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Anthony Akinbola

NATURAL BEAUTY

Sean Kelly, New York

September 8 – October 22, 2022

Opening reception: Wednesday, September 7, 6-8pm

Sean Kelly is delighted to announce *Natural Beauty*, a solo-exhibition of new work by Nigerian- American, Brooklyn-based artist Anthony Akinbola. This presentation, occupying the front and lower galleries, includes the artist's signature *Camouflage* paintings, single and multi-panel works that utilize the ubiquitous du-rag as their primary material. Universally available and possessed of significant cultural context, the du-rag represents for Akinbola a readymade object that engages the conceptual strategies of Marcel Duchamp and other significant artistic predecessors. The opening reception will take place on Wednesday, September 7, from 6-8 pm. The artist will be present.

Born in Columbia, Missouri, Anthony Akinbola, is a first-generation American raised by Nigerian parents in the United States and Nigeria. His layered, richly colored compositions celebrate and signify the distinct cultures that shape his identity. In the front gallery, an array of *Camouflage* paintings explore the du-rag as both a material for art-making and as commentary on larger issues of identity, respectability, and commodification of African American culture. The subtle variations in color throughout the works were often subject to supply chain availability. Individual canvasses range

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from subtle variations on a single, subtle tone, to richly contrasting fields of color, evoking artists as varied as Morris Louis and Ad Reinhardt.

In the lower gallery, Akinbola will install a single, multi-panel work positioned in dialogue with a taxidermized goat, an action that both pays homage to Robert Rauschenberg's revolutionary Combine, *Monogram*, 1955-59—which featured a stuffed Angora goat, engulfed in a rubber tire, standing on a painting—and functions for the artist as a conceptual self-portrait. In Nigeria, goats hold a significant place in the culture and are commonly used for their hides, meat and in religious festivals for ritual sacrifice. There is a ubiquitous fetish associated with goats and their totemic significance. Throughout his work Akinbola unpacks the rituals and histories connecting Africa and America, addressing the power of fetishization around cultural objects.

Anthony Akinbola was selected for the Anderson Ranch Art Center Residency in 2017 and created a monumental wall collage for The Queens Museum in 2018. In 2019, Akinbola was awarded the Van Lier Fellowship and named the eighth Museum of Arts and Design Artist Fellow, which resulted in a solo exhibition at the museum. Akinbola will be featured in forthcoming group exhibitions at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts in September 2022 and the Baltimore Museum of Art in March 2023. His work has been featured in exhibitions at The Queens Museum, NY; the Bronx River Art Center, NY; The Zuckerman Museum of Art, GA; and The Verbeke Foundation, Belgium, amongst others. Following his exhibition at the Museum of Art and Design, NY in 2020, Akinbola mounted a significant solo exhibition in early 2021 at the Kohler Arts Center, WI. Akinbola received a BA in communications and media from SUNY Purchase College. His work is included in the Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH, the Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, and The Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY amongst others.

For additional information please visit skny.com

For media inquiries, please email Adair Lentini at Adair@skny.com

For all other inquiries, please email Lauren Kelly at Lauren@skny.com

Image caption: Anthony Akinbola, detail of a Camouflage painting 2022 © Anthony Akinbola Courtesy: Sean Kelly, New York