



Press release 25 March 2022

## **Clare Woods' solo exhibition opens at the Serlachius Museums in Finland**

**The paintings of the renowned British artist Clare Woods combine the fluid brushstrokes with ambiguous and rugged themes, to which the war in Ukraine has given completely new meanings. The exhibition *Between Before and After* presents Woods' production from the last five years. It will be open at Serlachius Museum Gösta 26 March 2022. It is also Woods' first solo exhibition in Finland.**

Over a career of more than twenty years, Clare Woods (b. 1972) has developed a distinctive painterly language in which form plays a major role. Originally trained as a sculptor, Wood's way of painting has been described as sculpting with paint. She herself has described her painting process as very physical. She paints on horizontal aluminium bases quickly and instinctively, saying she sees the images as sculptural.

The size of her paintings varies from many metres wide to very small. The artist is inspired by photographs she has collected or taken herself. The transmission of psychological emotional states is characteristic of Woods' production. She depicts the vulnerability and short-lived nature of life through flowers as well as shapes of the human body. In some of her paintings is present the delicate boundary between illness and health, and ultimately life and death.

Woods' art often moves in an ambiguous realm: on the boundaries of good and evil, conscious and unconscious. The aesthetics of the works are sometimes beautiful, sometimes ugly. She paints her difficult subjects in the same way as the beautiful: to understand and process even painful issues. Strong brushstrokes unite the works into a cohesive entity.

The names of the works also play an important role in giving deeper meanings. Through carefully selected names, the artist wishes to offer viewers alternative perspectives and interpretations of her art.

### **Covid-19 pandemic gave rise to series of works**

Clare Woods graduated with an MA from Goldsmith College, London in 1999, following a BA in Fine Art from Bath College of the Arts in 1994. She lives and works in Hereford, England. Woods has produced many public works, particularly in the UK, that are known for their large scale. The artist has held solo exhibitions around the world, and her works are in many major collections.

In recent years, still lifes of flowers have been a recurring theme in Woods' works. They contain strong references to the *memento mori* tradition, which has influenced painting since the 17th century, but also to personal experiences. From her sickbed, Woods watched as the flowers she received gradually withered, conveying the transience of life.

The artist's most recent works relate to the protracted covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown it caused. Woods was profoundly affected by the pandemic, but at the same time it was an excellent opportunity to focus on painting. She spent long, uninterrupted days in her studio painting intensively. She gathers into her works perceptions from home, where the slow passage of time makes space for observation. Familiar things take on new meanings when the outside world is not visible but is present in thoughts.

### **What it means to be human?**

The name of the exhibition *Between Before and After* is referenced to the fact that there is no going back to the past and the future is uncertain. With the current war in Ukraine, the exhibition's name and the subjects of the artworks have taken completely new meanings.

"My works have always had a trace of perceived fear and the real anxiety this fear causes. If we had not been through lockdown, I would never have been able to imagine what is happening in the world now and how to carry the enormity of this nightmare. Maybe we are all facing the question of what it means to be human", she says.

The exhibition is a collaboration with Dundee Contemporary Arts and it is curated by Laura Kuurne, Serlachius Museums' Head of Collections and Exhibitions. The exhibition is accompanied by a book with the same title, which will be published by Parvs Publishing Ltd in April. The texts of the book are in Finnish and English.

**The exhibition *Between Before and After* is open at Serlachius Museum Gösta from 26 March 2022 to 5 March 2023.**

Press releases and photographs: <https://serlachius.fi/en/for-media/>

For further information and image requests, please contact:

Susanna Yläjärvi, Information Officer of the Serlachius Museums, tel. +358 50 560 0156 [susanna.ylajarvi@serlachius.fi](mailto:susanna.ylajarvi@serlachius.fi)

### **The Serlachius Museums are open:**

in the winter season, 1 September–31 May, from Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am–6 pm.

in the summer season, 1 June–31 August, every day 10 am–6 pm

### **Visiting addresses:**

Serlachius Museum Gustaf, R. Erik Serlachiuksen katu 2, Mänttä

Serlachius Museum Gösta, Joenniementie 47, Mänttä

### **Serlachius Museums in the social media:**

<https://facebook.com/serlachius>

<https://twitter.com/serlachius>

<https://instagram.com/serlachiusmuseums>

<https://youtube.com/serlachiusmuseot>

# **DCA**

Dundee Contemporary Arts