Contemporary African Sculpture: Indigenous Logics Of The Fractured Self – Bowman Sculpture



Oct 1, 2026

Via News Desk

There is a question sitting at the centre of Indigenous Logics of the Fractured Self that feels worth pausing on before walking through the door. What happens when a sculpture stops being treated as something that simply remembers, and starts being read instead for what it actually knows? Bowman Sculpture, working in collaboration with ADA Contemporary, has built an entire group show around that distinction, bringing together six West African artists whose work spans several generations and a fairly wide range of materials.

The lineup pairs established names with emerging ones. El Anatsui, Alimi Adewale, Niyi Olagunju and Reuben Ugbine represent decades of accumulated practice and international recognition, while Myles Igwebuike and Amanda Offor bring something rawer and more immediate to the room. Together they work across wood, metal, ceramics, and glass, and the show is structured so that these pieces are not simply displayed alongside one another but are allowed to converse, responding to inherited tradition in their own distinct ways.

Its approach to treating heritage as something static makes the idea unusual. Here, inherited knowledge gets carried forward, pushed and occasionally broken apart and reassembled using entirely new materials and methods. The process of translation, rather than preservation, is where the show's title finds its meaning. The fractured self is not an impairment. It is the gap between what has been inherited and what gets made new from it, the space where knowledge keeps moving rather than sitting still.

Adora Mba, founder of ADA Contemporary, was careful to present the exhibition as more than a simple survey of strong work. Her stated goal was to introduce distinct voices rather than flatten them into a single narrative about African sculpture, each artist carrying their own history, material vocabulary and point of view. She described the resulting dialogue between the artists as built on curiosity

and individual craftsmanship rather than any forced thematic unity, arguing that what emerges collectively is a genuine sense of how varied and alive contemporary African sculpture actually is right now.



El Anatsui

Mica Bowman, the gallery's director, prepared the show as something of a turning point for the space itself. Bowman Sculpture has built its reputation almost entirely around European sculpture, and she spoke openly about wanting the gallery to grow into something broader, a genuine destination for serious sculpture regardless of where in the world it comes from. She was equally candid about recognising the limits of her own expertise, describing the partnership with Mba as essential precisely because it allowed her to bring artists and ideas into the gallery with a level of authenticity she could not have achieved working alone.

The exhibition's framing lands on a fairly pointed closing thought: that these objects should not be read as relics. They function instead as something closer to data, carriers of information still actively being processed and reshaped rather than static artefacts of a finished past.

Mica Bowman adds: “For me, this exhibition marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Bowman Sculpture. We have always been known for European sculpture, but my ambition is for the gallery to become a destination for great sculpture from across the world. I also think it is important to recognise where your own expertise ends, which is why collaboration is such a big part of that journey for me. Adora has an extraordinary knowledge of contemporary African art, and working together has allowed us to bring artists and ideas into the gallery that I couldn’t have done authentically on my own.”

These objects are not relics. They are data.

Top Photo: Adora Mba, ADA Contemporary Founder

Indigenous Logics of the Fractured Self runs from 2 October through 27 November at Bowman Sculpture, 6 Duke Street in St James’s, London, open Tuesday through Friday from 10 am to 6 pm and Saturday from 11 am to 5 pm.

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