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From Needles to Monumental Power: Why 2026 is Makiko Harris's breakout year

By Doug Lambert - February 6, 2026
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Rewriting the Language of Feminine Labour

For London-based artist Makiko Harris, 2026 is shaping up to be a year of scale, visibility and international reach.

With major public exhibitions, live performance, and a transatlantic solo show lined up, her work will move from South London to Middlesbrough, Berlin to Florida—cementing her position as one of Britain's most compelling emerging voices.

The year begins with her selection for **New Contemporaries 2026**, the UK's flagship platform for rising talent. Opening at **South London Gallery in January** before travelling to **MIMA in Middlesbrough in May**, the exhibition places Harris among just 26 artists chosen by a panel that included Pio Abad, Louise Giovanelli and Grace Ndiritu—names synonymous with shaping the future of British art.

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For Harris, it is both recognition and launchpad.

Working across sculpture, installation, painting, film and performance, Harris's practice is rooted in a striking visual language. Needles, nails, stockings—objects historically associated with domestic labour and femininity—are transformed into monumental structures that command physical and political presence.

Her work interrogates gender, power and bodily autonomy, often through collaborative processes that emphasise intergenerational and collective making. What might once have been dismissed as *"women's work"* becomes, in Harris's hands, an architecture of resistance.

"My work often begins with materials and symbols that are overlooked," she



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explains. *“Particularly those associated with domestic labour or femininity.”*

In 2026, she plans to test those ideas *“at scale”*.



MAKIKO HARRIS / Image by Ben Pipe Photography

At the centre of Harris’s recent success is **Needle Dance**, a multidisciplinary project developed over the past two years. Reimagining tools of domestic labour as sites of power, the work reached a milestone in 2025 with an underwater conceptual film premiered at art’otel London Hoxton.

The haunting imagery—dancers bound in red rope, suspended beneath the surface—explored gender, constraint and relationality with quiet intensity.

This year, Needle Dance evolves again.

For New Contemporaries, Harris presents **Sentinel**: a spatial intervention featuring oversized powder-coated and brass-plated steel needles. The installation isolates the sculptural language of the wider project, foregrounding scale, material and physical presence.

Alongside the exhibitions, she will debut a new **live performance version** in London this spring. Reuniting with costume designer **Deborah Milner** and composer **Carlos Basilisco**, Harris will bring Needle Dance into a raw, embodied gallery setting—where sound, movement and resistance unfold in real time.

“It’s about the body, material and tension,” she says. *“In performance, those ideas become immediate.”*

After New Contemporaries, Harris’s calendar expands rapidly. Group exhibitions across Europe are planned for spring and summer, building on a productive 2025 that included sculptural placements at **Dulwich Picture Gallery** and an appearance at **Berlin Art Week**.

Then, in September, comes a major turning point: a solo exhibition at **Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in West Palm Beach, Florida**.

The show marks a conceptual shift beyond the Needle Dance framework, introducing new ways of working with intimacy, memory and shared authorship.

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Among the highlights:

- **Collaborative ‘Fishnet’ Paintings**

Large-scale works created through a “four-legged” process, where Harris and a collaborator paint together, bringing physical presence directly onto the canvas.

- **Monumental Needle Sculptures**

A next generation of oversized steel works, extending her recent public placements.

- **The ‘Locket’ Series**

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MAKIKO HARRIS / Image by Ben Pipe Photography

Together, the works explore what Harris calls *“the materialisation of intimacy”*—how relationships, touch and time can be made visible through form.

By November, Harris returns to London for a group show at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, completing a year that spans public institutions, commercial galleries and live performance.

It is a trajectory that reflects both strategic growth and creative confidence.

Educated at the **Royal College of Art** and Tufts University, and now represented by Kristin Hjellegjerde, Harris has steadily built an international profile. Her work is held in collections including the **Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection** in Florida, while institutions from Germany to the UK have championed her practice.

Yet her focus remains rooted in process.

“I’m developing new work around intimacy, memory and collective making,” she says. *“I’m excited to bring existing bodies of work to new audiences in different contexts.”*

In many ways, 2026 marks a moment of consolidation and expansion. Needle Dance continues to evolve, but new material pushes Harris beyond its framework. Performance meets sculpture; collaboration meets monumentality; personal history meets public space.

Spanning South London Gallery, MIMA, Europe and Florida, her programme reflects an artist stepping confidently onto a larger stage—without losing the political and emotional intelligence that underpins her work.

For audiences, it offers multiple entry points into a practice that refuses to separate beauty from power, or intimacy from resistance.

As Harris transforms overlooked objects into structures of meaning, 2026 looks set to be the year her vision fully comes into view.



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