

Beneath the Surface: Artist Makiko Harris on her immersive new exhibition ‘Needle Dance’

With *Needle Dance*, artist Makiko Harris invites audiences into a mesmerising world where sculpture, music, and movement intertwine beneath the surface—literally. The 5-minute conceptual film, shot underwater, explores the tension between connection and individuality, drawing inspiration from the myth of the red thread of fate. From the weightless motion of ropes to the immersive soundscape to the huge sewing needle sculptures on display, *Needle Dance* challenges viewers to experience art beyond the intellect, engaging the body and emotions first. As the exhibition prepares to open, Harris reflects on the creative process, the role of mythology in contemporary art, and the unexpected challenges that shaped this hypnotic film.



***Needle Dance* explores themes of connection and individuality. Do you think that art itself can serve as a kind of red thread binding people together across cultures and time?**

I hope so! I think that's why most artists are artists, we are trying to express and connect.

What was the most challenging aspect of *Needle Dance*? The filming, the sculptures, the soundtrack, or something else?

Filming underwater was certainly a technical, logistical, physical, and financial challenge. However, I think what we were able to do in this environment from an artistic point of view with the weightlessness of the rope and the slow-motion movements of the performers made it all worth it.

For someone who's new to conceptual art, what's the best way to approach *Needle Dance* to fully enjoy it?

*Great question! I would recommend completely ignoring the concept to start with. Try to experience the work intuitively or with your body instead of attempting immediately to understand it cognitively. Don't read anything about the work first, just look at it, listen to it, experience it, sit with it, and notice what comes up for you. What elements do you respond to or remind you of something in your life? For example, in *Needle Dance*, what does the underwater setting make you think of, or how do the bass drums or violin harmonies make you feel? Note that it's not about what you like or don't like, it's more about what it evokes for you and then observing that within yourself. Start from there, sit with that feeling, and then later read the exhibition text.*



Do you believe there's an inherent connection between mythology and contemporary art? How does *Needle Dance* reflect this relationship?

I think artists often tap into stories told by our culture, and part of that is mythology. I hope to utilise the mythology of the red thread as a conceptual framework, but then imagine a contemporary take on how this might be expressed.

The exhibition includes behind-the-scenes footage. What's one surprising thing visitors might learn about the making of the film?

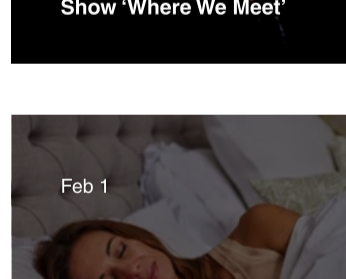
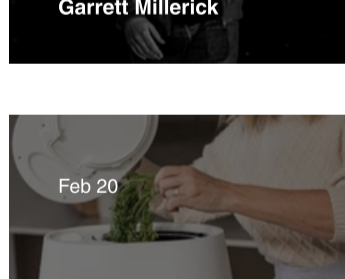
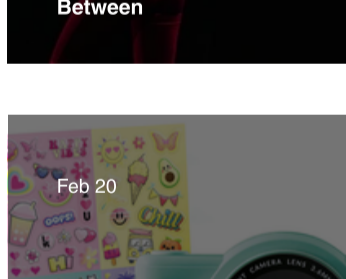
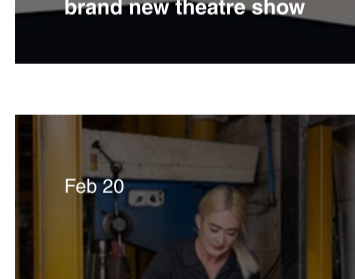
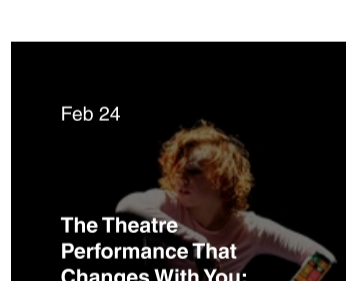
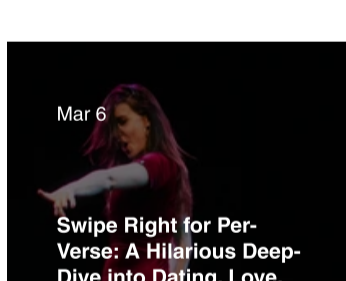
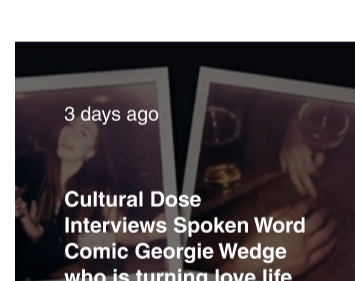
Well, it doesn't show this in the behind-the-scenes footage, but this project had many iterations and initially it wasn't planned to be shot underwater. Our performers Sabrina Wong and Duane Nasis were absolute champions at taking on this challenge, doing up to two-minute breath holds for some of our longer takes!

Needle Dance will be on view from February 17th to March 2nd at art'otel London Hoxton.

For more information, visit: <https://artotellondonhoxton.com/> or <https://www.makikoharris.com/exhibitions/49-needle-dance-kristin-hjellejgerde-gallery-x-artotel/overview/>

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