

Aspen Art Museum
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Educator Notes

Rashid Johnson: The Hikers

July 4–November 3, 2019



About the Artist

Rashid Johnson was born in 1977 in Chicago, Illinois, and lives and works in New York. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Columbia College, Chicago. His recent exhibitions have taken place at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Prospect New Orleans Triennial, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (all 2017).

Rashid Johnson was the ArtCrush 2018 Aspen Award for Art honoree.

About the Exhibition

Rashid Johnson is well known for challenging the assumptions often present in collective perceptions of blackness.

The artist uses a range of materials and images to explore themes of art history, literature, philosophy, and personal and cultural identity.

For this exhibition, the artist will present existing and new works.

New works include a major commissioned installation with live performative elements and the artist's first choreography collaboration complete with aspects of ballet and modern movement.

Johnson ultimately invites audiences to find connections to their own lives.

Questions for Discussion

- I Can you describe the artist's use of colors and shapes?
- I How has the artist presented the familiar in an unfamiliar way?
- I Can you describe a time you've worn a mask or a disguise?

Suggested Activity

Masked Performances

Prepare for the activity by gathering cardboard, construction paper, crayons, markers, scissors, glue, and string.

Have students begin by looking at the image still from Rashid Johnson's film *The Hikers*. Ask students what they notice about the dancers, pose, location, etc. Have students look closely at the image of the mask, asking them to consider how the performance and the masks go together.

After students have had a conversation about the images, have them begin the art activity by cutting out a base shape from cardboard for their masks. Help them cut out spaces for the eyes while they begin to make embellishments for the design. Encourage students to add construction paper, marks, and patterns to their masks.

Once students have finished their masks, break them up into groups of four to five kids. Have students compare their masks and figure out a story the masks can tell together. Students will then come up with a short performance that incorporates all students in the group wearing their masks.

After students have had time to prepare their performances, they will present to the class one group at a time. Upon completion of each performance, have the students who are watching discuss what story their classmates might be trying to tell through movement and masks.

