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COMD Theory - First Paper

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Art vs. Design

When we think of design we think of innovative problem-solving. We think of redefining a problem or human need and creating a solution for it. From engineering to architectural purposes, design plays an essential part in understanding how humans think and interact. Writer Graham Tuttle, from [weworks](#) writes “ design thinking is “human-centered,” which means that it uses evidence of how consumers (humans) actually engage with a product or service, rather than how someone else or an organization thinks they will engage with it.” In most cases, design is seen as a tool and not a strategy, which interestingly makes an argument as to why that is and how can design concepts be seen a strategic? Alternatively, how do we define art? The Greek philosopher Plato believed that art is essentially a reflection of a reflection of what is real; An umbrella term that can mean many things but in terms of strategy, it can be defined as finding the differences among things that are similar in nature.

In this paper, we examine how American artist Titus Kaphar uses his sculpture “*LANGUAGE OF THE FORGOTTEN*”, which was commissioned by Princeton University to discuss the controversial history of their part in the selling of enslaved black people as a strategic art design that functions as a conversational piece that provokes feelings within its observers and how fundamentally it can usher in a societal change in viewpoints. Much like design, sculpting takes on its own process starting with an idea. After researching and developing this idea which would need to be relevant to what is being sculpted, comes a sketch or drawing. From there that drawing would need to be created into a three-dimensional sculpt. Kaphar would carefully and

with great detail carved an inversion into the oak wood. He uses a cut-out mold of Thomas Jefferson's head as the centerpiece and in front of Jefferson is an image of Sally Hemings who is a female slave believed to be the mother of Jefferson's children who is also etched on a piece of glass. As mention in MASS MoCA's [website article](#) " Kaphar is first and foremost interested in history – and in particular whose stories get told, and which ones get left out. Through cutting, bending, sculpting, and remixing historic paintings and sculptures, Kaphar often shifts the focus of the narratives to create new works that exist between fiction and quotation." This sculpture is an installation that is 90 x 54 x 66 inches. The mediums used are high-density urethane, glass, charred white Oak, and LED lights.

Designer and artist Bruno Munari writes in his book *Design As Art* "what is a designer ?.. He is a planner with an aesthetic sense." We can argue that Kaphar is a designer whose "plan" is to design a new sculpture with aesthetics in mind. Author Micheal Phillips argues that design and art can intersect but are distinctive in their fields. He goes on to say that as a designer working amongst professional designers he would hear them make statements such as "Design is not art. The design has to function." "Art is meant to provoke thought and emotions, but it doesn't solve problems." "Artists primarily work off instinct, whereas designers employ a methodical, data-driven process." Phillips believes in a philosophical understanding of art and that a great design at first hand is indeed art. He uses the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) to quote "Art exists and has existed in every known human culture and consists of objects, performances, and experiences that are intentionally endowed by their makers with a high degree of aesthetic interest." Meaning that design can be classified as art, dated back into every human culture known to man.

In sum, Titus Kaphar creates a solution to a problem for Princeton University using his sculptor, a work of art as a strategic design to sway and bring notion in their joint mission. Art vs Design is not a versus when we think in terms of purpose. Can Kaphar's sculptors be functional? of course. It serves a purpose just like a design can but in a philosophical artistic manner. Titus relies on observations and empathy with how people choose to interact with his sculptor which employs a more of a hands-on approach in creating innovative solutions or what I would call awareness and call to action. This helps us gain a deeper understanding of just how important art and design plays within empathy and how Titus Kaphar's work is used to help observers uncover problems they never verbalize or were even aware existed, to begin with.

Citations:

Titus Kaphar Language of the forgotten | MASS MoCA

At MASS MoCA, artist Titus Kaphar leads us back from the abyss, The Boston Globe. TITUS KAPHAR Language of the Forgotten, 2018 Charred white oak, high-density urethane, glass and LED lights Courtesy of the artist

<https://massmoca.org/event/titus-kaphar>

The Design Thinking Process (Explained By An Expert)

What is Design Thinking? Get the ultimate beginner's introduction here:

<https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/ux-design/what-is-design-thinking-everything-you-ne...>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrsQSpIB_Cg

What is design thinking and why is it important? - Ideas

Design-thinking methodology was popularized by design consulting firm IDEO. The methods gained momentum in the larger business world after Tim Brown, the chief executive officer of IDEO, wrote an article in 2008 for the Harvard Business Review about the use of design thinking in business—including at a California hospital, a Japanese bicycle company, and the healthcare industry in India.

<https://www.wework.com/.../creativity-culture/what-is-design-thinking>

[Titus Kaphar Language of the forgotten | MASS MoCA](#)

[Design thinking, explained | MIT Sloan](#)

[Sculpture Making Process \(garlandweeks.com\)](#)

[What is design thinking and why is it important? - Ideas \(wework.com\)](#)

[Art vs Design – A Timeless Debate | Toptal](#)

Images of Titus Kaphar and his works are below ↓



Titus Kaphar, *Language of the Forgotten* (2018). Courtesy of the artist

Charred white oak, high-density urethane, glass, and LED lights • 90 x 54 x 66 inches



Titus Kaphar, *Language of the Forgotten*, 2018, installation view, MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts © Titus Kaphar. Photo: Jonathan Brand



Titus Kaphar. Photo: Christian Hogsted.

