



Sculptor and conceptual artist Willie Cole sitting on one of his original works. He uses everyday objects like women's high heels in repetition to transform those objects and grant new perspectives to his audience.



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The 2017 Newark Arts Honors Award Ceremony and Gala: Honoree Willie Cole

Newark, NJ – March 8, 2017– On March 29, 2017, sculptor and conceptual artist Willie Cole will be one of four creatives honored at the 2017 Newark Arts Honors Award Ceremony and Gala. The Gala honors artists who have made significant contributions in their field and represent diverse artistic communities and cultures.

Willie Cole is a Newark, New Jersey born-and-bred artist whose work has been featured in solo exhibits, group exhibits, site-specific installations, and college campuses across the country. Cole's work touches on themes of consumerism and includes traditional African-American iconography weaved in with pop culture motifs. His work embodies contemporary sculpture, addressing the intersections of biography and history- not just of himself, but of the viewer as

well. Some of his most notable pieces include a chandelier constructed of plastic water bottles, mask sculptures made of different shoes, and lithographs comparing the imprint of a clothing iron with an African-American slave ship.

Transcending biography and carving out a niche in the contemporary art field, Cole's work is often boiled down to themes of femininity, consumerism, or the African-American experience. In an interview with a Michigan newspaper, however, Cole himself stated, "Because I'm African-American, people often say it's about the African-American experience, but it's really about the human experience. People of all races wear shoes, use irons, that kind of stuff." A chandelier made of water bottles, for example, tells the story of both plastic manufacturing and the communities that helped Cole collect the thousands of water bottles. Viewers' reactions to the art says a lot about how they feel about those narratives.

Cole has been honored with numerous awards and residencies at institutions across the country and has been noted for his contributions to contemporary African-American art and art history. His engagements with art continue to have an impact on the communities where he lives and works. Come join us in honoring his ongoing legacy at the Newark Arts Honors Gala on March 29, 2017.



Above: With a Heart of Gold, sculpture by Willie Cole

About Newark Arts (formerly Newark Arts Council): Newark Arts is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created to advance and expand the artistic and cultural resources of the City of Newark,

New Jersey. The Council's mission is to bring the transformative power of the arts into the lives of those who live in, work in, and visit Newark. The Council is the umbrella for the Newark Arts Education Roundtable (NAER) and is a partner with the Mayor's Office of Cultural Development, Arts, and Tourism. The Council awards neighborhood grants through its ArtStart program, produces the Open Doors Citywide Arts Festival every October, and will oversee Newark's Community Cultural Plan in 2017-2018. For more information, visit www.newarkarts.org.

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