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Rockefeller's *Guernica* and the collection of modern copies

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Abstract

In 1955 the notable American politician and art collector, Nelson A. Rockefeller, commissioned a tapestry after Pablo Picasso's canonical 1937 painting, Guernica. Not only did the Guernica tapestry catalyze Rockefeller's significant collection of hand-woven tapestries reproducing Picasso paintings, but the tapestry also went on to circulate as a substitute for Picasso's famous painting and as an exemplar of Rockefeller's celebrated art collection. The Guernica tapestry sheds light on Rockefeller's engagement with art reproduction and on the continued practice of collecting copies in the twentieth century. Examining these Picasso tapestries elucidates how such a notable collector as Rockefeller engaged with reproduction despite the sometimes critical reactions of his art advisers, as well as how Rockefeller and the artists, dealers, and curators who facilitated his collection negotiated the questions of authorship, originality, and verisimilitude raised by the Picasso tapestries.

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