

JARVIS & WERNER

PRESS RELEASE

Martina Cox

Heart Eyes

September 2 – October 3, 2026

Jarvis & Werner are excited to present Martina Cox's solo exhibition, *Heart Eyes*. Cox's practice explores the femme form through carefully sourced Victorian era body containers including bodices, corsets and crinoline cages. Her working process typically begins with intense research into specific areas of fashion history. The containers are either represented in images Cox draws or directly utilizes as readymade objects.

Heart Eyes consists of three bodies of work: color pencil and watercolor works on paper depicting the boned interiors of women's bodices, sculptures made from crinoline cages embellished with millinery decorations and small bronze boxes containing the packaging of sewing notions.

The painstakingly created works on paper are life size representations of the interiors of bodices, drawn from digital images of these garments often found on auction house websites. Cox boldly crops the chosen images, which become extremely detailed almost abstract forms, but upon closer inspection whalebone ribs, busks and laces can be detected. Thread, hooks and eyes are sewn directly into the paper, joining the material structure of clothes to their representation. These representations of the femme torso recall the paintings of Christina Ramberg and performances of VALIEEXPORT, both of whom are important references.

The last work in the exhibition, *Morning*, is a drawing of a faded black bodice jacket once owned by the widowed Queen Victoria. The image was sent to Cox by a friend who works at Kerry Taylor Auctions in London, where the item was being sold. It is the only work on paper she has created devoid of color and rendered at slightly larger than life size. Queen Victoria famously mourned her husband, Prince Albert, for forty years and with this unsettling charcoal drawing Cox presents the viewer with an allegory of loss.

In a similar way to how Cox re-works antique garments, her works with 19th Century sewing notion packaging highlight the passage of time. Each element of sewing notion packaging is covered in a 3-D printed bronze box, which redacts the majority of the product design. Only single phrases remain, including "Bless That Nub!" and "Heart Eyes," which in today's world sound particularly odd or disconcerting. The redaction of text, a kind of clothing in itself, suggests that there could be a governing body controlling the circulation of this information. Significantly, these phrases hold different meanings today: for example, "Heart Eyes" refers to a patented style of design for the eye part of a hook and eye mechanism, but in the 21st century takes on the visual signifier of an emoticon or emoji.

Through reinvigorating 19th Century body containers, *Heart Eyes* considers the political and performative aspects of clothing and questions how time morphs the way we understand cultural production.

Martina Cox (b. 1995, New York, NY) lives and works in New York, NY and holds a BFA from Cooper Union. Recent exhibitions include The Museum at FIT, New York, NY (2026); Jarvis Art, New York, NY (2025); 12.26, Los Angeles, CA (2025); Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY (2025); Alyssa Davis Gallery, New York, NY (2024). Her work has been featured in publications including The New York Times, Elephant Magazine, Interview Magazine and LVL3. Cox co-hosts a monthly mending club called Darn it! with artist Hekima Hapa and clothes historian Kate Sekules.