



Artist Jenny Nijenhuis Flags a Message of Distress with This is South Africa

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This is South Africa by Jenny Nijenhuis

25 years ago in 1994 the South African flag was adopted to mark the end of Apartheid. It was intended to symbolize unity and came to represent the "new" South Africa (a rainbow nation).

Yet, since then the rate of sexual violence in South Africa is still considered amongst the highest in the world, and violence is still a current negative ingredient within the nations society.

Artist Jenny Nijenhuis is addressing the situation in South Africa through her art practice, and has taken the role of an activist to surface these issues not only within her own country but also abroad. Her latest work, This is South Africa, is a large South African flag fashioned from panties and underwear donated by rape survivors to her SA's

Dirty Laundry installation in 2016. The flag is hung upside down as a signal of distress in accordance with the international communication protocols.



The flag being constructed in the studio

Nijenhuis' practice addresses issues of isolation, vulnerability, manipulation, gender and the female experience, but more so it is about how we identify ourselves and use our belief systems to support our view points. "In my work the human form and its traces act as instruments to show how our hostile, divided and sometimes deadlocked society could be unbuttoned."

"I have a deep desire to elicit a shift in perception that has the ability to transform"

Nijenhuis' art has proven to reach many individuals and organizations around the world that are working to change the way society and the justice system deals with violence against womxn. Earlier this year she was invited to give the keynote speech at Cornell University to recount the impact of the #MeToo movement and sexual violence in Africa. Organized by the International Students Union, the event also featured 14 student organizations, who shared information on sexual assault around the world.



This is South Africa hung at the SA High Commission in London

Through her latest project Nijenhuis aims to raise awareness to the issue of rape in South Africa and to provoke a public and open dialogue attempting to connect to the greater narrative of South Africa through artistic intervention. So far her work is successful in achieving it's aim, as the flag has been recently hung at the SA High Commission in London to coincide with a protest against gender violence. This was possible in thanks to Julie Taylor, Director at the Guns & Rain gallery in Johannesburg.



SA's Dirty Laundry installation

SA's Dirty Laundry launched on 25th of November 2016 to coincide with 16 days of Activism for No Violence against Womxn and Children. The installation consisted of 3,600 pairs of used underwear donated by rape survivors who wished to share their stories.

Nijenhuis' artistic practice is about more than the representation of things which seem to be beyond her control or what she is dealing with. "I see art as a medium for redefinition. In a world dominated by ego, science, material and economic excess, we have become a nation of television addicted, pill popping, self-indulgent narcissists. We complain about the way of things, yet what we have is the power to change the way we see things."