

RICHARD SALTOUN

PRESS RELEASE

Penny Slinger: *Exorcism Inside Out*

2 July - 7 September 2024

Private View: Tuesday, 2 July | 6pm

In-conversation with Hettie Judah: Friday, 5 July | 6pm



Penny Slinger, *A Difficult Position*, 1970-77. Copyright The Artist.

We have many works that follow 'The Hero's Journey', but how many that track that of the Heroine? And this journey of the embodied soul is not sexist, we all, male and female alike, need to discover who we are, what are our characteristics, what is inherited, what has been instilled into us by our culture and what is projected onto us in relationships?

It is like a detective story, in which we, both protagonists and victims, must follow the clues and unravel the plot to find out who we really are. This psychological

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processing is something that I have not seen tackled in an artwork in the way it is in An Exorcism. I made images seeking to capture a state of mind. It is a blueprint for transformation and sets signposts in the sand for others who wish to know themselves.

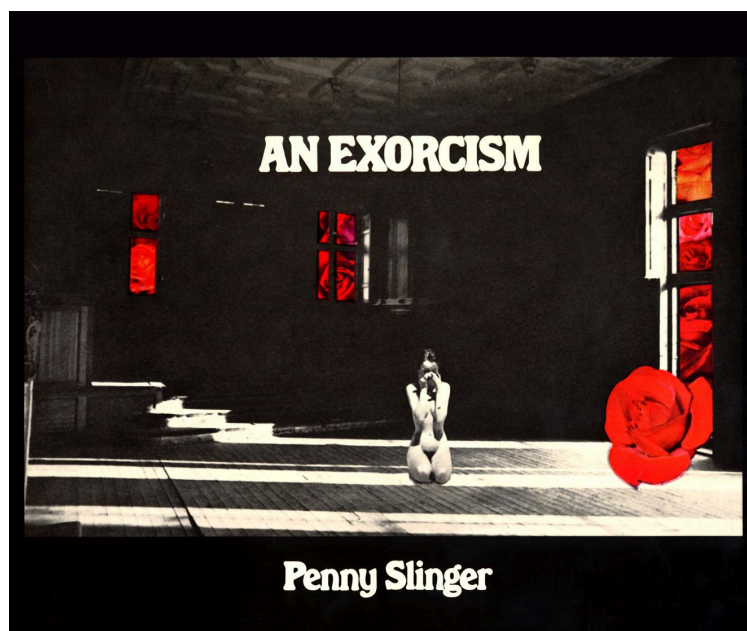
That never goes out of date.

- Penny Slinger on *Exorcism Inside Out*

Richard Saltoun Gallery announces the solo exhibition *An Exorcism*, with LA-based, London-born Feminist Surrealist **Penny SLINGER** (b. 1947), coinciding with the re-publishing of her eponymous book of the same title by Fulgur Press on June 21st. *An Exorcism* is a spectacular, immersive audio-visual exhibition based on Slinger's original publication.

An Exorcism was published in the 1970s, but faced censorship upon import to the UK, marked as pornography, and consequently burned. Therefore, this exhibition serves as a landmark occasion, marking the first comprehensive encounter for the British public with Slinger's project since the 1970s.

Penny Slinger started her career as one of the few celebrated women artists in the milieu of the late 1960s 'Swinging London'. She graduated from Chelsea College of Art in 1969, formulating her thesis on Max Ernst and finding her artistic identity in Surrealism. In her own words Slinger recalls that she "was fascinated by the seamless creation of mythological anthropomorphic figures in urban settings where the forces of nature disrupted the status quo".



Often hailed as her magnum opus, *An Exorcism* contains a collection of erotic collages, using the backdrop of the childhood home of her then-partner, Peter Whitehead, who appears as a quasi-satanic figure within several compositions. As described by Slinger, *An Exorcism* is a "surreal romance in photo collage." The narrative in the original book unfolds through biographical chapters, tracing the

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odyssey of a young woman navigating newfound realms of consciousness. Through a symbiotic blend of personal embodiment and imaginative transgression, Slinger weaves her own body into archetypal landscapes, engaging in a cultural exorcism that simultaneously delves into themes of fetishism and sexploitation from a feminist vantage point. This crypto-biographical journey is meticulously staged within the English Gothic ambience of Lilford Hall, merging the evocative allure of British neo-Romantic painting with the ominous foreboding reminiscent of horror cinema.

Enveloping the gallery space in site-specific wallpaper that mirrors the decaying grandeur of the mansion with evocative Surrealist interventions, the forthcoming exhibition at Richard Saltoun Gallery will feature the original collages from *An Exorcism*, alongside previously unreleased sound and video compositions, offering viewers an immersive encounter with Slinger's multifaceted exploration of desire, identity, and the subconscious. Presented for the first time as an immersive exhibition, *An Exorcism* will envelop visitors in the Slinger's seductive, uncanny world.

About Penny Slinger

The provocative practice of London-born, LA-based artist Penny SLINGER (b. 1946) spans photography, collage, film and sculpture. Active from the late 1960s, Slinger emerged into a maelstrom of political protest, social change and sexual freedom. She graduated from the Chelsea School of Art in 1969 having developed a visual language she described as 'feminist surrealism', influenced by her study of European Surrealism, her friendship with Roland Penrose and association with Max Ernst. Slinger quickly began exploring and investigating the notion of the feminine subconscious and psyche, using her own body to examine the relationship between sexuality, mysticism and femininity.

She featured in significant historical exhibitions such as *The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art* at Tate St. Ives (2009) and *Angels of Anarchy: Women Artists and Surrealism* at Manchester Art Gallery (2009), alongside Frida Kahlo and Meret Oppenheim. Recently, she was part of "The Horror Show!" at Somerset House, London (2022), a landmark survey of provocative visionary British artists from the past 50 years.

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