

Women's History Museum

*Needle Trades*

January 16 - February 14, 2026

Hosted by Soft Opening, London



Company Gallery is proud to present *Needle Trades*, the first solo exhibition in London by Women's History Museum hosted by Soft Opening as a part of Condo.

Founded in 2015 by Mattie Barringer and Amanda McGowan, the fashion-art duo began out of the desire to create novel and previously unseen images of beauty. The duo engages with fashion as a medium that has the potential to exist beyond regurgitative spectacle and the ability to change the fabric of reality. In this exhibition, Barringer and McGowan utilize imagery and aesthetics from fetish photography spanning from the 1800s to the present. These references are explored through a series of new mannequin sculptures, drawings, video and faux advertorial works, reflecting on commodity fetishism, their own position within this social phenomenon, and the dehumanization of women as a by-product.

Women's History Museum's new sculptures feature repurposed lingerie mannequins from the 1930s through the 1950s. With built-in heeled feet, impossible wasp waists, and torpedo busts, they appear as seductive cartoons, their bodies molded by the garments they were meant to advertise. They are dressed in new garments and accessories by WHM – constructed from historical and fetish materials including a lurid 1890s French calico, printed latex, bovine casino chips, brass, antique French alcohol tokens, perfume nips (a patented technology of perfume sampling from 1930s-50s referring back to the time period of the chosen mannequins), porcupine quills, antique nacre casino chips, poison labels, bobcat fur, and clear leather, amongst others.

Some mannequins are bound, pierced, masked, and disassembled—adorned in ermine printed bandages, quilled, or built from vintage perfume, poison, and medicine bottles. One twin figure wears a singed evening gown with an oversized brass cat paw belt, holding a duality of bondage and animal power. The sculptures evoke a disturbed yet beautiful landscape: one of intricate and fantastical clothing, but female figures depicted as restricted, suffocated, and disembodied. Presented alongside these works are layered drawings of various garments and prototypes, which create a splintered, dissected vision of the tradition of fashion illustration.

Also hanging in the exhibition are three oversized signs that present the ecstasy, vagueness, sex appeal, and abstraction of the female form in vintage advertising. They were shot by the two women of WHM—Mattie as model and Amanda as photographer. Mattie's face and body are sliced and segmented into large strips, like a car wash curtain. The latter more personal and historical works speak to a self reflexiveness and vulnerability in the show. *Needle Trades* explores the psychology of being a fashion designer—the masochism, pain, and ecstasy of working with clothing, a form of self-imposed bondage in one of the world's most tedious and fickle trades. The fantasy spirals into darkness when you confront your own role as a cog in a capitalist hellscape.

Women's History Museum was founded by Mattie Rivkah Barringer (b. 1990) and Amanda McGowan (b. 1990) in 2015. Solo exhibitions include *Grisette à l'enfer*, Amant, Brooklyn, New York (2025); *Museum Manu*, Company Gallery, New York; *Screens*, Forde, Geneva (2024); *The Massive Disposal of Experience*, Company Gallery, New York and CCA, Berlin (2022); Women's History Museum Biennale: *Poupées Gonflables*, Springsteen Gallery, Baltimore (2019); *Her Bed Surrounded by Machines*, LUMA Westbau, Zurich (2018); and *OTMA's Body*, Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2018). Recent group shows include those at Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles, CA; Francois Ghebaly, Los Angeles, CA; Emalin, London, UK; Roma Biennial, Rome, IT; Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York, NY; Performance Space, New York, NY; and the Contemporary Art Centre in Riga, Latvia. Their work has been acquired by the permanent collection of the Portland Museum of Art in Maine.

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## Left to Right:

Women's History Museum

*mew tigresse*, 2018 - 2025

Pen, pencil, gouache, makeup on paper and vellum  
14 x 11 in

35.6 x 27.9 cm

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*La Venus 1934 / interdite*, 2018 - 2025

Pen, pencil, gouache, makeup on paper and vellum  
11 x 9 in (27.9 x 22.9 cm)

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*Trapped Belle Époque*, 2018 - 2026

Pen, pencil, gouache, makeup on paper and vellum  
11 x 9 in (27.9 x 22.9 cm)

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*Fantine Enfer Dress Study*, 2018 - 2026

Pen, pencil, gouache, makeup on paper and vellum  
13 x 16 in (33 x 40.6 cm)

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*Hypo Doll*, 2018 - 2026

Pen, pencil, gouache, makeup on paper and vellum  
13 x 11 in (33 x 27.9 cm)

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*Neon Fantine Paws*, 2018 - 2026

Pen, pencil, gouache, makeup on paper and vellum  
13 1/4 x 13 1/4 in (33.7 x 33.7 cm)

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*Guépard Masque*, 2018 - 2026

Pen, pencil, gouache, makeup on paper and vellum  
13 x 11 in (33 x 27.9 cm)

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*Mon fantasme est un poison*, 2025

1930s faux moire Hindsgaul bust, 1920s faux Ermine fabric, African porcupine quills, 1890s French Calico bra layered with clear red leather, antique perfume bottles, antique poison bottles and liquor flasks, snakeskin-covered ballet fetish shoes, leaves  
63 x 17 x 7 in (160 x 43.2 x 17.8 cm)

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*A Lovely Torso*, 2025

Midcentury lingerie mannequin, lambs leather screen-printed with French poison label, bobcat fur, read leather, clear leather thong with 1930s-1950s perfume nips  
Dimensions variable

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*Sarcophage*, 2025

1920s antique mother of pearl and bone casino chips, African and North American porcupine quills, Ermine-stamped mummy fetish bandage, midcentury lingerie mannequin  
Dimensions variable

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*Devastating Evening in Paris*, 2025

Midcentury mannequin spray-painted gold, cage cap with bobcat fur, 1930s-1950s perfume nips, clear leather, antique mother of pearl casino chips, leather bullet bra, paint, singed ballgown with perfume nips and bobcat tails, lost wax cast brass paw belt, chain, backlit printed image, LED lights, leaves  
Dimensions variable

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*chemise d'oxygène*, 2025

Spray-painted midcentury gold mannequin, 1920s & 1930s French antique alcohol tokens made from wood, bone casino chips or "jetons", latex screen-printed with outsized Ermine  
Dimensions variable

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*Vixen / Last*, 2025

1940s leather shoes and wood  
Dimensions variable

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*Woman in Net 1*, 2026

Printed vinyl and fixtures  
108 x 72 in (274.3 x 182.9 cm)

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*Sphinx Headrest*, 2026

Printed vinyl and fixtures  
108 x 72 in (274.3 x 182.9 cm)

Women's History Museum

*Woman in Net 2*, 2026

Printed vinyl and fixtures  
108 x 72 in (274.3 x 182.9 cm)

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