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Artist of the week

Artist of the week no 8: Clare Woods

Jessica Lack explores the world of Clare Woods, whose landscapes explore dirty, strangled nature fighting its way through murky backgrounds

Jessica Lack

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Darker nature ... Clare Woods. Photograph: Frank Baron

The landscapes of Clare Woods are about as far removed from the sublime as you can possibly get. She is not interested in green, undulating hills or craggy mountain vistas; her world is that of the undergrowth.

Not the fertile brush of a wood or the thick ferns of a forest glade but the scrubby bracken that swallows up those neglected black holes of urban planning. The coarse scruff hedging its way through the gates of an abandoned building, nettles suffocating the life from a silted window.

Many of the paintings are made from photographs, which explains the strange, semi-abstract quality of the images. She often takes the pictures at night, pointing the camera into dense undergrowth and using a flashgun. The results are anything but comely, as emaciated pines and gnarled vegetation fight for attention against black backgrounds. They are creepy, imbued with the horror of a thriller, and have that uncanny combination of the pedestrian and the supernatural, at once as enchanting as the dense thicket around Sleeping Beauty's castle and as spine-chilling as the Blair Witch Project.

Why we like her: For Black Vomit, a malevolent creation of spiky branches and foliage as seen through an oily blue reflection.

So sinister: Many of the titles of her paintings are taken from the names of orphanages and Victorian asylums, you can almost imagine the rustling of branches as inmates make their escape.