



Left to right: Claude Wampler, costume from *She Is High*. *True or False?*, 1995, rubber dress. Photo: Chris Winget. Claude Wampler, costume from *She Is High*. *True or False?*, 1995, rubber dress. Photo: Chris Winget. Claude Wampler, costume from *She Is Not Bad*, *She Is Just Genetically Mean*, 1993, workboots and dress slippers. Photo: Chris Winget. Top right: Claude Wampler, costume from *Siamese Tease*, 1995, stills from a color video.

**H**air coifed, makeup dazzling white, six-inch ankle-strap platforms on her feet, Claude Wampler slowly works her way through a party of people made to stand and receive her disregard. Stiff black gloves rest on top of her wrists, eerily, emptily doubling any gesture her hands make; a pointy cone shoots out from her white satin dress. She looks at once suave, ridiculous, and utterly—fashionably—out of it. Probing the sticky underbelly of fashion, Wampler, in her performance piece *She Is High. True or False?*, 1995, spotlights the psychic consequences of party going and dressing up by channeling Jackie Onassis—intimate and Madame Grès—maven Chessy Rayner, a ubiquitous society-page presence. Aware that one of fashion's strongest devices is its various distancing effects, Wampler abolishes any notion of chic's warmth through a ravishing display of social chill; bemused, mumbling to herself, approaching a guest (someone in the audience) only to ignore him or her, she dissects the bonhomie of



cocktail hour into its constitutive parts: anomie, contortion, narcosis, escape from it all. Dry heaving, laughing without a sound, her appearance simultaneously stunning and ghostly grotesque, she contemplates fashion through the feigned, attenuated movements of

those (Rayner, Nan Kempner, various wasted models) who make fashion what it is. While her self-designed and self-made items of apparel remain weird and beautiful, her appearances supply what no photo, video, or static display of costume can replace—the body with its frisson of the immediate.

MARCH 1996 \$700  
INTERNATIONAL

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