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The Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery
and
The Institute of the Arts and Sciences Present

Just Futures: Black Quantum Futurism, Arthur Jafa, and Martine Syms
January 19, 2022–March 19, 2022

Take one of the future thoughts that you have reversed and build up a memory of it.

One-day only screening of Arthur Jafa’s the White Album at
Digital Arts Research Center Room 108, 9am–9pm
UC Santa Cruz, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, Calif. 95064
SANTA CRUZ, CA (December ?, 2021)— Against the present’s seemingly endless backdrop of deep political unrest, environmental emergency, and racialized injustice, *Just Futures*, curated by History of Art and Visual Culture Professor T.J. Demos, highlights poignant creative experiments in futurity and justice. With artworks by *Black Quantum Futurism*, *Arthur Jafa*, and *Martine Syms*, *Just Futures* considers how contemporary artists engage with time as both a site of struggle and a horizon of liberation.

The images and sounds of the video works and installations are resoundingly out of sync with the dominant production of time expressed in the 24/7 chronologies of capital, long synchronized to racialized, gendered violence and oppression—and enclosing people in temporal holds, defuturing communities, imposing time-traps of debt and deadlines.

Building on the critical resources of Afrofuturisms of decades past, the artworks creatively serve as timekeepers of emancipatory worlds-to-come.

The *Arthur Jafa video work that is the centerpiece of Just Futures was screened simultaneously over 48 hours across art museums in 2020 as an international response to racial justice uprisings and civil unrest*. (Dallas Museum of Art; the High Museum of Art in Atlanta; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles; The Studio Museum in Harlem; Julia Stoschek Collection Berlin; Luma Arles in France and Luma Westbau in Zürich; Palazzo Grassi – Punta della Dogana – Pinault Collection; Smithsonian American Art Museum; The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; and the Tate in London.)

*Black Quantum Futurism’s* work was last exhibited in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2016, and has an exhibition currently on view at REDCAT CalArts in Los Angeles, California.

*Martine Syms*, whose work was included in the recent *Uncanny Valley: Being Human in the Age of AI* exhibition at the deYoung Museum in San Francisco, seeks a new framework for Black diasporic artistic production in her *Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto*. Her work is currently on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) as part of the exhibition *Black American Portraits* which centers Black subjects, sitters and spaces, taking place in conjunction with the *Obama Portraits Tour*.

This is the first exhibition to include this grouping of artists.

*Just Futures* forms part of *Beyond the End of the World*, which comprises a two year-long research and exhibition project and public lecture series, directed by Professor T. J. Demos of the *Center for Creative Ecologies* at UC Santa Cruz.

**About the Artists**

*Black Quantum Futurism Collective* is a multidisciplinary collaboration between Camae Ayewa (Rockers!; Moor Mother) and Rasheedah Phillips (The AfroFuturist Affair; Metropolarity) exploring the intersections of futurism, creative media, DIY-aesthetics, and activism in marginalized communities through an alternative temporal lens. BQF Collective has created a
number of community-based events, experimental music projects, performances, exhibitions, zines, and anthologies of experimental essays on space-time consciousness. BQF Collective is a 2016 A Blade of Grass Fellow, 2015 artist-in-residence at West Philadelphia Neighborhood Time Exchange, and had their experimental short, *Black Bodies as Conductors of Gravity*, premiere at the 2015 Afrofuturism Now! Festival in Rotterdam. BQF Collective frequently collaborates with other Black Futurists, Joy KMT, Irreversible Entanglements, Thomas Stanley, Ras Mashramani, and Alex Smith to produce literature, present workshops, lectures and performances.

**Arthur Jafa** is an artist, filmmaker and cinematographer. Across three decades, Jafa has developed a dynamic practice comprising films, artifacts and happenings that reference and question the universal and specific articulations of black being. Underscoring the many facets of Jafa’s practice is a recurring question: how can visual media, such as objects, static and moving images, transmit the equivalent power, beauty and alienation embedded within forms of black music in US culture?

Jafa’s films have garnered acclaim at the Los Angeles, New York, and Black Star Film Festivals and his artwork is represented in celebrated collections worldwide including at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Studio Museum in Harlem, High Museum of Art, Dallas Museum of Art, MCA Chicago, The Stedelijn Museum Amsterdam, Luma Foundation, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, among others.

**Martine Syms** obtained an MFA from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson (NY) (2017) and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (IL) (2007). Syms has earned wide recognition for a practice that combines conceptual grit, humor and social commentary. Using a combination of video, installation and performance, often interwoven with explorations into technique and narrative, Syms examines representations of Blackness and its relationship to vernacular, feminist thought, and radical traditions. Syms’s research-based practice frequently references and incorporates theoretical models concerning performed or imposed identities, the power of the gesture, and embedded assumptions concerning gender and racial inequalities.

**About the Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery**

**Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery**
Porter College, UC Santa Cruz, 1156 High St, Santa Cruz, CA 95064  
831-459-3606 | arts.ucsc.edu/sesnon

**Free and open to the public.**
In-person admission January 19–March 19, 2022.  
Face coverings are required for all indoor activities and events.  
Visitors, employees, and students must submit a completed [COVID-19 symptom check](https://www.arts.ucsc.edu/sesnon/covid) before coming to a UCSC property.

**Gallery hours:** Tuesday – Saturday, 12:00–5:00 pm, Wednesday 12:00–8:00 pm
The gallery is wheelchair accessible and free. Metered parking is available. Group tours available by appointment.

Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery operates a museum-oriented program for educational purposes, which provides experiential learning for students, and encourages interdisciplinary discourse through the lens of the arts. It is part of the UCSC Arts Division. Email: sesnon@ucsc.edu

For more information about Just Futures: https://art.ucsc.edu/sesnon/just-futures
For more information about UCSC’s Institute of the Arts and Sciences: https://ias.ucsc.edu
For more information about the Beyond the End of the World series: https://beyond.ucsc.edu/

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