



ESMAA MOHAMOUD A SEAT ABOVE THE TABLE (WARREN MOON), 2018

GUIDED OBSERVATION

ELEMENTARY

- Look closely at this image. What do you see? If you could ask the artist five questions, what would they be?
- What would you need to do to sit on this chair? How would you feel once you got up there?

SECONDARY

- What do you find intriguing about this work? Why?
- Consider the title of this work. What does the seat represent?
- What might be challenging about having a seat that is at the table, but also distant from the table?

Esmaa Mohamoud. *A Seat Above The Table (Warren Moon)*, 2018.
Found rattan peacock chair, rattan, paint, tape, plastic, adhesive, nails.
Overall: 289.6 × 66 × 66 cm, 23.6 kg. Purchase, with funds from
Michael & Diane Hasley and Liza Mauer & Andrew Scheiner, 2019.
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CONTEXT

Esmaa Mohamoud is a contemporary Toronto artist whose work is focused on sculpture and installation art. Her works explore the societal constructs of Blackness and the ways in which Black people navigate contemporary cultural spaces. She is particularly interested in the dynamics of professional sports.

A Seat Above the Table (Warren Moon) is a black rattan peacock chair that soars 10 feet high. It was inspired by the life of football player Warren Moon, who was the only Black quarterback inducted into both the NFL and CFL Halls of Fame. Mohamoud questions representation in this work, asking: why are Black athletes for the most part ignored by the Hall of Fame and other institutions that provide validation in professional sports? Will there come a time when Black athletes find themselves within reach of having a seat at the same table as their peers?

Reflecting on this work, Mohamoud has said: “*A Seat Above the Table* not only references the ignored achievements of Black athletes, but of Black people in general, by focusing on the lack of equal representation in many aspects. It directly aims to critique the dismissal of qualified Black people in their respective fields. Black people who are not celebrated for their great achievements, Black people who have to work twice as hard just to be half as good, Black people who are told to be content with a silent seat at the table.”

BIOGRAPHY

Esmaa Mohamoud was born in London, Ontario in 1992, and spent her childhood in London, Toronto, and Egypt, where her family is originally from. As the only girl in a family of five children she was a die-hard fan of basketball. She grew up idolizing NBA stars and watching one of her brothers dream of becoming a professional basketball player. As an artist, she began by experimenting with various media, and then went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from Western University (2014) and a Master’s degree in Interdisciplinary Arts, Media, and Design from Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University (2016).

Mohamoud’s work investigates the intersections of race, gender, and athleticism. Her large-scale multimedia installations often repurpose industrial and familiar materials in evocative ways. Her sculptural installations have been exhibited at various museums and galleries throughout Canada and United States, including as part of the exhibition *Every. Now. Then. Reframing Nationhood* at the Art Gallery of Ontario (2017) and the nationally touring exhibition *Here We Are Here: Black Canadian Contemporary Art*, organized by the Royal Ontario Museum (2018–19).

