

Interview, 1955



robert Rauschenberg combines

MAY 21-SEPT 4, 2006 | MOCA GRAND AVENUE

There is no more subject in a Combine than there is in a page from a newspaper. Everything that is there is a subject.

—JOHN CAGE, *SILENCE* (1961)

I once heard Jasper Johns say that Rauschenberg was the man who in this century had invented the most since Picasso. What he invented above all was, I think, a pictorial surface that let the world in again. Not the world of the Renaissance man who looked for his weather clues out of the window; but the world of men who turn knobs to hear a taped message...electronically transmitted from some windowless booth. Rauschenberg's picture plane is for the consciousness immersed in the brain of the city.

—LEO STEINBERG, "REFLECTIONS ON THE STATE OF CRITICISM," *ARTFORUM* (MARCH 1972)

IN RAUSCHENBERG'S WORDS

COLLECTION (1954)

I'd really like to think that the artist could be just another kind of material in the picture, working in collaboration with all the other materials. But of course I know this isn't possible, really. I know that the artist can't help exercising his control to a degree and that he makes all the decisions finally.

—In Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors: The Heretical Courtship in Modern Art* (1965)

INTERVIEW (1955)

We have ideas about bricks. A brick just isn't a physical mass of a certain dimension that one builds houses, our chimneys with. The whole world of associations, all the information that we have—the fact that it's made of dirt, that it's been through a kiln, romantic ideas about little brick cottages, or the chimney which is so romantic, or labor—you have to deal with as many of the things as you know about. Because if you don't, I think you start working more like an eccentric, or primitive, which, you know, [...] can be anyone, or the insane, which is very obsessive.

—In an interview with David Sylvester, BBC, June 1964

ODALISK (1955/58) AND UNTITLED (c. 1954)

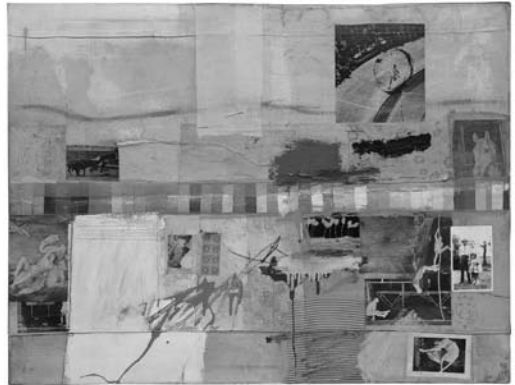
Any incentive to paint is as good as any other. There is no poor subject. Painting is always strongest when in spite of composition, color, etc. it appears as fact, or an inevitability, as opposed to a souvenir or arrangement. Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in that gap between the two.) A pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting with than wood, nails, turpentine, oil and fabric. A canvas is never empty.

—Artist statement, in Dorothy C. Miller, ed., *Sixteen Americans* (1959)

SMALL REBUS (1956)

Horses, pole-vaulters... That's sort of what my work is about... the activity and the moment that the runner is running or the pole-vaulter is vaulting and it's my way of competing with the performance arts because I think all of my life I've been envious of the uniqueness that a performer has. Because one has to cherish the fact that it is unique and it's only happening now. So, "now" is my competition.

—In an unpublished interview with Paul Schimmel, January 2005



Small Rebus, 1956

FACTUM I AND II (1957)

[The Abstract Expressionists] even assigned seriousness to certain colors. It got into poetry later, when the Beats started to hang around the New York artists. I used to think of that line in Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, about the "sad cup of coffee." I've had cold coffee and hot coffee, good coffee and lousy coffee, but I've never had a sad cup of coffee.

—In Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall: A Portrait of Robert Rauschenberg* (1980)

MONOGRAM (1955–59)

An artist manufactures his material out of his own existence—his own ignorance, familiarity or confidence. I come to terms with my materials. They know and I know that we're going to try to do something. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't but I would substitute anything for preconceptions or deliberateness. If that moment can't be as fresh, strange and unpredictable as what's going on around you, then it's false. The nature of some of my materials gave me an additional problem because I had to figure out how they could be physically supported on a wall when they obviously had no business being anywhere near a wall. That was the beginnings of the Combines.

—In Barbara Rose, *An Interview with Robert Rauschenberg* (1987)

A stuffed goat is special in the way that a stuffed goat is special. I wanted to see if I could integrate an object as exotic as that.

—In Mary Lynn Kotz, *Rauschenberg/Art and Life* (1990)



Monogram, 1955–59

CANYON (1959)

Do you know the eagle on Canyon? Sari Dienes called me. She lived in the Carnegie Studios and right next door lived one of the last of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. He died and the janitors pushed all of his stuff out into the hallway in front of the studios. Sari saw the stuffed eagle and asked me if she should collect it for me. Of course I said yes.

—In Rose, *An Interview with Robert Rauschenberg*



Canyon, 1959



FIRST LANDING JUMP (1961)

I began that piece by getting some materials to work with—again we have that business of limitations and possibilities. I just got a bunch of tires, not because I'm crazy about tires but because they're so available around here in New York, even on the street. If I were working in Europe that wouldn't be the material.

—Robert S. Mattison, *Robert Rauschenberg: Breaking Boundaries* (2003)

PILGRIM (1960)

I'm particularly attracted to elements in life that for the most part are taken for granted so successfully that no one sees them or understands them anymore...the chairs that I do incorporate in my work are classically ordinary. Maybe that's their revenge.

—In Mark Rosenthal, *Artists at Gemini G.E.L.: Celebrating the 25th Year* (1993)

FIRST TIME PAINTING AND SECOND TIME PAINTING (BOTH 1961)

I had to make a surface which invited a constant change of focus and an examination of detail. Listening happens in time—looking also has to happen in time.

—In Gene Swinson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture," *Art News* (April 1963)

SUMMER RENTAL, SUMMER RENTAL #2, AND SUMMER RENTAL #3 (ALL 1960)

I have always worked in series. I think this is because I am not interested in the finished painting. They all have to work: they all come with their own set of rules. Because I enjoy working very much, this gives me an excuse to engage in a whole series and when I get really comfortable within a series, I quit. I move on.

—In an interview with Mario Codognato and Mirta d'Argenzio, September 2003, Captiva, Florida

PANTOMIME (1961)

The order and logic of the arrangements are the direct creation of the viewer assisted by the costumed provocativeness [sic] and literal sensuality of the objects.

—Exhibition statement, 1953

ACE (1962)

With sound scale and insistency trucks mobilize words and broadside our culture by a combination of law and local motivation which produces an extremely complex random order that cannot be described as accidental.

—In "Random Order," *Location* (spring 1963)

GOLD STANDARD (1964)

One looks forward to a painting finishing itself...because if you have less of the past to carry around, you have more energy for the present. Using, exhibiting, viewing, writing, and talking about it is a positive element in ridding oneself of the picture. And it does justice to the picture that defies this. So that you may not accumulate mass as much as you may accumulate quality.

—In an interview with David Sylvester, 1964

RELATED EVENTS

MOCA ART TALKS

PRESENTED BY GALLERY C

These informal discussions—free with museum admission and open to the public—take place in the Ahmanson Auditorium at MOCA Grand Avenue unless otherwise noted.

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 3PM

A conversation between Robert Rauschenberg, Calvin Tomkins and Paul Schimmel

MOCA PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER
SILVERSCREEN THEATER

The artist, the author, and the curator will discuss Rauschenberg's work. A book signing of the new edition of Tomkins's *Off the Wall: A Portrait of Robert Rauschenberg* and the *Robert Rauschenberg: Combines* catalogue will follow at ART CATALOGUES, MOCA Pacific Design Center.

Reservations are required.

Seats are limited.

INFO 213/633-5373

FREE with museum admission

THURSDAY, MAY 25, 6:30PM

Autobiography and Allegory in Rauschenberg's Combines

Thomas Crow, director, Getty Research Institute, and professor of modern European and American art, University of Southern California

THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 6:30PM

Rachel Rosenthal, artistic director and performer with The Rachel Rosenthal Company

THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 6:30PM

Roni Feinstein, independent curator and critic

SUNDAY, JUNE 18, 3PM

Branden Joseph, associate professor, department of art history, University of California, Irvine

THURSDAY, JULY 13, 6:30PM

Wordplay in Rauschenberg's Combines

Mary Beth Carosello, MOCA curatorial research assistant

THURSDAY, JULY 27, 6:30PM

Paul Schimmel, MOCA chief curator and curator of the exhibition

MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C is made possible by The Times Mirror Foundation Endowment and Gallery C.

CLASSES

SATURDAY JUNE 10, 10AM–12:30PM

Rauschenberg Short Course

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

MOCA presents a special three-day course exploring Rauschenberg's work.

Instructor: Mary Beth Carosello, MOCA curatorial research assistant

Course continues June 17 and 24.

\$120 general; \$100 MOCA members

Advanced registration required.

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

SATURDAY JULY 8, 10AM–1PM

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

SATURDAYS, JULY 15, 22, 29 and

AUGUST 5, 12, 10AM–1PM

1010 WESTWOOD CENTER, WESTWOOD

Taking a Chance: The Intersection of Painting and Sculpture

In conjunction with UCLA Extension, this studio-arts workshop looks closely at the work of Rauschenberg and the use of collage, abstract painting, chance operations, and everyday objects.

Instructor: David McDonald, MFA

S2718B \$225 (MOCA members)

S2546B \$275 (General public)

855.36 Art 1.8 CEU

INFO 310/825-9971 or uclaextension.org

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 10AM–4PM

Writing in Three Dimensions

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

In this creative writing class, study Rauschenberg's experiments with form and materials, and then try your own hand at writing in three dimensions.

Instructor: Maria Hummel, novelist, and Stegner Fellow at Stanford University

\$70 general; \$55 MOCA members

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

EVENTS FOR FAMILIES

INFO 213/621-1712 or carias@moca.org

No reservations required.

FREE

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 1–4PM

Big Family Day

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Make sculptures with artist George Herms, chat about art with expert kids, and enjoy music.

SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1–3:30PM

For Families Workshop

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Explore the exhibition, then create art with artist/educator **Elliot Pinkney**.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 4–MONDAY, AUGUST 7, NOON–6PM

Collage Party

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Artist **Paul Butler** and special guests host a marathon open studio for families with children, ages 5 and up. Internationally known for his collage parties involving local artists, Butler brings this energetic and collaborative four-day event to MOCA's family audience. The August 6 First Sundays Are For Families workshop will be part of this dynamic ongoing program. Drop in anytime. A public reception will be held from 6–8pm on Monday.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1–3:30PM

For Families Workshop

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Closing weekend for the exhibition, and your last chance to explore the amazing *Combines* created by this high-energy artist.

Public + Artist is sponsored by the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department.

For Families/Para Familias is sponsored by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

Bank of America



Generous additional support is provided by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

TEENS OF CONTEMPORARY ART (TOCA) EVENTS

INFO 213/633-5310 or dgray@moca.org

FREE

SUNDAY, JULY 9, 4–6PM

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

View the exhibition, then create in this writing workshop with novelist **Sesshu Foster**.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 4–6PM

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Discover drama and improvisation with artist **Julie Lequin**, inspired by Rauschenberg's early performance work.

FILMS

MOCA GRAND AVENUE

Robert Rauschenberg: Retrospective, produced by Michael Blackwood (screenings daily in the Reading Room)

American Masters: Robert Rauschenberg: Inventive Genius, narrated by Dennis Hopper (screenings Saturday nights only in the Ahmanson Auditorium)

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