

Ayana V. Jackson (b. 1977) in East Orange, New Jersey; lives and works between Brooklyn, NY and Johannesburg, South Africa) uses archival impulses to assess the impact of the colonial gaze on the history of photography. By using her lens to deconstruct 19th and early 20th century portraiture, Jackson questions photography's authenticity and role in perpetuating socially relevant and stratified identities.

Jackson's practice maps the ethical considerations and relationships between the photographer, subject, and viewer, in turn exploring themes around race, gender and reproduction. Her work examines myths of the Black diaspora and re-stages colonial archival images as a means to liberate the Black body. The various titles of her series nod to the stories she is reimagining. Jackson often casts herself in the role of historical figures to guide their narrative and directly access the impact of photography and its relationship to the human body.

Her work is collected by major local and international institutions including The Museum of Fine Arts Boston (Boston, MA), The Indianapolis Museum of Art (Newfields, IN), The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York, NY), The Newark Museum (Newark, NJ), J.P. Morgan Chase Art Collection (New York, NY), Princeton University Art Museum (Princeton, NJ), The National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia), The Smithsonian Museum of African Art (Washington DC), Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR), The Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago, IL) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Seattle, WA).

Jackson was a 2014 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow in Photography and the recipient of the 2018 Smithsonian Fellowship, and a 2025 recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Award. In 2021, she founded STILL Art, an artist residency program in Johannesburg that supports emerging contemporary artists of all disciplines from Southern Africa. Her first major institutional exhibition, *From the Deep: In the Wake of Drexciya*, opened at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in April 2023. Two years later, her first major European exhibition opened in April 2025 at the Museo de Antropología in Madrid.

She has received grants from the Marguerite Casey Foundation, Inter America Foundation, US State Department as well as the French Institute, the latter supporting her participation in the 2009 Bamako African Photography Biennial.

Public art exhibitions include, "Not a Single Story" at South Africa's Nirox Sculpture Park, "The Space Between Us", in association with the Ifa Gallery (Berlin/ Stuttgart) and Round 32 of Project Rowhouses in Houston's 3rd ward (USA).

Her photography has been published in the form of the exhibition catalogue for "Poverty Pornography & Archival Impulse" produced as a collaborative effort between her Paris and Johannesburg galleries (2013) as well as the exhibition catalogue for her series "African by Legacy, Mexican by Birth" (produced in collaboration with writer/filmmaker Marco Villalobos in 2006).

Academic journals include "Transition Magazine" (Hutchins Center, Harvard University), "n.paradoxa", "Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society" (Columbia University) and the Massachusetts Review.