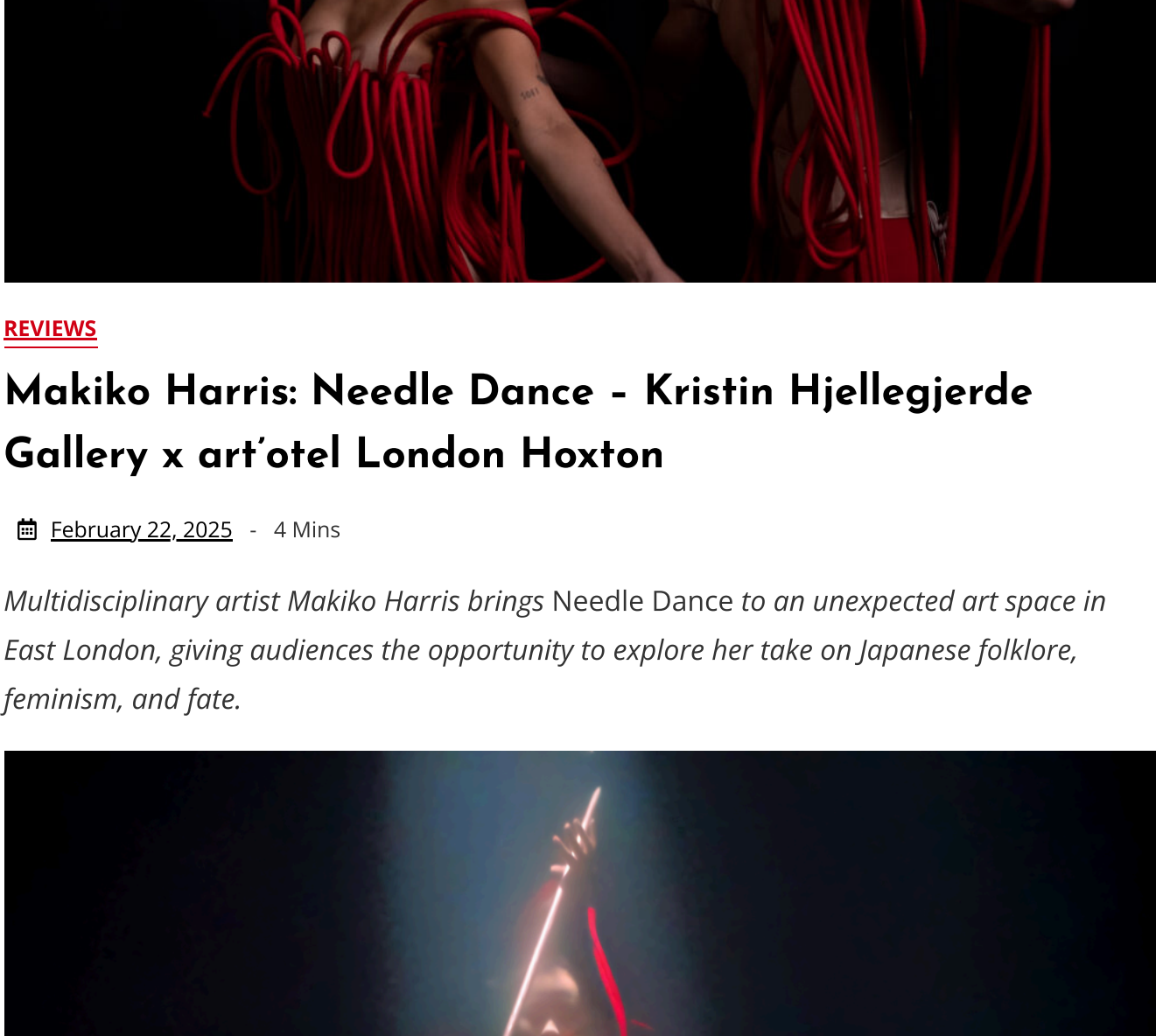


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Makiko Harris: Needle Dance – Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery x art’otel London Hoxton

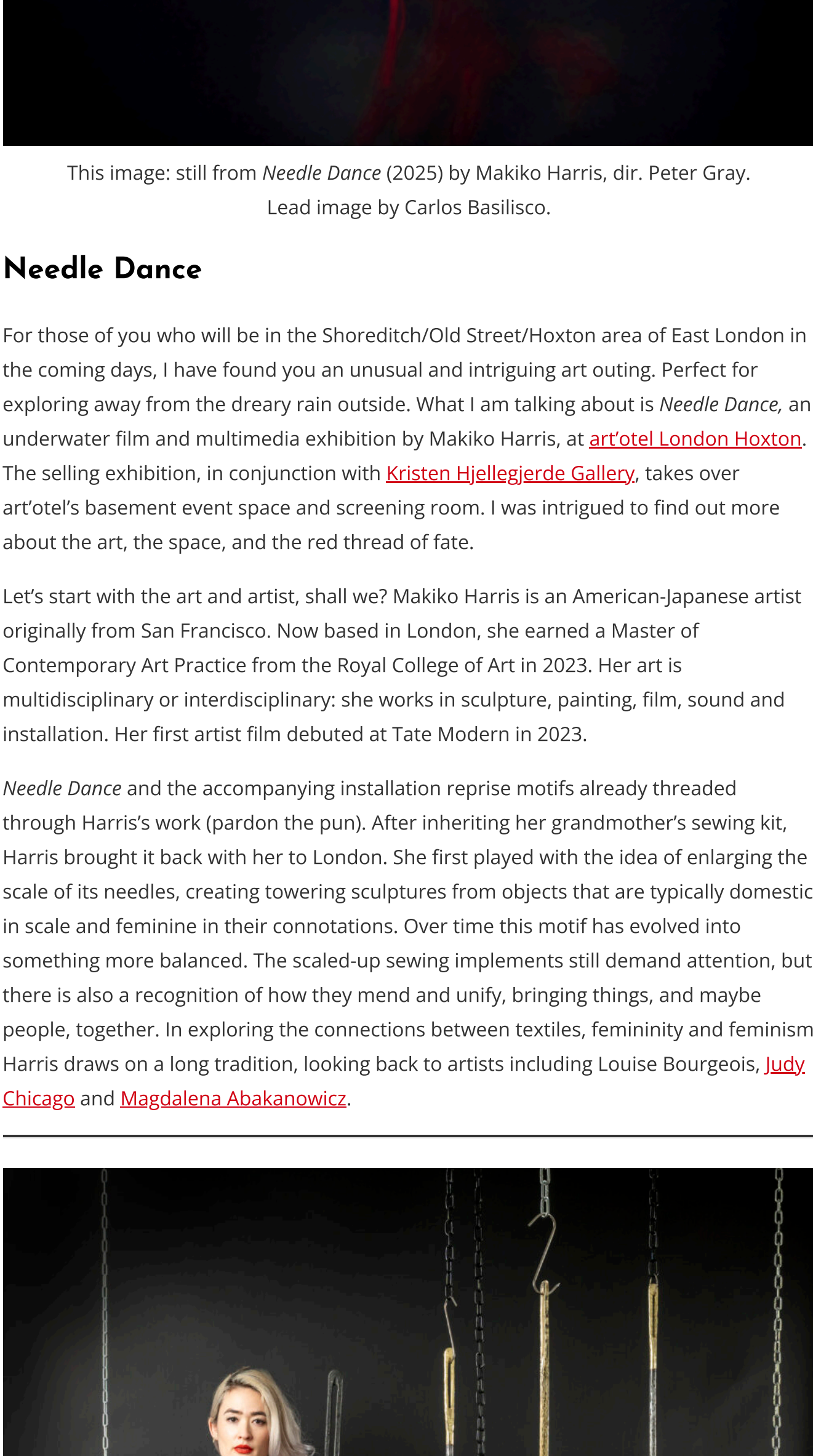


REVIEWS

Makiko Harris: Needle Dance – Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery x art’otel London Hoxton

February 22, 2025 - 4 Mins

Multidisciplinary artist Makiko Harris brings Needle Dance to an unexpected art space in East London, giving audiences the opportunity to explore her take on Japanese folklore, feminism, and fate.



This image: still from *Needle Dance* (2025) by Makiko Harris, dir. Peter Gray. Lead image by Carlos Basiliisco.

Needle Dance

For those of you who will be in the Shoreditch/Old Street/Hoxton area of East London in the coming days, I have found you an unusual and intriguing art outing. Perfect for exploring away from the dreary rain outside. What I am talking about is *Needle Dance*, an underwater film and multimedia exhibition by Makiko Harris, at [art’otel London Hoxton](#). The selling exhibition, in conjunction with [Kristen Hjellegjerde Gallery](#), takes over art’otel’s basement event space and screening room. I was intrigued to find out more about the art, the space, and the red thread of fate.

Let’s start with the art and artist, shall we? Makiko Harris is an American-Japanese artist originally from San Francisco. Now based in London, she earned a Master of Contemporary Art Practice from the Royal College of Art in 2023. Her art is multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary: she works in sculpture, painting, film, sound and installation. Her first artist film debuted at Tate Modern in 2023.

Needle Dance and the accompanying installation reprise motifs already threaded through Harris’s work (pardon the pun). After inheriting her grandmother’s sewing kit, Harris brought it back with her to London. She first played with the idea of enlarging the scale of its needles, creating towering sculptures from objects that are typically domestic in scale and feminine in their connotations. Over time this motif has evolved into something more balanced. The scaled-up sewing implements still demand attention, but there is also a recognition of how they mend and unify, bringing things, and maybe people, together. In exploring the connections between textiles, femininity and feminism Harris draws on a long tradition, looking back to artists including Louise Bourgeois, [Ludy Chicago](#) and [Magdalena Abakanowicz](#).

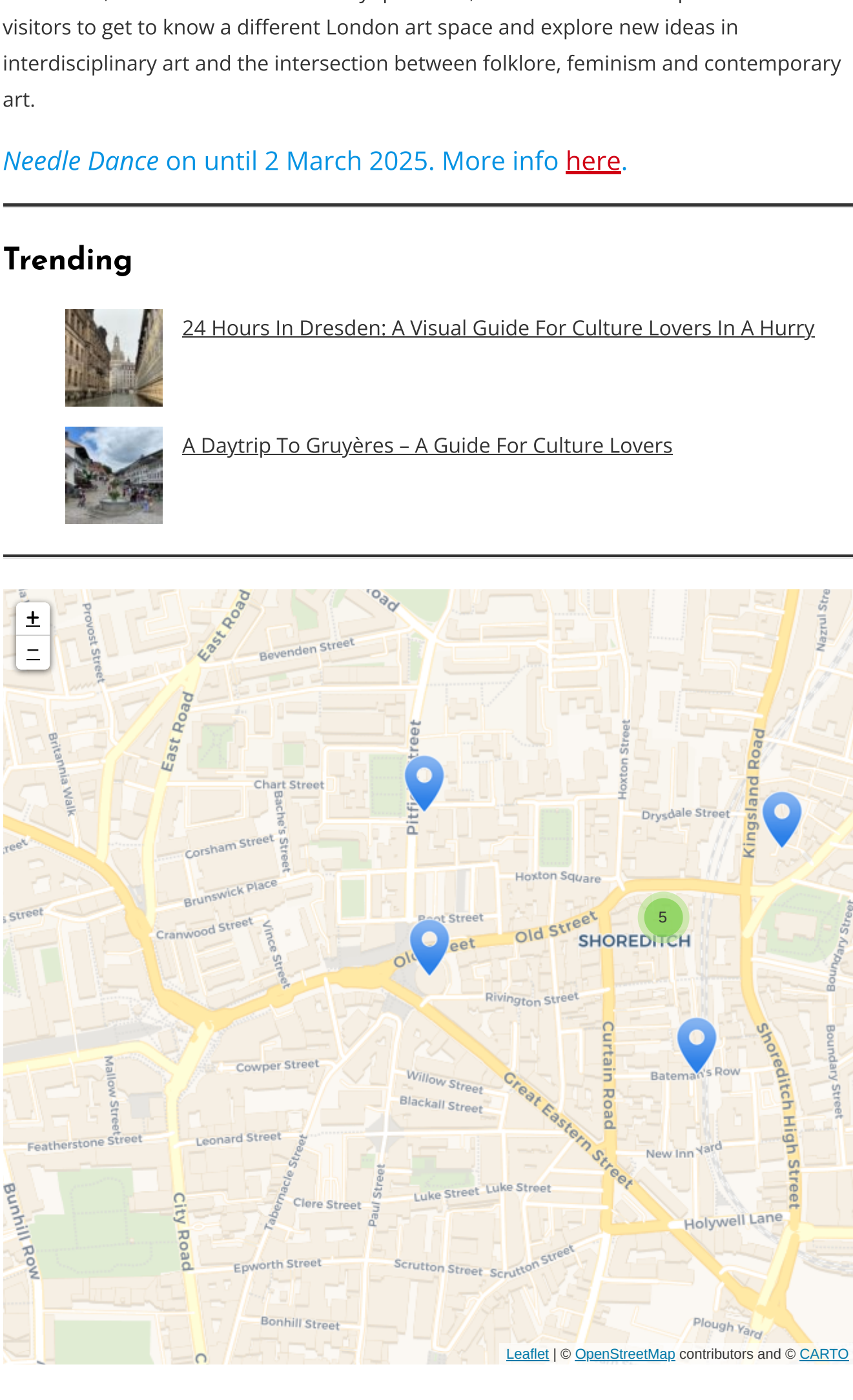


Image by Ben Pipe Photography.

A Technically Accomplished and Aesthetically Engaging Film

But what of the art itself? The art’otel space, as I mentioned, is a basement level event space. Sculptures greet you as you head down the stairs, and are placed around the perimeter of the main room. Projections from the film use the walls to great effect to create an immersive environment. The costumes worn in the film are also on display, a precursor to what is to come.

And then into the screening room. *Needle Dance* is not a long artist film at around five minutes. It is accompanied, however, by a ‘behind the scenes’ documentary of around ten minutes. The film, directed by Peter Gray, has a luxurious, saturated look commensurate with his contributions to publications like *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. A male and female dancer interact in an underwater world. Dressed in costumes by Deborah Milner, they twirl, parry, intertwine and separate. In their hands they hold Harris’s monumental needles, threaded with the red threads of their costumes. This is a reference to the East Asian belief in a ‘[red thread of fate](#)’, an unbreakable connection between those who are destined to meet or to love.

A film is an interesting extension of Harris’s maturing artistic vocabulary and imagery. By transforming the needles and threads from something static to something active, it allows her to explore the tension between fate and autonomy, for instance. Are the dancers’ pre-destined, or do they shape their own movements, and thus fates? The soundtrack, co-composed by Harris and Carlos Basiliisco with Harris performing on violin, underscores the feeling of timelessness and folkloric romance.

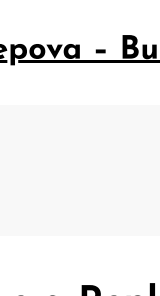
So all in all, *Needle Dance* is a relatively quick visit, which nonetheless opens the door for visitors to get to know a different London art space and explore new ideas in interdisciplinary art and the intersection between folklore, feminism and contemporary art.

[Needle Dance](#) on until 2 March 2025. [More info here](#).

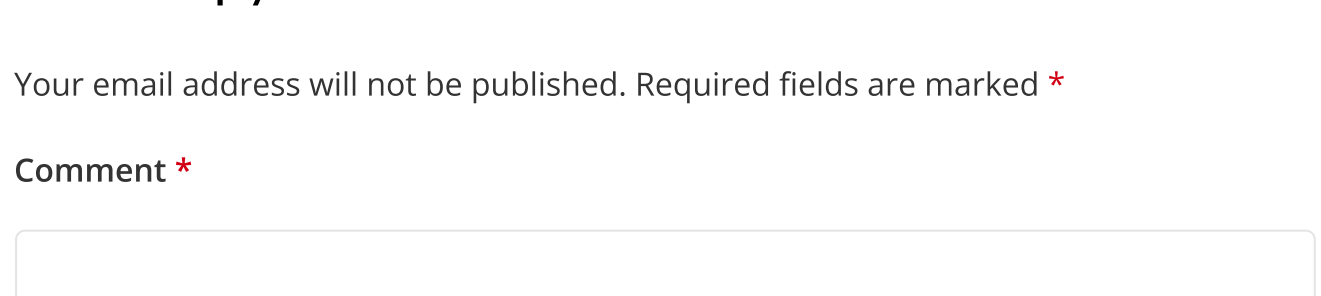
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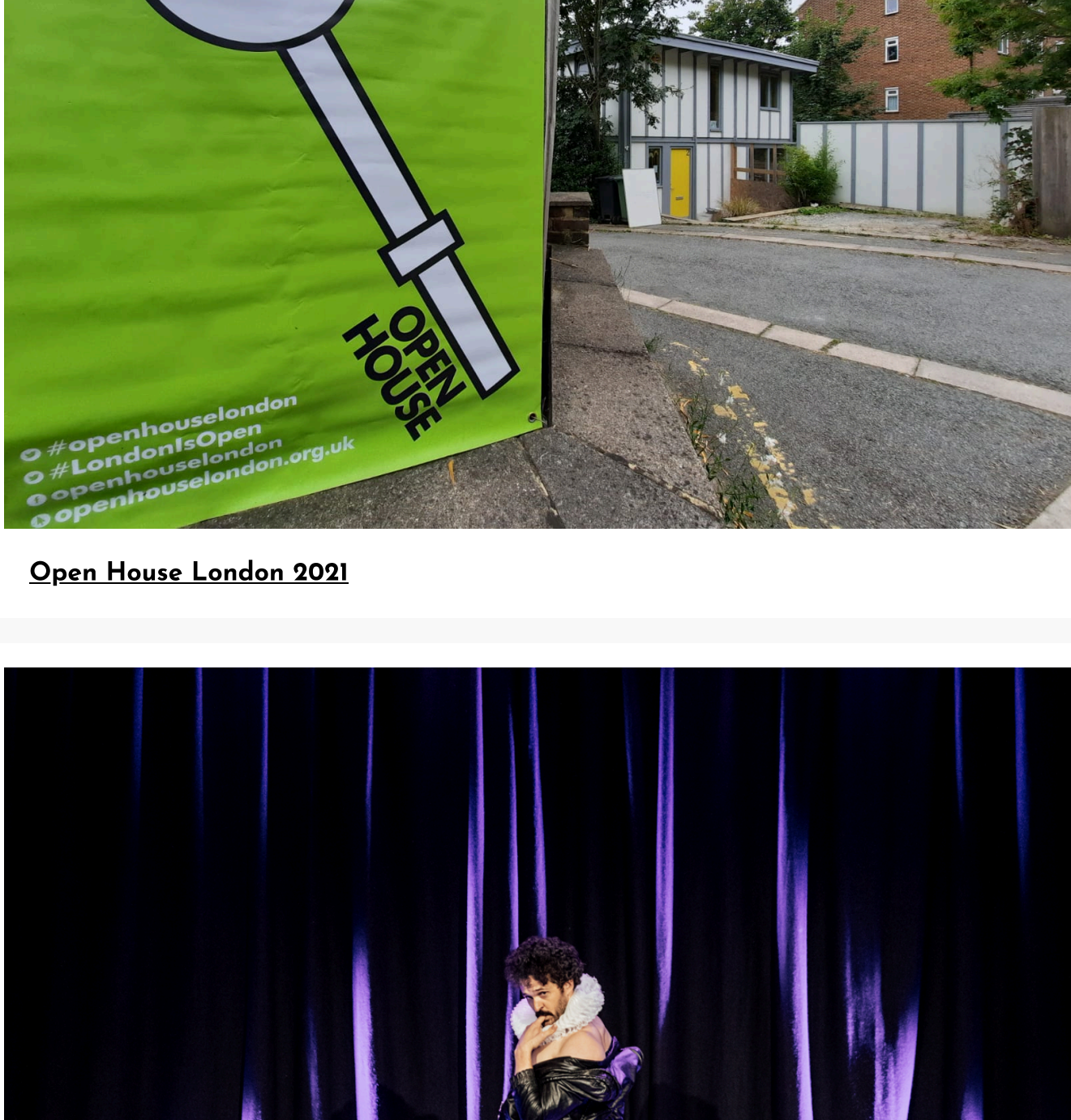


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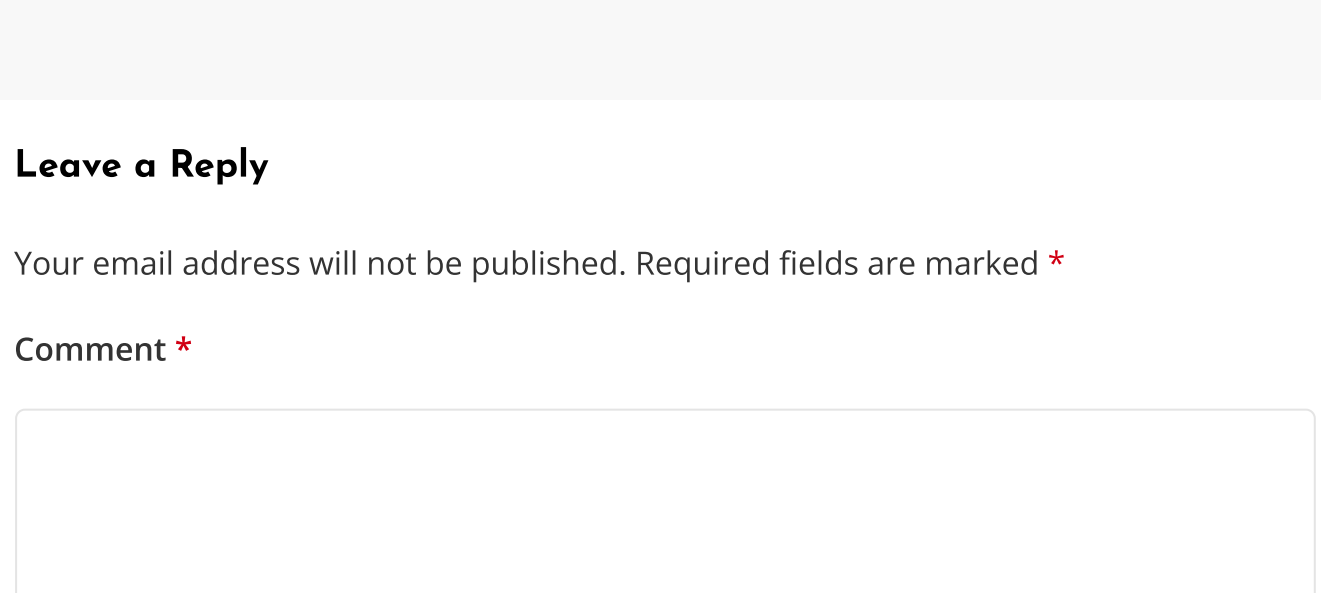
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