

Alvaro Barrington

Party, 2024–2026

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MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is pleased to present *Party, 2024–2026*, Alvaro Barrington's first solo presentation at the gallery's Paris space.

Party belongs to a new body of work which Barrington refers to as 'cutout paintings' – works that don't just reference movement and belonging but enact them. First presented within his landmark 2024 Tate Britain Commission GRACE, the work was subsequently shown at the Mangrove Sound Truck during Notting Hill Carnival in 2025 – moving through the streets of West London as part of a collective ritual – before finding its way to Pièce Unique in Paris.

Executed on burlap, the work layers silkscreened images, golden appliquéd cut-outs that carry an echo of Matisse, and stitching techniques passed down through the women in Barrington's family – all held within a frame of reclaimed wood and corrugated metal that references Caribbean domestic architecture.

Born in Caracas to Haitian and Grenadian parents, raised between the Caribbean and Brooklyn, and now living and working in London, Barrington's practice has always moved between worlds of painting and textile, art history and hip hop, the institution and the street.

Concurrently, Barrington is presenting *Labor Day Parade '91* at the 61st Venice Biennale – a truck covered in paintings and yarn works that conjures memories of the West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn. Across both works, the same questions surface: what it means to carry a culture through space, to celebrate collectively, to make joy out of displacement.

A few questions for Barrington.

Party was first shown at Tate Britain, then onto the Mangrove Sound Truck at Notting Hill Carnival, and now in this reworked version here in Paris. That's an unusual life for a painting. Does a work change when it moves through that many worlds?

Alvaro Barrington: Each time the work was shown it had to live up to an opportunity. For the Tate it was a backdrop painting for the Samantha sculpture. For Mangrove, it was a background for the masqueraders in Notting Hill Carnival and for its last iteration it's a series in conversation with the history of painting, with Matisse cutouts as a major point of reference.

So much of how you make things comes from people who came before you - women in your family, traditions that were never written down, knowledge that lives in the hands. Does that feel like something you carry, or something that carries you?

AB: I feel carried and saved by the traditions I was born into and living in, and now owe it to those traditions to also bring them forward.

In a world that feels increasingly heavy, you keep coming back to joy - not as escapism but as something almost defiant. Where does that come from in you, and do you ever have to fight for it?

AB: Joy is an interesting word; it's kind of gotten overused the way community gets overused, particularly black joy, resistances, etc. It's not a frame I think about, or I believe applies to me or my life. I'm not a joyful person. I think there is something sinister about that idea, similar to innocence. How I grew up, we would say did I have a good and memorable time, "a time was had" is usually a phrase we say all the time. As Biggie said, "I got a story to tell." You want a memory that you can tell people about. I try to have memorable encounters. There are memories, stories that reflects scars, close down curiosities, confidence in yourself, etc., and there are stories that open you up, open up the world around you. I try to have that encounter in my work, encounters that open me/us up? Tragic things can open one up. A breakup with a loved partner can open one up to new love, new experiences, or it can be scarring.

In your artist statement, you write that some of the most beautiful things are made by people who are just grieving, and what they produce is joy. Looking at *Party* and everything it has been through - is that where this work came from?

Press Office, MASSIMODECARLO

T. +39 02 7000 3987

press@massimodecarlo.com

www.massimodecarlo.com

IG: massimodecarlogallery

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AB: My artist statement is things I've heard that I thought conceptually are interesting. I don't agree with a lot of it, but it's something someone has said, and then I think about it. Grieving is usually a moment that one has to deal with; it's like hunger or tiredness or horniness, you eat or sleep or fuck. One usually remembers when one grieves, so it becomes easy to excavate it in art.

If this exhibition had a playlist, where would it start?

AB: Soca mixes from 2016-2021

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Excerpts from Alvaro Barrington's artist statement

My life is not memories rather their narratives ive told myself about myself

Figuring it out is hard and I'm sorry

Racism Shadism Classism colorist sexism Patriarch decentering whiteness

No Fucks Given/

The Marathon continues/

Art is about learning how to be, Painting is about what's in front of you, it's about learning to see/

'Artist should not look to the right or left. Art should be strong and non-conformist and most importantly should always be personal.'

I rather fail on my ideas than succeed on someone else

I love that shit too much for you to not care

Shit ive been through will probably offend you this is Emeldas older son

It was authentic at the beginning after a while it became something that was more constructedSome of the most beautiful prose poetry are done by people who are just grieving and what they produce is just joy

Artwork

Alvaro Barrington

Party, 2024–2026

Oil, acrylic, flash, enamel on burlap/silk screen

printed burlap, cotton linen, waxed cotton thread.

Framed in reclaimed wood, corrugated metal, enamel paint

255 × 196 cm / 100 3/8 × 77 inches