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ARTREVIEW AND MAYFAIR ART WEEKEND

The Embodied Beings Tour

The first of ArtReview's four themed guides on what to see during Mayfair Art Weekend



Penny Slinger, *Offerings at Twilight*, 1976, photo-collage on board, 42 x 59 cm. Courtesy the artist and Richard Saltoun, ...

With over thirty participating galleries and three days of events, **Mayfair Art Weekend** kicks off on Friday 28 June with Gallery HOP!, an evening of late viewings and special events at galleries in the area from 6-8pm.

In the lead-up to Gallery HOP!, *ArtReview* is publishing a specially themed guide each week, to help you decide what to see and where to start when the weekend kicks off. In lieu of *ArtReview* taking you round the galleries in person (we're not sure you would want that), you can use these to navigate Mayfair's busy art neighbourhood. Here's tour number one, taking you from Green Park to Oxford Circus...

The Embodied Beings Tour

The body might be the oldest subject in the history of Western art, but it's also the most inexhaustible. Arguments over the body – from reproductive rights to gender fluidity, from body image anxiety to pornography, to digital incarnation – shape the present moment. So it's no surprise that in the expanded field of contemporary art, as in the wider world, the body is battleground, a playground and a portal to enlightenment.

They're all here, on the 'embodied beings tour'...



Penny as Shakti, 1976. Photo: Nik Douglas. © the artist. Courtesy Richard Saltoun, London

Penny Slinger: *Tantric Transformations* at [Richard Saltoun](#), 29 June – 31 August

On your way to Richard Saltoun Gallery, take a stroll through the nearby National Gallery and count the female nudes smiling flirtatiously out of their picture frames. Penny Slinger was among a generation of artists emerging in the sixties and seventies to object to the, err, objectification of female bodies in art history. Her portrayals of the female body – in films and photographs – are altogether less demure, not obviously interested in satisfying male fantasies, and shaped by her interest in Eastern mysticism. Finding the artworld too conservative, she left it after co-authoring a tantric sex manual: helped along by a memorable *Village Voice* review promising 'opulent cocktailable sexbiggies', it sold a million copies worldwide. So, the younger among Mayfair's Art Weekenders may owe more to this pioneering 'feminist surrealist' than they realise. For those who want to find out more, Slinger is [in conversation with Hettie Judah](#) on Saturday, and [Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows](#), the recent documentary on the artist, screens (followed by a Q&A with Slinger) at the ICA the same evening.



*Zackary Drucker, FISH - A Matrilineage of Cunt White-Woman Realness, 2008.
Courtesy the artist and Luis De Jesus, Los Angeles*

It's Not Me, It's You at **Gazelli Art House**, 4 May – 29 June

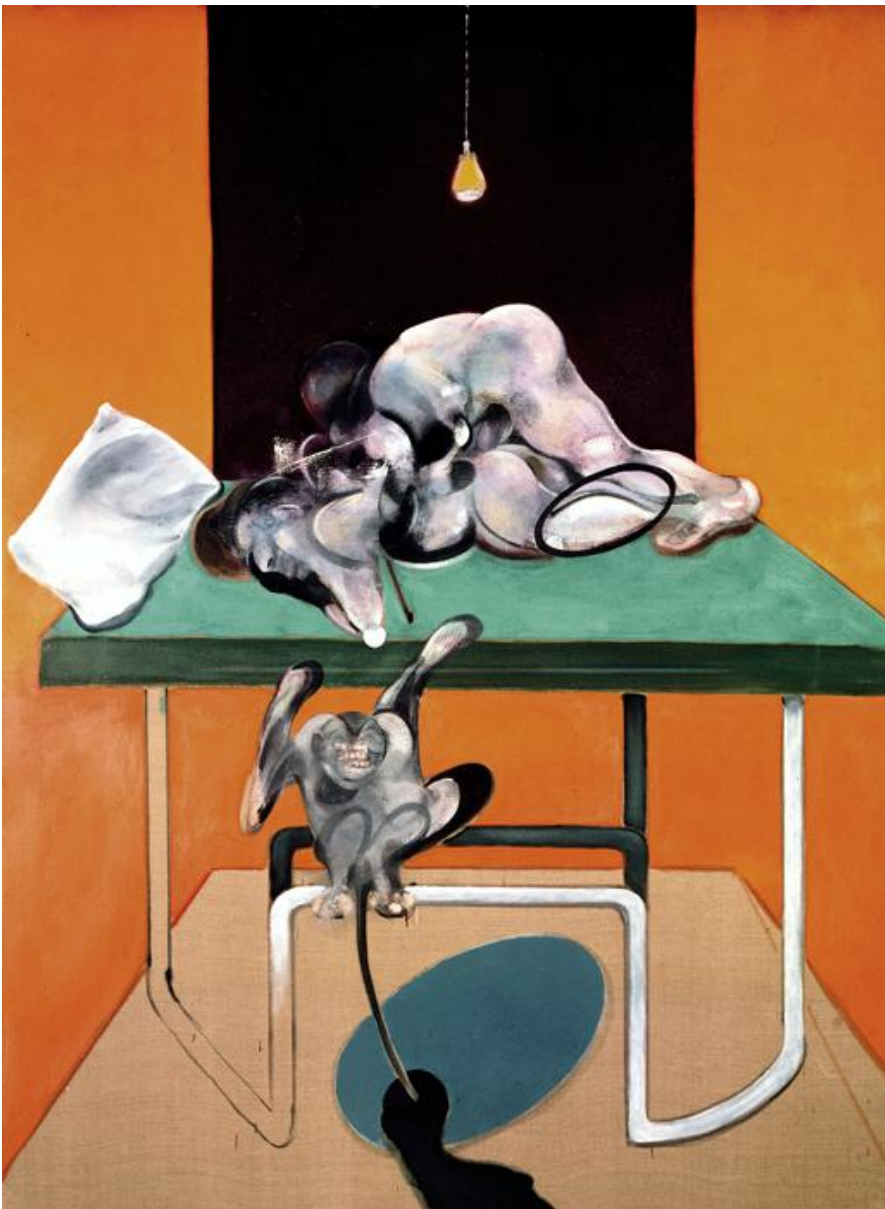
Flicking through Slinger's eyepopping illustrations to *Sexual Secrets: The Alchemy of Ecstasy* (1979) makes it easy to believe, as this group show at Gazelli proposes, that 'the positions of "you" and "me" might be exchangeable'. Considering how our relationship to our bodies is changed what the press release coyly calls 'intimate interaction', the exhibition features videos by trans artists Zackary Drucker, Gray Wielebinski and the post-gender performance artist Cassils, whom *ArtReview* fondly remembers as the 'contra-sexual prophet' whose dance literally breaks the internet in Zach Blas's *Jubilee 2033* (2014–18). Photographs by the great Nan Goldin, whose influential recent activism emerged from her own struggles with opioid addiction, round out a show that addresses the body in terms of vulnerability, intimacy and care.



Didier Fiúza Faustino, *Home suit Home*, 2013, carpet and nylon cable ties, 90 x 35 x 190 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Michel Rein, Paris & Brussels

Didier Fiúza Faustino: *Sweet Dreams are Made of This* at **Senesi Contemporanea**, 6 June – 27 July

'A house,' wrote Peter Sloterdijk, 'is a three-dimensional answer to the question of how someone can be together with someone.' Which sounds to *ArtReview* like stating the bleeding obvious, though *ArtReview* isn't a hugely influential German philosopher. But it might make sense to Didier Fiúza Faustino, an artist-slash-architect whose work considers the relationship between buildings and bodies. His hybrid structures often serve a political purpose, drawing attention to the plight of illegal immigrants or questioning the distribution of property in capitalist society, for instance. The gallery states that the works in *Sweet Dreams are Made of This* 'disclose a remarkable sense of wider humanity'. And who is *ArtReview* to disagree?



Francis Bacon, Two Figures with a Monkey, 1973, oil on canvas, 198 x 148 cm. © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2019. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd

Francis Bacon: *Couplings* at **Gagosian**, 6 June – 3 August

If intimacy and care for the body have been themes of this tour so far, then Francis Bacon's paintings of coupled figures explore the damage we inflict upon ourselves and each other. In these brutal canvases, spanning the 1950s to 1970s, the body is a site of violence and suffering; the loss of selfhood we associate with love and sex is dangerous rather than comforting. Among the subjects are Bacon's lover George Dyer (whom he met, at least apocryphally, when Dyer broke into the painter's flat during a failed burglary), Henrietta Moraes, who owned the notorious Colony Room Club at which Bacon and Lucian Freud were regulars, and his friend Isabel Rawsthorne.



Michelangelo Galliani, Amore, 2019, Carrara marble, glass and stainless steel, 100 x 76 x 38 cm. Courtesy the artist and Contini Contemporary, London

Michelangelo Galliani: *Sensitive Surfaces* at **Contini Contemporary**, 28 June – 30 July

The case for nominative determinism receives a boost, meanwhile, from Michelangelo Galliani's neoclassical sculptures of contorted and reconstructed bodies. That the artist would like his work to be understood in dialogue with the achievements of his Renaissance and classical forebears is exaggerated by the sculptures' having been left partially unfinished, as if recently rediscovered and tentatively patched together. As more than mere pastiche, Galliani's hybrid forms – rendered in marble, steel, wax, slate, ceramic, lead and gold – prompt thought on how our understanding of the human body has changed and how much, after all, remains the same.



Ryan Hewitt's studio, 2019. Courtesy the artist

Ryan Hewitt at **Unit London**, 20 June – 13 July

The attempt to identify that which is shared, and that which is unique, might explain the reduced geometrical portraits of Ryan Hewitt. With the distinguishing features here effaced or caricatured, these semi-abstract portraits give the impression of

feeling subjects unable to escape unresponsive or mechanical bodies. Mixing and matching styles – Bacon seems to have influenced the rendering of certain faces while Cubism is apparent in the reduction of complex physiognomies to regular shapes – Hewitt's paintings catch something of the millennial generation's much-vaunted sense of melancholy, displacement and alienation.



Zoe Williams, *Sunday Fantasy*, 2019 (installation view, Mimosa House, London).
Courtesy the artist

Zoe Williams: *Sunday Fantasy* at **Mimosa Art House**, 25 May – 27 July

The titular fantasies of Zoe Williams's film installation are those of the superbly named Veronica Malaise, who uses an enchanted perfume bottle once owned by a lesbian Roman priestess to make real her wildest erotic imaginings. Which sounds a whole lot more fun than the recent Disney re-adaptation of *Aladdin*. Yet there are some serious issues at play here, not least how the internal logics of fantasy can disrupt existing power structures – worth remembering here that the *1001 Nights* was dreamt up by a woman in order to dodge sex and subsequent execution – and how to represent the kind of queer female desire which was for so long excluded from the history of art. Anyhow, *ArtReview* is off to scour the flea-markets for antique perfume bottles, just on the off chance...

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5 June 2019

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