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ART

The Art of Fate: Artist Makiko Harris on Needle Dance and the Power of Collaboration

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For artist **Makiko Harris**, collaboration is more than just a creative process—it's an act of connection, discovery, and trust. ***Needle Dance***, her latest exhibition which includes a conceptual art film, is the result of an unexpected yet serendipitous meeting of minds. What began as a casual conversation in her studio soon brought together a composer, a director and couture designer Deborah Milner, former head of Alexander McQueen Studio, each lending their expertise to craft a visually and emotionally rich exploration of fate, autonomy, and the unseen forces that bind us. As *Needle Dance* is about to open at **art'otel in Hoxton London**, Harris reflects on the power of artistic synergy, the duality of constraint and freedom, and the deeply personal themes woven into the film.



You collaborated with a musician, a director and a costume designer for *Needle Dance*. How did you meet Carlos Basillisco, Peter Gray and Deborah Milner?

I moved to London in 2021 with the dream to pursue my art practice and zero connections. I was enrolled in an MA at the Royal College of Art, but also wanted to build community beyond the college. In my first month in the UK, I met Carlos Basillisco off a Facebook group for London musicians where he had posted, looking for new players to join his band. From there, we became friends and have been frequent creative collaborators over the last 3+ years including DJ sets, events, audio recordings, and live music. Needle Dance started when Carlos came by my studio in December 2023. As we were chatting and workshoping ideas, we were reminded of the stunning work created by Carlos' friend and neighbour, couture designer Deborah Milner. We knew Deborah had previously worked on film projects with her longtime friend and collaborator, multi-talented Peter Gray, and we had seen some of the incredible works they had

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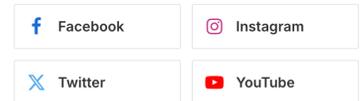
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produced together. We were looking for a project to loop Peter and Deborah into and this felt like the one. Eventually, all four of us met one evening in Carlos' flat in west London, and the energy between us was palpable. We started working on Needle Dance from that evening onwards.



The idea of constraint versus freedom is central to *Needle Dance*, and the costumes reflect this beautifully. How did you and Deborah approach this dynamic through fabric and form? What was the creative vision behind these designs, and how do they enhance the film's themes?

We were inspired by so many different influences, everything from the myth of the red thread itself to past couture runway shows, to the Japanese art of shibari rope-tying.



A comment from Deborah: "The idea was for the costumes to actually become part of the process reflecting complex emotions and the push and pull of the male and female psyche."

Entangling and unravelling in an eternal dance, the ropes making visible the invisible thread of time, culture and identity from which we can never fully detach."

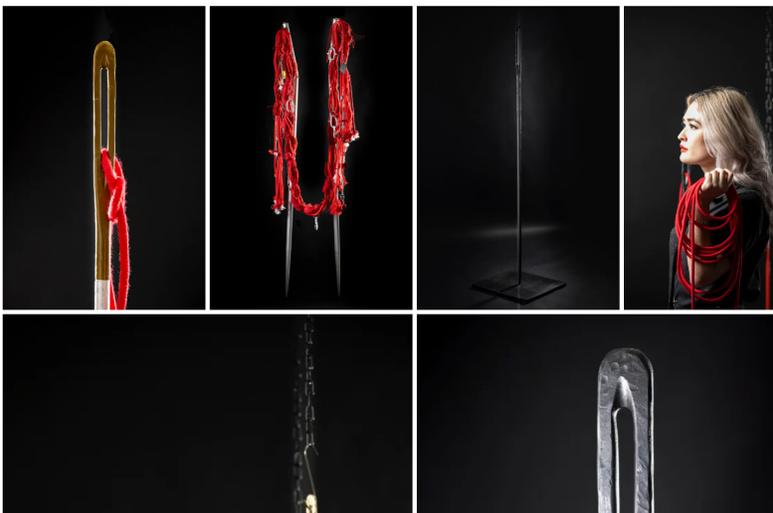
In your view, is destiny a liberating force, a constraint, or something in between? How does this belief manifest in your art?

I think it can be liberating to realise that we can't control everything. Like the creative process, sometimes the best things happen within some limitations or constraints. When we understand what the boundaries are, we get even more creative.



***Needle Dance* plays with contrasts—weightlessness and struggle, tradition and rebellion, autonomy and fate. Is there one particular duality that feels most personal to you?**

Autonomy and fate. Maybe we have no free will so there is no point in trying to control everything. I have no idea. I'm just out here doing my best. I admit I still try to control things. I think it's human.





Art often invites personal interpretation. Is there one reaction to *Needle Dance* that you hope to elicit from your audiences?

Ultimately, I hope it's emotive and moving, and that it reminds people of loved ones, especially those that we've lost in one way or another. I hope audiences find the experience of carving our personal paths while being in connection with those that matter to us a relatable struggle.



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>

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