

Press Release, 11th December 2025

CECILY BROWN

Picture Making

Serpentine presents a major solo exhibition featuring new works by Cecily Brown that explore themes of nature and park life

At Serpentine South

27 March – 6 September 2026

Press view: Thursday 26 March 2026, 10am–1pm

Please RSVP to: press@serpentinegalleries.org



Images: Cecily Brown, *The Serpentine Picture*, 2024. Oil on linen. 119.38 x 185.42 cm (47 x 73 in.) © Cecily Brown, 2026. Photo: Genevieve Hanson and Cecily Brown, *Nature Walk with Paranoia*, 2024. Oil on linen. 226.06 x 210.82 cm (89 x 83 in.) © Cecily Brown, 2026. Photo: Genevieve Hanson.

Serpentine is delighted to present *Picture Making*, an exhibition featuring new and recent works by Cecily Brown, one of the most important painters working today. The exhibition will run from 27 March to 6 September 2026 at Serpentine South and marks a homecoming for the British artist who has lived and worked in New York for the past thirty years.

Over three decades Brown has gained a reputation for her unique approach to painting, characterised by vigorous brushwork, a vivid sense of colour and dynamic all-over compositions that hold the viewer in an active space of looking.

Picture Making brings together works inspired by Serpentine's unique location in Kensington Gardens, a site of personal significance to the artist. Themes of nature and park life have long shaped Brown's formal explorations and, for her exhibition at Serpentine, the artist revisits familiar subjects such as amorous couples, woodland settings and uncanny nature walks.

New works made specifically for the exhibition will be shown alongside a selection of key paintings dating back to 2001 to contextualise the continuities and evolutions that have taken place in Brown's approach to painting over the past 25 years. In turn, recent monotypes and drawings offer insight into Brown's broader practice, touching upon her early memories of the English landscape, her interest in children's book illustrations, and the darker sides of nursery rhymes and cautionary tales.

Cecily Brown said: "The Serpentine holds such an important place in the hearts of the public and that's what makes it so exciting to be showing my work here. As a young art student in London I loved to visit, and saw exhibitions there that influenced me enormously. It's a huge honour to be having my first institutional show in London at a site so full of memories but that is still so exciting and unique today."

Bettina Korek, CEO and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director, Serpentine said: "We're honoured to present an exhibition of new works by Cecily Brown in Spring 2026. The paintings and drawings on view will showcase her dense, expressive practice, in which painterly surfaces and shifting imagery move fluidly between recognisable figures and abstract forms. Featuring this momentous exhibition at Serpentine South is a homecoming for the artist and speaks directly to our mission of connecting artists with audiences. It's a remarkable opportunity for the work to resonate with the setting of the Royal Park, and we look forward to inaugurating what promises to be an exceptional season of painting at Serpentine."

For Brown, painting is led by the medium itself and is an intensely physical process that makes visible the traces of her movements on the surfaces of her works. In paintings such as *Froggy would a-woeing go* and *Little Miss Muffet* (both 2024–2025), Brown collapses perspective, letting energetic brushstrokes shape each composition. Recognisable motifs, such as small figures inspired by Victorian fairy paintings, appear and disappear, thwarting narrative interpretation and inviting viewers to find their own entry points.

In other works, bodies merge with their surroundings, dissolving the edges between flesh and the natural world. *Bacchanal* (2001) and *Couple* (2003–2004) foreground Brown's sensuous handling of paint, which alternates between revealing and concealing its subject. The dialogue between image and medium continues in the merging of lovers' bodies with their watery surroundings in a series of boating scenes.

Repetition and the return to favourite motifs drive Brown's practice, with each new variation offering a fresh perspective. A group of 'nature walk' paintings, created specifically for Serpentine, takes inspiration from a jigsaw puzzle illustration featuring a fallen log acting as a bridge over a river. Brown reworks this composition across different scales, formats and palettes, the subject matter the starting point for infinite variation.

Woven amongst the subjects of nature and park life, Brown draws freely from wide-ranging visual references, including photographs, illustration, cinema and art history. A selection of drawings and monotypes borrow imagery from the stories of Beatrix Potter, the *Orlando the Marmalade Cat* series of children's books by Kathleen Hale and vintage Ladybird titles and highlight Brown's ongoing interest in animals as stand-ins for human experience.

Serpentine will publish a catalogue to accompany the exhibition, designed by internationally acclaimed graphic designer Irma Boom, featuring excerpts from Brown's personal correspondence with British painter Celia Paul, an in-depth interview between Brown and Serpentine's Artistic Director Hans Ulrich Obrist, and a creative response by poet Isabel Galleymore.

Picture Making is curated by Lizzie Carey-Thomas, Director of Programme & Chief Curator with Kit Gurnos, Assistant Exhibitions Curator.

This will be Brown's first solo exhibition of paintings in a UK public institution since her show at Modern Art Oxford in 2005 and follows her presentation at Blenheim Palace in 2020.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Cecily Brown (b.1969, London, UK) is one of the foremost painters working today. Following instruction from British painter Maggi Hambling, Brown attended the Slade School of Fine Art, London, where she graduated with a BFA in painting in 1993. During her studies, she undertook an exchange programme at the New York Studio School where she found a deep affinity with the city. In 1994 she moved to New York, where she has continued to live and work ever since.

Recent major solo exhibitions of the artist's work include Dallas Museum of Art, TX, USA (travelled to Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2025); Museo Novecento & Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy (2023); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA (2023); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2022); Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy (2022); Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, UK (2020); and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2018).

About Serpentine

Building new connections between artists and audiences, Serpentine presents pioneering contemporary art exhibitions and cultural events with a legacy that stretches back over half a century, from a wide range of emerging practitioners to the most internationally recognised artists, writers, scientists, thinkers, and cultural thought leaders of our time.

Based in London's Kensington Gardens, across two sites, Serpentine North and Serpentine South, Serpentine features a year-round, free programme of exhibitions, architectural showcases, education, live events, and technological activations, in the park and beyond the gallery walls.

The Serpentine Pavilion is a yearly pioneering commission, which began in 2000 with Dame Zaha Hadid. It features the first UK structures by some of the biggest names in international architecture.

Public art has emerged as a central strand of Serpentine's programme. Major presentations include a collection of Eduardo Paolozzi's sculptures (1987), Anish Kapoor's *Turning the World Upside Down* (2010), Lee Ufan's *Relatum – Stage* (2018-19), Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *London Mastaba* in the Serpentine Lake (2018), *I LOVE YOU EARTH* by Yoko Ono (2021), Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's *In remembrance of the coming alien (Alienor)* (2022), Atta Kwami's *Dzidzɔ kple amenuveve (Joy and Grace)* (2021-22), Gerhard Richter's *STRIP-TOWER* (2023), Yayoi Kusama's *Pumpkin* (2024), Esther Mahlangu's mural *Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (2024) and Giuseppe Penone's *Albero folgorato (Thunderstruck Tree), 2012* and *Idee di pietra (Ideas of Stone), 2010 - 2024* in 2025.

Proud to maintain free access for all visitors, Serpentine reaches an exceptionally broad audience and maintains a profound connection with its local community.

Serpentine is delighted to be releasing two original print editions to coincide with the exhibition: a giclee print and a large-format, etching & silkscreen in a small edition size.

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