

JENNIFER BINNIE



LADY OF THE FOREST

JENNIFER BINNIE

LADY OF THE FOREST

WIA GALLERY
3 FISHER ST
LEWES BN7 2DG

wearewia.com
[@wia_gallery](https://www.instagram.com/wia_gallery)

13 OCTOBER - 26 NOVEMBER 2023

jenniferbinnie.co.uk
[@jensbinnie](https://www.instagram.com/jensbinnie)

Photo credit : Andy Keate



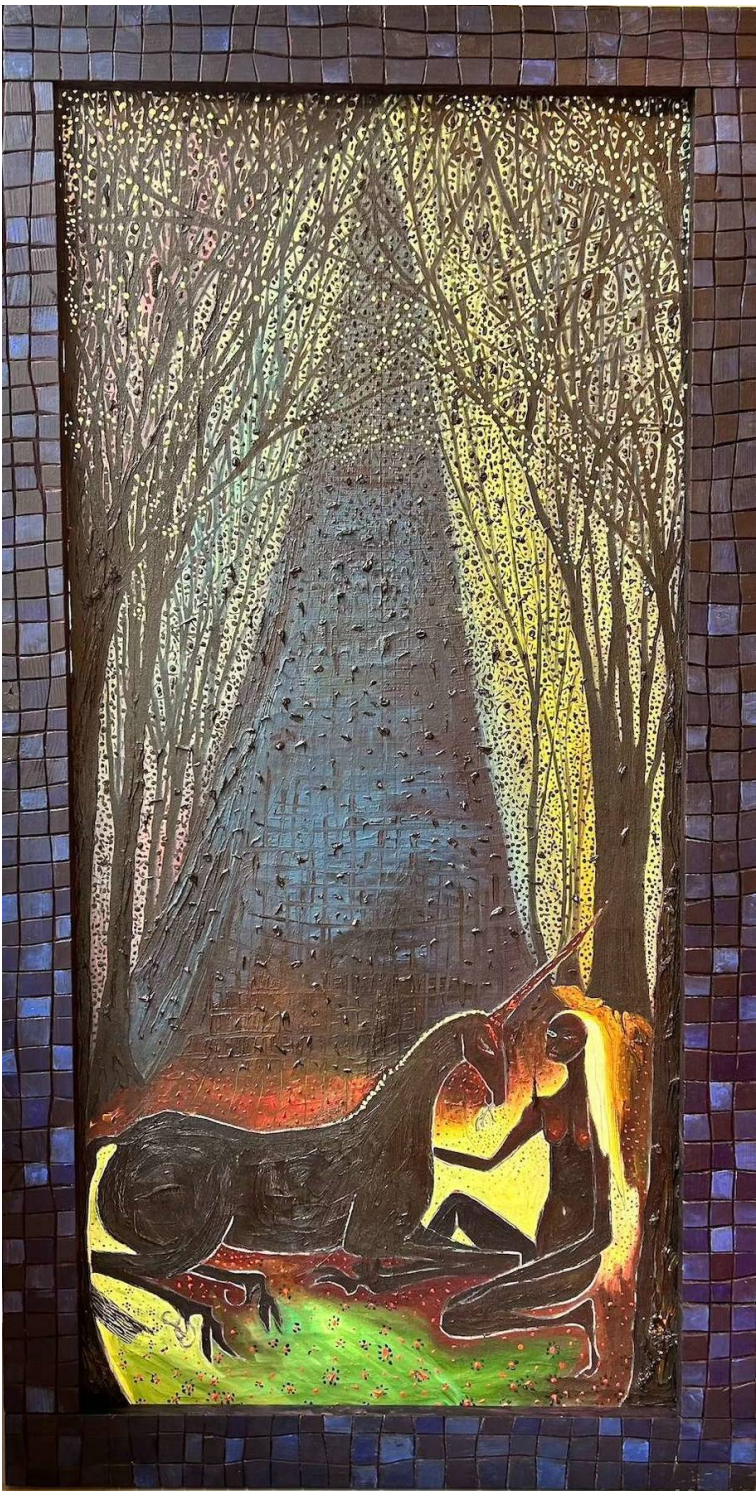
Painter and performance artist Jennifer Binnie first came to recognition alongside artists (and flatmates) Cerith Wyn Evans, Grayson Perry and her sister Christine Binnie.

With Christine, and painter Wilma Johnston, she founded the London based performance art group the Neo Naturists, whose performances and ritual actions in the eighties, and beyond, were anarchic, challenging, and frequently nude, imbued with the spirit of William Blake and neo-romanticism.

Binnie returned to East Sussex at the end of the eighties, and has since created many works reflecting her love of nature and landscape.

For the *Lady Of The Forest* solo show, Binnie brings oil painting, prints and lino cuts to Lewes' WIA Gallery, displaying her signature blend of nature lore and magical resonance. Selected pieces include bespoke, handmade frames.

This exhibition catalogue includes an essay by Jennifer Higgie, art critic and author of the highly regarded recent book *The Other Side; A Journey into Women, Art and the Spirit World*.



LADY OF THE FOREST

The paintings of Jennifer Binnie

Jennifer Binnie's recent painting *Walking with Echo Among Tall plants* (2022) was inspired by a walk the artist took in Friston Forest with her lurcher.

She pictures herself as a naked, radiant being, her left hand gently touching the head of her dog, who glows as brightly as she does. Her body is covered in sinuous lines, like the tendrils of plants, and her long hair streams behind her like a banner. The beech trees that surround her tremble with vermilion streaks that pulsate like veins; delicate pink flowers glow against the green background. Nature is imagined as a sanctuary, fuelled by mysterious energies.

Forests, nudity – symbolic and actual – and animals (in particular dogs, deer and horses), recur in Binnie's new work, which ranges from intimate gouaches to monumental oil paintings. In *Freeman the Gamekeeper* (2022), a woman, her skin decorated in spiral patterns, sits in a forest glade with two dogs with equally decorative fur. The branches of the trees above them form a cathedral-like canopy; a small animal, a puppy perhaps, a heart inscribed on its side, runs out the picture to the right. In *Oak Woman*, (2022), a fox is painted onto the body of a woman who faces us, oak leaves growing from her head in verdant tresses, her body painted with vines.

In *Woman in the Forest* and *Forest Woman* (both 2022), a woman dissolves into the trunk of a tree, the earth around her as soft and bulbous as breasts. In an earlier work, *Tall Trees* (2015), the woman and her dog are tiny silhouettes walking towards dissolving light; the trees have merged into a swirling, dark space: one of refuge, not threat. I ask Binnie what inspires her dreamy, charged paintings.

She replies: *'I'm interested in the questions that we don't know the answers to. Anything is possible when you don't know the answer.'*

She explains that her paintings grow *'from a spiritual place inside me; they're made intuitively. Everything feeds into them, everything in my life, everything I see, and everything that happens.'*

I ask her what the word 'spiritual' means to her. She says: *'I'd almost define it as not definable. It's about the unknown, and with the way I connect with life in a way that isn't talking. I've always had a very strong connection with animals and nature. Sometimes in the forest I experience moments of feeling that I'm absolutely in tune with everything and part of it all. I think a lot of the work is about trying to get that feeling into my paintings.'*

Many of Binnie's pictures of the past few years emerged from her extended stays in rural Sweden, where she fell in love with 'the hugeness of the trees' and the lack of people. When she first visited, around seven years ago, she began her paintings of a woman in a forest – a woman, she says, who is partly her, *'partly everybody and partly a goddess'*.

In 1981, Binnie, along with her sister Christine and Wilma Johnson, founded the three-woman performance group the Neo Naturists. Covering their naked bodies in swirling paint, they became, in essence, paintings themselves.

In London clubs, galleries and museums, they enacted, via mime, song and ritual, their exuberant, provocative paganism, ecology and celebratory feminism – concerns that are now apparent in Binnie's paintings.

In the Neo Naturists on Wapping Beach, 1982 (2021) she pictures herself with her two fellow performance artists and a fourth enigmatic character, reclining on a golden beach, the air pulsating with psychedelic washes of green, red and yellow. Their skin, covered in shades of green and blue configurations that delineate their curves, clearly contains multitudes.

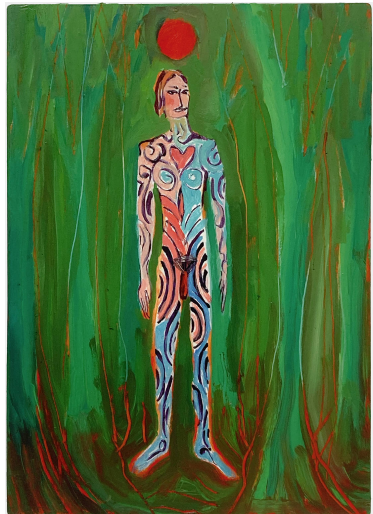
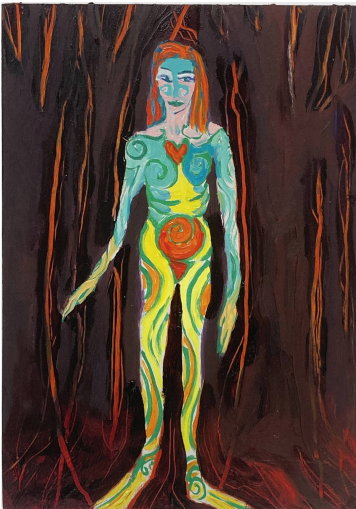
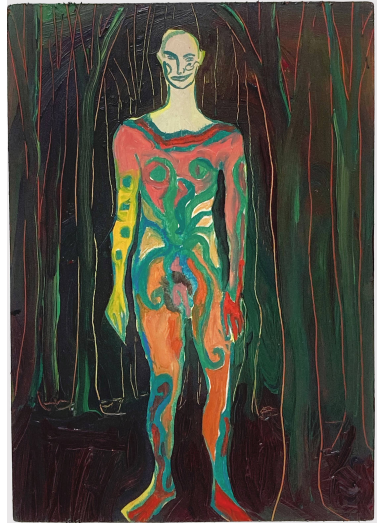
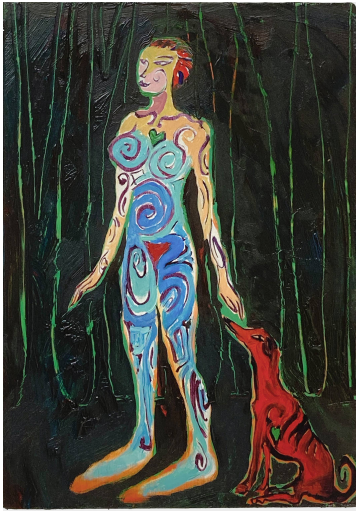
Two of the women have grown tails: like cosmic mermaids they look out at us, powerful, glorious, unblinking: sea creatures come ashore to disrupt and delight in equal measure.

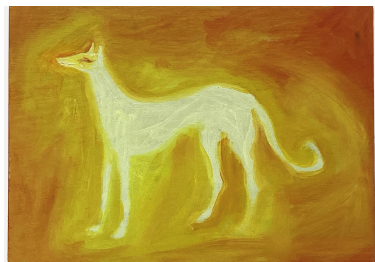
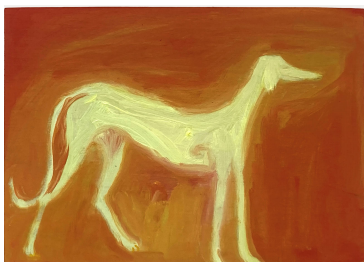
Jennifer Higgin
October 2023

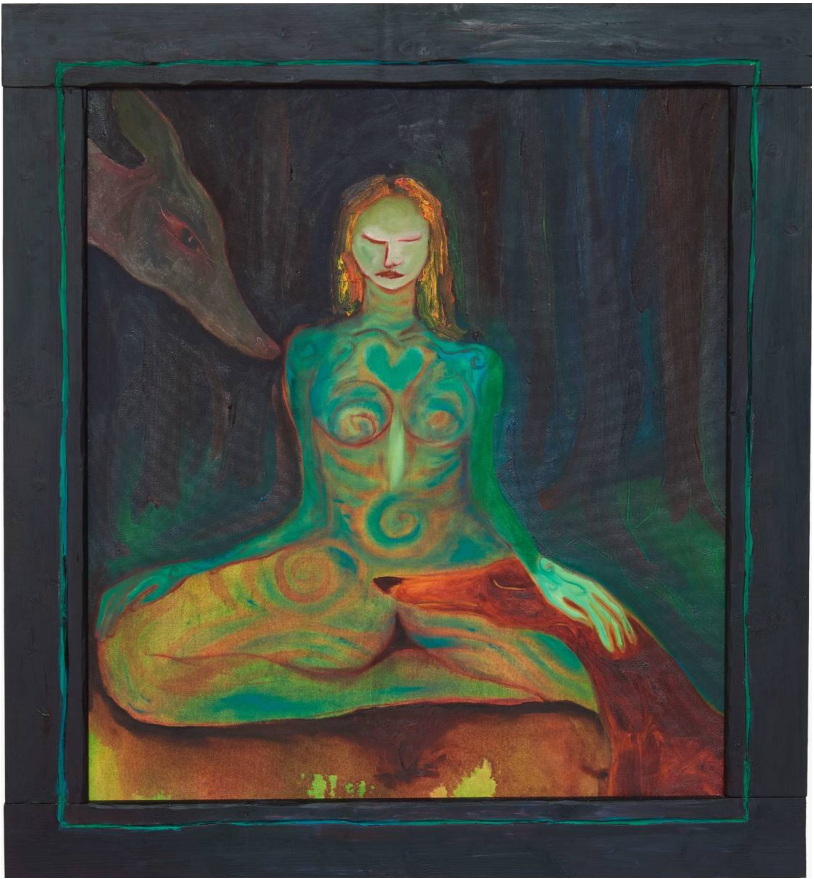
NEO NATURISTS ON WAPPING BEACH, 1982 (2021)



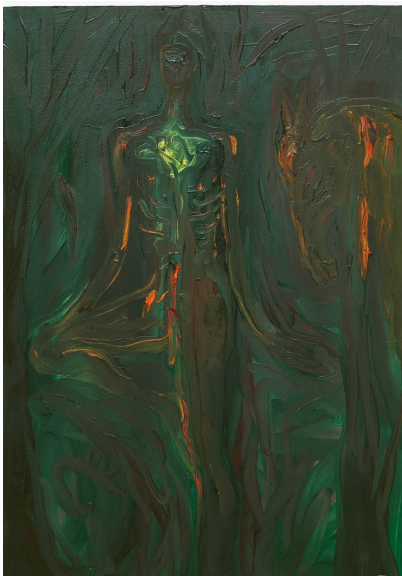
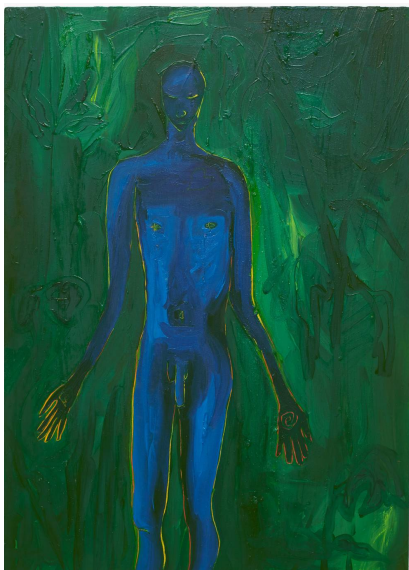
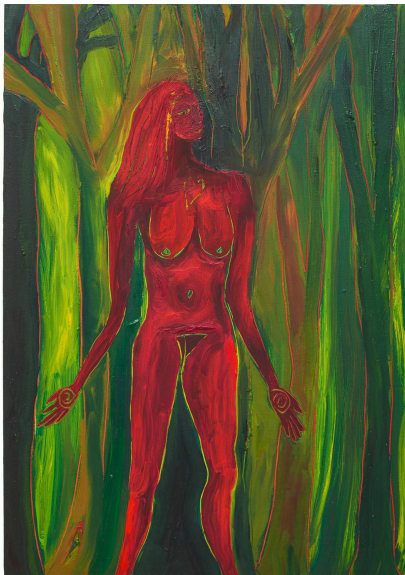
BODY PAINTED PEOPLE



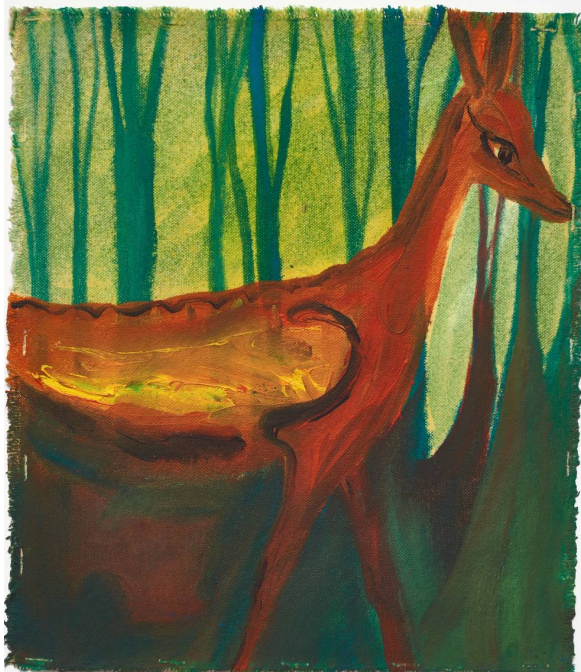
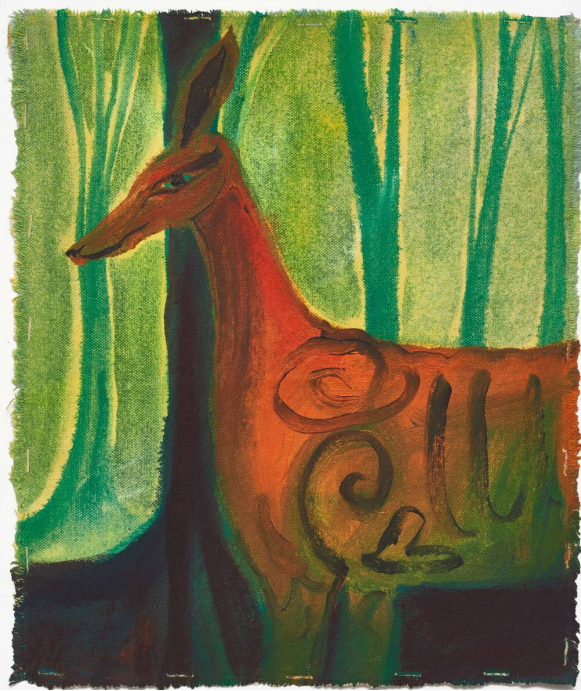




RECENT WORK







Works listed in order

Front Cover: Walking with Echo in Tall Plants

Neo Naturists on Wapping Beach I to III

Lady and Unicorn in the Shadow

Painted Woman and Dog in the Woods

Painted Man in the Woods

Painted Woman in the Woods

Body Painted Man

Lurcher with Red Sun

Sight Hound

Lurcher

Girl Meditating in the Woods with Spirit Animals

Freeman the Gamekeeper with Dying Doe and Hound

Tree with Dog

Red Woman

Blue Man

Tree with Horse

Cream Lurcher

Stag

Orange Deer I

Orange Deer II

Back Cover: Oak Woman

