

# RICHARD SALTOUN

## PRESS RELEASE

**Penny Slinger: *Exorcism: Inside Out***

**2 July - 7 September 2024**

**Private View: Tuesday, 2 July | 6pm**

**Performance by Penny Slinger & In-conversation with Hettie Judah:**

**Friday, 5 July | 6pm**



Penny Slinger, *A Rose by Any Other Name*, 1969-77. © Penny Slinger. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage 2022

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*"We have many works that follow The Hero's Journey, but how many that track that of the Heroine? This journey of the embodied soul is not sexist; we all, male and female alike, need to discover who we are. It is like a detective story, in which we, both protagonists and victims, must follow the clues and unravel the plot. This psychological processing is something that I have not seen tackled in any other artwork like I have in 'An Exorcism'.*

*This is not a work that exists within a time capsule - it's a subject that is timeless and universal. It is a blueprint for transformation and sets signposts in the sand for others who wish to know themselves."*

- Penny Slinger, 2024

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Richard Saltoun Gallery is pleased to announce *Exorcism: Inside Out*, a solo exhibition by pioneering LA-based, London-born Feminist Surrealist, Penny Slinger (b. 1947). Spanning original photo-collage, print and video work, the exhibition coincides with the publication of Slinger's iconic book, *An Exorcism: A Photo Romance* (Fulgur Press, 21 June 2024). After the original *An Exorcism* was published in 1977, the artist created this extended version, which was nonetheless withheld from being published in the UK after her other collage book, *Mountain Ecstasy* (Dragon's Dream, March 1978, Holland), was seized and burned by British customs for being deemed pornographic.

After nearly 50 years, Slinger's groundbreaking project may finally be revealed to audiences in the UK and beyond. In celebration of this moment, *Exorcism: Inside Out* will be one of the most ambitious exhibitions ever realised at Richard Saltoun Gallery. Inspired by the artist's project for Dior's haute couture fashion show in Paris in 2019, it is designed as an all-immersive audio-visual environment, with the entire gallery wrapped in images from the original *An Exorcism* series and presenting a spectacular evolution of the artist's vision.

Penny Slinger began her career as one of the few celebrated women artists in the late 1960s' "Swinging London." Graduating from Chelsea College of Art in 1969, she focused her thesis on Max Ernst and found her primary artistic influence in Surrealism. Best known for her photo-collages, Slinger's work foregrounds the female body and sexuality in a radical and unapologetic manner, aiming, in her own words, "to bring the inside out and the outside in" and to create "a new language for the feminine psyche to express itself."

*An Exorcism* is often hailed as her magnum opus. It's composed of a collection of erotic collages set against the backdrop of the empty mansion known to her then-partner, Peter Whitehead. Described by Slinger as a "surreal romance in photo collage," this work represents the "deepest excavations" she has done as an artist, started in 1969 and completed over approximately 7 years. The narrative unfolds through biographical chapters, tracing a young woman's journey towards self-actualization; from oppressive spaces dominated by phallocentric symbolism, evident in works such as *He Crows, He Crows, He Crows*, with the oversized head of a cock poking out from the corner, and *Tribunal*, in which a naked female figure stands exposed, surrounded by an all-dressed, all-male jury, to a reality where the protagonist finally comes into her feminine power, evoked in works like *A Rose By Any Other Name*, with a bright red, gigantic rose spreading its petals between a woman's naked thighs, and *Through the Glass*, a tender communion of entangled women.

Through a blend of personal embodiment and imaginative transgression, Slinger integrates her own body into archetypal landscapes, engaging in a cultural exorcism that explores themes of fetishism and sexploitation from a feminist perspective. This

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autofictional journey is staged within the Gothic ambiance of Lilford Hall, merging the evocative allure of British neo-Romantic painting with the ominousness of horror cinema.

From the original *An Exorcism*, Slinger created an extended version of the book, complete with her writings and a film script, which remain unpublished. The exhibition at Richard Saltoun Gallery will present a selection of Slinger's original collages alongside her recent animated film *An Exorcism - The Works* (2019), which will be shown for the very first time in the UK, and reflects Slinger's original, filmic approach to the project. The entire gallery will be transformed into an immersive environment, covered with images that mirror the surreal, decaying grandeur of the mansion, completely enveloping viewers within Slinger's multifaceted exploration of desire, identity, and the subconscious.

Premiering in the UK, *Exorcism: Inside Out* invites visitors to "walk into the Mansion of Dreams and feel themselves part of it, from the inside out".

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### About Penny Slinger

The provocative practice of London-born, LA-based artist Penny SLINGER (b. 1947) spans photography, collage, film and sculpture. Active from the late 1960s, Slinger emerged into a maelstrom of political protest, social change and sexual freedom. She graduated from the Chelsea School of Art in 1969 having developed a visual language she described as 'feminist surrealism', influenced by her study of European Surrealism, her friendship with Roland Penrose and association with Max Ernst. Slinger quickly began exploring and investigating the notion of the feminine subconscious and psyche, using her own body to examine the relationship between sexuality, mysticism and femininity.

Slinger's work was recently included in Tate Britain's *Women in Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970–1990* exhibition, currently touring at the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (2024/25), and *The Horror Show!* at Somerset House, London (2022), a landmark survey of provocative visionary British artists from the past 50 years. She featured in significant historical exhibitions such as *The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art* at Tate St. Ives (2009) and *Angels of Anarchy: Women Artists and Surrealism* at Manchester Art Gallery (2009), alongside Frida Kahlo and Meret Oppenheim.

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