

**RISD
MUSEUM**

Learning to Look Without Judgment

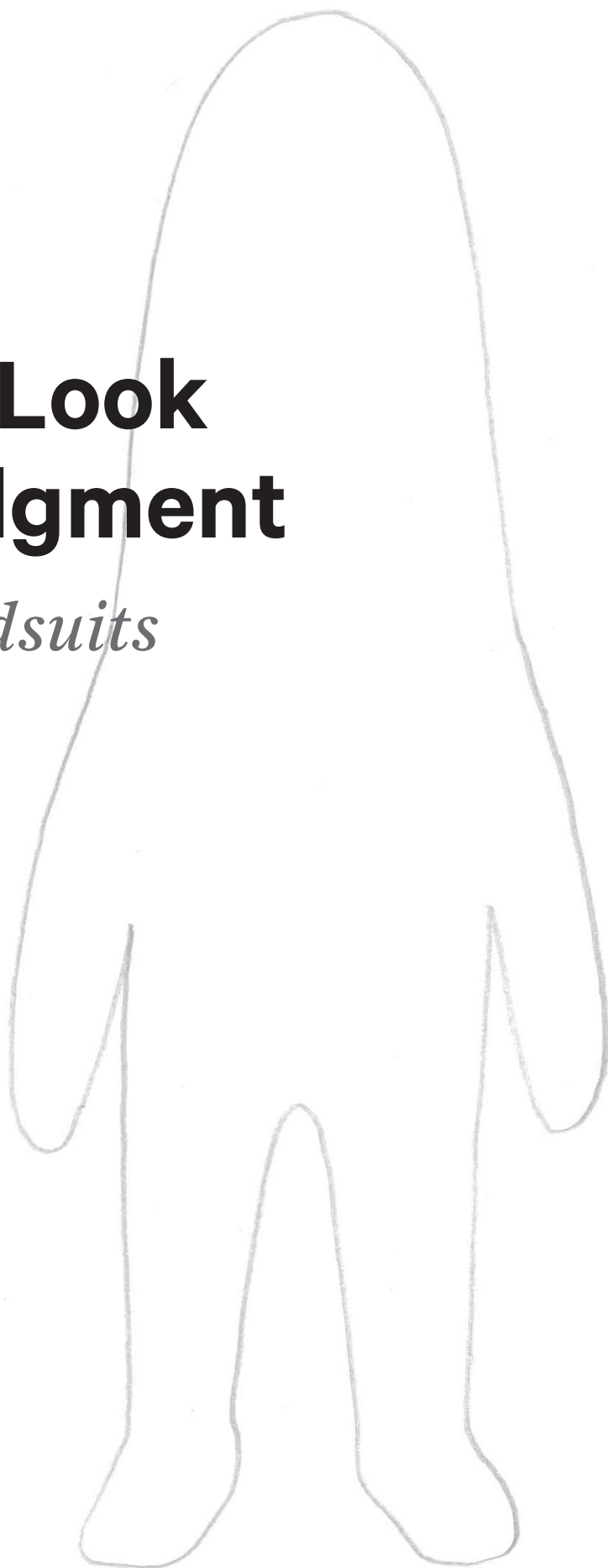
Nick Cave's *Soundsuits*

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your students'
soundsuits and
ideas with us!

Email us at
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Learning to Look Without Judgment

10 minutes **Introductory Discussion Using One or More Images:**

Project images of *Soundsuit* at RISD Museum and pass out images (*see attached*).

- What do you see?
- What materials do you think this made of?

After a few guesses, reveal and pass around examples some of the materials (a glove, a sock, driftwood, dryer lint, pieces of a knit sweater) and encourage students to use descriptive words to compare and contrast the textures of these materials.

- Why do you think the artist, Nick Cave, used these materials?
- What kind of feeling do you get when you look at this artwork?
- How would it feel to wear?
- Why do you think he called it a Soundsuit?
- What sound do you think it would make if you moved around while wearing it?

5 minutes **Watch and Discuss Video #1:**

Introduce and watch video: *Nick Cave's Soundsuits* by PBS NewsHour

53 seconds

- What did you notice while watching?
- How are these Soundsuits by the same artist similar to or different from the first one we saw?
- Why do you think the artist makes these?

10 minutes **Watch and Discuss Video #2:**

Before watching, summarize what artist Nick Cave is going to say, because his language is kind of high level:

"We're going to watch a video of Nick Cave, the artist who creates these Soundsuits. First he'll talk about going to art school in the 1980s and realizing he was being treated differently in society because he is a black man—including being seen by police as threatening. Then he talks about why he makes Soundsuits in response to that kind of discrimination."

Watch video: *Nick Cave: Thick Skin | Art 21* "Extended Play"

2 minutes, 43 seconds Watch with closed captions for visual learners

After watching:

- Why did Nick Cave make the Soundsuits? What inspired him?
- Why is this video called *Thick Skin*? What does that phrase mean, and how does it relate to his art?

10 minutes **Analysis of Artist Quote and Gender Stereotype Activity:**

Share this quote from the end of video #2:

“The Soundsuits hide gender, race, [and] class, and they force you to look at the work without judgment. You know, we tend to want to categorize everything, we tend to want to find its place. How do we sort of be one-on-one with something that is unfamiliar?”

–Nick Cave

Go through each sentence of the quote together to connect Nick Cave’s ideas to the Soundsuits.

- What are some of the ways we “see” or assume about gender? Race? Class? What are ways we categorize people or treat them differently based on these labels?

Focus in on the first term: gender.

- What are some examples of genders? Students and educator may bring up the following: *man/boy, girl/woman, transgender*. (For sample language that can be used to discuss gender expression and identities in school, check out this *Gender Terminology Discussion Guide* from GLSEN).

Introduce Activity:

Even though there are as many ways of expressing gender as there are people in the world, let’s talk about what society teaches us about things, activities, behaviors, and attitudes that are “for girls” and “for boys.”

Use a chalkboard, whiteboard, or smartboard divided in two to create this list. Encourage discussion and help students in acknowledging that these are stereotypes that are not always true or fair.

20 minutes **Soundsuit Design Activity:**

Pass out worksheets. (*see attached*)

The lists of behaviors and items students created will now become the “materials” students can choose from to combine in a Soundsuit design that expresses something outside of gender stereotypes.

Step 1: Students write down one or two materials (or inspiration ideas) from each side of the list (“for boys” and “for girls”).

Step 2: Figure out a way to combine those materials and ideas in a drawing of an original Soundsuit. Be creative!

5 minutes

Optional sound activity:

Everyone stands near their desks and imagines the sound their Soundsuit would make if they were to wear and dance around in it. One group at a time is invited to move and make their suits' sound for ten seconds.

After every group has had a turn, invite a few students to share out about the noise their Soundsuit would make, and how different groups' suits sounded together.

5 minutes

Reflection

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What connections were you thinking about?
- How does is your Soundsuit similar to or different from some of Nick Cave's?
- Is there anything else you're thinking or feeling that you'd like to share with the group?

Resources

- *Soundsuit* at RISD Museum: https://risdmuseum.org/art-design/collection?-search_api_fulltext=soundsuit
- Video 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpNcmh3rxko>
- Video 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6cG5wYxRcw>
- Gender Terminology Discussion Guide: <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Gender%20Terminology%20Guide.pdf>

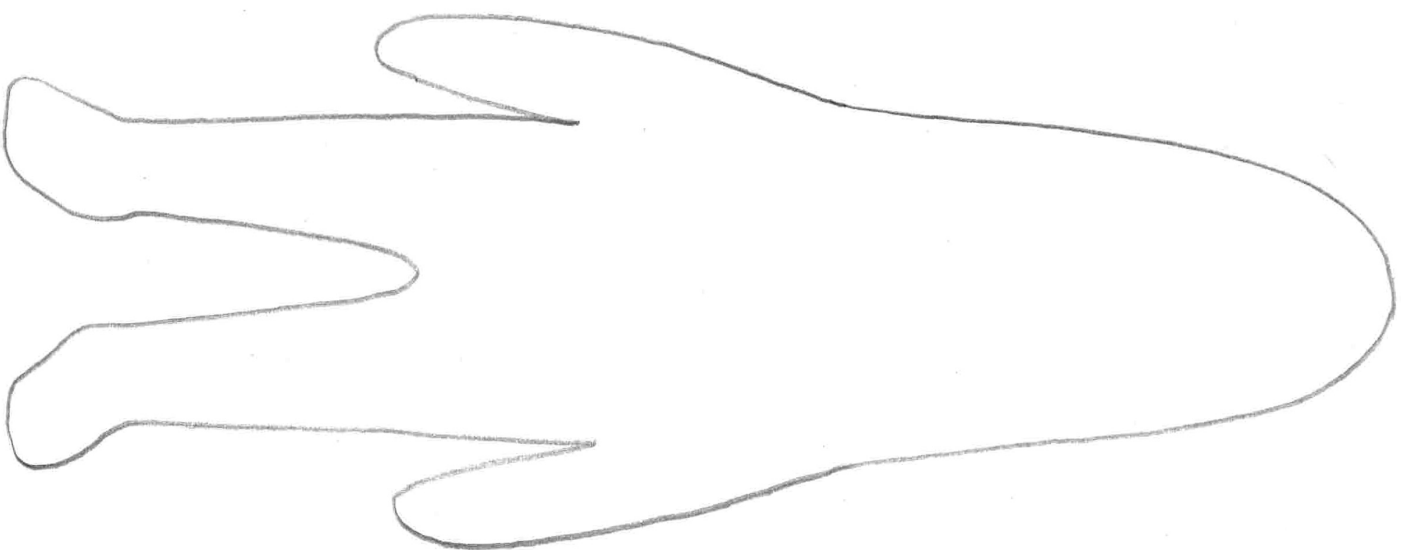
Nick Cave's Soundsuits



Nick Cave, Soundsuit, 2006. Found knit sweaters, socks, driftwood, dryer lint, and paint. Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund, 2007.11

MY SOUNDSUIT

materials/inspiration:



MY SOUNDSUIT

materials/inspiration:

- dirty/messy

One of the sounds my *Soundsuit* would make if I wore it would be the squelch of mud under my feet...

- sports

In sixth grade, I played football. I was the only person on the team who was not a boy. It was annoying that some boys wouldn't throw the ball to me even when I was open.

- Cute things

Puppy hand! Heart socks! Flowers!

- pink

When I was a kid, I hated pink because it's considered a "girl color." Maybe I didn't like it because society sometimes unfairly judges girls and people who like "girly" things. Even though I used to hate it, pink is now one of my favorite colors!

