

Handout

Image Analysis Procedure: “Absconded from the Household of the President of the United States”

Step 1: Description

Describe what you see in as much detail as possible. List information about the images, colors, lines, placement of objects, and other details.

Step 2: Identification

Record basic information about the piece. What do you know about it? Who created it? When? Does the piece have a title or any text? If so, what does it say?

Step 3: Interpretation

What does this painting suggest about how the artist thinks we should understand the history of the founding? How do the visual elements of the painting contribute to the artist's message?

Step 4: Evaluation

Read the following quote from the artist Titus Kaphar:

I'm not in the business of trying to demonize our Founding Fathers. I don't really think there's any benefit to that. But I'm also not trying to deify them [treat as a god]. And so that particular piece is kind of pulling back the curtain on these ideas, these illusions, these stories that we tell ourselves about the Founding Fathers.¹

How does this statement from the artist influence your interpretation of the painting?

Does the painting successfully communicate the artist's message?

¹ Mary Louise Kelly, "Meet the MacArthur Fellow Disrupting Racism in Art," NPR (All Things Considered), October 24, 2018, accessed August 20, 2020.