

Rashid Johnson: Anxious Men
October 2–December 20, 2015

Drawing Room

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 1, 6–8pm

For further information and images, please contact
Molly Gross, *Communications Director*, The Drawing Center
212 219 2166 x119 | mgross@drawingcenter.org

October 1, 2015



Rashid Johnson, *Untitled Anxious Men*, 2015. White ceramic tile, black soap, wax, 47 1/2 x 34 1/2 x 2 inches. © Rashid Johnson, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo by Martin Parsekian.

New York – The Drawing Center presents *Rashid Johnson: Anxious Men*, a site-specific installation created by Johnson for the Drawing Room gallery. Universally accessible and employing common visual tropes such as the monochrome and the grid, Johnson’s work is also self-referential, making specific allusion to his upbringing in Chicago in the late seventies and eighties and the Afro-centric values of his parents. The core of the exhibition is a new series of black-soap-and-wax-on-tile portraits that Johnson calls his “anxious men.” Executed by digging into a waxy surface, they enact a kind of drawing through erasure and represent the first time Johnson has worked figuratively outside of photography or film, and on such a small scale. Whereas Johnson’s previous work has taken a more conceptually-oriented approach to questions of race and political identity, the drawn portraits confront the viewer with a visceral immediacy.

The portraits are set within a multi-sensory environment that includes wallpaper depicting a photograph of the artist’s father from the year Johnson was born, and an audio sound track comprised of Melvin Van Peebles’s “Love, That’s America,” a song originally featured in Peebles’s 1970 film *Watermelon Man* and that was recently pressed into service by the Occupy Wall Street movement. In this way, the exhibition creates an immersive space that implicates not only the artist but also the viewer in its interrogation of selfhood and identity. Curated by Claire Gilman, Senior Curator.

Since distinguishing himself as the youngest artist in *Freestyle*, the landmark 2001 exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem, Johnson has established himself as one of the preeminent artists of his generation. Invoking such varied themes as the black experience in America, the dialogue between

abstraction and figuration, and the relationship between art and personal identity. Johnson's work is wide-ranging and has been discussed within the context of contemporary painting, photography, sculpture, video, installation, and even performance. Now, with the *Anxious Men*, drawing enters that list.

ABOUT RASHID JOHNSON

Rashid Johnson was born in Chicago in 1977. He was awarded a BA in photography from Columbia College, Chicago, in 2000, and earned an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005. His work can be found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Guggenheim Museum; the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Art Institute of Chicago; the High Museum, Atlanta; and the Miami Art Museum, among many others. In the last few years, Johnson's work has been featured in many group exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale, the Shanghai Biennale, and shows at MAMBo Bologna; the MIT List Visual Arts Center; the Nasher Museum at Duke University; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt.

Johnson's work was the subject of a ten-year survey exhibition entitled *Message to Our Folks*, organized in 2012 by the MCA Chicago, which travelled to the Miami Art Museum; the High Museum, Atlanta; and the Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis. In 2012, he participated in the solo museum exhibition *Shelter* at the South London Gallery, and in spring 2013 Ballroom Marfa held a solo show of his work, entitled *New Growth*, which travelled to the MCA Denver in 2014. In 2014 Johnson had solo shows at Kunsthalle Winterthur, Switzerland, and George Economou Collection, Athens, Greece.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Thursday, October 15 at 6:30pm

Join the artist and Claire Gilman, Senior Curator at The Drawing Center and curator of *Rashid Johnson: Anxious Men*, for a walkthrough of the exhibition.

PUBLICATION

The edition of the Drawing Papers series that will be published in conjunction with this exhibition will feature an essay by Claire Gilman, as well as contributions by poet Jeremy Sigler and the artist's mother, writer and historian Cheryl Johnson-Odim.

CREDITS

Lead support for *Rashid Johnson: Anxious Men* is provided by Joseph G. Mizzi. Additional support is provided by Jeffrey A. Hirsch, John and Amy Phelan, Erica Samuels, and Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond J. Leary. Special thanks to Hauser and Wirth.

ABOUT THE DRAWING CENTER

The Drawing Center, a museum in Manhattan's SoHo district, explores the medium of drawing as primary, dynamic, and relevant to contemporary culture, the future of art and creative thought. Its activities, which are both multidisciplinary and broadly historical, include exhibitions; Open Sessions, a curated artist program encouraging community and collaboration; the Drawing Papers publication series; and education and public programs.

LOCATION, HOURS & ACCESSIBILITY

35 Wooster Street between Broome and Grand Streets in SoHo, New York.
Gallery hours are Wednesday-Sunday 12pm–6pm, Thursday, 12pm–8pm.
Tickets: \$5 Adults, \$3 Students and seniors, Children under 12 are free, and free admission Thursdays 6–8pm.

The Drawing Center is wheelchair accessible.

212.219.2166 | info@drawingcenter.org | drawingcenter.org

FACEBOOK: [The Drawing Center](https://www.facebook.com/TheDrawingCenter)

TWITTER: twitter.com/drawingcenter

TUMBLR: the-drawing-center.tumblr.com

INSTAGRAM: [instagram.com/drawingcenter](https://www.instagram.com/drawingcenter)

AT THE DRAWING CENTER

<i>Richard Pousette-Dart: 1930s</i>	October 2–December 20, 2015
<i>Rashid Johnson: Anxious Men</i>	October 2–December 20, 2015
<i>Open Sessions 5</i>	October 2–October 25, 2015
<i>Open Sessions 6</i>	November 12 – December 20, 2015
<i>Louise Despont: Energy Scaffolds and Information Architecture</i>	January 22–March 20, 2016
<i>Jennifer Bartlett: Hospital</i>	January 22–March 20, 2016
<i>“Please Make This Look Nice”</i>	February 19–March 20, 2016
<i>Drawing Dialogues: The Sol LeWitt Collection</i>	April 15–June 12, 2016
<i>2016 Prix Canson</i>	June 20–July 1, 2016
Ongoing installations	
<i>Abdelkader Benchamma: Representation of Dark Matter</i>	Through March 2016
<i>Rachel Goodyear: Restless Guests</i>	Through March 2016
<i>James Sheehan: Death of Malevich</i>	Through October 2015

###

Rashid Johnson: Anxious Men
October 2–December 20, 2015

Images Available for Reproduction

For further information and images, please contact
Molly Gross, *Communications Director*, The Drawing Center
212 219 2166 x119 | mgross@drawingcenter.org

Caption for all black and white images:

Rashid Johnson, *Untitled Anxious Men*, 2015. White ceramic tile, black soap, wax, 47 1/2 x 34 1/2 x 2 inches © Rashid Johnson, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo by Martin Parsekian.

Caption for color image: Jimmy Johnson, *Self-Portrait*, 1977. Courtesy Rashid Johnson and Hauser & Wirth, © Jimmy Johnson. [The exhibition includes wallpaper depicting the photograph of the artist's father in a repeated pattern.]

