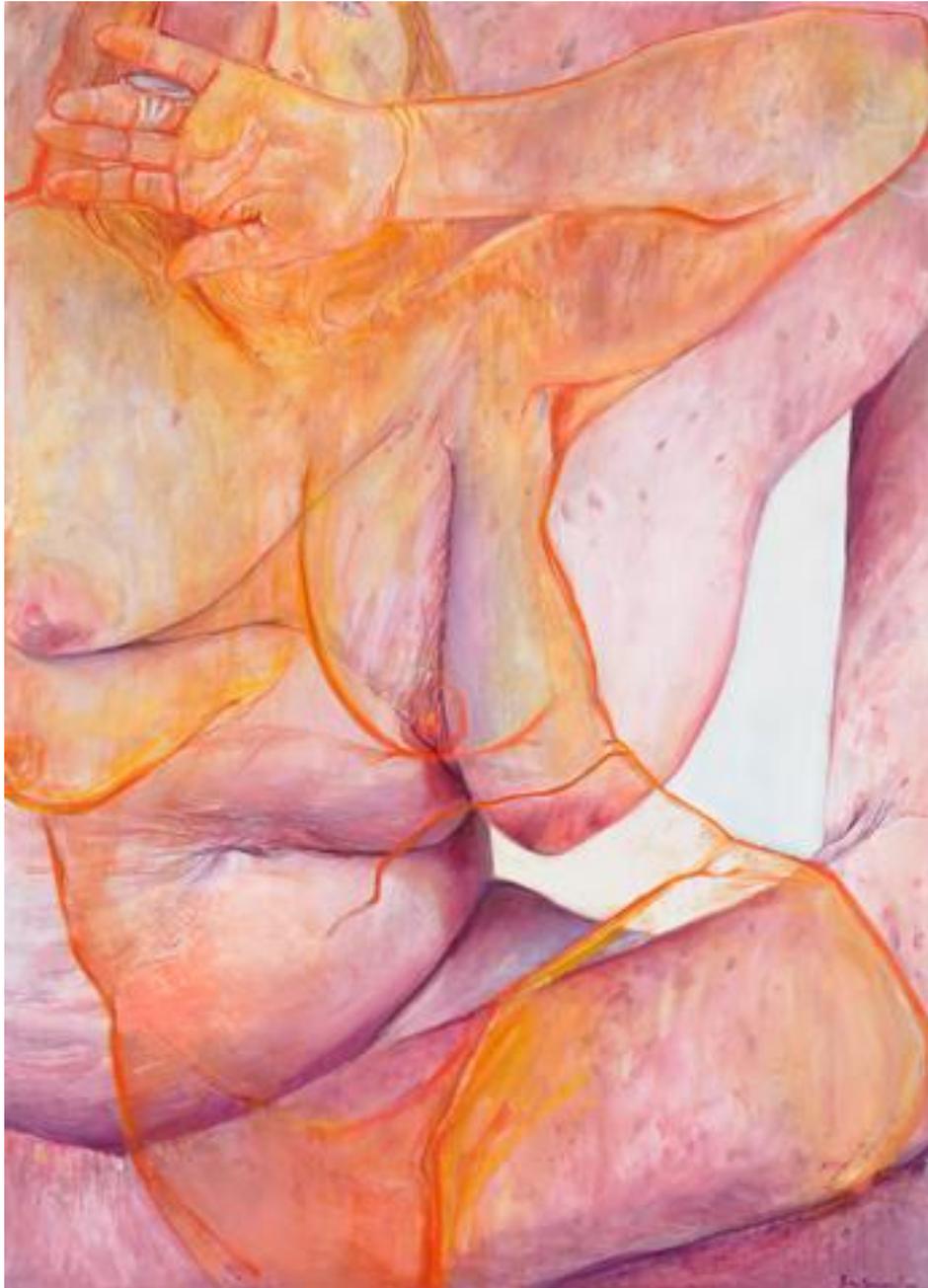


TWO COATS OF PAINT

October 13, 2016

Joan Semmel: A woman's body

2:27 pm by Sharon Butler



Joan Semmel, Open Hand, 2015, oil on canvas, 66 x 48 inches.

Donald Trump has made women's bodies a central campaign issue during the 2016 presidential election. In [a speech in New Hampshire](#) today, Michelle Obama responded to Trump's behavior:

The shameful comments about our bodies, the disrespect of our ambitions and intellect, the belief that you can do anything you want to a woman, it is cruel, it is frightening, and the truth is, it hurts. [This] is not normal, this is not politics as usual. It is intolerable. [It] doesn't matter what party you belong to, no woman deserves to be treated this way.

Trump's lifelong misogyny, his predatory behavior, and his blatant and unapologetic objectification of women are triggers for many of the issues Joan Semmel has been addressing in her painting since 1974 – how society looks at the female body, how we touch it, how we care for it.



Joan Semmel at Alexander Gray, installation view.

Semmel's lively, lyrical new paintings, on display at Alexander Gray Associates through October 15, depict fragmented sections of the aging female body, often from angles that can only be seen by women themselves. The gloriously large-scale nudes, all self portraits and many from selfie-like angles, provide an intimate view of how women see themselves—not as some guy's "piece of ass," but as mysterious, powerful instruments, in control of their own destinies. Semmel, born in 1932, is clearly comfortable in her own skin.



Joan Semmel, Crossed Limbs, 2016, oil on canvas 60x72 inches. 60h x 72w in



Joan Semmel, Blue Embrace, 2016, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches.



Joan Semmel, Flesh Ground, 2016, oil on canvas, 60 x 72 inches.

[“Joan Semmel: New Work,”](#) Alexander Gray Associates, Chelsea, New York, NY. Through October 15, 2016.

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