



E.V. Day at Henry Urbach Architecture

The much-hyped confluence of art and fashion in recent years has resulted in some rather mediocre shows centered around themes of fashion, the use of art as a mere accessory or prop in the fashion world, and “babe-with-a-brush” articles that keep popping up in style magazines. It hasn’t always been pretty.

The work of E.V. Day may be the best melding of the two so far. Day has received attention lately for her “Exploded Couture” series, for which she usually

cuts up iconic items of clothing and installs the bits on monofilament stretched taut from floor to ceiling, not unlike the symbolically loaded works by Cornelia Parker involving debris from destroyed buildings or historic sites. For the 2000 Whitney Biennial, Day cut up a white dress like the one Marilyn Monroe made famous when a subway vent sent it billowing upward in the film *The Seven Year Itch*; it was arranged to suggest that titillating moment and titled *Bombshell*. For the “Greater New York” show at P.S. 1, Day strung fragments of sex dolls on wires in a sort of freeze-frame of an explosion. In an earlier series, she dissected wet suits and reconfigured them into vaguely skeletal shapes.

For this, her first solo show, Day successfully expanded her visual vocabulary by creating a cohesive environment around a single element, a silver-sequined dress given to her by designer Stephen Sprouse specifically for the piece. At the center of the room was the spotlight dress, a column of shimmer stretched between two mirrored disks at top and bottom that illuminated the room. With the entire gallery painted a deep blue, the installation, called *Transporter*, had a celestial effect. The sliced-up dress almost seemed to disintegrate into the ether, hence the installation's name, which refers to the beam-me-up mode of getting around in *Star Trek*. Also in the gallery were a number of thin, hanging sculptures called "Celestial Pelvises," which look like melted tiaras or pieces of twisted wire hanger coated with clear ooze (actually surgical steel and resin). While their pelvic associations are unclear, it was easy to think of them as constellations floating in the night sky.

While the notion of "blowing up" designer clothing could be read as a feminist statement, that's not Day's intent. However, one might wonder why she installed the sex dolls in a pattern like a true explosion, while the dress remnants seem to be an attempt to salvage the original form. This seeming divide between the implicit act of violence and careful reconstruction is reconciled in Day's hands: destruction becomes the means to regeneration.

—Stephanie Cash