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T Magazine Editors on Things They're Into Right Now
By **OSMAN CAN YEREBAKAN** September 15, 2017



Nicola L. with *Eye Table Lamp*. Courtesy the artist

Celebrating a Pioneer in Body Art and Sculpture

The artist **Nicola L.** first arrived in New York in 1967 — when other artists, such as **Carolee Schneemann** and Yoko Ono, were pushing the limits of the body as political terrain. Soon, she joined the roster with her corporeal, three-dimensional work that scrutinized impositions on womanhood, subverting the female silhouette and its sociopolitical undertones. Sexual liberation prevailed at the time; Nicola L. delivered “Femme Commode” (1969), a yellow wooden chest replicating the female figure, where drawers were substitutes for lips, breasts and vulva.

Now, “**Nicola L.: Works, 1968 to the Present**,” which opens at the **SculptureCenter** next week, pays an overdue tribute to the artist with a decades-spanning survey that manifests her flair for sculpture and painting in addition to collage and film. A documentary compilation of “Red Coat” (1969), arguably her most eminent opus, chronicles participants marching under an immense shroud, brazenly roaming city streets while swaying harmoniously.

“Nicola L. radicalized sculptural material, always in reference to the human body. She incorporated commercial fabrics, plastic, metal to eroticize tactility and spatial dimensionality,” Schneemann says by phone. “We have been friends from our first years in New York City, now celebrating the current acceptance of art by women.” Born in 1937 in Morocco to French parents, L has dwelled in the Chelsea Hotel since the late '70s (the letter “L” abbreviates both her maiden name and former spouse’s last name). For the artist’s most comprehensive exhibition in the United States, the SculptureCenter curator Ruba Katrib selected a wide range of works including L’s “Penetrables” — a series of life-size wearable vinyl, cotton or

canvas sculptures intended for performance — that encapsulate her prowess in merging sculpture with movement. “Nicola L.: Works, 1968 to the Present” is on view from Sept. 18th to Dec. 18, 2017 at Sculpture Center, 44-19 Purves St., Long Island City, N.Y. sculpture-center.org