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Feminist exhibit features sculpture, more at Weatherspoon Art Museum



Courtesy of Weatherspoon Art Museum

titled "Beverly Semmes: Feminist Responsibility Project," brings her work to Greensboro.

"I would describe her as a sculptor, but she does so many different kinds of work," said Weatherspoon Curator Xandra Eden. These media include ceramics, fabrics, drawing, painting, glasswork and even video.

Semmes' work is in the collections of major museums such as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

Perhaps her most famous work, "Buried Treasure," is part of the exhibit at the Weatherspoon. "Buried Treasure" features a plain black crushed velvet dress

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By Bruce Buchanan / Special to Go Triad

GREENSBORO — Quirky. Multitalented. Thought-provoking.

Internationally renowned artist Beverly Semmes is all of these things, and more. The Weatherspoon Art

Museum's newest exhibit,

hanging on a far wall. One sleeve is of normal length, but the other spills out onto the floor, forming circles and lines across the gallery floor.

“It’s like a 3-D drawing,” Eden said, noting how the flat, black fabric on the floor resembles ink lines on a page.

The exhibit also features a series of more recent ceramic sculptures. These bright red creations catch the visitor’s attention as soon as he or she steps into the exhibit. Although they look bizarre from a distance, up close, they are revealed to be stacked ceramic vessels, held together with epoxy and painted red.

“You can see how her hands shaped them,” Eden said.

Semmes’ painting work is on display as well. For this series of paintings, she has taken pinup pages from men’s magazines, and painted over them to cover up any nudity and to change the conversation of how the women in the pictures should be viewed.

Eden said that Semmes has a lighthearted, humorous side, both in person and in her work. This is perhaps most evident in her short video contribution to the exhibit, titled “Kick.” In the video, Semmes paints some potatoes a reddish-pink color and kicks them across a frozen pond, leaving paint streaks in their wake. Also on display are a number of glass chandeliers that the artist crafted by hand.

“She definitely has a sense of humor in the awkwardness of everything,” Eden said.

Bringing Semmes’ work to Greensboro has been on the Weatherspoon’s radar for years. Eden said she first learned of Semmes in 1994, when the artist was part of the famed “Bad Girls” exhibition at New York’s New Museum. When Eden found out that Grinnell College was helping organize a traveling show of Semmes’ work, she said knew she wanted to bring this exhibit to the Weatherspoon.

“It continues our presentation of innovative American sculptors,” she said.