

Penny Slinger - Surrealism at Riflemaker - Hear What I Say

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[Penelope Slinger Self-Portrait 1977 - Riflemaker and Penelope Slinger](#)

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[The Riflemaker Gallery \(79 Beak Street, London W1F 9SU\) presents *Penny Slinger: Hear What I Say*. This is the first solo exhibition of this artist's work to be held in the UK for over thirty years.](#)

[Hear What I Say was originally published in book form in 1977 with the title 'An Exorcism' At the time it outraged art critics and many of Slinger's peers. The book, inspired by Max Ernst's 'Une semaine de bonté' and 'La femme 100 têtes', looks at the concept of feminine power and the feminine psyche. Slinger often shows herself both as subject and object as she explores the ultimate romance – the death and rebirth of Self. The action takes place in the empty rooms of a deserted country house. The empty rooms represent the many facets of the female psyche, spaces where boundaries between the so-called real world, and the dream world, are undefined.](#)

[Penny Slinger – About the Artist](#)

[Born in London in 1947, Penny Slinger graduated from Chelsea College of Art with a First Class Honours Degree in 1969.](#)

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[In addition to 'An Exorcism', Penny Slinger is author and illustrator of several publications including 'Mountain Ecstasy' \(1978\); 'Sexual Secrets – The Alchemy of Ecstasy' \(1979\); 'The](#)

Path of the Mystic Lover' 1993); 'The Erotic Sentiment in the Paintings of India and Nepal' 1998) and many others.

She has exhibited across the world in London, Tate St. Ives, Brighton and Scotland as well as Miami, New York, Guadeloupe, Brazil and the West Indies. She has also directed or appeared in a number of films such as 'The Other Side of the Underneath' (1972) and 'Sacred Sex' – a feature length documentary produced by Cynthia Connop for Triple Image Films, Australia.

Slinger lived in the Caribbean from 1980 to 1994 and then moved permanently to Boulder Creek, California. Throughout her career she has continued to explore and develop her interest in both Surrealism and Tantrism, a movement in both Buddhism and Hinduism that combines mystical and magical elements with sacred writings.

Penny Slinger's work can be seen in various public locations including Wallblake Airport, Anguilla, where she created the Historical Murals series in 1989. She has a permanent exhibition at Marigot, St. Martin, where paintings commissioned for 'On the Trail of the Arawaks' are on display.

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In New York, in 1982, Slinger was honoured as one of the 'Women of the Year'.

Penny Slinger in Conversation

Penny Slinger spoke exclusively about her work to Suite101:

Suite101: What country has influenced you most in terms of design and colour?

Penny Slinger: This is a difficult question as I have been quite culturally eclectic during the course of my life and career, which is in keeping with my more global than nationalistic approach to things in general.

I would say that in my early years I was most influenced by the concepts and palette of my country of origin, Great Britain, and by contemporary European approaches to aesthetics. This meant that my early work was often biased towards black and white and more somber tones and with a predominantly Surrealist aesthetic.

When I discovered the art of Tantra in the seventies, it had a huge impact on my approach to these matters. Looking at my book 'An Exorcism' and then 'Mountain Ecstasy' exemplifies that point very clearly. As a child I had always had a natural attraction to the art of the east. I lived in the Caribbean for 15 years and that also impacted my palette and how I designed my pieces. The light and color in the islands was so vibrant and I was creating art in a different context. I was no

longer part of the art world and its sophisticated and art referential aesthetic, but working with my media to find ways to connect directly through my art with people who did not have that cultural reference. I spent some time doing portraits of local island people and painting the majestic beauty of land, sky and sea. I wrote articles on local art and culture and helped foster a more art friendly, art conscious environment on the island. My partner and I were actively involved with archeological exploration and this led me to discover what would become my passionate engagement, art wise, for the rest of my time there. As we unearthed, often literally, Arawak Indian artifacts, I began to see the people behind the art.

The Arawaks had been short changed by history and I felt drawn to give face and form to this all but forgotten race. I did hundreds of drawings and over 100 paintings and pastels in the series on the Amerindians and made a film based on this collection. I think it is archetypal in the lives of many artists that they dedicate part of their lives as tribute to the 'noble savage'. This was mine.

Then I came to California and connected with the Visionary art community there and that also opened up another channel in my criteria of what was seen as art. My latest work features feminine archetypes from around the planet and I have tried to resonate with the design and colour of each!

Suite101: How do moods and surroundings influence your creativity?

At this point in my life I see my creative nature fed from a limitless source of inspiration. I feel I can never have enough time in my day, time in my life, to begin to touch the depth and breadth of that inspiration. I am always trying to play catch up with the visions I have received. That being said, my ability to manifest is tempered by the conditions I find myself in, both physically and psychologically. As my answers above indicate, I am very influenced by my surroundings when it comes to the nature of the kind of art I create. When it comes to mood, that also plays a part in the kind of work I do, but honestly, as an artist, I generally find that the creative engagement is a master mood that dominates all others and which has the power to transform all lesser sentiments. I discovered my creativity as a child, and it gave me power over boredom and loneliness. I would never have to experience these tiresome moods and sentiments again!

Suite101: Which of the works in the Riflemaker exhibition has the deepest meaning for you?

Penny Slinger: That's another challenging question. Actually I feel that all my art has deeper meaning, which is why I do it. And I have very blurry lines between the deeply personal and the artistic and archetypal. That has always been my choice as an artist. The whole 'Exorcism' series, of which a number are displayed in this exhibit, was a deeply personal journey of self exploration which went on over a period of 7 years. My whole approach was to delve so deeply into the chronically personal, that one came up with glyphs that had universal symbology and application. It was my own process of self analysis and so each image was based on real and deep experience. I feel this series attempted to do something not specifically intended by any other artist that I know of. The intention of each collage was to encapsulate in the work a specific state of being, a specific psychological nuance, the atmosphere of a state of mind. I also show a number of 'Mouthpieces', in 2D collage and 3D lifecast assemblages. This series embodies my wish to give form to the voice of the feminine, which I feel has been suppressed for far too long.

so these are pretty deeply felt too. And as I used my own mouth in both cases, one can't get much more personal and specific than that!

Hear What I Say will be on show from 11th September to 30th October 2012. Further information is available from Riflemaker.

Additional Sources:

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