

Everlyn Nicodemus

Black Bird

25.10.2025 - 01.02.2026

WIELS, Brussels



“I believe in art as an act of freedom”
— Everlyn Nicodemus, *Black Bird*

Whether it is through paintings, collages, essays, textiles or poetry, Everlyn Nicodemus’ work is rooted in a longstanding engagement towards art as a site for healing and freedom beyond individual expression.

WIELS joins forces with the National Galleries of Scotland to present a retrospective exhibition of Everlyn Nicodemus, with over eighty works spanning four decades of a compelling artistic career. This survey exhibition presents a wide range of works, from her very first experimentations on bark cloth to her latest drawings on paper, attesting to the artist’s bold and vibrant style that resists conventional frameworks.

Black Bird borrows its title from a yet-unpublished manuscript written by Nicodemus, invoking the poetry and the rich imagery that her work invites us to navigate. Through a playful use of colour, texture and form, Nicodemus opens up new horizons of artistic exploration in response to the global oppression of women, the profound impact of racism and her personal trauma and recovery.

Born in Marangu in 1954, at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro in the soon-to-be formed Tanzanian state, Nicodemus spent her formative years in a context of cultural, social and political effervescence. Moving to Sweden in 1973, she dedicated herself to the study of anthropology in response to the racism she encountered in the country. Together with her partner, art historian and critic Kristian Romare, she later moved from Sweden to France, Belgium and the UK where she has been based for the past fifteen years. In 1980, she stepped away from social anthropology and embraced painting as a *mother tongue*.

Her research on African Modern Art has been deeply influential in offering new understandings of artistic genealogies that were widely understudied and misrepresented in the Western canon. Her artwork inscribes itself in this lineage, through which she cultivates a singular language of abstraction and figuration that embraces her own experience and runs parallel to the rhythms of life.

For Nicodemus the exhibition is a homecoming, having spent twenty years of her life in Belgium. *Black Bird* is a testimony as much as it is a call for art as an act of freedom.

I would claim that my way into modernity within art was straight and with no sensational problems. Problems arose instead when I was confronted with a prejudiced white European view according to which I as an African had no right to modernity but should keep to African tradition and "primitivity".

— Everlyn Nicodemus, *Black Bird*

"She has explored the secrets, the voices of color and light, the intimate conversation between brush and canvas, the change of surface in movement and in space. Painting is by no means an exhausted language for her, but a mother tongue as old and as primordial today as the rock paintings."

— Kristian Romare, *Another way. Another path*, 1992

Curator: Sofia Dati

The exhibition is organised **in collaboration with** National Galleries of Scotland and **with the generous support of** Richard Saltoun Gallery, with special thanks to Amir Shariat.

Biography

Everlyn Nicodemus lives and works in Edinburgh. She moved to Scotland fifteen years ago, after having lived in Antwerp then Brussels between 1990 and 2008. She is recipient of the 2022 Freelands Foundation Award for her retrospective at the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, from October 2024 to May 2025. Her work has been included in various solo and group exhibitions, including *Paris Noir*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2025); *Love is Louder*, Bozar, Brussels (2024); Richard Saltoun Gallery, London (2022); Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2023); *Hacking Habitat: Art of Control*, Utrecht, Holland (2016); 18th Biennale of Sydney (2012), curated by Catherine de Zegher; *Bystander on Probation*, The Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, UK (2007); *Crossing the Void*, Cultural Center Strombeek, Brussels (2004); *Displacements*, University of Alicante, Spain (1997); *Vessels of Silence*, Kanaal Art Foundation, Kortrijk, Belgium (1992); and the solo exhibition *Everlyn Nicodemus*, National Museum, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (1980). She is represented by Richard Saltoun Gallery, London, and Andrew Kreps, New York.

Public programme

Conversation with Everlyn Nicodemus, Stephanie Straine and Sofia Dati (EN)

Fri. 24.10.2025, 19:00

Lecture by Catherine de Zegher (EN)

Sat. 25.10.2025, 15:00

Lecture by Zoé Samudzi (EN)

Wed. 03.12.2025, 19:00

in collaboration with KASK Curatorial Studies

Lecture by Osei Bonsu (EN)

Thu. 29.01, 19:00

in collaboration with KASK Curatorial Studies

Stay updated on the public programme via wiels.org.

Practical information

WIELS is open from Tuesday to Sunday from 11:00 to 18:00 and every first Wednesday of the month until 21:00

Press contact for interview and image requests:

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Images and credits

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WIELS

As one of the leading institutions for contemporary art in Europe WIELS presents temporary exhibitions by national and international artists, both emerging and more established. WIELS is a site of creation and dialogue, in which art and architecture form the basis for a discussion about current events and issues, not only through its exhibitions, but also through an international artist-in-residency, an education and community-oriented programme and complementary activities.

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