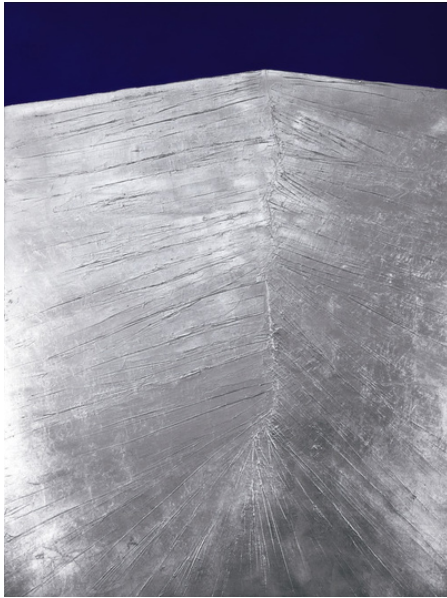


Anna-Eva Bergman *A Journey Within*

31 March 2023 – 16 July 2023



The Musée d'Art Moderne of Paris is presenting the first major retrospective devoted to Norwegian artist Anna-Eva Bergman (1909–1987). This key figure in postwar painting was a free, visionary artist whose work, characterised by the use of gold and silver leaf, is a powerful celebration of the beauty of nature, the landscapes of the Far North, and the Mediterranean.

Exhibited all over the world during her lifetime (notably at the Musée d'Art Moderne of Paris in 1977, but also in Italy, Germany and Norway), Anna-Eva Bergman nonetheless remains under-appreciated in Europe today. Her work, with its singular painterly language based on a vocabulary of pure forms, merits considerably more attention in art history terms, alongside the work of such other great women artists as her contemporaries Hilma af Klint, Georgia O'Keeffe and Sonia Delaunay.

With its panorama of her entire output, the exhibition *Anna-Eva Bergman, A Journey Within* brings a decisively new slant to the rediscovery of this major artist. Comprising more than 200 works, the exhibition follows in the wake of MAM's October 2019 retrospective devoted to Bergman's husband Hans Hartung.

As part of the exhibition, the museum is presenting *N°2-1964 Stèle*, acquired during the artist's lifetime, as well as the hundred or so works making up the Hartung-Bergman's Fondation remarkable donation to MAM in 2017. This ensemble is rounded off by photographs, drawings and archival documents from the Fondation's collections in Antibes, many of them never shown before.

In the Paris Musées catalogue edited by Hélène Leroy essays by French and Norwegian specialists detail the wealth of media used by Bergman and the highly individual deployment of metal leaf – gold, silver, aluminium, tin, copper, lead, bismuth – that became her maker's mark. Other essays look into Bergman's relationship to drawing and caricature, architecture and the golden mean, together with the exhibition and reception of her work after the war, and her kinship with the great masters of the past and such contemporaries such as Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt and Mark Rothko.

PRESS RELEASE

Museum director
Fabrice Hergott

Curator
Hélène Leroy

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Anna-Eva Bergman
N°45-1971 Crête de montagne [Mountain Ridge]
1971
Acrylic, modeling paste and metal leaf on canvas
200 x 150 cm
Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
Anna-Eva Bergman / Adagp, Paris, 2023
Photograph ©Laurent Chapellon – Key Graphic

Anna-Eva Bergman
N°26- 1962 Feu [Fire]
1962
Oil and metal leaf on canvas
250 x 200 cm
Anna-Eva Bergman / Adagp, Paris, 2023
Photograph © Claire Dorn

Visitor information

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
11 Avenue du Président Wilson
75116 Paris
Tel. 01 53 67 40 00
www.mam.paris.fr

Open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 6pm

Open late Thursdays, until 9: 30pm

Admission

Full rate: 15 €
Concessions: 13 €

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Anna-Eva Bergman embodies the artistic Europe of the 20th century. She grew up in Norway, began her artistic training in Oslo in 1927 and graduated in Vienna the following year. In Paris in 1929, she met Hans Hartung, a young and then unknown abstract painter. She immediately married him in Germany and joined the circles of politically committed artists in Dresden. The early part of her career was marked by her interest in caricature and illustration. Her powers of observation made her an alert chronicler of the social and political upheavals of the 1930s: she had no qualms about criticising Nazi doctrine and attitudes, poked fun at the cultural stereotypes of the countries she visited, and drew attention to the enormous gaps between the marginalized and the dominant classes. Her drawings were also an opportunity to describe herself and her romantic adventures with Hans Hartung, whom she married twice. At the same time, these graphic works do not reduce her to the status of a mere illustrator. Rather they bear witness to a powerful individuality, early emancipation and great freedom of spirit.

In the 1940s Bergman returned to painting full-time, choosing a non-figurative but still symbolic path she described as the "art of abstracting". Observation of nature became a primary concern, nourished by the deep-seated introspection that underpinned her personal aesthetic theory. Fixated on the landscapes of Norway and stunned by the experience of the midnight Sun in Finnmark, she nonetheless travelled extensively elsewhere, particularly on the Mediterranean coast, resulting in an obsession with light and its variations, contrasts and nuances.

Her approach is rooted in the primacy of line, recourse to the golden mean, colour symbolism, and a use of metal leaf inspired by the art of the Middle Ages. Painting and writing were inseparably linked at the time, and Bergman's notebooks are a record of the theoretical and technical questions, and the reflections on art, aesthetics and philosophy that crossed her mind. A stay on the Norwegian coast in 1950 led to a profound renewal of her artistic vocabulary and an evolution of her painting towards a limited number of simple forms including moon, star, planet, mountain, stele, tree, tomb, valley, boat, bow and mirror. This elementary natural repertoire culminated in the constantly shifting formal alphabet that permeates all her work. After a minimalist period a final transfiguration took place in the late 1970s, with an alternation of the very small formats she called "mini-paintings" and very large ones whose simple, monumental forms and narrowed chromatic range bear witness to a thoroughgoing mastery of composition and synthesis.

Anna-Eva Bergman's oeuvre is characterised by a deep sense of mysticism and the sacred – she called herself a "pantheist" – combined with a keen interest in life beyond the human range. Hardly surprising, then, that her paintings are now being welcomed by a new generation.

The Musée d'Art Moderne of Paris has collaborated closely on this project with the Fondation Hartung-Bergman in Antibes and the Nasjonalmuseet in Oslo, which will in turn devote an exhibition to Anna-Eva Bergman from 16 November 2023 to 25 February 2024.

With the collaboration and support of



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