

# WOMAN



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BOOKS

Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s



The group exhibition *WOMAN: The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s: Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna*, unites 450 works by 29 female artists. The history of art showed 'the image of woman' as the product of male projections. In the 1970s, for the first time, female artists themselves created 'the image of woman'. They studied their own bodies and grasped the prospect of determined feminine identities in a provocative, radical, poetic and ironic manner. Curator Gabriele Schor refers to this movement as the 'Feminist Avant-Garde', emphasizing the pioneering and collective role that these artists have played for the last four decades.

Helena Almeida	Birgit Jürgenssen	Martha Rosler
Eleanor Antin	Leslie Labowitz	Carolee Schneemann
Renate Bertlmann	Suzanne Lacy	Cindy Sherman
Teresa Burga	Suzy Lake	Penny Slinger
Lili Dujourie	Ketty La Rocca	Annegret Soltau
Mary Beth Edelson	Ana Mendieta	Hannah Wilke
VALIE EXPORT	Rita Myers	Martha Wilson
Esther Ferrer	Gina Pane	Francesca Woodman
Alexis Hunter	Ewa Partum	Nil Yalter
Sanja Iveković	Ulrike Rosenbach	

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074 Penny Slinger

b. 1947 London, UK



*Bride and Groom - Ceremonial Cutting of the Cake, 1973*

*Wedding Invitation - 2 (Art is Just a Piece of Cake), 1973*

B/W photographs

40.6 x 30.5 cm



Penny Slinger discovered her fondness for Surrealism while still at the Chelsea School of Art, where she completed her studies in 1969. In her early work, she worked intensively with surrealist forms of speech and used these in a feminist context to articulate the concerns of the women of her generation. The artist fought for the equality of men and women, above all with respect to sexuality. 'To be honest, there was hardly any understanding of the idea that women could enjoy having sex. It was thought that women should be subordinate and subject themselves to men.'<sup>1</sup> In the London of the 1970s, she took part in numerous happenings, discovering art forms for herself. In an interview with *Imagine Magazine* in 1973, she remarked, 'It's not just a question of showing people my work, I prefer to give people experiences.'<sup>2</sup>

The series of photographs from 1973, which shows Penny Slinger as a bride in a self-constructed wedding cake, also reveals her surrealist roots. In these works, Slinger equates the cutting of the wedding cake with the deflowering of the wedding night. The links between the body and pleasure, as well as those between nourishment and sexuality, are explored. These photographs were first shown, under the title *Opening*, at the Angela Flower Gallery in London in the summer of 1973. For the opening of the exhibition, Penny Slinger had planned to stage a happening to which visitors were supposed to come to the gallery dressed as bride and groom, where they would be served a banquet of erotic delicacies. At the last moment, the gallery owner felt too awkward about the action and backtracked on the idea. So in terms of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or 'total work of art', the happening did not take place. [NH]

1. Penny Slinger, interviewed by Angela Stief, *Kunstforum International*, no. 225, March-April, 2014, p. 142

2. Penny Slinger, *Imagine Magazine*, 1973

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*Promised a Bed of Roses, 1973*

B/W photograph, collage on paper

40.6 x 30.5 cm



Wooden dollhouse, dolls, photographs, mirrors,  
life cast of hand and mixed media materials  
66 x 58.4 x 36.8 cm

