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FRONT ROW

A Wrap Dress Unwinds

By [ERIC WILSON](#)



Robert Wright for The New York Times
TIED AND TRUE E. V. Day in her studio with a sculpture.

THE artist E. V. Day makes fireworks from fashion. She has torn apart wedding gowns, a Chanel suit and a replica of [Marilyn Monroe's](#) white halter dress — symbols of feminine entrapment or empowerment, depending on your perspective — to create installations rigged on fishing line that make them seem to be exploding. She has made bomber jets out of G-strings.

Read into that what you will.

For her latest project, Ms. Day is taking on a dress perhaps even more fraught with sexual metaphor, a bandage dress from the house of Hervé Léger. Introduced in the 1980s and resurrected last year by Max Azria (who bought Léger in 1998), the stretchy little dresses are practically molded to the body, to

such a constraining extent that they are sometimes called bondage dresses. Ms. Day had been asked by the [Whitney Museum](#) to contribute a work based on the dress for its annual Art Party on June 17 (BCBG Max Azria is sponsoring the event), when the piece and other works will be auctioned. (Bids for some items can be placed at [whitneyartparty.org](#).)

So, during a recent visit to her studio in Brooklyn, she was knee-deep in bandages and thought — bandages representing mummification, bandages looking like something you would wear if you were having full-body plastic surgery, bandages symbolizing transformation.

Ms. Day had earlier fitted a dress on Joanne Leonhardt Cassullo, a Whitney trustee, and was now molding it with resin to a plastic chair, imagining the final sculpture as it would sit in a mirrored dressing room. The bandages appeared to be unraveling, flying off to the walls or suggestively binding an invisible person's legs and wrists with pleasure knots. Ms. Day seemed tickled by the idea that a dress so restrictive could at the same time be so revealing.

“I’m not the kind of artist who looks at these things and says that they are negative toward women,” she said. “I’m the kind who points them out to say we need to think about them.”

It is probably worth mentioning that Ms. Day does not entirely reject convention. She was married last weekend to Ted Lee, the food writer. Her gown, made by the designer Gary Graham, was made of silver leather and chrome.