

*The one about the thing under the bridge*  
**Motunrayo Akinola**

13 September - 13 December 2025

**Flatland**

Flatland Projects presents the first institutional solo commission *The one about the thing under the bridge*, by British born Yoruba artist Motunrayo Akinola.

This exhibition brings together a newly commissioned installation drawing on Akinola's ongoing interest in the social and spiritual charge of space, the work forms a contemplative environment shaped by negotiation between structure and collapse, presence and absence, visibility and erasure. The title of the exhibition plays on the familiar phrase water under the bridge, a saying often used to dismiss experience as irrelevant or forgotten. Akinola reclaims this linguistic gesture, offering instead a space for what resists resolution. His practice, rooted in the transformation of everyday materials, speaks to the lives, labours, and systems that are routinely marginalised or made invisible.

At the core of Akinola's installation is a commitment to working with low-value, everyday materials most notably, corrugated cardboard. Ever present and disposable, it is a material often overlooked, yet charged with meaning: used to wrap, protect, conceal, and carry. Here, it is reimagined as architecture, as offering, as residue. The work's formal precariousness, its susceptibility to collapse, weathering, and decay is central to its power. These temporary forms speak not of permanence but of passage: of things held, exchanged, and eventually let go. In embracing a limited lifespan, Akinola invites viewers to consider value not through endurance, but through care, presence, and shared custodianship.

Each of the three sculptural works in the exhibition embodies a distinct mode of care and repair, taped, wet, soiled drawing from the language of wound dressing, convalescence, and survival. These gestures carry a material resonance that mirrors the fragility and resourcefulness embedded in diasporic experience. Rather than offering resolution, the works propose a continuity: a lineage of listening and labour that insists the work of repair is ongoing. Positioned within a postcolonial frame, Akinola's installation challenges the authority of architectural

systems and institutional structures, inserting marginalised experience at the centre. Through these provisional forms, the exhibition calls for a re-tuning of how we read, inhabit, and access space, disrupting the canon not through spectacle, but through a steady, embodied insistence that the conversation is far from over.

Akinola's practice continues to remain globally and communally oriented—driven by a desire for shared understanding across distance. This new commission is accompanied by a sound-based response by artist and composer Amble Skuse, commissioned by RePublic. Rather than a direct interpretation or standalone work, Skuse's piece adds a further dimension to Akinola's installation—an overlay of sound that deepens the encounter. Developed through sustained dialogue, the work approaches access not as an add-on but as an artistic method in itself. Listening becomes a way into the exhibition, shaped by the intersections between Akinola's sculptural world and Skuse's lived experience as a disabled artist. This exchange, grounded in generosity and trust, expands the terrain of the exhibition—holding space for new forms of understanding across difference.

Motunrayo Akinola (b. London, UK, raised Lagos, Nigeria. Lives and works between London and Melbourne, Australia) is an interdisciplinary artist working across installation, sculpture, and sound. His work often explores architecture, migration, spirituality and the politics of space. He has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally and is a recent graduate of the Royal Academy Schools.

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*The one about the thing under the bridge*  
*In Conversation: Motunrayo Akinola & Ben Urban*

**BU:** We might as well dive straight in. Let's speak about your approach to spirituality, how it sits between things in your work. Your practice often hovers between materiality and metaphor, where discarded, displaced, or re-contextualised forms carry emotional and political weight. With that in mind, how do you approach the physicality of your installations as a kind of "grappling" a negotiation of presence, resistance, and control within a given space?

**MA:** A great place to jump in. There's a level of synergy that you want to achieve when placing something within a space, and recently, I've known the spaces I'm going to occupy before making the work. It then becomes this tussle of working out which aspect of my practice can both complement and interrogate the qualities of the space. It's a fight of sorts. The ideas usually start quite maximalist and after rounds of refining, result in a somewhat minimalist presentation.

**BU:** The title *The one about the thing under the bridge* plays on the phrase water under the bridge, often used to dismiss or downplay lived experience. Thinking back to what you said about refining ideas and negotiating presence in space, what do you hope people take away from this new commission? How does the title speak to what's often pushed aside or overlooked?

**MA:** As always with my work, I want to create contemplative spaces which engage the everyday social. Through this commission, I hope the work speaks to conversations about access, histories of coexistence as equals (if at all), and a drive for betterment. Awareness of the space one holds, and equally, subtracts from others is vital.

**BU:** You spoke about the importance of being aware of the space we occupy and what we take away from others. That feels embedded not just in the ideas of the work, but in your materials too. You often use corrugated cardboard something fragile, familiar, and often overlooked. It also carries connotations of care, packaging, and transportation. What draws you to cardboard as a material? And how does its instability, or its role in holding and moving things, help you speak to the kinds of lives, labours, or systems that are routinely marginalised or made invisible?

**MA:** I think because cardboard is so universally familiar, it seems an apt material

to comment on and prompt conversations around topics we are all aware of; race, migration, etc. I am also excited by how easily recycled the works now are; aiming to keep them alive for approximately three years before they perish. The works are birthed and then experience a death - it is for others to preserve.

**BU:** One of the striking things about your practice is its ability to remain rooted in exchange, regardless of geography. From your new base in Melbourne, you've continued to hold space with collaborators across the globe. It feels like your process is less about physical proximity and more about a shared field of ideas, about creating moments of intersection where conversations, spiritual energies, and differing ways of knowing can meet. That openness is echoed in Amble Skuse's sound response to this commission, which reinterprets your work through the lens of disabled experience, offering new resonances through sound and embodied listening. How do you think about collaboration—both with people and with place—as a form of extended practice? And how do you see your work creating room for others to reimagine what it means?

**MA:** Intersectionality and then reaching shared understandings is paramount to the work so having the opportunity to collaborate with Amble Skuse in development of her response has been wholly enriching. I love that my commission and Amble's response are going to exist in the same space, and with the nature of Amble's work, the ideas shared will reach many more ears, with the opportunity to warp perceived hierarchies during the run of the show. In regards to my work, I'm excited by the prospect of collaboration in future projects.

**BU:** What resonates throughout this exchange is the way your work continues to hold space for complexity, for connection and for contradictions of meaning. Whether through material choices, spatial interventions, or collaborations across geographies, your practice refuses finality. It invites dialogue between people as a form of care, and making as a means for conservation of lived experience. I feel that your work insists on a slower, more attentive way of looking. Thank you for sharing so generously here, and for continuing to build a practice that leans into the unfinished.