

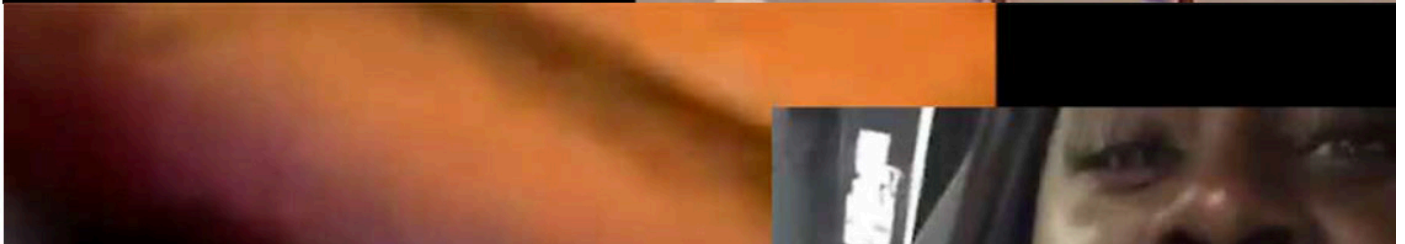
Ebun Sodipo,  
*Press*

## Nasty Girl Kills English Language

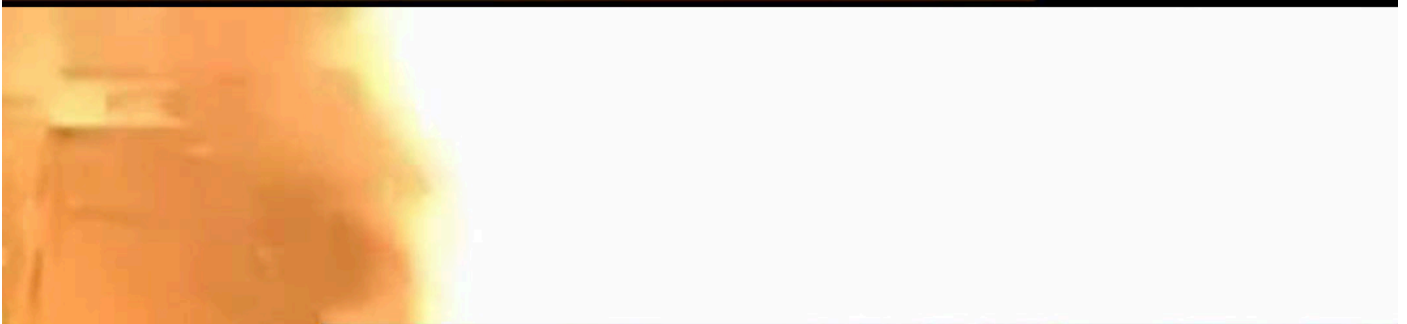
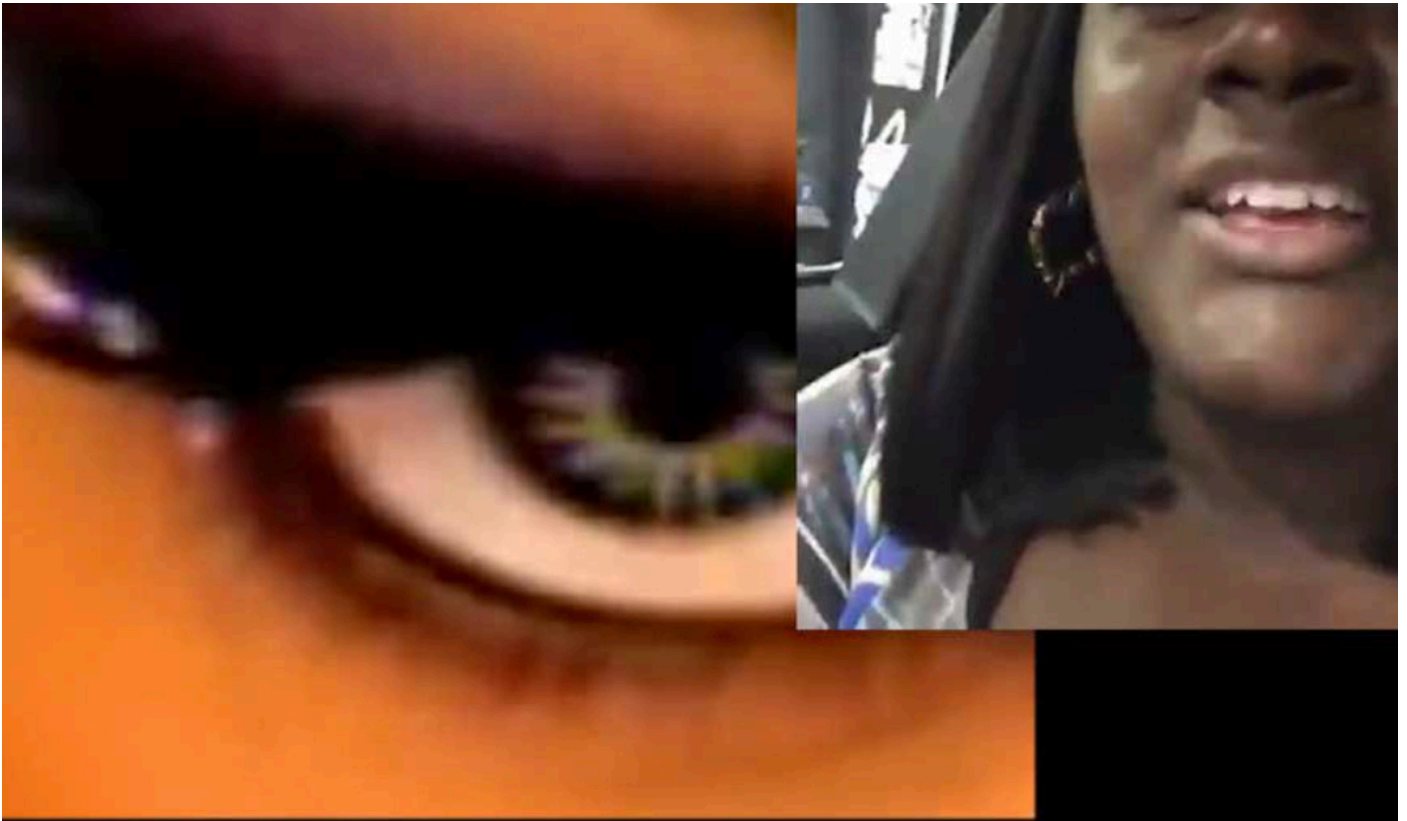
Start with the opening scene of Spike Lee's 1996 comedy *Girl 6*, in which an as yet no-name aspiring actress, portrayed by Teresa Randle (who had already achieved "it girl" status at the time of the film's release), sits down for a screen test in hopes of landing a starring role with an impatient Quentin Tarantino, played by himself. Tarantino, performing his real world celebrity persona, asks Randle, performing what we can imagine might have been her former self, to say some lines. She does; he's unenthusiastic. He then says something like, "Okay, cut to the chase: take your top off. It's needed for the role." No-name Randle pauses and replies, "What? My agent didn't say this is part of the gig." Tarantino, annoyed, whitemansplains that yes, it *is* part of the role. He "needs" to see her tits as a part of the business, and he has upwards of fifty other Black women outside that door aspiring to play the part. So, if she doesn't want to strip, she should stop wasting his time and find another profession.

**EBUN SODIPO**  
WORDS BY  
**TAYLOR LE MELLE**

# Flash Art, 2025



# Flash Art, 2025



# Flash Art, 2025

Ebun Sodipo by Taylor Le Melle

No-name Randle's initial reply is one of insolence. She thought that she was in the room with Tarantino because she was good at her art. But then she acquiesces, as she *needs* this gig to pay rent, and so down both shoulders, slowly, she slides her blouse, as if it was cotton blended with slime. Tarantino, and we as viewers, observe her discomfort and her nudity for a few seconds before she exclaims, "I can't do this!" She pulls up her shirt and bursts out of the rehearsal room and through the crowd of, as Tarantino promised, about fifty other Black women with no name waiting to be *SEEN*.

What happens next — and for the rest of the film — is that this no-name actress decides the most efficient way to earn money at the least expense to her dignity is to become a phone sex operator rather than aspiring to the fine art of being a serious actress. Thus, under the tutelage of a savvy and bossy madam played by a very hot 1990s Jennifer Lewis (who today is many scrollers' favorite great-aunt on the internet for her original meme-song "I-don't-want-nobody FUCKIN-wit' meeeee / in-these-streets!"), no-name actress rebrands herself as the eponymous Girl 6.

This film is just one of the many citations that appear in Ebun Sodipo's *Nasty Girl (The Sharpest in Town)* (2023) and *Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast)* (2024), a duo of video works that collage together found footage that she has sourced from the far corners of Tumblr, one of the places where Black culture lives on the internet. Where and what is Black internet culture, exactly? A possible response: I can't tell you; you just had to be there. Another possible answer: the Black internet does not exist in a specificity of form or in the aesthetic of an image, but in the mechanisms of circulation through which the image travels. Meaning, Black internet perhaps does not exist in a stable format, but simply arises when (at least) one Black user transfers data to (at least) one other.

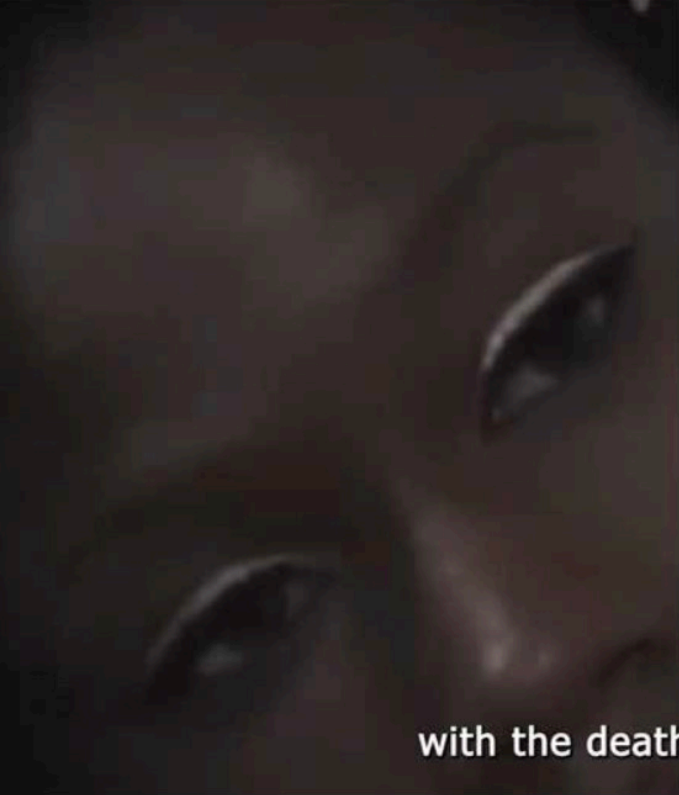
Sodipo also cites a clip from *Girl 6* in *Nasty Girl 1* (2022), in which one of the girls (Girl 75 in this instance) is on the phone, talking or rehearsing how to construct a compelling sexual fantasy for a listener who she hopes to keep on the line because the longer he listens, the more money he pays. Sodipo's video works could be interpreted as rehearsing or processing or trying to communicate this complex meeting point — call it an intersection — of three big problems for the single Black woman in a modern/postmodern metropolis. First, the compulsion to generate capital (I *need* this gig!). Second, the slimy fact of being viewed as a disposable object of desire by the dominant power structure that controls the remittance of that capital (Tarantino's impatience for an actress's discomfort). And third, a language problem — how to use your voice, and to whom you bother to speak your condition.

*Girl 6* and Sodipo's *Nasty Girl* series, along with much of the Black feminist literature that Sodipo devours, articulates this intersection of dilemmas in a capitalist patriarchy where Black women's presence is required for society to function, albeit as an object of resentment. What I have noticed in this literature that Sodipo reads, such as Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), is that Black women have tended to open possibilities for themselves through activating the mechanism that is also a site of the violence inflicted upon them: their own bodies. And in many cases, using the body to network language, by way of the voice, or in a more general sense the creation of text. So, the no-name actress generates her necessary capital, building a support structure for her survival, by speaking as a sex object on the phone. A phone which today has been replaced by the internet, where Sodipo, also an avid consumer of internet culture, is using her artwork to speak to and through the same dilemma that she herself is certainly deeply implicated within, as an emerging artist in an

# Flash Art, 2025



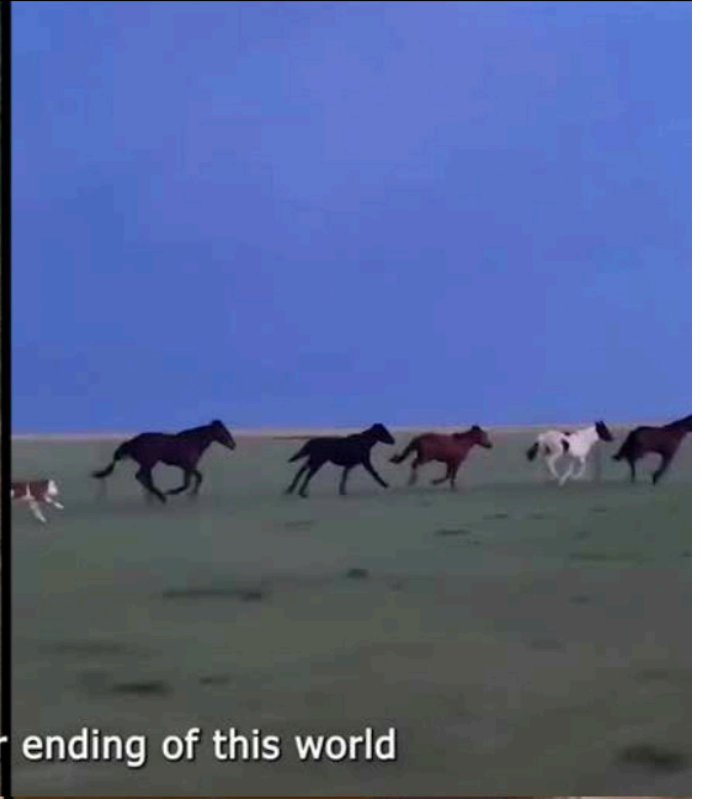
It might end,



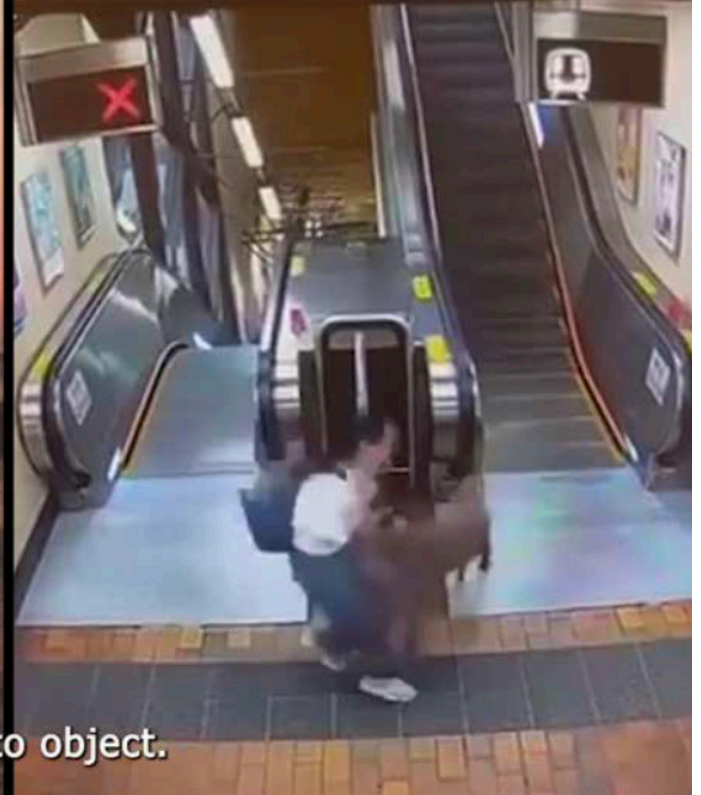
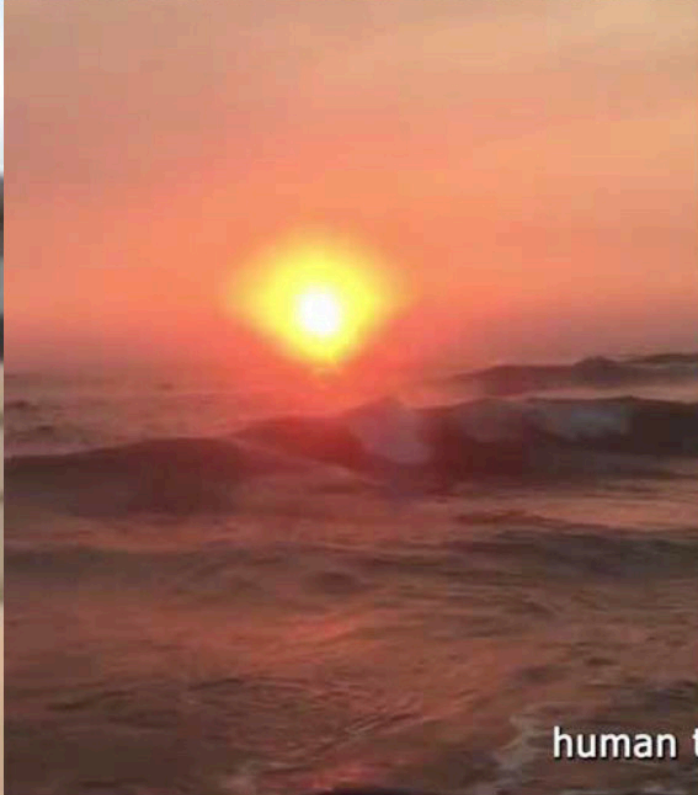
with the death of whiteness.



# Flash Art, 2025



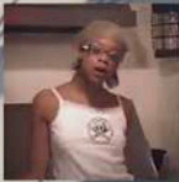
Can we seek another ending of this world



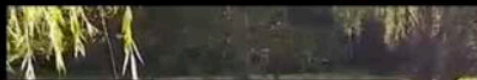
human to object.

# Flash Art, 2025

Nasty Girl Kills English Language



**Bring chaos and misfortune**





# Flash Art, 2025

Ebun Sodipo by Taylor Le Melle

art world which, despite its representational acquiescences, remains tethered to the surpluses of global racialized capitalism. I do not bother to state this as a criticism, but as the simple fact of a condition.

In Sodipo's *An Other Ending* (2023), the voice is layered over a rolling barrage of disparate internet-quality images and speculates on what it would take to see the death of whiteness, and this voice links whiteness and capitalism as co-constituted. To paraphrase: perhaps whiteness will end when the last coal furnace breaks; perhaps it will end when great thinkers admit that violence against women is always eroticized; and perhaps it will end when the last English-speaking person dies. It is a seductive proposition to think that this language of the British, and of the international art world, could become extinct, obsolete, and no longer necessary. Sodipo returns often to these speculations of mythic proportions where the world as we know it breaks. In her film works, where she herself (as in *Celeste – She of the Sea*, 2023), her friends (*Atlantic Cruises – A Rest Stop*, 2021), and her favorite Tumblr meme girls appear, women come to the city hoping to live long enough to see the end of capitalism while at the same time knowing they will never survive if they don't have some money. Perhaps this is Sodipo's exposition on what a Nasty Girl actually is: one who confronts the metaphysical dilemma of compulsory participation in one of Europe's most insidious inventions – modernism – with the relentless unattachment of a phone sex worker. To survive the city, she becomes like a jellyfish, a gorgeous supple predator like the one who appears in *Nasty Girl (The Sharpest Girl Town)* out on the street, with her friend, exclaiming "WE SUCKIN' EVERYBODY'S DICK! WE TAKIN' EVERYBODY'S MAN!" Hers is a carefree, brash obscenity that respectable people tend to shy away from because they don't want to risk their status in the capitalist hierarchy. A Nasty Girl maybe does not see a risk as a risk at all, because what is the worst that could happen? The end of this order of things?

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I told Sodipo that I find the figure of a Black woman artist in the international art world these days fascinating, given the discourse now circulating within it – particularly the increasing inclusion of Black studies in museums and galleries. Why would this be weird? Because a defining feature of Black study is an examination of the fallout of one of the biggest and most lasting violences on Black women – the transatlantic slave trade and the capital that Europe extracted from it – and a lot of this value is still, to this day, being held in the form of artworks. So how ironic is it that art can still also be seen as a liberatory mechanism by those who theorize oppression? How can art be a form that concretized the violence of capital, while at the same time serve as an opening for the possibility of joy, of creation, of ecstatic experience? Who would choose to be an artist in the midst of this metaphysical dilemma?

When I spoke with Sodipo, who is working across a variety of mediums besides video, also collage, installation, and performance, she located her investment in art not in any particular form or technical process but rather in a desire to communicate. Here, again, I find myself, through Sodipo, tapping into the network and noting how the transfer of information and text creates both community and possibility. Like I mentioned earlier in this text about theories of the Black feminine, I recognize in Sodipo's work, and also in her position as an artist making that work in this international artworld context, a compulsory position of needing to open a possibility for herself, and doing so by activating the mechanism that is also the site of the violence. I do not yet have language for why desire, seduction (Sucking everybody's dick! Taking everybody's man!), and obscenity is such a frictionless route to creating this opening, but if pressed to speak, I would, thanks to

# Flash Art, 2025

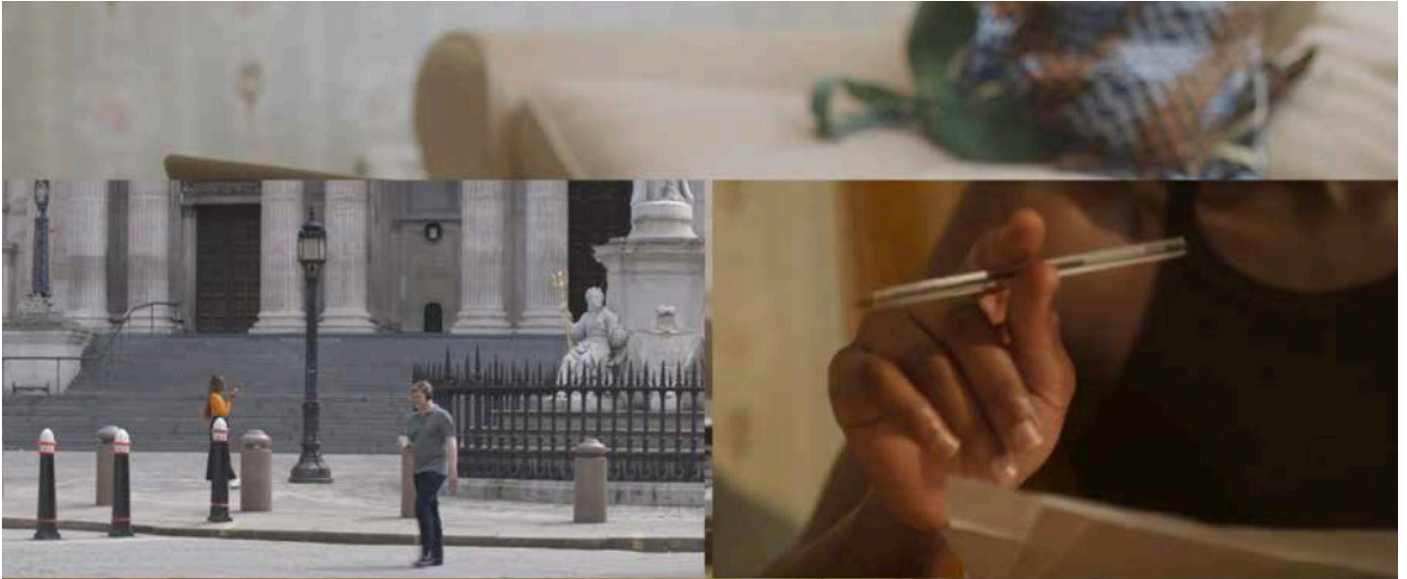


whenever you press ear to sand.

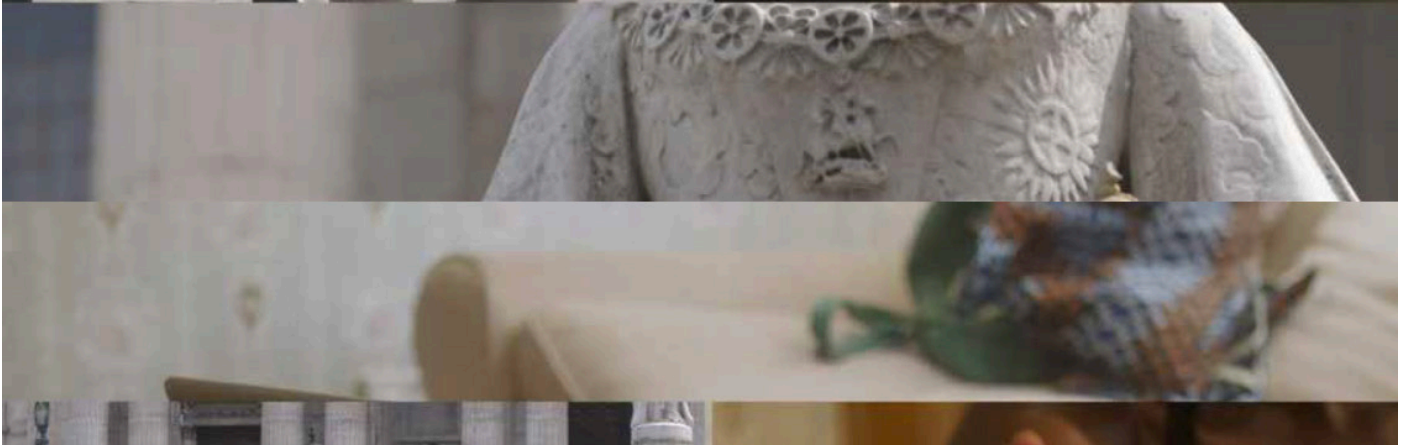
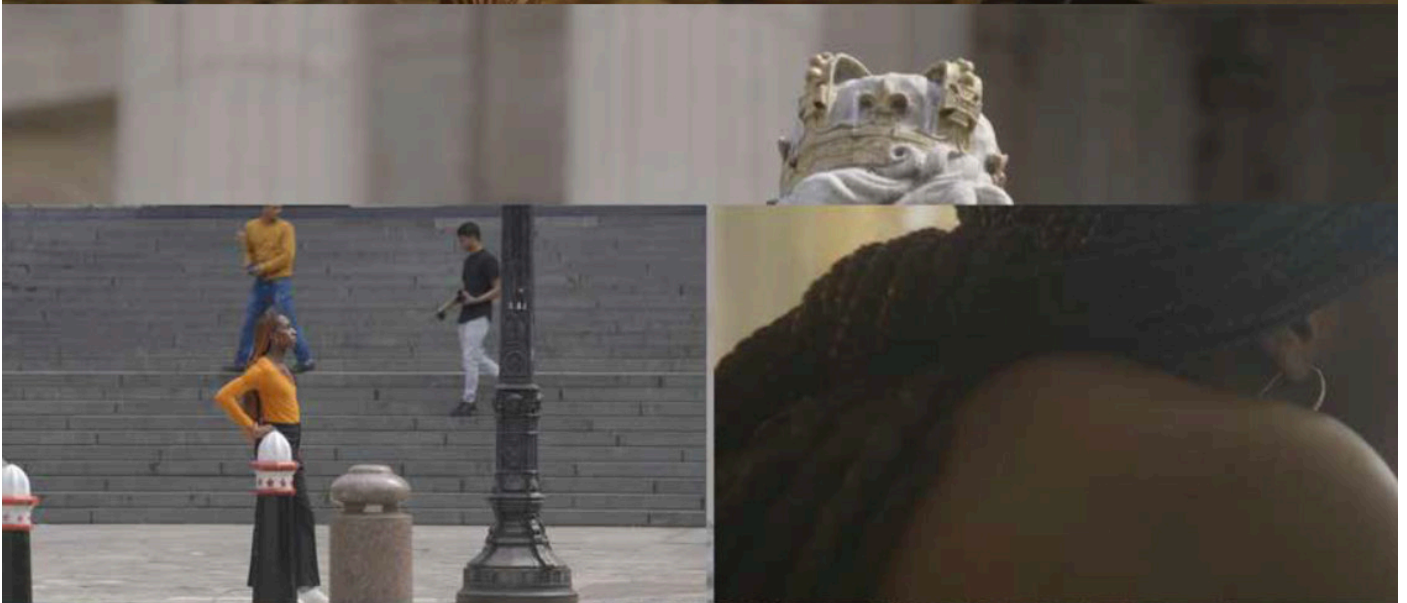


she could see no land.

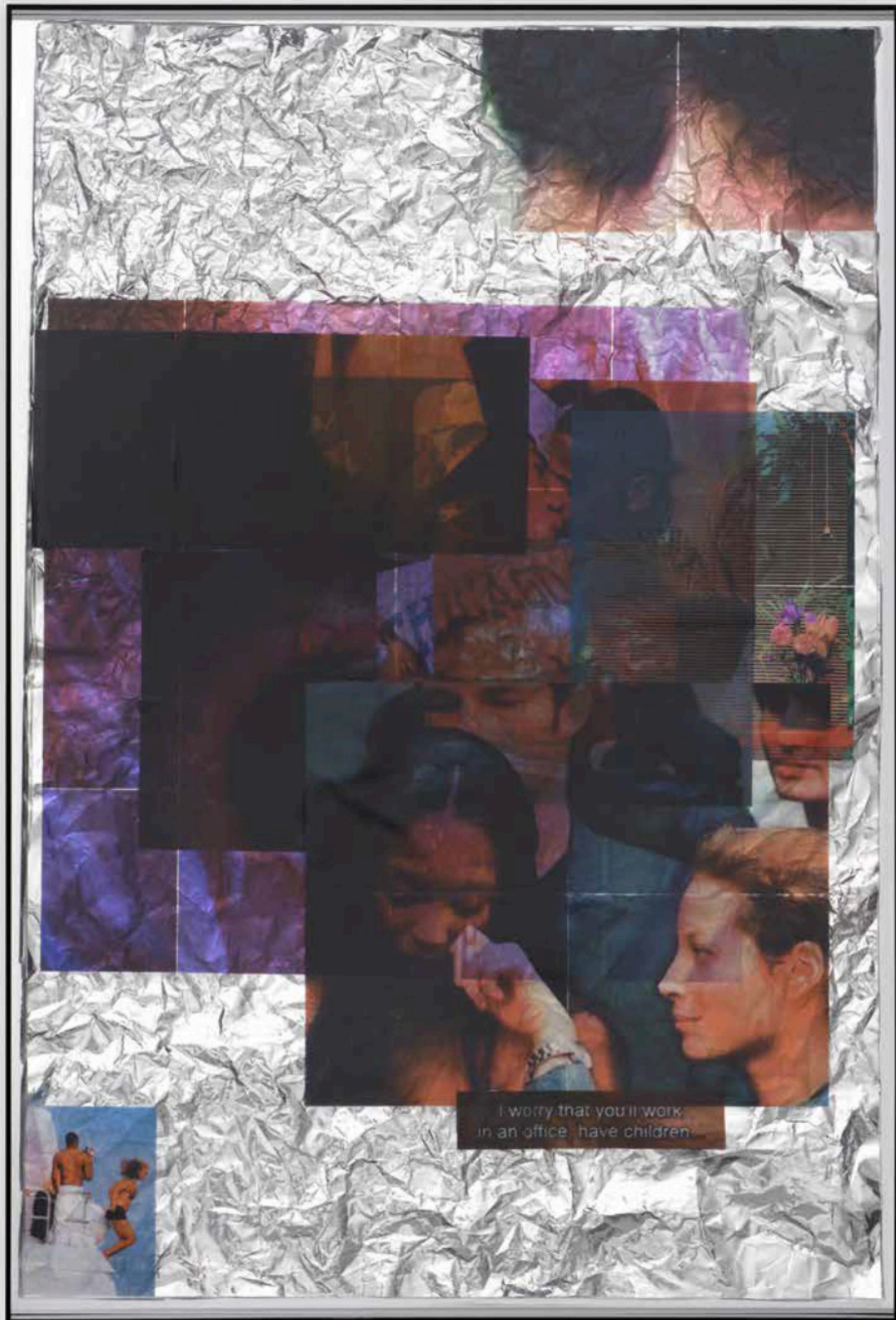
# Flash Art, 2025



*It may not be true but that is not what interests us.*



# Flash Art, 2025



*I worry that you'll work in an office, 2024.* Mylar, digital prints, resin, and acrylic. 120.7 × 84.5 × 5.7 cm. Photography by Paul Salvesson.

# Flash Art, 2025

Ebun Sodipo by Taylor Le Melle

Sodipo, simply flick through the pile of Tumblr images she has assembled in the *Nasty Girl* series. These images, to Sodipo, are not Black because of the people represented inside the frames, but become Black through the transfer of these images from the computer of one person living inside the racial construction of Blackness to another person situated somewhere else inside that construction. A collaged network of situatedness. Because these situations are not fixed in place, and for that matter nor is the construction, the metaphysics of living in that condition of being would necessarily have to include openings and possibilities only if through the momentary accident of many disparate parts being in a state of motion simultaneously. And this lack of fixity, as Sodipo's *Nasty Girls* display, might be what makes it possible for the site of the violence — the process of extracting capital from an eroticized brutality — to also be a location where those withstanding that violence can experience joy. An obscene proposition, but this obscenity, I think, protects us from any misplaced optimism that the world — yes, even the art one — changes its logics of racial capitalism by increasing its inclusion of Black images.

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*comfort begot by blood*, 2024. Mylar, digital prints, resin, and acrylic. 48.7 × 28.7 × 5 cm. Photography by Eva Herzog.

Video stills from:

*Atlantic Cruises – A Rest Stop*, 2021. 21' 22". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

*Celeste – She of the Sea*, 2023. 6'. Single-channel video, HD, sound. Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

*Nasty Girl [The Sharpest Girl In Town]*, 2023. 23' 57". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 2 + 1 AP.

*Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast)*, 2024. 13' 46". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 2 + 1 AP.

*An Other Ending*, 2024. 7' 44". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 3 + 2 AP.

All images courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London.

**Ebun Sodipo** (1993, London) lives and works in London. Sodipo's interdisciplinary practice narrates her construction a Black trans-feminine self after slavery and colonialism. Through a process of fragmentation, collage, and fabulation, she devises softer, other-wise ways of imagining and speaking about the body, desire, archives, and the past. Recent solo exhibitions include: Soft Opening at Paul Soto, Los Angeles; inter.pblc, Copenhagen; neven, London; V.O Curations, London; Vitrine, Basel; Goldsmiths CCA, London; and a space arts, Southampton. Her work has been included in group shows at CCA Derry-Londonderry; Hannah Barry Gallery, London; Hauser & Wirth Somerset; Southwark Park Galleries, Touring; Espacio Gallery, London; Philippa Reid, London; and FACT, Liverpool. Sodipo's solo show will be on view at Soft Opening, London from March 7, until April 26, 2025.

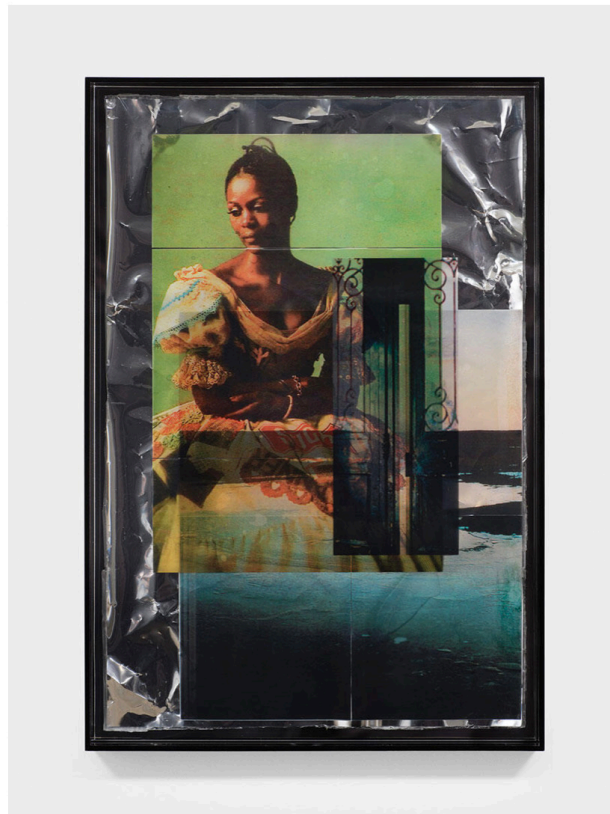
**Taylor Le Melle** is turning this body into one that can finish a novel. She's drinking a lot of wet flowers and living between Amsterdam and Louisiana.

## Ten Artists to Watch in 2025

We highlight the artists – each with major presentations this year – poised to shape the art scene this year

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BY FRIEZE IN OPINION | 07 JAN 25



Eburn Sodipo, *Sugar*, 2024, mylar, digital prints, resin and acrylic, 64 × 44 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London; photography: Eva Herzog

Eburn Sodipo is a London-based artist whose interdisciplinary practice encompasses performance, film, sculpture and collage. Her work narrates the construction of a Black trans-feminine self in the aftermath of slavery and colonialism, aiming to create narratives for Black trans people of the future. Guided by Black feminist study, Sodipo employs collage and fabulation methodologies to explore themes of identity, desire and the body. Her work has been exhibited at Hauser & Wirth Somerset (2024) and V.O Curations, London (2023). In February, she has a forthcoming solo show at Soft Opening, London.

The Face, 2024

# The queer artists taking over Art Basel Miami Beach

It's no secret that Miami Beach is queer as folk. Aside from legendary gay bar Twist, Gianni Versace's mansion and the year-round display of speedo-clad himbos, this month the city is home to many new queer art exhibitions.



Welcome to the world's glitziest (and campest) art fair: [Art Basel Miami Beach](#). Hot on the heels of [Art Basel Paris](#), this year's Floridian outing promises a sizeable contingent of historical and contemporary queer art, spanning surrealist, non-binary artist Claude Cahun all the way through to radical trans collagist [Eburn Sodipo](#).

Of course, where there's an art fair, there'll be queer representation in 2024. In this spirit, Art Basel has put its Nova section to good use – here, emerging galleries focus on new work from up to three particular artists – spotlighting everyone from the Olly Shinder-modelling artist [Michael Ho](#), to Tumblr heroine-turned-radical-art-DJ [Juliana Huxtable](#), whose name you might recognise from Berghain or the cooler dance festival line-ups.

# Ebun Sodipo, Soft Opening

After spending nine years of her childhood in Lagos and two in Abuja, artist Ebun Sodipo came to London in 2004. Her parents both worked, so her grandmother and cousins spent a lot of time caring for her, introducing the artist to bible stories and West African mythology.

“I suspect these stories influenced how I see history now: as stories and narratives disseminated by a particular power structure, concerned only sometimes with ‘fact;” she explains. “My upbringing was very religious. Both my parents were leaders in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and yet they combined this colonial way of seeing the world with some traditional religious practices, such as belief in babalawo [Yoruba healers] and witchcraft.”

Ebun’s practice – which spans collage, performance, installation and poetry – owes a lot to the syncretic nature of her family’s faith, which she applies to her own Black transness. In this vein, she takes inspiration from varied sources – be it Yoruba culture, old Naomi Campbell moments (*I worry that you’ll work in an office*, 2024) and even vlogs of hair-braiding clips (*Illustrations for Libations, Attestations, Affirmations*, 2020) – to give found imagery and phenomena new meanings. Her assemblages, pulled together with printed paper and mylar, sealed in epoxy resin, serve as what she calls, “survival strategies of the marginalised, particularly the uses of anger and memory”.

Having shown with some of London’s cutting-edge galleries, including [Neven Gallery](#) and [VO Curations](#), Ebun recently took to LA for a solo show with [Soft Opening](#). Throughout her work, she merges imagery from online – often social media – to build an archive for trans women of the future. Subtlety reigns supreme for Ebun, whose practice never gives itself away on first viewing.

“I think people expect a kind of [spectacle] with my work, and the work of POC people in general, that I deliberately avoid,” she says.



# Art Basel, 2024

## Galleries collaborate to showcase global talent at Art Basel Miami Beach

This year, eight galleries will host joint presentations. Four of them discuss the benefits of these temporary alliances

By Rob Goyanes | Nov 29, 2024 | 4 min read

Most Art Basel booths are occupied by a single gallery, but collaborations enable surprising synergies and conversations. Four gallerists discuss their collaborative booths: **Fabian Lang** (Zurich) and **Espacio Valverde** (Madrid), who will show a joint presentation of Spanish artist Elena Alonso's large-scale wall panels, sculptures and paintings. **Soft Opening** and **Emalin**, both from London, will show bronze sculptures and mosaics by Russian artist Evgeny Antufiev and the work of Ebum Sodipo, a multidisciplinary artist in London who excavates visual material to probe possible trans futures.



Evgeny Antufiev, Untitled, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Emalin, London. Photograph by Jan Kolsky.



Ebum Sodipo, E mostrava os peitos, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photograph by Eva Herzog.

**Antonia Marsh, founder of Soft Opening**  
**Lucy Cowling, head of exhibitions of Emalin**

**Why did you decide to pursue a joint booth? I like that you're also answering these questions with one voice.**

It's essential that the character of each gallery comes through distinctly, while a clarity of vision is maintained. As two galleries from the same city, it felt exciting for us to bring our programs together in a way we haven't yet had the opportunity to, considering our close physical proximity to each other in London and ways in which our approaches relate – an ethos of mutual support, attention to detail and commitment to supporting artists with utmost care.

# Art Basel, 2024

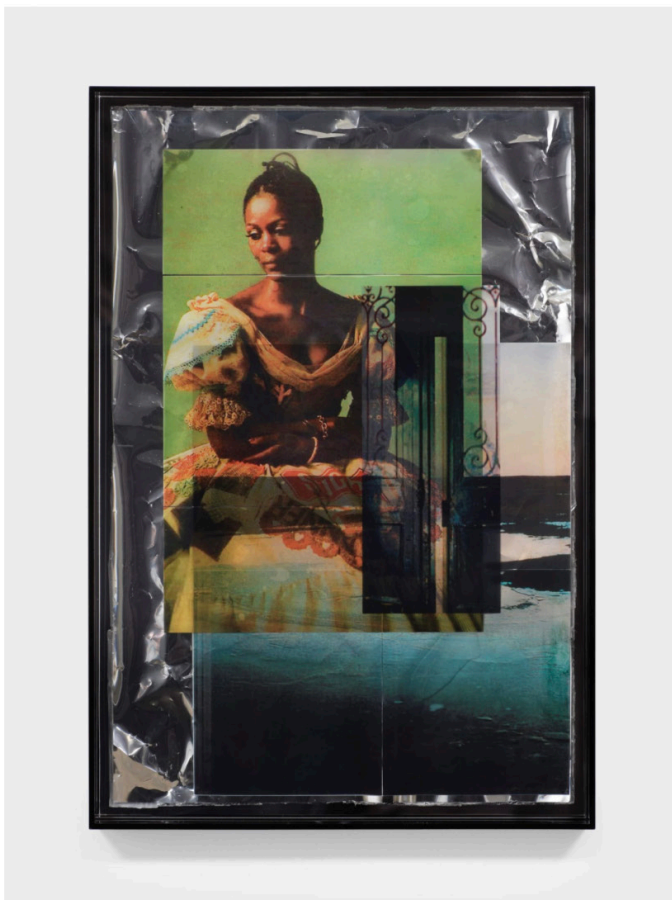
## Tell us a little bit about who and what you'll be showing.

Emalin's presentation of Evgeny Antufiev includes new vessels cast in bronze, encrusted with semiprecious stones, and mosaics that draw from ancient craft and stone setting techniques. Antufiev's laborious treatment and sourcing of materials leaves a tactile trace on the objects, like bronze caked with his fingerprints. In his critical engagement with mosaics, Antufiev explores the entanglements of imagined imperial aesthetics with Soviet identity-building and the violence of contemporary expansionism.

Soft Opening plans to present a group of wall-based assemblages by Ebum Sodipo. The images are made from an extensive visual archive of still and moving digital imagery sourced online. Building these into large-scale collages arranged across reflective Mylar, the artist then coats the works in a layer of clear resin and frames them in thick crystalline acrylic and mirror-backed boxes. Sodipo's compositions at once allow a restoration of neglected figures from the past and plot a trajectory for trans futures.

## Antufiev and Sodipo might appear to have very divergent practices. Do they share more in common than meets the eye?

Both Antufiev and Sodipo mine material culture for alternative and critical histories of image-making, and in doing so, explore an archaeology of representation, narrative, nostalgia and adornment. Of course, while the practices are very distinct, when seen in relief, they will illuminate each other materially, conceptually and critically.



Ebum Sodipo, Sugar, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photograph of Eva Herzog.



Evgeny Antufiev, Untitled (detail), 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Emalin, London. Photograph by Jan Kolsky.



CULTURE | EXHIBITIONS

## Meet the most exciting young artists in London right now

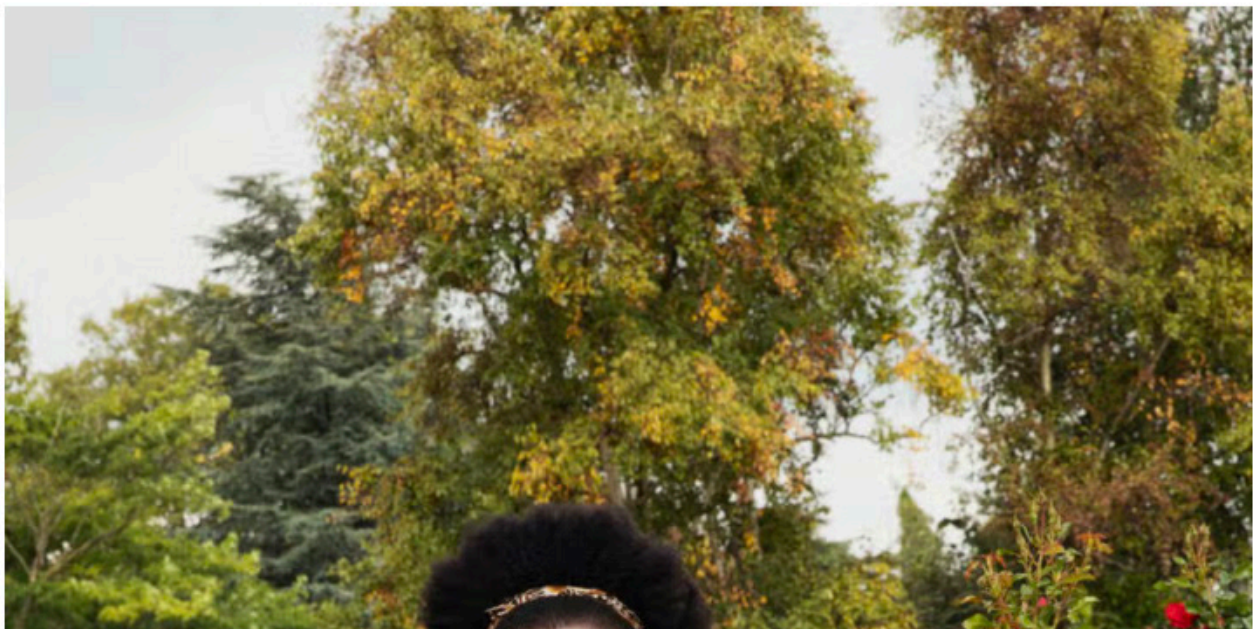


From specialising in massive sculptural installations and folklore-inspired canvases to textile collages... these are the creatives to watch

**NANCY DURRANT @NANCYDURRANT**  
**15 OCTOBER 2024**

This month, London has been the focus of the art world as Frieze brought artists, collectors and punters flocking to Regent's Park. But what's new? Who are the young artists emerging into the capital's art scene, who we're backing to be big at Frieze in the future? We've rounded up some of the most exciting.

**Ebun Sodipo (31)**



# The Standard, 2024



ELLIOTT MORGAN

Ebun Sodipo makes work “for black trans people of the future”. Guided by black feminist study, she uses sound, performance, text, installation, video, and sculpture to tell stories (her passion – she started writing a novel aged nine) about Black trans women’s presence and selves in the past, present and future. “My work is motivated by a desire to give to others, particularly Black trans kids, what I didn’t have growing up,” she says. She tries to fill in the gaps, excavate lives in a more considered, empathetic way than historical record allows.



## *Interview with Artist Eburn Sodipo*

27/09/2024

### ***Can you provide a short one-paragraph introduction to your life and work?***

*I am a London-based multidisciplinary artist. With my work, I try to bring forth narratives of black trans women's lives, particularly our interior lives, across the past and present, all so that trans people, specifically black trans women, will be able to build their selves up in ways I and other women living now could not. I always say I make work for black trans people in the future. I write, recontextualise images, draw out figures from the archive, and produce sculptures from historical imagination.*

### ***When did you first know you wanted to become an artist?***

*When I realised making art came easier than anything to me, when I realised how much pleasure it gave me. I must have been about 16 or 17. Before that, I wanted to be a psychiatrist but I was encouraged to explore painting and drawing by an art teacher at the school a couple of years earlier and really enjoyed it. But it wasn't until sixth form that I really sat down and asked myself which path would be best for my heart and soul that I realized how much I loved the researching, questioning, and experimentation art-making allowed.*

### ***Can you name 3 people who have inspired/informed your artistic practice?***

*Sylvia Wynter, Saidiya Hartman, Martine Syms*

### ***How has your identity formed your work?***

*I've always been a curious person, prone to questioning, mistrustful of authority, and dissatisfied with most accounts of the world. I think growing up I really needed to know why violence was occurring and allowed to occur. I am a migrant, I moved to the UK when I was 11; I am queer, and I am black. These factors pushed me to do a lot of reading the moment I was able to about common sense, about how we ended up with the world that we have, how we've come to the identities that we either take up or have placed on us. My work comes out of all that reading and questioning.*

# RAW, 2024



*Left Hand of the Sisters (2024)*

## ***What materials are you the most interested in working with?***

*I work across several mediums so it's not the easiest question to answer. I think I'm known for my performances and my collages. With my collages, I work with found still and moving images. My physical collages are made with paper, Mylar, and epoxy resin. So maybe... I'm interested a lot in the production of images, how they in turn produce emotions, narratives, and ideology and how they can be rejigged to tell stories about/of trans women. I also work with archival fragments or fragments of history, I build them into stories and images. I try to bring forth these accounts of black trans women into the world in diverse ways.*



# RAW, 2024



*General Partition – Precursor [Vitoria] Arrangement (2024)*

## ***If you could own one work of art from any period, what would it be and why?***

*Probably anything depicting and/or made by black transwomen from before the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There are images and objects depicting Gala priestesses from the 25<sup>th</sup> Century BC in Ancient Mesopotamia, Galli priestesses from 2000 years in Greece, and Rome (there was a grave uncovered a decade or so ago in York, UK) so I'm sure somewhere there is a depiction of African persons we would now call trans but due to a combination of colonisation, historical theft, and virulent queerphobia those objects are nowhere to be found. Someone needs to go into the archives and find these objects!*

## ***Can you tell us about a past project/collaboration you are particularly proud of?***

*I am most proud of my ongoing research project into the life of the enslaved African trans woman, healer and sex worker Vitoria. She lived in 16th century Azores and Lisbon and was kidnapped from Benin in modern-day Nigeria. She attracted the attention of the Portuguese Inquisition, who sentenced her to perpetual imprisonment as a rower on the King of Portugal's galleys. In her trial, she stated that there were women where she had lived who had bodies like hers, gesturing to an alternative gender system and way of relating to the body.*

*The outcomes of this project have included a theatrical performance *Vitoria: Buraco*, which premiered in Dublin in April 2024 as part of the LIVE Collision Festival. Developed using the transcripts from her trial, and scholarship on her life, the performance centres on my relationship to this archive and what it means to find Vitoria. Taking place between Benin, Lisbon, my bath, dream space and the hole in the sky, the story of Vitoria was told in a non-linear narrative using monologue, movement and sound.*

*I also created an installation, 'General Partition: Precursor [Vitoria] Arrangement' at Hannah Barry Gallery. This work was an enclosed octagonal space separated from the 'world' by PVC strip curtains, which had the left hands of different transwomen and trans-feminine people in my left printed on the surface. In this space were two altars, abstracted from the altar at the Oba's palace in Benin. One emitted sounds that Vitoria might have heard or made whilst in Lisbon, the other held items that were mentioned in the court trial: orange peels, bread and honey, a red ribbon, and stones.*

## ***Can you tell us about your upcoming projects/direction you'd like your work to take?***

*I'd love to produce another film, perhaps feature-length, about Vitoria, or maybe another black trans figure from deep history. And I also want to begin producing works that speculate on the future of black transwomen.*

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## Inside the Exhibition Spotlighting Britain's Artists of Tomorrow

As an ambitious group show of British art opens at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, five artists – Victoria Cantons, Joseph Yaeger, Ebum Sodipo, George Rouy, and Sang Woo Kim – unpack their work

FEBRUARY 05, 2024

TEXT Violet Conroy

LEAD IMAGE Sang Woo Kim, *You're looking at me*, 2023. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Damian Griffiths

What does the zeitgeist of British art look like at the moment? A bold, eclectic new group show at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, ***Present Tense***, aims to answer this question, showcasing the work of 23 artists both emerging and mid-career. With a mix of sculpture, painting, drawing, collage, video, and installation, there's much to take in: fresh from his ICA solo show at the end of last year, there's the uncanny, colourful sculptures of Gray Wielebinski; glitchy, tumultuous compositions by George Rouy; sensual collages by Ebum Sodipo, vast, cinema-inspired painting by Joseph Yaeger; a series of hallucinatory pigment dye transfers by Sang Woo Kim depicting glowing figures in nature; and much more.

Although there's a fair amount of sculpture in the show, painting reigns supreme here, ranging from the abstract, angsty canvases of Daisy Parris, all the way to the figurative, confrontational work of Victoria Cantons, which deals with the artist's lived experience as a transgender woman (Parris's work draws obvious parallels to Tracey Emin, and Cantons to Jenny Saville – two titans of British art). As a contemporary survey of emerging British artists, in theory, the 'next' Emin and Saville are in this Hauser & Wirth show, too.



# AnOther, 2024

Speaking a few days after the opening, Isabella Bornholt, the show's curator, says she's noticed a real return to skill and craft in the art of recent years. "All the artists in the show have real conceptual gravitas to their works, but they also execute it with a skill," she says, "which I think is very much indicative of what's happening in the art world right now." Another key theme that emerged, she believes, is self-reflection. "In a world where we consume so much imagery and information on a day-to-day basis via our phones and our laptops, it's a really new, hyperactive way to live," she says. "And so many of these artists are looking inwards and self-reflecting to pose and answer questions."

As a mega-gallery with locations in London, New York, Paris, Zurich, LA, Hong Kong and more, *Present Tense* offers an exciting opportunity for younger artists to show at Hauser & Wirth – none of whom are currently on their roster – and a refreshing chance to show outside of London, where most of the UK's art-world action usually takes place. Located in the picturesque town of Bruton, which boasts top-quality restaurants and hotels (Rochelle Canteen's Margot Henderson does the food at The Three Horseshoes, a 17th-century pub opened by Phoebe Philo's husband, Max Wigram, last year), a weekend trip down to Somerset to see the show is well worth the journey.

Below, five artists featured in the show – Victoria Cantons, Joseph Yaeger, Eburn Sodipo, George Rouy, and Sang Woo Kim – talk in their own words about their work.

## Ebun Sodipo

"I pull the images for my collages from this archive I've been building since 2014. From 2014 - 2018, I would go on Tumblr for a certain amount of time every day, and I would collect anything that was posted by a Black person that came across my feed. I basically grew up online. Tumblr kind of determined what it meant for me to be Black. It informed my politics when I was younger, and it's a place where I found myself, so that context is really important.

"These collages are about trying to describe a particular emotion, thought or desire that I have. I also like to think about the ways that we use these images and the Internet to communicate with each other, and to determine who and what we are through this relationship that is mediated by images. These images impact you in a way that you can't describe. It's like pre-thought; you don't really think about them, you feel them.

"Water, the sea, and the Atlantic is a really important aspect of my practice. I started making this work thinking about what it means to be Black, and part of that has to do with the Atlantic, or now, in contemporary times, the Mediterranean and the Gulf. I am thinking about what happens when a body moves from Africa into a non-African space via the sea, and the kind of transformations that happen. The psychological phenomenon of looking at the shifting feel of light and water, the kind of meditative states that it can get into, is really interesting to me. There's a theory that one of the reasons why we are drawn to shiny and glittering surfaces is because they remind us of water on a deep instinctual, lizard-brain kind of level. Our body is trying to quench a thirst that has been with us for a very long time, but you can never actually quench the thirst, and the desire is deeply embedded in your body in your DNA. That suddenly becomes a metaphor for thinking about transness and transfemininity, and this desire to move the body or to follow the desire to a certain point. That's why I use the motif of water and reflective surfaces in shine and shimmer, to get your attention and draw you in."

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# Frieze, 2021

## LIVE 2021: A Programme of Performance Curated by Languid Hands

Frieze London's LIVE will feature performances by Rebecca Bellantoni, Ebun Sodipo and Ashley Holmes exploring themes of embodiment, transformation and grief



This year's LIVE programme is curated by **Languid Hands**, a London-based artistic and curatorial collaboration between **Rabz Lansiquot**, filmmaker, programmer and DJ, and **Imani Robinson**, interdisciplinary writer, editor and live artist.



Rebecca Bellantoni, *Untitled*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist

# Frieze, 2021

The duo have been curatorial fellows at Cubitt Artists since January 2020, presenting *No Real Closure*, a platform for experimentation and development of black artistic practice across exhibitions, moving image, text, performance and public programming.

Their LIVE programme extends this method of inquiry, and will be available to view online, with performances by **Ebun Sodipo, Rebecca Bellantoni & Ashley Holmes**.

The performance programme will be hosted online on frieze.com from **Thursday 14 October**.

# Metal, 2021

EBUN SODIPO

THE ROAD TOWARDS  
YOURSELF



In her work visual and performing artist **Ebun Sodipo** takes us into her world of freedom and self-expression. Sodipo delves into the intricacies of her journey into confidence. She explores the fluid cosmological joy of being true to yourself. With themes surrounding gender, race and sexuality, Sodipo discusses safe art spaces and artistic symbolism as a means to extend conversation and spend more time together with artwork.

**Hi Ebun, could you present yourself for our readers?**

The most important things to know about me are that I am an artist and writer. Here are some less important things about me, in no particular order: I am a green fingered lover of anime and period dramas sets in imperial courts; I am a tall black trans woman living by the sea, enjoying the distance from the heart of an empire; I am Yoruba; a migrant with dual nationality; I consider myself a black abolitionist; I was raised in a middle class pentecostal Christian Nigerian household; I could stare at the sea for hours on end; I'm single, and I've had chicken pox twice.

# Metal, 2021

## **Growing up did you always know you wanted to be an artist?**

Not quite. My parents are both accountants, and in true post colonial middle class fashion wished for their children to go into STEM. They weren't into the arts either and didn't really have any friends who were creative. It wasn't until I was 16 or 17 that the desire for this path arose. I was quite good at drawing and painting and my art teachers at school persuaded me into doing an Art GCSE, and then an A-Level. After that it simply made sense for me, it felt like the best way to articulate myself.

I was always interested in storytelling from a very young age though. I devoured books from a very young age and started writing a novel when I was 9. I read constantly: in classes, on the bus on the way home (sometimes I'd be so engrossed in a book that I'd stay on the bus till its last stop hours from home). My parents tried, unsuccessfully, to confine my reading to the evenings, but obviously that didn't work. I think of my practice as storytelling, in different forms. There is always a narrative present in and between my works. Developing an artistic practice is in many ways simply learning different modes of

## **Your work depicts such a broad range of beautifully constructed, multi-disciplinary focuses. How do you come up with your varied projects?**

I usually go with my body. So many of the things I've made were responses to things I was reading, watching, seeing. I might write something down somewhere and return to it in order to pull out ideas. Or an image forms and I flesh that out, seeing what is possible and realisable right now, and what will remain a dream, like what budget do I have, what's the best way to display it. Sometimes I isolate particular ideas, conduct some research and then build a performance, film or text around them. If its a text then, how should it be put out into the world: via sounding, or reading? If reading, a book, a website, a leaflet? Which form best guides the audience along the narrative I'm forming, which medium best lends itself to the affective terrain I want to explore? There are core ideas I have that ripple across different works, embedding themselves without my knowledge.

# Metal, 2021

**A lot of your work touches on themes surrounding race, sexuality and gender. How have your own personal experiences influenced the outcome of your work?**

My experiences have led me to seek and answer questions, for example: what are black gestures; what is the place of imagination in self-fashioning; where do I begin and where do I end; how can you communicate the simultaneity of trauma and joy, the history that hurts and heals? Most of my works attempt to answer these questions, with long meandering answers, a drawing out and dwelling in the sensations of answering, using bodily sensations to take my audience somewhere: the feeling of being in the black mass, or an encounter with an image that sparks gender euphoria and realisation.

My work is motivated by a desire to give to others, particularly Black trans kids, what I didn't have growing up. This is why I try to speak about trans desire using black images, writing about the sensations of having little history. I make work for others to have and build on, answer questions others will no doubt ask, tell stories that haven't yet been told, construct a past that acts as a mirror for black trans people.

**You tend to depict striking and evocative visuals that communicate these themes in a way that isn't always so literal. How did you get into this symbolic visual exploration?**

In part the world taught me this. Like how so much of visual culture - i.e. images, films, adverts - subliminally communicate ideas about good and bad, the right type of people and life, and the bad kind: a brightly lit suburbia vs a dark and orange toned ghetto; lighting with a silky texture and the most pleasant of sounds when a muscular able bodied white man comes into frame makes us know him as attractive; unthinking, uncaring bad lighting transform a black man into a monstrous hulking shadow; multi hued lighting that reflects off sheening dark skin triggering erotic and nonerotic hunger. For me, film and video can be spaces to resist these techniques, to construct new ways of being impacted by seeing and listening, to upend ways of connecting with the world: can a disharmonious staccato burst of images and sound feel tender and calming?

# Metal, 2021

**Some of your projects include set designs such as The Black House, where you create warm familiar spaces that engage with those who visit. What encourages you to create these types of spaces?**

I wanted really to replicate the space I'd found myself in as I leaned into my blackness and queerness. Myself, Heidi Sincuba, and Kefloe Siwisa wanted very much to counteract the emotions and thoughts that can arrive in one's body in mostly white spaces. I had just finished university and was still recovering from the pervasive whiteness and anti-blackness of that space, grappling with the gentrification I could see happening where I lived in Camberwell, and in Elephant and Castle, in Brixton, a pushing out of poor black folk. We knew that so many spaces made by black people had been closed down so we wanted to mitigate that in some way, build and work towards a permanent space that held black creativity, aided respite, laughter and joy, healing, learning.

**Over the past few months, we've been in and out of lockdown. How did this affect the way you work?**

The pandemic really slowed things down for me. I was blessed to have a hospitality job at the time of the initial lockdown so I was furloughed. This gave me the opportunity to focus almost solely on my creative practice. I started revisiting and reworking old work, taking things apart and pulling out the golden kernels. I thought and experimented with my moving image work, trying to bring a heavier trace of my presence. I wrote a lot: more poetry, essays, fiction (which I hadn't done since my fanfiction days more than a decade ago), and it's upped my confidence there... I'm far more playful with text and language than ever before. I think I was also able to look more at other people's work, and speak to people (so many Zooms!) which developed my own visual practice.

**A lot of your work focuses on the much-needed representation of the LGBTQ+ community. What are you looking forward to the most in the art industry as a queer artist?**

I'm looking forward to the art industry being made more accessible, and to new networks that prioritise marginalised people. And perhaps less engagement with established institutions in favour of newer, small collectives and individuals. There are so many questions in need of answering like, how do you make an art career a realistic and sustainable option for young people from non-white, working class backgrounds?



# Metal, 2021

**You've displayed an amazing array of projects thus far, so what can we look forward to from you in the future?**

I just started a series of performance works titled *my body reminds us of water*, that have taken place at different venues around the UK, at small and major institutions: Kings College, Porthmeor Studios in St Ives, Frieze, Camden Arts Center in November. There are a couple more iterations coming up: Oxford in December and at Auto Italia. These performances think through image culture, desire production, the body as an archive, gender as ancestral communication. I've started work on a large scale project called *Following The Gourd*, which thinks through astronomical knowledge, cosmologies, archival practices, and will have multiple outcomes and realisations. One of these is a web based interactive map of a fictional night sky that also doubles as an archive of trans existence, created with a small group of Black Trans youth, with FACT Liverpool and VISUAL Carlow, in Ireland. I'm also writing a small collection of poetry to come out in 2022.



Illustrations for Libatons, Attestations, Affirmations. 2020. Performance, video.

# Metal, 2021



Atlantic Cruises. Embassy Gallery with Rosa Johan Uddoh - 2010. Performance.



*She tore fire from the sky*

*and*

*Sent it lashing to the ground*

*She tore fire from the sky.*

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