

# Arcadia Missa ì

Penny Goring  
*Cold Hunt Corsage*

28 February - 15 April 2025  
Private view: 27 February 2025, 6-8pm

The title of Penny Goring's exhibition *Cold Hunt Corsage* is a three word poem, just short of alliterative. Intensely evocative, it also defies a neat reading; like all Goring's work, meaning unfolds in its plurality, like the leaves of a tree. Fluidity of meaning is important to Goring, whose poetic sensibility is as present in her image-making as in her writing, using poetry to jostle the limits of both. In linguistic terms, poetry sets adrift the relationship between the signifier and the signified, between word and meaning; as Franco "Bifo" Berardi writes: "Poetry is the reopening of the indefinite, the ironic act of exceeding the established meaning of words."<sup>1</sup>

Across her practice, Goring has developed a semiotic approach that is both fiercely personal and instantly relatable; butterflies, teardrops, the archetypal figures of her Amelia Drawings repeat across time and across media, forming an idiosyncratic visual language. In *Cold Hunt Corsage*, the artist copy-and-pastes her own young face throughout the works, superimposed on the bodies of muscular men and a model pulled from a fashion magazine. Goring's young face, no longer her likeness, becomes her emblem, which like the text, she imposes on the images, to create spaces of both heaven and hell for herself, in a process she describes as 'magical territorial pissing'.

Of these works, Goring writes, "I also stuck my face on many other things and places, including: the moon, so I owned the sky – famous men, and many other men, so I owned the world – a zebra, so I was an animal – a Rothko painting, so I was revered, Sappho, so I could time travel, a widow floating in outer space, so I could mourn forever, Jesus on the cross, so I could suffer for our sins, the faces of a traditional bride and groom, so I could marry myself, and as a nod to my bisexuality and the enforced gender binary."

Throughout the exhibition, text and image act upon each other, forming taut reverberations of emotion and intent. Goring began making these visual poems in MS Paint in 2012, creating image macros for circulation on websites such as tumblr, Facebook and the now-defunct NewHive. Image macros were a popular medium for the alt lit poetry community, of which Goring was a prolific member in the early 2010s; the online self-publishing ethos of alt lit appealed to Goring who describes how she "fell in love with words and fonts and image macros and instant feedback without leaving the house".

In *Cold Hunt Corsage*, these visual poems leave the domestic space in which Goring makes her work, and the digital platforms of their initial circulation. Unlike earlier exhibitions, which brought the magnolia walls and soft carpets of the home into the gallery, *Cold Hunt Corsage*, with its stark walls and slick black floor, seems to suggest a space that is impersonal and institutional; a prison, an asylum, a hospital. Here, the visual poems – some of which have previously only been shown online, or as posters and wallpapered installations – are sleekly printed on aluminium and held in dark frames, as she abandons comfort to conjure sites of unease.

Within Goring's work, each decision is meticulous and deliberate, text, image and installation coming together to form an unstable poetic resonance. "Poetry is made up of figures and figurations and syntaxes as much as it is made up of words" writes Anne Boyer in the essay *No*, in which she considers the power of poetry as an act of refusal; but "words", she writes, "are useful for upending the world in that they are cheap, ordinary, portable, and generous".<sup>2</sup> There is both refusal and generosity in the works on display in *Cold Hunt Corsage* – a 'reopening of the indefinite' which puts the artist both in power and at risk – as Penny Goring puts it herself: "there is a lot of love and a lot of fear in this work."

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<sup>1</sup> Franco "Bifo" Berardi, "Emancipation of the Sign", 2012. *e-flux*. Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/39/60284/emancipation-of-the-sign-poetry-and-finance-during-the-twentieth-century/>

<sup>2</sup> Anne Boyer, "No", 2017. *Poetry Magazine*. Available at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/featured-blogger/77342/no>

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1. Penny Goring  
*Dam Gods*, 2015  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
174 x 121.5 x 2 cm  
68 1/2 x 47 7/8 x 3/4 inches

7. Penny Goring  
*Antiraptors*, 2014  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
178 x 121.5 x 2 cm  
70 1/8 x 47 7/8 x 3/4 inches

2. Penny Goring  
*Prayer*, 2024  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
159 x 121 x 2 cm  
62 5/8 x 47 5/8 x 3/4 inches

8. Penny Goring  
*For You*, 2024  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
166 x 121 x 2 cm  
65 3/8 x 47 5/8 x 3/4 inches

3. Penny Goring  
*Piggy*, 2024  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
161.5 x 121.5 x 2 cm  
63 5/8 x 47 7/8 x 3/4 inches

4. Penny Goring  
*Plague Fields*, 2022  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
121.5 x 182 x 2 cm  
47 7/8 x 71 5/8 x 3/4 inches

5. Penny Goring  
*Ruined*, 2024  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
161 x 122 x 2 cm  
63 3/8 x 48 x 3/4 inches

6. Penny Goring  
*Desperately Seeking*, 2015  
Digital collage mounted on aluminium, artist's frame  
169.5 x 121.5 x 2 cm  
66 3/4 x 47 7/8 x 3/4 inches