

**NICOLE POLONSKY**

**Mistakes Consistently Throughout**

10 November – 14 December 2024

MOCA London

113 Bellenden Road

London SE15 4QY

***Since (in theory) things outlast us, they know more about us than we do about them; they bear their experience of us within them and are...the book of our history lying open before us.***

**W. G. Sebald, *A Place in the Country***

*Mistakes Consistently Throughout* is a new body of work developed by **Nicole Polonsky** that explores latent meaning in an apparently unremarkable cardigan. The garment was knitted by hand for the artist by her mother, **Beata H Polonsky** (1928 – 1989), towards the end of her life. An artist herself – as well as an accomplished linguist, host and raconteuse – Beata experienced periods of mental ill-health. *Mistakes Consistently Throughout* draws on cross-disciplinary expertise and scholarship and is informed by a condition report on the cardigan that the artist commissioned from textile specialists at **Zenzie Tinker Conservation**. Akin to a psychological appraisal, the report offers insights and observations on the garment and, by extension, its maker. With its incorrect tension, dropped and laddered stitches and ‘mistakes consistently throughout’, the knitted artefact bears witness to Beata’s fluctuating states of mind. ZTC’s report can be found on the bookshelves and is available for gallery visitors.

*Mistakes Consistently Throughout* articulates literal and metaphorical readings emanating from the garment. Five brightly coloured screenprint collages by Nicole depict enlargements of some of the characterful knitting errors that were identified in the cardigan. The prints were achieved with hand-made stencils and cutouts, echoing the hand-made nature of the garment. These collages all feature repairs of some kind. With them the artist acknowledges contradictory urges: to celebrate her mother’s knitting mistakes while simultaneously seeking to correct flaws she perceives in her own creative output. A vintage haberdashery case displays knit swatches by craft aficionado and author **Geraldine Warner**. In pink yarn dyed to match the original, they too are interpretations of areas of mistakes. Pinned to display boards, they suggest the scrutiny with which the cardigan was studied and assessed, while also hinting at the scrutiny to which Beata was subjected in an entirely different context. Also on show is a set of glyphs embroidered by Nicole on cotton duck – a type of canvas that is used as a surface on which to paint, and in the construction of straitjackets. It is fabric that promotes self-expression and its antithesis. The glyphs themselves were devised by Geraldine as ‘knitting chart symbols’ – graphic representations of each stitch. Geraldine used this symbolic language to plot, or ‘chart’, all eight swatches. Through this meticulous process, flawed areas of knitting that might normally be overlooked acquire a new authority. Within their glass-and-wood case, they are preserved for posterity. Nicole encourages spectators to open and close the cabinet’s drawers, revisiting her own interaction as a student with specimens at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. A new composition by **A C Lovett**, *Dusty-Pink Woman’s Hand-Knitted Cardigan*, transforms one of Geraldine’s charts into a musical score, with notes corresponding to individual stitches. This layered piece includes text samples from ZTC’s condition report, spoken by Nicole and sung by **Frances M Lynch**, interwoven with a knitting acoustic provided by **Jane Trowell**. With *Dusty-Pink*, sound fragments are stretched and distorted, much like the cardigan itself. An image of the knitted artefact is projected on to the gallery’s window – a luminous, dematerialised presence, visible only as darkness falls.

In *Mistakes Consistently Throughout* errors and flaws become worthy of study, display and conservation. They are shown to provide ample source material for creative responses. Nicole Polonsky posits that a vernacular garment, crafted by her mother, is far from being a mute subject. Rather, its glitches and mistakes can be testaments to their maker's life and preoccupations. Here, in their conformity and unruliness, order and disorder, the cardigan's stitches embody Beata H Polonsky's frailty, persistence and creative spirit. The artist invites us to value them as evidence, in fibre, of a very human kind of fallibility and resilience.

## BIO

Nicole Polonsky is an artist, curator and writer. She gained her BA at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford, and MA Print at the Royal College of Art. Exhibitions include *lapse:re:lapse*, MOCA London, London UK (solo); *The Book as Art*, DeKalb County Public Library, Georgia USA; *A Pollock's Gallimaufry*, Pollock's Toy Museum, London UK (co-curator and participant); ACE-funded *Lighting Up Time*, Northern Print and Side Cinema, Newcastle UK (solo); *The Contemporary Print*, Flatbed Press and Gallery, Texas USA; *Y not I*, The House of St Barnabas, London UK (solo); *Ghost*[ed.], Dean Clough, Halifax UK and tour (co-curator and participant). Nicole's work is held in private collections internationally and public collections at Museum of Modern Art, Decatur Arts Alliance, Lafayette College (USA); MACBA Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (Catalonia/Spain); University of Oxford, Victoria and Albert Museum, Manchester Metropolitan University, Essex County Council, Chelsea College of Arts Library and the Poetry Library (UK). Her practice has been featured in a number of publications including *Creative Review*, *Art Monthly* and *Printmaking Today*, as well as Michael Petry's *The Word is Art* (Thames & Hudson). She has written for art and design journals and contributed an essay to a monograph on artist Chila Kumari Singh Burman (Tate Publishing). Born in Switzerland, Nicole Polonsky now lives and works in the UK.

[www.moca.london](http://www.moca.london)

[www.nicolepolonsky.com](http://www.nicolepolonsky.com)

[www.zenzietinker.co.uk](http://www.zenzietinker.co.uk)

[www.aclovett.com](http://www.aclovett.com)

[www.francesmlynch.co.uk](http://www.francesmlynch.co.uk)

[www.healingjusticedn.org/team/jane-trowell](http://www.healingjusticedn.org/team/jane-trowell)

[www.instagram.com/thegeraldinewarner/](http://www.instagram.com/thegeraldinewarner/)