Efie Gallery



FRIEZE ABU DHABI | BOOTH A6

El Anatsui, Abdoulaye Konaté, María Magdalena Campos-Pons

19 November - 22 November 2026

FRIEZE ABU DHABI

El Anatsui, Abdoulaye Konate & María Magdalena Campos-Pons

For the inaugural edition of **Frieze Abu Dhabi,** taking place from **19 to 22 November 2026,** Efie Gallery presents a group exhibition bringing together **El Anatsui, Abdoulaye Konaté, and María Magdalena Campos-Pons,** foregrounding the histories of cultural exchange that have long connected Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and the wider Global South. Presented together for the first time, the three artists offer distinct yet intersecting perspectives on the movement of materials, ideas, and cultural traditions across geographies and generations.

The presentation reflects Efie Gallery's commitment to situating African and diasporic practices within broader narratives of movement, trade, spirituality, and material transformation. Across the booth, woven metal, textile, wood, and watercolour emerge as vessels of memory and exchange, bearing traces of histories, encounters, and cultural continuities that transcend geographical boundaries.

El Anatsui's monumental bottle-cap tapestry and rare wood panel work reveal the interplay between fluidity, monumentality, and modular form, transforming familiar materials into meditations on history and transformation. Abdoulaye Konaté's textile compositions explore the expressive possibilities of colour, texture, and form, with an entirely white work introducing a contemplative register shaped by spirituality, silence, and restraint. Together, their practices illuminate the potential of material as both a formal language and a repository of cultural memory.

María Magdalena Campos-Pons presents three watercolour paintings that explore the interplay of abstraction and figuration through layered imagery, colour, and fragmented forms. Fleeting human figures emerge from intricate compositions, evoking the entanglement of personal experience, ancestral memory, and diasporic histories. Her work considers identity as an evolving constellation of relationships and inheritances, shaped across generations and geographies.

Together, the artists approach material as a site of historical inscription and cultural transformation. Their practices reveal connections between seemingly distant places and experiences, inviting a consideration of the Global South not as a fixed geographical category, but as an evolving constellation of exchange, encounter, and shared memory.

EL ANATSUI

El Anatsui (b. 1944, Anyako, Ghana) lives and works in Nsukka, Nigeria. His multidisciplinary practice transforms discarded materials into monumental assemblages of striking visual impact, investigating themes of consumption, memory, waste, and the legacy of colonialism.

His work is held in the permanent collections of T**he Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the British Museum, London; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Vatican Museums, Vatican City; Louvre Abu Dhabi; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); and Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo**, among many others.

Anatsui's work has been featured in the **44th Venice Biennale (1990), 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), and 56th Venice Biennale (2015); the 2012 Paris Triennale; and the 9th Havana Biennial (2006).** Most recently, his work has been showcased in major exhibitions at the **Brooklyn Museum, New York; Haus der Kunst, Munich; Guggenheim Bilbao**, among others.

In 2023, he was the subject of a major dedicated site-specific display at **Tate Modern, London**, for the Hyundai Commission in the Turbine Hall. This followed the 2019–2021 traveling survey El Anatsui: Triumphant Scale, organized by the **Haus der Kunst, Munich**, which concluded its tour at **Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha**. From 2025 to 2026, his monumental installation XOHANAMI was selected to transform the historic safety curtain of the **Vienna State Opera**.

Anatsui was a longtime Professor of Sculpture at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and has mentored generations of West African artists. He is a recipient of the **Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale (2015)** and the Praemium Imperiale for Sculpture (2017). In 2023, he was named one of the 100 most influential people in the world by **Time Magazine**.



EL ANATSUI

Za, 2025

Aluminium bottlecaps and copper wire
271 cm x 318 cm



ZA

El Anatsui's **Za** takes its title from the Ewe word for "night," a term whose significance extends beyond its immediate translation, carrying associations with time, atmosphere, rest, intimacy and the rhythms of daily life. This multiplicity reflects the linguistic openness characteristic of Anatsui's titles, which frequently draw upon the layered meanings of words in his native Ewe language. Rather than prescribing a singular interpretation, Za invites an understanding of night as both a temporal condition and a space of possibility, where familiar forms and relationships may be perceived anew. The work translates this richness of association into an expansive composition of black, gold, silver, yellow and red, whose shifting visual relationships resist any definitive reading.

The composition is anchored by an expansive black ground, from which contrasting forms appear to emerge. A large, irregular golden field dominates the upper right, glowing against the surrounding surface, while fragmented silver and yellow passages accumulate across the left. Below, bands of yellow, red and metallic material move horizontally through the work, introducing a sense of rhythm and movement. Together, these elements can evoke a landscape, an aerial view, or points of illumination across an expansive terrain, without resolving into a single image.

Constructed from countless pieces of aluminium, folded, cut and joined with copper wire, Za embodies the transformations central to Anatsui's practice. Discarded materials associated with consumption and histories of trade are reconstituted into a surface that appears at once precious, monumental and textile-like. Its flexible structure allows the work to gather and undulate differently with each installation, making light, architecture and gravity active participants in its appearance.

In Za, the notion of night becomes a point of departure rather than a fixed subject, allowing its many associations to unfold through the interplay of colour, material and form. The luminous passages that traverse the composition introduce a sense of vitality and movement, while the work's shifting surface resists the permanence of any single arrangement. Much like the linguistic richness of its title, Za remains open to interpretation, embodying Anatsui's enduring exploration of transformation, multiplicity and the capacity of abstraction to accommodate different meanings simultaneously.

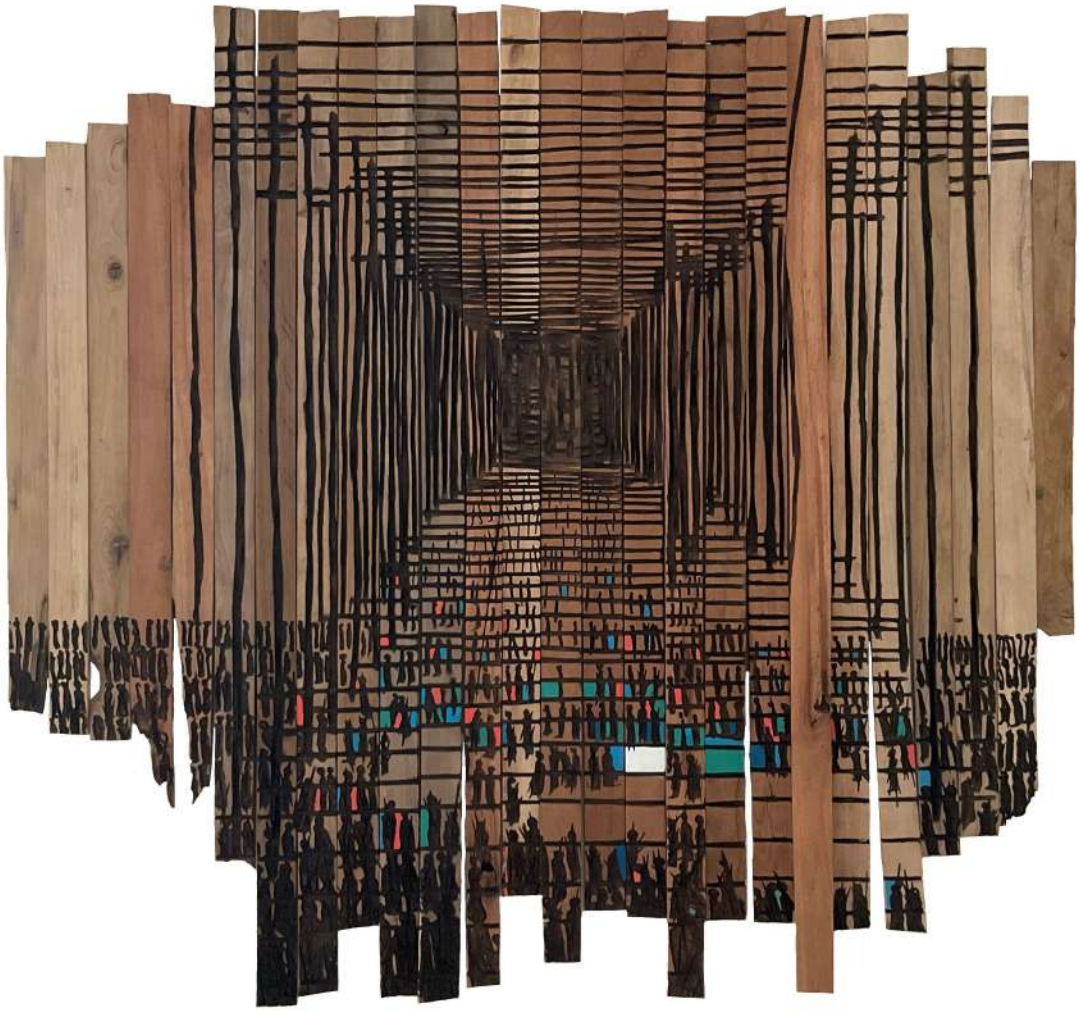

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EL ANATSUI

Migrating into History, 2024

Tropical Hardwood
248 cm x 267 cm



MIGRATING INTO HISTORY

In **Migrating into History**, El Anatsui extends his long-standing enquiry into materiality, movement, and the mutable architectures of memory by returning to one of his most foundational mediums: wood. The work recalls the sculptural vocabulary he first developed in the 1970s and 1980s, yet it does so with a conceptual clarity forged through decades of experimental practice. Here, the tropical hardwoods, each bearing their own histories of growth, extraction, and trade, are assembled into a large-scale relief that reads simultaneously as landscape, corridor, and cartography.

Anatsui's incised verticals and receding perspectival grid create the impression of entering a vast, almost cathedral-like passageway. This spatial pull, characteristic of his most ambitious wooden panels, positions the viewer within a continuum that stretches toward an unseen horizon. The vanishing point suggests not only depth but destiny: a collective movement through time in which migration becomes the very engine of historical formation. The silhouettes that populate the lower register, rhythmic, multitudinous, and deliberately stripped of individuating detail, evoke communities in motion. They recall the artist's long engagement with the themes of passage, displacement, and the porous boundaries between personal memory and shared experience.

As in many of Anatsui's works, material is never neutral. The tropical hardwoods, carved and scorched to produce a complex interplay of surface and shadow, operate as repositories of the global histories they have traversed: histories of transcontinental exchange, resource circulation, and cultural encounter. By manipulating the wooden planks into subtly irregular upper and lower edges, Anatsui disrupts any notion of a stable or linear historical narrative. Instead, the work gestures toward the fractured, recursive, and unpredictable paths through which identities, individual and collective, are continuously shaped.

Small inflections of colour punctuate the composition, functioning almost as mnemonic sparks within the broader field of abstraction. They offer a counterpoint to the austerity of the palette, suggesting the persistence of cultural specificity within the broader sweep of human movement.

Migrating into History stands as a masterful convergence of form and philosophy. It epitomises Anatsui's ability to transform humble, once utilitarian materials into meditations on the forces that bind and disperse communities. In doing so, the work affirms his position as one of the most significant contemporary artists of our time, an artist for whom history is not a fixed archive but a dynamic, ever-shifting terrain mapped through the very substances of the world.





ABDOULAYE KONATÉ

Abdoulaye Konaté (b. 1953, Mali) creates large-scale, textile-based installations using woven and dyed materials native to his homeland. His abstract and figurative tableaux explore both aesthetic language and pressing socio-political and environmental issues. Referring to the West African tradition of using textiles as a means of communication, Konaté balances global concerns with intimate references to his own life and country.

His works are in the collections of the **Centre Pompidou, Paris**; **The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**; **The Museum of Modern Art, New York**; **Tate Modern, London**; **Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.**; **Louvre Abu Dhabi**; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; **ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen**; Fondation Blachère, Apt; **Musée National du Mali, Bamako**; Fondation Guy & Myriam Ullens, Geneva; and The Tang Teaching Museum, Saratoga Springs, among others.

His work has been presented at the **Gwangju Biennale (2023)**, Dakar Biennale (2022), **Centre Pompidou, Paris (2020)**, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town (2020), and the **Venice Biennale (2017)**. In 2016, a major retrospective of his work was held at **ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen**. Earlier exhibitions include Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Hayward Gallery, London; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and Fondation Blachère, Apt. In 2026, Konaté presented L'Âme des signes, a major solo exhibition at the **National Museum of Mali, Bamako**, marking his return to the institution 35 years after his previous presentation there.

Konaté is a founding member of the African Culture Fund, and in 2004, he established the Conservatoire des Arts et Multimédia Balla Fasséké Kouyaté in Bamako.



ABDOULAYE KONATÉ

Motif Arkilla (Sahel) sur fond ocre, 2026

Textile
161 cm x 119 cm



MOTIF ARKILLA (SAHEL) SUR FOND OCRE

In **Motif Arkilla (Sahel) sur fond ocre**, Abdoulaye Konaté explores the relationship between textile, cultural memory, and abstraction, drawing on the rich visual traditions of the Sahel to construct a composition defined by rhythm, repetition, and chromatic interplay. Through the arrangement of woven elements and geometric motifs, the artist transforms textile into a language through which cultural references are reinterpreted and material histories brought into dialogue with contemporary abstraction.

The composition unfolds against an ochre ground, across which bands of richly coloured textile establish a measured interplay of verticality and pattern. Deep reds, blues, and golds punctuate the surface, while geometric motifs introduce a sense of order within the work's layered construction. Variations in colour, texture, and the lengths of the textile strips create subtle shifts in rhythm, allowing the composition to move between visual regularity and material variation. The ochre ground provides a unifying field against which the contrasting colours and intricate patterns acquire particular intensity.

These formal relationships reflect Konaté's sustained engagement with the cultural and social significance of textiles across West Africa. Drawing on traditions in which woven materials carry associations of identity, exchange, and collective belonging, the artist reconfigures familiar visual languages through a distinctly contemporary approach. Pattern becomes more than ornament, functioning as a means through which cultural knowledge is preserved, transformed, and transmitted. The interplay of repetition and variation further suggests how traditions remain dynamic, continually reshaped through new contexts and encounters.

Through Motif Arkilla (Sahel) sur fond ocre, Konaté positions textile as both material and carrier of cultural memory, bringing the visual heritage of the Sahel into a wider conversation about cultural continuity and transformation. The work invites consideration of how patterns and materials carry meaning across generations, retaining traces of their origins while acquiring new significance through artistic reinterpretation.





ABDOULAYE KONATÉ

Blanc sur blanc - No 1, 2026

Textile
150 cm x 220 cm



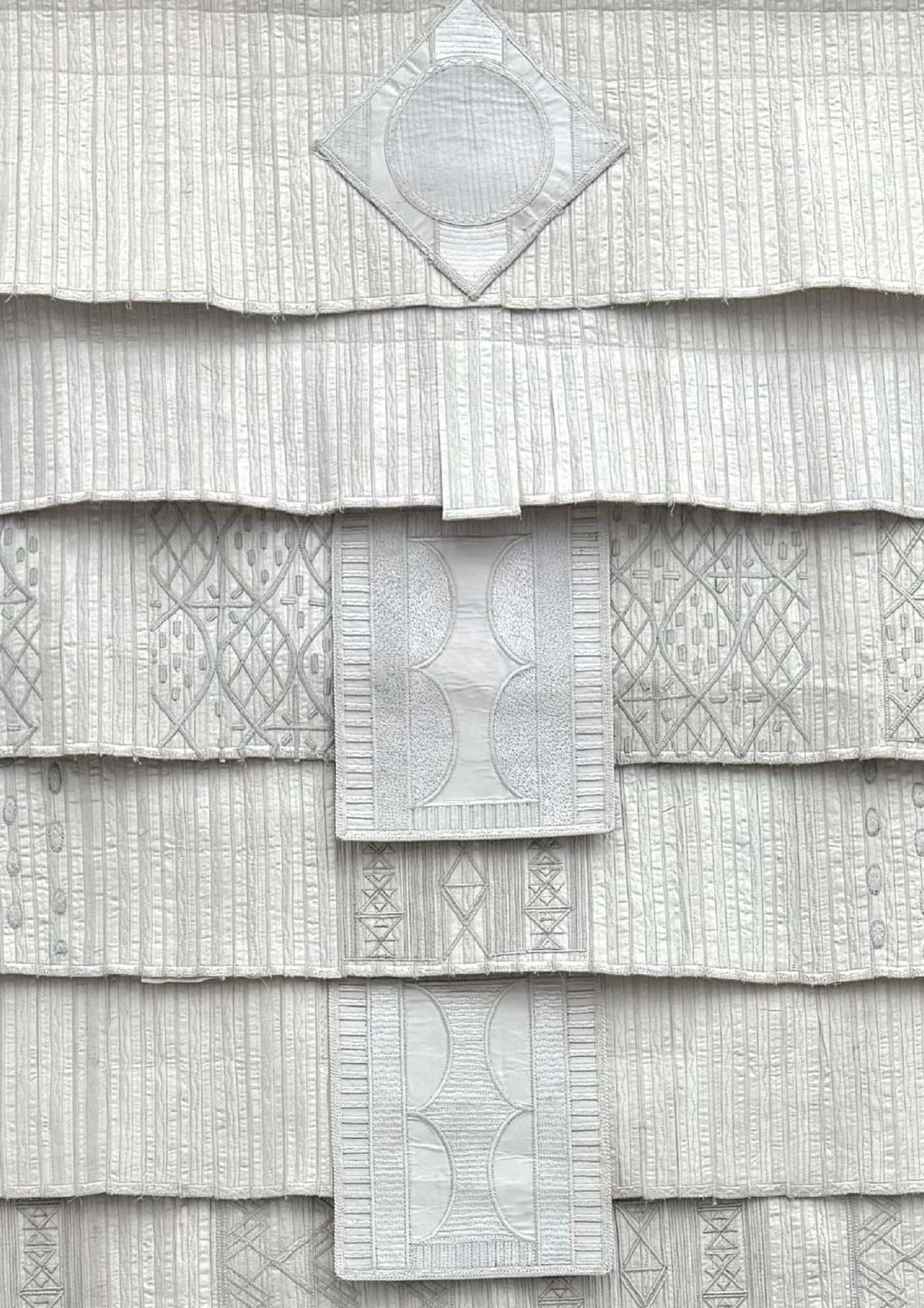
BLANC SUR BLANC – NO. 1

In **Blanc sur blanc – No 1**, Abdoulaye Konaté explores the expressive possibilities of textile through a composition defined by subtle variations in texture, pattern, and relief. Drawing on West African textile traditions, the work brings together layered strips of fabric and geometric motifs, transforming familiar material forms into a contemporary abstract language. Its monochromatic palette shifts attention away from colour towards the intricate relationships between surface, structure, and material, revealing the complexity of a composition shaped through restraint.

The surface unfolds through alternating bands of woven and patterned fabric, whose variations in density, weave, and arrangement establish a measured visual rhythm. Stitching and overlapping layers introduce subtle shifts in relief, allowing light and shadow to register across the composition. Against the uniformity of white, differences in texture and construction become increasingly pronounced, revealing the interplay between repetition and variation that defines the work. What might initially appear restrained gradually reveals a rich material complexity, inviting a closer examination of the processes through which the textile is assembled.

This approach reflects Konaté's sustained engagement with textile as both a material practice and a form of cultural expression. Drawing on traditions of weaving and fabric construction across West Africa, his work reinterprets established visual languages through an exploration of abstraction, repetition, and materiality. The monochromatic treatment marks a departure from the vivid, colour-driven compositions often associated with his practice, foregrounding instead the tactile qualities of the medium and the intricate structures through which pattern and meaning emerge.

Through Blanc sur blanc – No 1, Konaté demonstrates how restraint can open new possibilities for material expression. By reducing the role of colour, the work draws attention to the relationships between pattern, texture, and form, inviting contemplation of the cultural traditions that inform its construction and the ways in which these traditions can be reinterpreted through contemporary abstraction.



MARÍA MAGDALENA CAMPOS-PONS

María Magdalena Campos-Pons (b. 1959, Matanzas, Cuba) lives and works in Nashville, TN, USA. Her multidisciplinary practice intermixes photography, painting, sculpture, film, video, and performance to explore history, memory, gender, and religion, investigating the role of each in identity formation.

Her work is held in the permanent collections of **the Whitney Museum of American Art**, New York; **the Museum of Modern Art**, New York; **the Victoria and Albert Museum**, London; **the J. Paul Getty Museum**, Los Angeles; **the Museum of Fine Arts**, Boston; **the Smithsonian American Art Museum**, Washington, D.C.; **the Art Institute of Chicago**; **the National Gallery of Canada**, Ottawa; and **the Pérez Art Museum,** Miami, among many others.

Campos-Pons' work has been featured in the 49th Venice Biennale (2001) and **55th Venice Biennale (2013)**; Documenta 14 (2017); and the 14th Sharjah Biennial (2019) and **15th Sharjah Biennial (2023).** Most recently, she participated in the 14th Gwangju Biennale (2023); the 2nd Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale (2024); the **36th Biennial de São Paulo (2025)**; and the 4th edition of **Desert X AlUla (2026)** in Saudi Arabia. She is currently featured in the **61st Venice Biennale (2026),** titled In Minor Keys

In 2025, she was the subject of a major dedicated display at **Tate Modern**, London, in the Blavatnik Building Tanks. This followed the 2023–2025 traveling survey María Magdalena Campos-Pons: Behold exhibition, organized by the **Brooklyn Museum and the J. Paul Getty Museum**, which concluded its tour at the Getty Center in May 2025.

Campos-Pons is the Cornelius Vanderbilt Endowed Chair of Fine Arts at Vanderbilt University and has founded numerous artist-run programs, including GASP (Boston, 2003), the Engine for Art, Democracy & Justice (EADJ) (Nashville, 2018), and Intermittent Rivers (Cuba, 2019). She is a recipient of the **Pérez Prize (2021),** the **MacArthur Fellowship (2023)**, and the **ARTnews Lifetime Achievement Award (2024)**. Her recent major commissions include a site-specific installation for the **Obama Presidential Center**, titled Still Holding the Scent of Flowers.



MARÍA MAGDALENA CAMPOS-PONS

Exhale 2, 2026

Watercolor on paper
120 cm x 79.5 cm



EXHALE 2

In **Exhale 2**, María Magdalena Campos-Pons explores the delicate threshold between presence and absence, figuration and abstraction, memory and transformation. Through an intricate interplay of colour, gesture, and fragmented form, the artist gives visual expression to the intangible rhythms of breath, evoking a moment of release in which the body becomes both landscape and vessel for memory.

Rendered in luminous shades of rose, crimson, coral, and orange, the composition unfolds through intersecting geometric planes, fluid washes of pigment, and recurring organic patterns. Fleeting suggestions of human figures emerge from within the layered surface, their forms appearing to dissolve into the surrounding atmosphere. The tension between the painting's angular structures and its spontaneous, almost weightless gestures creates a sense of movement and suspension, as though the composition itself were caught between inhalation and exhalation.

These converging forms reflect Campos-Pons' longstanding engagement with the fluidity of identity and the complexities of diasporic experience. Figures and landscapes become inseparable, suggesting how personal and collective histories are continually fragmented, reassembled, and carried across generations and geographies. The repeated marks evoke traces of movement and accumulation, while the translucent passages of colour suggest the persistence of memory even as its forms shift and recede.

Within the wider series The Shape of an Exhale, breath becomes a metaphor for transformation: an invisible yet essential force connecting the physical and spiritual, the individual and collective, the remembered and the imagined. Presented by Efie Gallery at Frieze Abu Dhabi, Exhale 2 invites contemplation of these liminal spaces, proposing that identity is neither fixed nor singular, but continually shaped through acts of passage, release, and renewal.





MARÍA MAGDALENA CAMPOS-PONS

The Gathering, 2026

Watercolor on paper
100 cm x 100 cm



THE GATHERING

In **The Gathering**, María Magdalena Campos-Pons presents an intricate constellation of elongated bodies suspended across an expansive white plane. Figures stretch, drift, and converge, their forms extending beyond conventional anatomical boundaries as though liberated from the constraints of physical space. Neither entirely grounded nor wholly weightless, they inhabit an indeterminate realm in which the human body becomes a site of movement, memory, and transformation.

The composition unfolds through a delicate interplay of figuration and abstraction. Washes of luminous yellow, violet, turquoise, and orange punctuate the otherwise unoccupied surface, while fine lines, geometric fragments, and intricate networks of dots establish connections between seemingly disparate forms. The elongated bodies appear at once autonomous and interconnected, their gestures suggesting an invisible choreography of encounter, separation, and return. Here, the white plane is not simply a background, but an expansive field of possibility, one in which distance is negotiated through the relationships between bodies rather than through the conventions of perspective.

This spatial ambiguity speaks to Campos-Pons' enduring engagement with the diasporic condition, in which identity is shaped through histories of migration, displacement, and cultural convergence. The figures resist singular readings of geography or belonging. Their exaggerated proportions suggest bodies capable of traversing distances that exceed the physical, while the delicate threads connecting them evoke the persistence of ancestral relationships across time and space. What might initially appear as fragmentation gradually reveals itself as an intricate architecture of interdependence.

Central to The Gathering is a tension between the individual and the collective. Each figure retains a distinct presence, yet none exists in isolation. Bodies become extensions of one another, connected through gestures, patterns, and pathways that traverse the composition. In this sense, elongation becomes more than a formal device; it offers a poetic articulation of the ways in which histories, identities, and memories extend beyond the boundaries of the self.

The title, The Gathering, lends particular resonance to this arrangement. Rather than depicting a gathering as a singular event or physical assembly, Campos-Pons imagines it as an enduring condition of interconnectedness, one that transcends geographical proximity and linear time. The work transforms the space between figures into a place of encounter rather than separation, suggesting that belonging is not necessarily determined by where bodies reside, but by the histories, relationships, and invisible threads through which they remain connected.





MARÍA MAGDALENA CAMPOS-PONS

Exhale 1, 2026

Watercolor on paper
61 cm x 40 cm



EXHALE 1

In **Exhale 1**, María Magdalena Campos-Pons explores the profound intimacy of a single existence, presenting the human figure as a vessel through which memory, experience, and ancestral histories are made visible. At the centre of the composition, a solitary individual emerges from an intricate convergence of colour, gesture, and fragmented forms. The figure appears suspended between the physical and the ethereal, as though the act of exhalation has momentarily dissolved the boundaries separating the self from the accumulated experiences that constitute a life.

The composition unfolds around a contemplative face, whose features emerge through translucent layers of crimson, ochre, turquoise, and rose. Radiating from the figure are delicate, threadlike structures, geometric fragments, and recurring organic patterns, forming an elaborate constellation of interconnected elements. These visual threads suggest the invisible forces that shape an individual: relationships, memories, inheritances, and encounters, each extending beyond the immediate boundaries of the body. What initially appears as abstraction gradually reveals itself as an intimate portrait, not simply of a person, but of the multiplicity of histories contained within them.

The work's title lends particular significance to this unfolding. An exhale is both an act of release and an affirmation of life, a fleeting moment in which what is held within is surrendered to the world. Campos-Pons transforms this seemingly ordinary gesture into a metaphor for revelation. As the breath escapes, the individual's inner world appears to expand outward, its fragments becoming visible across the pictorial surface. The distinction between interior and exterior begins to dissolve, suggesting that the self cannot be understood independently of the experiences, relationships, and histories through which it has been formed.

This understanding resonates with Campos-Pons' longstanding engagement with diasporic memory, spirituality, and the transmission of ancestral knowledge. The figure becomes more than an isolated subject; it embodies the convergence of personal and collective histories, carrying within it traces of lives and geographies beyond its own. The radiating lines and intersecting forms suggest that an individual existence is never entirely singular, but rather an accumulation of encounters across generations and time.

Within the wider series The Shape of an Exhale, Exhale 1 offers a particularly intimate meditation on the relationship between breath and becoming. Where the human figure might conventionally be understood through its outward appearance, Campos-Pons instead invites us to contemplate the vast, often imperceptible world that resides within it. In the suspended instant of an exhale, a life comes into view, not as a fixed or complete narrative, but as an ever-unfolding constellation of memories, inheritances, and possibilities.





GALLERY INFORMATION

Efie Gallery
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Al Quoz 1, off 1st Al Khail Street, Dubai,
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Opening Times:
Monday - Thursday 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM
Friday - Saturday 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Sunday 1:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Frieze Abu Dhabi | Booth A6
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Preview days (by invitation only)
18 - 19 November 2026

Manarat Al Saadiyat, Saadiyat Cultural
District, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi,