

PROOF

BEVERLY SEMMES | NEW EDITIONS FALL 2016

Beverly Semmes' *Golden G: Flowers / Heels / Curtains* is a series of three editions that combine inkjet prints layered with intaglio and set into frames of printed acrylic fleece. The editions connect Semmes' ongoing *Feminist Responsibility Project (FRP)* to her 2016 exhibition at Susan Inglett Gallery, which debuted the ghost shapes (the "G" stands for ghost) that frame the Island Press redactions. Much of Semmes' work involves editing and erasure. Symbolic repositories for femininity—dresses, vessels, and decadent fabrics—all become platforms for manipulation and metamorphosis.

In the *FRP*, pornographic magazine images are painted over, printed on, and marked out with deliberate crudeness—as a child might deface a picture of herself. In the Inglett show, Semmes pairs these redactions with sculptural work in fabric, clay, and crystal, often playing with surrealist humor in a nod to Oppenheim's fur-covered teacup. Some sculptures confront the viewer with nightmarish excess. A velvet party dress is alarmingly elongated. The arms—more self-extruded than stretched—are distressingly tubed. The distortion reads like a body's overreaction to stress: what should be self-protective becomes destructive.

Golden G brings the redactions into relief. The dimensional frames were created by affixing cut fleece shapes to the paper and printing on top of them. They recall the amorphous, ghostly bodices of the Inglett show, and become much like inverted vessels—an insistent motif in Semmes' work. Semmes applies her sculptural forms to the *Golden Gs* in a kind of self-quotation. On these marked-out bodies, the vessels appear. They are never of the bodies, but rather stuck on—concealment and spotlight at once.

Semmes' palette is narrow and accusatory—colors so garish you feel interrogated by their brightness. Zesty citron becomes sourly fluorescent. Strawberry and gold pair like frosting and mustard. The limited palette creates an argument of color. In the *Golden Gs*, the bulbous frame is doggedly yellow. In this harsh beam, flesh tones flatten to beige. The inking over the flesh with flesh-tones emphasizes the discomfort with the image and what's mirrored in it—one's own skin.



Above: *Golden G: Flowers*, Intaglio on polar fleece chine collé with archival inkjet and collagraph insert, 34 1/2 x 26 1/4 in, Edition 12, published 2016.

Semmes isn't interested in heroic reframings—these are desperate, hasty cover-ups. They're not meant to liberate anything. The models never escape the lewdness of their poses. No matter how flat, how smooth, how simplified, the crotch is always a crotch. In some cases, the altered image is more objectifying than the original. The women's face and genitals reduced to nothing but a horrifying, dark geometry. By someone desperate to blot them out. The images seem created not by Semmes at all but by a persona—an off-screen redactor—someone discomfited but obsessed. She takes up an invented mantle—a fetishized chastity. Semmes turns these objectified beauties not into modest mice but beast Jesuses. Her marks are desperate evidence of a consuming process—of trying to unsee.

by **Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer**



Above: *Golden G: Curtains*, Intaglio on polar fleece chine collé with archival inkjet and collagraph insert, 34 1/2 x 26 1/4 in, Edition 12, published 2016 by Island Press.



Above: *Golden G: Heels*, Intaglio on polar fleece chine collé with archival inkjet and collagraph insert, 34 1/2 x 26 1/4 in, Edition 12, published 2016 by Island Press.

ABOUT BEVERLY SEMMES: New York-based artist Beverly Semmes was the Arthur L. and Sheila Prensky Visiting Artist to Island Press in the in spring 2016. Semmes experiments across a wide variety of media, creating sculptures in clay, fabric, and glass, drawings, performances, photography, and video that explore relationships between craft and fine art, and between pleasure, gender, and desire.

Semmes has had numerous solo museum shows, including major exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Tang Museum, and the Wexner Center for the Arts (Columbus, Ohio). Her work is included in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Denver Art Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. She is represented by Susan Inglett Gallery in New York.

IslandPress

CONTEMPORARY PRINT EDITIONS AND ARTIST PROJECTS

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Island Press is a research-based printmaking workshop and publisher committed to education and innovation in contemporary print editions and artist projects. Visiting artists work side by side with the master printer and students in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. The result is high-quality print editions of technical complexity created in a unique setting where artists and students share skill sets and ideas.

Island Press is project-driven and collaborative, tapping into the place where the artist's creative research intersects with the all of the

possibilities of the print studio. Recent artist projects include editions with Radcliffe Bailey, Chakaia Booker, Squeak Carnwath, Willie Cole, Henrik Drescher, Chris Duncan, Tom Friedman, Ann Hamilton, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Nina Katchadourian, Shaun O'Dell, Lisa Sanditz, and James Siena.

Island Press was founded in 1978. Past visiting artists include Hung Liu, Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith, Joyce Scott, Juan Sanchez, Nick Cave, and many other great artists.

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