

Bartha__ contemporary

Annika Thiems

On wings (or almost)

Exhibition Dates: March 5th to April 5th, 2026

Open Day: Saturday March 7th, noon to 4 PM

Bartha__contemporary is delighted to present the first solo exhibition by Annika Thiems (b. 1991), entitled *On wings (or almost)*, on view from March 5 to April 5 2026. Conceived in response to Méret Oppenheim's print series *Parapapillonneries* (1976), the exhibition unfolds as an inquiry into absurdity, surrealism, and psychoanalytic thought. The new sculptures perform futile attempts at emotional containment—unruly butterflies rising with their cases.

Working across textile sculpture and installation, Thiems creates soft structures that hover between utility and excess, tenderness and restraint. Drawing on her background in psychology, the artist employs free association and a surrealist language to engage with found materials and their sensual properties. Discarded fabrics, wooden containers, and domestic objects are treated as carriers of memory, shame, and longing. Upholstery techniques—learned while growing up in her family's furniture workshop—serve as an inherited vocabulary for the pre-verbal and unconscious. Thiems resists fixed interpretation, allowing sensuality, dream logic, and the grotesque to unfold without explanation.

Fifty years after the publication of *Parapapillonneries*, this response echoes the butterflies' refusal of prettiness and coherence, their insistence on individuality and contradiction. Oppenheim's radical legacy—her rejection of expectation, discipline, and obedience—forms a critical lineage for Thiems's practice. The new sculptures expose the absurdity of their own coping mechanisms, such as obsessive order or protective layers. The butterfly – or *psyche* in ancient Greek – becomes a force to be encountered rather than controlled: unpredictable, fascinating, and perpetually transforming.

German artist Annika Thiems lives and works in London. Her work has been presented internationally across visual art and performance contexts, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, Tate Britain, and has recently been featured in *The World of Interiors*.