



RASHID JOHNSON ? LIZWORKS

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Born in Chicago in 1977, Rashid Johnson is among an influential cadre of contemporary American artists whose work employs a wide range of media to explore themes of art history, individual and shared cultural identities, personal narratives, literature, philosophy, materiality, and critical history.

After studying in the photography department of the Art Institute of Chicago, Johnson's practice quickly expanded to embrace a wide range of media ? including sculpture, painting, drawing, filmmaking, and installation ? yielding a complex multidisciplinary practice that incorporates diverse materials rich with symbolism and personal history.

Johnson's work is known for its narrative embedding of a pointed range of everyday materials and objects, often associated with his childhood and frequently referencing collective aspects of African American intellectual history and cultural identity. To date, Johnson has incorporated elements / materials / items as diverse as CB radios, shea butter, literature, record covers, gilded rocks, black soap and tropical plants. Many of Johnson's works convey rhythms of the occult and mystic: evoking his desire to transform and expand each included object's field of association in the process of reception.



Rashid Johnson on his Anxious Men jewellery:

"This work is about anxiety and the negotiation with fear, it's an interrogation of those things and an awareness of their impact. I started making this body of work with cathartic intentions, to push back against the feelings that were at times really handicapping me, to illustrate those feelings and to give myself an action step to consider and unpack why I was feeling that way. My anxiety travels with me. Translating this work into a wearable gives it its own mobility—an antidote to those feelings wherever I am.

There is a long history of artists using jewellery and wearables to explore and spread our ideas. And there is a rich history in the black community and in my family of folks wearing one's wealth. I don't think of jewellery as feminine at all. I grew up with Marvin Gaye and Isaac Hayes wearing jewellery. I also grew up a child of Hip-Hop. Rakim of Eric B. and Rakim, Biggie—a lot of my heroes wore jewellery. There is a great interview on David Letterman with Mr. T where Letterman jokingly asks him why he wears so much jewellery. Mr. T replies that his ancestors were brought here with chains around their necks and their wrists and he wears them now but he has turned them into gold which makes people uncomfortable. He tells Letterman that people are constantly asking him if the chains get heavy and yet no one asked his ancestors that question."

Biography Lizworks

Founded in 2014 by Liz Swig, Lizworks collaborates with celebrated contemporary artists to create limited-edition pieces that reflect the moment and push the boundary between jewellery and art.

