

Hube Magazine
30 January 2026

Anthony Akinbola on crafting identity through art

By Hube Magazine

<https://hubemag.com/anthony-akinbola-hube-magazine-interview>



Nigerian-American artist [Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola](#) has emerged as an incisive voice in examining the diasporic Black experience within the material world, making profound contributions to contemporary conversations on identity in art. His celebrated Camouflage works repurpose, with reverence, the durag as a medium—large textile-based pieces that carry with them the ever-evolving story of the African American experience. Akinbola has exhibited at leading institutions, including the [Institute of Contemporary Art San Francisco](#), [Schirn Kunsthalle](#), and the [Museum of Arts and Design](#) in New York City, where he currently resides, and his work is featured in major international collections such as the [Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum](#), the [Pizzuti Collection](#), the [Speed Art Museum](#), and the [Ogunquit Museum of American Art](#).

At only thirty-four, Akinbola has already made his mark on the New York art scene through his ability to position contemporary cultural criticism within a larger global context, demonstrating mastery over his craft while suggesting that his most defining work may still lie ahead. Looking forward, he is featured by [Carbon 12 Gallery](#) at [Art Dubai](#) in April 2026, marking an important engagement with the UAE contemporary art scene and signaling the continued global reach of his practice.

Ivona Mirkovic met with the artist in his studio to capture the essence of his process and the nuances of his practice, while hube sat down to discuss the intersections of identity, materiality, and diaspora in his work.

hube: Much of your practice revolves around identity—both personal and collective. How has moving from Missouri to Nigeria and later to Brooklyn reframed the way you locate yourself within a global Black diaspora? How do those geographies inform your sense of belonging, or even the audiences you imagine for your work?

Anthony Akinbola: I think the beauty of the concept of diaspora is that it's not subject to just one physical location or experience. I am a collection of my experiences and it's these experiences that shape my idea of blackness. I hope people can see themselves in my practice, but ultimately I believe what's more important is that they feel inspired to share their stories and contribute to the ever-growing pool that makes up this 'global Black diaspora'. I feel like people don't always appreciate some of the more banal parts of their lives, but it's these things that create new and unique perspectives compared to the more sensationalised stories we tend to hear more often.

h: From a purely technical perspective, what has working with du-rags taught you about surface, tension, and modularity? Do they behave in ways that force you to adapt, and how do those limitations shape the outcome?

AA: Over the years I've learned more and more about the material and have been able to develop different techniques around working with it. I find myself constantly trying to push the limits of the material and what I can do with it, and I spend a lot of my time experimenting in the studio. Most of the time I don't really know what I'm going to get until what I'm working on is finished, but I also think that's the beauty of it; there's an element of spontaneity I like. I don't think I would be as interested if I knew what I was going to get.

h: How do your new flower arrangements mark a shift in your practice, and what excites you about this new direction?

AA: The flower arrangements are a body of work that is still very new. I've made work that has referenced foliage but it was surface level, like the work was green and draped so by nature I would think of trees and leaves just by the way the material draped. What makes these works different is that I'm starting with the intention of participating in the art history of floral/garden scenes. For me these paintings are my offering to what many have done before me and add to the ever-evolving conversation of still life and landscape painting.

This exercises allows me to also push the limits of the material and expand the ways I can use it. For me each du-rag tail is a brush stroke or a mark of color, and it's the accumulation of that mark making that creates a composition. I'm deciding to make a major switch from the works I've made over the past five years to this new style of working. Basically this is a new shift in the work, and I'm not going to be making the work I've been making the past couple years. I've learned what I need to learn from it, and now it's the start of a new journey. I personally feel like each body of work needs a start and finish—all good things must end, and you need to be able to return to the cave and figure out how to make fire again. It's important as an artist to constantly push yourself.

h: What feels truly beautiful to you right now—not just visually, but in energy or feeling?

AA: Wanderlust.