

Press release

# Joan Snyder *Earthsongs / Chants de la Terre*

6 June—25 July 2026  
Opening Saturday 6 June 2026, 6—8pm

Thaddaeus Ropac  
Paris Marais  
7 rue Debelleye, Paris, France



Joan Snyder, *Elegy for Souls*, 2025  
Oil, acrylic, paper mache, dried flowers, ink, paper on linen  
with 4 inch wooden shelf, 139.7 × 274.3 × 10.2 cm (55 × 108 × 4 in)

Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais presents *Earthsongs*, Joan Snyder's first solo exhibition in France. In these new paintings and works on paper, created over the last year, Snyder continues and extends the ideas and motifs that have defined her practice over her career of six decades. Simultaneously ethereal and grounded, the works oscillate between the otherworldly and the visceral, reaffirming Snyder's position as a pioneer of a vision of abstraction that is at once expansive and profoundly personal.

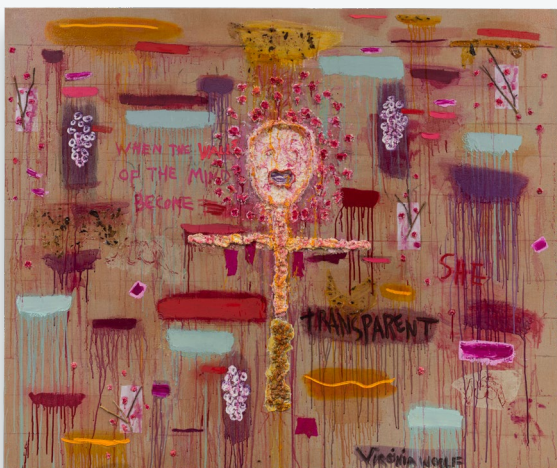
Snyder nurtures a synergy between abstraction and autobiography, with each work forming a diaristic episode in which narrative guides formal investigation. Her practice has been overtly feminist since its inception, rooted in her role as a defining figure of the women's art movement that flourished in the 1970s. She translates women's lived experience into a complex and personal vocabulary of forms to which she constantly returns: roses and breasts, trees and totems, ponds and moons. In *Earthsongs*, this



Joan Snyder, *Earthsong II*, 2025  
Oil, acrylic, paper mache, mud, ink, paper on linen, 142.2 x 248.9 cm (56 x 98 in)

reappropriated feminine vernacular is also reflected materially, through an adulterated palette of media where the natural meets the synthetic. Twigs, dried flowers, mud and straw are layered with offcuts of lace and velvet, glitter and plastic beads. This densely collaged approach suggests the complex fabric of life itself, as well as harnessing what writer Rachel Cusk calls in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition ‘the undocumented materiality of female existence’. Now 86 years old, Snyder presents works more accumulative than ever, their laden surfaces bearing the weight of feeling, memory and the inhabited body.

several of the works on view. Snyder has a profound interest in literature. In *The Walls of My Mind* (2026), she spells out a citation from Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* (1931): ‘when the walls of the mind grow thin’. The passage from Woolf’s novel describes a porosity between interior and exterior worlds – a feeling that is palpable in Snyder’s work, which casts nature as an expressive vehicle for the most fundamental of human experiences. As Cusk writes: ‘We belong to the world, these works seem to say.’ *Dear Elijah* (2026), meanwhile, begins in Snyder’s own cursive like a letter – a format that inherently conveys ideas of care and transmission – before giving way to a rhythmic enumeration in block capitals: ‘FLOWERS SONGS SOULS...’. The act of listing transforms the canvas into a site of gathering, serving as a verbal mirror to the material accumulation that characterises the works.



Joan Snyder, *The Walls of My Mind*, 2025  
Oil, acrylic, paper mache, fabric, twigs, dried leaves, ink, paper, coloured pencil on linen, 152.4 x 182.9 cm (60 x 72 in)

The artist has been inscribing words on her canvases since the 1970s, and insistent, clamouring handwriting features in

Patches of collaged burlap, fabric and papier mâché appear on the canvases, in places swelling into three-dimensional pouches. These forms act as vessels, collecting and cradling seeds, dried flowers and pools of paint. In the large-scale paintings *The Forest Becomes a Symphony* (2025) and *Elegy for Souls* (2025), wooden shelves jut from the base of the canvases, recalling easels. Appearing in her work since the 1990s, these shelves serve as repositories for colour and matter, giving the paintings a shrine-like aspect as well as a sculptural presence. Abstracted half-tree, half-crucifix forms recur across this latest body of works, as does the use of diptych and triptych formats, which evoke the traditions of early Christian altarpieces, framing painting as a devotional act. Snyder reflected in the late 1960s when writing for her MFA thesis: ‘My painting is my religion. It’s the altar that I go to and it’s where I face myself and find out who I am.’



Joan Snyder, *Femmes et Fleurs*, 2026  
 Oil, acrylic, paper mache, twigs, dried flowers, glitter, ink, paper,  
 coloured pencil on linen in two parts, 147.3 × 365.8 cm (58 × 144 in)

This new body of works is deeply rooted in the artist's *Field* paintings, a series that emerged in the mid-1980s in response to the agricultural landscapes Snyder encountered upon relocating from New York City to more rural surroundings. Her all-over treatment of the canvas establishes a creative field in which she sows imagery, colour and gesture to fuse formal experimentation with ideas of mythical and personal cyclical renewal. In these meadows of blooming forms, the palette oscillates between livid, corporeal intensity in fuchsias and reds, and muted tones of mossy green and flaxen collaged straw: contrasts that suggest cycles of life and death, perishability and rebirth. The natural tan colour of the linen means it can be left unpainted, or at times lightly stained, giving it a generative, earthy presence. As the artist herself describes: 'I am always seeking clarity, a purity, an essence, but have never been willing to sacrifice the ritual, the need for the deep, the rich, the thick, the dark.'

Brushstrokes have recurred as a central motif in Snyder's work since she first began dissecting this most fundamental of painterly gestures in her celebrated *Stroke* paintings in the early 1970s. In *Earthsongs*, they manifest as vivid staccato daubs of paint on canvas and drawn-out, weaving lines of ink and watercolour on paper. In one of the works on paper on view, Snyder presses a brush loaded with tarry black ink onto the surface to create imprints reminiscent of tire marks: a gesture as tough as it is delicate. These strokes often function as fragmentary musical scores. They set the rhythm for our encounter with the works, which

we read like hymns – at once despairing and ecstatic – to life itself. True to its title, *Earthsongs* kindles a sense of exultant joy in response to the bittersweet beauty of being alive: enacting what Cusk describes as 'a commemoration of the self in the world'.



Joan Snyder, *Vertical Harmony*, 2026  
 Oil, acrylic, paper mache, burlap, fabric, paper, wooden balls, rosebuds,  
 dried flowers, straw, pencil on linen, 152.4 × 182.9 cm (60 × 72 in)

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue featuring a text by writer Rachel Cusk, as well as Joan Snyder's 2019 text 'Femalish'.



Joan Snyder, portrait of the artist  
Photo: Lauren Fleishman

### About the artist

Joan Snyder lives and works in Brooklyn and Woodstock, NY. She was born in New Jersey in 1940. She received her BA from Douglass College (1962) and an MFA from Rutgers University (1966), both in New Brunswick, NJ. As a graduate student at Rutgers she initiated the Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series (DWAS) at the Mabel Smith Douglass Library to increase the visibility of emerging and established contemporary women artists, asserting her life-long commitment to championing women's participation in cultural spheres. In 2016, she was the recipient of an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Art which followed a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2007), John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1983) and National Endowment of the Arts Fellowship (1974). In 2026, she was elected to become a lifelong member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

First exhibiting her *Stroke* paintings in the early 1970s, Snyder has since had numerous significant institutional exhibitions, including solo presentations at the Brooklyn Museum, New York (1998); The Jewish Museum, New York

(2005; travelling to Danforth Art Museum, Framingham, MA); and Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University (2011; travelling to Boston University Art Gallery; University of Richmond Museums; and University of New Mexico Art Museum). She participated in the Whitney Biennial in both 1973 and 1981 and, more recently, her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2023–25); Tate Modern, London (2023); Brooklyn Museum, NY (2020); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2018–20), The Met Breuer, New York (2016); mumok, Vienna (2016); and Brandhorst Museum, Munich (2015). In recognition of her pioneering contribution to American art, Snyder's work is held in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; The Jewish Museum, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; and Tate Modern, London, among others.

Press release

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