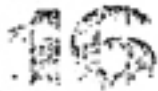


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ART

Dec. 9



Old school

Beverly Semmes turns to large stones for color lithographs

BY RICHARD HUNTINGTON
News Critic

The digital daze has so taken over printmaking that to see mega-sized, pure stone lithography is something of a jolt.

In the Nina Freudenheim Gallery's "Beverly Semmes: Hole/Pot/Dot," the big multipart color lithographs — three works using a total of eight stones printed on 32-by-47-inch sheets — are strikingly simple, open and direct. It is refreshing to see the imprint of an artist's hand captured by traditional lithographic techniques. No fancy work here, no electronic spiking. This is the way artists of old did it.

REVIEW

WHAT: "Beverly Semmes: Hole/Pot/Dot"
WHEN: Through Dec. 30
WHERE: Nina Freudenheim Gallery, 140 North St., Hotel Lenox
TICKETS: Free
INFO: 882-5777

That isn't to say that Semmes didn't have help. She was invited by World House Editions in New Jersey and Editions Copenhagen to work in Copenhagen under master printer and Editions Copenhagen founder Rasmus Urwald. She was fortunate enough to have at her disposal the largest litho stones in Europe.

The birth-pangs of the prints were intense, but the results on the wall are seemingly effortless. The theme of two of the prints is the dress, a subject the artist has made famous in her fabric sculptures; the third is a wobbly sort of pot with decorations.

"Hole" is a four-part hoxy dress in a luminous, airy magenta. The "hole" falls directly above where the four separate sheets meet, amplifying the blunt frontality of the image and its inherent abstractness. In "Dot" the dress-shape — a long gown with a squiggly pot resting at its hem — is the negative area between two activated background shapes made up of blotchy vertical brushwork. Loosely painted dots give the absent dress a hint of corporeal presence.

A big untitled installation concludes the show, an older work from 1994 in Semmes' familiar fabric sculpture style. For all its apparent festive air — the figure, though headless like an ancient

sculpture, is festooned in roses — the work is more of a meditation on feminine confinement.

The arms, made of the same stuffed woven garment that forms the body, are folded across the breast and molded to it, as though trapped in some kind of stylish straitjacket. An organza veil loosely encloses the figure, flows down the wall and winds out onto the floor like a wedding train heading the wrong way. Knots interrupt the flow every couple of feet, canceling out any possibility of personal freedom. The lithographs never make such pointed commentary. They seem content to bask in the freedom of their transparent color and unfettered line. ●

Focal point



"POT," one part of a multisheet suite of color lithographs in the **BEVERLY SEMMES** exhibition at the Nina Freudenheim Gallery, has an offhanded look that makes it seem — in reproduction at least — like a casual sketch. But its immense size — it measures 47 by 32 inches, huge for a print — makes it a formidable image when you see it for real.

If it is a pot, it is a very strange and irregular one, a pot in danger of collapse. Its top opening is bigger than the pot itself, as a child might make it, and heavily

drawn. This supposed empty space winds up seeming weightier than the rest of the object put together. The pot's body wiggles every which way, and the decorations seem like they have a mind of their own.

It is the odd combination of free, childlike drawing and monumentality that gives the print an unsuspected force and presence.

— Richard Huntington