

Miami Art Museum Brings Rashid Johnson's First Major Solo Exhibition to South Florida

Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks
September 7 - November 4, 2012



Rashid Johnson, *The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club (Emmett)*, 2008. Lambda print. 48 1/2 x 73 in. (123.2 x 185.4 cm). Collection of Elliot and Kimberly Perry, Memphis. Image courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.

MIAMI – August 8, 2012 - This September, Miami Art Museum will present *Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks*, the first major solo exhibition for Johnson, a preeminent artist of his generation. Johnson's practice encompasses photography, sculpture, painting and video and explores diverse questions relating to the self, identity, metaphysics and art, rooted in his individual experience. On view September 7 to November 4, 2012, the exhibition includes more than a decade of Johnson's work with an emphasis on major works from the last five years. An opening celebration and exhibition preview will be held on Thursday, September 6, 2012, 6-9pm.

"Rashid Johnson's unusual vocabulary of materials and innovative mixing of diverse forms and cultural references makes him one of the most vital and interesting artists working today," said Tobias Ostrander, MAM chief curator and deputy director. "Johnson's work has been supported for many years by our collecting community and we are thrilled to present his first museum exhibition in South Florida."

Throughout his work, Johnson evokes shared memories by referencing icons and figures from American and African-American culture. The exhibition fosters a dialogue by inviting viewers' free associations with familiar figures -- such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Sun Ra, Miles Davis, and Public Enemy -- and everyday objects that appear in Johnson's work, including plants, mirrors, rugs, record albums, CB radios, shea butter and books.

Johnson's conceptually loaded and visually compelling works also allude to alchemy and transformation through his materials and play with the significance and symbolism of different media. His work creates a sense of wonder in the unknown and allows the viewers to draw their own meaning from his works. The exhibition also presents examples from ongoing bodies of work such as *Cosmic Slops*, abstract paintings made with melted black soap and wax; *The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club*, portraits of members of a fictional black bourgeois secret society; recent "shelf sculptures" featuring found objects, such as *The Shuttle* (2010) and *Triple Consciousness* (2009); and early photographs made using the nineteenth-century Van Dyke Brown printing process.

Johnson was born in Chicago in 1977 and currently lives in New York. He has a BA in photography from Columbia College and attended graduate school at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work is in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, Whitney Museum of American Art, Seattle Art Museum, Brooklyn Museum of Art, and Detroit Institute of Art. His work has been featured in major group exhibitions including *30 Americans: The Rubell Collection* (2008); *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* at the International Center of Photography (2003); and *Freestyle* at the Studio Museum in Harlem (2001); and in 2011 was featured at the International Pavilion of the 54th Venice Biennale. He is one of the nominees for the Guggenheim's 2012 Hugo Boss Prize, and the winner of the 2012 High Museum's David C. Driskell prize that honors excellence in African-American art and scholarship.

Exhibition Organization and Support

Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and curated by Julie Rodrigues Widholm, MCA Pamela Alper Associate Curator. Lead support for this exhibition is generously provided by The Joyce Foundation and Margot and George Greig.

Additional generous support is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts; Mary Ittelson; The Estate of Edward Anixter; The Efrogmson Family Fund; Jack and Sandra Guthman; David Kordansky Gallery; Hauser & Wirth; Massimo De Carlo/Carlson Gallery, Milan-London; Liz and Eric Lefkowsky; Paul Gray and Dedrea Armour Gray; Marilyn and Larry Fields; Susan D. Bowey; Paul and Linda Gotskind; Lenore and Adam Sender; David Shuman; Dr. Daniel S. Berger; Galerie Guido W. Baudach; Dr. Anita Blanchard and Martin H. Nesbitt; Evan Boris and Monique Meloche; and Lynn and Allen Turner.

Additional support for the presentation at Miami Art Museum is provided by UBS Financial Services Inc. – The Bodner Zubizarreta Group.

Related Programming

Opening Reception for *Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks*

Thursday, September 6, 2012, 6-9pm

Entertainment, Cocktails. Details at events@miamiartmuseum.org or 305.375.1704.

MAM Members free, non-members \$10.

Curator-led tour of *Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks*

Friday, September 7, 2012 at 12:30pm

MAM Associate Curator Diana Nawi will lead a guided tour of *Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks* on the exhibition's opening day! New York-based artist Rashid Johnson's first major solo exhibition explores the complexities and contradictions of black identity in a practice that is rooted in his individual experience. Incorporating commonplace objects from his childhood in a process he describes as "hijacking the domestic," the artist transforms everyday materials such as wood, mirrors, tiles, rugs, CB radios, shea butter and plants into conceptually-loaded and visually-compelling works. Free in conjunction with DDA DWNTWN Art Days.

Second Saturdays are Free for Families: "Curious Collections"

Saturday, September 8, 1-4pm

After examining the art of Rashid Johnson in the galleries, thoughtfully assemble images of ordinary objects into extraordinary arrangements. Create a table-top gallery for your custom collections! At 3pm, enjoy an engaging storybook reading of *SOMETHING TO PUT SOMETHING ON*, an artist favorite by artist Lawrence Weiner. Free and open to the public. Presented by MetLife Foundation. Additional support provided by Miami Salon Group, Inc.

MAM @ Books & Books: Reading Art

Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness by Touré

Monday, September 24, 2012, 6:30-8pm

Join MAM's book club for a discussion of *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness* by Touré with a foreword by Michael Eric Dyson (2011). Touré, a catalog author for the exhibition *Rashid Johnson: Message to our Folks*, on view at MAM September 7 to November 4, 2012, is correspondent for MSNBC, author, contributor to *Time*, *Ebony* and *Rolling Stone* as well as the host of Hip Hop Shop and On the Record. In *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness*, Touré examines the constraints of notions of an authentic Black culture and in doing so interviews and looks at the work of a number of contemporary intellectuals, public figures and artists, amongst them Rashid Johnson. Books & Books, 265 Aragon Avenue, Coral Gables, FL 33134. Free to the public. RSVP required to education@miamiartmuseum.org or 305.375.4073.

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About Miami Art Museum

Miami Art Museum, a modern and contemporary art museum located in downtown Miami, FL, is dedicated to collecting and exhibiting international art of the 20th and 21st centuries with an emphasis on the cultures of the Atlantic Rim—the Americas, Europe and Africa—from which the vast majority of Miami residents hail. Miami Art Museum’s educational programming currently reaches more than 30,000 people every year, with the largest art education program outside the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Miami Art Museum will reopen as Pérez Art Museum Miami in fall of 2013 in downtown Miami’s Museum Park. The new, expanded museum, designed by Herzog & de Meuron, will provide room to showcase growing collections, expanded exhibition space to bring more world-class exhibitions to Miami-Dade County and an educational complex. For more information about Miami Art Museum, visit miamiartmuseum.org or call 305.375.3000.

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