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TELF AIR ACADEMY | JEPSON CENTER FOR THE ARTS | OWENS-THOMAS HOUSE

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Telfair Museum of Art presents

Robert Colescott: Troubled Goods

Noted painter offers incisive commentary on contemporary social issues

Series of related programs held in conjunction with exhibition

[Savannah, GA]— This spring, the Telfair presents *Robert Colescott: Troubled Goods*, on view at the Jepson Center for the Arts from February 18 - May 16, 2009. Featuring the work of contemporary painter Robert Colescott, the exhibition includes selections spanning the artist's career—from his late 1970s appropriations of iconic paintings to recent abstract works. The public is invited to attend several related programs in the coming months, including a lecture by eminent art historian Peter Selz.

For over fifty years, Robert Colescott (b. 1925) has been fearlessly plumbing contemporary social and political issues to create compelling and provocative works of art. Born in Oakland, California, Colescott received his BA and MFA degrees from the University of California at Berkeley, and studied for a time in Paris on the G.I. Bill with Fernand Léger.

"Colescott's paintings explore often taboo issues of race, sexuality, and politics with riotous color, unfettered brushstrokes, expressively distorted forms, and a healthy dose of wit and sarcasm," said the Telfair's chief curator of fine arts and exhibitions, Holly Koons McCullough. "With his unflinching eye and masterful technique, the artist challenges us to confront the sometimes uncomfortable realities of contemporary society."

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Coming of age during the rise of Abstract Expressionism in the early 1950s, Colescott ultimately rejected non-objectivity, choosing to adopt a highly expressive figurative style. Over time, the artist began to reevaluate the formidable artistic education and training he had received in the U.S. and Europe, as he became increasingly influenced by non-Western tradition.

In the mid 1960s, Colescott spent several years in Cairo after securing a fellowship to study at the American Research Center, marking a formative period in his professional development. Profoundly affected by Egyptian art, specifically its narrative form and strong “non-white” tradition, he began to view issues of his own race and culture from a new, and often more critical, perspective.

Consequently, in the 1970s, Colescott began reinterpreting classic images from the history of art, including Jan Van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Portrait* (1432, National Gallery, London) and Emanuel Leutze’s *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), provocatively replacing white figures with caricatured black ones. Colescott moved on to treat complex human narratives, with subjects ranging from urban violence to the social tension engendered by racial mixing. Some of his most recent works employ a more abstract aesthetic, conveying meaning through swelling form and powerful color.

Colescott is represented in many prominent public collections including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and many others. In 1997, he became the first African-American artist to serve as the sole representative of the United States at the Venice Biennale.

Related Programs

February 19, 12pm

Film: *Robert Colescott: The One Two Punch*

Telfair’s Jepson Center for the Arts

Join us for a lunchtime screening of the 1992 documentary *Robert Colescott: The One Two Punch*. The short film includes interviews with Colescott and several museum curators. Free to museum members or with admission.

March 5, 6pm

Film by Robert Colescott: *Dulacrow’s Masterwork: A Mockumentary Film*

Telfair’s Jepson Center for the Arts

In a rare screening of this 1976 film narrated by the artist himself, Colescott gives a mock art history lecture, telling the story of the painting *Liberty Leading the People* by “Eugene Dulacrow” (Colescott’s alter ego) based on the work of the same title by French master painter Eugene Delacroix. Free to museum members or with admission.

April 16, 6 pm

Lecture by Art Historian Peter Selz: *Robert Colescott: Troubled Goods*

Telfair's Jepson Center for the Arts

Distinguished art historian Peter Selz will give an illustrated lecture on Robert Colescott's work. Selz is an authority on German Expressionism, curator of retrospectives on modern masters Rodin and Giacometti, and author of numerous publications on modern and contemporary art including the work of Colescott. Free to museum members or with admission.

About the Telfair

Located in the heart of Savannah's historic district, the Telfair Museum of Art is the oldest public art museum in the South. It is comprised of two National Historic Landmark Buildings—the Telfair Academy and the Owens-Thomas House—and the contemporary Jepson Center for the Arts. With three unique buildings housing three distinct collections, the Telfair bridges three centuries of art and architecture.

Images available upon request.

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The Telfair Museum of Art is supported by its members, with partial support of the annual operating fund provided by the City of Savannah and by the Georgia Council for the Arts through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly.

The Telfair Academy is located on Telfair Square at 121 Barnard Street, Savannah, GA. The Jepson Center is also located on Telfair Square, just steps from the Academy building, at 207 W. York Street. The Telfair's Owens-Thomas House is located at 124 Abercorn Street on Oglethorpe Square. General admission (which includes a one-time visit to each of the Telfair's three sites) is \$15 for adults; \$12 for seniors, military personnel, and AAA members; \$5 for K-12 students; children under 5 are free. Members are always admitted free.

The Telfair's Jepson Center for the Arts and Telfair Academy are open Sunday 12-5 pm, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Tuesday-Closed, and Thursday 10 am-8 pm. Call 912.790.8880 for Owens-Thomas House hours or visit www.telfair.org. Museum sites are closed some holidays.

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