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RR Chronology

1925 - born Oct. 22, Port Arthur.

1949 - Black Mountain - explores time as an element in art (*The Early 1950s*, p.23) - first serious work in photography (ibid, 23 ff)

1950 - *22 The Lily White* (ibid, 29) - Parsons show - meets Cage - *Mother of God* (ibid, 29) - use of mirrors in *Stone Stone Stone - Should Love Come First* as precursor of Pop (ibid, 31)

1951 - Meets Cy Twombly at Art Students League - Blueprint painting chosen for Steichen's "Abstraction in Photography" show at MOMA - RR shows *22 The Lily White* in 9th Street show, removing it from Parsons show.

- Black Mtn. in summer - Studies photog. first time, with Hazel Larsen, at Black Mtn. Summer session - birth of Christopher, separation from Sue ~~- trips with Cy Twombly -~~ *Night Blooming* paintings - first *White Paintings* and *Black Paintings* (see RR letter to Betty Parsons re showing Whites, Oct. 19 1951, p. 230) - close interaction with Cage (65) - importance of time in *WhitePaintings* and Cage's *4'33"* (66)

1952-53 - Steichen acquires 2 RR photos for MOMA, his first works in a museum - spring trip with Cy Twombly to N.Orleans, KeyWest, and Cuba; first experiments with solvent transfer drawing.

- Europe and North Africa - *Cy and Roman Steps* another example of time element (109) - collages (111) - fetishes and boxed assemblages (112-113) - contrast with Cornell (115) - Cy joins him after Atlas job, they travel thru Morocco and Tangier, meet Paul Bowles.

1953-4 - Returns to NY in April, moves into loft at 61 Fulton St. - finishes black ptgs.(153) - sees Cage, Cunningham, Feldman, Guston; Cunningham Co. formed that summer at Black Mtn. - RR and Cy show at Stable in Sept. (158) - *Elemental Sculptures* (161) - *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (161) - dirt and gold-leaf ptgs (161) -begins work on red paintings (164-166) - meets Jasper Johns

1954 - Continues red ptgs., starts first combines (167-8) - *Untitled* includes Plymouth Rock hen, photos and drawings by Cy and Tworkov, white shoes like those man wears in photo - Egan show in December, first affirmative review, by Frank O'Hara (167-8)

1955 - Makes *Minutiaie* for Merce. Invites 4 artists to contribute to his ptg. for Stable, Johns and Weil comply. Does *Rebus* in summer, first use of "pedestrian color" - lighter and more open ground. Moves to 278 Pearl Street - Johns one floor below him.

1956 - Premier of *Nocturnes*, with set and costumes by RR

1957 - Castelli opens gallery. Visits Pearl Street, etc.

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1958 - Begins making solvent transfer drawings in earnest. First Johns and RR shows at Castelli. Castelli buys *Bed*, only RR work sold. Starts work on Dante series, applies for and is denied Guggenheim grant. Visits Phila Mus. to see Duchamp works. Moves to 128 Front Street, after Pearl Street is condemned.

1959 - Finishes *Monogram* in winter. Shows it at Castelli. Robt Scull offers to buy and donate it to MOMA, but Barr declines. (Purchased in 1964 by Moderna Museet).

1960 - Combines becoming more painterly, with larger fields of bright color and fewer photo images; using new collage elements -- hardware, electrical devices, mechanical objects. Tells reviewer he's trying to avoid "souvenir quality" of early works: "Nostalgia tends to eliminate some of the directness. Immediacy is the only thing you can trust." RR contributes money thrower to Tinguely's *Hommage*. Begins involvement with Judson group. In fall, retreats to Treasure Island, small fishing village near St. Petersburg, Fla., to complete Dante drawings, which are shown for first time at Castelli in December.

1961 - *Pantomime* and *Reservoir* incorporate fans, clocks etc to give sense of motion and time (theatrical dimension). Interview with Andre Parinaud for *Arts*. Iris Clert portrait show. Moves from Front Street to 809 Broadway, commercial bldg in which residential occupation is forbidden. Participates in symposium at MOMA, with Duchamp et al.

1962 - Starts printing with Tatyana Grosman. Performs in *Construction of Boston*. Begins work with Kluver and Harold Hodges on *Oracle*. Dylaby at Stedelijk. Meets Warhol, sees his silkscreen ptgs. Begins first series of black and white s.s.'s. (See notes)

1963 - MOMA acquires Dante drawings, as gift from anonymous donor who bought them from Castelli for $30,000. First retrospective at Jewish Museum, with 55 works spanning career to date. Premier of *Pelican* at Judson concert for Pop Festival in Wash. DC, in connection with *The Popular Image* show there. RR's father dies of heart attack. JFK assassinated - RR debates whether or not to use JFK screens in new paintings; selects image of him pointing, at press conference, and integrates it into ~~several~~ eight ptgs., such as *Retroactive I and II* (1964).

1964 - RR retrospective at Whitechapel in London. Surplus Dance Theater performances in NYC. Cunningham world tour. Wins Grand Prize for painting at Venice Biennale. Calls ass't Tony Holder in NYC, tells him to destroy approx. 150 silk screens in studio, so he can avoid repetition. Mounting problems with Cunningham and Cage, RR and others break away. But not before making *Gold Standard* in Tokyo.

1965 - First New York Theater Rally. Lobbies for bill to establish NEA. Buys former orphanage and chapel on Lafayette St., will spend a year on renovations. For Kiesler funeral, rolls tire down aisle and then paints it in 4 colors, as a "wreath."

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1966 - Contributes major share of funds for Artists' Peace Tower in LA, against the war in Vietnam. Co-founds E.A.T. with Fred Waldauer and Billy Kluver. (Becomes chairman in 1968). 9 Evenings of Theater and Engineering at 69th Regiment Armory.

1967 - Starts working at Gemini in LA, with *Booster*. (6' high, the largest lithographic print pulled to date.)

1968 - Begins 3-year collaboration with Teledyne on *Mud Muse*.

1969 - Fire in Broadway studio -- RR goes to Malibu to work on *Currents* with Robert Petersen, a printer at Gemini.

1970 - Trisha Brown starts her dance company. RR does poster for first annual Earth Day -- 300 signed and 10,000 unsigned. Establishes Change, Inc, to give small sums to artists for rent and medical costs. In late fall, establishes permanent residence in Captiva.

1971 - Establishes Untitled Press, Inc. in Captiva, with Petersen. Participates in Art and Technology at LACMA, shows *Mud Muse*. Exhibits *Cardboards* at Castelli in Oct.

1972 - Begins *Venetian* series, sculptural works inspired by his trips to Venice; made with found materials such as branches, tire treads, glass jars.

1973 - *Pages* and *Fuses* at Moulin à Papier Richard de Bas in France. Begins *Early Egyptian* series, cardboard boxes coated with glue, rolled in sand or wrapped in gauze, and painted on one side in Day-glo colors.

1974 - Begins *Hoarfrosts* (thru 1976) -- images transferred by solvent to unstretched fabric.

1975 - *Bones and Unions* series at Ghandi ashram in Ahmadabad, India. Amazed by colors in India, and gains "a new sense of fabric." Begins *Jammers*, imageless works on silk with rattan supports. Makes *Yule '75*, first of *Spreads.*

1976 - Shows *Rodeo Palace (Spread)* at Fort Worth Art Museum, which commissioned it. Lobbies Congress for Javits's bill to reinstate tax-exempt status for works donated by artists to non-profit institutions. Bill passes Senate on Aug. 4th. Major RR retrospective organized by Walter Hopps, opens in Wash DC, travels to MOMA, San Francisco, Albright-Knox, and Art Institute of Chicago. RR visits *Treasures of Tutankhamen* show at National Gallery. "I was so moved by it that I was afraid I'd never be able to paint again -- so I went to Florida and started right in…" (see rest of quote, p. 574)

1977 - Begins *Scales* (thru 1981). Does set for Cunningham's *Travelogue*, first collaboration with Merce and John for 13 years. Lobbies Congress for artists' rights.

1978 - Elected member of American Academy of Arts and Letters.

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1979 - Premiere of Trisha Brown's *Glacial Décor*, with RR sets and costumes.

1980 - Settles lawsuit brought by photographer Morton Beebe, over image of diver used in two *hoarfrosts*.

1981 - Begins *Kabal American Zephyrs*, sculptural series inspired by 19th century Japanese woodcuts. Begins work on *The 1/4 Mile or 2 Furlong Piece*, to be the longest artwork in the world, recalling past works from his career.

1982 - Travels to China to work at world's oldest paper mill. Makes two visits to Japan, works with ceramics.

1983 - Begins *Salvage* series. Premiere of Trisha Brown's *Set and Reset* at Next Wave Festival, Brooklyn Acad. Of Music - RR returns to photography.

1984 - Exhibits work in Port Arthur - first visit back there in 40 years. Writes statement on soon-to-be-announced ROCI project. (text p. 579). Project announced at United Nations on Dec. 13.

1985 - ROCI Chile in Santiago, with *Copperheads* -- photographs silkscreened on copper and brass supports. ROCI Venezuela, ROCI China, ROCI Tibet.

1986 - Begins *Gluts*, after becoming aware in Texas of how oil glut on market caused negative effects on economy. ROCI Japan.

1987 - Shows sections of *The 1/4 Mile...Piece* at Met Museum, 81 units for one year. Testifies before Senate Judiciary Committee against confirmation of Judge Robert H. Bork to Supreme Court.

1988 - Begins *Urban Bourbons*. ROCI Cuba, feted by Fidel. Travels to USSR to prepare for ROCI. *Rebus* sold at Sotheby's to private collector for $5,750,000, largest sum reached for RR work. It will be sold in 1991 at Sotheby's for ~~$6,600,000.~~ $1,300,000

1989 - ROCI USSR in Moscow. Enthusiastic reception. Begins *Borealis* series, using tarnishing agents on sheets of brass, bronze, copper to create what he calls "corrosions."

1990 - ROCI Berlin. ROCI Malaysia. Starts to make works for ROCI USA -- which he calls *Wax Fire Works*, in collab. with Don Saff. Whitney Museum mounts show of *Robert Rauschenberg: The Silkscreen Paintings, 1962-1964*, org. by Roni Feinstein.

1991 - ROCI USA, final stage in project, at National Gallery in Wash DC. All the ROCI works from 11 countries. *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s*, org. by Walter Hopps opens at Corcoran, travels to Menil Coll., MOCA Chicago, SF Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim SoHo.

1992 - Begins *Waterworks* series (thru 1994), using Iris printer.

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1993 - New studio on Captiva designed by RR and Darryl Pottorf. Receives National Medal of Arts Award, presented by Pres. and Mrs. Clinton.

1994 - Makes *Shales* using fire-wax technique. (see p. 583, 585). Labyrinth (Kotz, 284)

1995 - *Reefs*, series of tall narrow rectangular structures of mirrored aluminum; the interiors are silkscreened with photographic imagery and gestural painting in acrylic. Starts work on *Anagrams* -- Iris prints transferred to paper, but on much larger scale.

1996 - Begins *Arcadian Retreats*, on wet plaster. Enters Betty Ford Center.

1997 - Guggenheim retrospective.

1998 -

1999 - Apogamy Pods

2000 - *Synapsis Shuffle* at Whitney Museum. *Apogamy Pods* at Pace.

2001 - Breaks hip in fall - hospital - slow recovery - works on *Short Stories*

2002 - Second fall (21 April), and stroke - in hospital for a month.

2003 - Slight stroke in late January - *Short Stories* at Pace (April-May)

2004 - Retrospective in Ferrara - Hurricane Charley

2005 - *Scenarios* at Pace - Combines at Met - Cardboards at Menil - shows in Miami (Upcoming) and Lafayette, and in Nice.

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RR: The Silkscreen Paintings (catalog)

Begin in fall 1962, continued for less than two years - made 79 in all, while also doing prints at ULAE, working with Merce, performing etc. - after winning Venice Biennale prize in 1964 he telephoned his assistant in NY to destroy all the (nearly 100) screens (p. 21)

Silkscreen paintings were somewhat eclipsed at the time by emergence of Pop, Warhol, et al (pp. 22, 91)

RR "sought to reveal the order…within randomness" (23). "Meaning is inherent but impossible to pin down precisely." (24)

RR quote on a single brick and what it evokes (25)

Worked on several paintings at a time - not "schemingly" (42 - CT)

Early prints at ULAE anticipated imagery of screens (43)

Geldzahler took him to Warhol studio in fall of 1962 (45)

Images of movement: arrows, dancers, climbers scaling a wall, athletes, horse and rider (48)

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Some recurring images (45-83) - flight (birds, mosquitoes, helicopters); transportation (horse, truck, sailboat); charts, diagrams, dials; nature (clouds, open sea); cityscapes and buildings and roof water towers; the glass of water; the schematic cube; street signs; reproductions of old masters (Rubens "Toilet of Venus," [used in 9 works],Velasquez's "Venus and Cupid; Sistine Chapel with superimposed diagram; giant radio receiver/transmitter with men climbing on it; a single swimmer; baseball players and track athletes; space program (rockets, parachuting astronaut, re-entry capsule); Statue of Liberty; bald eagle; JFK - used in 8 works; Sunkist orange crate - etc.

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OFF THE WALL

On his early work, seen at Venice Biennale: "The early ones look like kids -- the kind that won't ever grow up." Also, the broken bottle in "Coca-Cola Plan." (p. 8)

RR at age 38, good description (8). And, "I can't afford to lose touch with myself." (11) His peculiar focus: "I tend to see everything in sight."
"I was going to be a preacher until I was about thirteen." (15)

Discovering there was such a thing as an artist, Huntington Library (19)

RR and Albers (33, 52)

RR's "balance in tension" (55)

His early move "in the direction of austerity, toward emptiness" (70) - "much to see but not much showing" (72)

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RR's "dude period" in late 1960s (265)

"He's a bottomless pit of needs…vicious and insulting" (266)

"Autobiography", 1967 (267)

"Signs," 1970 print that sums up the sixties (268)

RR on art and society -- "Stoned Moon" - "Currents" (288-9)

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Hopps retrospective (297 ff)

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Quotes on RR

John Cage: **ON ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, ARTIST, AND HIS WORK**

"Beauty is now underfoot wherever we take the trouble to look. (This is an American discovery.) Is when Rauschenberg looks an idea? Rather it is an entertainment in which to celebrate unfixity." "It's a joy in fact to begin over again. In preparation he erases de Kooning." "Modern art has no need of technique. (We are in the glory of not knowing what we're doing." "There is no more subject in a *combine* than there is in a page from a newspaper…Over and over again I've found it impossible to memorize Rauschenberg's paintings. I keep asking, 'Have you changed it?' And then noticing while I'm looking it changes." "The white paintings were airports for lights, shadows and particles." "There is in Rauschenberg, between him and what he picks up to use, the quality of an encounter. For the first time." (pub. originally in *Metro*, May 1961, reprinted in *Silence*)

"With all his humor, Rauschenberg also reflects, most accurately and beautifully, the tragic and elegiac spirit of his time -- whilst maintaining a quintessential lightness, sharpness, and delicacy of touch." - Brian Robertson, Whitechapel cat., p.3

Henry Geldzahler on *Rebus*, ibid. p.5; on the difference between RR's and Warhol's use of silk screens, p. 7.

"Other than Rauschenberg, no artist I know (even including Jasper Johns) takes such a polyvalent and imaginative inventory of modern life. It is this fullness of response which gains respect, and which is deeply moving." - Max Kozloff, Whitechapel cat., p. 19

"The objects collected by Rauschenberg for the first combines (1953-1955) tend to be somewhat nostalgic…After 1955 the images become more impersonal and generalized…and they reflect the urban environment completely." - Alan Solomon. Jewish Museum cat. essay. (See CT notes on reproductions in catalog).

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Walter Hopps --- Guggenheim catalog

"Rauschenberg both paved the way for, and exerted a substantial influence on, subsequent art to a degree that rivals Pablo Picasso and Willem de Kooning." (20)

What Brian O'Doherty called his "vernacular glance" in 1974. (21)

"By fusing and intermingling painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, and performance. Rauschenberg has become the preeminent practitioner of breaking down the barriers among art-making genres and methods." (21)

"…perhaps the widest array of subject matter of any artist of his time." (24)

"…an art of fusion" which carries over into the later work. "…an alchemical blending of natural and manufactured elements." (25) Use of polished metal surfaces in *Shiners* and *Borealis* series to include reflection of viewer and surroundings. (25)

"In the 1980s, the artist returned to the process of silkscreening images in his series of paintings on metal…Today he uses the digitally scanned, enlarged, and manipulated Iris-print transfer technique. / In the 1970s, Rauschenberg made an enduring and fruitful return to the exclusive use of images generated by his own camera…" (26 -- see text for more on ebb and flow of photography in his work).

"In 1992, Rauschenberg was introduced to the Iris print, a vegetable-dye, digitized output. Using water as a solvent in a transfer process, Rauschenberg was able to release the image onto the surface of another receptor. In the *Waterworks* and *Anagram* series, the images were transferred onto acid-free pulp paper. Later, in the series called *Arcadian Retreat*…the dye was transferred onto wet plaster, producing a modern-day version of the antique medium of fresco." (26-27)

"…his public support of social activism, which, over the years, has embraced racial equality, antiwar efforts, ecological issues, workshop and teaching endeavors, artists' rights and emergency funding, and human rights." (28)

"The human figure…is often a central character. When visually absent, a human presence is still implied by a utilitarian object such as a chair, bicycle, or umbrella…" 28)

"Rauschenberg's art has always dealt with the interweaving of the private and the public…" (28)

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Kotz Book
(new edition)

More than 6,000 works of art, and counting.

ROCI - pp. 15-41.

"It was a groundbreaking personality, in the spotlight and at ease. Its uncanny magnetism did a lot toward creating a climate favorable to change." - p. 108, fromBrian O'Doherty in *American Masters*.

Merce Cunningham: RR "was and still is the finest lighting designer in American theater." (p.117)

RR and JFK's death, soon after his own father's - deciding to use the screens (p. 172)

The altercation with Robert Scull (p. 173)

Currents "the most serious journalism I ever attempted." (180)

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Hopps' 1973 retrospective and its reception (209-215)

Kabal America Zephyrs - "fantasy-macabre" (215) -- "I would love for my work to have the early crudeness, but I'm not going to affect it…" - RR to Tono (218)

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The 1/4 Mile or 2 Furlong Piece - (255)

"If Picasso invented collage, then Rauschenberg completely re-invented it" (Nan Rosenthal) - Johns on the "artist who has invented the most since Picasso." (259)

ROCI finale in Wash DC - Pottorf came to work for him in 1981, encouraged him to paint on aluminum -- also to build new house (276-277)

Whitney show of silkscreen ptgs introduces new generation to his work in 1990 (see Roberta Smith quote) - "The Early 1950s" at Corcoran (276)

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Borealis series -- 95 ptgs on baked enamel-coated aluminum panels and mirrored aluminium, created during 7 year period beginning 1990 (277)

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"Tribute 21", silkscreen prints to honor 21 individuals -who? (288)

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Honors pile up - RR's market booming, *Rebus* resold in 1991 for $7.3 million -- MOMA buys *Factum II* in 1999 (298-9)

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Breaks hip twice, two strokes in 2001 - despair and recovery - how he works today - *Scenarios* - (305- 308)

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Leo Steinberg
("Encounters with Rauschenberg")

"…a frankly personal lecture -- as much about me as about Rauschenberg." (1)

Quoting RR: "I am always wondering what will look good in a picture." (10)

On RR's ethical quality: "Of course, the trick is to perform a moral gesture with wit, and that takes imagination." (12)

Talking to RR about emotional content in Johns: "He listened as few artists will, if you're tactless enough to talk to them about someone else. And when I had done, he said quietly and in dead earnest, 'I think you are very close.'" (15)

On RR's abandonment of drawing: "…he sensed where he was heading -- toward a visual art that had no further use for the genius of drawing." (20)

On Erased de Kooning: "…I can think of no single de Kooning drawing that is famous the way some of his paintings are, except the one Bob erased." (22)

On the flatbed picture plane in RR: "…I tend to regard the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal as expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture." (33)

Preceded in this (above) by Duchamp and others, but "On the New York scene the great shift came in Rauschenberg's early work" - specifically in the first work he admits into his canon, the 1949 *White Painting with Numbers*. (36)

In silkscreen paintings of the 1960s, "the images -- each in itself illusionistic -- kept interfering with one another; intimations of spatial meaning forever canceling out to subside in a kind of optical noise." (42)

"I once heard Jasper Johns say that Rauschenberg was the man who in this century had invented the most since Picasso. What, I think, he invented was a pictorial surface that let the world in again."

Bed and its (mis)interpretations - (47-51)

Goat and ditto - Rosalind Krauss on RR's "uncontainable network of associations" (56)

In the late work, "I feel that something of Rauschenberg's unique gift has been traded in for the commonplace of mere meaning…Meanwhile, I suspect that much of the later work I have trouble responding to may be collaborative." (62-66) Finds good in *Washington's Golden Egg,* whose parts remain "immiscible." (67)

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Leo Steinberg, "Reflections on the State of Criticism"
(first pub. in *Artforum*, March 1972; reprinted in October's RR issue)

Drew a bead on Greenberg's formalism and its "interdictory stance." (7)

Summarizes Greenberg doctrine in Greenberg's words (10). Shows how flawed it is by referring to old master art. "All important art, at least since the Trecento, is preoccupied with self-criticism. Whatever else it is about, all art is about art." (19)

"At one historical moment painters get interested in finding out just how much their art can annex, into how much non-art it can venture and still remain art. At other times they explore the opposite end to discover how much they can renounce and stay in business.(21)

The Flatbed Picture Plane (27-29)

"…it seemed at times that Rauschenberg's work surface stood for the mind itself…" (32)

"The all-purpose picture plane underlying this post-modernist painting has made the course of art once again nonlinear and unpredictable:…It is part of a shakeup which contaminates all purified categories." (36)

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Rosaline Kraus, "R. and the Materialized Image)
(in October's RR issue)

"…part of what is urged by its [RR's work's] layered clutter and disarray, is, surely, that the masterpiece as conventionally conceived is a concept which is itself deeply compromised." (40)

RR's reinvention of collage -- "such that in Rauschenberg's hands the meaning and function of the collage elements bore little relation to their earlier use in the work of Schwitters or the Cubists." (40)

"…a kind of temporal unfolding that was like that of hearing or reading a sentence…the kind of extended temporality that is involved in experiences like memory, reflection, narration, proposition." (41)

"Rauschenberg endows them [images] with a sense of having to be encountered through time." (52)

"For it is exactly the notion of memory…that is redefined by these pictures." (52)

Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory"

"…Rauschenberg has repeatedly said, 'I always wanted my works -- whatever happened in the studio -- to look more like what was going on outside the window.'…"

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Rauschenberg/Rose

BRose: "His method is to oscillate between the two poles of a minimal austerity and that of an elaborated, celebratory, florid excess." (4)

"Rauschenberg's choice is to cast his lot with innocence and to continue actively to pursue perhaps unrealizable goals rather than to give in to the forces of passivity and entropy." (5)

"Although his early works…anticipated minimal art and Arte Povera, and his introduction of recognizable imagery made pop art possible, Rauschenberg is still most intelligible within the context of abstract expressionism…Rauschenberg was the first American artist to unashamedly snatch his imagery from reproductions…" (6)

RR: "I'm equally at home with nothing or too much." (11)

Cage was "the only one who gave me permission to continue my own thoughts." (34) One night, leaving a party, Cage said to him: "You know, Bob, there wouldn't have had to be but one of us." (48)

"The strongest thing about my work, if I may say this, is the fact that I chose to ennoble the ordinary." (59)

"I don't want my personality to come out through the piece. That's why I keep the television on all the time." (72)

"When I lived on Broadway, I would go out to the middle of Union Square and take Poloroids to have made into silkscreens. I needed some very simple images, like perhaps a glass of water, or a piece of string, or the bathroom floor with a roll of toilet paper on it. They didn't need to have any immediate emotional content. I needed them to dull the social implications, to neutralize the calamities that were going on in the outside world." (74)

Re Judson Group: "It seemed like there were always more performers than audience." (88)

"John Cage wrote an article about Jasper in which I was quoted. I said I thought he was in a most dangerous position. That was years ago. The dangerous position was that of walking a tightrope that was on the floor with no place to fall." (89)

Quarter Mile Piece - "That was my solution to the confusion that was the seventies." (90)

On Matisse: "Once he understood excess, then he could get really simple." (110)

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"My art is about just paying attention -- about the extremely dangerous possibility that *you* might be art ." (111)

"Innocence is not like virginity. Virginity you can have only once. Innocence you have to nourish every day." (125)

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De Kooning (Stevens and Swan)

"I'm not interested in 'abstracting' or taking or taking things out or reducing painting. I paint this way because I can keep putting more and more things in it: drama, anger, pain, love, a figure, a horse, my ideas about space." (p. 250)

"According to *ArtNews*'s Tom Hess, 'The picture was no longer supposed to be Beautiful, but True -- an accurate representation or equivalence of the artist's interior sensation and experience. If this meant that a painting had to look vulgar, battered, and clumsy -- so much the better.'" (p.267)

"DeKooning loved the atmosphere of ideas, though he recoiled from intellectual snobbery. He could almost feel ideas in the tips of his fingers: they actually made him want to paint." (p, 277)

Re the Club - "First, it was decreed that no women, communists, or homosexuals could be members of the Club…" (p. 287)

Rosenberg on the new painting, as "inseparable from the biography of the artist…It is to be taken for granted that in the final effect, the image, whatever be or not be in it, will be in *tension.*" (p. 351)

"De Kooning required doubt 'to keep off-balance'…" (p. 354)

RR and the Erased De Kooning (pp. 358-360)

De Kooning's becoming an alcoholic (pp. 365-5)

"…it was exactly the impurity of life and art that excited in de Kooning the sensation of truth." (p. 392)

"Rauschenberg once said that de Kooning's 'aura eclipsed his shadow.'" (p.431)

"He felt, said Brockman, that he had been symbolically raped by Rauschenberg when the younger artist erased his drawing." (p.455)

DeK: "It seems that a lot of artists, when they get older, they get simpler: they feel their own miracle in nature; a feeling of being on the other side of nature." (p.551)

"'I am becoming freer,' said de Kooning. 'I think you can do miracles with what you have if you accept it.'" (p.601)

DeK's 1983 Whitney show a disappointment (p.605)

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RR 1
(12/12/04)

On the "Scenarios," asked how many more he might do: "I'll do them until I get good at it, and then I'll stop."

He's in the studio, watching the cooking channel on TV. There was relatively little storm damage here. A few leaks in the roof -- they put out pails and garbage bins to catch the water, but no damage to the paintings hanging on the walls. Most of these ~~had~~ have been sent up to NYC ~~earlier anyhow. Now~~ There are ten new "Scenarios" hanging in the studio and one lying flat on the floor. They look terrific (see description, p.7). Clarity and authority, with a lot of open space. Bob is sitting in a sort of high office chair on wheels, by one of the long work tables, facing the TV. His paralyzed right hand is bent at a right angle to the forearm, the long fingers slightly contorted but not ungraceful. There are red blotches on his face from recent radiation treatments for a skin cancer, but otherwise he looks OK. He seems a little quieter, waits for others to speak, but responds with his old wit and cackling laugh. He's drinking from a large glass -- white wine and soda, with ice -- which gets replenished from time to time.

Czar, the only remaining dog (Samoyed), has just had his coat trimmed. He's a quiet, docile animal whom Bob adopted five or so years ago, because the people who had owned him couldn't keep him any more and were taking him to the pound. Bob thinks he was about three years old then, and is now eight or nine. Czar doesn't like to go out for walks without a leash -- he lived on the street for a while, and hated it.

Last night, we arrived around 5 PM, talked for a while, and then were joined by Barry Levinson and his wife, a young architect and his wife, and several others including TK and TK, neighbors on Captiva who have known Bob for years -- he used to have an art gallery in TK, then one in Naples. A convivial group. Bob and Barry L. met about six months ago and took to each other right away. He's an open, sunny sort of guy, very friendly, who tells funny and often self-deprecating stories. We all went out to dinner eventually, to Ellington's, a noisy place with live jazz, on Sanibel. Bob sat in his wheelchair at the head of the table, with Darryl on his right to help him eat. He seemed to enjoy the evening a lot, laughed often, did not subside into illness.

We began interviewing him around 5 PM today.

Calling the new series "Scenarios" -- does that imply narrative? "Yeah, like a fulfillment of the whole thing. 'Short Stories' had ambiguous references to the page…I don't know, it could also be just a nice word."

The images are not his own photographs. "Because I can't take photographs now. Because of my arm. The way I take photographs, I never put the camera on automatic, that's my morality about taking pictures. They're all individual, and focused, and executed. They are pictures that other people have taken, recently." Did you direct them? "Now and then. So far I've been very unsuccessful. I told people, 'Don't do any

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selecting. If you think anything would be a bad shot, take it.' And I've had some success there, but I don't know, you can't advise them to do something that's negative, even in photography. [laughs] I have my taste, so I know what's awful. Or interesting, because awful is interesting."

What are you looking for when you take a picture? "Usually, ridiculous contrasts. Like, this should not be in the same photograph with this."

He gave no specific instructions as to things he wanted to show. "There are people around, like, say, the circus comes to town, and they like to go take photographs and bring them back…"

How hard for him not to photograph? "Oh, terrible. That's one thing that I miss more than --." How has he coped with this handicap? "I hope, with dignity. [laughs] I can't stand myself or anybody else if they start whining. It is a tragedy, and it's not going to be over soon, if ever. I just have to figure out ways to continue without being so distraught that I don't function."

He selects the photographs he wants, tells them what size to make them (changes his mind about size sometimes, when he sees them with the others), moves them around with his left hand. Makes decisions about color, dark or light. "Kevin puts the image down where I've placed it. That's a job I'm always here for…It has all the complexity of my painting it myself, but you have to have a better reach!"

How did he reach the point where he could do this? "I just started…One of the reasons why these are tighter is because I don't have the freedom that I had, like being able to slop around with the paint. They've simplified themselves…The focus is more exact. It sort of changes or defines the message of what they're trying to say. Because there's nothing else."

Do you like it that they're tighter? "Ah-h-h, right now it is. I'm having a good time." This is the first series since his illness -- for the "Short Stories" he still had both hands. Did he ever wonder whether he'd be able to work or not? "Oh, sure. That takes about fifteen minutes. It goes with the same feeling as, 'Is this good enough? Am I finished?' I know when these are finished, more quickly than when they're looser."

Photography and Bob - the lifelong fascinating with it, isn't that contradictory, considering his feeling for collaboration with materials. Photography is at one remove from that, isn't it? What attracted him to the medium? "I don't know. It was immediate, and the moral issues were a concern. Like, what ethical issues when you make a photograph -- no cropping, all my hang-ups. You don't change anything. I saw Christopher once taking a photograph, and there was a package of cigarettes in the photograph, thrown away on the street, and he said, 'I just can't move that, but it'll ruin my picture.' …" But a photograph is a chemical substitute for something in the real world; does it function for you as something in the real world? "Yes. Just like a

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photograph of this vase of flowers and the vase of flowers -- it's part of the real world, too." It's not one step removed? "I have to piss." Nurse brings the bottle.

He just tells people to take pictures. Not only the people in the studio -- anyone. Not necessarily with his camera. Expensive digital cameras don't work for his purpose, they louse up the printing process. [Why?]

I remind him of our first meetings, when I came to the Broadway studio and he was working on the silkscreen paintings. He'd said then that, after working for several years on the combines, it was very exciting to be able to work flat again. Does he have anything like that feeling now, with the Scenarios? "Yes, that's what these are. They look so exact, too. I don't know exactly what that means, but it's like you can't deny that this is a *fact*. It doesn't have that quality of meandering between things." Is he close to the end of this series? "No. I can't tell, until something changes. Usually, something steps in and has to be done. It invited itself. I mean, I don't go looking for a change. The series before 'Short Stories' was completely without text, so I think that's what led into this, something that represents something else." The series before S.S. was "Apogamy Pods," the word apogamy referring to something that reproduces itself without sexual contact. "I just found the word in the dictionary, and the more I inquired… Don't ask me how they do it! [much laughter]. It was such a small fragment of information, there was no conclusion, so the canvases had to carry the mystery. I tried to paint very dumbfoundedly! [laughs] But each one of these [Scenarios) is a puzzle to put together."

What's his reaction to people saying his later work is not as good as the early work? "I don't hear it." Has anything any critic said about your work been of any use to you? "Yes, that Yves-Alain Bois. He was talking about an all-white minimal show…I just thought his overall perspective was so on the point." Leo Steinberg? No. "He played me and Jasper off, and Jasper won! And I wasn't even playing. But I don't want to talk about critics."

Some of the people who've figured in his life:

Cy Twombly - Met at Art Students League. "I really liked the way he approached painting. With a kind of freshness. Letting the painting be just whatever came out, out of his hands, out of his head, out of his heart."

Jasper Johns - "He was a Sunday painter. He had Sunday off from his job at Marboro Bookstore. I just loved the way his mind worked." Suzi Gablik introduced them; later, she brought Jasper over to Sari Dienes' apartment, just down the street from Marboro on 57th Street. "I was the janitor at the Stable Gallery then. So we became good friends. Rachel Rosenthal was a friend of Jasper. I was already on Fulton Street…" He'd built a bathtub out of a fish crate there, but there being only cold water, it wasn't very functional. "I developed a very practical habit. I'd go to a party, and I could take a shower, wash my hair, and dry off in less time that it would take most people just to go to the bathroom." He had one of Jasper's early paintings of potatoes, which he (Bob) altered

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because he "thought they'd look better as oranges." Jasper had destroyed all his early work before Bob knew him, but he was still a Sunday painter then.

Seeing each other's work every day -- what was that like for you? "It wasn't about self-expression, and mine wasn't either. Our differences remained dormant." Did you both feel you were treading on new territory? "Yeah, but it was my job. We weren't sharing this" -- just doing it. No discussions.

Was there something to the southern connection among you, Cy, and Jasper? "I think so. I think all over the world, the most sensitive artists come from the southern part of the country, because it's warmer. And we are examples of that. Northern artists think we don't know anything…But look at Italy. The talented people come from the south… And the other thing is that we were in the north, we southerners.

"And we're all still working! Cy didn't change much, and neither did Jasper." Did you? "I think so. I've done more, just in the sense of activity. I'm involved with the dance world, and ROCI was -- it cost me seven million dollars out of my own pocket. [END SIDE A]

(not recorded: I ask him about de Kooning's late work. "I like it." When I say it has a lot of empty space in it, he thinks a moment, then says, "I wouldn't call it empty. I'd say open.")

On John Cage: Of the people he was close to in the fifties and sixties, "The one who was outstanding, was John. We just had simultaneous thoughts, mutually." How was he encouraging to you? "Through actions. He would do something, and I would think, God, that's brilliant, that's marvelous. Then I would do something, and it wouldn't surprise him. We made each other feel very comfortable in this world, and that's a big one."

On his situation now: "Traveling is a little tough. But I'm forced to travel, and I'm sure that it's going to get easier, the more I do it… I'm afraid it's hurting Darryl's work, so I'm trying to solve as many of my problems as I can. If it's too much for me, it must be too much for him, too."

On the night Leo Castelli and Ileana came to Front Street to see his work, and ended up offering Jasper a show: "The moral of that story is, have your own ice cubes!" [laughs]. But how did Bob deal with the hurt? "I tolerated it. It obviously would give me second thoughts, and I had plenty. I'd just cooked a terrific meal on a hot plate, and for the love of an ice cube…[much laughter] I guess it was a year and a half later that Leo [gave me a show -- actually much less]. But I never felt badly about him [Jasper]. It functioned as an insecurity."

His relations with Ileana: "Leo was more like Jasper -- anything that didn't require emotions was safer than anything else. I just loved Ileana from the very beginning, and still go see her all the time." But was there ever a time when you felt that she withdrew her support? "No. Even now." "There was a meeting, and I was a fool again. Ileana and

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Leo, I don't remember if they told me separately, I think maybe that did, that they wanted to talk to me and come by the studio. They came by together, and I think Leo said that he just couldn't sell my work. The sales didn't fall off or anything. But that broke my heart, that Ileana sort of agreed. That took a little time to get over. But I was much stronger because of it. But I went on just loving Ileana." He thinks this was around the time he as doing the Spreads and Scales. "I just kept having shows" -- not with Leo. Was the relationship with Ileana maternal? "We were more like girl friend and boy friend. We just had fun."

Cage again: His involvement with Zen -- did that interest you? "John used to say that he had spent…years studying Zen, and I was natural Zen. The first thing I asked was, 'What's Zen?' I think that's pretty Zen-ish." What about chance? "I couldn't make it work for painting. It didn't interest me that much. I had respect for coincidence, and luck, but those things in action." On the use of chance in Cunningham's "Story" -- "That was just my job."

"Nothing is left to chance with Jasper."

He agrees that many of the decisions in the "Scenarios" on the wall here could have been different ones -- they didn't have to be the way they are.

Trisha Brown - "When I was doing my own choreography, Trisha was always the person I first thought about. Her and Steve Paxton. I used Carolyn Brown, too, in Pelican. The way I worked, we didn't rehearse together, including me. I rarely even did things before I did it. I didn't want people to interact, like, while you're doing this I'll do this. The performance was the first time everybody had gotten together. And Trisha was good at that, because her forte was improvisation. She did everything with determination, clarity, but surprise. There was that freshness, which is still her main -- attribute."

"I've been around so many dancers, and the one thing they can't do is work without their audience. Trisha didn't know what to do for a solo, and I said, why don't you do the most difficult thing that any dancer could do. She said what's that? And I said, don't look at the audience. And she did a *beautiful* piece -- did you see it, ever? And when Nureyev wanted to turn it into a duet, Trisha gave him the other side of her body, and they played backwards and forwards at the same time."

Ever any interest in making films? "I once had a five-dollar camera. I spent a whole year doing a movie. And when I played it back, there wasn't anything on it. It was all just burned up film, overexposed film. But it was a beautiful camera -- that was the trap. An antique. It was sort of an abstract thing…" Done around time of silkscreen paintings.

Combines - "I'm wondering how far they're going to misinterpret combines, and what that's going to lead to. Because I've heard of some things that -- but I want the show to be as rich as possible, so I'm not going to tell anybody what to do or what not to do. There were special paintings that were called combines. They just got more architectural, which I used in my own personal economy, I used the extra space to keep working. Their

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standing out from the wall, that gave me tons of extra space. I really don't mind what aren't combines in the combine show." The Guggenheim retrospective had a lot of combines, but this show will have many more.

Was "Rebus" the first combine? "'Rebus' wasn't a real combine. What is meant by a combine is three dimensions. And the Man With the White Shoes, that was the real beginning. And 'Odalisk,' with the chicken on top." The man with white shoes was no one Bob ever knew -- had been an ad (?). The actual white shoes "may have been mine."

Many of the combines were done on Fulton Street. Bob was going to the Cedar Bar all the time in those days. "Everybody would pour each other drinks every time a painting was sold, so you'd rush right over to the Cedar Bar and put everything on the house."

Barnett Newman -- "I just loved him. He was the only painter of his generation that used to come to all the Judson performances. He just wanted to know what was happening." But is it true that Newman was upset about Bob's white paintings? "Yes, it was. But all the accusations he made about my white paintings, they'd already said about his stripes…" "Bill de Kooning told me what Barney had said, when he saw my white paintings at the Stable Gallery, and it was exactly a quote from Elaine de Kooning, about Barney: 'Does he think it's easy?'" [laughter]

"Bob Ryman never did an all-white painting, anyway. It's either white-on-white, or white on canvas, or shaped white."

On drinking - "There weren't too many nights I didn't show up at the Cedar Bar. It was so rich, with the contacts -- and there was no other way that I could see them." But when did drinking become a regular part of your working life? "I don't know, I guess it started at the openings." But when you went to the Betty Ford clinic, had you acknowledged that you were an alcoholic? "Yeah." And it had become a serious problem? "Yep. But I didn't have any of those sob stories, like I'd get drunk and crash the car. When I was at Betty Ford's, you have to do all kinds of things, can be quite embarrassing. Tell you life story. I started off by saying, I'm kind of embarrassed, because I didn't have any of the adventures that you-all have been talking about. I'm self-employed, so how can I lose my job? I never stopped working. So I began telling 'em what being an artist is like. They finally stopped me, because I'd been talking so long, and I was only up to the second show. I took 'em all through Europe, and Sweden -- they loved it! The group asked if I could continue the next day!" [But he didn't]. And he didn't stop drinking after Betty Ford's. Now he drinks watered wine, "and when I go out to dinner, and there's an open bar, I have a vodka and club soda." But has drinking helped his creative process? "It relaxes me." [END RR 1]

[RR 2]

"You develop mannerisms about drinking. So, one of the things they teach you at Betty Ford's is, don't ever be without something to drink. I still don't enjoy wine, but it's about

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the easiest thing." But doesn't always have something to drink mean something non-alcoholic? "That's what she means!"

I say it used to occur to me that he drank to bring himself down to the level of the rest of us. RR: "That doesn't sound like me, or you."

Last night at dinner, Bob talked about his jobs as a kid -- D. asks him to do that again. When he was ten or eleven, he talked himself into a job at the local department store. "I needed money, and it wasn't at home. I had this idea that the local department store, Bluestein's, if they had a child working in the boy's department, the customers could point at him and say, 'He's a little taller than that -- come here, son.' I volunteered for the job, and I got it." Next job was as a lifeguard at a pool. "Nobody ever drowned, but I made it clear to anyone that was swimming that I couldn't swim." He was a teenager then. He also sold Christmas cards in July. His mother did this in December, "but she didn't go after the summer crowd. I made more than she did." Went door to door.

The summer of 1948 when he was in Paris, he had no idea that Gertrude Stein was still there.

Bob is getting tired, so we take a break - I use it to look more closely at the Scenarios in the studio. 1) images of Greek or Roman statuary across the top - same image repeated - triangular sign - two railroad cars - blue trash can - open space; 2) mirror image of sign at top - black space with arrow - crude (child's?) drawing of a bed with quilt - lot of white space on left - laundry hanging from balcony; 3) more colorful - photo of large bird, maybe osprey or hawk, wings spread, landing on nest - graffiti on truck: "Hip-Hop the Hot Spot to Eat…on Avenue A" - man in T-shirt trying to start a motorcycle - car with images painted on it - upper right, truck painted red and green with a strawberry image, and sign "Organic Strawberries" on patch of grass - tenement buildings; 4) spectrum of colors on umbrella - string of lights with bulbs out except one - pipe with gauge - on right an enlarged photo of a dozen or more people in bathing suits, sitting or standing on rocks near water - concrete wall behind them with sign saying RE-MOVE; 5) more crowded picture - rural images - store with Exxon sign and beer sign - images of industrial equipment, huge blue hose -- sign "2 for $3"; 6) also crowded, people under a big tent, maybe a rural auction - sign for pet shop, with image of angel fish - barber shop - shopping cart full or oranges by fruit stand - trash with paint cans - crudely painted sign for beer; 7) very colorful, kids playing - painted signs - more kids - empty space - food stand - motorcycle - tables and chairs - big black dog, large scale (on all of these Bob's signature, done with his left hand in quavery capitals); 8) not framed yet, mirror images, "Tickets Sold Here" - trailer - bicycle hooked to it / "Keep Out" - tree -- boats pulled up on land - Circus.

→ and "2k+3" a "2k+4"

In middle of the room are a great many disparate objects that were once part of the "Dylaby" exhibition - broken up after the exhibition, and Ileana had it put in storage in Europe; recently taken out of storage and sent here - old chairs, metal tubs, pieces of twisted metal, weathervane, birdcage, old-fashioned wooden sled - a pile of kitchen clocks - wheelbarrow - broken bicycle - typing tables, etc. (END SIDE A)

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RR 2 - 12/13/04

Invu with **Bradley Jeffries** - Bob fell and broke his hip on April 30, 2001, in the Lafayette Street house in New York -- got up in the middle of the night and tripped. He was flown down to Florida, had emergency surgery five days later for perforation of his intestines. Almost a year later, on April 20, 2002, he fell again. The EMPs came and checked him over, said he was OK, but when he got up the next am he wasn't. He'd had a brain bleed as result of fall. Entered hospital 21 April, 2002, was there for a month. (Fort Myers). Had a little stroke in late January, 2003, and was in hospital for a couple of days. "But as soon as he could get mobile, he was always back at work. He didn't really stop. We have registry books for everything, and you can see, for 2001, it only goes to April 24."

Bradley came to work for Bob as photo assistant in 1980 - her then husband had been hired that year as Bob's photographic printer, for "In and Out of City Limits" books. She started the registry for his photographs. Started helping out in the office, doing correspondence and filing. Then Bob turned the office over to her in 1981. Darryl came the same year.

Bob built his present house in 1991. How many houses in all now? The studio, the bay house, the fish house, the Weeks house, the Stamford cottage, the print shop, the road house, this office building (former studio), the beach house, Bob's present house -- ten houses. He used to own one up by the post office, called the tree house - he bought it because it backed up on the "jungle;" set it up as guest house but didn't need it, so he sold it. He's got about 35 acres - still largest private landholder on the island, "as far as we know." Renovations now going on in almost all of them. First Charley, then Francis hit them. The fish house lost its roof - they researched it to get the same timbers, etc. for restoration. The studio held up pretty well, but there was some water damage. Bob's house -- a window in his upstairs bathroom blew out, and then the skylight went, and the spiral staircase was sucked out and the water poured in.

How does Bob sustain all this expense? "Well, early on, he had a lot of mortgages. And then he'd pay off the mortgages when money came in. When ROCI came along, he needed more money. He'd sold the art works from his collection, all he could part with, and so he mortgaged his properties again. Gradually, as art works sold -- we're now mortgage-free, and have been so for a long time. I mean, something is always going wrong…One of the reasons we could get people to come right away when the storm hit was because they knew him, they'd been coming here for many years."

RR 12/13/04

He tell us about the upcoming show in Nice, which will have Gluts and later works, mainly from his own collection. David White is in Nice now for that. This in addition to combine show, Miami and Lafayette, La. shows. "I'm very curious about the repercussions to so much exposure."

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We look at photo of Bob's last show in Ferrara, with people looking at "Labyrinth" in the snow, under umbrellas. "The bright colors of the umbrellas, and the snow falling -- " he loved it.

But the pressures of renewed exposure: "Well, there's no way to anticipate it, except with either doubt or fear." [laughs]

I ask about the sixties, when Bob got so involved with performance, political and social action, art and technology etc., somewhat at the expense of work in the studio. "No, the experiments on art and technology produced about four very complicated pieces." But his primary focus was not on his own work in the studio. "That was my work!" But he agrees it was a different pattern and focus. Was it a very exciting time for him? "Yes. Because I was way over my head with technology. And none of the people I was collaborating with were artists. And so I had to trust myself with my spontaneous ignorance. [laughter - he does enjoy his own choice of words]. But was art and tech a worthwhile thing to have done? "Oh, yes. Not only for me, but to invite other people to step across that boundary. I think a lot of the video art came out of that period…" But didn't all this somewhat interfere with your own reputation as an artist? "Probably did, yes." Any regrets over that? "No, because I got more out of it. I wasn't really that interested in regretting anything. If it's a successful mistake, then you applaud. [laughs]. My career is unknown to me. Other people understand it, but I'm not that interested in it. I think it's sort of indecent to have things so worked out, or to work them out, so things end up like you thought they should. It's so boring. You think I want to be what I am? [laughter] But you have to expose yourself to more, and see what the consequences are. And with me, I've really just had great fun working with technology. It's frustrating, because nobody knows -- even engineers from Bell Labs didn't know why something was going wrong, so we just kept working…"

"That group of performances at the Armory, a lot of the artists had a very suspicious sense of collaboration with somebody they didn't know. I think the cure for that is, get to know them."

What about the urge on the part of many artists then to go "beyond art?" "I think they did. I think that's even true today -- I mean, it's still opening up. The galleries are not in the kind of control that they once were, when you had eleven artists and they're all yours. Artists don't live that way any more."

Warhol's importance? "I think what Warhol did, he supplied a new attitude that was more critical to aesthetics. I think that what he picked to be a subject, and he would go through a series --like the dollar sign. Each one of his things was kind of a series. And I think he challenged traditional aesthetics by that. Also he built a new attitude about the preciousness of art. He didn't even have to do his work, because he had helpers -- right from the start. That was unheard of…Andy Warhol was kind of a trademark for their own involvements, and he quickly took advantage of it."

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The Judson idea that you could do all these things without special skills - he agrees that this idea has not continued to be a useful influence.

Moving to Captiva - was it because you were tired of all that activity? A return to the studio? "No. At this time, there were so many intimate breakups, so many that were friends of mind, that I was beginning to think of them as my fault. And I had to get out of that. I went to an astrologer, and he said, go to the sun and the water and your problems will be taken care of. That's what I did." Did he actually feel he was having a negative influence on his friends? "Yes. I know that's sick. It was happening all around me, people were breaking up left and right. Nearly all of them were. I took the blame for it all!"

"But I said, when I decided to settle here, that if I ever felt lost or bored, I'd go back to New York and live. And I've never had to do it. Like two days after I was here -- that was when the ferry boat quit at six o'clock at night or something, and I didn't have anything to do in Fort Myers anyway, but it frightened me to have to be here." He was by himself then, in the beach house. "I took stock in myself, and tried to figure out what's the material that's international, that no matter where I travel it'll be available, and it turned out to be cardboard and sand…" Before his material had been urban. "That was the problem, I couldn't just walk out and get anything but a fish box. But there were endless possibilities working with the cardboard box. It's already something, and easily changed into something else." Walter Hopps and Josef Helfenstein are doing a show of the cardboards at the Menil in 2006.

Silkscreens -- It was Ileana — or Henry Geldzahler? who took Bob to Warhol's studio in the early 60s, to see his silkscreen paintings. Bob was also using screens then, but differently, "as a tool to make something else, where his was featured." Bob's were really an extension of his transfer drawings. "They allowed me to take advantage of my own photographs." Warhol

Off the record -- "I didn't find his [Warhol's] crowd too interesting. Everybody seemed so superficial, and so sensational."

Duchamp - "a kind of weird hero. He came to see Jasper's and my studios, because of what Teeny had told him about us -- that we were safe." Had dinner with him many times in New York. [END RR 2]

RR 3 (12/13/04)

ROCI - he started thinking about it when he was in China the first time. The Chinese seemed so isolated, from each other and from the world. It struck him that "if everybody knew enough about each other, then everything would be more tolerant, there wouldn't be so much hatred and prejudice going around. That was how it started." He thought he could get corporate sponsorship -- "I thought it was a natural for some big company. But everybody refused. Isn't that something? Because the possibilities in advertising were just enormous. The real thing. In the end, when the show was going to be at the National Gallery, some communications company wanted to sponsor that show, and I said, what

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the fuck, I went backrupt doing it, you're not going to come in at the last minute. I had to put up my houses and everything."

He sold a lot of his art collection -- an early Jasper Johns with the names for colors written on, Warhol's "Dick Tracy," Twomblys. "But I was having a good time." The crew that traveled with him was about four people, "if you count Don Saff, who was kind of the scout who goes out and sees what the space is like. But then we involved as many people as we could -- universities, and art students, and… It was seven years in all, and you're working the whole time." Did it achieve what you wanted it to? "Yes, except that I don't see any excess of peace. But you can't be successful when Bush is the President. His fortune comes from weapons and oil, so he can't stop wars, or he'd go broke." But do you still feel that art can "encourage individual consciousness?" "I didn't learn anything! It was a good proposal, but -- ."

Did ROCI hurt your art world reputation? "No. I know I missed a lot socially…But I wouldn't take it back, because I was doing a lot more overseas, in odd countries, than I ever could in anything that could be local."

What do you think is art's most important contribution to the world? "What do you?" I say that for me, the idea of art-as-communication has less intensity; that I think art can reveal things about life and the world that would not be revealed otherwise, and that in a way it can justify life, especially in times like this when the world seems to be going to hell. It's one of the things to hold to. "Yes. Art's the only thing that can make you feel optimistic, or that there's hope."

There's been a huge expansion in the idea of what art can be, I say, and away from its being just precious objects for the rich. "Some of the most outstanding art has been primitive, or folk."

What would you say is the strongest element in your work? "Perseverance. Curiosity. That I don't know where I'm going, but I'll be there on time."

What period are you in now? "I hate to say it, but I think I'm playing a cripple."

"Tribute 21" - Bob selected 21 people in 21 different categories. This was done around 1995. People in the 20th century who would be significant in the 21st century. There were 21 images (prints) - get the book of it. The series was shown at the Whitney.

"Synapsis Shuffle" was done in 2000, at the Whitney. Leonard Lauder bought it for the museum. It was done at a warehouse on Long Island. People selected by Bob drew lots on 52 paintings, panels in different sizes but the same height; then put them together to "make a Rauschenberg." They could also argue, and bargain with each other on choices. The game was done again, in Cologne, and may be repeated elsewhere in future.

How the "Scenarios" are made: Not with an Iris printer, which is outdated -- they haven't used it in ten years. Darryl: "We've had five other printers and processors since then, and

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we are up to the latest, with 200-year archival pigment and inks and stuff, you should take with Lauren. He does all that work. They started with the Iris, which cost $250,000. They come out with new and better printers every year, and the newest one is only $10,000, and ten times better. It's computer-directed, and the technology is much more advanced. "They've got 200-year inks, and that's before we even coat them with three coats of UV-coater. Now we've had to go back to the company and tell them coat it with gelatin so we can get them to release…We're having a special mylar paper made just specifically for us -- it's coated with gelatin so it will release for us in the transfers. The process is used commercially for outdoor billboards.

The surface was devised in the shop here, over several years. They start with an exterior-grade aluminum sheet that is laminated together - used for outdoor signs on high-rise buildings. Then in house here, they've made their own vacuum table; they use rolls of linen paper that are .32-inch thick, acid-free, which they laminate to the aluminum. "It has a smooth surface that absorbs anything and everything. Once you've completed that painting there's no going backwards. It then gets three coats of a UV non-yellowing coater, which saturates the paper and makes it almost like a plastic surface. The final coat is matte, and makes it look like paper. You can take a sponge and wash it down, and nothing will change. This was all devised in the studio by Bob's crew.

The computer converts a photograph into an image on acetate, in any size Bob wants. There are piles of these on the long tables. [END SIDE A]

Cooking -- one of the things Bob misses most. He never read cook books or cooked from recipes, just made it up as he went along.

He hasn't named any of the new pictures yet. [END]

Addenda (recorded at half speed) - **Tibet** - In addition to Change, Inc. he has another personal foundation, The Rauschenberg Foundation, whose main beneficiaries are leprosy and Tibet, things he says others are almost "too embarrassed" to give to. Why Tibet? "I hate the way the Chinese have tried to destroy the culture." He's met the Dalai Lama, and been on several panels with him. Says the story about calling him "Mr. Lama" isn't true. Also, that Tibet was "the high point" of his whole ROCI tour. "Because I loved the people so much. We had so much in common that we thought was important. Picking up a rock, and *knowing* that it has so much power, and acknowledging that with the white paint, and putting it back. And that can be done to anything…They had no way of -- they couldn't separate art from anything else they found, that worked, as objects. So I sort of suspected that that would be the attitude. I made some pieces that you had to touch, or do something else to, and I had all these in the show…I just loved them. I was there twice, I guess about two weeks each time. It's different from every other place, except in your heart." His exhibition there was in a hall where they usually show new farm equipment -- now they have their first art gallery, as of three months ago.

Change, Inc is funded by the payments Bob gets for "odd jobs," like modeling for The Gap, or awards, etc. Started around 1970, small grants to artists who couldn't pay the

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rent or needed medical assistance. No red tape. Used to be around $500 each, now around $2000. For the Rauschenberg Foundation, Bob and Darryl do a benefit every year, which raises around half a million. They each do a lot of drawings, which are sold at auction in Sanibel. [END]

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RR - 2/22/05

How the term "combine" came about. He was thinking about Calder calling his things "mobiles." "He couldn't move [i.e.sell] his things until he called them something else, so he just called them mobiles. That's the predicament I was in. If I called them sculptures, they'd say well, no, they're more like paintings, and vice versa. So I said, I think I need it. That's what I did. They were combinations of painting and sculpture. And then there's the farmer machinery called combines. It just mixes things up. Combine is really just a marvelous word… The moral there was, people won't look seriously at anything they don't know what it is." But the name came from Bob, it wasn't suggested by anyone else? "Right."

Giving Jasper the map -- does he remember doing that? "Yeah. It was a very well articulated -- just a very clear map." Jasper had already done the flag painting then.

What did he get from Jasper back then? "Yeah. Courage [laughs]." How did he give you that? "By persisting upstream."

"I liked [Jasper's work] right away. I was so envious of the encaustic, because my studio used to smell like old mildew and rust, and his smelled like a bakery."

Has Bob ever felt there was a rivalry between them? "Never. From time to time, one of us was luckier than the other, but that wasn't enough to establish a rivalry. There wasn't many of us! When you get down to a team of two, there's not room…"

Conversations in recent years? "I think maybe the last time was -- at the Twombly show we had a nice conversation. We always have a nice conversation. Oh, and I saw him when we were photographed by Penn." But nothing like it used to be. "I don't know what happened. I think maybe we outgrew that."

Bob said years ago that Jasper had gone in for hiding, in his work. "Yes. Had gotten more and more private, and I got more public. You can't go around then world and have it pay for itself, incognito."

He remembers Jasper reading "Toklas" in the studio. "I don't read very well…Hart Crane is marvelous." But you 're so good at titles. "That's something else I like. You're finished a painting, and all there is to do is to title it. And all of a sudden, it's about fifty percent of its development. I always find that sort of miraculous, the title."

He's getting out of the hospital in 3 days. House not ready yet, but he'll move into the studio. "Most important thing is to get the fucking out of here." Since the opening at Pace he's done two more "Scenarios." [END]

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Trisha Brown
(1/10/05)

She was a scholarship student at the Merce Cunningham studio, and she kept hearing about "Bob Rauschenberg," and fielding telephone calls from him. She never danced with Merce, just took classes there. Came to New York first at the end of 1960. Joined Bob Dunn's composition class at the Cunningham studio, based on Cage's work. Can't remember when she met Bob face to face. But "Steve Paxton was my best friend from the west coast…It was a tight little spiral."

Judson Group - Bob came in originally to do the lighting, but then he became a performer, first in other people's pieces and then in his own. "You have to be careful about 'choreograph,' because there are certain rules about choreography…He made extraordinary collages of imagery of people and props and things like that. One piece of spaghetti that was about a block long, that kind of thing. They were a hybrid of happenings and dance."

"We were working with ordinary movement and the untrained body…wanting to be down to earth. We were a large group of people, you can't really ---. Each of us was performing in each other's pieces, and so a little later Bob was one of the players." She remembers especially the pieces in the skating rink in Wash DC, Bob's "Pelican," with Carolyn Brown in toe shoes and a sweat suit and Bob and Alex Hay on roller skates. "Bob was wearing roller skates in the loft, so if you went over for dinner you got greeted at the door by Bob in skates, and he might pick you up…"

First piece they actually collaborated on was "Glacial Décoy," in 1978 or 79. (There's an article about their collaboration in the Guggenheim catalog, where she talks about those pieces). "In those days I always programmed with structure. I didn't know how to collaborate, so I just told Bob what my structure was. I was coming out of Judson, so I needed to find out what kind of gesture -- what would work if you weren't just trying to be plain Jane. What's the boundary for being too decorative in gesture. I was being very careful, exploring ways to do impulsive movement." She blocked out movements of four dancers, back and forth across proscenium. "Bob said, 'Well, I want to move, too.' He really reflected my structure, in the background. Photographs that he took -- it sort of brought him back into photography."

They didn't work separately, the way Merce did. "I brought him into my studio. Bob became very, very involved with the total look of the stage…He was calling me frequently with an idea for a set, and no choreographer can move that fast. I'd say, 'That's beautiful, Bob,' and go back to work, and he'd call me and say that one was out and this one was in. But when he saw us in the studio doing 'Glacial Decoy,' that's when he came up with his set. He gave me the name, which was wonderful. The dresses he made out of silk-screen fabric ends -- they were pleated, and when we bent over like this, they went, 'chunk, chunk' as though ice was on it. But at the same time, with the lighting coming from one direction the dresses were opaque, and if it came from behind us, then

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we were nude. Bob said, 'I want a 2000-seat house to see you the way I see you,' and that was what drove him…"

Bob's sense of theater - "I think overriding all the pieces that I've done with him, [it's using] the body to make a picture with. He worked in black and white. I asked him one time, why are we always in black and white? And he said, 'I don't want a blush to compete with you.' It was a very handsome stage…The dance was an open field. You could see our backstage procedure…I once described a piece to him, thinking that Laurie and I would do the sets together. I was thinking of walking on the wall, hand-held. But said, 'Well, who's doing the sets and costumes?' So I invited him. The first thing he said to me was, 'I'd like to do a living set.' I turned that idea down, because he wanted to pick up to perform it everywhere we went. He didn't want to have dancers do it. But…I couldn't afford to train people that way, so I turned it down. And he came up with my dancers making a ?? backstage, so you'd have dancers in another lighting zone, behind a screen, not really visible but visible."

"A few years ago we were having a conversation, and he suddenly said, 'What was that word you just said?' I said, 'well, which word?' And he couldn't remember and I couldn't remember, and he said, 'Just give me a word, and I'll run with it.'"

They've done six pieces together, including "Astral Convertible" and "Astral Converted." Car headlights for lighting from two towers (?).

Bob suggested idea for "If You Couldn't See Me." Called and said he had idea for a piece, in which "you'll be dancing with your back to the audience. That's really an interesting idea -- very, very difficult. Nobody turns their back to the audience." Piece is about 10 minutes long, with music by Bob, on his Yamaha. One problem was that you can't turn, because you face will show -- and turning is a momentum device. She perfected a barrel roll which was difficult to do. Bob said, 'Oh, Trisha, you can turn.' And I knew at that moment, I can't." His first idea for title was "If I Weren't Here." But he called back and said that was too modern, so he came up with "If You Couldn't See Me," which is actually wrong, because the audience does see her -- she can't see the audience.

Does she have a favorite piece they've done together? "I think 'Set and Re-set.'"

Bob's friendship - "I didn't have a mentor. I was thinking about it a lot, and I said, maybe I'll take Bob Rauschenberg as my example of what I could be. Isn't that interesting?.. That's a profound outcome. I was always honest with him… He had people he paid around him all the time, and there was a lot of misinformation about Merce and different people. I would just say, that is not how it was. John fired Bob, but Bob said Merce asked him to…"

She went to Lafayette Street recently, just before going to Paris, and saw one of the new paintings. "I feel very emotional about this. I went in and saw a collage there, and it was extraordinary." She didn't want to look at anything else. "It had in it forms that were

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mirrored, but also converted. I just tried to figure out how he did that. This was very current work."

His drinking -- a lot of artists drink, "but not like that." There have been times when he'd fall down the stairs in his Lafayette house, and just get a little bruised. She was the one who talked him into going to Betty Ford. "The night before he was drooling at the dinner table." The next day, discussing the Ford clinic, she told him, "You've predicated your life on ~~???~~ [508], take a chance on this, give it a try." He was afraid he wouldn't be able to still paint if he gave up alcohol, but her telling him to take a chance was the turning point.

risk

She writes in the article about watching him work late at night in the studio, after a lot of drinking. "He was like a maestro. How he could separate the fluids on the paper from the fluids in himself --- he would pour that stuff out, you can't control stuff like that but he did. He knew when to move in on it and when to get off it. He was masterful."

His lighting for Merce was different from his lighting for Trisha. With Merce he did it himself, before things got computerized with lighting boards. "I don't know how to do that," he told her, so she always had a lighting expert on hand. "He got what he wanted." In "If You Couldn't See Me," he wanted a red aura around Trisha. He used pink light for flesh and blue for coolness. [END TAPE]

Addenda: Her 35th anniversary season begins in April. She's planning a Rauschenberg night in her performances at the Rose Theater. When she told him about it, Bob said, "That could push someone out of suicide."

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Susan Davidson
(12/21/04)

She says Bob would like to see a museum of his work. "He's a very prolific artist, one of the most prolific in the 20th century, and, being aware of that, I believe that he wants to find a home for a lot of that work. So he asked me about four years ago to come on board as a kind of museum consultant…One of the other things he quickly came to understand was that he didn't want it to be [just his work], he wanted it to be a dialogue with other artists, where people could go and look at his work in relation to that of his time, and before and after. Not a lot of artists would have that kind of foresight."

"Most institutions are always going to be shy on combines, because that's the material that just isn't around any more. Los Angeles has eleven, from the Panza gift, and the next largest holding is still privately owned. San Francisco bought a body of work in 1998, but I think there was only one combine in that. But there was a wonderful silkscreen painting, and they got the erased de Kooning drawing, which I felt Bob should not have sold. It was part of the package for San Francisco that Arne Glimcher put together in 1998. The de Kooning and the tire print. Once it gets into a museum it's never loaned any more…and Bob had been very generous about loaning it. I think, next to Duchamp's 'L.H.O.O.Q,' it's probably the most important work of the 20th century. I really do."

Bob doesn't own much of his early work. Doesn't own a single silkcreen painting. But from the 1970s he still has a lot, including some of the best things. After the last retrospective he began letting things out, placing them in museums. After a retrospective a lot of artist's prices go down, but in Bob's case the opposite was true -- people recognized how important the work was, and began clamoring to buy it. "I think he felt quite rightly it was time to make sure they found a home that they needed."

How does she feel about the widespread perception that his work post-1970 is not as good as the earlier work? "I don't agree with that. I've looked at all of Bob's work. There are people who say that the '80s was a bit of a low point, when he started to do the work on metal, but I think that when you have a distance on that you see that's it's just as adventurous as what he was doing with silkscreen paintings in the '60s. As time goes on people get nostalgic about things, but I don't think that the work is any less, at all. And I think that what he's doing now is just fantastic. It's so vibrant, it's so alive, and it continues to use the vocabulary it's always had. It's really solid…When he started with the Anagrams, which ran into the Apogamy Pods and the Short Stories and the Scenarios, immediately in that first body of work, around the time of the retrospective in 1997, there was a great picture called "Fusion" that the Whitney ended up buying. And before that, with the metal pictures, there's a great one called "Bible Bite" that's in Cologne now, a fantastic painting, on copper. And the picture the Menil bought, called "Holiday Ruse," which is a black and white painting from a series called Shiners (?) - it's typical of Bob to kind of clean his palette and not use a lot of color, it's twenty feet long, a stunning picture. There's always something that rises to the top."

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"David [White] and I are going to do a show of Bob 's work in Nice next summer, that's going to be of metal paintings and Gluts. Mainly '80s work." There's also the Cardboards show at the Menil, the combine show in LA, the Miami show (mostly new work), and the show in Lafayette, La.

The number of works in each series is smaller than it used to be. There were 150 combines, for example, and nearly 100 silkscreen pictures, but only 34 Short Stories and probably about that many Scenarios.

Davidson got involved with Bob's work in the late '80s, when she worked with Walter Hopps on the show of early work. She was assistant curator and research ass't on that show, and helped to find five or six paintings or objects that had believed to be lost. After that, Walter wanted to do a combine show. But the '50s show went to the Guggenheim, as an added-on venue at the last minute, and during the process Walter and Tom talked about doing a combine show; Tom decided that wasn't big enough, and that's how the retrospective came about. Davidson was co-curator with Walter on that.

"Bob lives very much in the present. He does not like going backwards." When she and Walter went to Captiva to work on the '50s show, they laid out all the photographs on the ping-pong table, but for two days Bob wouldn't look at them. Finally he did so, and provided a lot of useful information.

"Bob has the best titles of any artist around. They're funny, and very direct. He's very visual, and it's interesting how he connects the visual with the spoken, in the titles. It's like naming a baby -- just the right name for it. Even though Bob's not a reader, he's a very intellectual thinker. He doesn't need to ponder things, he gets it all rather quickly."

"Bob said once that he never had any choice in it, he had to be an artist. In think that's what keeps him going, that he needs to produce. He may not work at the speed he used to work at, but he's still working at the same level."

"Bob often grids the work out in a way that you don't often see right away. But the work is treated as a series of grids. Because of an overlay of a lot of imagery it's hard to read it. But I think with the Scenarios you do see the grid a little more clearly, so in that sense it is more ordered and precise. He's let the image come forward."

His ability to make use of everything -- e.g. the print "Accident" from a broken stone. "He's always taking advantage of calamity, or something that happens." There was a period of about a year when his level of depression was pretty high, and he didn't do much work.

She wants eventually to do a show of Bob's color photographs, which he's been doing since the early 1980s. There are about 10,000 of them that have never been shown, some of which have been used in his work and some which haven't. She's starting to catalog them, and to pull out ones Bob might want to exhibit. Joaquim Pissarro and Nan

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Rosenthal want to do this show at the Met -- they were in Captiva with Susan the night he fell and had the brain bleed.

Pissaro was also interested in a show of Bob, Jasper, and Cy Twombly. Jasper wouldn't do it. (Kirk Varnedoe also wanted to do this, in addition to doing a book on the three.)

Synapsis Shuffle - "It's about Bob wanting to have a dialogue, with anyone. Let anyone be an artist and comment on my work as you will." He invites 13 people, each of whom gets a series of numbers and gets to pick from the 52 panels, and to create their own "Rauschenbergs." After the Whitney, it was done in Paris (Bob didn't go -- too sick.)

"I think Bob's work of the '80s has always had very short shrift." Because of ROCI? "No, I don't think so. I think it was because of his dealer at the time. [Knoedler]. Bob was doing great work, but what was getting shown was not the best."

But are there some low periods in his work? "Yes, there are some things that aren't fabulous. A couple of weird series, like the Viaducts, or the Shales. But you know, as Walter says, you always have to have at least one dog in a show. I think he meant that it's important to show something that's not great, so that you understand how great everything else is. I hated the Viaducts. And the Faux Tapis, late '80s or early '90s, which I eventually grew to love…Huge, huge pictures. Bob had bought a lot of fabric in various locales like Sri Lanka, printed with men in wild ties or eight-balls or completely absurd, random visuals, very loud, very garish. And he made a series of tapestries, fake tapestries, Faux Tapis. But Bob has always put fabric in his work, so it was just another way of using his vocabulary. But I never found them very successful. They were twenty feet high by twenty feet wide…He was going to sell them to Gianni Versace, but then he got shot. They were so wonderfully garish."

The ceramic copy of the big painting in Bob's NY studio is of "probably the best painting" in his Anagram series. It's called "Mirthday Man," and was made for his own birthday in 1997, right after the retrospective opening. It's now in a private collection in Europe. It includes the X-ray from "Booster." The copy was done by the ceramic firm he'd worked with in Japan on the fresco works - they asked him if they could reproduce a work, and he said to do this one, and give me a copy. Davidson had it in the recent show in Ferrara.

MOMA does not have a really wide or deep collection of Bob's work. They own "Bed," and one of the "Factum"s, and "First Landing Jump," and the "Cantos." What else? Davidson hadn't heard the story about Barr declining the gift of "Monogram."

Does she think a lot of good work came out of ROCI? "Yes, I do. The prints that Bob did in Russia, I love those works. Very large prints. There's a great work called ??? that he did in Japan, with a big kite. The work in Tibet, the one with the two rings called "Omen…"

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"When Bob feels that he's not done it right, or if it isn't working out, he pretty much quickly abandons it and goes on to something else. He doesn't bury down deep into something that's going to be bad. And that's why there isn't a lot of just awful work. I think he quickly sees when something's not working."

The Menil show will go to Europe, but probably not to NYC. The Nice show won't travel.

The Ferrara show is a complete retrospective in 89 works. Bob loved it, esp. the opening, with the snow falling on "Labyrinth."

Bob was commissioned by the Vatican to do a work, which they then rejected. Bob had identified God with radar, and the church didn't like that. He was very pissed off about the rejection.

On 17 March Bob receives the Julio Gonzalez award for sculpture from the ?? in Valencia, Spain. He's going over for that. Susan and David will do a little show in connection with the award, of "Gluts," "one of my favorite series." [END]

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John Elderfield
(1/15/05)

"De Kooning's generation actually validated artistic drinking…Somehow it became the thing that happened when they became famous."

MoMA's collection of RR still is nowhere near the level of its collection of Johns? "I agree. When we were doing the re-installation, it was clear to be that it should be improved. Kirk getting 'Factum' was really important -- and of course the 'Bed.' Kynaston was responsible for getting one of the later "Hoarfrosts." And then of course there's that small work which is coming ???. In the end, I felt the room - there was enough work, but still, I would love to get -- what we need is some other combines, and it's really hard to get. It's certainly high on my list. The 'Factum' arrangement is that we and LAMOCA agree that we will each keep two of them for four-year periods." They do not have a silkscreen painting.

[He's going to check on the story about Bob Scull offering to give 'Monogram.']

"I think it's not only that the early commitment, which was obviously less, but also with Jasper one has the sense that that early commitment was sustained, there's a real sense of following the work. My sentiment, which is not only within the museum but more broadly, that because of the more evident, ironical stance of Jasper's work, it was more popularly sustainable. In that sense, Bob's continued to be perceived in a context not unlike de Kooning's -- as a kind of art of emotion and art of manual manipulation, his success would depend upon those things. And just as de Kooning moved in and out of favor, almost in response to the character of the ??? (169), one has to think that way about Bob's work. There were obviously people who thought differently about post-image painting, Bill Rubin notably, and Bill makes no secret of it -- he felt that after the early work…He felt that what was radical and revolutionary about Jasper was the early, iconic pictures, where the image and the surface were coterminous. He was simply less interested in the hatch pictures and everything else. But I think generally, with Jasper, there's been a sense of continuing public interest, owing to the continual puzzlement of the work, and the sense of something gnomic and aloof and distant. Where Bob is more wearing his heart on his sleeve, like de Kooning.

"I think also the kind of popularist side of Bob has made it difficult. And the increased production --ROCI and all that."

What about the general perception that his work after 1970 is second rate? "I think there is -- and this does apply to Jasper's as well, and to most artists -- that there is usually this moment of great revolutionary activity which lasts five years, ten years, whatever, and then the art changes. I remember quite recently hearing -- there was a show of Aggie's collection in Cleveland, and Frank Stella said, in a conversation there, 'You know, most artists have five years.' And Aggie said, 'Really? Does that include you?' And he said, 'Probably.'

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"I certainly remember when I was a student in England, seeing the Whitechapel show, and it was just amazing, really amazing. I'd just never seen things like this before. It was one of these experiences which was ---. I was an art student in the north of England, and came down to London. And [I thought] what is this? And I know that all my peers were so astonished by these things, a kind of category of mistakes. Almost to the extent that artists are revolutionary at the beginning, it makes it harder for them subsequently. It's like human relationships -- the period of passion, and then it becomes something else… Some of it is in how it is presented and received, and in that sense Bob has suffered from the context in which the work has been received, because of the character of the work and its psychology, rather than --. I think it's really more to do with the character of it…" He also draws a parallel with Picasso's breadth and fecundity.

Asked about a highly selective show of Bob's work from 1970, he questions whether it could be done properly (i.e. very rigorously) while Bob is still around. Most artists are inclined to think their current work is the most important, etc. But Diebenkorn, when John worked with him on an exhibition, said 'I'm going to have a strong opinion about everything except over the last ten years, when you're on your own' -- which is amazing. Another complicating factor is that we're in a artistic culture which has come to especially valorize the late work of important artists. It's almost kind of like an expected thing. It's probably Matisse's fault! The idea of this great final flowering…In Picasso's case it was a recent invention…"

"Rebus" is on the market? "I've heard this, yes…A year ago I did sit down with the people at LAMoCA to talk about the combine show, and at that point I asked them what was their understanding about what was still potentially out there. I do think it's important for MoMA to do something more. I don't know if I should be saying this publicly because prices will go up!"

"When I saw the Whitechapel show, I was very interested in Schwitters. And this was nothing like it. It could have been pieces of air conditioning or something."

The Andrew Forge book on RR -- Bob didn't like the text, so he had it printed in such a way that the text was unreadable.

"Any art as diaristic as Bob's is bound to draw changing interpretations. You can't do things as close to -- (inaudible). In a very different mode, it's like what Helen Frankenthaler said…about having that diaristic approach to picture-making, which means that in the early moments, where it comes out with a great intensity, and then it shifts and becomes more that they know how to do it. And therefore it seems to be a little bit staged. It's a question of toughing your way back into the diaristic methods in a way. For Bob certainly, there are moments when he gets right back into it, and then there are other moments where it's sort of a fragile ???. What we need is a real, rigorous look at it to see how it works."

"In a way, Bob's work looks less modernist. Not less modern but less modernist. In the way in which Johns is very much the T.S. Eliot, poetry is not letting loose emotion but a

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control of emotion, the whole modernist thing that art isn't about personal expression, it's about the control of expression -- that made de Kooning seem less clicking-in than Pollock, Newman, Rothko and so on; you look at 'Woman I' and it doesn't click in like the Newmans and the Rothkos and the Pollocks, however great it may be." The same could be said of "Monogram."

"When the 'Hoarfrost' came in, there was a lot of debate about it. And comparison with earlier, particularly with the silkscreen pictures, which MoMA also needs. My sense of the 'Hoarfrost' reception was that precisely because these things look so fragile and feminine, people thought what we expect from Rauschenberg is this tough, gritty thing, and 'what is this? It's decorative.'"

Serra says that the initiating piece and the culminating piece in any of his series are the best works.

He says MoMA's next task, after the reinstallation, is to look back on the lessons learned from it, and see what needs to be done -- including new acquisitions. Need to set priorities. There is no later work by Bob in the collection (post-Hoarfrost). [END SIDE A] -- but see list he sent subsequently, with promised gifts.

Does he think ROCI hurt Bob's reputation. "Yes, I think so. But I think it's another modernist thing that we like our artists to be working out of private imperatives, not in a communal way. I think artists who do that are thought to be less than the hermits in Sharon! Saint Jerome is the model for artists. The hermit in the cave with the pig. But the ones who go preaching, they're treated differently. And I think something else that's hurt Bob is the extraordinary valorization of minimalism. This absolute sense that the minimal revolution has been the defining aspect of the art of the last thirty years. That has been thought of as *the* American art, which I think has made a more messily autobiographical art seem to be less central. Whether it's true or not -- Michael Kimmelman can write in the Times that this is the great generation -- it's a phenomenon that Leo Steinberg wrote about in The New Criterion, that the harshest critics of artists are other artists -- Matisse criticized Picasso, and de Kooning was upset by Rauschenberg… Obviously we're not at a point where the enormous impact of minimalism is finished. Somehow the alternative is coming out of Warhol and pop, but not out of Rauschenberg…But I think, good for Bob. You know, I'm just going to do it and not be affected by what people think…"

The enormous amount of material coming out of academia on Warhol.

Joaquin Pisarro wanted to do a show and seminar on Cezanne-Pisarro, Johns-Rauschenberg. Jasper refused. He said you can't do this on artists who are living, "Wait until we die."

John remembers, after the Whitechapel show, trying to use lighter fluid to transfer images. "This sense of image liberation -- I think that transfer method was almost symbolical. How easy it is to take images -- all you need is lighter fluid and something to scratch with, and you can do it." [END]

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Arne Glimcher
(1/24/05)

Scenarios - "I think they're spectacular. I have a theory about the Scenarios. I've been watching the last ten years that we've been together, watching what's happened to the work, and I think there are real parallels between the 'Scenarios' and the *papier decoupages* of Matisse. Because he starts cutting out the images, and instead of overlapping all of them, several of them begin to float in space. I think that's going to happen more and more. They are opening up, and the images are being allowed to exist for themselves, and there's less and less narrative in them. In the series before that, the 'Short Stories'…there were completely incongruous images, almost surreal in how they were placed. Rauschenberg was throwing out all these metaphors for you to build the narrative -- he was saying each one of these was a chapter, and it was your interpretation of the chapter. He was playing with the public in a different way. But in the 'Scenarios,' I think he's really isolating images that are really important, playing them against each other -- I think they're much more internal, and…more decorative than he's ever been, in a very positive way. The use of that white space is so daring. Where Matisse would be overlapping forms like that, Rauschenberg is creating a grid of them, and leaving a whole chapter of white up there and isolating the images. It's cut-out!…"

"I think they're triumphant…In the last couple of years, more than once he's cried on the 'phone or when you see him. One time we were in the studio, and we were thrilled with the paintings, the 'Scenarios,' and he put his arm around Milly -- he was standing then, this was before the hurricanes and everything -- and he said…'I'm so glad, because I've lost so much,' and he began to cry. [Off the record] He's aged so, but the work is so young. It's almost like the work is compensating, becoming more daring in these cutouts…"

"I always thought he was the greatest artist of the second half of the 20th century…He's constantly working, constantly inventing. What I love so much about Rauschenberg is this kind of life force, this storm going through the second half of the century, not conscious of himself. It's not a question of, am I making a precious painting? It's a question of living art…That's what the public doesn't understand. They understand four precious paintings a year. But Rauschenberg, there's nothing like him."

What about the perception of his later work? "I think the Guggenheim show had too much in it, but it did show the protean genius. The thing is Rauschenberg did not stay doing one thing…He was the first one not to be identifiable. Look at the cardboard pieces. If anyone did those cardboard pieces by themselves, it would be an astonishing career. The Gluts, an astonishing career. He's a chameleon, he keeps changing. And he doesn't care about 'a picture'…The extraordinary thing about Rauschenberg is that it's a focus on art, not a focus on picture-making or on masterpieces. There are masterpieces, but collectively the life is a masterpiece. It's real art, not a commodity."

Talks about his show of late Picasso in 1980, many people including Bill Rubin said it was a mistake. (100 ff). And look how productive Picasso was, sometimes doing six

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paintings a day. Late Picasso became a huge influence on artists of the 80s. He pulled line out of them -- he whose work had always been based on line. RR did something like the same, separating painting from the transfer in 'Scenarios.' The 'Apogomy Pods' all have line in them, but were very difficult for people to understand because of all the white space in them.

Glimcher has worked with Bob for ten years. Pace McGill had been showing his photographs before that. Bob was very unhappy. His last show had been with Gagosian, out of which he sold one work. Arne went down to visit him, said he'd love to represent him. Bob was doing works on paper then ('Anagrams'?), and Bob said "Let's do it."

"I think he was being seen in a new gallery for the first time, on dark walls so you could see the paint -- light is such an important part of the work. Every gallery has the same clients, but every gallery has a coterie of clients, and a lot of our collectors didn't have a Rauschenberg. It just took off -- that show sold out in about a day, and a waiting list started for the next work, and it's just never tapered off. Every show has sold out. This show has four works sold already, a museum is coming on Monday, another museum is coming on Wednesday…These are a huge jump in price, which I fought against [0ff the record]. Before the show opened I sold seven of them, six months ago, at $485,000. Bob insisted on getting $800,000 for the pictures, and it's a mistake. Because the great thing about Bob is that the work keeps going, and you can get it out. We're selling them -- but this show should have been sold out already."

A new picture by Jasper brings $2 million. "But, there are four of those, or five of those a year, as against 40. We sell an enormous amount of his work -- collectively I'm sure we've sold more than Jasper in dollars. Bob is very solid now."

The San Francisco sale -- "It was completely my idea. I said to him, who don't you have the pleasure of placing a group of your works during your lifetime? He'd always had the Erased de Kooning in his bedroom…And he agreed to let me offer it for a great deal of money, to the Museum of Modern Art. And I did. And Kirk said, well of course it belongs here. But we went back and forth for a year, without them making a move -- a serious offer the Erased de Kooning, which with the Urinal is one two greatest conceptual works of the 20th century. I was angry about it. Then San Francisco was starting to build its collection." They had some early RRs. Arne knew the donor, Phyllis ??, had sold her a lot of paintings. "And so I put together a group from what was left, showed it to Bob…he was a little annoyed that the Modern had never given him the attention they had given to Jasper. So, I called David [Ross], and he came and sat down, and I showed him everything we were talking about. We'd put a very, very respectable price on it, and David said give me a couple of weeks. And he got Fisher, Schwab, he got everybody behind it…He was wonderful. He built a great, great collection in San Francisco. It was the most aggressive collecting period of any museum I've ever seen, and buying masterpieces…We made the deal. But it stemmed from wanting to place the Erased de Kooning. I thought it was the quintessential New York document. I called Kirk before the sale, and said I have a museum that wants to buy this now, and this is really your last

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chance. I gave him two weeks, and he called back and said we just can't do it." There were nineteen works in the San Francisco sale, all major works from different periods.

"Bob was always so radical."

ROCI - "That was one of the great performances of the time. The problem with these huge projects he does is that people don't see it as a whole, they see fragments. They see fragments of Beuys but they accept that, because there are so few of them…"

'Rebus' is indeed for sale again. I know for a fact that there have been offers around $30 million, which have been refused. Also that he's been offered $25 million for 'Summerstorm' [1959, Ovitz's painting] Rebus will eventually bring way over $30 million."

When the Guggenheim was going to have a museum branch on the Hudson, there was going to be a Rauschenberg pavilion.

MoMA is "looking for a color silkscreen, and they're very interested in the late work."

"I don't think Jasper is as protean a genius as Bob. Jasper is more like Vermeer, with exclusive paintings. Very self-conscious and very successful…" [But Arne doesn't think the last 15 years have been successful at all, he also doesn't think Twombly is on the same level as Bob and Jasper.]

"With Bob is isn't about succeeding or failing, it's about living. It's about art-making…We can see his career already, his career is fifty years old, and this whirlwind is still going from a wheelchair."

"The younger artists all revere him, because he speaks so much more to them than other artists of his generation."

"The response to the Guggenheim show was fantastic. That was so positive. They show had too much in it, and the public didn't say that."

It's true that his work doesn't sell well at auction. "The work is radical. The use of photography in contemporary art comes so much out of Bob. I think the public in general has a very difficult time trying to understand why these transferred, existing images -- it's not the same thing. But it's more radical, and it's greater…He's a very young artist."[END SIDE A]

Mambo Kings -- opens in SF mid-May, on Bway (previews) in July. He's taking leave from gallery in April. He wrote the script and lyrics, is directing. Set is overlapping screens, and he says he's thinking of Rauschenberg.

At the opening of the Guggenheim show, Kiki Smith said: "Everything that I ever do, he did before I was born." [END]

Gliecher 2/14: "Every show of the later work has sold out."

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Bill Goldston
(1/20/05)

He has two projects now with Bob -- the first since 2000, when Bob did "Ruminations," nine prints with images of his family. These were "phenomenally successful," being bought by many museums throughout the country.

The project he was coming in to talk to Bob about last week, at Lafayette Street, was set in motion by Sarah Jessica Parker, who called Bob out of the blue (they'd never met) to ask him if he'd design a T-shirt for the Sri Lanka tsunami relief. Said she'd admired his work for years. Bob agreed to do it, and is working on the image right now. He and Goldston collaborated on a T-shirt for Central Park's 150th anniversary.

They had a four or five hour session together. Bob will be making some new print at ULAE this year. "The only difference in working with Bob now is the physical handicap. [His mind] is as sharp or sharper than ever before. He said to me, 'Bill, I'm just going to work with what I've got.' He just keeps going forward."

Bob and Jasper as printmakers - "With Bob, no two images ever look the same. There's an enormous amount of freedom in working with him. He'll try anything, and he just thrives on something you may never have seen before. With Jasper, the image is already well developed before he starts. We've just finished one of the most beautiful prints by Jasper I've ever seen - it's based on TK, the painting that MoMA just bought. Their approaches are completely different…" With Jasper, for example, they gear up for traditional etching technique. "Both of them leave possibilities for collaboration which are unique. With Jasper, one plate had five different colors on it. We could print only four a day, it was so complicated."

"Scenarios" - "I think they're really beautiful. This whole development started with the Anagrams, those water-color-like images with a lot of activity in them - almost like an abstract expressionist image. And then he moved into the Short Stories, and now the Scenarios. At the opening, somebody remarked to me on the amount of white space in them. With Bob, though, the white spaces sometimes have more going on in them than the painted ones. Did you see the paintings downstairs at the studio -- the ones he's keeping for himself? They're as beautiful as anything Bob has done, I think."

What has he learned from Bob, personally? "If I've learned anything, it's how to be a better human being."

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Michael Govan
(1/14/05)

"The problem is that he was so influential, and he was so loved by artists and everyone who saw his work as breakthrough, brilliant -- it's hard to imagine an artist who's had more effect. He's lived a long time, and done a lot of work since." But why isn't Jasper treated like this, or Ellsworth? "In part, Bob Rauschenberg is a very prolific artist. There are artists who constrain their output, either naturally, because they work very slowly and they do one thing at a time, or because they constrain it artificially because they know that's the way to keep it present in the world and of value. Bob Rauschenberg appears to me someone who's a consummate maker -- his work feels like Picasso's, who couldn't get up from the lunch table without taking the fish bones and pressing them into a plate. Also generosity. He's a generous maker, who keeps putting things out into the world, he can't stop. So he's had an enormous production, and he's been involved in making work that didn't care whether it was valued as a single entity for a museum or for a collector. He's made for public projects, he's done his Quarter Mile Painting which is like a personal autobiography…I think it's hard to look at the [late]work in the present…"

"I think his career will suffer the ups and downs of Rubens's career. There's a kind of factory approach to the screens and these big-scale things. He uses assistants. He has a facility which is somewhat off-putting -- he's so good at everything, composition, color juxtaposition, isn't it a little like Rubens, with the cinematic scale of some of his later works?"

Govan agrees that in every RR series there are one or two works that stand out. He doesn't think about making masterpieces, and why should he? "Picasso didn't think that way… Given all this adversity and physical disability, he's still a really productive artist."

Scenarios? - "I was at the opening. I would say, one, I like their sparseness and their straightforwardness. There's a kind of grid that emerges, where they're sort of screen, screen, screen, white space. They looked extremely matter-of-fact, like all other things pared away but basic impulsive arrangements and communications. The open space is left open in a pointed, poignant way, a specific way, instead of just raw canvas…I thought these works were very direct and extremely strong in their presentation. He's so facile and his composition is generally so beautiful, but I thought there was, through a lot of them, a straightforwardness that belied that a little bit." In the Short Stories, the images overlapped much more.

"He clearly established something that was an American option, which wasn't painting, and he developed a technique that used some mechanical means. I think that Leo Steinberg essays making an analogy to the flatbed was fundamental, whether he thought that way or not." But the collage esthetic "was not viable except for artists like Bob Whitman…"

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RR's connection to minimalism - Brice Marden was his studio assistant -- "Bob is one of those artists, like Picasso, who was involved in many fields. Picasso made Cubist work and other kinds of work, and because he was so prolific and so inventive he was able to move in and out. He does have a minimalist sensibility if you want, in the emptying out and the ordering in his conceptual sensibility -- he always had that. So there are lines."

"I think his work is such a pervasive influence that at this point it's actually a little difficult to pinpoint it to him. It's so filtered through so many different artists now…His work is everywhere. Artists talk about Warhol because his relation to pop culture and icons are things you can hold onto. Rauschenberg doesn't have a thing like that. What's his thing? He doesn't own anything that's simple like that. You can take Rauschenberg's work back to a thousand things, like Dada, Schwitters, a lot of other precedents…It's hard to image contemporary art history without him."

"Jasper has so controlled his output. He makes very, very little work. Each work is very much in the mode of what he's been doing for a long time, and it's dense, packed work…Bob Rauschenberg just has this outpouring. It's too much work for people to get their hands around, when they're trying to get their hands around the next artist's work."

"I think he's an artist who makes masterpieces. As history gets sorted out, a few works will emerge from every period. But I do think he made works without that criteria." The works he made for the ROCI project were not made to be in a museum. "It was not in the same model. It was like a continuous project. Collectors hate that."

"One of his biggest contributions was to revive printmaking as a medium, he and Jasper. His contributions are monumental. I admire him because he went to do other things. He didn't just keep making works for galleries." Off the record, he doesn't feel that Johns's late work is any better, but it's more collectible and more precious.

It's true that Bob was not out to create a masterpiece, as Motherwell said, "but he did create some, for sure. And I think some were intended. If you look at a work like 'Canyon,' it's a masterpiece of American art. There are few pictures that represent our culture…also a couple of others, 'Monogram'… He's had a conceptual strain throughout -- that's what the early work shows. He was very much a conceptual artist, even though he's so facile with materials."

[G. on the government rail line planned to go right by Heizer's City project, for a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, 330-385]

END

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Antonio Homem
(1/13/05)

Ileana and Bob R. are close friends who sometimes get annoyed at each other and "get on each other's nerves. They care so much about each other that they become very thin-skinned about each other, and anything can very quickly upset them."

"Ileana never complains about people, she just gets upset…And she also forgets completely [her upsets]. They both never let anything negative get in the way. Ileana is a born-again woman, every day she starts life completely new."

"Bob is not interested in experience. Bob is only interested in dealing with the cards he's dealt, on the spot. Experience doesn't help, because every time is new. He talks about all the difficulties of going around with John and with Merce, with such happiness and how wonderful it was that the lights didn't work and they had to this and that. I think he loves the idea of difficulties, and how you work -- not even around them, but how you use them for your work." Tells about a RR show in Venice in 1975 at the ???, when he had two large vertical drawings but no wall where they fit, so he put one on top of the other and turned them into a new work.

"Bob's work basically is about teaching freedom and independence, so if you follow his work you will not follow what he's teaching."

About Leo and Ileana coming to Bob and saying they couldn't sell his work - "I think that Bob felt maybe they were not selling enough. I think Bob wrote a very long letter at the time, saying he felt that not enough had been done, and that maybe they said, yes, it is true, we are doing what we can but we can't do any better." Bob felt it was a withdrawal of their support? "I can't speak for Leo, and I must say that Bob always had that feeling with Leo, and maybe up to a point it was true. Not, I wouldn't say, a withdrawal of support, but I think maybe it was much easier to sell Bob's work in Europe than in America. They were much more conservative here…It is true that we were here in the seventies, and we did sell works quite readily. But we were selling mostly younger artists, with lower prices, and maybe we didn't have a platform for the higher prices that Bob felt, understandably, that he should reach. I don't believe that there was a withdrawal of support. That would be so contrary to Leo 's way of dealing -- Leo never withdrew support from anybody! But maybe Bob read it as a withdrawal…I think they didn't want to be an obstacle, and if Bob could do better they didn't want him to lose out…"

"It's quite possible that Leo said it. But both of them felt very concerned about not giving Bob the feeling that he had to stay with them and accept what they could do. It was more about saying, look, we can't do better than this…" What about the stipend? "The stipend was not huge, and as a matter of fact -- I don't think Leo would ever stop paying a stipend. He went on paying stipends to artists he never could sell. Even after Bob went to Knoedler the door was always open. We made a show of the works that had always been hardest to sell, the cardboards, the hoarfrosts, and the jammers -- that must have been ten years ago. We always loved those works, and we loved the works that he did after the

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seventies. We would make a show of these immediately if Bob wanted to. But for us the problem is to tell Bob, well, let's make a show of that, because you know, he's doing very well with Pace…"

"Even today, Ileana is paying a very modest stipend [to Bob]. I think Ileana felt it was a link with Bob that she didn't want to sever."

On the perception that Bob's work since 1970 is less good -- "Any artist who becomes renowned has to deal with that. People say those things about Jasper. So many people say that was a disappointment, but for me the show gave the connection between all the works that I needed…I feel about the Guggenheim show the way I feel about most of Bob's shows, which is that Bob is an over-killer of his work. He can never stop having works, and at the end you just can't see them. We went to that show at the Corcoran, of Bob's early works, and it was absolutely a dream show, and then from there we went to Bob's show for ROCI at the National Gallery, and…there were so many works, it was so tremendously full. It's something that is part of Bob's personality, but it is a mistake, really. He always shows too much, so that people can't focus enough."

"Bob's work is not the kind of work that does well at auction, aside from combines and such. People at auction want to identify a work…as the best, the choice, and Bob's work is so contrary to all that."

"Canyon" - is it true it can't be old because the eagle is an endangered species? "Yes, that is true. We were told that Ileana cannot sell that work. It could be given, I believe, but not sold. Actually, I keep seeing in the newspapers that there are more and more bald eagles…too many in some regions, but there is no change in that law."

About the first Leo-Ileana visit to Bob's studio - "I'm sure the ice cubes were just an excuse, a pretense that Bob found to show Jasper's work. It is typical of Bob to pretend that it was just an accident."

At any rate, he says there was never a break in the relationship between Bob and Ileana. [END]

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Walter Hopps
(11/10/04 - tel. 718-869-7744)

The new "Short Stories" and the new "Scenarios" are, he says, "some of the most beautiful image paintings he's done in years."

Walter's show of RR's early works was "the hardest show I've ever had to work on." Why? For one thing, "Bob claimed it was all thrown away, but we kept finding things. It was a real adventure. That was a very emotional time for Bob. His marriage to Susan Weil had broken up, he was seduced by Cy, and they went to Europe…To me, Bob's work began to get interesting when he went off on his own to North Africa. Then Bob falls in love with Jasper. It was an extraordinary time, and emotionally complicated for Bob to revisit. I had a lot of very important help from Cy on the one hand, and from Jasper on the other. Jasper is a saver of things. And there was Rachel Rosenthal, whose family had money, and who was able to buy some important things."

When Walter went down to Captiva with Joseph Helfenstein (who had not met Bob before), they talked about his work, and about wanting to buy more of it, and possible shows, such as the Cardboards show. Bob was very glad they were getting "Glider." David Ross had secured a lot of important Rauschenbergs for the San Francisco museum, and there were very few of the early silk screen paintings left.

"He can't drive a car any more, because of not being able to use his right arm, but he has such a backlog of photographs, and he's the only artist I know who has his own Iris printer. He can lay down the images, and he's a master at knowing where to leave the white space. His earlier works were pretty much edge-to-edge with images, but there's a very beautiful, different quality now. He can't use his right hand, but he's learned how to use his left."

The surface of the new works is very durable. "You can tap a coin on it, and it clicks. You can use an ordinary sponge and wipe them down." But will the colors fade in time? "The tests show that so far so good. He has three different surface. There's a coarser matte, which has the feel of canvas; also a finer matte; and there's a glossy. God help us,. Calvin, I'd love to have one of those paintings."

The "Cardboards" -- "They've never been given their due." Abstract. The Menil is showing them in ???

Walter also likes very much the metal wall reliefs called "Gluts," with their wide range of colors and configurations, and found street signs. He says some of them were used in theater and dance performances in Europe, though never here. Hopps wants to do a show of these.

Does he think the late work is more important than it's generally perceived to be? "Absolutely. I think there's a handful of American artists whose late work is terrific. Look at Arshile Gorki, and Franz Kline. I believe in both early Pollock and late Pollock -

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- works like "Portrait and a Dream," and "The Deep," and "Scent," the last one of all. Very powerful work. I'm on the side of those who admire the late work of de Kooning. The line may be gone, because of his Alzheimers, but the gesture remains."

San Francisco now has the most important collection of RR in the world, thanks to David Ross. When the new Rauschenbergs were installed there, Ross invited Hopps to come and speak. He did. He told the audience that since the death of de Kooning, Rauschenberg was the greatest living American artist. Hands went up in the audience -- what about Cy Twombly? What about Jasper Johns? Walter said that he knew both those artists well, and that both of them had said to him that Bob was their master. Jasper said, "I had to destroy everything I had been doing, and begin again," when they were living down on Front Street -- this was the summer when the famous combines began. Both Jasper and Cy own and treasure works by Bob, and they have wonderful examples.

In Captiva, Bob spends a lot of time watching cooking shows on TV. He can't cook any more, but he "directed" the preparation of "the best Chilean sea bass I've ever had."

There were a lot of new "Scenarios" around in the studio down there, and more hanging in a gallery named after Bob at the local community college in ??. He likes to hang new things there, to see how they look. "Mostly, he had dinners at his place. One night, he said something wonderful. We were sitting around the table, Caroline and I, and Joseph, and David White -- Bob likes to have people around -- and he said, 'Would you all like to hear what I plan to do with the rest of my life?' Well, that got our attention. 'First of all,' he said, 'I'm going to eat very well. I'm going to teach anyone who's here how to cook. Second, I'm going to get good sleep, because I dream when I sleep, and dreams are very important for my work.' The third thing he said was that he planned to have as good a foundation as he could create to help new young artists and performers -- of course, he already has his Change Foundation doing that. And the fourth thing, he said, 'I plan to make art of some kind right up until my last day on earth.'"

[END]

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Frederika Hunter
(11/17/04)

"He knows everything, somehow. And there's a sadness to that, because he knows himself, too, and his limitations. There's a sense of solitude in the recent works. It's partly that he can't use his right arm to paint, but it's also in the structure -- single images isolated in the space. Also the empty space."

"Ileana lost faith in his work, around the time of the Spreads and Scales, and she let him know it. He was deeply hurt. This was a factor in his moving to Pace." But he's made up with Ileana since then.

His generosity to Trisha Brown -- he's given her nearly $1 million. He is a great theater designer.

Terry Van Brundt, the studio assistant before Darryl, sued Bob for palimony, said he'd had important part in making the work. What happened?

When the Guggenheim show came to the Menil, a dealer in Austin, former pal of Bob's, got a court order to seize works from the show. Marshalls came and did so. She thinks Bob had to make a settlement -- he claimed Bob owed him money, and got a local sheriff to do it. Also, the incident of Bob being arrested in Texas for peeing behind the bus.

"People like to read autobiography in Bob's work, but there's so much more than that. He's always dealt with big ideas."

"Bob is *it*. Not Jasper."

"He can also be mean and petty."

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Jasper Johns
(12/28/04)

(by 'phone from St. Martins)

What was it in Bob's work and Bob's approach that you found useful? "Well, the first thing was that when I met Bob I wanted to be an artist but I wasn't an artist, and Bob was an artist, in my vocabulary. He was like the first real artist that I had any contact with…"

Trading ideas with him - "That's true. That didn't happen frequently, but it happened. He brought me once the equivalent of a mimeographed map of the United States, and simply gave it to me…I took it as something to work with."

Jasper destroyed his early work in the fall of 1954. Did that have anything to do with the influence of Bob? "It had to do with a change of mind about what art meant. What it meant to be an artist. I'm sure it had something to do with [observing Bob's approach and attitude]. It's very hard to separate it from the natural process of maturing. At the time in my life when Bob and I were close, it was just after I was in the Army, so I was probably 24 years old or something. It's hard to know cause and effect. But certainly he was an important example to me, and watching him work. At the same time, I met John and Merce, and they were similarly influential by their conduct."

His saying Bob had invented more than anyone except Picasso - what did he invent? [Laughs] Well, I could give you some examples. I think that when I said that, I was referring to his complex sense of structure, and how form occurred -- how you made something that had form, and his constant re-investigation of the possibilities. You know, he was at that moment working with paint, canvas, real objects -- such things as light bulbs and three-dimensional structures. It was a fantastically prolific conception of what art was, I think. In the context of that time, it was particularly inventive, if that's the word."

Their work being so profoundly different - "It's certainly different, because we're such different personalities. But we were very close and considerate of one another, and actually were the main audience for a number of years, for one another. So each of us developed an idea about the other, however inaccurate it might have been it had a certain degree of accuracy. So we were able to formulate ideas and to trade ideas and to question what we did. I was allowed to question what he did and he was allowed to question what I did. We were relatively isolated at that time, in society."

What was Jasper's early work like? "Well, it had no coherence…In South Carolina I don't think I had ever seen a painting by a major artist."

Were you both aware that you were breaking new ground? "Well, I was aware that I was becoming an artist. I got rid of certain things in my life and made certain decisions that that's what I was doing. But Bob, as I said earlier, certainly already was an artist. Bob had had shows in Europe, and in New York he had shown in important galleries -- Betty

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Parsons and the Stable -- and was very knowledgeable about the New York art scene. He knew most of the people in it. To me that was all news. It was clear to me -- I of course believed that what Bob was doing was of extreme importance, and of course he believed it.[laughs]. That may have helped to convince me! He had a different kind of imagination from me. I remember once, I was reading Stein's autobiography of Alice Toklas to him, reading it out loud in the studio, and he turned and said, 'One day they'll be writing about us like that.' And that kind of thought had never entered my mind."

The Picasso-Braque parallel - "I don't like that comparison. But as far as differences, our work was very different but compared to other work at the time, our work had similarities. We had a relationship to a kind of general picture about what was going on, I think."

He tried to do a couple of Rauschenbergs? "Yes, I did. Two of them." Bob's asking if he could make a mark in encaustic on Jasper's canvas, and then hitting "the wrong thing," was the only case he recalls of RR trying to do a Johns.

The erased de Kooning - "I think I titled it. He had already done it. I think that over the years, the number of erasers he used has increased! I can't believe the paper would hold up under the number…But at any rate, he had done that. So, there was some occasion when…he decided to show it, and was questioning how to do it, how to present it. And I had gotten -- I don't know what it was called, it was a template that allowed you to do very precise lettering. You would put a needle in the template, and then there was an extension with a pen, and the pen would make the letter with great regularity. And I made the little title for it. The matte for the work was cut out, and this little label was put in. I think I suggested that it be called 'Erased de Kooning.' But that's what it was. I've been reading the new de Kooning biography, it's very interesting. There's lots that I didn't know, and I think it's very well written."

The visit from Leo and Ileana to Bob's studio, did that change your relationship with Bob? "I was not aware of it. It was an odd time, and a lot happened, and there are reports of things happening that I don't remember. I don't know what to say. It actually introduced a kind of excitement into our lives, over a period of time, from that visit and through the first couple of shows at Leo's. Leo called one day and asked did I think Bob could be ready for a show in, I don't know, in a month or something, and I said he could be ready now." [He called you to ask that?] "We shared a telephone, and I answered it."

Has he seen any of Bob's recent work? "No. I haven't seen any of Bob's shows." Any contact with Bob? "Only very slight. The last time was a couple of years ago, when Merce was opening in Brooklyn, and he asked ??? to decide the order of something. I saw him there, and at about the same time, who was it? Penn took a photograph of a group of us, and we met at that studio. At the time he was in a wheel chair."

Jasper's upcoming show at the National Gallery - is it a print show? "I hope not. I don't even know that it's definite. I can't really discuss it. Jeffrey has a particular idea, and I'm not entirely certain what it is. I haven't paid that much attention to it. I questioned

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whether he'll be able to borrow the pictures that he wanted to borrow. It's far enough off that I don't have it in my mind!" [END]

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Jeff Koons
(1/21/05)

[from #115, side A]

"I've always loved Bob's work. The way he uses things from everyday life -- the connection with the readymade of Duchamp, and carrying that forward and just incorporating everything around Bob that he comes into contact with."

Bob had a "direct" influence on his work. "I've always enjoyed how the object -- there's a sense of grace that's found in everything, whether it's an umbrella that's found on the street or something, and just reviewing the grace in everything. Also harmony of chaos. You just have images from all different areas being formulated together, and you get a harmony."

"Just incorporating the world around us -- an acceptance that everything's here, and opening oneself up to things. An acceptance of our world and ourselves."

"Bob's always been this cultural icon. About six years ago I did a painting called 'Cutout,' and I incorporated in the background an image of Mount Rushmore, and I thought I was just making a kind of reference to great American icon artists like Bob. It's really a reference to Bob."

He loves a fairly recent painting of Bob 's called "Plank,' with a board going across and then making a sharp bend. (???)

Scenarios - "I think they're great. Each one is a world unto itself. What a productive artist!"

"Some of my favorite works are…the cardboard pieces. Just fantastic. The sincerity, just to unfold a cardboard box on the wall -- not unfold it, but whatever. I really love those works." He recently did a painting called 'Popeye,' with references to many artists such as Lichtenstein and Warhol, and also some cardboard boxes referring to RR.

"As far as thinking about certain works…I can't think of a work that has more power as an image than 'Canyon.' I think that just defines the ability of an art work to have a presence. I know no other work that has as great a presence as 'Canyon.' It incorporates so many aspects of early 20th century art -- concepts of Freudian type of thought, and dream, and of the readymade object, and the subconscious life."

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Jeff Koons (1/21/05)

Celebration series? "We have all of them in production right now [we meaning Larry Gagosian], so they are being completed. I don't know when we're going to have a show, exactly, but they're all coming along. We have all the metal pieces in production, and now we're just finishing with works like 'Playdough' -- finishing off these polyethylene pieces."

New works he's doing - "I've just designed this new piece called 'Train.' It's a large public sculpture that consists of some readymade elements. One being a crane, a very large, 161-foot crane, and hanging from that, facing straight down, pointing vertically to the earth, is a 1940s steam locomotive engine. A 70-foot-long engine with 81-inch drive, very large wheels. It will start up every day - 365 days a year it'll start up at least once a day, hopefully three times a day, and very slowly, you know -- *choo, choo* -- and billow huge puffs of smoke, and build up momentum in about two-and-a-half-minutes, be going full steam, and there'll be *wo-o-o*, *wo-o-o*, and then two and a half minutes of slowing down, until you get these last vestiges of smoke puffing out. I've designed this for Francois Pinaud, for his new foundation in Paris." A permanent installation there.

The Hulk -- "They're these inflatable green Hulks. I make different versions. One is a Hulk organ -- it's a huge pipe organ, with the pipes coming out of his back. It's about nine feet tall. The keyboards run across his chest and on his legs, quite chaotically. The pedals are down on his feet. It's a piece that you can play. It incorporates kind of like the power of steam engines, along with the history of the organ in baroque-type settings. It's high-testosterone." Pinaud is making a Koons retrospective at his foundation, at the end of 2007, for the opening of the museum -- Hulks may show there first. The inflatables are definitely based on the comic-book character.

"I think the chaos in this sculpture, how the organs are placed in there, running across the stomach, and the different pedals, and the valves -- you know, couldn't exist without Bob. This kind of randomness and the acceptance of chaos, the beauty of chaos. In the end, it all comes to accepting ourselves, and each other. Bob's work has been so powerful in that area."

"The figure of Bob as an artist, how you live your life as an artist, is so relevant today."

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Dorothy Lichtenstein
(1/20/05)

"He's as open as any young artist."

"He has the most beautiful hands."

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IRVING PENN
(conversation on telephone/26 January 2004/regarding Rauschenberg sitting)

We just printed up the picture...It was a precarious sitting -- we were both walking on eggs...There's a lot in the picture. I think it's good...I spoke with the New Yorker about how to print the picture -- how to use a double page spread...His hand is on display. It's the truth of his situation now. I'm glad the picture exists. It tells us as much as we want to know. That's a historical picture. It's good to have that in existence.

(I tell Penn that Tony Just asked me the other night if it would be possible to get the picture he took of Elizabeth Peyton, because she loves it so much. He doesn't like the idea. "He can buy the magazine and own it. People always want to own the thing." I tell him how much the sitting meant to Elizabeth. "You know how I felt about doing that picture." [He didn't like her work, so he was resistant.] "But it was a little love affair there. She was a tender little thing. I'm glad I did the picture, but that's as far as I want to go.")

(Back to the Rauschenberg picture)
"That's a museum piece. I've photographed him twice before...and it was sappy. I didn't throw them away, but they weren't published. Here's there's both compassion and a tenderness not to hurt. That's a burden to carry around.

(He tells me that he had just gotten out of the hospital, and he wasn't sure that he was going to be able to do it. He was in a lot of pain, "but that's personal." He tells me that the doctors in the hospital knew about the photo sitting with Rauschenberg, and were trying to help him walk and get ready for it.)

"I feel he became somebody else after the picture."
During photography, Penn kept talking to him very quietly, saying things like "very severe, very severe," and "pretend to say a very small word." Very intense session, and Bob cooperating fully, with him.

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Joachim Pissarro
(1/26/05)

He saw several of the 'Scenarios' before they left the house, "and what surprised me about them was the degree of clarity, of directness…the way the groups are carefully laid down almost like playing cards on a table. There was a frontality to those works that I was not used to seeing. But then again, John Elderfield showed me the other day a work of 1984. I associate the work of the early 80s with the ROCI project, and I would have thought -- that's why you can never turn your eyes with Bob." The 1984 work had "already that degree of orderliness, of wanting to control the surface…to place things in an architecturally precise way.

"Anyway, I think with the Scenarios this reaches a quasi-climatic point. I thought it was very clean. The white space is very surprising too. One thing that amazes me about Bob's work from beginning to end, which is inexplainable, I just have to out it in two ways. One, you sense a kind of almost -- ejaculation of textures, of paint, an explosion of stuff that happens on the surface -- explosion is the best word probably. Then, second, it's the intelligence that comes out of the result you see on the surface. The two don't cohere, you can't figure out somebody just pouring stuff on the canvas, and then you stand back and it makes a hell of a lot of sense. How do the two things happen? There's a French poet called Rene Char, who speaks about the 'lightning speed of the metaphor.' I think Bob's work feels that way. That bolt-of-lightning kind of precision, of linking of stuff that happens at the speed of an instant…The reason I'm think about that is that in the 'Scenario' series, those links are unbelievable real, unbelievably structured. You can sense that he's thought about all kinds of puns, all kinds of echoes, either language games or rhyming effects, mirroring effects…It almost screams Rauschenberg."

"Bob used to say, I shoot photographs like I breathe. He looks, he sees, he shoots. Now, those particular works apparently are not necessarily his photographs. But he signs -- with his left hand."

"One great show that needs to be done -- he's one of the greatest photographers of the last fifty years."

The rap on Bob's work since 1970 not being good, "to me that's completely crazy. The seventies are just as interesting as Jaspers's work. But people were saying the same thing about Jasper, you remember? It's intensely stupid, I think. Look at the veil paintings, the 'Hoarfrost' series. They're mind-boggling." David White calls Joachim whenever an earlier work of Bob's surfaces at the house. "About three or four months ago, he calls and says there's a bunch of 'Hoarfrost' paintings that you most likely have not seen. The whole gallery downstairs is covered with these immense 'Hoarfrost' paintings, not a single one I think had been exhibited." They had been in Bob's storage space.

"I think this should be on the record, because I'm here quoting Jasper. I ran into him on the street, an accidental encounter. We walked along. Barbara Castelli was next to him. And so we arrived at the room I call the room of southern gentlemen -- the gentlemen of

(to MoMA)

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the southern renaissance: John Cage, Twombly, Rauschenberg, and Johns. And Jasper crosses the room, passes by 'Diver,' and looks back and the Dante drawings by Bob…We talk about Bob's work. And for some reason the conversation goes on to 'Factum I' and 'Factum II.' I said I had received a letter from LAMOCA about that combine show, and John and I were discussing the fact that it seems rather odd to call those combines, what do you think? And he says, 'I should know something about it, because I coined that word. I created that word, and gave it to Bob…I asked him, what does it mean, that word? And he said, 'It's painting doing the game of sculpture'…"

RR 's titles are as fascinating as Magritte's. Both Bob and Jasper love crossword puzzles and language games like Scrabble. (Bob playing with the dancers on tour.)

[END INVU - SIDE A, 194]

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Daryll Pottorf
(1/14/05)

Bob's going out more than he did when he was healthy. Since the hurricane, they've been out to dinner every night. Even before his two falls, "It was getting to the point that there were rumors he was dead."

When Robert Mapplethorpe came to visit, not long before he died of AIDS. "Bob came up and gave him a big smack on the lips, when everybody else was standing ten feet away."

Medical history before the stroke - "Nothing too serious. He had to have a Pacemaker. That was basically his only problem before the fall."

First fall was in NYC, the night after the party for Ileana. He came home, and tripped over a rug in his bedroom. Darryl heard him yell, and found him on the floor unable to get up. Called ambulance and took him to Beth Israel. He was flown to Florida, because they couldn't operate on the hip right away. But there were complications -- internal bleeding. Rushed him to emergency room at Fort Myers hospital, where they were told if he didn't have an operation he would die within an hour or two, but there was only a 20% chance of his surviving it he did have surgery. Darryl tried frantically to reach his sister or Christopher for permission (he now has that right himself), and reached Chris for OK. Darryl thought he might never see him again, but decided "that of anybody could survive, it would be Bob."

Six months later [actually it was one year later] he was walking fine after hip replacement, doing "really fine" and working in the studio. But he fell again, and hit his head on the floor. "It was about alcohol -- he was inebriated." Darryl called an ambulance, but the decision was that he was OK. But he was on kumiden, and blood was leaking into his brain, although the symptoms didn't show until 24 hours later -- was having trouble eating spaghetti, got up to go to the refrigerator, and he fell again, and his right side collapsed. Luckily he fell on the dog. Darryl took him right to the hospital. "It wasn't a stroke per se, it was blood on the brain." Not in the hospital as long as the first time, but when he came home he had to be in a hospital bed downstairs, and that's when Darryl hired full-time nurses. [END SIDE A]

Darryl hasn't worked in the studio since then, because he doesn't want anybody saying Bob isn't doing his own work. He got his younger brother Kevin in as studio assistant, and Darryl takes care of Bob and does his own work.

Bob has a lot of pain in his right arm still. You can't touch it without hurting him. The doctors wanted to cutting it surgically, to straighten it out. This would have involved putting in a steel rod, and he still couldn't have used the arm, so they decided not to do it.

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"Bob has learned to deal with it and to go on with his life. He's not happy about it -- who would be? But you can't keep Bob too long. You know Bob. He still has his sense of humor…"

He was bedridden for three or four months after the first fall, and the hip operation. That's the period he couldn't work. And then after the stroke he couldn't work for a while. But once he accepted his condition, he went back to work. He's had to accept the wheelchair, and the fact of no privacy in his life, with 24-hour nursing. "Even when he was depressed, it was not a severe depression. I would call it more, he was just unhappy. Not being a happy camper. There was one time when he said, 'Darryl, I think my life is just about over. And you know what makes me feel bad? I've had such a great life, I don't want to let go of it."

"But still, to this day, he'll say 'This is only temporary. I'm going to get through this, and I'm going to walk again.' He's determined that he's going to work again."

He had started the "Short Stories" before the fall, and finished them after it (the first fall).

Scenarios - started after he'd been unable to work for a considerable period. First works since the stroke. "Once he started that series, that's when he started improving. Even if he doesn't work now, he sits in the studio and concentrates, and goes over business. He may start a painting, start laying it out, and that may take his whole energy for the day. He has a physical therapist who comes in. He wears out pretty quickly. It's a lot slower, even though he's produced such an incredible amount. A painting may take a week or more. I would say there were at least fifteen before the hurricane. The damage came in the middle of the studio, so the paintings didn't get wet. We had garbage cans out to catch the leaks. The first ones in the series were more like what he'd been doing before. And then it kind of evolved into more of a -- specific and complete images, rather than anything loose." He made all the decisions, insisting on having the entire image used. He directs how the images are laid out - can't reach the middle of the table -- and if he doesn't like it, it has to be done over. Bob can't use the squeegee, to transfer the image; Kevin does that.

Some images are from his own, old photographs. But he takes Kevin out, and tells him what to shoot, and he also asks other people to take photos for him. "Bob doesn't like to go back to the past, and use things from the past. In the studio, all those objects from 'Dylaby' in the fifties -- all of us look at those things and imagine the beautiful things Bob could do with them, but Bob looks at them and says, 'Ahh, too many memories, I don't want to deal with that shit.' It's not fresh. He likes the future and the present. For years he just hated to talk about all that."

"There's a side of him that's very insecure, and a side of him that has confidence, and a side of him that needs -- he's very needy of love, attention, and recognition -- and control. I know who Bob is. I'll tell you, if we'd been kids together, we would have been best friends…" Much in common, in terms of family backgrounds, problems, etc. They

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met 27 years ago, when Darryl was 26 -- he's now the age Bob was when they met, at the opening of a Spreads and Scales show in Fort Myers.

Bob went to Knoedler because Armand Hammer could get the ROCI show in Russia.

Drinking - "I don't think it helped or hurt [his work.] I've seen him sober and I've seen him drunk, and yes, it has affected it. If you've been drinking for a long time --- I think the painting he did before he went to Betty Ford was very weak. Bob used to drink a quart of Jack Daniels a day, and for breakfast he would do vodka and grapefruit juice. He did this for many, many years. I used to say Bob, when you die, I want your liver." [END SIDE A] He was never a binge drinker. "Dorothy [Lichtenstein] and I got him into Betty Ford. I knew that he was going to die unless something changed. He was drinking sometimes more than a quart of Jack Daniels a day. I talked to Dorothy. She gave me the name of an interventionist…" Darryl decided the time he would go, and he went, in February. "Bob called that night, and said 'I'm coming home.'" Darryl, whose father had just died, talked him into staying. He'd gotten so he couldn't go any time at all without alcohol. He wasn't eating.

He did the whole program at Betty Ford -- one month. Since then "he doesn't drink any hard liquor -- oh, occasionally when he goes out he might have a vodka, but never at home. But he does drink a bottle and a half of white wine a day. We used to buy a case of Jack Daniels a week." They water the wine a little.

Darryl went to Betty Ford two years later.

"Bob's a fine person to travel with, because he does everything first class." Darryl came to work for Bob in 1981, did a lot of different things for several years. Didn't become his main companion until around 1989, during the ROCI tour.

At Lafayette Street - Bob sitting at the kitchen table, watching Dr. Phil on TV. Rocky is at the far end of the room, by the radiator. Darryl talks about the hurricane. It had already passed through when they came to take them out by helicopter. Bob was furious. Darryl bribed the sheriff to let him back on the island a day or so later, to arrange for the paintings to be shipped to NY - danger of mildew, or theft. [Bob's "heh-heh-heh" laugh at intervals]. [END]

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Christopher Rauschenberg
(1/5/05)

The relationship with his father - "I have a terrific relationship with him. He's very supportive, and interested in what I'm doing. Almost all my other artist friends have parents who say, 'It was nice to see your name in the paper, but I didn't really understand it.' My parents were divorced when I was a baby. I'd see my father and spend time with him. But as I became an adult…[the relationship] has become richer."

"I was a physics major, but I'd always been interested in photography. I started it again in high school, and eventually decided that's what I want to do."

"It's wonderful for me to see the ways he's changed the world, reflected in one person at a time. People feel welcomed by the work in a certain way…I think there's a way in which people respond to it in sort of a family way. A lot of the critics sort of missed the boat on that one, I think. Normal people got the work in a direct, personal way. I was in L.A. on grant panel on my father's birthday a few years back, and I walked down to the Museum of ContemporaryArt, they have a room of Rauschenberg. I went in and here's Dora, and here's my aunt Janet, and here's my mom -- I felt like it was a perfect birthday, because there I was giving money to artists and hanging out with the family."

Any rough spots in getting along with him? "No." Why Portland? He went to Reed College, and just fell in love with Portland.

"My work is about looking at the ordinary world around us and saying, 'Hey, wait a minute, that's not ordinary, that's really interesting.' And of course to anybody whose work is about that, he's a big stepping stone. He's not the only one, certainly, but that's a big element. I understand that it's hard to be better than your father when he's the best artist in the world…but I view art-making as a team endeavor, and so does he. I started a non-profit photo gallery with some other photographers, and during the 29 years of that I've co-curated six hundred shows of other artists…" He's shown his work five or six times in New York, at different galleries.

Bob is always direct, never manipulative.

The new work, post-strokes - "He had a down period, when he wasn't making any work. It went on for a long time. That is the first time that he didn't make work since he became an artist. One of the things he never had to deal with before is the white sheet of paper in the typewriter kind of thing, how you get moving from a dead stop. I work in the traditional 35-mm sort of way, I'll take a hundred pictures a day and if none of them work out I'll go out and take a hundred more the next day. But he doesn't throw work away, anything he makes has to be a keeper. And it's very hard to come out of a dead stop and make a keeper with the first thing you do…But I think his work now is really gorgeous. "

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What got him started? He got in the studio and looked at some of the Short Stories. "And he said, 'What if I were to make them twice as big?' And I think that having more turf, having more white space, it sort of freshened the work by introducing some new questions in there. I wasn't there during that transition, but my sense was -- he's an explorer, he wants to break into new territory all the time."

Did he talk with Bob about being incapacitated? "A little bit. He's always in the studio, for many, many years he's worked with assistants. The idea that he couldn't use his right hand very well in the studio wasn't so much of a problem, because he has right-hand men! I know it was very upsetting to him to not be able to make a signature. But in the studio he was well positioned to overcome that handicap. But he wasn't able to go and photograph. That was something I talked to him about…" Talked about using a little digital camera, and showed Bob some of the images he'd done with his, but Bob didn't seem too interested in that.

His gallery -- Blue Sky Gallery, started in 1975 in a storefront space in Portland, to show local photographers. Others heard about it and started to show there, now about a third of the shows are international. Two shows a month. No collection.

Back to Bob: Have there been periods in your life when you had little contact? "No, it's been pretty much continuous. I generally go down to Captiva once a year or something like that, but then I also go to a lot of his shows. He had a show recently in Ferrara, and I went to that. They showed the big Labyrinth piece in Ferrara, and it snowed -- it looked wonderful in the snow. I made a panoramic picture of it in the snow, and they're going to use that in the show in Florida."

Bob's drinking - "Obviously I don't think it's ever good for people, but I would say that his unbelievable level of curiosity and enthusiasm about the world just dwarfed what alcohol -- alcohol normally sort of dampens everything down, but it more than met its match in him. To me there's an enthusiastic curiosity and excitement about the world and about the work -- what am I going to paint tomorrow? -- and I think that's an irresistible force, and it's kept him from being knocked off course."

Their joint show in Lafayette opens May 21st. He leaves tomorrow for Thailand, for three weeks. [END]

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Jim Rosenquist
(1/19/05)

Met Bob and Jasper in the fifties, at a party for Macy's 4th of July fireworks. They were "extremely shy individuals, didn't say anything." He used to see Bob here and there in early sixties. Hung out at Cedar Bar. After billboard painting for a few years in Times Square, Jim was looking for a loft to paint in; saw Bob and Jasper on Fulton Street. A little later, he called Bob, whom he knew was doing display work, to ask for information about a commercial job he was doing. When Jim got his place on Coentes Slip, "Who should drive by but Jasper Johns in a white Jaguar wearing a white overcoat. He gave me a ride, and I thought, Wow, that's fantastic, he is really making money."

Bob and Jim "drank together for about ten years, and then I tapered off." Around 1965, having a drink with Bob on a freezing winter night, Bob said he'd just bought a place in Captiva, and he offered to let Jim stay there. He repeated the offer a few nights later, so Jim went down with his wife and infant son and stayed about two weeks. Did Jim's settling in Aripeka have to do with that? "Absolutely."

Did Bob's work open doors for Jim? "Absolutely. You know, Tanya Grosman used to say about Bob, 'He is my hero.' Bob is very heroic. He could plant grass on a sculpture. He would do anything, and he could pull it off."

The "Scenarios?" "Well, Bob's getting older. Look at his work now, it's getting more colorful and more subtle and more delicate. That's what I have to say. It's not as brash. Intellectually it may be very brash, but not stylistically. The last couple of shows I've seen, it's been more and more colorful like this."

Drinking - After Bob's fall, "he was given blood thinner and told not to drink any alcohol. So he did both of them." Another fall, causing a stroke. "But before that, Bob seemed indestructible. I visited him in Betty Ford. I was in LA and Sid Felson said Bob is in Betty Ford, so we went out to visit him. That was a big changeover, that slowed up his drinking, but then trickle by trickle he kept on drinking." When Jim used to visit him in Captiva, "there would be nothing to eat there but celery, carrots and Jack Daniels."

Tells about going to Captiva for Bob's birthday once. There were a lot of others, and they all went out to dinner at a restaurant. Bob was in a bad mood. He got up and said, "I hope you all got what you came for." Jim went outside, found a big rock, put a hurricane candle on it, came back and set it down on the floor and said, "Hurray for Jackson Pollock." This did the trick, changed Bob's mood.

Bob's main contribution? He thinks hard about this. Says, slowly, with several pauses: "I think -- that his work really is -- an invitation to everyone to do -- anything, accurately. I think that's a key, accuracy. A lot people put things together, and I just don't get it. But with Bob, most of the time I get it -- I think I get it. But another things about Bob is that Bob shoots from the hip, and he does all sorts of things and he shows all of it. And on one

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side it won't all be great. But in and amongst there's genius pieces. But he doesn't qualify anything."

Jim thinks his own main contribution was large scale, which he got from painting billboards. A lot of others, including Oldenburg, began working large after Jim's first show.

"A lot of younger artists try to emulate other people's work, but they never had the experience that de Kooning had. Or the experience that I've had or Bob had, and so it doesn't have the accuracy, I think. Jasper has always been concerned with accuracy, too. He would always talk about that."

Bob's relationship with Leo? "I really don't know."

"I'm doing a book on my life, before I forget everything." Working with a writer named David Dolphin (?). "It was a nice time then, because artists had time to gather time because living was so cheap."

"Don't quote me on this, but I just hate to see Bob in this condition. It beats me up. He was always a role model for me, I mean really. He was just always out there. It seems his mind is just fine. His generosity is overwhelming."

[END]

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Nan Rosenthal
(11/3/04)

The Rauschenberg show at the Met is of combines and combine paintings, 1954-1964. It was originated by Paul Schimmel at LAMOCA, who offered it to her. She took it first to Bill Lieberman, who made her decide he had really lost it by saying he'd rather the Met did its own Rauschenberg show with in-house material, although the Met has no Rauschenbergs except prints. Nan went to Marukh Tarapor, the head of exhibitions, who said sure, take it straight to Philippe de Montebello, so she did. Philippe said he knew all about the combines and their importance, and go ahead with the show. A few weeks later, Bill Lieberman got sick, so the problem was solved.

Schimmel had a list of about 120 pieces. Nan went through it, and made her own list of some seventy-odd. The show will start out at the Met, in December 2005, then travel to LA and after that to the Pompidou.

She's nervous about loans, because so many of the pieces are fragile. She wants "Minutiae," and the one Jasper used to own, with the parachute fringe on the bottom (Jasper sold it to buy his Cezanne "Bather"), and the one with the man in the white suit. She's just starting to investigate loans. Show will be in the Cantor galleries.

About RR's later work, she says carefully that there are some good things in it. She liked the Egyptian series, which were very pale. But she's afraid that a lot of the works with photo-transfers on metal have a questionable "shelf-life." It's not known how they will react to light, and you don't want to buy a piece that will have to be kept in the dark, in storage, for much of the time.

One big problem with the Met's modern art dept is that there is virtually no storage. Also that's it's hideous space, filled with a lot of junk. [Off the record, of course.] The great need is for someone to raise serious money to redesign the space, and to weed out a lot of the junk. Gary Tinterow is good at raising money. Nobody knows whether his recent appointment (taking over 20th century as well as 19th) is a kind of sop, to make him feel better because he's not going to get Philippe's job, or a discreet preparation to take over Philippe's job -- there are a lot of rumors at the Met about this.

Marukh now lives in Geneva. Still has title of deputy director for exhibitions, but nobody quite knows what's going on.

About the late work looking emptied out -- she says this has been the case throughout his career. He'll begin a series with very empty pieces, like the white paintings; then things get more and more crowded and complicated, until they empty out to begin a new series. Check this.

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Paul Schimmel
(11/14/04)

Combines - "These things are fifty years old now. Part of my hope was to have it open on the anniversary - fifty years. And of all the institutions…this was going to be their thing [The Met's] -- MoMA was not going to do it. It was either not going to be in New York or it was going to go to the Met. And Nan wanted it a lot. And I think, given the change in the structuring of the 20th century department, and Gary Tinterow taking over, frankly I think it's a big deal for the Met. It's a kind of old-master show from mid-century that they should be doing. So it was just sort of fortuitous…"

Offered the show to the Met for 2006, after our spring opening. The galleries offered were downstairs, which Schimmel didn't want. Only slot available before 2008 for the upstairs galleries was just before MoCA was going to open. This was obviously best for the artist, so an easy decision.

"But it is a MOCA show. We have by far the largest holdings in the world because of the Panza acquisition. It's something that we've been working on for three or four years." Third venue is Pompidou - Paris very important city for Bob in this period of his life. Fourth venue was first to sign on: Moderna Museet in Stockholm, which owns "Monogram," and made its loan on condition they got show. And, Pontus Hulten is MOCA's founding director; and it was through Pontus that MOCA met Panza and brought him on the board.

MOCA owns twelve combines. (He was going to give us a check list, but didn't). "We'll begin with 'The Man With the White Shoes', 1954-55. Although it's not the most iconic work, like 'Coca-Cola Plan' or 'Factum,' it is the richest of all of our pieces, in that there is a white painting, in terms of the shoes on that kind of speckled field; there is a black painting in the background, a small black painting; there is a kind of collage, pinking painting like the work of '53.'54, over here -- and that's all on one side, like his history as an artist; and on the other side is pictures of his father and mother together on their silver anniversary, a picture of his sister, the winner of the Lousiana yam festival; there's a Cy Twombly drawing; it's very personal, an absolutely brilliant piece. But our range of works goes from the more gestural works of '59.'59, the most conceptual works like 'Factum,' and then the more performative works like 'Gift for Apollo' or the 'Trophy for ???. "

"The idea of doing the combine show really went back to Walter's early work exhibition. After he did the early works, I said, oh, I really want to do a combine show -- it seemed like the perfect follow-up. Ronnie had just done the silkscreen show at the Whitney, and that made perfect brackets, and we had this. At that time, Walter was already thinking and talking about the Gugg. That was the next one up."

"But, why do it now, instead of wait another five years? In terms of Bob's direct participation, this is the time to do it -- most important, number one. And when he talks about the combines he seems happy - not like when he talks about the silkscreens, which

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came at a sort of difficult time in his life. Hopefully -- his health is OK, but it's not the best. And it was also the 50th anniversary, and I think in terms of the general public -- I know that when I say it to people, fifty years, it 's a shocker. You can think of Pollock in terms of fifty years, but you forget there's only five years difference between Pollock's greatest achievement and when the combines begin, a very short period of time. The New York School artists didn't really come into until they were well into their forties, whereas Bob was a star in his twenties. It was a different model…You don't think of it in terms of fifty years."

"There are 162 pieces that are defined as either combine-paintings or combine-sculptures. You know about 20 of them. And a lot of these more modest, autobiographical, quick, diaristic works, which characterize so much of the legacy of him, the real art-life stuff, not big masterpieces but almost the remnants of daily life -- so little is known about that, but it is an immensely rich body of work. Much more nuanced than a chicken, a goat, those kinds of icons. So it really does give us a chance to really throw it out in a way that's never been done before. The book will be comprehensive…" Essays by Schimmel, Brandon Joseph, maybe Nan, maybe Thomas Crow -- whose essay for the Guggenheim catalog offended Bob and wasn't published [??]; he'll have to be persuaded. Crow talked about his sexual identity, "which is of course the elephant in the room, and probably can't be dealt with until all three of them are dead." [Bob, Jasper, Cy].

Bob is "such a social animal." He's coming to the MoMA opening on Tuesday. He went to the Sid and Joan Felson's honoring at the Hammer Museum, to the Ruscha opening at MOCA, to a luncheon before it, etc. "We talked for several hours. He looked at 'Trophy I for Merce Cunningham,' the one with the photograph of Merce like that, and he said, 'Oh, that was when Merce broke his ankle. Merce came down on the floor so hard, his foot went right through the flooring, and you see this thing here, that people sometimes call a knee-pad, it's an ankle brace, and under the brace is a compression rod.' And there's a street sign where you have construction, and it says 'Please Walk Carefully.' It's so literal, which his work is. And I'm hoping he'll talk more about these things."

RR's later work -- "Let me just evade that question for a second, by saying that Rauschenberg's legacy, which really does begin with the combines, is so pervasive, so unbelievably generous. You just think about, even in his own time, artists he was close to -- I'm absolutely certain that you look at the career of early Johns, of early Twombly, and look at the point where they come into contact with Bob, and by dint of his generosity, his spirit, his fearlessness, in that moment he opened things up for them. There's no doubt that their relationship was enormously beneficial to these artists."

"And then you certainly see the relationship it has to the formative years of Pop art in the early sixties, the relationship it has to happenings, assemblage as whole genre, with ramifications on the west coast -- everybody talks about that. But there's also Fluxus, arte povera, all the performance space movements of the sixties, conceptualism of the seventies -- the erased de Kooning, the whole Cagean aspect of his work is the foundation of conceptual art. Environmental art, installation art, political art -- and this sense, most importantly, that everything an artist does somehow makes the life of the artist the

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greatest body of work. That erasure between the object and the person who made it. So, that all began with the combines. And there is nothing subsequent to that, that will ever be as influential as that.

"Has he made more beautiful pieces? Yes. Has he made more stunning, more clear, more lucid, more precise, more comprehensible pieces? Absolutely. Those are all qualities that are in the works subsequently. More gregarious, more staged -- yes, he's done all of those things./ He's done epics, from his world travels to stage things. But no body of work will ever be as meaningful to painting and the history of art."

This is true of most artists, but not all -- cf Lucian Freud, Louise Bourgeois. De Kooning had only two periods of great influence, the black abstractions and the women paintings. Artists who change the way other artists look at art -- "that happens very infrequently." "I'm confident that Twombly and Johns would not be the artists they are, without Bob." They're all very different, not a school, not Picasso and Braque tied together. "Cy remains much more firmly grounded in the ethos of the New York School than either Bob or Jasper. But I stand very strongly on the belief that, among equals, Bob was the first there. It's the personality, the generosity that this work had, that it somehow could go more one way than the other."

"Even though an artist may have more in common with Bob, they talk about Jasper. It's a strange thing. The other person who gets so much credit is Warhol. And yet -- the art world likes things to be a lot neater. And you really have to step back with Bob, and look at it from a different standpoint. Today -- where call it postmodernism, call it hip-hop culture, the appropriation, all of these terminologies all have their genesis in the combines. In Los Angeles…where we have this great holding, you ask a young artist who's the master from the fifties, they'll tell you it's Bob Rauschenberg. Because they can see it. And this is the ultimate story that I hope comes out of this exhibition. You've got to look at these things -- they don't reproduce so well."

RR and Johns - "The dramatic development of the crosshatch paintings that occurred in the 70s in Jasper's work has no equivalent in Bob's development. They are very different kinds of artists. And yet, I would argue that during the entirety of the 60s, Bob continues to move much more dramatically forward in terms of breaking new ground. The silkscreen paintings, while they don't have that kind of hard, iconic quality that Warhol has…they're more lyrical, they're more art-historical, they don't delve into the consumer aesthetic or the popular culture, but in terms of their sheer virtuosity and this use of material, he was by far one of the most advanced in terms of using mass reproduction, photography, print-making…And all of this work with performance, and art and technology, this is huge in terms of the history of art -- much more influential than anything Jasper did during the 60s."

Warhol takes on the mass media, even more than Bob. But Jasper's work doesn't break the mold, "it is very much within the history of 20th century art. They are exquisite objects."

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But "when you think about multiculturalism, when you think about politics and art -- these are all things that dominated the scene in the 90s, and they all had -- are they in themselves great masterpieces? No. And maybe that's one of the interesting characteristics of Bob's career. As much as we think of his career in terms of 'Monogram,' as masterpieces, part of the re-shuffling of the deck was that he is more influential in terms of changing the paradigm than any one masterpiece would be able to illuminate."

Schimmel would like to do a show of RR's drawings -- even today, some of the most beautiful things he's doing are the smaller works on paper. The restriction of the scale concentrates his effect. [END SIDE A]

The word is generous. "The work itself is really generous. For some artists, including Pollock and even Jasper to some degree, where do you go with what they do? Pollock is a giant, but in some ways the lineage -- Greenberg argued that the lineage was the image being embedded into the surface, into the weave of the canvas, but that's not necessarily the most monumentally successful lineage. Jasper's lineage is, you know, Brice Marden to Bob Gober. But Bob, in his own generous, sloppier way, has a huge sweep -- it's just epic, the sweep of what he does. If people don't see that, they're just not looking. And at the Met, they'll look. Bob is not as easy as other artists. I've always wondered why 'Coca-Cola Plan' is our most sought-after loan by Bob, the one everybody wants. It is not the richest, not the most Bob in some ways. It certainly does not have all the nuances of his personal life, of the history of art, but it's kind of what we want it to be for Bob. It's very iconic -- three Coca-Cola bottles, with the Winged Victory on it. It's a marvelous piece, quick, easy, clear. But there's no question that 'Man With the White Shoes' is much more -- you can just become immersed in it."

Catalog for show will have every work defined as a combine in it, show will have about half as many. About 75 works in show, out of 162. And I promise that even you will find pieces that you've never seen before. There's a piece that he gave Ileana, never been shown before, untitled, that has a little sort of poky Boucher figure in it, reaching up pouring water, and the paint is pouring down; it's got wonderful little fragments…it's never been published before. Out of the 162 pieces, we are up to 158 -- just four away from finding everything."

The combines "are far sturdier than people make them out to be. They look funky, because that's the way they're made!"

[He wants us to urge Si Newhouse to lend his two combines to the show.]

"Gold Standard" is a marvelous summary work -- time, performance, the RCA Victor linking America-Japan, the Gutai, etc. Last room in the show "will be bold, and muscular, and gestural, and performative. Pieces like 'Navigator,' 'Diplomat,' along with 'Gold Standard,' it's going to make a really dynamic ending to the exhibition."

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LEO STEINBERG

There were actually two works that I picked from the late period. That very long panel with the crumpled metal thing, which I liked. And of course the thing I put on the cover, the pyramid of chairs, which I found really the sort of image stays with you. And it simply takes on a kind of permanence, and I can't imagine a world without it, anymore than I can imagine a work that Shubert melody -- it just exists. If any work of art can do that, it's something...I think I mentioned to you, when I first caught sight of it, across the space of the Guggenheim, it's sort of tk and its authority. But these have a kind of authority. I like the way these telegragh sort of intrude into the next image. It's a kind of togetherness. I'm thinking of Leonardo DaVinci objecting to the practice of fresco decoration, putting one scene above another, so that you see a (3 or pre) horizon, stepped over each other at the same time. And then he says, sneeringly, it's like the inside of a retail shop, with merchandise stacked in drawers. It's a wonderful putdown. And what is it he's putting down? The entire tradition of Italian monumental fresco decoration from Giotto to his contemporaries -- Gilandaro and so on. And his solution is put one picture on the wall and one horizon. But you can't see two horizons at the same time. Now, I think I'll tell that to Rauschenberg. See, it's especially the horizon at the top, that reveals the sky.

(Do you still have the feeling that these pictures are organized as though it's a flat surface, a horizontal surface...)
Here he's rather insistently vertical, isn't he? That's what you're getting at. In fact, since you mention it, conflict of vertical with the upper right corner, is insistently vertical...and at the lower right corner, there's a kind of deliberate havoc...It becomes irrelevant. Hmm?

(Yuh, it does)
I think the one thing that strikes me as new -- it's the blank patches in it, here and there. Did he do that in earlier works?...

(Except I was talking with him recently and saying that in DeKooning's late work there was a lot of empty space, and Bob said. He thought and said, "I don't think of it as empty. I think of it as open.")
You can't be open without being empty, can you?

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(In his mind, I guess you can)
Ahh. Well, his word open has a positive connotation, and empty, negative...

(He's very proud of his being part Indian...)
...When I first looked at the photograph on the upper left corner with that chair and the beer glass. What is it? Dark beer? A bicycle and a nice old door and the weather is fine. It had a kind of hospitable, welcoming look to it, and then you realize that it repeats down below, and it's nothing of the kind. It's another manufactured paper item. So the sentimental feeling that you might get from one alone is then instantly neutralized...Except for this one, they all play on the horizontal, don't they.

(...feeling that everything past 62 or 71, he hasn't hit a right note...)
One can put together a whole tradition of that kind of criticism. People said that about Beethoven. You know, he was great when he wrote the Heroica, but then he went deaf and no longer had the tk of the ear to control and correct his things, and wrote bad music. That was a fairly common judgment. And appreciation of late Beethoven came much, much later. And it certainly was said of the late Michelangelo. When I wrote my book on Michelangelo's last paintings, two frescos in the Parlino Chapel, there was practically no literature on it. People were embarrassed in Michelangelo's days. They respected the genius of Michelangelo, and wished they could just spirit those frescoes away. So there's a long tradition...

(It was certainly said about Picasso)
Certainly about Picasso. And there's a kind of joke about somebody says, okay so you won the nobel prize, but what did you did you do after that? When I had to write that lecture, I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't been able to find two works in this late period which I could genuinely admire. But I felt I had to be honest. I'm not a tk-datious man. And those Japanese pieces where he uses the Mona Lisa 4 times and the old masters, I really find them detestable. And the whole psychology behind it. Leave Leonardo alone. Do your own thing. And putting those smears on the Leonardo, that's just rather pointless. Tasteless. I think I indicated that. But I still be believe that. And I could never forget looking at them, of the 4 Mona Lisa's, one of them he had tk Botticelli's tks into her...It's a silly schoolboy joke. And then one of them, the face of Mona Lisa. Life size. Beautiful color.

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And the force and the beauty and the density of that face. It came across to me for a moment I experienced Leonardo. Rauschenberg, stop scratching your name on a tk monument.

(Of course, he's done that almost from his earliest pictures. You know, the image of the Rubens' The Toilet of Venus appears in the silkscreen paintings. And the Velasquez The Rokeby Venus)
See, The Rokeby Venus, he used -- I still am co-owner with my ex-wife of the great lithograph called I forget -- a huge lithograph that then split...

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Show will have a few of the red paintings, as hints of what's to come, but it really goes from 1954 to 1961, with a few pieces up to 1964. [END]

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David White
(11/4/04)

He shows us into the house on Lafayette Street, which has been renovated since I was last there -- the wood paneling all revarnished, etc. In the large front room on the ground floor are several big paintings from the new series, called "Scenarios," which look like paintings on canvas but are not.

David: "The 'Short Stories' [last series] were the same height, seven feet by five feet; these are twice as big." Not yet decided which ones will be shown at Pace in January. They are on polylaminate -- paper laminated to a support, with photographic transfer images. The images are his, although since the last stroke, which paralyzed his right hand, he's been delegating a lot of the photography to others. These were shipped up here just after the last hurricane. There were about 30 in the studio, which was not seriously damaged, although water poured into the room on them -- they were just sponged off. Luckily the "treasure wall" in Bob's bedroom was not damaged; part of the roof blew off, but they were quickly wrapped up and saved. But in the aftermath of the storm, with no air conditioner or de-humidifier, everything was starting to mildew and mould, so a lot of stuff was packed up and sent to NY.

"As soon as they could get a generator in the studio after the hurricane, and get the trees cleared off the road -- they weren't allowed on the island for some time -- but then for his sanity he had to start working right away. He's done five or six of this series since the hurricane."

When Bob finishes a body of work, it comes up here. They're only an inch above sea level, and the humidity is not good for art. It comes to the house and to their warehouse on 38th street in Manhattan.

Bob works on these on a table -- horizontal. The images are generated by a iris printer.

There was mandatory evacuation from Captiva. Bob and a couple of co-workers stayed on, until forcibly taken off the island by helicopter. Nobody allowed on the island for quite a time. The whole area called "the jungle" was leveled, either snapped off or felled. You can drive down the central road and see from shore to shore.

Images in the new ones are familiar -- single bird, umbrellas, an old-fashioned bicycle with a big wheel in front and small in back, street signs, barbershop pole, truck, meat market with chickens hanging, pulled and load, telephone booth, water tower, chairs, home-made sign for shrimp. A lot of empty white space in several.

The chapel -- forty-or-fifty-foot ceiling. Truncated in middle of window. On the wall where the altar was, a huge painting on ceramic that was done with Bob's permission by the people at the ceramic workshop in China where he had worked -- he told them to make two, one for him. In six panels. His skeleton from "Booster," etc. He used to work in the chapel, assisted by Brice Marden -- did the big Plexiglas "Revolvers" here.

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David White started working for Bob in 1980. He'd been working for Castelli in the sixties, where he met Bob. He grew up on Cape Cod, went to RISD where he met David Whitney, who later introduced him to Castelli.

Room on second floor with "Short Stories" on walls -- one panel, not two.

Third floor - more recent paintings. Large potted plants near the windows, Egyptian mummy between the windows. And there's Rocky, the desert tortoise. David picks her up and brings him into the room, one of a number that Bob rented from Trefflich's on Chambers Street for "Spring Training." (That was 1965 or earlier). They know she's female "because she laid an egg once." Rocky went to Captiva once but didn't like it -- she's only happy on parquet. She goes for painted toenails in the summer, can give quite a bite. She's on cover of the ROCI catalog. Makes a rather loud thump as she moves around the floor, her shell bumping with each step.

Besides the Pace show in January, there are two others upcoming: one at the Miami Art Museum (of "Scenarios"), March 3- June 12; and one at University Art Museum in Lafayette, La., May 21- August 31, with works by Bob, Darryl Pottorf, and Christopher Rauschenberg. Christopher lives in Portland, Oregon, and runs the Blue Sky Gallery (photography).

He shows us some tiny sculptures Bob made in the mid-1990s, one of an apple core -- he picked it from a tree on the roof here, ate it, and made a cast of the core. It's never been shown.

Interview -

Has he noticed any change in the pattern of how he works, or his attitude? "No, it really is constant enthusiasm. It goes on and on. When he fell and broke his hip, and then he fell a second time afterwards -- two and a half years ago? -- that was the beginning of a lot of difficulty. Because of the delicacy of his system he wasn't able to have a hip replacement right away. They thought it could possibly knit together on its own, but it didn't, so I think it was painful, or certainly annoying. But then there was a second fall where he hit his head, and apparently there was blood on the brain. A doctor up here told me that an absolute guaranteed consequence of blood on the brain is depression, and once the body absorbs the blood that will go away. So there was this period when I heard Bob say, 'I don't have any interest in going to the studio,' which was the most shocking thing I ever heard, from someone who didn't want to do anything else but go into the studio. But once it was absorbed, everything came back, and then this fantastic series of paintings blossomed."

Does he think about reputation, etc.? "He may, but it's not something he speaks about or seems to be concerned about…"

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Does it bother him that critics say the later work is less good? "He ignores it. And since he's most enthusiastic about what he's working on at the moment…That hasn't changed."

Working for Bob -- he doesn't like to hear someone describe how his things are made. "You're taking all the magic out of it!" But he's such a generous person. He lets people alone -- not like a boss. There was an assistant in the studio once who was a wonderful carpenter, so Bob used that in the "Spreads and Scales" series, really complex shapes. When Bob Peterson was with him, Bob got really interested in print-making (Peterson had worked for Gemini) and started Untitled Press for his own work and others's.

Bob does a lot of physical therapy - very upbeat about that. The new paintings are signed with his left hand. [END SIDE A]

"Minutiaie" - came up for auction but didn't sell - is being stored in NYC by Swiss owner.

How does he define "Combine?" It includes both free-standing works and paintings. No clear definition. He's still doing combines. But Hopps makes cutoff 1962 when he began silkscreen paintings - the end of certain kind of work and beginning of another.

"Gold Standard" - 1964 combine done in Japan, on six-part screen. "This is after Bob had begun doing the silkscreen paintings, and yet it's certainly combine-like. It's now at C & M Arts. That may be the extreme date, if it's used in the exhibition."

Mary Lynn Kotz is publishing an updated version of her book.

The ROCI tour -- Armand Hammer was helpful in getting Bob an exhibition in USSR. This was a factor in his going to Pace. Bob kept stuff on consignment at Leo's, and Leo always maintained he had never left the gallery. But he had. [END]

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