

### Marie Harnett: Were you dreaming?

2 May - 8 June 2025



*Half agony, half hope, 2024*  
Graphite on drafting film  
Paper: 23 x 30.6 cm  
Image: 5.2 x 16.6 cm

*"What could she say, but that too well he lov'd?"*

Ovid, Orpheus, Metamorphoses

Cristea Roberts Gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of new drawings by Marie Harnett (b.1983). *Were you dreaming?* (2 May – 8 June 2025), the artist's fourth solo show with the gallery, brings together twenty-five intricate works on paper depicting tender, decadent and dream-like scenes inspired by contemporary film, Greek mythology and Old Master paintings.

Best-known for pencil drawings that are hyper realistic in style, the artist's practice always begins with film stills sourced from a diverse range of trailers. Films are a conduit for the artist, who sifts through hundreds of trailers, intuitively selecting certain frames that encapsulate a particular atmosphere.

Through this process, Harnett establishes a series of fragmented scenes that allude to classical myth and tragedy; the artist was particularly inspired by the Greek myth of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, lovers separated by death. Although Orpheus persuades Hades, God of the Dead, to allow him to take Eurydice back to the world of the living, he inevitably breaks the terms of their agreement, stealing a final, forbidden glance at Eurydice, causing her to return to the underworld forever.

Harnett's tableaux of drawings collectively inhabit the same world, forming part of a new narrative, a realm that is not quite our own; a woman is framed in a window, a coin held between her fingers; a man holds the head of a broken statue in his hands; the façade of a building is concealed by thick foliage.

The artist commits these unexpected scenes to paper, imbuing her drawings with drama and suspense. As a result, visitors to the exhibition, become active protagonists, joining into the act of observing and being observed.

Harnett pairs the ancient with the modern, creating what she describes as an *"other world, an underworld, a mirror world, that is frozen in time."*

Harnett's use of graphite collaging in her drawings produces images that are surreal and uncanny; characters from period films are blended and recontextualised with backgrounds sourced from mythological paintings. *In for you alone, 2024*, a man in modern dress is transposed into the landscape of *Orpheus, 1628*, by Roelandt Savery.

Drawing inspiration from Baroque and Renaissance sculptors, such as Bernini and Michelangelo, several of the artist's works, including *Half agony, half hope, 2024*, depict marble statues that appear in film. Interested by how stone sculptures depict subjects that are seemingly suspended in time, Harnett experiments with the medium of pencil to create the same illusion.

Harnett also presents several drawings that take the form of photographs; in *Love has an earlier death*, and *You've cast a spell, 2024*, a jelly-like trifle is shown in both positive and negative versions. In these drawings, Harnett experiments with transformation; a film still of a particular object is turned into a photographic negative which, in turn, is made into a drawing. Through this method, Harnett intends to highlight the sculptural quality of drawing, to establish distorted parallels in shades of light and dark.

Harnett's titles are selected from the audio of the trailers she watches. Through this pairing of image and word Harnett creates a new staging and cast of characters, all connected to pervading themes of loss, love, yearning and grief.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication featuring an interview with the artist.

*Marie Harnett: Were you dreaming?* takes place during the 2025 edition of London Gallery Weekend (5 - 8 June 2025), when the artist will be giving a public talk and the show will be open for extended hours.

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## Cristea Roberts Gallery

43 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JG  
+44 (0)20 7439 1866  
info@cristearoberts.com  
www.cristearoberts.com

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### About the artist

Marie Harnett was born in 1983 in Hertfordshire, England. She studied drawing and painting at Edinburgh College of Art, graduating in 2006.

Harnett makes highly detailed, meticulous drawings derived from film stills which capture fleeting moments of drama, beauty and suspense. By removing the stills from their context and reworking them as intricate pencil studies, Harnett focuses on every aspect of pose, light and texture. Harnett also explores these themes in her printmaking, which include large scale linocut prints of images built up from black and white curving lines, which can take up to one month to carve, and a series of mezzotints, which are housed in the permanent collection of the British Museum, London.

Recent solo and group exhibitions include The British Museum, London; Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam (2023); Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (2022); Cristea Roberts Gallery, London (2021, 2017); BcMA, Berlin (2020); Städtische Galerie, Bietigheim-Bissingen; Haugesund Museum of Fine Art, Haugesund (2019); Yale Center for British Art, Connecticut (2017); Theodore: Art, New York, USA (2017); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2023, 2018, 2016); Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (2016); Bremen Kunsthalle, Bremen (2015) and Galleria Bonomo, Rome (2014). In 2019 Harnett completed a residency at The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Connecticut.

Harnett's works are held in international public and private collections including British Museum, London; National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh; Government Art Collection, London; Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh; Städtische Galerie Bietigheim-Bissingen; Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Connecticut; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Marie Harnett lives and works in London.

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## Exhibition March 2025

Press Contact:  
Charlotte Hampshaw  
charlotte.hampshaw@cristearoberts.com  
+44 (0)20 7439 1866

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### About Cristea Roberts Gallery

Cristea Roberts Gallery is a leading international art gallery with a particular focus on original prints and works on paper. Since its inception, the gallery has commissioned a significant number of editions by a wide range of artists, whilst also representing others for their unique works. The underlying ethos of the gallery has always been artist-led.

It was originally founded in 1995 as the Alan Cristea Gallery and changed its name in September 2019 to Cristea Roberts Gallery. Acknowledged as one of the leading galleries in its field of speciality, the gallery's programme is dedicated to publishing, cataloguing, exhibiting and dealing in original prints and drawings by its roster of over 30 important international artists and Estates.

It participates in all the major international art fairs and has a dynamic programme of exhibitions hosted in its bespoke space in Pall Mall, London. The gallery works closely with international museums on acquisitions and loans, and examples of its editions are held in major public collections around the world including Tate, London; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

### Visitor information

Tues - Fri 11 am - 5.30pm  
Sat 11 am - 2pm

Closed on Mondays, Sundays and public holidays  
Closed 3 – 5 May, 24 – 26 May 2025  
Free admission

Travel: Piccadilly or Green Park underground station  
+44 (0)20 7439 1866

info@cristearoberts.com  
www.cristearoberts.com

Instagram: @cristearoberts  
Facebook, LinkedIn: Cristea Roberts Gallery