

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

Press Office

TEL 404-733-4437

FAX 404-733-4529

prinfo@woodruffcenter.org

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## HIGH MUSEUM OF ART NAMES ARTIST RASHID JOHNSON AS 2012 RECIPIENT OF THE DAVID C. DRISKELL PRIZE

*Honoring Excellence in African American Art and Scholarship,  
the Driskell Prize will be Awarded on May 5, 2012, in Atlanta*

ATLANTA, February 23, 2012 – The High Museum of Art has named artist Rashid Johnson as the 2012 recipient of the David C. Driskell Prize. Named after the renowned African American artist and art scholar, the Driskell Prize is an annual award that recognizes a scholar or artist in the beginning or middle of his or her career whose work makes an original and important contribution to the field of African American art or art history. Based in New York, Johnson works in a variety of media, including photography, sculpture, painting, drawing and printmaking. As the eighth Driskell Prize recipient, Johnson will be honored at the Driskell Prize Dinner in Atlanta on Saturday, May 5, 2012.



“Rashid Johnson is a visual artist fully incorporating every available resource to create works relevant to both the past and the present,” said Michael E. Shapiro, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., Director of the High. “His ability to draw upon materials and visual sources that stand alone formally but have strong ties to the African Diaspora and highlight African culture through his imaginative and distinctive art exemplifies the qualities of a David C. Driskell Prize recipient. We are pleased to support his vision and development through this award.”

In April of this year, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago will present Rashid Johnson’s first major museum solo exhibition. Johnson will explore the complexities of black identity by creating a dialogue with legacies of black intellectual and popular figures through a process and materials-based practice of photographs, sculptures, videos, installations and paintings that are rooted in his own identity as an African American. The shifting nature of identity and one’s agency in that shift are at the root of his work, which deconstructs a false notion of a monolithic African American identity by bringing education and class differences into the discussion.

A preeminent artist of the post-media generation, Johnson skillfully oscillates among several different media depending upon conceptual needs of the work. Johnson’s specific materials allude to alchemy, transformation and magic to undermine any sense of concrete understanding in favor of prompting a sense of wonder in the unknown, yet stem from the familiar and commonplace. His sculptures, photographs and installations evoke an otherworldly idea, often incorporating found objects, plants, books, vinyl records, photographs, vessels and Shea butter for their personal and universal connotations.

Rashid Johnson received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Columbia College of Chicago in 2000 and attended the Art Institute of Chicago from 2004 to 2005 before moving to New York. In 2011 Johnson was named as one of the six finalists for the The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation’s 2012 Hugo Boss

## **HIGH MUSEUM OF ART/ 2012 David C. Driskell Prize Winner Rashid Johnson**

Prize. Over the last ten years, Johnson's participation in numerous solo and group exhibitions has been met with critical success. Originally from Chicago, he currently lives and works in New York City.

The selection process for the 2012 recipient of the Driskell Prize began with a call for nominations from a national pool of artists, curators, teachers, collectors and art historians. The final winner was chosen from these nominations by review committee members Dr. Richard Powell, Duke University; Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art; and Michael Rooks, Wieland Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, High Museum of Art.

### **David C. Driskell Prize**

Established by the High in 2005, the David C. Driskell Prize is the first national award to honor and celebrate contributions to the field of African American art and art history. Past recipients include scholar Valerie Cassel Oliver (2011), artist Renee Stout (2010), Krista A. Thompson (2009), artist Xaviera Simmons (2008), curator Franklin Sirmans (2007), artist Willie Cole (2006) and Kellie Jones (2005). A cash award of \$25,000 accompanies the prize. Proceeds from the High's annual Driskell Prize Dinner go toward both the David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisitions Fund and the David C. Driskell African American Art Endowment. Through the David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisitions Fund, the High has acquired works by artists such as Radcliffe Bailey, Nick Cave, Willie Cole, John T. Scott and Renee Stout.

### **David C. Driskell**

David Driskell is a practicing artist and scholar whose work on the African Diaspora spans more than four decades. The High's relationship with Driskell began in 2000, when the Museum presented the concurrent exhibitions "To Conserve a Legacy" and "Narratives of African American Art and Identity: The David C. Driskell Collection," which examined African American art in the broad historical context of modern and contemporary art. Born in 1931 in Eatonton, Georgia, Driskell is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland, College Park. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Howard University in 1955 and his Master of Fine Arts degree from Catholic University in 1962. He also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine in 1953 and studied art history in The Hague, the Netherlands, in 1964. More information about Driskell is available at [www.driskellcenter.umd.edu](http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu).

### **High Museum of Art**

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 12,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High's media arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005, the High opened three new buildings by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum's size, creating a vibrant "village for the arts" at the Woodruff Arts Center in midtown Atlanta. For more information about the High, please visit [www.High.org](http://www.High.org).

### **The Woodruff Arts Center**

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Young Audiences. To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit [www.woodruffcenter.org](http://www.woodruffcenter.org).

**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART/ 2012 David C. Driskell Prize Winner Rashid Johnson**

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**Media contacts:**

Nicole J. Taylor

Assistant Manager of Public Relations  
Tel: 404-733-4585/Fax: 404-733-4529  
E-mail: [nicole.taylor@woodruffcenter.org](mailto:nicole.taylor@woodruffcenter.org)