

Since the 1960s, Nicola L. has occupied a unique position through her interdisciplinary practice. She creates works that are thematically connected but take on many different forms and formats, from performance to film to domestic objects. Her exhibition at SculptureCenter is the artist's first institutional survey, including works from her wide-reaching oeuvre from the late 1960s to 2000s, showing her "functional art" alongside her paintings, collages, and film works.

In the 1960s, Nicola L. worked as an artist between Ibiza and Paris, connecting with other key figures exploring Pop, including Yves Klein, Marta Minujín, and Alberto Greco. In the late 1970s, she moved to New York City, where she currently resides in the Chelsea Hotel. Nicola L.'s work takes up notions of skin and surface, often breaking apart representations of the body and turning them into furniture-like objects and vice versa. Dressers, lamps, sofas, and other items resembling human forms comprise her functional objects. This body of work appears as a cast of characters, physically confronting their human counterparts as they open and close, turn off and on, and store personal items. Her series of *Penetrable* works, initially conceived to be entered or worn by viewers and/or performers, extends the body's exterior, skin, into vinyl and textile casings that enclose single or multiple bodies within another layer of material. An emphasis on superficial coverings and caricaturized anthropomorphic objects ties into Nicola L.'s longstanding interests in feminism and in interrogating constructions of subjectivity.

Nicola L.'s performative sculpture *The Red Coat: Same Skin for Everyone*, which was first performed on stage in a music festival in 1970 for the Tropicália musicians Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso, is represented in the exhibition through a compilation of documentary footage of various happenings around the world. Other works in the exhibition have previously been used as functional art, and others are iterations of works made over the decades. Her series of *Femme Fatale* paintings from 1995 features portraits of famous women who have faced a range of injustices based on their gender and the social and political circumstances under which they lived. These works are part of Nicola L.'s reclamation of female voices through her work, as well her extensive use of collage and narrative. Similar strategies are evident in her 1975 series *Diario de Ibiza*, which captures political as well as other daily news events in the year of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's death.

Nicola L. has maintained certain threads and motifs within her works, returning to images, objects, and ideas and reinvesting them with new meaning. In her short film within the exhibition, *Sand, Sea, Sky* (1994), Nicola L. embarks on a narrative around some of the natural elements that feature in her work, such as the sea and fire. Shot in the Bahamas, the film invents origin myths and fantasies to forge a story about unity between humans and the environment. In an approach not

atypical of the time, the film also ventures into exoticizing as well as essentializing tendencies. Nicola L.'s politics emerged through her engagement in 1960s counter-cultural movements that aspired to equality, freedom, and love, tenets that have remained within her work. This ethos and its representational modes however have undergone more rigorous critique in the last decades, and while her film is pure fiction, it also is a historical record of her work that casts many of her sculptures as actors and props within a particular context of her creation.

Nicola L. (French, born 1937 in Mazagan, Morocco; lives and works in New York) studied at the Académie Julian followed by the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris. Her solo exhibitions have been held at Elga Wimmer PCC, New York (2016, 2015); Broadway 1602, New York (2013); Cat-Berro Galerie, Paris (2008); Wooster Projects, New York (2001); Florida International University, Miami (1986); Thread Waxing Space, New York (1986); Le Magasin, Grenoble (1986); and Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris (1969). Notable group exhibitions include *The World Goes Pop*, Tate Modern, London (2016); *A Modest Proposal*, Hauser & Wirth, New York (2016); Liverpool Biennial (2014); *artevida*, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (2014); *re.act.feminism #2*, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona (2012); La Bienal de la Habana (2012); *elles@centrepompidou*, Paris (2009); *The Death of the Audience*, Vienna Secession (2009); *Aimer, travailler, exister*, MAMCO, Geneva (2004); and *Grandes Femmes, Petits Formats*, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris (1974). Since the late 1960s, Nicola L. has conceived group performances for experimental theaters and public spaces worldwide, including the Isle of Wight Pop Music Festival (1970) and the 12th Avant-Garde Festival, New York (1975). Her work is in the collections of Centre Pompidou, Paris; Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; FRAC Bretagne, Rennes; MAMCO, Geneva; Art & Design Atomium Museum, Brussels; and M HKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, among other institutions.

*Nicola L.: Works, 1968 to the Present* is curated by SculptureCenter Curator Ruba Katrib and is accompanied by a fully-illustrated publication with essays by Katrib and Erica F. Battle, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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