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	Bellamy	III .A.70

A REWARD BOOK

\$9.95

Dallas Texas
Dear Dick: 9/16/65

While driving thru
Goblin Valley in Nevada
under a full moon I
began to have
hallucinations. Men
pulling hay bails down
the white line, small
white fox off and on.

I Colorado I
heard your name

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A REWARD BOOK

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mentioned many
times in a line of
humanism, Confucianism
Jen, Bagavad gita,
nin jo, on, satori.

You must have
unconsciously known
these years ago
because I realize
that you are one of
the most unself conscious

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A REWARD BOOK

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persons I've ever
met.

I heard about the
timeless closing of the
Green Gallery and
I want to elect
you to D. Miller's
job at the Museum
of Mod. Art where
I think you might
have been all the
time except for

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A REWARD BOOK

\$9.95

reality.

I have a quote from
Hsun Tzu about mans
receptivity, effort and
reality which makes
a sage different than
an ordinary man.

I will send it to you
later.

This letter is
no halucination.
Best regards
Jim Rosenberg

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A REWARD BOOK

\$9.95

The
BUSINESS
of
Art

Edited and with an introduction by
LEE EVAN CAPLIN

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Artists and Planning

by

James Rosenquist



JAMES ROSENQUIST is an artist and a member of the National Council on the Arts.

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The question I ask myself when art and business are discussed together is, "Has art grown into a desk job?" I started drawing in 1949—or even before that—but I arrived in New York in 1955. The Third Avenue El was just being torn down, the Colosseum wasn't built yet, and the Whitney Museum was still on 54th Street. At that time the art world was very small. The number of galleries was few, and I would say the number of people who collected avant-garde art—which meant that it had come from young living Americans—was perhaps less than a dozen.

While art, historically, has always been related to communication, in 1955 in New York many famous underground artists lived within a few blocks from each other but did not know each other, had never met each other. In the '50s, Jim Harvey—the man who designed the Brillo box—who used to travel to the Middle East, brought back slides of his travels and invited the whole art world to come and see the slides down at Coentie's Slip. So everybody and his brother showed up, and I was surprised to find that people did not know each other. I met Ad Rinehardt—one of America's most famous artists—for the first time. Major artists were not in close contact. In the late '50s, American artists such as Baziotes, de Kooning, Gottlieb, Guston, Kline, Motherwell, Newman, Pollock, Still, Rothko and others had tremendous underground reputations. They had worked for years—some of them, like Franz Kline, in the WPA programs—yet they hadn't had one-man shows and they were already in their late forties or older. Some of them would get up at the Friday Night Club and broadcast their art. They'd talk about it, be assertive about it, defend it; and they were, I would say, very self-conscious about their work. They talked among themselves. They would try to establish the work; in other words, they were not cool about it. They were *hot* about it compared to the next generation, called Pop Artists, of which I was a part.

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When I arrived on the art scene, the art audience had already begun to increase. In 1958 de Kooning had a show, and one of his paintings sold for the highest price for a living American artist—\$14,500. Just after that, Jasper Johns appeared on the scene. He seemed to be a reactionary to a style in painting sometimes described as drips and splashes. Actually it was called "abstract expressionism." His style resulted in critics trying to group artists in a "movement," but they were not all alike.

At that time in New York, Ivan Karp, Henry Geldzahler and Dick Bellamy would prowl the streets, going to artists' studios to discover new talent. They actually went from door to door to find out who lived in each loft. I think this was the first time artists were solicited. Young unknown artists felt they didn't have a chance to show their work when they saw someone like de Kooning walk down 57th Street in an old Levi jacket and bedroom slippers, looking very poor. If *he* wasn't doing well, how could a lesser-known artist expect to do well?

One day in 1960 I ran into Bob Indiana. He said, "Guess what I saw, Jim. I saw a dirty new collage of Bob Rauschenberg's behind a big glass table on Park Avenue! Let's go out and have a drink and celebrate!" So we celebrated Bob Rauschenberg's breakthrough. At that time artists supported themselves any way they could. Some did commercial art jobs, some worked on construction jobs, and some sold coffee in Madison Square Park from the coffee stands. I painted billboards and created window displays for Bonwit Teller and Tiffany. Rauschenberg also did window displays for Bonwit Teller. We all had to make a buck.

When Henry, Ivan, and Dick started looking for people, Henry was a curator at the Metropolitan Museum, Ivan was at the Castelli Gallery, and Dick was about to open his new Green Gallery. Dick asked me to be in his gallery. I knew I could make a living at that point, so I quit my commercial artist's job just to paint. I was very happy. I lived frugally, and was able to live on very little. I could eat breakfast for twenty-five cents at the Seamen's Institute! I found it a tremendous luxury to be able to live in a cosmopolitan city and not have to deal with it except to dream. The dealers urged me to hurry up and have a show as fast as I could, but I was happy just to live with my pictures and simply let things happen. My paintings were like my companions, and I wasn't consciously trying to sell them. But then Dick sold some of them to Bob Scull, the Tremains, Dick

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Baker, Jan Streed, Morton Newman and others, for prices ranging from \$350 to \$1,100.

In the 1950's you could walk into the Whitney Museum annual exhibit and buy almost anybody's painting for a thousand bucks. Then things started to heat up. People became interested in art—I don't know why. Leon Menuchin bought practically a whole show for Brandeis University. People followed his lead. Harry Abrams, who had been buying French Impressionism and Old Masters' works before that, saw what Leon had done and began buying young artists' work. John Powers saw what Harry and Leon bought, and he bought what they bought. So collectors of young unknown American artists began to proliferate.

ART AS A BUSINESS

I've been asked, "How does an artist relate to business?" and "Can I plan a career as an artist?" As for planning, Eisenhower once said, "A plan is nothing. Planning is everything." Being an artist, whatever that is, involves constant questioning of everything. It is very difficult to set out a plan in a businesslike manner because a happy accident could happen and someone might like your worst work.

Artists work in unknown territory. If it were known, they probably wouldn't be artists. This is difficult for an artist to realize, but it's also more difficult for an audience to understand. However, when an artist is through with a work, then strange things can happen, like people wanting to be near it, people talking about it, and people wanting to own it. When this happens, artists usually don't know what to do.

My first experience in relating to business was like building a better mousetrap. I never had to ask my friends or potential buyers to visit me. One day Barbara Durkee visited me. She told her husband Steve about my work, and he told his dealer Alan Stone. Alan told Ileana Sonnabend, and she told Bellamy and Karp, and they told Leo Castelli. Jasper Johns even asked to come to my studio. He said, "Where did you learn to paint like that?" People beat down the door to my studio. Artists, then, were usually indifferent to galleries; they didn't expect much money, only the possibility of having their work on view in a neutral space. Before I had any reputation, I never had to schlep my paintings anywhere. That's how it happened with me. Other people's introductions to a

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gallery and to business happen differently. Frank Stella just walked into the Castelli Gallery, and Leo asked him, "What do you paint?" Frank said, "I paint. I just paint, man." The artists of the '60s and the '70s were a little luckier because they didn't have to solicit their art. In the '80s there is an entirely different situation. There are many more artists living in New York City, and there are many more galleries. I like it that way; there is more to look at, more to investigate.

All through the '60s my daily routine was waking up with a hangover about ten o'clock, painting all day, at five o'clock renting a tuxedo from Silver's Tuxedos, going up to 57th Street to an opening, going up to the Jewish Museum to Rauschenberg's opening, or somebody else's opening, or my own opening, then going out, staying out till one or two in the morning, waking up with a hangover, working the next day, renting another tuxedo at Silver's (or keeping the same one), going out again—every night of the week! Sometimes I was invited to three dinners at a time. Life was fast and fun.

But getting back to that planning thing: planning is like looking for your wallet under a street lamp when you didn't lose it there in the first place. When I started planning, I wanted to be a mural painter. I tried to go to school where they would teach me mural painting. All these men teaching had read books about it, but they had never done it. I looked around and I saw billboard painters painting, and I thought, "Gee, those guys can handle any kind of space. They must know how to handle paint and brushes." So I went right into billboard painting as a master billboard painter—no apprenticeship, no nothing. I learned a great deal from my helpers: David Mishnick, a sculptor who had come from Russia in 1927 and had shown his work with Arshile Gorky; Solly Schnee, Harold Bernstein, who had a lot of knowledge about paint. These old-timers were like teachers to me. They told me what *not* to do. It was like going to school—but it was a tough commercial business.

Successful artists as well as businessmen use creative thinking to get from point A to point B. The attempt to repeat an approach or a style that has been successful in the past in order to achieve new success can lead to a dull result. Creative, successful artists and businessmen rarely approach the same thing in the same way twice. Art isn't really done for any reason other than a means of the artist's self-expression. Business, on the other hand, is traditionally done to make money.

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Now art may not be done to make money, but that doesn't rule out its value. The problem for any artist has always been either having money and no time, or a lot of time and no money. The ideal life for an artist would be to live in a cosmopolitan city and be free from the burden of having to make a living. And, however one accomplishes it, that freedom from "making a living" could be essential to being an artist. I think a problem comes when an artist does start to sell something, for then he becomes connected with business and his life is no longer free from that involvement.

For myself, I don't have the slightest idea of how to allocate time between art and making money except on a case-by-case basis. I really have no plan at all. The reason I work, the reason I make things, is to physically illuminate some feelings I've had. Then they exist outside of myself in some kind of form, so when I am old and grey I'll be able to look at them and realize that I was alive at a certain period. I really regard it almost like a philatelic thing. When I'm dead, that's outside the human condition and I don't care any more about the works.

There's a whole new crop of young artists who grew up surrounded by materialism, as I did, but who try to plan their art careers like the climb up a corporate ladder. I can't imagine an artist's life being as steady as that. People who don't know what an artist does ask me, "Are you doing pictures for magazines now? What are you doing this for?" My answer is that I'm not doing art for anyone but myself. The reason *why* is that if I did art for somebody other than myself, I wouldn't know what to do. I don't have to paint something this color or that color because of someone else's reason. I can do anything I please. And that's the lovely, scary thing. It's challenging to go into a room with a canvas and know that you can do anything you want to do. This is probably a Far Eastern attitude about learning. You confront yourself totally, whether you're able to work or not.

So, getting back to the idea of planning, to an artist's mind there are no holds barred, no barriers. The only thing that stops you is the old Catch 22 thing, the financial problem that you just don't want to deal with. Yet you have to face it.

When I began painting, James Michener came to my studio and said, "I want to buy that painting." I said, "I'm sorry; it's already been sold. Richard Bellamy sold it." He said, "I'd like one just like it, or something like it." I felt that the look of my art wasn't like anything else being done at that time, so I was very reactionary and

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ARTISTS AND PLANNING

I said, "No, I can't possibly do that." Now if he hadn't said what he did, I might have made four more paintings similar to that one, or studied it further. But I viewed his request as an interference. I was very sensitive then!

Just a few years ago it wasn't fashionable to want one's son or daughter to be an artist. Now sons and daughters are encouraged to study art because it could be possible to make a handsome income from it. I can't think of art as a desk job. Avant-garde artists still face hardships in spite of a current government attitude that art is alive and well in the United States. Artists have a hard time getting credit, getting hospital care. Their work is sold, and resold quickly for high prices in a short time, and the artist gets only the first piddling commission from a dealer—or may not get paid for years. Artists can't contribute their work to museums for a tax deduction as art collectors can, because the government says the only value coming from an artist's work is the cost of the materials! Back in the 1960's, when it was lawful, the art dealers' association carefully scrutinized donations, so there were very few overvalued works. The person possibly most responsible for stopping contributions was former President Nixon, who donated his writings for an unrealistic deduction.

Artists' heirs are often stuck with a huge inheritance tax on unsold works, and have to sell them off cheaply to be able to pay the taxes. There are a great number of artist problems pertaining to business and taxes. If the speed of thinking of the IRS and the government could accelerate at the same rate as the speed of artists' and inventors' thinking—that is, linked with communication—I think we could get away from a guns or unemployment society and get into space without bringing war with us.

During the time I've taken to write this, the current acceleration of the change of events regarding government support for the arts, business support for the arts, and the fate of the National Endowment for the Arts under the new administration has changed drastically. The new government senses a need for extreme budget cuts in every area except military spending. In the *New York Times*, during the height of the Vietnam conflict, the annual government military contracts to major corporations were published. If one added up the cost of all the arts activities in the United States for the same year, including dance, music, museums, theater, and even large Hollywood films, it wouldn't be a drop in the bucket compared to the enormous military expenditures for Vietnam.

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On a television program on Sunday, April 28, 1981, the panelists seemed to agree that art should become a business in order to be able to make it on its own. Mr. Herb Schmerz, of Mobil Oil, stated that art groups should be able to function and survive as a business. Mr. Schmerz was happy to announce that art finance should be left to the private sector and will happily be taken over by big business. One panelist said that art in America is alive and healthy, and always was, despite government support. Another panelist suggested that viewers should send their ideas to their congressmen.

I remember a time not long ago when art barely existed in New York. And the future of art in America doesn't look good now. In this great country of ours, let's encourage the arts and humanities, and new forays into visual art. Let's build one or two fewer missiles and provide the National Endowment for the Arts—with its history of a hands-off attitude—with a healthy, growing budget. Let's not let large corporate control lead us into "1984."

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

ART VIEW/Michael Kimmelman

From Rosenquist, A Pleasing Look At Early Pop

WITH SO MUCH ART TODAY derived from Pop, a steady flow of exhibitions looking back on the movement's roots is inevitable. No show has been more ambitious than "Pop Art," the disorderly survey organized last year at the Royal Academy in London, now in Madrid and opening at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in October. And none has been more pleasing than "James Rosenquist: The Early Pictures," at the Gagosian Gallery, at 980 Madison Avenue in Manhattan, through July 11. Mr. Rosenquist's paintings were among the standouts of the rambling London blockbuster. And the display at Gagosian of nearly two dozen paintings, along with some of the magazine advertisements on which they were based, is further confirmation of the exceptional quality of these works from the early 60's.

It was partly the flat, seemingly uninflected way in which Mr. Rosenquist painted, based on his experiences as a billboard artist, that critics derided when the pictures were first exhibited. Coming on the heels of Abstract Expressionism, with its premium on surging emotions, they seemed especially cold and banal and a crude betrayal of the heroic ideals of 50's art.

Now their strengths, largely unrecognized at first, are easy to detect. Crisp and bold, these paintings possess considerable formal energy. Look at the marvelous zigzag line that slices through "Zone," dividing it in two, the circular panels attached to "Untitled (Two Chairs)" and the collage of elements in "A Lot to Like," knitted together by the image of a giant arm and hand of a man wielding a comb, which weaves in and out of the picture. In "Vestigial Appendage," the outline of a child's leg is interrupted by a sliver of a woman's face, only to metamorphose on the other side of her nose into a slender hand. Mr. Rosenquist's works are full of lines that begin as one thing and end as another.

His connection with Surrealists like Magritte has often been cited, and it's obvious in these paintings. But there's also a jazzy, jumpy rhythm to his imagery that can bring to mind Stuart Davis and Fernand Leger.

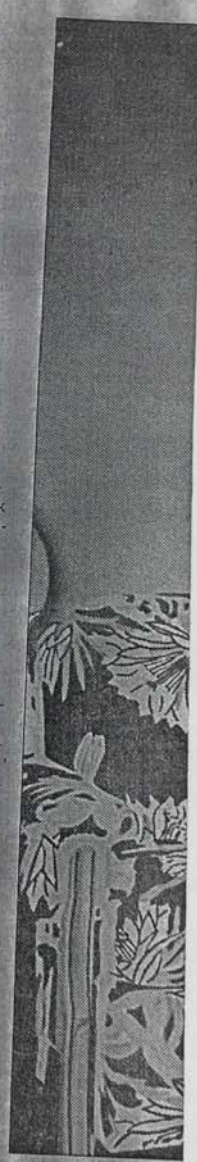
The paintings are frustratingly deceptive precisely because they look so easy to read with their familiar, giant, technicolor images. Those images are layered and juxtaposed in ways that vividly evoke the disjunctiveness of the electronic age, in which a flick of the television dial produces a stream of cacophonous sights. Mr. Rosenquist based his imagery on clippings from magazine advertisements and illustrations, which he would arrange and crop sometimes in ways that completely obscured the sources.

It's only by seeing the advertisement for tomato soup in one of the clippings on view

Today, after so much ironic 80's art, James Rosenquist's images seem almost wholesome.

here that the principal subject of "In the Red" can be deciphered. Without that clipping, the image becomes an abstraction much like paintings from the same period by the English-born Pop artist Richard Smith (a marvelous assortment of which can be seen at Richard Feigen Gallery in SoHo through June 20). Like Mr. Smith, Mr. Rosenquist used popular imagery to open up the possibilities of abstraction, not to reject it.

To see a painting like "In the Red," with one panel depicting a man's feet in brown socks and another depicting part of the naked torso of a woman in a chair, is to be reminded of the collaging technique of David Salle, the 80's star who shows now at Gagosian. Mr. Salle must have learned from Mr. Rosenquist's example. Mr. Rosenquist's paintings, however, are conspicuously more assured in their technique, and their mood is entirely different. There's nothing knowing or sly about them, and they're hardly ironic. They convey an enthusiasm for what they depict,



"Untitled (Two C

at the same time that shallowness and fast world on which they Rosenquist's images are m world, contradictory. These are works p milieu. The billboard quist earned a living ngly outmoded form

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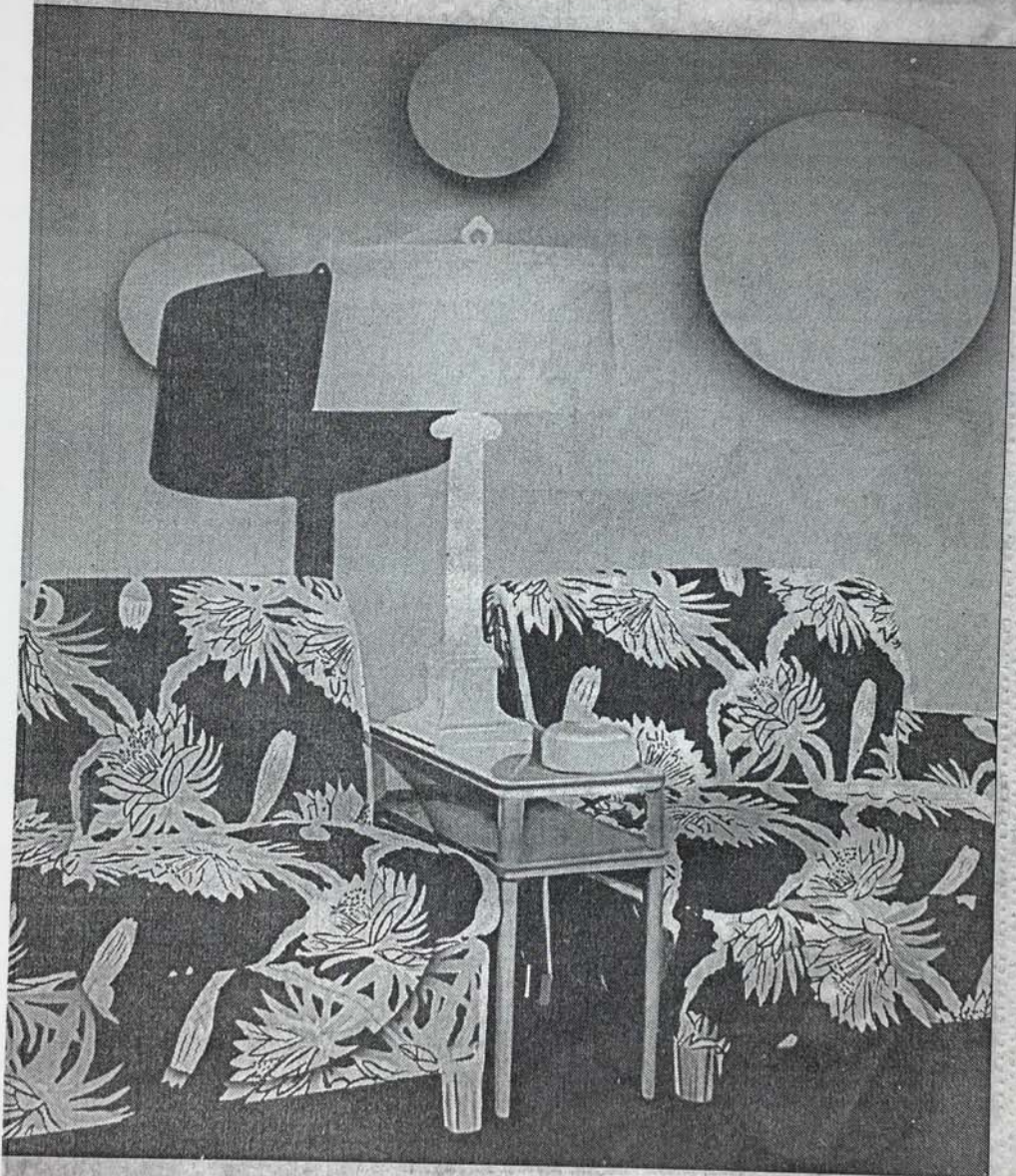
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SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 1992

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Chairs),” a 1963 Rosenquist work—His strengths, largely unrecognized at first, are easy to detect. Gagosian Gallery

they acknowledge the pace of the commercial culture based, Mr. Rosenquist wanted to be, like that and unresolved. Produced in a changing world by which Mr. Rosenquist were becoming increasingly of public address,

marginalized by television. The ads he used quickly became the stuff of nostalgia. A mood of nostalgia, if unrecognized by the artist at the time, pervades these works, which are wonderfully redolent of an era.

Today, Mr. Rosenquist's images exude an innocence and even a wholesomeness that comes across as refreshing after so much ironic 80's art. His works may be disorient-

ing, but they don't seem especially cold anymore. In contrast to the hands-off technique of so much current art, his carefully, skillfully painted surfaces, as well as his grandness of scale, seem not all that far in spirit from the work of the Abstract Expressionists. Mr. Rosenquist's pictures from the early 60's are as much a link to the art that came before them as they are a break with it. □