

## Art in Review

### Beverly Semmes

Leslie Tonkonow  
535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea  
Through April 16

Beverly Semmes is best known for working lush expanses of fabric into monumental dresses that could be for frighteningly giant children or some obscure yet modernized cult of goddess worship. But for my money, her best distortions of familiar objects are those she makes in clay and now glass.

Ms. Semmes's 10th solo show in New York once more displays several of her enlarged garments, whose appeal continues to elude me. There are also two rough ceramic pots painted bright red whose matte surfaces make them seem even brighter; one of these is combined with a long matching dress to form an installation piece.

The pots are nice enough; but the show is stolen by a ravishing clutch of homely crystal vases made by coiling thick strands of glass into cylindrical forms. The coiling technique is basic to hand-building in clay, whose malleability allows the coils to be smoothed over. Such smoothing isn't nearly as feasible in molten glass, so the coils remain.

The lumpen, slightly liquid disarray of these forms is beautiful: their uneven surfaces contrast markedly with the clear, hard gleam of the crystal, but also seem to increase its powers of refraction. The vases also don't quite jibe with the spiky, spindly handles (sometimes as many as 18), which are affixed to their curves and couldn't possibly be used for lifting. At once celestial and earthy, inviting and armored, these shapely, misshapen vessels seem eminently venerable. ROBERTA SMITH