

Arts

'Sex Work' exhibition of censored feminist art finds home at Frieze

Updated 6th October 2017



1 / 14 - "Ohne Titel (Untitled from the series 'Death Dance with Maiden') (1979-1980) by Birgit Jürgenssen

Written by
Ana Rosado, CNN
 © London

During the 1970s, a span of work from a group of revolutionary, sex-positive female artists was deemed too sexually explicit to be put on show. At the time, art dealer Leo Castelli famously said of video art pioneer Natalia LL's pieces that played on physical sensuality: "America is not ready for this."

New York- and Warsaw-based curator Alison Gingeras challenged Frieze art fair in London to bring back these artworks in a special exhibition -- aptly titled "Sex Work" -- that asks the question again: are we ready for pieces a number of feminists also thought should be kept in the dark?

Gingeras has no doubt: "In terms of context the world is ready because we are seeing ... an egregious return of misogyny incoming directly from, for example, the president of the US. To go back in history and look at female artists who are using their sexual agency. It's a retaliation against President Trump's 'grab them by the pussy,' disgusting, degrading treatment of women."

Sex Work

The American curator, who has held positions at institutions like Paris' Pompidou Center and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, is no stranger to sex-positive feminism: her first official show at Dallas Contemporary, "Black Sheep Feminism: The Art of Sexual Politics" looked into sexual mores.

With "Sex Work" she aims to celebrate nine women artists who dared to put

with sex work, and aims to celebrate the women artists who dared to put a transgressive spin on sexuality and who, for their forward-looking, feminist oeuvre, were suppressed from the commercial gallery narrative.



"Consider the Lilies" (1970-1977) by Penny Slinger

On the walls at Frieze there will be works by California-based artist Penny Slinger, whose surrealist collages opened new doors into female sexuality and enlarged the erotic imagery bank, and from American artist Marilyn Minter, a nightlife staple of the 1970s, whose style borrowed as much from advertising as from pornography. Polish artist Natalia LL, also part of the exhibition, notoriously indulged in bananas and frankfurters on screen, which caused uproar and titillation in equal parts.

The feminist black list

The 1970s are known for the sexual revolution, but this period was also teeming with feminist sex wars on more divisive themes like pornography.

"I was writing about the artist Jeff Koons, who infamously made this body of work in which he pictured himself with his wife, who is a famous Italian politician and porn star, Cicciolina, and I realized ... that all of these women artists -- decades before -- were making work way more audacious than his," said Gingeras about her initial interest in sex-positive feminism. "In fact, they formed a kind of matriarchy of art that paved the way for (Jeff Koons') body of work that got a lot of attention and propelled him to worldwide fame.

"I was looking at all the artists that seemed to have been left out of the first big exhibitions (about feminist art history) by major museums and the common denominator had to do with graphic sexuality."

MORE FROM CNN



Style

Dakota Johnson has lost her gap tooth -- and sparked



Style Videos

Hillary Clinton offers rare glimpse inside family's DC



Style Videos

Billionaire buys world's most expensive diamond for his 7-



Style

Masculinity in the Middle East: Confronting



"Ohne Titel (Untitled)" (1979) by Birgit Jürgenssen

All nine artists have been boycotted for their views on sexuality. Dorothy Iannone, nicknamed the original bad girl, had her works seized at a 1969 exhibition in Bern, Switzerland, and Penny Slinger saw thousands of copies of her book "Mountain Ecstasy" not only confiscated, but burned.

"The sad truth is that a lot of these artists are still forgotten or they don't have galleries -- or if they have galleries, they can't afford to do an art fair and come to London and engage the expense."

Is there an artist she wishes could have been included in the exhibition at Frieze? "Anita Steckel, who founded a group in the 1970s called Fight Censorship, which was a group of sex-positive feminist women who ... were shunned. There are a few women in that group who are still alive and are amazing artists, but they haven't found gallery representation."

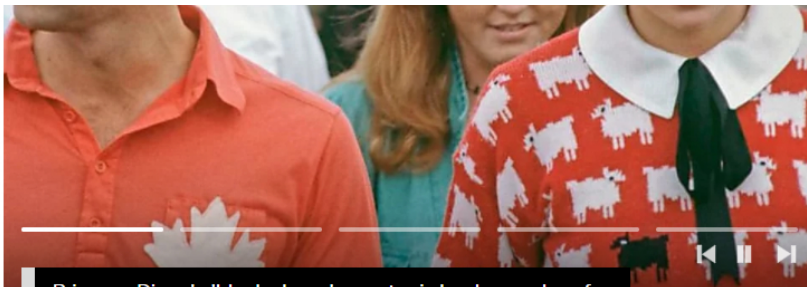


Paid Content

by Outbrain | ▶



Mansion Global Daily: Celebs in the New



Princess Diana's 'black sheep' sweater is back on sale -- four decades after she made it famous

[Read More >](#)



Check Out These Dubai Mansions That Offer Luxury You Can Only...

[Mansion Global](#)



The Cost Of Dental Insurance in Dhaka Might Surprise You

[Dental Insurance | Sponsored Listings](#)



Discover the Most Extravagant Homes in Los Angeles

[Mansion Global](#)



Dhaka: The cost of big data courses might surprise you

[Big Data Courses | Sponsored Listings](#)



The Cost Of Digital Transformation Courses Might Surprise You

[Digital Transformation Courses | Sponsored Listings](#)



Getting a Job in UK may be easier than you think

[Jobs in UK | Sponsored Listing](#)



[CNN](#)

Vatican admits Pope John Paul II was warned about abusive...



[Sports](#)

Defender scores 'miraculous' scissor kick after his bicycle...



[CNN](#)

Japanese town deploys 'Monster Wolf' robots to...



[Style Videos](#)

Remember When Kylie Minogue's gold hotpants...



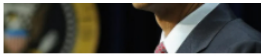
[CNN](#)



[CNN](#)



[CNN](#)



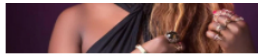
CNN

Trump hangs over Obama's memoir like an onrushing train



CNN

Why wasn't the UK public told about Prince William's Covid diagnosis?



CNN

A polygamous upbringing and a tragic loss contribute to the confidence heard...



U.S.

A woman died while scuba diving in a lake at Montana's Glacier...



Style Videos

The indie book platform trying to take on Amazon



Style Videos

A trove of old Ektachrome slides shows artists, friends and lovers in the...



Cindy Crawford and Rande Gerber Selling Beverly Hills...

Mansion Global



Real Estate Prices in Miami Might Surprise You

Real Estate | Search Ads



Dallas Real Estate Prices Might Surprise You

Real Estate Dallas | Sponsored Listings



Where Do The Richest Americans Live?

Mansion Global



Full-Floor Penthouse at the Ritz-Carlton Residences in Sunny Isles Beach...

Mansion Global



Real Estate Prices in Las Vegas Might Surprise You

Real Estate | Search Ads



CNN

What's next for the Trumps



CNN

An iceberg 80 times the size of

What's next for the Trump show?



Entertainment

Julianne Hough's estranged husband Brooks Laich says...

An iceberg 60 times the size of Manhattan could destroy a...



Style Videos

Rare NASA photos up for auction, including the only...



Sports

Diego Maradona was sedated to help him cope with withdrawal...



Health

Researchers tested 14 types of masks. Here's what they learned



CNN

Scores of civilians beheaded by insurgents in Northern Mozambique...



CNN

Nxivm leader belongs in pantheon of human evil



Style Videos

Subway train lands on whale's tail statue



Style Videos

Sindika Dokolo, Congolese businessman and art collector, has died aged 48

