

Jamiu Agboke

Don't go chasing waterfalls

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Making lyrical reference to the 1990s R&B group TLC, Jamiu Agboke's exhibition *Don't go chasing waterfalls* at MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique draws together a wide range of influences that shape his poetic painting practice.

Agboke's work envelops viewers, inviting them into immersive environments where they traverse mountains, climb foothills, and descend waterfalls. His paintings conjure the rush of gale-force winds and the crash of torrential rain. In these works, nature is not a backdrop but an active force.

The title - and the exhibition's centrepiece - signals Agboke's blending of references: from poetry and literature to a range of musical genres. Sometimes these influences surface overtly, in titles or visual motifs; other times, they are embedded in the layered pigments and luminous textures of his surfaces.

Agboke's use of colour feels both intentional and instinctive. His canvases are grounded in earthy greens, sun-washed yellows, and deep browns, but it's the sudden bursts of orange and sharp acidic tones that animate the landscapes. This interplay between warmth and intensity reflects the shifting moods of the natural world.

The waterfall emerges as a central motif in this new body of work - its rhythmic cascade guiding the viewer's eyes through each painting.

In *Peekaboo*, *Tuh-dah*, and *Don't go chasing waterfalls*, flowing water disrupts otherwise tranquil scenes, injecting vitality while maintaining a sense of grace. In *Peekaboo* and *Tuh-dah*, waterfalls plunge over ledges, cleaving the landscape with powerful motion. In contrast, *Don't go chasing waterfalls* has water winding its way down the hillside, carving a precise path through the terrain.

Throughout Agboke's lush natural worlds, there is always a lyrical disruption. Whether it's the dynamic arc of a tree trunk or branches swaying in psychedelic rhythm, the unexpected is ever-present. His works honour tradition, evident in pieces incorporating silver plates, yet they also deliberately disrupt it, offering a fresh, multidisciplinary approach to the storied lineage of nature painting.

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Traversing the edges of landscape and abstraction, Jamiu Agboke's (b. 1989, Lagos, Nigeria) paintings are both entirely new and sensorially familiar, deeply rooted in and completely outside of our world. Agboke's work exists on delicate precipices, grounded in tradition and yet disruptive through energetic mark making and a radical abandonment of the canvas, favouring effervescent metallic surfaces. When encountering Agboke's painting your hair begins to blow in the wind, and wisping gusts pass by your ears. You feel the tall grasses and wet marshes underneath your feet as you are enveloped into his environments. The artist epitomises the role of voyeur, allowing the influences of music, poetry and literature to inspire him and become channelled into the work at various points, their audible presence playing a significant role in how the paintings are both made and consumed. He captures the aura of nature, allowing it to wash over its viewers, commanding their engagement and confronting them with fervour. Agboke is currently based in London and has exhibited at VIN VIN Vienna (2025), Sea View, Los Angeles, CA (2024), VIN VIN, Turin, Italy (2023); White Cube, London, UK (2023); Galerie Margo, Paris, France (2023); Jack Barrett, New York, NY (2023); and VIN VIN, Vienna, Austria (2019).