

# Tunji Adeniyi-Jones

## Fragments

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**MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is pleased to present *Fragments*, an exhibition of new work by Tunji Adeniyi-Jones.**

*Fragments* is the most public Adeniyi-Jones has been in Paris. Born in London, based in New York, and equally at home between West African, African American and European art histories, he is an artist whose practice has always been shaped by movement - by what happens to a body of work as it crosses contexts. The show occupies the window of Pièce Unique - a new wallpaper of hand-drawn leaf and floral motifs on the wall, a single pink painting against a blue ground.

Adeniyi-Jones has been thinking about this kind of exposure for a while. The wallpaper, begun at the end of last year, is his newest attempt to work it out - a way of expanding beyond the canvas, as he puts it, while keeping the hand at the centre. "The subject, the core of it, is hand-drawn always," he has said, and you can feel it beneath the pattern's regularity, that slight pulse of a line a body made. Translated into repeat, it becomes something else: part painting, part printmaking, part textile. It's a conversation he has always wanted to have. He has described William Morris and William de Morgan as "a rare point of kinship between British culture and African textile," two lineages he grew up with in equal measure, and has pointed out that Josef Albers, whose colour theory still runs through most Western art education, built it on the quiet study of African and South American antiquity - a debt that rarely gets named. The pink painting, *Rose Sentinel* (2026), pressing against the blue wallpaper, is no different: not a decorative choice but a structural one, the chromatic push and pull that runs through all his work, stretched here from the canvas across the entire room.

For an artist who draws equally from Yoruba mythology, the Harlem Renaissance and European art history, Paris is not a neutral setting. Adeniyi-Jones has talked about how the same work takes on entirely different connotations depending on where it's shown - in West Africa the motifs become immediately legible as textile and fabric; in Paris they enter a conversation with classical ornamentation, with the city's decorative history, with everything

visible through the glass. "There's not really one place it comes from," he has said. Each one leaves a mark.

*Fragments* follows *Celestial Gathering* (2024), the ceiling painting Adeniyi-Jones made for the Nigerian Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale, which he describes as the beginning of a new way of thinking about space - not as a container for painting but as something painting can generate. Ideally, he says, this is the start of something.

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### Tunji Adeniyi-Jones

Tunji Adeniyi-Jones (b. 1992, London, United Kingdom) is an artist living and working in New York.

Adeniyi-Jones's paintings emerge from a perspective of what the artist describes as 'cultural addition, combination and collaboration'. Born and educated in the UK and now living and working in the USA, his practice is inspired by the ancient history of West Africa and its attendant mythology, and by his Yoruba heritage.

Often beginning with studies in ink pen or watercolour on paper as a means to explore his imagery, Adeniyi-Jones employs a varied palette and works with different seasons or times of day. His characters and forms are repeated and re-worked in multi-panel paintings which depict figures in small groups or pairs, invoking the ritualized repetition integral to ceremonial processes.

His boldly coloured paintings are set within a flat, shallow space located in modernist abstraction – in particular the overlapping planes of Cubism and the colourful papier découpé of Matisse – as well as the narratives and symbolism of West Africa. In these, abstract backgrounds of lush, stylized foliage proliferate across the canvas surface, the sinewy bodies emerging and dissolving into the tessellating shapes and interlocking swathes of colour.

Addressing the perception of the black body within Western painting – and in particular, its association with physicality – Adeniyi-Jones uses the body as both narrative instrument and primary tool of communication. Emphasising the importance of dance and body language in a continent where over 1000 languages co-exist, his works site the figure at the fulcrum of contemporary diasporic identity, one formed, as the artist notes, by “travel, movement and cultural hybridity”.

Adeniyi-Jones' locates his paintings within a specifically Nigerian cultural landscape; one that includes the post-Colonial writing and painting: “Every memorable Greek myth or fable that

we know of has an equally compelling African counterpart, but because of reductive concepts like primitivism, one rarely sees the expansive world of ancient West Africa represented outside of the continent. These cultural parallels have been detailed most notably through the literature of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Amos Tutuola, and I want my paintings to serve as a visual accompaniment to this lineage,” he has stated.

### Artwork details

Tunji Adeniyi-Jones

*Rose Sentinel*, 2026

Oil on canvas

104.5 × 89.2 × 6.7 cm / 41 1/8 × 35 1/8 × 2 2/3 inches