



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

High to Host “Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks” Exhibition

ATLANTA, April 2, 2013 – The [High Museum of Art](#) will present the exhibition *Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks* surveying the first 14 years of the Chicago-born artist’s career. The exhibition opens June 8 and will continue through Sept. 8, 2013.

With dozens of works in a range of media – including painting, photography, video and sculpture – Johnson’s first major solo museum exhibition comes to the High from the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where it debuted from April to August 2012 and hosted more than 95,900 visitors. The exhibition explores the artist’s own personal and cultural history, while humorously sharing a metaphysical journey as he contemplates the creation of the universe, art and the self.

In many of Johnson’s pieces, he references musicians and cultural icons including jazz legend Miles Davis, rap group Public Enemy and experimental artist Sun Ra, writings by Civil Rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois, and symbols of the African-American intellectual fraternity Sigma Pi Phi as a method to understand his own role as an artist. By bringing attention to individuality, Johnson attempts to deconstruct false notions of a monolithic Black American identity. The title “Message to Our Folks” is borrowed from an Art Ensemble of Chicago album from 1969.

Through a process he named “hijacking the domestic,” Johnson transforms everyday objects from his childhood – such as books, shea butter, black soap, CB radios, record albums and food – into works that challenge thinking about the Black American experience. With a practice grounded in modern and contemporary art, Johnson’s work gives voice to an Afro-futurist narrative that combines history, science fiction, magical realism and non-Western theories on the origins of the universe to explore the shifting nature of identity and the individual’s role in that shift.

The exhibition is organized by Julie Rodrigues Widholm, the Pamela J. Alper associate curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and managed in Atlanta by Lily Siegel, the High’s assistant curator of modern and contemporary art. A fully-illustrated catalog was published for the exhibition.

“It’s an honor to collaborate with Rashid and Julie on this exhibition, and I look forward to the conversations and excitement that the work promises to generate,” said Siegel. “Rashid Johnson is one of the most thoughtful artists working today, and the exhibition will be engaging for High Museum of Art members and visitors.”

About Rashid Johnson

Born in 1977 in Chicago, Johnson grew up in the Wicker Park neighborhood and suburban Evanston, Ill. He earned a bachelor's degree in photography from Chicago's Columbia College, and a master's degree of fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work has been exhibited around the world and is in the collections of many of the world's leading art museums. Johnson was the winner of the 2012 David C. Driskell Prize at the High. He currently lives in Manhattan.

About the High Museum of Art

Founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, the High Museum of Art is the leading art museum in the Southeastern U.S. With more than 13,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-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 first major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. 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 visit www.High.org.

About 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 visit www.WoodruffCenter.org.

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For more information, please contact:

Kristen Heflin
Manager of Public Relations
kristen.heflin@woodruffcenter.org
404-733-4423

Marci Tate
Public Relations Specialist
marci.tate@woodruffcenter.org
404-733-4585