

Modupeola Fadugba
Of Movement, Materials and Methods
Gallery 1957, London

Thursday 22nd May – 29th June 2025

Opening Reception Thursday 22nd May 2025 | 6-9pm



Modupeola Fadugba, *The Kiss*, 2025, Acrylic, graphite, and ink on burned Canvas, 72 x 39 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery 1957.

Gallery 1957 is proud to present ***Of Movement, Materials and Methods***, a solo exhibition by **Modupeola Fadugba** opening in London on 22nd May, running until 29th June. As an official part of the **London Gallery Weekend 2025** programme, the exhibition is inspired by the rich pageantry of the Ojude Oba festival.

Held annually in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria, the festival is a vibrant celebration of Yoruba heritage, honouring the Awujale, the paramount ruler of the Ijebu people. Known for its elaborate equestrian processions, resplendent attire, and deeply rooted communal traditions, Ojude Oba stands as a powerful symbol of identity, unity, and cultural continuity. For Fadugba, the festival becomes both subject and starting point – a site of gesture, history, and living tradition. Her latest body of work reflects a shift in her practice, from water to land, from solitary swimmers to collective choreography, offering a personal yet expansive reflection on heritage and transformation.

Drawing inspiration from the grandeur of Ojude Oba, Fadugba translates its essence onto canvas through her signature mixed media approach, incorporating gold leaf, layered textures, and a palette as vibrant and rich as the festival itself. Intertwining traditional Nigerian motifs with the compositional influence of Islamic miniature painting, she layers shimmering hues of coral, magenta, and bronze to evoke the festival's electrifying atmosphere. Through visible pencil strokes, deliberate shading, and unfinished elements, she preserves the raw creative process – echoing not only the evolving nature of Ojude Oba but also her ongoing inquiry into cultural memory and lived experience.

1957

Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast
& Galleria Mall
PMB 66 – Ministries
Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue
Ridge – Accra
Ghana
info@gallery1957.com

Gallery 1957, London
1 Hyde Park Gate
London, SW7 5EW
UK
london@gallery1957.com
Instagram: [@gallery1957](https://www.instagram.com/gallery1957)
[gallery1957.com](https://www.gallery1957.com)

The series introduces Fadugba's expanded beading practice, a continuation of her long-standing interest in materiality, memory, and community. More than embellishment, these works speak to heritage, to the tactile wisdom passed between generations, and to the role of artisanal knowledge in sustaining local economies. By collaborating with community-based artisans, Fadugba creates work that is both an aesthetic expression and a gesture toward economic empowerment – transforming beading into a method of engagement.

At the heart of this series lies a journey of return and reorientation. Though her ancestral ties are to Osun, Fadugba finds resonance in the spirit of Ojude Oba – its fusion of past and present, its collective celebration of identity, and its embodiment of movement as both metaphor and method. Through intricate detailing and layered surfaces, her works capture the rhythm of the drumming, the choreography of the riders, and the brilliance of the attire, inviting viewers into a space where cultural inheritance is not static but a flowing stream of story, ceremony, and renewal.

As Modupeola states: *“What does it mean to archive the present? To document not just artefacts but voices, gestures, festivals, failures, and laughter? How do we, as artists, avoid merely appropriating culture and instead become part of its evolutionary arc—its renaissance? Museology, I’ve come to believe, isn’t confined to vitrines and climate-controlled rooms. It happens in the streets of Ijebu-Ode, in family compounds, in the cadence of oral history, and in the handed-down knowledge of women who string beads with ancestral precision. The artist, too, can be a kind of curator—of feeling, of folklore, of form.”*

Of Movement, Materials and Methods honours the festival's profound significance while offering a contemplative gesture toward the evolving role of tradition, community, and cultural memory in a world in motion.

A Short Tale of Spirituality and Splendour By Zoé Whitley

If we imagine an artist's onward journey as a story, then a new chapter here begins with it being time to get out of the pool, dry off, get dressed (sumptuously) and head to the village.

The multidisciplinary artist in this story is Modupeola Fadugba, who developed her shimmering series of swimmers through site-specific researching, listening and observing. Many of her subjects were women, though not exclusively. Ever focused on Nigeria and its rich cultural reverberations across the African diaspora, Fadugba sets out on new cultural enquiries in Yorubaland aiming to work more closely with male subjects, notably the patriarchs involved in the annual *Ojude-Oba* celebration in the town of Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State. A driving force for the artist remains identifying the practices that bind us together, whether as people of shared ancestry or as individuals assembled for a common purpose. What unites us? With whose heritage do we adorn ourselves? How are traditions kept alive and carried forward?

1957

Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast
& Galleria Mall
PMB 66 — Ministries
Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue
Ridge — Accra
Ghana
info@gallery1957.com

Gallery 1957, London
1 Hyde Park Gate
London, SW7 5EW
UK
london@gallery1957.com
Instagram: [@gallery1957](https://www.instagram.com/gallery1957)
[gallery1957.com](https://www.gallery1957.com)



Modupeola Fadugba, *The King's Seat*, 2025, Acrylic, graphite, and beads on burned Canvas, 96.52 x 71.12 cm. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery 1957.

Ever since shadowing Maasai beaders in Arusha, Tanzania during her formative years, Fadugba's material interests always begin with close looking: seeking mentorship is her method. Employing her focused creative enquiries to new ends, Fadugba was immediately drawn into the hospitable families of Ijebu land as they made their festival preparations. Oral accounts trace the tradition of *Ojude-Oba* to the rule of Ademuyewo Fidipote, who became the Awujale (monarch) in 1852.

Taking place during the Islamic Eid period, *Ojude-Oba* gathers all faiths as the Chief processes on splendid horseback alongside dancers, musicians and prominent members of the community. More than a spectacle, historian Abiodun Akeem Oladiti notes "*it is one of the most popular events that take place in the life of the community [...] It is a celebration that attracts Christians, Muslims, and traditional religious groups from Ijebu-Ode and the diaspora, including Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Sierra Leone and many other Yoruba communities...*".

Historically important traders, the Ijebu Yoruba possess a highly sought-after specialist weaving technique whose customary palette includes deep shades of blue, purple, green and red. Made on a vertical loom, the continuous warp textiles integrate vibrant decorative motifs and insignia to convey the status of the wearers, in particular the members of the Ogboni (or Oshugbo) society, upon whose wise counsel the Awujale once relied and who serve as intermediaries to worshipping the Earth and fertility deity Agemo. Colours and textures from such weavings inform Fadugba's latest compositions, into which she inserts not only intricate beadwork but also references to the intricate picture planes of Islamic miniatures.

She is reinterpreting those cherished woven textiles and remixing the traditional proportions of men's Agbada ceremonial dress with elements of hand-drawn, floral damask inspired by fashionable *aso oke*

1957

Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast
& Galleria Mall
PMB 66 — Ministries
Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue
Ridge — Accra
Ghana
info@gallery1957.com

Gallery 1957, London
1 Hyde Park Gate
London, SW7 5EW
UK

london@gallery1957.com

Instagram: @gallery1957
gallery1957.com

from the 1970s. Having been so warmly welcomed into Ijebu homes and embraced for the sincerity of her interest in their living culture, the artist in turn, invites different members of the community into her studio to translate their stories into richly patterned images. The generosity of the elders imparting their wisdom reflects both the genesis of the festival as an interfaith and intergenerational coming together of all social strata and offers a metonym of the history and formation of multiethnic polylingual Nigeria as we know it today.

A festival of this kind is to be experienced not described, so the nearest one can offer is an excerpt from Yoruba poet Niyi Osundare's "Invocations of the Word," composed to be performed aloud with musical accompaniment:

[...]

Unwind the wind

Give rapid legs to the crouching leaf;

The horse of words has galloped

Through clouds, through thunder, through roaring waters...

Throw open the door of your ears

Araba ponmbe ponmbe ponmbe

Araba ponmbe ponmbe ponmbe

The percussive rhythm of the poet's refrain evokes both the pageantry of high-stepping hooves and of drumbeats. Semantically, one cannot translate the words 'Araba ponmbe ponmbe ponmbe' in the refrain; they were invented and conjured by Osundare for their sonorous qualities rather than designed to impart any literal meaning. Yet, they call to us. We feel them resonate. Allow them instead to serve as prelude to the festival, to the exhibition *Of Movement, Materials, and Methods*, and to the works of Modupeola Fadugba's yet to come as she continues to study ritual and relation.

Further reading

Mack, John and Picton, John. *African Textiles*. London: British Museum Press, 1993 (3rd edition).

Oladiti, Abiodun Akeem. "A Historical Analysis of Ojude-Oba Festival in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria" in *Facts, Fiction, and African Creative Imaginations*. Toyin Falola and Fallou Ngom, eds. London: Routledge, 2010. pp. 122-133.

Osundare, Niyi. *Selected Poems*. London: Pearson, 1992.

Spring, Chris. *African Textiles Today*. London: British Museum Press, 2012 (1st edition). pp. 187.

- Curatorial text by Zoé Whitley

About the Artist

Modupeola Fadugba

(b. 1985, Togo. Lives and works in Ibadan, Nigeria)

Modupeola Fadugba is a multimedia artist known for her work in painting, drawing, and socially engaged installations. With a multidisciplinary background in engineering, economics, and education,

1957

Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast
& Galleria Mall
PMB 66 — Ministries
Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue
Ridge — Accra
Ghana
info@gallery1957.com

Gallery 1957, London
1 Hyde Park Gate
London, SW7 5EW
UK
london@gallery1957.com
Instagram: @gallery1957
gallery1957.com

Fadugba's art explores intersections of cultural identity, social justice, game theory, and the socio-political dynamics of Nigeria within the global economy.

Her acclaimed project, *The People's Algorithm*, a game-based installation fostering dialogue on improving Nigeria's education system, earned her the Outstanding Production Prize from El Anatsui and the Grand Prize at the 2016 Dakar Biennale. *Dreams from the Deep End* (2018), her recent multimedia exhibition, delves into the collective experiences of swimmers, examining America's racialized swimming history and exploring themes of collaboration and resilience. The project was exhibited at Gallery 1957, Accra, and documented in a film that received an Emmy Award in 2022 for outstanding long-form DEI content. The documentary was also screened at the Brooklyn Museum and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York.

Fadugba has participated in prestigious residencies, including the Smithsonian Institute of African Art Research Fellowship (2020), the International Studio and Curatorial Program in Brooklyn (2018), and the International Cité des Arts in Paris (2017). She is also an Archbishop Tutu Leadership Fellow (2024). Her works are part of significant collections, including the Smithsonian Institute of African Art, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Sindika Dokolo Foundation, and Facebook, where she completed the commissioned piece *Indigo Reflection* in 2021.

In February 2025, she won The Norval Sovereign African Art Prize 2025, a milestone recognising her contributions to contemporary African art.

About Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957 is a contemporary art gallery with spaces across Accra, Ghana and London, UK.

It dedicates its programme to spearheading international exchanges between art practices from these communities and the rest of the world, presenting artists who interrogate concepts of belonging and identity, cultural exchange, and social history beyond Western narratives.

Launched by Marwan Zakhem in 2016 on Ghanaian Independence Day, Gallery 1957 has since expanded across three gallery spaces in Accra. Originally set up to promote Ghana and West Africa's presence in the arts scene, it now encompasses the Global South and its diaspora. Gallery 1957's London space opened in October 2020, providing a further platform for artists to build dialogues with its growing network of international collaborators.

Gallery 1957 presents exhibitions, installations, and performances by celebrated artists, fostering connections between local and international audiences. The Gallery's global gallery partnerships and ongoing artist residency program have attracted numerous international artists and arts professionals to Ghana. The Gallery's annual Cultural Week in September serves as a platform for encouraging deeper engagement with Ghana's vibrant contemporary art scene.

In 2021, Gallery 1957 launched the Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize for female Ghanaian artists, the first ever dedicated art prize of its kind. The prize aims to further strengthen the gallery's commitment to supporting and promoting emerging and established artists.

Gallery 1957's work expands beyond the gallery walls through a public programme that includes local and international art fairs, talks, off-site projects, and site-specific installations as well as the publication of books and catalogues – continuously supporting cultural initiatives in Ghana, Africa and beyond.

1957

Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast
& Galleria Mall
PMB 66 — Ministries
Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue
Ridge — Accra
Ghana
info@gallery1957.com

Gallery 1957, London
1 Hyde Park Gate
London, SW7 5EW
UK
london@gallery1957.com
Instagram: [@gallery1957](https://www.instagram.com/gallery1957)
[gallery1957.com](https://www.gallery1957.com)

Artist: Modupeola Fadugba
Title: Of Movement, Materials and Methods
Address: Gallery 1957, London
1 Hyde Park Gate
London
SW7 5EW

Press Contact: Lore Alender, Scott & Co | lore@scott-andco.com

1957

Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast
& Galleria Mall
PMB 66 — Ministries
Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue
Ridge — Accra
Ghana
info@gallery1957.com

Gallery 1957, London
1 Hyde Park Gate
London, SW7 5EW
UK
london@gallery1957.com
Instagram: [@gallery1957](https://www.instagram.com/gallery1957)
gallery1957.com