

## PRESS RELEASE

**C. Mae Bloom**

***Borrowers***

**12 March - 9 May 2026**

*Borrowers* is the first solo exhibition by C. Mae Bloom at Hannah Barry Gallery. It brings together four separate bodies of work exploring how time and feelings are imposed upon objects and the subjective ways in which they are valued. Sourced from charity shops, car boots, antiques shops, junk shops and house clearance stalls, Bloom reimagines the left-behind and abandoned, casting a light on the lives of objects and the stories they tell.

Two bodies of work in the downstairs gallery inspire the title of the exhibition.

The ongoing series of sculpture, *Somebody else's song*, presents personal collections of related objects discovered by the artist and preserved intact, in the conditions of how they were found. For example, the gold and silver button collection is displayed in the organisational pattern it was displayed in for sale, and permanently secured in place by the artist. The collection of trim came with no container, so the artist used a box found at the same house clearance stall to hold them together, imagining they came from the same home, experienced the same touch of the same hand, so it seemed the same act of simple, sensible thrift ... The scrap wool collection is kept in an exact reproduction of the original box it was found in at the second-hand market.

In making these works, the moment of time is preserved when the objects change: from a functional ready to be used group of things, to a practical gesture in a fossilised state, saved for a future that never came. Intention is suspended, plans not fulfilled... nevertheless the instinct to keep, to hold on, to give a place, to record time is continued.

*Constellations* present ensembles of objects embodied with meaning and life stories, each part being its own separate form but understood differently when observed in dialogue with its surrounding objects. This term is borrowed from 'constellation narratives', a literary device that links multiple stories into a coherent storyline to reveal a deeper contextual knowledge. The objects are chosen incidentally with objects of resonance. A bag that formerly contained human ashes, coloured cellophane chocolate, a travel sewing kit, small embroidered felt bags. Some things found at the same time, in the same box, at the same junk shop, leading to the presumption that they were made by the same person.

The three circular surfaces, through this act of instinctive arrangement, evoke three life stages. On one circular surface, objects referencing games, toys, chance and potential are reminiscent of youth. The largest circular surface presents objects performing social encounters or objects of labour associated with adulthood and its constructed behaviour. The last circular surface, with objects that most obviously show their lifespans – antique objects, spindly objects that are not obviously of this time but still hold meaning – indicate a more habitual, elderly age.

In the upstairs gallery, a series of bronze sculptures shows a contrary approach to objects, beginning with a fully crafted form, informed by the process of making them itself. Bloom uses bronze as a means to think about hierarchies of objects and materials in culture - laden with historical context, from prehistoric to neo-classical use, and a history of craft that has been continually reinvented across different cultures, riddled with potentials of failure or mistake.

The artist takes an irreverent, experimental approach in making bronze sculptures, which are then painted or stained with easy, household colourants such as nail polish and felt tip pen. With clock faces featuring prominently, Bloom represents the sense of time that is invested in craft, and how this inspires emotional investment outside of economic value. Three abstract reliefs created from impressions of handcrafted materials – crochet, lace and embroidery – and the tools used in the ornamentation of textiles – pins and needles, buttons, scissors – are pressed into wax sheets that become bronze.

*Time as exchange (optimism-pessimism, industry-hobby)* deals with ideas around labour and pleasure, craft and time. In this installation, small objects – all of which are either tools of textile craft, garment making, clothing decoration or handcrafted souvenir-type objects – are placed on clock motors that sweep and tick around over a minute's cycle, some only twitching as the motor fails to complete its cycle. The objects are placed on a scatter graph: *optimism-pessimism* runs on a vertical line, with pessimism highest and optimism lowest. On a horizontal scale, it runs *industry-hobby*, with industry on the left and hobby on the right.

In Bloom's work, textile and craft operate as analogies for time embedded within personal and familial histories. Bloom draws on a lineage of women—her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother—whose lives were shaped by textile labour, often undertaken as low-paid or home-based piecework. Against this backdrop, the work reflects on the erosion of everyday making skills and their replacement by outsourced systems marked by exploitation, alongside the increasing commodification of leisure. Rather than resolving these tensions, Bloom holds them in suspension, asking what remains when function falls away. The work returns us to a persistent question: who is craft for, and who is permitted the time to enjoy it?