

GAGOSIAN

Gagosian to Exhibit New Paintings and Sculptures by Titus Kaphar in London

The Artist's First Exhibition in the City

New Alters: Reworking Devotion Opens at Grosvenor Hill on March 17, 2022



Titus Kaphar, *New Enunciation*, 2021, oil on canvas with vinyl, 71 1/2 × 77 1/4 × 2 1/4 inches (181.6 × 196.2 × 5.7 cm)
© Titus Kaphar. Photo: Rob McKeever

LONDON, March 15, 2022—Gagosian is pleased to present *New Alters: Reworking Devotion*, an exhibition of new paintings and sculptures by Titus Kaphar. Held at the gallery's Grosvenor Hill location, it marks the artist's first exhibition in London. *COLONELGARGLE* (2008), a steel sculpture by John Chamberlain, is also included, establishing a visual dialogue with Kaphar's work.

In paintings, sculptures, and installations, Kaphar examines the history of representation by altering the work's supports. In doing so, he reveals oft unspoken social and political truths, dislodging history from its status as "past" to underscore its contemporary relevance. *New Alters: Reworking Devotion* stresses the heterogeneity of Kaphar's process by incorporating all the techniques he has employed to date into a single presentation that emphasizes the images' surreality and strangeness. It is characterized by a layering of imagery and form, and by a strategic disregard for the consistency of ground and space. Shifts in scale turn some figures into miniatures and others into giants, while the use of gilded frames hints at a dedication to something beyond the physical.

What, asks Kaphar, might it mean to produce a contemporary devotional structure within a secular art world—especially in the context of a European art historical tradition dominated by religious imagery and architecture—and what parallels might be drawn between artistic and spiritual practices? Further, what are the implications of resurrecting characters from the past and inserting them into environments and situations that would be unrecognizable to them? By incorporating painted black-and-white reproductions of American Civil War-era daguerreotypes into several paintings here, Kaphar recalls a period that was critical for defining freedom in the United States.

New Enunciation (2021) represents a shift in scale from the earlier, smaller collage that inspired it, reimagining the biblical tale of the Annunciation, in which an angel visits the Virgin Mary to tell her that she will give birth to Jesus. Excavating images from his personal archive, Kaphar recasts the scene's characters to show this "glorious message" being delivered to a Black worker in front of a broken-down car, surrounded by a field full of enslaved individuals. Where the combination of references to nineteenth-century photography and Renaissance painting built into this work establishes a complex material and conceptual stratification, another canvas, *Saints of De-Industry* (2021), employs a very different setting. Here, Kaphar layers images of two figures and a helicopter over a view of postindustrial Detroit. A central bust half-covered in black tar and a man who steps over the border of the work's frame both represent the workers who were vital to the city's construction, but who suffered the most in its latter-day decline.

In sculptures such as *Shroud of Washington* (2021) and *Sindon* (2022), Kaphar combines representational painting with object making, investigating formal strategies suggested in part by the work of Sam Gilliam, Lucio Fontana, and Robert Rauschenberg—all artists who have themselves deconstructed the canvas en route to a disruption of the image and its contexts. In *Shroud of Washington*, Kaphar's painted reproduction of John Trumbull's *General George Washington at Trenton* (1792) has been removed from its stretchers to cloak a life-size female figure. Dressed in military uniform, Washington's distorted image smothers the woman beneath it, underscoring the former president's problematic legacy. Kaphar also makes explicit reference to Chamberlain by including the late artist's *COLONELGARGLE*, a work in painted and chrome-plated steel that employs a similar crumpling technique.

Presenting the past as a still influential component of the present, Kaphar demands that viewers become active producers of history, addressing the complex legacies of previous antagonisms to consider the notion of deliverance. Is it possible, he asks, to emancipate the pictured individuals from the tragedy of their captured moments?

Titus Kaphar was born in 1976 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut. Collections include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; 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, Alabama (2019–20); *Redaction*, MoMA PS1, New York (2019); and *Suffering from Realness*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts (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

TITUS KAPHAR

New Alters: Reworking Devotion

Opening reception: Thursday, March 17, 6–8pm

March 17–May 15, 2022

20 Grosvenor Hill, London

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