

Rashaad Newsome

*Silence Please,
the Show
is About to
Begin*

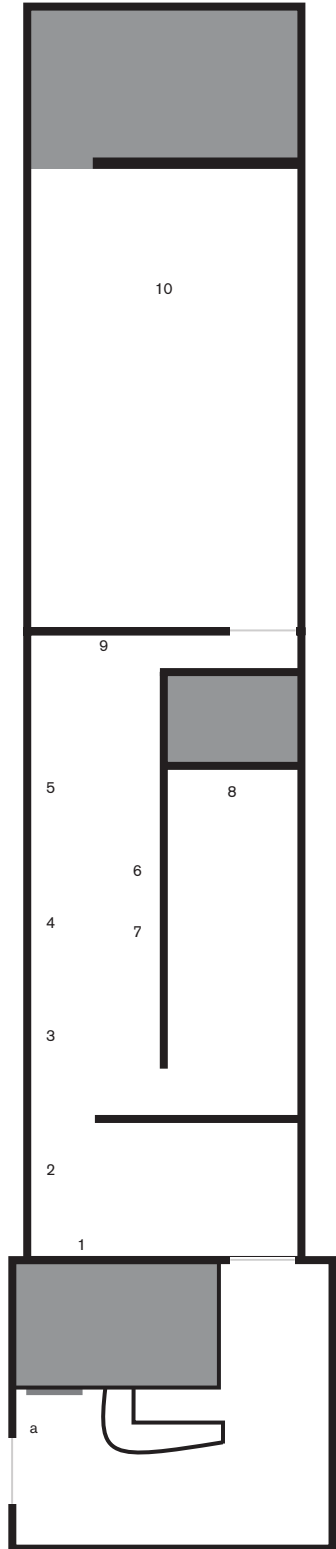
Curated by Suzanne Carte
Art Gallery of York University
April 8 – June 14, 2015

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agYU

Rashaad Newsome's first Canadian exhibition, *Silence Please, the Show is About to Begin*, brings together a selection of recent video, performance documentation, and collage works that explore the construction of gender, race, and class. Newsome works directly with vogue ball dancers in New York and appropriates the work of hip-hop legends to create new narratives that challenges narrow views of what it means to be black and queer.

Through his video mash-ups, collages, and concerts, Newsome redefines ideas about masculinity, gender performance, and the communication of status. He boldly melds the glamour of luxury goods with the aristocracy of heraldry, folding them together to create a new vision of "high" culture. Like the showmanship on display in bling culture, Newsome doesn't shy away from spectacle. The compositions are big, bright, and bold. In an explosion of light and colour, the pieces drip with gold chains, diamond rings, and jewel studs.



Collages by Rashaad Newsome

1) **Saints and Centers 1**, 2014

Collage, 22 x 30 inches

2) **Saints and Centers 5**, 2014

Collage, 22 x 30 inches

3) **LSS (Alex Mugler)**, 2014

Collage in customized antique frame, 50 ½ x 58 x 4 inches

4) **LSS (Omari Mizrahi)**, 2014

Collage in customized antique frame, 50 ½ x 58 x 4 inches

5) **LSS (Kevin JZ Prodigy)**, 2014

Collage in customized antique frame, 50 ½ x 58 x 4 inches

6) **Ballroom Floor**, 2014

Collage, 52 ½ x 62 ½ x 3 ¼ inches

7) **Patterns, Pathologies and Paradigms**, 2014

Collage, 50 x 60 x 3 ¼ inches

Videos by Rashaad Newsome

8) **Shade Compositions SFMOMA**, 2012

Performance/video, 49' 59"

Newsome's *Shade Compositions* series feature choirs of women and queer men of colour performing intonations and gestures stereotypical of expressing annoyance or directing attitude — *throwing shade*. Newsome leads the concert of voices by sampling, looping, and overlaying the recording of the chorus in real time, utilizing a modified Wii controller to remix the sound. Performing urban expression in a classic theatrical setting, the choral series becomes an anthropological composition, critiquing and celebrating the complexities of Black vernacular.

Each presentation of the improvised score contains different actions and verbal cues specific to the locale. This version took place at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where the performers were selected from an open-call audition process. For the SFMOMA performance, participants were outfitted in clothes by Bay-area native Alexander Wang.

9) **KNOT**, 2014
Video, 3' 45"

Commissioned for the Brooklyn Museum of Art's *Killer Heels* exhibition, *KNOT* brings together legends of the ballroom scene to a soundtrack composed by Newsome. The song features vocals by Newsome as well as his long time collaborator MC Kevin Prodigy, newcomer queer MC Cakes Da Killa, and singer Ian Isaiah (also featured in Newsome's *Shade Composition* SFMOMA performance). Through the doors of a dream closet lined with the signature red soles of Louboutin stilettos — status symbol of luxury footwear — dancers move through psychedelic fields and duck walk in meadows of lacquered flowers.

The wallpaper is constructed from photographs of jewelry in the private collection of Oprah's *W Magazine*. The pattern was originally designed by Newsome to vinyl-wrap a Lamborghini Murciélago to lead his 2013 *King of Arms* procession in New Orleans.

A reappearing motif in Newsome's work is Leonardo da Vinci's drawing the *Vitruvian Man*. In this video, da Vinci's circular frame becomes a diamond-encrusted watch face. Taking the place of the watch's hands, vogue dancers in turn take the place of da Vinci's "perfect man." Significantly, most of the dancers representing this idealized (male) beauty are transwomen.

10) **ICON**, 2014
Video, 9' 21"

The feature video, *ICON*, positions a cast of vogue dancers, breakers, and pole dancers in a digital playground of Baroque architecture. The ornamental architecture of Baroque opulence is crossed with the sensibilities of Hip-hop luxury. Dancers take over formal architectural configurations, at times becoming them, composing new symbols of power and status. Queer and transgendered bodies spin and twist in the domes and vaulted ceilings of European cathedrals, which serve as the backdrop to voguing's most distinctive move, the "death drop." Accompanied by a Hildegard von Bingen medieval chorus mashed-up with house and trap beats, women wrap their legs around silver chains in acrobatic performances. In this video, Rashaad positions ballroom Legends as icons — the ultimate divas; the incarnation of all things magnificent and powerful across the spectrum of our past, present, and future.

Offsite Video Installation by Rashaad Newsome

Rashaad Newsome, *Untitled and Untitled (New Way)*, 2010
Video, 6'48"

Presented at Public Window (1575 Dundas Street West)
8 – 19 April, 2015. Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Public Studio hosts *Untitled and Untitled (New Way)* by Rashaad Newsome as part of their Public Window series. Stark and unadorned, the videos catalogue styles, variations, and gestures of dancers in the New York ballroom community, illustrating traditional movements and adding new moves to the repertoire.

All works by Rashaad Newsome are courtesy of the artist and Marlborough Gallery, New York.

Opening Night Performance

Rashaad Newsome with House of Monroe, *AGYU*, 2015
Performance, ~15'

Members of the House of Monroe walk the gallery at the opening reception, Wednesday, April 8, to the beats of *ICON*. These voguers have defined the Toronto Ballroom Community and helped drive the scene's increasing prominence in the city.

Audio Out Listening Post

a) TravoyintheFlesh, *Pop, Spin, Dip, Pump*, 2015
Audio, 21' 4"

At AGYU Audio Out listening post, *Pop, Spin, Dip, Pump* gets you riled and ready to dance and move. These beats and chants get the “gurls” screaming and shouting up and down the runway. Warning: these sounds will be fab, fierce, and fun.

Originally from Jamaica, TravoyintheFlesh is a multi-disciplinary artist and activist, majoring in Sociology at York University. He is a pioneer of the ballroom scene in Toronto: Mother of the House of Monroe, Chair of the Toronto Kiki Ballroom Alliance, and Legendary Canada Father for The Legendary Royal Kiki House of Old Navy.

Vitrines

b) Daniel Cockburn, *I Can Feel It*, 2015
Three channel video. 4' 25"

Sing along with Daniel Cockburn's *I Can Feel It* in AGYU Vitrines. Silently rocking out along the Accolade East Building's corridor, the three videos share an inaudible tempo. One word at a time, you can feel it in the air... and hear it in your head.

Currently completing his Masters in Film Production at York University, Cockburn is a writer, director, and videomaker who has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions internationally. He is the second artist presented in the AGYU's new series of commissioned works by York MFA and PhD students.



<http://theAGYUisOutThere.org/everywhere>