

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CLARE WOODS: DOUBLETHINK



6 SEPTEMBER – 5 OCTOBER 2019

PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER, 6 – 8PM

SIMON LEE GALLERY, LONDON

'The power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them...To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies.'

— George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Part 2, Section 9.

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to announce *Doublethink*, the first solo exhibition at the London gallery of British artist Clare Woods, who presents new paintings across both gallery floors.

Over the course of a career spanning more than twenty-five years Woods has developed a unique painterly language that is concerned with the moulding of an image in two dimensions. Her early practice as a sculptor continues to inform her exploration of physical form via the materiality of paint. Although at first concerned with landscape, a preoccupation with the human body and its connection to entropic themes of mortality, degeneration and disease has surfaced in the artist's work. For Woods, the corporeality of her subject matter and the physical element of the paint are inextricably tangled up in one another. In these new works, Woods employs an often-bilious palette that subverts the viewer's expectations of her virtuoso application of paint on aluminium. Defamiliarising the everyday, Woods probes the boundaries of figuration to challenge her audience's experiences of fear, anxiety and the fundamentally destructive impulses of humankind.

Woods derives inspiration from found photographic sources such as newspaper clippings, magazines, and other diverse sources of visual ephemera that depict unsettling and often transgressive imagery. Yet it is not the origin of the image that is important to the artist, but rather the emotional response it triggers within her and its potential for reinterpretation or translation once painted. In Woods' work painting cannot live without photography, the former offering an interpretation of the representation of reality presented by the latter. The artist's approach to her source imagery involves editing visual data, frequently via cropping or repositioning, thus distancing it from its provenance, while nonetheless retaining a tangible relationship to the original. In this way, Woods' painting teeters on the edge of legibility, excavating the source image through the physical act of painting and providing new content and context, while restoring a form – albeit intentionally disturbed and disturbing – to the original photograph.

The disjunction between figuration and abstraction lies at the heart of Woods' manipulation of her source imagery. These alterations can dramatically change the meaning of the work or the viewer's emotional response. What

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happens out of the frame, what is lost, removed or invisible, becomes as important as what is seen. During the drawing process Woods conceptually empties an image, yet this information is replaced during the act of painting. The use of vigorous, expansive, brushwork, compositional distortion and abstract colour, remove the normality of the everyday and position it in the artificial, forcing the viewer to question their ability to analyse and decipher the content that is in front of them. Woods' approach to painting reflects our over consumption of images in a world that treats banality and disaster in the same way: human stories are told in digital images, with the manipulation between the media, memory and reality allowing these images to be consumed with ease and without thought. The paintings in *Doublethink* confront this phenomenon head on, inviting us to review our responsibilities towards the processing of representational imagery.

To coincide with the exhibition, there will be an artist talk at the gallery:

Clare Woods in Conversation with Jennifer Higgle, Editor of Frieze.

Thursday 19 September

6.30 - 8.30pm, Simon Lee Gallery, London

Please note this event is free to the public, but booking is required: events@simonleegallery.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Clare Woods

Clare Woods was born in Southampton in 1972 and lives and works in Herefordshire, UK. She received her MA from Goldsmith's College, London and her BA from Bath College of Art, Bath. Woods' work has been shown extensively internationally and has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions and projects, including Simon Lee Gallery, New York, NY (2019), Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, UK (2018); Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, UK (2017); Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, UK (2016); Oriel Davies Gallery, Wales, UK (2014), which travelled to Oriel-y-Parc, Wales, UK (2015) and Oriel Plas Glyn-y-Weddw, Wales, UK (2014); The New Art Centre, Salisbury, UK (2013); Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, UK (2012); The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield, UK (2011) and The Chisenhale Gallery, London, UK (2006). She has been included in major group exhibitions at venues including Pier Art Centre, Stromness, UK (2016); The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, UK (2014); The National Museum Wales, Wales, UK (2014); ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Denmark (2014); Tate St Ives, St Ives, UK (2009) and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2009). Her work is housed in major public and private collections including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Denmark and Arts Council Collection and British Council, London, UK. She has a permanent commission at the River Bend in Dallas, TX.

About Simon Lee Gallery

Founded in London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices explore a wide range of media, from sculpture and painting to video and photography, and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, which introduced its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme. In 2014, Simon Lee Gallery opened an office and private viewing space in New York. In 2017, this space was re-launched with a year-round programme of exhibitions and events, showcasing the work of emerging and established artists in dynamic group and solo exhibitions.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @SimonLeeGallery

www.simonleegallery.com

Image: Clare Woods, *Own Life*, 2019. Oil on aluminium, 150 x 150 cm (59 1/8 x 59 1/8 in.) Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

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