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Titus Kaphar to Exhibit New Paintings and Sculptures at Gagosian Paris

The Artist's First Exhibition in the City Opens at 4 rue de Ponthieu on January 29



Titus Kaphar, *Kinfolk, Breath Is My Precious Inheritance (Harry Washington)*, 2025, tar and oil on linen, 60 × 48 inches (152.4 × 121.9 cm) © Titus Kaphar. Photo: Owen Conway

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PARIS, January 13, 2026—Gagosian is pleased to announce Titus Kaphar's first exhibition in Paris, *The Fire This Time*, opening at the rue de Ponthieu gallery on January 29, 2026. The exhibition features new paintings and hand-carved wood sculptures that extend the artist's engagement with how history and representation impact collective memory.

The exhibition title refers to James Baldwin's civil-rights-era masterpiece, *The Fire Next Time* (1963), which charts the author's struggle with—and ultimate rejection of—the racial politics of America. In relocating to Paris, Baldwin joined a community of American expatriate artists and thinkers, including Miles Davis, Nina Simone, and Richard Wright—figures who refused what Baldwin called “the American madness.” Jesmyn Ward's anthology *The Fire This Time* (2017) carries those concerns into contemporary America, more than fifty years later.

Kaphar's new paintings and sculptures reflect on the symbolic role of the American presidency at a moment when that "madness" is again at center stage. As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence—alongside national "No Kings" protests—Kaphar offers a form of homage and redress by foregrounding faces and voices that have long existed in the shadows of power.

In several new canvases, he revisits the formats and media of the *Tar* (2012–) and *Whitewash* (2013–) paintings for which he is known, advancing the formal conversations that anchor his practice. These portraits depict people who orbited the founding American presidents yet who were consigned to the margins of the historical record. By bringing them into the frame, Kaphar emphasizes their presence and agency, restoring dignity for individuals whose stories were once erased or obscured. Many of these subjects were enslaved people connected to George Washington: members of his household staff, fighters in the American Revolution, and women who remained enslaved years after his death—many whose histories are only now being recovered.

Partially inspired by Kaphar's recent work in narrative film, his new *Moving Picture* paintings (2025–) conceal inset panels behind the main canvas that reflect on what is suppressed, or omitted from sanctioned records. When opened for the viewer, the hidden component of *Celia: Embers, Bone, and Ash* (2025) gradually reveals Celia's story as a journey from victimization to empowerment.

The exhibition also debuts a major series of hand-hewn wood sculptures portraying friends and family—"saints" who sustained the artist in his personal life. Influenced by Byzantine and Renaissance Italian art and prompted by a transformative visit to Florence, each sculpture is charred to seal the wood and to ornament the surface. Their blackened finish echoes Kaphar's extended use of tar in paintings such as *The Jerome Project* (2014–).

For Kaphar, the fire still burns.

The Fire This Time coincides with Kaphar's participation in *Titus Kaphar and Junius Brutus Stearns: Pictures More Famous than the Truth* at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (February 14–July 26, 2026) and *America 250: Common Threads* at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas (March 14–July 27, 2026).

For Titus Kaphar's biographical information and exhibition history, [please visit gagosian.com](http://gagosian.com).

#TitusKaphar

TITUS KAPHAR

The Fire This Time

Opening reception: Thursday, January 29, 6–8pm

January 29–March 7, 2026

4 rue de Ponthieu, Paris

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