

ANNOUNCING

**NICOLA  
VASSELL**

THE INAUGURAL  
EXHIBITION

**MING**

**SMITH:**

**EVIDENCE**

**138 10TH AVE** NY,  
NY

**MAY 20–JUL 3**

**2021**

For press inquiries

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# NICOLA

Nicola Vassell Gallery, a new space committed to discourse that widens the lens of the history and the future of art, is pleased to present Ming Smith: *Evidence*, its inaugural exhibition and the first presentation by the artist in New York in over four years.

The exhibition features a combination of rare, vintage silver gelatin and never-before-exhibited archival prints, spanning the arc of Smith's fifty-year career. The assembled pictures exemplify the artist's keen, enduring eye and her use of the photographic medium to depict charged atmospheres and surreal states, using a cast of evocative landscapes, blurred silhouettes, dynamic street scenes and revered cultural figures including, Brassai, Grace Jones and Sun Ra.

Smith's lyrical narratives tease out the complex emotions and thoughts deeply embedded in the minds and environments of her subjects. In engaging the world around her, she makes perceptible much of the unseen psychological and social complexities that lurk beneath the surface. Her work depicts the beauty of Black life and its struggle for visibility, over time, in the wider cultural landscape.

The gallery opens to the public on Thursday, May 20 from 10-6pm.

“I am delighted to inaugurate my new gallery with a solo presentation by Ming Smith, an artist I admire greatly. Ming embodies the spirit of the gallery and its journey to inception— the irrepressible quest for truth and beauty. It is my honor to share this moment with her.”

— Nicola Vassell



# NICOLA

## ABOUT NICOLA VASSELL GALLERY

Nicola Vassell Gallery 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 inter-generational, cross-disciplinary program of international artists and thinkers.

The gallery is run by Nicola Vassell, an art dealer and curator. Prior to creating the gallery, Vassell was Principal of Concept NV, an art consultancy and curatorial agency, founded in 2013, which specialized in exhibitions and debate on cultural phenomena. In 2015 Vassell was appointed Curatorial Director of The Dean Collection and No Commission, a contemporary family art collection and cultural platform developed by Kasseem “Swizz Beatz” Dean and Alicia Keys.

Vassell has organized several exhibitions, including, *Home, Dreamweavers, Edge of Chaos, Black Eye, Substraction* and No Commission: London, Berlin, Bronx, Shanghai and Miami. Vassell was a Director at Pace Gallery and Deitch Projects, NY. She is a visiting lecturer at Sotheby’s Institute of Art.

## ABOUT MING SMITH

Harlem-based, Detroit-born Ming Smith became a photographer when she was given a camera at a young age. She was the first female member to join Kamoinge, a collective of Black photographers in New York in the 1960s who documented Black life. Her work was first published in the Black Photographer’s Annual in 1973 and she would go on to be the first Black woman photographer to be included in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

Her practice is a tale of five decades spent examining transitory occurrence—intervals at which figures blur, atmospheres alter, vistas haunt, souls whirl, and opposites engage in allied work. Smith’s photographic approach is both scientific and celestial, and experimentation and adventure mark her fascination with detail as it stretches across form and mood. Her dedication to music, dance, and theater underlines the synergistic excellence that characterizes her secondary, if metaphoric, occupations as anthropologist, historian, and poet.

Many of Smith’s subjects are well-known Black cultural figures, such as Alice Coltrane, Grace Jones, Nina Simone and Tina Turner.

Smith was recently included in ‘*Soul of a Nation*’ at Tate Modern in collaboration with Brooklyn Museum, Crystal Bridges and The Broad. She was also featured in Brooklyn Museum’s ‘*We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-85.*’ Her work was exhibited in conjunction with Arthur Jafa’s ‘*A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions*’ at Serpentine Galleries, London; Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin; Galerie Rodolfinum, Prague and Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Smith’s work is in the collections of MoMA, the Whitney Museum of Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of Arts, Virginia Museum of Fine Art, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the National Museum of African-American History and Culture. She was included in MoMA’s 2010 seminal exhibition, ‘*Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography*’.