ATLANTA– The High Museum of Art has named artist Rashid Johnson as the 2012 recipient of the David C. Driskell Prize.

Named after the renowned African American artist and art scholar, the Driskell Prize is an annual award that recognizes a scholar or artist in the beginning or middle of his or her career whose work makes an original and important contribution to the field of African American art or art history. Based in New York, Johnson works in a variety of media, including photography, sculpture, painting, drawing and printmaking. As the eighth Driskell Prize recipient, Johnson will be honored at the Driskell Prize Dinner in Atlanta on Saturday, May 5.

“Rashid Johnson is a visual artist fully incorporating every available resource to create works relevant to both the past and the present,” said Michael E. Shapiro, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green Jr., director of the High. “His ability to draw upon materials and visual sources that stand alone formally but have strong ties to the African Diaspora and highlight African culture through his imaginative and distinctive art exemplifies the qualities of a David C. Driskell Prize recipient. We are pleased to support his vision and development through this award.”

In April of this year, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago will present Rashid Johnson’s first major museum solo exhibition. Johnson will explore the complexities of black identity by creating a dialogue with legacies of black intellectual and popular figures through a process and materials-based practice of photographs, sculptures, videos, installations and paintings that are rooted in his own identity as an African American. The shifting nature of identity and one’s agency in that shift are at the root of his work, which deconstructs a false notion of a monolithic African American identity by bringing education and class differences into the discussion.

A preeminent artist of the post-media generation, Johnson skillfully oscillates among several different media depending upon conceptual needs of the work. Johnson’s specific materials allude to alchemy, transformation and magic to undermine any sense of concrete understanding in favor of prompting a sense of wonder in the unknown, yet stem from the familiar and

commonplace. His sculptures, photographs and installations evoke an otherworldly idea, often incorporating found objects, plants, books, vinyl records, photographs, vessels and Shea butter for their personal and universal connotations.

Rashid Johnson received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Columbia College of Chicago in 2000 and attended the Art Institute of Chicago from 2004 to 2005 before moving to New York. In 2011 Johnson was named as one of the six finalists for the The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation's 2012 Hugo Boss Prize. Over the last 10 years, Johnson's participation in numerous solo and group exhibitions has been met with critical success. Originally from Chicago, he currently lives and works in New York City.

ADDITIONAL IMAGE OF NOTE