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Beverly Semmes, *Recent Sculpture*, 1996. Installation view.

D Ü S S E L D O R F

BEVERLY SEMMES BUGDAHNS UND KAIMER

The "Recent Sculptures" (the title of Beverly Semmes' exhibition) are made from a material that excludes the notion of sculpture in its technical sense (Lat. *sculperre* — to chisel): velvet and organza. Maybe the reference to sculpture as a medium is an attempt to claim the value and status of the works: working with needle and thread — Beverly Semmes makes the pieces herself — still carries connotations of typical, badly-paid, women's work and so-called "applied art."

One work was installed on each of the three levels of the gallery; the basic forms were taken from women's dresses, although the formats were unnaturally enlarged and the proportions distorted. The extended sleeves of the three "Black Gowns," lined up side by side in the first space, the sleeves of a single dress, *Yellow Pool*, surrounded the undulating organza strips of the skirt like a lake extending a number of meters into the space. The third work, *Shadows*, consisted of a series of six dresses made of transparent pink organza, whose long skirts stretched into the space, terminating in a straight line.

These dresses aren't just made for exhibition. They have a reference to the space that derives from minimal art, as borne out by the serial hanging, the use of the three dimensions, and the necessary movement of the viewer around the works. But their strength lies in their hybrid character, which doesn't rule out their being used.

In the gallery office there were a number of film stills showing friends of the artist wearing Semmes' sculptures, taken in a landscape with an atmosphere recalling the aesthetic of decadence with real flowers looking like artificial ones. In the performances and their documentation the dichotomies of the natural and the artificial, the body and its surroundings become unstable and give the performers the opportunity to reinterpret them.

Barbara Hess

(Translated from German by Shaun Whiteside)