

Rose Bethanica Gelin

Artist Statement for *Not an American – Born Sapphic*

*Not an American – Born Sapphic* highlights the dying dysphoria of feeling disassociated with my identities as I've grown out of my girlhood into my womanhood. As I've gotten older, I've realized I don't need to choose one or another of my identities, but that I can allow myself to accept them all. The colors in this photograph help me emphasize these identities: the blues, reds, and whites of the American flag coexist with the blues and reds of the Haitian flag. I use these colors as my background to portray something not easily knowledgeable to the naked eye: my Haitian roots. Meanwhile, I am covered in soft pink and bold orange in solidarity to my sexual identity.

As I grow into my honest self, I've learned to illustrate my own interpretation of self-liberation throughout my transition of moving to the US. I show this through the subtle appearances of my own personal items in the portrait: a picture of me at age 5 in Haiti; a stuffed bunny I crocheted; seashells I've collected; a crystal I hold dear to my heart; a rosary that belongs to my mother; and *Here's to the Graduate*, a picture book filled with words of wisdom. All these items have influenced my personal growth and individuality.

All these items I give to myself as a peace offering, all in a basket. Although I share my differences within my identities, they all create a world of color I can see clearly. I'm not just Haitian-American, I'm not just queer, but a young girl who's figuring herself out in a way that feels right to her.