

Dani Trew: To Make Shirts from Anemones

18th November – 23rd December 2024

16 Bourdon Street
London W1K 3PH



Beyond the Fragments, 2024
Oil on board.
Signed verso.
50 x 50 cm (19 3/4 x 19 3/4 in)

Lyndsey Ingram is delighted to present *Dani Trew: To Make Shirts from Anemones* at Number 16 Bourdon Street. This is Trew's (b. 1991) first solo exhibition and presents the most comprehensive group of her paintings and drawings to date. Trew studied English Literature at the University of Oxford and was an Assistant Curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum. In 2015, she was shortlisted for the BP Portrait Award, and in 2023 she graduated from the Royal Drawing School's postgraduate programme.

The title of the show was inspired by the writings of the French philosopher and activist Simone Weil (1909-1943). As a young woman, Weil analysed 'The Fairy Tale of the Six Swans,' by the Brothers Grimm, which tells the story of a sister who silently sewed shirts from anemones to return her brothers to human form after they are turned into swans, drawing parallels in the narrative with the silence of women throughout history and their longstanding connection with textile production. It uses the language and process of making textiles to highlight the power of making over discourse, and as a metaphor for personal and communal metamorphosis. In Trew's work, textiles and weaving are explored as both a way to paint entangled social and familial bonds, and also as a way to visualise disentangling ties and converting them into creative inspiration, just as disparate threads are placed into a loom and woven into a textile.

Trew's paintings depict various threads which bind women together: through friendship, family or community and shared artistic sensibilities. Female figures are seen weaving fabric – such as in *The Nightingale's Loom III* (2024) – but they also become submerged into the fabric itself. In *The Nightingale's Loom I*, (2024) a woman's body is constrained by a closely-woven textile. Her silk dress merges into the fabric and delicate branches of wisteria weave in and out of sight. Trew's figure has a composite pose reminiscent of ancient Egyptian sculpture. Avoiding eye contact with the viewer, she stares out of the side of the painting, her eyes following the direction of the branches which are, like her body, trapped by the warp and weft of the textile.

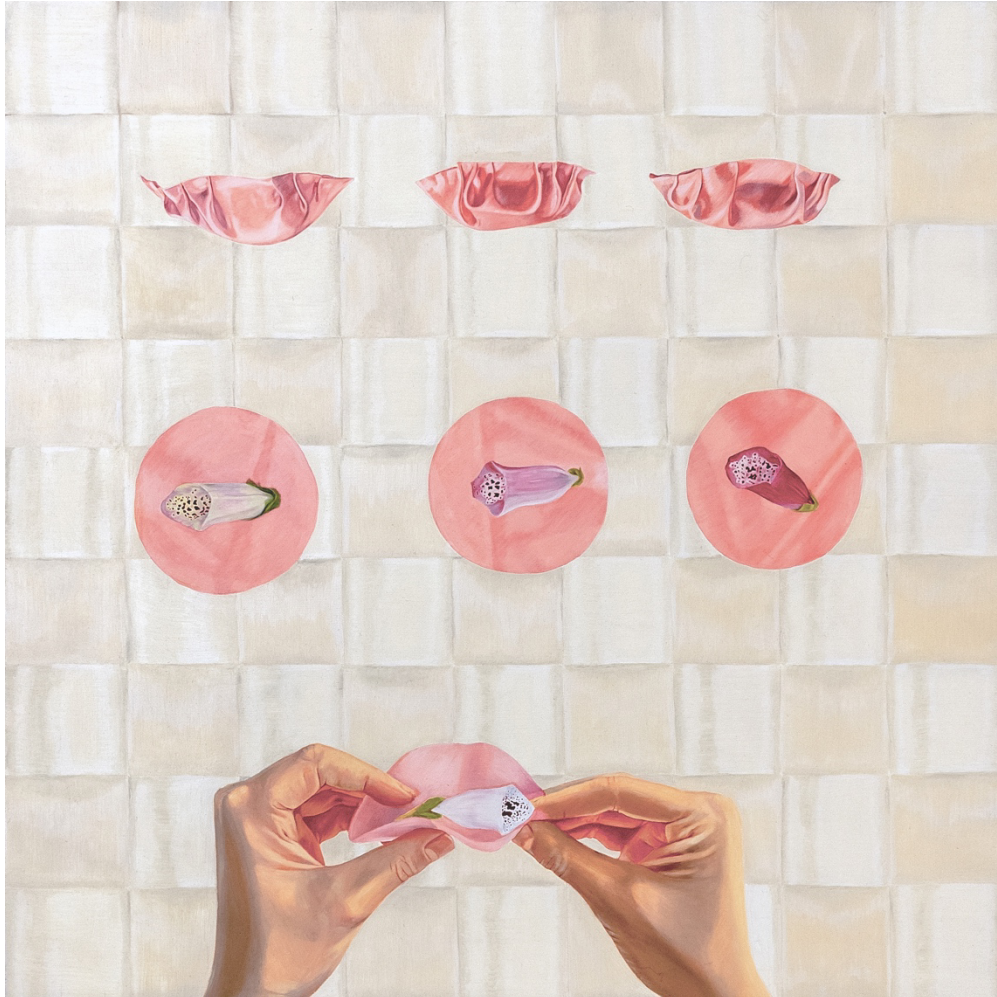


The Nightingale's Loom III, 2024
Gouache and colour pencil on paper.
Signed verso.
137.2 x 85 cm (54 x 33 1/2 in)



The Nightingale's Loom I, 2024
Gouache and colour pencil on paper.
Signed verso.
137.2 x 85 cm (54 x 33 1/2 in)

Similarly, In *I'll Eat Your Poison Dumplings* (2024), natural elements are folded into a textile. Here, a pair of hands are seen wrapping foxgloves into silk dumplings. The act of folding, encasing or trapping flowers into fabrics is given multiple meanings; either hiding away what is dangerous or difficult (foxgloves are highly toxic) within something beautiful and seductive like silk, or the fabric itself becoming an impediment between freedom and captivity.



I'll Eat Your Poison Dumplings, 2024

Oil on board.

Signed verso.

39.8 x 39.8 cm (15 5/8 x 15 5/8 in)

Trew's paintings and drawings draw on a wide variety of sources for their inspiration beyond Weil's text. Each work often contains a myriad of references ranging from Greek mythology, modern literature, poetry, contemporary fashion, architecture and Renaissance painting. *Barbara* (2024) is based on portraits of the saint that often show her holding the tower in which she was imprisoned. Trew has replaced the traditional tower with an exquisitely observed version of the architect Tadao Ando's *Azuma House* from 1976. On the side of the painting is a trompe l'oeil daffodil; Trew's reference is to *St John in the Wilderness* (c. 1455, The National Gallery, London) by Giovanni di Paolo, which has a frieze of flowers growing up each side. The figure wears a dress by Rym Beydoun's brand SuperYaya; a fashion label known for mixing its founder's Lebanese heritage with her background growing up in the Cote d'Ivoire.

Trew has a particular interest in historical and contemporary fashion; prior to her time at the Royal Drawing School, she was an Assistant Curator in the V&A's Furniture, Textile and Fashion Department. The painting *The Nightingale's Loom II* (2024) features a woman wearing clothes by Home of Hai, a London-based designer who champions the use of Chinese silk. The figure, with flowers and animals appearing out of her clothes, is tied to a modular lamp designed by Lana Launay (inspired by the iconic paper lamps of Isamu Noguchi). The floor tiles have the light pastel colouring of Dieric Bouts the Elder's *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin and Child* (c. 1415 – 1475), whilst the background fabric is from a medley of Northern Renaissance paintings. It is remarkable how Trew seamlessly places these complex and contrasting references together, creating work with a quiet but undeniable tension which builds on closer observation.

The complexity of source material reflects Trew's sensitivity to the world around her, yet her paintings and drawings also reflect her multicultural heritage. *Mother of Pearl* (2024) connects a series of shells which are knotted onto threads. This is how Trew visualises being connected to her ancestors – both biologically, but also in terms of the artists who precede her. The painting features a portrait of a girl wearing a silk sailor hat by Cawley Studio, a fashion label which was started by a mother and daughter working with traditional textile processes. Trew, whose mother is Chinese, Japanese and Polish Jewish, has traced her Chinese ancestors to pearl divers and sailors. The hat here is both a symbol of a mother-daughter bond as well as powerful reminder of fashion's ability to convey messages about who we are and where we come from. In *Cosmic Egg* (2024), a hellebore sprouts from a speckled egg cradled in a model's hand. The egg, which is often used as a symbol of rebirth, life and transformation, is interpreted by Trew as accepting internal conflicts about family and roots and finding joy in overcoming them. In *So On and So Forth*, (2024), Trew paints a series of three women bonded together by plaits of hair. The three women can be understood as referring to Trew's mother and sister who she grew up with. This tripart arrangement strengthens the idea of bodily threads which bind women together in ways which are both seen and invisible.

Trew will donate 100% of the sale proceeds from *Opening Move* to [The Parent House](#), a non-profit providing mentoring, training and support for parents in Islington. The organization helps parents to enter employment, enhance their qualifications and professional training, and improve their mental wellbeing. It is a lifeline for many families in Islington, where 47% of children are currently living in poverty.

This donation is made possible by [Artists Support](#), a charitable initiative working with artists to help them raise funds and awareness for the causes they care about deeply.