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## These are the 5 NYC Artists to Know Right Now

By Ann Binlot

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Anthony Akinbola

Historically in Black culture, the durag, a cloth tied around the top of the head, is used as a form of protection — to tame curls and waves after being brushed down, or to encourage growth. Symbolically, the durag means so much more; it's a celebration of Blackness, a fashion statement. For Anthony Akinbola, the durag is his medium of choice.

"I had always been pretty used to durags, but there was something about how the light reflected off the satin that was compelling to me, and I started to appreciate the beauty of durags as an object independent of someone wearing it," explains the artist. "I wanted to see how I could translate that beauty into something new." Akinbola sews countless durags together to create colorful, abstract compositions that are both compelling and mesmerizing.

Akinbola grew up in Columbia, Missouri, surrounded by art thanks to his parents, who ran an arts nonprofit there. "On the weekends when I couldn't stay home by myself, I would follow them there," he recalls. "The studio was always full of art books and

material for me to make use of." It wasn't until Akinbola was older and movements such as Fluxus and Arte Povera showed him the possibility of art that he saw it as a viable career path.

This spring, Akinbola, who is represented by Sean Kelly Gallery in New York and Night Gallery in Los Angeles, will have his second solo show at Night Gallery open from the end of March. He credits New York for kick-starting his career. "There's just so much that goes on here, so many things happening, so many people to meet, so many places to be," says Akinbola. "New York gives me hope, I always feel like tomorrow is another opportunity for anything to happen. The city keeps it fresh and exciting and applies pressure to you where you have to step out of your comfort zone to try and chase your dream."