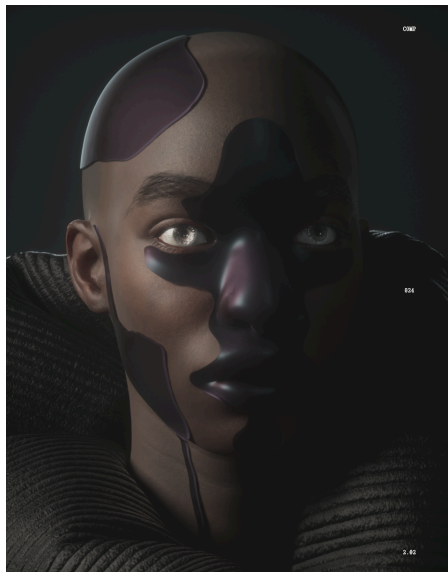


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2025

**MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY GALLERIES PRESENTS THE EXHIBITION
THE AGE OF BLACK METAL BY AFROTECTOPIA**

ON VIEW SEPTEMBER 23 THROUGH DECEMBER 14, 2025

A Collection of Artists Collaboratively Imagine the Future of Space Travel through Black Culture



Jeremy Kamal, *Companion 180 vol. 1*, 2021.
Visual rendering. Courtesy of Afrotectopia

Montclair, NJ — The Montclair State University Galleries is pleased to host *The Age of Black Metal*, a visionary exhibition that projects centuries into the future to explore the societal, cultural, and spiritual impact of Black Metal—a groundbreaking conceptual work at the intersection of Black futurism, art, and speculative technology. The exhibition is curated by Ari Melenciano and is on view from September 23 through December 14, 2025 in the George Segal Gallery and Alexander Kasser Theater display cases.

The exhibition builds upon the foundational ideas of the book *Black Metal*, authored by Ari Melenciano, Jordan Caldwell, Jeremy Kamal, and Kordae Jatafa Henry and published by Afrotectopia through a pioneering incubator with MIT Media Lab's Space Exploration Initiative, NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program with support from the Ford Foundation.

The book consists of four chapters, situated decades in the future:

- *Celestial Florilegia* by Ari Melenciano unveils a cosmic geomantic practice, revealing a quantum form of intelligence through the use of intuition and botanical life. When put into use, it becomes your koan for the Black Metal Voyage, and a personal ritual for daily purposes.

- *Companion 180, Volume I* by Jeremy Kamal is the first of a series of spiritual and technical instructions for linking mind, body, and spacesuit. The shamanic guide is meant to facilitate the union of voyager with spacesuit, body with spirit, and outer space with inner growth.
- *Dark Voyage* by Kordae Jatafa Henry is a graphic chapter that unveils the lives of Herman and Alice. Through cinematic portraits of an interstellar journey, readers experience story fragments, training facilities in orbit, and a Black Metal interface that lives on the skin.
- *Training Grounds* by Jordan Caldwell is a metaphysical workbook for Shedding, Integrating, and Grounding. The workbook supports readers walking the Black Metal path through a framework for aligning with their continuous inner work process.

The exhibition is set centuries beyond the original text, imagining an even further timeline where society has been profoundly shaped by the principles of Black Metal. *The Age of Black Metal* translates the book's themes into a fully immersive experience for visitors to explore each conceptual chapter, from metaphysical training manuals, botanical consciousness, and self-alignment protocols, through participatory installations. Visitors will have the opportunity to craft their own koans, inspired by *Celestial Florilegia*, and use pages from the *Training Grounds* to better understand themselves at a metaphysical level. Ultimately, visitors will not only bear witness to the societal effects of Black Metal, but also leave transformed in some way.

In addition, *The Age of Black Metal* expands upon the original work through the inclusion of speculative artifacts and contemporary works by artists influenced by and in relation to the Black Metal paradigm, in an installation called *The Orbit*.

Black Metal is more than a theory, it is a pedagogy of the self. It treats space travel not just as physical displacement, but as an interpersonal and spiritual evolution. It envisions Blackness in boundless new forms.

The Age of Black Metal invites all to imagine the futures that Black culture can build, if given space to expand without limit.

About the Supporting Organizations

- **Afrotectopia** is a social institution cultivating boundless innovation at the nexus of art, design, technology, and culture. Founded in 2018 by NYU ITP graduate student Ari Melenciano, Afrotectopia began as a highly cross-disciplinary conference cultivating a vibrant community of industry and cultural pioneers. For years, Afrotectopia hosted a variety of programming that bridged connections between emerging technologies, Black culture, and racial equity. In 2021, Afrotectopia partnered with MIT Media Lab's Space Exploration Initiative and New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program to create an incubator that reimagines space travel, additionally supported by the Ford Foundation. The product of the incubator is an expansive and highly limited edition art book titled *Black Metal*. To celebrate the launch of the book, Afrotectopia invited communities around the globe to co-imagine this world through an immersive book tour, Black Metal Starship Program.
- **NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP)** is a 2 year long graduate program within New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. ITP is sometimes described as an art school for engineers and at the same time an engineering school for artists. ITP is often considered a Center for the Recently Possible.

- **MIT Media Lab's Space Exploration Initiative** is an expansive and highly collaborative research team. With society at the cusp of interplanetary civilization, the MIT Space Exploration Initiative takes a unique approach to humanity's horizons. SEI is invested in building, testing and flying the technologies and tools of exploration that will empower Earth citizens for this new phase of our collective existence.
- **The Ford Foundation** is a non-profit organization invested in building a world where everyone has the power to shape their lives.

About the Artists

- **Ari Melenciano** is an artist, designer, and systems thinker. Through her practice, she explores how computation and designed perception can be used to nurture new frameworks for understanding the world.

She has taught courses in new media technologies, design, critical theory, and culture across NYU, the Pratt Institute, Hunter College, Parsons School of Design, and Rutgers University. Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, Venice Biennale, Sundance Film Festival, and the Museum of the Future in Dubai. And, she is the founder of Afrotectopia, a pioneering social institution that builds communities at the nexus of culture, art, design, and technology. It has taken the form of festivals, think tanks, a multi-university incubator, an international fellowship, and an experimental art book.

Previously, she worked as a creative technologist at Google's Creative Lab, where she contributed to projects ranging from machine learning on fingertip-scale hardware to creative direction for the Google for Africa campaign, and generative AI research strategy.

- **Jeremy Kamal** is an artist combining film, video games, music, and landscape architecture into a single expanded fictional universe. Using contemporary media, such as computer-generated animation and video games, Kamal creates digital sci-fi environments that challenge traditional ideas of culture and ecology. His work features a growing cast of interconnected landscapes that host atmospheric imagery, emotive characters, and unique narratives that frontier new geomythologies.

Jeremy is an Onassis ONX fellow and was previously an artist resident at the Sundance Institute, NYU ITP, Folly Tree Arboretum, and Black Public Media. As a freelance 3D generalist, he has collaborated on projects for Marine Serre, The North Face, Gucci, Trippie Redd, Yo Gotti, Sa Babi, and Lil Miquela. He is a design faculty at the Southern California Institute of Architecture and holds a Master of Landscape Architecture from Harvard GSD and a Master of Arts from SCI-Arc's Fiction and Entertainment program.

- As a filmmaker and visual artist, **Kordae Jatafa Henry's** (also known as Tafa) practices ruminate in the invisible, lost, invented, forgotten, coded, and bounded layers of who we are into new worlds. His most recent work explores the ontological themes of raw materials, mysticism, landscapes, movement performance, race, gender and emergent technologies through the power of ceremony and ritual. As a non-binary approach, Kordae's work reconstructs past, present, and future narratives driven by pop-culture, and Black speculative fiction.

Where flesh meets animation, performance meets the virtual, Kordae's work instills a techno-ontological study of Blackness in the 21st century. This re-imagining of cinema is an emergence of a new ideology for storytelling that refuses to sit still. His CGI works evoke an embodied viscosity that Pixar has yet to exhibit into motion pictures. Stemming from his own

Jamaican-British roots he finds himself returning to artforms such as movement, mythology, and folklore but in the digital, that utilizes intonation and music to deliver rhythmic accentuation and dramatic stylization of worlds that feel.

Through live-action music films, installations, dance, anthropomorphization, game engine environments, and mythology, Kordae's work invites new ways of seeing humans, folklore, mysticism, pop-culture, post-genre music, labor, and creation stories as tools to explore the radical imagination. Currently, Kordae is directing music films, teaching at SCI-Arc and a fellow at NEW INC/ONX. Within his fellowship he is working on a coming of age interstellar short film entitled IF NOT NOW about how civilizations began.

- **Jordan Caldwell** is a projector blending art, language and technology within community. Her practice materializes as new media exhibitions and cooperative spaces for interdisciplinary studies. Her current focus is cultivating residency programs in land-oriented locations, while centering intrapersonal growth as essential to creative development.

Digital Engagement

The University Galleries is a proud partner of Bloomberg Connects, the free arts and culture app created by Bloomberg Philanthropies. The Galleries' free digital guide is accessible via web or on the app store both onsite or offsite, and features audio, video, and text insights from artists, curators, and students. The Galleries' joins over 1000 cultural organizations worldwide with exclusive digital guides on Bloomberg Connects.

Public Hours

Segal Gallery

Tuesday – Friday, 12 – 4 p.m.

Kasser Theater Lobby

Monday – Friday, 12 – 6 p.m.

In addition to these public hours, we are open on select Saturdays of the month and by appointment.

Programs & Events

All exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public.

Opening Reception

Tuesday, September 30, 5 – 7 p.m.

George Segal Gallery and Alexander Kasser Theater Lobby

Meet artist and curator Ari Melenciano at the opening of Montclair State University Galleries' Fall 2025 exhibition.

6 p.m. Remarks by Dean Gurskis and artist and curator Ari Melenciano

Art Forum

Monday, September 22, 5:20 p.m.

George Segal Gallery

Art Forum is a speaker series featuring artists, designers, art historians, curators, and art critics from around the world presenting their work and ideas in an open forum, hosted by the Department of Art & Design. Artist and curator Ari Melenciano will discuss her latest work in *The Age of Black Metal* by Afrotectopia.

Panel Discussion

Wednesday, October 15, 12 p.m.

George Segal Gallery

This interdisciplinary panel explores ideas of collective liberation through the context of *Black Metal*.

Black Metal Film Screening and Discussion

Wednesday, November 5, 12 p.m.

George Segal Gallery

This special screening of *Black Metal*, the film adaptation of the art book by Afrotectopia, is followed by a discussion with artist and curator Ari Melenciano.

About Montclair State University Galleries

The Montclair State University Galleries brings together ideas, perspectives, and dialogues to foster curiosity and shared understandings through art. The University Galleries presents diverse and inclusive exhibitions and programs, creating connections that unite the campus experience with local and global communities. www.montclair.edu/galleries

Social Media

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @montclair_galleries when posting.

Support

This exhibition is made possible, in part, by funds from the McMullen Family Foundation, the Dolph Gallery and Museum Studies Fund, the College of the Arts, and private contributions.

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