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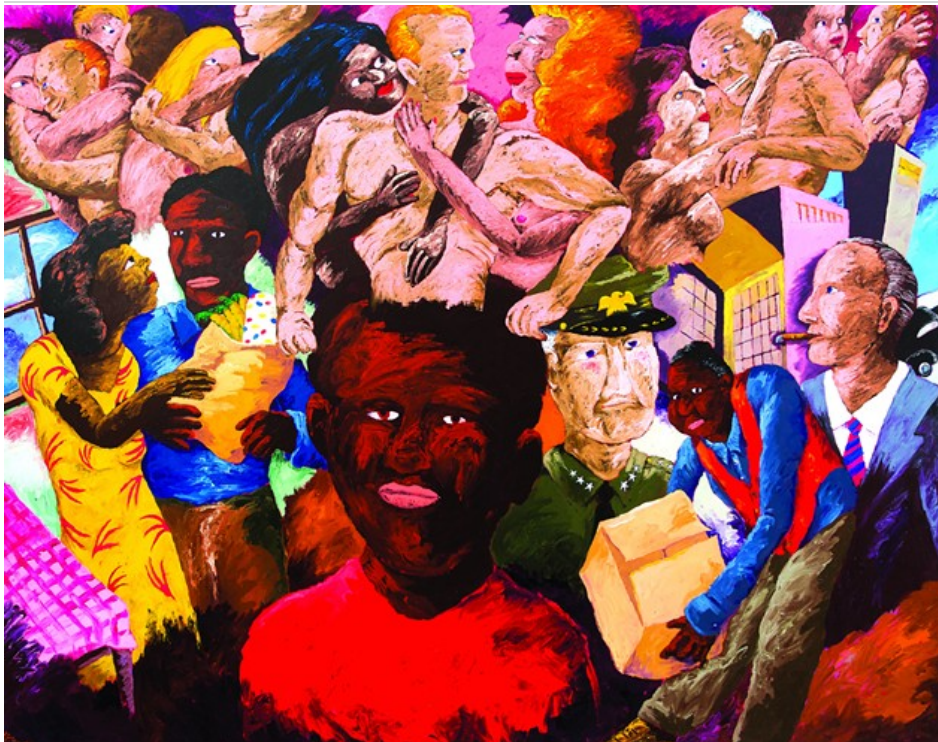
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Review: *Pride of Place* and the art of art collecting

Arthur Roger's personal collection runs at NOMA through Sept. 23

By D. Eric Bookhardt

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When Arthur Roger launched his gallery in 1978, there were only a handful of others focused on new art. The scene has expanded greatly since then, but Roger has more than kept abreast of the ever-changing art world through the years, as we see in this sprawling new exhibition of works from his personal collection, which he donated recently to the New Orleans Museum of Art. This beautifully installed *Pride of Place* expo also reveals how collecting can be an art form in its own right, a visual conversation in which all of the works have something revealing to say about each other. For instance, the way Douglas Bourgeois' surreal yet ethereal figures resonate with Robert Colescott's raucously carnivalesque scenes such as *Power for Desire-Desire for Power* (pictured), an exploration of the all too common power trips people pursue, often without even realizing it. Both artists share an earthy soulfulness, and it helps to know that California-born Colescott's parents were, like Bourgeois, Louisiana natives.

Pride of Place: The Making of Contemporary Art in New Orleans

• Through Sept. 23

• New Orleans Museum of Art, City Park, 1 Collins C. Diboll Circle, (504) 658-4100; www.noma.org

Another vital part of the Roger art overview involves social issues, and David Bates' powerful portraits of Hurricane Katrina flood survivors elaborate on Simon Gunning's vivid views of the storm-ravaged Lower 9th Ward even as Jacqueline Bishop's and Courtney Egan's more meditative works suggest how the natural world is being mutated by human activity all around us – themes further elaborated by Luis Cruz Azaceta, Nicole Charbonnet and Cynthia Scott. A rich diversity of works by Willie Birch, Radcliffe Bailey, Bruce Davenport Jr. and John Scott, among others, hark to both the deep pathos that arose from the Atlantic slave trade as well as the joyous street culture and sheer *joie de vivre* that define New Orleans as America's quintessential Creole city. Striking gender studies by artists including Deborah Kass and Robert Mapplethorpe provide provocative counterpoint to classic canvases by New Orleans legends like the late Ida Kohlmeyer and Robert Gordy in a show where all of the works seem totally at home with the burgeoning 21st-century art scene.

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