

Anne Wehrley Björk: Story Tellers

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Edel Assanti, St James's

11 September – 3 October 2026



Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Story Tellers* – an exhibition of new paintings by Anne Wehrley Björk. Drawing on the site of Chaco Canyon in remote northwestern New Mexico, USA, these enigmatic abstract compositions investigate the physical, spatial and psychological conditions of the desert landscape and architectural language that has profoundly shaped Björk's life and practice.

Born in Farmington, New Mexico, in 1948, Björk has returned to nearby Chaco Canyon – a site of significance for the indigenous Chaco Culture between 850 and 1250 C.E., and one of the largest and most sophisticated pre-Columbian complexes in North America – repeatedly over the last five decades. Rendered in earthy, vivid colour, the forms in Björk's paintings take this canyon as a point of departure, evoking brilliant, blazing sunlight, extreme temperatures, and the surreality of traversing an unforgiving landscape which, nonetheless, teems with life.

In the late 1970s Björk enrolled in the Master of Fine Arts programme at the University of New Mexico. This became an important gathering-place for artists seeking to develop their work by engaging with the New Mexico desert, including local artists Raymond Johnson and Richard Diebenkorn, as well as Björk's contemporaries Emmi Whitehorse and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, who were simultaneously adopting abstraction as a strategy to communicate indigeneity and a sense of place. Björk was profoundly influenced by her time there, and perhaps most significantly so by her fellow UNM alum and lecturer Agnes Martin's practice of transcendental non-thinking; not thought, and not the effort to suppress thought, but something prior to or beneath both.

Like shadows of shadows, Björk's painterly marks transmute and reform themselves within a single composition. In one work, a rust-red form leaps and multiplies into a many-limbed echo of itself, rendered in velvety blue-black; in another, a small, slipper-pink curl sits adjacent to a sweeping arch made up of linked, mineral-coloured shapes. These associative, gestural expressions – of climate, touch, sudden movement, vastness – seek to convey Björk's experience of moving through the landscape, and the emotional impact of a place as it transforms over time.

ABOUT ANNE WEHRLEY BJÖRK

Anne Wehrley Björk (b. 1948, New Mexico, USA) lives and works between Charleston, South Carolina and Lexington, Kentucky. During her graduate studies at the University of New Mexico, she trained with Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Emmi Whitehorse, Agnes Martin, Joan Brown, Susan Rothenberg, and Deborah Butterfield, fellow women artists similarly drawn to the atmospheric quality specific to New Mexico, who encouraged her practice. Her commitment to the forms of Chaco Canyon – its distinctive architectural interventions, inscribed petroglyphs, and adobe structures – has been consistent throughout, a constant in a career underpinned by a thorough investigation of light, colour and form.

Björk has shown across the United States regularly for the last forty years, most notably at Margot Samel Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2026); Fernberger Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2024, 2025, forthcoming 2027); Ross+Kramer Gallery, East Hampton, NY, USA (2020); Mary Bell Gallery, Chicago, IL, USA (group exhibitions regularly throughout 1991–2005), and at the Lexington Art League, Lexington, KY, USA (2009). Her work is in the public collection of the Fine Arts Museum at the University of New Mexico, as well as the Corporate Collection at Sears Tower in Chicago, IL.

ABOUT EDEL ASSANTI

Edel Assanti was founded in 2010 in London by Jeremy Epstein and Charlie Fellowes. The gallery programme focuses on narrative-driven work by international contemporary artists whose practices engage with the complex realities of the moment in which they live.

Having been located in London's Fitzrovia since 2014, in 2022 the gallery opened its 4,000 square foot flagship space in a renovated Grade II listed building on Little Titchfield Street. In June 2026, Edel Assanti opened a second London location at 11 Bury Street, St James's, in the heart of one of the city's most historic gallery neighbourhoods, broadening the scope of programming for its artists and their multifaceted practices. The Little Titchfield Street gallery stages four to five ambitious solo exhibitions per year – tending towards interdisciplinary, research-led work – with biannual expansive group exhibitions providing a platform to bring together non-represented artists in explorations of emerging themes of artistic interest. Bury Street offers an intimate, salon-style environment for focused presentations by both represented artists and those new to the programme, highlighting individual works, significant periods and definitive themes.

Our premises play host to a dynamic events programme in parallel to gallery exhibitions, encompassing performance, talks and live music. The gallery's digital presence includes a series of short films and artist interviews published to accompany exhibitions.

In 2021, Edel Assanti's Jeremy Epstein founded London Gallery Weekend (LGW), an annual celebration of London's diverse gallery community, bringing together 130 contemporary commercial galleries. Now in its sixth year, Epstein remains at LGW's helm.

CONTACT US

For press enquiries and high-res images, please contact Ella Lewis-Williams (ella@edelassanti.com).

IMAGE

Anne Wehrley Björk, *Coyote Watching*, 2026. Acrylic on canvas; 132.1 x 193 cm, 52 x 76 in.

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