

Review

“Point of Purchase”

d.u.m.b.o. arts center, through Sept 24

★★★★★

Maybe you can't imagine America's soulless retail chains providing a reasonable climate for making art, but the 13 artists in "Point of Purchase" can and do. Under the curatorial watch of MoMA's Gretchen Wagner, we see Wal-Mart, the Mall of America and other cathedrals of consumption satirized or otherwise subverted in media ranging from photography to performance. Many of the individual works fail to rise above the dead weight of their subject matter (a tall order, to begin with), but the show's overall message inspires: There is potential for the expression of the individual within the collective.



Zoë Sheehan Saldaña, *Camp Shirt (Lucky Lime)*
Photograph: courtesy d.u.m.b.o. arts center

A sense of playfulness helps. Hence Keith Pavia's brightly painted banners that hang overhead, emblazoned with creepy figures and texts like *save/slave/save*. Zoë Sheehan Saldaña, who purchased a green shirt from Wal-Mart for \$9.87, displays the garment alongside a life-size photo documenting a replica that she painstakingly sewed by hand, then placed on the racks of Wal-Mart—ostensibly to be resold. A nice bit of guerilla exhibition tactics, that, but it also leaves you concerned for the artist's livelihood: Saldaña is out the cost of shirt, materials and labor. Meanwhile Wal-Mart gets to put \$9.87 in its coffers—twice.

Bryan Bennett and Nicole Tschampel's solipsistic sale circulars (they advertise the show) and Brian Ulrich's ironic photos of malls also stand out. But it's Andrew Lynn's performance piece *Whirl-Mart* that offers the most hope: In video documentation, Wal-Mart shoppers roll empty shopping carts around and around the store. Their act of defiance? Buying nothing. —
Sarah Schmerler