

September 13th - November 2nd

Experimental Time Order

Black Quantum Futurism

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In Black Quantum Futurism's video *Time Travel Experiments* (2017), the artists' guide us through an exercise in time travel. Presented as an instructional tutorial, the exercise asks the viewer to consider time as a malleable, multiplicitous substance. At the core of this inquiry is the question of time: what it is, how it effects us, and how we can realign it as something to be manipulated and wielded as a tool, rather than as a fixed system dictating a linear temporal progression.

On first glance, BQF's engagement with time might appear like something from a speculative fiction—a future imaginary of time machines and time travel—like a DIY H.G. Wells. But the tone, tenor, and intention of their work operates on a different level. In this video, the artists narrate: “Recall a memory, then get inside of the memory to actually re-experience it.... Pay particular attention to the thoughts you have and order them in terms of their relation to past, present, or future. As you categorize these thoughts, notice where you place the ‘future’ thoughts, ‘past’ thoughts, and ‘present’ thoughts in your imagination.” Asking if the past thoughts sit behind and

the future thoughts in front, in a standard linear construction, BQF then instructs us to take one of those thoughts and “reverse the direction.”

For BQF, time travel is as meditative as it is scientific. Though influenced heavily by notions from modern quantum physics, their approach to disrupting and manipulating time is definitively less technical. Their propositions call to mind the novel *Kindred* (1979), by Octavia Butler, which follows the temporal shifting journey the novel's protagonist Dana, who is spontaneously and unwittingly teleported from her present in the late 20th century back to the slavery era US South in the mid-19th century. Like Butler's Dana, BQF's realization of time travel is an action that is not carried out with machines and devices: a notion of time travel that is an equally real, tangible, and genuine pursuit. Their methodology for this activity is carried out through reflection and introspection, through a reconfiguration of what time can be and how we use it, a cultivation of a temporal space that refutes linearity and fixed experiences of time.

This refutation of time and space is on display in the various clock works that span the gallery's east wall. The works, from the series *All Time is Local* (2018) are all built into collages where the function of

the clock has been disrupted. The hands of the clocks all stopped, and the faces of them adorned with collaged element, BQF's intervention on these objects stops time and overlays it with images calling up past, present, and future imaginaries of Black time, space, and being. The first clock that viewers are greeted with, *Experimental Time Order* (2019), is the only one with functioning clock hands. The hands appear stopped as one approaches the work, but as one leans in close, or brings their hand up to face of the clock, a sensor activates a circuit, engaging the clock. With this work, BQF has literally placed time in our hands. While the clock's interactive activation may seem trivial, the work stands as a reminder about core ideas in all of BQF's work: we have the capacity to hold time, to use it rather than be used by it, to embody future possible worlds in our present every day.

—Pablo de Ocampo

Artist Biography

Formed in 2014, Black Quantum Futurism is an interdisciplinary creative practice between Camae Ayewa and Rasheedah Phillips, based in Philadelphia. BQF weave quantum physics, Afrofuturism, and Afrodiasporic concepts of time, ritual, text and sound to present innovative works and tools offering practical ways to escape negative temporal loops, oppression vortexes and the digital matrix. In 2016, BQF founded Community Futures Lab, a community arts space in North Philadelphia. BQF is a 2018 Velocity Fund Grantee, 2018 Solitude & ZKM Web Resident, 2017 Center for Emerging Visual Artists Fellow, 2017 Pew Fellow, 2016 A Blade of Grass Fellow, and a 2015 artist-in-residence at Neighborhood Time Exchange, West Philadelphia. BQF has presented, exhibited and performed at Red Bull Arts, New York; Serpentine Galleries, London; Philadelphia Art Museum; Open Engagement; MOMA PS1, New York; Bergen Kunsthall; Le Gaité Lyrique, Paris; and Squeaky Wheel, Buffalo, among others.

Camae Ayewa is a musician (performing as Moor Mother), poet, visual artist and workshop facilitator, and has performed at

numerous festivals, colleges, galleries and museums around the world, sharing the stage with King Britt, Roscoe Mitchell, Claudia Rankine, bell hooks and more. Camae is a vocalist in three collaborative performance groups: Irreversible Entanglements, Moor Jewelry and 700bliss. In late 2016, she released her debut album *Fetish Bones* on Don Giovanni Records, and in 2017 she released *The Motionless Present*, commissioned by The Vinyl Factory x CTM. Recent festival performances include Borealis, CTM Festival, Le Guess Who?, Unsound Festival, Flow Festival, Rewire and Donaufestival.

Rasheedah Phillips, Esq. is a Philadelphia-based practising legal services attorney, artist, cultural producer and writer. Rasheedah's writing has appeared in *Keywords for Radicals*, *Villanova Law Review*, *The Funambulist Magazine* and other publications. Rasheedah is the founder of *The AfroFuturist Affair*, a founding member of *Metropolarity Queer Spec Fic Collective*, co-founder of *Black Quantum Futurism*, and co-creator of the award-winning *Community Futures Lab*, which utilises themes of oral history, Afrofuturism and communal memory in an area undergoing redevelopment, gentrification and mass displacement. Phillips is a recipient of the *National Housing Law*

Project 2017 Housing Justice Award, 2017 City & State Pennsylvania 40 under 40 Rising Star award, and 2018 Atlantic Fellow for Racial Equity. She is the self-published author of *Recurrence Plot (and Other Time Travel Tales)* (2014), and the editor of the anthologies *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Vol. I* (2015) and *Space-Time Collapse I: From the Congo to the Carolinas* (2016).

List of Works

1. *Experimental Time Order*,
mixed media collage, arduino, clock,
2019

2. *All Time is Local*
mixed media collage, clocks, 2018

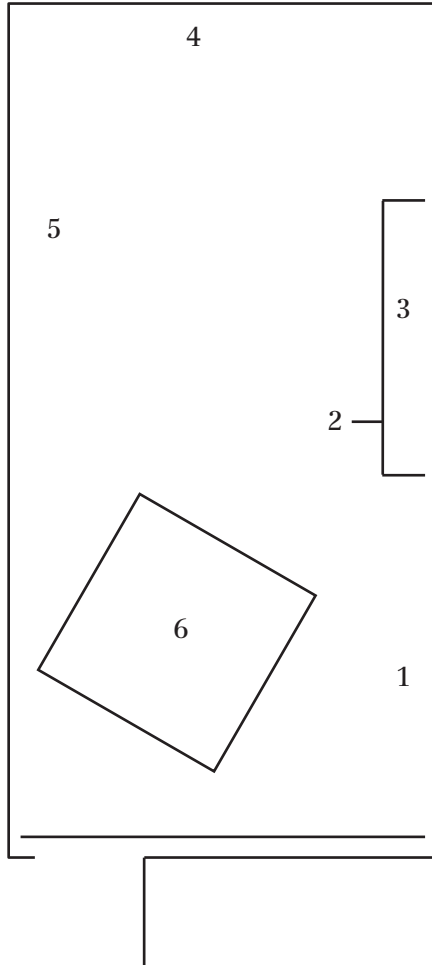
3. *Black Space Agency*
collage, 2018

4. *All Time Is Local*
video, 2019

5. *Various Black Quantum Futurism
Publications*

6. *Time Travel Experiments*
video, 2017

Exhibition Map



Canada Council
for the Arts
Conseil des Arts
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