

## ART

**Joan Semmel**

Apr. 15-May. 29

Gray  
510 W. 26th St.  
Chelsea

This electrifying New York painter has dedicated herself to feminist figuration for sixty years, and the characteristically glorious works in “Balancing Act” (on view at Alexander Gray Associates, in Chelsea, and upstate, in Germantown) prove that her vigor hasn’t waned. Semmel’s ever-evolving conceit is the collapse of the artist-model divide: the nude figure she portrays is her own. Leaning, twisting, folded poses are made even more dramatic by foreshortened views and the use of a supernaturally hued chiaroscuro. “Red Hand,” from 2019, depicts the artist’s octogenarian body, seated and turned away from the viewer, shadowed in violet-magenta on a saturated goldenrod ground. An arm, nearly obscured by the flesh of her torso, extends a hand to the viewer, looking brightly gory in the picture’s lurid light. This striking show is a tantalizing prelude to the upcoming Semmel retrospective at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, aptly titled “Skin in the Game.”

—*Johanna Fateman*