



art21.org/shaunleonardo



Shaun Leonardo

ABOUT

Born

1979 (New York, NY)

Education

Bowdoin College, BA
San Francisco Art Institute, MFA

Lives and Works

Brooklyn, New York

About the Artist

Through drawing, performance, and public participatory workshops, Shaun Leonardo explores the constraints of masculinity, and the ways that systems of oppression and violence have crafted and contorted societal expectations of Black and brown people and their bodies.

In his work as a multidisciplinary artist, Leonardo is informed by his past experiences as an athlete and an educator; physical embodiment and community dialogue are key tools of his practice. The artist simultaneously critiques the spectacle of violence, aggression, and hypermasculinity imposed on Black and brown people's bodies and subjects himself to a physically arduous process to make sense of his identity.

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials

installation, performance

Key Words and Ideas

critique
masculinity
multidisciplinary
storytelling

Related Artists

Marina Abramović	Doreen Garner
Tanya Aguiñiga	Theaster Gates
Allora & Calzadilla	Barbara Kruger
Eleanor Antin	Glenn Ligon
Janine Antoni	Kalup Linzy
Matthew Barney	Tala Madani
Tania Bruguera	Kameelah Janan Rasheed
Nick Cave	Salman Toor
Abigail DeVille	Kara Walker
Stan Douglas	Carrie Mae Weems
LaToya Ruby Frazier	

"Art became a pathway for me—a way in which I could express these vulnerabilities and wear them, and share them to an immediate audience." —Shaun Leonardo

How to Use This Guide

Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Shaun Leonardo into your teaching context. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

NOTE: Please view all films before sharing them with your students.

Before Viewing

Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

- ① Describe the kinds of things that come to mind when you think about the terms “masculinity” and “vulnerability.” What is each term often associated with?
- ② How are stories told? What kinds of approaches do people take when it comes to storytelling?
- ③ Leonardo often creates works where he is performing in front of spectators. Discuss the kinds of performances you have experienced in person or virtually. Where did they take place? How does watching a live performance engage the viewer differently than looking at an object, such as a painting or a sculpture?

While Viewing

Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify particular ideas:

- ① What does the artist say about masculinity and vulnerability? Jot down a few quotes that resonate with you.
- ② How would you describe Leonardo's approach to storytelling?
- ③ What characterizes Leonardo's performances? What kinds of things stand out about his approach to artmaking? How are they different from other performances you've seen?

After Viewing

Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

- ① Discuss how Leonardo's thoughts and ideas about masculinity compare with your own.
- ② What kinds of stories is Leonardo telling through his performances? Why does he want us to think about these things?
- ③ Compare Leonardo's approach to performance with the artist Marina Abramović, featured in the “History” episode of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*. What kinds of similarities and differences are there between each artist's process?

Related Activities

Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

- ✓ Create a performance, drawing, or painting that questions assumptions about concepts like masculinity and femininity. What kinds of things can you explore or teach viewers and readers about these terms?
- ✓ Interview a performer such as a musician, singer, actor, performance artist, or dancer. Explore the reasons behind their love of performance. Why do they enjoy sharing their art with others? Publish your interview in a school newspaper, zine, or even online.