



Raindance Film Festival: Penny Slinger: Out Of The Shadows

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Penny Slinger: Out Of The Shadows

Directed by Richard Kovitch

Starring Penny Slinger, Peter Whitehead, Jack Bond, Michael Bracewell and Jane And Louise

Screening at [Raindance](#) September 21st, 25th, 2017

by Lewis Church

Penny Slinger's visual art and performance grew out of the 1960s and 70s counterculture of Swinging London, and yet has remained largely overlooked in the historical documentation of the period. Richard Kovitch's documentary *Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows* begins to rectify this by enacting a deep and respectful survey of the startling, strange and alluring work Slinger produced across multiple art forms. With a fantastic soundtrack by Psychological Strategy Board, and editing that intriguingly echoes the collage aesthetic of Slinger's visual artworks, the documentary feels both current and needed.

As contributor Maxa Zoller observes, the recentering and affirmation of work made by women during the time requires a denial of the 'museumification of the sixties' and a deep excavation and production of archival material. *Out of the Shadows* does this admirably, with comprehensive and important interviews with major participants, including Slinger herself and Peter Whitehead and Susanka Fraey, her partners and collaborators. Between them they suggest that Slinger's bisexuality and challenge to an often-chauvinistic counterculture led, in part, to the oversight the film works to rectify. Slinger's provocative staging of female desire is further referenced as both a successor to the Surrealists and a precursor to the YBAs, one that is only now coming to light.

The film concludes with an extended explanation and analysis of *An Exorcism* (1977), a piece seen as the synthesis of Slinger's practice, and a concretisation of all her earlier potential. A collaged self-portrait and psychological journey, *An Exorcism* leaps from the screen as an under-documented masterpiece.

After this seminal work, Slinger largely retired from London art world, and the documentary too rather abruptly finishes, although not without offering a tantalising glimpse of her subsequent work with the Arawak peoples of the Caribbean. Whilst it would have been fantastic to see more of this, *Out of the Shadows* demonstrates the need for continual historical reappraisal and highlights the work of an artist who deserves to be better known.