

FERDINAND HODLER DRAWINGS—SELECTIONS FROM THE MUSÉE JENISCH VEVEY

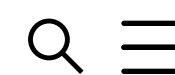
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View of "Eternal Forms: Exploring the Intersection of Earth and Humanity," 2023.

LAGOS

Alimi Adewale

O'DA ART GALLERY

10 Sir Samuel Manuwa St, Victoria Island
July 15–August 19, 2023



Alimi Adewale is an artist constantly experimenting with style. For his series "Migration," 2016–20, he crowded his canvases with seemingly animated forms that bleed into one another. He worked in an impasto style, applying a warm and bright palette of azure, pink, blue, and yellow against pale-gray color

fields. In contrast, in more recent paintings like *Gaze into the Future*, 2021, the figure (usually feminine and depicted at life size) is solitary, brooding if not altogether expressionless. Unlike in the "Migration" series, there is a firm order here, with the subjects placed against a background of floating geometric shapes.

Adewale draws from both these approaches in his latest exhibition, "Eternal Forms: Exploring the Intersection of Earth and Humanity." Although not widely known, petroglyphs abound in Nigeria, particularly in the areas of the once feared Ife Empire. Drawing on this pictorial language, the artist juxtaposes the ancient—cave drawings of early life—with more contemporary portraits. For the series "Timeless Tales", 2022–23, Adewale has abandoned impasto to scrawl images of goats, vegetation, men hunting, and a ship (or ark?) in thinly applied pigments on stitched heavy cotton. He also includes what appear to be numbering systems, all rendered in earth tones of brown, red, bronze, and olive. Meanwhile, the colorful portraits of "Ethereal Gaze", 2022–23, break with market-friendly clichés of Black figuration. Adewale's subjects may have indistinct expressions, but he embeds them within a cascade of riotous patterns. In another series, "Beauty Within", 2023, the artist returns to orderly figuration, but this time with the body affixed in embroidery.

All told, Adewale, ultimately, is more technique than narrative. In this show more than ever before, he is an artist at play and at the height of his powers, given to visually satisfying experiments on wood, stitched cotton, and canvas.

— *Ayodeji Rotinwa*

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