



ARTS & CULTURE, FUTURE ARCHIVES, INTERVIEWS

Makiko Harris: A Needle Mends and It Pierces

BY • 31ST AUGUST 2026

FUTURE ARCHIVES • ARTIST • INTERVIEW

A sewing needle mends and it pierces. Makiko Harris on intimacy as the most powerful force there is, objects that carry contradictory meanings, and making the private impossible to overlook.

Makiko Harris takes forms associated with intimacy and femininity — fingernails, fishnet stockings, sewing needles — and remakes them through industrial materials and processes, often enlarging intimate details of the body until they become monumental.

Her selected works photographed by Ben Pipe open this edition: an installation seen at scale, then detail by detail, down to the needle.

WORKS

Installation and objects, photographed by Ben Pipe

CREDIT

Courtesy of Makiko Harris. Photo: Ben Pipe

COVER DIRECTION

Future Archives — London

THE CONVERSATION

Future Archives asks what the present leaves behind. Your work often enlarges intimate details of the body until they become monumental. What changes when something private is made impossible to

overlook?

I was listening to a podcast once and they mentioned there are essentially 3 levels of closeness you can develop with another person: public, your professional persona you share with the widest net of people; private, what your family and close friends know about you; and secret, what maybe only your spouse, closest confidant, or maybe even nobody else might know about you.

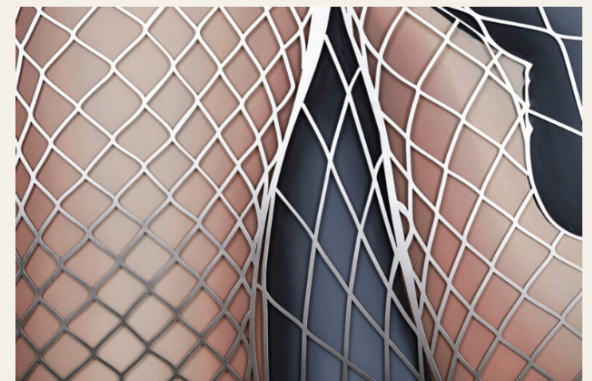
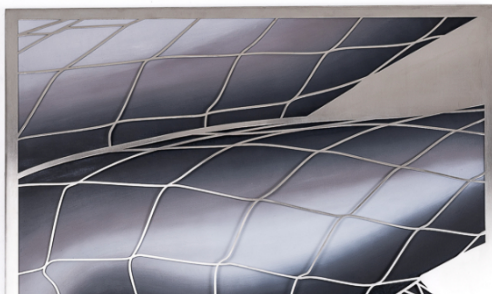
As we get to know people, we sometimes 'graduate' to different levels of intimacy. Going deeper from a more public connection to a more private one is relatively common; but very few people ever get to unlock a secret level of intimacy with anyone else.

I think art has a way of bypassing the regular rules of polite socialising. All of a sudden, through the nonverbal communication of an object, you can connect heart to heart, secret to secret. You enter connecting with another person sideways, through an expression of their soul that is strange, ineffable, and ultimately unknowable.

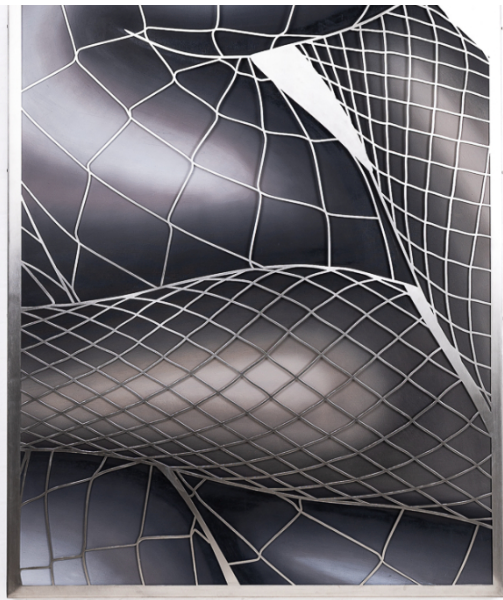
The reason why I think this is both magical and important is because I think a lot of people feel alone in their secret lives. If we connected more with each other, I think we'd actually all realise that we're not as isolated in our weirdness as we think we are. Lots of other people are in the same boat. I hope that the work cuts to that part of you that you've been hiding.

Fingernails, fishnet stockings and sewing needles carry histories of beauty, labour, desire and control. What draws you to objects that already hold so many competing meanings?

Who wants to work with objects that are simple and obvious? I'm drawn to objects that already carry contradictory meanings. A sewing needle mends and it pierces. A fishnet stocking is both glamorous and confining. A fingernail is grooming and it's a weapon. I don't have to invent the contradiction, it's already in the object. That makes it interesting to work with.



Makiko Harris, *Telltale*, 2026 (detail). Oil on canvas, stainless steel, 180 × 100 × 4 cm. Photo: Ben Pipe.



Makiko Harris, *Triumph*, 2026. Oil on canvas, stainless steel, 180 × 100 × 4 cm. Photo: Ben Pipe.

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MAKIKO HARRIS

You often take forms associated with intimacy or femininity and remake them through industrial materials and processes. What happens to their meaning during that transformation?

I think that intimacy is actually the most powerful force there is. Closeness, connection, love. I don't need to speak to the feminist side – I think everyone already knows the feminine is magnificently powerful and bends and shapes reality.

There is often a tension in your work between attraction and discomfort.

What becomes possible in that unsettled space?

I hope what becomes possible is curiosity. I believe that the quality of our lives is in direct correlation with focused attention on our curiosities.



Makiko Harris, *Triumph*, 2026 (detail). Oil on canvas, stainless steel, 180 × 100 × 4 cm. Photo: Ben Pipe.

The body is present in your work even when no body is shown. Do you think of the body as a kind of archive?

Yes, absolutely. I make physical artworks because it's my way of expressing what my brain hasn't yet processed in language. Physicality as a mode of expression and archive is important to me. I wrote my dissertation on embodied or corporeal knowledge. Our bodies know often times long before our brain does, or will remember long after something has long gone. The skin surface is often a physical map of our lived experience, too.

Scale does more than make these forms visible; it can also make them threatening,

absurd or powerful. How do you decide how large a work needs to become?

You only live once, we're all bags of blood and bones and then we die. Go big or go home. Take the risk, be bold. Love fiercely. Find the edges of your capacity for expression. If the artwork asks to be big, make it big.



Makiko Harris, Sewing Needle 23, 2026 (detail). Powder coated and brass plated steel, 102 × 2 cm. Photo: Ben Pipe.



Makiko Harris, Sewing Needle 23, 2026. Powder coated and brass plated steel, 102 × 2 cm. Photo: Ben Pipe.

Your Japanese and American inheritance is often brought into discussions of your work. How do you allow personal history into the work

without letting it become the only way the work is read?

Most artists make work from the vantage point of their particular subject position. I think it would be near impossible to be divorced from it. However, in my practice, I don't actively think about heritage when I am making work. It's simply that if I am thinking about other elements – for example folklore or ideas of feminism – naturally it's going to pull from the social subjectivity I've grown up with. For me, the cultural connection is more simply a byproduct of making work about life, not the point of the work itself.

If someone encountered these works a hundred years from now, what would you want them to understand about intimacy, femininity and power in the world that produced them?

I would want them to know that these concepts and identities were some of the strongest and most powerful forces in the current era. Nobody is created without a woman. No life is worth living without love.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Makiko Harris makes work about intimacy, femininity and power, remaking forms associated with the body and domestic life through industrial materials and processes.

CREDIT

Courtesy of Makiko Harris. Photography © Ben Pipe.
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EDITION

Future Archives — London, print edition · [Order](#)

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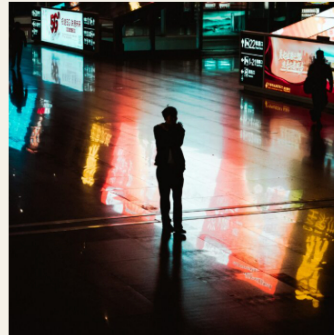
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