

# Institute of Contemporary Arts

PRESS RELEASE

PENNY WORLD

8 June – 18 September 2022

THE ICA PRESENTS *PENNY WORLD*, AN EXHIBITION OF WORK SPANNING 30 YEARS BY ARTIST AND POET PENNY GORING

Press view: 7 June, 10am – 12pm

Opening: 7 June, 6:30 – 8:30pm



Penny Goring, *I was a Visionary for Boudica*, 2015.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

*Terrible things happen and there is nothing you can do.*

*Terrible things happen and you do nothing.*

– Penny Goring, *Terribl*, 2011

In June 2022, the Institute of Contemporary Arts presents *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.

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.

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.

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.'

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.’

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.’

— ENDS —

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**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. Goring has published many poems and books online and performed her poetry at the ICA in 2015.

A limited edition print will be released to coincide with the exhibition.

*Fail Like Fire*, a collection of poems from Penny Goring's archive, will be published by Arcadia Missa to coincide with the exhibition.

**The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA)** is an independent organisation that supports the most pressing debates in contemporary culture. From its home on The Mall, the geographic heart of the UK establishment, the ICA presents a programme that speaks to the challenges of the 21st century: timely exhibitions, performances, independent film and keynote lectures by many of the world's leading thinkers. Founded in 1946 by a collective of artists, poets and their supporters, the ICA played a pivotal role in the development of pop art and charted the course of punk, performance art and independent cinema. The ICA is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and is supported by the Culture Recovery Fund.

### Access

If you have an access requirement that we can assist you with, please get in touch in advance of your visit, and we will make our best endeavours to help you. Please contact us in advance of your visit for more information at [access@ica.art](mailto:access@ica.art). Full venue accessibility information can be found [here](#).

### Visitor Information

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 12 – 9pm

Location: Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London

For information about tickets and membership, please contact:  
[sales@ica.art](mailto:sales@ica.art) / +44 (0) 20 7930 3647 / [www.ica.art](http://www.ica.art)

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