

Gay City NEWS

By Susan Yung

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Like traditional sculptors, Charles LeDray creates finished artworks that give few clues as to their meticulous production. Okay, so making miniature clothes and furniture is not exactly Michelangelo carving the Pieta. But there is a striking compressed energy to LeDray's beautifully finished work, intensified by the miniature scale and often-familiar subjects.

The largest-scale work is *Party Bed* (approximately 26" high x 49" x 40") – a cheap steel frame, box spring, pad, mattress (a “do not remove under penalty of law” tag dutifully attached), sheets, pillows, coverlet – all painstakingly crafted to scale. Strewn on top are coats whose variety includes leopard print, Burberry checks, denim, nylon, and more, many with logo-printed linings tailored to perfection and trimmed with to-scale buttons, brooches, and zippers. You can almost hear muffled music from the next room.

Old-fashioned baseball catcher's gear (15" high) on a wooden hanger is among the most lovingly crafted and convincing items in the show, although it seems incongruous that the chest protector appears new, not yet sweat- or dirt-soiled. *Hall Tree* is a coat tree (29" high) whose custom brass hooks hold work jackets of denim and velveteen, work gloves jammed in a pocket, and a

trenchcoat. The reduced scale is very convincing, but there are certain reminders of the difficulty of LeDray's task. Individual topstitches and buttonhole stitches are too long, the weave of some fabrics a bit large, their drape unforgiving.

Village People, a series of hats, hangs high on the wall so details are glimpsed, not inspected. But the sheer variety, and the stereotypes that go along with each, speak volumes. Hat styles include trucker with corporate or designer logos, skunk, Robin Hood, gondolier, and more. A bunch of flip-flop sandals hangs on a line, with convincing rippled rubber straps and worn-down soles. A couple of toy boxes feature tiny stuffed animals and other treasures. LeDray edges toward Dada/Mrs. Haversham in a few works – *Straightjacket*, which gives a close-up lesson on how one is laced; *Anvil*, with a pin cushion shaped like a head; and *Shoe pin cushions*, several rows of varying shades stuck with handmade safety pins.

Also on view are some less successful “necklace busts” that play with language and natural forms on a normal scale. LeDray's most affecting work though, and perhaps his albatross, are the nostalgic realistic miniatures that allow us to be simultaneously art admirers and children.