

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release

LEO CASTELLI MAKES GIFT OF SEMINAL RAUSCHENBERG WORK TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Tuesday, May 9, 1989.....Richard E. Oldenburg, director, The Museum of Modern Art, announced today that Leo Castelli, owner and director of the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York City, has made a gift to the Museum of one of the seminal works of postwar American art, Robert Rauschenberg's Bed (1955). The gift was made in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the founding director of the Museum. The Committee on Painting and Sculpture gratefully accepted the gift yesterday, and it will be presented tomorrow to the Board of Trustees.

Gifford Phillips, chairman of the Committee on Painting and Sculpture, stated, "The Museum of Modern Art has long been favored by acts of great public-spirited patronage. But now, when art prices have risen so sharply and the financial incentives for giving have been greatly diminished by changes in the tax laws, we have special reason to celebrate the exemplary generosity of Leo Castelli in donating this masterwork by Robert Rauschenberg."

Donald B. Marron, president of the Museum, said that he spoke "for the trustees and the staff of the Museum, as well as for our public, in extending our deepest appreciation to Leo Castelli for this extraordinary gift."

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Mr. Oldenburg added, "Leo Castelli is respected throughout the international art community as a farsighted and dedicated supporter of contemporary creativity. He has been a longtime friend of this Museum, and we are honored and pleased that he has chosen to give this remarkable work in memory of his friendship with, and respect for, Alfred Barr."

Bed, a combine painting executed in oil and pencil directly on a pillow, quilt, and sheet, is one of the best known and most discussed works by this American artist. It was first shown at the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1958 and has been in Mr. Castelli's personal collection since that time. Kirk Varnedoe, director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, commented, "Bed is a work of unique stature and importance. Truly an icon of postwar American art, it brings together the painterly style of Abstract Expressionism and a new openness to found materials. Like several other of Rauschenberg's works of the period, Bed has been regarded both as a sign of a revived interest in the principles of earlier Dada experiments, and as a harbinger of the concerns of American art in the 1960s. And, beyond questions of historical rubric, it is a singularly arresting, and still unsettlingly vivid, work of art."

Mr. Varnedoe added, "We are enormously pleased to add this work to our collection, and deeply grateful to Leo Castelli for his generosity in assuring that Bed will be permanently available to our public as an essential part of our representation of the history of modern art."

Mr. Castelli commented to the Painting and Sculpture Committee, "I think I've said many times before that the Modern, and of course Alfred (Barr), who created it, were my great teachers. Without them, I wouldn't be standing here giving the Museum a great masterpiece of this kind." Mr. Castelli went on to explain that his first encounter with Bed was in

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1957, soon after he had opened his first gallery, and that the work convinced him he should represent Robert Rauschenberg.

William Rubin, director emeritus, Department of Painting and Sculpture, commented, "When Leo Castelli first promised me, some eighteen to twenty years ago, that he would eventually give this work to the Museum, we were all tremendously gratified. Sometimes we forget that what really builds great Museums is generosity and grace, and these, I think, are epitomized in what Leo has done for us."

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