

# Kunsthalle Wien

## Press release

Nicola L.

27 June–14 September 2025

Kunsthalle Wien hosts a retrospective of the celebrated French artist Nicola L. (b. 1932, El Jadida, as Nicole Jeannine Suzanne Leuthe; d. 2018, Los Angeles). Encompassing sculpture, performance, painting, collage and film produced between 1964 and 2014, the exhibition brings together works on loan from public and private collections in Europe and the United States of America. Presented in collaboration with Camden Art Centre, London; Frac Bretagne, Rennes and Museion – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bolzano/Bozen, it is the first survey of Nicola L.'s work in Europe and also the first monographic exhibition devoted to her work in Austria.

Various celebrated in relation to pop art, nouveau réalisme, the applied arts and design, Nicola L.'s expansive practice also addresses diverse subjects including cosmology, environmental concerns, spirituality, sexuality, activism and political resistance. Her work frequently collapses boundaries between the body and space. It is characterised by wit, playfulness and subversion, while resolutely defying categorisation and spanning multiple disciplines.

The exhibition includes a series of *pénétrables* sculptures. These textile works were originally intended to be participatory, providing apertures that people could insert limbs or heads into, occasionally with several performers creating a single organism. This gesture of bringing different people together within 'one skin' was conceived as a political act. The exhibition includes archival footage and photography from several performances including *The Red Coat*, which was repeatedly activated between 1970 and 2009 in different locations around the world. Other exhibits document performances of *The Blue Cape* between 2002 and 2008 and *The Secession Evolution Flag*, performed at the Secession, Vienna in 2009.

Also presented is a reconstruction of a large-scale installation, entitled *Chambre en Fourrure*, or *Fur Room*, originally made in 1969. The structure measuring approximately 3m x 5m x 4m structure combines purple faux fur, zippers and a metal armature to create a freestanding room which can be entered, inviting the audience to become performers. Reconstructed in 2020, the work allows visitors to the exhibition to interact with Nicola L.'s sculpture in the way the artist intended.

A number of functional objects such as lamps, sofas and commodes are also included. A series of painted wooden cabinets take the form of a silhouetted female torso. Floor and wall-based lamps take the shape of an eye; a coffee table describes the outline of a woman's body and a sofa is shaped like a head seen in profile. Soft, pliable sculpture takes the form of feet and fragmented bodies. Scaled up and upholstered with coloured vinyl and fur, these tactile objects are imbued with a political message that emphasises equality, collectivity and the place of women within the home and society. The artist's alignment with feminist politics is also evidenced by *Femme Fatale* (1995) – a group of paintings and collages made on bed

sheets that pay homage to women including Eva Hesse, Marilyn Monroe, Billie Holiday and Ulrike Meinhof whose lives ended in tragedy or violence.

The exhibition also features the artist's films, a medium that she adopted in 1977. A series of documentaries address diverse subjects including the activist Abbie Hoffman, the punk-rock band Bad Brains and the Chelsea Hotel, where Nicola L. was a resident between 1989 and 2017.

### Biography

Nicola L. (b. 1932, El Jadida, as Nicole Jeannine Suzanne Leuthe; d. 2018, Los Angeles) held solo exhibitions at the Sculpture Center, New York (2017); Frost Art Museum, Florida International University, Miami; M HKA, Antwerp; MAMAC, Nice; Le Magasin, Grenoble (all 1986) and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Ibiza (1976). Her work has also been presented within group surveys at Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2022); Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Nice (2021); Tate Modern, London (2015); Liverpool Biennial (2014); Centre Pompidou, Paris; Secession, Vienna (both 2009) and Musée d'Ixelles (1975). She lived and worked in Paris, and periodically in Brussels and Ibiza and from 1989, at the Chelsea Hotel in New York before moving to Los Angeles in 2017.

### Exhibition Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated monograph on Nicola L. published by Camden Art Centre; Frac Bretagne; Kunsthalle Wien; Museion – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bozen/Bolzano and Lenz. Published in English, French, Italian and German, *Nicola L.: I Am The Last Woman Object* includes new essays and supplementary texts on major bodies of work presenting a long overdue appraisal of her multifaceted oeuvre. The book offers novel perspectives on the artist's practice from some of the exhibitions' curators: Gina Buenfeld-Murley, Martin Clark, Géraldine Gourbe and Leonie Radine. Together, they reflect on the artist's life in Paris, Ibiza, Beirut and New York, situating her within the politics and the social movements of her time. They also bring her work fully into the present by placing it in the context of the social, political and ecological challenges that we face today.

Editors: Gina Buenfeld-Murley and Martin Clark

Texts by: Gina Buenfeld-Murley, Martin Clark, Leonie Radine, Géraldine Gourbe, Arese Uwuoruya

Page count: 240

Format: 20.4 x 26 cm

Languages: English, French, Italian and German (quadrilingual)

Designer: Sara De Bondt

Release date: 2025

ISBN: 979-12-80579-67-6

Price: € 40

### Notes to Editors

Nicola L.

27 June 2025–14 September 2025

Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier

Press conference: Thu 26 June 2025, 11 am

Exhibition opening: Thu 26 June 2025, 7 pm

Press images for download and further information:  
<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/nicola-l/press>

All dates for guided tours and the programme are available online at:  
<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/calendar>

#### About Kunsthalle Wien

Kunsthalle Wien is the City of Vienna's primary institution for contemporary art. At its locations in the Museumsquartier and on Karlsplatz, it presents an annual programme of exhibitions alongside public and educational programming that seeks to engage diverse publics. We provide a platform for artists, commissioning new works and partnering with individuals and institutions, both local and international, to develop exhibitions and publications based on original research. Kunsthalle Wien is committed to providing an inclusive space for exchange and debate and furthering the discourse on contemporary art in all its forms.

#### Kunsthalle Wien Thanks

Kunsthalle Wien is financed by Magistratsabteilung Kultur der Stadt Wien (MA 7). The artistic programme is also supported by the members and patrons of the Kunsthalle Wien Club. The exhibition was produced by Kunsthalle Wien in collaboration with Camden Art Centre, London; Frac Bretagne, Rennes and Museion – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bolzano/Bozen and was made possible through the generous support of Alison Jacques and The Nicola L. Collection and Archive.

#### Address and Information

Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier  
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna  
[www.kunsthallewien.at](http://www.kunsthallewien.at)  
+43-1-52189-0  
[office@kunsthallewien.at](mailto:office@kunsthallewien.at)

#NicolaL  
#KunsthalleWien  
@KunsthalleWien

#### Opening Hours

Tuesday–Sunday: 10:00–18:00  
Thursday: 10:00–20:00

#### Press Contact

Iseult Grandjean  
+43-1-52189-221  
[presse@kunsthallewien.at](mailto:presse@kunsthallewien.at)