

Intersections of Futures Thinking and Afrofuturist Visioning

A memo from an Afrofuturist Festival

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Afrofuturism aims to reclaim and transform
the trauma of past atrocities
against the Black and Afro-Queer diaspora.”

—LONNY BROOKS
CO-DESIGNER OF THE FESTIVAL

The Future is Dark, Planetary, Speculative, and Surreal

Afro-artists find themselves at a pivotal point in the long history of peoples with roots in Africa. It is a time when the histories of fighting oppression can be transformed into futures that are powerful, sustaining visions of humanity engaging technology, reimagining and rebuilding the planet, and even exploring the universe beyond the planet. And just as the Afro visions that are emerging from today's artists eschew the narrow identities of past oppressions, they require a kind of futures perspective that goes beyond narrow, short-term formulations of Afro issues to imagine Afrofutures that are not simply extensions of the past.

To incubate this perspective, Institute for the Future, with support from the Blue Shield of California Foundation, hosted a one-day AfroFutures Festival to bring together artists, community members, and futures practitioners—exploring what Afrofutures tools and methodologies might look like and how they might catalyze imagination, vision, and new realities for people of color.

Fifteen Afrofuturist artists—poets, visual artists, musicians, and storytellers—led the way for about 150 guests at IFTF's Gallery of the Future, with reach into the networks of San Jose State University, California State University East Bay, and the Black Speculative Art Movement (BSAM) as well as the Ashara Ekundayo Gallery, the Museum of the African Diaspora, and Zoo Labs.

Participants explored four virtual reality experiences, dozens of paintings and sculptures, and three video installations alongside resources about historic bias, Afro aesthetics, human-machine collaboration, feminism, and ancestral heritage. They engaged in conversations about social justice, institutional racism, foresight, and imaginative visioning with over 22 speakers, in person and with remote connections as far away as China, Barcelona, and Lagos.

This memo is a brief tour of the experiences that shaped the festival—and the visions that might inspire Afro-artists at this pivotal point in time.





A Foresight-Insight-Action Tour of Afrofutures

The idea for an Afrofutures Festival came about when the Black Speculative Arts Movement designed festival conferences for IFTF's 50-year practice of futures thinking. The festival embraced the possibility of an Afrocentric perspective within futures forecasting. This perspective is both long overdue and deeply embedded in the long history of Black people.

"Black people have always been futurists," Lonny Brooks, co-designer of the festival," explains. "We had to be. Afrofuturism aims to reclaim and transform the trauma of past atrocities against the Black and Afro-Queer diaspora."

He cites the experience of being brought through the Middle Passage as a "science-fiction horror story where Black people were transported from Western Africa, the home planet of the Black Diaspora, and where previously unseen technologies of transportation and bondage were used to dislocate, kidnap large numbers of people to a new world."

Arriving in this new world, enslaved people were killed if they spoke their own languages or practiced their own rituals. They had to adopt a new religion and infuse it under the radar with their own rituals.

"In this world they had to innovate, adapt, capitulate, succumb, and rebuild their former lives and traditions. Spirituals became a form of sonic utopias, articulating Black visions of a future of uncolonized minds and bodies," Brooks continues. "This is a form of futurism. And forecasting is stronger, not weaker, when it includes the fullness of the forecaster, stronger as advocate than as agnostic."

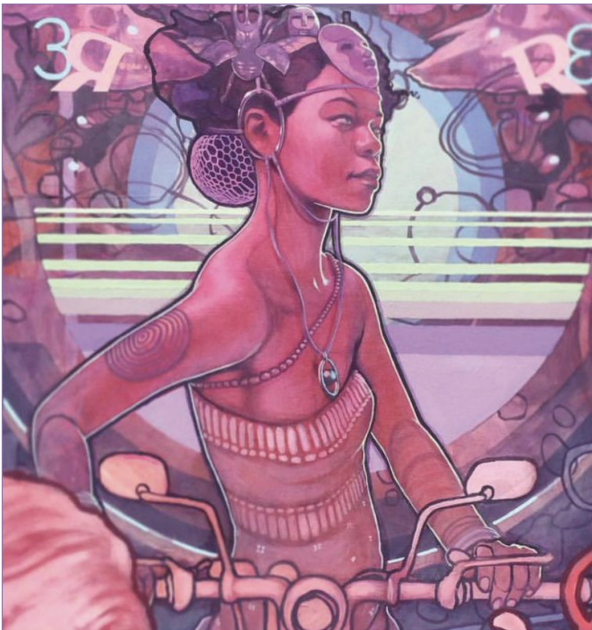
The premise of the festival, then, was a blending of IFTF's forecasting toolkit for a process called Foresight-Insight-Action with the perspectives of Black artists, writers, poets, and activists, participating as futurists in their own right. Presented here are the highlights of the conversations inspired by this blend.

A LEXICON OF THE FUTURE

Afrofuturism 2.0 is the early 21st Century technogenesis of Black identity

As Reynaldo Anderson emphasized in his keynote for the festival, Afrofuturism is not a unified school of thought and practice. It intersects with Afro-Surrealism, African sci-fi, Black feminist sci-fi, Black speculative art, and ethno-gothic film, among others. Each of these has its own touchstone works of writing, film, and art, and each has a different way of imagining Black futures. But perhaps Afrofuturism 2.0, as defined by Anderson, provides an umbrella definition:

Afrofuturism 2.0 is the early 21st Century technogenesis of Black identity, reflecting counter histories, hacking and or appropriating network software, database logic, cultural analytics, deep remixability, neurosciences, enhancement and augmentation, gender fluidity, post-human possibility. It has grown into an important diasporic technological Pan-African movement.



Artist: Joshua Mays

SIGNALS OF EQUITABLE FUTURES

The time for shits and giggles is over

In America, Afrofutures have historically been the futures of struggle for equality in a land where the curation of art, history, and technology has been a curation of exclusion by the dominant culture. The Afro response to this “curation of exclusion” has been movement making, cultivation of community and personal relationships, and a repurposing of technology to create authentic cultures in the margins.

The Afrofutures Festival convened a panel of artists, teachers, and movement makers to learn from signals of revolution in today’s world of inequality. These panelists pointed to three domains where that revolution is happening today:

Movement making: As panel moderator, Anmol Chaddha said, “The idea of trying to connect to build a social movement that is geared towards this almost unimaginable future of social inequality is a greater feat of futurism” [than the work of celebrated futurists like Elon Musk].

Transformative technology: Technology is an inevitable piece of the puzzle in equitable Afrofutures, but it must have an explicitly social context. Consider the drive to develop a blockchain economy with EOS Detroit, focusing on engaging decentralized autonomous communities of people of color in innovation.

Post-apocalyptic narratives: A key role of Afrofuturism is to help people build new narratives beyond the apocalyptic visions that exist today because, in a very real way, African Americans have already lived through a centuries-long apocalypse as colonization, slavery, and genocide destroyed everything that African Americans knew. Afrofuturism allows communities to go into the imaginary and see that there are a lot of different ways of organizing society.

As panelist Niota Guyra said, “We’re in a serious time right now. If we don’t bring other voices to the table—the people who are impacted by the things we talk about here—we will never advance. The time for shits and giggles is over.”

SIGNALS OF AFRO-INNOVATION

You're entitled to make a difference in the world

Check the narrative: after years of stories and images of Africa as a continent trailing behind, as a people impoverished and sickened and war-torn, the future is coming to life, at scale, on the continent. The Africa of today is becoming the continent of tomorrow—connected, innovative, and, most of all, young and excited. Young African people are thinking ahead of today's technology and ahead of today's policies. They are imagining a future that is more diverse, more inclusive, and more prosperous for everybody. And they're scrambling to make that future real, innovation by innovation.

At the Afrofutures Festival, panelists from Nigeria, China, and Barcelona joined a conversation about today's African innovation and what it means for Afrofutures worldwide. These panelists told a story of cutting-edge technological innovation in a landscape where access and connection can't be taken for granted. Here are some of the signposts they see on the road to the future:

Local access, global connection: Access to technology is uneven, but young innovators are working to grow access, through networks of 3D virtual reality mini-labs throughout Nigeria and across Africa, or through efforts to connect Lagos, Nigeria to the world through the Porthole system that currently provides life-size image, voice, and video connections to 36 locations around the world.

African technology design and development: While Nigerians may not have access to 3DVR systems, they are already imagining and working toward a future where these tools will be ubiquitous, with social implications as well. Consider, for example, a young Muslim fashion illustrator who aspires to create a 3D virtual reality fashion show, or a young man who is creating artificial skin designed to attract malaria-carrying mosquitos away from actual human skin.

Young Innovators, nearly a billion strong: At the heart of the African innovation story is a population of young people. Africa is a young continent, demographically speaking: 60% of its 1.25 billion people are under 25 years old. While the world often points to these statistics as worrisome, citing the potential economic disruption of a vast number of young people unable to find jobs in the global economy, young Africans see themselves creating the future economy.

China and the Afro-innovation future: It is clear that China is investing heavily in Africa's future and its emerging culture of innovation. And Africans have concerns that the price tag for this investment may be high. Innovators like Folabi Esan, however, are not as worried about Chinese control in Africa. As he says: "Nigeria is extremely diverse, and it makes it very difficult for any outside party to come in there and exert unilateral control over the country." Esan believes that there is a lesson for the United States and others, however, and that lesson is long-term planning. China has a long-term view, and Esan advises Africans and their would-be partners worldwide to think in terms of generations.

The future of Africa really comes down to the speed of change and the part that individuals can play in that change to make it useful. At the end of the day, said the panelists, "the solution is in us."

RADICAL FUTURES GAMING

A reparations tattoo? I think you just won the game!

The year is 2030, and on a series of clandestine floating islands, the Global Afronet, is weaving a tapestry of the future. Each island hosts a unique city, with a single Futurescope at its center. Citizens visit the Futurescope, an enormous structure featuring floors of research labs and art galleries, pierced through the center by a bundle of glowing wires. These wires run throughout the building, eventually converging in an orb that floats atop the building. The collective work and energy of the building diffuses through the orb, creating the perfect setting for citizens of the island to meet and collaborate on visions of the future. As these visions are produced, they link to the network of stories created by Futurescopes across the planet, creating a colossal map for an ultimate journey through the Astro-Blackness Plane where we rise above our colonized past and see the full universe.

So begins a card game called *Afro-Rhythms from the Future*. Created by Lonny Brooks and game developer Eli Kosminsky, the game is designed to draw out unexpected possibilities, encourage radical reimagining, and collaboratively produce visions of diverse futures. The game is a dynamic, engaging, and safe space for a community to imagine possible worlds using ordinary objects as inspirations to rethink existing organizational, institutional, and societal relationships.

The winner by declaration was a woman who imagined a tattoo that represented one's history and could be scanned to receive reparation funds to redress and heal the trauma of slavery. In summarizing all the features of the future imagined in the gameplay, Kominsky said:

Our future has tattoos that store memories and produce reparations from one generation to the next. It has a power glove that can snap away the police. It has infinity stones, and it's temperature regulated. It has a black skirt that cannot be penetrated—it's bulletproof and reflects and amplifies the sounds in the surroundings. It has stories that induce deep empathy and self-care and naps. It deconstructs colonialism, especially for women.



AFRO-PRESENT WOMANIST IMAGINARY

**“We are living in someone else’s imagination.
How do we create our own?”**

At the core of the Afrofuturist project is a reimagining of the world—a reimagining of infrastructures and institutions, cultural resources, and culture itself. Women play a central role in this project, creating what artist and community gallery owner Ashara Ekundayo calls “The Womanist Imaginary,” which ultimately reimagines the very definition of woman.

At the Afrofutures Festival, three women led the conversation about an “Afro-Present Womanist Imaginary,” focusing on the ways that women of color are creating the essential space for personal and cultural reimagination. As panelist A-lan Holt said, “We are living in someone else’s imagination. How do we create our own?”

Reimagining Woman: In 1983, Alice Walker coined the term “womanism” in her book *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens* to distinguish the feminism of women of color from White feminism. She offered four definitions:

- 1. From “you acting womanish...**usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior.”
- 2. A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually...**appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility... and women’s strength...Traditionally capable, as in “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.”
- 3. “Loves music.** Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.”
- 4. “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.”**

Reimagining Womanist Institutions and Culture:

In imagining institutions of the future, society needs to understand—and reimagine—the institution of women. As Vinitha Watson, founder of the Zoo Labs music accelerator said, “The ability of women to support and hold people is massive and undervalued. The institution of woman is the source of creation.”

Reimagining Womanist Infrastructure: Women of color need a new infrastructure for the roles they have been cast into, including nurturing girls into womanhood and protecting them from violence. But women are also asked to do the work of dreaming the future and they need an infrastructure that respects and supports this work. A project by Amara Tabor-Smith, called “Black Women Dreaming,” invites black women to come into secret location and just nap in the middle of the day, just rest and dream together in secret. According to panelist Vinitha Watson, this is very necessary work, work that often does not get funded. Smith’s project, says Watson, is a call to cultural work and community practice: “A powerful nap that opens up space for all of us who are chronically fatigued and using this work redress this imbalance.”

Reimagining Womanist Resources: Reimagining the future of women of color and reimagining cultures of color, in general, requires a redistribution of resources. Yet as people like Watson, Smith, and Ekundayo have found, they are often with wealth holders who don’t think culture is worth investing in. As Watson argues: “This is what is raising our children, teaching and educating them.”

Reflections on Festival as Futures Methodology

The Afrofutures Festival was a collaborative effort among distinctly different organizations ranging from a research organization to a museum, gallery, music accelerator, and movement-making arts network. Its goal: to blend a well-established set of futures thinking practices with the sensibility of artists, musicians, writers, and activists to catalyze new futures for the global Black Diaspora and African community and the artists who represent those futures.

Beyond this basic goal, the festival was an experiment in blending the perspectives of established, research-based approaches to the future with the creative, often outsider views of Black artists. This experiment combined the IFTF Foresight-Insight-Action framework with the arts festival methodology of the Black Speculative Arts Movement (BSAM), which brings together the variety of Black artist movements ranging from Afrofuturism, Astro Blackness, and Afro-Surrealism to Ethno Gothic, Black Science Fiction, Magical Realism, and the Esoteric, among others. (See “A Lexicon of the Future” earlier in this report.)

The Foresight-Insight-Action framework of IFTF gave structure to the festival, but the festival also reimagined this framework for people who have been marginalized and whose futures are often characterized by the mainstream as “unequal” at best and “bleak” at worst. This reimagining suggests important lessons for building an Equitable Futures Network that gives real voice to diverse members of society. Consider specifically the following reframing of the Foresight-Insight-Action process:

FORESIGHT AS TRANSFORMATIVE VISION

Realizing the power in otherness

Foresight, as practiced at IFTF, is the process of turning facts about the present into clear and actionable views of the future. It’s a mindset that encompasses creative thinking about future possibility, and systematic analysis of patterns that affect change—signals of the future, combinatorial effects, consequences, and alternatives.

However, these foresight processes tend to produce extensions of the present in which marginalized people remain marginalized and often voiceless. Embedding these kinds of processes in the festival setting of artists—especially Black speculative artists—shifts this foresight process toward transformative visioning. It grabs hold of the “excluded Other” and transforms it into the “empowered Other.” It empowers the visions of radical change that are often essential to building a more equitable future.

Lesson:

Use a range of artistic media and more academic conversations to move from neutral foresight to visions that dig deep into the psyches of participants to co-imagine transformative change.

INSIGHT AS AUTHENTICITY

Embracing otherness as a future path

At IFTF, insight is defined as an “aha” moment when we begin to translate foresight into implications for the choices we face. We provoke insight with a range of tools, from two-curve futures and cross-impact maps to analysis of threats and opportunities. As with foresight, these insight processes can often seem neutral, even when groups share common values and goals for the future.

The arts festival methodology challenges this neutrality with an invitation to authenticity. It searches for what’s authentically Other in the visions of the future. What’s an authentic Black hero? An authentic Black homeland? An authentic womanist dream? Authenticity is inherently personal, so a focus on authentic futures invites everyone to find their own voice in the future. An arts festival breaks down the group norms to invite personal discovery in the authenticity of the artist.

Lesson:

Build insight that is authentic to marginalized people with new tools that use works of speculative art (in all media) as the focal point for discovering authentic future paths for both individuals and communities.

ACTION AS EXPERIENCE

Resting in the future

In IFTF's Foresight-Insight-Action cycle, the last step is choosing a clear and compelling way forward. It's creating action roadmaps, designing experiments or prototypes, and building networks of collaborators to put our insights about the future into action to make the futures we want. For marginalized communities, action is often a Sisyphean experience of life—an endless struggle against odds. The antidote to the fatigue (or paralysis) of struggle is perhaps the experience of the future as present: a complete immersion in the dream realized, if only for an hour, a day, a week. The arts festival provides this immersion. At its best, it combines transformative vision with authentic identities in a multi-sensory experience of the world to be created. Out of this experience comes personal and community renewal, a fresh foundation for the next day's work.

Lesson:

Invest in artists and innovators who can create present-day experiences of speculative futures and use those experiences as times of renewal for activists who can then translate those experiences into their daily lives: If this is the future that nourishes me, what do I do today?





Appendices

Festival Agenda

Guest Speakers

Exhibiting Artists and Poets

Producing Team

About Participating Organizations

Festival Agenda

The formal program for the Afrofutures Festival included keynote speakers, panels, games, and a poetry reading.

1:00pm Welcome and Keynotes

1:15pm Look Back to Look Forward

1:45pm Signals of Equitable Futures Panel and Discussion

3:00pm Signals of Afro-Innovation Panel and Discussion

3:45pm Draw Out Unexpected Possibilities: Afro-Rhythms From The Future Game

4:30pm Our Afro-Present Womanist Imaginary

5:15pm AfroPoetic Futures: Readings

6:15pm Rally Your Network

Happy Hour with music from Fuze the MC, Artist Meet and Greet, VR experiences including NeuroSpeculative AfroFeminism, Fireflies: A Brownsville Story, The Fade, Debias VR, The Future of Lagos 2150

Guest Speakers

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Reynaldo Anderson

BSAM Executive Director and founder, St. Louis, MO and author of Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness

Tessa Finlev

Research Director, IFTF Equitable Futures Lab

Lonny Brooks

Associate Professor in Strategic Communication at California State University East Bay and lead on Long-Term and Futures Thinking Project and the Long U

Rochelle Spencer

MFA Writing Program at Sarah Lawrence College and author of Afro-Surrealism: The African Diaspora's Surrealist Fiction

SIGNALS OF EQUITABLE FUTURES

Nyota Uhueu

Guerilla media activist and founder of media projects Skip to Baloo and All-Black Media

Ingrid LaFleur

Founder of AFROTOPIA, artist, and former candidate for mayor of Detroit

Danae Martinez

Teacher of Afro-pessimism and Afrofuturism at San Francisco State University

Euneika Rogers-Sipp

Social entrepreneur, restorative designer and founder of the Georgia-based Sustainable Rural Regenerative Enterprises for Families (SURREF), social impact writer, and artist under the name Ingrid Bunting

Amos White

Organizer, poet, and producer for Black Speculative Art Movement, Oakland

Moderator

Anmol Chaddha, Director, IFTF Equitable Futures Lab

SIGNALS OF AFRO-INNOVATION

Folabi Esan

Founder of private equity firm Adlevo Capital and art producer, Lagos, Nigeria

Judith Okonkwo

Founder of Imisi 3D, organization development consultant, and technology evangelist, Lagos, Nigeria

Nael Hailemariam

Venture capitalist and innovation broker, bridging Shenzhen, China, and Ethiopia

Moderator: Jeremy Kirshbaum

Research Affiliate, IFTF

RADICAL FUTURES GAMING

Ahmed Best: host of Afrofuturist Podcast

Ben Hamamoto: Research Director, IFTF

Eli Kominsky: Co-designer of Afro-rhythms from the Future game

AFRO-PRESENT WOMANIST IMAGINARY

Ashara Ekundayo

Curator & Cultural Strategist at AECreative Consulting Partners, LLC and Ashara Ekundayo Gallery, Oakland, CA and IFTF Future for Good Fellow

A-Ian Holt

Interim Executive Director at the Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University

Vinitha Watson

Founder of Zoo Labs music accelerator and IFTF Future for Good Fellow

Exhibiting Artists and Poets

Nyame O. Brown is a visual artist born in San Francisco and an Afrofuturist installation artist working in the media of painting, drawing, and cut paper. Brown's work addresses the Black imagination as a space for new ways to perceive diaspora not just through unity and similarities but looking at the dynamics of difference to further comprehend diaspora. He uses the folklore cultural practices and symbols from the diaspora to make paintings of contemporary black mythologies

Alan Clark: Your friendly neighborhood super villain and ontological machanicist. He moved to Oakland to write his latest graphic novel series, *In Search of the Black Panther Party*, and also franchise villainy to the west coast. He is also author of the sci-fi soap opera, *Babylon*, and the founder of Phantom Elektrik Comics. Clark studied thermal dynamics and theoretical physics at Georgia State University. Phantomelektrik.com

Lance Coleman: Hailing from Howard University, the Oakland-based digital strategist has had his hands in a number of music-related business ventures over the past few years. Coleman is the official Social Weaver of Zoo Labs and provides digital strategy and business development for the Blueprint Group, an artist management company representing Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj, T.I., G-Eazy, Lil Twist, and Jake Troth. In addition, he runs the digital firm IV The Love that manages projects for Young Money, Common, Hit-Boy, Ester Dean, Howard Homecoming, and Noble Black Society. Coleman has worked in the music industry in a number of capacities including being a digital strategist, artist, and social weaver. He is an IFTF Future for Good Fellow.

Tongo Eisen-Martin was born in San Francisco and received an M.A. from Columbia University. He is the author of *Heaven Is All Goodbyes* (City Lights, 2017) and *someone's dead already* (Bootstrap Press, 2015), which was nominated for a California Book Award.



Ashara Ekundayo is a Detroit-born, Oakland-based artist, independent curator, creative industries entrepreneur, cultural strategist, and founder working across arts, community, government, and social innovation spaces. Through her consulting company AECreative, LLC and her project space Ashara Ekundayo Gallery, she designs and manages multidimensional ventures and fosters collaborative relationships through the use of mindfulness and permaculture principles to bring vision to life and create opportunities "in the deep end," often with unlikely allies. Her creative arts practice epistemology requires an embodied commitment to recognizing joy in the midst of struggle.

Hyphen-Labs is an international team of women of color working at the intersection of technology, art, science, and the future. Through our global vision and unique perspectives we are driven to create meaningful and engaging ways to explore emotional, human-centered, and speculative design. In the process we challenge conventions and stimulate conversations, placing collective needs and experiences at the center of evolving narratives.

Vernon Keeve III is a Virginia born writer that California molded into an educator. He lives and teaches in Oakland. His purpose is to teach the next generation the importance of relaying their personal narratives, sharing their experiences, and taking control of their destinies. He holds an M.F.A. from California College of the Arts, and a Master's in Teaching Literature from Bard College. *Southern Migrant Mixtape* (Nomadic Press, 2018) is his first book.

Exhibiting Artists and Poets (cont.)

Raina J. Leon is an associate professor of education at Saint Mary's College of California. As a Cave Canem graduate fellow (2006), CantoMundo fellow, Macondo fellow, and member of the Carolina African American Writers Collective, she has been published in numerous journals as a writer of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Her first collection of poetry, *Canticle of Idols*, was a finalist for both the Cave Canem First Book Poetry Prize (2005) and the Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize (2006). Her second book, *Boogeyman Dawn* (2013, Salmon Poetry), was a finalist for the Naomi Long Madgett Prize (2010). Her third book, *sombra: (dis)locate*, was published in 2016 as well as her first chapbook, *profeta without refuge*. She has received fellowships and residencies with Cave Canem, CantoMundo, Montana Artists Refuge, the MacDowell Colony, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Vermont Studio Center, the Tyrone Guthrie Center in Annaghmakerrig, Ireland, and Ragdale. She also is a founding editor of *The Acentos Review*, an online quarterly, international journal devoted to the promotion and publication of Latino and Latina arts. She is an associate professor of education at Saint Mary's College of California.

Ajuan Mance is a Professor of African American literature at Mills College and a lifelong artist and writer. Mance's comics and zines include Gender Studies, an autobiographical comic series, A Blues for Black Santa, the 1001 Black Men series, the web-based comic strip Check All that Apply, and many others. Her drawings and comics have appeared in a number of publications, including, most recently, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The New York Times*, *Brown Alumni Monthly*, the *Mills Quarterly*, and the *Women's Review of Books*. Both her scholarly writings and her comics and zines explore the relationship between race, gender, and representation, specifically as it applies to people of African descent in the United States. Mance is the author of two books on the history of African-American writers. They are: *Inventing Black Women: African American Women Poets and Self-Representation, 1877-2000*, and *Before Harlem: An Anthology of African-American Literature from the Long Nineteenth Century*, both from the University of Tennessee Press.

Joshua Mays is an Oakland-based painter, muralist, and illustrator. Born in Denver, CO, he studied illustration at Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design and graphic design at Community College of Denver before moving to Philadelphia, where he lived and worked for eight years before exhibiting and traveling nationwide. He has created commissions in Washington, D.C., Denver, Portland, Philadelphia, Oakland, London, Johannesburg, Mexico City, and Jakarta.



NeuroSpeculative AfroFeminism (NSAF) is an award winning three-part digital narrative that sits at the intersection of product design, virtual reality, and neuroscience. Inspired by the lack of multidimensional representations of black women in technology, the NSAF products range from sunblock for traveling through the multiverse to earrings embedded with cameras that offer protection and visibility. The VR experience is set in a Neurocosmetology lab where black women are pioneering techniques of brain optimization and cognitive enhancement. Finally, scientific research explores the neurological and physiological impact of showing images of empowered black women as well as content made for and by women of color. The NSAF team includes Ashley Baccus-Clark, Ece Tankal, Carmen Aguilar y Wedge, Nitzu Bartov, Todd Bryant, Halime Maloof, Lajune Mcmillian, Michelle Cortese, Adam Harvey, Ab[Screenwear], Memoire, Mert Çetinkaya, Dyane Harvey, Ludmila Leiva, Adam Sobolew, Future Media Labs, and Mind Traveler Design.

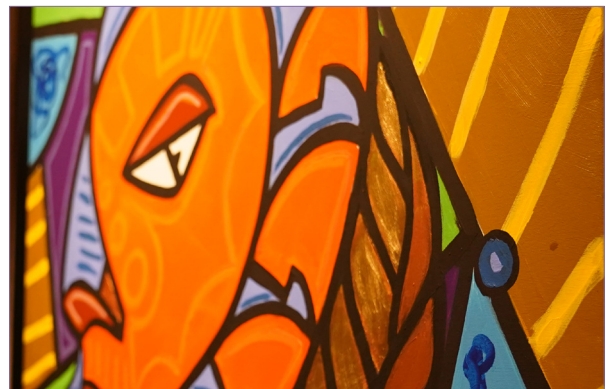
Exhibiting Artists and Poets (cont.)

Roye Okupe: Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Roye Okupe is an author, speaker, and entrepreneur whose passion for animation led him to found YouNeek Studios in 2012, an avenue that would allow him to pursue his dream of creating a diverse library of superheroes. Under that umbrella, Okupe wrote, produced, and directed several animated productions including 2D/3D animated short films, TV commercials, show openers, music videos, and much more. These productions have allowed Okupe to attain many prestigious recognitions, such as being #5 on Ventures Africa's list of "40 African Innovators to Watch" (2016) as well as being part of *New African magazine's* "100 Most Influential Africans" list two years in a row (2016 and 2017). With the superhero genre currently at the height of popularity, Okupe has made it a goal to create a connected universe of heroes, with origins from locations that are currently neglected and/or ignored. In August 2015, Okupe released his debut graphic novel titled: *E.X.O.: The Legend of Wale Williams Part One*, a superhero story set in a futuristic Nigeria. *E.X.O.* was received with critical acclaim and has since been featured on *CNN*, *Forbes*, *The New York Times*, *NBC*, *The Guardian*, *ABC7*, *BBC*, *The Huffington Post*, *Mashable* and more. Okupe's sophomore graphic novel, *Malika: Warrior Queen* was also received with critical acclaim, selling more than 40,000 copies of its "chapter one special" during Diamond Comic's Free Comic Book Day (2017). Both books have gone on to win several awards, including a Glyph Comic Award (2017) and a Heruica Character Creation Award (2017).

Stacey Robinson: An Arthur Schomburg fellow, Stacey Robinson completed his Master of Fine Art degree at the University at Buffalo. He is originally from Albany, NY and graduated from Fayetteville State University with a Bachelor of Arts. His art speculates futures where Black people are free from colonial influences. His recent exhibition *Binary ConScience* explores ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois' "double consciousness" as a Black cultural adaptation and a means of colonial survival. Along with John Jennings, he is part of the collaborative duo *Black Kirby*, which explores Afro Speculative existence via the aesthetic of Jack Kirby. He recently art directed *Unveiling Visions: the Alchemy of the Black Imagination* for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black

Culture in Harlem, NY. He was a part of the exhibition *Invisible Ink: Black Independent Comix* at University of Tennessee, and the *Beyond the Frame: African American Comic Book Artists* presentation at the Flint Institute of Arts. Robinson's collected works reside at Modern Graphics in Berlin, Bucknell University, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Malik Seneferu feels it is his duty as a self-taught artist to have an internal dialog with the viewer and in many cases their ancestors, where at this point he finds inspiration for artistic expression as well as painting live in public. Fathering his child, serving his community, drumming, martial arts, poetry, philosophy, and ancestral facts (history) all help with the enhancement of his expression to capture the Black experience in America. Seneferu enjoys manipulating dry water-based paints, oil pastels, ink pen, found objects, or assemblage. Book illustrations, portraiture, and public art projects have brought him closer to his community. The purpose of his compositions is to elevate the social, political, environmental, and spiritual issues of people deeply challenged by oppression.



Exhibiting Artists and Poets (cont.)

Kevin Sipp is a fine artist, independent scholar, and curator with expertise in printmaking, painting, sculpture, and multi-media installation. He has over 20 years of experience creating functional resources and spaces for community-based artists in all disciplines. Sipp's fine art works have appeared in solo and group exhibitions throughout the country and internationally. His foundational aesthetic examines the spiritual, political, social, and historical influence of African-derived culture in the world, often making references to global mythologies, Afrofuturism, cultural identity, colonial and post-colonial history, past and contemporary music, and comics. Kevin is a public speaker whose lectures have inspired and entertained audiences at college campuses such as Brandeis University and the Emory University Michael C. Carlos Museum, as well venues such as the Arnall Golden Gregory law firm, festivals, and comic book conventions. His poetry has also been featured during the National Black Arts Festival, sharing the stage with such luminaries as Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, and the poets of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. A Florida native, he has lived and worked in Georgia since the early 90s where he received a B.A. in Printmaking from the Atlanta College of Art.

Karen Seneferu: Visual artist Karen Seneferu is founder and co-curator of "The Black Woman is God" multi-media visual and spiritual exhibition. With over 150 Black women from the African diaspora who are painters, sculptors, filmmakers, and performance artists, the exhibition challenges Western cultural narratives of God being white and male. Through the examination of cosmology, womanhood, feminism, politics and psychology, "The Black Woman is God" reveals the fragments in art history and culture that posit Black art as only ancient or contemporary, only white and male, failing to honor the vast spaces in between.



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About the Participating Organizations



In this time of unprecedented economic inequality, persistent racial disadvantage, disintegrating social safety net, and deteriorating job quality, IFTF's Equitable Futures Lab combines expertise in social science, quantitative research, policy analysis, and public engagement with proven foresight methodologies to develop and prototype innovative solutions for an equitable future. <https://equitablefutures.iff.org/>

Institute for the Future is the world's leading futures thinking organization. For over 50 years, businesses, governments, and social impact organizations have depended upon IFTF global forecasts, custom research, and foresight training to navigate complex change and transformative possibilities across all sectors that together support a more equitable and sustainable future. www.iff.org



ASHARA EKUNDAYO GALLERY

Ashara Ekundayo Gallery (AEG) is an arts exhibition and events venue located in the Uptown/KONO Arts District in Oakland, CA that exclusively showcases the archival, contemporary art, and new media works of Black women of the African Diaspora, and artistic creations made in collaboration with Black women. Highlighting artistic production across a myriad of disciplines, AEG specializes in displaying works that investigate and inspire social and spiritual inquiry at the intersection of Fact x the Black feminist imaginary x Afrofuturism. ashara.io/ashara-ekundayo-gallery



The Black Speculative Art Movement (BSAM) is a network of creatives, intellectuals, and artists representing a variety of perspectives on Afrofuturism, Astro Blackness, Afro-Surrealism, Ethno Gothic, Black Digital Humanities, Black Science Fiction, The Black Fantastic, Magical Realism, and The Esoteric. BSAM emerged in the wake of an exhibition entitled *Unveiling Visions: Alchemy of The Black Imagination*, curated by John Jennings and Reynaldo Anderson at the Schomburg Library in New York in 2015. www.bsam-art.com



Museum of the African Diaspora

MoAD, a contemporary art museum, celebrates Black cultures, ignites challenging conversations, and inspires learning through the global lens of the African diaspora. Its focus spans the African diaspora across history, from the diaspora at the origin of human existence through the contemporary African diaspora that has affected communities and cultures around the world. It explores four broad themes in its exhibitions and programming: Origin, Movement, Adaptation, and Transformation. moadsf.org



Zoo Labs is a nonprofit artist accelerator and professional development community. It empowers artists as community, cultural, and business leaders by teaching them business, supporting them as entrepreneurs, and directing resources toward their ventures. zoolabs.org