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**Shock artist takes a scalpel to his painting***American painter Titus Kaphar brings a new meaning to cutting edge art*Sarah Lagan  
Writer/Sub-editor

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14: American artist Titus Kaphar shocked audiences at a recent exhibition opening by walking up to his own painting and taking a scalpel to it.

The Bermuda National Gallery set a group of eight local and international artists the task of responding to a historical artwork of their choice from the Decoding the European Collection Exhibition.

So as part of the Re-Interpreting the European Collection, Kaphar submitted his own full-scale replica of Thomas John Medycott by renowned British portrait artist Thomas Gainsborough c. 1763. A short time into the evening, a character dressed in workmen's clothes and carrying a bucket, walked into the space, cut out the main figure and then proceeded to discard the materials. Once the art was trashed, the character emerged from the scene as himself — the artist.

The work challenges the truth of family histories and poses the question of who has the right to tell them. Through his work, Kaphar invites the viewer to take representations of truth and become active producers of history.

Lisa Howie, BNG director said: "Although I did know what his intentions were, in terms of entering the gallery under character and intervening with his artwork, I wasn't sure when or exactly how he would do this.

**Remarkable**

"It was a surprise to the audience and when he started to cut the painting guests cried out in shock.

"The finished work is as remarkable as the rest of Mr Kaphar's portfolio — stimulating, provocative, with many layers of meanings. By creating space in the artwork, he has opened wide new meanings for both his work and its stimulus, the original Gainsborough. Bottom line — you have to see it for yourself."

Kaphar graduated with a MFA from Yale University, School of Art and a BFA from San Jose State University.

He was artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum Harlem, 2006, and more recently the recipient of the Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Fellowship.

He is currently represented at the Friedman Benda Gallery, New York.



Kaphar cuts into his own oil painting.  
\*Photo supplied



New perspective: American artist Titus Kaphar walks away from his replica of Thomas Gainsborough's portrait of Thomas John Medycott at the Bermuda National Gallery after carving out the main figure.  
\*Photo supplied