

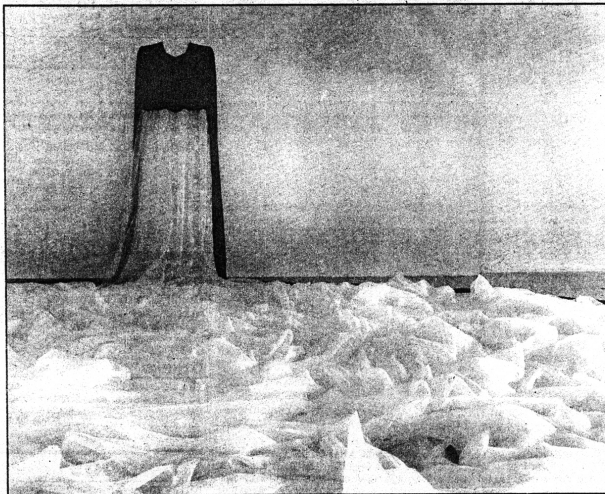
ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

# GUIDE

*The Dallas Morning News*

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PREVIEW



**PROM DRESS:** Beverly Semmes' installation "The Yellow Pool" is on exhibit at the Contemporary Culture Gallery. She will speak Saturday at the Dallas Museum of Art.

## Beverly Semmes' clothes art skirts the issues

New York-based artist Beverly Semmes, who is most noted for her eccentric sculpture, will be giving a talk and slide presentation for the DARE (Dallas Artists Research and Exhibition) dialogue series.

The evening will focus on Ms. Semmes' off-beat installations, which are based on women's apparel. She sculpts material — yards and yards of billowing luscious fabric that often takes over an entire room.

Ms. Semmes began working with clothes while getting her master's degree in sculpture at Yale University in the late 1980s.

At first, she worked on outdoor installations that dealt with landscape and used more traditional materials, such as wood and steel.

But soon Ms. Semmes found herself drawn to clothes. Her first piece, "Pink Feather Coat," was three-dimensional and made of copper window screen and pink feathers.

"At the time, I didn't know it was going to be my main work," she says. "I considered it (feather coat) just a prop."

Since then, her works have evolved from those meant to be worn to her more recent pieces that are much too large and abstract for personal adornment.

"The pieces have more power when they're empty, hanging on the wall, rather than when a person is performing in them," she says. "The viewer can project themselves and fill in the blank. They're more surreal, more fairy tale-like."

In February, Ms. Semmes will have another

work, *Watercoats*, exhibited in a group show at the University of North Texas in Denton. This piece, which hangs 12 feet and pools about 3 feet on the ground, has two bodices that share one skirt made out of blue flannel.

"It's about being pulled between opposites and it alludes to a landscape," says Ms. Semmes. "At least I see it as a landscape, a waterfall."

Ms. Semmes is also working on an untitled piece for The New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York on Broadway for an exhibit titled "Bad Girls" in March.

"It's like a wall of crushed velvet," says Ms. Semmes. "There will be three dresses. But when you first look at it, it won't be apparent. Rather it will look like a huge curtain — like a granite wall."

Her most recent work, *The Yellow Pool*, a giant prom dress that Ms. Semmes describes as so good-girl-like that it's twisted and evil, is on view in Dallas at Contemporary Culture. The dress hangs more than 8 feet high and consists of a purple velvet bodice and a high-waisted skirt made of 200 yards of pale yellow organza.

— Deborah Bradley

**■ DETAILS:** Beverly Semmes will talk at the DARE Dialogue Series Saturday at 2 p.m. at the Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 N. Harwood. Call 821-0612. Admission is \$5, \$2 for DARE and DMA members. *The Yellow Pool* runs through Jan. 22 at the Contemporary Culture gallery, 5501 Columbia. Hours are Thursdays and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from noon to 5 p.m. For information, call 823-8955. Free.