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Robert Fishko, *Director*

WILLIAM BECKMAN
(b. 1942)

Man and Woman, 1987
oil on panel
79 x 79 inches
signed lower left "WB"
signed, dated and titled verso
"William Beckman 85-87 / Man and Woman"

Provenance

The Artist
Collection of Astrup Fearnley, Oslo, Norway
(Forum Gallery, New York, NY)
Private Collection, Boca Raton, FL
(acquired from the above in 1996)



Exhibited

William Beckman: Couple Paintings: 70s, 80s, 90s, K&E Gallery, New York, NY,
April 6 – 30, 1996

William Beckman, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA, August 2 – October 27, 2002

William Beckman | *Gregory Gillespie*, Forum Gallery, New York, NY,
November 16, 2023 – January 6, 2024

Literature

Belz, Carl. *William Beckman*, Frye Art Museum, University of Washington Press,
Seattle and London, 2002, pl. 21, p. 34, Illustrated.

Note

The sitters are the artist, William Beckman, and artist, Diana Moore, Beckman's wife at the time.

“Beckman's oeuvre includes six paintings of male/female couples: *Double Nude* (1977-78), *Studio* (1985-86), ***Man and Woman (1986-87)***, *Woman and Man* (1987-88), *White Painting* (1990-99), and *Overcoats (American Modern)* (1998-99). The first four image the artist and his wife, and in each one he meets, and challenges us with his gaze – as Diana does in the majority of the paintings of her – while she in one way or another avoids making eye contact. Only in the pictures of the 1990s do artist and model both address us. With all six pictures, then, we are invited into the couples' world, but here the issue isn't so much *our* relationship with the figures – which it is in the Diana series – as it is *their* relationship with one another. So each picture is about control, for that's what relationships are all about.

The last two paintings in which Diana appears are forbiddingly austere and unsettling, the figures presented in studious retreat from one another and openly resistant to personal exchange of any kind. Each seems determined to assert an individual identity, so control is more at stake than ever before. In *Man and Woman*, he stares out at us, his face tense, his body taut, its contours abrupt and angular; his image is assertive but neither assured nor confident. A vertical line extends from an airless background panel through his left arm and leg, isolating him in a cell-like space. She is isolated in a cell of her own, her head tilted back, her expression is distant and self-absorbed. The pants he wears conceal his body, but his anxiety is laid bare; her body is fully displayed, but she is cloaked in inaccessible reverie. Both male and female aggressively seek control here – one actively, one passively – but they speak past one another.”

_Carl Belz on *Couples*

For the book published on the occasion of *William Beckman*, a retrospective exhibition presented by the Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA, 2002.