
Sophia Victor Illuminates Faith, Community and The Black Identity in Latest Exhibition

Ekklesia - Sophia Victor
Opening reception: May 17th 6-9pm
630 Flushing Ave Brooklyn, NY 11206
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Brooklyn, NY, April 1st, 2025 –The Bishop Gallery is pleased to present *Ekklesia*, a compelling new exhibition by acclaimed artist Sophia Victor, thoughtfully curated by teddy raShaan reeves, ph.d. of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. Opening on May 17th, the exhibition draws inspiration from the ancient Greek term ἐκκλησία (pronounced ek-klay-see'-ah), originally describing the assemblies of Athenian democracy and later adopted by early Christians for gatherings of the faithful. Through her latest work, Victor explores the enduring importance of communal spaces within African American traditions, highlighting their cultural, spiritual, and social resonance.

Victor's evocative and deeply personal exhibition extends this historical lineage into the contemporary African American context, paying homage to the church's enduring role as sanctuary, community cornerstone, and guardian of cultural legacy. Through a strikingly thoughtful body of new works, Victor creates dynamic spaces for reflection, dialogue, and communal engagement, inviting viewers to contemplate stories shaped by collective faith, resilience, and purposeful existence.

Drawing thoughtfully from the material culture of the Black church, *Ekklesia* underscores the complex relationships within the artist's formative communities, spaces that have both nurtured and challenged her creative gifts. Leveraging decades of artistic exploration, as well as deeply personal relationships with her subjects, Victor unveils a layered narrative exploring contemporary Black life—from intimate family dynamics and the pursuit of educational equity, to confronting mass incarceration, and systemic injustice.

With authenticity, empathy, and a bold artistic vision, Victor masterfully reinterprets the timeless concept of the *Ekklesia*, rooting her creations firmly in an unwavering commitment to faith, humanity, and social justice.

Please join us at The Bishop Gallery as Sophia Victor calls viewers together, fostering a powerful communal experience, and igniting vital conversations about identity, spirituality, and collective action.

Sophia Victor:

Sophia Victor (b. 1988, Brooklyn, NY) is a multidisciplinary artist and muralist whose practice blends art therapy, activism, ministry, and community service. Raised by Jamaican parents, her vibrant portraits and public artworks highlight personal narratives of social injustice while celebrating diverse Black experiences through painting, installation, video, and performance—including roller disco skating. Victor participated in biennials at Jamaica's National Art Gallery (2015) and the Bronx Museum for the Arts (2017); her work has been featured by Forbes, The Guardian, BBC News, and appeared in TV series and films such as *She's Gotta Have It* and *BelAir*. She holds a BFA and an MPS in Art Therapy from the School of Visual Arts, an MA from New York University, and is an alumna of residencies at the Whitney Independent Study Program and the Bronx Museum. Victor joined the faculty of SVA's Fine Art department in 2020.

teddy raShaan reeves, ph.d.

teddy raShaan reeves, ph.d. is a multifaceted, award-winning producer, curator, and storyteller. Currently, teddy serves as the senior Curator of Religion at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C. Through his work at the NMAAHC, teddy has created innovative projects that have highlighted the influence of digital technologies, media, and visual art in capturing, preserving, and telling the stories of Black spiritual and religious life in the Americas. Most recently, teddy founded Art Like ME Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to break systemic inequities facing Black and Brown boys and men through art and cultural experiences that transform narratives, enhance emotional wellness, and expand economic mobility. teddy earned his B.A. from Hampton University, M.Div. from Princeton Seminary, and Ph.D. from Fordham University. teddy hails from Winston-Salem, North Carolina—by way of Rochester, NY—and now calls Brooklyn, New York home.

www.teddyrashaan.com

The Bishop Gallery

Founded in 2009 by Erwin John and Stevenson Dunn, Jr., The Bishop Gallery has organized pivotal exhibitions that reimagine our role in creating art historical narratives around underrepresented communities. Our mission is to honor the legacies of exceptional historical artists while championing emerging talents. Anchored in the stewardship of art history, we have exhibited the works of historically acclaimed artists. From the iconic brushstrokes of Jean-Michel Basquiat to the profound expressions of Yenovk der Hagopian, our solo and traveling exhibitions have captivated audiences far and wide, igniting conversations and inspiring thousands.

Yet, our purpose extends beyond the confines of gallery walls. We are rooted in the community. We firmly believe that accessibility is the cornerstone of artistic evolution. Guided by this belief, our doors are wide open to marginalized communities, inviting individuals from every walk of life to engage with art in meaningful ways. Our exhibitions serve as mirrors of diversity, reflecting the rich tapestry of human experience and fostering cross-cultural dialogue.

At The Bishop Gallery, we are committed to democratizing art collecting. We pave new pathways for aspiring and new collectors, guiding them through the terrain of acquiring art and managing an art collection. Through education and empowerment, we strive to dismantle barriers, making the world of art ownership more inclusive and equitable for all who seek to partake in its beauty and historical significance. At The Bishop Gallery, we aim to redefine the purpose of an art gallery, contributing to a future where Black people and people from marginalized communities see themselves in canonical art.

