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**JOURNEY TO ANOTHER IN WORLD IN ATLANTICA: THE GILDA REGION BY ARTIST APRIL BEY**

**Reno, NV (August 26, 2023)** – Sense-tingling, scintillating and surreal: these adjectives only partly describe the universe created by contemporary artist and educator April Bey in *Atlantica: The Gilda Region* on view at the Nevada Museum of Art beginning August 26, 2023. Offered under the framework of tourism, the exhibition invites viewers to visit this imaginative world—a place where glitter is the unit of currency—through the lens of an industry the artist experienced firsthand during her childhood in The Bahamas. Tourism is one of the Bahamas’ principle economic engines and Bey incorporates its unique design—in the form of peppy imagery—that often describes the experience of a tourist arriving in a new destination.

Yet, in *Atlantica*, Bey rewrites fraught histories to eliminate oppression and racism to instead celebrate people of African descent thriving as visionaries and artists. Home to innovators and creators, *Atlantica* presents an Afrofuturism that embraces queerness, feminism, Internet culture, and above all, joy.

“I’m creating a space where Black women and queer people can simply be themselves,” Bey said. “In *Atlantica*, we can solve everything,” the artist said.

Bey grew up on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas and finds the roots of her inspiration for this exhibition in a childhood memory. At the tender age of five, Bey recalls her Black father doing his best to explain racism to her after she had been teased at school for the color of her hair. Her father responded to Bey’s questions with something far beyond the artist’s expectations—he told her that the reason people mistreated her at school was because Black people are aliens from another planet and that she was on a reconnaissance mission to retrieve information about the strange customs of the people on Earth. To Bey, the idea that she was on a mission from a planet not plagued by divisions of race, gender, and social class was enchanting, and so *Atlantica* was born.

Serving as an “alien ambassador,” Bey is responsible for reporting on Earth—offered under the auspices of Bey’s journey as an artist and educator deeply interested in feminism, post-colonialism and race, welcoming new worlds so visitors can have experiential encounters with these larger narratives through a physical space informed by the artist’s imaginative social critique.

Originally curated by Mar Hollingsworth at the California African American Museum (CAAM) in Los Angeles, CA, *Atlantica: The Gilda Region* incorporates mass-produced printmaking, mixed media painting, textiles, and videos to showcase the new planet, where an invented history, landscape and people all bear the imprint of the artist’s scholarship and experiences—a kaleidoscope of pop culture, science fiction, and found objects that symbolic meaning relevant to the central themes of the exhibition.

“I’m trying to get everyone to think in an elevated, evolved way,” Bey said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. “If the aliens came in to check on us, they might be like ‘Ohmigod, you still have race? You still have gender?’”

Bey's works manifest as woven tapestries, digitally woven blankets and textiles mounted on wood and encased in resin; a material Bey notes she uses when she wants the viewer to see their reflection—themselves—caught in the work. The planet hosts “emissaries” who offer possibilities for a world not plagued by oppression, division and violence. These emissaries include trans activist Marsha P. Johnson, and an all-Black rodeo team called the Cowgirls of Color who serve as spokespersons of Atlantica's history, culture and values. The artist develops unique features for the planet that include citizens who can replicate themselves, Black vampire women who leave individuals with dreams in exchange for sustenance, and methods to duplicate food to eliminate hunger.

“Atlantica is a joyous AfroFuturist meme, while it is also a serious paean to women's resilience in the face of colonialism, specifically Black women who are expected to be sovereign and robust while at the same time assumed to be inept and emotionally weak when leadership roles are sought,” said Bey. “Made in another universe that parallels, critiques, celebrates and satirizes our own Atlantica occupies exploited space, offering up a fictitious world where labels are non-existent, and we are allowed to float within our self-defined identities.”

Bey now resides and works in Los Angeles, CA as a visual artist and art educator. Bey's interdisciplinary artwork is an introspective and social critique of American and Bahamian culture, feminism, generational theory, social media, AfroFuturism, AfroSurrealism, post-colonialism and constructs of race within supremacist systems. Bey has launched seven solo exhibitions: *Picky Head* at Liquid Courage Gallery in Nassau, Bahamas, *COMPLY* at Coagula Curatorial in Chinatown, Los Angeles, *MADE IN SPACE* at Band of Vices Gallery in West Adams, a large survey of work spanning several years, *Welcome to Atlantica* at Fullerton College Art gallery, *Atlantica: The Gilda Region* at The California African American Museum and *When You're on Another Planet and They Just Fly* at Gavlak Gallery Los Angeles.

Bey's work is in the collection of The California African American Museum, The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, The Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Fullerton College Art Gallery, Museum of Art and History, Lancaster, CA, and more. Bey has exhibited in biennials NE7, NE8 and NE9 in The Bahamas. Bey has also exhibited internationally in Italy, Spain and Accra Ghana, West Africa.

*April Bey: Atlantica, The Gilda Region* is organized by the California African American Museum in Los Angeles.

**Image Captions:** *From left to right:* April Bey, *When Your Limit is the Sky, I'm on Another Planet and You Just Fly*, 2021. Water-based latex paint, watercolor, hand-sewn fabric, glitter, and sequins, 110 x 216 in. Courtesy of the artist and GAVLAK Los Angeles and Palm Beach. April Bey, *A Whole Me?!*, 2021. Acrylic paint, watercolor, and hand-sewn, digitally woven, and printed crown, 110 x 72 in. Courtesy of the artist and GAVLAK Los Angeles and Palm Beach. April Bey, *One Thigh Snack Fry Dry Please*, 2021. Digitally woven blanket with hand-sewn fabric and glitter, 80 x 240 in. Courtesy of the artist and GAVLAK Los Angeles and Palm Beach.

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#### **Land Acknowledgement**

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western Shoshone), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 28 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.