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*Notes Toward a Personal Afrofuturism*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at  
Virginia Commonwealth University.

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## **Gratitude**

To my parents and grandparents: Syreeta Adams-Harris, Jon Harris, Carol Adams, Charles Adams—for their unwavering support.

To my partner, Shawnai Smith—for being my anchor.

To my folks back home—for reminding me where I came from.

To everyone who was a part of my growth during my time here.

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### **Abstract**

This paper is penned by a young adult who is generally confused about a lot of things regarding life, but has one singular focus that is perhaps larger than life—trying to find the bridge between a future already lived, and a past yet to happen. These are his findings so far.

## Introduction

I live in my head a lot. So much so that I began to ponder how I and my fellow fantasizers could lend their imagination to something more “impactful.” I put “impactful” in quotations because my definition of what is determined to be impactful has to deal solely with me and my anxieties, particularly as an individual—a Black man working within the fine arts. What is the use of art in a society under a constant state of violence? How did the work my cohorts and I created, and literature we discoursed—directly change the lives of my folks back home? While I engaged in various fruitful conversations with many intelligent people regarding the importance of making work that critiqued and resisted imperialism, colonization, and anti-Blackness—it never felt tethered to reality. I’d leave my insular classroom filled with promise, only to be met with the harsh reality of life soon after. “\*\*\*\*\* died.”<sup>1</sup> Another cousin murdered by the ideals of white supremacy, and I felt the exclusivity of my bourgeois dialogues to be equally culpable in the crime. Through no explicit fault of their own, my contemporaries spoke of Black bodies as abstract entities and concepts. Our lives were weighed differently. While they could go home, decompress, and detach after talking about Black death and anti-Black violence, I could not—there was no separation from critical theory and the immediacy of my own life; I became jaded quickly.

Shortly after, I began to question whether art was the path for me to take in regards to my contributions to the resistance. I yearned for results more direct, tangible, and immediate. In an effort to determine whether working in the arts was my role to play in the bigger picture, I looked to the north star of afrofuturism to guide me through my odyssey. It was important for me to work within the framework of afrofuturism for two reasons: one- to satisfy the inner child that was always looking for any chance to build imaginary worlds; and two- to create something that explored and provided new boundaries for the philosophical, speculative, and aesthetic production of the movement. In my own personal observations as a lover and consumer of afrofuture art, I noticed its inherent radicality was beginning to dilute. Our imagined worlds started to weaken its basis in the reflection of the tangible; and our costumes became so shiny it was driven to the characterization of kitsch. “Could we speculate on an afrofuture that’s based on our material reality?” Interested in the potential an afrofuturist framework could have as a tool to create blueprints toward self-determination, this was the question I asked myself and dedicated my research to. The remainder of this essay are notes defining the foundation of my in-progress system of knowledge production titled *Material Afrofuturism*, detailing aspects of my exhibition installation *The School For Material Afrofuturism: Open House*, and highlighting key moments of research.

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<sup>1</sup> i love You.



# **Notes Toward a Personal Afrofuturism**



2

Fig. 1

*The ship is about to takeoff, do your best to follow its trail*

---

<sup>2</sup> Peter (formerly identified as “Gordon”), 1863.

### Material Afrofuturism<sup>3</sup>

is my theoretical brainchild, resulting from an 18 month process of trying to figure out what living with intention looks like for me, especially in relation to my art practice. Central to my research has been the words from Martine Syms' *Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto*, Walter Benjamin's *Theses On The Philosophy of History*, and the theological approaches of *Liberation Theology/Black Theology*<sup>4</sup>. What does it mean to understand history as a living entity, and from the perspective of the Black? If we applied theology to our material reality, how would that bible read? And in this context, who would then be considered the messiah? The angel? The antichrist?

By that extension—what kind of stories can be created within this context? Afrofuturism, history, and theology all act on the same spectrum of speculation; and when they interact with each other, they disrupt the linearity of time, and create new historical trajectories through nonlinearity. What can this kind of time-traveling do for imagining and creating better futures for the world we want to live in? What happens when we speak about the future in the past-tense? What is the potential for altering material reality when the myths we create act as wish fulfillments that must be embodied to be attained?

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<sup>3</sup> What is material becomes imagined; what is imagined becomes material.

<sup>4</sup> *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* by Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Black Theology and Black Power* by James Hal Cone

## The School For Material Afrofuturism: Open House

is a site-specific installation (fig. 2). Given the vaulted ceiling architecture of my assigned gallery space, this installation leans into the design principles of the Black church house, to create a temporary seminary for contemplation of the spirit and the mind. A physical manifestation of the immaterial, meant to encourage the audience to engage with the ideas of *Material Afrofuturism*, along with themselves—in an act of embodiment that can continue beyond its brief construction.

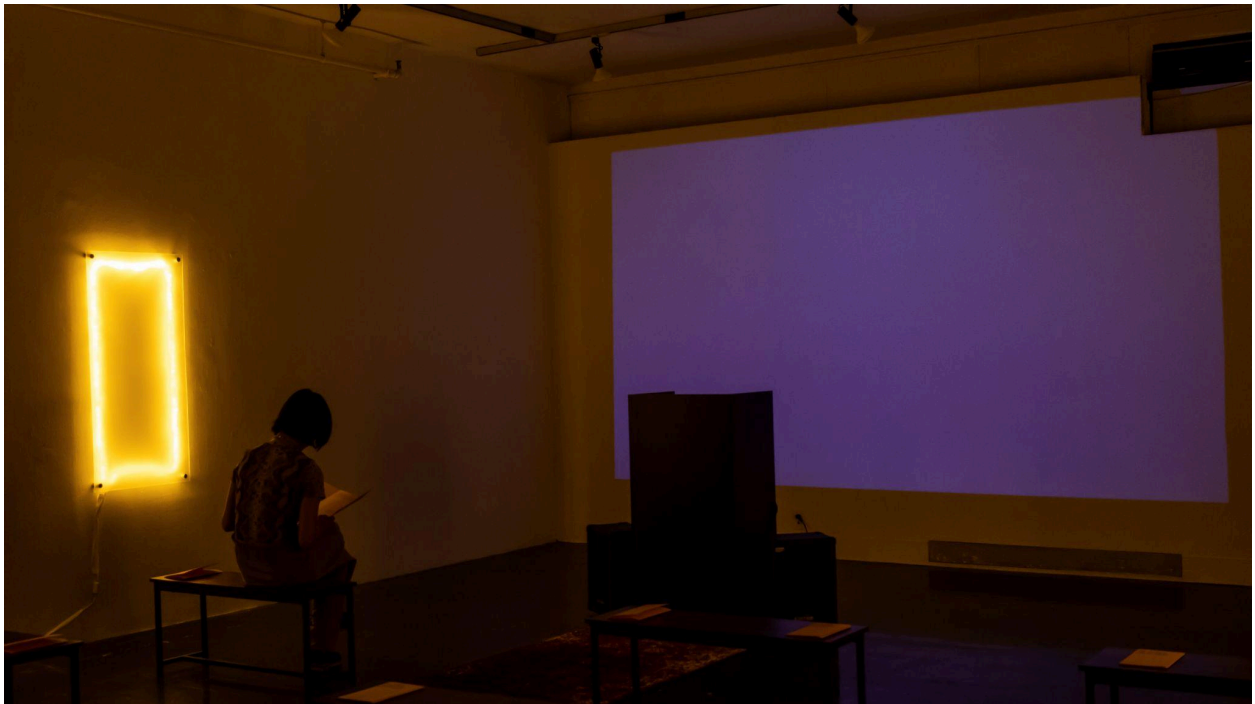


Fig. 2

## The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto<sup>5</sup>

- "The most likely future is one in which we only have ourselves and this planet."
- What imagined possibilities can come about avoiding the traditional tropes of Black Sci-fi?
- "We will root our narratives in a critique of normative, white validation. Since "Fact" and "Science" has been used throughout history to serve white supremacy, we will focus on an emotionally true, vernacular reality."
- Our "twoness" is inherently contemporary and futuristic. "If I got a problem, a problem's gotta problem 'fil it's gone." - ODB<sup>6</sup> in response to Dubois (W.e.B.).
- Mundane Afrofuturism is the ultimate laboratory for worldbuilding outside of imperialist, capitalist, white patriarchy.

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<sup>5</sup> Martine Syms, "The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto," Rhizome, December 17, 2013, <https://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/dec/17/mundane-afrofuturist-manifesto/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ol' Dirty Bastard.

## **Mundane Afrofuture Film Thoughts**

- One character's story affects another character's story, an interconnected web.
- How do others fill out who we are?
- What is the form/aesthetic/content of revolutionary cinema?
- What're the real world examples of my ideas visualized?
- What are the aesthetics of the real world revolution?
- How can surrealism/absurdity/theatricality be used within a real world context and still feel real world? How does one make sure it doesn't feel like an alternate universe?

## **The Form of Mundane Afrofuture Cinema**

An emphasis on the awareness of multiple narratives always concurrently happening, versus one master narrative. A Flattening of importance of Character(s). An understanding that narrative is always in a flux and never fixed. A realization that a film isn't a novel, and that while moving-images aid plot, it is not slave to plot. The mundane afrofuturist filmmaker realizes that in building better futures, there is no room for macro story-plots with a singular protagonist at the helm. The mundane afrofuturist filmmaker understands the interconnectedness of human life and activity, and reflects that in the stories they tell.

## **The Content of My Mundane Afrofuture Cinema**

I am interested in the embodiment or path to the embodiment of ideas such as black marxism, black feminism, black queer theory, pan-africanism, and ecological consciousness looks like on a micro, human to human level; and how an innumerable amount of these stories can create a mosaic for macro revolution. I am interested in the creativity, struggle, and resistance that materializes from the embodiment of these ideas. Criticizing the West: capitalism, imperialism, racism, sexism, religious dogma, Queer phobia, etc.



## The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction<sup>7</sup>

- Carrier Bag Theory of Human Evolution
  - The first cultural device was probably a bag rather than a spear.
- The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction
  - Spear vs. bag, collecting vs. killing violence.
- The reduction of narrative to conflict is absurd.
- Populating the story with people rather than heroes.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin and Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (London, UK: IGNOTA Books, 2020).

## The Cinema and The Creatively Maladjusted<sup>8</sup>

The maladjusted: Those who create images to experience the particular privileges time - based media has to offer. Narrative is incidental to moving images.

- The pantry of the filmmaker is in between the space of language.
- "Narrative is the oppressor of moving image."
- "The maladjusted spectator does not expect to be pleased. She expects to be respected."

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<sup>8</sup> Cauleen Smith, "The Association for the Advancement of Cinematic Creative Maladjustment: A Manifesto," *Black Camera* 11, no. 2 (2020): 246–55.

## **The School For Material Afrofuturism: Open House**

was my first ever attempt at creating installation art (fig. 3). This installation was born at the crossroads of tension and release. In February 2024, I was struggling greatly in my art practice, and well before then too. The images weren't speaking to me anymore. For a lens-based artist, this was the equivalent to getting gut-punched by Mike Tyson.

When I got assigned my space by The Anderson for the exhibition show, at first I wanted to lose my mind. It was not the space I campaigned for, and I had not thought about the possibility of getting a space that was not my first choice. This, ultimately however, became a blessing in disguise. When I went to The Anderson and scoped out my lot, the only word that came out of my mouth was "installation."

As an artist whose work up to this point was primarily based in film and video, whenever a seedling for an idea was sowed, it was typically in relation to that which is cinematic. However, due to finding myself in a rut, I began thinking about "that which is cinematic" differently. Could the cinematic be deconstructed? If so, what were the parts that made the whole greater than the sum? I then had to define for myself what the essential quality of the cinematic was; and I concluded that which is cinematic is that which is experiential. And so, the goal of this project was to transform the gallery and create a space for spiritual & intellectual engagement, embodiment, and communication; and to deconstruct the cinematic.

Regarding the cinematic, it is typically the mode of spectator that the audience engages in experience with. In this installation, I utilize an audiovisual looping score and text publication to shift the mode of engagement with the audience from spectator to participant. While both the score and publication work by themselves, their full potential is unlocked once they're interacting with each other, which cannot happen until one decides to become active rather than passive.



Fig. 3

## Films and Dreams<sup>9</sup>

- We must understand dreams more before associating film with dreams.
- Trivial similarities: The cinematic qualities dreams carry in comparison to real life, the spatio-temporal discontinuities of dreaming sequences are akin to edits in film.
- Immediacy and vividness are shared between films and dreams, as well as a display of dramatic form. In recounting both, we tell stories.
- Spectatorship & perspective is what differs dream worlds from Film worlds (POV). 2D VS 3D; imagining vs inhabiting.
- Bi-presence: being in the dream as well as a spectator of the dream.
- Perhaps the film/dream comparison is most astute in the similar tendency to induce a self-forgetful involvement within whatever world is being experienced.

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Curry, "Films and Dreams," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33, no. 1 (1974): 83, <https://doi.org/10.2307/428950>.

## Surrealist Cinema: Politics, History, and The language of Dreams<sup>10</sup>

- Exploring societies social foundations through Cinema's capacity to materially reproduce the structure and logic of dreams.
- The narrative, experimental, and documentary converge in surrealist cinema.
- "... (surrealist) cinema could be a means of communication which would bypass the rational distortions of verbal language, a mode whose emphasis on the body could reveal those Truths hidden by the abstraction Of language."

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<sup>10</sup> Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, "Surrealist Cinema: Politics, History, and the Language of Dreams," *American Imago, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND FILM*, 50, no. 4 (1993): 441–56, <https://www.press-jhu-edu.proxy.library.vcu.edu/journals/american-imago>.

## **Time in Cinema, Afrofuturism (Mundane), and The Black experience, Time in Dreams/Dream Logic**

"Not knowing where we're going, but knowing we're going somewhere."

- How does the medium of film affect time?
- How does the embodiment of mundane afrofuturism affect time?
- How does the collective Black experience affect time? (surrealism)
- How do dreams and dream logic affect time?
- How does writing & acting affect time?

What feels like a dream is the reality; and what feels like reality is a dream.

↑

The merging of surreal fronts colliding, making what's real and what isn't indistinguishable. A mythological, surreal odyssey organic to the real world; and dreams that are so mundane its reality isn't questioned.

## Dreams and The Temporality of Consciousness<sup>11</sup>

- Dreaming is a unique state of consciousness that incorporates 3 temporal dimensions: experience of the present, processing of the past, and preparation for the future.
- In the environment of sleep, stimuli is internally generated and many of the restrictions associated with waking thought are absent.
- In dream consciousness, sensory stimuli is bypassed, and a flexible integration of past experiences / forging of novel connections are possible.
- The same neural network is engaged in remembering the past and imagining the future.
- Prospective thoughts are not novel, rather recombinations of perceptions from previous experiences.
- Waking thought = internal timeline (chronology), sleep= converged timeline
- REM is a "protoconscious state, providing a VR model of the world essential for developing our waking conscious.
- Freud: dreams are wish fulfillments.
- Freud: secondary revision, the similarity in the acceptance of what is presented in both dream & material reality.

### \*Dreams & epistemology\*

- The past: 65% of the imagery and context we experience in the dream state derive from people and places we've seen before.
- Memory in dreams are fragmented, never able to recall the complete episodic memory of an event that happened. A mosaic of memories in which no conception of what came before leads to no context of what's currently happening. And we only ever remember a small fraction upon waking up.
- Random but cool: human fetuses spend the majority of their time in REM Sleep.
- REM Sleep is a key component in neural development.
- The future: The purpose of REM Sleep is to rehearse how the brain should react and adjust to a threat it might encounter.
- The salience of dream emotions is evident to all dreamers; often after waking, the emotion of a dream is the only memorable detail.
- Emotion in dreams provides a continuity that the dream content does not.
- "Hyperassociation": The retrieval of fragmented memories recombined in bizarre, illogical ways.

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<sup>11</sup> Katherine Macduffie and George A. Mashour, "Dreams and the Temporality of Consciousness," *The American Journal of Psychology* 123, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 189–97, <https://doi.org/10.5406/amerjpsyc.123.2.0189>.



- A dream is a temporal bridge across the past, present, and future; an overlapping window.

## The School For Material Afrofuturism: Open House

is the church house for the revolution (fig. 4). Black church houses are historically located in the tradition of the radical. Formed out of the necessity for Black Americans to have spaces of worship post-slavery, these spaces ended up becoming community staples not only for religious practice, but also for political education as well. With the most well-known example of the marriage between politics and religion being the Civil Rights' Movement and two of its foregrounded leaders, Martin Luther King Jr. (a Christian pastor) and Malcolm X (a Muslim). In this installation, the design principles of the Black church house aren't utilized to align itself with the institution of the religion, but rather the institution of revolution. The installation uses space and the implication of familiar cultural material to communicate to the audience that in a future that will continually become more secular and technological, the spirit should not and cannot be forsaken in the midst of political struggle.

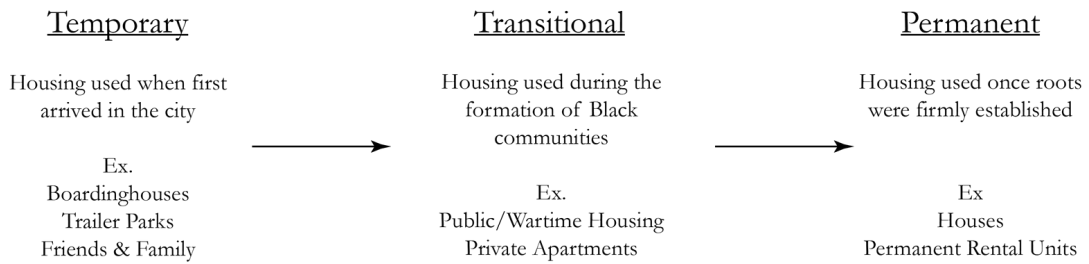
In his essay, *Churches as Black Space*<sup>12</sup>. Researcher Nicholas Eichelberger creates a diagram that describes the settlement and spatial patterns of the Black church house. The “settlement pattern” (fig. 5) moves from the temporary, to the transitional, to the permanent; and the “spatial pattern” (fig. 6) moves from finding space, to adapting space, to creating space. Given my designated gallery space and the duration of the exhibition, I'd qualify my installation as a temporary adaptation of space. All of the materials utilized: the benches, pulpit, and LED light sheets, work to imply and evoke the familiarity of the traditional Black church house; but they also work as a signifier of this space being a temporary construction. The understanding of a space being temporary shifts the focus from all the meaning being informed by the medium, to the meaning being informed by the message. Communicating to the audience that once they exit this space, it will not be something they can return to, putting emphasis on their ability to embody the message that was delivered.

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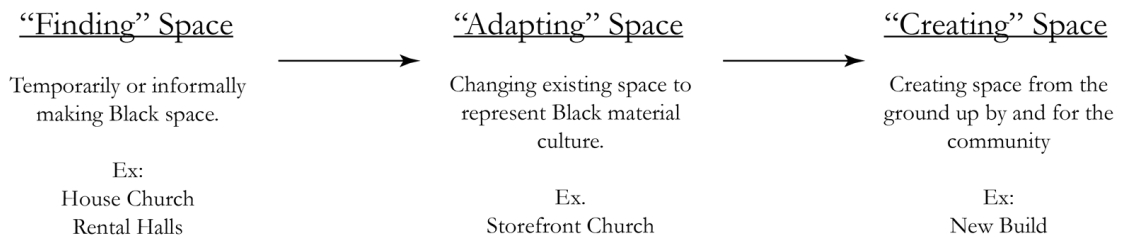
<sup>12</sup> Nicholas Eichelberger, “Churches as Black Spaces,” *Reconstructing Black Space: Creating a Public History of Black Life in Niagara Falls*, 2021, <https://www.reconstructingblackspace.com/explore-pages/black-space-essays/churches>.



## Settlement Patterns



## Spatial Patterns



Top: Fig. 4, Middle: Fig. 5, Bottom: Fig. 6

### **Third Cinema**<sup>13</sup>

The identification process is more likened to a political and social experience, more so than a dream experience (in regard to spectator viewership).

The aesthetic of third cinema moves between two poles: one that demands the work to engage in the actual pressing social realities of the day; and two that the film achieves its impression of reality not by simply mirroring, but transforming the given.

Third cinema semiotics move between, and live on, the ambiguity of signifiers (representation) and referent (the real).

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<sup>13</sup> Special shoutout to *Touki Bouki*, *Soleil ô*, *Mandabi*, and *Memories of Underdevelopment*

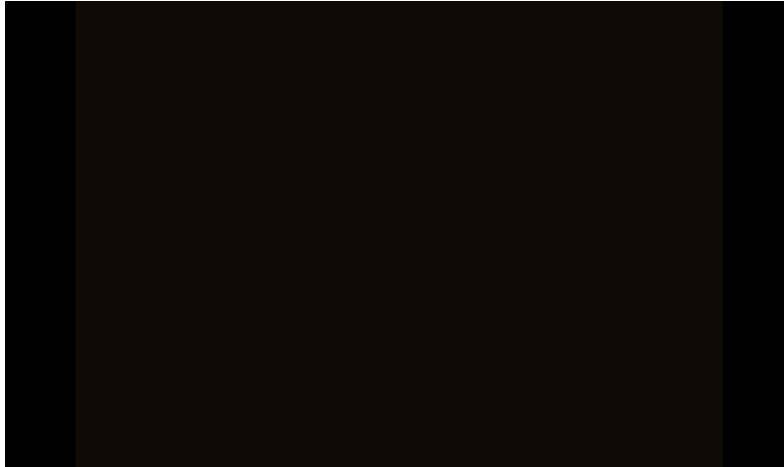
## The School For Material Afrofuturism: Open House

employs an audiovisual looping score to create ambience throughout the installation space (fig. 7). In organizing a design principle around the sound, I thought a lot about gospel and house music. With both genres originating from Black culture, there are many similarities that point to them being on the same spectrum of function; the most clear cut similarity being both genres relation to space. The most common environment of experiencing gospel and house comes by way of community gatherings. Gospel is experienced in the church house; and house is experienced in the neighbor's house. There's a kind of time traveling that occurs when gospel and house interact with each other. I travel from the southern, rural landscape of the 1920s, to the northern, urban landscape of the 1970s and back again; and find that hearing a singer hit a high note from the soul, functions in the same way as feeling pulsing electronic kick drums through the soles of my feet—their repetitive rhythms sending the spirit to a place the body can't reach.

The visuals of the score is our claim to opacity. In color theory, the technical definition of a “shade” is any “pure” color that is mixed with black, thus creating darker variations or shades of said pure color. In Material Afrofuturism, we call any color mixed with black a *shade of black* (fig. 8, 9, 10). If in these shades of black you can't see God, then your gaze is not welcome.



Fig. 7



Top: Fig. 8, Middle: Fig. 9, Bottom: Fig.10

## On Walter Benjamin's Historical Materialism<sup>14</sup>

- In Benjamin's *On the concept of history*, he transforms concepts into images.
- Traditional historical materialism: Every historical event derives from a linear cause and effect relationship, and all these events together create a progressive, continuous motion.
- History has collapsed into a single catastrophe, a pile of debris, wreckage upon wreckage that grows toward the sky. The angel of history must look at this catastrophe, even as they're carried away from it. (Angelus Novus)
- Weak messianic power: the power of mankind
- The historical materialist understands that history has a power which the past has claim to. And so the historical materialist, or angel of history, wants to awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed.
- The past = what has been, past generations, tradition of the oppressed, that which is dead.
- The completeness and incompleteness of history. History is not just a science, but also remembrance, which can make the incomplete (happiness) complete, and the complete (suffering) incomplete.
- What has been lost is not lost for all of time.
- The historical materialist is aware that the past has a claim on us, and we cannot settle this claim lightly.
- The materialist thinks by arresting the flow of history to a standstill, and thus the historical event of object confronts the materialist as a monad, immediately present and living.
- There is a revolutionary chance for the oppressed past/present in the messianic arrest of historical happening.
- The historical materialist must wrest tradition away from the ruling class (and wrest conformism away from tradition).
- The messiah (the oppressed) is the redeemer, a victor over the antichrist (ruling class).
- Theology guides historical materialism. (Afrofuturism as theology?) But only guides it when historical materialism enlists its services. This tag-team can be victorious in the class struggle.
- Mankind should be the objective of progress, not the other way around.
- The Vulgar - historical materialist vs. The Genteel - historical materialist.
- The historical materialist should be critical of the concept of progress (the vulgar only recognizes the progress of the mastering nature).
- The historical materialist is to blast out the continuum of historical succession, and adopt the concept of discontinuity and interruption. Leading the past to bring the present to a critical

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<sup>14</sup> Alfredo Lucero-Montano, "On Walter Benjamin's Historical Materialism," *Astrolabio. Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, 2010, 126–31, <https://raco.cat/index.php/Astrolabio/article/view/197743>.



state. Making the concept of progress a critical interrogation rather than uncritical hypostatization.

- The historical discontinuum. The discontinuity of historical time. Historical materialism doesn't reconstruct history by repeating the past, but by constructing interferences (actualization over progress).

## Black Marxism: The Roots of Black Radicalism<sup>15</sup>

- "... the development of each (Brit, German, US empires) testified to the characteristic tendency of capitalist societies to amass violence for domination and exploitation and a diminishing return, a dialectic, in its use." (71)
- "Black radicalism, consequently, cannot be understood within the particular context of its genesis. It is not a variant of western radicalism whose proponents happen to be Black. Rather, it is a specifically African response to an oppression emerging from the immediate determinants of European development in the modern era and framed by orders of human exploitation woven into the interstices of European social life from the inception of western civilization." (73)
- The African becomes the more enduring "domestic enemy" in the next imperial stage after the obliteration of the New World's past.
- The "Negro" was both a negation of African and a unity of opposition to white.
- The construct of Negro suggested no situatedness in time, that is history, or space, that is ethno- or politico-geography. No civilization, no cultures, no religions, no history, no place, and no humanity that might command consideration.
- The need for the Negro was closely associated with the economic, technical, and Financial requirements of western development from the 16th century onward.
- "In the more than 3,000 years between the beginnings of the first conception of the "Ethiopian" and the appearance of the "Negro," the relationship between the African and European had been reversed." (82)
- "The obliteration of the African past from European consciousness was the culmination of a process a thousand years long and one at the root of European historical identity." (82)

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<sup>15</sup> Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2021).

## **Black Marxism: The Historical archaeology of the Black Radical Tradition**

- By denying the historical development of the dominated people, the imperialists also deny their cultural development.
- The slaves had developed and retained concepts of family and land tenure that contradicted and couldn't be comprehended or controlled by the dominant class. The concepts varied according to the particular conditions of each colony.
- The docility of the slave was a sham.
- Many historians of the past concluded that black people came to accept the terms of slavery, they "became" slaves; and the subsequent generations of "Native Sons" bore these scars.
- African labor only became necessary when Native labor was exhausted and European labor became inadequate.
- Palenqué communities of the 1500s in Mexico: communities of escaped slaves. Resistance has always been happening.

## National Liberation and Culture<sup>16</sup>

What is culture? How significant is this force if imperialist bodies find it necessary to neutralize?

- "As with the flower in a plant, it is in culture that you find the capacity (or responsibility) for the production and the fertilizing of the seed which ensures the continuity of history, ensuring at the same time, the perspectives of the evolution and of the progress of the society in question." What does this mean for revolutionary culture?
- "The study of the history of liberation struggles shows that in general, they are preceded by an increase in cultural phenomena which progressively crystallize into an attempt, successful or not, to assert the cultural personality of the oppressed people in an act of rejection of that of the oppressor."

Pg. 6 "It Must be noticed that...(esp the culture)"--utopias of a third kind. The constant adapting of strategy and acknowledgment of complex cultural issues.

- Culture is not uniform and does not equally develop across the board.

"The attitude of each social group when faced with the struggle is dictated by its economic interests, but it is also profoundly influenced by its culture. One could even say that it is the differences in The levels of culture which explain the different reactions of individuals in the same socioeconomic group to the liberation movement. And it is here that the full importance of culture for each person is reached: understanding of, and integration with his environment, identification with the fundamental problems and aspirations of the society, and acceptance of the possibility of change in the direction of progress."

- The liberation movement must base its program on having profound knowledge of the culture of the people. It must also be able to discern the essential from the secondary, the positive from the negative, the progressive from regressive, the strengths from the weaknesses in the total cultural complexity of the people. And converge various cultural and social categories, transforming it to a single force which acts as the basis and foundation for armed struggle.

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<sup>16</sup> Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," *Transition*, no. 45 (1974): 12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2935020>.

## Utopias of a Third Kind<sup>17</sup>

- Utopia: "Collective dreaming"

- Utopia is a construct created in response to the perceived gap between the current and the ideal

- 3 utopian responses to colonialism

Reactionary: nationalistic response. Depends on the coexistence of dystopias for others

Emulation: Beat them at their own game. Abstaining from precolonial knowledges in favor of modernity

*\*The colonizer is still the unit of comparison w/  
reactionary and emulatory utopia dreaming\**

Third Kind: Grounded in the local, located in a planetary context. Comes from the imagination of the oppressed. Questions the paradigms of both the oppressor and one's own culture, and values aspects of both. Not limited to the axis of Colonizer - Colonized, always learning from other cultures and people, always adjusting.

\*we are simultaneously local and planetary\*

\*the examination of possibilities within and beyond the experience of colonization\*

- Radical egalitarianism
- Utopic as direction rather than destination
- Sharing a planetary consciousness between different utopias
- Localized utopias are perhaps the only real utopias possible. Therefore, utopias must be different from each other, but their global expression must have weight. (Rainbow coalition v. city of Chicago)
- To counter the paralysis of the imagination, Three interrelated things are needed.
  1. Proof of concept experiments grounded in reality and a counter to the paradigm of destructive "development of modern industrial civilization."
  2. Stories informed by the experiments, yet freed by the imagination
  3. Different paradigms, ways of seeing the world
- Individual freedom and social good, heightened responsibility to one another.. "Ubuntu", "radical ecological democracy"... Feedback loop, reinforced by One another. Flattened hierarchies
- The relationship between humans and nature
- Alternate conceptions of time (linear vs cyclical)
- Transcending the false dichotomies of capitalist modernity

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<sup>17</sup> Vandana Singh, essay, in *Utopias Of A Third Kind* (US, US: PM Press/Outspoken Authors, 2022), 19–36.

## **The School For Material Afrofuturism: Open House**

text publication is a two-fold riso-printed brochure (fig. 11). One of its purposes is practical, as it grounds the installation in the concept of a school open house for prospective students; and delivers information on the pedagogical impulse of Material Afrofuturism. Its other purpose serves as a guide for spiritual engagement if one wishes for it.

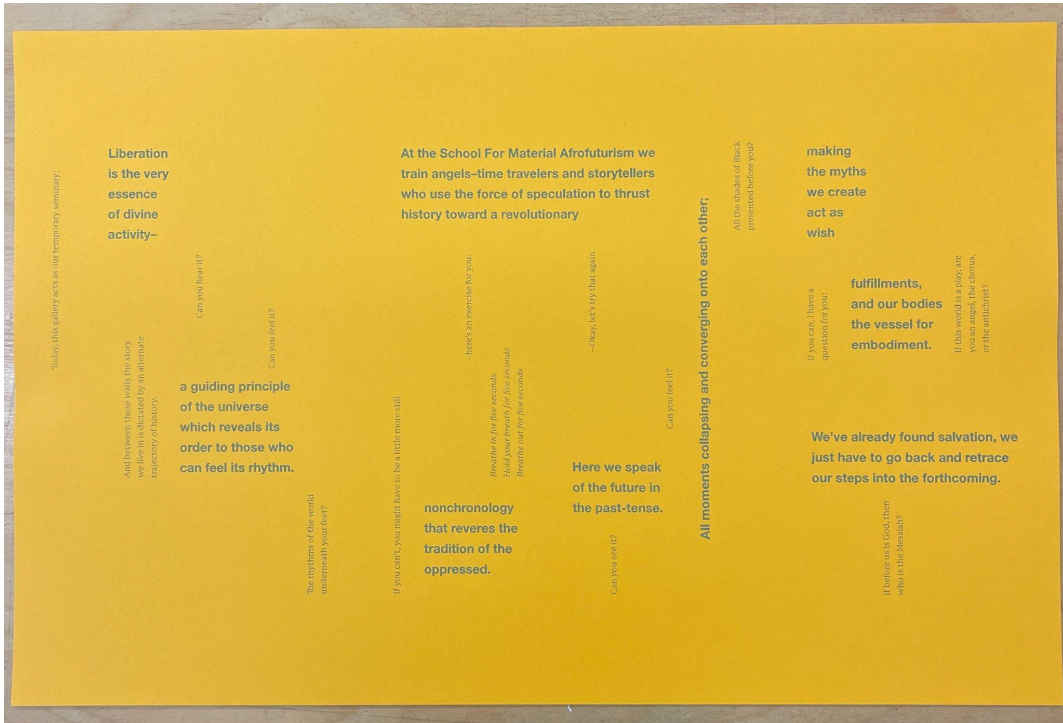
The brochure contains two sets of text that operate on different axes. On the horizontal axis is prose text that informs the reader (fig. 12), allowing them to understand what Material Afrofuturism is. On the vertical axis is poetry that inquires and guides the reader (fig. 13), allowing them to feel what Material Afrofuturism is. This dichotomy between intellect and emotion is something I intentionally wanted to work within. As a strategy to resist the gaze's overzealous consumption, I lean into the that which is intuitive and tacit, and lean into creating layers of meaning that also act as layers of accessibility. To feel what Material Afrofuturism is the real goal. However, I only want a certain demographic to cross that finish line, being privy to not let revolutionary material fall into the wrong hands. Therefore, the audience must pass through every layer of access. Keeping up with the concept of school, it is kind of like a secret test, a way of seeing who is worthy of becoming an angel, and who might be the antichrist trying to infiltrate.

It is also worth noting that the risograph is a canonical contributor to the production of material culture in relation to the church. As its accessibility and economic printing process led to churches being able to produce text-based artifacts (a pamphlet for example) en masse.



Fig. 11





Top: Fig. 12, Bottom: Fig. 13



## Material Afrofuturism<sup>18</sup>

is my theoretical brainchild, resulting from an 18 month process of trying to figure out what living with intention looks like for me, especially in relation to my art practice. Central to my research has been the words from Martine Syms' *Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto*, Walter Benjamin's *Theses On The Philosophy of History*, and the theological approaches of *Liberation Theology/Black Theology*. What does it mean to understand history as a living entity, and from the perspective of the Black? What does it mean to apply theology to our material reality, how would that bible read? In this context, who would then be considered the messiah? The angel? The antichrist?

By that extension—what kind of stories can be created within this context? Afrofuturism, history, and theology all act on the same spectrum of speculation; and when they interact with each other, they disrupt the linearity of time, and create new historical trajectories through nonlinearity. What can this kind of time-traveling do for imagining and creating better futures for the world we want to live in? What happens when we speak about the future in the past-tense? What is the potential for altering material reality when the myths we create act as wish fulfillments that must be embodied to be attained?

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<sup>18</sup> Now this time, let's start from here.

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