



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 NOVEMBER 13, 2020

NEW YORK, October 13, 2020 – Salman Toor’s first solo museum exhibition – originally scheduled to open in March 2020 but postponed due to the pandemic – will be presented by the Whitney Museum of American Art from November 13, 2020 to April 4, 2021. 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 in 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 pre-pandemic 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 our visitors."

Public Program

Salman Toor In Conversation with Chitra Ganesh

November 16, 6-7 PM

Online via Zoom

On the occasion of *Salman Toor: How Will I Know*, Toor speaks with artist Chitra Ganesh about the intersections in their artistic practices, from mining art historical and literary canons to considering vulnerability and empowerment in the context of queer diasporic identity.

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, Further Forward Foundation, and the Manitou Fund.

Additional support is provided by the Artists Council, Graham Steele and Ulysses de Santi, and Luhring Augustine.

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 ninety 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	Through May 2022
Order and Ornament: Roy Lichtenstein's Entablatures	Through November 16, 2020
Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1950–2019	Through February 2022
Cauleen Smith: Mutualities	Through January 31, 2021
Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945	Through January 31, 2021
Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist	Through November 1, 2020
Jill Mulleady: We Wither Time into a Coil of Fright	Through January 2021
Around Day's End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986	Through November 1, 2020
Salman Toor: How Will I Know	November 13, 2020–April 4, 2021
Nothing Is So Humble: Prints from Everyday Objects	November 20, 2020–Spring 2021
Working Together: The Photographers of the Kamoinge Workshop	November 21, 2020–March 28, 2021
Public Art Project: David Hammons: Day's End	December 2020
Andrea Carlson	On view February 2021
Julie Mehretu	March 19–August 8, 2021
Madeline Hollander: Flatwing	March 19–August 8, 2021
Dawoud Bey: An American Project	Opens April 17, 2021
Dave McKenzie: The Story I Tell Myself	Spring 2021
Jasper Johns: Mind/Mirror	September 29, 2021–February 13, 2022
My Barbarian	Opens October 2021
Martine Gutierrez	On view Fall 2021
2022 Whitney Biennial	Opens Spring 2022

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Public hours are: Monday and Thursday: 11:30 am–6 pm; Friday: 1:30–9 pm; Saturday and Sunday: 1–6 pm. Member-only hours are: Monday and Thursday: 6–7 pm; Saturday and Sunday: 10:30 am–1 pm. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 pm. Reserve timed-entry tickets in advance at whitney.org. For more information please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

###