

**GALLERY CONVERSATION STARTER:
NINA CHANEL ABNEY**

Nina Chanel Abney is an African American contemporary artist and painter who explores race, gender, pop culture and politics in her work. She uses symbols and bright colors to present new ways of approaching loaded topics as she invites viewers to draw their own conclusions. Blending the playful and the serious, Abney has said that her work is *“easy to swallow, hard to digest.”*



Nina Chanel Abney
Class of 2007, 2007
diptych, acrylic on canvas
114" x 183"

Biography

Born in 1982, Chicago, Illinois — currently based in New York, New York

Education

2007, MFA, Parsons School of Design, New York, New York
2004, BFA, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois

Guiding Questions + Artist Insights

Can you imagine yourself in this painting?

If so, who would you be and why? If not, why not?

Why would the title of this piece be *Class of 2007*?

“I questioned what would make a work about race issues ‘universal’ until I finally came up with an answer. I figured if I could paint my classmates as African Americans, filtering them through my vision, I would be able to create a painting more understandable to them.”

So, who is in the graduating class in the painting?

“I set out to fuse multiple issues. I was the only African American student in my art class. Some of my classmates assumed that simply by creating a class

portrait it would show that I was the only black student in the class. But I'm not one to do the expected."

What would you ask the artist if she were here?

"I had been searching my entire time in graduate school for what I believe to be the perfect balance: work that is conceptual, humorous and visually pleasing, while at the same time commenting on extremely uncomfortable race issues that can be experienced by anyone. With the creation of "Class of 2007," I finally began to feel like I was within arms' reach."

Resources

McVey, Kurt. "How Nina Chanel Abney Is Championing the Black Lives Matter

Movement with a Paintbrush." Vanity Fair, October 15, 2015

Valdez, Juan. 30 Americans Rubell Museum, Fourth Edition, 2017

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nina_Chanel_Abney