



## Awol Erizku Brings the Street Into the Gallery in “The Only Way Is Up”

Take Donald Judd’s renowned series of “Stacks”—the sleek, painted iron boxes installed vertically on a wall like ladder rungs—and replace those minimalist forms with black basketball hoops; the result is Awol Erizku’s *Oh, what a feeling, Fuck it, I want a Trillion* (2014). A response to Judd and a reflection on his own upbringing, Erizku injects adolescent experiences, in this case, shooting hoops on public courts in his native New York, to develop a dialogue on cultural identity and contemporary art.

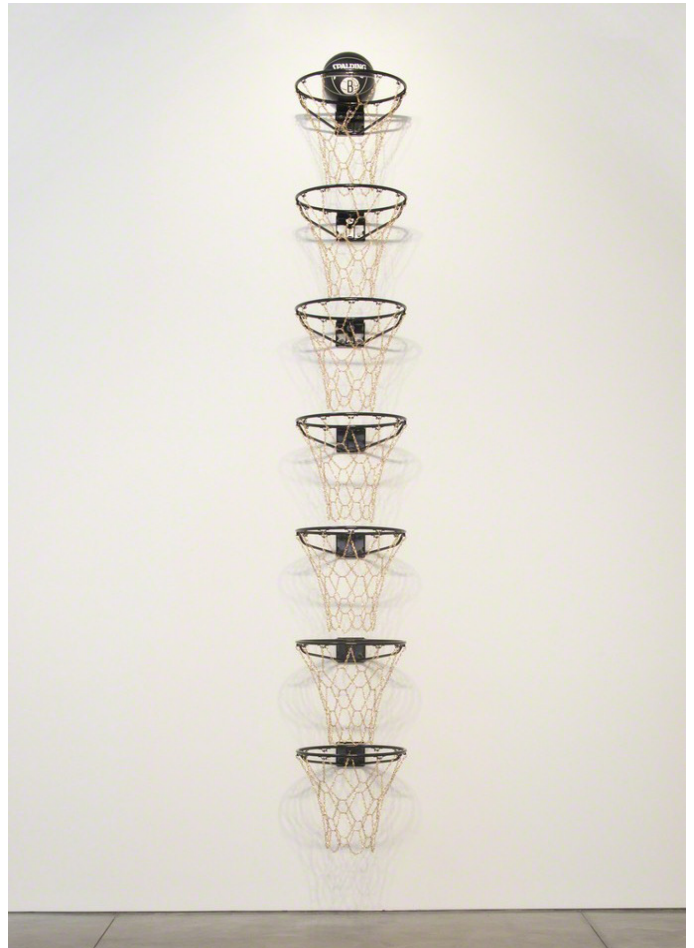
Juxtaposing the revered world of art history with his own daily life, Erizku’s “The Only Way Is Up,” now on view at Hasted Kraeutler, synthesizes iconic works of art and New York City streets. His interests lie in morphing the context and purpose of ready-made objects, working in a range of mediums including photography, sculpture, and video installation. While the bulk of his work focuses on self-discovery, it also delves into African-American culture in an effort to alleviate the relative absence of people of color throughout art history.

In two squares of black leather hung on the wall, the artist takes inspiration from Ed Ruscha’s *OOF* (1982) and, in neon, displays the words “#TRILL,” paired with an old Michael Jackson record, and “#WAVY,” with a Barack Obama t-shirt. Both words have roots in urban vernacular and, viewed alongside political and cultural symbols, they conjure both the street and the historic African American figures they reference.

Keeping with the young artist’s mission to combine art world formalities with urban character, Erizku teamed up with New York DJ Kitty Ca\$h to create a mixtape to serve as the soundtrack for the exhibition, featuring songs that have inspired works in the show. “The Only Way is Up” takes its title from a Quincy Jones record—whose message was to empower and uplift—reflecting the revisionist slant and boot-straps self-determination of an exhibition that seeks to write African Americans back into the history of Western art.

*“The Only Way Is Up” is on view at Hasted Kraeutler June 19th–August 15th, 2014.*

*Follow the show on social media with #erizkuwayisup.*



**Awol Erizku**  
*Oh what a feeling, aw, fuck it, I want a Trillion*, 2014  
Hasted Kraeutler