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### New In Town: Bowery Galleries by Blair Murphy

There is something peculiarly contemporary about the Kigurumi subculture, with participants' commitment to becoming a representation. Doller costumes are bulky and wearers have difficulty navigating physical space and interacting with other people. The point is to be seen, to be looked at, but not to act. By creating images of Dollers, Simmons' is depicting people dressed as representations of the human form. Several of the images feature models whose arms reach out past the frame, as if taking selfies, a nod to the crucial role the Internet plays in Kigurumi culture. The Doller's attempt to transform into a representation of a person, to flatten out reality, ultimately results in additional layers—layers of meaning, layers of fabric on flesh, representations of people costumed to mimic representations of people.

Photographer Laurie Simmons has long had a fascination with dolls. In her early work, she utilized dollhouses to construct elaborate tableaux. More recently, her series *The Love Doll* included images of life-size sex dolls, posed in mundane and everyday environments. She builds on this past work and digs deeper into doll-based subcultures in *Kigurumi*, *Dollers*, and *How We See* at Salon 94. Kigurumi is a sub-subculture, the most committed and perhaps confounding constellation in the anime and "cosplay" universe. Also referred to as "Dollers," participants don elaborate doll masks and full body fabric or latex suits. The masks are cartoonishly oversized, complete with massive anime-style eyes, and attached wigs. The suits match the skin color of the masks and cover the wearer's flesh with a flat, artificial surface.

Simmons' photographs feature models dressed in full Doller gear. The prints highlight the imperfections, the moments when the materiality of the costume disrupts the fantasy. The eyes and lips on the mask appear hand drawn; the body suits bunch and wrinkle. These imperfections are evidence of human bodies beneath the costumes, proof that the images aren't digital constructions or documentation of inanimate dolls.



Laurie Simmons, *Yellow Hair/Red Coat/Umbrella/Snow*, 2014, Pigment print, 70 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York