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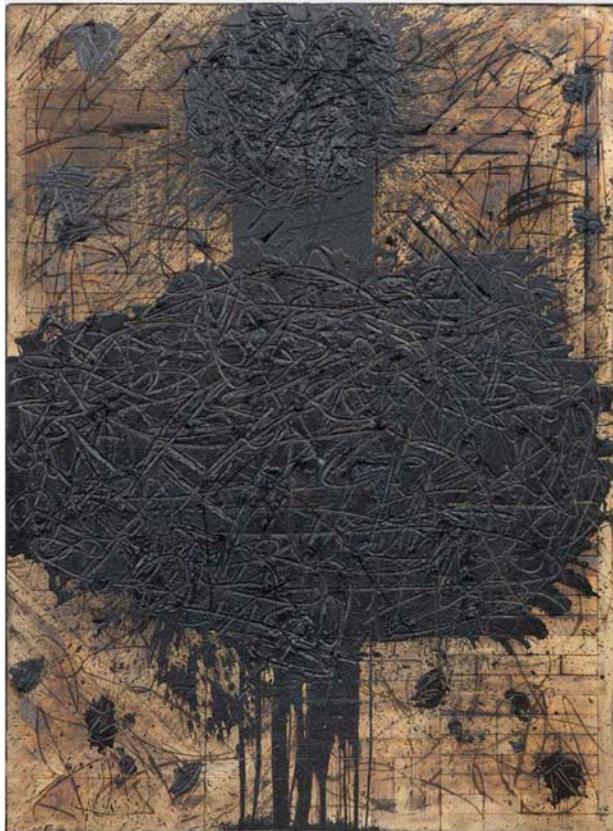
Press Release

Rashid Johnson The Gathering

Hauser & Wirth Zürich
2 November – 21 December 2013
Opening: Friday 1 November, 6 – 8 pm

Hauser & Wirth is excited to announce Rashid Johnson's first solo exhibition in Switzerland, 'The Gathering', comprising over a dozen new works including sculpture, painting and video. For this exhibition, Johnson will unveil a new series of abstract portraits which he refers to as 'characters'.

To make these new works, Johnson begins with a panel made from wood flooring, arranged in a geometric composition and sprayed with gold enamel paint. He then takes a blow torch to the surface and burns off almost all of the paint, leaving behind a golden aura with hints of other colours left by the paint residue. Using this surface as his canvas, the artist applies his signature black soap and wax mixture, creating a gestural form that resembles a figure. The abstracted form of these 'characters' was inspired in part by Johnson's recent re-reading of Albert Camus' 'L'Étranger', in particular a memorable scene in which the rays of the sun obscure Meursault's vision of the Arab.



Figuration has played a significant role in Johnson's work since the earliest days of his career – in a series of photographic portraits of homeless men in Chicago – but here it finds a place in his painting practice for the first time. A group of 'characters' of different scales gather in a single room of the exhibition, suggesting the 'gathering' that the artist refers to in the exhibition's title.

The exhibition will also include several new wood wall sculptures with shelves supporting found objects. Marking a departure from his previous wood wall works, in this exhibition Johnson makes the edges of the works uneven, revealing the wooden floor boards from which the panels are made. With shamanistic inspiration from both African-American and Art history, many of Johnson's works employ materials in a way that suggests an indefinite form

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of mysticism and a role as devotional objects, and these sculptures suggest a use as altars or shrines. In fact, the artist has said that he likes the idea of these objects literally being put to use: the books on the shelves being read and contemplated, the shea butter being rubbed on elbows, the records being played, and so forth.

'Everybody's a Star' is a new black mirror work that Johnson has created for his Zurich show, and is his largest to date. Comprised of hundreds of pieces of black mirrored tile, the surface is splattered and built up with black soap and wax on two planes: first on the floor, with the artist standing above, pouring onto and working into the mirrored panels below; and then on the wall, the drips down the face of the work bearing witness to this axial shift.



Hanging on the gallery's back wall is 'The Hour of Chaos', a large gridded steel structure, displaying a vinyl album, shea butter, books and plants. These objects are reminiscent of relics or offerings; the outline of the shelves echoing the lines of a constructivist painting. On the floor near this sculpture sits a work comprising of a Persian rug, a material the artist has employed in recent years, piled with oversized blocks of shea butter and resting below an array of plants hanging from the ceiling. Originating from Africa, shea butter is admired for its soothing and healing properties. The Persian rug refers both to psychoanalysis (Johnson is struck by the abundance of them in photographs of Sigmund Freud's office) and to his personal history, as his wife is of Iranian descent. The notion of nurture is carried forward with the artist's installation of palm and spider plants that hang from the gallery ceiling, encompassing works and leading visitors through the gallery space beneath a living canopy.



Johnson's most recent video work, 'Samuel in Space' is presented on a monitor placed on another rug in the centre of the main gallery space. Filmed in Marfa, Texas, 'Samuel in Space' continues a trajectory that began with 'The New Black Yoga', a dance-like movement piece originally inspired

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by Johnson's attempts to learn yoga while in Berlin, where his inability to understand German thwarted both his physical and intellectual mastery of the poses. Shot on location in and around Marfa, 'Samuel in Space' depicts a black male dancer moving (or tumbling) through the high desert at sunrise, seemingly laying claim to and revelling in the landscape.

Johnson's recent solo exhibitions include 'New Growth', Ballroom Marfa, TX (2013); 'Shelter', South London Gallery, London, England (2012); 'Rumble', Hauser & Wirth New York NY (2012) and the major touring survey exhibition 'Message to Our Folks' which opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago IL (2012) and travelled to Miami Art Museum, Miami FL (2012), High Museum of Art, Atlanta GA (2012) and most recently Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis MO, where it will be on view until January 2014.

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Bootsy

2013

Burned red oak flooring, black soap, wax, spray enamel
245.1 x 184.2 x 7.6 cm / 96 1/2 x 72 1/2 x 3 in

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Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Martin Parsekian

Shut Down

2013

Branded red oak flooring, black soap, wax, shea butter,
book, gold spray enamel

292.4 x 243.8 x 34.7 cm / 115 1/8 x 96 x 13 5/8 in

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Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Martin Parsekian

Everybody's a Star

2013

Black mirrored tile, black soap, wax

365.8 x 609.6 x 7.6 cm / 144 x 240 x 3 in

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Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Martin Parsekian