

Press Release

Softwear

Curated by **Kira Wainstein**

On view:

Friday, 18 September - 17 October, 2026

Wednesday - Saturday, 12–18

Opening Reception:

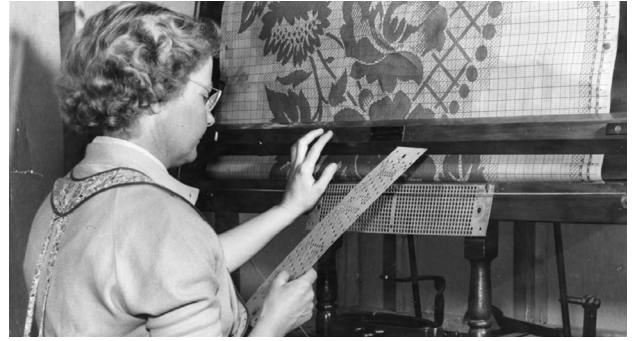
Thursday, 17 September, 18:30-20:30

Location:

No Show Space, 39 Temple St, London E2 6QQ

Featuring work by:

Crystal Bennes - daniela brill estrada & Monica C. LoCascio - Charlotte Johannesson - Steph Linn - Shannon Swinburn



Crystal Bennes, *When Computers Were Women*, 2021

Looms ran on binary code over a century before computers.

In 1804, the Jacquard loom revolutionised weaving, using punched cards to program complex images into fabric. Many decades later, the punch-card system was essential to early computers, providing a language that could be understood by digital machines. This foundational principle of computers was first harnessed not by scientists or engineers, but by weavers.

Like weaving, the history of computers is built on manual, precise, and often gendered labour. Before digital computers, women worked as 'human computers' solving mathematical problems by hand. Ada Lovelace published the first computer program in 1843, and a century later, an all-women team programmed ENIAC, one of the first modern computers.

Softwear examines how code, labour, and women have defined the histories of both textiles and computation.

Charlotte Johannesson's plotter print *Guardian?* (1984) was made after the artist traded her loom for a computer. Crystal Bennes's *When Computers Were Women* (2021) translates 2,131 computer punch cards from a CERN experiment into woven textiles. daniela brill estrada and Monica C. LoCascio's *Phantom Fields* (2026) embosses historic lace drafts and fragments of physics and poetry onto copper. Shannon Swinburn's *IBM 1401* (2025) reconstructs the hand-threaded memory of an early computer. Steph Linn's *History Keeps Me Awake at Night* (2024) reproduces an untraceable digital image through hand-punched knitting cards.

Softwear was selected through apexart's Open Call. For more information and images visit apexart.org/wainstein.php or contact maryam.ghoreishi@apexart.org.

Kira Wainstein is a curator, researcher and writer. She is Assistant Editor of the forthcoming Rachel Whiteread catalogue raisonné and works directly with artists on commissions and independent projects. She has held curatorial positions at Tate Modern and Tate Britain on displays and exhibitions including Yoko Ono, Electric Dreams, and Do Ho Suh.

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#Softwear

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