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Daniel Cordier Show – April, 1961

The problem was that the show coincided with the Algerian crisis, the General's revolt, and Cordier himself was active in it on the side of De Gaulle. As a result he had very little time to devote to the show or to Bob, and was not even at the gallery most of the time. Bob was offended.

At the opening, a lot of the artists were kept out because of their dress, etc., which Bob resented even more. Cordier had a class attitude.

The show got little public notice, but it had a great effect on some critics and French artists. Restany tried to co-opt Bob for his "stable," and when he couldn't he promoted a rivalry between Bob and Yves Klein. Leo gave Klein one show, of blue paintings and sponges, but Klein promoted it so hard that he offended people -- you don't do that in NY, and especially at Leo's "low profile" gallery. Klein and Leo fought over one piece that Leo didn't want to show, a coffin of some kind. "But I like the blue paintings," Leo said, "and even some of the sponges." "I like the new ones better," said Ileana, "the ones his wife paints."

Ileana Sonnabend (2/15/78)

To many of the older artists and critics of the fifties, RR was "a menace" -- a menace to high art, ideals, attitudes. This made it difficult for US museums to do much about him. In Europe, on the other hand, he was understood almost immediately. Partly because of the heritage of Dada and Surrealism there is less self-righteousness about capital A Art there. And "Bob fulfills their idea of the American myth. Pollock would have done that too if he had gone to Europe. Bob's presence was very important."

The Parinaud invu started out hostile and barbed, but Bob responded so beautifully that P. was quite won over. Bob responds well to pressure of that sort.

Ileana had many shows of Bob's work, only one of Jasper's/ At first only Panza and Ludwig bought, then several others (Italian, French, BelgiaN) "So much of Bob's success began in Europe. They all had seen reproductions of Pollock and the others, and their work no longer seemed fresh. Bob's energy and spirit really excited the Paris artists/"

RR on US success in Europe: "The Italians don't feel they've finished a picture now until they've scribbled in wet paint somewhere on it."

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Paris 1961

After R's show at Daniel Cordier (which was highly frustrating because of difficulties with Cordier; pictures hung wrong, broken by Spanish hung upside down, upside down, ok. R stayed on for a while. Johns was having a show at the Rive Droite, Niki and Jean were there and Bob was getting on famously with them. The idea arose to do a special "concert" for David Tudor, who was leaving soon on tour. Through Dorothea Speyer of the American Cultural Center they received permission to stage their concert in thw beautiful little theater of the American Embassy, 9 Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré. They had five days to get ready, and everything went splendidly. Although no advance publicity was allowed (the Embassy fearing the worst), the theater was filled and hundreds were turned away. June 30 1961.

The "concert" spectacle provided, simultaneously on stage: Niki's shooting gallery, with a marksman in audience; a Tinguely machine that did a strip tease back and forth across stage; David Tudor playing in and around the piano*; R. painting his First Time Painting, which had an alarm clock embedded in it, set to go off five minutes before the end of the performance -- the back of the picture, on a very elegant easel procured by Castelli, faced the audience, and R. was hidden behind this, but he had contact mikes attached to the surface (this was before Cage used them) so that all the sounds of his painting and some of the motions were visible, but the audience never did see the picture. Johns had painted a sign saying INTERMISSION, which was used to denote intermission. During that break, "things actually picked up a little on stage." Nobody stopped what they were doing, and the audience came to look more closely. Afterwards, the house lights were left on and the audience stayed right there, chatting with the artists etc. Some splashed paint from Niki's shoot got on R's canvas, pleasing him no end.

Ileana says audience perturbed when 2 men came on near end and carried off R's picture, which they never got to see. After that, the rest of the cast just left. No one quite sure whether this was the end or not. Also, contact mikes not amplified enough on R's picture.

* Cage's Variation II.

~~Paris~~ Tudor Theater Piece (1961)

1961 in Paris - this was a painting performance on Bob's part. He did a painting on one half of the stage, but the audience never saw it because its back faced out and Bob was behind it. The first thing he did was to set in a clock, with the alarm set for ten minutes before the performance was to end. Contact mikes attached to the canvas more or less didn't work. At the end, a hotel bellboy came on and helped Bob wrap up the finished painting and carry it out through the audience (which was to be "without the gratification of seeing the result"). This was First Time Painting, which he traded for a Magritte. "The whole thing came about because David Tudor came to Paris, absolutely knocked out with exhaustion from a solo tour. We were so glad to see him that we asked if he'd stay a few extra days if we could find something interesting to do. It all happened in about three days. David played the piano on one half of the stage -- something of John Cage's. I had the other half. Jasper did a painting for the entr'acte - a target made out of fresh flowers. Tinguely made a self-stripping machine, which kept going off to one side of the stage or the other and shedding a few parts. Niki did one of her shootings -- she got the world's second best sharpshooter out in the audience, firing at a plaster figure in which were imbedded bags of paint -- we all wished she'd gotten the first best, because we were moving around and the stage wasn't that big at all.

"We all enjoyed that so much, that when Jean and Niki came to New York soon afterward we decided to do another one. That was the Construction of Boston." ~~(See next page)~~

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Program of Théâtre de l'Ambassade des États-Unis, 41 rue du Faubourg ~~St~~ Saint-Honoré, Tuesday June 20, 1961 read: "Surrounded by works of Jasper Johns, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Robert Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely, David Tudor plays ~~Variations~~ Untitled Variations II by John Cage.

After the Embassy performance, R. helped Jean and Niki one day when they were being filmed by German TV (picture shoot). Afterwards, the three of them decided to make something. Jean had given Bob a big door frame he'd found. Bob took a sheet hanging out to dry in the bassse, and knotted it into the frame, together with some other oddments -- springs, pieces of machinery, and painted it white. They later ~~xxxxx~~ sent this to the "Anti-Proces" show in Milan, where it was held up in customs until opening night, finally arrived by truck about midnight and was unloaded, to loud cheers -- this added to R's European reputation as a hero. (see below)

R's show at Daniel Cordier was immensely influential in Paris. The French artists are not really chauvinistic, and they accepted him at once. "He took them out of painting," says Ileana, "and this made him a hero." Pierre Restany, who is chauvinistic and who had been very much opposed to R. previously, came around somewhat after all his European artists showed their enthusiasm. Says Ileana: "The French get an idea, and then they do something. Restany had the idea, and he felt Rauschenberg was a threat."

Pierre Restany -

Another factor was the famous interview in Arts. Ileana was there as interpreter, and says that Andre Parinaud, who is sharp and "quite tough, in the detached French way," was quite obviously out to make R. look foolish. The interview was originally planned to cover only a quarter page, and the questions were loaded. Bob was aware of this, and very nervous. But as the questions continued, Parinaud began visibly to relax and warm up. At the end, he said "Well, obviously we can't nail you to the cross" -- and since then has been extremely helpful to R. in Europe. The interview's title was taken from the Marilyn Monroe film "The Misfits," then playing in Paris, and the word "misfit" had a distinct connotation in the French mind with the American Hero, who must be a renegade, etc. R. was a hero from then on. Ileana says his reputation in Europe is much greater than it is here, while that of Johns is somewhat less. [R. says Parinaud wanted to use him as a means of being anti-American, show work as sick, materialistic. Midway, called in his own interpreter because didn't trust Ileana. Later edited piece to clean up hostility of his own questions.]

Stockholm - Movement Show 1961 - (see Hulten letter) - R. exhibited "Black Market" - rec'd Dwan.

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Construction of Boston - May 4, 1962

Buoyed by the collaborative success in Paris, Niki was anxious to do something like it in NY when she and Jean came over shortly afterward. She approached Kenneth Koch, the poet, and his idea, which they accepted, was to put on something about "The Construction of Boston." Koch asked each person what they wanted to do, or be. Tinguely said he would be an architect, but a lady architect (his jibe at American career woman, whom he finds hilarious), building a rubber city out of huge balloons which he would pump up throughout the performance -- as one inflated, the last one would be deflating. Niki, according to R., said "Oh, you know, art or war," and decided upon a cross between Napoleon and an artist. R. said "what I like about cities are weather and people," so he decided to make rain and furnish an apartment.

Everything went badly. Koch wrote a script showing just what each person was supposed to do and say. The others refused to speak lines or to say anything on stage, so they compromised by having doubles to speak for them. To keep Koch from fixing their parts rigidly, they changed what they were doing around without telling him. Instead of the rubber city, Tinguely decided to built a wall of cinderblocks between the actors and the audience (the anti-happening aspect). R. did make rain, with a hose arrangement, and he furnished an apartment with all sorts of things, including Viola Farber and Steve Paxton, who started out in bed and then went through the day's routine activities in a sort of dance form. Merce Cunningham directed, but R. says it was not really a success. It was definitely not a happening (see ~~over~~).

text was much shorter than the final one; and once the three artists had begun to work out their creations on the basis of it, the play was completely rewritten. The next part of the collaboration was that which took place on stage, and this part is hard to describe. Some lines of the text were changed and most of the actions. We never had a complete rehearsal, chiefly because the play was constantly changing. The last phase of the collaboration was the performance during which some of the play's most important events took place for the first (and only and last) time: Rauschenberg's rainfall, the shooting of Niki de Saint-Phalle's Venus, and the complete building of Jean Tinguely's brick wall.

Kenneth Koch

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R. on Happenings: "I think the Happenings are very important. It's such a completely logical idea, it makes such perfect sense. But it seems to me that the idea has so far been more interesting than the results...I wouldn't make a Happening, myself, any more than I would make a Pollock, it's just not my thing." (But bad idea for Theater piece you before - see Sue Weil mine - and ~~always~~ struck by Leonardo's play...!)

Construction of Boston

Each artist had a choice of areas to represent - architecture (Jean), weather and people (Bob), art and society (Niki). The comedy team and the singer couldn't understand anything that was going on - they were "professionally temperamental." Frank Stella delivered Bob's lines, but he was as shy as Bob was instead of saying them he projected them on the back wall. Niki picked the singer to say her lines. Jean picked Henry Geldzahler. Bob made a rain machine: a barrel of water, out of sight in the flies, with an elaborate coil of hose, perforated, and a cork with a string to let the water down. Billy Kluver got curious about the string, a few minutes before curtain time, and pulled on it, flooding the stage; they all got mops and went to work, and Bob refilled the barrel.

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"The Construction of Boston" (from John Wulp piece in Esquire, Nov. 1962?)

Wulp was managing the Maidman Playhouse," a rather plush offOBr adway theater on West 42nd Street"). Had taken a one-year lease, but not doing well at all. Koch talked him into it, for $150 rental. There were two ads in the Times, paid for by Leo Castelli. No tickets on sale until ten a.m. on morning of show; $3 apiece, no comps.

Tinguely, Niki, RR, Koch, Henry G. Maxine, The Stewed Prunes (who had been performing at the Maidman on Monday nites, comedians, not popular). Chaos right up to performance. People calling non-stop for tickets all day, and a line at boxoffice. By one p.m. the house was badly oversold and there was a waiting list of several hundfed people. Marcel Duchamp came. SenJavits and wife arrived without tickets, bullied their way in.

As Wulp was about to announce the performance, Merce took him aside and said he didn't want his name mentioned.

All the principals had altar egos. The part of Jean Tinguely was played by JT, also by Henry Geldzahler. Tinguely in white ball gown with large flounce at bottom, and a wide-brimmed picture hat covered with ostrich plumes and tied under his chin with large satin bow. He came on pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with cinder blocks, which he dumped on stage. Henry also wearing ball gown, followed him onstage carrying script and cigar: "I am ze spirit of Jean Tinguely."

(cont.)

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Kenneth Koch

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("Construction of Boston" - II)

"In one corner of the stage a facsimile of a small apartment had been set up consisting of a bed, a dresser, one or two chairs, a cast-iron bathtub, a Maxfield Parrish drawing, abd other assorted objects, Here the male and female dancer silently went about the acts of daily living" -- waking up, brushing teeth, setting-up exercises, dressing, making coffee.

On another part of stage Bob R. and his altar ego came on dressed in army surplus rain capes with illuminated photo reflectors where their heads should have been. When script called for Bob to say something, his alter ego projected his words in writing on back wall of stage. "The Stewed Prunes commanded Bob R to make weather for Boston and he obliged by setting in motion a mechanical contraption he had erected at the side of the stage. A feather duster began to spin around scattering a whole bunch of plastic balls that ~~had been~~ were delicately balanced above it into the audience and about the stage... Next, the Stewed Prunes commanded Bob R to supply the elements for Boston. He filled a bucket with water from the cast-iron bathtub and poured this into a toilet seat imbedded in an old automobile tire... Finally the Stewed Prunes commanded Bob R to produce rain for Boston. He pulled a rope which was donnected to a network of black rubber hose he had strung around the ceiling and a stream of water was released, drenching everyone onstage. Rx (para) The audience cheered."

When Tinguely had dumped all the cinder blocks unstage he began building a wall across proscenium. He worked from both sides, leaving center open for entrances and exits. The ~~[illegible]~~ flounce of his gown kept getting

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caught in the blocks, and he would wrench it free. Finally he removed the gown and hurled it into wings.

"The Stewed Prunes called upon Niki to Saint-Phalle to appear and supply culture for Boston."... Niki entered down center aisle of auditorium, dressed in uniform of Napoleonic cannoneer, with two assistants similarly clad. Her alter ego sang a ditty about culture, inaudible in the din. Maxine G. wheeled on a veiled plaster replica of the Venus de Milo. It was unveiled, and Niki, taking a rifle from an assistant, began firing at it. Paint began to ooze from the statue. As soon as one rifle was empty an assistant gave her another. At length her assistants retired to the wings and returned pulling a small cannon. (All this time, the couple went about its everyday busines, listenting to the news on radio, washing the dishes etc). The assistants stuffed the cannon with newspapers and poured in gunpower. Niki added a pellet of white paint, which was supposed to turn the state white again. She lit the fuse. The cannon went off and hurtled backward across stage, almost into the first row.

Tinguely redoubled his efforts on the wall, now aided by the others. As wall grew higher, Henry G. spoke thru a small hole, and Niki's alter ego mounted a ladder behind it. As soon as wall was finished, house lights came on. The whole perf. had taken about fifteen minutes.

Bob R. insisted that they clean up the place then and there. Wulp counted the receipts - nearly $800. Deducting expenses, still more than $600 profit

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(Construction of Boston O IV)

"It just goes to prove what I've always suspected," said Niki de Saint-Phalle. "People are tired of the theater and movies. They want <u>real</u> entertainment."

Tinguely said (in French) that artists have become the new movie stars.

[illegible] was much shorter than the final one; and once the three artists had begun to work out their creations on the basis of it, the play was completely rewritten. The next part of the collaboration was that which took place on stage, and this part is hard to describe. Some lines of the text were changed and most of the actions. We never had a complete rehearsal, chiefly because the play was constantly changing. The last phase of the collaboration was the performance during which some of the play's most important events took place for the first (and only and last) time: Rauschenberg's rainfall, the shooting of Niki de Saint-Phalle's Venus, and the complete building of Jean Tinguely's brick wall.

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Rauschenberg I
E.A.T. - 1966

THE CONSTRUCTION OF BOSTON

Though the play was put together very quickly the final result was an expression of ideas we had all had about art and the theatre for some time. The inception of the work was accidental - Niki de Saint-Phalle suggested to me that she and Jean Tinguely put something on stage as part of a double bill with the play GEORGE WASHINGTON CROSSES THE DELAWARE. I agreed. Next day Niki phoned me and said that she had talked about the project with Bob Rauschenberg and that they had decided that all four of us should do something together. Niki also said that we would have to do it within two and a half weeks since she had to go back to Paris within that time. We were all enthusiastic about the idea of creating a work for the theatre in which artists would be an essential part of the dramatic action rather than just set designers. We wanted to create a work which was both artistic and completely theatrical. It seemed to us that certain physical actions (earthquake, rivers flowing through a landscape, smoke coming out of a chimney) were at least as dramatic as dialogue, and that they might be even more dramatic in the theatre than they had already proved to be in the movies. The next step was to decide on a subject; the idea of building a city onstage seemed to appeal to everyone. Rauschenberg chose to make the weather and the people; Tinguely chose to make the architecture; Niki de Saint-Phalle chose to bring art to Boston; I wrote the text. The first version of the text was much shorter than the final one; and once the three artists had begun to work out their creations on the basis of it, the play was completely rewritten. The next part of the collaboration was that which took place on stage, and this part is hard to describe. Some lines of the text were changed and most of the actions. We never had a complete rehearsal, chiefly because the play was constantly changing. The last phase of the collaboration was the performance during which some of the play's most important events took place for the first (and only and last) time: Rauschenberg's rainfall, the shooting of Niki de Saint-Phalle's Venus, and the complete building of Jean Tinguely's brick wall.

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Dylaby, Amsterdam, Sept. 1962

Suffered from careerism of Tinguely, who was really running the show and didn't let you forget it -- kept putting pressure on other artists to finish on time, etc.

R. reacted against the "country fair" or carnival spirit of the exhibition. Maybe against too much "art is fun" stuff. Anyway, his room he sealed off from the rest by a door construction that opened to the touch. Inside, feeling of an airport tarmac -- anyplace, impersonal. Rudkin R. had been working on the big remote-radio construction in NY (still unfinished), was still in that spirit, and so he made four large sculpture constructions and put each in a sort of wire cage, self-lighted, with no other lights on in the room. He put tarpaper on the floor, with a white broken line, to walk on; if you stepped off this you stepped on seashells which made a crushing sound. R's idea was to create an entirely different atmosphere from the rest of the exhibition, make people feel they were somewhere else. Note: This reflects his falling out with Tinguely, and perhaps can be stretched a bit to suggest the controversy between New York and Paris as to who really represents le nouveau realisme. R's Dylaby show had Time Painting with 5 clocks, all saying diff. time. Also a sculpture with part of airplane wing, bathtub full of water with air bubbling up, etc. Ileana owns them all

RR on Dylaby:- was intended to be an international selection of artists coming together with no preconceived ideas, to share the Stedelijk in a large collaborative show. "The attempt was that these artists would all work together on a single anonymous piece - at least that was my understanding. Somehow the work would arise out of some community attempt. We were supposed to meet for the first time at one o'clock or something. I got there and everybody was sitting there with their sketches and plans. And not too long after that everybody had picked out their spot. I had a really adverse strong reaction to this, because I had found the other idea so interesting -- I guess what really happened was that we just proved the other idea was impossible. We had three weeks. I didn't start until the end of the second week, I would just come over to the museum, have a beer, walk around and leave. At the end of the second week I decided enough's enough, I've got to do something. I took one of the rooms that were left over and started to work. The scale was so large that I literally lived in my space for a week. I had an arrangement with a cafeteria nearby to let me get in at night and leave a note saying what I'd taken.

"Anyway it got done. But I had thought that Niki and Jean and I were so close - I don't know what happened, but they were so preoccupied with each other they made me feel like a stranger. We're still friends, but it was never anything like as creative a relationship."

Klaver:

Dylaby in Amsterdam was originally Tinguely's idea. Had long wanted to do a labyrinth. But Bob's ideas about collaboration were very different, and they had a falling out as a result. It was supposed to be a total collaboration, one great work in which nothing was signed, and no one would know who did what. It became a series of individual rooms.

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Kluver - Stockholm Motion Show, 1961

After the opening, they all took the ferry to Scanset - Jean Tinguely, Niki, Bob Rauschenberg, Per Olof Ultvedt in white tie and tails. It was like an early happening, with everyone performing. Meanwhile, all that day, the others had been putting paint into little bags and inserting them between the carpet and the floor at the theater-in-the-round where the party after the opening was being held. There would be dancing, and the idea was that the dancers would unwittingly create an abstract picture by stepping on the bags. Theolonius Monk was scheduled to play - he'd been on a concert tour in Europe. He refused to perform, for some reason. Bob R. finally told him, "Don't behave like Judy Garland." Monk played. The people danced, and made a painting. At the end everyone disappeared, leaving Bob and Billy alone with the painting. They rolled it up and carried it through the streets, looking in vain for a taxi until they'd covered a couple of miles (it was three or four a.m.) Finally got a cab and took the painting to Pontus's house and hung it up there (probably still there too). The whole thing was Niki's idea - she even chose the colors.

This was Pontus's first big show. He had a big Calder outside the museum, and he designed the long catalog and planned the activities. Bob came from Paris where he and Jasper and Jean and Niki had done the event for David Tudor, at the embassy. Bob and Jasper were breaking up then. Bob and Tinguely sort of fell in love with each other, really hit it off.

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Tel. 233055

mr calvin Tomkins
The new yorker
25 W 43 N.Y.

dear mr Tomkins
many Thanks for your letter from june 11 —
which is not so easy to answer:

when in march 61 we organised the exhibition
"the moving movement" (le mouvement
émouvant) i was struck very much by the
work of jean Tinguely and per olof ultvedt:
mostly structures made "ad hoc" and destined
to disappear after the show, but of an extremely
acute actuality
— They opened new horisons —
(i wrote a few lines about my impressions
for Tinguely's exhibition in the Iolas gallery
in NY)

but i wanted to go further because i hold the
opinion that the real creative artists have a
clearer conception of the development than
museum directors

so in a coffee mill in new york, talking with
Tinguely, the idea of the exhibition dylaby
(dynamic labyrinth) was born:

the public should not be walking around a work
of art, but should be enabled to walk inside —
the whole environment should be created by
artists in the museum itself

At the opening night of the show Bob prepared for a late dancing, that was to take place after 2 o'clock in a Luna Park arena, an enormous canvas, that was put under the carpet that covered the dance floor. It was double and the paint was in plastic bags in between. Thelonius Monk was to play the music, about 300 people were there, but he never played, he just stood there... Niki de St Phalle and Jean Tinguely saved the night, morning rather, improvising on a toy xylophone. The dancing was never very hectic, the canvas still excists, but it did not really come off.

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so on the suggestion of Tinguely i invited 6 artists to come to amsterdam on august 8, 1962 to make the exhibition in 3 weeks time -
our only task was to help -

so rayssc, rauschenberg, spoerri, niki de St phalle Tinguely + ultvedt arrived and set to work - with an amazing result -
The exhibition attracted large crowds of every age between 10 and 80, was very much criticised of course and very much appreciated - press, T.V. and radio gave it great attention

The 6 creations were entirely different rauschenbergs contribution seemed to me the most philosophic and i enjoyed it very much (as i did in the exhibition "4 americans" earlier in the same year where rauschenberg and alfred leslie drew great attention)

This show was originally organized By dr. hulten in stockholm

To my opinion a museum of modern art should not only reflect what happens today or yesterday but they should play an active part in the development

"dylaby" was a step in this direction

i do hope that you may find in this letter some thoughts that are of some use for your article - in the case you have not the dylaby catalogue at your disposal i could send you a copy

cordially Sandberg

16.6.'63

please note my new adress !

At the opening night of the show Bob prepared for a late dancing, that was to take place after 2 o'clock in a Luna Park arena, an enormous canvas, that was put under the carpet that covered the dance floor. It was double and the paint was in plastic bags in between. Thelonius Monk was to play the music, about 300 people were there, but he never played, he just stood there... Niki de St Phalle and Jean Tinguely saved the night, morning rather, improvising on a toy xylophone. The dancing was never very hectic, the canvas still excists, but it did not really come off.

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STATENS KONSTSAMLINGAR
MODERNA MUSEET
STOCKHOLM 100
Telefon växel 24 42 00

Stockholm, August 2nd, 1963.

Dear Mr. Tomkins,

Your letter about Bob Rauschenberg has been following me for a long while. I am now on holiday with family on a small island between Sweden and Finland. New York seems very far and even Stockholm is under the horizon.

I liked your profile of Jean Tinguely very much (except the drawings-portrait) and I shall try to "jot down a few comments on Rauschenberg".

I only have met Rauschenberg at three occasions, when he was in Stockholm at the installation of the movement-show in 1961, in Amsterdam when the Dylaby was prepared and at my recent visit to New York.

I think Bob liked Stockholm right away. He almost immediately started working, he made two combines. One was the door for an environ meant by Kaprow (called "Store-room"?) that we put up on a small balcony in the inner room of the movement-show. (It was a room full of empty card-board boxes and old newspapers, there was black and white paint and brushes at the disposal of the visitors. We had to take it down after about a week, it got too messy, for some reason Kaprow seems to be unhappy about this experience.) We were all very charmed and touched that Rauschenberg, worldfamous American took to the situation and choose to work on the exhibition. Bob also made an other combine for himself as he said, in memory of Stockholm.

At the opening night of the show Bob prepared for a late dancing, that was to take place after 2 o'clock in a Luna Park arena, an enormous canvas, that was put under the carpet that covered the dance floor. It was double and the paint was in plastic bags in between. Thelonius Monk was to play the music, about 300 people were there, but he never played, he just stood there... Niki de St Phalle and Jean Tinguely saved the night, morning rather, improvising on a toy xylophone. The dancing was never very hectic, the canvas still excists, but it did not really come off.

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About the Dylaby and the dance concert in Washington you will get good information from Mr. Per Olof Ultvedt, Vegagatan 8, Stockholm Va, who very actively participated in both.

The more I have seen of Rauschenberg's work the more impressed I have been. The Jewish Museum's show was extremely strong. I had seen most of the things in Stockholm at the "4 Americans". They were even better in New York. Of course, Rauschenberg was the most shocking of the 4 Americans. People came to the museum only to see the Bed and the Goat (Monogram) and when they had seen those they left. A professor of history of art of the University of Lund made a special point in a broadcast, protesting against the showing of a living (!) goat in an art museum.

The main difference in the reaction towards Bob Rauschenberg's and Jean Tinguely's work is that Jean's work is more easily and immediately loved by the great public that is unconcerned with any artistic judgements whereas Bob's work appeals to the advanced, artinterested public and takes them very hard. Amongst Swedish art critics, collectors, etc. it has more and more been understood during the last winter that Rauschenberg, together with Johns, are the main creators in American art after Pollock and that Rauschenberg is one of the very great artists of this time.

Rauschenberg has at the moment a certain influence on young Swedish art. If one is asking a young painter under 30 which artist impresses him the most, you would very often get the name of Rauschenberg.

Of course Rauschenberg's work is very American, in light, color, structure and conception it seems to me to relate very directly to lower Manhattan. He also is an American in a more "profound" way, being uncommitted, violent, beautiful, idealistic, etc., etc., etc., but that is so well described in so many places already. Bob Rauschenberg and his work is certainly an interesting subject.

If I in some way can send you some material, please tell me.

With my best regards,
Yours sincerely,

K.G. Hultén
Director
Moderna Museet
through Marta Sahlberg
Marta Sahlberg
secretary

Calvin Tomkins, Esq.,
THE NEW YORKER
No. 25 West 43rd Street
New York, 36, N.Y.

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To: TAD

From: DUSTY

THIS PAPER N'EXISTE PLUS — FRENCH FOLKS HERE SAID I'D HAVE TO PHONE THE ARCHIVES OF BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE BUT I GOT LUCKY — HAPPENED TO BE IN MOMA LIBRARY TRACKING DOWN GIACOMETTI QUOTE IN THEIR CARD CATALOG FOR MAXWELL STORY WHEN I FELL OVER A GIACOMETTI INTERVIEW IN "ARTS" — FIGURED IT WAS POSSIBLE THEY HAD RR INTERVIEW ~~CATALOGUED~~ CATALOGUED TOO — THEY DID



UN DOCUMENT

# Un "misfit" de la peinture new-yorkaise se confesse

- POURQUOI INTÉGREZ-VOUS DANS VOTRE ŒUVRE DES CHAISES DE LA FICELLE, DES LÉGUMES ? — Afin que l'on puisse voir les choses d'une manière neuve et fraîche
- SI ON VOUS PROPOSAIT LE POSTE DE PRÉSIDENT DE LA GENERAL MOTORS, RENONCERIEZ-VOUS A LA PEINTURE ? Pourquoi pas? C'est un bon job

ARTS

no. 821
JUIN 10-16, 1961

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UN DOCUMENT

# Un "misfit" de la peinture new-yorkaise se confesse

- *POURQUOI INTÉGREZ-VOUS DANS VOTRE ŒUVRE DES CHAISES DE LA FICELLE, DES LÉGUMES ?*

  – Afin que l'on puisse voir les choses d'une manière neuve et fraîche

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  – Pourquoi pas? C'est un bon job

ARTS

NO. 821
MAY 10-16, 1961



Robert Rauschenberg est l'un des chefs de file de la jeune « Ecole de New York. Né en 1925 à Port-Arthur (Texas), il a successivement étudié à Kansas City Art Institute, puis au lendemain de la guerre à l'Académie Julian à Paris. Rauschenberg obéit à une véritable tradition zen. Il cherche à provoquer un choc, une révélation dans l'esprit de ceux qui regardent ses œuvres sans les comprendre. En page 7, Michel Ragon critique l'œuvre de Robert Rauschenberg.

UNE crise grave ébranle tous les arts. En période normale il est facile de distinguer entre officiels et novateurs — les seconds sont qualifiés de schématiques et l'orthodoxie maîtrise la continuité nécessaire. Rien de tel aujourd'hui. La balance des traditions suprêmes toute orthodoxie et rend l'hérésie impossible — à peine née, elle est approuvée et officialisée.

Quel rapport établir entre des peintres comme Poussin et Cézanne et les hommes qui, étalant sans humour et parfois avec quelque habileté de la couleur sur des toiles préparées, cherchent rapidement la notoriété et la richesse ?

Passons. Ils ont dessiné, exécuté un portrait, une copie. S'il paraissait c'était pour proposer à ses contemporains de participer à la contemplation d'un beau paysage ou d'un grand événement historique, mythologique, religieux et d'éprouver la délectation qu'il avait lui-même ressentie.

Sans inspiration, sans dessin, sans composition, le peintre devrant un jeu déroutant. Un jour, sont doute proche, nos descendants s'interrogeront en examinant une peinture qui leur paraîtra absurde et qui sera peut-être jugée comme le symptôme du mal dont notre société aura été morte. Avec les déclarations de plusieurs des plus célèbres créateurs contemporains nous voulons donner un exemple. Cette semaine, la paisible candeur des réponses de Rauschenberg à André Parinaud enfuit toute accusation de cynisme.

André PARINAUD. — Vous intégrez des objets dans vos tableaux. Avez-vous déjà peint d'une manière plus traditionnelle ?

Robert RAUSCHENBERG. — La peinture, même est un objet, si la toile vaut. A mon avis, le vide qui doit être rempli n'existe pas.

P. — Vous reconnaissez-vous des maîtres spirituels, des maîtres à penser, des maîtres à peindre ?

R. — Mes préjugés changent de temps en temps. Je trouve aussi importantes les choses que l'on aime que celles que l'on n'aime pas et, naturellement, ces choses changent. L'art du passé est trop souvent une continuation du passage. Les peintres qui m'ont influencé ne font pas de paysages. C'est Léonard de Vinci par exemple. Sa peinture était la vie. Une de ces œuvres essentielles qui m'a marqué, est « l'Annonciation », à Florence. Dans cette toile, l'ange, le ciel, la Vierge, ont tous la même importance, en même temps. Il n'y a pas de hiérarchie. C'est ce qui m'intéresse. C'est de l'Annonciation de Léonard de Vinci avec les limites mais en utilisant toutes mes ressources. Le passé n'existe pas comme l'avenir, c'est une supposition. Le passé est parti du présent. Il est plus difficile de penser au passé et à l'avenir sans se dire que l'on en n'est qu'une interprétation du moment. La peinture est que pour moi. Le passé change continuellement, alors que l'avenir, lui, demeure toujours le même.

P. — Avez-vous l'intention de vous intégrer dans un mouvement existant, ou, au contraire, êtes-vous en rupture avec tout ce qui est ?

R. — Il trop de gens sont dans même cas et une même chose cela devient une généralité et la généralité est l'ennemi du mouvement. Les mouvements de peinture sont le contraire du mouvement.

P. — Si vous n'avez pas de critères et d'auteurs qui vous aident matériellement et intellectuellement, si vous êtes totalement, continuellement à vous comme vous le faites comme un l'un temps, par Celle peinture de vous aujourd'hui et ricanant pour eux la valeur d'un tableau. Il y a, certes, beaucoup d'affectation dans ce jeu, qui est aussi limité que ce qu'ils veulent éviter, mais c'est une expérience intéressante.

Les « événements » sont des espèces de pièces de théâtre pour lesquelles on compose un décor où les gens participent spontanément. Ils donnent alors l'impression de vivre un événement irrationnel organisé... A New York, on compose ainsi des tableaux vivants. Plusieurs peintres y collaborent, comme des amis, comme des couleurs arrivent sur la palette.

Il n'y a pas de thème. Les gens participent à l'action et font ses éclairements importants. Par exemple, quelqu'un monte sur une chaise et fait un discours ; un autre personnage arrive avec une échelle, fait du bruit ; une jeune femme distribue des cartes postales et des images ; des personnages dansent dans le fond. Il n'y a pas réellement de musique. Il n'est point de sens. Cela dure de dix minutes à vingt minutes (selon les cas). C'est cette expérience que cela avec spectateurs. Le mélange des genres est de son

vous entre la peinture automatique et votre propre peinture ?

R. — Je ne vois aucune différence entre la peinture automatique et l'autre. Ce qui me comprends. Je cherche désespérément à surpasser le message et à aller au-delà. Je voudrais faire un tableau créant une situation qui laisserait autant de place pour le regardeur que pour l'artiste.

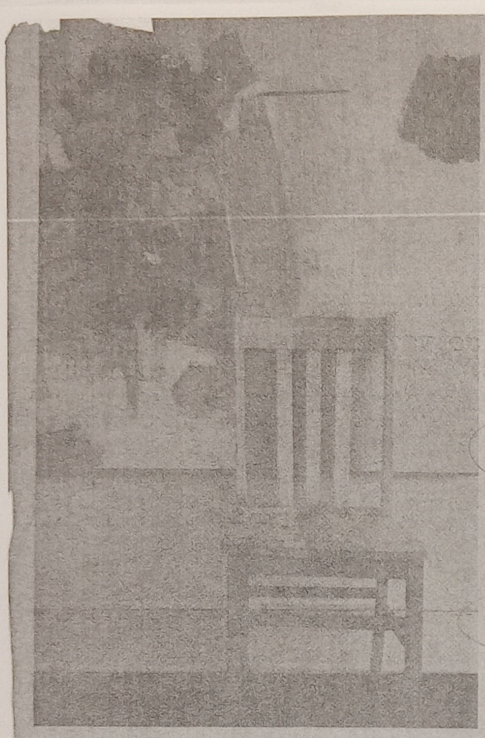
P. — Considérez-vous votre œuvre comme une expérience intime ou comme une œuvre d'art ? Quelle valeur plastique lui accordez-vous ?

R. — Peindre c'est d'abord important pour moi. Il se peut qu'il y ait une autre personne pour laquelle ce soit également important. Une n'existe pas l'autre. Il n'y a pas de frontière entre la valeur intime de la peinture et sa valeur plastique.

P. — Qu'est-ce qui a provoqué votre position actuelle ? Sont-ce les découvertes scientifiques, l'évolution des mœurs ? Comment vous expliquez-vous votre apport dans la peinture d'aujourd'hui ?

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# Une toile pour s'asseoir

© A quoi sert ce tableau ? Robert Rauschenberg a trouvé une réponse à cette question : « Cela sert à s'asseoir. » Ce siège à la toile — avec des ficelles, des légumes et des lanières de bouteille — une chaise, Admettons. Toutefois M. Rauschenberg a peut-être commis une erreur : il a placé son objet dans le mauvais (ou le bon) sens, quand on l'utilise on tourne le dos au cadre. Détail : M. Rauschenberg appelle lui-même ses toiles « des combines ».

une manière actuelle.

P. — Comment appelez-vous ce que vous faites ?

R. — Je les appelle « des combines » c'est à dire des œuvres combinées, des « combinaisons ». Je vous aime bien les calembours. Si j'avais appelé peintures ce que je fais en utilisant des éléments des sculptures, et si j'avais appelé cela des sculptures, on aurait dit qu'il s'agissait de bas-reliefs ou de peintures.

P. — Pourquoi intégrez-vous dans vos œuvres, dans vos « combines », des bouteilles, des ficelles, des chaises, des objets divers ?

R. — Je n'ai aucun but. Les peintres emploient des couleurs qui, elles aussi, sont fabriquées. Je désire intégrer à ma toile n'importe quels objets de la vie.

P. — Est-ce une tentative poétique ?

R. — C'est une actualité.

P. — Quel sens donnez-vous à ce mot ?

R. — Mes toiles ont la valeur de la réalité. A un moment donné, la perspective fut une actualité. Maintenant, nous savons que c'est une illusion. De la même manière, ces combinaisons sont, maintenant, des actualités.

P. — Mais vous n'êtes peut-être qu'une mode ?

R. — Un peintre doit être un chercheur, un inventeur perpétuel parce que la compréhension de ses tableaux devrait l'entendement de sa vie active. Si on se comprend parfaitement. Il est mort.

P. — Considérez-vous être arrivé au point ultime de vos recherches, de votre expérience, et bien souhaitez-vous aller plus loin encore ?

R. — Je n'y suis pas encore.

P. — Quelle est la part d'humour dans votre peinture ?

R. — L'humour, c'est permettre l'objectivité de la vue. L'admiration ne permet pas l'attention, la concentration, et la passionnante est un autre genre d'enjolivement. L'humour est l'amour et la spiritualité du moment, ici même, temps.

P. — Par humour entendez-vous une certaine façon de vous moquer de vous-même ? une façon de vous moquer des autres ?

R. — L'humour est une forme esthétique d'objectivité artistique. Autrement, c'est burlesque, grotesque ! C'est donc la dérision de soi et des autres.

P. — Vous considérez-vous comme une victime de l'ordre social ou un révolutionnaire ? Appartenez-vous au passé ou à l'avenir ? Etes-vous une fin ou un commencement ?

R. — Je suis dans le présent. Je cherche à célébrer le présent.

## Votre art est-il provocateur ?

P. — Y a-t-il un rapport entre votre démarche et celle de la Beat génération ?

R. — Pas consciemment.

P. — Votre Art n'est-il pas un Art de déchard si on le compare à celui des architectes de la General Motors qui, eux aussi, visent dans le même contexte social ?

R. — Ma peinture est une réaction à l'idée qu'un aspect ou une généralité, comme un élément et un milliardaire existent. Les uns dans, je suis contre les catégories.

P. — Ne peut-on pas dire que votre peinture est inspirée par une sorte d'esthétique du déchet, dans votre façon d'utiliser les objets, de les magnifier, de les exalter ?

R. — Oui, mais le fait même que le matériel est réemployé est, en somme, le paradoxe. Cela cesse d'être un déchet.

P. — Votre Art pourrait provoquer ?

R. — Je l'espère ! Je ne voudrais pas vous réveiller si je n'avais pas quelque chose à dire !

P. — Concevez-vous la provocation comme une paire de gifles au bourgeois, ou, au contraire voulez-vous faire circuler un message personnel ? Voulez-vous communiquer ou voulez-vous rompre ?

R. — Si j'en ai l'autre, car je ne suis pas intéressé par la moralité. Je ne veux pas réformer le monde. Je veux simplement être là. Je désirerais que mon œuvre soit aussi claire et aussi intéressante et aussi vivante que le fait que vous avez mis cette cravate aujourd'hui, plutôt qu'une autre.

P. — De nombreux amateurs d'Art sont malachetiens, n'est-ce pas leur complexe que vous exploitez ?

P. — Comment [illegible] vous le désirez faire [illegible] ?

R. — Je désire faire [illegible] de gens possible ?

R. — La raison pour laquelle j'aime rendre des tableaux, c'est pour l'argent. J'ai quantités de moyens de l'employer, avec lui, je peux faire quantités de choses. Mais mes peintures sont inutiles pour rien et elles ne valent rien. Elles sont faites gratuitement et elles sont gratuites à mes yeux.

P. — Mais elles ont un cours à la Bourse... Accepteriez-vous de vous commercialiser ?

R. — J'ai appris à connaître la valeur de l'argent et à savoir l'employer lorsque je n'en avais pas. Je n'en ai plus besoin, mais je peux l'employer. Je ne peux pas me commercialiser, au sens de produire en série, par exemple, ou de répondre au désir d'un acheteur, parce que je considère que si l'on n'est pas (contre) ce que l'on a déjà fait, on n'a rien accompli. Il faut être en continuelle évolution par rapport à soi-même. La continuation elle-même est une illusion, car il faut toujours être contre ce que l'on a fait. Lorsque l'on travaille, il faut être conscient que c'est la première fois que c'est la seule fois que l'on se dégage de l'habitude et des mains.

P. — Aimez-vous votre époque ?

R. — Je n'ai pas le choix.

P. — Méprisez-vous les formules de la société actuelle ? Etes-vous révolté ou êtes-vous indifférent ?

R. — Vivre est un problème.

P. — Que répondriez-vous si l'on vous dit que votre art peut être considéré comme une fausse-monnaie ?

R. — Je dis merci et je me demande ce qu'est la vraie monnaie de l'époque.

P. — Que pensez-vous de l'évolution du monde ? Etes-vous inférieur par votre époque ?

R. — Je ne comprends pas la marche du temps.

P. — Comment situez-vous votre peinture dans l'époque ?

R. — C'est une crise. Tout l'art est une crise, pour réaliser, mon pratique, mais qui est LA devant vous. Il n'y a pas de programme général. D'ailleurs, pourquoi avoir des intentions ?

P. — Quelles sont, actuellement, les préoccupations des jeunes peintres américains de votre âge ?

R. — Ils commencent à trouver le moyen d'aller au-delà de leurs moyens techniques d'expression.

De nombreux peintres américains pratiquent ce que j'appelons « un événement », qui a

## Qu'est-ce que vous avez inventé ?

P. — Pensez-vous que cette situation de la peinture soit un fait de crise, comme une fièvre ou qu'elle soit plutôt l'annonce de quelque chose qui vient, ou, au contraire, une fin ?

R. — Le mot « fièvre » décrirait assez bien la situation. Il y a une urgence dans ce mot ; mais il est un peu romantique.

C'est un début en tout cas. On n'a pas vu cela avant. On ne sera la fin ou cela se développera. Mais, en ce qui me concerne, le passé et l'avenir ne m'intéressent pas.

P. — Vous n'ignorez pas qu'il y a eu, dans l'histoire de la peinture moderne, une période passionnante, analogue à celle que vous décrivez. Elle se situe entre 1917 et 1925 en France, en Russie, en Allemagne.

J'ai un peu l'impression, personnellement que vous nous racontez une vieille histoire, qui recommence avec d'autres idées-écrans. Quelle est votre opinion ?

R. — Je n'ai pas vu les autres. Je ne connais cela qu'à travers les livres. Il me semble que l'esprit en est complètement différent. Pour Dada, il s'agissait d'écriture. C'était la censure contre le passé, son effacement. Aujourd'hui, pour nous, il s'agit d'inclure un mouvement, d'introduire le passé dans le présent, la totalité dans le moment. Il y a toute la différence entre l'exclusion et l'inclusion.

P. — Qu'est-ce que l'avant-garde pour vous ?

R. — Le mot « avant-garde », c'est de la bouse de taureau...

P. — Que voulez-vous communiquer avec un tableau ?

R. — Si vous me demandiez si je veux plaire ou déplaire, provoquer ou contraindre et si vous donniez encore une dizaine d'autres raisons, je serais obligé de dire que c'est, exactement, tout cela à la fois. La moitié de mes raisons serait négative et l'autre moitié positive. Mais l'effort de concentration de mon corps sur un message me limiterait et je préfère aller vers l'inconnu.

P. — Voulez-vous insinuer que vous ne savez pas ce que vous voulez dire et que vous ne cherchez rien que ce que l'on veut trouver dans vos toiles ?

R. — S'il y avait un message spécifique, je serais limité par mes moyens, mes idées, mes slogans.

Or, ce qui m'intéresse, c'est un contact. Ce n'est pas d'imposer un message.

P. — Quelle différence faites-

je me sens obligé de le dire. Je ne voulais pas aimer une couleur plus que toute autre et j'ai souvent rencontré davantage de difficultés lorsqu'il s'agissait de rendre le vert encore plus vert en le mettant à côté du rouge.

P. — Mais c'est le problème de tous les peintres !

R. — Je n'ai pas voulu montrer une couleur à une autre. Toutes les couleurs et les formes se trouvent en démocratie, mes employées.

P. — Quelle différence faites-vous entre la peinture moderne actuelle, à New York et à Paris ?

R. — En Amérique la peinture est définie par l'opposition qui consiste à être peintre. Il n'y a pas de continuation, mais il y a une résistance. Être peintre signifie être opposant. En France, il y a une continuité, une liaison entre les paysans, les ruraux et les peintres. Tout baigne dans la patine. On ne voit pas ce manque de talent que l'on voit en Amérique. Là, il y a trop de grâce et de talent. A un point qui est vraiment pénible...

P. — Si l'on vous proposait de devenir président des États-Unis ou président de la General Motors, cesseriez-vous d'être peintre ?

R. — Ce sont de bons jobs ! Je considérerais la chose avec intérêt. Si cela arrivait, j'y penserais sérieusement. C'est un autre moyen d'expression.

P. — Certains sujets pourraient-ils vous inspirer ? Dit que la mort de Lumumba, par exemple, l'accession de Kennedy à la présidence des États-Unis ? Accepteriez-vous une commande ?

R. — Certainement. Je préférais même être inspiré plutôt que d'être un artiste du moment, mais avec mon propre moyens d'expression... Evidemment. Je ne voudrais pas être un journaliste comme les autres !

P. — Dessinez-vous d'une façon réaliste pour vous ? Faites-vous des croquis ?

R. — Je le faisais autrefois, car j'adore le dessin. C'est quelque chose d'intime, de très différent de la peinture. J'aquarelle également. Mais j'ai été incapable de trouver le contenu en faisant le contour. Je n'étais pas assez fort pour y traduire en même temps le sujet et ce qui se passait dans la pièce voisine.

P. — Vous êtes-vous déjà fait psychanalyser ?

R. — Non.

P. — Vous reconnaissez-vous des complexes ?

R. — Oui, bien sûr, je l'espère !

P. — Etes-vous heureux de vivre aujourd'hui ?

R. — C'est une question difficile ; très difficile.