



[art21.org/salahelmur](https://art21.org/salahelmur)

# Salah Elmur

## ABOUT

### Born

1966 (Khartoum, Sudan)

### Education

College of Fine and Applied Art at  
Sudan University, BA

### Lives and Works

Cairo, Egypt

### About the Artist

Elmur draws inspiration from his vast archive of Sudanese portrait photography to create dreamlike paintings that reflect his memories of Sudan, his cultural heritage, and his own political commentary. Weaving together the documentary and the fantastical, he draws on his personal experiences to explore universal themes such as nostalgia, community, conflict, and censorship.

## TEACHING CONNECTIONS

### Media and Materials

film  
painting  
photography  
installation

### Key Words and Ideas

abstraction	memory
censorship	place
displacement	preservation
family	time
figuration	war
history	yearning

### Related Artists

Natalia Almada	Doris Salcedo
LaToya Ruby Frazier	Amy Sherald
Theaster Gates	Shahzia Sikander
Daniel Lind-Ramos	Rose B. Simpson
An-My Lê	Song Dong
Liu Xiaodong	Do Ho Suh
Julie Mehretu	Michael Rakowitz
Aliza Nisenbaum	

"I don't think about the future too much. I'm thinking always about the past. I like the smell of the history, the smell of time." —Salah Elmur

**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 Salah Elmur into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

**NOTE:** Please view all films before sharing them with your students. The film, “Salah Elmur: Fixing Time,” contains brief nudity.

Elmur

**Before Viewing**

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

- ① Describe a favorite memory from the past year. What did it smell, sound, and feel like?
- ② How does place influence you? How do you change from place to place (consider your clothing, actions, speech, etc.)?
- ③ What role does fantasy play in your life?

**While Viewing**

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

- ① What does memory mean to Elmur? What memories does he represent in his work?
- ② What places inspire Elmur’s paintings?
- ③ How does fantasy appear in Elmur’s work?

**After Viewing**

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

- ① Why is it important to capture memories? How do you capture memories?
- ② How does Elmur’s practice change over time and from place to place?
- ③ How does Elmur blend fantasy and reality in his work? What does that allow him to do?

**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.

- ✓ Elmur describes himself as a battery. When he needs to charge himself, he goes “back home.” How do you recharge? Make an artwork representing that process.
- ✓ In 1990, Elmur published a cartoon in the Sudanese magazine, Sudanow, that opposed the opinion of the Muslim Brotherhood. Elmur’s work was censored because of its political views. When is art or media censored today? Who has the power to censor art? Make a cartoon inspired by your answers.
- ✓ Elmur’s paintings draw from the landscapes of his childhood in Sudan including the Blue Nile, electricity towers, and even horses passing by. He preserves his memories of the Sudanese landscape because it is difficult for him to return. If you couldn’t return to the place you live, what aspects would you want to remember most? A favorite tree, a building, an animal? Make a sculpture of that aspect of your landscape.