


art21.org/salmantoor


Salman Toor

ABOUT

Born

1983 (Lahore, Pakistan)

EducationOhio Wesleyan University, BFA
Pratt Institute, MFA**Lives and Works**

New York, New York

About the Artist

Strongly influenced by Old Master and Surrealist works, the artist's intimate figurative paintings often draw from his own life as a queer man in New York City, tenderly depicting both the freedoms and vulnerabilities of his urbane, cosmopolitan community.

With a deep interest in traditional Western figuration, Toor paints elongated and exposed bodies in interior spaces, often in repose or in quiet communion, using short, sketch-like brushstrokes to create tubular and entangled limbs. Focusing on his own cultured, urban, queer community, Toor's paintings imagine spaces of belonging and intimacy, as well as more disquieting narrative scenes of queer men being dismissed, surveilled, or harassed.

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials

painting

Key Words and Ideasatmosphere
color
community
cosmopolitan
empower
freedom
gaze
intimacyivory tower
memory
postcolonial
queer
repression
representation
surrealism
vulnerability**Related Artists**Laylah Ali
Firelei Báez
Jordan Casteel
Marcel Dzama
Luchita Hurtado
Anish Kapoor
Tommy Kha
Liu XiaodongKerry James Marshall
Elle Perez
Amy Sberald
Yinka Shonibare CBE RA
Shahzia Sikander
Nancy Spero
Carrie Mae Weems

“There’s something glamorous about emerald green—and something nocturnal, inviting. I wanted to just explore that color for a while.” —Salman Toor

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 Salman Toor into your classroom. 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 What adjectives come to mind when you think of or see the color emerald green?
- ② Why might an artist want to reference historical artists and their works? What might these references tell the viewer?
- ③ How can an artist create atmosphere in a painting? What might they do during the process?

While Viewing

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

- ① How does Toor use emerald green? What does it represent to him?
- ② Note the artists that Toor references in the film.
- ③ What are some commonalities between many of Toor's paintings?

After Viewing

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

- ① Did Toor's use of emerald green change your initial interpretation of the color? If so, what does it represent to you now?
- ② Of the artists Toor referenced, are you familiar with any of them so far? If not, which would you like to learn more about?
- ③ Toor says his paintings are 'annoyingly free.' What aspects create this atmosphere? How is the theme of freedom expressed in Toor's work?

Related Activities

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

- ✓ In the film, Toor discusses the importance of his friendships with other artists. Ask students to make an artwork representing a friend in any medium. What do they value about their friend? Consider what aspects of their subject's personality they want to highlight in the work. The work does not need to be a figurative representation of the person.
- ✓ Ask students to pick a color they find 'glamorous.' Consider what adjectives come to mind when looking at that color and if there are any common symbols associated with it. Create a work that highlights the glamorous nature of that color.
- ✓ Toor states that his paintings are "based on anxieties" and a "movement between being an empowered new person in this city, but also moments of disempowerment and maybe even humiliation." Create a work of art or short story that explores being empowered, disempowered, or both.