

PHOTOGRAPHY

E.V. DAY AND KEMBRA PFAHLER: GIVERNY

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The NY-based artist invites the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black performer to Monet's iconic garden

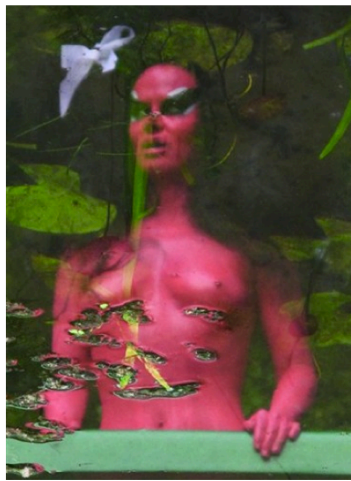


IMAGE GALLERY

Kembra Pfahler is the artist and rock musician known for her alter-ego project The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black; a naked, painted and patent-booted powerbabe with giant hair and deep vocal roar. E.V. Day is the installation artist and sculptor exploring feminism and sexuality, famously exploding couture during one series of work in 1999.

Having collaborated once before, the two creatives unite for GIVERNY, an exhibit at Kathy Grayson's The Hole gallery, featuring Pfahler resplendent in contrast to the surroundings of Monet's famous garden, an immaculate horticultural theme park beyond time where visitors can touch the world of the French impressionist. Unlike the garden, this show is sponsored by Playboy, which Femlin-adoring Kembra is thrilled about. Dazed Digital caught up with the two artists ahead of today's opening in New York.

Dazed Digital: Kembra, can you tell us about your relationship with Playboy? How has Femlin influenced you?

Kembra Pfahler: I've loved Playboy all of my life, they have worked with many important minor to major cultural icons over the decades. Shel Silverstein, Richard Kern, just off the top of my head. It was just serendipity with this show. A couple of years ago Neville Wakefield did a show for Miami during Art Basel, that was called 'Nude as Muse', I met them and told them about the Femlin series I had been working on with Andrew Strasser.

Then last December [Playboy] asked if I could do an event for them and Kathy and I put together a presentation where we showed the Femlin piece and performed live. Kathy Grayson [founder and director of The Hole] is also a girl of Karen Black and features prominently in the Femlin shots – you can see the pictures online at The Hole site. She's really an unusual gallery owner, her vision very far reaching and her enthusiasm with her artists is courageous and not solely based on commerce and/or social acceptability.

DD: So it was a 'lightbulb moment' in asking them...

Kembra Pfahler: And most importantly we were ready. Artists aren't exactly valued in our culture, we have no ministry of culture and I don't live to please collectors. We are doing this work to have a conversation with other friends and artists in the community and to effect change, to create a new paradigm of visibility to share beauty.

Playboy haven't censored any of our ideas, in fact quite the opposite. It's just like a happy dream come true. To be among women in the magazine that represent one blush of aesthetic and female sexuality is important to me, because the image created by me in the band is not exactly what the general population thinks is pretty girl stuff. We've come up from the underworld to present a new conversation about essentially what is beautiful.

DD: What do you admire about her?

E.V. Day: What I admire about Kembra – and the archetype she created, Karen Black – is that she explores the darkness that comes with extreme beauty, without losing sight of the humour in there, too. Plus, Kembra is about the sweetest person I ever met – except when she's hungry and in the back of a tiny Renault that's lost in Paris traffic.

DD: You shot the series in August, the busiest period at Giverny. How did the public react to the performance?

E.V. Day: That's a funny story. As artist-in-residence, I had 24/7 access to the garden, so we shot after the thousands of tourists had left for the afternoon. We were the only people in Monet's iconic water lily pond, with total privacy, perfect serenity, and then Kembra said she felt so awkward without an audience! So we found some of the gardeners spying on us in the bushes and let them take pictures posing with her. Also, on the way to the garden, Kembra wore a robe over her Karen Black costume, so we turned heads as she strode down Rue Claude Monet! We have a great picture of that in the exhibition as well.

Kembra Pfahler: I find that when your motives are very clear, it sets the tone for how people treat you. The gardeners there were so happy to see the costume juxtaposed with the verdancy of the garden – we got nothing but kindness from those we encountered. It was our intention to spread joy and it was contagious. So we didn't come into any harmful objections from anyone.

GIVERNY by E.V. Day and Kembra Pfahler runs from March 30th – April 24th 2012 at The Hole, 312 Bowery, New York, NY 10012