

# Exploring identity - Photomontage Activity



ANDERSON COLLECTION  
AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY Cantor Arts Center

Can you guess what a **photomontage** is?

It is a collage made from photographs that creates a surreal situation or image.

Today we are thinking about identity. This activity is similar to the process that artist Titus Kaphar uses in his artwork and leads us to ask these questions:

**What is the effect of removing features (faces and hands) associated with human identity?**

**What happens when you take away [obscure?] a person's identity?**

## Step by Step Photomontage

You will need:

Scissors, glue,  
paper, magazines  
or newspapers.

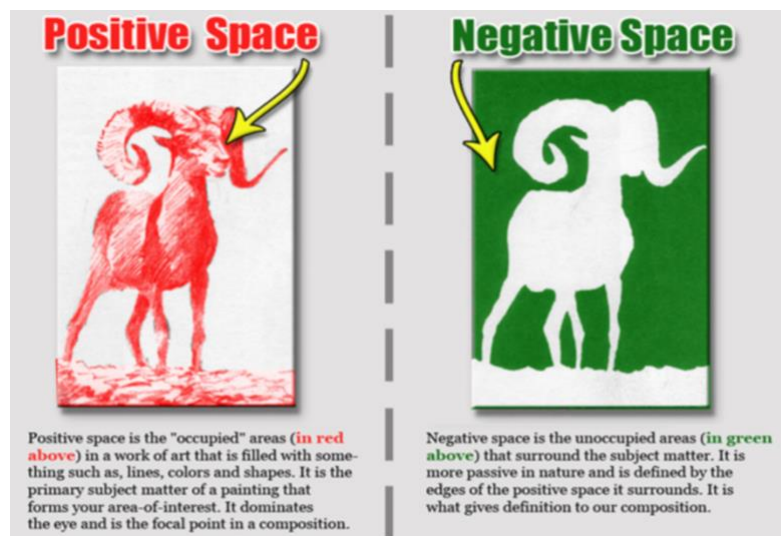
Links to helpful background information about Titus Kaphar and his art.  
Time Magazine Cover

<https://time.com/5847487/george-floyd-time-cover-titus-kaphar/>

TED Talk

[https://www.ted.com/talks/titus\\_kaphar\\_can\\_art\\_amend\\_history?  
language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/titus_kaphar_can_art_amend_history?language=en)

1. Look through magazines for pictures of people that look easy to cut out.
2. Cut out the page and then cut carefully along the edges of the picture so that you can save all the figure shapes. The picture of the person is the positive shape and the cut-out-shape remaining is the negative shape.
3. Place the magazine page - negative space shape onto your base paper. In the example below, the base paper is white. You may decide to choose another color paper or even another photograph.
4. Play with your pictures as though they were puzzles. Try several arrangements before you decide. When you have your most interesting arrangement, carefully glue down your pieces.
5. **Tips and tricks:** Take a look at Titus Kaphar's artwork online and see the amazing ways he uses negative space in his compositions. It may take a few tries to make a picture that you like. So please don't give up.
6. **Share your artwork.** We would love to see it! [cantor\\_education@stanford.edu](mailto:cantor_education@stanford.edu)



**Once your photomontage is completed, share in your social channels and tag us with @cantorarts.**

**Questions? Email us at [cantor\\_education@stanford.edu](mailto:cantor_education@stanford.edu)**

# Second Sunday Inspiration: Titus Kaphar



© Titus Kaphar

## Page 4 of Jefferson's "Farm Book," ...

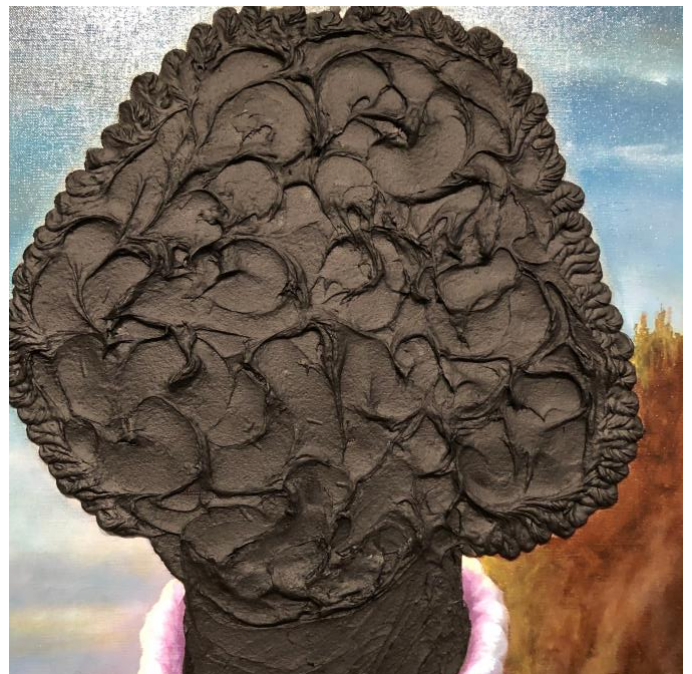
Page 4 of Jefferson's "Farm Book,"  
January 1774, Goliath, Hercules,  
Jupiter, Gill, Fanny, Ned, Sucky,  
Frankey, Gill, Nell, Bella, Charles, Jenny,  
Betty, June, Toby, Duna (sic), Cate,  
Hannah, Rachael, George, Ursula,  
George, Bagwell, Archy, Frank, Bett,  
Scilla, ?, 2

As human beings, we are hard-wired to recognize other human faces and the emotions they express.

What is the effect of removing features (faces and hands) associated with human identity?

What happens when you take away (obscure) a person's identity?

**By obscuring the sitter's face and hands in the painting, Kaphar asks us to think about the ways in which the identities of Black people have been erased or hidden by the forces of American racism.**



© Titus Kaphar





## Page 4 of Jefferson's "Farm Book," ...

© Titus Kaphar

Our artmaking activity is inspired by this painted portrait in the Cantor's collection. Titus Kaphar, the artist, used tar to paint the face and hands.

What message is the artist communicating by using tar as part of the painting?

This portrait is part of an exhibition called *The Medium is the Message*, which considers the limits of figural representation and explores how we might challenge dominant discourses around art, culture, and history through an exploration of medium.