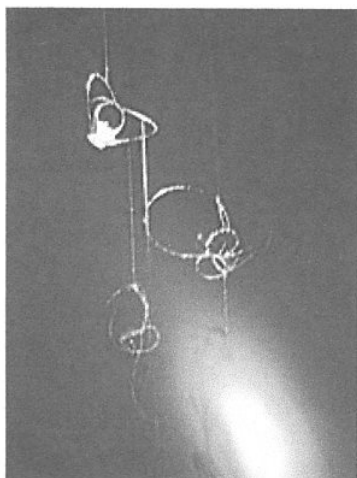


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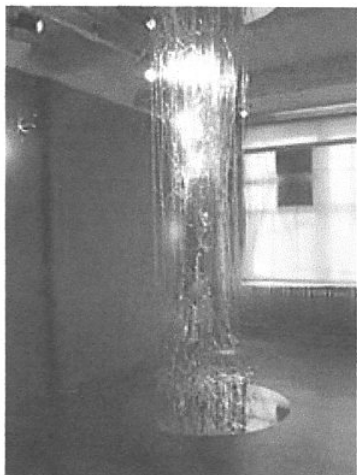
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Gotham Dispatch

by Max Henry



E.V. Day
Transporter
2000
at Henry Urbach



E.V. Day
Celestial Pelvis
1998-2000
at Henry Urbach

Day for night

All that glitters is gold, or rather silver sequins, in the new installation from cut-up couture artist **E.V. Day**. Lucky Day garnered spots in both the "Greater New York" survey at **P.S.1** and the **Whitney Biennial** without ever having had a solo show in New York. At the Whitney, the 33-year-old artist deconstructed a white evening gown (like the one worn by **Marilyn Monroe** in *Seven Year Itch*) into bits and pieces strung out on scores of monofilament wires. The P.S.1 piece was more risqué, an exploding pink plastic sex doll in an orgasm of suspended fragments.

For her solo debut at **Henry Urbach Architecture** over in the Chelsea Arts Building on West 26th Street, Day painted the interior of the small space midnight blue and installed *Transporter*, a silver sequin dress by 1980s hotshot designer **Stephen Sprouse**. The piece looks like a spangled jack-in-the-beanstalk, shooting north and south ad-infinity by way of two circular mirrors bottom and top. Along the walls hang clusters of surgical wires arranged in pelvis shapes and coated with globules of clear resin. They look like butterflies casting celestial shadows onto the dark walls.

The installation is theatrical — it's got **Marlene Dietrich** written all over it. The nocturnal setting alludes to Hollywood glamour, film premieres and parties.

E-off!

They wear sporty orange jackets and look like a racing team, but **etoy** is not a Formula 1 outfit. Rather, etoy is a Swiss-based collaborative of artists who shot to fame for defeating the publicly traded on-line retail giant **eToys** in a trademark infringement lawsuit (for more info, check out www.etoy.com and www.toywar.com). For a ten-day run, **Postmasters** on West 19th Street is presenting "Impact Management: etoy Corporation in Manhattan."

Parked outside on the street is a 40-foot-long orange truck trailer painted with the etoy logo. Inside the gallery is a big orange tent topped with barb wire and holding a web station where one can navigate through the "Toywar."

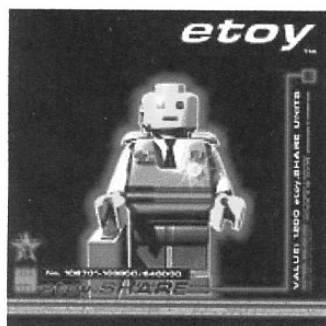
Hanging on the gallery walls are slick photoprocess works, marked with modern graphics and digital illustrations, that represent "shares" in the etoy company, complete with names, dates and serial numbers. Ettoy claims to sell "cultural value" — a sound financial investment, in the words of etoy curator **Suzy Meszoly**.

And though etoy members call themselves cultural terrorists and business hackers, they're not above making a buck. The individual and corporate shares are priced at \$3,000 and \$5,000, respectively. (EToys recently announced fourth-quarter losses of \$48.4 million. Ettoy is doing rather better — all 60 on view in the gallery are marked "sold," though new ones representing the "toy war" are available.)

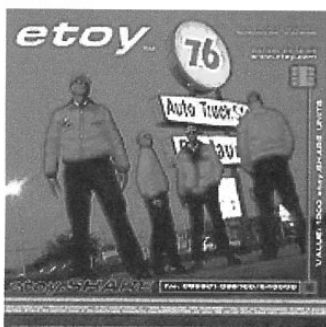
Ironically, the eToys lawsuit brought the art group a huge international audience, not to mention a David vs. Goliath status. Now, etoy says it is letting shareholders vote on whether to sell its domain name to the Santa Monica-based online toy retailer. In the end the group's high moral ground won't interfere with profit, making its contradictory brand of commerce more artifice than art.



Etoy's mobile headquarters,
outside Postmasters gallery



An etoy "share."



Another etoy "share."



Gillian Wearing
Drunk
at Gorney Bravin + Lee

What friends **Gillian Wearing** has. Her 23-minute-long, black-and-white video installation at **Gorney Bravin + Lee**, appropriately titled "Drunk," shows a bunch of drunken no-goods in search of an endless flow of free suds. The artist coaxed this gang of louts into her studio, documenting their debauchery in exchange for liquid sustenance.

Wearing's video stars desperately need a shave and a bath, not to mention a sense of direction. Where you might expect rambling pub conversations, you get instead a plain white existential setting. The lack of ambience and furnishings reduces these pathetic bastards to caricatures of themselves.

A real-time narrative seems to unfold -- this could have been a day in the life, yet it was filmed over several years, men and women coming and going, their chronic drinking deteriorating to stupor and worse.

One guy leans on the paper backdrop peeing on the wall, another one is splayed out across the floor, a dead ringer for **Keith Richards**. Some soused hag nods off -- it's funny as hell. A few guys tussle, on the verge of fisticuffs. Two men hug and hold each other up as one mumbles words of comfort. "It's okay."

Looking like a Gap ad gone awry, these anti-demographic denim-wearers seem subtly cognizant of the camera watching every move, perhaps even embellishing a bit as they throw caution to the wind. Wearing's Situationist scenario has been well edited, its pace and elliptic arc hums, and the matter-of-fact material is ageless.

Hurly-burly

The painter **Steve DiBenedetto** spent three months on the estate of **Claude Monet** in Giverny, France. The influence of Monet is apparent in the small paintings now on view at **Baumgartner Gallery** on West 15th Street in Chelsea. DiBenedetto sees the world in fractious shards of myopic light and color, his small canvases wrought with an arsenal of stimuli.

The combustible blurred realism he willfully composes out of an impressive impasto is complex and regulated into a semblance of place. Up close its chaos and congelation, 25 feet away it's a hurly-burly of globes, Ferris wheels, tentacles and splotches of undersea flora.

The gem in this series is *Celtic Frost* (1999), an 11 by 14 foot horizontal of ectoplasmic greens. Its many shades run from emerald to evergreen and the gritty brushwork ranges from unruly to sublime. DiBenedetto has an Impressionist's heart and an Abstract Expressionist hand, numbingly morphing the two into a potent cogency.

The only fault in the show is the dim lighting, which relegates the marvelous fireworks of color to the shadows. "That's how all the shows are lit," sniffed the gallery girl. Well, the lighting is quite dreary, deary, and in a word -- sucks!

Mapplethorpe's modesty

Between 1972 and '74, the young photographer **Robert Mapplethorpe** (he was born in 1946) produced experimental "auto-portrait" Polaroids that were precursors to his later works. Now on view at **Cheim & Read** on West 23rd Street, these 56 previously unexhibited self-portraits may be described as autoerotic and modest. Mapplethorpe's familiar pornographic content of later years is here incubated by ingenuous celebrations of the body.

These photographs have the raw innocence of self-discovery. When he was young and beautiful, Mapplethorpe had the look of a rock star and the poses of an actor. The curator **Richard Marshall** puts these works in their historical context in an essay accompanying the show, stating that during the early 1970s photography and video converged with performance and body art, challenging the hold that Minimalism and Conceptualism had over the avant-garde.

Modest and unaffected, these photos document sexuality as expressed in costumed



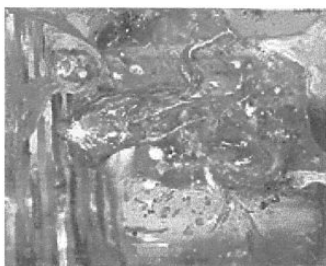
Gillian Wearing
Drunk
at Gorney Bravin + Lee

shows his lingam and testicles. If anything they reveal that he embraced the lifestyle that would later be his claim to fame then infamy.

MAX HENRY lives in New York.



Steve DiBenedetto
Cultus Sanguine
1999
at Baumgartner



Steve DiBenedetto
Dark Magus
1999
at Baumgartner



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