

PUBLIC



Shaniqwa Jarvis, *i feel your warmth and it feels like home*, 2026 (detail)

Shaniqwa Jarvis

Only Love Will Break Your Heart

April 30 — June 7, 2026

89 – 91 Middlesex St, London E1 7DA, UK

Public Gallery is pleased to present *Only Love Will Break Your Heart*, the first UK solo exhibition by New York born, Los Angeles based artist Shaniqwa Jarvis. Through floral motifs, layered compositions, and reflective surfaces, the exhibition attends to traces of grief, memory, loss, and resilience while foregrounding questions of spectatorship. Central to the exhibition is a sustained interrogation of the material condition of the photographic image. Across fifteen new works, Jarvis considers photography as object-based and subject to physical encounter, resisting the medium's association with flatness and fixity.

Acrylic washes resembling worn netting map across several works, functioning as both compositional devices and markers of deterioration. In *from negative to positive* (2026), a weblike film draws the eye into a field of blur, through which purple gerbera daisies gradually come into focus. Flowers, the recurring subject of Jarvis' work, register fragility and impermanence while also recalling the historical language of still life and its associations with cyclical change. These cycles are emphasized in *only love can break your heart* (2026), where marguerite daisies converge into ruby red dahlias, like one season bleeding into the next.

Questions of spectatorship arise through Jarvis' use of reflective and translucent materials. Silk paintings stretched across mirrored surfaces produce shifting, live double exposures in which the viewer is folded into the image, their reflection tracked across the surface. The mirror functions less as a device of self-recognition than as a threshold through which multiple temporalities and layers of encounter remain in circulation. In works such as *again and again and again*. (2026), the artist's own hand enters the composition as subject, disorienting the viewer by positioning them from Jarvis' vantage point.

In writing about spectatorship, art historian Alexander Alberro locates the intersection of subject-object relations within an apparatus he has coined 'the aesthetic field', arguing the artwork is no longer understood as entirely autonomous but as something constituted through its relations. By folding the viewer into the work's temporal and spatial logic, Jarvis understands the artwork as contingent and co-constituted through encounter, and foregrounds this process of subjectification. *felt and meant* (2026) underscores this exchange: a wicker framed mirror reads 'I'll mean something to you', situating meaning as something produced through engagement, where 'you' and 'I' become positions occupied and enacted by the viewer. The intensified sense of nowness that Jarvis cultivates thus situates the work outside the ordinary conditions through which photographic images are consumed, resisting immediate legibility in favor of subjective encounter, and affect over narrative.

On the basement level, an installation collapses two discrete spaces from the artist's childhood: the room where she slept at her maternal grandparent's house, and the CRT television and bedside table in her own bedroom. Jarvis describes her dreams dancing like shadows across the ceiling; it was in these spaces that her visual language first coalesced.

The short film combines archival footage with recent video and voice recordings that reflect on health, labor, and artistic value, particularly in relation to New York City. Moving images of the city's skyline play against audio clips describing the hustle and expectation to produce, or one's desire to 'make it' against odds or pervasive feelings of self-doubt. Jarvis' flowers – at times carefully arranged in bouquets, at others gently bruised or quietly wilting – stand in for this collective abrasion, a visual metaphor for being handled roughly. Together, the installation reads as a time capsule that shuttles the viewer between two different moments in space, a physical realization of Jarvis' photography practice.

In entirety, Jarvis' work offers a sustained consideration of how material processes complicate conventional understandings of photography and spectatorship. Walter Benjamin argued in 1936 that an artwork's 'aura' refers to its unique presence in time and space, failing photography and film by virtue of their inherent reproducibility. Yet Jarvis reclaims what might be understood as the aura of the photographic work through layered processes that insist on presence. If a work's aura is understood as the ability of an object to return one's gaze, Jarvis' work actively stages this reciprocal relation, forcing a confrontation of one's own embodied encounter, reaffirming the image's capacity to retain a here and now.

Shaniqwa Jarvis (b. New York, USA) lives and works in Los Angeles, USA. Recent solo exhibitions include *If You Could See My Thoughts, You Would See Your Faces*, Anthony Gallery, Chicago (2025); *Everywhere You Go, There You Are*, CONTROL Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); *Sleep to Dream*, SN37 Gallery, New York (2022). She has participated in group exhibitions at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Open Space Contemporary Art Museum, Amsterdam; Southern Guild, Los Angeles; Gladwell Projects, New York; Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles; Rele, Los Angeles; Webber Gallery, Los Angeles; Anthony Gallery, Chicago; and Art + Practice, Los Angeles. Her work is held in the permanent collections of LACMA, MOCA, and the Hammer Museum via the joint MAC3 fund.

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