

Institute of Contemporary Arts

The Mall
London SW1Y 5AH
www.ica.art

PENNY WORLD

8 JUNE - 18 SEPTEMBER 2022

Penny World spans the last 30 years of work by London artist and poet Penny Goring. This is the artist's first solo exhibition in a public institution and includes a selection of work from her expansive practice. Presented here are vividly coloured paintings, drawings and sculptures, and darkly humorous digital collages and videos. The artist's relentlessly direct poetry is also entangled throughout – appearing in her works' titles and stitched onto her fabric sculptures.

These works stem from Goring's personal processing of trauma and her experiences of violence. Collectively, they convey emotions associated with states of grief, fear, loss, panic and powerlessness. Interweaving representations of personal experiences with references to history and contemporary culture, Goring populates her invented mythologies with repeated words and motifs.

Working from her home, Goring makes art compulsively and works freely across mediums. She uses modest materials – such as ballpoint pens, fabric and food dye – and free computer programmes such as Microsoft Paint. Her practice has been shaped by restrictive housing conditions, lack of funds and inadequate therapeutic support. Viewed in the context of the UK's cost-of-living crisis, *Penny World* attests to the long-term effects of financial precarity and affirms the power of creativity in the face of austerity.

This exhibition includes artistic depictions of nudity, self-harm and themes of sexual violence, addiction and death.

Lightweight chairs with back support and armrests are available for viewing the exhibition. Please let a staff member know if you require one.

IMAGE MACROS

Goring was active in the internet-based alt lit scene of the 2010's. She was prolific in output and uploaded hundreds of poems, GIFs, videos and digital collages to Tumblr, Facebook and Twitter. Of this time, she writes: 'I fell in love with words and fonts and image macros and instant feedback without leaving the house.'

Goring's image macros are mini poems that collage words and images. Made for circulation online, they appear as printed posters in *Penny World*. In these works, Goring superimposes photographs of herself as a young woman onto images of male artists and models and overlays her words upon the artworks of others. Of this process, Goring writes: 'Copy-pasting my young face onto other people's photos felt like magical territorial pissing: if I stick my face on it, it's mine.'

UPPER GALLERY

AMELIAS

Amelia Dead Inside Me (2017) and the three felt-tip pen works accompanying it are selected from a body of drawings and paintings titled the *Amelia* series (2017 – 18), which feature Goring and Amelia, the artist's ex-lover, who is now dead. Goring writes that in the scenes depicted in these works, 'spectacular violence is the idiom of everyday life.' She describes her subjects as: 'two girls stuck in a dark dead world – interchangeable, like killers dressed in a victim's skin, thrilled to know themselves the object of so much desire and terror, struggling with the awful consequences.'

EXTREME NAKED YOGA

The practice of drawing is central to Goring's work. The seemingly free and impulsive nature of her biro and felt-tip lines have been skilfully honed and are tightly controlled – a drawing style Goring describes as 'very carefully wrong.'

Drawings of bodies in various states of contortion are seen throughout *Penny World*. For her *Extreme Naked Yoga* series from 2017, Goring turns to fetish porn websites to draw figures in impossible postures. Elsewhere, Goring's figures are depicted weeping, bruised, and drowned in blood. The artist's drawn characters appear neither dead nor alive but helplessly caught in states of stasis brought on by unseen violence.

1990'S PAINTINGS

Goring studied painting at Kingston University in the early 1990's. During this time, she made *Dim Jaw* (1995) and the accompanying paintings exhibited as part of *Penny World* – works that demonstrate Goring's development of the autobiographical approach that has come to characterise her practice.

In these paintings, the artist makes repeated use of childlike motifs, pastel colours and simple shapes. At the time of their making, these works were criticised by a university tutor for being too 'girl's world.' Full of feelings of loss and longing, these works pre-empt the self-therapeutic painterly mode that rose to prominence in the 2000's.

LOWER GALLERY

ART HELL

Penny Goring's semi-autobiographical series *ART HELL* (2019 – 20) was made during a period of desperation due to oppressions inflicted by Conservative legislation.

Goring created these 50 small drawings by intentionally accessing recurring PTSD visions. The works feature two of the artist's alter egos, who inhabit violent, dystopian landscapes populated by severed heads, shit storms, broken horses and melting trees – images repeated throughout Goring's work. Seen together, these symbolic works reflect a contemporary condition in which violence is structural and commonplace.

DOOM TREE

The image of a solitary tree recurs throughout Goring's work, repeated in both her drawings and poetry. Trees are often understood as symbols of steadfastness and vitality; however, the trees in *Penny World* appear vulnerable and limp. In Goring's words, *Doom Tree* (2016) 'echoes something real'.

ME, ME, ME, ME

Penny World is full of self-portraits and the artist's representations of her subconscious. These works take many different forms – from drawings of alter-egos to digital collages.

In the early self-portraits *me, me, me, me* and *Emotional Tourist* (both 1992), Goring wrangles with her body's sense of longing and desire. These works introduce the troubled

DOLLS

Goring's hand-sewn doll sculptures embody extreme emotional states, such as *Grief Doll* (2019), which mirrors how feelings of loss can be experienced physically. These works also attest to the consequences of habitual violence: *Hell Doll* (2022) appears as if nailed to a stake and engulfed by flames, *Dust Doll* (2019) wears a severed red hand for a heart, and *Blue Murder Doll* (2022) is cut and scarred.

Although these sculptures are manifestations of the effects of trauma, they also hold protective qualities. These works have been made lovingly, with their frailties honoured by the artist; in turn, they offer comfort and respite. In Goring's words, these works examine 'the eternal embrace of what saves and what kills.'



BIO

Penny Goring (b. 1962) lives and works in London. She graduated from Kingston School of Art in 1994 and has exhibited at Tate St Ives; the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; South London Gallery and Arcadia Missa, London.

Download the Penny World Instagram face filter tagging @penygoring @icalondon #PennyWorld, download here:



shapes of damaged bodies and limbs that repeat throughout *Penny World* and act as precursors for the distorted forms of her more recent doll sculptures. For Goring, the act of creating these confessional self-portraits is alleviative – it helps with the processing of her anxieties.

FOOD DYES

Goring makes art using only what can be found in her home. Her *Untitled Food Dye* series of paintings from 2009 is made using red, blue and black food colouring as an alternative to ink. These bold decorative works feature figures swamped by voluminous and heavily patterned dresses. Goring also uses food dye for her *I Smell Stupid* series of sketches from the same year that reveal feelings of shame and worry.

FEAR & PLEASE MAKE ME LOVE YOU

Lo-fi video-poems *Fear* (2013) and *Please Make Me Love You* (2014) feature Goring reading her poetry aloud at home. Obsessively listing everything she is frightened of – from poverty to ageing to relapse – *Fear* is typical of Goring's raw and direct writing style. In *Please Make Me Love You*, Goring juxtaposes darkly surreal imagery with colloquial idioms and saccharine greetings. Her repetitive phrasing builds in both works, mimicking the nature of an anxiety spiral.

Transcripts of these poems are available at the front desk and here:



EVENT PROGRAMME

Penny World Introductions

7pm on weekdays and 3pm on weekends

Daily introductions to the exhibition by ICA Public Advisors

Fail Like Fire

Wednesday 13 July, 7pm

An evening of spoken word by artists and poets.

Penny World Curator Tour

Wednesday 10 August, 6:45pm

Penny World Curator Tour (BSL Interpreted)

Wednesday 7 September, 6:45pm

Tours for Schools, Universities and Youth Groups

For further information on educational tours or to book tickets for events, please visit www.ica.art or the box office.

The ICA would like to thank all the lenders to the exhibition: Alice Black, the Braunsfelder Family Collection, Antonia Marsh, Sophie Mörner, Alexander V. Petalas, Bianca and Stuart Roden, and Camilla Safyurtlu.

This exhibition has been made possible through the generous support of ICA Friends and the Penny Goring Exhibition Supporters Circle: Alice Black, Concrete Projects, Silvia and Francesco Francica Collection, Sigrid and Stephen Kirk, Arcadia Missa, Bianca and Stuart Roden and Robert Sheffield.

CURRENTLY
LOWER BY
YOURSELF
BACK TOWARD
THE SOIL
EAT FLOWERS

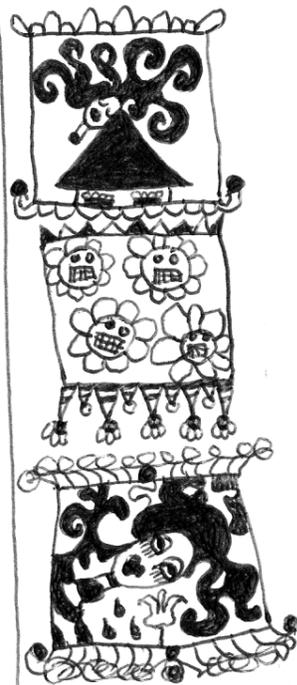
HOW MANY
TIMES
CAN I
BE RUINED

I DREAM
OF
ANTI
CAPITALIST
RAPTORS

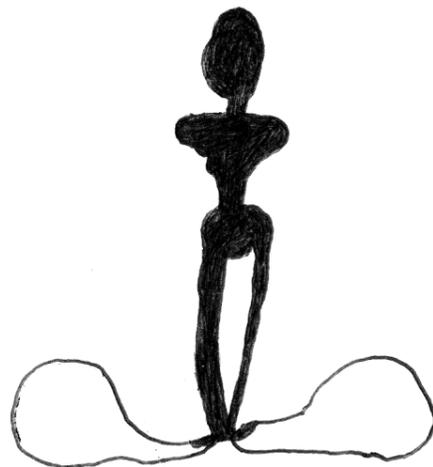
← IMAGE: MACROS →

LOWER GALLERY

ART
HELL

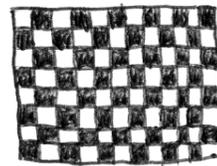


DOOMTREE



FOOD
DYES

FEAR



PLEASE
MAKE
ME
LOVE
YOU



penny 2022

ME, ME, ME, ME

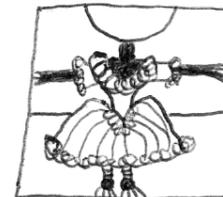
AMELIAS



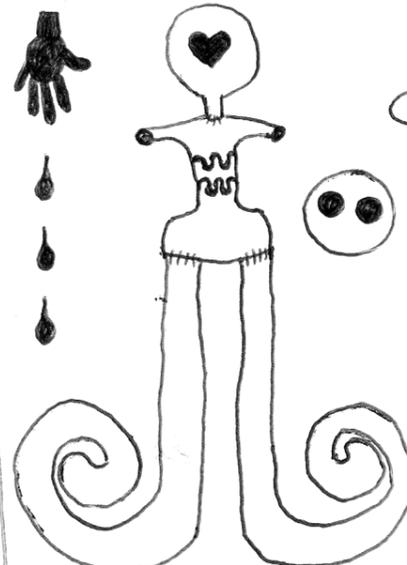
EXTREME
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1990's
PAINTINGS



UPPER GALLERY



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