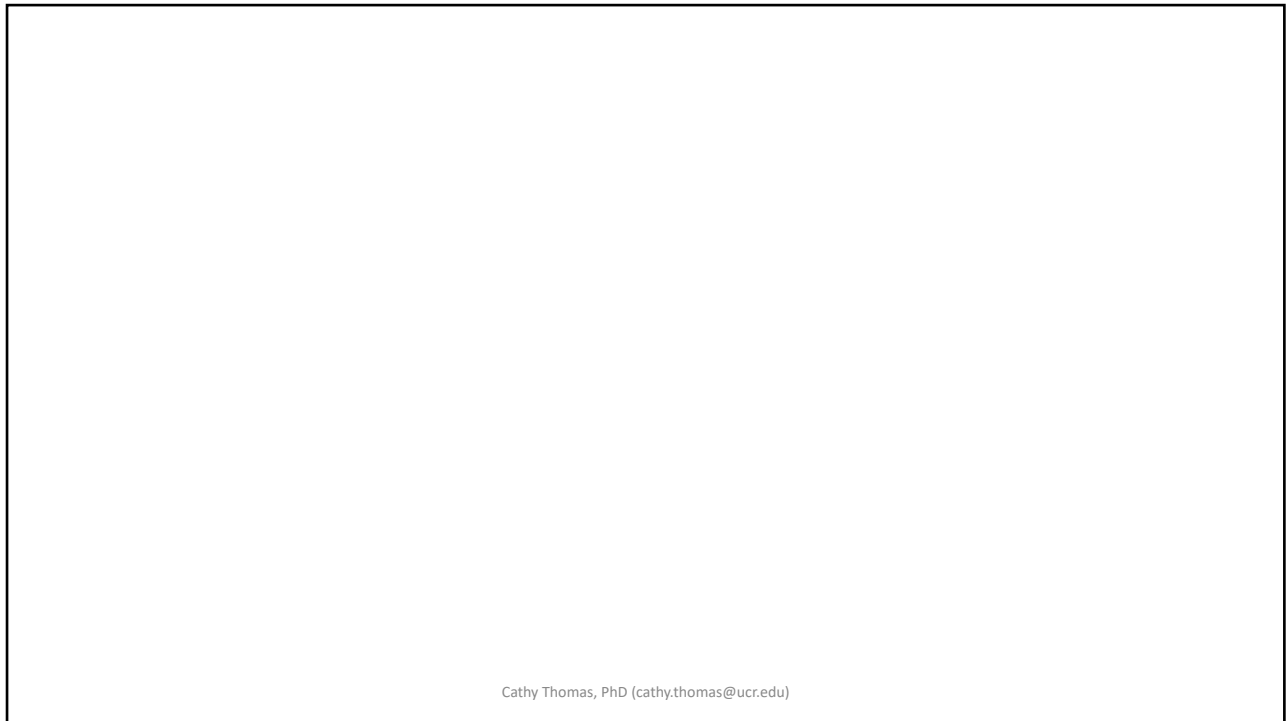




3



4



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5

- History
- Questions
- Themes + Aesthetics
- Literature + Comics
- Art + Architecture + Design
- List of (some) Afrofuturists in Art
- Afrofuturism as Futurity or Mundane

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6

History

- “History is His story. You haven't heard my story.”

— Sun Ra

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MARK DERY Cultural Critic



“Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delaney, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose”

Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future—might, for want of a better term, be called “Afrofuturism.” The notion of Afrofuturism gives rise to a troubling antinomy: Can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures? Furthermore, isn't the unreal estate of the future already owned by the technocrats, futurologists, streamliners, and set designers—white to a man—who have engineered our collective fantasies? The “semiotic ghosts” of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, Frank R. Paul’s illustrations for Hugo Gernsback’s *Amazing Stories*, the chromium-skinned, teardrop-shaped household appliances dreamed up by Raymond Loewy and Henry Dreyfuss, Norman Bel Geddes’s *Futurama* at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, and Disney’s *Tomorrowland* still haunt the public imagination, in one capitalist, consumerist guise or another.³

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ALONDRA NELSON,
Sociologist and Cultural Critic *Columbia University*

- The **word** allowed us to name what we already knew...La Belle, George Clinton, Prince, Janell Monae, outliers: gender possibilities, imagination; feminist affective performance...
- A way of thinking about Black diasporic production; an epistemology about alienation and alienating; aspirations for modernity and finding a place in the future; speculation, utopia;
- Black survival is about imagining the future and a better world
- Other space and gender possibilities
- Was part of an art collective called Apogee

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Questions

- Humanity? Blackness? Neither is a biological fact or origin. How is A/F taking up these (im)positions?
- If Struggle, Survival, and Success are diasporic encounters, what is A/F doing discursively and visually to change the meaning of Blackness over time and space?
- What is the relationship of blackness and Black cultures with regards to technological material and traditional material?
- Does A/F productively dismantle categories of race, gender, and sexuality the way it challenges the Human?
- Does the museum or gallery exhibitions or artist or critic decide what is A/F art?

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W.E.B. Dubois



Images from the 1900 Paris Exposition exhibit. Graphics hand-drawn, maps, and photos of black life across America with emphasis on Georgia.

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BLACK LIVES of WOMEN in photos displayed by DuBois from the 1900 Paris Exposition exhibit.

“past”



“present”



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Themes + Aesthetics

- Biopunk + Cyberpunk + Afropunk
- Mythology \ Spirituality
- Quantum Physics as a lens
- Middle Passage Epistemology as a lens
- Ecological Sustainability as a lens
- (Dis)ability as a lens
- Diasporas \ Returns
- Communal Memories
- Methods of Healing \ Reckoning
- Human Beingness*

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Sun Ra & musicians



Images from Sun Ra: Space is the Place (1973)

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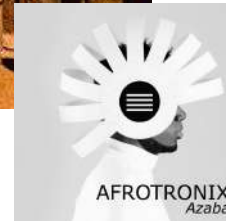
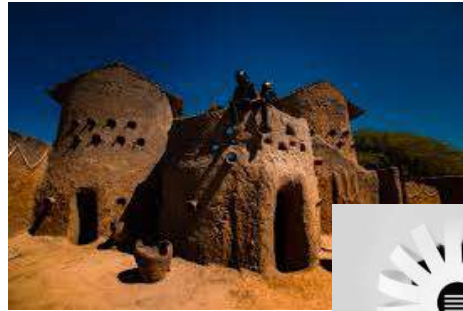
14

“The earth cannot move without music. The earth moves in a certain rhythm, a certain sound, a certain note. When the music stops the earth will stop and everything upon it will die.”

“diaspora”



“home”



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<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/fashion/afrofuturism-the-next-generation.html>

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17

Critiquing the present in the future

Choose your leaders with wisdom and forethought.
 To be led by a coward is to be controlled by all that the coward fears.
 To be led by a fool is to be led by the opportunists who control the fool.
 To be led by a thief is to offer up your most precious treasures to be stolen.
 To be led by a liar is to ask to be told lies.
 To be led by a tyrant is to sell yourself and those you love into slavery.

Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Talents (Earthseed, #2)

18

Black Bodies

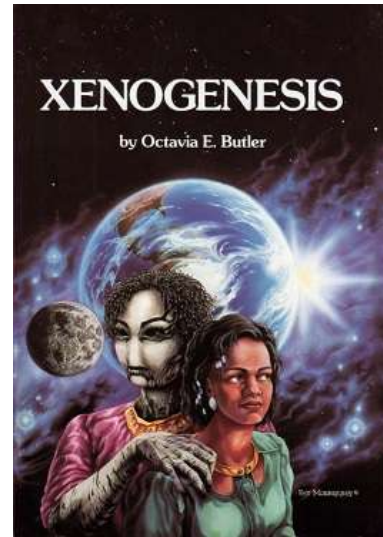
Tell stories
Filled with
Facts.
Make People
Touch and
Taste and
KNOW.
Make People
FEEL!
FEEL!
Feel!

Sensory Tendrils around ears, eyes, mouth and breathing slits on throat (closed during speech) These are tough fibers that protect delicate openings and intensify sensory input.

The appearance is more of a mask than of hairiness. Tendrils can come together and appear to be slightly darker, unbroken flesh, or they can wave free or clutch at objects, examining them microscopically.

Math tendrils inside. No teeth. Raspier to every acid saliva.

A detail from notes Butler made for the Oankali, characters from the *Xenogenesis* trilogy. (c) Estate of Octavia E. Butler/The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens (cathy.thomas@ucr.edu)



1987. Book cover. (Pat Morrison, artist)

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Image 1 & 2 from forthcoming comic *Hardears* (Matthew Clarke, Nigel Lynch)

CARIBBEAN COSMOLOGY

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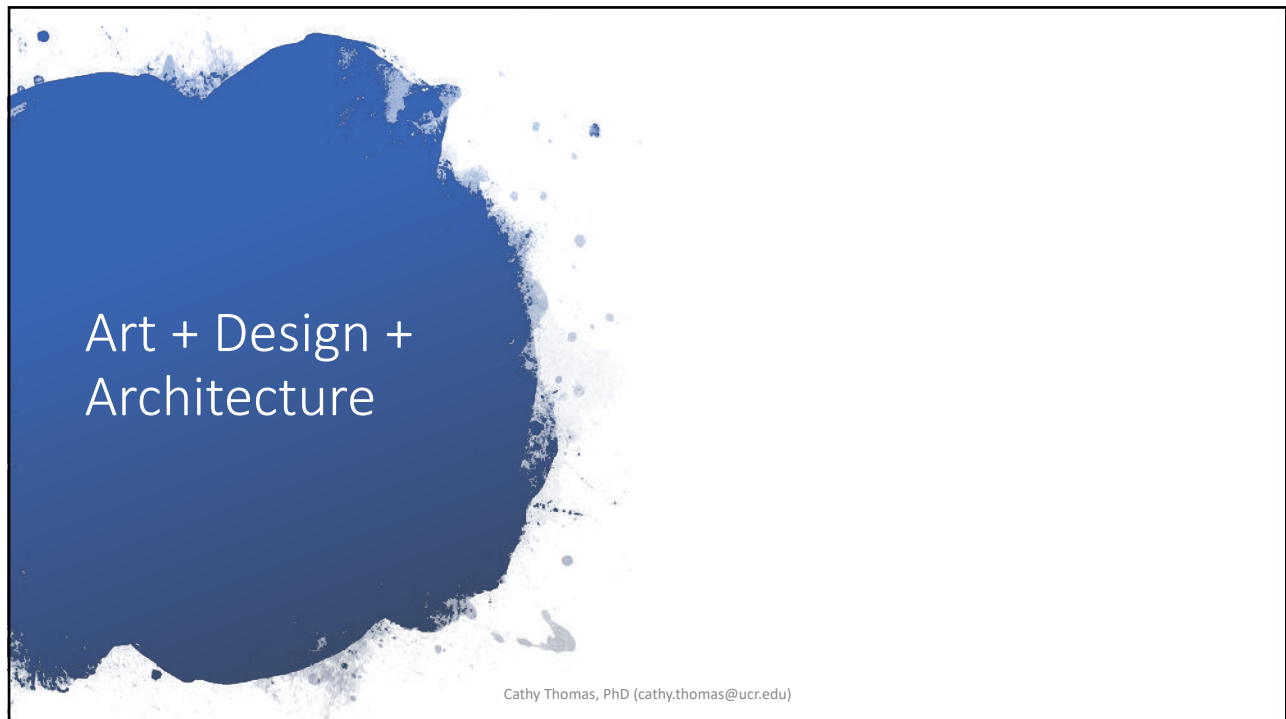
Black Space

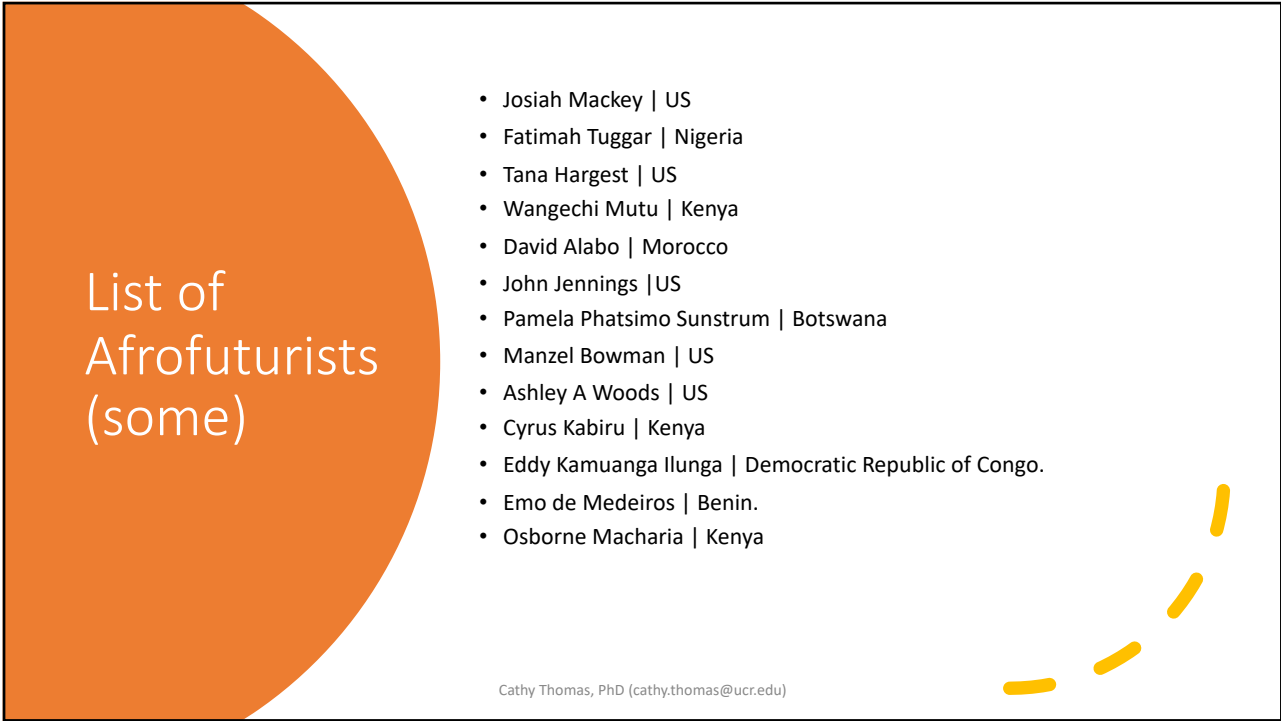


“Judgement Day”, Incredible Adventures (EC Comics)



Fantastic Four #52 (Marvel, July 1966)



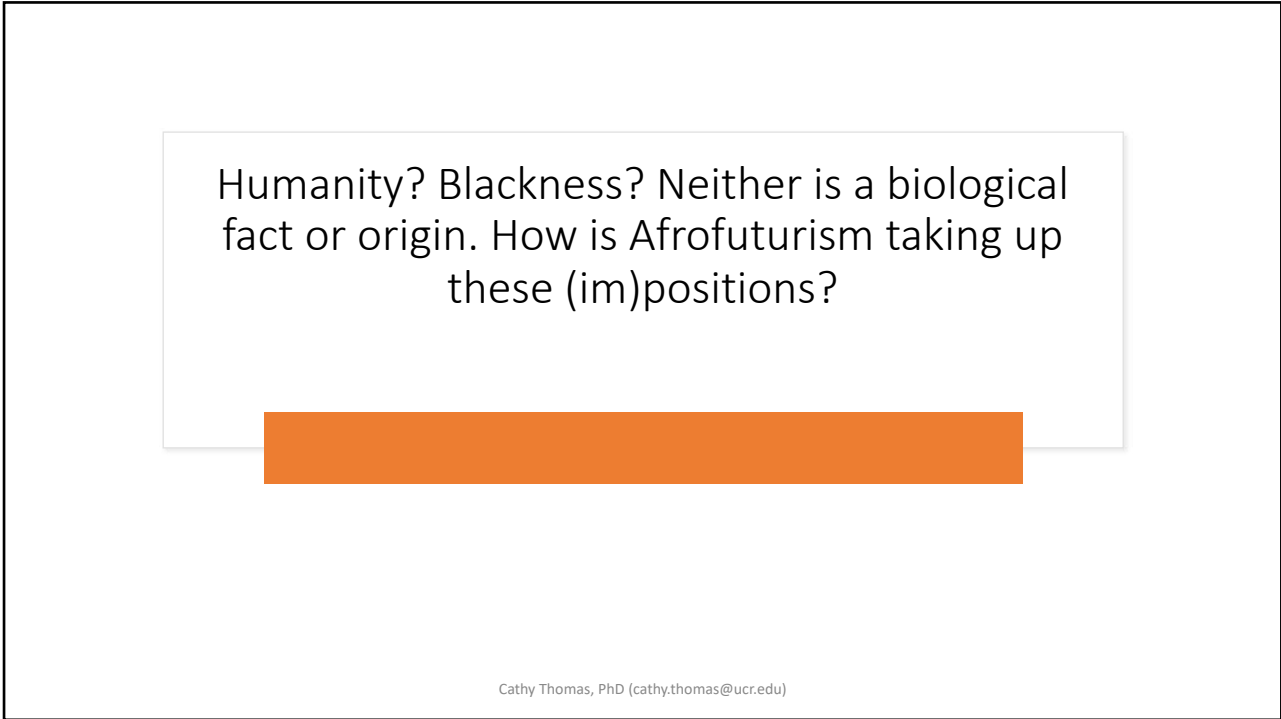


List of Afrofuturists (some)

- Josiah Mackey | US
- Fatimah Tuggar | Nigeria
- Tana Hargest | US
- Wangechi Mutu | Kenya
- David Alabo | Morocco
- John Jennings | US
- Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum | Botswana
- Manzel Bowman | US
- Ashley A Woods | US
- Cyrus Kabiru | Kenya
- Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga | Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Emo de Medeiros | Benin.
- Osborne Macharia | Kenya

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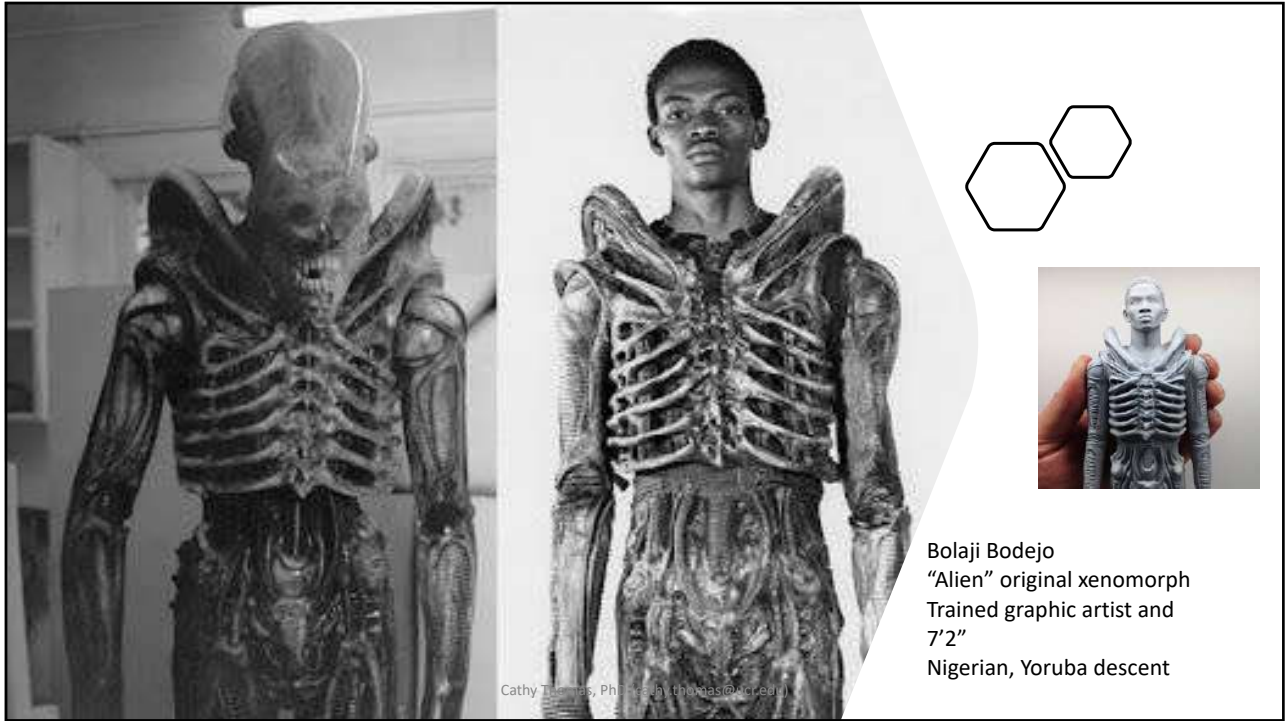
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Humanity? Blackness? Neither is a biological fact or origin. How is Afrofuturism taking up these (im)positions?

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Bolaji Bodejo
 "Alien" original xenomorph
 Trained graphic artist and
 7'2"
 Nigerian, Yoruba descent

Cathy Thomas, PhD (cathy.thomas@ucr.edu)

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Kevin Peter Hall. "Predator"

Cathy Thomas, PhD (cathy.thomas@ucr.edu)

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JOHN JENNINGS

is a Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of California at Riverside. Jennings is co-editor of the Eisner Award-winning collection *The Blacker the Ink: Constructions of the Black Identity in Comics and Sequential Art*.



Hair is significant and symbolic in Afrofuturism visualization.

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Rastafari

Rastafarianism developed in Jamaica in the 1930s as an Abrahamic religion and a social movement holding that Emperor Selassie is the reincarnated Messiah and that Black people will return to Africa.

Alienation from temporality of Judeo Christian religion

Aesthetics and socialty commonly coopted



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If Struggle, Survival, and Success are diasporic encounters, what is Afrofuturism doing discursively and visually to change the meaning of Blackness over time and space? What are its modes of reclamation?



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MANZEL BOWMAN

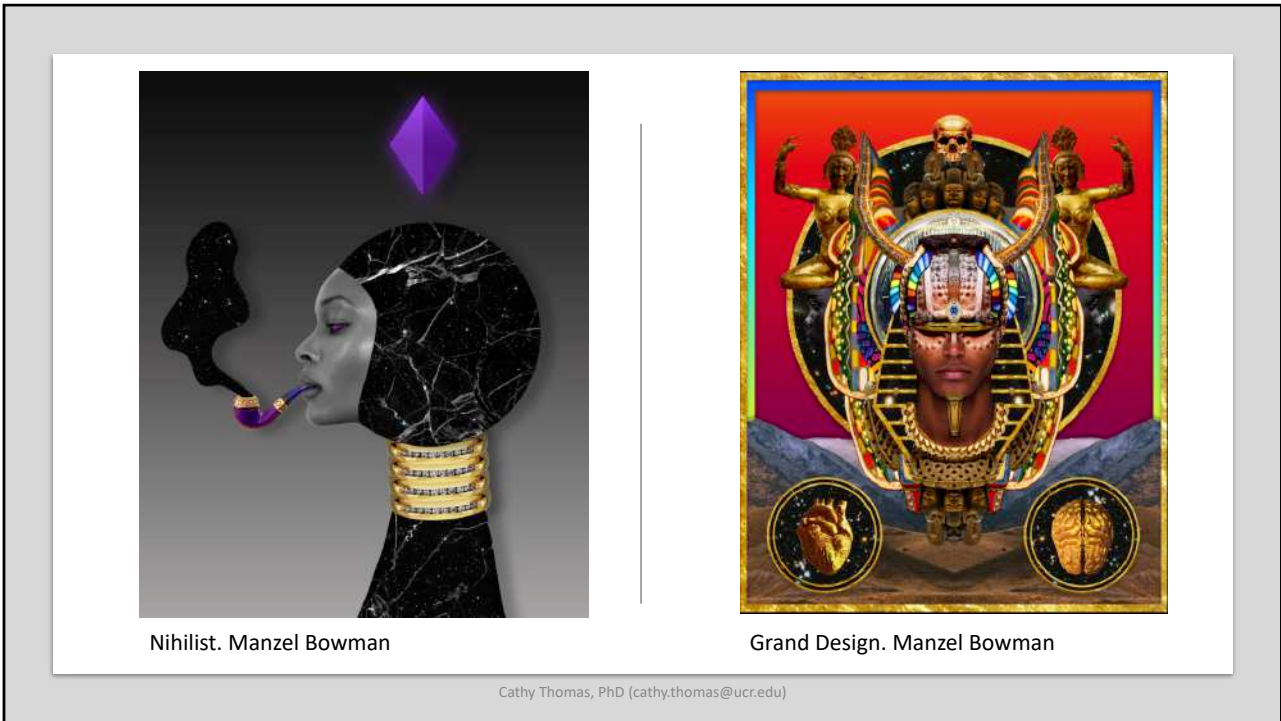
“I am trying to bring about a correction to the misrepresentation of my people and the best way I can do that is by creating pieces and scenes daily to counter America’s normative. I just want to see black people flourish the way they are supposed to!”

– Bowman (www.africandigitalart.com)



Cathy Thomas, PhD (cathy.thomas@ucr.edu) Ziggurat.com

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Nihilist. Manzel Bowman

Grand Design. Manzel Bowman

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TANA HARGEST

New Negrotopia was conceived as BNI's expansion into themed entertainment environments. The project was presented as a post-race paradise, where every detail had been crafted for the viewers delight, allowing one to play tourist through the constructs of race and time, or if preferred, take a vacation from these realities. (www.hargestart.com)

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TANA HARGEST

“Established in 1999, Bitter Nigger, Inc. (BNI) is a fantastical art and idea corporation with the corporate mission of bringing cultural interventions of the highest quality to the art marketplace. Using humor and the language of consumer culture to investigate hierarchies of power, race and class, each new installation expands the corporate footprint. To date BNI is composed of a robust family of distinct yet interconnected subsidiary ventures.”



10 SCREENS FROM INTERACTIVE ANIMATION, THE EQUALIZER



8 SCREENS FROM INTERACTIVE ANIMATION, TOMINEX
Cathy Thomas, PhD (cathy.thomas@ucr.edu)

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Does Afrofuturism productively dismantle categories of race, gender, and sexuality the way it challenges the Human?



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WANGECHI MUTU

is a contemporary Kenyan artist noted for her work conflating gender, race, art history, and personal identity. Creating complex collages, videos, sculptures, and performances, Mutu's work features recurring mysterious leitmotifs such as masked women and snake-like tendrils. (www.art.net)



Eve, 2006

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A Shady Promise. Wangechi Mutu

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Riding Death in my Sleep, 2002. Ink, collage on paper. Wangechi Mutu

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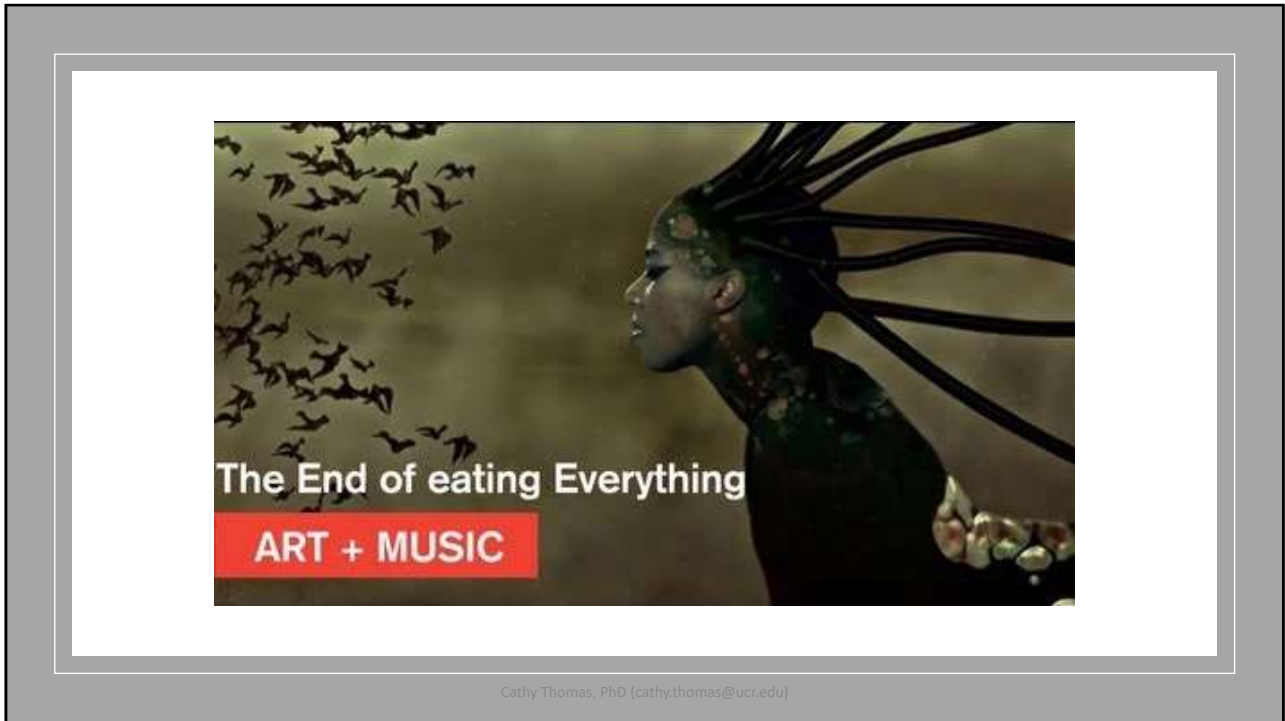
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The End of Eating Everything. (Still. Featuring Santigold?) Animated, 8,min.

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What is Afrofuturism foretelling of empowerment?

What is Afrofuturism foretelling of gender roles/gendering?

<https://josiahmackey.com>

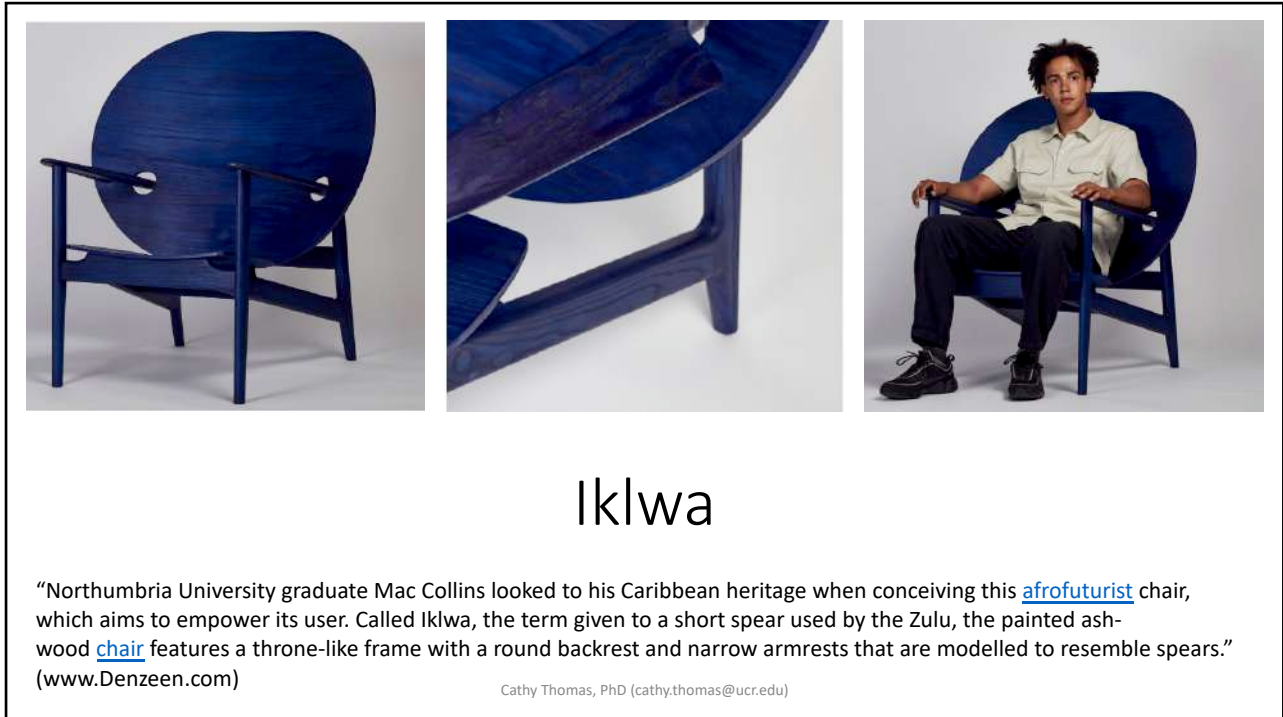
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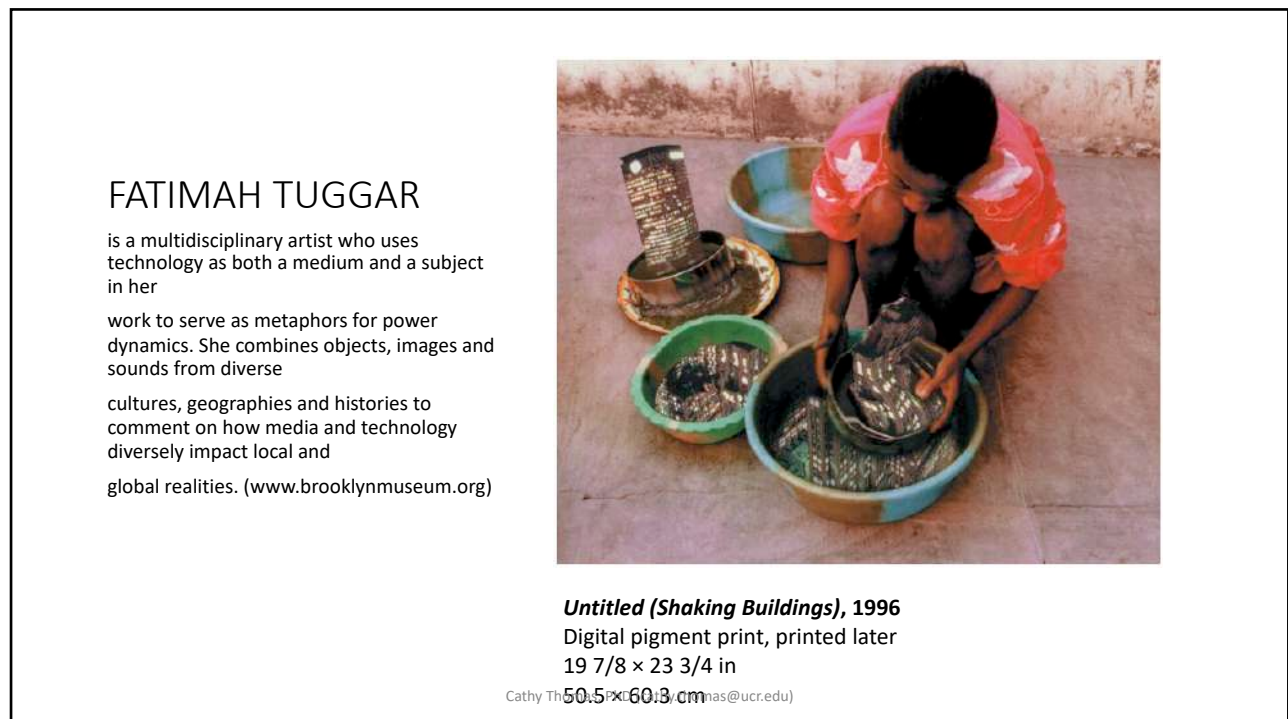
What is the relationship of blackness and Black cultures with regards to technological material and traditional material?

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Broom, 1996,
Dimensions: 24 x 2
inches / 61 x 6 (W x H),
Medium: Hay Broom,
Electronic Sound Chip,
Power Button,
Description:
Embedded in the hay
broom is chip that
makes swooshing
sounds.

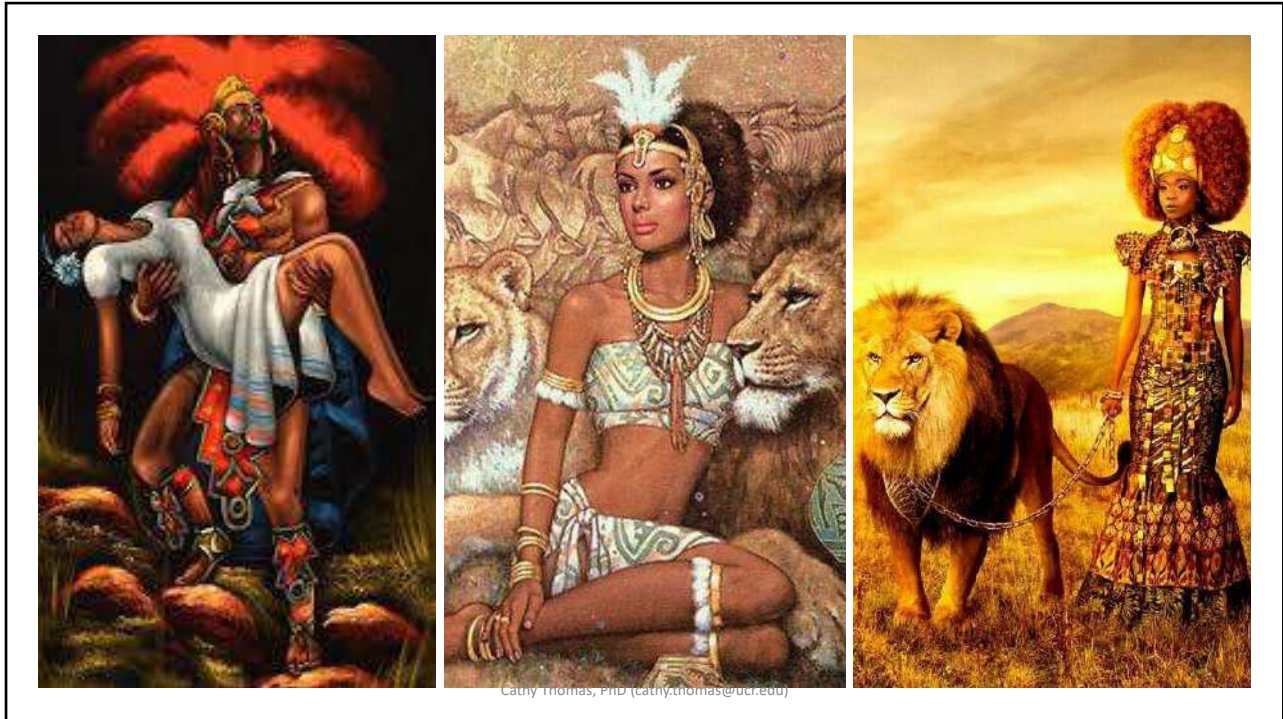
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Does the museum or gallery
exhibitions or artist or critic decide
what is Afrofuturistic art?

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Afrofuturism as
Futurity or
Mundane

- This is a provocation for discussion.

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MARTINE SYMS

publishing, video, performance

The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto

The undersigned, being alternately pissed off and bored, need a means of speculation and asserting a different set of values with which to re-imagine the future. In looking for a new framework for black diasporic artistic production, we are temporarily united in the following actions.

The Mundane Afrofuturists recognize that:

We did not originate in the cosmos.

The connection between Middle Passage and space travel is tenuous at best.

Out of five hundred thirty-four space travelers, fourteen have been black.

An all-black crew is unlikely.

Magic interstellar travel and/or the wondrous communication grid can lead to an illusion of outer space and cyberspace as egalitarian.

This dream of utopia can encourage us to forget that outer space will not save us from injustice and that cyberspace was pre-figured upon a "master/slave" relationship.

While we are often Othered, we are not aliens.

Though our ancestors were mutilated, we are not mutants.

Post-black is a misnomer. Post-colonialism is too.

The most likely future is one in which we only have ourselves and this planet.

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ARTBOUND: S7 E1: The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto (cathy.thomas@ucr.edu)

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Works cited

- See Word doc added to Google Drive under “Afrofuturism”

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