

---

Press Release

---

## Guggenheim New York Presents *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers*

Traveling large-scale, mid-career survey spans the museum's rotunda and features dynamic live performance programming in collaboration with community partners four days a week for the duration of the exhibition

Special preview with extended hours on April 17 offers the public an opportunity to experience the exhibition before the official opening

**Exhibition:** *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers*  
**Venue:** Guggenheim New York, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York  
**Location:** Rotunda  
**Dates:** April 18, 2025–January 18, 2026, with a public preview on April 17 from 12–8 pm

(NEW YORK, NY—April 16, 2025) The Guggenheim New York presents a major solo exhibition of work by **Rashid Johnson**, opening April 18, 2025, and remaining on view through January 18, 2026. Encompassing the entirety of the museum's rotunda, **the show is Johnson's first solo presentation at the Guggenheim, his largest exhibition to date, and the first expansive museum survey of his work in over a decade.** *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers* brings together more than ninety artworks, including an outdoor sculpture and new pieces made specifically for the exhibition—two of which will be activated through ongoing performances.

The survey spans pivotal phases of Johnson's career, including notable series such as *The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club*, *Cosmic Slops*, black-soap shelf paintings, spray-painted text works, the more recent *Anxious Men* and *Broken Men* series, and large-scale indoor and outdoor sculptures. The exhibition offers a loose chronology of Johnson's artistic evolution across nearly three decades, traversing cycles of social alienation, self-examination, and artistic freedom. Beginning with his early explorations in photography, video, and installations, and extending to his recent ventures into materially hybrid paintings and assemblages, Johnson brings nuance to exploring the human psyche amid the profound historical influences of our time, all while reflecting on themes of masculinity, parenthood, and care for self and others.

Explains Johnson, "This exhibition continues the conversation I've always been invested in: one that allows for freedom of expression and an awareness of artistic possibilities. I've always embraced the fluidity between mediums. For me, medium specificity has never been the goal—it's about how the project can move freely between different forms, creating space for a broader conversation that goes beyond the limitations of any one medium."

### Exhibition Highlights

As visitors approach the museum, they are met by Johnson's outdoor sculpture, *Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos* (2008), a large steel sculpture with graphic design-inspired trim lines and gun-scope references that brings forth Jasper Johns's target works. Directly influenced by hip-hop pioneer Public Enemy, the piece invites the viewer to question who is in control. Inside the museum, **the rotunda floor features *Untitled* (2025), a new mosaic work made especially for the Guggenheim exhibition, along with *Rotunda Stage* (2025), an interactive space for performances.** As visitors proceed up the first ramp, they are greeted by Johnson's photograph *Self-Portrait Laying on Jack Johnson's Grave* (2006), an early work that explores cultural lineages, connecting the artist's last name and Chicago roots (where the grave site is located)

with the first Black heavyweight boxer whose victory over a white fighter in 1910 triggered race riots.

The Guggenheim's High Gallery features a miniature survey of Johnson's career, showing a range of early and recent pieces, including sculptures, paintings, a mosaic, and a spray-painted text work.

On Rotunda Levels 1 and 2, visitors have the opportunity to learn about Johnson's emergence on the art scene, beginning with a series of photographs he took in his early twenties that helped launch his career when he became the youngest artist featured in Thelma Golden's seminal 2001 exhibition *Freestyle* at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Viewers also encounter Johnson's early work in sculpture, installation, text, and video, which remains an abiding medium for the artist. Progressing through the exhibition, museumgoers will discover more of Johnson's mixed media pieces. Rotunda Levels 3 and 4 continue an exploration of video works including *Black Yoga* (2010) and *The New Black Yoga* (2011). This segment also introduces Johnson's breakthrough *Cosmic Slop* painting series (2008), made of black soap and wax, underscoring Johnson's investment in materials as cultural signifiers.

Rotunda Level 5 showcases Johnson's sculptures, such as his *Untitled Bust* series composed of heavily worked glazed stoneware. This ramp also contains mosaics and collages, as well as later paintings such as *Anxious Red Painting "August 18th"* (2020).

At the top of the museum, Rotunda Level 6 features the monumental installation *Sanguine*, a large, gridded steel structure consisting of plants, books, and a piano that supports a series of cascading plants that seem to float in mid-air. In dialogue with the performance and public-engagement program, *Sanguine's* piano will be activated every Friday and Sunday. Toward the end of this ramp is a monitor presenting Johnson's most recent films, including a 2024 film also called *Sanguine*, which focus on relationship with the maternal and paternal sides of his family. Closing the exhibition is a never-before-seen 2025 painting hung in a contemplative area where viewers are encouraged to engage with the art in self-directed reflection.

### Organization

The exhibition is cocurated by **Naomi Beckwith**, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, New York, and **Andrea Karnes**, Interim Director and Chief Curator of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, with additional support from **Faith Hunter**, Curatorial Assistant, Guggenheim New York.

Says Beckwith, "The Guggenheim could not be more thrilled to host this timely exhibition. Rashid Johnson is a master at synthesizing the key tendencies of twenty-first century art: the ability to move freely between different modes—painting, video, sculpture, performance—each a refined tool for forging a relationship between his own life history and art history. Above all, Johnson well understands that the vocation of the artist entails more than looking inwardly, it is also an opportunity to create, quite literally, platforms for the creative expression and self-care of others."

The exhibition's title, ***A Poem for Deep Thinkers***, takes its name from a poem by Amiri Baraka, an American poet, writer, teacher, and political activist whose work is a frequent source of inspiration for Johnson.

### Programming

*A Poem for Deep Thinkers* will be accompanied by a performance and public-engagement program that takes place every Friday through Monday for the nine-month run of the exhibition. Developed in collaboration with existing and new community partners, the program will highlight spoken word, music, and live arts. Many events will animate the two works that bookend the exhibition—*Rotunda Stage* and *Sanguine*—bringing the installation to life as a place for programmed creative expressions. **Cultural partners include the Academy of American Poets; Asian American Writers' Workshop; Traci Brimhall, the 2025 Guggenheim Poet-in-Residence; Cave Canem; DreamYard; Wayne Escoffery; Harlem School of the Arts; Urban Word NYC; and the Teachers & Writers Collaborative**, among others.

Live performances will be scheduled Friday through Monday. **The *Sanguine* piano will be activated every Friday at 4 pm and Sunday at 1 pm. Performances will also take place on the Rotunda Stage every Saturday at 1 pm and Monday at 4 pm.** In May, **Teachers & Writers Collaborative** will program *Rotunda Stage* with readings by Diamond Arrindell, Trace DePass, Joshua Garcia, Alba Hernandez, Dave Johnson, Libby Mislán, Nkosi Nkululeko, Stephanie Pacheco, DS Waldman, and Donnie Welch, among others. **Grammy Award-winning jazz**

**musician Wayne Escoffery** will curate musical performances of *Sanguine* throughout May, featuring musicians such as ELEW, Lawrence Fields, Mike King, and Miki Yamanaka. Escoffery will also perform and lead the Wayne Escoffery Quartet, with Orrin Evans, Ugonna Okegwo, and Mark Whitfield Jr., in a concert on *Rotunda Stage* as part of *Late Shift* on May 15. **Arts and social justice organization DreamYard** will organize performances by Bronx poets and students throughout the month of June, including a special series of readings by the Rad(ical) Poetry Consortium fellows on June 19 at *Late Shift*. Throughout the exhibition run, students from **Harlem School of the Arts** and youth poets and slam poets from **Urban Word NYC** will punctuate the performance calendar with musical performances and readings.

On select Tuesdays, the museum will host **GuggTeens Tuesdays**, a monthly program where teens can expand their art-making skills and connect with other teen artists. **On May 2, the museum will hold GuggTeens Fest in conjunction with the GuggTeens Collaborative**, an initiative that features local students working closely with staff to create a better museum experience. The fest will provide an open space for art making, gallery exploration, performances by teen poets and writers, and community building for teen artists and art enthusiasts. Beyond this, Guggenheim New York will be launching the **Teen Circle**, a free membership program for teens ages 13–18 designed to connect NYC teens with art and foster a creative, cultural community at the Guggenheim.

Additional public programs will include hour-long art and architecture tours led by expert guides during the first week of the exhibition (April 19–27); **a conversation between Rashid Johnson and exhibition curator Naomi Beckwith on Wednesday, April 23**; and monthly extended museum hours with performances and refreshments during the *Late Shift* series, held on the third Thursday of each month from May through December.

More performers and events to be announced; **please visit [guggenheim.org/calendar](https://guggenheim.org/calendar) for additional information**. Event details are subject to change.

### Publication

The Guggenheim has published an exhibition catalogue in late April 2025, designed by Kimberly Varela of Content Object Studios and including an interview with artist Odili Donald Odita; an exploration of moving-image artworks by Kevin Quashie; an analysis of the affective and emotional landscapes of contemporary artists by Nana Adusei-Poku; reflections on transgression by Tiona Nekkia McClodden; contemplations on Johnson's recent God paintings by Hendrik Folkerts; and essays by curators Naomi Beckwith and Andrea Karnes.

### Travel

The exhibition will travel to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth from March 8 through October 4, 2026, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago from November 7, 2026, through April 25, 2027.

### About the Artist

Born in Chicago in 1977, Rashid Johnson earned a BA in Photography from Columbia College in Chicago, followed by graduate studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he honed his multidisciplinary practice. Johnson has a long history with the Guggenheim New York as an exhibiting artist (shown, most recently, in *By Way Of: Material and Motion in the Guggenheim Collection* in 2024 and *Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim* in 2015); as a supporter and funder of the museum's internship program; and as a former member of the museum's Board of Trustees. He is included in the Guggenheim collection with four artworks, ranging from sculptural painting to film and video. His work has been exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Institute of Contemporary Photography, New York; the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

For nearly three decades, Johnson has cultivated a diverse body of work, drawing upon art history, philosophy, literature, and music as conceptual frameworks. Through this multidisciplinary approach, Johnson has developed a distinct visual language that engages with the central themes, questions, and aesthetics of the contemporary era, such as race and masculinity, and the conditions of artmaking when conventions around medium and meaning have been upended. The exhibition situates Johnson within interconnected spheres: as a discerning scholar of art history; as a mediator of Black popular culture and its widespread commodification; and as a creative citizen engaged with the vast global circulation of contemporary art.

## Support

Lead support for *Rashid Johnson, A Poem for Deep Thinkers* is provided by Ford Foundation.

Visionary support is provided by Hilarie and Mitchell Morgan, Edlis-Neeson Foundation, and Daniel Xu and Flora Huang.

Major support is provided by Neuberger Berman.

The Leadership Committee for this exhibition is gratefully acknowledged for its generosity, with special thanks to Hauser & Wirth, David Kordansky Gallery, Madeleine Arison, Heather and Felix Baker, Justin Bayless, Marie-Josée Coutu, Nancy and Steve Crown, Natasha and François-Xavier de Mallmann, The George Economou Collection, Anton J. Levy, Jennifer and Alec Litowitz, and David Shuman.

Additional leadership funding is provided by Candace and Michael Barasch, Allison and Larry Berg, Mahshid and Jamshid Ehsani, Alex and Greg Mondre, Dr. Daniel S. Berger Charitable Giving Fund, Tiqui Atencio Demirdjian and Ago Demirdjian, Nicola Erni Collection, Katherine Farley and Jerry I. Speyer, The Forman Family Collection, Paul and Dedrea Gray, John and Amy Griffin Foundation, Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia, Kathy and Mitchell Jacobson, Judelson Family Foundation, LaVon Kellner and Tom Roush, Amanda Precourt, Gary Steele and Steven Rice, George Wells and Manfred Rantner, Debi and Steven Wisch, Marilyn and Larry Fields, Bernard I. Lumpkin and Carmine D. Boccuzzi, Jessica and Brian Robinson, Carol and Lawrence Saper, Ann and Mel Schaffer, The Sherman Family Foundation, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Support is also generously provided by The Kate Cassidy Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, and The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the Guggenheim New York's 2024 International Director's Council.

Yamaha Piano provided by Yamaha Artist Services New York.

### **About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation**

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937 and is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The international constellation of museums includes the Guggenheim New York, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the Guggenheim Bilbao, and the future Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. A "temple of spirit" where radical art and architecture meet, the Guggenheim New York is among a group of eight Frank Lloyd Wright structures in the United States designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. To learn more about the Guggenheim New York and the Guggenheim's activities around the world, visit [guggenheim.org](https://www.guggenheim.org).

@Guggenheim  
#RashidJohnsonGuggenheim  
#PoemForDeepThinkers  
#LiveAtTheRotunda

April 16, 2025

### **For additional information:**

Guggenheim Press Office  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation  
[pressoffice@guggenheim.org](mailto:pressoffice@guggenheim.org)  
212 423 3838

### **Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

#### **Exterior**

Rashid Johnson

*Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos*, 2008

Steel

136.5 x 126 x 24 inches (346.71 x 320.04 x 60.96 cm), A.P. 2/2, edition of 3

Courtesy the artist

X.2025.1



#### **Rotunda Floor**

Rashid Johnson

*Rotunda Stage*, 2025

Powder coated steel

185.4 x 420.6 x 27 inches (470.9 x 1068.3 x 68.6 cm)

Courtesy the artist

X.2025.90



Rashid Johnson

*Three Broken Souls*, 2025

Ceramic tile, mirror, branded red oak flooring, spray enamel, oil stick, black soap, wax, bronze, oyster shells, and wood panel

120 x 240 inches (304.8 x 609.6 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.142



#### **Ramp 1, Bay 14**

Rashid Johnson

*Self Portrait laying on Jack Johnson's Grave*, 2006

Chromogenic print mounted on panel

40.5 x 49.62 inches (102.87 x 126.03 cm), edition 1/3, 2 A.P.

Collection of Dr. Daniel S. Berger

X.2025.43



#### **High Gallery**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**High Gallery**

Rashid Johnson

*Fire Pit "High Life"*, 2022

Bronze

39.37 x 98.37 x 47.25 inches (110 cm x 249.86 x 120.02 cm), edition  
2/3Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Gift of Lisa Watson and Mike Krupka  
X.2025.6

Rashid Johnson

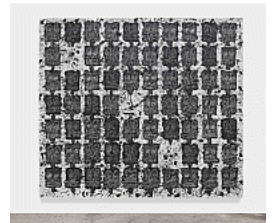
*Untitled Anxious Audience*, 2019

Ceramic tile, black soap, and wax

159 x 180 x 3 inches (403.9 x 457.2 x 7.6 cm)

Collection of Clara Wu Tsai

X.2025.50



Rashid Johnson

*Death is Golden*, 2004

Spray enamel on paper

42 x 68 inches (106.68 x 172.72 cm)

Dr. Cheryl Johnson-Odim

X.2025.62



Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Totem*, 2021

Cast bronze and plants

80 x 37 x 36 inches (203.2 x 94 x 91.4 cm)

Private collection

X.2025.124



Rashid Johnson

*Soul Painting "Six Souls"*, 2024

Oil on linen

96 x 108 x 1.68 inches (243.8 x 274.3 x 4.3 cm)

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

X.2025.127

**Ramp 1, Bay 12**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 1, Bay 12**

Rashid Johnson

*Jonathan's Hands*, 1998

Van Dyke brown print

22.75 x 23.75 inches (57.79, 60.33 cm)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Purchased with funds provided by John A.

Bross

X.2025.20



Rashid Johnson

*Michael*, 1998

Van Dyke brown print

23.75 x 18.87 inches (60.33 x 47.93 cm)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Purchased with funds provided by Mrs.

Myron Goldsmith

X.2025.21

**Ramp 1, Bay 11**

Rashid Johnson

*Manumission Papers (In Circles)*, 2001

Van Dyke brown print

80 x 50 inches (203.2 x 127 cm)

Courtesy N'Namdi Collection

X.2025.131

**Ramp 2, Bay 28**

Rashid Johnson

*Self-Portrait With My Hair Parted Like Frederick Douglass*, 2003

Chromogenic print

57.25 x 45.18 x 1.25 inches (145.4 x 114.8 x 3.8 cm)

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Gift of the Susan and Lewis

Manilow Collection of Chicago Artists

X.2025.16



Rashid Johnson

*Our House*, 2001

Van Dyke brown print

52 x 46 7/8 inches (132 x 119 cm)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Dedrea and Paul Gray

X.2025.103

**Ramp 2, Bay 27**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 2, Bay 27**

Rashid Johnson

*Stay Black and Die (from the series "Things I need to do")*, 2005

Spray enamel on felt

77 × 91 1/2 inches (195.6 × 232.4 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Gift, Rennie Collection, 2024

2024.61



Rashid Johnson

*United Boogie Down Baptist B-Boy Beathouse Crew*, 2001

Color video with sound

3 min., edition 3/3

Collection Avelino Marin, Murcia, Spain

X.2025.69

**Ramp 2, Bay 26**

Rashid Johnson

*Contemporary Black Male Literature Starter Kit*, 2003 to present

Books, plastic wrap, and wood pallet

28 × 40 × 48 inches (71.1 × 101.6 × 121.9 cm)

Dr. Cheryl Johnson-Odim

X.2025.41



Rashid Johnson

*The Reader*, 2008

Chromogenic print

28.75 x 40 inches (73.03 x 101.6 cm), edition 2/5

Dr. Kenneth Montague, The Wedge Collection, Toronto

X.2025.68

**Ramp 2, Bay 25**

Rashid Johnson

*The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club (Thurgood)*, 2008

Chromogenic print

64 × 51 inches (162.6 × 129.6 cm), edition 2/5, 2 A.P.

Rubell Museum, Miami and Washington, DC

X.2025.11

**Ramp 2, Bay 24**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 2, Bay 24**

Rashid Johnson

*bLAX*, 2005

Steel and stained wood

29 x 9.5 x 1.5 inches (73.66 x 24.13 x 3.81 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.40



Rashid Johnson

*Signed Angela Davis "Civil Rights All stars" Throwback Dashiki Jersey*, 2003

Embroidered cloth shirt with ink signature mounted on fabric, Plexiglass, and wood display case

37 3/8 x 61 1/2 inches (94.9 x 156.2 cm)

The Blanchard Nesbitt Family Collection

X.2025.64

**Ramp 2, Bay 23 (High Gallery Overlook)**

Rashid Johnson

*Homage to Chinua Achebe IV (Fela Kuti "Zombie")*, 2004

Acrylic on wood and metal with audio CD

18 x 30 x 37 inches (45.72 x 76.2 x 93.98 cm)

The Speyer Family Collection, New York

X.2025.63

**Ramp 2, Bay 22**

Rashid Johnson

*The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club (Emmett)*, 2008

Chromogenic print

48.5 x 73 inches (123.2 x 185.4 cm), A.P. 2/2, edition of 5 (exhibition print 2025)

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Funds from Ryan E. Lee and Lee Group Holdings (LGH), Heather and Jim Johnson Fund, Kend Family Fund, and Peter Edwards and Rose Gutfeld Fund

X.2025.15

**Ramp 2, Bay 21**

Rashid Johnson

*Me, Tavis Smiley and Shea Butter*, 2004

Color video with sound

1 min., 57 sec., edition 1/3

Collection Avelino Marin, Murcia, Spain

X.2025.65



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 2, Bay 21**

Rashid Johnson

*Soul Painting "Birthday Boys", 2024*

Oil on linen

60 x 72 x 1.68 inches (152.4 x 182.9 x 4.3 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.125

**Ramp 3**

Rashid Johnson

*Run, 2008*

Spray enamel on mirror

53 x 65 inches (134.62 x 165.1 cm)

Nancy Delman Portnoy Revocable Trust

X.2025.60

**Ramp 3, Bay 39**

Rashid Johnson

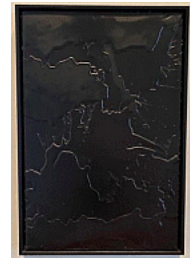
*Cosmic Slop (18), 2008*

Black soap, wax, and wood panel

36 x 24 inches (91.4 x 61 cm)

Collection of Paul Gray, Chicago

X.2025.89



Rashid Johnson

*Cosmic Slop 7, 2008*

Black soap, wax, and wood panel

30 x 22 inches (76.2 x 55.8 cm)

Collection of Reinaldo Leandro

X.2025.99



Rashid Johnson

*Cosmic Slop 14, 2008*

Black soap, wax, and wood panel

22 x 20 inches (55.8 x 50.8 cm)

Courtesy Boyd Family Collection

X.2025.122

**Ramp 3, Bay 38**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 3, Bay 38**

Rashid Johnson

*Wake Up Sellout*, 2011

Mirror, black soap, wax, vinyl record, album cover, books, shea butter, space rock, and wood panel

54.02 x 81.02 x 11.61 inches (137.21 x 205.79 x 29.49 cm)

Shuman Family Collection, New York

X.2025.84

**Ramp 3, Bay 37**

Rashid Johnson

*Black Yoga*, 2010

Persian rug, spray enamel, monitor, and color video with sound, transferred from 8 mm film

4 min., 42 sec., 19.69 x 110.24 x 138.78 inches (50.01 x 280.01 x 352.5 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.37



Rashid Johnson

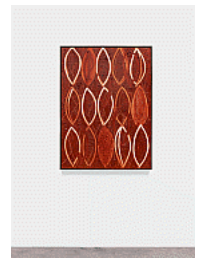
*God Painting "What's Happenin"*, 2024

Oil on linen

48 x 36 x 1.68 inches (121.9 x 91.4 x 4.3 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.105

**Ramp 3, Bay 36**

Rashid Johnson

*Triple Consciousness*, 2009

Black soap, wax, spray enamel, shea butter, brass, vinyl records, album covers, and wood panel

48 x 96 inches (121.92 x 243.84 cm)

Collection of Dr. Daniel S. Berger

X.2025.58



Rashid Johnson

*Threeness*, 2005

Color video with sound

3 min., 10 sec., A.P. 1/2, edition of 3

Collection of the artist

X.2025.66

**Ramp 3, Bay 35**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 3, Bay 35**

Rashid Johnson

*The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (The Power of Healing)*, 2008

Wax, black soap, shea butter, incense, books, glass, spray enamel, and wood panel

96 x 96 x 12 inches (243.84 x 243.84 x 30.48 cm)

Rubell Museum, Miami and Washington, DC

X.2025.59

**Ramp 3, Bay 34**

Rashid Johnson

*The New Black Yoga*, 2011Color video, transferred from 16 mm film, with sound, 10 min., 57 sec.  
edition 1/3

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by David Shuman, 2012

2012.124

**Ramp 3, Bay 33**

Rashid Johnson

*Death by Black Hole "The Crisis"*, 2010

Steel, black soap, wax, books, shea butter, plant, space rocks, mirror, spray enamel, and stained wood

96.5 x 76.25 x 30 inches (245.11 x 193.68 x 76.2 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.36

**Ramp 3, Bay 32**

Rashid Johnson

*Cosmic Slop "Black Orpheus"*, 2011

Black soap, wax, and wood panel

96 x 120 x 1.75 inches (243.84 x 304.8 x 4.45 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.35



Rashid Johnson

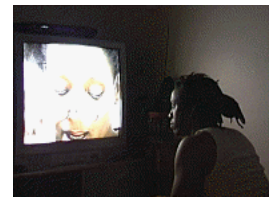
*Watching 'The End of Blackness'*, 2007

Color video with sound

3 min., 5 sec., A.P. 1/2, edition of 3

Collection of the artist

X.2025.39

**Ramp 3, Bay 31**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 3, Bay 31**

Rashid Johnson

*The Shuttle*, 2011Mirror, black soap, wax, books, shea butter, oyster shells, plant, CB radio,  
and wood panel

96.5 x 125 x 11.75 inches (245.11 x 317.5 x 29.85 cm)

Rubell Museum, Miami and Washington, DC

X.2025.12

**Ramp 4**

Rashid Johnson

*Promised Land*, 2008

Spray enamel on mirror

48 1/8 x 71 3/4 inches (122.2 x 182.2 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.72

**Ramp 4, Bay 49**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled*, 2007

Spray enamel on polyester

84 x 84 inches (213.36 x 213.36 cm)

Seattle Art Museum, Purchased with funds from Rebecca and Alexander Stewart in honor of Marisa Sánchez, and in honor of the 75th anniversary of the museum

X.2025.3

**Ramp 4, Bay 48**

Rashid Johnson

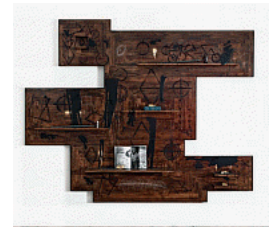
*Fatherhood as Described by Paul Beatty*, 2011

Branded red oak flooring, black soap, wax, books, branding irons, shea butter, oyster shells, space rocks, and spray enamel

96 x 120 x 12.5 inches (243.84 x 304.8 x 31.75 cm)

Private collection of David and Jennifer Feldman

X.2025.55

**Ramp 4, Bay 47**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled (Daybed 1)*, 2012

Ebony-stained wood and zebra hide rug

25.25 x 73 x 36 inches (66.68 x 185.42 x 91.44 cm)

Private collection

X.2025.106



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 4, Bay 47**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled (Daybed 2)*, 2012

Ebony-stained wood and zebra hide rug

26 1/4 × 73 × 36 inches (66.7 × 185.4 × 91.4 cm)

Private collection

X.2025.181

**Ramp 4, Bay 46**

Rashid Johnson

*The Sweet Science*, 2011

Branded red oak flooring, black soap, wax, and paint

96.5 x 132.5 x 2.36 inches (245.11 x 336.55 x 5.99 cm)

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Gift of Pamela K. and William A. Royall Jr.

X.2025.9

**Ramp 4, Bay 45**

Rashid Johnson

*Carver*, 2012

Burned red oak flooring, black soap, wax, and spray enamel

72.5 x 49.5 x 3 inches (184.15 x 125.73 x 7.62 cm)

Private collection, Greenwich, Connecticut

X.2025.45



Rashid Johnson

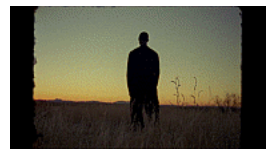
*Samuel in Space*, 2013

Color video with sound, transferred from 16 mm film

4 min., 55 sec.

Collection of the artist

X.2025.187

**Ramp 4, Bay 44**

Rashid Johnson

*The Sweet Fly Paper*, 2012

Mirror, black soap, wax, shea butter, ceramics, plant, book, vinyl record, and album cover

96 x 120 x 16 inches (243.8 x 304.8 x 40.6 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.180

**Ramp 4, Bay 43**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 4, Bay 43**

Rashid Johnson

*Another Star*, 2014

Cast bronze panel, black soap, and wax

49.12 x 39.12 x 0.5 inches (124.8 x 99.4 x 1.3 cm)

Heller Collection, New York

X.2025.76



Rashid Johnson

*Harder They Come*, 2013

Cast bronze, black soap, and wax

49 x 39.5 x 1 inches (124.5 cm x 100.3 cm x 2.5 cm)

Kravis Collection

X.2025.78



Rashid Johnson

*Airline*, 2015

Cast bronze, black soap, and wax

49.12 x 39.12 x 0.5 inches (124.8 x 99.4 x 1.3 cm)

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Endowment and Pamela K. and William A. Royall Jr. Fund for 21st-Century Art

X.2025.80



Rashid Johnson

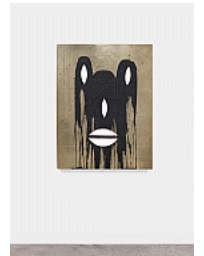
*Roadrunner*, 2015

Cast bronze, black soap, and wax

49.13 x 39.5 x 0.5 inches (124.8 x 100.3 x 1.3 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.111

**Ramp 4, Bay 42**

Rashid Johnson

*Four for the Talking Cure*, 2009–2012

Steel, painted wood, spray enamel, plants, shea butter, and zebra hide rug

97 x 84 1/2 inches x 84 1/2 (246.4 x 214.6 x 214.6 cm)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by Contemporary Friends, 2013, with additional funds provided by Holly and Albert Baril, Allison and Larry Berg, Viveca Paulin-Ferrell and Will Ferrell, Linda and Paul Gotskind, Jennifer Hawks and Ramin Djawadi, Laura and James Maslon, Phil Mercado and Todd Quinn, Candace and Charles Nelson, and the Kerry and Simone Vickar Foundation

X.2025.14



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 4, Bay 41**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Anxious Men*, 2015

Ceramic tile, black soap, and wax

47 x 34.25 x 2 inches (119.4 x 87.6 x 5.1 cm)

Collection of Schuyler and Jonathan Levin

X.2025.82



Rashid Johnson

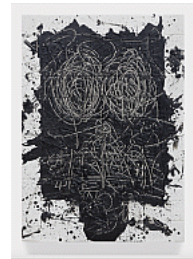
*Untitled Anxious Men*, 2015

Ceramic tile, black soap, and wax

47 x 34.25 x 2 inches (119.4 x 87.6 x 5.1 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.83



Rashid Johnson

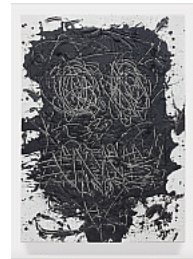
*Untitled Anxious Men*, 2015

Ceramic tile, black soap, and wax

47 x 34.25 x 2 inches (119.4 x 87.6 x 5.1 cm)

Collection of Emily and Jeremy Steckler

X.2025.87

**Ramp 5**

Rashid Johnson

*Homage to LeRoi Jones "The Dead Lecturer" (#1)*, 2009

Spray enamel on mirror

48 in x 60 inches (121.92 cm x 152.4 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.73

**Ramp 5, Bay 59**

Rashid Johnson

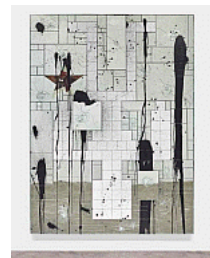
*Falling Man*, 2015

Mirror, ceramic tile, spray enamel, vinyl, black soap, wax, and wood panel

96.75 x 72.75 x 2.15 inches (245.75 x 184.79 x 5.41 cm)

Collection of Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Bequest of Arthur B. Michael, by exchange, 2016

X.2025.13

**Ramp 5, Bay 58**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 5, Bay 58**

Rashid Johnson

*Post Prison Writings*, 2012

Steel, stained red oak flooring, paint, black soap, wax, oyster shells, shea butter, and books

78 x 60 x 6 inches (198.12 x 152.4 x 15.24 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.56



Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Microphone Sculpture*, 2018

Bronze panel, ceramic tile, mirror, books, shea butter, black soap, and wax

60 x 60 x 6 3/16 inches (152.4 x 152.4 x 15.6 cm)

Collection of Christine and Richard Mack

X.2025.101

**Ramp 5, Bay 57**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Escape Collage*, 2018

Ceramic tile, mirror, branded red oak flooring, vinyl, spray enamel, oil stick, black soap, wax, and panel

97 x 121 x 2.25 inches (246.38 x 307.34 x 5.72 cm)

Collection of Kathy and Mitchell Jacobson

X.2025.88

**Ramp 5, Bay 56**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled (Shea Butter Table)*, 2016

Shea butter, Persian rug, and branded walnut wood

55 x 203 x 72.5 inches (139.7 x 515.62 x 184.15 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.32

**Ramp 5, Bay 55**

Rashid Johnson

*The Hikers*, 2019

Color video with sound, transferred from 16 mm film

6 min, 54 sec, 2/3, 2 A.P.

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Gift of Charles Roth

X.2025.8



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 5, Bay 55**

Rashid Johnson

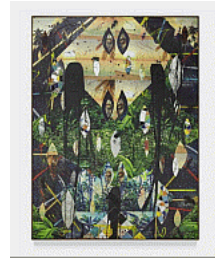
*Untitled Escape Collage*, 2018

Ceramic tile, mirror, branded red oak flooring, vinyl, spray enamel, oil stick, black soap, wax, and panel

97 x 73 x 2.5 inches ( 246.38 x 185.42 x 6.35 cm)

Collection of Debi and Steve Wisch

X.2025.49



Rashid Johnson

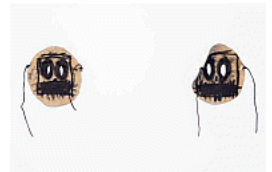
*Anxious Mask*, 2019

Oil on animal skin

27.5 x 40 x 1.75 inches (69.9 x 101.6 x 4.5 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.129

**Ramp 5, Bay 54**

Rashid Johnson

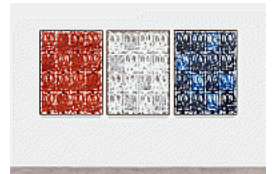
*Triptych "Nowhere Man"*, 2020-2024

Oil on linen

48 x 36 x 1.68 inches (121.9 x 91.4 x 4.3 cm), each

Collection of the artist

X.2025.130

**Ramp 5, Bay 53**

Rashid Johnson

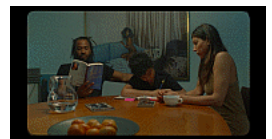
*Black and Blue*, 2021

Color video with sound, transferred from 35 mm film

7 min., 50 sec., A.P. 2/2, edition of 3

Tate: Presented by John Caudwell 2024

X.2025.22



Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Bust*, 2019

Glazed stoneware

11 x 8 x 7.5 inches (27.94 x 20.32 x 19.05 cm)

Collection of Shelley and Gilbert Harrison

X.2025.91



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 5, Bay 53**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Bust*, 2019

Bronze

14 x 10 x 9 inches (35.56 x 25.4 x 22.86 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.92



Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Bust*, 2019

Glazed stoneware

16 x 8 x 10 inches (40.64 x 20.32 x 25.4 cm)

Lenhardt Collection, Arizona

X.2025.93



Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Bust*, 2019

Glazed stoneware

14 x 7 x 8 inches (35.56 x 17.78 x 20.32 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.94



Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Bust*, 2019

Glazed stoneware

10 x 9 x 9 inches (25.4 x 22.86 x 22.86 cm)

Collection Lee F Mindel FAIA and Jose Marty

X.2025.95



Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Bust*, 2019

Glazed stoneware

16 x 8 x 10 inches (40.64 x 20.32 x 25.4 cm)

Collection of Heifara Rutgers and David Roth

X.2025.96



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 5, Bay 53**

Rashid Johnson

*Untitled Bust*, 2019

Bronze

16 x 7 x 8 inches (40.64 x 17.78 x 20.32 cm)

Collection of Linda and George Kurz, Cincinnati, Ohio

X.2025.97

**Ramp 5, Bay 52**

Rashid Johnson

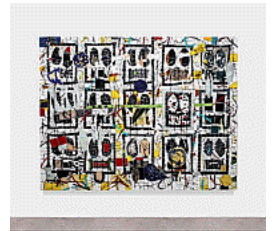
*Untitled Broken Crowd*, 2021

Ceramic tile, mirror, oyster shell, spray enamel, oil stick, black soap, and wax

73.25 x 94.75 x 3 inches (186.06 x 240.67 x 7.62 cm)

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Purchase with funds from the Rogath Family Collection, Lauren and Brian Frank, Darriane and Justin Christian, Scot French, and Suzanne McFayden

X.2025.23



Rashid Johnson

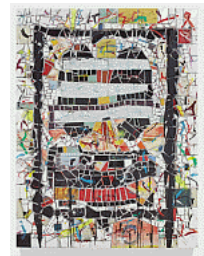
*Untitled Broken Men*, 2019

Ceramic tile, mirror, spray enamel, oil stick, black soap, and wax

50 x 38 x 3 inches (127 x 96.5 x 7.6 cm)

The Studio Museum in Harlem; Museum purchase with funds provided by Albert and Renee Laboz

X.2025.102



Rashid Johnson

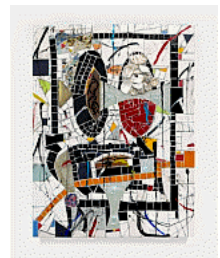
*Untitled Broken Men*, 2018

Ceramic tile, mirror, spray enamel, oil stick, black soap, and wax

49.5 x 38.5 x 3.5 inches (125.73 x 97.79 x 8.89 cm)

Private collection

X.2025.186

**Ramp 5, Bay 51**

Rashid Johnson

*Anxious Red Painting "August 18th"*, 2020

Oil on linen

72 x 96 x 2 inches (182.88 x 243.84 x 5.08 cm)

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Jamie and Reese Genser, Toni and Doug Gordon, Donna and David Frieze, Kerry and Jeremy Sclar, 2023

X.2025.44



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 5, Bay 51**

Rashid Johnson

*Red Chair "Big Red Peaches", 2024*

Bronze

65 x 33 x 42 inches (165.1 x 83.8 x 106.7 cm), AP 1, Ed of 3 + 2 AP

Private collection

X.2025.118

**Ramp 6**

Rashid Johnson

*Fly Away, 2010*

Spray enamel on mirror

40 x 30 x 2.5 inches (101.6 x 76.2 x 6.35 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.5



Rashid Johnson

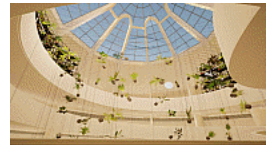
*Sanguine, 2025*

Steel, books, ceramics, monitors, grow lights, plants, and shea butter

Site-specific installation

Private Collection

X.2025.24

**Ramp 6, Bay 68**

Rashid Johnson

*God Painting "The Spirit", 2023*

Oil on linen

120 x 96 inches (304.8 x 243.8 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Promised gift, James Gordon

X.2025.28



Rashid Johnson

*The Sweet, Sweet Runner, 2010*

Color video with sound, transferred from 16 mm film

3 min., 19 sec., A.P. 1/2, edition of 5

Courtesy the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago

X.2025.57

**Ramp 6, Bay 67**

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 6, Bay 67**

Rashid Johnson

*The Broken Five*, 2019

Ceramic tile, mirror, branded red oak flooring, spray enamel, oil stick, black soap, wax, bronze, oyster shells, and wood panel

97.25 x 156.5 x 3 inches (247.02 x 397.51 x 7.62 cm)

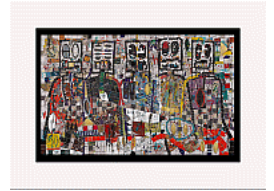
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Sun Hung Kai &amp; Co.

Foundation, Janis and Dina Zuzans (Riga, Latvia), Laura and James

DeMare, Susan and Leonard Feinstein Foundation, and Anonymous

Gifts, 2021

X.2025.74

**Ramp 6, Bay 66**

Rashid Johnson

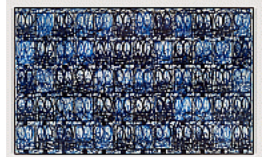
*Bruise Painting "Honeysuckle Rose"*, 2021

Oil on linen

95.88 x 157.75 x 2.5 inches (243.54 x 400.69 x 6.35 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.143

**Ramp 6, Bay 65**

Rashid Johnson

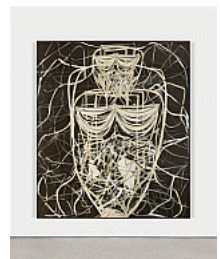
*Soul Painting "Urban Magic"*, 2024

Oil on linen

96 x 84 x 1.68 inches (243.8 x 213.4 x 4.3 cm)

Forman Family Collection

X.2025.26



Rashid Johnson

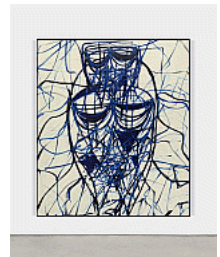
*Soul Painting "For Kippy"*, 2023

Oil on linen

96 x 84 x 1.68 inches (243.84 x 213.36 x 4.27 cm)

Nicola Erni Collection

X.2025.46



Rashid Johnson

*Mudcloth*, 2001

Van Dyke brown print

102 x 82 inches (259 x 210.8 cm)

Courtesy N'Namdi Collection

X.2025.123

**Ramp 6, Bay 64**

4/11/2025

**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 6, Bay 64**

Rashid Johnson

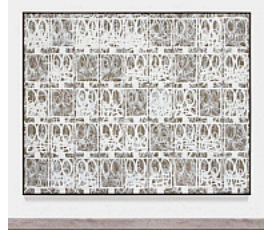
*Surrender Painting "Think Big"*, 2022

Oil on linen

94.25 x 120 x 1.68 inches (239.4 x 304.8 x 4.27 cm)

Collection of Robert F. Smith

X.2025.47

**Ramp 6, Bay 63**

Rashid Johnson

*Seascape "Jitter Bug"*, 2022

Oil on linen

72 x 96 x 2 inches (182.88 x 243.84 x 5.08 cm)

Private Collection

X.2025.2



Rashid Johnson

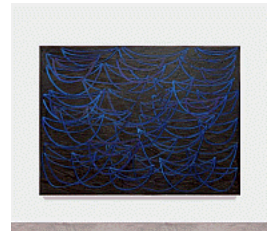
*Seascape "The Last Night"*, 2021

Oil on linen

72 x 96 x 2 inches (182.88 x 243.84 x 5.08 cm)

Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris

X.2025.18

**Ramp 6, Bay 62**

Rashid Johnson

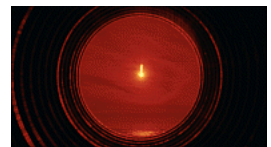
*Sanguine*, 2024

Color video with sound, transferred from 35 mm film

5 min., 52 sec., edition 1/3, 2 A.P.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Promised Gift of Hilarie and Mitchell Morgan, co-owned with the Norton Museum of Art

X.2025.85

**Ramp 6, Bay 61**

Rashid Johnson

*Quiet Painting*, 2025

Oil on linen

96 x 84 x 1.68 inches (243.84 x 213.36 x 4.27 cm)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.136



**Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers**

(checklist for venue/s listed in bold)

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, April 18, 2025 – Sunday, January 18, 2026)**

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Sunday, March 8, 2026 – Monday, October 4, 2027)

**Ramp 6 Passageway**

Rashid Johnson

*No Mas*, 2001

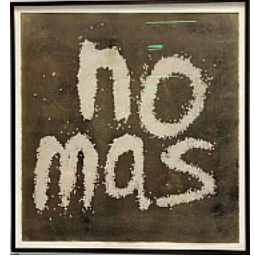
Van Dyke brown print

40 in x 38 inches (101.6 cm x 96.52 cm), 44 1/4 x 42 x 1 1/2 inches

(112.4 x 106.7 x 3.8 cm) (framed)

Collection of the artist

X.2025.70



95 artworks

# RASHID JOHNSON A POEM FOR DEEP THINKERS

Rashid Johnson (b. 1977, Chicago) believes that a person is a product of the time in which they live, but in his art he is most interested in examining the many ways in which an individual can shift, or even escape, sweeping historical forces. As such, for almost thirty years Johnson has played with language, material, and forms to question the beliefs of the twenty-first century. He is influenced by radical artistic and political movements that helped shape the decades from the 1960s to the 1990s—periods of his parents' activism and his own education—when idealists actively challenged hierarchies and established new orders. Though Johnson is acutely aware that these movements failed to create a just world, he looks both externally—toward the past—and internally to his personal everyday experience and emotional life, creating powerful artworks that reflect the ways a single life can both move with the times and carve out a singular path through history.

*Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers* presents over ninety artworks and takes visitors on a journey through the growth and desires of an artist. Johnson's early work includes experimental photography, video, and sculpture, in which he explores important historical figures and heroes—often with humor or as inspiration for performative role-playing. Over time, Johnson develops a private vocabulary of symbols and adopts signature materials, such as black soap and shea butter, which he incorporates into hybrid paintings and mixed-media, three-dimensional still-life objects. In more

recent work, Johnson illustrates human fragility through broken wood panels, scarred bronze and ceramic sculptures, and canvases that are deeply marked or overdrawn. Finally, Johnson makes spaces where other people can create: A performance stage on the museum's ground floor and a music chamber with an upright piano on the top floor act as bookends to the exhibition.

While the show highlights Johnson's willingness to abandon established art styles and experiment with new ideas, materials, and themes, two things remain constant: his love for language and literature (the title of the exhibition is from an Amiri Baraka poem) and his ongoing search for internal peace and creative satisfaction. Johnson often says, "The subject of my work is freedom," revealing his strong desire to break free from limitations in art, culture, and even physical time itself. Through this unceasing drive, he finds poetry in everyday life and makes ordinary objects heroic.

*Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers* is cocurated by Naomi Beckwith, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, New York, and Andrea Karnes, Interim Director and Chief Curator of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, with additional support from Faith Hunter, Curatorial Assistant, Guggenheim New York. This exhibition is co-organized by the Guggenheim New York and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

The curators wish to thank the Guggenheim team members who worked to give shape to this exhibition.

Find exclusive content about this exhibition on the Guggenheim's Digital Guide.



300

#RashidJohnsonGuggenheim

#PoemForDeepThinkers

#LiveAtTheRotunda

## Death is a Good Start

Johnson possesses a talent for working across many forms—sculpture, installation, experimental photography, painting, film, and video—often collapsing these traditional media into hybrid objects. For instance, an early text drawing is also a graffiti painting; a bronze sculpture is a fire pit; a large-scale “painting” of several faces is also a ceramic sculpture and, more distinctly, uses no paint whatsoever. In other words, Johnson easily abandons—“kills off,” if you will—conventions and previous ways of working in favor of new configurations that match his ambitions at the time.

In his work across different modes of expression, Johnson has several concerns, many of them attempting to imagine new ways of being and making meaning in the world. The works in this gallery suggest new beginnings, but beginnings also require ends. For Johnson, death—a recurring theme—is one such end, but it is not final. Death, instead, marks the start of a new journey into an afterlife (*Soul Painting “Six Souls”* and *Fire Pit “High Life”*); the beginning of a legend (*Self-Portrait Laying on Jack Johnson’s Grave*, which opens this exhibition); and it can even be a goal, a kind of respite, or an escape (*Death is Golden*). These works mark the mysterious migration from the physical to the metaphysical realm, while the characters in *Untitled Anxious Audience* act as witnesses to the transformation.

## (Ir)reverence

The majority of Johnson's work is organized in series, through which he works on a single prompt or idea across several objects. In his earliest series, he energetically and slyly makes reference to other artists, art-historical artworks, events, prominent figures, musical lyrics, and works of literature. The quotes he utilizes from these sources are evidence of his active intellect and, like many of the hip-hop generation, his ability to remix and repurpose those objects and gestures into altogether new forms. For instance, *Signed Angela Davis "Civil Rights All Stars" Throwback Dashiki Jersey* pays tribute to the venerable educator and organizer but recasts her as a sports star, likening politics to game theory. *Homage to Chinua Achebe IV (Fela Kuti "Zombie")* holds Nigerian literary and pop-music icons on equal terms with modern European artists, such as Joseph Beuys. In these works, Johnson both honors and playfully teases these heroes, bringing the illustrious status of these well-known figures down to a more human level. Johnson will deploy this mischievous behavior and deadpan humor time and time again through linguistic puns, as seen in his spray-painted texts, and in works that imitate yet deflate legends such as Jack Johnson and Frederick Douglass.

## Know Your Heritage

Johnson is part of a generation of artists educated in Conceptual art, a movement guided more by ideas than by technical, art-making concerns. Johnson expands far beyond Conceptualism's borders in order to borrow freely from a wide range of artistic precedents, such as the expressionism and poetic reduction of American modernist painting; the Italian Arte Povera movement's interest in transforming cheap materials into high art; the Fluxus insistence on performance and exchange; and the linguistic wit and visual puns available in works by a variety of artists, from the Belgian Marcel Broodthaers to the Americans Robert Colescott and Barkley L. Hendricks.

Conceptual art in the United States arose in the 1960s, the same moment of social liberation for, among others, women, queer people, and people of color, especially African Americans. Johnson, a keen student of these movements, mobilizes Black liberation struggles as his art's conceptual framework, especially the moments when Black aesthetics, whether in fine art or pop culture, align with liberatory politics. He has worked to reimagine art forms in the context of social history, from early works that examine the New Negro movement and the Harlem Renaissance of the early 1900s (the Black bourgeois subject as modernist icon) through to the Black Arts movement of the 1960s (Black subjects as radical outsiders) to more recent works that engage Afrofuturism (Black subjects as aliens meant to return to their cosmic "home"). More specifically, while attempting to create new modes and ideas, Johnson ponders the artist's obligation to society.

## Material as Concept

By 2008, Johnson's work embodies a new investment in the behavior of materials. The artist's focus is not so much working through specific art forms but rather exploring the possibilities of materials that hold cultural and emotional meaning. Black soap and shea butter—common grooming products in the African diasporic community that signal self-care for the body—become the basis for the black-monochrome *Cosmic Slop* paintings and a sculptural material, respectively. In his large structures, plants often appear on or inside cube forms, juxtaposing the masculinist language of Minimalism with living organisms that elicit empathy and depend on human care. (Note: This Frank Lloyd Wright building was originally designed to house plants year-round.) Paneled works composed of ceramic and glass tiles recall the bathhouse in a community building in Chicago that Johnson once frequented. Books and music mark an intellectual and cultural self-education. In all of these examples, Johnson builds his own material vernacular, joining the influence of artists from the Italian Arte Povera movement of the 1960s with that of contemporary artists working in the United States, such as David Hammons, Senga Nengudi, and Nari Ward.

## Inner Life and Personal Symbolism

Just as Johnson has a tool kit of favored materials that he returns to again and again—black soap, shea butter, glass, ceramic, books, plants, and vinyl albums—he also has a singular glossary of signs and symbols that he leaves to individual interpretation. Hand-carved grids, crosshair targets, and diamond shapes first appeared in the *Cosmic Slop* works in the early 2000s. In later works, Johnson uses hot irons to brand targets, palm trees, and concentric or interlocking circles across the surface of works composed of wood floorboards, such as *The Sweet Science*, or on rugs. Like traditional cattle branding, Johnson marks his presence within, and ownership over, these objects.

These symbols become the most prominent features in Johnson's mature paintings, often proliferating across canvases or ceramic tiles in gridded forms. They have their roots as much in urban graffiti as in the rudimentary pictograms found in paintings by Abstract Expressionist Adolph Gottlieb. The appearance of these characters in such works as the *Anxious Men* series and the *God* paintings allows Johnson to address emotional and affective states with care and sensitivity without relying on flat, documentary representation. This, in turn, opens his work to the sublime and the metaphysical.

# Escape

As a dedicated student of African American history and literature, Johnson is well aware of the abiding theme of escape and eluding capture in the Black folkloric imaginary. One can trace this tradition through recurring characters in narratives from nineteenth-century work songs to contemporary Afrofuturism, such as fugitives from an unjust criminal justice system, or “flying Africans,” or “Drexcians” (captured Africans who either returned home from the Americas via the air or established a home at the bottom of the Atlantic, after jumping or being thrown from slave ships). Johnson builds on this tradition through earlier text works—*Run, Fly Away*, and *Death is Golden*—evoking these tendencies of flight in a way that is often like a warning to his audience. Later, wall-based works such as *The Shuttle* or *Untitled Escape Collage* are more subtle as potential portals to an imagined elsewhere.

Yet one need not go “elsewhere” to escape from a disturbing or stressful present. In his work, Johnson frequently deploys and enacts therapeutic terms (rest, reading, bathing, yoga); subtly references psychotherapy through furniture-based artworks, such as *Four for the Talking Cure* and *Untitled (Daybed 1)*; or creates interior spaces that protect a subject from the potential ills of an unpredictable world (the site-specific installation *Sanguine*, the culmination of this exhibition). These works, along with several *Anxious* paintings, point toward Johnson’s psychological vulnerabilities, yet he constantly seeks aesthetic liberation, too. Never relying on one medium to articulate his ideas, Johnson moves nimbly through multiple forms, aiming within each work to both reinvent cultural terms and escape meanings that are no longer personally useful.

# Poetry

*. . . skymen*

*dancing, and the skymen stumbling, till they get the sun out  
they eyes, and integrate the inhead movie show, with the  
material reality that exists with and without them. . . .*

–Amiri Baraka, “A Poem for Deep Thinkers,” 1977

Describing African American poetry as an undeniable form of Black genius, Johnson often takes poetry as the starting point for his visual art concepts and series. Poetry can conjure for readers beautifully absurd images, enticing juxtapositions, and convincing contradictions. A poem can also fabricate new worlds previously unimaginable. In her writings about women’s experiences, poet Audre Lorde argues that poetry is socially necessary for maintaining mental health and even life itself, as it can articulate feelings and affects that cannot be framed in conventional prose and scholarship. Johnson, like poets (or comedians and other short-form writers), seeks succinct means of expression that give shape to his experiences in a way that is translatable to his audience.

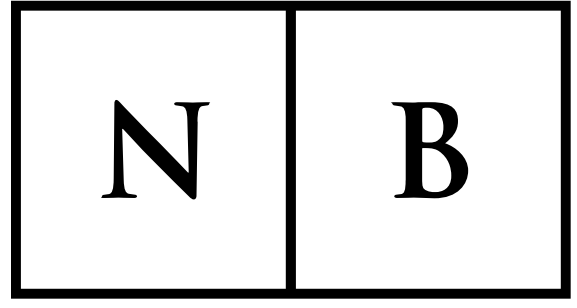
Amiri Baraka (born LeRoi Jones), whose poem provided the title for this exhibition, is a frequent source and oft-cited reference for Johnson. Baraka came into prominence as a Beat poet in the 1950s, then transformed himself into a socially committed playwright, novelist, critic, and one of the cofounders of the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and ’70s. Sometimes controversial, Baraka gave voice to the tension that exists between prioritizing real-world social change and the drive to push artistic boundaries (in the excerpt above, the external “material reality” versus the “inhead movie show”). His poem’s “skymen,” blinded by sunlight, find echoes in the red hues of Johnson’s *God* paintings, which, the artist explains, are inspired by the the color one sees when closing one’s eyes and facing the sun.

Lead support for *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers* is provided by

## **Ford Foundation**

Visionary support is provided by Hilarie and Mitchell Morgan, Edlis-Neeson Foundation, and Daniel Xu and Flora Huang.

Major support is provided by Neuberger Berman



PRIVATE WEALTH

The Leadership Committee for this exhibition is gratefully acknowledged for its generosity, with special thanks to Hauser & Wirth, David Kordansky Gallery, Madeleine Arison, Heather and Felix Baker, Justin Bayless, Marie-Josée Coutu, Nancy and Steve Crown, Natasha and François-Xavier de Mallmann, The George Economou Collection, Anton J. Levy, Jennifer and Alec Litowitz, and David Shuman.

Additional leadership funding is provided by Candace and Michael Barasch, Allison and Larry Berg, Mahshid and Jamshid Ehsani, Alex and Greg Mondre, Dr. Daniel S. Berger Charitable Giving Fund, Tiqui Atencio Demirdjian and Ago Demirdjian, Nicola Erni Collection, Katherine Farley and Jerry I. Speyer, The Forman Family Collection, Paul and Dedrea Gray, John and Amy Griffin Foundation, Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia, Kathy and Mitchell Jacobson, Judelson Family Foundation, LaVon Kellner and Tom Roush, Amanda Precourt, Gary Steele and Steven Rice, George Wells and Manfred Rantner, Debi and Steven Wisch, Marilyn and Larry Fields, Bernard I. Lumpkin and Carmine D. Boccuzzi, Jessica and Brian Robinson, Carol and Lawrence Saper, Ann and Mel Schaffer, The Sherman Family Foundation, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Support is also generously provided by The Kate Cassidy Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, and The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation.

Additional funding is provided by the Guggenheim New York's 2024 International Director's Council.

Yamaha Piano provided by Yamaha Artist Services New York.

The accompanying exhibition catalogue is available in the museum store. Support for this publication is generously provided by The Kate Cassidy Foundation.