



Robert Colescott

Oakland, CA 1925–Tucson, AZ 2009

Robert Colescott is best known for his improvisational, large-scale canvases that comment on class, gender, sexuality, and race in a satirical manner. While attending the University of California, Berkeley, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Colescott absorbed the prevailing style of abstracted, figurative painting practiced by many San Francisco Bay Area artists. Yet the key elements of Colescott's mature work—vivid color, complex narrative, and monumental scale—were largely the product of time spent abroad studying with Fernand Léger in Paris and later encounters with ancient, non-European art in Cairo, Egypt. In the 1970s, Colescott began to appropriate famous American and European paintings, inserting both well-known and anonymous black figures into compositions that reinterpreted these white-centric scenes through an African American lens. In the following years Colescott continued his critique of societal stereotypes, incorporating myth, humor, allegory, and popular culture into often-controversial paintings. In 1997, Colescott became the first African American artist selected as the US representative at the prestigious Venice Biennale exhibition.

The Other Washingtons. Oil on canvas, 1987; 90 x 114 inches.
University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust, U-6463.2015.



Carroll Dunham

born New Haven, CT 1949

For more than forty years, Carroll Dunham has pushed the boundaries of abstraction, figuration, and sexuality in a unique body of work that draws from Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Pop Art. In the 1980s, Dunham achieved recognition for colorful, explosive paintings on wood that combined biomorphic forms with graffiti-like mark making. Through the 1990s, Dunham utilized an intensified palette and thick black outlines to depict increasingly ambiguous scenes of cartoonish figures sporting unusual appendages and large sets of teeth. The artist's exploration of these characters—who were often outfitted with suits and top hats and wielding weapons—continued in various iterations throughout the 2000s. Toward the end of the decade, he shifted his focus to more explicitly sexual, representational depictions of female nudes set in fantastical, natural landscapes. In a recent body of work, Dunham has expanded these landscape scenes to include male nudes. He currently lives and works as an artist and writer in New York.

Another Island. Acrylic, enamel, pastel, and pencil on linen, 1998–1999; 60 x 77 inches.
Courtesy of Karen and Robert Duncan Collection.



Philip Guston

Montreal, Quebec, Canada 1913–Woodstock, NY 1980

Philip Guston held an avid interest in cartoons and comics from a young age. In 1935, after studying art in Los Angeles, he moved to New York City where he painted murals for the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. After stints as an artist in residence at universities in the Midwest, Guston returned to New York in the late 1940s and became a core member of the Abstract Expressionist movement. He eventually became disillusioned with the New York art scene and left the city in 1967 to settle permanently in Woodstock, New York. Guston's work soon shifted from nuanced abstractions to stylized figurative paintings that drew from his early interest in cartoons. These potent narratives—executed primarily in a palette of reds, pinks, and grays—employed a range of symbols that referenced the artist's complicated biography as well as controversial sociopolitical topics like the Ku Klux Klan. Guston continued to work in this representational mode until his death in 1980.

Pit II. Oil on canvas, 1976; 60 1/16 x 52 1/4 inches.
University of Nebraska–Lincoln, gift of the estate of Musa Guston, U-4429.1992.



Peter Saul

born San Francisco, CA 1934

Peter Saul studied at the California School of Fine Arts and Washington University in Saint Louis before living in Europe during the late 1950s and early 1960s. While abroad, Saul began painting provocative critiques of American culture in a gestural style reminiscent of Abstract Expressionism. In 1964, Saul returned to the US and continued what he had begun in Europe, employing lurid colors and a polished graphic style to create a series of violent, cartoonish condemnations of the Vietnam War. In subsequent years, Saul has continued to shock viewers with his complex, surrealist compositions, grotesque imagery, and controversial takes on subjects ranging from Donald Duck to O. J. Simpson to Willem de Kooning. Although many of his works are politically and socially charged, Saul maintains that these paintings are not representations of his own beliefs, but rather meant to provoke a response in the viewer. In 2000, Saul moved to New York, where he still works and exhibits today.

Abstract Expressionist Still Life. Acrylic on canvas, 2016; 72 x 84 inches.
University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust, U-6563.2016.

Original Behavior

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