

***After the Ball – On Seeing my Reflection in the Mirror, Age 65
(with love to Alice Neel)***

("Alice Neel's Women," the museum retrospective, was curated by Carolyn Kinder Carr and exhibited at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Fall/Winter, 2005/2006.)

Presto! Flashback! Replay!
Museum retrospective: Alice Neel's Women;
instant insight, coming on the heels
of three years of wondering; as once
for Archimedes, now for me, gravity
provides the Eureka moment. Question:
Why, at seventy-five, did Alice Neel
decide the time had come to paint her first
true self-portrait, nude, with glasses on,
cheeks pink from effort, "flesh dropping"
from her bones, full form, from white hair
to flat feet, big toes polished purple,
unmistakably prehensile, taking half
a dozen years, or so, to complete, seated
in front of an unshown mirror? Answer:

- a. It was who she was and had become, and
- b. better late than never.

Barbara Ann Porte