

A bold underwater film and multimedia art exhibition exploring fate, feminism, and the power of connection comes to London



By LDN Guest Post

22 January 2025

9 minute read



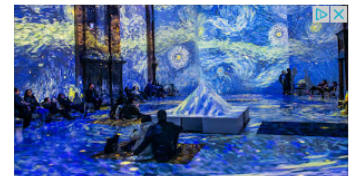
Multidisciplinary artist Makiko Harris presents **NEEDLE DANCE** – a bold underwater film and multimedia exhibition exploring Fate, Feminism, and the Power of Connection

The exhibition will run from 17th February to 2nd March at art'otel London Hoxton

Towering needle sculptures, dancers entwined in brilliant red rope, and a captivating underwater setting converge in **Needle Dance**, the latest work by American-Japanese artist Makiko Harris. This five-minute conceptual art film is premiering from 17th February to 2nd March at art'otel London Hoxton. The film and corresponding sculpture and two-dimensional artwork exhibition is co-presented in collaboration between art'otel and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery which represents Harris.

'Needle Dance' was created in collaboration with Director Peter Gray (renowned as a prolific and imaginative image-maker, contributing to editorial shoots for a range of luxury and style titles including Italian, American and British Vogue, Harper's Bazaar), Costume Designer Deborah Milner (noted for her sculptural and innovative couture, she also consulted for Alexander McQueen realising some of his most iconic showpieces) and Composer and Executive Producer Carlos Basilio. The ambitious violin score that accompanies the film was also co-composed and performed by Harris.

Makiko's work delves into the interplay of autonomy, fate, and desire, continuing her far-reaching exploration of contemporary feminist identity.



Van Gogh: Tickets from £18

Van Gogh Experience Book Now >



.London News

.Lifestyle

Barking, Havering and Redbridge NHS Trust logs over 1,500 staff absences for mental health issues since 2021



.Lifestyle



More about Makiko

Makiko Harris, an interdisciplinary artist exploring themes of feminism, identity, and desire, has earned significant recognition for her work across painting, moving image, sculpture, and sound. Her first artist film premiered at Tate Modern in 2023 as part of the Tate Lates series, a significant milestone that signalled her rapid rise in the international art scene. Harris has received numerous prestigious accolades, including the Grand Prize at The HIGH Prize for Excellence (2023), receiving a grant from the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation (2022), and residencies such as PADA Portugal (2024) and the Buinho Creative Residency (2022).

A finalist for the Ingram Prize in 2024, her sculpture Sewing Needle 2 (Black and Gold) earned critical acclaim. Her work is held in private collections worldwide, and in 2024 was placed in the permanent collection of The Bunker Museum, Florida. She has exhibited across the U.S., UK, Japan, Canada, Austria, Singapore, and Germany, with notable solo exhibitions. Her work has been featured in the HIGH Fashion Collection (2023) and in the San Francisco Symphony's 2021–2022 season campaign, highlighting her dynamic presence across the arts and cultural sectors.

A Cinematic Immersion: The Exhibition at art'otel Hoxton

The art'otel Hoxton provides a dynamic stage for Harris's vision, offering both a surround-sound cinema and a dedicated gallery space. In the cinema, visitors can watch Needle Dance on a continuous loop, interspersed with behind-the-scenes footage that reveals the intense process of filming underwater and the collaboration between Harris, Gray, Milner, and Basilisco. Meanwhile, the gallery will be transformed into an immersive showcase for Harris's monumental needle sculptures, two-dimensional artworks, and Deborah Milner's original costumes—ensuring audiences experience every facet of this multidisciplinary project.

Needle Dance marks Harris's second solo exhibition, following the critically lauded Lacquered Rebellion at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery (2023). Harris has rapidly gained recognition for her fearless embrace of media—from painting and sculpture to moving image and sound.

Threads of Myth and Modernity: The Red Thread of Fate

Central to **Needle Dance** is the Japanese legend of the red thread of fate, an ancient myth positing that an invisible red string binds two people destined to meet. Although the string might stretch or tangle, it is ultimately unbreakable – representing a force beyond human control. In Harris's interpretation, this notion of destiny rubs against the contemporary feminist imperative for self-determination: Must women accept a path laid out by tradition and ancestry, or can they wrest agency and independence from the weight of heritage? The tension between fate and autonomy is a thematic thread running throughout Harris's practice, prompting viewers to question whether destiny complements or challenges the pursuit of personal freedom.

Submerged in Symbolism: The Underwater Film

Filmed entirely underwater, **Needle Dance** magnifies the poetic resonance of the dancers' movements, reflecting a state of suspension akin to the red thread's flexible yet unbreakable nature. The water environment functions as both resistance and liberation: the dancers appear weightless, yet they must continually move towards their pre-destined fate. In the myth, the red threads of fate are a destiny we are born into, our future written in the stars. Here the water evokes an amniotic fluid – as soon as we exist, what lies ahead is already cast. This setting captures the perpetual struggle between being bound to others—through romance, family, or communal ties—and the primal human urge to forge an individual path.



“For me, filming underwater epitomises the feeling that we’re constantly navigating unseen currents, both literal and metaphorical,” Harris explains. “It allows the dancers’ movements to appear dreamlike, yet it underscores how every graceful gesture requires effort—mirroring the push and pull we feel when deciding whether to follow fate or assert our own autonomy.”

Reimagining Feminist Power: Enormous Needle Sculptures

While studying at the RCA, Harris inherited her grandmother's sewing kit. Moved by the intimacy of these tools, as well as their link to the feminist legacy of textile arts, Harris set out to upend their domestic connotations. She began foraging needles on a monumental scale, sometimes one

New year, new home:
L&Q offers final
collection of homes in
Walthamstow

LDN LONDON DAILY NEWS
Subscription

Sign up to get LondonDaily.News delivered to your inbox.

your email address

It's a London thing...

Van Gogh: Tickets from £18

Van Gogh Experience

.Lifestyle

Office dog crèche being piloted in Barbican

.Lifestyle

New London venue to put couples' relationships to the test this Valentine's

.Lifestyle

to two meters tall, elevating them from dainty implements of “women’s work” into towering sculptures that demand attention.

What causes condensation on the outside of windows and how to prevent it?



“

“Historically, the needle was overshadowed by the pen—but if we enlarge it to the size of a weapon, we subvert the idea that women’s work must remain small,” Harris explains.

Influenced by Judy Chicago’s textile-based practice from the 1970s feminist art movement and Louise Bourgeois’s consideration of family relationships and oversized needle sculptures, Harris’s larger-than-life needles embody both fragility and confrontation. They become emblems of defiance as well as reparation—repurposing a traditionally domestic tool into a powerful feminist symbol.

A Journey From Weaponry to Care

In the early stages of this project, Harris viewed the enlarged needles through a lens of almost militancy, echoing her sense of personal and generational struggle. She speaks candidly of developing these works in a time when she lost her grandmother, simultaneously experiencing the end of her marriage: “These events forced me to reckon with what it means to keep a family lineage alive while also shaping a new voice for myself,” she notes. “Initially, the needle sculptures felt like an arsenal—tools for battling against the lack of agency women in my family have faced.”



f
X
in
G+
S
P
...



Over time, however, the symbolism evolved. Harris found herself drawn to the needle's capacity to mend, stitch, and unify—qualities she now highlights in **Needle Dance**.

“

“I still see the needle as strong and powerful, but I also embrace its role in linking us together with love and care,” she says. “My grandmother had so few choices – she didn’t have access to an education past the age of 12, she didn’t choose who or if she married or had children – but her sewing was a form of self-expression. That’s a reminder that even small acts of creation can be revolutionary. By magnifying the needle, we reclaim it as an instrument of feminist power, reparation, and healing.”

Feminism, Desire, and Belonging: Woven Into Motion

Through myth and movement, **Needle Dance** illuminates Harris's core themes of feminism, identity, and belonging. Desire also emerges as a key force—if the “heart wants what it wants,” how much of our longing is shaped by destiny, and how much do we shape ourselves? If fate binds people together, does this increase equality, or does it confine individuals to inherited roles?

Similarly, the idea of belonging echoes through the powerful motif of the red thread. Being bound to someone by fate might represent ultimate closeness, yet it also provokes questions of personal freedom. Harris invites viewers to contemplate whether connection and independence can truly coexist. “It’s always going to be a struggle,” she says, “being close with others—romantically or within our families—while trying to define our own paths. I want **Needle Dance** to acknowledge that tension but also to celebrate that these bonds are what make a meaningful life.”





Makiko's Perspective: Words from the Artist



"I wanted to honour my lineage and ancestors while still forging my own path. Growing up, I watched my grandmother—a woman with almost no choices—express her agency through sewing. Inheriting her needles made me realize how creative expression can thrive even when opportunities are limited. To me, these needles became symbols of womanhood and creative power. Making them the size of weapons captures the tension between fate and autonomy—it's always a struggle to honour the people you love while defining your own path. But the needle can also be a tool for repair and forgiveness, echoing Louise Bourgeois's idea that it's meant to mend rather than harm. For me, that kind of hope is at the heart of this film."

Needle Dance is presented by Makiko Harris in collaboration with:

Internationally acclaimed hair stylist and accomplished film director **Peter Gray** (Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, T Magazine, Hermès, Ungaro, and Dsquared) who contributes his distinct blend of high-fashion sensibility and cinematic vision to Makiko Harris's underwater exploration of fate, feminism, and artistic transformation.

Costume Designer **Deborah Milner** (Head of Alexander McQueen Couture Studio for 18 years who designed the Dior-inspired gown worn by Helena Bonham Carter at the Oscars). Here, Milner draws on her flair for dramatic silhouettes to enhance Makiko Harris's underwater choreography, weaving each rope-based design with a nuanced blend of fragility and strength. By uniting artistry, craftsmanship, and a flair for theatrical impact, Milner's costumes become a powerful element in **Needle Dance's** exploration of fate, feminism, and the transformative potential of "women's work."

Executive Producer/Composer **Carlos Basílico**. Drawing inspiration from composers like Hans Zimmer, Harris collaborated with co-composer Basílico to lay down a percussion-driven, MIDI-infused track, improvising violin and layering more than 20 separate takes. Harris and Basílico have crafted an innovative, genre-blending score that reflects the project's fusion of tradition and modernity.

Exhibition Details

Title: Needle Dance | Artist: Makiko Harris

Dates: 17th February – 2nd March

Venue: art'otel London Hoxton (Cinema & Gallery Spaces) | Visit: <https://artotellondonhoxton.com/>

1. Click on "CONTINUE"
2. Activate your account
3. Access your content

CONTINUE



.Lifestyle

Top women's perfume trends for 2025 revealed



.Lifestyle

Drew Pritchard's new wife: An insight into the life of the antique dealer and his love story



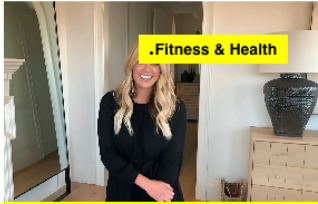
.Lifestyle

Darts wonderkid Luke Littler celebrates World Darts Championship with bespoke 24-carat gold phone



.Lifestyle

What is Pulse Mode on a Geek Bar?



.Fitness & Health

Shea McGee's weight loss journey: How she did it



.Tech

How to save disappearing photos in Instagram DMs: A step-by-step guide



.Tech

Top in-demand skills for 2025



.Automotive

Common problems to look out for in the Hyundai i20

LDN LONDON DAILY NEWS



BECOME A CONTRIBUTOR CONTRIBUTOR AGREEMENT
FAQS TERMS & CONDITIONS
CONTACT US PRIVACY POLICY
MEDIA PACK COOKIE POLICY

Website Content © 2025 London Daily News Ltd / Website by **Brandtastic**