

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 6, 2026

MEDIA CONTACT:

Manuel Venegas

mvenegas@mcachicago.org

Saadia Pervaiz

sypervaiz@mcachicago.org



Rashid Johnson, *Glass Jaw*, 2011. Mirrored tile, black soap, wax, books, shea butter, vinyl album cover, CB radio, oyster shells, and paint; 88 1/2 × 118 1/2 × 12 in. (224.8 × 301 × 30.5 cm). Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin by exchange, 2012.2. © 2011 Rashid Johnson. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

Multimedia

material: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/niucp95vwtd9lfxl0xqce/AKawGM2FyWr5634i9ZoLEI?rlkey=ril49yk787ua80tyj0pub1e6c&st=kcf3q65a&dl=0>

MCA Chicago announces Chicago presentation of *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers*

CHICAGO—The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is pleased to announce *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers*, a major survey covering nearly thirty years of Rashid Johnson's (b. 1977, Chicago, IL; lives in New York) practice. Running in the Griffin Galleries from November 7, 2026, through April 25,

2027, the exhibition examines Johnson's work from his perspective as a student of art history; a consumer and translator of Black popular, literary and intellectual culture; and a cultural participant in the age of globalization and its aftereffects. With works including photographs, videos, large-scale installations, immersive paintings and multimedia assemblages, *A Poem for Deep Thinkers* asks fundamental questions about the fragile human psyche in the face of ineffable historic forces. Johnson often says "the subject of my work is freedom," and throughout the exhibition visitors will encounter pieces inspired by radical artistic and political movements from the 1960s to the 1990s that modeled how individuals and communities can resist established orders to carve out new paths through history.

A Poem for Deep Thinkers features over seventy-five artworks spanning the full breadth of Johnson's career, including works from his seminal *The New Negro Escapist Social* and *Athletic Club* series, the *Cosmic Slops* and other black-soap shelf paintings, spray-painted text works, and the *Anxious Men* and *Broken Men* series. Additionally, Johnson's film and video projects will be displayed intermittently throughout the galleries. Johnson's latest film *Sanguine* (2024) explores familial dynamics through the lens of the artist's relationships with his father, brother, and son, and features a poem by the poet and activist Amiri Baraka. The subtitle of the exhibition also refers to Baraka and his poem of the same name from 1977.

A Poem for Deep Thinkers will be Johnson's third solo exhibition at the MCA, following his early-career show in 2002 as part of the museum's 12 x 12 series, which was his first institutional exhibition, and his mid-career survey, *A Message to Our Folks*, ten years later in 2012. The MCA will be the last stop during the tour of the exhibition, signaling a homecoming for the Chicago-born and raised artist. A catalogue accompanies the exhibition with essays from exhibition curators Naomi Beckwith and Andrea Karnes, along with contributions by Nana Adusei-Poku, Hendrik Folkerts, Tiona Nekkia McClodden, Kevin Quashie, and Odili Donald Odita.

Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers will travel from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, where it runs until January 18, 2026, and from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, where it will run from March 8 through October 4, 2026.

Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers was organized by Naomi Beckwith, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Andrea Karnes, Chief Curator, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. The MCA presentation is curated by Jack Schneider, Assistant Curator.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rashid Johnson (b. 1977, Chicago) is a leading figure among contemporary American artists, recognized for a multidisciplinary practice that explores themes of art history, cultural identity—both individual and collective—personal narrative, literature, philosophy, and critical history. Johnson earned a BA in Photography

from Columbia College Chicago and pursued graduate studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Although he began his career in photography, Johnson's practice quickly expanded to encompass a wide range of media including sculpture, painting, drawing, filmmaking, and installation. His work often incorporates materials loaded with personal and cultural symbolism—such as shea butter, black soap, books, plants, and tile—frequently referencing his upbringing and African American identity. In recent years, his work has increasingly engaged with existential themes, exploring interiority, anxiety, and transitional states.

Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers, a mid-career survey currently on view at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, fills the museum's iconic rotunda and features over 90 works.

SUPPORT

Lead support for *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers* is provided by the Harris Family Foundation in memory of Bette and Neison Harris, the Zell Family Foundation, and Cari and Michael Sacks.

Major support is provided by Conagra Brands Foundation and Jack and Sandra Guthman.

Generous support is provided by The Francis L. Lederer Foundation and Nickol and Darrel Hackett.



ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CHICAGO

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The MCA interweaves exhibitions, performances, collections, and educational programs while providing a place for audiences to contemplate and discuss contemporary art in pursuit of a creative and diverse future. The MCA believes in the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) as a platform to enact structural change. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

[The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue](#) is open 10 am to 5 pm Wednesday to Sunday and Tuesdays from 10 am to 9 pm. Tuesday evenings (5-9 pm) are free

for Illinois residents. The museum is closed on Mondays. Admission is free for all youth 18 and under, members of the military and veterans, and MCA members. Free admission for anyone 18 and under is generously provided by the Lefkofsky Free Under 18 Fund. Find more information about MCA's exhibitions, programs, and special events at mcachicago.org or [312.280.2660](tel:312.280.2660).



facebook.com/mcachicago

IG: [@mcachicago](https://instagram.com/mcachicago)

X: [@mcachicago](https://twitter.com/mcachicago)