

NNEKA JONES

ARTIST STATEMENT

The Caribbean is often praised for and advertised as the stereotypical “tropical paradise” and a “worry-free” destination. However, as a Trinidadian woman and activist artist, my artwork actively addresses the social, political and environmental issues affecting the Caribbean society, specifically women and girls. This is done with the purpose of raising awareness about topics such as sexual abuse, human trafficking, consent and identity. I explore different media including hand embroidery, textiles, paint, mixed media and large-scale murals.

My series, “Targets” combines symbolism and realism to address the sexual exploitation of minors, particularly young girls of color. The symbolism is explored through the use of condoms and the creation of a target pattern as I am purposely creating a connection between my material and the subject matter. The concept of having a young, innocent girl surrounded by hundreds of condoms creates a juxtaposition that evokes emotions or some response from the viewer, initiating conversations about sexual abuse and sex trafficking.

In addition, my hand embroidered series, “Targets Variegated”, expands on “Targets” by capturing a wider age range for women and girls. The series reassures that sexual abuse, although often times associated with childhood trauma, it is not only limited to children. The range of hand sewn portraits and use of the target symbol reinforces the reality that anyone can become a victim at any age but also how trauma ages with time.

As my work evolves, I am reminded of my purpose for creating and most recently the exploration of identity and consent and my personal experiences with these as an artist, black woman and activist. For the sake of the Caribbean society, it is important for me as a Trinidadian woman of color to raise awareness about these topics through portraiture and symbolism in an attempt to bring about social awareness and positive change.