

ART IN REVIEW

## 'Giverny': E. V. Day and Kembra Pfahler



E. V. Day and Kembra Pfahler

E. V. Day's photograph of the performance artist Kembra Pfahler in Monet's garden at Giverny, on display at the Hole.

By KEN JOHNSON

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*The Hole*

*312 Bowery, near Bleeker Street,  
Lower East Side*

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Countless artists have painted and photographed [Monet's garden at Giverny](#). Probably few have treated it as irreverently as [E. V. Day](#) and [Kembra Pfahler](#). Ms. Day is known for sculptural representations of exploding dresses made of real garments and wire. Ms. Pfahler is the downtown

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performance artist known for her signature look: naked body painted in lurid colors, dominatrix boots, Kiss-style makeup and giant mass of teased black hair. She was inspired by LeRoy Neiman's [Playboy Femlin](#).

For their Giverny project in 2010 Ms. Day photographed Ms. Pfahler in costume, her skin painted hot pink, posing against lushly verdant backdrops in the garden. In most of the big [color prints](#) Ms. Day has made, the compositions have been rendered symmetrical by means of Photoshop to eerily surrealistic effect. In each, Ms. Pfahler stands at the center glaring enigmatically back at the camera, an infernal interloper in Eden.

The gallery setting for these spiritually subversive images is comical. The artists have recreated in miniature a piece of Giverny with grassy artificial turf, live flowers, wall-covering photomurals of the garden, a pathway of off-white gravel and a little wooden bridge arching over a pond in which lily pads float.

The whole production is a one-liner, but one with rich psychological implications. As the anti-Femlin, Ms. Pfahler simultaneously embodies and satirizes a stereotype of ferocious female energy, one that Western society has both demonized and reinforced. She is the return-of-the-repressed personified, a nightmare of Western innocence.

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