



Transitions, 2012, oil on canvas, 48h x 60w in (121.92h x 152.4w cm); *Untitled*, 1978, mixed media collage on paper, 22h x 30w in (55.88h x 76.2w cm)

Joan Semmel

April 17 – May 25, 2013

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present an exhibition featuring the works of Joan Semmel, including recent paintings and mixed media collages from the late 1970s and early 1980s. Together, the paintings and works on paper demonstrate Semmel's consistent formal and compositional point of view, providing insight into her experimental representation of the female body.

Joan Semmel's self-portraits feature the artist in multiple positions, fragmented and in-motion. A departure from her early 2000s paintings in which she exposes the camera and mirror, these new paintings investigate color and flesh in explorative, intimate compositions. A common theme of veiling resonates in these works; Semmel holds multiple positions, each thinly overlaid by the next. Semmel's training in abstraction is apparent in the diluted transitions from one hue to the next; her subtle use of color adds depth and enhances the sense of emotional as well as formal dynamism. Semmel's argument for female autonomy through the body challenges the voyeuristic culture of depicting women, redefining the role of the passive female nude in art history through radical explorations of the aging process.

The mixed media collages utilize many of the same techniques apparent in Semmel's recent paintings, including the use of overlay to create complex compositions. Juxtaposing photographic self portraits with gestural pastel figure studies, Semmel explores color and line—the combination reinforcing her commitment to figuration and art historical precedents. Created after her *Erotic Series* of the early 1970s, these drawings are not depictions of female sexuality and pleasure; instead, these collages serve as early instances of Semmel taking hold of the female gaze, commanding control over her own body's representation.

Concurrent with the exhibition at Alexander Gray Associates, *Joan Semmel: A Lucid Eye* is on view at the Bronx Museum of the Arts through June 9, 2013. Her work is featured in the Gallery's group presentation at Frieze New York 2013 art fair. Semmel's work in the Art Basel 2013 Feature section is a micro-retrospective presentation, her first solo presentation in Europe since the 1960s.

Joan Semmel (b.1932) studied at the Cooper Union, Pratt Institute and the Art Student's League of New York. In the 1960s, She began her painting career in Spain and South America, where she experimented with abstraction. Semmel returned to New York in the early 1970s, when her practice turned towards figurative paintings, many with erotic themes in response to pornography, popular culture, and concerns around representation. Semmel's museum exhibitions include: *Me. Myself. Naked* at the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, Bremen, Germany; *Joan Semmel: A Lucid Eye* at the Bronx Museum of the Arts (2013); *Shifting the Gaze* at the Jewish Museum (2010); *Rebelle* at the Museum of Modern Art Arnhem, The Netherlands (2009); *Solitaire: Lee Lozano, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Joan Semmel* at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2008); and the touring exhibition *WACK! Art and the Feminist Movement*, MoCA, Los Angeles (2007). Semmel's paintings are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; Orange County Museum of Art, CA; Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; The Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY; the Jocelyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE; the Jewish Museum, New York; and the Brooklyn Museum, New York. She is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including the Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award 2013, Anonymous Was a Woman, and the National Endowment for the Arts awards. She is Professor Emeritus of Painting at Rutgers University, NJ.