

# UNTO ITSELF

KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED

SEPTEMBER 19–OCTOBER 6, 2017

About the Artist

Kameelah Janan Rasheed (b.1985) is a Brooklyn-based interdisciplinary artist, writer, and former high school public school teacher from East Palo Alto, CA working in installation, photography, printmaking, publications, and performance. She is on the faculty of the MFA Fine Arts program at the School of Visual Arts and also works full-time as a social studies curriculum developer for New York public schools.

Rasheed has exhibited her work in North America, Africa, and Europe at the 2017 Venice Biennale, ICA-Philadelphia, Printed Matter (forthcoming), Jack Shainman Gallery, Studio Museum in Harlem, Bronx Museum, Queens Museum, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Project Row Houses, the Luminary, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Transmission Gallery (UK), Wysing Art Centre (UK), National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Pinchuk Art Centre (UA), MoCADA, Boston University Art Gallery, among others.

Her work has been written about in *Artforum*, *Guernica Magazine*, *New York Times*, *Art 21*, *Wall Street Journal*, *ArtSlant*, and *Hyperallergic*.

Recently shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize, Rasheed is the recipient of several other awards and honors including the Harpo Foundation Grant, Magnum Foundation Grant, Creative Exchange Lab at the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art Residency, Smack Mellon Studio Residency, Triple Canopy Commission at New York Public Library Labs, Lower Eastside Print Shop Keyholder Residency, A.I.R. Gallery Fellowship, Queens Museum Jerome Emerging Artist Fellowship, Artadia Grant, Art Matters Grant, Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant, Process Space Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Residency, Center for Book Arts Residency, Center for Photography at Woodstock Residency, among others. She has participated in readings and performances at Housing Works, Cave Canem, Red Bull Arts New York, Poetry Project, among others.

Rasheed has spoken at the Printed Matter Book Fair, New Museum, Montclair Art Museum, the MET, MoMA, MoMA PS1, Brooklyn Museum, Queens Museum, MCNY, Creative Time, Schomburg Center, NYU, 8th Floor Gallery, etc. She has been a visiting lecturer at Northwestern University, MICA, Williams, Hampshire College, School of Visual Arts, Parsons, The New School, and Columbia University.

A 2006 Amy Biehl Fulbright Scholar to South Africa, Rasheed holds a BA in Policy and Africana Studies from Pomona College (2006) and an EdM in Secondary Education from Stanford University (2008).

For further information, visit: [www.kameelahr.com](http://www.kameelahr.com)

*Unto Itself* (second activation) is made possible at the University of Maryland by the Department of Art and its annual John Dorsey Prize.

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About the Work

Kameelah Janan Rasheed's process begins with intensive archival research around a set of open-ended questions. She arrived at *Unto Itself* by examining "how we tell stories about progress . . . how time has changed history and changed our conditions." From her diverse array of practices, Rasheed then selects the medium that best fit the ideas she's working through—in this case, a combination of digital collage, printmaking, and xerox. These variable materials come together as an installation as Rasheed examines how text and language can "live in places other than books—how it can live on walls, how it can live in projections, how it can live in a range of spaces . . . creating a space where people can read differently . . . *read a space*, sitting and having their own starting point."

Language is shape-shifting, duplicitous, and unpredictable. Rasheed considers language for what it can and cannot do: "There are things that we want to express about how history has developed, how we have developed as individuals that we can't always expressed, and language is often there to do that work but language often fails." Where text and images in this installation are cut off and inconclusive, spilling over corners and edges, or becoming otherwise opaque, Rasheed invites visitors to conceive of their own meanings and to contemplate for themselves the possibilities of finishing or extending a phrase.

*Unto Itself* was first created for the Future Generation Art Prize exhibition at the Pinchuk Art Centre in Kyiv, Ukraine in spring 2017. For this second activation at University of Maryland, Rasheed reorganized print materials in clustered and lone items that traverse the irregular faceted walls and terraced layout of the Herman Maril Gallery's five-sided space. The installation was realized as a pedagogical collaboration with University of Maryland's 2017 Art Honors students, guided by project co-curator Raino Isto and in virtual dialogue with the artist. Together they melded methods – from the improvisational to the systematic – in interpreting the idiosyncrasies of the real space and of the artist's materials and layouts in this new context.

*Unto Itself* (second activation) is accompanied by a small, satellite installation in nearby administrative display cases of posters from Rasheed's 2017 series, *Are We There Yet? (and other questions of proximity, destination, and relative comfort)*, which first debuted as a large-scale banner at the 2017 Venice Biennale.

This project is curated by 2017 Dorsey Prize winners Raino Isto and Cecilia Wichmann, both graduate students in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Maryland-College Park, and was conceived in conjunction with the recent acquisition of two prints from Rasheed's 2016 series "How to Suffer Politely (And Other Etiquette)" by the University of Maryland's 2016–2017 Contemporary Art Purchasing Program. The prints are on view through October 14 alongside other new acquisitions in *New Arrivals 2017* at the Stamp Gallery in the Adele H. Stamp Student Union—Center for Campus Life. Rasheed will visit campus October 6 to deliver a public talk.

For further information, visit: [thestamp.umd.edu/Gallery](http://thestamp.umd.edu/Gallery)

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