May 2016

Comic Cuts: The Satirical Prints of Warrington Colescott

Nicholas William Pipho
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

COMIC CUTS:

THE SATIRICAL PRINTS OF WARRINGTON COLESCOTT

by

Nicholas Pipho

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in Art History

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2016

ABSTRACT

COMIC CUTS: THE SATIRICAL PRINTS OF WARRINGTON COLESCOTT

by

Nicholas Pipho

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016
Under the Supervision of Professor Katharine Wells

In this paper I examine the work of prominent Wisconsin printmaker Warrington Colescott, based on the social and political context he was working in during the second half of the twentieth century. Colescott is known for his satirical intaglio prints that address a wide range of topics including American history, contemporary politics, and the history of art. In this paper I focus specifically on three topics that he addressed in his prints: protest, war and the military, and the environment. My study relies heavily on archival interviews with the artist, as well as research undertaken for exhibitions of Colescott's work, primarily at the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where Colescott taught for many years. Through my study I demonstrate how the artist uses satire to communicate with and activate his audience. His use of humor does not encourage his audience to simply laugh away the serious issues in the world around them, but works to engage them in the process of solving those problems. The entertaining comedy that is found in his prints is meant to draw the viewer in, and help them wrap their heads around the daunting problems of contemporary life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

All works are by Warrington Colescott (American, b.1921)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Kay Wells, my thesis advisor, for her expertise and indispensable critiques. I would also like to thank my second reader Professor Richard Leson for his insightful feedback.

From the Department of Art History I would like to thank Dr. Linda Brazeau, Director of the UWM Art Collection and Galleries, Christa Story, Curator of the UWM Art Collection, and Kate Negri, Academic Department Associate, for their assistance in planning and carrying out this exhibition. My grateful thanks are extended to the UWM Friends of Art History for their generous financial support of this exhibition. I would like to thank Max Yela, Special Collections Librarian, for his assistance in facilitating the loan of five works from Special Collections at UWM Libraries. Special thanks to the Peck School of the Arts for making the Arts Center Gallery available for this exhibition.

I am particularly grateful to the Wriston Art Center Galleries at Lawrence University for their generous loan of three prints. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Beth A. Zinsli, Director and Curator of the Galleries, and Valerie Lazalier, Gallery and Collections Assistant, for their assistance in organizing the loan of those works.

Additionally I would like to thank Amber Piacentine for her invaluable help with the design of my exhibition catalog. Finally, thank you to my parents, Bill and Amy Pipho, for their continual support and encouragement throughout my academic career.

Introduction

The year was 1963. In Vietnam, the conflict continued to escalate. One of the most memorable images of the war was captured in June, as the Buddhist monk Quảng Đức committed suicide by setting himself ablaze in the streets of Saigon. In America, the civil rights movement was at its height. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his famous Letter from Birmingham Jail in April and delivered his "I Have a Dream Speech" to a massive crowd during the March on Washington in August. The year ended in tragedy as President John F. Kennedy was assassinated as his motorcade drove through the streets of Dallas in November. 1963 was also a year that marked a major turning point in the career of Warrington Colescott. During this swirl of events, both national and global, he created his print *In Birmingham Jail* (fig. 1). This print includes elements that were not previously seen in Colescott's work, including a cast of clearly defined figures, narrative elements, dark humor, and a clear critique of the social and political environment of the era.

Many scholars have pointed to this moment, and *In Birmingham Jail* in particular, as a crucial turning point for the artist. Different forces have been identified as the reason behind this change. In the years following the Second World War, abstract art dominated the American scene, with artists such as Jackson Pollock attaining celebrity status. Colescott began his career during this postwar period. In these early years as a professional artist, he worked primarily as a painter of abstract compositions. He studied painting at the University of California-Berkeley during the late 1930s and early 1940s. At the time, printmaking was not even taught in the art department.[1] His years at Berkeley coincided with a time when abstract expressionism began to take hold in the Bay Area, with artists such as Clyfford Still rising to prominence.[2] While this was

a movement that Colescott was certainly aware of, even attending a Still "Retrospective" in 1947, it was not one in which he ever actively took part.[3] Although he did not participate in the Bay Area Abstractionist movement, during these decades abstract forms dominated his artwork, which consisted primarily of paintings. His earliest experiments in printmaking were also largely abstract. He began his printmaking career creating serigraphs[4], a technique he learned from a colleague at Long Beach City College in 1948.[5] Abstraction remained the central focus of his work until the 1960s.

When Colescott turned to the figure in the 1960s, he was moving in a direction that was echoed by many other American artists. The new decade brought about a revival of the figure as part of a movement against the dominant force of Abstract Expressionism.[6] In her essay tracing the arc of Colescott's career, Mary Chapin identified the 1960s as an era when American art began to "break free of the iron grip of abstraction," and sees that larger movement as an important factor in Colescott's return to the figure.[7] Pat Gilmour echoes this sentiment arguing that it was the revival of the figure and representational art during the 1960s that allowed Colescott to "follow his predilections, and give full play to his sense of humor."[8] Throughout the country former practitioners of Abstract Expressionism turned back to figurative art, including Philip Guston who surprised many by exhibiting figurative paintings in 1970 after years of exhibiting abstract works as part of the New York School. On the West Coast, where Colescott spent his formative years, the Bay Area Figurative Movement formed in the 1950s and 1960s.[10] Pop art emerged as a major force with Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, among others, rising to prominence. Jasper Johns created one of the most iconic works of this era with his *Flag* of 1954-1955. Robert Rauschenberg found international success, winning the Grand Prize for

Painting at the 1964 Venice Biennale, with a series of works that combined painting and found objects with silkscreen images of everything from current events to art historical masterpieces. These new styles were a dramatic shift from Abstract Expressionism. They moved away from pure abstraction, and created representational and figurative work influenced by contemporary culture. While these artists were working in style very different from Colescott's, they show a conscious move away from abstraction and a desire to create representational works. As Gilmour and Chapin point out, seeing the dramatic success of these artists may have given Colescott confidence in his move toward figuration.

Colescott's adoption of intaglio printmaking is another important factor in his artistic breakthrough of the early 1960s. This is perhaps the most often cited force behind his artistic evolution. Much like his first experiments with serigraphs, Colescott's earliest intaglio prints were done with the assistance of a colleague, this time Alfred Sessler at the University of Wisconsin in the 1950s.[11] His early experiments showed him the potential of the medium, and he looked for opportunities to pursue it as a major part of his artistic practice. This impulse led him to apply for a Fulbright Scholarship to study at the Slade School in London.[12] One of the primary reasons Colescott chose the Slade School was his desire to study under the printmaker Anthony Gross.[13] From Colescott's perspective, "Gross was the perfect mentor for me at that period. He was immensely knowledgeable in prints: technique, history, current activity, and the rich lore of myth."[14] These elements would all be crucial to Colescott's career moving forward. Over the course of his career he became a master of the techniques of intaglio printmaking, and he was always conscious of both historical trends and the contemporary activity of printmakers.

When his time in England came to an end and he returned to Madison, intaglio printmaking was at the center of his artistic production. In this newly adopted medium, Colescott was able to work with line in a way that had eluded him in serigraphs.[15] From these lines, figures began to appear. As Colescott remembers, "I found the marks of my scratchy little tools adding up to figures and events. It was hard to believe, but I was back to figurative narration."[16] Colescott has also attributed his turn to satirical subject matter in his prints from the 1960s forward to the process of creating intaglio prints.

> The process has a way of getting into your mind and influencing the direction of your ideas. Corrosive materials beget corrosive thoughts. When your face is enclosed in a fume respirator, while your gloved hands are dropping splats of nitric acid onto an aquatint and your creative marks are sizzling and fuming, you do not think of images such as "lovers riding into the pale moonlight."[17]

In this statement, we can see a clear connection between the process of creating intaglio prints and the dark humor of his subject matter. The strong lines that were achieved through etching may have led to figuration, but the satirical nature of those figures was influenced by the process of working a plate with caustic chemicals.

Colescott's move toward satirical figuration, which he would pursue for the rest of his career, was also heavily influenced by the social and political situations that surrounded him. It is this social and political context that forms the basis of this exhibition, and it is the topic that I will explore in detail throughout the remainder of this essay, focusing specifically on three themes: protest, war, and environmental issues. Discussing Colescott's work broadly in relation to its social and political content is not a novel approach. Richard Cox and Mary Weaver Chapin, who I will refer to often throughout this essay, provide excellent explanations of the subject matter of individual prints from throughout Colescott's oeuvre.[18] In this essay I will go beyond

this existing analysis by focusing specifically on three themes—protest, war, and the environment—that are especially prominent in the narratives of American art and history in the second half of the twentieth century. These themes were addressed repeatedly by Colescott and other American artists during these years, and analyzing the way Colescott addressed these themes in relation to his contemporaries helps us understand his personal view of each contentious topic and reveals the position he occupied in American art in the postwar years. Colescott stood in contrast to most of his contemporaries by addressing these themes through satirical prints. As Mary Weaver Chapin has pointed out, "it is easier to compare Colescott to his artistic antecedents than his peers. Daumier, Dix, Gillray, Goya, Grosz, and Hogarth, among others, readily spring to mind…but comparisons to contemporaries are more elusive."[19] In this essay I will discuss why he chose this style that was seemingly out of place in contemporary fine art prints as a way to offer critiques aimed at the reform of existing structures and institutions.

I will also draw on archival interviews with Colescott to support my analysis of his work. These include an interview from the Smithsonian Archives of American Art conducted in 1986, and an extensive series of interviews recorded as part of an oral history project at the University of Wisconsin in 1995. These resources provide an invaluable view into Colescott's life, work, and creative process. Situating the artist's own words within a wider discussion of art history enables us to better understand how his use of satirical figuration to address social and political issues separated him from his contemporaries and offered him a means to critique the social and political structures surrounding him.

This focus on the social and political climate leads us back to 1963 and *In Birmingham Jail.* This print includes the elements that would define Colescott's prints moving forward,

including its clearly defined figures and use of narrative. From this figurative narration, Colescott crafts a clear critique of the contemporary social and political situation. As discussed above, 1963 witnessed many major events in the civil rights movement. Like most Americans, Colescott followed the growing tensions in the South closely, and *In Birmingham Jail* takes its subject directly from these events by showing the civil rights protesters who were locked in the Birmingham jail.[20] One of the central figures in the print is a smiling caricature of Bull Connor, the Commissioner of Public Safety in Birmingham during the civil rights era who became symbolic of the racism that existed in the South. Connor is shown in the print as a bulging man, dressed in a uniform with a pistol on his hip and a flower in his hand. He wears dark glasses and a grin stretches across his face. He is recognizable based on his name, "BULL," which appears prominently on the front of his uniform. Surrounding Bull throughout the print are a mix of police and prisoners squaring off in separate acts of violence. Satirical characters like Bull would make up the standard cast of Colescott's prints, figures that he himself refers to as "Colescott People."[21]

When faced with the unrelenting social and political conflicts that were occurring throughout the era, Colescott turned to satirical figuration as a way to address the issues in the world around him. As a man who had a father in World War I, the war to end all wars, and as a veteran of World War II, the most destructive war in human history, he now saw a world engaged in a prolonged cold war with the threat of World War III hanging over the globe. In America, the promise of freedom and equality for all was called into question by the growing protest movements. He moved away from the abstract manner he was working in during the

1940s and 1950s and began to create prints that told the narrative of the era. Colescott summarized his move to satirical printmaking as a need for "comic cuts:"

> When the audience is nervous and needs mirrors to see how they're doing, when they need a little help in understanding what's really going on, that's when the satirists thrive. War, depression, social upheaval, riots, rebellion, political assassination, are driving forces for comic cuts. Sadly, I have lived through all those events. Some terrible moments have been recorded in my prints…I watch our world and try to find a way to reference it in my reactions.[22]

The term "comic cuts" that Colescott uses here functions on multiple levels to perfectly describe his personal style. At the highest level, it is an expression used by the English to describe a humorous drawing.[23] Beyond that, it references the physical action of intaglio printmaking, the cutting into a plate to create an image. Most significantly, "comic cuts" captures the way Colescott addressed his subjects; humor is always at the center of his prints, but there is also a sharp cutting edge to his comedy that gives it a darker side.

This quote also begins to explain Colescott's choice of figurative prints as a way to address the social and political climate he was working in. He sees his role as being an interpreter of current events and using satire to translate these events in a way that is easier for his audience to digest. Yet this mission to reflect the world around him to his audience is complicated by two factors. First, his reference to acting as a mirror is contradicted by the way that his own opinions and experiences distort or alter the view of the world he puts forth in his work. The view of the world he expresses through his prints is not neutral. He takes aim at the hypocrisy he sees, with the hopes of engaging his viewers and promoting change. Second, by the very nature of creating editioned prints, Colescott limited his audience to the print-buying and gallery-going public. He recognizes this and targets his prints at what he describes as an audience with, "a certain kind of mindset and intelligence,"[24] that is to say an audience that was

aware of current events as well as art and literature. It is this audience that he hoped to engage through his critiques of contemporary society.

Protest

In the late sixties, Madison, Wisconsin was a hotbed for social protest. The central issue of the day was the debate surrounding Vietnam and the University's connection to the war. This was a topic that weighed heavily on Colescott's mind and found its way into his work. In his print, *Out My Garden Window* of 1969 (fig. 2), which is on display in this exhibition, he captures the contentious environment of the Madison campus at this time. The print was inspired by driving through a riot on one of the residential streets surrounding campus.[25] The setting of the print shows the two story houses that served, and still serve, as the housing for many of the University's students. The houses form a jagged horizon behind the figures, an effect that is amplified by Colescott's use of cut plates for printing. This was a technique that Colescott had adopted in the early sixties after seeing it done by one of his students, and it became a major part of his print practice going forward.[26]

On the street between the houses, we see the protest itself. A procession of figures march across the composition, followed closely by a billowing cloud of tear gas. In the crowd we see college students, hippies, and reporters, all caught up in the momentum of the mass of people. An even more eclectic group lines the streets. We see sailors and farmers, as well as recognizable types that are common throughout Colescott's oeuvre, such as scantily clad burlesque dancers and even a Klansman. It was Colescott's intention to capture the idea that these protests were events that drew in all facets of society. "Everyone was there, so I tried to put every man – every man was in here, you know: the cook, and the baker and the candlestick

maker, and the students all being taken off to jail."[27] Colescott has relied on these sorts of type characters throughout his career. In doing so he creates easily identifiable characters that his audience will immediately recognize, making for a clearer narrative. This is a practice that has a long history in art, especially in satirical prints and political cartoons, such as the caricatures of military officers that appeared in the satirical illustrations of George Grosz, or the bloated capitalists that appeared in the pages of the socialist American magazine *The Masses* at the beginning of the twentieth century.[28] It is from this tradition that Colescott's risqué burlesque dancers and menacing Klansmen emerge.

In the foreground of *Out My Garden Window,* a police officer, with his arm raised to strike, forces one of the protesters over a vehicle. These two figures are the largest in the print, and are placed in the left foreground framing the rest of the scene. This pair of figures adds to the ominous character of the scene. It is also one of the few overt signs of violence in the print. The procession of protestors peacefully marches forward, arms placed on the shoulders of those in front of them. Even the crowd, with its odd cast of characters, maintains the peace, calmly watching with hands placed behind their backs. The FBI officers maintain their distance, and coolly report what they see into their radios rather than engaging the crowd. Colescott maintained a healthy distrust of government agents throughout his career, and they appear often in his prints.[29] The relative peace of the scene makes the action of the officer in the foreground all the more jarring. It is a fitting description of how seemingly peaceful student protests could quickly dissolve into violence.

This print not only captures an event that Colescott personally witnessed, it also reveals his personal view of the student protests that were occurring in Madison. By capturing

moments of police aggression, represented by the tear gas and the baton wielding officer, he chooses to show the students as victims rather than instigators.

By 1969 these scenes of protest would have been all too familiar to Colescott. By that time, the student movement that had been building throughout the decade was in full bloom. Working in Madison provided Colescott with a front row seat for some of the most large scale and publicized social protests found anywhere in the country during this time. In Colescott's own description, "Madison was anti-establishment, gently left-of-center, which echoed my own feelings. The university community was charged up politically. I protested the War. Mostly, I supported the student resistance."[30] The campus environment that had existed when he arrived at Madison in 1949 had changed dramatically.

In many ways the changes seemed to happen very rapidly with the escalation of the Vietnam War, but they had roots in the changes that were occurring at large Universities throughout the country following World War II. The post war years saw a massive rise in enrollment, and also an increasing reliance on government funding. The government saw large research Universities as a crucial element in winning the Cold War.[31] During this period federal money flowed into the University to support research that was seen as central to protecting the American way of life. Over the span of 10 years, from 1950 to 1960, annual federal research spending at the University of Wisconsin jumped from $8.4 million to over $30 million.[32] There were also programs with long histories that became lightning rods for protest in the tense atmosphere of the sixties. One of the most obvious, and often criticized, was the campus ROTC program. As a land grant University, participation in ROTC had been required by all male students at the University of Wisconsin. This policy had drawn criticism from students

throughout the years, showing up regularly in student newspapers as the subjects of opinion articles and political cartoons.[33] Participation in ROTC was changed to voluntary in 1960, but the presence of the ROTC on campus still generated controversy. ROTC buildings were often the targets of small bombings and vandalism over the course of the decade.[34]

Toward the end of the decade there were multiple large scale events that brought Madison national attention as a center of the student movement. The first occurred in 1966 with the occupation of an administrative building. Students peacefully occupied the first floor of the building for 72 hours to protest the University's cooperation with the Selective Service System, a government agency that collects information related to the military draft.[35] That first protest ended without violence, an outcome that would not always be repeated in the coming years.

The first violent clash between students and police came in 1967 with the Dow Chemical protests. Dow became a target of protest in the sixties due to their production of napalm, a weapon that became synonymous with the brutality of the Vietnam War. Dow was one of a large number of companies that conducted interviews on campus with the hopes of hiring prospective graduates. Campus groups that opposed the war decided to target these interviews in a two day protest. Protestors had become frustrated by the lack of progress they had seen through peaceful protest and, beginning with the Dow protests, they turned to direct action instead.[36] The demonstration ended in violence, as protesters were forcefully removed from the building where the interviews were being held.

The trend of violence continued throughout the coming years. National Guard troops were called to campus in response to both the Black Strike of 1969 and protests sparked by the

invasion of Cambodia in 1970. The wave of protests came to a breaking point in 1970 with the bombing of Sterling Hall. Planned as an attack on the Army Math Research Center, the bombing resulted in the death of a postdoctoral researcher in the physics department, Bob Fassnacht.[37] The event became a symbol of the end of the student movement. It marked the end of an era that had come to define Madison as a center of social unrest.

As an artist whose work addresses the social and political climate in which he worked, it is only natural that the social protests of these years found their way into Colescott's prints. As a faculty member during the fifties and early sixties, he noted the growing connection between the University and the government. In his *The Great Societ*y series of 1966, he addressed the topic in his print *Art and Education* (fig. 3). He makes the connection between the government and the University clear with the inclusion of a towering building decorated with American flags filling the right half of the print. At the top of the tower a helicopter hovers. At the base of the tower, students are shown in rows of classroom chairs staring at a screen that reads "Students should think for themselves." This line is a clear criticism by Colescott of what he perceived as a devaluation of original thought in the university setting. The students are brainwashed as they stare blankly at the television screen. The towering university building adorned with American flags above them makes it clear that the government has a direct role in this process. Colescott clearly takes a critical view of the university's new role as creator of American citizens who will play an active role in winning the Cold War.

Protests are directly shown in another print from *The Great Society* series, *Inner Core* of 1967 (fig. 4). This print addresses the race riots that occurred in Milwaukee in the sixties. Like most of Colescott's prints, *Inner Core* contains many smaller scenes within the larger narrative.

In the center of the print a menacing police officer in riot gear rises from the skyline of the city which is crisscrossed with freeways streaming with cars. To the right of the officer, in the upper corner of the print, a police car weaves its way through a mass of figures. Although these scenes are off-putting, it was a pair of figures on the left side of the image that caused the most controversy when Colescott first showed the print. Along the left edge of the print a nude white woman is held captive by a smiling African American man. Never one to shy away from controversial subject matter, Colescott had intended these figures to function as an absurd personification of the fears that existed among the white community.[38] This intent was lost on some viewers who were repulsed by the image,[39] but this negative response seems to have had little effect on Colescott's choice of subjects moving forward.

During the last years of the sixties, war and protest became a central theme in his prints. The tense atmosphere on campus during these years must have been all the more jarring for Colescott after having been abroad for several years while the protest movement was beginning to take hold. He had spent 1965 and 1966 in London on a Guggenheim grant, and the following year in Rome teaching at the Tyler School. By the time he returned to Madison in 1967, he had missed the early, more peaceful years of protest, and came home to a campus which at times resembled a war zone. Colescott's memories of these years are dominated by the turmoil on campus. "The war had a tremendous effect on the university, on the students and on the faculty. We were all drawn into it to one degree or another, and at one point, of course, we had the National Guard. We had the National Guard snipers on the roof of the Humanities Building and we had teargas within our controlled ventilation system and so for

days, we had watery eyes."[40] The subjects of Colescott's prints from these years reflect this atmosphere.

While *Out My Garden Window* is based directly on the events unfolding in Madison, other prints deal more generally with historical themes of war and unrest. His *Avalon Ballroom* of 1971 offers a view of the many adversarial groups of that era. Rather than showing them doing battle with one another he chooses to show them as dance partners. Hippies dance with soldiers and businessmen, and a Vietnamese man dances with a U.S. soldier. Colescott chose to show all of these seemingly opposing figures dancing together, because "I have always seen dancing as something of a struggle."[41] The use of dancing also brings levity to a tense topic, a strategy that Colescott has employed throughout his career. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than his *Lincoln at Ford's Theater* of 1973 from his *Prime-Time Histories* series. In this print, on view in this exhibition, he reimagines Lincoln's assassination with John Wilkes Booth replaced by a cow and the stage of Ford's Theater filled with burlesque dancers. If the assassination of one of America's most beloved presidents was fair game for satire, no contemporary topic could be off limits.[42]

In the late sixties, while Colescott was creating prints like *Out My Garden Window,* the subject of Vietnam prompted many other artists to join the protest. Their activism took many forms, ranging from work with political messages to direct action meant to address the issues head-on. In some cases, existing abstract styles became infused with a political message through the actions of the artists. The Minimalist artists were a noteworthy group in this regard. In 1968 an exhibition of Minimalist works was organized to benefit the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. This show was intended not only as a

benefit, but also based on the idea that the included works would function as a statement in support of peace.[43] This infusion of political content through the description and marketing of the work has been described as secondary-level political art by Claudia Mesch in her study of political art since 1945.[44]

Other artists of the era created work that required less explanation to get its radical message across. One of the most well-known of these works is the poster *Q: And babies?* of 1970, created by the Art Workers Coalition (AWC). It shows an image of the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam, along with the text "Q: And babies? A: And babies." referring to the fact that children were among the victims of the massacre.[45] Through the image and the text, the viewer is forced to face the horrible realities of the war.

The politically motivated art of the 1960s also involved direct action on the part of the artists. Artists formed politically active groups, such as the AWC established in 1969. There was debate within the art world over whether artists should concern themselves with political issues such as Vietnam, with some arguing that art should not be instrumentalized for political causes. Groups such as the AWC disagreed, feeling that the art world was already intimately linked to politics and that artists had an obligation to address political issues.[46] Artists began to take issue with the art world establishment, which was often intimately connected with what they viewed as the war machine.[47] In 1969 a group who called themselves the Guerilla Art Action Group staged a performance at the Museum of Modern Art that has become known simply as *Blood Bath*. During the performance, the group began screaming and writhing on the lobby floor while simultaneously spilling bags of blood. Their actions were directed toward the Rockefellers, who were on the Board of Trustees at MOMA, and had financial ties to the war

industry.[48] Through their art and actions, these groups took an active role in the protests of the sixties.

Colescott's prints addressing the social and political environment of the sixties fall into a different category than other protest art from that era, belonging instead to a long tradition of social and political satire in the graphic arts. While at Berkeley as an undergraduate, Colescott was an active contributor to multiple on-campus publications. He contributed political cartoons for both the *Daily Californian* and the campus humor magazine the *California Pelican*. His early experiments with political satire in those years paved the way for the prints he would create beginning in the sixties. Unlike artists groups such as the AWC, he didn't use his work as a form of direct action. Rather than creating protest posters, he created fine art prints that addressed the issues in a humorous way. Instead of critiquing the art world art at large, his topics often hit closer to home, whether that be the streets of Madison in *Out My Garden Window,* or Milwaukee in *Inner Core*. The political message in Colescott's art was never as easy to pin down as the other artists' movements of the era. He chose to take aim at hypocrisy wherever he saw it, and was never limited to one movement or political position. This complicated perspective is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Colescott's representations of war and the military.

War and the Military

The military was always a major part of Colescott's life. His father fought in France during World War I, and both he and his brother Robert were called to serve in World War II. These experiences had a major effect on his life, and throughout his career the military was always a major theme in his prints.

In 1986 Colescott collaborated with Walter Hamady to produce *Since Man Began to Eat Himself*, an artist book that is on display in this exhibition and includes six etchings and a drawing by the artist. One of these etchings was *War* (fig. 5), which was created to accompany a poem by Jerome Rothenberg that bore the same name. In this print we see a group of grotesque military officers who had become recurring characters in Colescott's work.[49] The central figure dominates the scene. He is a heavily decorated officer who swoops out of the sky, jumping from a winged motorcycle, and sails down toward gathered figures below. His uniform is open, exposing two breasts from which the figures below suckle. In his mouth we can see the arms and legs of tiny figures that he appears to be devouring. The smaller figures below are made up of two types, the enlisted man and the officer. The enlisted men are shown nude, except for dog tags, looking upward expectantly at the larger than life officer descending from the sky. A group of two officers gather to the right, ominously grinning and gesturing toward the nude enlisted men. The closer officer points a sword at the enlisted men and points toward one of the breasts. He also receives another medal, which is pinned to his chest by the massive left hand of the central figure. The other wears a swastika emblazoned armband and has a gaunt skeletal face.

This bizarre cast of characters is drawn from Rothenberg's poem, but also reflects certain types often seen in Colescott's military works. The poem begins, "he is (they say) a general with tits down to his knees." Colescott captures this figure in dramatic fashion, making him the central focus of the scene. As in the print, the general "beckons the young men to his breasts." In this poem, and its supporting illustration, we are presented with a common narrative of war, in which scheming old men send young boys off to die.

Based on the imagery in *War*, it would seem that Colescott had a negative view of the military. In reality, however, Colescott's view of the military was more complicated, and was influenced by a lifetime of military experience. His father's experience in the trenches during World War I was always a topic of interest for him. He has memories of wearing his father's helmet and gas mask and playing war.[50] This interest in the military led him to join the Boy Scouts and participate in the ROTC.[51] In Colescott's opinion, "The war was very much on the mind, I think, of the total population. It took a long time for this country to come out of the effects of World War I and I think children in that period were marked by it."[52] This fascination with World War I has stayed with him throughout his career. In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, rather than focusing on America's current conflict, he created a pair of prints dedicated the famous World War I Battle of Verdun.

Colescott's interest in the military continued into his college years. He again participated in the ROTC, although it was not voluntary. At that time Berkeley required all male students take two years of ROTC. While in the ROTC he went into the Coast Artillery with a friend. In the end that branch was a bad fit for him due to the mathematical knowledge that it required, but he still enjoyed his time.[53]

While Colescott was at Berkeley, the war in Europe and the Pacific was escalating. In 1942, Colescott graduated and shortly after he was drafted into the military. Due to his ROTC experience, he was assigned to artillery. During his time in the military he worked his way up and was eventually put in charge of training new recruits. He sees this time training soldiers as important to his future career in teaching. "I found that I did have a teaching skill and I think I really learned how to teach in the army, because that's basically what I did."[54] His time in the

military includes many episodes like this; there were negative aspects to his time in the service but it also helped point him on the path that led him to his career as an artist and educator.

Eventually he was called upon to fight overseas. He was sent to the Pacific theatre in 1945, and was stationed in Okinawa as the army prepared to invade the Japanese mainland. As he was preparing for his first heavy combat experience, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Being so close to taking part in what would have been a horrifically costly invasion of Japan forever altered Colescott's view of the atomic bomb. "The inhumanity of dropping these bombs on Japan are interesting to me because it's my feeling that if they hadn't been dropped, my sons would not exist because I was in the 7th division, and we were to be the lead troops in the landing in the Bay of Tokyo."[55] This helps to illustrate his view of war throughout his career. The destructive nature of war is always there, but he can't bring himself to completely denounce it. His family history and personal experience always remain a part of his perspective on war and the military.

The end of the war was not the end of Colescott's military adventure. He was sent to Korea as part of the occupation force of the peacetime U.S. military. His time in Korea lasted eight months, and he spent that time filling a number of roles. He organized the loading of cargo onto ships, a job which resulted in him comically "losing" a tank by dropping it in the ocean.[56] But the experiences were not all so amusing. In Korea he saw an army of young men that had been through hell, and who were starting to show signs of breaking down. It was a group of men that Colescott described as "neurotic at best, insane on the average."[57] That same description could be applied to some of the characters that would later appear in Colescott's military themed prints.

After his eight months in Korea, Colescott's official time in the military was over, but it was an experience that continued to influence his worldview and the topics of his prints. While the military became a common topic in his prints in the 1960s and 1970s, his first satirical images of war were actually made during his time at Berkeley. While working as an editor and illustrator for the *California Pelican* in the late 1930s, he created images dealing with the escalating hostilities in Europe. He recalls the seriousness of the times, "The humor wasn't custard pie and pratfall stuff. Our world had gotten very dark, and the material we dealt with was pertinent to our generation. I can tell you it was nervous stuff. The world had gone to hell and the demons were right outside, waiting for us to come through the graduation gates. My caricature targets were Hitler and Mussolini."[58] Even at this early stage of his career, Colescott revealed a tendency to turn to humor to address the tense political situations around him.

When Colescott turned to military themes throughout his career he chose to critique the military and its administration in a humorous way. Rather than showing the horrors of war he sought to show its absurdity. In his 1981 etching *Poker Night at the Pentagon* (fig. 6), he shows the top brass gathered at the U.S. military headquarters for a game of strip poker. One officer sits at the table dressed from the waist up in full military uniform, while from the waist down he wears only his boxers. The man next to him seems to be faring worse in the game and is down to only his hat and a pair of socks. Colescott delighted in showing these types of high ranking officials as comical figures. He was drawn to this subject because of a desire to show the various branches of the government during the Reagan administration.[59] As the self-described "last FDR Democrat," his distaste for conservative politicians is readily apparent throughout his career, and he enjoyed satirizing them every chance he got.[60]

Colescott's view of the military was also one of an insider. He had spent many of his formative years as a member of the U.S. military and had seen its inner workings firsthand. That is not to say he disliked his time in the military, he actually enjoyed aspects of it including tactical training which he felt complemented his "sneaky nature."[61] His insider's knowledge is on full display in prints such as *Boo Boo in Silo Sixteen* of 1984 (fig. 7).[62] The subject of that print is a soldier writing a letter home to his parents describing an accident, a "boo boo," that resulted in the launching of a warhead. The soldier describes the military life to his mother, through text on the print including "It is nice here. We go to class – Sing while we march." The text ends with "Today I made a boo-boo," and we can see figures scrambling around, as the massive warhead at the center of the image prepares to launch. Colescott describes the print with a laugh, saying "no one could do this piece without intimate knowledge of the military."[63] As a former soldier, he knew the monotony of military life, broken up by potentially deadly action.

Colescott was not the only veteran of World War II to reflect on the absurdity of war through his art. The satirical view of the military in Colescott's prints bears a striking resemblance to Joseph Heller's celebrated novel *Catch-22*.[64] Like Colescott, Heller had fought in the war and his fictional account of life as a bomber pilot in Italy is full of the same absurdity one would expect to find in a Colescott print. Although the novel is set during World War II, Heller has admitted that it is largely a critique of the McCarthy era.[65] The same can be said of many of Colescott's prints. Although he participated in World War II, his prints often critique the military of the Cold War. This can be seen in the prints discussed above, including *Poker Night at the Pentagon* and *Boo Boo in Silo Sixteen*.

Colescott's interest in war and military life blended with his appreciation for art history. Throughout his career he displayed his considerable knowledge of art history, most notably in his *The History of Printmaking* series. He was drawn to the work of other printmakers who addressed war through their work. The German artist Otto Dix was of particular interest to Colescott. At first glance, Dix's representations of war could not be more different than Colescott's. While Colescott's view of war often focuses on the comedic and absurd, Dix chose to show the horrors of war instead. Despite this difference in approach, Colescott admires Dix's work citing him as an influence, and saying that Dix's work is the best artistic argument against war ever produced.[66] In his 1992 series My German Trip, Colescott created the print *Into the Trenches with Otto Dix, We Are Nearly Killed by a Sniper (My Father?) I Call Out to Him, but the Intensity of His Fire Increases* (fig. 8), which alludes to Dix's work in both subject and style. In this print Colescott populates the trenches with figures drawn directly from specific works by Dix and uses Dix's dark distorted realism throughout.[67] Even in this grim landscape, however, Colescott can't resist injecting some wry humor. He includes himself in the print, hiding in the German trenches, shouting "Dad! It's me!" as an American soldier eagerly opens fire.[68]

Another artist whose depiction of war intrigued Colescott was Francisco Goya. While in England on his Fulbright scholarship, Colescott had the opportunity to view Goya's *The Disasters of War* series firsthand.[69] Years later when he set out to create his series celebrating the history of printmaking, Colescott chose Goya's war imagery as one of his subjects. Much like his print celebrating the work of Dix, Colescott's print *Goya Studies War* of 1976 (fig. 9) appropriates Goya's style and subject matter. The print includes the reproductions of the horrific war imagery that Goya included in his prints. Through the center of the print we see the

images pulled from Goya's prints *The Disasters of War* including the grotesque depiction of a corpse impaled on a tree.[70] Much the same as he did in his tribute to Dix, Colescott balances this brutality with a good dose of satire. In the lower right corner we see two twentieth century art dealers studying Goya's prints enthusiastically. As Mary Weaver Chapin rightly points out, this type of juxtaposition of historic and contemporary imagery makes perfect sense in Colescott's oeuvre.[71] His prints often included anachronistic details. At times, as in the Goya print, he included present-day figures as a way to critique contemporary society and inject a note of humor. The dealers in the print look at Goya's work based on its potential marketability while completely overlooking the artist's message. As a printmaker who had to rely on galleries and dealers himself, this was a subject that hit close to home for Colescott. Similar print collectors appear in another print from the same series, *Rembrandt Bankrupt* of 1977, also on display in this exhibition. In that print, the collectors take it one step further, with one proclaiming "Prints are a good investment," with a sly look in his eye.

Colescott's representation of war and military in his oeuvre is a complicated mix of family history, personal experience, and art history. He had a respect for the military based on his years in the service and his admiration for his father's experiences in World War I, but he was also skeptical of military leadership and was quick to point out the hypocrisy he saw throughout the military during the Cold War. In Colescott's work, the blame for the destruction caused by war is always placed squarely at the feet of those at the top that call the shots. As the Cold War went on his prints often took on apocalyptic subjects. The threat of nuclear war was no doubt a major inspiration for these images, but another topic that also posed a threat, and

that appeared with greater frequency in his prints in the 1980s, was the growing concern over the state of the environment.

The Environment

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, environmental issues came to the forefront of American news, and Colescott picked up on these issues and addressed them in his prints. In the artist book, *Since Man Began to Eat Himself*, discussed above in relation to the etching *War*, Colescott also included a print called *Leak* (fig. 10) that accompanied the poem "Topic Sentence" by Joel Oppenheimer. *Leak* addresses a familiar environmental issue, a catastrophic oil spill. The background of the print is a wilderness landscape made up of a tall pristine mountain range. Cutting horizontally across the landscape and winding through the alpine valleys is an oil pipeline. The pipeline bears the label "U.S.A." and is covered with makeshift patches. One of these patches has failed and oil pours from a hole in the middle of the pipe. From this hole, located in the center of the print, oil pours out in a river of blackness that flows directly at the viewer. In the foreground, the oil has collected in a large pool which is filled with the victims of this environmental disaster. These victims include animals of all kinds including birds, fish, a moose, and even a large killer whale which floats belly up.

The type of environmental disaster shown in *Leak* should be all too familiar for most viewers, and we almost immediately detect an environmentalist message in the print. At the time the print was made in 1986, these types of ideas were part of the national conscience, but only a few decades earlier, environmental issues were generally underestimated, or ignored completely.

During the early years of the Cold War there was a general feeling in the country that science and technology would provide solutions to all of humanity's problems. This optimism extended to environmental issues as well.[72] In the 1960s, this blind faith in scientific advancement began to be challenged. Arguably the event that triggered the largest change in people's views of the environment was the release of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962.[73] In her book, Carson points out the negative effects that man-made substances, most notably the pesticide DDT, had on the natural world. Although much of the information in Carson's book was not new, it was presented in a way that struck a nerve with the public.[74]

Throughout the decade following Carson's book, the environmental movement continued to gain traction. It was being discussed on a national scale. The mainstream nature of the movement can be seen in the foundation of the first Earth Day in 1970. Environmentalism developed alongside other movements described above, such as the anti-war and student movements. Much as many figures that were active in the civil rights movement were also involved in the anti-war movement that developed later, there were direct links between the environmental movement and the other national protest movements.[75]

After the wave of support and growth in the 1960s and 1970s, the movement came up against a wall of opposition in the late 1970s and 1980s. Growing economic hardship and a move toward conservatism in national politics caused many to put less value on environmental issues.[76] Many of the environmental laws that were passed during the 1970s were rolled back by the Reagan administration, and one of President Reagan's first actions upon moving into the White House was to have the rooftop solar panels that were installed by the President Jimmy

Carter removed.[77] When Colescott chose to address environmental issues in his work it was largely to critique this era of conservative politics.

Despite declining enthusiasm for the movement and a lack of government support, environmentalism had become a national concept, and environmental crises continued to appear in the news including major events such as the discovery of the hole in the ozone layer in 1986 and the Exxon Valdez oil spill off of the coast of Alaska in 1989 which caused a scene eerily familiar to Colescott's print from three years earlier.[78]

Much like other national movements discussed above, environmentalism found its way into the art world as well. In the 1960s, artists began to incorporate environmental subject matter into their practice with diverse results. Some movements, notably Land art, sought to call attention to nature and natural processes without projecting a clear ecological message.[79] Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* of 1970 is perhaps the most well-known example of this type of work. Simthson's earthwork used natural materials and called attention to the landscape it occupied. It was designed to be acted upon by the environment, but it did not contain a focused activist message relating to the environmental movement.[80]

For other artists the ecological message was at the center of their work. The artists Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison continually addressed environmental issues in their work. Their *Making Earth* of 1970 celebrated the process of creating nutrient rich topsoil by bringing that process into a gallery space. By doing so they were taking something that most viewers took for granted, and using the space of the gallery to bring it to their attention.[81] The scope of these types of artistic projects could extend outside of the gallery as well, and take on massive proportions. In 1982, Agnes Denes undertook a project she called *Wheatfield, Battery*

Park City – A Confrontation. This work involved clearing a landfill in New York City and transforming it into a wheat field. In doing so, Denes called attention to a wide variety of ecological issues ranging from land reclamation to management of resources, in a very public way.[82]

Although environmentalism exploded onto the American art scene in the 1960s and 1970s, Colescott was not fully drawn to the subject until the 1980s. It was the conservative backlash against the movement in that decade and into the 1990s that drew Colescott to the subject. His print *Welcome to Watt Park* of 1984 is a prime example of his attack on the environmental policies of the 1980s. The print criticizes the actions of James G. Watt, Ronald Regan's secretary of the interior from 1981 to 1983.[83] Watt was a controversial figure who is often described as an "anti-environmentalist." He was firmly against government regulation and supported the movement known as the Sagebrush Rebellion, which supported selling government land to private interests for mining, logging, and ranching.[84] *Welcome to Watt Park* (fig. 11) gives a darkly comedic view of Watt's policies by offering a view into the fictitious James Watt National Park. A road leads the viewer through the park, beginning in the foreground with a triumphal arch bearing the park's name and passing through a desolate land of tree stumps toward a factory in the background spewing smoke into the air. Throughout the landscape the animal inhabitants are shown dead and dying, while happy tourists wave and snap photographs. In this print Colescott expresses concerns about environmental issues such as deforestation and air pollution, and makes it clear that he sees conservative policies having a negative effect on the natural world.

The next presidential administration was also subjected to Colescott's attacks related to environmental issues. His 1992 print *An Environmental President Visits Hole-in-the-Ozone* (fig. 12), sets its sights on President George H. W. Bush, who had proclaimed himself an environmental president while campaigning. As the title suggests, President Bush is shown paying a visit to the infamous hole in the ozone. He is shown in the back of the plane eyeing the hole through a pair of binoculars and exclaiming "Golly! A Big Mother!" with a crooked grin on his face. The rest of the plane is filled with a cast of characters that includes the President's wife Barbara and other standard Colescott figures, including cigar smoking businessmen and FBI agents in dark sunglasses. In another version of the subject created in the same year, the President's comrades shout out ways to deal with the hole including the suggestions to "Nuke It" or "Move It Over Detroit." The hole itself is seen in the upper right corner of the print, casting a vertical beam of light down onto the figures and landscape below. The landscape features more environmental tragedies, including a whaling ship in the process of harpooning a whale and a pipeline spewing black oil into the surrounding ocean.[85] Using a strategy he often employed, Colescott uses Bush's own words against him, ironically labeling him as an "environmental president." Like other difficult and contentious issues that faced the country in the second half of the twentieth century, Colescott chose to address environmental issues with his personal brand of dark humor. The same shady characters that appear in critiques of war and social protest are also responsible for the deteriorating state of the environment.

These prints clearly indicate that Colescott's interest in environmental issues was closely tied to his personal politics. While other artists sought to reveal the processes of the natural world and call attention to its deterioration, Colescott's work focused on satirizing the

politicians who he saw as being either responsible for or indifferent to these environmental tragedies.

Conclusion

Throughout his career, Warrington Colescott has created work that is expressive of its political climate. Whether he is drawing on current events or illustrating literature and poetry, his work bears the mark of contemporary times. Colescott sees himself as an interpreter, taking the anxious events of the day and making them more palatable for his audience through his use of humor. He describes his work as creating mirrors that the audience could look into in order to better understand the world around them. While he seeks to reflect contemporary events, the images he creates are heavily influenced by his own personal beliefs and experiences. His works are not objective reproductions of the world, they are pointed critiques of the structures that make up American society, and are reflective of his personal history. He took inspiration from the events he witnessed firsthand working in Madison during the turbulent era of the Student Movement. He drew on his family history of military service as he took aim at the Cold War military. Finally, his work reflected his personal politics as seen in his representations of movements such as environmentalism that rose to national significance throughout his career.

In his prints that address these themes, Colescott focuses on critiquing existing institutions with the hopes of reform rather than revolution. He has not given up on the hope of improving existing political and social structures, rather than tearing them down. When he addressed the problematic link between the Cold War era government and institutions of higher education in prints such as *Art and Education*, he called attention to the problems he saw with the hopes of reform. As an authority figure within the structure of higher education,

he still believed in the mission of the university, but he felt the need to critique it based on the troubling circumstances he was witnessing firsthand.

A similar connection can be made between his identity as a veteran and his critiques of the modern military. His view of the military has been shaped since childhood, and is based on a complex mixture of nostalgia related to his father's service and his own personal experiences as a soldier during World War II. He saw a multitude of problems with the modern military and the use of its power in the second half of the twentieth century. These problematic developments led him to critique the military, while at the same time retaining a generally positive view of the armed forces as a whole based on his own experiences.

His institutional critiques are often aimed at those in positions of power. These are the figures that have the ability to affect change and are responsible for the failings that Colescott identifies. By using satire, Colescott transforms these villains into comical figures, and in doing so he is able to undercut their power. This can be seen clearly in many of his military prints, most notably *Poker Night at the Pentagon* which shows the top brass of the military as buffoons. It is also the case in his prints related to the environmental policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations. In these works he pictures the conservative politicians as comic antagonists, responsible for the destruction of the environment through their exploitive policies or willful ignorance. By taking aim at these specific politicians, he suggests change is still possible if these particular individuals, and those who share their values, are removed from power. He has not given up on the ability of the political process to affect change.

Colescott chose to use satire to communicate his critiques to his audience. His use of humor is not intended to cause his audience to laugh away the issues in the world around

them, it is meant to engage them in the process of solving those problems. The entertaining comedy that is found in his prints is meant to draw the viewer in, to help them wrap their heads around the daunting problems of contemporary life. In his use of satire, he has placed himself in a long tradition of art aimed at engaging its audience with contemporary politics. Much like the great satirists throughout history, such as Honoré Daumier in France or George Grosz in Germany, he uses satire to advocate change in the social and political climate he is working in. Colescott sees satirical prints as the most effective medium to project his reform minded message.

As discussed above, Colescott's artistic approach is often very different from his contemporaries. Artists involved in the protest movements of the 1960s, such as the AWC, were focused on revolutionary changes to existing structures. This radical approach was reflected in the art they created. They looked beyond traditional modes of artistic production to accomplish their goals, as can be clearly seen by direct action performances such as *Blood Bath*. Through these non-traditional means they sought to subvert the status quo. In contrast, Colescott chose traditional forms, political satire and fine art prints, to reform rather than overthrow.

Colescott occupies an interesting place in American art. He has never been at the forefront of a national movement and his use of satirical figuration bears a closer resemblance to earlier printmakers than it does to his contemporaries. Much like the anachronistic figures in his prints, his style seems more at home in a different time. Despite these differences, Colescott has carved out an extremely successful career as both an artist and an educator. This success is partially due to his immense technical skill, but it also reveals that there is a place for satirical

figuration in contemporary art. Viewers respond to his criticisms, and there does seem to be a palliative effect to laughing at the tense circumstances of contemporary life. Through Colescott's "comic cuts" viewers are able to come to terms with the turbulent world around them and perhaps see a path toward something better.

FIGURES

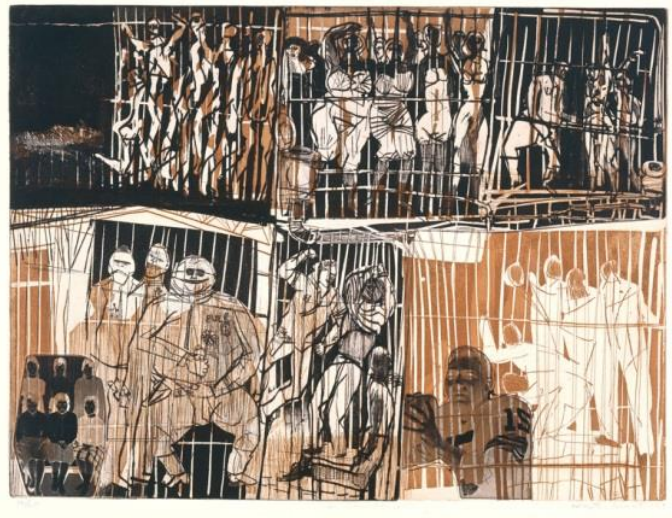

Fig. 1: *In Birmingham Jail*, 1963.
Color intaglio
Milwaukee Art Museum Collection

Fig. 2: *Out My Garden Window*, 1969
Color intaglio
Wriston Art Center Galleries, Lawrence University

Fig. 3: *Art and Education*, *State I*, 1966
From *The Great Society* series
Color intaglio
Chazen Museum of Art

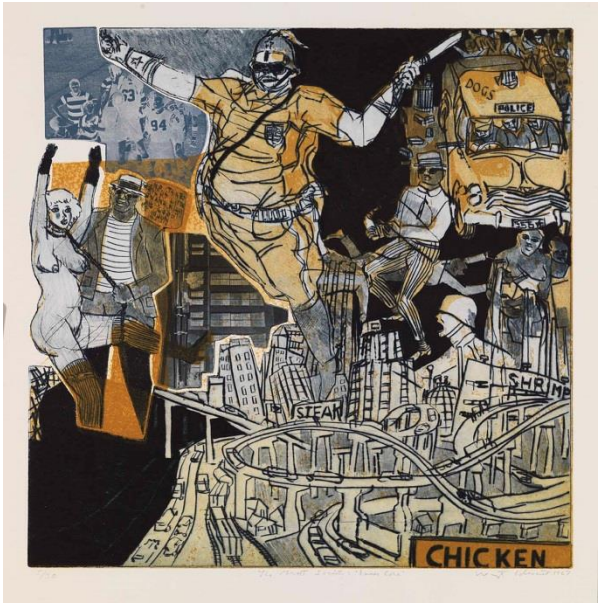

Fig. 4: *Inner Core*, *State I,* 1967
From *The Great Society* series
Color intaglio
Wriston Art Center Galleries, Lawrence University

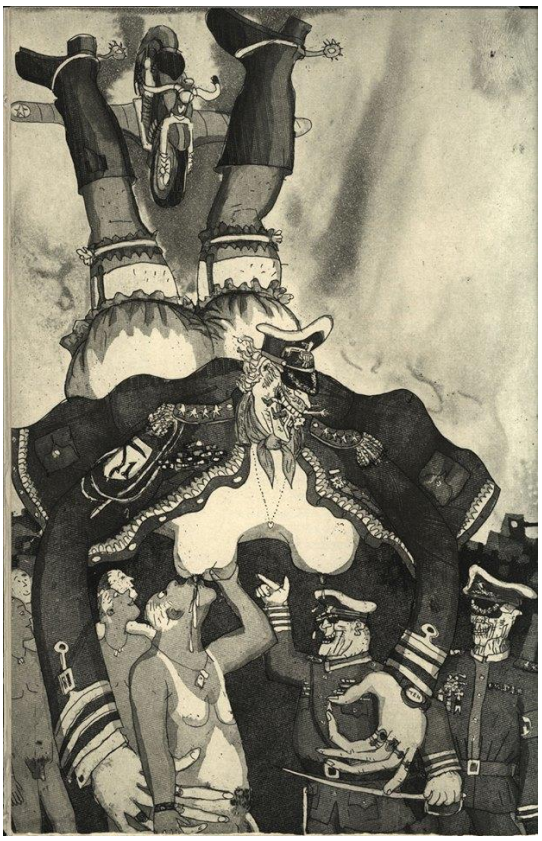

Fig. 5: *War,* 1986
From *Since Man Began to Eat Himself*
Intaglio
UWM Art Collection, UWM Libraries Special Collections

Fig. 6: *Poker Night at the Pentagon,* 1981
Color intaglio
Milwaukee Art Museum Collection

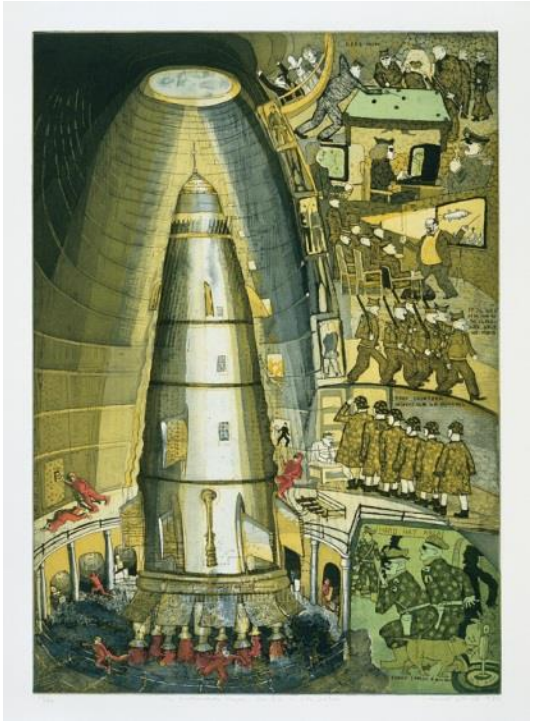

Fig. 7: *Boo Boo in Silo Sixteen,* 1984
From *The Hollandale Tapes* series
Color intaglio
Milwaukee Art Museum Collection

Fig. 8: *Into the Trenches with Otto Dix, We Are Nearly Killed by a Sniper (My Father?) I Call Out to Him, but the Intensity of His Fire Increases,* 1992
From the *My German Trip* series
Color intaglio
Chazen Museum of Art

Fig. 9: *Goya Studies War,* 1976-77
From *The History of Printmaking* series
Color intaglio
Wriston Art Center Galleries, Lawrence University

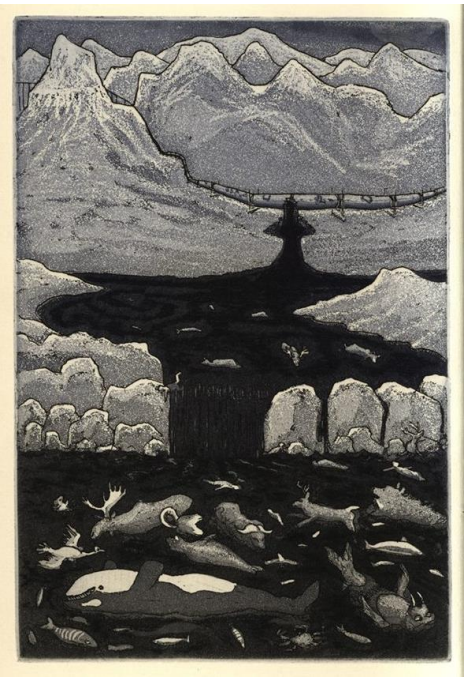

Fig. 10: *Leak,* 1986
From *Since Man Began to Eat Himself*
Intaglio
UWM Art Collection, UWM Libraries Special Collections

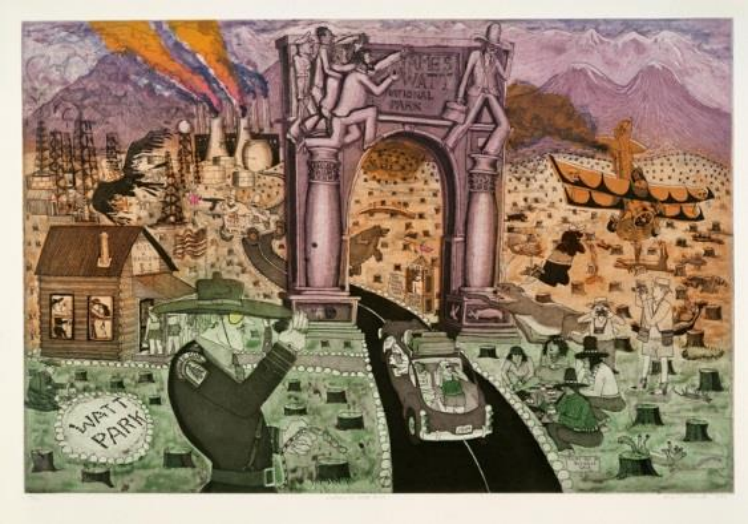

Fig. 11: *Welcome to Watt Park,* 1984
Color intaglio
Milwaukee Art Museum Collection

Fig. 12: *An Environmental President Visits Hole-in-the-Ozone,* 1992
Color intaglio
Milwaukee Art Museum Collection

REFERENCES

[1] Warrington Colescott, Oral History Program Interview with Warrington Colescott. Interview by Arthur Hove and Barry Teicher, 1995. University of Wisconsin-Madison Archive, Tape 1.

[2] For analysis of this era see Thomas Albright's *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area*. Thomas Albright, *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

[3] Richard Cox, "Warrington Colescott: Forty Years of Printmaking." In *Warrington Colescott: Forty Years of Printmaking a Retrospective, 1948-1988*, ed. Russell Panczenko (Madison, WI: Elvehjem Museum of Art, 1988), 5.

[4] I will use the term serigraph rather than screenprint in this essay, based on the artist's preference for the term.

[5] Mary Weaver Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott: A Catalogue Raisonne 1948-2008* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press), 9.

[6] Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent 1955-69* (London: Calmann and King, 1996), 89.

[7] Ibid., 27.

[8] Gilmour, Pat, "The Discriminating Exaggeration of the True." In *Warrington Colescott*, ed. Margaret Andera (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1996), 6.

[10] This movement included many influential West Coast artists including Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, and Wayne Thiebaud. For more on the Bay Area movement see Caroline A. Jones, *Bay Area Figurative Art 1950-1965* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

[11] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 11.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 27.

[14] Warrington Colescott and Arthur Hove, eds. *Progressive Printmakers: Wisconsin Artists and the Print Renaissance* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 14.

[15] Colescott describes the challenge of creating lines while working with Serigraphs saying "I began to see the limitations of the median – for me, you know, someone else might have gone on with serigraphy forever,… but I – there was a difficulty with drawing in line with -- through

the screens. Screens were just a little crude. I had been pushing and trying to achieve linear effects" Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 3.

[16] Colescott and Hove, *Progressive Printmakers,* 53.

[17] Warrington Colescott, "Artist's Statement." In *Warrington Colescott*, ed. Margaret Andera (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1996), 4.

[18] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott* and Cox, "The Discriminating Exaggeration of the True."

[19] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott,* 57.

[20] Cox, "The Discriminating Exaggeration of the True," 7.

[21] Warrington Colescott, Interview with Warrington Colescott. Interview by Helena Wright, 1986, Smithsonian Archive of American Art, Tape 1 Side A.

[22] Colescott and Hove, *Progressive Printmakers,* 57.

[23] "Comic Cut," Oxford Dictionaries, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/comic-cut.

[24] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 4.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Colescott credits the use of cut plates to his former student, Jay Yager, who chose to remove a mistake from one of his copper plates by cutting that section off rather than attempting the long process of scraping away the mistake. Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott,* 28.

[27] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 4.

[28] Ralph E. Sikes and Steven Heller, *The Art of Satire: Painters as Caricaturists and Cartoonists from Delacroix to Picasso* (New York: Horizon Press, 1984), 98-108.

[29] Cox, "The Discriminating Exaggeration of the True," 9.

[30] Ibid., 10.

[31] Matthew Levin's *Cold War University* provides an in depth look at the roots of the protest movement in Madison. Matthew Levin, *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).

[32] Ibid., 33.

[33] Ibid., 26.

[34] Ibid., 171.

[35] Ibid., 4.

[36] Ibid., 149.

[37] For a full account of the bombing of the Army Math Research Center, see Tom Bates's *RADS: A True Story of the End of the Sixties.* Bates, Tom. *RADS: The 1970 Bombing of the Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin and Its Aftermath* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

[38] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott,* 34.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 4.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Colescott produced multiple versions of this print, and describes the idea behind it in Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 186-187.

[43] Julia Bryan-Wilson, Julia, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 142.

[44] Claudia Mesch, *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945,* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013).

[45] Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers,* 20.

[46] Lucy Lippard, *Get the Message?: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1984), 7.

[47] Bryan Wilson, *Art Workers,* 113.

[48] Ibid*.,* 185.

[49] Chapin includes these military figures in a list of recurring characters that includes "the corrupt general." Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington* Colescott, 48.

[50] Cox, “The Discriminating Exaggeration of the True,” 4.

[51] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 1.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Colescott and Hove, *Progressive Printmakers*, 51.

[59] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 4.

[60] Colescott, “Artist’s Statement,” 4.

[61] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 1.

[62] Chapin *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 49.

[63] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 4.

[64] This comparison to Heller’s work was also briefly noted by Chapin. She includes Kurt Vonnegut as another writer who was a contemporary of Colescott’s and possessed a similar “blend of satire and black comedy” Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 58.

[65] James Nagel, *Critical Essays on Joseph Heller*. (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1984), 76.

[66] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 272.

[67] For a list of the specific works by Dix that Colescott references in this print, see footnote 33, Gilmour, “The Discriminating Exaggeration of the True,” 22.

[68] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 54.

[69] Colescott, Oral History Project Interview, Tape 3.

[70] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 45.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Benjamin Kline, *First Along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 71.

[73] Ibid., 74.

[74] Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 109.

[75] Ibid., 116.

[76] Kline, *First Along the River,* 99.

[77] Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire,* 101.

[78] Kline, *First Along the River,* 105.

[79] Barbara C. Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 38.

[80] Ibid., 42.

[81] Ibid., 39.

[82] Ibid., 51.

[83] Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 242.

[84] Kline, *First Along the River,* 102.

[85] Chapin describes this print when describing Colescott's critical view of the Bush administration. Chapin, *The Prints of Warrington Colescott*, 50.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albright, Thomas. *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area 1945-1980: An Illustrated History*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.

Andera, Margaret, ed. *Warrington Colescott*. Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1996.

Bates, Tom. *RADS: The 1970 Bombing of the Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin and Its Aftermath*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Bryan-Wilson, Julia. *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009.

Chapin, Mary Weaver. *The Prints of Warrington Colescott: A Catalogue Raisonne 1948-2008*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2010.

Colescott, Warrington. "Artist's Statement." In *Warrington Colescott*, edited by Margaret Andera, 4. Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1996.

——— Interview of Warrington Colescott by Helena Wright. Interview by Helena Wright, 1986. Smithsonian Archive of American Art.

——— Oral History Program Interview with Warrington Colescott. Interview by Arthur Hove and Barry Teicher, 1995. University of Wisconsin-Madison Archive.

Colescott, Warrington, and Arthur Hove, eds. *Progressive Printmakers: Wisconsin Artists and the Print Renaissance*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999.

Cox, Richard. "Warrington Colescott: Forty Years of Printmaking." In *Warrington Colescott: Forty Years of Printmaking a Retrospective, 1948-1988*, edited by Russell Panczenko, 3–20. Madison, WI: Elvehjem Museum of Art, 1988.

Crow, Thomas. *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent 1955-69*. London: Calmann and King, 1996.

Gilmour, Pat. "The Discriminating Exaggeration of the True." In *Warrington Colescott*, edited by Margaret Andera, 6–23. Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1996.

Jones, Caroline A. *Bay Area Figurative Art 1950-1965*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

Kline, Benjamin. *First Along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Levin, Matthew. *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013.

Lippard, Lucy R. *Get the Message?: A Decade of Art for Social Change*. New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1984.

Matilsky, Barbara C. *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions*. New York: Rizzoli, 1992.

Mesch, Claudia. *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013.

Nagel, James. *Critical Essays on Joseph Heller*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1984.

Oxford Dictionaries. "Comic Cut." Accessed February 13, 2016. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/comic-cut.

Panczenko, Russell, ed. *Warrington Colescott: Forty Years of Printmaking a Retrospective, 1948-1988*. Madison, WI: Elvehjem Museum of Art, 1988.

Shabecoff, Philip. *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.

Shikes, Ralph E., and Steven Heller. *The Art of Satire: Painters as Caricaturists and Cartoonists from Delacroix to Picasso*. New York: Horizon Press, 1984.

APPENDIX: EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

All works are by Warrington Colescott (American, b.1921)

1. *Inner Core*, 1967
From *The Great Society* series
Drypoint and aquatint, with roulette, vibrograver, and found letterpress photo plates, printed in color on cream Arches paper
22 ¼ x 25 inches
Wriston Art Center Galleries, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI. Gift of Eugene I. Schuster, 67.002

2. *Out My Garden Window*, 1969
Hard- and soft-ground etching, drypoint, and aquatint, with roulette, found letterpress photo plate, and relief rolls through stencils, printed in color on cream Barcham Green handmade paper
22 $^{5}/_{8}$ x 29 $^{13}/_{16}$ inches
Wriston Art Center Galleries, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI. Gift of Eugene I. Schuster, 69.006

3. *Pursuit*, 1971
From the *Death in Venice* series
Hard-ground etching and aquatint, with found object, printed in color on cream Arches paper
22 ¼ x 15 inches
UW-Milwaukee Libraries Special Collections

4. *I Feel Sick*, 1971
From the *Death in Venice* series
Hard-ground etching, aquatint, and photo-enhancing, with vibrograver, and relief rolls through stencils, printed in color on cream Arches paper
22 ¼ x 15 inches
UW-Milwaukee Libraries Special Collections

5. *Death on the Lido*, 1971
From the *Death in Venice* series
Drypoint, aquatint, and photo-enhancing, with vibrograver, and relief rolls through stencils, printed in color on cream Arches paper
22 ¼ x 15 inches
UW-Milwaukee Libraries Special Collections

6. *Lincoln at Ford's Theater*, 1972
From the *Prime-Time Histories: Colescott's USA* series
Soft-ground etching, drypoint, and aquatint, with vibrograver, printed in color on light cream Barcham Green handmade paper
28 ¾ x 22 ½ inches
UWM Art Collection, Gift of Mr. Anthony Petullo, 1992.002.01

7. *George Washington Meets Betsy Ross, but Too Late*, 1973
From the *Prime-Time Histories: Colescott's USA* series
Drypoint, soft-ground etching, and aquatint, with vibrograver, printed in color on cream Arches paper
27 ½ x 22 $^{1}/_{8}$ inches
UWM Art Collection, Gift of Mr. Anthony Petullo, 1992.002.02

8. *The Decline and Fall of Air Force One*, 1975
Soft-ground etching, aquatint, and drypoint, printed in color on white, moderately thick, smooth, wove paper (bleed print)
20 x 14 $^{15}/_{16}$ inches
UWM Art Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Moebius, 1979.027.05

9. *Goya Studies War*, 1976
From *The History of Printmaking* series
Soft-ground etching, aquatint, and drypoint, with vibrograver, printed in color on cream Arches paper
24 $^{7}/_{8}$ x 35 ½ inches
Wriston Art Center Galleries, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI.
Gift of Dr. Robert Dickens ’63, 96.013.10

10. *Rembrandt Bankrupt*, 1978
From *The History of Printmaking* series
Soft-ground etching and aquatint, with à la poupée inking, printed in color on cream Arches paper
24 $^{7}/_{8}$ x 36 inches
UWM Art Collection, Gift of Mr. Anthony Petullo, 1992.002.03

11. *Since Man Began to Eat Himself*, 1986
Book with four poems and two stories by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Kenneth Bernard, Allen Ginsberg, Toby Olson, Jerome Rothenberg, and Joel Oppenheimer
Book conceived, designed and printed by Walter Hamady
Published by The Perishable Press, Mount Horeb, WI
Etching, soft-ground etching, aquatint and letterpress
11 x 7 $^{5}/_{16}$ inches
UW-Milwaukee Libraries Special Collections

12. *Improvisations*, 1991
Book with 32 pages, three illustrations, four endsheets, cloth-covered case
Poems by Jerome Rothenberg
Handmade paper and book design by Susan Gosin, New York
Illustrations printed by Mantegna Press, Mount Horeb, WI
Published by Dieu Donné, New York
Etching, soft-ground etching, aquatint, spit bite, printed in color
17 ¾ x 12 ¼ inches
UW-Milwaukee Libraries Special Collections