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ROBERT COLESCOTT RETROSPECTIVE ON VIEW AT THE NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

"Robert Colescott: A Retrospective," a major exhibition of works from 1975 to 1986 by this important American artist, will be on view at The New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York from February 24 through April 16, 1989. This exhibition was organized by the San Jose Museum of Art, California, and is being circulated under the auspices of the American Federation of Arts with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support has been provided by the New York State Council on the Arts.

Using a vividly colored and expressive painting style, Robert Colescott creates ironic, irreverent and confrontational art that satirizes contemporary American society. Drawing on his experiences as an African-American artist, Colescott attacks racism, sexism and middle-class consumerism in his work, often employing the very stereotypes he seeks to undermine.

Colescott appropriates images from the canon of Western art history and from popular culture to achieve his particularly biting brand of social critique. In Eat Dem Taters from 1975, Colescott parodies Vincent Van Gogh's The Potato Eaters of 1885, drawing comparison between Van Gogh's down-trodden Dutch peasants, who were allowed their misery in their meager situation, and African-Americans of the same period, who were expected to be content in their hardship.

Colescott's deliberate references to well-known works from the history of art subvert both their meaning and their intentions. He states, "Once you have seen my paintings, every time you look at the originals, you will think of mine." The artist uses humor as a bait, forcing the viewer to confront issues like social injustice and racial and gender stereotypes. His most recent

work revolves around the themes of desire and beauty in art and life, as well as the meaning of history within contemporary society.

"Robert Colescott: A Retrospective" was curated by John Olbranz, former Director of the San Jose Museum of Art. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by the San Jose Museum of Art with essays by Lowery Sims, Associate Curator of Twentieth-Century Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Mitchell D. Kahn, Director of the Akron Art Museum, Ohio. After leaving The New Museum, the exhibition will travel to the Seattle Art Museum.

In conjunction with "Robert Colescott: A Retrospective," The New Museum will present on three consecutive Tuesdays in March a series of programs organized by Kellie Jones, Visual Arts Director of the Jamaica Arts Center, New York, on contemporary African-American aesthetics. "Black to the Future: A Series on Contemporary African-American Aesthetics" includes a lecture on March 14 by Lowery Sims; "Alva Rogers in Performance" on March 21, developed in collaboration with writer/filmmaker Lisa Jones; and "African-American Aesthetics: Links to the Past, Directions for the Future," a panel discussion on March 28 moderated by Kellie Jones, with music critic Nelson George, Lisa Jones, art historian Judith Wilson and playwright George C. Wolfe. All programs begin at 7:30 PM; tickets are \$4 for Museum members and \$6 for the general public. Reservations can be made by calling 212/219-1222.

"Black to the Future: A Series on Contemporary African-American Aesthetics" is made possible, in part, by grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. "Alva Rogers in Performance" has been made possible, in part, by Artists and Audiences, a public program of the New York Foundation for the Arts.

The New Museum of Contemporary Art is located at 583 Broadway between Houston and Prince Streets in Soho. Its hours are Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, noon to 6 PM; Friday and Saturday, noon to 8 PM; Monday and Tuesday, closed. Admission is by suggested contribution: \$2.50 general; \$1.50 artist, senior, student; children under 12 and members, free.

Recorded information on The New Museum's exhibitions and programs can be obtained by calling 212/219-1355.