

e.v. day

Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris
New York

But is it sexy? This was the question on my mind when I was told that E.V. Day was stretching two hundred pairs of thong underwear and “flying” them from the rafters of the sculpture court at the Whitney Philip Morris. As it turned out, what’s sexy when glimpsed peeking out from a woman’s waistband was doubly so when marshaled in tight vector formations like a flock of birds. Day, quite simply, has conjured a kind of aerodynamic eroticism out of airborne scatter art. I’m inclined to think the artist has uncovered the missing link between the postadolescent and adult imaginations: sensuous curves.

After all, the streamlined contours of a Porsche Carrera are slinky in the extreme, but you can’t make love to them. A young boy might fetishize the smooth silhouettes of a Hot Wheels car, not, as one might think, until he’s of legal age to drive a real one, but rather until he can displace his sublimated longing onto a living, breathing sexual partner. Thongs, on the other hand, suggest a mysterious absence that the culture immediately rewards. Sure, your development

is arrested if you worship the garment to the exclusion of the person wearing it, but it’s a much shorter journey to eventual consummation than the merger between flesh and steel. Wasn’t this what J. G. Ballard’s *Crash* was all about? A community of people so alienated by industrial culture that they could only get aroused by the fear of death that a speeding car promises?

Lightness and reduced drag, the two characteristics a thong’s sheer, microfiber composition lends itself to most readily, are held in check only by centrifugal force. Underscoring this was the apt title of the show, *G-Force*, suggesting the gravitational pull imparted when an object departs from its linear trajectory. It’s no surprise that fighter jets mimic the cluster formation of birds—to fly in tandem significantly cuts down on wind resistance and increases speed. The resistance that Day seemed to want to overcome, though, had little to do with smoother flight paths and more to do with achieving escape velocity from a slow, post-minimalist inertia.

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E.V. Day *G-Force*, 2001, installation view.
Photo by George Hirose.

