

# GAGOSIAN

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## TITUS KAPHAR

### From a Tropical Space

October 1–December 19, 2020  
522 West 21st Street, New York

Titus Kaphar, *Twins*, 2020, oil on canvas, 83 3/4 × 68 inches (212.7 × 172.7 cm) © Titus Kaphar. Photo: Alexander Harding

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September 22, 2020

Gagosian is pleased to present *From a Tropical Space*, an exhibition of new paintings by Titus Kaphar. This is Kaphar's first exhibition with the gallery and inaugurates his representation.

A painter, sculptor, filmmaker, and installation artist, Kaphar reexamines American history by deconstructing existing representations and styles through his own formal innovations. His practice seeks to dislodge history from its status as “past” in order to understand its continuing impact on the present. Using materials including tar, glass, and rusted nails—together with highly refined oil painting—and employing techniques such as cutting, shredding, stitching, binding, and erasing, he reworks canonical art historical codes and conventions. And by uncovering the conceptual and narrative underpinnings of certain source images, he explores the manipulation of cultural and personal identity as a central thematic concern while inventing new narratives.

While much of Kaphar's work begins with an exhaustive study of pre-twentieth-century master painting techniques, *From a Tropical Space* sees him wield these various methods to create an emotionally saturated visual landscape that is entirely contemporary. Just as artists, through time, have translated the fraught and mercurial sociopolitical contexts in which they operate into new and often radical aesthetic modes, so do the pervasive social and cultural anxieties of the world in which we find ourselves resonate throughout Kaphar's new work.

In *From a Tropical Space*, Kaphar presents a haunting narrative of Black motherhood wherein collective fear and trauma crescendo in the disappearance of children, literalized through the physical excision of their images from the canvases themselves. The absence of each juvenile figure—whether seated in a stroller or held in a woman's arms—reveals only the blank gallery wall beneath. The intense coloration of the suburban environments in which the figures are set only heightens a pervasive tension—these are images for uncertain times. Included in the exhibition is *Analogous Colors* (2020). Demonstrating further the broader resonance of Kaphar's recent work, the painting was featured on the cover of the June 15 issue of *Time* magazine, which included a report on the protests sparked by George Floyd's killing at the hands of Minneapolis police.

Kaphar's work and practice reflect on the experience and perception of historically underrepresented and marginalized groups, including the African American community. Key to Gagosian's representation of the artist is the gallery's substantive ongoing support for NXTHVN (Next Haven), a new national arts model established by Titus Kaphar with cofounder and chairman of the board Jason Price and cofounder Jonathan Brand in 2015. Located in the Dixwell neighborhood of New Haven, Connecticut, NXTHVN nurtures creative talent within and beyond the local community, offering fellowships, residencies, and other professional development opportunities to artists, curators, and local high school students. NXTHVN is housed in two repurposed factory buildings designed by Deborah Berke Partners, where it maintains exhibition and performance spaces in addition to studio and co-working facilities.

**Titus Kaphar** was born in 1976 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut. Collections include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Seattle Art Museum; and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Exhibitions include *Selections from Asphalt and Chalk*, MoMA PS1, New York (2015); *UnSeen: Our Past in a New Light*, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC (2018–19); *Knockout*, Legacy Museum, Tuskegee University, AL (2019–20); *Redaction*, MoMA PS1, New York (2019); and *Suffering from Realness*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2019–20). Kaphar is the recipient of awards including the Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Fellowship (2009), Rappaport Prize (2018), and MacArthur Fellowship (2018).

#TitusKaphar

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## Press

### Polskin Arts

Meagan Jones  
meagan.jones@finnpartners.com  
+1 212 593 6485

Julia Esposito  
julia.esposito@finnpartners.com  
+1 212 715 1643

### Gagosian

pressny@gagosian.com  
+1 212 744 2313