



A photographer with a sharp eye and a keen wit, Awol Erizku twists art history around to fit his needs. Observing that there weren't many museum masterpieces featuring people of color, the 24-year-old artist set about creating his own versions of the classics. In his bohemian studio, which is situated below a flower shop in downtown New York, Johannes Vermeer's iconic *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was transformed into *Girl with a Bamboo Earring*, with the model being a young black girl he spotted on the subway. Likewise, Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with Ermine* was humorously remade as *Lady With a Pitbull* and Caravaggio's *Young Sick Bacchus* got slyly reinvented as *Boy Holding Grapes*.

"The models I choose to work with are not professional models but possess an undeniable, striking beauty," declares the Ethiopia-born photographer, who grew up in the Bronx. A graduate of Cooper Union, Erizku has been working for the past few years as a commercial photographer, capturing the likes of Mos Def and the A\$AP crew for magazine pages, while simultaneously pursuing his fine art work. After being featured in a group exhibition at NYC's high-profile FLAG Art Foundation last fall, he landed his first solo show, which is currently on view at Hasted Kraeutler Gallery. Click through to view our favorite photos from the show and to watch a video interview with the artist, who'll soon be off to Yale to further explore his dreams.