## THE CAREER OF ROBERT COLESCOTT

The career of the American painter Robert Colescott (1925-2009) has never been more relevant than at this present moment in time. Given the crisis of race relations, image management and political manipulation in the current American landscape, his perspectives on race, life, social mores, historical heritage and cultural hybridity forthrightly confront the state of global culture today.

Colescott initially made his mark on the art scene in the 1970s with paintings that transformed well-known masterpieces of art history by black facing the main characters. This provocative strategy challenged long-standing taboos about racial stereotyping, while allowing Colescott to achieve his stated purpose to "interject blacks into art history." As he transformed familiar images to forge new, unexplored social meanings and implications, Colescott became a pioneer in the reemergence of figuration in the 1970s and in the strategies of appropriation in the 1980s.

Despite its unparalleled pedigree, however, Colescott's work continues to be mired in controversy because of his blunt and crude gestural painting style and his transgressive examinations of race and gender. Colescott is particularly skillful at shocking us by dealing with the issues that we usually shy away from, or only speak of in secret, and then delivering what has been described as a "one-two punch" that forces us to grapple with the artistic, political, social and historical meanings of his images.

Co-curated by Lowery Stokes Sims and Matthew Weseley, and organized by Raphaela Platow, the Contemporary Arts Center's Alice & Harris Weston Director and Chief Curator. Following its debut in Cincinnati, the exhibition will travel to the Portland Art Museum, Chicago Cultural Center and Akron Art Museum.

Major support of the exhibition has been provided by the Henry Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Richard Rosenthal; the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts for the research phase of the exhibition and the exhibition itself; and the Harold & Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation for its support of the catalogue. 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.

## ART AND RACE MATTERS THE CARBER OF ROBBA COLESCOTT