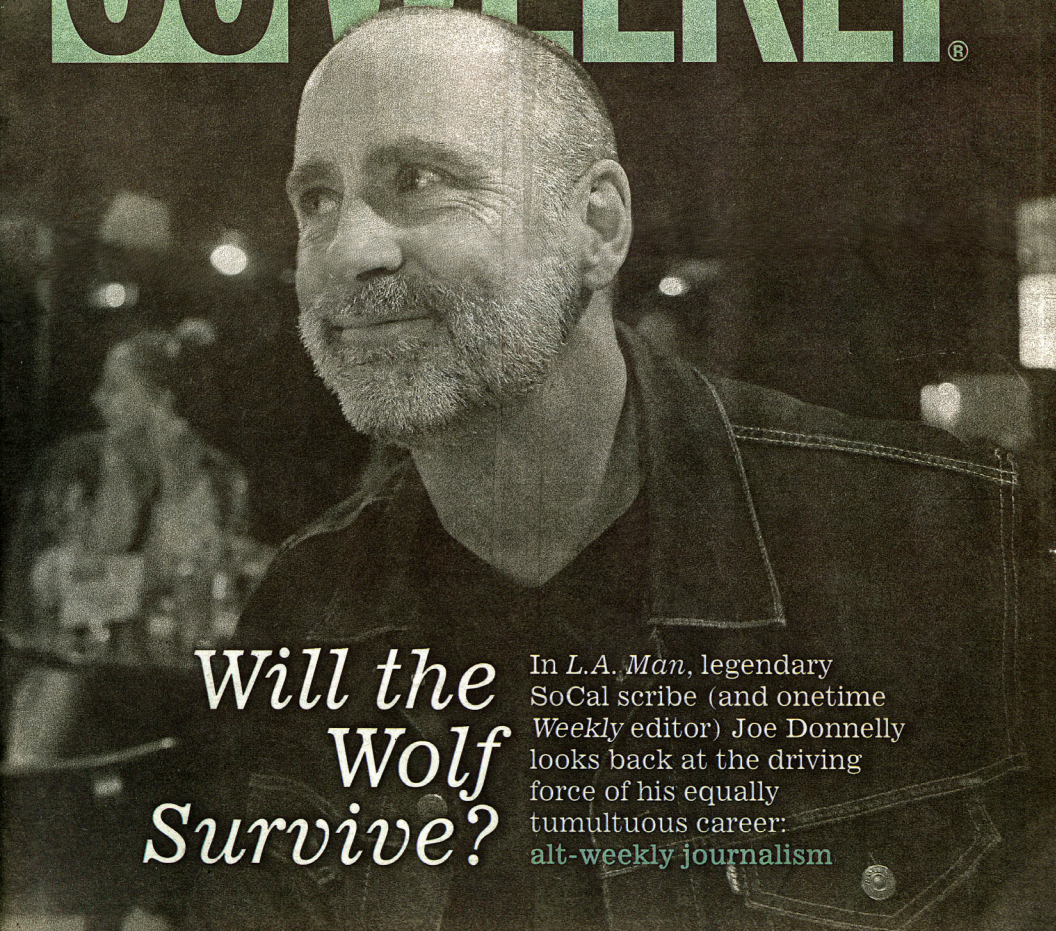


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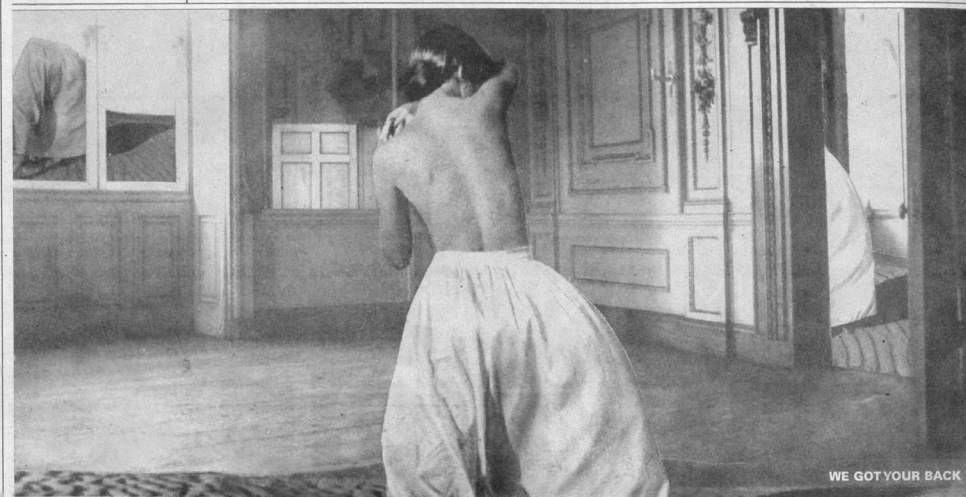
In *L.A. Man*, legendary SoCal scribe (and onetime Weekly editor) Joe Donnelly looks back at the driving force of his equally tumultuous career: alt-weekly journalism

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WE GOT YOUR BACK
PENNY SLINGER

The Feminine Mystic

Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows tracks the career of the lost surrealist artist
BY AIMEE MURILLO

In a moment when forgotten artists and iconoclasts are finally getting their due through documentary films, *Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows* sheds light on an underrated artist who created most of her seminal work during the 1960s and '70s. Slinger was most active in the London art scene and presented a series of surrealist art works that aimed to challenge the male gaze and liberate her own physical and sexual energies. While her vision was highly influential on many European artists at the time, Slinger experienced some of the same patterns of neglect and apathy by the larger art world and retreated to the Caribbean islands during the 1980s, quietly focusing on creating work that depicted the Arawak Indians.

Slinger's story falls within similarly told narratives of brilliant women artists relegated to footnotes in art history, but *Out of the Shadows* director Richard Kovitch trusts Slinger to tell her own story throughout the film. Along with insightful commentary by contemporaries, curators and collaborators, as well as the rich visual montages of the artist's work, this standout documentary presents Slinger as an especially magnetic and valuable art heroine for our time.

What makes Slinger such a fascinating topic for rediscovery in this generation is the freshness and vitality behind her work. She often inserted her own image into collage, experimental film, photography, painting, performance art, life-casting, sculpture, assemblage and theater, all of which contains energy, movement, poetry, dialogue and narrative. There are intersections of mysticism, the occult, magical realism, male and female sex dynamics, fetishism, symbolism, ruminations on patriarchal power imbalances, body dysmorphia, desire, dreams, and other matters of female liberation and the feminine. Inspired greatly by early surrealists such as Max Ernst, Salvador Dali and Jean Cocteau, as well as Dadaists such as Hannah Hoch, Slinger created collages and assemblages that would be her bread and butter through this period, even though those forms were seen as arcane mediums during the '60s. As Slinger says in the film, "Nobody has ever done collage like this."

As noted by close collaborators such as theater director Jack Bond and Peter Whitehead (a photographer and filmmaker best known for shooting counter-cultural short films for the Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd), as well as Slinger's long-

time partner during the '60s), Slinger was a striking presence because of her beguiling looks. Though she concedes she was aware on some level of her attractiveness, Slinger says she strived for autonomy over her own body and its representation in art. "I didn't want to be someone's muse; I wanted to be my own muse."

These goals drove her to investigate previously held notions of the female form in art history, and with cut-up, collaged photographs of her body parts, she made the female form something disquieting, abstract and not meant solely for male pleasure. Despite attending meetings and knowing key figures in the burgeoning feminist movement, Slinger cites a feeling of "disconnect" with the female radicals espousing empowerment and liberation because she felt the movement negated sex positivity and feminine sensuality, topics the artist was obsessed with exploring and wanted to boost for other women.

Kovitch hardly makes any missteps in depicting Slinger and her oeuvre, her vision and the personal connections with artists who would influence her work. Much of the film is focused on understanding her thought process, her formative years and her ascension to being a fully realized artist, but the viewer is left

with the impression that Slinger dropped off the face of the Earth during the '80s and '90s. Actually, she traveled to the West Indies before settling in Boulder Creek, California, for a time. Slinger was still very much active as an artist during those years—and she still is, now living in downtown Los Angeles.

It's understandably difficult to condense an artist's entire life and art within a reasonable running time—especially for a persona who gets very little recognition already—but thankfully, Kovitch avoids essentializing Slinger's work into a "greatest hits" film and instead presents a thorough examination of her most notable creations.

Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows is a truly immersive, engaging documentary, one that recently enjoyed its U.S. premiere at the Newport Beach Film Festival. While the film may take a while to land distribution or a Video On Demand release, followers of surrealist art and women artists should make a note to track the film's journey to wide release—or, at least, look more into Slinger, who at the spry age of 70, continues to offer the world her wisdom and talent.

AMURILLO@OCWEEKLY.COM
For updates and notes on the film, go to www.pennyslingerfilm.com.