

# TEMPLON



ALIOUNE DIAGNE

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## Closing Soon: Alioune Diagne's Paintings Embracing the African Dream at Templon

The Senegalese artist merges heritage and hope in his U.S. debut "Jokkoo," which is filled with striking, pointillist scenes that point to a bold vision of shared futures.

By [Māna Taylor](#) · 04/29/25 3:17pm



The artist's pointillistic technique blurs borders—both literal and symbolic. Photo: CHARLES ROUSSEL

Alioune Diagne's paintings are composed of minuscule pointillistic lines that spread across his large canvases, creating imagery that is simultaneously blurry and distinct. For his debut show in New York and his third with Templon, the Senegal-based artist has delved more deeply into his exploration of cultural heritage, drawing from the parallels between his native country and New York. This interweaving of countries also echoes the sentiment that, as the gallery notes, the "younger generation of Senegalese, who, when asked about their future, gaze across the Atlantic." His unique approach to painting creates a world that transcends history and geography, that allows both places to exist in one room. He told *Observer*, "I genuinely believe in the 'African Dream'—that it's entirely possible to succeed, to accomplish ambitious projects and to create real international synergies from Africa, particularly from countries like Senegal. This belief motivated me to return home, set up my studio in Senegal, and develop my artistic projects directly from here."

Titled “Jokkoo” after the Wolof word for connection, the New York show is a window into the artist’s life and his country, filled with hopes and dreams. In Senegal, fishing is a significant aspect of the culture and day-to-day life. The beaches are crowded with colorful pirogue boats, each hand-painted and decorated with unique symbols and iconography. Fishermen set sail at the crack of dawn, returning with fish to sell at the morning markets. Diagne was the first artist to represent Senegal at the Venice Biennale last year, exhibiting a pirogue boat split in two in a nod to those who also use the fishing boats to migrate to Europe at their peril. His paintings at Templon offer a degree of hope, through imagery of sports and cityscapes, of crowds gathering and communities forming. By merging Senegal and New York, he articulates that neither is inherently better than the other. In fact, Diagne’s translator pointed out that his drawings of American basketball players are much more angular, while the scenes from Senegal are softer.

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Diagne aims to challenge African youth to reimagine success, proposing an ‘African Dream’ that mirrors the American Dream, but also sees his purpose as creating a living archive of his country. “At the same time, I want to raise awareness about critical issues, such as the exploitation of our fishing resources, the tragedies linked to clandestine migration and the heartbreaking shipwrecks involving Senegalese migrants and the alarming pollution affecting our coastline,” he said. “I want the world to become conscious of all these realities.”

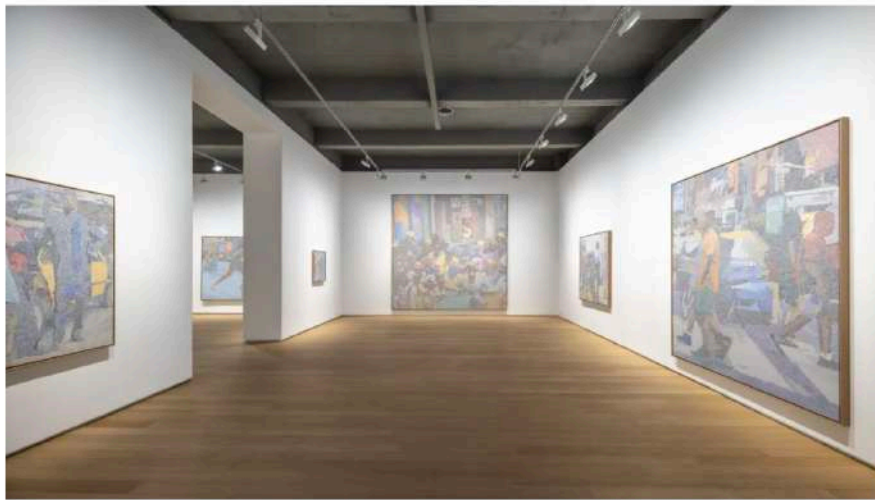


Alioune Diagne, *Dembak Tey – Past and Present*, 2025; Acrylic on canvas 350 × 350 cm — 137 3/4 × 137 3/4 in. Courtesy of the artist and Templon, Paris - Brussels - New York. Photo: CHARLES ROUSSEL.



In his first exhibition in New York, Diagne's large paintings make their presence felt on the walls of the gallery. The canvases are larger than you can imagine. Only visible up close, the small curvilinear lines that make up his paintings were inspired by his grandfather, who was a calligraphist of Arabic script. He never taught Diagne directly, but he was in awe of this script as a young boy. When his grandfather passed, it was as if it had been transmitted to him, though his lines are neither letters nor copies of his grandfather's script but a method of transmitting stories.

Growing up, Diagne was never exposed to contemporary art. "For a long time, I had no knowledge of art history or the contemporary art world, mainly because in the village where I grew up, we simply didn't have access to that kind of artistic culture," he said. It was only later, at the École des Beaux-Arts in Dakar and during his time living in France, that he really began to discover art history. "Today, I'm particularly drawn to Cubism and especially moved by the work of Pablo Picasso. Seeing Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* in person at MoMA was an incredible visual shock for me. For many years, people spontaneously connected my paintings with Impressionism or even Pointillism—movements I wasn't even aware of back then. It's only recently that I genuinely started exploring this movement and its techniques, allowing Impressionism to consciously influence my artistic approach."



At Templon, Diagne reimagines the African Dream through layered calligraphic forms. Photo: CHARLES ROUSSEL

Working on a collaborative project in 2023 with the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, France, which is known for its impressive collection of Impressionist works, gave him access to new forms of artistic language. In New York, Diagne's "Jokkoo" links continents and traditions, a window into embracing multiple worlds. His paintings speak for themselves. In one, a crowd of Senegalese women are backdropped by skyscrapers that appear to be made of cardboard; the presence of the crowd is more striking than the cluster of buildings behind them. In another work, set this time at what appears to be an American protest, there is someone standing tall with the Senegalese flag in their arms. In yet another painting, the police officers at a Black Lives Matter protest are wearing Senegalese uniforms. All the paintings at Templon evoke this kind of duality—a balance of here and there, Senegal and New York in one shared space. Looking closer, the calligraphy takes shape, blurring the image. Yet in these puzzling scenes that fuse geographies, Diagne's singular voice resounds. "Above all, I want to share with the wider public the beauty and richness of Senegal, its values and traditions: the bustling energy of its markets, the resilience and strength of its women, and the hopes and ambitions of its youth, far beyond the stereotypes that are so often portrayed," he concluded.

**"Jokkoo" is on view at Templon through May 1, 2025.**