

# FROM THE DEEP

IN THE WAKE OF  
DREXCIYA WITH  
AYANA V. JACKSON



Ayana V. Jackson, *It Is Only When You Lose Your Mother That She Becomes a Myth*, 2018-22, archival pigment print on German Etching paper, National Museum of African Art

**Last Chance to Dive In**

"From the Deep" at the Smithsonian  
National Museum of African Art



Sea Quake  
2022

Stop motion projection

Slide presentation contains no narration., Picture from National  
Museum of African Art



On a slightly different note, Washington D.C.'s Smithsonian National Museum of African Art is deeply dedicated to exhibiting cultural and artistic works representing both the African continent and its diaspora. Exhibitions currently running in this prestigious house include "From the Deep:

In the Wake of Drexciya" with oaken creations by Ayana V. Jackson. Ending in January 2024, the exhibition provides astute history, identity, and mythological commentaries. An entire other world is pulled deep within it-underwater.

### About the Artist: Ayana V. Jackson

Ayana V. Jackson is a contemporary artist whose practice ranges across photography, performance, and video.

Known for works dealing with the themes of identity, memory, and diaspora, Jackson's practice challenges historical narratives through her works on the Black body in a place of empowerment and dignity. Her practice often incorporates elements of mythology, Afro-surrealism, and speculative fiction, offering a transformative lens on the Black experience.

Jackson's approach is fully informed by historical research mixed with creative storytelling, considering how often she draws inspiration from archives and oral histories. Her work is about unsettling colonial narratives and creating an alternative vision of history and offering new ways to interact with the legacies of the African diaspora. "From the Deep" does this ethic quite well; it places the reader in a mythological world emanating from the very resilience of the enslaved.



Ayana V. Jackson/Gallery MOMO, The New York Times



## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION: FROM THE DEEP

"From the Deep: In the Wake of Drexciya" was inspired by the mythology of Drexciya, an Afrofuturist concept developed in the 1990s by a Detroit techno duo of that name. Drexciya's mythology imagines an underwater world peopled by the descendants of enslaved Africans who were thrown overboard during the transatlantic slave trade. Survivors adapted to life beneath the waves, creating an extraordinary metaphor for resilience and transformation.

Ayana V. Jackson brings the mythology of Drexciya into the physical world via large-scale photographic works, video installations, and sculptural elements. In doing so, her art beckons audiences into this aquatic realm: historical tragedy blended into speculative fiction. Jackson here illustrates an excruciating vision to imagine the loss and survival that Black communities negotiate as trauma and agency.





Jackson's work confronts the historical erasure of Black lives, a violence that occurred through transatlantic slavery. Reimagining the mythology of Drexciya, she opened up a space to pay witness to those lost and to highlight the very strength of the African diaspora that would not be defeated. Fact and fiction blend throughout the exhibition, using mythology as a tool to reinterpret historic events.

This approach lets Jackson challenge dominant narratives of history and offer alternative ones that celebrate resilience and creativity. The multimedia nature of the exhibition envelops viewers in the world of Drexciya. The striking underwater visuals, combined with soundscapes and sculptural forms, create a deeply engaging experience that transcends traditional art displays.









"Take me to the Water: Baptism by Waters both Salty and Sweet"  
2022

Computer-generated imaging using motion capture  
Collaboration with Zwelakhe Mbalo, edited by Eran Tahor,  
National Museum of African Art

### **Visiting the Exhibition**

"From the Deep" is a must-see for art enthusiasts and for anyone interested in the meeting points of history, mythology, and contemporary art. The exhibition is at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art until January 2024. The broader collection of the museum can be toured to understand more about African art and its impact worldwide. Admission to the museum is free, and full visitor information, including hours and accessibility services, is available on the museum's website.



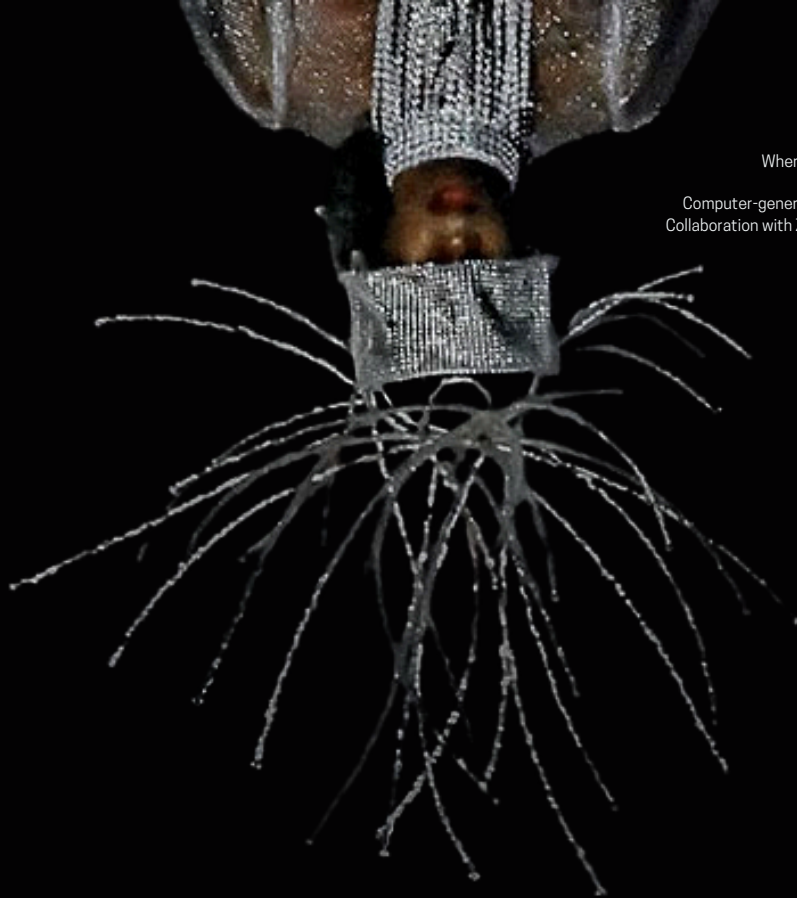
Ayana V. Jackson's "From the Deep: In the Wake of Drexciya" is a powerful and thought-provoking exhibition that reimagines history through an Afrofuturist lens. Hosted by the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, this exhibition invites audiences to reflect on themes of resilience, identity, and the enduring power of storytelling. As the exhibition approaches its final weeks, it is an unmissable opportunity to experience art that resonates deeply with past, present, and future narratives.

Where Light and Sound Bend  
2022

Computer-generated imaging using motion capture  
Collaboration with Zwelakhe Mballo, edited by Eran Taho,  
National Museum of African Art





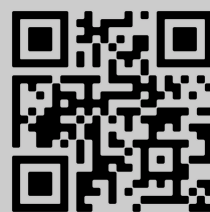


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**More about the  
exhibition:**

(All pictures were taken  
by the National Museum  
of African Art  
(Smithsonian's website))



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