

SculptureCenter
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For Immediate Release

Release Date:
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Exhibition:
Nicola L.: Works, 1968 to the Present

Dates:
September 18 – December 18, 2017

Opening Event:
Sunday, September 17, 2017
5:00-7:00pm

Program:
The Banquet of the Beheaded
Tuesday, September 26, 2017
6:30-8:30pm

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NICOLA L.: WORKS, 1968 TO THE PRESENT

SCULPTURECENTER PRESENTS FIRST INSTITUTIONAL SURVEY BY NICOLA L.

Long Island City, NY – SculptureCenter is pleased to announce the first institutional survey by artist **Nicola L.**, a pioneering artist who works across the mediums of sculpture, performance, painting, collage, and film. The exhibition will include works from her wide-reaching oeuvre from the late 1960s to 2000s.

The artist's "functional art" including early pieces such as *White Foot Sofa* (1968) and *La Femme Commode* (1969) will be on display with her paintings, film works, and select archival materials. The exhibition will focus on both canonical and lesser-known works, early works and contemporary, conceptual and functional, resulting in an incisive summary of her 40-year career.

"As a young female artist of the 60's, it was all about breaking free. Psychedelic trips were part of how we would leave behind useless authority and enjoy life carefree," states the artist. "I would come back with new creatures pounding and dancing in my head. Ruba Katrib brought them together in a fantasy garden of her own. I had never imagined this family reunion ever possible. These 'enfants terribles' reunited are an unexpected gift to me, to you and in fact more than anything... a tribute to them! They kept me amused and energized like only few humans ever did..."

- Nicola L.

In the 1960s, Nicola L. worked as an artist between Ibiza and Paris, connecting with other key figures exploring Pop, including Yves Klein, Marta Minujin, 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 caricatured anthropomorphic objects ties into Nicola L.'s longstanding interests in feminism and in interrogating constructions of subjectivity.

As part of the exhibition, SculptureCenter will host a staged reading of *The Banquet of the Beheaded*, a performance work by Nicola L. originally mounted at La MaMa E.T.C. in New York in January 1999.

The Banquet of the Beheaded is a collection of monologues delivered at a dinner party for decapitated historical figures. At this meeting, twelve characters (originally staged with actors' heads poking through the surface of a long table) assemble to describe the circumstances of their iconic deaths, aiming to correct the historical record and reassess the relevance of their fates.

The work is a synthesis of two strains in Nicola L.'s work from the mid-1980s on: a sustained interest in the form and philosophy of the head, which appears across her sculpture and painting through the late 1990s; and the mobilization of figures in art, history, and culture to overcome sensational and reductive popular characterizations. In an artist's text written for *Night Magazine*, Nicola L. describes her performance research as a transcultural and transhistorical exploration of the violent nuances of execution by decapitation: as symbolic retribution, as punishment for crimes against nature or religion,

as political strategy, as populist revolt, as public judgment, as tragic accident. Working across ethically complex injustices, *The Banquet of the Beheaded* voices alternate narratives that undercut contextual and historical perceptions of celebrity, infamy, and subversion.

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 Clerf, 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. *Nicola L.: Works, 1968 to the Present* is supported by Linda Mirels and Gerard Mossé, Amy and Ronald Guttman, and Ursula Hauser.

About SculptureCenter

SculptureCenter leads the conversation on contemporary art by supporting artistic innovation and independent thought highlighting sculpture's specific potential to change the way we engage with the world. Positioning artists' work in larger cultural, historical, and aesthetic contexts, SculptureCenter discerns and interprets emerging ideas. Founded by artists in 1928, SculptureCenter provides an international forum that connects artists and audiences by presenting exhibitions, commissioning new work, and generating scholarship.

Over the past 18 years, SculptureCenter has presented works by nearly 750 emerging and established artists through our annual exhibition program, and today, SculptureCenter is considered one of New York's most adventurous kunsthallen. Placing importance on investment, inclusiveness, independence, transparency, and rigor, SculptureCenter has developed a strong reputation for championing under-recognized and emerging artists, many of whom have gone on to celebrated and substantial careers such as: 2016 Turner Prize nominee Anthea Hamilton, Sanford Biggers, Nairy Baghramian, Tom Burr, Liz Glynn, Rochelle Goldberg, Camille Henrot, Leslie Hewitt, Rashid Johnson, Ugo Rondinone, Katrín Sigurdardóttir, Alexandre Singh, Monika Sosnowska, Gedi Sibony, Mika Tajima, and recent Hugo Boss Prize winner Anika Yi.

As a non-collecting museum, SculptureCenter's annual exhibition program includes 1-2 commissioning programs by mid-career artists, 10-15 projects by emerging artists, and 3-6 solo and group exhibitions in addition to an exciting series of special projects by emerging artists through *In Practice*, an open call program, and *Public Process*, a public art and education initiative for high school students. SculptureCenter continuously offers a dynamic series of free public programs and events that feature artist talks, performances, film screenings, and concerts, as well as publications.

SculptureCenter's major exhibition and operating support is generously provided by grants from the Lambent Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation; the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council; the Kraus Family Foundation; the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; the A. Woodner Fund; Jeanne Donovan Fisher; the Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation; and contributions from our Board of Trustees and Director's Circle. Additional funding is provided by the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation and contributions from many generous individuals.

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