

# Pulling the Nude from the Pedestal

**A** ARTSY EDITORIAL  
6 HOURS AGO

*“What I was interested in doing was really subverting the whole genre of the nude, to be able to do it in a way that was logical for me as a woman ... and for it to be obvious that it was from a woman’s point of view.”—Joan Semmel*

Since the 1960s, [Joan Semmel](#) has worked to subvert what she calls the “passive, dominant, ridiculous attitude” embedded in historical depictions of nude women. Now in her 80s, little has changed; today, the artist who once painted exhibitionists from life turns the lens to herself and paints her own figure. And though her practice has developed—she now uses Photoshop to layer photographs in studies of composition and transparency before painting—Semmel’s uncanny commitment to the figure remains unchanged. “I didn’t want to idealize,” she said. “I wanted the body to be a *specific* body, rather than the idealization of what femininity is about.”

*Portrait courtesy of Alexander Gray Associates, New York*

*On view at [Alexander Gray Associates](#), Art Basel 2013 - Feature, Booth G4, June 13th – 16th. [Explore Art Basel](#).*



Joan Semmel  
*On the Grass*, 1978

