



## Rashaad Newsome Unveils Video Installation at Westfield World Trade Center

By Kristen Tauer | April 25, 2018

The Brooklyn-based artist is showing his "Icon" video art in collaboration with the Art Production Fund.



Rashaad Newsome, photo by George Chinsee

For the next month, you can meet Rashaad Newsome at the mall.

The New York-based artist has installed his video at Westfield World Trade Center and Westfield Century City, in collaboration with the Art Production Fund. Through the end of May, his "Icon" series, featuring vogue performers, will be publicly projected across 19 screens alongside advertising programming at the shopping centers. The juxtaposition parallels the themes Newsome explores in much of his work.

"I use a lot of images from advertising in my collage work, and my videos are essentially live-action videos of those collages," says Newsome from inside his Brooklyn studio, where several of his works-in-progress are on display. "So it was kind of interesting to show that work interspersed with the world that a lot of the images come from."

In addition to taking a page from advertising — much of his work is constructed using images that have been cut-out by hand from catalogues, visible in his studio as a seemingly bottomless pile on a large work table — he also draws inspiration from the voguing community, hip-hop culture, heraldry and baroque architecture.



Rashaad Newsome; photo by George Chinsee

Newsome describes his process as “an elaborate allegory about holding space — taking space when there is no space for you in the world,” he says of using collage as a tool for evocation. “Each image that makes up the background is fighting for its space in the composition, the background is fighting the foreground for space within the picture plane, the frame is trying to devour the actual artwork,” he explains. “That was sort of a connection to the work I do with and about the voguing community — there’s a sense of battling in that world, but also in hip-hop culture, which is an ongoing reference in the work; emcees battle.”

Transporting those ideas to Westfield, the videos are also, in a sense, competing for space within the video screens, which they will share with tangential imagery.

“The video [work] is called ‘Icon’ because I was thinking about what brought me to making the collage work, which was looking at heraldry, and looking at the design formula of heraldry,” he explains. “And within the heralds who create these images there’s a ranking system. I thought it was interesting that within the vogue community there are also [ranks]. I chose to call the piece ‘Icon’ because icon is the highest level one can achieve within that world,” he adds.

Much of the imagery he works with is familiar, but given new meaning through context.

“There’s kind of a queering of all these things that we recognize — we recognize the chains and all that stuff associated with hip-hop culture, we recognize the body that I insert into the space, and you recognize the spaces, but they’re kind of seemingly desperate — there’s a kind of queering of all these things that we know and understand, as an allegory for a queer being a state of mind rather than a lifestyle.”



Rashaad Newsome; photos by George Chinsee

The project at Westfield marks Newsome’s second collaboration with the Art Production Fund, which commissions and matches public art projects for different spaces.

“Rashaad’s work is bold, graphic and powerful. It instantly pulls you in to its visual landscape,” says Art Production Fund executive director Casey Fremont. “This unparalleled platform, and the diversity of the enormous audience who will experience the work every day, make it in extraordinarily special opportunity.”

Newsome — who is working on another video project involving vogue dancers, using motion capture technology — notes gratitude for the exposure Westfield offers, particularly with audiences less likely to experience Newsome’s work in a more traditional art setting.

“The art world is a bubble. It’s nice for the work to exist in a space where it can be seen not only by people who follow and appreciate art, but just everyday people who may not, but it may make them think about it more,” he says. “It’s also nice to have those bodies in that space, for that long. Even just going there for tests and seeing people walk by, and seeing those bodies there that they normally don’t see in that space...that was exciting, to see them excited.”