

E. V. Day

November 21, 2009 - January 9, 2010 at [Otero Plassart](#), West Hollywood

by Daniella Walsh

Anyone who plowed through "Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution," the 2007 MOCA mega-exhibition of just about every striation of Feminist art, may be excused if they think that there is nothing more to be said on the subject. Enter E.V. Day, who has found yet another take on something that defined, confined and classified women since humans began to walk upright: Clothes.

While Day has recently turned discarded New York City Opera costumes into sculptures and thus assured their place in both art and fashion history, this exhibition shows off her remarkable ability to create variations of the proverbial silk purse made from a sow's ear. That may well be the reaction of many who will become intrigued by Day's use of brilliantly hued crotchless panties and other sexy lingerie ordinarily more at home at Fredrick of Hollywood than an art gallery.

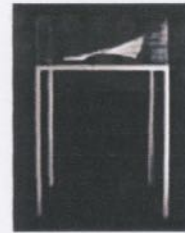
But, never mind delving into origins. In sculptures like "Saarinen's Mother 2," Day suspends the underwear with monofilament lines coated with translucent resin simulating a delicate stream and droplets of water. Stretched into freeform triangular shapes, brilliantly red panties float with seeming weightlessness in a Lucite box atop a stainless steel pedestal. While the piece, by virtue of its title, invites being likened to Eero Saarinen's architectural forms, this particular arrangement brings to mind strippers or circus performers who, while tantalizingly beautiful, remain untouchable and thus able to hide the sweat and tears of their labor.

More than any other piece here, "Saarinen's Mother 2" is about beauty, real or imagined, achieved with smoke and mirrors and ultimately worshipped for its own sake. There is no seduction without beauty, or at least a perception of it. That seduction travels with the speed of sound in "Bridal Dragster."

It will take a practiced eye to recognize the source of her art supplies, and that seems to be the point: In a post-feminist age where teachers pole dance after hours and middle-schoolers dress like "Pretty Woman," it's no longer clear who might work the streets and who amasses billable hours in corporate law offices. As Day makes clear, the notion of clothes as delineators of class, income and state of virtue is pretty much kaput.



"Saarinen's Mother 2," 2007, silk crotchless panties, resin, blown glass, monofilament, plexiglas case, stainless steel hardware, 84 x 28 x 28".



"Bridal Dragster," 2007, nylon bridal thong, artificial pearl, stainless steel hardware, monofilament, acrylic box, steel base.



"Mummified Barbie--Gold," 2008, Barbie doll, beeswax, Mervé Léger bandage.

In addition to the plethora of feminist rumination that her work invites, the reality that female beauty standards across the globe stretch further than elastic remains constant: Consider Western women who augment their breasts with liquid-filled plastic sacs, while some African tribeswomen, unconcerned about appendages only an infant could love, attach disks the size of dinner plates to their lower lips to signal wealth and desirability.



"Cherry Bomb Vortex,"
2002, mixed media.

When she encases the ubiquitous unmentionables into a Lucite box placed on a pedestal, turning them, or perhaps the implied wearer, into an object of worship, the connection between religion and sexuality becomes glaringly clear. Similarly, implications of violence override "Cherry Bomb Vortex's" bouquet-like beauty—*fleurs du mal*, indeed. Then again, fixation on female innocence, real or imagined, as embodied by the pink pair of underpants suspended among gossamer pieces of white fabric ("Pink Panty") refuses to go away.

Day delves into the inescapable religion-sex connection when she stretches a pair of fishnet stockings and embeds them into paper. A suggested lingerie lace frame recalls stained glass windows. Yet, one also thinks of Georgia O'Keeffe's flora whose sensuality, although overt, she took great pains to deny.

Still, Day is not above resorting to cliché to make her point: "Mummified Barbie--Gold," shows a Barbie Doll, loved by many and equally despised by others, wrapped in gold bandages—bringing to mind swaddled infants and women encased in burkas. Barbies, marching stealthily and steadily across the globe, have been the recipient of many a feminist's ire, so one more just adds to the pyre on which the accursed "role models" will, one hopes, some day land.

Above all, the artist's pronounced sense of irony (made more effective by her technical acumen) makes one re-examine notions of beauty in popular culture and whether we have really come such a long way. Women have been given more roles to play and costumes to wear but at what price exactly?