



**ON VIEW:  
JULY 29–  
NOVEMBER 23,  
2025**

***Beverly Semmes:  
Boulders / Flag / Flip / Kick***

**July 29–November 23, 2025  
40 Talbot Ave, Medford**

**Exhibition Curators:  
Dina Deitsch  
Beverly Semmes  
Camilo Alvarez  
with Deniz Bora**

**Copyediting:  
John Ewing**

**Brochure Production:  
Madeline Ditzler + Sarah Prickett**

**Design:  
Omnivore, Inc.**

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**Please scan here to access the  
Educational + Reading Guide  
for *Boulders / Flag / Flip / Kick*.**



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**Beverly Semmes** (b. 1958, Washington, DC; lives and works in New York) graduated from Tufts University and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (now SMFA at Tufts) with a BA/BFA in 1982, and received an MFA from Yale School of Art in 1987 after attending the New York Studio School in 1983–84. Semmes has been honored with numerous solo museum exhibitions, including presentations at the Tang Teaching Museum, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; ICA Philadelphia; Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle; Ginza Art Space, Tokyo; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Semmes’s work is in the permanent collections of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem; Tufts University Art Galleries; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

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*Boulders*, 1980, chicken wire, canvas, cheese cloth, and acrylic polymer. Dimensions variable. Installation view. Courtesy of the Artist.

## BEVERLY SEMMES: BOULDERS / FLAG / FLIP / KICK

Tufts / SMFA alumna Beverly Semmes (BA/BFA '82) has built an extensive practice in sculpture, painting, film, performance, and fashion that probes the paradoxes and complexities of the body and its representation. Best known for her oversized dress sculptures, begun in the early 1990s—followed by her *FRP (Feminist Responsibility Project)* series of over-painted pornographic images and her clay sculptures—Semmes has played with the scale, exposure or covering, and abstraction of the female form for over three decades.

Tufts University Art Galleries (TUAG) is pleased to present the most comprehensive survey of Semmes's work to date: beginning in her student days at Tufts, where she tested ideas of ephemerality, scale, and representation in the itinerant installation *Boulders*, to her most recent fabric installations (*Flag* and *Flip*), early videos (*Kick*), ceramics, and paintings that continue to explore issues of female visibility and presence. As the exhibition title suggests—by referencing series of work from different points in her career—this is an incomplete yet broadly episodic survey.

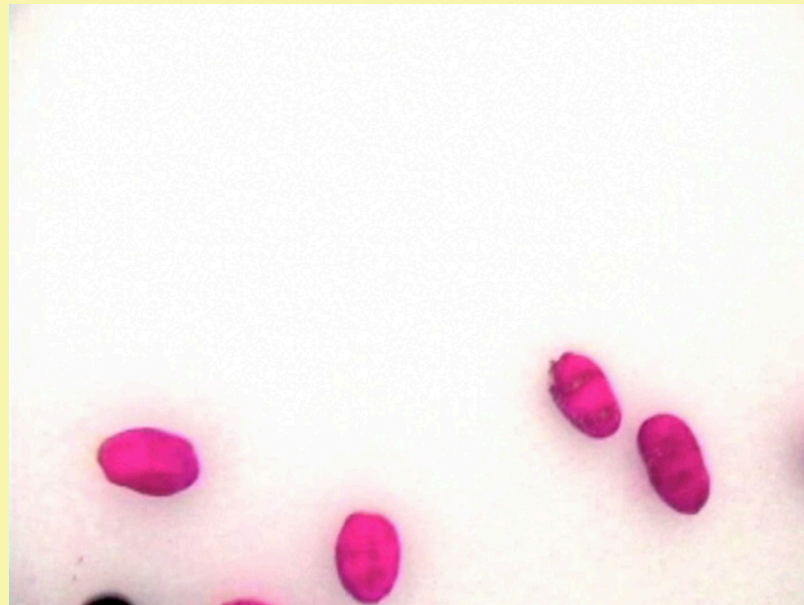
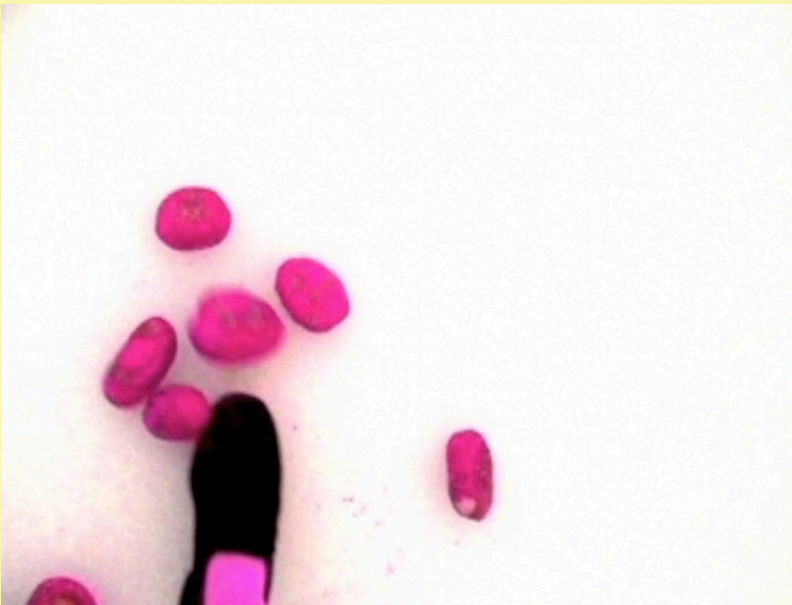
While Semmes has worked in almost every medium, there remains a perpetual friction between presence and absence in her art—be it a room-sized installation of empty gowns in wispy organza, a haunting performance video, or hollow, human-sized clay vessels. Throughout her wide-ranging oeuvre, Semmes offers a material corollary to the internal and public tensions over who in society is allowed to take up space, and in what form.

—Dina Deitsch, Director | Chief Curator, TUAG



## ***Buried Treasure***

Camilo Alvarez, 2025



To be a confident human being, one should be willing to let an/the other be your equal. Every body has its own rhythm, and there's a need for a cadence to collaborate. Beverly Semmes has consistently and constantly been learning and teaching since she graduated from Tufts in 1982 (then Yale in '87). No one becomes a pro alone. We all thrive and labor in community.

As with an/this exhibition, her many mediums represented (video, sculpture, collage, painting, ceramics, glass)—cue timing, as in *with a beat*. Compare a beat to a **Kick** (her video from 2005) with all the rest. The sound of a solitary labor with the resonance of cooperatively making in tandem or with a breadth of methods.



Stills from *Kick*, 2005, digital video, 14:33 min. (looped). Courtesy of the Artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.

*Buried Treasure (EC1)*, 1994, C-print. 16 x 20 inches. Courtesy of Shoshana Wayne Gallery.

As you prance, sway, hop, and skip with the exhibition, her findings from antique textile shops waltz with sculpted crystal (not cast or blown) tapped with felt, fleece, and crepe. She makes so she can feel color. She makes so we can feel sound.

***Buried Treasure*** is/as sculpture and photograph marks a/the frequency frolic of events with students, teachers, makers, places, upon, against, beside, versus, etc., etc., etc. She who enters the dance must dance.





*Not Here*, 1999, organza and chiffon. Dimensions variable. Installation view, Ezra & Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. Courtesy of the Artist.



*Three Figures in Cloud Hats and Purple Velvet Bathrobes at the Table*, 1991, photograph documenting performance. 8 x 10 inches. Courtesy of the Artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.

***Not Here*** as/is (e)merging images, a winding time full of dance: with frill turning distance, performing the making. Drawing with gaps, Semmes's particular way to take up space involves a down, up, and over. Hailing from the Line State, Semmes states a line, then navigates and negates them. Prim and proper lace drapes enable, provide, and question a sorta slight Southern modicum. The work loosens up ideas of parts and role. ***Not Here*** blazes a trail, and addressing with dresses showing a road or path. Does this train represent marriage? —its incipient ceremony and pressures or fallopian/ovarian meanderings; marriage and reproduction as paths among many. Can we unlearn and deskill? ***Cloud Hats***. Let's learn from an inability to understand. Supporting the creation of legroom (***Bib Overalls***) for an equal presence explores a progression of range. Taking up space, seeking resolution, and acknowledging differences: ***Not Here***.

We have found a need beyond this — when you erase those unbearable things that a character does, that stereotypes do, to cage humanity.

“But speaking the truth about a woman's body is not the simple explication of body parts — it is instead the place of that particular body in this particular world, its value, its use, its place in power, its political and economic life, its capacities both potentially realized and habitually abused”

(Andrea Dworkin, *Right-Wing Women*, 1983).





Stills from *CarWash Collective Fashion Show*, 2016, digital video, 2:47 min. (looped). Courtesy of the Artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.



*Melons*, 2017, oil and magazine page collage on glass. 16 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the Artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC. Photographed by Adam Kremer.



*Big Tree*, 2017, oil and magazine page collage on glass. 16 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the Artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC. Photographed by Adam Kremer.

In /with /on her collaboration with Jennifer Minniti, Carwash Collective (two to tango!), as with her ***Feminist Responsibility Project*** (heretofore ***FRP***), step by step limbing outcomes, arms akimbo painted or performed. The Carwash “clothing” flaunts tinted hearts, altered breasts, a bobbing hip, dyed leg, and reddened shoes/toes assess you drawing (with) body parts. You like loving in that? Moving with that? You like dancing for that? To that?

Semmes doesn’t have people make work for her; she makes work with; she has them teach her. What’s that old adage? Teach a woman to fish? Deskilling from knowledge and experience through interaction to bond and put things together. Art does that too. Many try to put together the colorful clues. Semmes worked on puzzles with her mom to pass the time. Why get it? Can we think of the ***FRP*** in these terms? ***Four Hands. Melons. Blue Arms. Blue Legs***. Semmes finds it conscientious to take up alignments to speak for, stand in.





*Buried Treasure*, 1994, crushed velvet. Dimensions variable. Installation view, Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Los Angeles. Courtesy of Shoshana Wayne Gallery.

*Flip*, 2024, faux fur, chiffon, acrylic over photograph printed on canvas. 81 x 67 x 23 inches. Courtesy of the Artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC. Photographed by Jason Mandella.



Through and with an identitarian  
absolution: some artists somehow stitch  
or cut through the thread of identity intact.  
There is no such thing as being free from  
context, from history, from difference;  
there is a responsibility to your gender,  
community, and on and on. This place  
crucial to who she is screens absence  
with a flexible sheen fully embodying  
and questioning the feminist label, its  
complexities, diversity and reality. Nothing  
uncut(e) makes it out of the near future,  
burrowing joyfully down natural, clitoral,  
cultural, sensory, sexual, subjective, erotic,  
and semiotic dimensions; in order to force  
sense: (taste and hear and feel and touch  
and listen) latent spaces of this ***Buried  
Treasure*** that has softly wended its way  
into human culture.

A potential reason why culture teems with the  
merging of the ridiculous and the horrible is that  
stupid material is exceedingly clashing with serious  
intelligence in disquieting ways. This, Ours, is a  
culture wet with images, in a contact context where  
we are expected to be generous with our physical  
selves endlessly through our labor and images of  
the self. Think platform economy. Semmes, with  
occasional compliance, patience, and others,  
complicates and bristles, ***Flip***ping it. Being a student  
or expert, emotional endurance exhausts. Embodied  
knowledge through teaching is a collaboration,  
imposing as an act of allegiance, to an undertaking  
and object. The trajectory of the foot-blow to the  
hit potatoes becomes a compressed logic where  
depicting engages disorientation. Embracing chaos  
as part of our nature.  
Let's follow the pota(toes).



# BOUL DERS FLAG KICK

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*Andy Warhol*

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