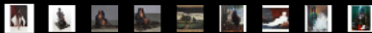


Review: Titus Kaphar, “Classical Disruption”

The artist tackles race and art history. *Paul Laster*



Disordered Suspension

Photograph: Courtesy Friedman Benda

An emerging artist of tremendous talent, Titus Kaphar could succeed just by sticking to his remarkable skill for painting portraits and landscapes. However, this young African-American prefers to push his work into a Conceptual realm, where painting and sculpture merge, and issues of race and identity are brazenly addressed. Cutting, shaping and altering his canvases in ways that ironically veil his subjects, Kaphar constructs postmodern works that engage both the mind and eye.

A canvas titled *The Preacher's Wife* portrays a conservatively attired black woman holding a paintbrush loaded with white paint, which seemingly has just been used to obliterate her seated husband in a flurry of angry strokes. The wax and tar sculpture *Doubt* depicts a naked, muscular black man—who appears to be a slave—on his knees with his head tilted toward the heavens as he clutches a crumpled painting of pious European subjects from Renaissance times. In another piece, *Eve*, an unstretched canvas depicting a voluptuous female nude has been heaped into a pile atop a wooden platform that metaphorically reads as a raft.

Kaphar's elisions play on the idea of blacks being left out of traditional art history. *Venus* pictures a reclining female figure admiring herself in a mirror, but her entire body has been scissored out of the painting. Meanwhile, the formally posed gent in *Disordered Suspension* has been similarly cut out from the jaw down. A tangled mass of shredded canvas hangs from where his mouth ought to be—a critique of the standard art history that's been shoved down everyone's throat, regardless of race.

Laster, Paul. "Review: Titus Kaphar, 'Classical Disruption.'" *Time Out New York*, March 15, 2011