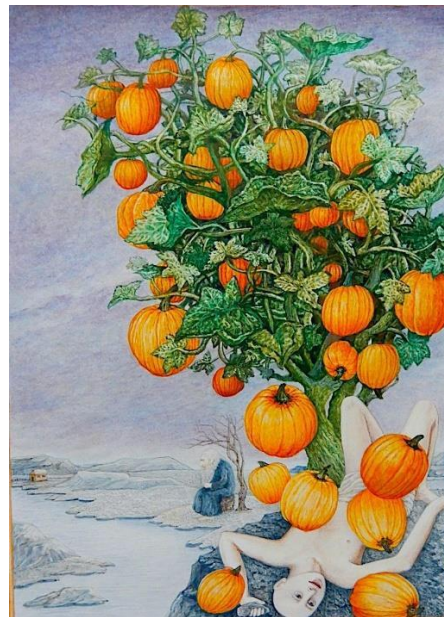


PRESS RELEASE

MONIKA BEISNER
FOREST OF THINGS

20 January – 3 March, 2023

[View Catalogue on-line](#)

The Pumpkin Tree, 18.5 x 13.5 cm, watercolour

Art Space Gallery is delighted to announce our representation of artist and illustrator Monika Beisner with this debut exhibition of original works selected from book illustrations spanning four decades. It will trace a visual journey from the earliest books in the 70s to her 100 illuminations of one of the defining masterpieces of European literature, Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the early 2000s, and reveal how historical and modern perspectives, reality and dream, imagination and precise observation all combine to create a visual language of great power and originality.

Marina Warner has written that, *Monika Beisner works from language and stories, rhymes and poems, and condenses them into glowing images: she materializes words in rich colour and lively line, summoning onto the page the pictures that form in her mind as she reads, and then passing these on as gifts to her audience. 'Illuminations' – in both senses of the word – describes her art more aptly than the term 'illustration': her pictures illuminate the stories she tells, and they also resemble the jewel-like images found in medieval and renaissance manuscripts.*¹

And in this statement lies the essence of Beisner's art: a purveyor of the marvellous, the modern-day equivalent of the wandering minstrel and the tales her paintings tell are of strange and wonderful places that transport the spirit of medieval illuminations into the twenty-first century. Small and intensely luminous images of myths, spells, riddles, nursery tales, folk wisdom and ingenious nonsense play their part in shedding light and meaning onto the text.

Since the first black and white creations for children in the 70s Monika Beisner has evolved as a wonderful storyteller and a supremely vivid colourist. In titles like *The Heavenly Zoo* (1979), *Fabulous Beasts* (1981), *Book of Riddles* (1983), and *Topsy Turvy* (1987) she has fashioned

memorable places and portraits of wonderous and mythical creatures. In *Of Flying and Talking Trees* (1994) she collected together, edited and then painted a compendium of old and new tales from all over the world about trees, their symbolism and their mysteries that the poet Christopher Reid has described as ...*investigation of a narrative and poetic tradition that may be centuries old, but that can still disturb like Surrealism, or reveal truths as deep as those of modern psychology.*²

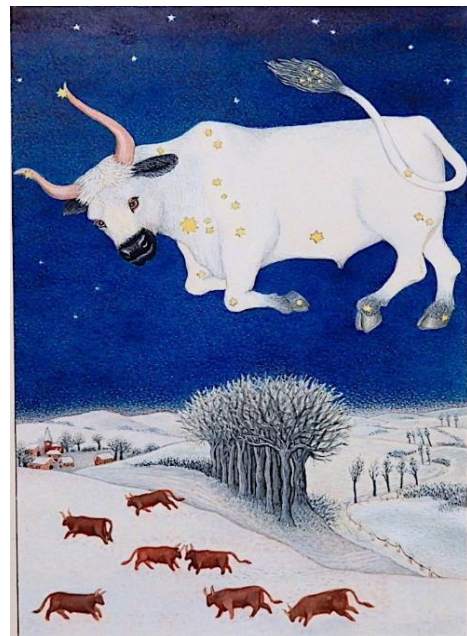
Monika Beisner was born in Hamburg in 1942 and studied painting in Braunschweig and Berlin. A German Academic Exchange Scholarship and a Fulbright Grant enabled her to study at the Slade School of Art in London (where she currently lives) and the New School for Social Research in New York. She then embarked on a career as an illustrator of books and has published 16 books in multiple languages between 1971 and 1994 which earned her an international reputation and exhibitions worldwide.

The most recent publications with her illustrations are of Dante's *Comedy – Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso* (2007), and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a portfolio of 36 giclée prints (2010). Monika Beisner has also completed a series of 29 paintings for *Gilgamesh*, the world's oldest surviving poem which is in the process of being put into book form and in the early stages of planning for an exhibition of the work included in the book.

The book *Forest of Things: Monika Beisner – Conversations with Robert Bush* was published in 2021. ISBN 078-1399901147

The Exhibition Catalogue
with an Essay by Dr. Matthew Eve, and
Poetry by Martha Kapos and
Christopher Reid is available.

[view on-line](#)



Taurus / The Bull, 13 x 9 cm, watercolour

¹ Marina Warner, 'Illuminating Stories', from foreword to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, 2007, illustrated by Monika Beisner

² Christopher Reid, *The Flying Tree* exhibition, 2006