



Study Guide:
“One of the Boys (Black)”
(2019)
by Esmaa Mohamoud

About the artwork: This artwork from 2019 is part of a series that questions gender norms and expectations through fashion play. It is wearable art: artworks that take

the form of clothing, jewellery, or other accessories and design around the body. Wearable art emerged in the 1960s from mixed-media artists. This example is made from silk, velvet, jersey and repurposed jersey, and shoelaces and is presented here on a mannequin frame. The sides of the dress lace like a corset but use the laces of basketball shoes. The dresses are often exhibited alongside a series of photographs, picturing racially Black models with ambiguous genders wearing a gown. The concept for *One of the Boys* comes from an early childhood memory in which Mohamoud was told she must wear a dress to play outside with her brothers. In an act of rebellion, she layered it with her special black Vince Carter jersey. Her mom was so upset she cut the jersey into pieces, saying: “You’ve got to realize that you’re not one of the boys.” The phrase stuck. It was a painful lesson about gender and the roles we feel expected to play. The first dresses in this series were a collaboration with fellow art student Qendrim Hoti. It was brought to life by a hired seamstress.

About the artist: Esmaa Mohamoud was born in London, Ontario (1992). She is the middle child and has four brothers. Sport was a very important part of her early life, as her father felt it taught the children discipline. Her brothers all played basketball, and for young Esmaa, basketball was a way to bond with them. Mohamoud creates art in multiple disciplines, including sculpture, photography, textiles, video, performance, and installation. Her art uses athleticism as an entry point for conversations about gender and race.

Please preview the short film and then share it with your students. Select one or two guiding questions that reflect your curriculum and can guide student research and

inquiry connected to the artwork, artists, and the socio-cultural context in which it was created.

Guiding Questions:

- Explore how the artist uses “Juxtaposition” both conceptually and figuratively in her artworks.
- Consider the ways that the artist uses the concept of “Hybridization” in her series, *One of the Boys*.
- These artworks are 3D and wearable. They also challenge perceptions of how we perform gender. In what ways does that artwork challenge literal and conceptual “Point of View”?
- What fashion trends from different time periods are being used in this artwork?
- How does the artist play with both historical and contemporary expectations for fashion and portraiture?
- The artworks were inspired by something Esmaa’s mother said. Write or draw about an event in your life when you did not align with someone’s expectations of you.
- These artworks are wearable and functional. How does this question what is considered “art”?
- How does art and sport interact? Compare and contrast these two industries.
- In what other ways can sport as an entry point to greater dialogues about politics, social justice, equity, gender, and liberation?
- How does this artwork ask us to interrogate the racial fetishization of Black bodies in sports and entertainment?
- How does this artwork ask us to interrogate Black masculinity or femininity?
- How might fashion be a tool for resistance?
- Create a dance, dramatic scene, original song, poem, or short story where childhood experience bumps up against societal expectations of gender roles.
- How do we define and experience gender?
- How does this artwork invite us to question the underrepresentation of women in (professional) sports?
- Create an original artwork that questions gender norms.
- Design a series of wearables that play with competing concepts.

Supporting Links:

- [Esmaa Mohamoud](#)
- [AGO X RBC Emerging Artists Workshop: Esmaa Mohamoud](#)
- [Artist Esmaa Mohamoud Examines How Pro Sports Profit from Black Athletes](#)
- [Esmaa Mohamoud: Game Changer](#)
- [Black Athletes Are Not Objects For Our Entertainment | HuffPost Opinion Archive](#)
- [Insider Presents the 'Black Ensemble' of pioneers, models, designers, and thought leaders of luxury fashion](#)
- [The Saartjie Baartman’s Body Shape versus the Victorian Dress: The Untold African Treasures](#)

Ontario Secondary Curriculum Connections

The Arts- Visual Arts

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process

by examining, interpreting, evaluating, and reflecting on various art works;

B2. Art, Society, and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how art works reflect the

society in which they were created, and of how they can affect personal values;

C1. Terminology: demonstrate an understanding of, and use correct terminology when referring to, elements, principles, and other components related to visual arts;

C2. Conventions and Techniques: demonstrate an understanding of conventions and techniques used in the creation of visual art works;

A1. The Creative Process: apply the creative process to create a variety of art works, individually and/or collaboratively;

A2. The Elements and Principles of Design: apply elements and principles of design to create art works for the purpose of self-expression and to communicate ideas, information, and/or messages;

The Arts - Media Arts

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by using it to monitor the creative process, and by examining, interpreting, assessing, and reflecting on media art works;

B2. Identity and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how media art works reflect personal and cultural identity, and affect personal, cultural, and community values and their awareness of those values;

C2. Contexts and Influences: demonstrate an understanding of the sociocultural and historical contexts of media arts;

A1. The Creative Process: apply the creative process to create media art works, individually and/or collaboratively;

A2. The Principles of Media Arts: design and produce media art works, applying the principles of media arts and using various elements from contributing arts (dance, drama, music, visual arts);

A3. Using Technologies, Tools, and Techniques: apply traditional and emerging technologies, tools, and techniques to produce and present media art works for a variety of audiences and purposes.

The Arts - Dance

A1. The Creative Process: use the creative process, the elements of dance, and a variety of sources to

develop movement vocabulary;

A2. Choreography and Composition: combine the elements of dance in a variety of ways in composing

individual and ensemble dance creations;

The Arts - Drama

A1. The Creative Process: use the creative process and a variety of sources and forms, both individually and collaboratively, to design and develop drama works;

A2. Elements and Conventions: use the elements and conventions of drama effectively in creating individual and ensemble drama works, including works based on a variety of sources;

A3. Presentation Techniques and Technologies: use a variety of presentation techniques and technological tools to enhance the impact of drama works and communicate for specific audiences and purposes.

The Arts - Music

A1. The Creative Process: apply the stages of the creative process when performing notated and/or improvised music and composing and/or arranging music;

A2. The Elements of Music: apply elements of music when performing notated and improvised music and composing and/or arranging music;

History:

A1. Historical Inquiry: use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of Canadian history, with a focus on the development of identity and culture (CHI4U)

B3. Culture and Identity: analyse ways in which various factors contributed to the development of culture and identity in the selected ethnic group in its country or region of origin

Clothing, Grade 10

B1. The Functions and Social Impact of Clothing: demonstrate an understanding of the functions

clothing serves, the kinds of messages it conveys, and the impact it can have on social interactions;

A1. Exploring: explore topics related to clothing, and formulate questions to guide their research;

A2. Investigating: create research plans, and locate and select information relevant to their chosen topics, using appropriate social science research and inquiry methods;

A3. Processing Information: assess, record, analyse, and synthesize information gathered through research;

B2. Wardrobe Planning and Clothing Selection: demonstrate an understanding of various factors affecting personal wardrobe planning and clothes selection.

D3. Procedures, Skills, and Techniques: demonstrate the ability to use appropriate procedures, skills,

and techniques to create and repair clothing or accessories.

English:

Writing: use a variety of organizational structures and patterns to produce coherent and effective written work;

Writer's Craft:

- produce writing for a range of purposes and audiences with an emphasis on well-developed content and the effective use of appropriate forms, techniques, diction, voice, and style;