

ARTNEWS

BEVERLY SEMMES AT SUSAN INGLETT



Beverly Semmes continues to speak her own unmistakable feminist language with just a few new variations on her themes. In her recent show, titled "Rabbit Hole," she took the measure, literally in some cases, of domesticity with her ceramic still lifes, drawings, and dresses.

Composed of 12 rough-hewn ceramic, epoxy, and fleece cups and saucers nestled on soft, thin, slime-green fabric and set on gnarly tree-stump-like pedestals, the ceramics appear as if for Alice's adventures in Wonderland with the White Rabbit and the Queen of Hearts.

Variations on her signature dresses were here, but they were different now. Hung on the walls, the sack-like frocks, all with "Ghost" in their titles, contained partially exposed secrets of odd sorts. In the middle of one, *Blue Ghost* (1996), there's a possible vagina or a belly button; in another, *Blue Velvet Ghost* (2016), a fur-covered finger-nail-polished hand, set like a medallion, alludes to Surrealist icon Meret Oppenheim, but is also a bold declaration of femaleness, cheekily referring to genitalia. Those animal hands also combined in a laminated fur-and-crepe wall hanging, with the hands linking up as if in solidarity.

The roughly composed and shapeless sacks here, called to mind Native American coverings. Though fabricated with ruffles at the hemline, they are not girly or pretty like some of Semmes's more familiar gowns—the long flowing ones that turn into rivulets on the floor and almost threaten to consume their audiences.

Finally, there was Semmes's two-part diagrammed drawing with the objects' dimensions given in the composition. Titled *Plan* (2016), it was created after artist Erle Loran's outlines of Cézanne's works. In Semmes's deconstructions, with arrows included, we are guided in our reading of the relationships of the objects to one another and their setting in the picture plane.

Nevertheless, all the objects in this show came off as more nostalgic and reflective, self-contained, and protective, than angry or aggressive. One wishes the installation had included more ceramic groupings, filling the room, and forcing us to interact and share in the dream—or perhaps the nightmare.