

**NICOLA
VASSELL**

Opening March 6, 6–8 pm
March 6 — April 19, 2025

ALBERTA WHITTLE:

*Towards a motherful loving praxis,
we cast seeds into the darkness*



Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm

138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011

For Press Inquiries

For press inquiries, please reach out to the team at [ALMA](#).

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Nicola Vassell is pleased to present *Towards a motherful loving praxis, we cast seeds into the darkness*, an exhibition of new work by Alberta Whittle, the artist's second solo show with the gallery. Through a series of collaged paintings, watercolors, sculptures and video, Whittle has created a group of works that, through their variegation and visual abundance, respond to the uncertainty of our times by reaffirming love, intimacy and connection as necessary acts of resistance.

Informed by her study of pre-colonial history, Whittle's interdisciplinary practice has long been focused on developing hybrid forms that encourage historical curiosity while also rehabilitating our capacity for interspecies relationships not grounded in exploitation. In thinking about the degradation of togetherness and collectivity in our contemporary moment, Whittle has fashioned the term 'motherful' to express an expanded, genderless sense of care and support between people and species more generally, a concept her works enact through their formal relationships and material complexity.

The evolution of collage in Whittle's practice is exemplified by the sculptural intensity of the paintings in this exhibition. In a series of tondo paintings that depict vivid landscapes and imaginatively patterned spaces, she combines materials that carry contemporary meanings, such as the hoodies of contemporary sweatshirts, with those that carry older resonances, such as woven lace doilies, objects meant to invoke forms of handcraft that add beauty to intimate and domestic spaces. Whittle regularly affixes these objects and many others, such as tambourines, raffia ribbon and fretwork, either at the edges of her paintings or on top of them, so that they activate the immediate space of the viewer while generating a sonic register of experience as well.

In her square paintings Whittle merges collage with more figuratively grounded scenes of subjects that at times perform acts of care and togetherness, whereas in others they appear caught, trapped or limbo. A recurring motif in these works is the addition of beaded coils that are affixed to the fretwork on the frames. These objects connect the paintings—and the tondos—to the history of domestic craftwork and communal exchange, forms of experience that Whittle understands as being necessary for the creation of new familial connections. The open spaces surrounding or behind these figures and objects are left ambiguous in tone and possible meaning, as Whittle invites viewers to bring their personal histories to bear on these colorfully dense and beautifully rendered worlds.

The two sculptures in the exhibition each make use of beaded coils that extend from the floor to the ceiling and are adorned with a myriad of objects—feathers, tambourines, cowrie shells and freshwater pearls, among many others—that fuse past histories of craft with contemporary creative practices. That these works mean to reclaim the past as a way of protecting and empowering us in the present can be understood as the result of inspiration Whittle drew from the historical example of 'marronage,' whereby enslaved peoples, particularly those in the Caribbean and South America, escaped plantations for days or weeks at a time while some did so permanently, even establishing new communities on the outskirts of the slave societies from which they fled. The critical relationship for Whittle is between the haven created by those formerly enslaved and the society that sought to keep them in bondage, or, the existence of a community born out of resistance to racial and economic oppression yet which continues to live alongside it in opposition.

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Whittle imbues her works with the example of ‘marronage,’ as each contains within it a talismanic quality meant to empower us through personal reflection and a collective attention to histories of resistance.

About Alberta Whittle

Alberta Whittle (b.1980, Bridgetown, Barbados) lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. She received her MFA from The Glasgow School of Art and completed her doctorate at Edinburgh College of Art in 2024. She is a Research Associate at The University of Johannesburg. Whittle represented Scotland at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia and has been the recipient of a Turner Bursary, Frieze Artist Award and a Henry Moore Foundation Artist Award.

Whittle’s expansive practice encompasses drawing, digital collage, film and video installation, sculpture, performance and writing. Grounded in research, her work considers historic and contemporary expressions of anti-blackness, colonialism and migration. Weaving together networks of ancestral knowledge and future possibilities, Whittle explores manifestations of resistance through community, compassion and collective care.

Solo exhibitions include *Towards a motherful loving praxis, we cast seeds into the darkness*, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York (2025); *Alberta Whittle: Learning a new punctuation for hope in times of disaster*, Regen Projects, Los Angeles (2024); *Alberta Whittle: Under the skin of the ocean, the thing urges us up wild*, Mount Stuart, Isle of Bute, Scotland (2024); *Alberta Whittle: between a whisper and a cry*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2023) and *Respectability won’t save you: a Caribbean haunting*, curated by Arianna Nourse, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York (2022). Group exhibitions include *Flow States-LA TRIENAL 2024*, El Museo del Barrio, New York (2024); *Surrealism and Us: Caribbean and African Diasporic Artists since 1940*, The Modern, Fort Worth, Texas (2024); *Soulscapes*, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London (2024); *Black Melancholia*, The Hessel Museum at Bard College, New York (2022) and *Life Between Islands*, Tate Britain, London (2021). Her work has been acquired by the UK National Collections, The Scottish National Gallery Collections, Glasgow Museums Collections and The Contemporary Art Research Collection at Edinburgh College of Art.

About Nicola Vassell Gallery

Nicola Vassell is a contemporary art gallery committed to discourse that widens the lens of the history and future of art. Its focus is on developing an intergenerational, cross-disciplinary program of international artists and thinkers.

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