

# NICODIM

Devin B. Johnson

*My Heart Cries, I Set Out an Offering for You*

Nicodim, Los Angeles

September 4 – October 16, 2021



Devin B. Johnson, *The Office*, 2021

Devin B. Johnson left New York for what was supposed to be a six-week residency at Kehinde Wiley's Black Rock, Senegal in February, 2020 under an umbrella of the status quo. Though there were whispers of a virus ravaging the East, it felt foreign, far away, and American politicians and their supportive media ecosystems have a penchant for saber-rattling and fear mongering, anyway. He had his paint supplies. He was excited to set foot in Africa for the first time, to walk barefoot on its beaches, to acclimate to life beneath the equator.

Then came the pandemic. Then the travel restrictions. Then the global awareness of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the countless others Johnson could only read about from several time zones away. Six weeks became twelve weeks of cancelled flights and news of devastation back home. Twelve weeks became five months, after which Johnson and his Black Rock colleagues were finally able to board a government-chartered jet home. But home didn't feel like home anymore. Home was boarded-up with plywood, vandalized, and overgrown. His own skin felt different, too. *Everything* felt different; everything felt abstract.

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To readjust, Johnson underwent a seismic realignment of self. Inspired by Torkwase Dyson, Cullen Washington Jr, and the Dada movement's walkabouts, he sought to find his way underneath Black compositional thought, underneath the skin, to delve beyond representational articulations of memory and experience and render them haptically. He no longer wanted to paint bodies, he wanted to paint souls interacting in liminal spaces, to capture and amplify their spirit and energy. He no longer saw his body as skin and bone, but as a transitional vessel to temporarily house experience, with a certainty of change. The texture on his canvases became almost sculptural, and he began to incorporate ceramics and mediums from happy times, like ash from blunts.

Within *My Heart Cries, I Set out an Offering for You*, Johnson's third solo exhibition with Nicodim, forms are repeated and approached from alternate angles and varying scales until they mimic the reconstruction and reevaluation of remembrance and how he understands it. There is a graciousness in his range of composition and the way he articulates them "tight, loose, and in-between." Johnson does not meet these bleak times with despair, this body of work is an offering of gratitude.

Devin B. Johnson (b. 1992, Los Angeles) obtained his BA in Fine Arts from the California State University of Channel Islands (2015) and received a Masters of Fine Arts at Pratt Institute (2019). He was one of sixteen artists from around the world selected for the inaugural year of the Black Rock Senegal residency, and was featured in the Northeast and MFA issue of *New American Paintings* (2019), and included in *Cultured's* "Young Artists 2021." Recent exhibitions include *Long Walk*, Galeria Nicodim, Bucharest (2021, solo); *Melody of a Memory*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles (2020, solo); *When You Waked Up the Buffalo*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles (2020); *Hollywood Babylon: A Re-Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, Jeffrey Deitch, Nicodim Gallery, AUTRE Magazine, Los Angeles (2020); *Atmosphere of Certain Uncertainty*, Residency Gallery, Inglewood (2019, solo); and *Incognito*, ICA LA, Los Angeles (2019).

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## Devin B. Johnson

° Born 1992, Los Angeles, California, United States

Lives and works in Los Angeles, California

### Education

2019 MFA, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York

2015 BA in Fine Arts, California State University of Channel Islands, Camarillo, CA

### Solo Exhibitions

2021 *My Heart Cries, I Set Out an Offering For You*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Long Walk*, Galeria Nicodim, Bucharest, Romania

2020 *Melody of a Memory*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2019 *Atmosphere of Certain Uncertainty*, Residency Art Gallery, Inglewood, CA

### Selected Group Exhibitions

2021 *Clay Pop*, Jeffrey Deitch, New York, United States

2020 *When You Waked Up the Buffalo*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

*Hollywood Babylon*, Jeffrey Deitch, Nicodim, AUTRE Magazine, Los Angeles, CA

2019 *Skin Stealers*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

*Trans World*, Galeria Nicodim, Bucharest, Romania

*Trans World*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

*Island*, RAMP Gallery, London, United Kingdom

2018 *Winter in America III*, mom's favorite space, Venice, CA

*Incognito*, ICA LA, Los Angeles, CA

*The New Contemporaries*, Residency Art gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2017 *More \_\_\_ for the Masses*, DTAtelier, Los Angeles, CA

*Peaches: A black internet experience*, Superchief Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

*Griot's Ark: A Living Room Activation*, Space 15 Twenty, Los Angeles, CA

2016 *Sweet(suites)*, Groundspace Project, Los Angeles, CA

2015 *Neo-Mythology*, BG gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, CA

2014 *Spectrum-Gestalt*, BG gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, CA

*The Red, The White, The Bold*, CSU Channel Islands, Camarillo, CA

*Display LA Showcase*, curated by DisplayLA, Los Angeles, CA

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2013 *Sudden Impact*, 1111ACC Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
2012 *21st Century Sex*, Bleicher Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

## Residencies

2020 Black Rock Senegal, Dakar, Senegal

## Collections

Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, Miami, Florida  
Collezione Taurisano, Naples, Italy  
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California  
Pond Society, Shanghai, China  
Rubell Museum, Miami, Florida