite stands (not on sale).

The staff of the museum has been sucked into the satire; they spend portions of busier days cruising the floor like salespeople on commission. Perchuk is ready with a clipboard to keep track of inventory. Biggest sellers: the Leon Golub wall clock and the "Jumping Giaco's"—a children's squeeze-toy with a Giacometti figure rather than the usual clown flipping on a string.



As soon as you enter the Guggenheim Soho you're confronted with the big-ticket items: a series of fine ceramics created by various artists including Cindy Sherman, Roy Lichtenstein, George Segal, Arman, Dan Flavin, Komar and Melamid and Joseph Kosuth. A sales attendant with an indecipherable ac-

