



11-22 44th Rd
Long Island City, NY
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ANTHONY OLUBUNMI AKINBOLA | *by Fire by Force*

January 31 – March 7, 2021

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

– Ephesians 6:12

FALSE FLAG is pleased to present the first solo gallery exhibition of Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola, *by Fire by Force*.

A first-generation American raised between Missouri and Nigeria, Akinbola straddles the cultures of Africa and the West, investigating their histories, superstitions, and stereotypes. His debut presentation confronts these structures of belief - prompting re-examination of religious and secular forms of faith through imaginative subversions of material.

Akinbola’s most recent series of all-black durag paintings grow in scale and complexity from the gallery’s entrance to the furthest wall. Titled after Yoruba orishas - mediators between the human and the mystical - these mesmeric paintings are uncannily captivating.

The installation *Play to Win* offers a striking visual contrast at the first corner: a day-glo billboard depicts Jesus emerging from the gates of Heaven amid a shower of lottery tickets and cash. Walking a path made of golden bricks flanked by Rolls Royces, he offers riches to a lucky winner. Accompanying the billboard is a locker cabinet with twelve compartments. Visitors are given a single chance to leave with one of the “prizes” placed inside, should they have the faith to play.

Encompassing a remarkable aesthetic and technical range, the exhibition tackles the fetishization of objects within religious, ritualistic, and socially intimidating systems. Akinbola’s stated aim is to “liberate these objects from the narratives that oppress them. I see the show as offering deliverance from ideologies: religion, capitalism, even art itself.”

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Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola (b. 1991, Columbia, Missouri) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Solo institutional presentations include The John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI (2021), The Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY (2020), and The Queens Museum, Queens, NY (2018). His work has featured in group exhibitions at The University Art Museum, Albany, NY (2021), The Zuckerman Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA (2020), and the MoCADA Museum, New York, NY (2019). Akinbola was selected for the Anderson Ranch Art Center Residency in 2017, was awarded the Van Lier Fellowship in 2019, and will be an artist-in-residence at Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, Austria in 2021.

