

*Arcadia Missa* ÷

PENNY GORING  
PRESS

ARCADIAMISSA.COM  
INFO@ARCADIAMISSA.COM

35 DUKE STREET  
LONDON, W1U 1LH

# FRIEZE

## Penny Goring's Art of Survival

The artist and poet invites us into her world of rage, vulnerability and humour at ICA, London



BY ELLA SLATER IN [EXHIBITION REVIEWS, UK REVIEWS](#) | 04 JUL 22



'Penny World', the artist and poet Penny Goring's first solo institutional exhibition, is her testimony to surviving a hellish existence through creation. This is a romantic idea, but one Goring fully embodies, having overcome personal trauma, poverty and mental illness through 30 years of compulsive artmaking. Entering Goring's world feels like creeping into the depths of her brain; there is a sense that she produced this work to be viewed privately.



Penny Goring, *Dust Doll*, 2019, fabric sculpture. Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London; photograph: Tim Bowditch

The main wall of the downstairs gallery is covered in Goring's 'Image Macros' (2013–22), Microsoft Paint collages that initially existed online but are here blown up to wall-sized proportions. In *Dethbone* (2014), Goring stares frostily at the viewer with the ferocious words 'I FUK DEATH WIV MY LOVE BONE' on her chest. Through digital artworks, poetry and GIFs, Goring established herself in the alt-lit scene of the 2010s. Her Tumblr page contains streams of untameable language, cigarette-in-hand webcam selfies and biro drawings of contorted women bleeding, shitting and masturbating.

Goring's sharp charisma penetrates all this work. For example, in *Fear* (2013), one of two lo-fi video poems, she erratically lists her phobias: 'I fear hip replacement ... I fear people.' While in *Please Make Me Love You* (2014), she deadpans: 'love you like my mum's dead uncle ... love you like god's luxury omni-dick ... love you like tenuous lol'. The humour functions more as a psychological antidote to her often painful and vulnerable subject matter. The introduction of the artist's voice animates the work and is an excellent addition to the show. Curator Rosalie Doubal's decision to include it only in these videos leaves me wanting more.



Penny Goring, *Inflatable Dress of Despair (Heart)*, 1992, acrylic paint on paper. Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

There is no sense of time in this world. Goring draws on evergreen themes, such as systemic violence, lack of access to affordable therapy and the UK's cost-of-living crisis. Her work parallels that of Louise Bourgeois and Eva Hesse: Bourgeois's textile figurines, such as *Single I* (1996), are clear predecessors of Goring's hand-sewn Spandex dolls; while in a 2017 interview with *i-D*, Goring quoted Hesse's experimentations with loss as a touchstone. *Blue Murder Doll* (2022) appears resting with its severed head on its hip, scarred limbs outstretched; *Grief Doll* (2019) spills black stamens from its chest, forming a delicate, dark and velvety flower. Goring's dolls are vulnerable and comforting despite their emotional burdens; they embody what Bourgeois described in Christiane Meyer-Thoss's *Designing for Free Fall* (1992) as 'the art of hanging in there'.

An unmistakable sense of consideration runs through 'Penny World', down to the hand-drawn exhibition map-cum-poster. In *Emotive title (Super virilent hyperdeath virus targeted at you know whose)* (2017), a kneeling 'Amelia' – Goring's alter-ego-cum-late-ex-lover – cries rainbow tears amidst a pool of shit, cradling a severed leg. The work undoubtedly depicts violence but also suggests empathy for the turmoil it illustrates.



Penny Goring, *I was a Visionary for Boudicca*, 2015, digital collage. Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

As the author Chris Kraus wrote in *I Love Dick* (1997): 'The sheer fact of women talking, being paradoxical, inexplicable, flip, self-destructive but above all else public is the most revolutionary thing in the world.' Goring knows this and exists in this lineage of irrepressible female artists and writers. It is why it has never been an option for her to compromise in the face of art-world acceptance or anyone else's opinions but her own. 'Penny World' is undeniably a painful place, but it is unashamed in its emotion, irresistibly itself.

Penny Goring's ***Penny World*** is at ICA, London, until 18 September.

Main image: Penny Goring, *Dim Jaw (detail)*, 1995, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

## In Pictures: See Inside Artist and Poet Penny Goring's Moving, Funny, and Confrontational World in a New Show at ICA London

The exhibition is the artist's first U.K. retrospective.

Amah-Rose Abrams (<https://news.artnet.com/about/amah-rose-abrams-284>), June 10, 2022



Penny World at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (ICA). Photo credit © Anne Tetziuff

The artist and poet Penny Goring's clever and biting work has been getting a lot of attention (<https://news.artnet.com/partner-content/6-artists-to-watch-april-2020>) lately, and now she's having her first U.K. retrospective, at the ICA in London (<https://www.ica.art/exhibitions/penny-world>).

The exhibition, "Penny World," takes us through 30 years of Goring's emotive, political, and confrontational practice that encompasses sculpture, painting, drawing, video, and poetry, including some of her key series, "Anxiety Objects" (2017) and "ART HELL" (2019-20).

As an artist who has worked through trauma and poverty, Goring makes a point of using food dye, biros, and other inexpensive or free materials to make her work. If she uses a computer, she takes advantage of the free program Microsoft Paint that often comes preloaded on it. In her more recent work, she uses her financial restrictions, lack of therapy, and housing issues to address the reality faced of a lot of creatives in London at a time of a cost-of-living crisis.



Penny Goring, *Yearn* (2013). Image courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

"Despite the violence they depict, there is a sense of comfort to be found in Penny's work," Rosalie Doubal,

curator at the ICA, said in a statement. " Her works are empathetic; they embody the disorientation and stasis brought on by states such as grief. They also offer strength and, in their humor, disarming normality.

"ART HELL" (2019-20) looks specifically at the effects of recent legislation by the conservative government in the U.K. It was inspired by the PTSD visions of two alter egos of Goring's, which comment on structural and systemic violence.



Penny Goring, *Those who live without torment (Red 4)*, (2020). Photo courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

"I have always lived under the rule of men and money, and right now, I am angry at the ways it hobbles my life and my body," said Goring. "I find the future we are in to be terrifying. Also ridiculous, in the way of a murderous clown. And I hate that it somehow feels inevitable, relentless, like a speeding juggernaut."

Goring's work communicates themes of violence, humor, and emotional health or the lack thereof through her use of fabric, color, and texture. Her "Anxiety Objects" (2017), designed to be worn on the body to alleviate anxious feelings, and her dolls offer a kind of comfort for darker times. Through addressing these themes in the places that they exist her works offer solidarity and humor.



Penny Goring, *Dust Doll*, (2019). Photo: Tim Bowditch. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa London

"The body of work that Penny has produced over the last three decades is astonishing, and her very human compulsion to create as a form of coping is profoundly

moving. I could not be more honored that the ICA has had the great privilege of staging this significant exhibition," said Doubal.

#### Repeat Offender

Love is a dress you try on in a posh shop. You take pics of yourself wearing it in the changing room. You post them on Instagram. This dress makes you look good. You desperately want it. You hide it in your bag and, glowing with the thrill, you walk out. Halfway down the high street a security guard grabs your arm and, very gently, drags you back to the shop. He searches you, interrogates you, calls the police. You spend 6 hours in the cells, crying your eyes out, and 3 months dreading your court appearance. You get 40 hours community service. The overalls don't fit but they are yours.

Repeat Offender, from *Fail Like Fire* by Penny Goring. Photo courtesy the artist.



Penny Goring, *Dim Jaw*, (1995). Photo courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

## The ICA presents Penny World, an exhibition spanning the last 30 years of work by London artist & poet Penny Goring

[Mark Westall](#)



Penny Goring, *Dust Doll*, 2019 Fabric Sculpture Photo: Tim Bowditch. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

In June 2022, the Institute of Contemporary Arts will present Penny World, an exhibition spanning the last 30 years of work by London artist and poet Penny Goring. This is the artist's first institutional solo exhibition and

explores the breadth of her extensive practice, which includes poetry, sculptures, drawings, paintings and video.

The works exhibited in Penny World stem from the artist's personal processing of trauma and experiences of violence, conveying emotions associated with states of grief, fear, loss, panic and powerlessness.

Rosalie Doubal, curator, said:

*Despite the violence they depict, there is a sense of comfort to be found in Penny's work. Her works are empathetic – they embody the disorientation and stasis brought on by states such as grief. They also offer strength and, in their humour, disarming normality. The body of work that Penny has produced over the last three decades is astonishing, and her very human compulsion to create as a form of coping is profoundly moving. I could not be more honoured that the ICA has had the great privilege of staging this significant exhibition.*



Penny Goring, *Yearn*, 2013 Image macro Courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

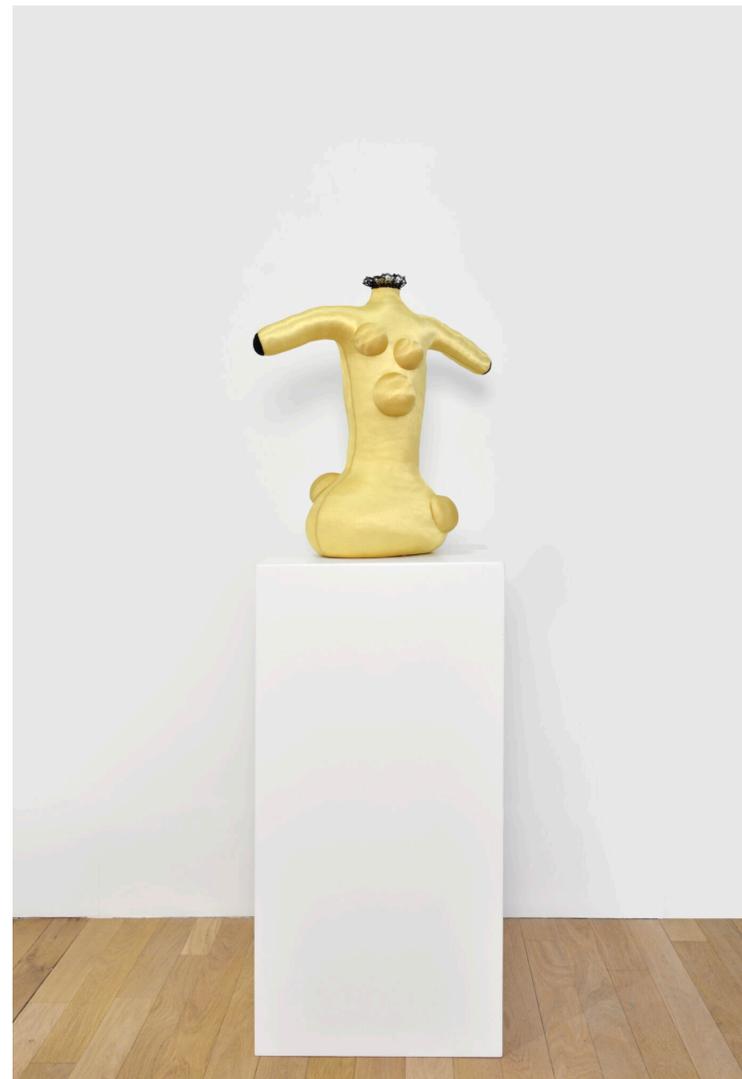
Goring works from her home using modest materials – ballpoint pens, hand-sewn fabric, food dye and free

computer programmes such as Microsoft Paint. She makes art compulsively and works freely across mediums, using images, words and materials repetitively, with new pieces often referencing works she has made previously. Her work 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 asserts the power of creativity in the face of austerity.



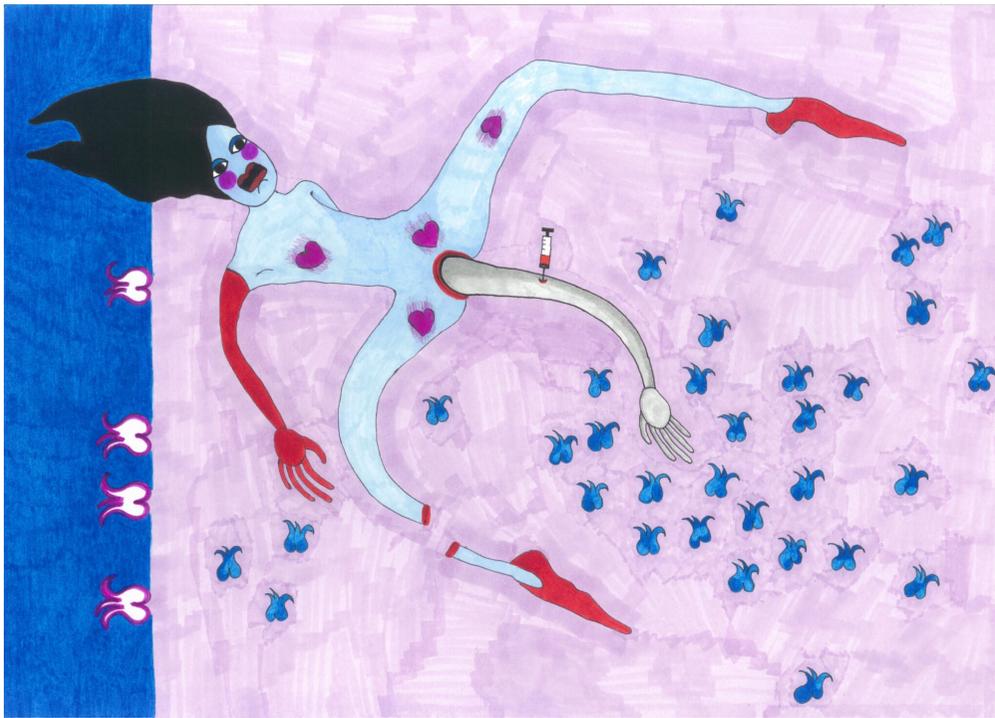
Penny Goring, TRULY (ART HELL), 2019 Black ink on paper Courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

Goring's semi-autobiographical ART HELL (2019–20) series was made during a period of desperation due to oppressions inflicted by Conservative legislation. Goring created these fifty 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, plague flowers, shit storms, wounded horses and melting trees – images repeated throughout Goring's work. Seen together, these emblematic works reflect a contemporary condition in which violence is structural and commonplace.



Penny Goring, Plague Doll, 2019 Fabric Sculpture Courtesy of the artist and Campoli Presti London/Paris

The exhibition also features hand-sewn fabric sculptures that range dramatically in scale. Goring's black and blue velvet Doom Tree (2016) stands among her Anxiety Objects series (2017) – bright, grimacing forms created to be worn on the body as a source of comfort. The artist's often life-size doll sculptures enact extreme emotional states, such as Grief Doll (2019), Plague Doll (2019) and Poison Doll (2021), which perform feelings brought on by loss and illness. While Goring's sculptural works attest to the consequences of habitual violence, they also have protective qualities. In the artist's words, her work examines 'the eternal embrace of what saves and what kills.'



Penny Goring, *Amelia Dead Inside Me*, 2017 Felt Tip on Paper Courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

Vividly colourful self-portraits and drawings of contorted bodies in ballpoint and felt-tip pen are exhibited throughout Penny World. These works amass figures falling apart in each other's arms – sisters, lovers, wives, enemies, friends – who are often pictured as mutilated and bleeding, appearing simultaneously dead and alive. These works on paper detail the artist's invented mythologies and interweave personal experience with images from history and contemporary culture.

Goring's video poems, such as *Fear* (2013), are exhibited in the gallery space and a selection of her digital works are hosted on the ICA's website. Relentlessly direct and often darkly humorous, the artist's poetry is entangled throughout her work – appearing in titles and sewn into her fabric sculptures. Like the figures in her drawings, Goring's words reveal an unsettling intimacy with danger, articulating violence as inescapable.

Penny Goring said:

*'I have always lived under the rule of men and money, and right now, I am angry at the ways it hobbles my life and my body. I find the future we are in to be terrifying. Also, ridiculous, in the way of a murderous clown. And I hate that it somehow feels inevitable, relentless, like a speeding juggernaut.'*

*'My work bends to my will, never hits me, is always there for me, suits my every mood swing, can cope with being cut to bits or stroked gently. Where*

*else and with who or what could I have a relationship like that? It's not easy, but it is mine.'*



Penny Goring, *I was a Visionary for Boudica*, 2015 Digital collage Courtesy of the Artist and Arcadia Missa, London

# ARTFORUM

## CRITICS' PICKS



Penny Goring, *Plague Doll*, 2019, fabric and lace, 24 x 24 x 8".

LONDON

### Penny Goring

ICA - INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS, LONDON

The Mall

June 8–September 18, 2022

Penny Goring's survey, titled "Penny World," brings to mind words the late painter Paula Rego used to describe the lone protagonist of *Girdle*, 1995: "I thought of her as cast out, a sinner in the wilderness . . . A real, lumpy, bumpy woman who has sinned." Like Rego's interpretations of fairy tales—where the line between innocence and experience, victims and perpetrators gets complicated—Goring's biro and colored felt-tip drawings intermingle sex and violence in frank illustrations of alienation, hysteria, deprivation, and mutilation. The exhibition is also populated with lumpy, bumpy women in the form of dolls—*Plague Doll*, 2019; *Blue Murder Doll*, 2019; *Grief Doll*, 2019; *Poison Doll*, 2021; *Jell Doll*, 2022—stuffed and hand-stitched

from silk, velvet, and other fabric cast-offs, their heads and limbs missing, contorted, or elongated. Adrift and abandoned, the dolls sit on plinths like totems or hang high on the walls like religious icons. Their plush, yielding materiality and repurposed domestic textiles recall works by Louise Bourgeois, Yayoi Kusama, and Dorothea Tanning, who have all represented the body in pieces, laden with fetishistic intensity.

Elsewhere, a series of "anxiety objects"—soft sculptures hung on ropes and bearing names like *Grey Lump*, *Cry Baby*, and *Red Torment*, all 2017—invite comparisons between artistic and therapeutic processes. Here, the aesthetics of accumulation and compulsion intertwine with an attempt to resolve psychological trauma. In two video poems, *Fear*, 2013, and *Please Make Me Love You*, 2014, she recites desires, terrors, and rage with a mantralike delivery. Goring has also installed billboard-sized collages in which her face and body are pasted over various images culled from the internet. In one, she appears as Bianca Jagger astride a bug-eyed white horse at Studio 54, hijacking Rose Hartman's iconic image of velvet-roped glamour and hedonistic splendor. It's Penny's world, after all. We're just living in it.

—Philomena Epps

Sculpture

Interview

## Artist Penny Goring: 'David Bowie showed me that there was another world'

Hettie Judah

Tue 21 Jun 2022 10:37 BST



‘I felt that I wasn’t posh enough to be a part of the art world’ ... Goring at her home/studio in London. Photograph: Linda Nyland/The Guardian

**Brought up in a rough area, Goring drank heavily and never thought that she would make it as an artist. Finally, after a detour into ‘weird Facebook’, her freaky explorations of womanhood are getting their due**

The floor beneath Penny Goring’s worktable is awash in filaments and fragments of scarlet cloth. Slivers and snippets carry across the carpet in crimson eddies, as though blood had spilled from her stabbing scissors and is seeping across the floor of her bedroom into the world beyond.

Encountering her art – haunting doll-like soft sculptures; paintings lifted from a brutal dreamworld – it is easy to confect an image of Goring as some otherworldly creature plucked from a fairytale. We meet on a wet day in late spring, not at a haunted forest but the very real-worldly locale of Surbiton station. Walking through the rain as buses splatter past, we talk about not being able to wear high heels anymore, and her time as an art student in London in the early 1990s.

“When I close that door and I’m on my own, the rest of the world disappears,” she tells me, sitting at her little worktable above the sanguine tide of thread and textile scraps. “Everything I have ever done has been centred on feelings. It’s easier to communicate emotions by inventing shapes that show how it feels.” Her work is variously funny-sad, sexy-sad, comforting-sad, politically furious and excellently freaky. There are her spirit-like Anxiety Objects, which strap on to and hamper the body, and the self-explanatory Extreme Naked Yoga drawings. A series of beautiful, storybook-like pictures of violently entangled women – the Amelia works – recall a mutually destructive relationship.



‘I Was a Visionary for Boudica’ (2015). Digital collage. Photograph: courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

Goring’s soft sculptures are meticulously crafted and stitched by hand. “I like labour-intensive things that I do with care over long periods of time. Everything is sewn with this tiny little needle,” she tells me, pulling a sharp tool from the belly of a bear stuffed with pins. “This teddy bear is always by my side: it’s called Relapse Ted,” she says, replacing him. “I was in a treatment centre in 2005 because I’m in recovery as an alcoholic.”

**‘I only want to make things I can do in my room, with no help from anyone else. I like to think I’m slyly poking fun at the big boys**

It’s the week before sculptures and paintings, old and new, will be collected from Goring’s flat and delivered to London’s ICA for the installation of Penny World, a 30-year survey show. You could read that title as Penny v World, “because I am not comfortable in this world”, she says. But also as a play on Poundland: “Everything I make is using materials I can afford, and I’m on a very tight budget.”

She leans into this poverty of means, using food dyes, felt tip pens and fabric from old clothes. The weighty-looking golden Plague Doll, covered in breast-like boils, is made of stretchy fabric rather than cast in bronze: “I couldn’t afford that,” she says. “I only want to make things that I can do in my room, with no help from anyone else. I like to think that I’m slyly poking fun at the big boys and grand gestures, because she could be monumental but she’s gold Spandex.”

Her enveloping environment for the ICA includes lino flooring (“I grew up with fitted lino because mum and dad couldn’t afford a fitted carpet”), homely magnolia wall paint and captions in 1970s-style bubble writing.

Ahead of the show, Goring’s home is unusually stuffed. She has hung work on the walls for me to see. The scarlet Hell Doll hangs above her bed, arms severed to stumps, a black heart like a void where her face should be, and long

curls like tentacles or flames in place of legs. Other sculptures lie on shelves, mummified in layers of cellophane against the moths and dust. In the hallway (but not the show) is a huge print of an image posted on Goring’s cult Tumblr feed in 2015. A model in a green fur coat sits with legs splayed, her head concealed by a crude cutout of Goring’s face. The lines “pragmatic vagina / romantic clitoris” hover on the surface.



‘Relapse Ted’. Photograph: Linda Nyland/The Guardian



© "It is hard to live with them, I'll be glad when they're not there" ... Goring and one of her dolls. Photograph: Linda Nyland/The Guardian

Growing up a misfit "in a really rough area in southeast London", Goring became an "expert truant". Her saviour was David Bowie. She joined his fan club aged nine and saw him play Earl's Court when she was 10: "He showed me that there was another world, apart from this harsh, scary place where I was getting beaten up and told that I was a freak."

Arriving at Kingston art school in her late 20s, she discovered artists who explored awkward, overwhelming feelings. "Frida Kahlo: she was like my gateway drug," says Goring. From there she found Eva Hesse. Then Louise Bourgeois: "She is so close to my heart. I feel such an affinity with her work." A pile of neat student sketchbooks is stacked on the windowsill. Goring invites me to explore them. The germs of her current work are already evident. Even the title - Penny World - pops up.

Goring has not taken a conventional route (if there is such a thing) into the art world. She is not comfortable with face-to-face encounters. (Those swirly legs on the Hell Doll? That's panic, melting the feet and ankles into useless jelly.) Despite the support of tutors including painter Peter Doig, she was not awarded a place on an MA course after art school. "I've always been really shy and had a lack of confidence, and was drinking quite heavily by the end of my final year," she says. "I just resigned myself, quite happily in the end. I made my peace with carrying on making my work anyway."

But purchasing a computer for her daughter's schoolwork in 2009 introduced Goring to the participatory culture of web 2.0: a way to make her work public in private. What came out was not pictures but words. "As I was painting, I kept hearing huge swarms of words invading my head. I kept trying to ignore them and they wouldn't go away." For six months, "they were building up and getting louder and louder. Just torrents of stories. I sat down and started writing them."



© Those Who Live Without Torment (Red 4), 2020. Photograph: courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

She posted fragments of text on Twitter which other writers identified as poetry. Goring was embraced by the online writing community, first joining the collective Year Zero Writers, then falling into the edgier, lower-case, wonky spelling, auto-fiction world of the "alt-lit" movement. Here Goring encountered "a whole new way of writing and communication". Alt-lit "used Facebook as a poem. Everything was poetry." She engaged with the visual realm again, combining text with found images, making videos and gifs. "It was only when the scene ended that we all realised we were part of a huge, sprawling universe called Weir Facebook: we were this little poem-y corner of it."

**|| You can carry baggage around for too long sometimes. If you don't examine your thought processes and trace things back to where they're coming from**

Thus, it was through the written word that Goring re-entered the art world. A video over which she recites her 2013 poem Fear ("I fear I will not get what I fear I want. / I fear what I want. / I fear I will not get what I need, let alone want. / I fear lonely, drunken, drugged-up defeat. / I fear arthritis ...") was selected by curator Rózsa Farkas for a group show at the ICA. After seeing her paintings and sculpture, Farkas went on to champion Goring through her newly commercial gallery, Arcadia Missa.

To coincide with Penny World, Arcadia Missa is publishing two volumes of Goring's writing: the poetry collection *Fail Like Fire* and a 2016 text, *Headfuck the Reader*. "She changed my life," Goring says of Farkas. "I felt that I wasn't pushy enough to be a part of the art world. She helped me see that was something to let go of. Because you can carry baggage around for too long sometimes, if you don't examine your thought processes and trace things back to where they're coming from."



© Truly (Art Hell), 2019. Photograph: courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

I ask how it feels to live surrounded by her own work: each doll or painting apparently testament to an emotional evisceration. "It is hard to live with them, basically, is the simple answer," she decides on reflection. "Big statement dolls, I'll be glad when they're not there." Nevertheless it can hurt to let things go. She describes feeling "a pang" when Farkas sold a favourite drawing recently.

Goring has mixed feelings about participating in the brutal public arena of the commercial art world. There's a series of drawings tellingly titled *Art Hells*. "I don't think of an audience when I'm making," she says. If she imagines "people to please, impress, or entertain, my mind goes blank, I feel really self-conscious and I can't make anything worth making."

Nevertheless, it is also a source of sincere delight: after decades of precarious living she can support herself and her daughter through art and poetry. "To think that all the weird stuff I've been making all my life can now be how I make my living, it's very peculiar. It's like a revelation."

Penny World is at the ICA, London, until 18 September.

# MOUSSE

evry aesthetic susk: Penny Goring  
Dodie Bellamy

Writing about London-based artist Penny Goring, I have the urge to get it right. But there is nothing right about her libidinal artifacts, be they poems, drawings, sculptures, paintings, collages, videos, or photo memes. As she writes on her Tumblr, “evry aesthetic susk.”<sup>1</sup> Goring’s work denatures the divisions between figurative and abstract, aggressive and vulnerable, worthy and throwaway. Like all the best art, it is compulsively visceral, and more often than not obscene.

In 2009 Goring began posting to Tumblr and other social media sites, where she established an avid fan base. In 2015 her digital poetry was featured in an online exhibit hosted by New York’s New Museum and Rhizome.<sup>2</sup> And when the internet ceased to be a radical or utopian space, Goring undertook prolific gallery exhibitions, including lauded solo shows in London and Paris. In 1994, then in her early thirties, Goring received a BA in fine art from Kingston University, London. Earlier she studied fashion writing at London College of Fashion. For an artist whose career is blooming, these ancient credentials are beside the point. But catalogue copy and reviews make repeated references to them, as if to say that this may look like outsider art, but this stuff is sophisticated—Goring’s really one of us. As someone whose friends tell her “you should get an agent, you should get a bigger publisher,” I ponder what makes a valid career, and I’m not convinced that my friends are right. If one’s goal is radical alterity, that needs to be protected. In a 2013 interview in *HTMLGIANT*, Goring’s viewpoint resonates:

“i’m always deeply cringing at any sweeping statements about what art is or isn’t etc. ugh. i’m not comfortable with the capital A either. being an artist feels more like a curse to me [ . . . ] so now i make stuff but i’m doing it compulsively. its like i’m a donkey chasing a carrot. and i put out too much work. i treat tumblr, facebook, twit, like a wall in a studio, not a show.”<sup>3</sup>

For Goring, art is first and foremost a process. Galleries aren’t so much a step up as a different species of venue to explore. She continues to post her work on Instagram and Tumblr.

I initially spent most of my research time looking at documentation of Goring’s solo shows *Damaged Gods* at Arcadia Missa, London (2016) and *Escape from Blood Castle* at Campoli Presti, Paris (2020). Both were exquisitely curated, with drawings, paintings, sculptures, collages, and texts resonating as if in a wounded echo chamber. In the photos, hand-stitched soft sculptures float in a pool of gender that never coalesces. Not quite dolls, but doll-like, they do not invite play. Surrounded by the gallery’s vast white expanses, they seem preternaturally still. Aborted.

Figures hang with faces to the wall or upside-down. The ends of amputated legs look like red eyes, peering out. Spongy bodies have never bothered to grow feet. Partially behave as wholes. Distressed, contorted figures lie on the ground, frozen in the non-time of trauma. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Is that a cock or a leg? Deflated torsos lie on a shelf, legs drooping over the edge. Stripped of both clothing and context, they seem not so

much sexual as libidinal fragments or Freudian drives in search of a subject. To observe them feels obscene. I am thrown back on my own vulnerability, my own discomfort with exposure. Goring’s figures turn internalized oppressions inside out, refashioning damage into a sort of non-corny sublime.

My sole means of accessing them are screens. To imagine the physical impact of an in-person encounter, I think back to first seeing Eva Hesse’s *Untitled or Not Yet* (1966), the inexplicable obscenity of orbs hanging in net bags. Or peering through the peephole of Marcel Duchamp’s *Étant donnés* (1946–66), where sight felt like a gasp. The poem that accompanies *Damaged Gods* begins: “PENIS OF A POLITICIAN. VAGINA OF A VIRGIN. LABIA OF A SUICIDE. CERVIX OF AN ARTIST. CURIOUS COLDNESS OF A DEAD PENIS. WOMB OF A WITCH” and ends with “VAGINA IN YOUR MOUTH. LIVER OF AN AMATEUR. VAGINA OF A DEAD BOY. MANIFESTING PENIS. PENIS IN YOUR MOUTH.” This cataloguing of body parts evokes the specificity of fetish porn, and also the relentless accumulation of war atrocities in Pierre Guyotat’s *Eden, Eden, Eden* (1970). One of the wall sculptures in *Escape from Blood Castle* is titled *War Doll* (2019)—a pink satiny figure with a heart for a face and red tentacles extending from its sides. In this realm, eros magnetizes danger.

I don’t need or even want to know the story behind these figures. Their lack of specificity pulls me into relation. Upon the night of May’s full-moon eclipse in Sagittarius, I pour myself a glass of wine and scroll through Goring’s Tumblr for hours. Goring is one of those people it’s impossible to not look at. Damaged charisma is perhaps the most glamorous of all. Nerdy me keeps scrolling and scrolling; it’s like I’ve fallen into a vortex I can’t pull myself out of.

The further I scroll back through time, the more personal and various are the posts. Jerky gifs. Poems. Goring with a giant pregnant belly, beaming. People in her life photographed with a loving eye. Lots of gender play. Fans leave love notes in the comments. A series of pale blue bunnies I recognize from *Damaged Gods* are sewn from an old jumper. There’s a wonderful messiness in the muck of it, and so much humor. The earliest posts consist mostly of found images and poetry. In a series of “unselfies” Goring alters photos of herself by placing large dots over her face or breasts or crotch—a reductiveness that foreshadows her later work.

I’m taken with her spare ballpoint drawings of naked women in extreme yoga poses, legs thrown back over shoulders, assholes and clits displayed full frontal. In *Over and Over* (2018), beneath one woman in an impossible contortion of the plow pose is written: “WHAT DOESN’T KILL ME MAKES ME TRAUMATIZED.” I download the jpeg and think: MINE.

1 <https://pgoring.tumblr.com>.

2 *Poetry as Practice*, New Museum and Rhizome, New York, 2015.

3 Rauan Klassnik, “.....Penny Goring.....” *HTMLGIANT*, September 7, 2013. <http://htmlgiant.com/author-spotlight/penny-goring/>.

99 Penny Goring, *unselfie #3*, 2013. Courtesy: the artist

100 Penny Goring, *Escape from Blood Castle* installation view at Campoli Presti, Paris, 2020.

Courtesy: the artist and Campoli Presti, London / Paris

101 Penny Goring and Max Thomas-Edmond aka @pis\_slute, #pisswave collaboration,

@ *my soul* (detail), 2013–17. Courtesy: the artists

102 103 Penny Goring, *Damaged Gods* installation view at Arcadia Missa, London, 2016.







# Flash Art

INTERVIEWS

20 May 2021, 9:00 am CET

## Material Traces of the Immaterial: A Conversation with Penny Goring by [Caroline Elbaor](#)



**Caroline Elbaor:** First off, sincere congratulations on this pair of exhibitions. That leads to my initial question: Were these shows always planned to coincide with one another, or did the timing occur by chance?

**Penny Goring:** No, the timing is coincidental – scheduling for both had to change due to COVID restrictions, and the outcome was that the London show opened not long after the exhibition at Galleria Federico Vavassori in Milan. The works in each were made at different times and are part of different series.

**CE:** Can you walk me through the separate shows individually? What is/will be on view? How did you prepare for each, and decide which works to include where? In other words, how do you feel the two exist as standalone presentations? (Or, conversely, do you feel they function inextricably, working in tandem with one another?)

**PG:** The two shows function as standalone presentations that are also inextricable – because they are my shows, everything I make is entangled and connected, making the work is a continuous accumulation, each piece leads to the next or springs from earlier work, ideas submerge and resurface over time. I'm simultaneously looking backwards and forwards whilst always wanting to explore different mediums, new approaches, or revisit and expand on previous methods or themes.



**CE:** Although the shows are distinct from one another, in some ways they bookend the current time we are in. The work in the Arcadia Missa show was made during the latter half of 2019 and January 2020, just before COVID, whereas most of the work in the Federico Vavassori show was made during lockdown: So it's pre-COVID and post-COVID, two different cycles of work, separated by time and world-wide catastrophe. The works in each show deviate in form, by being large doll sculptures and figurative paintings on canvas in London versus tiny doll sculptures, older sculptures, and abstract paintings on velvet in Milan.

**PG:** Further to this, the works at the Arcadia Missa show, "No Escape from Blood Castle," belong together, I made them to be shown together, they are trapped in Blood Castle – by which I mean the Capitalist structures we ourselves cannot escape. And the works at Federico Vavassori also belong together – collectively they constitute a hellish garden where the very idea of living without torment can only ever be an enviable luxury, a dream, something to aspire to, a state of mind only snatched at briefly in moments of denial or delusion. In some ways, the title of the show – "Those who live without Torment" – does not directly refer to the world of the show itself, but rather, to that which it is lacking: which is the peace of mind many are forced to live without.

The doll sculptures at Arcadia Missa are not intended to literally represent, for example, dismemberment; their damages are metaphorical; each doll is an entity that embodies and manifests a particular state, and is an attempt to convey intense and discrete emotion by way of showing, for example with *Grief Doll* (2019), what grief can actually feel like. *Grief Doll* is forever wearing a *Grief Flower*, it is permanently strapped to her torso, where it constantly pours forth a flood of grief, represented by the long black velvet "stamens" that flow from its center and down towards the floor – this is intended to demonstrate how grief can be experienced bodily, distorting your perceptions and senses.



CE: *Doom Doll* (2019) — a smaller doll, perhaps child-size, with an amputated leg and wearing a blindfold, emanates vulnerability; it is helpless and it is obviously doomed. The amputation is not intended to shock or be gruesome — the site of the wound is a hand-sewn scarlet velvet patch, almost glamorous. The remaining lone leg becomes unbearably poignant, and the blindfold, an unmistakable indication of defenselessness, is formed from a piece of embroidered peach linen that I treasured for twenty years.

PG: I make these doll sculptures lovingly, honoring the emotions, the frailties, the symptoms of the act of living, whilst giving them a visual language that causes each doll to enact its own particular predicament. The dolls displayed in “No Escape from Blood Castle” are explicitly performing their feelings.

Excerpt from: *No Escape from Blood Castle*

GHOST TOURIST  
DEVIL SCAMMER  
FIBBING DRIVER  
KNIFE BUZZ

HIP FLASK  
BIGGER BIJOUX  
MERCY FUCKER  
BAG BIRD

GOLDEN BOLLOCKS  
FUTURE BACON  
ABSTRACT GAMBLE  
CAPS LOCK

DARKER MATTER  
DEEPER LOTION  
TOXIC CIRCUS  
DEATH TOLL

SEE-THROUGH NYLON  
DISCO STRIPPER  
FEVER FLOWERS  
BOMB DROP

BLOODY CASTLE  
DOLLY MOTION  
SUGAR WIDOW  
CLOCK STOP

Both shows are named after the poems I wrote whilst making them. The poems accompany the shows, and also act as press releases. I regard them as a kind of natural spillage, in so much as they are a written by-product of the thinking, imagining, and visualizing that informs and propels the work. The poems are material traces of the immaterial, foundational aspects of my process, and exist as an alternative medium for me to utilize. They come about unprompted during the making of the work and relate specifically to the content of each separate show. To my mind, they encapsulate the themes of the shows and also function as individual works in and of themselves.



In fact, the poems are actually a polished glimpse of what's inside my private sketchbooks, which also act as diaries, where I habitually record my inner world — there is an untrammelled mix of anything I feel, hear, see, think, or dream, including TV shows and books, that moves me enough to explore it in the form of drawings and scribbled words. It is my place of freedom. These sketchbooks are in a sense my original source, where everything I make begins, and where the poems first appear, as incidental footnotes, diatribes, observations, lists, reminders, instructions, or messages to myself.

“Those who live without Torment,” as described earlier, is a wild and dangerous garden, a place where those few fortunate beings who live without torment would never want to belong.

The series of ten paintings on velvet that were made for this show are abstract, yet they could seem to suggest insect-infested plant-like forms. This aspect of the works and the poem I wrote while painting them became the initial elements that suggested the tormented garden. We then expanded on this theme by selecting three of my earlier works: *Emergency Fence* (2016), *Doom Tree* (2016), and *Wrong Rabbit* (2017), which seemed as though they were always intended for this garden.

*Emergency Fence* is a traditional suburban privet fence, but it hangs upside-down on the gallery wall, which causes the two long spikes that are supposed to be driven into the ground to hold the fence upright and in place (on the circumference of your perfect lawn, to demarcate the boundary of your property and safe happy life), to become inverted to suggest

weapons of self-defense — those two sharp wooden spikes are a warning, like, actually, there are dangers you need to protect yourself from here, and this pretty fence needs to be subverted, repurposed, because the emergency is constantly upon us. *Emergency Fence* could kill, if it had to. Alongside this stands *Doom Tree*, its drooping branches embroidered with a poem in scarlet thread on dense black velvets. This tree looks as if it has survived trial by fire — it's a poem-tree — it's a doom-poem, which across its various branches reads:

we invented love without loving  
we trust in the grief of the night  
give me the word  
yes pleas thank you  
poison poison

*Wrong rabbit* also belongs in this wild wrong garden. It is the wrong shape, wrong color, it is very carefully wrong, and it is embroidered with words proclaiming its wrongness: "Wrong Feelin, Wrong Face, Wrong Heart, Wrong Leg." Hidden across its reverse is embroidered "Stolen From Penny," suggesting my secret ambivalence at letting it go, this "Wrong Rabbit," this wrong thing, even though I willingly gave it up. I find this idea of "Wrong Rabbit" having been stolen from me to be evocative of many losses, for example, how time steals youth.

Excerpt from: Those who live without Torment

300 pink and yellow butterflies  
and they will never die  
and they will live for 48 hours  
and they will never die  
today i am wearing a voluminous powder blue dress, waist-high fuchsia knickers, strappy red wedge sandals, heart, what didn't kill me  
Fragile gestures towards Freedom from Fuckery



Penny Goring, Work in Desperation (2020). Courtesy of Campoli Presti.

## Don't Miss These 6 Exciting Up-and-Coming Artists With New Work You Can Check Out— Virtually—All Month

Galleries may be closed, but you can still discover new talent in these virtual exhibitions around the world.

Katie White, April 13, 2020

As cities across much of the world enter the second month of lockdown, many artists' long-awaited exhibitions have been moved to online platforms. For emerging artists in particular, exhibitions are a much-needed chance to gain a larger audience.

So, to help keep their momentum going, this month we're highlighting six emerging artists whose practices you might not know, but should—and whose most recent work can be experienced online through the Artnet Gallery Network.

### Penny Goring, "Escape from Blood Castle" at Campoli Presti



Installation view "Penny Goring: Escape from Blood Castle," 2020. Courtesy of Campoli Presti.

Delve into the gloomy, girlish imaginary world of the artist Penny Goring through drawings, paintings, sculptures, and video works that explore experiences of trauma on the body, from addiction and violence to aging and grief. Through dreamy symbols, anthropomorphic flowers, and ghost-like apparitions, Goring transforms personal narratives of death and loss into folkloric visual narratives full of wit and even confrontation. In her paintings, flat monochromatic fields of color become like the backgrounds of Byzantine icons, while her fabric doll sculptures appear to conjure both childhood transitional objects and voodoo dolls.

Penny Goring's "Escape from Blood Castle" is on view online through April 18, 2020, at Campoli Presti.

<https://news.artnet.com/partner-content/6-artists-to-watch-april-2020>

## AnOther

### Ten Brilliant Exhibitions to See as London Reopens

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY / ANOTHER LIST



Installation view of Penny Goring, Doom Doll, 2019 and War Doll, 2019. Courtesy of Arcadia Missa

#### As restrictions ease, a selection of exhibitions for your art-starved eyes

APRIL 26, 2021

TEXT Lara Johnson-Wheeler

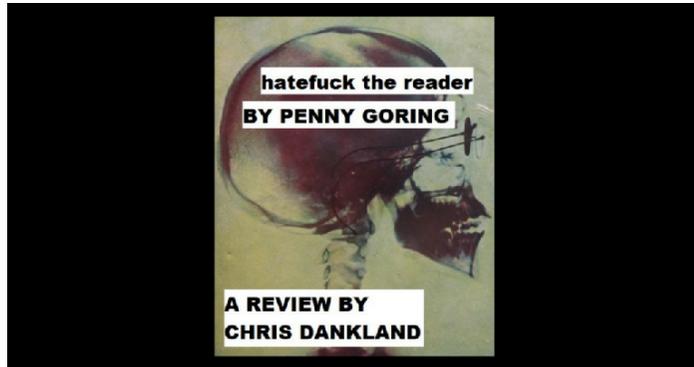
This spring, the multitude of **exhibitions** that have just opened in London are, frankly, a tonic for our art-starved eyes. Showcasing a rich array of both emerging and established artists, as well as a diverse mix of perspectives and mediums, gallery programmes right now are so vast, it can feel overwhelming. As such, we've done our own bit of curating, selecting ten key exhibitions to see now.

#### **Penny Goring: No Escape from Blood Castle at Arcadia Missa, 35 Duke Street, London: Until May 27, 2021**

In this Penny Goring exhibition, the artist's elegantly ominous doll forms hold their shapes while pinned to the walls, accompanied by square tiled paintings, which were created at the same time and feature the same characters. Sewing, along with her use of fabrics and shapes, subvert expectations of doll-making as a passive craft. Penny's figures are active – upside down, back to front, in action through their missing limbs or exposed hearts. Based on her own life experiences, each tells its own story.

## PENNY GORING'S hatefuck the reader REVIEW by Chris Dankland

POSTED: MARCH 15, 2018



Penny Goring's book 'hatefuck the reader' starts with the sound of someone talking so close to your ear that you can feel hot breath:

when i was invincible i believed beauty lasts forever and i died every day. you gave me nothing. i prefer to think you hit me because you are ill. i prefer to stroke my cold pillow. i prefer to sit on a chair than a sofa. i have a plastic joint in my right big toe. you permanently damaged every part of me. my aches and pains are not caused by ageing they are the aftermath of the violence. the end of a story is something i forget. in the month leading up to the twin towers event, i kept waking from a dream where an aeroplane was crashing through my window. i look better in photographs than irl. i don't truly believe in anything. i am startled when anyone calls me Pen, it implies familiarity and affection. i am slow to learn from my mistakes in life, but not in my work. i am attracted to boys girls women men anyone anything anybody. competition repels me. to describe what remains would distress me. i wonder if i will ever truly want to give up smoking. when i sit on the edge of my bed i worry about damaging the mattress, i try to sit on a different area every time, there are not enough different areas. you said i was boring in bed, then you fucked me every day for 2 years. i have cheated on all of my lovers, they were easy to fool, so was i. i joke about Art when it is invoked with a capital A. i wonder if i love anybody except my daughter, it often feels like hate. i do not intentionally remember hurt. i do not trust you. i was fined £1000 for criminal damage, this is how it happened, you punched me in the face until i stopped talking, then you grabbed a knife, then you stabbed holes in my thin plaster walls, then you ran outside, then i knew what had hurt me was outside, then i wanted to hurt the hurt, then i hurled dirty plates and cutlery out the window, then a plate smashed the sunroof of a BMW parked in the road way down below. it is a serious crime to damage a car because car equals money on wheels, and that is the true meaning of beauty.

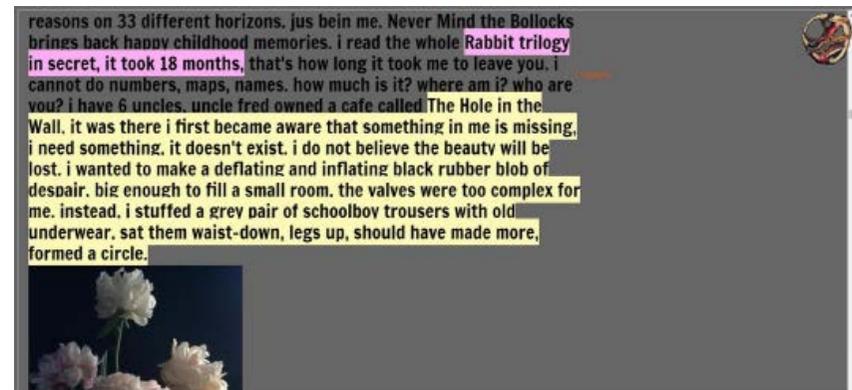


The book comes at you in a non-stop flood of confessions:

"i got my 1st black eyes, broken nose, walking home through the park after school. i curled in a ball in the mud, a crucial bone in my spine got kicked into a new shape"

"at times i have lived with people who are now dead, believing it to be a forever thing."  
"i have seen a dead junkie hovering 2" above me in bed, yes, i have known ghosts, and i have felt their fabric."

The book looks beautiful to me. It's one of my favorite examples of digital literature. I look forward to the time when print versions of books become collectors items and pdfs become the norm. Nowadays most of us consume our music and movies in digital, streaming formats. We don't need cds and dvds to enjoy albums and movies. We don't need print books to enjoy great works of literature.



## tower block 55: a poem by penny goring

London-based artist and poet Penny Goring uses unorthodox methods casually yet meticulously, to make works that are 'very carefully wrong.' Learn more about Penny here and read her poem Tower Block 55, written for The Fifth Sense.



Born in New Cross in London in the early 60's, London-based artist and poet Penny Goring spent a number of years at various art schools, eventually graduating in 1994 with a First Class (Hons) Degree in Fine Art and Commendation for her dissertation on the artist Louise Bourgeois. In the same way that Louise Bourgeois used a variety of methods to release the emotional turmoil from the course of her life, Penny creates with words and whichever cheap and domestic materials she has on hand - salt dough instead of clay, food dye instead of ink, ballpoint pens and felt tips instead of pencils and paint, open office instead of word and ms paint instead of photoshop. Over the past 50 years, her unconventional use of shapes, colours and fabrics has evolved so that today, they distinctly form the visual language of Penny's inimitable world.



Hex ffs  
courtesy Penny Goring and Arcadia Missa



### Tower Block 55

on my dirty balcony that cannot support the weight  
of the flowers i'm growing  
& the vultures nesting in my terracotta pots  
(i am me & i ages) my skinny lil arms full of woman  
Curse Dolls  
this tower block bleeding the sky  
i smell same as you: (onion, hyacinth, sausage, cream)  
amorphous enough to fill spaces  
solid enough to endure the rising levels of ordure  
(i am high up here) & i cry tears from the sting of the onion  
not real tears from the sting of the thing between us  
& i bleed slo-mo  
& i wish fast  
my mouth a wide wet kidney dish  
i am  
sleep walking naked in Peckham down the Clayton Road  
Sorry i am wearing the lodger  
i am wearing a girl means Survivor  
i smell reluctant remnant of the days that run away  
i smell very carefully wrong  
i smell beggar, bleeder, liar, lover, crippled sexgod, thief  
i am the balcony diver  
i smell slashed wrists in the Maudsley  
i am only eating jelly babies  
bus stop on Lavender Hill  
i am throwing your books off my balcony  
we are riveted river run dry  
My only tool is 13 golden clits at the end of my gun  
i smell over the top  
i smell over the hill  
KAPOW! (i am us & we was)  
i am  
baking an ugly cake, you will eat it  
i am knitting an ugly jumper, it will fit you  
keep time at arms length, dodge its feely breath  
or smell my big death, little death, idc  
4 BETTRE OR WORSER My hands  
I CAN'T GET OUT NOW  
i am wearing the shape & smell of your dust  
What happens if you're lucky  
they haven't put a stop to that yet  
vulture on my shoulder is cooing  
Open the fridge, something is rotting:  
DEEP DISH DELETIA  
Beep.  
on my dirty balcony look over the railings you will see: landmarks, abyss, junction

[https://thefifthsense.i-d.co/en\\_gb/article/tower-block-55-a-poem-by-penny-goring/](https://thefifthsense.i-d.co/en_gb/article/tower-block-55-a-poem-by-penny-goring/)

## The questionnaire with the London based artist and poet Penny Goring

November 2016\_by Federica Tattoli



The work of Goring is totalising: a scene is created in which the artist materialises many of the figures and tropes found in a prolific output of poetry and drawing published online across many platforms 2009-present. Iterations of Penny and from her psyche: totems and objects of memory, desire, pleasure, hate, fear and lust. She is an artist and poet. She makes sculptures, drawings, poems, paintings, songs, image macros, videos, and interactive digital poems. Her work includes: hatefuck the reader (5everdankly publications, 2016), DELETIA – self portrait w no self (New Museum/Rhizome, 2015), LOVE TESTER DELUXE (Peanut Gallery Press, 2014), and The Zoom Zoom (eight cuts gallery press, 2011). She has performed her poetry at Looks Live at the ICA, and Re-Materialising Feminism at the ICA and the Penarth Centre, and will be presenting a selection of her digital work and performing live at The South London Gallery on 23rd November 2016.

She is co-editor of MACRO - an anthology of image macros (Boost House, 2016), and was late summer/fall poetry editor for Fanzine, 2015. Recent shows include Dreamfair/Frieze NY (Arcadia\_Missa, London), Works Off Paper (SALTS, Basel), and PROJECT 1049 in Gstaad. #pisswave is an ongoing collaborative project with hela trol pis.

How would you present your work?

In a space you are only allowed to enter and be in with great caution, and if I don't love you, get out.

This Friday Nov. 11 you will open a solo show at Arcadia Missa, Damaged Gods. I know that it will be an installation of sculptures, could you tell me more about it?

Most of the sculptures I made this year, and one I made in 1986. They are all fabric and/or wood, all the stitching done by my hand. I don't like sewing machines, the stitches are ugly, no soul. I need total control of every stitch to get the shapes, positions, everything I want the fabrics to do, the tension, warp n weft etc. This year was the first time I've worked in this way since 1996. I picked up the threads I left dangling and yanked them into now.

You work with poetry, drawings and you have also a digital current of works... could you tell me something about these different ways to express yourself?

Every medium is a tool to make with/toy to play with. If there was infinite time I would use everything every day.

Anger, grief, fear, joy, anxiety and lust – which meaning have into your life and in your work?

These things propel everybody don't they? I make to survive being me, to contain myself, to try be safe, to get through a day without jumping under a train, relapsing, or getting locked up. To stop myself going out and doing criminal damage or hurting myself.

Where do you make your works?

In my living room by the light of my computer screen, or standing at my kitchen worktop.

What can't be missing from your worktable?



Relapse Ted

A collection you wish at least one work of yours was part of?  
I don't know anything about collections!

A museum where you'd like to have an exhibition?  
I don't think about stuff like this.

The market or your need to express?  
I don't know anything about the market.

Lightness or depth?  
Both are good. But depth is deeper. And candles make light in the dark.

Day or night?  
I love every hour of every day except between 1pm and 4pm can feel frightening - empty empty empty, and vast enough for terrible things to happen.

A question you've never been asked but one you've always wanted to answer? Answer that question...  
Yes of course you can carry this shopping home for me, thank you.  
Yes, I will gladly accept a good quality new mattress, how kind.  
Yes, I would dearly love to live in a tiny corner of your huge home.  
Oh my darling, you guessed right, a foot massage would be perfect.  
Clean my flat? Oh wow! YES YES YES.

Could you briefly describe one of your latest works?  
Blue Tree Grey has a 5ft wooden stand, I designed it and my dad made it, he's an old school master carpenter, I painted the stand indigo blue, made 6 long grey droopy branches for it, tied a grey velvet egg baby to its central pole with a blue ribbon, because oh dear what can the matter be, Johnny's so long at the fair, he promised to buy me a bunch of blue ribbons to tie up my bonny brown hair, and there's 6 midnight blue velveteen 'heads' tied to its branches, I see them as mourners, watchers, protectors, and they're my version of my all time favorite sculpture: Nature Study (Velvet Eyes) by Louise Bourgeois.

What are you reading?  
Swordspoint by Ellen Kushner. I just finished The Marriage Plot by Jeffrey Eugenides, and next I'll read A Writer's Diary, Virginia Woolf.

A film?  
I hardly ever watch films these days, they are too short. I watch TV shows. I need all the seasons. I started watching American Horror Story, Hotel last night. I love the extravagant tropes and lavish sets, really relaxing, I napped for 2 hours in the middle of Episode 1, then continued watching.

Where would you like to live?  
Some place without the constant threat of becoming homeless.

Do you have reference artists? Artists you'd like to work with?  
I prefer to keep whose work I look to as my secret. Having said that, Eva Hesse and Louise Bourgeois live in my head. The only person I work happily with is hela trol pis. Although I did really enjoy being involved with Jesse Darling's NTGNE.

A project, related to art, that you'd like to do?  
I'm looking forward to renovating my mum's favorite coat, it's been savaged by moths, she's letting me 'mend' it for her, I'm gonna do... all sorts of things with the holes!

If you weren't an artist, what job would you like?  
World's best alcohol and drug and sex and love addiction counsellor.

Let's imagine a group show. Who would you like to exhibit with?  
I don't want to imagine this. It feels like a waste of brain-time to me.

Yes or no to curators? If yes, who would you choose?  
I've not had much experience with curators, the ones I have met recently are lovely, so 'yes' to curators.

A dream of yours?



armourr, image macro

## Poetry in the age of the web

### An online exhibition exploring the intersection of heartbreak, line break, and break the internet



Courtesy of Penny Goring, Rhizome and New Museum, NY

Many a poetry lover will know, a poem isn't only the words that compose it: the materials in which the poem is embedded, or its technologies of publication, are just as integral to the poem as the language it employs. As London-based writer Harry Burke points out, there is no natural or neutral "blank page": every publishing decision is a choice that shapes the nature of the piece.

An online exhibition curated by Harry Burke and co-presented by Rhizome and the New Museum in New York as part of their First Look series, Poetry as Practice releases a new online poem by a different poet each Monday through 6 April, totaling six poems. Using the web not as a blank page but as a digital media environment, the varied poems draw attention to the conditions of their production and circulation.

In Alex Turgeon's piece "Better Homes and Gardens Revisited," GIFs feature animated calligrams roping through barred windows and slipping out from under doors. Ye Mimi's poetry film *Was Being Moved?* – the only piece not commissioned for the online exhibition – depicts pilgrimages, parades, and postcards. Tan Lin's poem "Mastering the Art of French Cooking and Systems Theory" uses code to pit two difficult-to-master books – Julia Child's celebrated cooking tome and Niklas Luhmann's systems theory – against one another. The two texts race at variable speeds, producing what Lin compares to a "screensaver on amphetamines." Lin says: "The piece is about ambient speed reading that's been hacked. I think you can make anything into poetry if you alter its timing. I like a novel with a stopwatch in it; but even more, I like a novel that is a stopwatch."

Penny Goring says that these days, she uses "twitter as my notebook, facebook as my scrapbook,

tumblr as my studio walls, and the internet as my archive, my source, my raw text, my toy." Her mesmerising DELETIA- self portrait with no self is a seventy-plus-page epic ("cuz fuk internet attention spans," she pronounces) made with multimedia publishing platform NewHive. Goring explains, "Deletia is about loss – it's a grief circus. Too many close friends and almost all of my lovers have died young because of drugs, suicide, cancer." To represent this 'death snowball,' Goring needed DELETIA to be sprawling and unconstrained. The piece, which has a twisted Tumblr aesthetic, inserts the artist's face in a variety of images and features an original font, 'Hell Lobster,' which mixes Helvetica and lobster.

Batter up: giving us a hint of what's to come with her forthcoming contribution the project (live on March 30), Melissa Broder of Twitter poetry fame describes her new poem as "audio ekphrasis." The piece emerged from a series of sleepless nights during which she continuously listened to Oneohtrix Point Never's *R Plus Seven* album. NewHive's embeddable frames allowed song and language – both integral to her piece – to co-exist.

Attention to the material structure of a poem doesn't detract from the linguistic or emotional force of the poem; in Poetry as Practice, this awareness actually enriches the poetic experience. In the words of curator Harry Burke: "I'm into poets who just write poetry, too! I'm into the intersection of heartbreak, line break, and break the internet."

Poetry as Practice runs through April 6, with new works published each Monday. For more, click [here](#)

# this is tomorrow



**Penny Goring: Damaged Gods**  
**Arcadia Missa**  
**12 November - 10 December 2016**  
**Review by Betsy Porritt**

On entering Arcadia Missa, a single railway arch in Peckham, we are asked to either remove our shoes or wear blue plastic shoe covers in order to protect the grey carpeting that covers the floor. While a practicality, this is December after-all, the consequence is that everyone entering must choose to pad about the space barefoot or to rustle over the works like a forensic analyst. Because of the abstract physicality of the works and depending on the manner in which your feet meet the floor, the gallery is then transformed into either a crime scene or a fetish room.

The sculptures that make up Penny Goring's solo show 'Damaged Gods' resemble dismembered limbs. Some explicitly refer to naked legs, vaginas and bum-holes, others are more abstract limb-like constructions, tactile fabric tubes squeezed together or shaped as totems and way-signs. There are other, smaller objects here too: small blue eyeless rabbits made of wool, worn-looking silk dolls laid out on a shelf like gloves

with bright buttons and beads for bushes. On the walls too are sections of a white picket fence. This is a landscape where the borders between public and private have been violently cut away.

There is an element of the cult suggested by the words that are stitched onto a few of the sculptures. The one that most resembles an object of worship bears words that act as a form of incantation. For all its soft-furnished domesticity there is something of the temple in the space: a temple to the erotic implied by the contorted and dismembered limbs. Inanimate lust and fetish items invite eroticism without boundaries: the objects are faceless so desire can be guilt-free.

The anonymity of desire is reflected in the poem that accompanies the show, a block of text identifying body parts of people; "Cervix of an artist. Curious coldness of a dead penis. Womb of a witch." This text appeared previously in the artist's work, in a video where a woman's voice sings the words over an inset recording of a young girl dancing. It is part of a series of poem objects that use collage, video, sound and still images. Much of Goring's work appears online. It is here that she shows her concern with the language of performance and sculpture and how artists are agitating the definitions of poetry. Language is a material that can form the central part of sculpture; an object or image can be linguistic without the use of words.

The text we're given, then, rather than merely an accompaniment is really key to the cohesion of the show. Without it the sculptures have no purpose other than objects: with it they become participants in a world filled with other 'damaged gods'. Beginning with the small footwear adjustment we have to make as we enter, the exhibition is less a gallery space in which sculptures have been placed, and more an alternate linguistic world that we have entered.

<http://thisistomorrow.info/articles/penny-goring-damaged-gods>

# ARTNEWS

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

## Penny Goring at Arcadia Missa, London

BY The Editors of ARTnews POSTED 12/02/16 5:23 PM



Installation view of "Penny Goring, Damaged Gods," 2016, at Arcadia Missa, London. TIM BOWDITCH/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ARCADIA MISSA

Pictures at an Exhibition presents images of one notable show every weekday.

Today's show: "Penny Goring: Damaged Gods" is on view at Arcadia Missa in London through Saturday, December 10. The solo exhibition presents new works by the artist.



Copyright 2017, Art Media ARTNEWS, llc. 110 Greene Street, 2nd Fl., New York, N.Y. 10012. All rights reserved.

<http://www.artnews.com/2016/12/02/penny-goring-at-arcadia-missa-london/>

Arcadia Missa ï

ARCADIAMISSA.COM  
INFO@ARCADIAMISSA.COM

35 DUKE STREET  
LONDON W1U 1LH