

April Bey

On display through Feb. 4, 2024, at the Nevada Museum of Art (nevadaart.org), *April Bey: Atlantica, The Gilda Region* immerses viewers in contemporary artist April Bey's (april-bey.com) exploration of Afrofuturism. A movement that dates back to the 1960s, Afrofuturism navigates the relationship between Black Americans and their ties to space travel and understanding of extraterrestrial life.

Told through a series of colorful tableaux, Bey positions herself as an alien from the fictional world of Atlantica who was sent to Earth to report back to her native planet. On Earth, she discovers racism and oppression, constructs that do not exist in Atlantica, a world where Black people prosper through beauty and love. "I'm creating a space where Black women and queer people can simply be themselves," says Bey, who was inspired by her life growing up on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas, where her otherness manifested in bullying from her childhood peers. "In Atlantica, we can solve everything."

The solutions Bey presents take shape as Black vampire women who solve food insecurity; the Cowgirls of Color, an all-female Black rodeo team who uphold Atlantica's past, present and future;



and trans activist Marsha P. Johnson. Glitter is the currency of Atlantica, and Black individuals are celebrated as visionaries, artists and beacons of queerness, feminism and radiant joy. Woven tapestries, mixed-media paintings, digitally woven blankets, videos and resin-encased textiles mounted on wood dance with color, life and prosperity due to Bey's inspiring visions.

"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," says Bey, who now calls Los Angeles home. "Made in another universe that parallels, critiques, celebrates and satirizes our own, Atlantica occupies exploited space, offering up a fictitious world where labels are nonexistent and we are allowed to float within our self-defined identities."

Atlantica, The Gilda Region was curated initially by Mar Hollingsworth at Los Angeles' California African American Museum (CAAM). Organized by Carmen Beals, associate curator and outreach director at the Nevada Museum of Art, the exhibition is on display now in Reno, Nev.



Clockwise from top: April Bey, 'A Whole Me?!' (2021, acrylic paint, watercolor and hand-sewn, digitally woven and printed crown); 'Gilda Trinity' (2021, digitally woven blankets with hand-sewn sequins and glitter); the artist.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP, PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GAVLAK LOS ANGELES AND PALM BEACH; THE CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM; THE ARTIST