

# RICHARD SALTOUN

*Everlyn Nicodemus*  
12 April - 28 May 2022



Richard Saltoun Gallery presents a major solo exhibition of African diaspora artist Everlyn Nicodemus (b. 1954), her first with the gallery. The exhibition marks Nicodemus' first solo show in London in over 15 years and brings together a selection of works spanning 40 years, including unseen paintings from *The Wedding* series.

Everlyn Nicodemus is one of the strongest feminist voices to emerge from Eastern Africa in the past 30 years. Drawing on personal experience and her battle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Nicodemus' work explores the universal issues of racism, cultural trauma, human suffering and the marginalisation of women throughout history.

Born in Kilimanjaro, Nicodemus spent many years moving across Europe - to Sweden, France, Belgium and finally Scotland, where she currently lives and works. Her years of emigration were marked by harassment, persecution and isolation and eventually culminated in a traumatic breakdown - which she describes as a near-death experience - and the beginning of her suffering of PTSD.

Amidst the adversities, Nicodemus turns to art-making as a way of healing. She creates out of necessity, her unique body of work is a spontaneous outpouring of emotions into multiple forms: paintings, collaged

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'books', photographs, poems and assemblages where textiles, straw and other natural materials overlap with metal wire and found objects.

A recurring element in her figurative paintings is the female body, instrumental in reclaiming freedom and the lost stories of women from minority communities.

Nicodemus' own body takes centre stage in *The Wedding* (1991-92), a series of 84 large-scale self-portraits representing a ballad about the experience of meeting and fighting death and returning to life after her breakdown. For Nicodemus, returning to life meant reoccupation of her body, which had been obliterated by the past trauma. And to make this pictorial representation tangible, she chose constantly bigger sizes, with the final works in the series measuring more than seven square metres.

The paintings from *The Wedding* are shown here for the first time, alongside works on paper and mixed media assemblages that Nicodemus realised over the course of 40 years (1980-2020).

## **Richard Saltoun Gallery, London**

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Images, left to right: Everlyn NICODEMUS, *The Wedding 45*, 1991. Signed and dated lower left recto, 'Borgerhout' to recto, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm; Everlyn NICODEMUS, *The Wedding 61*, 1992, signed and dated lower right recto. Titled and dated, 'Borgerhout' to verso, paint on canvas, 200 x 150 cm. Both images © the Artist Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery, London and Rome.

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## Notes to editors:

**Everlyn NICODEMUS** is an artist, writer and curator. As an artist, she produces powerful works centred on personal and cultural trauma as well as the role art can play in healing, while her research and curatorial interests focus on the history of Modern African Art.

Born in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania in 1954, Nicodemus' life has been marked by movement: she is part of a moving diaspora which she documents in her writing and art making. Moving across Europe - to Sweden, France and Belgium before finally settling in the U.K. - her experience of racism and cultural trauma has prompted the creation of a unique body of work encompassing paintings, collaged 'books' and mixed-media assemblages as well as poems, using unusual materials to explore human experience, from metal nettings and sisal to textiles and found objects.

Throughout her travels, she has taken an active involvement in community life, giving voice especially to the marginalisation of women throughout history and making visible their shared traumas and experiences. Significantly, Nicodemus's investigations into trauma and violence, resulted in what is considered to be one of her most important works: Reference Scroll on Genocide, Massacres and Ethnic Cleansing (2004), a 16-metre-long scroll documenting some of the most atrocious genocides and ethnic cleansings known throughout history.

Her response to her own ordeal with PTSD and personal grief is a major factor in her work, as is her research investigating art from Africa in relation to human suffering and societal responsibility, on which she completed a PhD African Modern Art and Black Cultural Trauma from Middlesex University in 2012.

Nicodemus lives and works in Edinburgh. Her work has been included in various solo and group exhibitions, including Hacking Habitat: Art of Control, Utrecht, Holland (2016); 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2012), curated by Catherine de Zegher; Bystander on Probation, The Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, UK (2007); Crossing the Void, Cultural Center Strombeek, Brussels, Belgium (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). Her work is included in major private and public collections including The Arts Council Collection (UK), the Flemish Community Collection (Belgium) and the National Bank of Belgium.

Founded in 2012, **Richard Saltoun Gallery** is based in Mayfair, London. The gallery specialises in contemporary art, with an emphasis on feminist, conceptual and performance artists from the 1960s onwards. The gallery is considered a leader in its representation of female artists, from avant-garde pioneers of the 1960s and '70s, such as Eleanor ANTIN, Renate BERTELMANN and Gina PANE, to a younger generation of female artists including Silvia GIAMBRONE and Marinella SENATORE.

Additionally, Richard Saltoun is noted for its support of pioneering artists who have pushed the conceptual and disciplinary boundaries in which they work, from LI Yuan-chia, one of the earliest proponents of abstract and conceptual art in Taiwan, to ULAY, the late photographer and performance artist, as well as British artists Victor BURGIN, Rose ENGLISH, John HILLIARD, Peter KENNARD, BOB LAW, Penny SLINGER and more.

The gallery preserves the legacy of artists through its representation of artist estates, including Helen CHADWICK, David HALL, Alexis HUNTER, Bob LAW, Marinella PIRELLI, Jo SPENCE, Barbara LEVITTOUX-ŚWIDERSKA and Shelagh WAKELY, amongst others. The gallery acts as a consultant to major museums and public institutions and advises private and corporate collections. It actively documents the work of its artists through the production of publications and frequently stages talks, screenings and performances.