

FALSE FLAG

NADA Miami
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newartdealers.org

|| Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola ||

FALSE FLAG is pleased to present new work by Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola for NADA Miami 2021. Three large, all-black, durag paintings anchor each wall: two 72” x 72” works and one measuring 72” x 108”. A taxidermied lamb and rooster accompany the wall works at center. The fourth wall features a participatory installation: a bank of lockers with sixty compartments filled with ritualistically charged objects selected by the artist. Visitors are given a single chance to leave with one of the totemic “prizes” placed inside, should they have the faith to play. Participants are left in an intermediary space between transaction and transcendence.

The exclusive use of black durags in the paintings on view subtly engages broader issues of perception: the perversion of objects based on a certain kind of gaze (white, western, male, etc.), and the power of perception to assimilate and strip away identity.

Responding to and updating the legacy of the readymade, Akinbola places uncanny sculptural work in dialogue with traditions of abstract painting. Exchanges between the proposed works push their constituent materials away from typical cultural and historical evocations, emphasizing plays of color and texture while highlighting unexpected thematic associations. The deceptively simple works, invigorated by simple but radical acts of alteration, prompt re-examination of religious and secular forms of faith through imaginative subversions of material. Akinbola’s presentation confronts structures of belief - investigating their histories, superstitions, and stereotypes.

In the artist’s words: “While I’m challenging viewers to reconsider their beliefs about Blackness in particular, I also want to offer the opportunity to participate in an exercise of faith I’ve constructed. This includes religious aspects, but also encompasses broader concepts: things we accept day to day that are grounded in myths and superstitions adopted over generations. Will people respond with reverence or scorn? Will they perceive works of art or a ploy? We’ll have to see...”

Akinbola tackles the fetishization of objects within religious, ritualistic, and socially intimidating systems. His stated aim is to “liberate these objects from the narratives that oppress them. I see these works as offering deliverance from ideologies: religion, capitalism, even art itself.”