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Gladstone presents Robert H. Colescott: Cairo, opening November 5, 2026 in New York

Gladstone will present an exhibition of paintings by Robert H. Colescott (1925–2009), the gallery's first solo presentation with the artist since announcing representation of his Estate in 2025. The exhibition will focus on a pivotal period in Colescott's practice between 1964 - 1968, tracing the years immediately before, during, and after his time living and working in Cairo, Egypt. Gladstone's Robert H. Colescott exhibition will offer a focused examination of how the geography of Cairo and the history of its people reframed the artist's identity both as a painter, but also as a Black man.

Colescott's earliest trip to Egypt was in 1964, where, after having applied and being accepted, became the very first artist-in-residence at the American Research Center in Cairo. During this initial trip, which would ultimately be one of two prolonged stays in the region, Colescott pursued his painting practice and explored the country, its community of artists and ancient history. Colescott later returned to Cairo in 1966 as the first visiting professor of art at the American University in Cairo. Colescott remained at AUC through 1967 - until he was prematurely forced to flee Cairo with his young family upon the outbreak of the Six-Day War.

The years Colescott spent in Egypt marked an important shift in his artistic development. His encounters with the country and its culture offered a new context through which to consider his own identity as a Black artist. Colescott later described his time in Cairo as providing the possibility of identifying and assimilating as Black rather than white, an experience that scholars have connected to changes visible in his paintings from this period. Earlier works characterized by more subdued figuration and landscape painting, gave-way to an evolution in palette, abstracted figuration and ultimately fully resolved narrative painting.

This exhibition highlights this essential shift in Colescott's practice, and the artist's evolution of color, medium and form. *Imagine Acrobats* (1964), made at the outset of this period, combines oil, graphite, and collaged canvas, demonstrates Colescott's ongoing experimentation with material and composition. Across his subsequent works, changes in color, figuration, and narrative reveal an artist reconsidering the possibilities of painting and the ways in which race can operate within it.

Additionally, the exhibition surveys an important body of tonal brown paintings, such as *Untitled*, 1964 - which were made during the artist's first trip to Cairo. The color of these paintings - or lack thereof - is largely a result of art supply shortages - and Colescott's choice to supplement with simple house paint and basic building materials allows us to identify some of the earliest work from this period. By removing the consideration of color from his work - Colescott was positioned to think more formally about composition. This choice, a product of circumstance, proved critical for Colescott's later paintings in the 1960s. Once supplied with the proper materials and

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pigments, Colescott developed a group of heavily color-saturated works - such as, *ODE To The Sun*, 1968 or *Dooooo-oh*, 1968 or *Untitled*, 1966 - all of which more directly explore the duality of race.

Colescott's experiences in Egypt would have lasting implications for his practice. While race would become a more explicit subject in his work in the years following Cairo, paintings from this period reveal an important transition in his representation of Black figures and his approach to narrative. The period and painting in Cairo would ultimately be the progenitor for the incisive, satirical paintings for which Colescott would later become widely recognized, works that confront race, identity, art history, and American culture while challenging established conventions of representation.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication of a new monograph devoted to this period of Colescott's practice. Featuring works and archival materials from the Robert H. Colescott Estate alongside examples from institutional collections, the publication *Robert Colescott: Cairo* includes newly commissioned essays by Clare Davies and Erin Christovale.

Exhibition Details

Robert H Colescott: *Cairo*

November 5 – December 19, 2026

515 West 24th Street,

New York, NY 10011

About Robert Colescott

In addition to his own artistic practice, Robert H. Colescott (b. 1925, Oakland, CA; d. 2009, Tucson, AZ) was a long-time teacher of painting who earned the prestigious Endowed Regents' Professorship following teaching roles at institutions including the Portland State University, Oregon; The San Francisco Art Institute; University of California, Berkeley; and University of Arizona, Tucson, where he achieved emeritus status. In 1966 and 1967, he was the first visiting professor of art at the American University in Cairo. Colescott's early studies in Paris under Fernand Léger were instrumental in the artist's embrace of the human figure. Prior to studying in Paris, the artist received bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of California, Berkeley, under the GI Bill, following his service in the U.S. Army during World War II.

In celebration of the artist's centennial in 2025, the Tacoma Art Museum (TAM) opened *The One-Two Punch: 100 Years of Robert Colescott in 2025*. To further commemorate the artist, the exhibition coincides with the opening TAM's permanent space for "The Current, An Artist Award," an annual award bestowed to a Black artist living and working in Tacoma. Colescott was the first Black artist to represent the United States in a single-artist exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1997. Colescott was also the subject of a major retrospective, *Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott*, which traveled to the New Museum, New York (2022); Chicago Cultural Center (2022); Sarasota Art Museum (2021); and the Portland Art Museum, Oregon (2020). The

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exhibition originated at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati in 2019, curated by Lowery Stokes Sims and Matthew Weseley, and was accompanied by a comprehensive monograph published by Rizzoli Electa. Colescott's first retrospective, Robert Colescott: A Retrospective, organized by the San Jose Museum of Art (San Jose, CA) in 1987, traveled to the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH; Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX; New Museum, New York City, NY; and the Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA. Additional solo exhibitions include Robert Colescott: Women at Venus Over Manhattan Gallery in New York in 2023, and Robert Colescott: The Cairo Years at the Tahrir Cultural Center, Cairo, in 2021.

Colescott's work is represented in public collections internationally, including the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, which acquired Colescott's iconic painting George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware (1975), and the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, following the artist's long friendship with Arlene Schnitzer, founder of Fountain Gallery (Portland), the first gallery to represent Colescott.

Additional representation in public collections includes the Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH; Art Bridges Foundation, Bentonville, AR; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; BY ART MATTERS, Hangzhou, China; California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Crocker Museum of Art, Sacramento, CA; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Delaware Museum of Art, Wilmington, DE; Denver Museum of Art, Denver, CO; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; de Young Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Los Angeles, CA; Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, UC Davis, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Morgan Library and Museum, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA; Portland Museum of Art, Portland, OR; Pinault Collection, Paris, France; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Seattle Art Museum.

About Gladstone Gallery

Gladstone is known for its commitment to artists whose prescient approaches and experimental practices have defined the contours of contemporary art. The gallery has long been an active partner in the cultivation of iconoclastic careers, fostering a roster of artists recognized for their ground-breaking contributions. Headquartered in New York and including outposts in both Brussels and Seoul, Gladstone's impact extends globally, enabling both the presentation of new bodies of work, and an amplification of the international reach of its artists. Alongside its work with contemporary artists, the gallery is steward to the legacies of pivotal historical artists and serves as an advocate for the enduring power of art. Gladstone is led by a team of partners who spearhead its

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long-term vision and program, building on the values of its founder Barbara Gladstone.

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