



ROOTED IN COLOR

AN EXHIBITION BY ASHLEY A. JONES

ARTIST BIO:

Ashley A. Jones is an art educator, lecturer, researcher and an urban realism artist from Duquesne, Pennsylvania. In 2005, Jones received her BA in studio arts from Central State University in Ohio and is now in her last year of the MFA, drawing program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Jones's artwork has been highly exhibited in Southwestern Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Canada. Her works include drawings, paintings and wall installation art that serve as a means of both recognizing and creating new understandings and conversations about how our culture views and approaches African-American women, their physical appearance and how society defines beauty and its standards.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

I am interested in questions of identity, mainly ones related to the experiences of African-American women. Through my art, my overall aim is to make incisive and poignant works that critiques all forms of sexism, discrimination and oppression. Presently, my work explores colorism and identity among women in the African-American community. My intent is to give a visual narrative on how African-American women of different hues have unique experiences based on their skin tone, facial features and hair texture, and the way these experiences influence how they feel about themselves, and how they interact with each other. As with any socially driven content base art, I am mindful of the challenge of not caricaturing and/or stereotyping the moment, but rather capture it in all its glory and its faults.

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"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." –Audre Lorde

"Rooted In Color," evaluates issues of intergroup discrimination among women within the African-American community, called colorism. As a subcategory of racism, colorism has encouraged an ideological way of thinking that places favoritism upon lighter skin tones, straight hair and other European phenotypic characteristics. Numerous studies on this matter have revealed that despite the advances following the Civil Rights movement, colorism is still prominent in America. I specifically selected to concentrate on African-American women, even though colorism is not exclusive to women or African-Americans. In my research, I've established that Black women tend to suffer more psychological and emotional damage from colorism than men. The drawings, paintings and installation work in this exhibition explores the nuanced and complex experience African-American women have with the standardized ideas of beauty, while addressing issues surrounding hair politics, classism, acceptance, and individuality. This work will offer understanding for

those unaware of this multifaceted phenomenon that strikes women in the African-American community, establishing a dialogue concerning how we perceive those with darker skin hues and why we all buy into the notion of beauty and stereotypes when it comes to race and color in America.