Kahlil Robert Irving & Beverly Semmes

Sky, Blue

SEP 7-OCT 19, 2024

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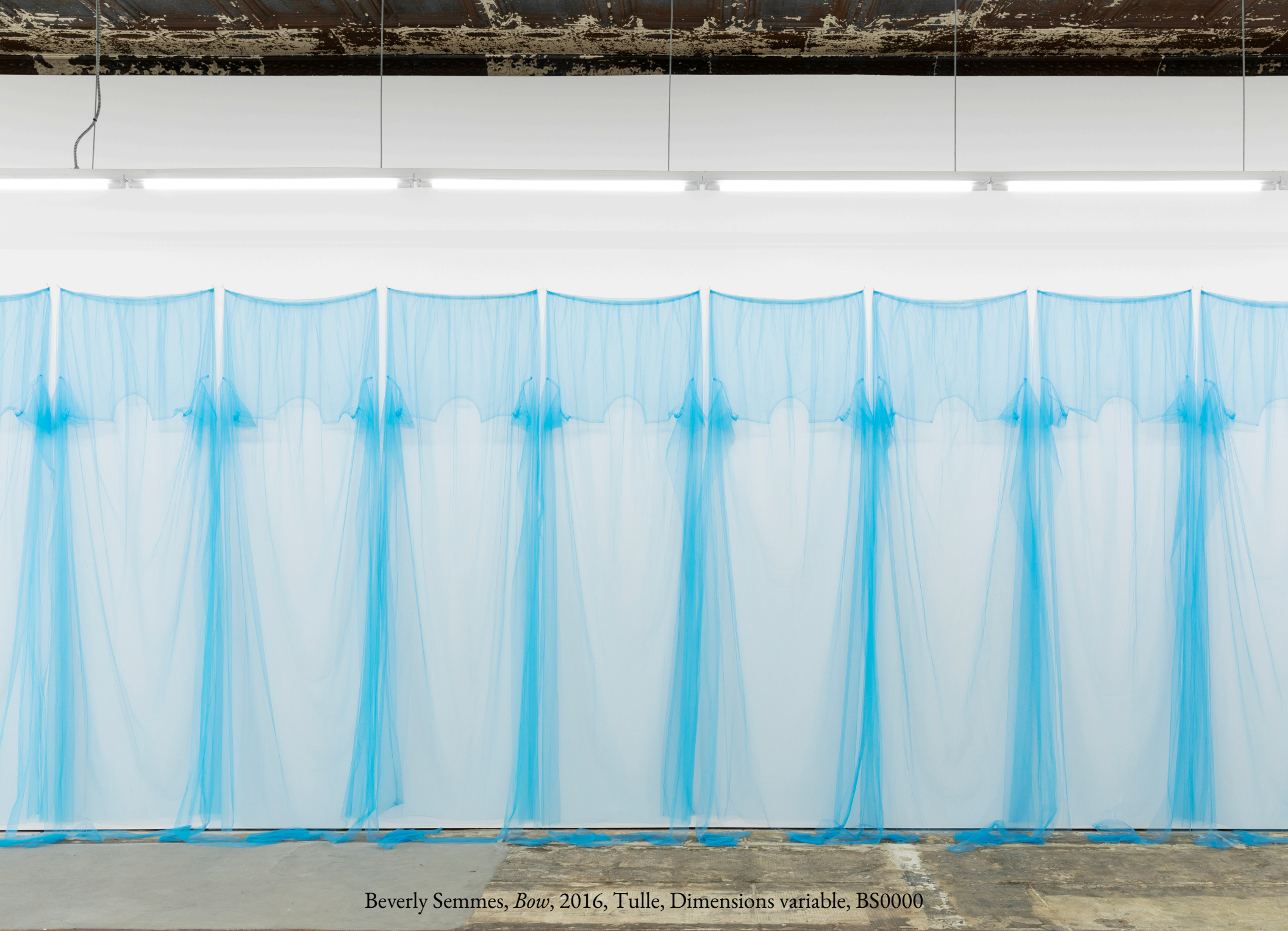
Tureen is thrilled to present Sky, Blue, a two-person exhibition of works by Kahlil Robert Irving & Beverly Semmes that explores both artist's interest in memory, absence & monuments.

This endeavor begins with mimesis. Two sets of objects occupy the exhibition space, both of which mirror the everyday. The viewer is invited into their reality only to find something more disruptive than initially bargained for. Tableware is an apple with a metal stem is a sliver of sky as lead pipe is ceramic; a series of dresses is a prone curtain drawn over the surface of the gallery. Nothing here is what the eye reads. In miming the tangible stuff of daily life, the artists call into question what counts as real, what things in the world deserve notice and how can they topple the act of noticing. Irving's and Semmes' sculptures use the archaeological human impulse as a lure with which to tell a story on the margins of contemporary culture.

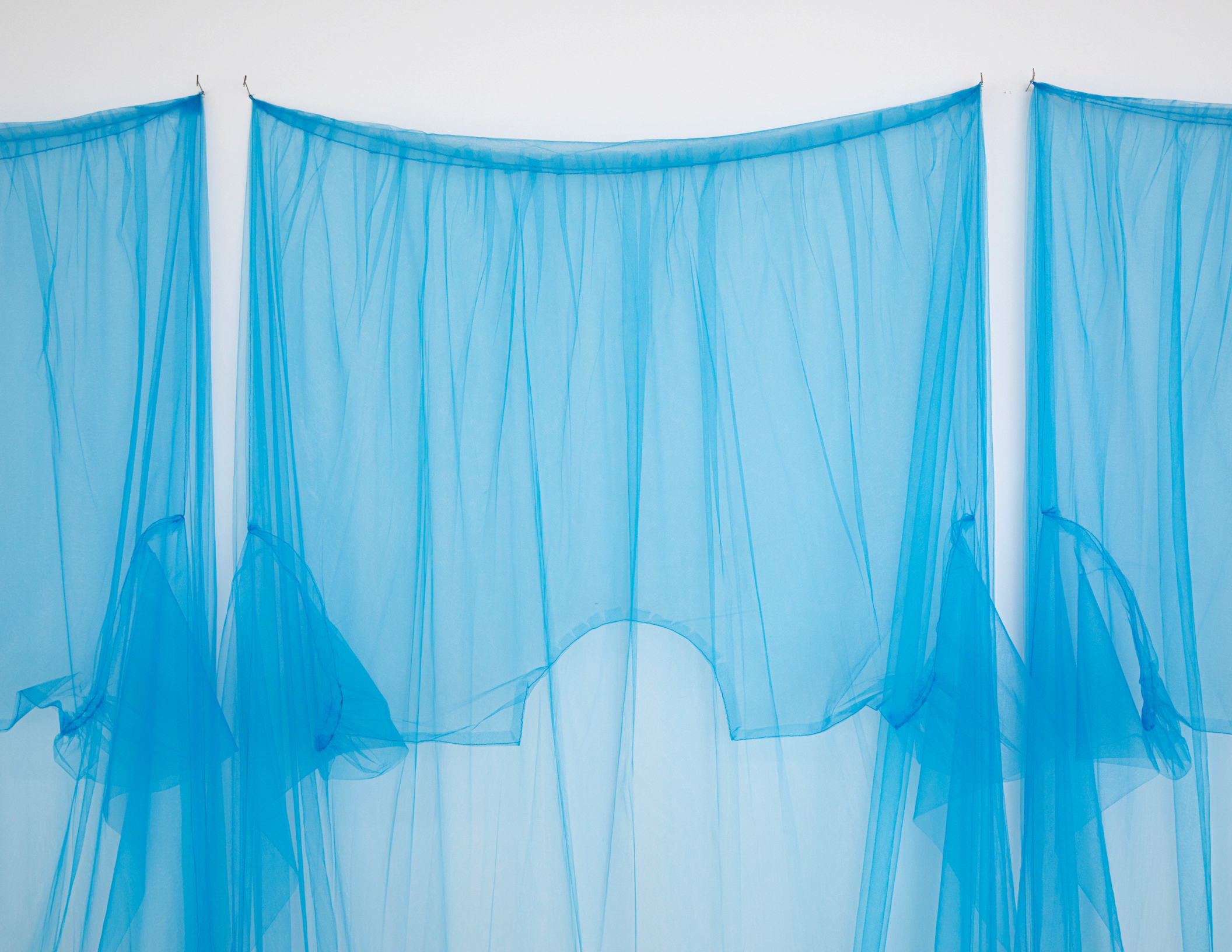
Some logic of the outside world does persist. Blue means sky. Semmes' work, Bow, covers the horizon line like a theatrical backdrop, its color so overwhelming that you move under and in it rather than around it. Bow catches the more literal sky in Irving's work titled SKYTUBE & Silver Chalice \ Concrete tears embedded jewels (take me as I am) and proves the linguistic rule. But his sky sits flat on what the viewer clearly sees is a three dimensional void. There is of course a logical topography in SKYTUBE, the image of clouds floating above its structure, as there is in Bow's relationship with the gallery. Both still confound. Blue means sky, but it doesn't always mean freedom– Irving's sky-shrouded tube recalls implements of oppression and violence, and Semmes' gauzy tulle hangs melancholic, if ceremonial. Their blue knows its own depths in modern memory, the blues of militaristic authority and of unfulfilled promises of equality.

In spite of their artifice, there is profound honesty in the way these works engage their surroundings. Each knows its stride, settling into the architecture as if for a more permanent visit. These monuments cast their own import. Irving's piece anchors itself into the hundred-year-old tile floor, embracing the history of its surroundings. These trappings—the tile, tin ceilings, terra cotta shingles, wooden cornices—were the product of a racialized industrial and commercial expansion in the American city. And while the history is somewhat masked by the perceived economic ideal of gentrification, the black base of its plinth backs up and drives over the question of aesthetic monumentality. Periods of decay are evident on every surface of the gallery, and mirrored in SKYTUBE, save the walls where Semmes' work hangs. Hers is all volume and no weight, floating sentinels for an uncompromisingly gendered future, one that sees architectural space recolonized by the most delicate materials; the medium is the message.

What the viewer is left with, in spite of the doubt in one's reality these objects engender, is desire. Like a coin you find tails up, glinting in the city's daylight, they are a treat to encounter but a barb to hold in your mind. The bright blue tulle of Bow is a visual feast but its scale can almost suffocate; it wields a soft power. Irving's ceramic has a handheld preciousness and its strata reveal gemlike, metallic discoveries. Both works disarm with their beauty but also use it as a mere top note the base of which is a deep longing. There are boxes and buildings for these jewels to reside in, but the inner life of the objects is lived too large and with too much knowing to permit your desire to stagnate. They want more and so must you.



Beverly Semmes, *Bow*, 2016, Tulle, Dimensions variable, BS0000



Kahlil Robert Irving, SKYTUBE & Silver Chalice \ Concrete tears embedded jewels (take me as I am), 2023-2024, Glazed and unglazed ceramic, enamels, lusters, digital print ceramic decals, 14 x 14 x 12 in., 35.56 x 35.56 x 30.48 cm, KR0001

23-2024

23-2024

Kahlil Irving

Kahlil Robert Irving (b. 1992, San Diego, CA) is an artist living and working in St. Louis, Missouri. He received his MFA in 2017 from Washington University in St. Louis and received his BFA in 2015 from the Kansas City Art Institute. His work was most recently the subject of a solo exhibition, Archeology of the Present, at the Walker Art Center, which traveled to Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum. Projects: Kahlil Robert Irving was presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (2021-2022), which was organized in partnership with the Studio Museum in Harlem. Irving was also included in the 2021 New Museum Triennial: Soft Water, Hard Stone, co-curated by Jamillah James and Margot Norton. Other institutional group exhibitions include I'll Be Your Mirror: Art and the Digital Screen at the Fort Worth Modern (2023); Making Knowing: Craft in Art at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2018-2022); What is Left Unspoken at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2022); and Working Thought at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2022). His work was recently included in 18 Painters at Andrew Kreps Gallery (2024); Social Abstraction, curated by Antwan Sargent at Gagosian Beverly Hills (2024); and in the three-person exhibition Thornton Dial, Kahlil Robert Irving, Leslie Martinez at Chapter NY (2024).

Irving has been awarded the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant (2019) and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2020). His work is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park; the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence; the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Sarasota Springs; and, the Whitney Museum of American Art. His work has been exhibited at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park; the Arizona State University Art Museum, Phoenix; and, the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, among others.

Beverly Semmes (b. 1958, Washing D.C.) is an artist living and working in New York City. She received her MFA from Yale in 1987 and her BFA from Boston Museum School, Tufts University in 1982. She also attended New York Studio School, 1982-83 and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1982. Her work has been the subject of many institutional exhibitions including at the ICA Philadelphia (1993); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1995); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (1996); Ginza Art Space, Tokyo (2000); Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle (2019) among others. Recent group exhibitions include *She Said, She Said: Contemporary Artists from the Rubell Museum* (2024); *Always In Relation: 50 Years of the Gallery* at Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University, Middletown (2024); *The New Village: Ten Years of New York Fashion* at Pratt Manhattan Gallery, NYC (2024); *Witch Hunt* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2022), and the *57th Carnegie International*, at the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh (2018-2019).

Semmes is the recipient of various awards including from the International Endowment of the Arts, New York Endowment for the Arts, Artist Space, and the National Academy of Design. Her work is included in the permanent collections of the Albright Knox Gallery, Buffalo; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; the Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem, the Netherlands; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, among others. She is also a founding member of the Carwash Collective.

In 2025 Tufts University will mount Semmes first career retrospective at the University gallery, curated by Dina Deitsch.

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