

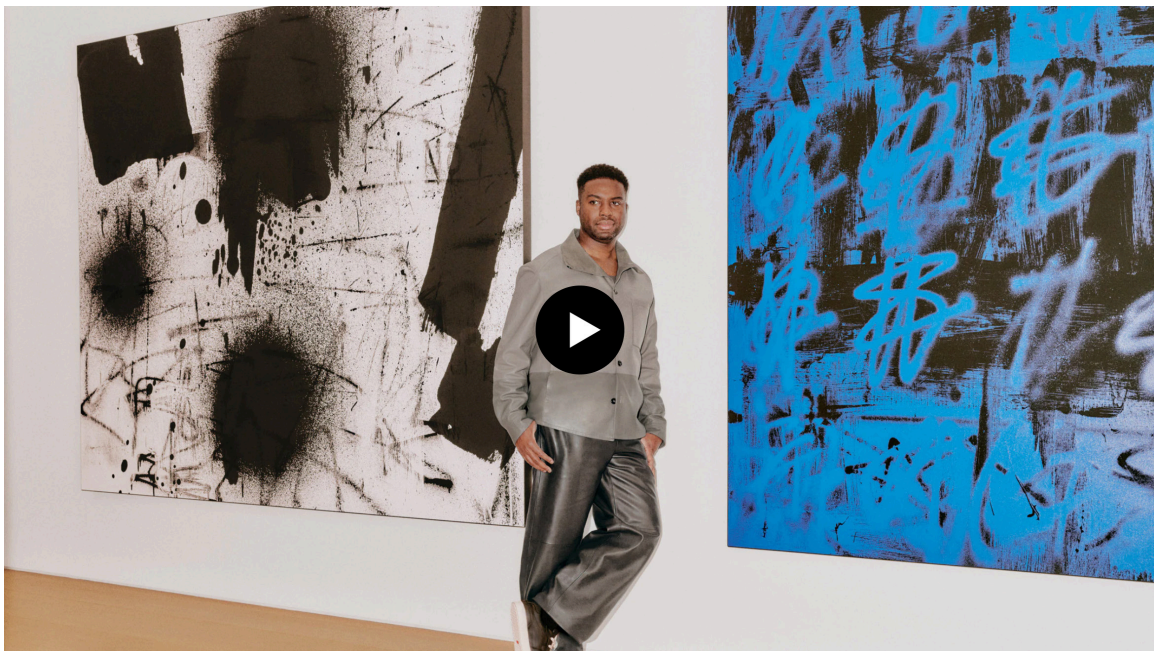
Galerie

ART & CULTURE

Artist Adam Pendleton Opens the Door to His Brooklyn Studio Ahead of a Major Show at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam

Painting, architecture, and abstraction converge in this one-of-a-kind artist's space that beautifully complements his attuned practice

BY HILARIE M. SHEETS PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILIANO GRANADO
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Adam Pendleton, wearing a jacket, pants, and sneakers by Hermès, stands before two large-scale panels of his *Untitled (Days)* (2026) in the front gallery of his studio in Brooklyn. Styled by Charlie Ward.

“Painting, for me, is a space for and about freedom,” says acclaimed artist Adam Pendleton, standing in his paint-splattered workroom—the inner sanctum of his vast and otherwise pristine Brooklyn studio.



In his practice, the artist—clad here in Armani—layers watercolor, ink, and paint, including spray paint.

Tacked to facing walls are two rows of tall sheets of paper, each more than eight feet high, gathering accumulations of gestures, marks, and fragments of text. "Making those swooping gestures with a big, inky, wet brush," Pendleton says, "or taking the brush across the paper and just letting the ink drip and drop—it's this kind of beautiful relationship between control and the loss of control."

These large vertical works—Pendleton calls them "Basis" drawings—will later be scanned and screen-printed in gold on black. "I'm very process-oriented and like blurring the distinctions between drawing and painting and photography," he says. He shows several finished examples from the series hanging on the clean white walls of the studio's front gallery—a room visible from the street, which lets him consider how his pieces will feel when they get to a museum. "My work is so invested in the sustained act of looking, and that's what I get to do here."

With architect Frederick Tang, Pendleton designed the studio as a series of unfolding spaces, also including offices for his staff and for himself, a library, and a model room where he uses architectural maquettes to plan the installation of upcoming exhibitions—often several at once. "I can't get anything done without a model," he says. "I understand things through space."

"Art allows us the greatest opportunity for life not to be ordinary but to be extraordinary in really tangible and poetic ways"

Adam Pendleton

Since 2008, Pendleton has developed a distinctive visual vocabulary guided by his artistic philosophy of "Black Dada"—looking at Blackness as an open-ended idea not just related



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Black Dada Drawing (A/A) (2023) hangs in the library at his studio, designed by Frederick Tang.

to notions of race but in relationship to abstraction and the avant-garde. In 2021, Pendleton was one of the youngest artists ever to have a major solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. There, in a monumental installation titled *Who Is Queen?*, he filled the central atrium with five-story black steel scaffolds supporting black-and-white text-based paintings, large-scale drawings, and video works shown on a massive screen.

He plays with architectural space again in his upcoming exhibition at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, which pioneered the use of white walls as an ostensibly neutral backdrop for modern art in 1938. "I am turning one of the first white cubes in the world into a Black space," he says of the show, titled "Some Wild Kind of Language," on view from October 10 to January 17, 2027. On a model of the exhibition, he points to where, at the top of the grand interior staircase, he will paint the walls black for the first time in the museum's history and insert eight of his gold-and-black "Basis" drawings into the arched niches ringing the space. "If you think about black as a color but also a cultural context, there are also these kinds of slippery questions about gold," Pendleton says. "Is it a color? Is it a value?"

In an adjoining gallery at the Stedelijk, he is presenting paintings featuring fields of color—red, purple, green, or shades of blue—in conversation with black, a big departure from his largely black-and-white palette. "In this room, every painting will be very different, either in terms of palette or scale or the marks that I'm using," he says. "There's nothing automatic about the act of looking in this exhibition."



Pendleton poses beside his 2026 work *Black Dada (L)*, wearing a shirt, pants, and a jacket by Ralph Lauren.

Fans of the artist's work will have multiple opportunities to experience it in the next year. His long-running exhibition, "Love, Queen," remains on view at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., through January 3, 2027. On November 5, Pendleton will be part of "Hard Art," a cross-generational show of more than 40 Black painters at MoMA PS1. "It's this beautiful, articulate brew of artists wrestling with the prospect and elasticity of abstraction," says Pendleton, who will also have concurrent exhibitions at Pace and David Kordansky galleries next fall. Tinkering with the model for his solo museum show at Tai Kwun in Hong Kong, opening in February 2027, he is, he says, still deciding which video portrait to project in a dramatic triangular space he constructed and painted black.

Born and raised in Richmond, Virginia, Pendleton became serious about painting as a young teenager, when he would travel to New York to visit museums and galleries. He finished high school early and, at 16, went to art school in Tuscany, Italy, for two years before moving to New York to be an artist. He remembers seeing formative exhibitions of Sol LeWitt, Barbara Kruger, and Joan Mitchell at the Whitney Museum of American Art during those years.

"One could argue my work is a kind of mash-up of LeWitt, Kruger, Mitchell," he says of their respective conceptual, word-based, and Abstract Expressionist approaches. He also recalls being floored by a Richard Serra exhibition. "It's like being on Mars the first time you encounter something like that," he says. "Art allows us the greatest opportunity for life not to be ordinary but to be extraordinary in really tangible and poetic ways."

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