

Aug 26

# Penny Slinger: "Exorcism: Inside Out" at Richard Saltoun Gallery, London

Penny Slinger, a pioneering figure in the realms of surrealism and feminist art, returns to the London art scene with her evocative and deeply personal exhibition, *Exorcism: Inside Out*, at Richard Saltoun Gallery. Running from August 24 until September 7, this exhibition marks a significant moment in Slinger's illustrious career, offering viewers an intimate glimpse into the psyche of one of the most influential artists of the past few decades. Known for her radical exploration of the female subconscious, Slinger's work in this exhibition continues to challenge and redefine the boundaries of art and identity.

## Exhibition Overview

*Exorcism: Inside Out* is an exhibition that delves into the core themes that have defined Penny Slinger's career—sexuality, identity, and the female body—through the lens of surrealism. This body of work was originally created between 1969 and 1977, a critical period for Slinger, when she was deeply engaged in exploring the intersections of the personal and the political. The works on display are part of her seminal book, *An Exorcism* (1977), which is considered a landmark in feminist surrealism.



Self Image, 1970-1977. Copyright The Artist. Penny Slinger

The exhibition features a compelling mix of photomontage, collage, and mixed media pieces, each one offering a haunting and visceral exploration of the artist's inner world. Slinger's use of photomontage—a technique where she juxtaposes photographic images with hand-drawn elements—allows her to create dreamlike compositions that are both striking and deeply unsettling. These works are a direct confrontation of societal norms, where the female body is both subject and object, simultaneously empowered and entrapped.

### Themes and Artistic Approach

At the heart of *Exorcism: Inside Out* is Slinger's exploration of the female experience, particularly the ways in which women navigate and resist the confines of societal expectations. The works in this exhibition are imbued with a sense of both liberation and entrapment, as Slinger grapples with her own identity and the external forces that seek to define it.

Slinger's photomontages often feature fragmented female forms, merging body parts with architectural elements, natural objects, and surreal landscapes. This fragmentation reflects the multifaceted nature of identity and the

complexity of the self. By using photomontage, Slinger creates a visual language that speaks to the disjointed and often conflicting experiences of women, particularly in relation to their bodies and sexuality.

One of the key themes in this exhibition is the notion of exorcism—both literal and metaphorical. Slinger's work can be seen as an attempt to exorcise the internalized images and narratives that have been imposed on women by society. The pieces in this exhibition reveal a process of self-discovery and self-liberation, where the artist confronts and purges the demons of oppression, shame, and fear.

### Notable Works

Some of the standout pieces in the exhibition include *The Bride's Pool* and *The Alchemy of Ecstasy*, both of which exemplify Slinger's mastery of photomontage and her ability to blend the personal with the fantastical. In *The Bride's Pool*, for example, Slinger uses the motif of a bridal figure submerged in water, a recurring symbol in her work that represents both purity and repression. The image is both serene and disturbing, capturing the dualities that define the female experience.



Self Image, 1970-1977. Copyright The Artist. Penny Slinger

*The Alchemy of Ecstasy* takes a different approach, using vivid colors and bold imagery to explore themes of transformation and empowerment. This piece, like many others in the exhibition, challenges the viewer to reconsider the role of the female body in art and society, urging a deeper understanding of the complexities of desire, power, and identity.

### Cultural Impact and Legacy

Penny Slinger's work has had a profound impact on the development of feminist art and surrealism. Her exploration of the female subconscious, combined with her innovative use of photomontage, has influenced generations of artists who seek to challenge traditional narratives and representations of women. *Exorcism: Inside Out* not only revisits some of Slinger's most important works but also reaffirms her position as a trailblazer in contemporary art.

Slinger's legacy is particularly relevant today, as contemporary artists continue to grapple with issues of identity, gender, and the body. Her work resonates with current feminist discourses, offering a powerful reminder of the ways in which art can be used as a tool for both personal and political transformation.



Self Image, 1970-1977. Copyright The Artist. Penny Slinger

*Exorcism: Inside Out* at Richard Saltoun Gallery is more than just a retrospective; it is a powerful re-engagement with the themes that have defined Penny Slinger's career and continue to resonate in today's cultural landscape. Through her evocative and deeply personal works, Slinger invites viewers to join her in a process of exorcism—purging the societal demons that seek to constrain and define, and in doing so, reclaiming the body, the self, and the narrative.

This exhibition is a must-see for anyone interested in the intersections of surrealism, feminism, and contemporary art. Penny Slinger's work is as relevant today as it was in the 1970s, offering new generations of viewers the opportunity to explore the complexities of identity and the power of the female subconscious.