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Rashid Johnson, *Plateaus*, 2014. Steel, spray enamel, plants, ceramic, concrete, plastic, brass, burned wood, grow lamps, CB radios, shea butter, rugs, books; 228 x 180 x 180 inches. Photo by Fredrik Nilsen. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.

HIGH LINE ART PRESENTS

RASHID JOHNSON *BLOCKS*

**NEW SITE-SPECIFIC SCULPTURE DEBUTS ON THE HIGH LINE AND
TRANSFORMS AS IT INTERACTS WITH THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE**

MAY 2015 – MARCH 2016

ON THE HIGH LINE AT LITTLE WEST 12TH STREET

New York, NY (March 6, 2015) – Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art is pleased to announce that acclaimed artist Rashid Johnson will present his first public commission in New York City, a new site-specific work installed among the vegetation of the High Line at Little West 12th Street. Debuting in the spring, the sculpture will transform as it interacts with the surrounding plant life over the course of its almost year-long residency in the park. Titled *Blocks*, the work will be on view from May 2015 to March 2016.

Inspired by a childhood steeped in African American cultural influences, Rashid Johnson creates layered artworks that engage a conversation between personal biography and the implied gravitas of larger cultural and historical narratives. Johnson works predominantly in mixed media sculptures and paintings, combining bare materials such as mirror, wood, and shea butter with loaded iconic objects including record covers, CB radios, historical books, and common domestic objects. Throughout his career, Johnson has explored the ways in which we form our sense of belonging to races and communities, investigating the relationship between familiar objects and identity.





For his High Line Commission, Johnson will build one of his minimalist three-dimensional steel black grids, which will house a variety of objects including busts painted to resemble shea butter (a material commonly used by the artist), and will act as a living greenhouse as plants on the High Line begin to intertwine with the sculpture over the year of its installation. Playing with forms taken from the Minimalist tradition – Sol LeWitt’s white open cubes come to mind – Johnson turns them into a reflection on blackness by breaking the rational structure open and embedding loaded objects within it.

Installed in an oblong island of plants growing between pathways on the High Line just south of The Standard, High Line, the sculpture will change over the course of its installation, the empty rectilinear vessel becoming a horticultural container as the seasons pass. The work reflects the artist’s ongoing interest in a line from a book by Lawrence Weiner called “Something to Put Something On,” in which the concept “table” is explained as “something to put something on.” This semiotic explication resonates with Johnson, who pushes its implications toward thinking about the ways in which lives, cultures, and historical arcs are a mere practice of putting some things on top other things that are imagined to be taken as given, such as the exemplary case of the table.

Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art says “We are thrilled to be presenting Rashid Johnson’s first public commission in New York City. The installation expands the artist’s interest in questioning the tradition of minimalism by integrating organic forces within it. I look forward to seeing how *Blocks* will interact with the living vegetation of the High Line and what happens when the domestic space is brought out into the public realm.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rashid Johnson (b. 1977, United States) lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver (2014); Ballroom Marfa, Texas (2013); High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2013); Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis (2013); Miami Art Museum (2012); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2012); and South London Gallery (2012). Selected group exhibitions include *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014 – 2015); *30 Americans*, organized by the Rubell Family Collection, Miami, traveling to Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans (2014), Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville (2013 – 2014), Milwaukee Art Museum (2012), Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia (2012), Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2011 – 2012), North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh (2011), and Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2008 – 2009); *Variations: Conversations in and Around Contemporary Painting*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2014); *Body Doubles*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2014); *Angel of History*, Beaux-arts de Paris: L’école nationale supérieure (2013); and *In the Holocene*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA (2012). Johnson’s work has been featured in major biennials, including the 2012 Shanghai Biennale; the 54th Venice Biennale (2011); and the International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Prague (2005).

ABOUT HIGH LINE ART

Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art commissions and produces public art projects on and around the High Line. Founded in 2009, High Line Art presents a wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. Curated by Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art, and produced by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.

High Line Art is presented by Friends of the High Line and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. Major support for High Line Art comes from Donald R. Mullen, Jr. and The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, with additional support from Vital Projects Fund, Inc. High Line Art is supported, in part, with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council and from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

ABOUT THE HIGH LINE AND FRIENDS OF THE HIGH LINE

The High Line is an elevated freight rail line transformed into a public park on Manhattan’s West Side. It is owned by the City of New York, and maintained and operated by Friends of the High Line. Founded in 1999 by community residents, Friends of the High Line fought for the High Line’s preservation and transformation at a time when the historic structure was under the threat of demolition. It is now the non-profit conservancy working with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to make sure the High Line is maintained as an extraordinary public space for all visitors to enjoy. In addition to overseeing maintenance, operations, and public programming for the park, Friends of the High Line works to raise the essential private





funds to support more than 90 percent of the park's annual operating budget, and to advocate for the transformation of the High Line at the Rail Yards, the third and final section of the historic structure, which runs between West 30th and West 34th Streets.

For further information on High Line Art, please visit art.thehighline.org.

MEDIA CONTACT

Ashley Tickle | High Line Art Communications Manager | Friends of the High Line
(212) 206-9922 x2101 | ashley.tickle@thehighline.org

