Beyond the statement that a woman's body is first and foremost her own, Semmel's work is erotic in an unusual way. Narcissism is certainly present, but purged of the negativity that narcissism usually implies. It seems to me that Semmel is making an anti-puritanical gesture for everyone.

Most of us have been brought up to avoid our own bodies. The insanity of this is clear. Often any such natural curiosity on the part of a child is punished as cryptomasturbatory. Pleading oneself is considered sinful. Fear of flesh and the pseudo-mystery of Otherness begins at home. The dictum to know thyself should also include knowing one's body.

These are unusual self-portraits, but once one thinks about it, they are the most natural. They are also primal; the exploration of the world begins as an exploration