

## Stephen Friedman Gallery

Wallpaper\*

Melanie Bilenker depicts domestic scenes with a single strand of hair

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Melanie Bilenker's delicate handmade jewellery depicts domestic scenes, inspired by Victorian hair art

The Victorians were fascinated with hair jewellery, intertwining the hair of deceased loved ones into pendants or rings in a mourning ritual which showed respect for the dead. It is a history jewellery artist Melanie Bilenker builds on in a new exhibition which explores ways in which to capture time. 'HomeWork' – taking place at the Sienna Patti gallery in

Massachusetts as well as virtually – showcases her jewellery and objects created by gluing a single strand of hair to paper.



'Upon seeing Tom Friedman's Untitled (1990), a bar of soap with a spiral of his pubic hair set into the surface, I was struck by the contrast between the humble familiarity of materials alongside the reverence marked in hours spent making a perfect spiral,' says Bilenker on what originally inspired her. 'Likewise, in the nineteenth century, miniature memorial scenes were painted using dissolved hair of the departed as a physical stand-in, a beloved souvenir of what once was.' An ordinary, mundane material like hair becomes imbued with significance, the domesticity of daily life honoured.

'HomeWork is a reflection on the invisible work that we all take part in behind closed doors,' she adds. 'All of the time spent caring for and existing within the spaces we create that only those closest to us see. How we trim our hair over the sink, the way we hold the scissors; these are gestures rarely seen by other people, yet we can

recognise ourselves in these small movements.' Her pieces translate these scenes into simple forms, drawing the intimacy in basic lines: 'It is an attempt to stop time and present a moment as it exists.'

