

Beauford Delaney Teacher's Guide

Discussion Questions



Use the questions below to lead a class discussion after viewing the film.

1. What role did family and religion play in Delaney's early years?
2. What role did Lloyd Branson play in the development of Delaney as an artist?
3. How did the Knoxville Race Riot of 1919 impact Delaney?
4. How did race impact the trajectory of Delaney's career?
5. Discuss the evolution of Delaney's style from portraiture to representational abstract to abstract. What common themes emerge?
6. Throughout his life, Delaney benefitted from the encouragement of friends and patrons who recognized his talent. Discuss the role that key individuals such as James Baldwin played in Delaney's life.

Connections to Today

1. Delaney grew up as part of a vibrant middle class African American community centered along East Vine Avenue. This area was largely destroyed by efforts at urban renewal and expansion of highways. Discuss the challenges of fostering a sense of community in urban areas today.
2. Delaney benefitted from the influence of mentors and a strong social network at many points throughout his life. Discuss the importance of building a professional network and the role of social media in modern networking.
3. Beauford Delaney suffered from one or more unnamed psychological conditions that led to a suicide attempt in 1960. Discuss the state of mental health care in the United States today especially as related to access for people of color.
4. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth in the United States. The LGBTQ youth are three times as likely to attempt suicide as heterosexual youth.* Discuss strategies to combat suicide among all youth, especially those in high risk categories such as LGBTQ youth

* Statistics from CDC

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Research the Knoxville Riot of 1919 and its impact on the Knoxville community.
2. Delaney was part of the WPA's Federal Art Project. Research the goals and success of the project particularly focusing on the impact of murals in public buildings.
3. Delaney's brother Joseph was also an artist. Research Joseph Delaney's life and art.
4. Ruth Brice Cobb was a contemporary of Beauford Delaney, but chose to stay in Knoxville. Compare the trajectory of her career with that of Beauford Delaney.
5. One of the enduring connections in Delaney's life was his friendship with James Baldwin. Research Baldwin's life and works.

Suggested Reading

Amazing Grace: A Life of Beauford Delaney by David Leeming, Oxford University Press, 1998 - ISBN: 9780195097849

Other Resources

Knoxville Museum of Art Exhibit- [Beuford Delaney and James Baldwin: Through the Unusual Door](#)

KMA curator Stephen Wicks leads a virtual tour of the exhibit which highlights the friendship between Baldwin and Delaney.