

Martin, Alison. "Beverly Semmes protects women from male gaze in latest show *Mixed media*," *Fine Art Globe* 09 February 2022.

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Mixed Media show in Chelsea gives women control of their image



BEVERLY SEMMES, *Fig Leaf*, 2021, Ink, acrylic over photograph printed on canvas. (Photo: Chris Kendall/Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC)

Beverly Semmes' new body of work, on display in *Pot Peek* at The Susan Inglett Gallery in Chelsea, is the latest piece of her broader ongoing "Feminist Responsibility Project." Launched two decades ago, the show is made up of paintings, drawings, ceramics, and other mixed media works that were inspired by photographs of women she observed in various magazines for men.

Instead of portraying these women as they're seen in the magazines, Semmes does something different—she tries to hide her subjects. She does this by painting over their bodies so the viewer only sees the subject's face or eyes as though the subject is peeking at the viewer. Semmes uses mostly pots as a shield to hide most of the subject's features.

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One of these notable works, *Eye Tooth*, depicts a scene in a bathroom as is evident by a towel seen hanging from a wall in the top left corner. Encompassing the painting is a woman whose whole body except for part of her arm is hidden behind a sky-blue canvas on which there are two different types of pots. One of the pots resembles a pitcher of water that's mostly white with traces of yellow situated around the spot where the woman's face is. Just below the spout is a lopsided hole in which the woman's eye is staring directly at the viewer.

Below the pitcher is a teapot that has the same bright yellow and white colors with most of the bright yellow on the bottom with the white smoothly blending in, as a more dandelion yellow surrounds the edges and the spout. Underneath the pot is a black toothbrush with thick bristles symbolizing the notion of grooming or perfecting certain parts of the female figure. Another painting titled *See Through* has the same concept of peeking through a hole at the viewer. A large black vase consumes most of the painting that has a yellow background with traces of green. Near the neck of the vase is a small hole of which we see a woman's eye she puts her arm around the front of the vase revealing her hand and painted nails. We also see in the background faint outlines of her body including her hair, part of the crown of her head, and her nose outlined in green paint.



BEVERLY SEMMES, *Eye Tooth*, 2021.

Ink, acrylic over photograph printed on canvas. (Photo: Chris Kendall/Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC)

There are also some paintings in the show that are quite mysterious such as *Tulips Two Feet*. In this painting, we see the part of the back legs of a woman wearing high heeled shoes standing on a against a white barrier. On the same surface where she's standing is a small but

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stout black teapot like object of which a multitude of red tulips emerge. There is a giant red vase also rising from the pot and some of the tulips can be seen coming out of the vase and some surrounding it. The vase and flowers hide the woman's actual body to represent the true beauty of the woman and what she's capable of, like bearing children representing by the vase and tulips rising from the teapot like blooming flowers coming to life.

One of the most dynamic works in the show is *Fig Leaf* in which Semmes covers her subject with vibrant shapes and colors.

The painting consists of three giant spiral shapes, two teapots, and several flowers revealing only the legs and high heeled shoe of the female subject. The centerpiece of the piece is a neon green teapot placed right in the center amidst a red and orange color scheme.

There are three works in show that do not contain any pots or round shapes titled *Copper Curtain*, *Hill & Dale*, and *Red See* respectively. In *Red See*, about three quarters of the image is covered in pink and white paint resembling blinds and a woman's feet and red shoes that rise from above the blinds. *Copper Curtain* and *Hill & Dale* both have the added feature of glitter over the painted canvas to add an aspect of glamour.

In *Copper Curtain*, the glitter is seen on the copper curtain that dominates the image. The curtain also has long tassels on its uneven ends represented by yellow and white paint as it reveals a person's lower leg and foot stepping onto a light pink cushion of another person. In *Hill & Dale*, we see the back of a woman's legs. As she seems to bend over, we see her red dress falling forward, surrounded by a sparkly blue and mauve colored setting.