

8. Samantha McLeish: Pinned-Up

Pinned-Up is a textile installation by Samantha McLeish created in 2026. It consists of five panels of fabric in variable shapes and sizes, which are pinned evenly along the wall of the gallery.

Five sheer, gauzy peach-coloured pieces of fabric are affixed to the wall using long one inch silver T shaped pins. The pins stretch the fabric pieces and hold them in place. The fabric pieces are roughly shaped like body parts or an unassembled garment pattern for a sheer bodysuit. A left arm piece is pinned first, followed by the back panel midsection and legs, then a right arm, and a front panel with midsection and legs, and lastly, the gusset, a strip of fabric that reinforces a garment's crotch and connects the front and back panels.

Each panel features areas of tension where the fabric is pinched or scrunched, as if held within a fist. They correspond to where long white threads sewn in parallel lines have been pulled. Where these threads were pulled, the fabric gathers into tight vertical folds. In these areas, where the fabric is tightly compressed, geometric shapes are decoratively embroidered in green, blue, pink, and red thread.

While these sections of folded fabric and embroidery mostly occur on areas of the panels aligning with the lower abdomen and groin, they also adorn the wrists, a shoulder. Yellow and green embroidery is applied in arching diamond shapes that zig zag across the midsection. Delicate blue X shapes hold pinched fabric in place along the middle of the chest. And one long and continuous red embroidery tread connects each area of embroidered tension together. This long, loose, and curving line threads through each panel piece in turn and then dangles loosely from the end of the gusset.

About the artwork and artist:

Pinned-Up is a textile installation about lived experience of chronic pain and gendered embodiment. A ghostly fabric form mirrors the artist's body while decorative needlework traces a history of chronic pain caused by endometriosis.

The needlework practice is called smocking, and it is used to hold gathers or folds in fabric in place. Its application here not only bears witness to pain and trauma by marking areas of tension, it also connects to the artist's matrilineal heritage of women who knit, crocheted, smocked, and performed seamstress work to survive.

Decades of feeling isolated by experiences of medicalization and sexism within medical practice are also translated here through these areas where the artist pays tender attention. Where static diagnosis and insufficient treatment once touched, smocking becomes an act of intricate transformation. In these places, the body witnesses pain become something closer to hope.

Samantha McLeish is an interdisciplinary artist specializing in sculpture. Her practice centres on women's lived experience and her maternal lineage to explore how intergenerational trauma can be embedded within textile practices.

The next artwork in the exhibition is a sculpture located to your right, about a metre away from the wall.