



SPECULATIVE FUTURES OF RACE SYMPOSIUM

14TH APRIL 2017

SPECULATIVE & FUTURIST APPROACHES TO CRITICAL ISSUES OF
RACE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE, ART AND ACTIVISM

NALO HOPKINSON • VALORIE THOMAS • REYNALDO ANDERSON

ART • ACTIVISM • THEORY • PRAXIS

ZEAL HARRIS • BEATRIZ CORTEZ • MARTON ROBINSON

TOBIAS C. VAN VEEN • PAVITHRA PRASAD

8 STAR • ARTIST PERFORMANCE

T. CARLIS ROBERTS & ANAND JAY KALRA

FB.ME/SPECULATIVEFUTURES RACE
MANZANITA RM 240 + ARMER THEATER



CSUN

Department of
Communication
Studies

SPECULATIVE FUTURES OF RACE SYMPOSIUM

FRIDAY 14TH APRIL 2017 • DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

ART • ACTIVISM • THEORY • PERFORMANCE • PRAXIS

The Speculative Futures of Race Symposium is a one-day conference addressing speculative and futurist approaches to critical issues of race in theory and practice, art and activism.

The Symposium highlights the evolving political, social, and artistic movements of Afrofuturism, Arabfuturism, Latinofuturism, Indigenous Futurism, Afrosurrealism and Astroblackness. These social movements emphasise imaginative, speculative, and futurist approaches to antiracist praxis, operating at the intersection of liberatory politics and the speculative arts.

The Symposium addresses critical issues of speculative race theory, including radical ontologies of becoming, posthumanism, and performance, by turning to the impact of these lived experiences and their discourses upon identity, global citizenship, politics, art, and ecological networks.

The Symposium draws together speakers and perspectives from critical communications and media studies, gender and sexuality studies, critical race theory and African-American studies, philosophy, music, art, activism, and literature.

Find us on Facebook: fb.me/speculativefuturesrace | @speculativefuturesofrace

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Morning Session

Aronstam Library, Room 240, Second Floor, Manzanita Hall

10:30am — 11:30am • Speculative Artists Panel I

Beatriz Cortez (Los Angeles), *Migration, Nomadism, and Imagining the Future*
Marton Robinson (San Jose, Costa Rica), *Identity and Representation in Costa Rica: Visual Strategies of Imagination*

11:45am — 12:30pm • Keynote Address

Dark Speculative Futurity, Afrofuturism, and the Rise of Neo-Nationalism
Reynaldo Anderson (Harris-Stowe State University)

12:30pm — 1:15pm

Lunch

1:30pm — 2:00pm • Visiting Scholar Address

Afrofuturism and the Race for Utopia: Speculative Futures of Posthumanism
tobias c. van Veen (CSUN)

2:00pm — 3:00pm • Speculative Artists Panel II

Zeal Harris (Los Angeles), *Signifiers of Race & Speculation in My Art*
Pavithra Prasad (CSUN), *Notes on Terrestrial Performance of Outer Space*

3:00pm — 3:15pm

Coffee break

Afternoon Session

Armer Theater, Room 100, First Floor, Manzanita Hall

3:30pm — 4:15pm • Keynote Address

The Vertigo Tango: Crosspasts, Liminal Selves, and the Speculative Futures of Race
Valorie Thomas (Pomona College)

4:30pm — 5:30pm • Keynote Address

Whose Afrofuturism?
Nalo Hopkinson (UC, Riverside)

5:45pm — 7:00pm • Performance/Pieces

8 Star
T. Carlis Roberts and Anand Jay Kalra (Oakland)
Moderated by Dr. Pavithra Prasad (CSUN)

:: KEYNOTE SPEAKERS ::

Nalo Hopkinson is a Jamaican-born Canadian speculative fiction writer and editor, whose work draws upon Caribbean history and language, and its traditions of oral and written storytelling. Her novels include *Brown Girl in the Ring*, *Midnight Robber*, *The Salt Roads*, *The New Moon's Arms*, *The Chaos*, and the short story collection *Skin Folk*, for which she is a recipient of the John W. Campbell Award, the World Fantasy Award, the Gaylactic Spectrum Award, and a two-time recipient of the Sunburst Award for Canadian Literature of the Fantastic. Hopkinson has edited the fiction anthologies *Whispers From the Cotton Tree Root: Caribbean Fabulist Fiction* and *Mojo: Conjure Stories*, and she is co-editor with Uppinder Mehan of the anthology *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Visions of the Future*, and with Geoff Ryman of the anthology *Tesseract 9: New Canadian Speculative Fiction*. Hopkinson defended George Elliott Clarke's novel *Whydah Falls* on CBC's Canada Reads national radio program in 2002, and she was the curator of *Six Impossible Things*, an audio series of Canadian fantastical fiction on CBC Radio One. Nalo Hopkinson is currently Professor of Creative Writing at University of California Riverside.

Dr. Valorie Thomas, Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies, Pomona College, originated the concept of Diasporic Vertigo as a motif of decolonization. Thomas also studies film and visual art, has an ongoing interest in the connections between writing, art and social justice, and is a screenwriter. She recently curated the international exhibition *Vertigo@Midnight*, featuring twenty-one Afrodiasporic artists exploring the motifs of Afrofuturism, speculative art, and spirituality at Pomona College's Chan Gallery and Scripps College's Clark Humanities Museum.

Dr. Reynaldo Anderson, Associate Professor of Humanities at Harris-Stowe State University, co-founder of the Black Speculative Arts Movement (BSAM). With Dr. John Jennings (Harvard) he recently co-curated the Black Speculative Arts exhibition *Unveiling Visions: The Alchemy of the Black Imagination* at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, NYC. He is the co-editor with Dr. Charles E. Jones of *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness* (Lexington, 2015) and co-editor with Dr. Tobias C. van Veen of "Black Lives, Black Politics, Black Futures," a forthcoming special issue of *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*.

:: ARTISTS ::

Zeal Harris, MFA • www.zealsart.com

Zeal Harris is known for contemporary, seductive, colorful, caricaturesque, political, urban-vernacular, story paintings. She is a Los Angeles based visual artist and has been in recent exhibitions in Port Au Prince at Haiti's Ghetto Biennale; in New York at the Caribbean Culture Center of the African Diaspora; in Arizona at The Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum; and in Los Angeles at the California African-American Museum, The Makeshift Museum, 18th Street Arts Center, and Gallery 825. Zeal has been mentioned in art reviews and interviewed on *Rising Up with Sonali*, *Pacifica Radio*, *Fabrik Magazine*, *The Culture Trip*, *Life in LA*, *Requited Journal*, *the Blk Grrrl Show*, *Clocktower Radyo Shak*, *the LA Weekly*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. Zeal has an MFA in Studio Art from Otis College of Art & Design.

Marton Robinson • <https://www.biomythart.com/marton-robinson>

San Jose, Costa Rica artist Marton Robinson explores ways of challenging conventional black representations of identity and ethnicity from the notion of art history, history, politics, mass media and popular culture. Through prints, found objects, sculpture and videos, Marton Robinson creates new discourses using mockery and symbolism, exploring how black identity is constructed through colonialism and how this perception is engraved in the psyche of his native Costa Rica.

Beatriz Cortez • <http://www.beatrizcortez.com>

Beatriz Cortez is a writer and an artist. She was born in El Salvador and has lived in the United States since 1989. Her work explores simultaneity, the existence in different temporalities and different versions of modernity, particularly in relation to memory and loss in the aftermath of war and the experience of immigration, and in relation to imagining possible futures. She has exhibited her work nationally in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., New York, Minneapolis, and Miami, and internationally in El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Ecuador. She holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the California Institute of the Arts, and a doctorate in Latin American literature from Arizona State University. She is a recipient of the California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists for 2017. She teaches in the Department of Central American Studies at California State University, Northridge. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

8 Star — Artist Performance + Talk • *International Debut* • T. Carlis Roberts + Anand jay Kalra

8 Star is a new musical about the life and work of Octavia Butler. Placing key moments of Butler's life alongside characters and philosophies drawn from her works, *8 Star* reveals a portrait of the artist and the multiple worlds of her creations. Performing artists T. Carlis Roberts and Anand jay Kalra will provide a look inside the musical by exploring their creative process and thinking through Butler's racial and gendered speculations. This will be the first public performance of selections from the larger work.

Dr. T. Carlis Roberts is an artist and scholar based in Oakland. As a composer and sound designer, they have worked with theater and dance companies across the country, including Steppenwolf Theatre Company, San Jose Repertory Theatre, and About Face Theatre. As a musician, T has performed as a drummer, singer, and bandleader with groups including The Singing Bois and Las Bomberas de la Bahía. T Associate Professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley, where they teach courses on music and politics. <http://tamararobertsmusic.com/>

Anand jay Kalra has loved musical theater since before he could talk. He wrote and performed a solo show about critical moments in his transition to adulthood and transmasculine identity in 2009 and has performed his poetry and songs in small cabarets and community events since 2008. In 2016, he formed the all-transmasculine singing group Vajayna Men's Choir and co-produced Man2man, a vocal-driven concert, with T. Carlis Roberts for the National Queer Arts Festival in San Francisco, California.

:: SPEAKERS / ORGANIZERS ::

Dr. tobias c. van Veen is a critical media theorist, creative director, and Visiting Scholar at CSUN. His research focuses on speculative race theory, futurist media cultures, and philosophy of technology. He is co-editor with Reynaldo Anderson of the “Black Lives, Black Politics, Black Futures” special issue of *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* (2018); editor of the Afrofuturism special issue of *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* (2013), and co-editor with Hillegonda Rietveld of the Journal’s special issue *Echoes from the Dub Diaspora* (2015). A sound-artist, media arts curator and tactical turntablist since 1993, tobias is founding director of the UpgradeMTL at the Société des arts technologiques [SAT], and has organised interventions, events, broadcasts, and exhibitions worldwide, working with organisations including MUTEK, Steim, Eyebeam, the New Forms Festival, Studio XX, VIVO Media Arts Centre, CiTR Radio 101.9FM, Kunstradio, and Turbulence.org. He hosts the *Other Planes: Speculative Futurism* podcast on CreativeDisturbance.org and is director of sound-art label IOSOUND.ca.

Dr. Pavithra Prasad is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at CSUN. Pavithra Prasad's research deals with the intersections of race, class, gender, and cultural identity in performances of nightlife and transnational subcultures. Her ethnographic work on subculture and tourism in India has been published in *Text and Performance Quarterly*, *Ecumenica*, and *Critical Arts*. She is currently working on a book that traces the effects of socio-economic neoliberalism on performances of cosmopolitanism, class, and global mobility, in clubs and electronic dance music festivals in India. She maintains a creative life as a performer, musician, and playwright, playing across genres ranging from science fiction theatre and performance ethnography, to folk music fusions and un-passable drag.

ORGANIZED BY —

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