

Modupeola Fadugba

The Armory Show, Booth S11

September 8-10, 2023



Modupeola Fadugba, *Merry Go Round in Gold*, 2022, Acrylic, graphite, ink, and metal leaf on burned canvas, 88 x 46.5 inches.

Nigeria's kó gallery presents Modupeola Fadugba at The Armory Show, September 8-10, 2023, Booth S11. This presentation is featured in the Solo section, focusing on intimate presentations of work by a single artist.

Modupeola Fadugba (born 1985 in Lomé, Togo) is a Nigerian multimedia artist working in painting, drawing, and socially-engaged installation. Her works explore cultural identity, social justice, game theory, and the art world within the socio-political landscape of Nigeria and the greater global economy.

This presentation features new mixed media paintings, uniting various bodies of work by Fadugba that delve into the concept of water and the swimming pool as a contested dialectical site full of possibilities for liberation and community-building. Originally trained in Chemical Engineering, the artist employs a unique technical skill-set to bring her surfaces to life, activating material science as a form of storytelling. Through the delicate burning of paper and incorporation of a variety of materials such as gold leaf, graphite, ink, acrylic,



and oil, Fadugba explores the spatial composition and geometric patterns of swimming pools, experimenting with ideas of time, texture, and the tension between a work's surface and the ideas lurking beneath.

In her ongoing series ***Synchronized Swimmers***, the artist is inspired by the collaborative feat of bodies moving and working together in water as a metaphor for personal identity and collective empowerment. The figures in these works are often inspired by archival footage of historic Olympic team performances and are often anonymously matching in appearance, emphasizing their sense of unity and shared purpose over individualism. In her standalone portraits and newest series ***Reflections***, however, Fadugba turns to documenting members of her own family and studio team, creating a bridge between life and art, the personal and universal.

For her seminal solo exhibition ***Dreams from the Deep End*** in 2018, Fadugba worked with the Harlem Honeys and Bears, an all-Black senior synchronized swimming team based in New York. Inspired by the history of the American public pool –a socially contested space fraught with tensions regarding access and autonomy– this body of work tells stories of survival, community, learning, togetherness, and play. A new portrait on display from this ongoing series, ***Lady in Red***, 2023, is visually crowned in gold and embraced by the striking red of the group's swim uniform.

This recurring muse and mentor of the artist sits in direct dialogue with Fadugba's own grandmother, tranquil yet tentative, alongside a precocious infant in ***Swim School***, 2023, the masterful synchronized swimmers, and the meditative young women in ***Reflections***. These final contemplative subjects –based on young women the artist works with in Nigeria who learned to swim as part of the communal studio process– gaze into the water's shimmering surface, oscillating between the abstract and the representational. Together, they tell an intergenerational story, where swimmers, alone or together, create a community holding a spectrum of transcendent experiences, from fear and fatigue to leisure and radical joy.

About Modupeola Fadugba

Modupeola Fadugba was born in Togo and grew up in England and the United States as a child of Nigerian diplomats. A self-taught artist, she holds a Bachelors Degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Delaware, a Masters in Economics from the University of Delaware, and a Masters in Education from Harvard University. Her interdisciplinary, research-based projects have engaged triumphant swimmers and lifeguards from Accra, Abuja, Lagos, Dakar, Philadelphia, and Harlem.



Recent solo exhibitions include *Why Nations Win* at Alara in Lagos, 2021; *Dreams from the Deep End* at Gallery 1957 in Accra, 2018 (with an accompanying documentary about The Harlem Honeys and Bears earning an Emmy Award in 2022); and *Prayers, Players & Swimmers* at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris, 2017. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions including the *Royal Academy Summer Exhibition* in London, 2020 & 2017; *A Ballad for Harlem* at The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, 2019, and *Afriques Capitales* in Lille, France, 2017. Her work was selected for the 2016 Dakar Biennale, where she was awarded a Grand Prize from the Senegal Minister of Communication. Her project *The People's Algorithm* received the 2014 El Anatsui's Outstanding Production Prize at Nigeria's National Art Competition.

From this initiative Fadugba has developed *The Artist's Algorithm* – a new series of exhibitions, essays, talks, games, performances, mentorship programmes, murals, and videos which aims to shed light on problems in education, politics, and governance through art. Experiences informing this ambitious project include research as a Fellow at the Smithsonian, 2019-2020, and collaborative learning studies through a Museum Education Practicum with The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2021.

Her work is included in the collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Minneapolis Museum of Art, the University of Delaware, Chicago Booth School of Business, the Sindika Dokolo Foundation and the Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

About kó

kó is an art gallery based in Lagos, Nigeria, that is dedicated to promoting modern and contemporary art. kó has a dual focus in championing Nigeria's leading artists from the modern period and celebrating emerging and established contemporary artists across Africa and the Diaspora.