

Tab 1

Imagined Exhibition: Working as the head curator for an imagined exhibition explored through your own interests and discipline.

NUDE

*“Thinking with Moten, I have been wondering
how museums can adopt a particular kind of critical positionality but also
think about how to create, how to imagine, how to do and to make anew?...”*

Typically, the purpose of an exhibition is to communicate a message, idea or concept to an audience; while displaying works created by one or more artists. The aim is to inspire, engage or create deeper thought within the audience. **NUDE** is an exhibition which discusses the topic of the mistreatment of women throughout art history, looking at female-focused contemporary pieces on the nude portrait. The art world has been a misogynistic space since the beginning of its existence, with many of the greatest works displayed being paintings of women as objects, viewed no differently from the average still life subject, such as some fruit or a pretty vase. The artists creating those works often being men profiting off of the mistreatment of women in their personal and professional lives.

The goal of this exhibition is to showcase female portraiture, particularly the nude portrait, through the lense of women; discussing the contrast between the male and female gaze when it comes to these particular subjects in art. This will be communicated by creating an open exhibition consisting of Female artists solely. The people included in this exhibition have been chosen as they are artists who majoritarilly focus on Women in their work, as well as other marginalised groups. It was also crucial to choose a selection of artists who represent a range of backgrounds and perspectives to recognise the importance of intersectionality within this discussion; avoiding white feminism and recognising the history of the nude portrait which predominantly consisted of attractive, young, white Women– which were painted from the male lense and created for the male spectator. For his own gratification. The exhibition space chosen is Mission Gallery. This became the gallery of choice due to its intimate atmosphere, location and the positive messages the gallery managers uphold. Being a familiar space, it was easier to picture where each piece could go and how they would collaborate with one another. The space, while small, is also incredibly unique as it is a converted church. This lends to the exhibition as the space itself becomes involved– I believe the rounded, less rigid architecture and natural light from the alcove windows creates a better atmosphere than a bright, white box.

Entering the space to the right hand wall, we see three pieces by Joan Semmel (born 1932) an American artist known for her large-scale nude paintings, often being self portraits. These portraits are typically from the artist's perspective, whether it is from her view looking down at her own body, or from a mirror reflecting back at her. It is as if the viewer is gazing at her from her own eyes. The focus is on the details of the female body, with each curve, wrinkle and layer of skin represented in these paintings. Age is often an important factor represented in these works, especially in her later pieces as Semmel herself ages and addresses the anxieties around the inevitability of ageing and the importance of recognising and accepting imperfections instead of selling false images of women to people



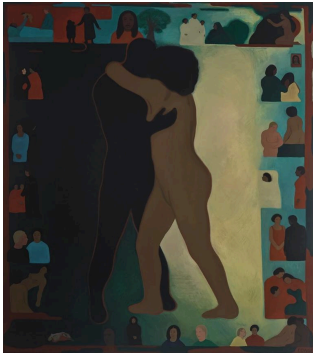
The reason I used myself in this was that I wanted to make images of women that were not fetishized. All I saw on the newsstands were images of pin-up kind of women. I felt that it was a false image; it was a commercialized image of selling women's bodies. I wanted women to be seen in a way that they really were, and with all the imperfections that were there. - Joan Semmel



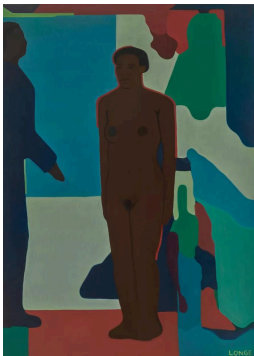
Semmel's 'With Camera' pieces are particularly striking as they show the body of Semmel, being an older woman, not hiding or attempting to change the way her body looks. This is an honest and realistic depiction of the female figure in contrast to western paintings of the female nude, as well as what we see today online of women's bodies which set unrealistic standards for women and girls. However, these expectations have always existed. If we compare Semmel's paintings with the likes of Titian or Botticelli, we see how the ideal woman has historically been portrayed as: pale, smooth and youthful.

- 1) *Centered*, 2002
- 2) *Pink Cushion*, 2004
- 3) *Close-Up*, 2001
- 4) *Baroque*, 2002
- 5) *Titian, Venus of Urbino*, 1532 or 1534.





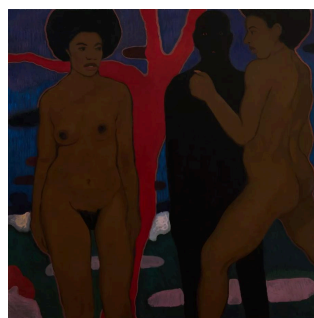
To the left hand side, on the opposite wall, we see paintings from Sahara Longe (born 1994) a British figurative painter who currently works in London. Longe uses techniques from the old masters in her paintings after studying for four years at the Charles H. Cecil Studios in Florence. She applies them in vibrant and bold ways, with rich colours and expressive features. Longe's paintings reference historical western paintings with Black people as the focus. Though Longe does not primarily depict the nude in her work, those will be the paintings given showcase in this exhibition.



The Black nude portrait is historically uncommon in Western art, or when represented (by the White artist) the subject is dehumanized, devalued, exoticised and often caricaturised and oversexualised. These topics and theories are discussed in Tayler Friar's essay titled 'The black female body: Representation of the erotic in contemporary visual art in Africa'. Which includes quotes from Manuela Coppola and Isabel Ruiz.



Within the European context, the black female form has been associated with many destructive stereotypes, claiming her to be sexually deviant, primitive, subhuman, hypersexual, an uncontrollably erotic creature; all under the often-perverse white male gaze (Ruiz 1). Coppola adds that over time, this same body has been ripped from its autonomy, purged from intellectual spaces, and exposed raw as a 'bizarre' public spectacle (25). - Tayler Friar (1)



- 1) *Good Times/ Bad Times, 2024*
- 2) *Blue Nude, 2024*
- 3) *Nudes III, 2021*
- 4) *As We Are (after Otto Friedrich), 2024*



Moving towards the back wall on the left hand side, beside the entrance of the alcove, we see pieces from Soheila Sokhanvari سهیلا سخنوری (born 1964) An Iranian-British artist. Sokhanvari was previously a scientist before becoming an artist, her recent works created with egg tempera on calf vellum, though she has been known to use other mediums, with the subject matter typically stemming from old family photographs accompanied by vibrant colours and patterns. Her paintings use humour and metaphors to discuss the histories of the Middle East and Western culture. She addresses subjects such as the laws against women in Iran and the women pioneers from her country. The patterns used in her works are taken from designs frequently used in devotional spaces such as Mosques in Iran.



"I wanted to drown people in Iranian culture, not just give them a flavour of it, but to immerse them completely. And I wanted to have these women sing. The Iranian government has banned women from singing and dancing and I wanted to give this platform back to them." - Soheila Sokhanvari

These paintings were chosen due to the history behind them and interesting juxtaposition the pieces themselves have against the rest of the work in the space, as they are tiny and intricately detailed paintings, being no more than between 10 and 20 centimetres, forcing the viewer to get up close and personal to the paintings.

- 1) Mkultra 6, 2020
- 2) Mkultra 7, 2020
- 3) Mkultra 8, 2020



Finally, entering the alcove at the back of the gallery space, we see the work of Sarah Lucas (born 1962) A British artist, whose sculptures help break up this exhibition space. Instead of the classic naked female painting we see a comedic and unique twist on the nude– a figure which appears to be entirely made of breasts, apart from the long spindly legs which protrude from the bottom, wearing stockings and heels as it sits on a chair. Lucas titles these specific pieces her “Bunny Girl” sculptures, which are made from stuffed tights placed over

pieces of furniture. Lucas was labelled in the British art scene as a “troublemaker”, known for creating provocative and, oftentimes ‘offensive’ pieces which touched on the subjects of class, sex and gender.

Lucas cleverly creates these characters, which are intended to be over exaggerated representations of women, which twist and contort themselves in an uncomfortable and disturbing way, as women do and have done for centuries to adhere to beauties standards to appease an audience; men. Using everyday objects such as the chair, which Lucas states that ‘Empty chairs are implying a body,’ meaning, the existence of a chair, an object only people use, implies human existence.

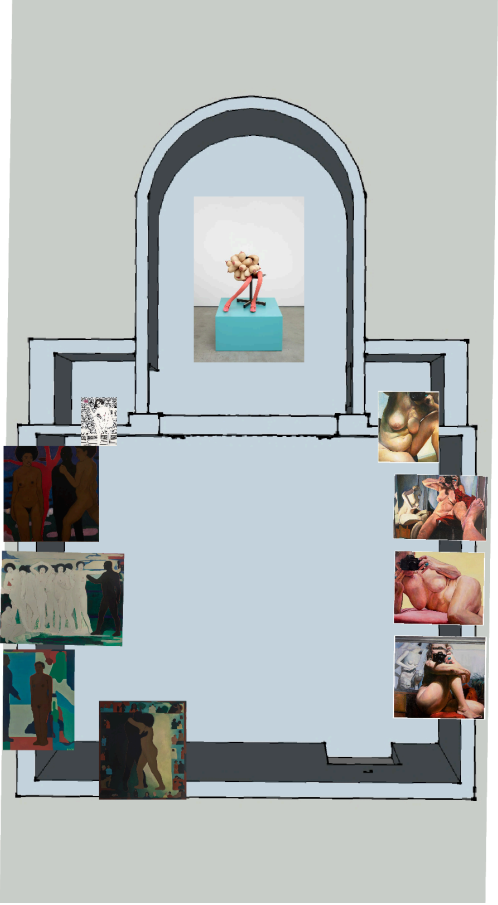


1) Sugar, 2020

With that, the exhibition concludes. Four women, contemporary artists, who are still active today. Each from varying backgrounds, age ranges and experiences. Creating a display of what the female nude really should be– An expression of the human figure. Not an image for the male voyeur.

“...Is critique enough? Because the burden should be a burden to be critical so that we can work it through. But it probably is also a burden to imagine ... to create. And that I don’t know how to do that yet. If you ask what the curator’s role is, that’s probably what they should be doing.”

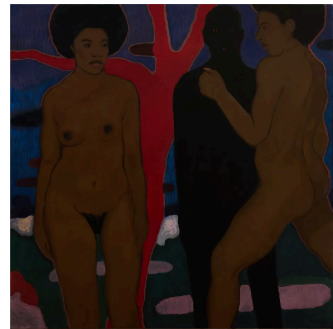
- Wayne Modest, “Museums are investments in Critical discomfort”



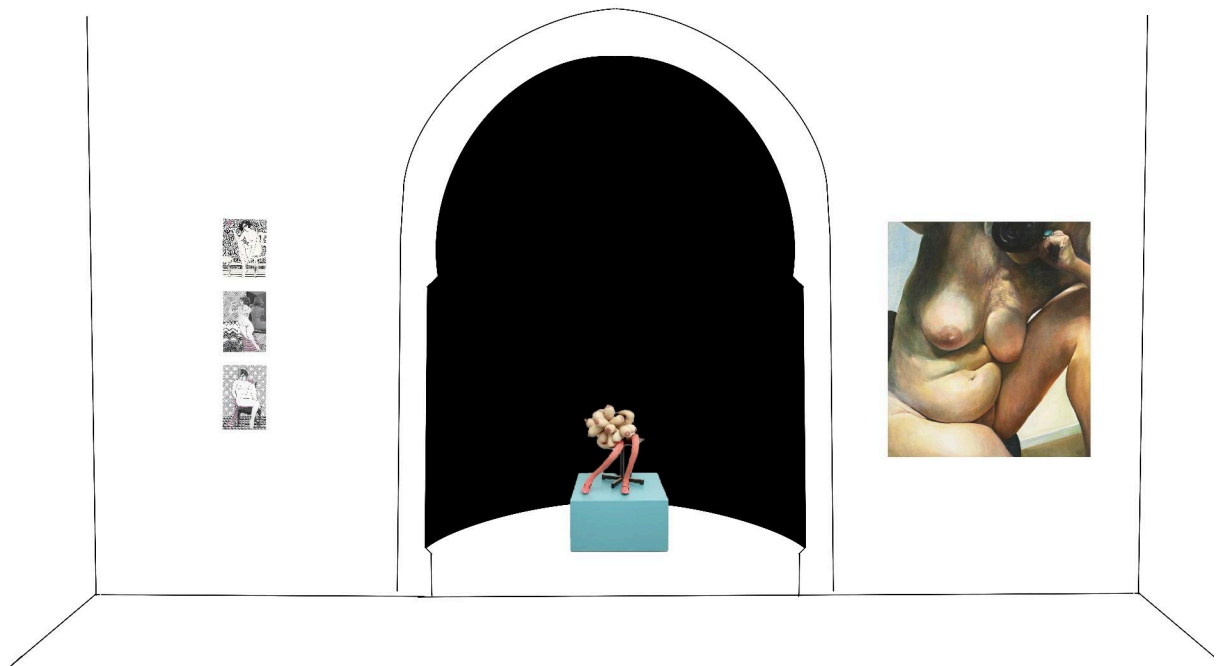
Right wall

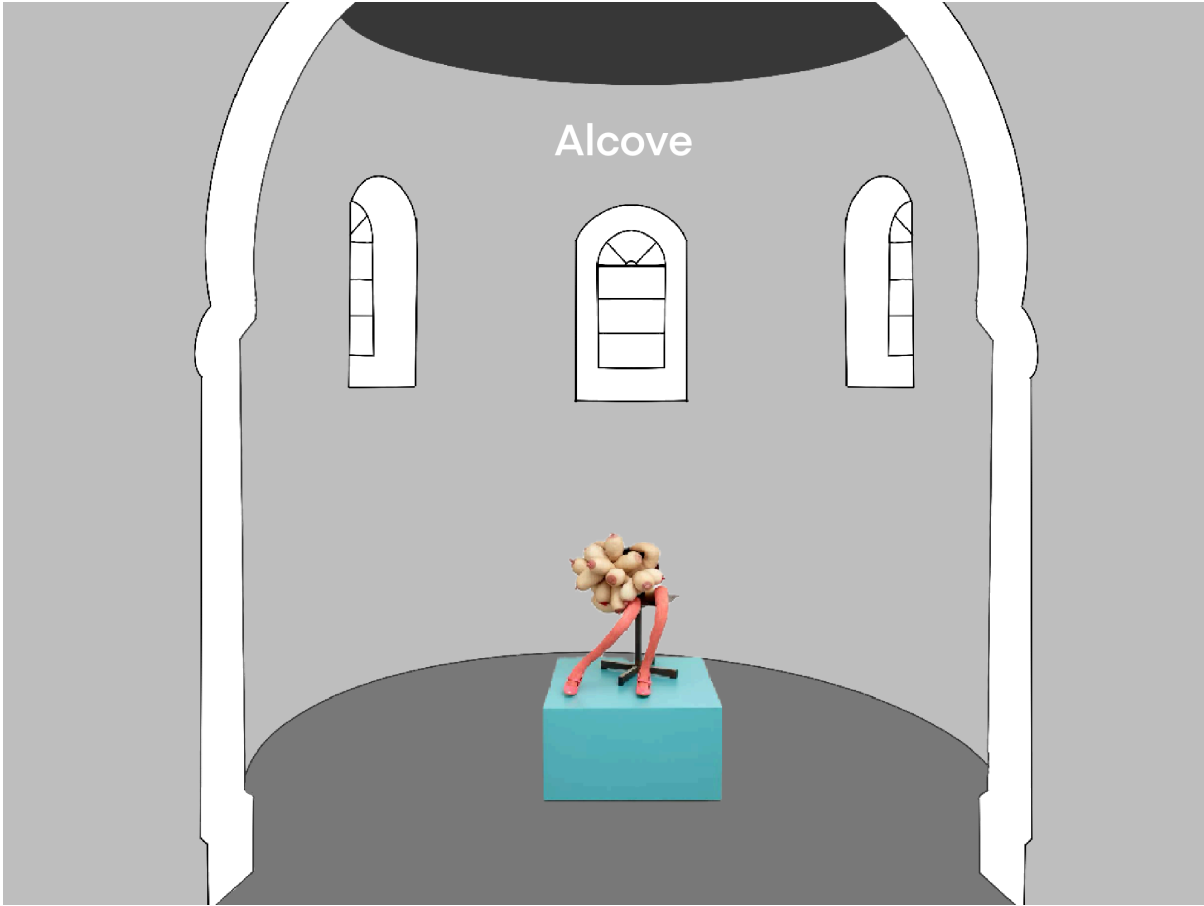


left wall



Back wall





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