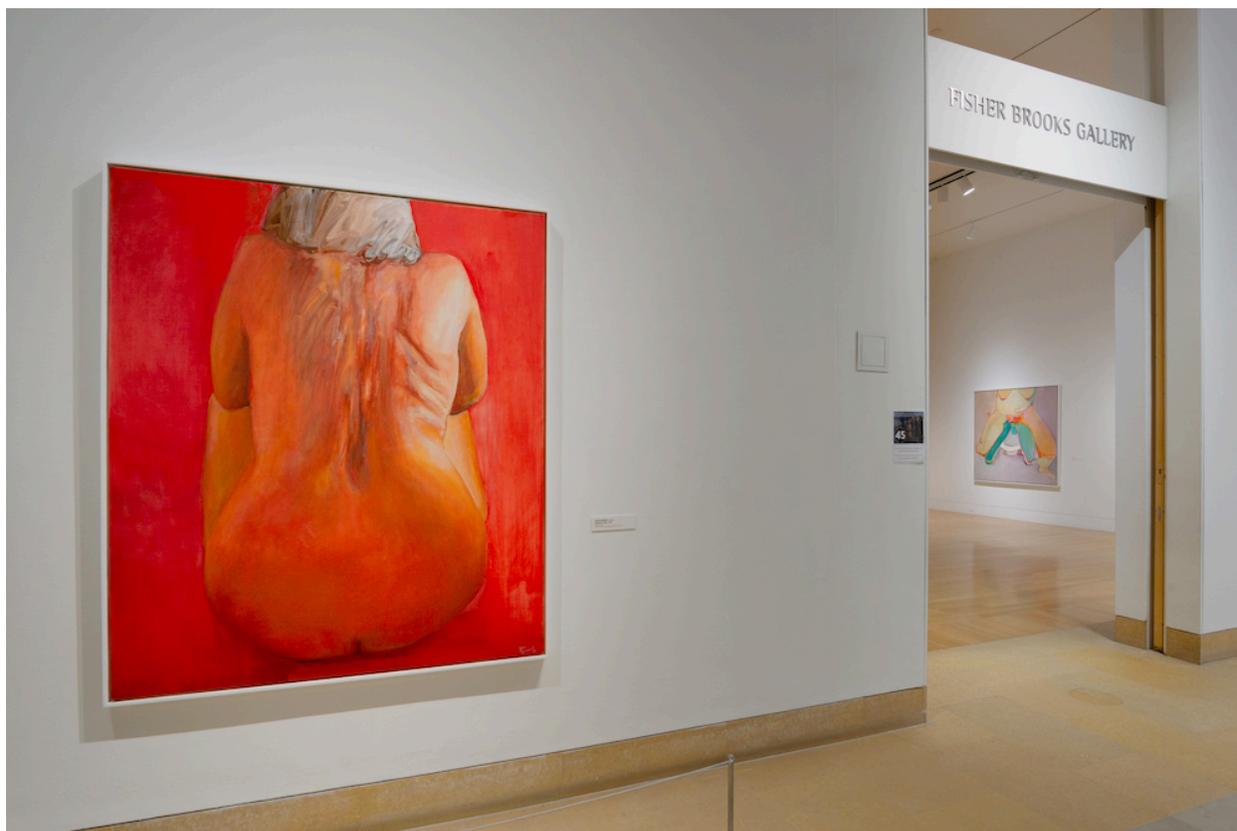


# JUXTAPOZ

## Joan Semmel: Skin in the Game @ Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia

Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts // - April 03, 2022

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**“I do not pretend to address the problems of all women in the world. My work is personal and I speak for myself.”** At the age of 89 years old, NYC-born Joan Semmel has had decades of influence over a wide-ranging collection of painters, and yet she is only now getting her first museum retrospective in *Joan Semmel: Skin in the Game* at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine

Arts. In her statement above, you get the sense that she was blazing a path for herself as much as a generation of women painters behind her, but that in turning the gaze onto herself, with some of the most provocative and intimate nude self-portraits you could see, she became groundbreaking. Her depictions of flesh have the sort of texture that feels like realism, but her work has a sense of almost abstraction in that the self recognizes only so much of its own consciousness.

*Skin in the Game* takes almost six decades of work, from more abstraction to her more wider known erotic and sexual paintings, and creates a rare narrative of how an artist can be internationally recognized as a political painter and yet create works that don't go too far astray from the own artist's body as a subject. In an interview a few years ago, Semmel noted this and said, "The whole feminist idea of why I was doing what I was doing was important to me at the time. I wanted the work to exist with that but also independently of it." From Lisa Yuskavage and Jenna Gribbon, Marliyn Minter and beyond, Semmel is a conduit and starting point, and that she now has the vaunted retrospective is long overdue and spectacularly in time.

