

# The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

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## Robert Colescott

Through July 1. George Adams Gallery, 38 Walker Street, Manhattan. 212-565-8480; [georgeadamsgallery.com](http://georgeadamsgallery.com).



Robert Colescott's "Frankly My Dear ... I Don't Give a Damn," 1993. Robert H. Colescott Separate Property Trust and George Adams Gallery/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Robert Colescott, who died in 2009, was deadly serious about complexity and injustice, but the paintings he made about race in America also had a sense of humor — if not about the subject itself, then at least about the limitations of art as a way of confronting it. His wry, resigned, fiery approach is particularly well encapsulated by “Frankly My Dear ... I Don’t Give a Damn,” one of several 1990s-era acrylics currently showing, along with a few slightly surreal watercolors, at George Adams Gallery.

In the painting’s lower left corner, a maudlin white man with a pompadour and goatee holds a swooning Black woman in a checked gingham dress; two skeletons recap their pose on the other side. Imperious golden faces gaze down, a nervous woman leans against a burning planet down below, and a suggestion of hellfire whispers behind the skeletons. A ribbon of red and green, in combination with the angels’ gold, suggest a Pan-African banner. Everything is there to bring out the cosmic epic implicit in one famous line from “Gone With the Wind” — Colescott even letters the phrase across a starry blue sky.

But his color choices, the way he crowds all the figures to the front, and his quick and vigorous brushwork combine to give the piece the feeling of a magazine illustration, too. It’s as good as saying, “Don’t look to me for solutions. This is only a comment.”

*WILL HEINRICH*