

## Clara Gesang-Gottowt

### Coast

14 December 2023 – 27 January 2024

*OTP: Is it accurate to describe these works as abstract landscape paintings?*

CGG: I very much see them as landscape paintings. But what drives me to paint them is the relation between the colours, the structures from the brush strokes, and the light. My interest in landscapes comes from the desire to be touched. For that I don't need beautiful sunsets or Northern Lights. It's more about small things: a sudden heavy rain that drenches you, thunder, a field of heather. Those things stay in my mind and body and later I find them in my paintings. I see it as a circular thing. What I paint, I see in nature, and what I see, effects my paintings. When a painting is finished I want it to have a strong presence and atmosphere. I think that the state of mind I am searching for originates in memories from nature. It very much has to do with bodily and sensory memories.

*OTP: What sort of role do childhood memories play in your painting?*

CGG: I grew up in the countryside, in Dalarna, 200 kilometers north of Stockholm. There, nature and weather had a really strong impact on our lives. Most of my childhood memories are about experiences of nature: to sit in the morning darkness in a frozen car, waiting for my parents to get the engine to start, and drawing with my fingers on the ice on the inside of the window, or to walk alone in an old fir forest and suddenly realise that you are lost – a scary but at the same time beautiful experience. I have many strong experiences of nature like that within me. Most of them I don't remember clearly. I think I unconsciously get hold of childhood memories through my paintings and that's why they speak to me.

*OTP: How would you describe your interest in the threshold between land and sea?*

CGG: I never choose motifs with the intention to tell something specific, but afterwards I can sometimes see some intention. One thing I can say about my relationship to land and sea is that I lost my big brother in a drowning accident. It was because of that I started to paint. Painting became my sanctuary, a place where I could feel free for a moment. Since then, water and the ocean have always been connected with danger and grief. Over the years I have been thinking about painting water and the sea but it never felt right. It was first in 2019, when I was expecting my second child, that I could finally approach the motif. The whole context of being pregnant and vulnerable and actually having a child swimming around inside my body while I was working with paintings for the church made me want to go to the water.

*OTP: Many of these paintings were produced at the same time and in the same dimensions - can we understand them as a sequence?*

CGG: Yes. For the first time I have limited the conditions of my practice to specific dimensions. Time was limited and that forced me to keep to those chosen conditions. The paintings came easily and fast, all during October and November, and that limited period of time also gave them a closer relation. I was first expecting that this shared premise was going to make the paintings more about painting and less about a narrative, but in the end maybe created a stronger sense of narrative.

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**Clara Gesang-Gottowt** (b. 1985, Stockholm; SE) lives and works in Lund, Sweden. She graduated from the MFA programme at the Royal Institute of Art (Stockholm; SE) in 2013 after completing her BFA at the Royal Institute of Art (Stockholm; SE) in 2010.

Recent exhibitions include: *Skyming* at Galleri Cora Hillebrand (2023, Gothenburg; SE), *Necessity* at Galleri Magnus Karlsson (2022, Stockholm; SE) and *Atlanten* at Lund Cathedral (2019, Lund; SE). Paintings by the artist are included in the permanent collections of Moderna Museet (Stockholm; SE) and Malmö Konstmuseum (Malmö; SE) among others.