

PRESS RELEASE



Salman Toor, *Four Friends*, 2019. Oil on panel, 40 × 40 in. (101.6 × 101.6 cm). Collection of Christie Zhou; image courtesy the artist.

SALMAN TOOR: HOW WILL I KNOW OPENS AT THE WHITNEY ON MARCH 20, 2020

NEW YORK, January 24, 2020—Salman Toor’s first solo museum exhibition will be presented by the Whitney Museum of American Art from March 20 to July 5, 2020. Primarily making intimate oil-on-panel works, Toor expands the tradition of figurative painting by melding sketch-like immediacy with disarming detail to create affecting views of young, queer Brown men living between New York City and South Asia. *Salman Toor: How Will I Know* is part of the Whitney’s emerging artists program, which most recently included solo shows by Kevin Beasley and Eckhaus Latta, and will be on view in the first-floor John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation Gallery, which is accessible to the public free-of-charge.

“Over the past few years the field of figurative painting has been reimagined once again, this time by artists frankly depicting lives and cultures that were all too often overlooked,” said Scott Rothkopf, Senior Deputy Director and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator. “Salman Toor is one of the most exciting of these young talents, conjuring beautiful stories across his canvases with a sensitive and elegant touch.”

Considering the figures he paints to be imaginary versions of himself and his friends, Toor portrays his subjects with empathy to counter the judgments he feels are often imposed on them by the outside world. Allusions to art history—notably classical European and modern Indian painting—feature throughout the artist’s work, endowing his narratives, which are drawn from experience, with elements of fantasy. Recurring color palettes, notably muted greens used to evoke a nocturnal atmosphere, heighten the emotion and drama of Toor’s compositions. In these dreamy vignettes, characters dance in cramped apartments, binge-watch period dramas, play with puppies, and style their friends’ hair. Meanwhile, another group of works, more

somber in tone, highlights moments of nostalgia and alienation. One painting depicts a morose family dinner; in a series of works, forlorn men stand with their personal belongings on display for the scrutiny of immigration officers. Rich in personal detail and situated within a queer diasporic community, Toor's paintings evocatively consider how vulnerability appears in public and private life.

Curatorial assistant Ambika Trasi says, "Toor's tender depictions of friendship and solitude while at leisure reflect on our hyper-connected present and yet still feel incredibly timeless. Painting his characters as though haloed in divine light or as well-dressed dandies, his work pays homage to 'chosen family' and the importance it has for the communities that he references."

"His paintings are so attuned to the subtle nuances of everyday life," says Nancy and Fred Poses Curator Christopher Y. Lew. "Toor captures the quiet celebrations and anxieties of the day to day; and it's thrilling to share his poignant vision with broad audiences."

About the Artist

Born in Lahore, Pakistan, Salman Toor (b. 1983) earned his Masters of Fine Art from The Pratt Institute in 2009. His work has been featured in several solo and group presentations in the United States and South Asia, including the 2018 Lahore Biennale, Lahore, Pakistan; the 2016 Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India; Aicon Gallery, Marianne Boesky, and Perrotin, all in New York; Nature Morte, Delhi, India; and Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles. Toor's works are held in prominent public collections such as Tate Modern, London, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. He is a 2019 recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation's Painters and Sculptors Grant.

Curatorial Credits

This exhibition is organized by Christopher Y. Lew, Nancy and Fred Poses Curator, and Ambika Trasi, curatorial assistant.

Exhibition Support

Salman Toor: How Will I Know is part of the Whitney's emerging artists program, sponsored by

NORDSTROM

Major support is provided by the John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation and the Manitou Fund.

Additional support is provided by the Artists Council.

About the Emerging Artists Program

Since its founding, the Whitney has consistently supported artists during the early stages of their careers through a multifaceted approach including exhibitions, acquisitions, and the Museum's landmark Biennials. More recently, since the opening of our downtown building, the emerging artists program has amplified our programming around new artists and pressing artistic concerns, notably maintaining critical engagement with emerging artists between Biennials. Since 2015, the Whitney has presented the first U.S. institutional solo exhibitions by emerging artists including Sophia Al-Maria, Juan Antonio Olivares, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Bunny Rogers, and Rachel Rose. Group exhibitions like *Between the Waters* (2018); *Pacha, Llacta, Wasichay* (2018); *Mirror Cells* (2016); and *Flatlands* (2016) have showcased new creative tendencies—often as they unfold.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

The Whitney's Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965	Ongoing
Order and Ornament: Roy Lichtenstein's Entablatures	Through March 2020
Pope.L: Choir	Through March 8, 2020
Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1950–2019	November 22, 2019–January 2021
fruits, vegetables; fruit and vegetable salad	January 15–February 17, 2020
Cauleen Smith: Mutualities	February 17–May 17, 2020
Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945	February 17–May 17, 2020
Jill Mulleady: We Wither Time into a Coil of Fright	On View March 2020
Salman Toor: How Will I Know	March 20–July 5, 2020
Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist	March 13–June 21, 2020
Dave McKenzie: The Story I Tell Myself	March 27–May 31 2020
Nothing Is So Humble: Prints from Everyday Objects	June–September 2020
Julie Mehretu	June 26–September 20, 2020
Working Together: The Photographers of the Kamoinge Workshop	July–October 2020
Around Day's End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986	July–October 2020
My Barbarian	Opens September 2020
Public Art Project: David Hammons: Day's End	Opens September 2020
Jasper Johns	Opens October 28, 2020
Dawoud Bey: An American Project	Opens November 2020

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Museum hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm; Friday from 10:30 am to 10 pm. Closed Tuesday except in July and August. Adults: \$25. Full-time students, visitors 65 & over, and visitors with disabilities: \$18. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

###