

ARTISTS PERSONAL STATEMENTS

CLAUDETTE JOHNSON

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Within the term "Art" the work, experiences, culture and values of the black artist are too often either ignored, obscured, devalued, misrepresented, or misunderstood. This is perhaps inevitable in a society where the criteria that have defined and controlled the production of Western art, are blindly applied to the work of artists whose cultural heritage is Asian, African or Caribbean. The work of the black artist involves the expression of her or his life experience. Here in Britain that experience includes institutionalised racism and class oppression. Any assessment of 'black art' which fails to fully acknowledge these factors is at best superficial and at worst totally invalid.

The white woman, whose creativity and human potential are forcibly limited, distorted, or aborted, by male definitions of her sexuality, experiences sexism. The black man, who is subtly and brutally degraded by a skein of lies and violence designed to maintain and perpetuate his position of economic vulnerability, where his labour is cheap and abundant, experiences racism.

Whilst the black woman experiences oppression on the grounds of her sex, sexuality and race, there is not yet a word that properly describes the specific and deliberate nature of this oppression. She does not experience sexism exactly as the white woman nor racism exactly as the black man. The quality nature and forms relate to her specifically as a black woman with a history and struggle of her own. This is the present, out of which the black woman artist, creates her future.



Claudette Johnson