

**NEW**  
**235 BOWERY**  
**NEW YORK NY**  
**10002 USA**  
**MUSEUM**

**PRESS CONTACTS:**  
Sarah Morris  
212-219-1222 ext. 217  
press@newmuseum.org

Andrea Schwan  
917-371-5023  
info@andreaschwan.com

**New Museum Presents**  
**“Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott”**  
**June 30–October 9, 2022**



**New York, NY**—Featuring approximately forty paintings, **“Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott”** highlights the sixty-year-long career of Robert Colescott. Colescott’s bold and richly rendered works traverse art history to offer a satirical take on issues of race, beauty, and twentieth century American culture. Often ahead of his time, Colescott explored the ways in which personal and cultural identities are constructed and enacted through the language and history of painting. He anticipated urgent contemporary discussions around the power of images and shifting political and social values, while asserting the continuing validity of painting as a critical medium for exploring these questions. This exhibition offers a long overdue celebration of Colescott as one of the most consequential artists of his time.

Colescott is perhaps best known for works made during the 1970s in which he reimagined iconic artworks to examine the absence of Black men and women as protagonists in dominant cultural and social narratives. Paintings like *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook* (1975) offer irreverent parodies of familiar masterpieces, while incisively critiquing America’s often brutally discriminatory past and present. His transgressive use of racial stereotypes to interrogate hierarchies of power was echoed in the strategies of younger artists in the

1990s such as Kerry James Marshall and Kara Walker. Along with a provocative approach to humor, Colescott's paintings also demonstrate an adventurous formal evolution and a studied analysis of the history of Modernism. In its complex interplay of high art and vernacular traditions alike, his work has opened new possibilities for chronicling the history of America while ridiculing its grandiosity and biases, exerting a profound impact on generations of artists grappling with similar issues.

This groundbreaking exhibition highlights the depth of Colescott's legacy as a standard bearer for figuration in the 1970s, a forerunner of the appropriation strategies of the 1980s, an overlooked contributor to debates around identity politics in the 1990s, and a sage pioneer in addressing some of the most challenging issues in global culture today. The exhibition builds upon the New Museum's long history with the artist, including "Robert Colescott: A Retrospective," a touring survey of his work that was presented at the museum in 1989.

"Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott" is co-curated by Lowery Stokes Sims and Matthew Weseley. It is organized by the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati. The presentation at the New Museum is coordinated by Gary Carrion-Murayari, Kraus Family Curator.

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## **ABOUT NEW MUSEUM**

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

## **SUPPORT**

*Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott* is organized by the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH.

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The exhibition was also awarded a Sotheby's Prize in 2018 in recognition of curatorial excellence and its exploration of an overlooked and under-represented area of art history.

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Image: Robert Colescott, *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook*, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 78 1/2 × 98 1/4 in. (199.4 × 249.6 cm). Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Los Angeles, 2021.45.1. © 2022 The Robert H. Colescott Separate Property Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.