

**WARRINGTON COLESCOTT**

American, born Oakland, CA, 1921, died Hollandale, WI, 2018

*Picasso at Mougins: The Etchings*, 2002

Color etching and aquatint on paper, 22 1/2 x 30 inches

Gift of Kay Deaux (Class of 1963), 2012.8

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“That bastard, he’s really good.” —Picasso on Delacroix<sup>1</sup>

In his vivid print *Picasso at Mougins*, commissioned by the New York Print Club, Warrington Colescott presents lion of modern art Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). The setting of the imagined scene is Picasso’s grand home and studio in Mougins on the Côte d’Azur, which he occupied from 1961 until his death. It was where Picasso produced his last major group of prints in 1968, when he was in his late eighties and at the height of his celebrity and wealth.

The arched-ceiling studio is a hectic space chockablock with jaggedly drawn things and people. Colescott shows his protagonist wearing ink-stained underwear and smoking a cigarette, surrounded by assistants, acolytes, hangers-on, and works of art. There is work underway at center where messy inking unfolds as Picasso elbows away eager assistants and ignores the elegant woman looking on. The printing press at far left is conspicuously not in use. Other figures range from nude models and sycophants to a neatly dressed man at far right, a dealer or critic interviewing a naked woman in a broad straw hat in absurdly close proximity—a swipe no doubt at Picasso’s reputation as a philanderer. Elsewhere there is a mix of semi-comic and risqué activities: a barely-clad pair descends the staircase, a naked woman lies awkwardly on the floor, and a shirtless man makes a frantic exit in the near foreground.

Colescott mirrors a key component of Picasso’s practice: the Spanish artist’s endless thinking about the history of art and his most inventive predecessors. Cubism, an influential artistic mode championed by Picasso and Georges Braque (1882–1963) in the first decades of the twentieth century, was exemplary art about art. Later, Picasso created many series in response to works by predecessors like Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) and Edgar Degas (1834–1917). The language and tone of Colescott’s print are those of satire: it straddles the boundary between a fanciful homage to one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century and a humorous cartoon parodying the machismo and hero-worship associated with the modernist canon.

—S. Hollis Clayson

Bergen Evans Professor Emerita in the Humanities and Professor Emerita of Art History

1 Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 187.