**Nina Chanel Abney Video Script**

Hi. I'm Nina Chanel Abney. I'm an artist. I'm from Matteson, Illinois and now I work and live in Jersey City.

I never sketch, so I had no idea what it was gonna look like.  So I start, I order the spray paint, I just kind of get a bunch of different colors that I think I might use.  I decided to paint the background black before I got there, and then I just start taping off different shapes and that's how I start.  I might reference some other murals I've done, but overall I don't know what it's gonna look like.

Usually when I start working and I have a very general idea of what I might want to paint, I find a bunch of photos and I usually put them up all around the studio.  Or as I'm working, I don't know, say if I want to paint something like a car, I'll go look for car pictures and then work on it.

It's really intuitive at this point.  It's just a feeling of what colors feel right next to each other.
Improvisation is a big part of my process cause I don't plan anything out and I'm usually responding to something as I put it on the canvas.

It's important for me to give people options.  Like, I don't want to be boxed in, so I don't want the figures to be boxed in, you know.  I want to be able to raise a bunch of different questions and possibilities and I don't want just one set answer for the work I'm doing.

I guess since the beginning when I switched the races of my classmates so it's just been an overall progression of mixing gender and race in the figures.  I kind of found like if I, when I was doing portraits, just because the figure might be black or white, the painting's already automatically read in a very specific way, so if I mix and match the races, no one could necessarily attach one specific whatever, meaning, to that painting or something on to that particular figure.

I use emojis all the time with my friends when we're texting.

The symbols came out of like an interest in emojis and a way to abbreviate other things I was talking about in the work.  Before I had some positive feedback about my work, like how I could simplify something just by a shape, even if it was a nose like it didn't have to be a well rendered nose but everyone gets that it's a nose.  So from there, I wanted to kind of create symbols that could mean multiple things but everyone could put a definition to it and it'd be something simple.  So that's where the stencils kind of come from, so a heart.  But then I like that I can use it in different ways or depending on where I place it, it creates a whole different context.  And then, for the spray paint colors, yeah, I usually need like these three different shades of brown and different skin tones when I'm doing figures.

I have a lot of texting going on with my friends.

The nail polish emoji and the poop/ice cream emoji, those are my favorites.
I mean early on, I wanted to find a way to still keep a sense of humor in the work cause I knew, you know, some of the topics I would touch, and so it was important for me to still keep my sense of humor.  Like, I love any cartoon that's sarcastic and I just thought it would be a fun way especially with the colors I use, I still wanted to keep a lightheartedness even if it was kind of deceptive.
Where it might draw the person in and then they're forced to confront something else. It's awkward to see my work in a museum sometimes.  A lot of the time it doesn't feel like it's my work. It's a disconnect sometimes because I always knew I wanted to be an artist but I never knew what that actually looked like and really never could have imagined this.  So even I guess when I see my work in a museum, I'm like, oh it's just one of my paintings.  I really don't necessarily see what someone else who just walks into the museum would see.

A lot of that work I haven't seen in like nine years so it's interesting for me to look at it and try to put myself in that place again when I was making it and the revelation I had is I feel like I couldn't return to that way of working.  I feel like I've gone intuitively and the natural progression of my hand and what I gravitate towards over time and there are things in some of the earlier works that I would maybe want to incorporate now but I don't know if I could even paint like that.

I'm curious what everyone's response will be.  I hope it's anger.  I hope it's a mix of reactions, like I'm more concerned, not concerned, but I really want my work to be able to still be relevant to what's happening now despite the time when I made it, could have been responding to something completely different, but that's what I want from my work: to always kind of remain relevant no matter what's happening so I'm hoping it can be read in an entirely new way.

I feel like anyone can be an artist.  I mean, they can still go home and create or find an outlet to express themselves so I would say just do it.