

# FALSE FLAG

## || Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola ||

Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola (b. 1991, Columbia, MS) reimagines the construction of identity through startling original treatments of color, texture, and media. A first-generation American raised between Missouri and Nigeria, Akinbola's self-developed techniques explore the possibilities of totemic materials such palm oil, hair brushes, and durags—fiber scarves used in the maintenance of Black hair. Characterizing his works as “metaphors for what a first-generation existence might look like,” Akinbola forgoes conventional approaches to painting and sculpture, unpacking the rituals and histories separating Africa from Black America. His multifaceted compositions celebrate and reconcile diverse cultural narratives, creating multilayered works of art that engage consumption, respectability, and the commodification of Black culture.

Throughout Akinbola's process he has used durags as a primary material in ongoing investigations of the Color Field and Action Painting movements. Each successive series of paintings takes up its own line of inquiry, exploring the possibilities of his medium through attention to color, fabric, drapery, and composition. Rather than negating the cultural connotations of the durag altogether, these works invite the viewer to both engage and detach preconceptions at will, illuminating how changing contexts create newfound activations of the familiar.

Akinbola creates an oppositional aesthetic by stitching durags together in his mural-sized monuments celebrating and mourning Black life. The literal process of stitching in his work again recalls the process of quilting. The innumerable durags, specifically associated with Black hair and identity, come together as a community, spilling into the viewer's space.

The migration and transformation of materials and cultures - questioning in particular a dichotomy between Africa and Black America - can be found in Akinbola's paintings, which allude to camouflage not only in title but also in material: durags, used to maintain and compress Black hair, can be understood as tools of assimilation, though stretched across the canvas they are themselves rendered nearly unrecognizable.

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**Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola** has featured exhibitions at The Queens Museum, New York, NY; The Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY; The Zuckerman Museum of Art, Kennesaw, GA; Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Pace Gallery, New York, NY; and The Verbeke Foundation, Belgium, among others. He was selected for the Anderson Ranch Art Center Residency, was awarded the MAD Artist Fellowship, and was an artist in residence at Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna in 2021. Akinbola mounted a significant solo exhibition in early 2021 at the Kohler Arts Center, WI, and his first ever solo gallery presentation - *by Fire by Force* - at FALSE FLAG in New York, NY. He lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

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## ANTHONY OLUBUNMI AKINBOLA

Born 1991, Columbia, Missouri. Lives and works in New York, NY.

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *by Fire by Force*, FALSE FLAG, New York, NY  
*Market*, Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Magic City*, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI  
*Thanks a Million*, Carbon12, Dubai, UAE  
*Schottenfeld Atelier*, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna
- 2020 *Local Import*, Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY  
*NADA Miami 2020*, presented by FALSE FLAG, Miami, FL
- 2018 *CAMOUFLAGE*, Queens Museum, New York, NY

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *The New Bend*, Curated by Legacy Rustle, Hauser & Wirth, New York, NY
- 2021 *Convergent Evolutions*, Pace Gallery, New York, NY  
*What It's All About*, Jenkins-Johnson Gallery, New York, NY  
*Idealistic*, Curated by Mike Moseby, University Art Museum, Albany, NY
- 2020 *UNBOUND*, Zuckerman Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
- 2019 *Styles of Resistance*, MoCADA Museum, New York, NY  
*19191919*, New Image Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018 *Crossworks*, Dordyart, Dordrecht, Netherlands  
*Same Difference*, Miranda Kuo Gallery, New York, NY

### FELLOWSHIPS & RESIDENCIES

- 2021 Galerie Krinzinger Residency, Vienna, Austria
- 2019 MAD Artist Fellow, Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY
- 2018 Verbeke Foundation Residency, Kemzeke, Belgium  
Dordtyart Crossworks Residency, Dordrecht, Netherlands
- 2017 Anderson Ranch Art Center Residency, Snowmass, CO