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ART & DESIGN

## Beverly Semmes: 'FRP'

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Art in Review

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER



*Susan Inglett*

*522 West 24th Street, Chelsea*

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Students at the all-women's Wellesley College recently wrote a [letter](#) to the school protesting the installation of a sculpture of a near-naked male sleepwalker on campus. Various commenters on the Internet suggested the women stage a creative intervention and dress him up. If so, they might have used the work of [Beverly Semmes](#) as a model.

Ms. Semmes is known for making giant garments that engulf figures or entire galleries, forcing us to question the norms of appearance and attire. For her current exhibition, "FRP," short for "The Feminist Responsibility Project," she has drawn and painted over images of women published in pornography magazines. What she leaves blank, in the midst of these colorful, blobby abstractions, are the grasping hands, supplicating eyes, or sharp stiletto heels we associate with pornographic images (and performances). The "FRP" works hark back to Dada photomontage, Surrealism and even earlier (male) masters of biomorphic creepiness: Odilon Redon, Edvard Munch, Francisco Goya or William Blake.

Displayed nearby is a small group of Ms. Semmes's ceramic vessels, which suggest prehistoric fertility sculptures — reframed in modern times as fetish objects — and a long, red velvet garment that is tacked to the wall and flows onto the floor. The best works are the "FRP" images, though, which update the antics of Max Ernst and Hannah Höch and slyly invert concepts like censorship, defacement and "defilement," putting power into the hands of an artist who offers a cunning creative remix.