

# Woman Magic | Anne Berg, Paintings 1980-1998

Curated by Anna Souter

4 July - 20 September 2025

Public opening Thursday 3 July, 6-8 pm

Brooke Benington is pleased to present the first full solo exhibition by figurative painter Anne Berg in 35 years. The exhibition will be at Brooke Benington's Fitzrovia gallery at 76 Cleveland Street, London W1T 6NB from 4 July to 20 September. The public opening will take place on Thursday 3 July from 6-8 pm. Taking its title from an exhibition of the same name organised by Berg and Monica Sjöö in the early 1980s, *Woman Magic* brings together a selection of Berg's paintings of magical female figures, presenting a world view of feminist power, ecological sensibility, and interspecies relationships.

Berg studied under Victor Pasmore and Richard Hamilton in the 1960s, but she rejected her teachers' insistence on the primacy of abstraction in favour of feminist figuration. She remained committed to her singular artistic vision, later finding co-feeling and inspiration among a group of women artists including Monica Sjöö. In collaboration with Sjöö, Berg co-authored the keystone manifesto "Images of Womanpower" as part of the pamphlet *Towards a revolutionary feminist art* (1971). "WE SAY NO TO EMPTY ABSTRACTIONS," they write, "to the 'art for art's sake' philosophy of the privileged white middle-class male art world." They query how women's experiences of oppression, childbirth, and sexuality can be conveyed in "stripes and triangles". Instead, they advocate figuration, the defence of nature, and the reinvigoration of the Mother Goddess as an essential antidote to patriarchal capitalism.

Often working ad hoc with the materials she had to hand, many of Berg's paintings suggest her struggle to make her creative voice heard while also looking after children. Energised by the gendered injustice she witnessed, she took part in the seismic *Woman Power* exhibition at Swiss Cottage Library, London in 1973, which was investigated by police after a complaint about Monica Sjöö's landmark painting *God Giving Birth*.

In the early 1980s, the touring exhibition *Woman Magic* marked the movement's broader turn towards goddess feminism and early ecofeminist ideas. Berg's works from this time feel newly relevant in our contemporary era, which is seeing a revival of interest in the goddess movement and mystical ecofeminism. The paintings combine political and environmental activism with an expanded sense of the myriad forms women's magic might take, from the figures of classic mythology to the mermaid, the witch, and the animal whisperer.

Alongside her painting practice, Berg creates extraordinary illuminations for her diaries in which she chronicles personal, creative, and broader ecofeminist concerns. These diaries will be displayed for the first time as part of *Woman Magic*, providing an insight into how Berg's practice combines the practical concerns of everyday motherhood with expansive theoretical forays into artistic endeavour and the position of women.