

Painterly Power Plays: Titus Kaphar

Posted February 23rd, 2011 by dawire

Categories: Reviews

Tags: Diana McClure, Titus Kaphar



Titus Kaphar, *This place never felt like home*

There is no question that nuances of power are central to the work of Titus Kaphar. However, in today's world, to disempower, overpower, or empower is *dépassé*. To play with power is the name of the game. To cut off the head of power, exploit it, expose it, erase it, deflate it, reveals its fragile construction. And, this is precisely what Kaphar does in his current exhibition, *Classical Disruption*.

On view in New York City at Friedman Benda through April 2, the exhibition breathes life into classical scenes that collapse time marrying history with the now. The cuts, slices and sculpting that obscure canvas as a medium, and subject matter, propel the viewer into a conspiratorial relationship with the work. A mysterious historical storyline unfolds that somehow implicates the present day gallery system and western art historical canon in an ongoing act of treason.



Titus Kaphar, *The Preacher's Wife*



Titus Kaphar, *Doubt*

Using the colonial past of Europe and the presence of Africans in the Americas as a story arc, several of the pieces in the exhibition seem to reflect ethnically ambiguous undercurrents in a collective history. Perhaps, a metaphor for what goes unspoken in the halls of the art industrial complex. Kaphar's use of tar as a sculptural medium, the sensual folding of canvases, perfectly cut curves, and rich yet dark hues of green, blue and red, humanize the work with a subtle penetrating passion that activates the work in the present moment.

What makes this exhibition so powerful as a whole is that there is no victim complex lingering in the human beings that inhabit the paintings and sculptures. Each and every

individual, or trace of individual, sits, strolls, stands,
kneels, rides - looks - at the viewer as an active participant
in the illusion of history that defines us today.

-Diana McClure