

Juliao, Danielle. "Beverly Semmes Encourages Women 'To Take Back the Image' at Susan Inglett Gallery and Debuts Capsule Collection with Fashion Designer Jennifer Minniti," *ADAA Inside Stories Blog*, 12 October 2017.



Beverly Semmes Encourages Women 'To Take Back the Image' at Susan Inglett Gallery and Debuts Capsule Collection with Fashion Designer Jennifer Minniti

By Danielle Juliao

When entering "Bow"—the current exhibition at Susan Inglett Gallery—the viewer confronts blue tulle curtain-like dresses that delicately drape from the walls, encapsulating the space, and creating the illusion of covered windows. Nearby, three tall, pastel ceramic sculptures face each other as if conversing. In the back room of the gallery, two colorful abstracted silhouettes of women's bodies—from pages originally torn from vintage pornography magazines—hang on the wall.



Although these works were made using vastly different materials and techniques, they all highlight the duality and the dysfunction of the feminine forms they refer to. The sleeves of the dresses are too long and their fabric too transparent, marking them as un-wearable. The ceramic vases symbolize the age-old idea of women as vessels but—made out of dozens of smaller pots stacked on top of each other with deformed handles sticking out all over—they also allude to the anxiety women may feel when presented with too much to handle. Semmes' painterly alterations to the vintage pornographic images highlight the awkwardness of the women's poses, turning them into a comment on America's obsession with sexual objectification.



These altered images are just the latest of many such works that make up Semmes' ongoing "Feminist Responsibility Project," which the artist began somewhat serendipitously in the 1990s. "Semmes' neighbor was cleaning out his garage and found a stash of vintage pornography magazines. He gave them to Semmes, who then sat at her table in Rhinebeck, New York and tore out the images to censor them—to protect the women," art dealer Susan Inglett explains.

Semmes has taken her altered nudes to another level by transforming them into digitally printed textiles to be sold—and worn—as clothing. This special line of limited edition clothing, titled "CarWash Collective," is a collaboration between Semmes and fashion designer, curator and scholar Jennifer Minniti—the chair of Pratt's Fashion Design Department, an expert on the cultural context of textiles around the world, and a longtime admirer of Semmes' work.

Just as Semmes highlights the awkwardness of women's poses in men's magazines in her iconic altered prints, Semmes and Minniti have created some unconventional cuts for their articles of clothing that depict Semmes's images. "The capsule collection begins with a depiction of the female body and ends up back on the female body," Inglett says. "Semmes is inviting women to 'take back the image.'"

The exhibition "Bow" is on view through October 21st at Susan Inglett Gallery and the "CarWash Collective" will debut with a reception at the gallery on Saturday, October 14th - at 5 PM.