

MEADOWS MUSEUM SMU

5900 Bishop Boulevard • Dallas, TX 75205
P.O. Box 750357 • Dallas, TX 75275-0357
T 214.768.2516 • F 214.768.1688
meadowsmuseumdallas.org

Media Contacts

James Salomon
917-617-0828
james@salomoncontemporary.com
www.salomoncontemporary.com

Victoria Winkelman
SMU Meadows School of the Arts
214-768-3785
vwinkelm@smu.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2012

DRAMATIC SUSPENDED SCULPTURES OF OPERATIC COSTUMES BY ARTIST E.V. DAY EXHIBITED AT SMU'S MEADOWS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AND MEADOWS MUSEUM

Works from Divas Ascending series on view through September 30

Three suspended sculptural works by noted New York artist E.V. Day are on exhibit at SMU's Meadows School of the Arts and Meadows Museum through September 30, 2012.

The works – Carmen, Merry Widow and Hats – are from Divas Ascending, a series of 14 suspended sculptures made with retired costumes from the New York City Opera's archives, a collection comprised of wardrobes from prominent international opera houses. Dresses from Carmen and The Merry Widow originate from the New York Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera, respectively; Hats is made up of pieces from numerous houses. Divas Ascending is presented by the Salomon Contemporary gallery in New York.

Carmen is on view in the lobby of the Meadows Museum, 5900 Bishop Blvd. on the SMU campus; Merry Widow and Hats are suspended in the Bob Hope Theatre lobby of the Meadows School's Owen Arts Center at 6101 Bishop Blvd.

"I make sculptures that transform familiar icons of women's empowerment and entrapment into new objects that confound conventional readings of these clichés, and constellate meaning in a range of emotions: anxiety, ecstasy, liberation and release," said Day. "In my art, I use tension to suspend, stretch, and shred garments and to create forms that I liken to futurist abstract paintings in three dimensions. The challenge...was

to do justice to the retired costumes, which still have a majesty and degree of craftsmanship unlike any I'd ever encountered. I wanted the sculptures to reflect and refract the specific roles the costumes had played. The interplay between the story of the opera from which each costume came, the moment created by the sculpture, and the physicality of the transformed garment – its materials, its shapes, its colors, floating in this celestial space – is the work that I hope viewers of my installation will appreciate.” The heroine of Bizet’s *Carmen* is one of the most notorious women in opera – willful, fiercely independent, and the ultimate operatic gypsy. In Day’s sculpture, the gold fabric of *Carmen*’s Spanish-style gypsy dress appears tough as armor, glinting between ruffles of black polka-dotted tulle. The dress is pulled in all directions so it appears puffed-out and spiky, like a blowfish. Here, it is *Carmen* – not Don Jose – who wields the bloody knife, warning that “Love is a rebellious bird” and staying true to her word.

The Merry Widow, a sparkling operetta by Lehár, recounts the tale of wealthy widow Hanna Glawari, the most sought-after woman in Pontevedro. However, this charming young woman only has eyes for an old flame who refuses to be caught. Through her allure and a slight bending of the truth, she wins back the heart and trust of her former beau. Upside down, her dress functions as a goblet or reservoir for her fortune, which many men seek. Her petticoat is lined with gold lamé and her arms flex in exasperation.

In Hats, a selection of fanciful millinery from several operas is clustered into a column of shimmery opulence. The velour dreadlocks that dangle from *Turandot*’s conical caps; the Romanesque helmets crafted from gilded leather, rope and feathers; the bejeweled turbans from *Casanova*; and golden veils from *The Magic Flute* all suggest the exotic landscapes – fictitious and real – in these operas.

“E.V and I are thrilled to have the opportunity to work with SMU on this traveling exhibit,” said James Salomon, owner of Salomon Contemporary gallery in New York. “Meadows Dean José Bowen gave an enthusiastic thumbs-up to the project, and his team could not be more welcoming.”

Divas Ascending was first exhibited in the Promenade of the David H. Koch Theater in Lincoln Center for the 2010 season of the New York City Opera. Works from the series have since been exhibited at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts in Louisville, the Salomon Contemporary gallery in New York and the Houston Grand Opera. Two additional works from the series, *Cinderella* and *Mimi*, are on view through June 2 at the Rosewood Crescent Hotel in Dallas. They will be replaced by *Pagliacci* and *Don Giovanni* on June 3 and remain on view at the Crescent through July 15. This fall, several of the works will return to the Houston Grand Opera to celebrate the opera’s 2012-13 season.

E.V. Day received her M.F.A. in sculpture from Yale in 1995. The first sculpture in her Exploding Couture series, Bombshell, was included in the 2000 Biennial of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and is now in the museum's permanent collection. She has had numerous solo exhibitions, including the 2001 installation, G-Force, at the Whitney Museum at Altria, a ten-year survey exhibition in 2004 at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, and the 2006 installation, Bride Fight, at the Lever House. Day's work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the New York Public Library, the Saatchi Collection, NASA, the Lever House and numerous private collections.

Meadows Museum hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tues.-Sat.; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Thurs.; and 1-5 p.m. Sun. The Owen Arts Center is open 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week. There is no charge to view the costume sculptures. For more information, call the Museum at 214-768-2516 or visit www.meadowsmuseumdallas.org, or contact the Owen Arts Center at 214-768-2713.

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