

Zara, Janelle. "A Panel Etched with 'Blood,' 'Nerves' and 'Knee'." *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* (February 18, 2022) [ill.] [online]

T THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

THE ARTISTS

A Panel Etched with 'Blood,' 'Nerves' and 'Knee'

Nikita Gale's new series presents a range of words that might be used to describe a human being.



Nikita Gale, "Body Print: Blood" (2022). © Nikita Gale. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker, New York

By Janelle Zara

Feb. 18, 2022, 12:00 p.m. ET

In each installment of [The Artists](#), I highlights a recent or little-seen work by a Black artist and offers a few words from that artist putting the work in context. This week, we're looking at "Body Print: Blood" (2022), one of six inscribed aluminum panels in a series by Nikita Gale. The pieces appear in ["End of Subject,"](#) Gale's new solo exhibition, on view at Manhattan's 52 Walker gallery through March 26.

Name: Nikita Gale

Age: 38

Based in: Los Angeles

Originally from: Anchorage, Alaska

Where and when did you make this work?

This is a brand-new work for a big, lovely space in Tribeca called 52 Walker. I worked on it from last October to December, and in Los Angeles and New York.

Can you describe what's going on in the work?

The pieces in my "Body Print" series were made through a process of etching and removal of the surface of large rectangular panels of aluminum. They are a continuation of my interests in performance and the relationships between absence and presence, specifically the ways that humans often indicate presence through the removal or extraction of material: Think of encountering carved initials in a tree, or handprints in the concrete of a sidewalk. The titles are based on materials that any human body would contain, like bones, breath and blood. This one is called "Body Print: Blood," and, as with all the panels, I etched words onto its surface that exist on a kind of spectrum for describing a person. The terms go from those for the physical material of the body to those that are more relational, like "father," "sister," "child." What emerges are these indexes of systems that define our ideas of what makes a human being.

Each of the panels is paired with a small spotlight whose light spills off the aluminum and onto the surrounding space. I often use spotlights in my work because of their status as what Jenny Odell, an artist and the author of [“How to Do Nothing”](#) (2019), refers to as “attention-holding architecture.” Essentially, they’re objects that tell you where to look and direct attention in a way that I find really seductive. I’m a big pop-music fan, and, at concerts, I see how spotlights direct the viewer’s gaze. For years, I’ve been fascinated by the ways that objects condition social behaviors. That ties into this larger conversation about power and authority and how those systems direct our bodies to move in certain ways, look at particular things or receive certain types of information. So the spotlight is a useful metaphor for thinking about power in the context of the public arena: The stage, or wherever we focus our attention, represents where power is concentrated.

What inspired you to make it?

I was thinking about artists who have worked in this tradition of body prints, which rely on the body as a mark-making tool. Of course, [David Hammons](#) came to mind immediately. The making of his “Body Prints” in the 1960s and ’70s was a type of performance: In the studio, he covered his body or someone else’s in baby oil or grease, pressed the body against a surface like paper or fabric and applied pigmented powder or charcoal. In my series, I’m interested in using language to examine different systems that render a body legible as human, gendered, racialized and so on.

What’s a work of art in any medium that changed your life?

In 2013, the ICA Philadelphia had a show called [“Jason Rhoades, Four Roads.”](#) One of the included pieces was “The Creation Myth,” a gallery-size installation of smoke machines, monitors, projectors, paint buckets and more that the artist originally created in 1998. I was so blown away by the meticulous detail, and how all the materials were thoroughly worked through. It was a profound experience, seeing that show. I remember walking through it and feeling as though I was being given permission to *do* something. It’s very rare for that to happen, but when it does, it really sticks with me.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

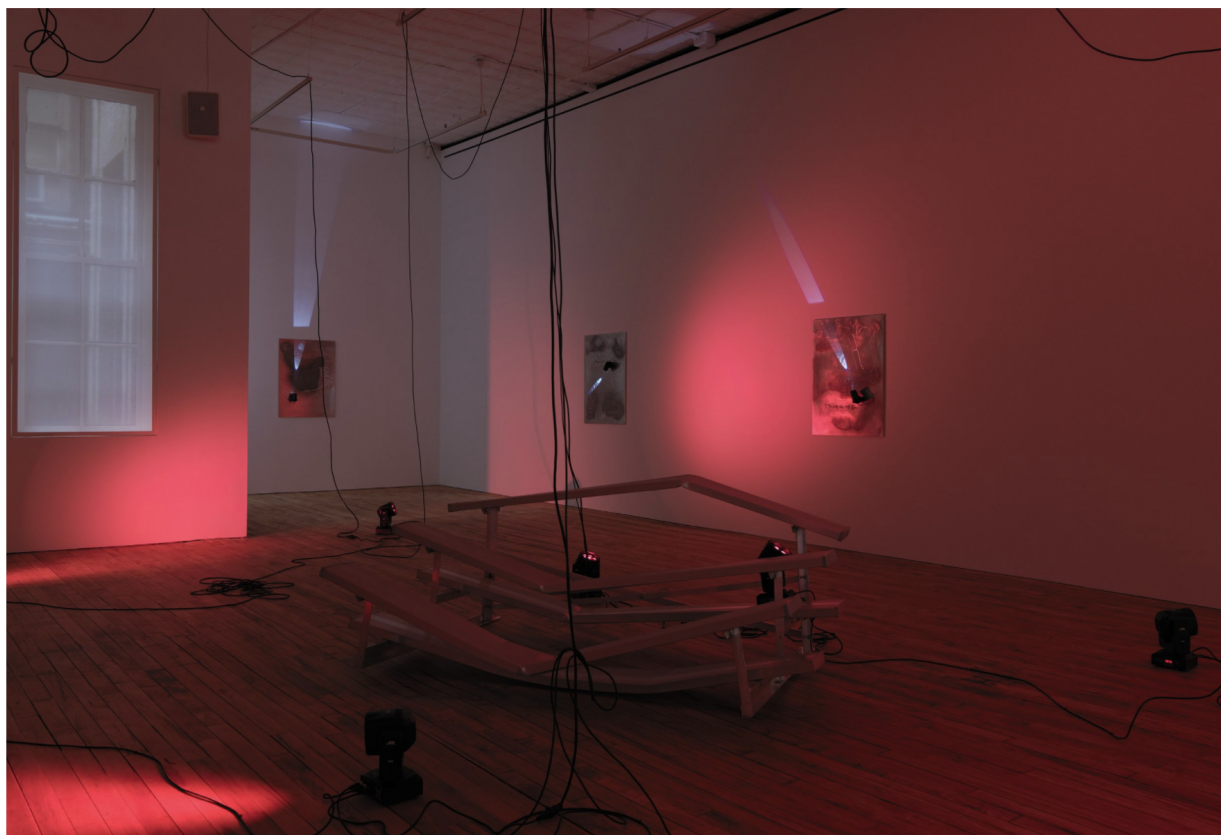
Schulz, Madeleine. "NIKITA GALE | 'END OF SUBJECT' AT 52 WALKER." *Flaunt* (February 14, 2022) [ill.] [online]

F L A U N T

FEBRUARY 14, 2022

NIKITA GALE | 'END OF SUBJECT' AT 52 WALKER

BY MADELEINE SCHULZ



Installation view, *Nikita Gale: END OF SUBJECT*, 52 Walker, New York, January 21–March 26, 2022. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

Los Angeles-based artist Nikita Gale presents a new body of work, *END OF SUBJECT*, at 52 Walker. In *END OF SUBJECT*, Nikita uses light and sound to explore and disrupt notions of witnessing, visibility, and representation. Through Nikita's multidisciplinary approach, the artist constructs a sensory experience to interrogate the material limits of ideology. In doing so, Nikita broaches a conversation with the audience and prompts viewers to converse with one another as well.

Below, Nikita shares insights into the artistic process, the questions that inform the work—and that *END OF SUBJECT* attempts to answer—and the exploration of the relationship between sound, architecture, and the human body.



Nikita Gale, *BODY PRINT: BLOOD*, 2022. © Nikita Gale. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

What can you tell us about your exhibition, *END OF SUBJECT*, at 52 Walker? Can you describe your process? From conception to completion?

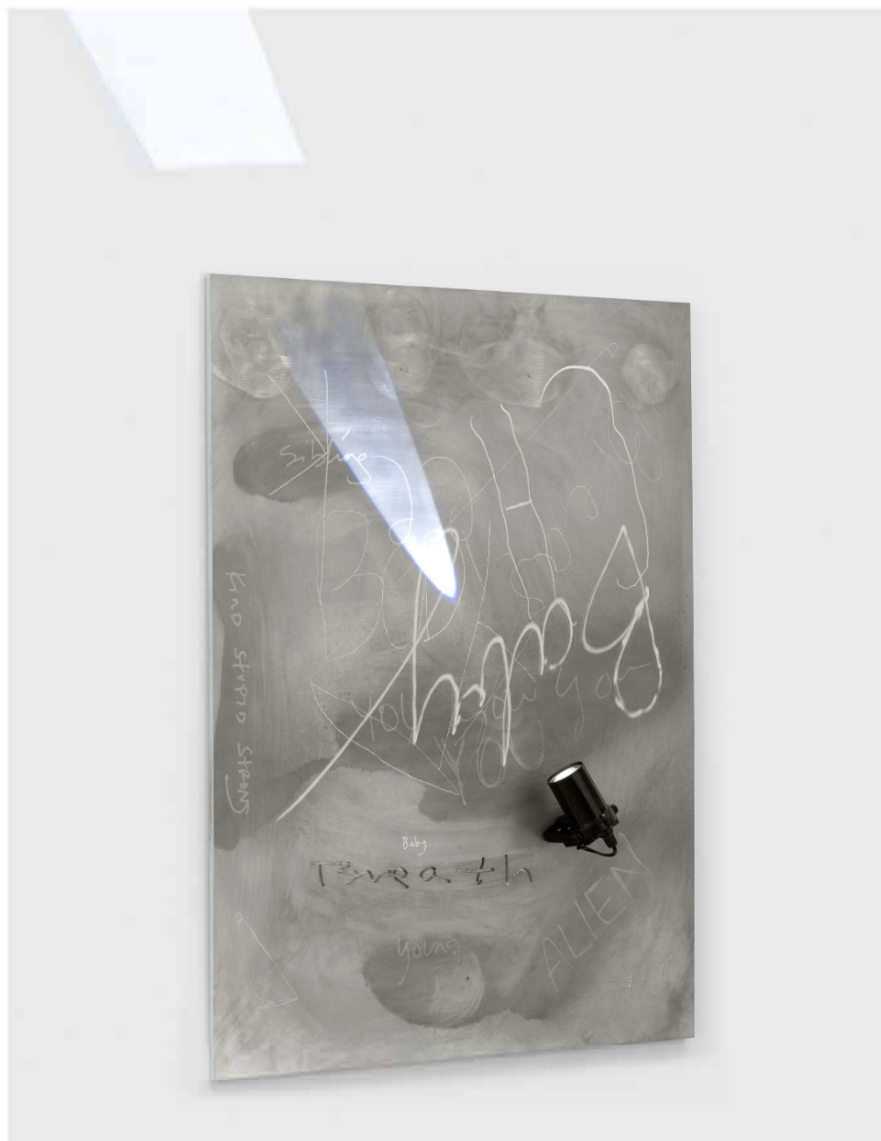
My exhibition at 52 Walker presents a new group of *BODY PRINTS*, which are aluminum panels etched both by hand and with the use of machinery, each including an LED spotlight. The *BODY PRINTS* surround a new installation titled *END OF SUBJECT*, which is also the title of the exhibition. The installation consists of six sets of bleachers—three have been crushed with applied force, and three were left untouched. The bleachers were then distributed within the space in various orientations. Stage lights are mounted throughout the space, programmed and automated by a show control system designed in collaboration with lighting designer Josephine Wang, and a four-channel audio installation features an original theme by composer Tashi Wada. The audio comprises environmental sounds like rain, thunder, the sound of human laughing and crying, voice-overs from four-voice actors I've worked with previously on my performance project *AUDIENCING* at PS1 in February of 2020, found clips of Toni Morrison reading from *Sula*, my dog's barking, and even myself whistling a motif that appears throughout the composition by Tashi Wada. The sounds are from widely disparate contexts so there's a sense of kind of sonically rummaging through ruins—tidbits and vignettes from widely varying environments and contexts. The site shifts between dormant and active states where the gallery performs as a "gallery" for viewing static artworks and sculptures and then evolves into a more active and visually unstable space where the movement of the lights animates the bleachers and surfaces of the wall works. The piece is organized as a series of two- to eight-minute vignettes that play over a period of about two hours and fifteen minutes.

Where does the title come from? Can you expand on the meaning behind it?

"End of subject" is what you say when you're leaving an argument. It doesn't mean you've won or lost, but it does mean you're moving on. A subject is an object of study or attention, but it also refers to how we refer to people in the context of systems of power and control. I'm interested in creating models that demonstrate the possibility of ruining or destroying those systems. It's in this destruction that I'm able to point to the instability of the structures that tell us what things are worthy of attention and how personhood, subjectivity, and all of the facets of identity get articulated and defined.



Installation view, *Nikita Gale: END OF SUBJECT*, 52 Walker, New York, January 21–March 26, 2022. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.



Nikita Gale, *BODY PRINT: BREATH*, 2022 (detail). © Nikita Gale. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

In order to make these works, you inquired: "What lies between the bodies and the sounds and the stage and the lights—what are we to each other in the act of witnessing? What have we agreed upon through the mere act of showing up?" Did you find an answer?

Yes, but it's not something I can simply land on. For me, the answer is in the experience of this space that I'm offering up through this installation. The answer is in the conversations that I get to have with an audience through the work but it's also in the conversations that the audience for the work ends up having with each other. I'd say I am always finding an answer but it's more of an ambient slow burn than an "aha" moment. The most important thing to know is that doing this work helps me to remember the importance of experiencing how sound and architecture can activate different parts of the structures that we rely on to define ourselves and others.

How does the use of lighting, staging, atmosphere, and sound imitate the presence of a human body? What did the creative process behind the work look like?

The sonic elements of the work are meant to be both alienating and grounding. I'm interested in the ways that objects condition social behaviors. I'm really into pop music, and at concerts, I see how people orient themselves around a stage and follow the spotlight with their gaze. That ties into this larger conversation about power and authority, and how those systems direct our bodies to move in certain ways, to look at particular things, or to receive certain types of information. I think that's an incredibly useful metaphor for me to think about power in the context of the public arena—the stage, or wherever we focus our attention, represents where power is concentrated, or rather where power wants us to look or direct our attention.



Nikita Gale, *BODY PRINT: MUSCLE*, 2022 (detail), © Nikita Gale. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

You explain that your work also constitutes the expectations of a human body shaped by existing social and political systems. What systems are you mostly interested in talking about? And what further commentary is it making?

I use infrastructural vernacular elements—like barricades and bleachers—to refer to objects that orient our navigation of space, and I use the term “space” both as a reference to architecture but also as a reference to social and psychological space. In *END OF SUBJECT*, the bleachers stand in as a kind of shorthand for the intersubjective act of witnessing; those objects represent the tacit agreement between the audience and the materials that enable the act of viewing and experiencing.



Nikita Gale, 2021. Photo by Lelanie Foster

The exhibition is on in New York City until March 26, 2022 at 52 Walker.

Kleinman, Adam. "Nikita Gale's "END OF SUBJECT"" *Art Agenda* (February 11, 2022) [ill.] [online]

ART / AGENDA

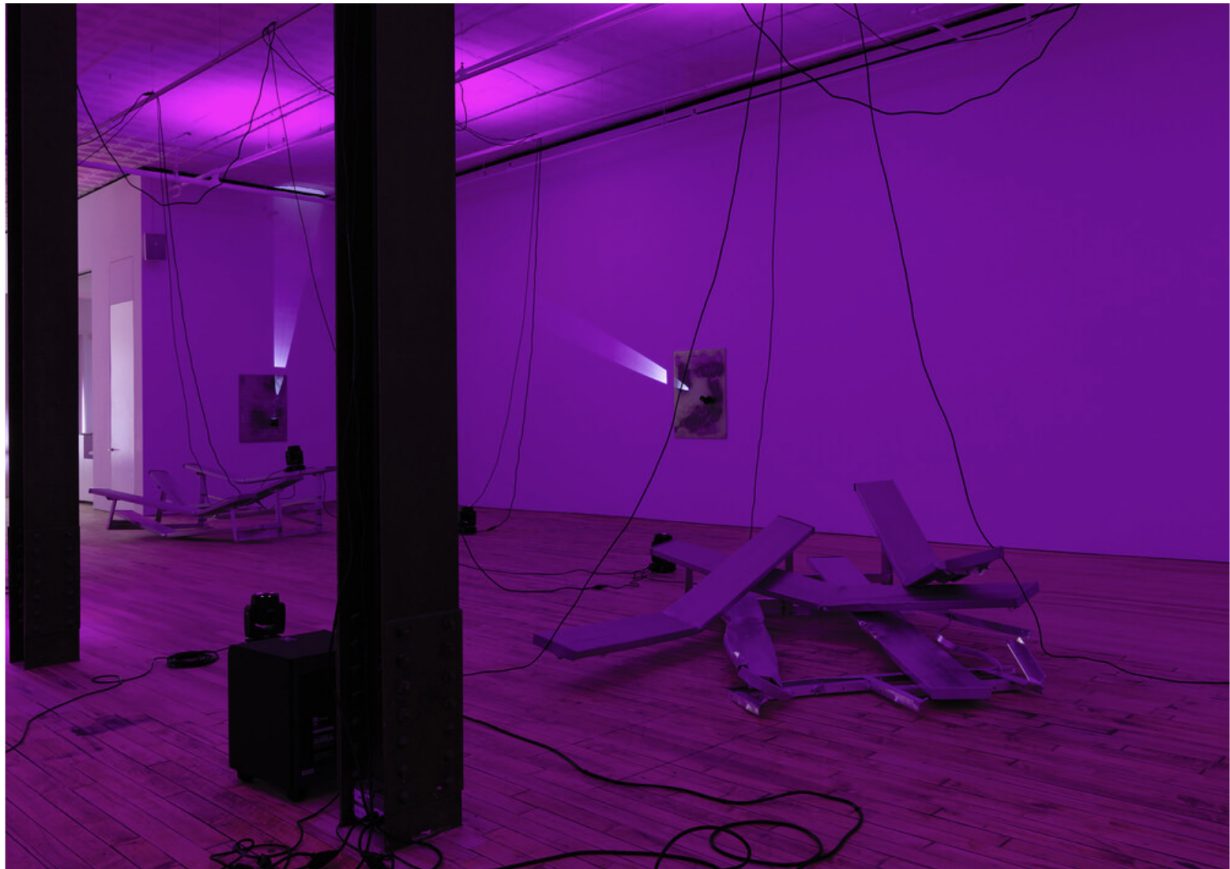
Nikita Gale's "END OF SUBJECT"

by Adam Kleinman

January 21–March 26, 2022

52 Walker, New York

February 11, 2022



View of Nikita Gale's "END OF SUBJECT" at 52 Walker, New York, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.

What are the uses, and abuses, of abstraction? Five years on from the controversy sparked by the inclusion of Dana Schutz's *Open Casket* (2016) in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, the quandaries of representation continue to preoccupy institutional programs. Brilliant figurative portraiture of and by traditionally silenced voices has become dominant—at the price, perhaps, of de-platforming artwork in which personal identity is less than immediately recognizable. Said more crudely: visibility is in, while opacity is out. But at what, or whose, cost? Plausibly as a consequence of, and response to, the kind of over-visibility through which people are surveilled by corporations and states, several artists who deploy strategies of interference are now, perhaps paradoxically, achieving prominence. Nikita Gale—a nom de plume (or is it nom de guerre?) created by redacting Gale's inherited “legal” surname—is one such artist. In Gale's work, abstraction is more than a device to generate imagery, and becomes a mode of creative reflection and deflection.

Upon entering the artist's current exhibition at 52 Walker, the David Zwirner TriBeCa outpost that opened in October 2021, expectations are immediately interrupted. Within the cavernous hall, a series of crushed and deformed aluminum bleachers frame the overall sense of arriving too late to an event that appears to be over, if not in already in ruin. This effect is heightened by a flickering AV installation in which theatrical lights wash and scan the gallery through actions teasingly tethered, or not, to their mate: a discontinuous audio track replete with human cries, sirens, and laughter. The cables that tie this machinery together drape the scene erratically, as if they have slipped out of place in concert with everything else. Neither what the exact nature of this implied event was, nor who its phantom participants were, are precisely delineated.

Six portrait-format metal panels line the walls. Eschewing paint for power tools, Gale has roughly engraved these surfaces with words that describe personalities (such as “cruel”), familial relations (such as “baby”), and the names of body parts (such as “finger”). Instead of giving the impression of a sitter's face, each panel features vaguely corporeal marks. These act both as an index of an excavated subject, and as an allusion to David Hammons' “Body Prints” series (1968–79) in which the artist evidentially pressed his own pigmented and stained body onto various substrates to prove his humanity while also effectively turning that same body into a tool. Gale's “Body Prints” series offers another way to demonstrate who someone might be through the bits and pieces of what they're called, what their connections may be, and what they are physically made up of. Yet, once abstracted, the attributes of those same bodies can in turn be appropriated into characteristics and properties to be watched, collected, and dehumanized.

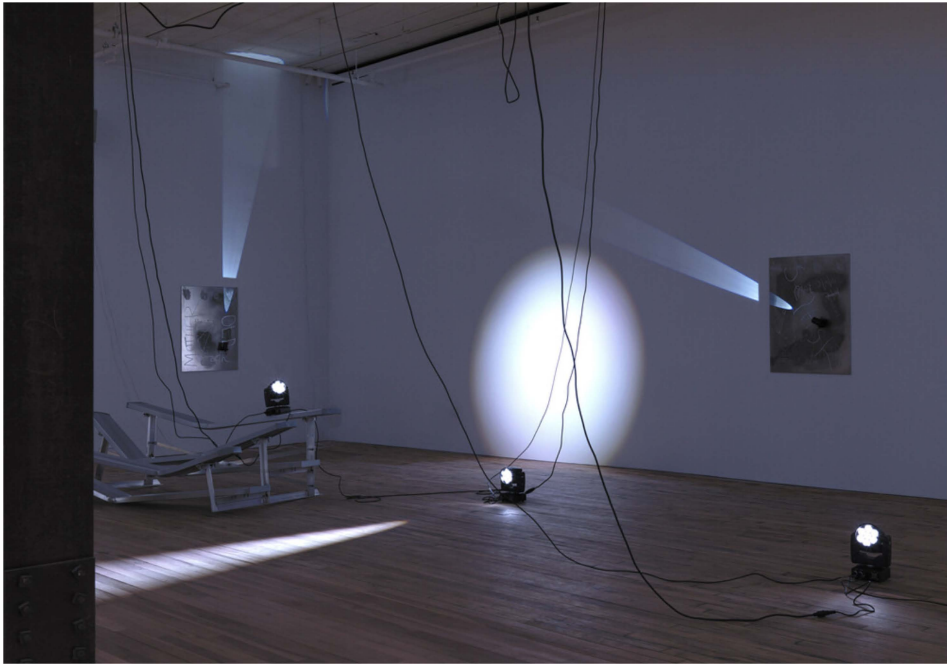
At the preview, Gale referred to the process of gouging out these scratchiti-like marks as a form of “extraction,” a term whose use in contemporary discourse about power—in relation to the ways and means of mining data points from profiled individuals, or conversely, marketing them to turn these metrics toward one’s own advantage—increasingly complements the traditional use of the term as it pertains to the deleterious removal of objects in the case of looted goods and/or mineral resources. Abstraction—a catch-all phrase for art whose subject matter isn’t easily identifiable—means to remove or drag away a part (to abstract a tooth, for instance) and to analyze. Extraction is a synonym for abstraction.

Setting aside the messy dyad of abstraction versus mimetics, and the question of their relative efficacies, it may be useful to ask instead: what is the present scope of these techniques? Can the discourse around representation be expanded beyond the (necessarily) part-for-whole personal, to also include a macro discussion of how power functions systemically? This might be done by tracing how an infrastructure preys upon persons and objects, or conversely, how removing or withdrawing a potential “prey” delineates the limits of a structure’s reach and, by extension, how to get beyond it. By no means would this approach exclude biography. Gale’s choice of show title, “END OF SUBJECT,” begs a question: what kind of subjectivity, or subjection, is over?

In addition to their scrapes and patinas, Gale’s metal panels (are they possibly paintings-in-drag?) contain fixed lights mounted at strange angles. These fixtures ambivalently shine and shade the works, creating an effect much like an actor caught out of sync with a spotlight; their oblique throws also extend well past each panel so that the architecture in which the works are hung is also targeted. These skewed projections combine with the other implied mechanical breakdowns throughout, so that this gallery-in-ruin could also be a system in collapse. In Gale’s previous work, the artist has focused on performers such as Tina Turner who have deliberately stepped out of the limelight as a way to reclaim their autonomy. While the intensions of these withdrawals are various, they all arrest, and thus critically expose, a profession by making it malfunction. And while Gale’s light-and-sound show echoes hard, the display finds a true force in its omissions, inhibitions, and Gale’s refusal to be reduced. The exhibition’s spectral desertion lies somewhere between philosophical tongue-holding, and a poetic image—paradoxically put into words—attributed to Sappho: “What cannot be said will be wept.”



Nikita Gale, *BODY PRINT: BONES*, 2022. Stain, etching, and LED spotlight on aluminum panel, 40 x 30 x 4 1/2 inches. © Nikita Gale. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker, New York.



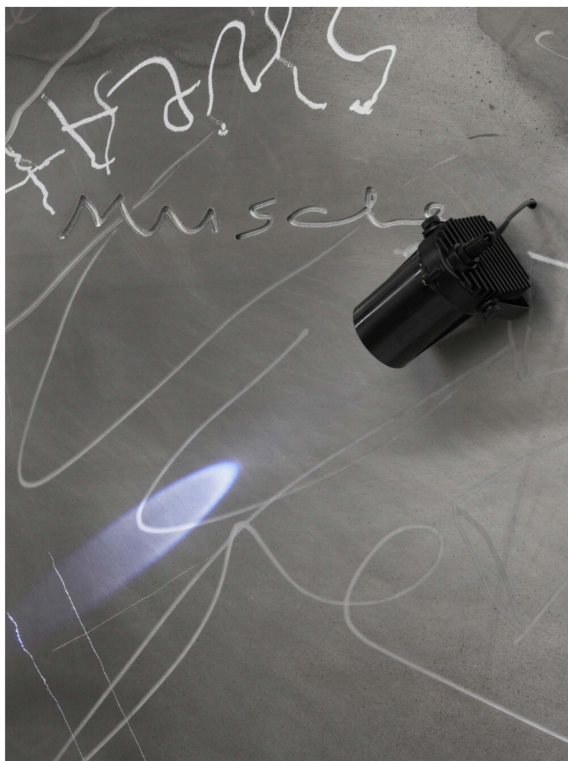
View of Nikita Gale's "END OF SUBJECT" at 52 Walker, New York, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



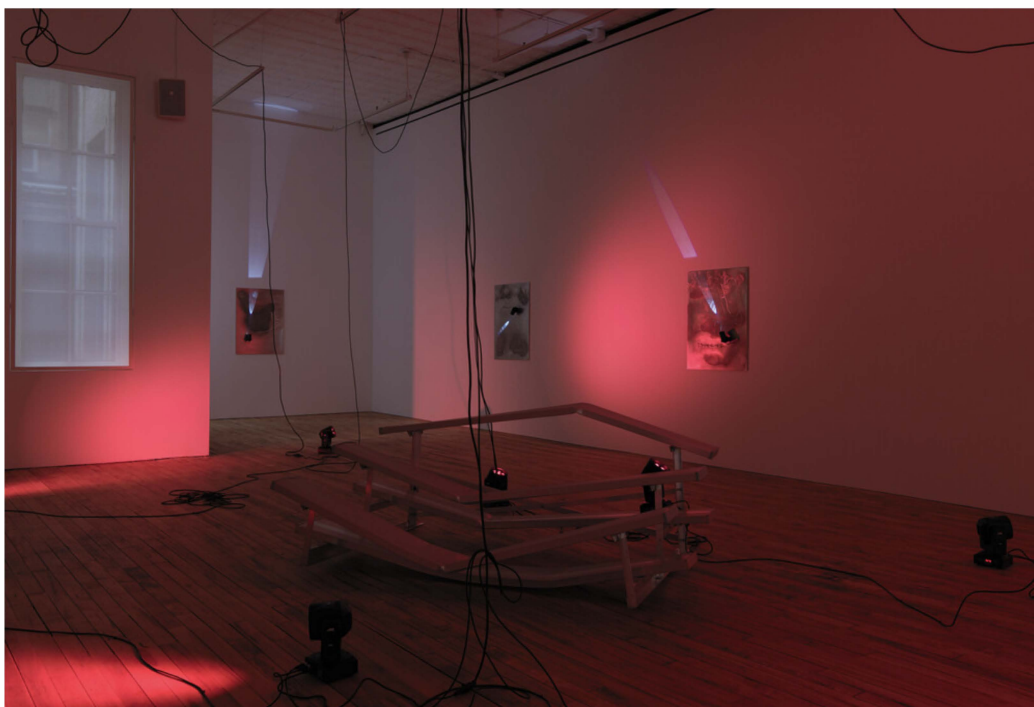
Nikita Gale, *END OF SUBJECT* (detail), 2022. Six aluminum bleachers, automated lighting system, 4-channel sound, dimensions variable. © Nikita Gale. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker, New York.



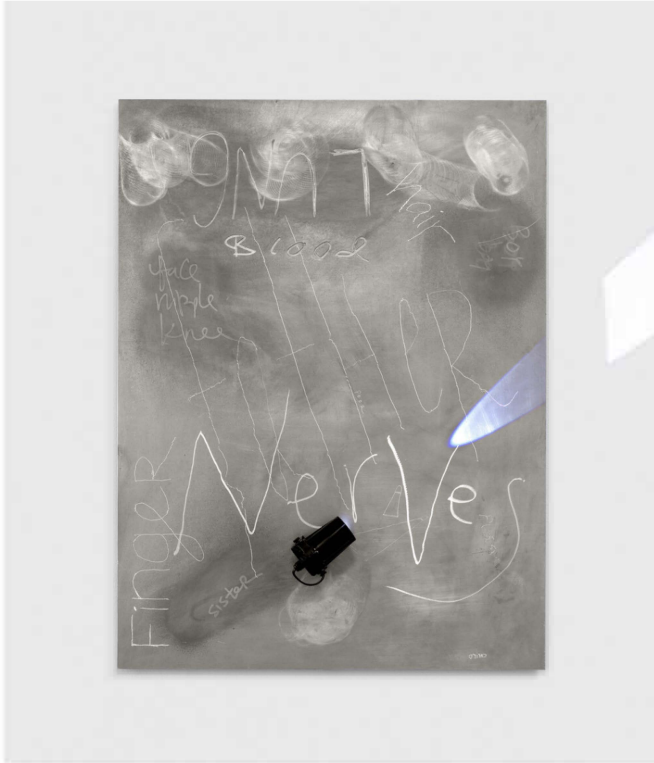
View of Nikita Gale's "END OF SUBJECT" at 52 Walker, New York, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Nikita Gale, *BODY PRINT: MUSCLE* (detail), 2022. Stain, etching, and LED spotlight on aluminum panel, 40 × 30 × 4 1/2 inches. © Nikita Gale. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker, New York.



View of Nikita Gale's "END OF SUBJECT" at 52 Walker, New York, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Nikita Gale, *BODY PRINT: BLOOD*, 2022. Stain, etching, and LED spotlight on aluminum panel, 40 x 30 x 4 1/2 inches. © Nikita Gale. Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

“Nikita Gale: END OF SUBJECT.” *Artforum* (January 27, 2022) [ill.] [online]

ARTFORUM

David Zwirner | 52 Walker Street END OF SUBJECT



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52 Walker, davidzwirner.com
By appointment only

MUST SEE

Nikita Gale
END OF SUBJECT
January 21 - March 26, 2022

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52 Walker is pleased to present its second exhibition, END OF SUBJECT, featuring the work of Los Angeles-based artist Nikita Gale (b. 1983). Engaged with the history and politics of sound and its surrounds, Gale will present an aurally and visually rich environment in the gallery, complete with light, movement, and sound, which calls upon the tacit agreement between the audience and the materials that enable the act of viewing and experiencing. Through the artist's multidisciplinary approach, Gale recasts and destabilizes notions of witnessing, visibility, and representation that operate both inside and outside of the space as well as within and among our bodies.

Kazanjian, Dodie. Marius, Marley. "The 29 Art Exhibitions We Can't Wait to See This Year." *Vogue* (January 12, 2022) [ill.] [online]

VOGUE

ARTS

The 29 Art Exhibitions We Can't Wait to See This Year

BY DODIE KAZANJIAN AND MARLEY MARIUS

January 12, 2022



Ettore Spalletti, *Paesaggio, 16*, 2016. 3 elements; color impasto on board. Courtesy Studio Ettore Spalletti and Marian Goodman Gallery. Copyright: Studio Ettore Spalletti (20307).

Masking, vaccine requirements, and rejiggered opening hours notwithstanding, gallery-going in 2022 is, at least for the moment, looking much as it did in the before times, with an exciting slate of shows set to open as the year goes on. Here, we gather just a few of the ones we're most excited to see—from new commissions to sprawling retrospectives and group shows to art fairs, in New York, Los Angeles, London, Venice, and beyond.

Alice Trumbull Mason at Washburn

Overlooked in the canon of art history, Mason was a leader in the “boys’ club” of abstract art in the New York art world during the 1930s-60s. Ad Reinhardt said in the early ’60s that “were it not for Alice Trumbull Mason, we [the abstract painters] would not be here, nor in such force.” Mason also stars in the Whitney’s all-women group show, “Labyrinth of Forms: Women and Abstraction, 1930–1950,” on view through March. *Through January 22.*

“Toni Morrison’s Black Book” at David Zwirner

Photographer unknown. Toni Morrison in China, 1984. Photo: Courtesy of Princeton University Library (Toni Morrison Papers, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections, Princeton University Library).

Curated by the author and critic Hilton Als, this exciting group exhibition pays tribute to the work and cultural significance of the writer Toni Morrison (1931–2019), adding in “visual components that italicize the beauty and audacity of her work.” Featured artists include Garrett Bradley, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Kerry James Marshall, Julie Mehretu, Walter Price, Amy Sillman, and James Van Der Zee. *Opens January 20.*

“Nikita Gale: End of Subject” at 52 Walker

At 52 Walker, the gallery space programmed and led by David Zwirner director Ebony L. Haynes, “Nikita Gale: End of Subject” foregrounds Gale’s innovative light, movement, and sound work, exploring “the tacit agreement between the audience and the materials that enable the act of viewing and experiencing.” *Opens January 21.*

“Ad Reinhardt: Color Out of Darkness” at Pace

The abstract painter Ad Reinhardt is the subject of a show curated by James Turrell, who has pointed to Reinhardt as a major influence on his own work. A lighting concept conceived by Turrell will illuminate Reinhardt’s canvases, and a new addition to Turrell’s Wedgework series will appear on the gallery’s ground floor. *February 11 to March 19.*

“Bridget Riley: Perceptual Abstraction” at the Yale Center for British Art



Bridget Riley, *New Day*, 1988, oil on canvas. Bridget Riley Collection. Photo: Anna Arca. © 2021 Bridget Riley, All rights reserved.

In New Haven, the Yale Center for British Art mounts the first American survey of Riley's work in decades. Now 90 years old, the London-born Riley has long been celebrated for her dazzling experiments in geometric abstraction, including an impressive op art practice. *March 3 to July 24.*