

IT'S TRUE THERE'S DIVINITY IN FEMINITY SO PUNCH THE PEDAL AND LET'S ROCK N' ROLL

VISIONARY ARTIST AND
RECENT DIOR COLLABORATOR,
PENNY SLINGER,
ORCHESTRATES A
HIGH-FASHION HOMAGE
TO THE THREE GRACES

*Written by Bil Brown
Photographed by Penny Slinger
Styled by Soaree Cohen*

Left to right: **SILVIA TCHERASSI** dress and
BETONY VERNON necklace and bracelet. **DIOR**
shirt, pants, belt, shoes, hat, and necklace. **GUCCI**
suit and shirt and **DALMATA** earring.





Left to right: **DIOR** dress, belt, shoes, and necklace.
ADEAM dress, **CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN** shoes, and
BETONY VERNON choker.

SILVIA TCHERASSI dress and BETONY VERNON necklace and bracelet.

Left to right: ZIMMERMANN top and pants. ADEAM dress and BETONY VERNON choker. FENDI dress and shirt.



ABOVE ALL, PENNY SLINGER IS AN ARTIST. WITH her recent 2017 documentary, *Penny Slinger: Out of The Shadows*, a collaboration with Dior, multiple gallery shows across Europe, New York and LA — Slinger’s art world ascent is palpable, alive, and influential to scores of artists. After graduating from Chelsea College of the Arts in London, Slinger began working in the late ‘60s, connecting with influential artists like Max Ernst through her patron, Sir Roland Penrose, and publishing her first book, *50% The Visible Woman*, with her penchant for collage on full display. By the late ‘70s, she had all but abandoned the art scene, viewed by many as a vanguard to feminist expression, and praised by critics like Laura Mulvey, famously remembered for coining the term, “male gaze.” With her films live-scored by Kim Gordon and Lizzi Bougatsos, to a Haute Couture dress designed after her *Doll Houses*, we are excited to see the next phase of Slinger’s ongoing visionary work.

You’ve been working on your art for over 50 years. A lot of your work is self-portraiture or using yourself as your own muse. Current and past feminists have embraced it as part of their cultural and political narrative. Has Feminism actually been a consideration when you are making anything you have done?

I have always been making work for the liberation of the feminine. The feminine spirit felt suppressed to me as I was growing up and coming to understand the values of my culture. I always wanted to spread my wings beyond the confines of established orders, if they did not seem to resonate with the deeper inclinations of my being. So I took it upon myself to be an example of the kind of liberation I was talking about, and making it about all of me – the mind, the body and the psyche, and expressing it through my art.

I have never really aligned myself as such with any movements, being a little more of a pathfinder than a follower in my temperament. However, I have experimented with different forms of participation and co-creation, including being part of the first all-woman theater troupe in the UK, Holocaust. Jane Arden, who spearheaded this venture, was a feminist, so I guess you could say Feminism was definitely a consideration in this co-creation.

Speaking of Holocaust and Jane Arden, weren’t they some of the catalysts for your iconic book, *An Exorcism*? A reaction to that particular extreme vision? Wasn’t there a film, and some healing to do?

Yes, indeed. The evolution of *An Exorcism* is a big story! In 1969, hot out of art college, I met filmmaker Peter Whitehead, and we decided we would make films together. We visited a deserted

mansion in the English countryside, Lilford Hall, where we shot some test 16 mm film, and took many photographic stills of the empty rooms and grounds.

To cut to the chase on an epic drama, I participated in a film directed by Jane that evolved out of the theater production. It was a pretty devastating experience for all involved and resulted in the break up of my relationship with Peter.

Determined to put myself together again after losing both the significant man in my life, and my co-creation with the feminine, I embarked on *An Exorcism* as a process of self-analysis, healing, integration and resurrection. The series of photo collages that comprise this work were made using the photos Peter and I took at Lilford Hall in 1969. It was created over a seven-year period. It was that deep.

The editorial images presented here in *Flaunt* were the first time

Left to right: ZIMMERMANN top and pants. FENDI dress and shirt. ADEAM dress and BETONY VERNON choker.

Hair: Veronica Valdivia
Makeup: Sara Tagaloa
Models: Tia Shipman
Janine Mari Tugonon
Ema McKie
Scott Albrecht
Keenan Tracey
Danae DiGiulio
Aussie Guevara

PHOTOGRAPHER: PENNY SINGER. STYLIST: SOFEE COHEN. PRODUCER: EMA MCKIE. HAIR: VERONICA VALDIVIA AND MYNXII WHITE. MAKEUP: SARA TAGALOA. FX MAKEUP: ANDREA VALDEZ. MODELS: TIA SHIPMAN AT LA MODELS. JANINE MARI TUGONON AT LA MODELS. EMA MCKIE AT TWO MANAGEMENT. SCOTT ALBRECHT AT THE TRIBE MQMT. KEENAN TRACEY, DANAЕ DIGIULIO, AUSSIE GUEVARA. PHOTO ASSISTANT: DHIREN DASU. STYLIST ASSISTANT: REGINA DOLAND. HAIR ASSISTANT: MELISSA TOLENTINO. MAKEUP ASSISTANT: CHRISTOPHER MILES. FASHION INTERN: LARRY KING.

you’ve officially turned your lens and aesthetic toward a fashion shoot, although you have been embraced by some of fashion’s most notable names. What were some of the challenges in putting a purely art-aesthetic toward one that deals primarily with the buying and selling of clothes?

In this case, the theme of this issue of *Flaunt* is focused on embarking on a quest or journey of the heart and mind, even against one’s better judgement. I contemplated this, and what arose was the quest for the ‘Divine Feminine,’ where seekers have grazed the wilder shores of love to come to a place of grace. I pondered the fact that what is sought on the mythical quest is but a reflection of these qualities sought within oneself.

The Three Graces presented themselves as worthy embodiments of this theme, so I envisioned permutations on this icon, combining the models wearing the fashion with nude models, who emulate the classical inspiration and are made white like statues. After the Three Graces, the Triple Goddess emerged. I have always been fascinated with the idea of ‘living art’ – the way the statue (Lee Miller) comes to life in Cocteau’s *Blood of a Poet* and the *tableaux vivants* that were once in vogue, so I sought to weave these threads into the creation with the quest for the ‘unobtainable’ feminine that is represented in high fashion.

I like to blend separate categories into a new mélange. That is the nature of the collage artist: to take pieces of established reality and blend them together into a new reality. In this editorial, I thought I would also tip a hat to my favorite teacher when I was a student at Chelsea College of Art in the late 1960s, Allen Jones. Although the work has been criticized by feminists, I found Allen never to take himself too seriously and the work felt more of a witty commentary than an endorsement of female subjugation.

All my life I have enjoyed fashion. As someone dedicated to self-expression, how we dress and adorn ourselves is one of our prime opportunities to express who we are. So I wondered how a rendition of this would feel, made by a woman, and with role reversal. I believe that the true role of the hero in our current times is that of service of, and surrender to, The Feminine.

In working with the subjects of your work, the ones that are outside of yourself, you’ve said you prefer a close collaboration

and understanding of each other to get into a sort of sacred space. When working with celebrities or professional models that have a strong sense of their own branding, has this been something you think you’ve been able to address?

If the artist is a good visionary, they can take ‘branding’ to the next level. An artist is both an empath and a rule-breaking revolutionary. If the artist is doing a good job, they are both totally in tune with the needs of the situation and simultaneously able to take it to a new level and tread those paths least trodden to virgin territory.

Art is an ongoing evolution. How do you think your work is currently evolving with collaborations that are more or less more public than over the last few decades? It seems everyone you have worked with has been very generous accepting your vision. How do you see it going forward?

I love being able to spread my wings! The recent collaboration with Maria Grazia Chiuri at Dior for the FW19 Haute Couture show allowed me to take the interior of an iconic building and completely transform it. I was assisted by my creative partner, Dhiren Dasu, and an extensive production team! This was such a privilege, and resulted in the creation of my largest

collage to date! It was as if I was taking those montages and collages from my series, *An Exorcism*, and actually pulling them out into three-dimensions, as if I was taking my fantasy *Doll House* of the 1970s and making them life size!

My actual art practice, at this time in my life, is focused on showing that I, as a woman in my ‘wisdom years,’ have experience and distilled wisdom to offer back into the cultural melting pot, which is not only significant, but vital. As an older woman, I seek to prove my relevancy in a climate that has marginalized us and pushed us aside. That is why I am using myself as my own muse, again at this time, to ‘show up’ and be noticed that I am still here, still present, and still ardently creative and productive on all levels. Being offered collaborations gives me the chance to show how ready, willing and able I am to not only participate, but make a deep and impactful contribution to the current art world and cultural milieu. I feel this is the next bastion of feminism. So yes, to get back to your earlier question, I am taking Feminism as I see it into consideration in the creation of my current works.

