

# **Mondays with MoMA**



**MoMA**

## Step 1 Look closely

1. What's happening in this image?
2. What do you notice about the setting?
3. What do you notice about the colors?
4. What do you notice about the figures?  
What is included, and what is taken out?

## Step 2 Learn More

Titus Kaphar draws from historical and contemporary subjects, combining traditional painting methods with new techniques. In the series *From a Tropical Space*, he makes oil paintings of Black women and their children. He then uses an X-ACTO knife to precisely cut out the forms of the children, leaving a negative space. He engaged in this process to center Black motherhood and the collective fear and trauma these mothers experience. "We don't see very many pictures of Black women in art history, period. They are not our Madonnas. They're not our Venuses. They are not our odalisques. What we have is the depiction of Black folks in general, and Black women specifically, as enslaved and [in] servitude. When I looked at the compositions themselves, I realized that this [series] is a conversation about the Madonna. This is a conversation about the *Pietà*. These are mothers mourning the loss of their children. So in that way, the relationship to art history is there. It's just, the expression has changed."

## Step 3 Listen and learn from the artist

1. Watch Titus Kaphar talking about his art and process: [Can beauty open our hearts to difficult conversations?](#). Have a notebook and something to write with to take notes. Consider these questions as you are watching:
  - a. What are the narratives that Titus Kaphar is challenging?
  - b. What does he choose to include? What does he choose to omit?
  - c. What artistic techniques does he use to illustrate his ideas?
  - d. What does Kaphar mean when he says he uses beauty as a "Trojan Horse"?
  - e. How does he bring together ideas from the past and the present?
2. After watching the video, explore more of Titus Kaphar's [artworks](#) to see what themes and stories he revisits.
3. Reflection: Think about stories in your community that are untold or misrepresented. Who are the people who are connected to these stories?
4. Optional: Watch more [videos](#) from the artist.

## Step 4 Share

Share your research with a friend, classmate, or family member. Or share it with us at MoMA: [schoolprograms@moma.org](mailto:schoolprograms@moma.org).



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Image: Titus Kaphar. *From a Tropical Space*. 2019. Oil on canvas. Gift of Agnes Gund in honor of Catherine Gund