



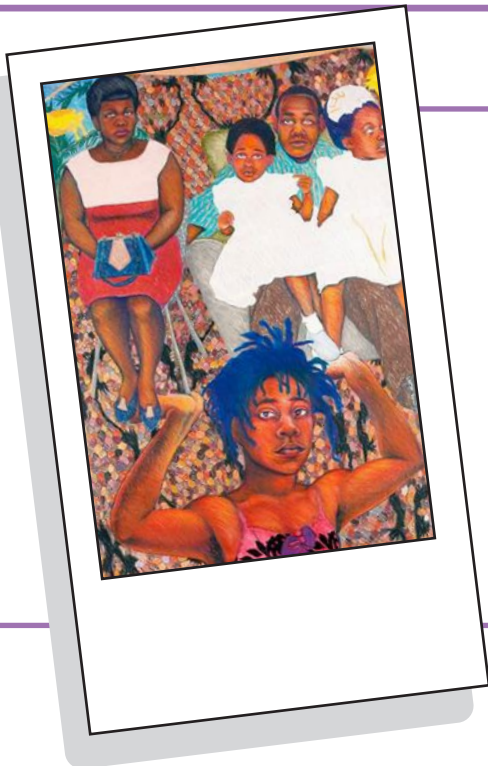
Sonia Boyce



Sonia Boyce was born in London in 1962. At school, she would doodle in her notebooks. Her art teacher encouraged her to study at art school.

Sonia studied at both East Ham College of Art and Technology and Stourbridge College in the West Midlands. She became an artist and a teacher.

Her first pieces of art were drawings. During the 1980s, she was linked to the British Black arts movement. This was a group of artists who made art about **race**, **gender** and equality in everyday life. Sonia included herself in some of her work. Her work was about identity and what it was like to grow up in London.



This is one of Boyce's most famous drawings. It's called 'She Ain't Holdin' Them Up, She's Holdin' On (Some English Rose)'. Sonia is at the bottom of the picture, portraying herself as a strong woman supporting her family.

Sonia is British-born but holding on to parts of her Caribbean heritage. She is wearing a pink dress with black roses. The rose is a symbol of England but the black colour is a reminder of her identity.

gender – Commonly used to describe whether a person is male or female.

race – A grouping of people who share some of the same physical or non-physical features, such as skin colour or hair texture, or culture or religious beliefs.

During the 1990s, Sonia stopped drawing and began experimenting with photography, film and performance. This work dealt with similar themes to her earlier work.

An image from Boyce's 'Exquisite Cacophony' performance, 2015



'The Audition', 1997-2018



This piece is called 'The Audition'. Boyce started it in 1997 and it was exhibited in 2018. It consists of photographs of both Black and White people trying on an Afro wig - an Afro being a hairstyle associated with Black people. She took photographs of each person wearing the wig and without the wig to promote discussion about how people can judge others based solely on their physical appearance.

One of her most famous artworks is yet to be completed. It is a project that Boyce started in 1999, called 'Devotional'. The artwork is made up of a collection of pictures, magazine articles and drawings that are all related to Black British female singers.

In 2007, Sonia was awarded an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II. In 2020, she became the first Black female artist chosen to represent Britain at the 2022 Venice Biennale - a prestigious art show in Italy.

Boyce is currently a professor of fine arts at Middlesex University and professor of Black art and design at the University of the Arts, London.