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Makiko Harris: Exploring Feminist Identity Through Monumental Art

Makiko Harris's *Lacquered Rebellion* at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery reclaims femininity through bold sculptures and paintings exploring feminist identity



Dominique Catherina Foertig
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Makiko Harris with *Lacquered Rebellion* currently on view at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery and with an overview about her works on Munchies Art Club Magazine. Image Credit: Ben Pipe.

Makiko Harris's Lacquered Rebellion at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery reclaims femininity through bold sculptures and paintings

Makiko Harris's *Lacquered Rebellion* offers a bold meditation on contemporary femininity, identity, and power.



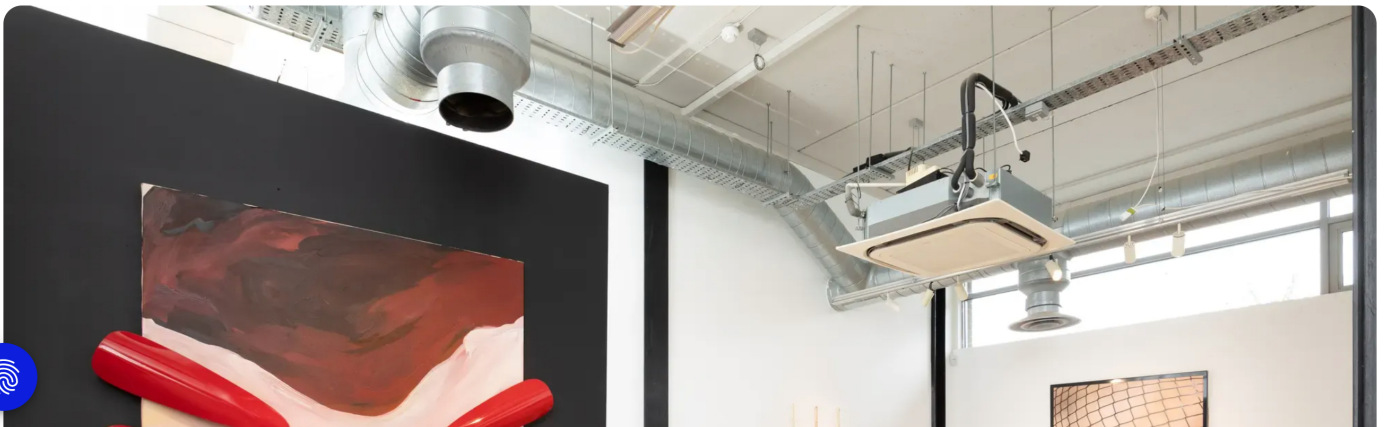
Makiko Harris in her studio | Image Courtesy of the Artist. Image Credit: Ben Pipe.

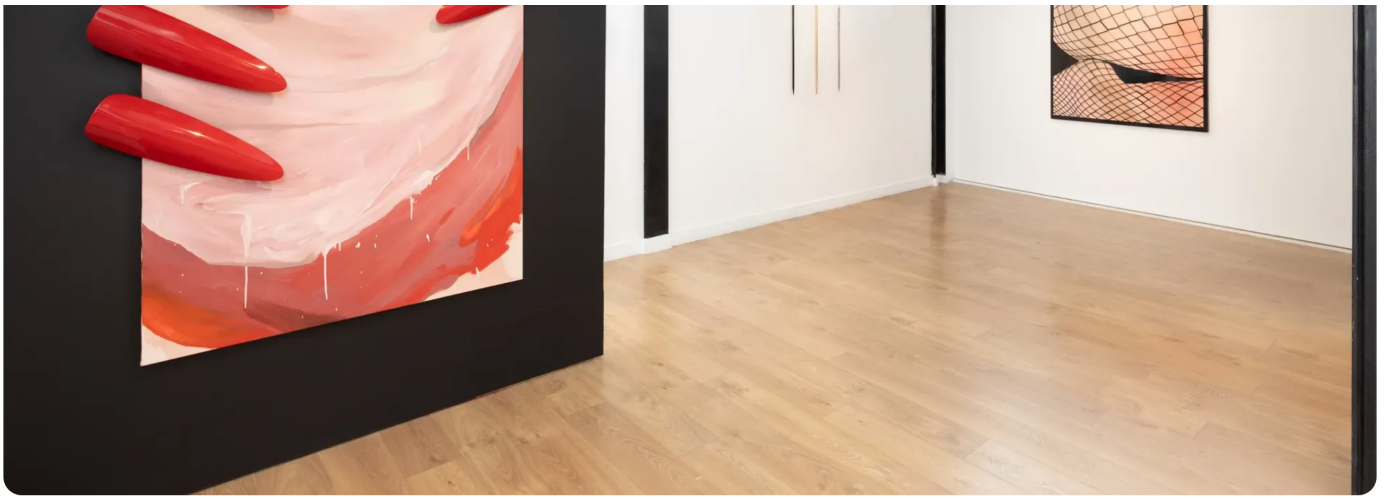


Her work bridges personal experience and feminist theory, making it feel raw and deeply introspective.

Makiko Harris with *Lacquered Rebellion* in her first Exhibition at 23 AUGUST - 21 SEPTEMBER 2024 , **Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery**, London.

A Japanese-American artist born in the Netherlands, Harris moves between London and San Francisco.



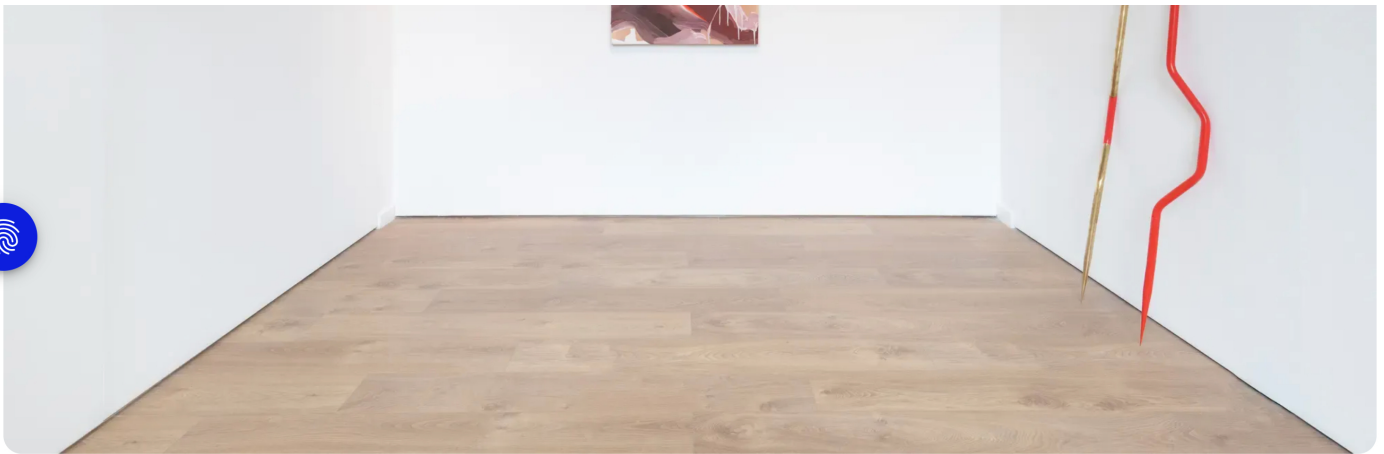


Makiko Harris: Lacquered Rebellion with Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London ©BJ Deakin Photography



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Her education in painting and philosophy, notably with a focus on feminist aesthetics, informs the way she interrogates ideas of gender and belonging.

At the center of her practice is an exploration of objects tied to feminine identity—oversized fingernails, knitting needles, chains, and stockings.

These are not just passive symbols but are transformed into monumental forms, confronting viewers with a powerful reclamation of what it means to be a woman.



Makiko Harris at PADA Studios Residency in Portugal | Image Courtesy of the Artist. Image Credit: Ben Pipe



Artworks by Makiko Harris. From left to right: 1. Innecore (Acrylic, oil, aluminum, and chain on wood panel, 50 × 40 cm, 2024), 2. Nail 1 (Mistress K Red) (Powder-coated aluminium, 50 × 18 cm, 2024, Unique Multiple of 3), 3. Hands 1 (Chain, Silver) (Oil on canvas, lacquered galvanized steel, 50 × 40 cm, 2024). Image Credit: Ben Pipe

The nails, for instance, are no longer mere decorative objects. Instead, they

become shields, weapons even, in a fight for agency.

Harris's artistic gestures aren't merely about reclaiming femininity—they're about wielding it as a form of power.

While completing her MA at the Royal College of Art in London, she came across her Japanese grandmother's sewing kit, a relic that had been used for both practical and expressive purposes.



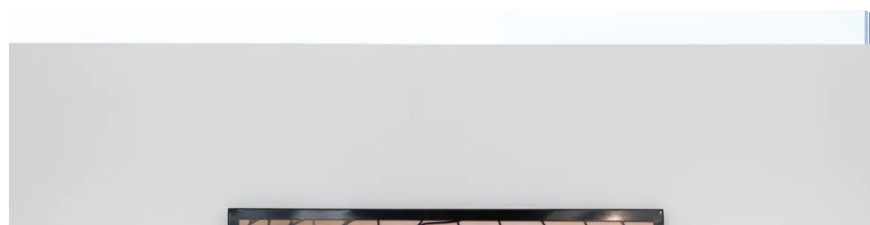
Makiko Harris: *Clutch* (Oil and acrylic on wood panel, powder-coated aluminium, 50 × 40 cm, 2024). Image Credit: Ben Pipe

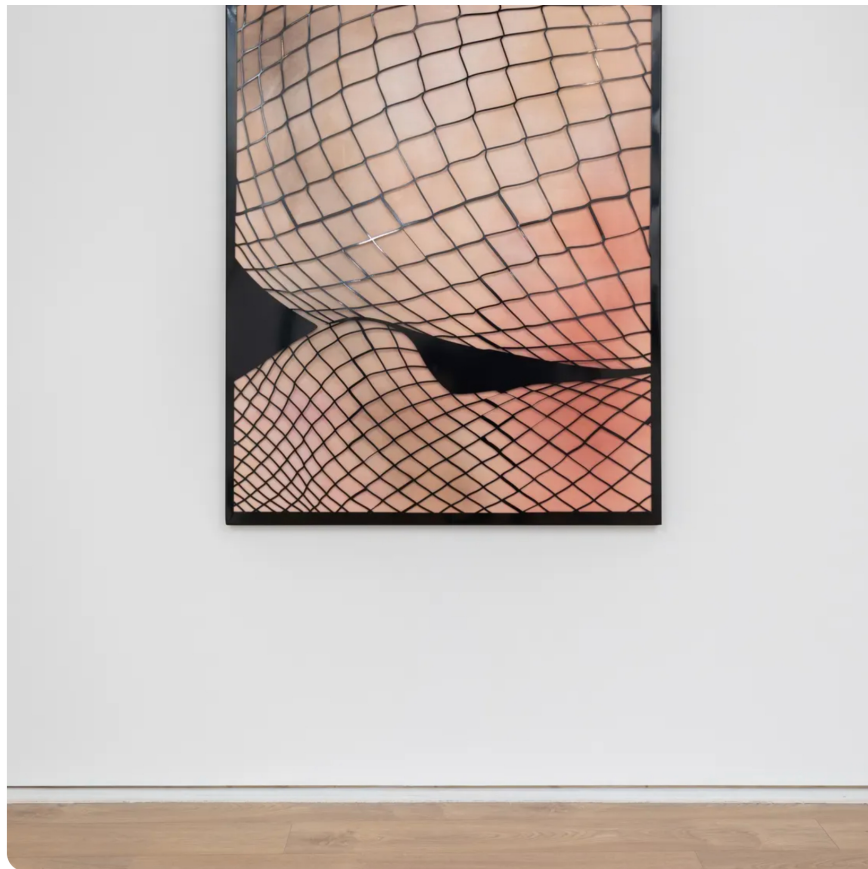
This inheritance led her to reimagine these tools, pushing their functionality to an almost absurd scale. Needles, once used for quiet domestic tasks, now loom in monumental sizes, nearly two meters tall.

They're delicate yet aggressive, elegant yet brutal.

These sculptures don't just fill space—they demand attention, challenging the viewer to think about the contradictions in what we think of as feminine power.

The other central piece of *Lacquered Rebellion* is Harris's *Stockings* series. Here, she plays with both texture and perception.





Makiko Harris: Stockings 12 (Large, Foot, Black) (Oil on canvas, powder-coated galvanized steel, 150 × 120 cm, 2024). Image Credit: Ben Deakin

At first glance, the fishnet tights seem familiar, something we've all seen before. But on closer inspection, they're made of steel—rigid, unyielding.

It's a striking metaphor for the tension between vulnerability and strength, sensuality and protection.

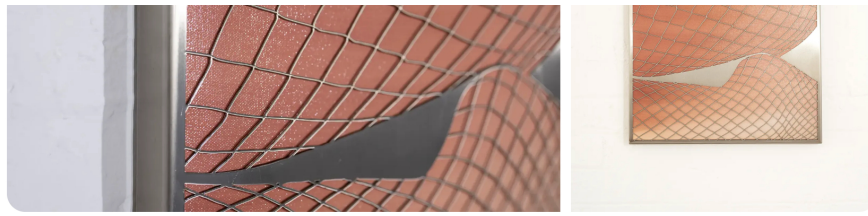


Artworks by Makiko Harris. From left to right: 1. Stockings 2 (Leg, Silver) (Oil on canvas, lacquered stainless steel, 50 × 40 cm, 2024), 2. Stockings 3 (Leg, Silver) (Oil on canvas, lacquered stainless steel, 50 × 40 cm, 2024), 3. Stockings 1 (Leg, Black Matte) (Photo print on Hahnemühle William Turner, powder-coated galvanized steel, 50 × 40 cm, 2024). Image Credit: Ben Pipe.

Harris isn't just reflecting on the ways Asian women are fetishized; she's confronting it head-on, subverting the narrative and making it hers. The stockings, rather than symbols of submission, become signs of rebellion.

Harris uses her materials—metal plates, chains, paint—as a way of layering meaning.





Makiko Harris: Stockings 4 (Foot, Silver) (Oil on canvas, lacquered stainless steel, 50 x 40 cm, 2024). Image Credit: Ben Pipe



The juxtaposition of hard, industrial materials with soft, dripping brushstrokes speaks to the tension inherent in her work. Femininity, in Harris's hands, is both sharp and soft, controlled and chaotic.

She leaves chains loose in her pieces, suggesting both bondage and the possibility of escape.



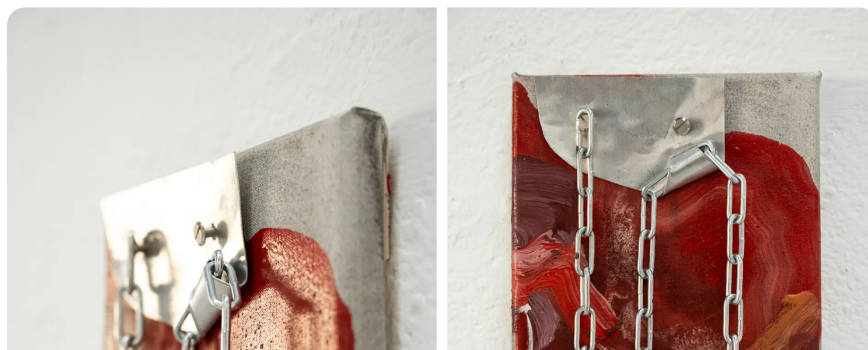
Makiko Harris: Soft Power (Acrylic, oil, aluminum, and chain on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, 2024). Image Credit: Ben Pipe



It's a nod to the intergenerational trauma passed down through women, and the complexities of breaking free from the expectations placed upon them.

Thematically, Harris's work is deeply personal but it resonates universally. Her experience as a biracial woman informs much of her art, particularly in how she explores identity and belonging.

Feminism, for her, isn't just an abstract theory—it's lived experience, filtered through her personal history and cultural background.

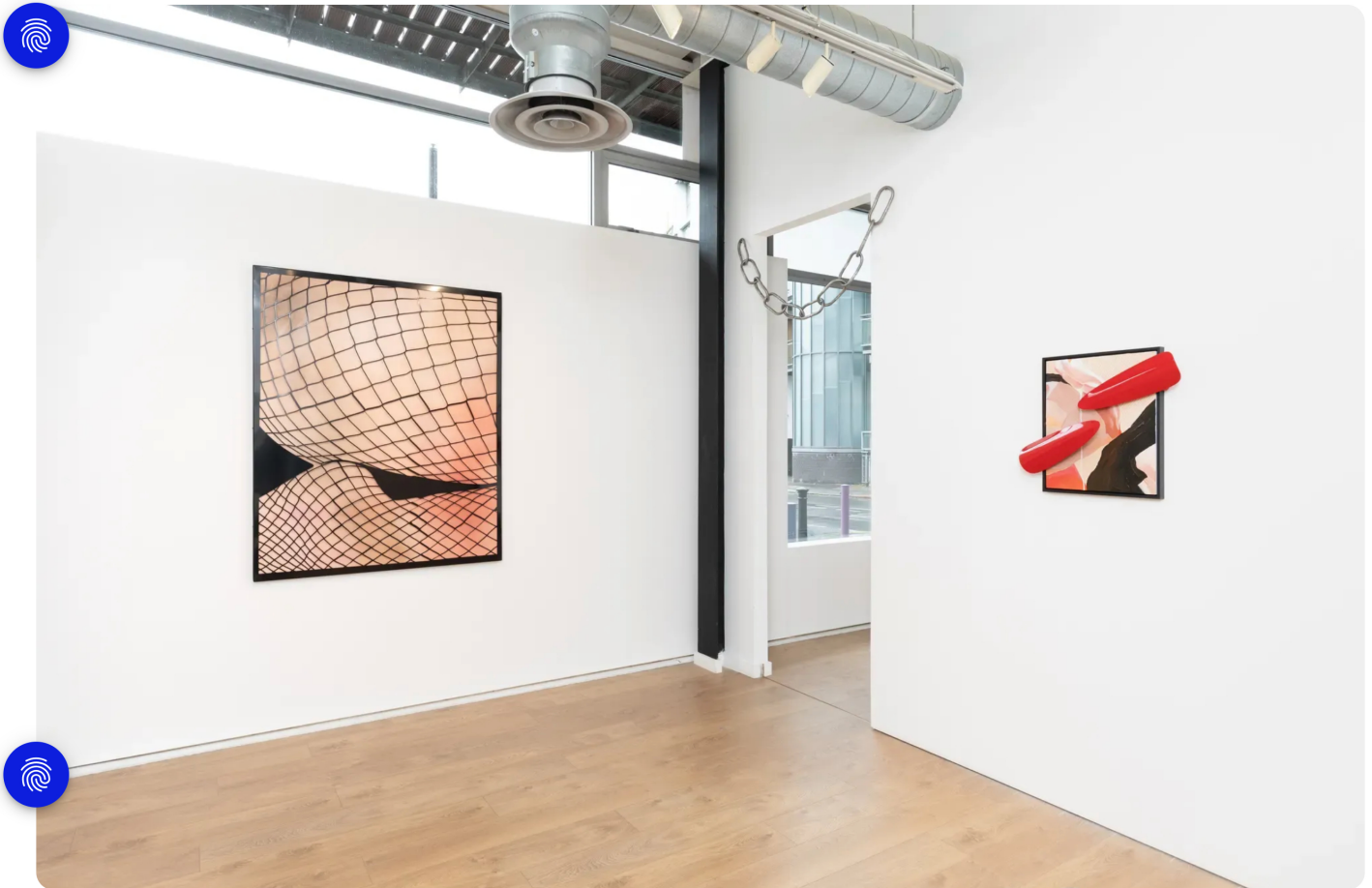




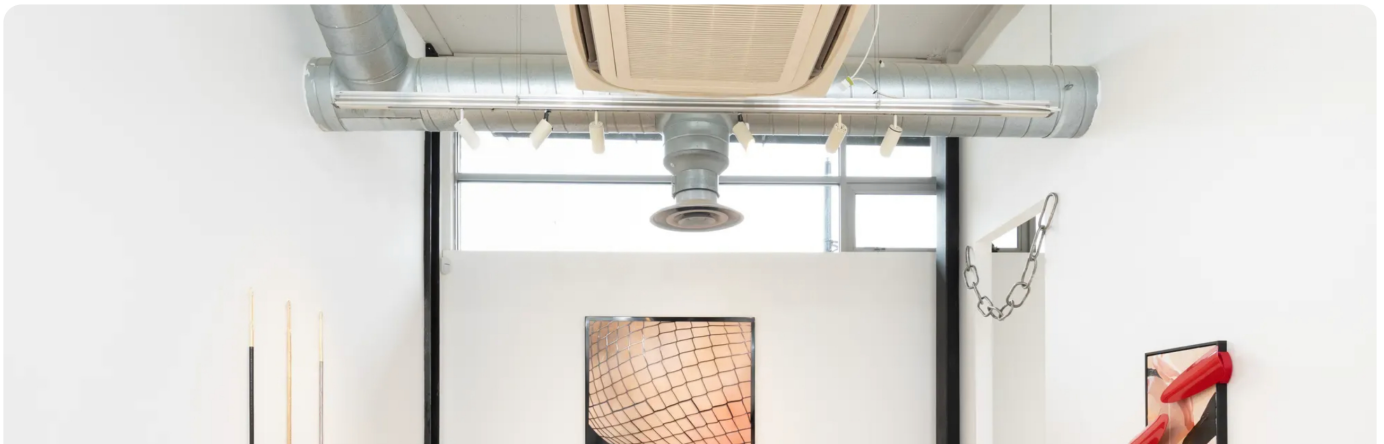
Makiko Harris: Wicked (Acrylic, oil, powder pigment, aluminum, and chain on canvas, 24 x 16 cm, 2024). Image Credit: Ben Pipe

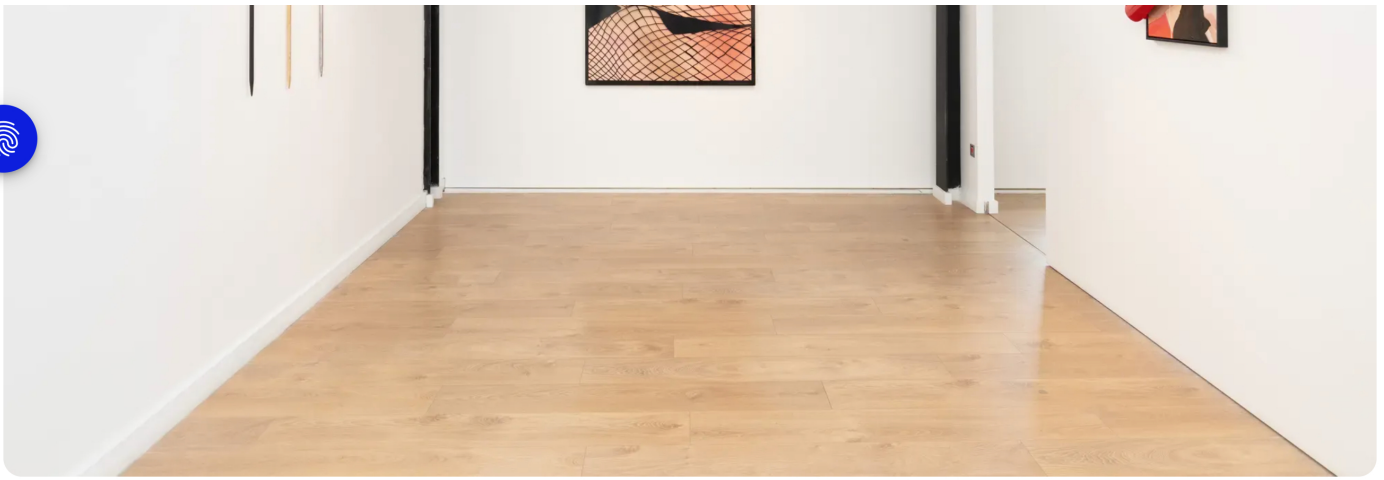
What makes her work compelling is the way it refuses easy answers.

Each piece pushes the viewer to confront their own ideas about gender, identity, and power, challenging us to think more critically about our place within these structures.

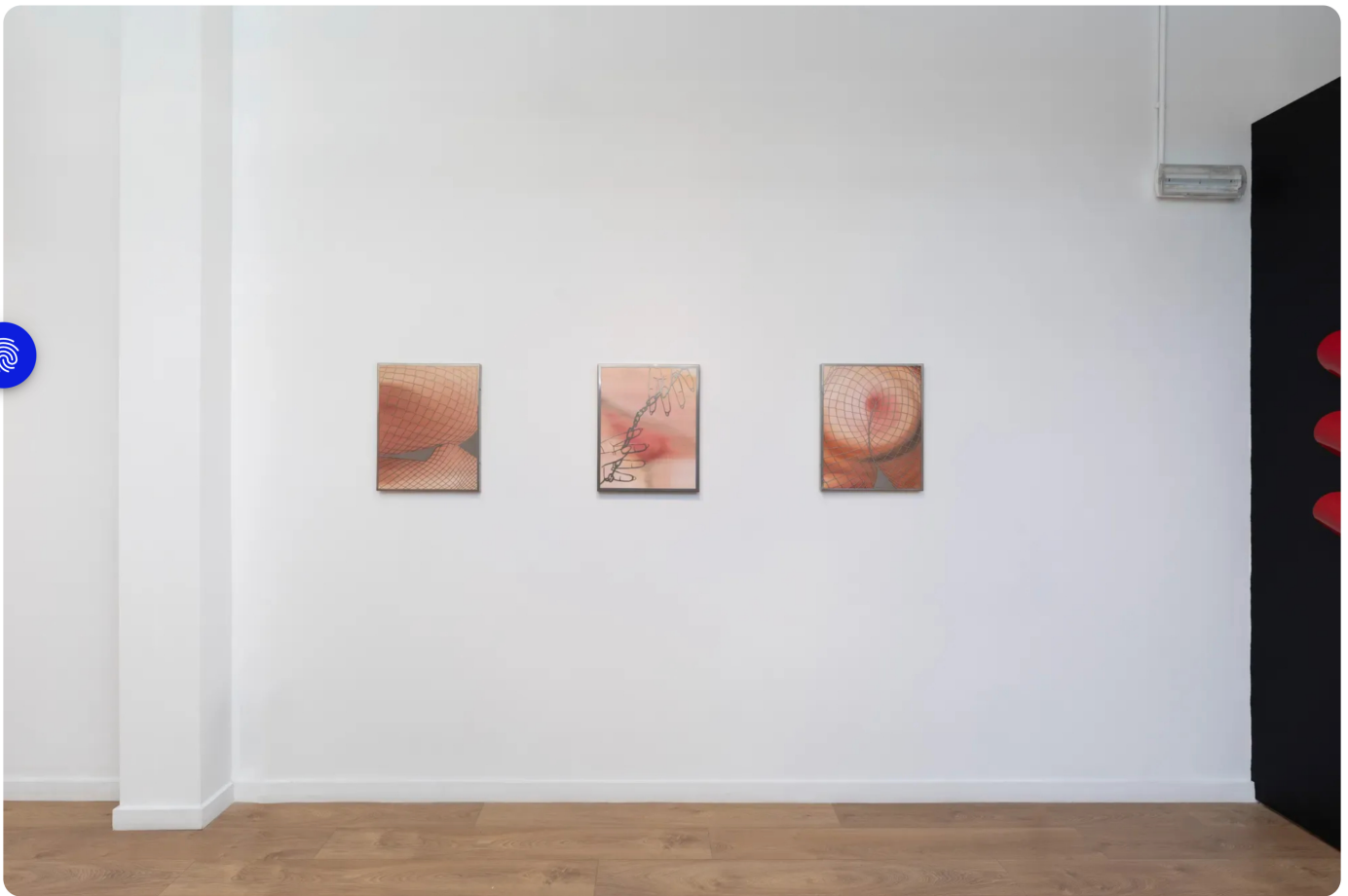


Makiko Harris: Lacquered Rebellion With Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London ©BJ Deakin Photography





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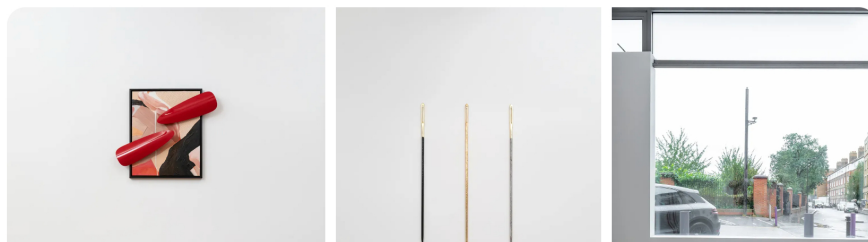


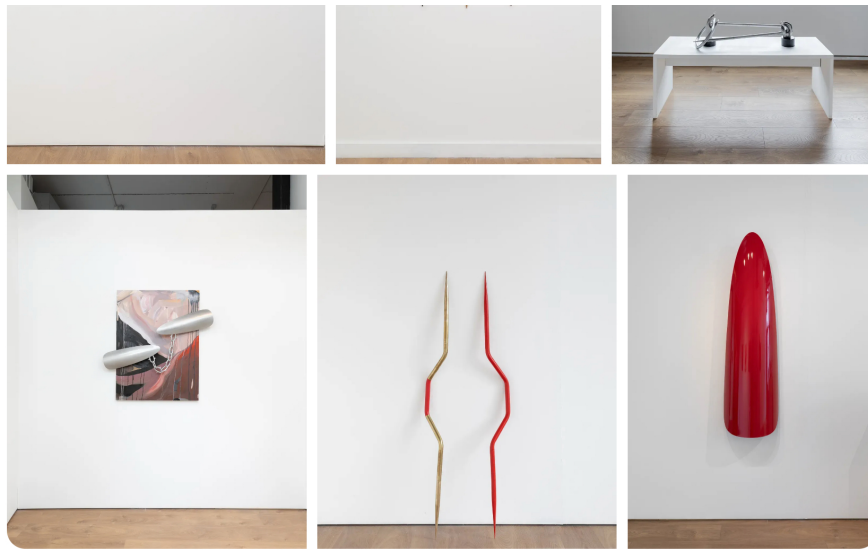
Makiko Harris: Lacquered Rebellion With Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London ©BJ Deakin Photography

The exhibition, which runs from August 23 to September 21, 2024, at the **Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London**, showcases Harris's unique blend of painting and sculpture.



It's her first solo exhibition at this gallery, but Harris is no stranger to showing her work.



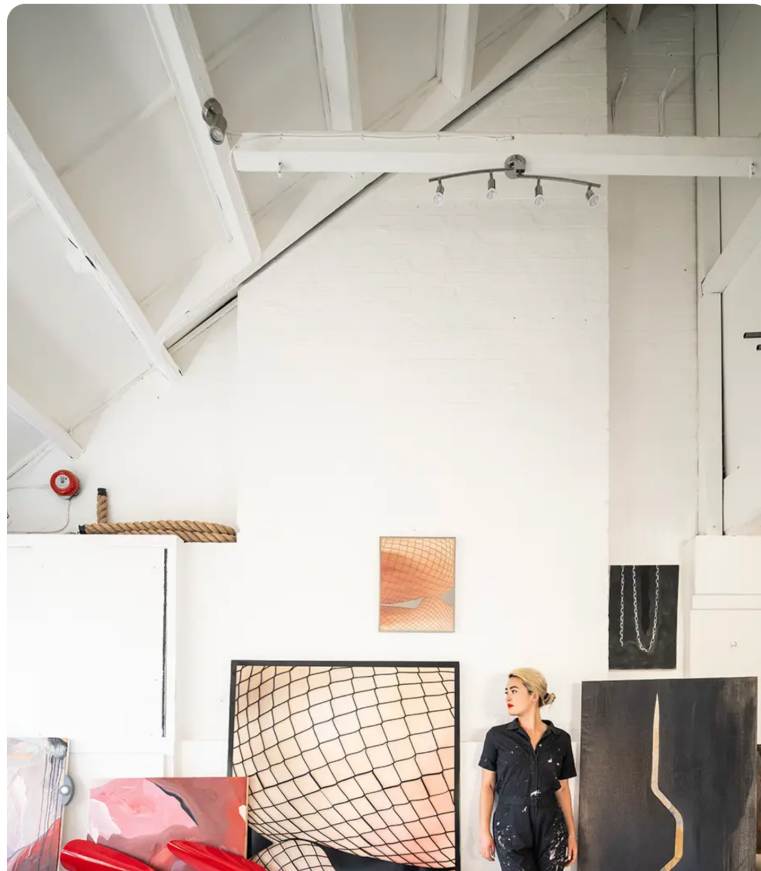


Makiko Harris: Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London, Lacquered Rebellion - Installation view © BJ DeakinMak

Her previous exhibitions include *Unfolding Traces* presented by Pigeon Park in London (March 2023), *Edge* at Gallery G in Hiroshima, Japan (October 2023), and London Art Fair with Commonsense Gallery (January 2024).

Makiko Harris upcoming exhibitions include *Kink* with **Maximilian Wölgang Gallery in London** (September 2024), *Confront and Constrain* with Ames Yavuz Gallery in Singapore (November 2024), and a salon exhibition with **Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery**, West Palm Beach, FL (March 2025). She is also working on an artist film featuring dancers with her needle sculptures, which is planned to be released in Spring 2025.

The power of Harris's work lies in its ability to merge the personal with the political, the soft with the hard.





Makiko Harris in her studio | Image Courtesy of the Artist. Image Credit: Ben Pipe

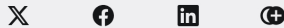
She plays with contrasts—feminine and masculine, delicate and forceful—to create something wholly original.

Her sculptures and paintings force us to rethink our assumptions about gender, about art, and about the very nature of power.

For more artworks and projects visit [her website](#) or follow **Makiko Harris on Instagram**:

Makiko Harris on Instagram

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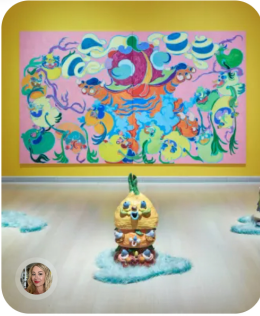
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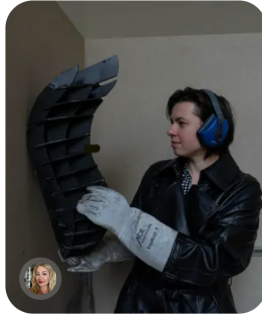
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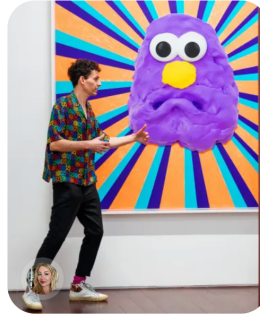
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