

Art & Exhibitions

## Art Meets Fashion at B Dry Goods, the Little Brooklyn Gallery That Could

Andy Warhol's Keith Haring T-shirt? Check. Josephine Baker's banana belt? Check. David Hockney's red bowtie? Check.



Andy Warhol, Keith Haring screenprinted cotton T-shirt (ca. 1986), \$2,000. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

by **Lee Carter** • January 31, 2024

The haute couture shows have just ended in Paris, following another round of men's collection in Europe. While you'd be excused for feeling a little fashioned out, don't hit pause for too long because the New York shows are less than two weeks away. As a palate cleanser, we propose a trip to the pocket-sized yet

treasure-filled fashion exhibition “[Fashion Forward](#)” (through March 30) at B Dry Goods gallery in Brooklyn.

Tucked away on a side street in Crown Heights, B Dry Goods feels every bit the high-end curiosity shop. Objects are hung densely and stacked high, and all handpicked by gallerist Gabe Boyers, who’s as generous with his boisterous laughter as he is knowledgeable about the 170 items on display, ranging from rare vintage mementos to contemporary finds.



Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí, telephone dial powder compact (ca. 1950s), black enamel, brass and glass, \$1,500. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

When I popped in a few days before the January 25 opening, we perused the weird and wonderful wares together. First up was a telephone dial-shaped makeup compact from the 1950s, which the Italian avant-gardist Elsa Schiaparelli had actually come up with in the 1930s. “It’s based on a design by Dalí,” enthused Boyers, who said he found it in a Paris flea market some years ago (and it’s not the first one he’s sold). “They were just funning around when she said, ‘Let’s make it!’”



Andy Warhol, Souper Dress (ca. 1965), A-line dress made of screenprinted tissue, \$4,500. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

Several paper dresses caught our eye next, one bearing an outsized face of Bob Dylan and another, produced by Campbell's Soup, that "capitalized on the Warhol craze," said Boyers. "They called it the Warhol 'Souper Dress,' and it was originally folded inside of a magazine."

Next came a group of items that belonged to Josephine Baker, including a feathery pink hat—similar to one she wore to the Battle of Versailles—as well as her infamous banana belt (ca. 1930). Baker herself wore all the items on display, confirmed Boyers, who acquired them from a Paris sale of items deaccessioned by France's national public radio (ORTF). The banana belt is an especially stunning find, even if its best shimmies are behind it.



Josephine Baker's Banana Belt, worn at the Casino de Paris (ca. 1930), \$25,000. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

There is another Josephine Baker item in another display. When Karl Lagerfeld gifted a cape he'd designed to André Leon Talley, the *Vogue* editor and quippy fashion juggernaut, he included a portfolio of original fashion illustrations by the French poster artist Paul Colin. Some of those images, which were published unbound in 1930, depict a young, fresh-faced Baker—whose journey from a small Missouri town to the center of the Paris *beau monde* was the source of immense fascination for Talley. "It's pretty rare to find a complete set of these pictures," said Boyers, "made extra special because of the Lagerfeld provenance."



Trunk belonging to Marie Antoinette, oak and cyprus, studded leather and hammered metal, \$200,000. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

The centerpiece of the show—literally in the center, stopping us in our tracks—is a large trunk owned by Marie Antoinette, battered by many journeys in horse-drawn carriages on unpaved roads. “This was used to transport Marie Antoinette’s famous gowns and finery from palace to palace,” explained Boyers. As such, they were not “fine things” meant to be kept, like furniture, so they were typically destroyed after they became unusable—which makes the existence of this one all the rarer. “Marie Antoinette had a trunk-maker on site at Versailles, as one does. I’m sure she had hundreds of trunks at one time, but Versailles only has three of them left,” explained Boyers, who said his sample most recently belonged to a well-known designer who probably had an inkling of what it was. After all, the trunk reads “*Garde-robe de la Reine*” across the top, or “Wardrobe of the Queen.”

The asking price for the trunk is \$200,000. “That’s the price we put on it based on recent rare trunk sales,” said Boyers. “There were sales happening where Supreme Louis Vuitton trunks were going for \$280,000, and Marie is very hot right now as the goddess of fashion.” The highest price in the show, however, goes

to a collection of 119 drawings by the couturier Hubert de Givenchy, costume designs for the Bolshoi Ballet's production of Giselle in 1997. "They were gifted to his coordinator in New York, but we can only show a handful of them as they are so delicate." Given their fragility, this archive is selling for \$250,000.



Left: David Hockney's silk red bowtie, \$8,500. Right: Sonia Delaunay fabric printing mold (ca. 1924), \$6,000. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

Mixed among the bigger-ticket objects are smaller, more moderately priced pieces, too: a necktie worn by David Hockney; a Sonia Delaunay fabric printing mold (ca. 1924) containing remnants of pigment; two Nike quilts by Amy Rauner—former footwear designer at Converse—celebrating the Air Force 1 shoe; a T-shirt screenprinted by Andy Warhol with the likeness of Keith Haring (ca. 1986); a metal couture belt attributed to Paco Rabanne in 1970; a magazine photo of a model wearing an Oleg Cassini outfit with a handwritten message from Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, telling the designer she wanted one ("A great wool dress—would love this"); and a bronze Roman belt buckle dating back to 100 C.E., more or less.



Patrice Yourdon's 'bralette' (2022) with stainless steel screws, \$3,900. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

Contemporary fashion makes its presence known, too. The most eye-popping is a “bralette” made out of thousands of metal screws by New York-based artist Patrice Yourdon, whom Boyers discovered on Instagram years ago. “That would send quite a message on a first date,” he cracked. Elsewhere, Boyers included the paper disc dresses of artist Karina Sharif, also found on [Instagram](#). “They might be difficult to wear on a rainy day like today, but perfect for laying around on a chaise.” Then there’s the “Big Hat Energy wall,” which is how Boyers describes a cluster of paintings by local artist Paul Gagner showing an exaggeratedly long cowboy hat.



Left: Paul Gagner, *Big Hat Energy* (2022), \$3,500. Right: Paul Gagner, *The Wig Shop* (2022), \$3,000. Courtesy of B Dry Goods.

Part of Boyers's job, as he sees it, is to save archives from the dustbin of history. He once got a call from a picker—the people allowed to enter forgotten storage lockers for non-payment—who had opened a locker in Chicago and “not only found a piano, but a trunk full of musical manuscripts that turned out to be incredibly rare jazz manuscripts by Charlie Parker. If that guy hadn't been there, they would have been lost.” Boyers and his team saved the musical treasures, which ended up with a “wonderful” collector, then surfaced again after his death. Which is to say, they wound up in the collection of Charlie Watts, drummer of the Rolling Stones and one of the great jazz collectors of all time. “Not to toot my own horn,” tooted Boyers, “but about 70 percent of the things in the [Charlie Watts auction](#) at Christie's came from me.”

“My biggest fantasy,” said Boyers, “is that people will buy these things and actually wear them.” The gallerist said he himself owns and uses two soup cups and soup spoons belonging to Anna May Wong. “It's so much fun. There's nothing very special about them



except that they belonged to her—but it's a vibe. And, you know, you could easily wear Paul Newman's trench coat or Frank Zappa's leather jacket covered in pins. You'd be wearing a piece of history."

*"Fashion Forward" at B Dry Goods, 679 Franklin Avenue, Crown Heights, Brooklyn, January 25–March 30, 2024*



**Lee Carter**

Collectors Guide Editor

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