



Transcript

Tonya Gregg - Aunt Jemima Series

Gregg: Well, my Aunt Jemima series is, um, a series that I, I, I wanted to do because, um, ironically, I felt that the image of Aunt Jemima is very beautiful. And I wanted to empower an image that has been very painful for many African-Americans and to, um, bring light to a very tragic story. Um, so, to put it simply, uh, I wanted to emancipate Aunt Jemima.

I painted using gouache paper, and I put collage onto the gouache painting.

So she has, as you can see, um, these gold teeth, which are very popular among, uh, rappers or hip-hop guys today to put these gold fronts on their teeth. It, it means a lot to them, so I thought I would give her that jewelry.

And I also, what I did was I painted one original portrait of Aunt Jemima and then I, uh, took the paper and made Xeroxes of that original and then painted on top of the Xerox and then included actual collage pieces from catalogs and things like that. So, um, I also wanted to stay within the same color scheme for the whole series, too, so I used red, yellow, and blue, for example. It just liked the way those colors work together.

And here she has her airline ticket to Paris.

The thing that's very key in terms of recognizing Aunt Jemima, is the skin and the smile.

The eyes change here. Blue eyes. Kind of imitating the earrings. These kind of diamonds and her eyes are diamonds. So, um, I was kind of thinking about Toni Morrison, too-the bluest eye, sort of.

This little girl with this, uh, complex about her self-image. and I put a twist to it. Um, she's having a sip of her favorite mixed drink here. .[words not clear] And here, she's, uh, probably had a date with.

Little Kim, the one of the most so-called popular, if not notorious, rappers today. Because she has all the features that do not naturally come with the idea of a black woman. However, um, she's the blonde bombshell here, so, if blondes do have more fun, then Aunt Jemima joined that bandwagon.

Um, I had a very fun time doing this series because, again, I don't think everything has to be so serious all the time. I thought, "Well, I'll take anything that is supposed to be, uh, a more ideal way of life and juxtapose it with this image and see what happens." So, either way you look at it, I think it's all about, um, it's about fun. It's about using stereotype against stereotype to, to make a story. And one stereotype against another stereotype should hopefully cancel it out. That's the whole.... *End of video.*