

## Artist Attacks Painting



September 7, 2011 —  
Artist Attacks Painting at BNG

WHAT? The Bermuda National Gallery (BNG) has a painting on display that is most provocative, primarily because most of the painting is no longer there. American artist Titus Kaphar, a participant in the exhibition *Re-Interpreting the European Collection*, submitted a full-scale replica of Thomas John Medlycott, by renowned British portrait artist Thomas Gainsborough, c. 1763. Kaphar's oil painting was on display during the BNG's exhibition opening last Thursday evening,

September 1, and then, suddenly, an unknown bucket-carrying character entered the space and proceeded to attack the painting.

BNG Director says: "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. 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."

### EXHIBITION DETAILS

#### *Re-Interpreting the European Collection*

Eight local and international artists were invited to respond to an historical artwork of choice from the *Decoding the European Collection* Exhibition, which was exhibited here from January to June 2011. These artists include: James Cooper, Louisa Flannery, Charlie Godet Thomas, Titus Kaphar, Sunell Lombard, Lynn Morrell, Alan C. Smith, and Sharon Wilson. According to Freedman Tider, whose definitive text *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1957) established six principles for interpretation, "The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction rather provocation." To this aim, these artists have repositioned the original artwork into the contemporary moment by providing another layer of meaning; they bring their own histories and perspectives to historical artworks that may well be far removed from their pasts. These artworks shape a new context for dialogue, using symbols, technology, collage and narratives, in order to provoke meaning making both about their own artwork and the original stimulus. The exhibition also features a documentary film created by local artist Milton Raposo, which adds another layer of meaning by exploring the artists' creative processes. This synergy of meaning moves away from a single, curatorial narrative. By exploring multiple layers of meaning simultaneously this exhibition provokes the idea that meaning and truth are neither fixed nor finite.



## INFORMATION ON THE ARTIST

**Titus Kaphar (American) b. 1976**

### About the Artist

Titus 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.

### About the Work

Titus's work encourages new questions about how family histories are told and who has the right to tell them. His paintings depict imagined symbolic acts of empowerment that never happened, but perhaps should have. Through layers of personal and national histories and iconic representations of truth, Kaphar asks the viewer to become active producers of history.

In the catalogue foreword 'Intricate Illusion' (2011), by Bridget R. Cooks, Ph.D, she says of his work: "Kaphar works hard to present the appearance of the truth in painting as his first effect. His paintings offer something familiar to draw the viewer in and, at the same time, offer a deformation. Within a few moments of approaching one of his works, it is clear that something is not quite right. The viewer's must labour to deduce what exactly is going on. The persistence of change in Kaphar's work mimics the revelation of inherited narratives within personal and collective histories that explain how our present came to be. Kaphar shows us that these stories are constructed as deceptively simple truths: the past, like the present, is complex, sloppy, and contradictory; our understanding of history as an easily consumable narrative is often an intricate illusion. The fact that histories have multiple points of view is a given for Kaphar and his work offers these perspectives for the viewer both to experience and reveal."

See [www.tituskaphar.com](http://www.tituskaphar.com)

This exhibition runs September 2, 2011- May 2012