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PRESS RELEASE

Get Well Soon

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Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola

CARBON 12 is delighted to present *Get Well Soon* an exhibition of new paintings by Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola.

Moving through a long history of botanical and floral painting, in this series Anthony Akinbola places himself in conversation with artists who have approached this genre across centuries. He enters this lineage through the arrangement of his long-explored material, the durag. Durags are stretchable fabrics worn over the head to shape and protect the hair and in Akinbola's practice, they are both culturally loaded objects and a material he can reconfigure.

In *Get Well Soon*, Akinbola assembles durags into compositions that are drawn from the structure of classical floral still lifes. Translating this genre into fabric, seams and folds allows the image to form through construction rather than illusion, while the durag's cultural charge continues to circulate within the work. Painting history, abstraction, and objecthood meet in the same space: petals emerge through stitching, density, and layering, and gravity becomes a quiet collaborator. The flower is not painted; it is built.

Color, too, is not symbolic. Akinbola does not dye the durags, but increasingly produces them in the studio from raw materials, extending his control over palette while keeping the object's form intact. What was once shaped by commercial availability now shifts between the found and the fabricated, while the final juxtapositions remain his decision. The durag moves between what it is outside the studio, Black, American, typified as cultural artifact, and what it becomes through Akinbola's handling: a material that holds the histories of the body and the formal problems of painting at the same time.

Alongside the floral arrangements, Akinbola works through another motif: bricks. Developed from his earlier systems of repeating lines and columns, the brick pattern appears through subtle shifts in alignment, an evolution from abstraction into representation. The brick introduces a different register: a wall, a structure, a longing. It gestures toward the search for something that lasts, and toward the idea of home as legacy; something made to endure and to move from one generation to the next. Across the series, Akinbola moves through questions of permanence and impermanence: the fleeting moment of celebration and grief; the wish to hold onto what cannot be held. The title *Get Well Soon* operates as both a cue and a condition, an everyday phrase that carries hope and uncertainty at once.

Beyond the paintings, two installations pull the exhibition into real time. A bouquet of helium balloons begins the show standing tall, defying gravity, until it no longer can, over the course of the exhibition, the balloons slowly descend, grounded by a perfume bottle, an object that carries autobiographical significance for the artist while also holding an objective truth: perfume evaporates. Nearby, a diffuser releases a fragrance selected by Akinbola, filling the space temporarily, only to dissipate. *Get Well Soon* moves between what disappears and what remains: between the ephemerality of flowers, balloons, and scent; the solidity of brick and structure and the proposition of art as something built against and in time.

-Yasaman Nozari