
Cristea Roberts Gallery

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Press Release March 2024

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Clare Woods: Soft Knock

8 March - 20 April 2024



Collage for Woolworth's Roses, 2023
Oil and spray paint on paper / 114 x 79 cm

Cristea Roberts Gallery is delighted to present *Soft Knock*, a solo exhibition of new works on paper by Clare Woods (8 March – 20 April 2024). Woods utilises the genre of still life and the classical trope of *memento mori* to explore the vulnerability of life, its fragile boundaries and co-existing tensions. In a departure from earlier work exploring the human body, Woods' new collages and prints, from cut flowers to empty stoneware jugs, are seen alongside works depicting loaded skies. Hovering between figuration and abstraction, the works in *Soft Knock* present us with both the familiar and the uncanny, the gentle and the sinister.

The title *Soft Knock* is a joining up of two opposites. Evocative of expressions associated with the delivery of bad news and supernatural activity, such as the apprehension of an unexplained knock, this contradictory term reflects the tension that runs through Woods' work. The titles the artist uses derive from a vast archive of quotations, selected to trigger an emotional response in the viewer.

Still Here, 2023, is a new series of six screenprints illustrating Wedgewood and stoneware pots and jugs. Depicted in muted blue tones, each jar sits in isolation and an unsettling energy runs through the works.

Clare Woods comments; *"These objects capture familiar moments in the home, representative of a typically safe place. However, these same moments can be altered by events outside that are unfamiliar and dangerous. The detail in the everyday becomes heightened with discomfort; this allows for new ways of seeing the ordinary."*

Woods describes the technical element of screenprinting as "controlled chance" and has recently built a dedicated print room in her studio complete with a printing press. Since making her first graphic works with Cristea Roberts Gallery almost ten years ago, printmaking and the development of her collages have become central to Woods' practice, on a par with her painting.

Two new prints *The Price* and *Midway, 2024*, together with *Collage for Murk, 2023*, depict background skies from Ukrainian news reports. We cannot determine this from looking at them, but when we know, it changes our understanding of the images. These works consider the cataclysmic changes caused by war, when ethereal pink and orange clouds and skies, once considered heavenly and divine, become associated with danger and dread. Woods explains, "they are not a place to dream but a place to fear."

Still life, most notably bouquets and vases of flowers, have been at the forefront of Woods' subject matter for the past several years. Wilting flowers, dipping stems and curling leaves are depicted in new collages and prints, including *Collage for The Dark Sun* and *Collage for Final Gesture, 2023*. Woods explores the ambiguous threat of every-day life, mediating between moments of beauty and mortality.

The artist's collages derive from found imagery and are assembled from intricately cut sections of hand-painted paper. Collages featuring deep shades of maroon and crimson are suggestive of snowcapped mountains, however their titles such as *Collage for Mr Softee*, and *Collage for Soft Peaks, 2023*, reveal the images to be tops of dessert trifles, on the brink of melting and disintegrating. *Collage for Lou, 2023*, is a powerful portrait of late American sculptor Louise Bourgeois. Woods fuses diverse influences from traditional art historical genres. The artist sets her collages in coloured frames which become an intrinsic element of the final work.

Soft Knock is accompanied by a new episode of the Cristea Roberts Gallery podcast series *Making a Mark* which delves into the work of the artist.

Clare Woods will be in conversation with writer and critic, Charlotte Mullins at Cristea Roberts Gallery at 6.30pm on Tuesday 19 March 2024.

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About the artist

Clare Woods was born in Southampton, England, in 1972. She studied for her BA Fine Art at Bath College of Art 1991-94 and for her MA Fine Art at Goldsmith's College, London 1997-99.

Woods had her first solo exhibition in 1997 and her first major institutional show in the UK at The Hepworth Wakefield in 2011. Recent solo exhibitions include; Cristea Roberts Gallery, London (2024, 2021); CCA Museum, Mallorca (2023); Art Museum Gösta, Mänttä (2023); Simon Lee Gallery, Hong Kong (2022), London and New York (2019); Martin Asbaek Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark (2021); Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre (2018); Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee (2017); Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (2016); and Hestercombe Gallery, Somerset (2016).

In 2022 Woods was elected a Royal Academician by The Royal Academy of Arts, London and in 2023 curated a selection of still life works in their Summer Exhibition. In 2019 Woods created a large scale, site-specific, watercolour mural for the Design District of Dallas, Texas. In 2012 the Contemporary Art Society, London commissioned Woods to create a permanent ceramic mural for the Olympic Park, and in 2015 she created a 20 x 8 metre painting for Aarhus VIA University College, Denmark.

In 2016 Art/Books published the artist's first monograph, entitled *Strange Meetings*. Volume two of the monograph will be published in Spring 2024.

Her work is held in numerous public collections including Royal Academy of Art; Government Art Collection; Arts Council Collection, London; Southampton City Art Gallery; Tullie House Gallery, Carlisle; The National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield; Arken Museum of Modern Art, Denmark; CCA Andratx, Mallorca, Spain; Dakis Joannou Collection Foundation, Athens, Greece; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

Solo exhibitions by the artist will take place at Norrtälje Kunsthall, Sweden in 2024 and Towner Eastbourne, UK in 2026.

Clare Woods lives and works in Hereford, England.

Website: www.clare-woods.com
Instagram: @clarewoodsstudio
#ClareWoods

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About Cristea Roberts Gallery

Cristea Roberts Gallery is a leading international contemporary art gallery with a particular focus on original prints and works on paper. Since its inception, the gallery has commissioned a significant number editions by a wide range of artists, whilst also representing others for their unique works. The underlying ethos of the gallery has always been artist-led. It was originally founded in 1995 as the Alan Cristea Gallery and changed its name in September 2019 to Cristea Roberts Gallery.

Acknowledged as one of the leading galleries in its field of specialty, the gallery's programme is dedicated to publishing, cataloguing, exhibiting and dealing in original prints and drawings by its roster of over 30 important international artists and Estates. It participates in all the major international art fairs and has a dynamic programme of exhibitions hosted in its bespoke space in Pall Mall, London.

The gallery works closely with international museums on acquisitions and loans, and examples of its editions are held in major public collections around the world including Tate, London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Visitor information

Tues - Fri 11am - 5.30pm
Sat 11am - 2pm

Closed on Mondays, Sundays and public holidays
Closed over Easter: 29 March - 1 April 2024
Free admission

Travel: Piccadilly or Green Park underground station
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