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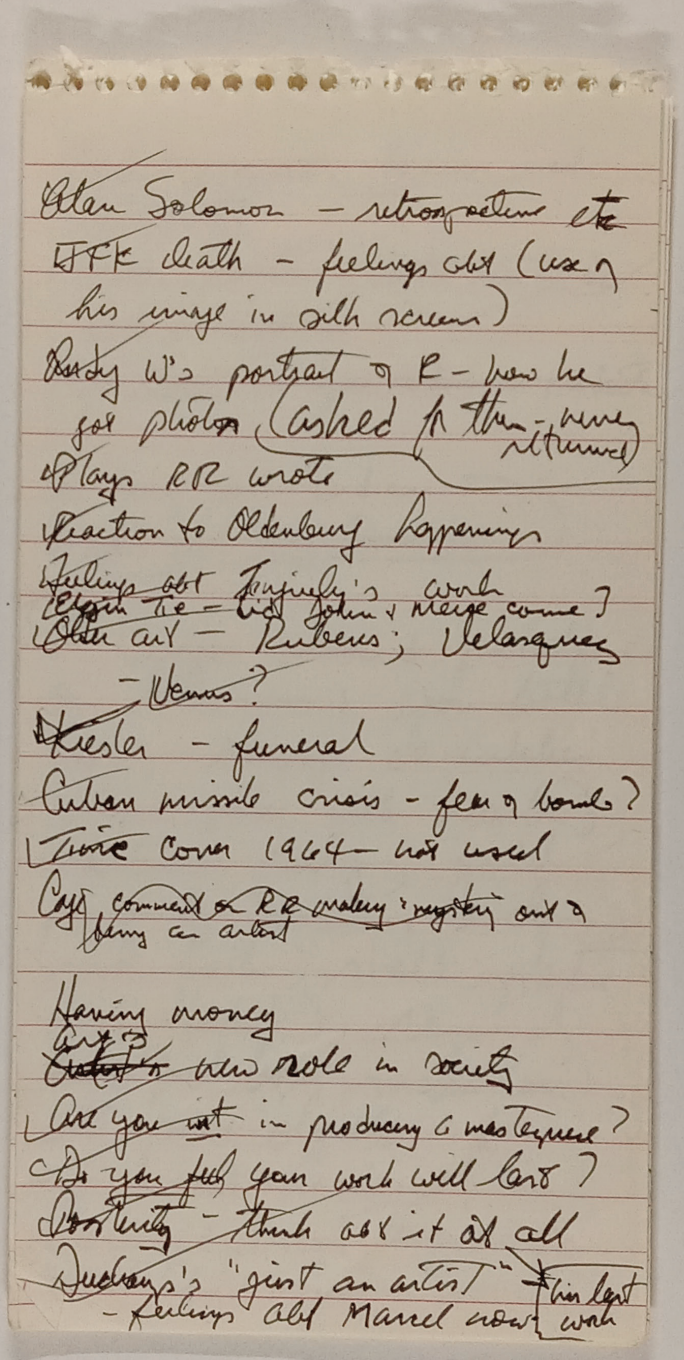
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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY | Collection: Tomkins | Series.Folder: IV.C.59



Alan Solomon – retrospective etc
JFK death – feelings abt (use of his image in silk screens)
Rocky W's portrait of R – how he got photos (asked for them – were returned)
Plays RR wrote
Reaction to Oldenburg happenings
Feelings abt Judd's work
Elgin Tie – Did John + Marge come?
Other art – Rubens; Velasquez – Venus?
Kiesler – funeral
Cuban missile crisis – fear of bombs?
Time Cover 1964 – not used
Cage comment on RR making a mystery out of being an artist

Having money
Art's new role in society
Are you in producing a masterpiece?
Do you feel your work will last?
Duchamp – think abt it at all
Duchamp's "just an artist" – his last work
– Feelings abt Marcel now

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Warhol's career - boredom used deliberately

Marisol Escobar - wanted him to do book on Vietnam -

Mel Munn - Teledyne making war products

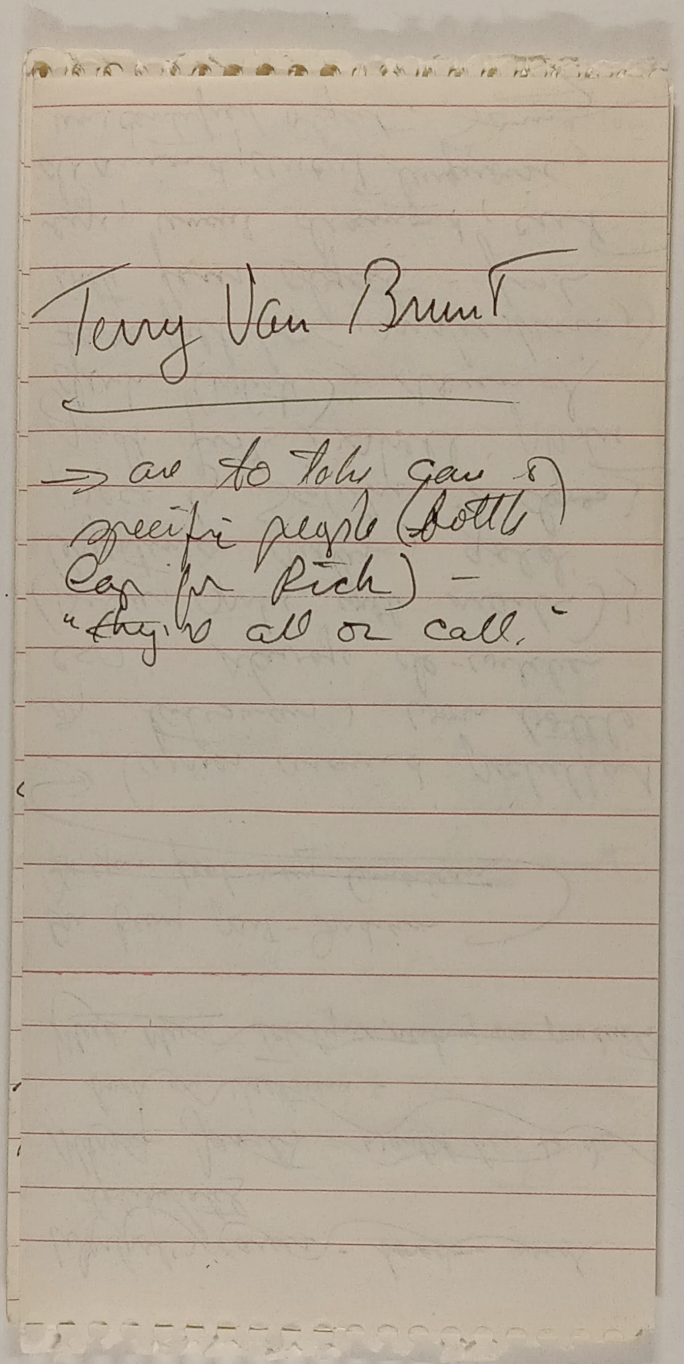
On being part-Indian

~~If you feel very American~~

→ Carries around pocketful of talismans; coin bottle cap; Navajo de-colcher (silver pin with mark); Argentinian ruby; gold piece by Sacchi, 2 dimes; jade fish; shell; plastic duck (white); round pill box, snakeskin, with four objects - fish eye, uncut diamond, cut diamond, uncut turquoise, unidentified object. Some

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Terry Van Brunt

⇒ ask to take pics of specific people (both Cage & Rich) – "they'll call."

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(Dora Carolina Matson

Mother's maiden name:

Where from: Galveston

Why going round to La. (New Jork?)
Father transferred – same
co., better job

~~Pat Hanna address:~~

First winter NY – galleries – artists:
Lots – ~~met~~ Egan a friend of
Sue's parents – then Betty P –
after breaking up Sue hung out
at Cedar etc.

MOMA: Not a lot –
saw first Duchamps there,
same year w/ Noguchi + Maillol
Bicycle wheel on stool.
Best museum was up until
Galleries

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Sue's younger brother: Jimmy

Sextet costumes: bright 'crayola colors' leotards.

Motherwell - study with? No.

Summer house backdrops: 35'-40' by 12' high.

Dante translations: Ciardi, Longfellow, also had copy of Italian - sense of sound + rhyme

Pete moved to Bway studio - same time as break w/ Jasper? Did he stay from St.? — later, a little. Jasper at SCar.

Lafayette St. renovation - how much? — about $15,000

Pollock
Riviera

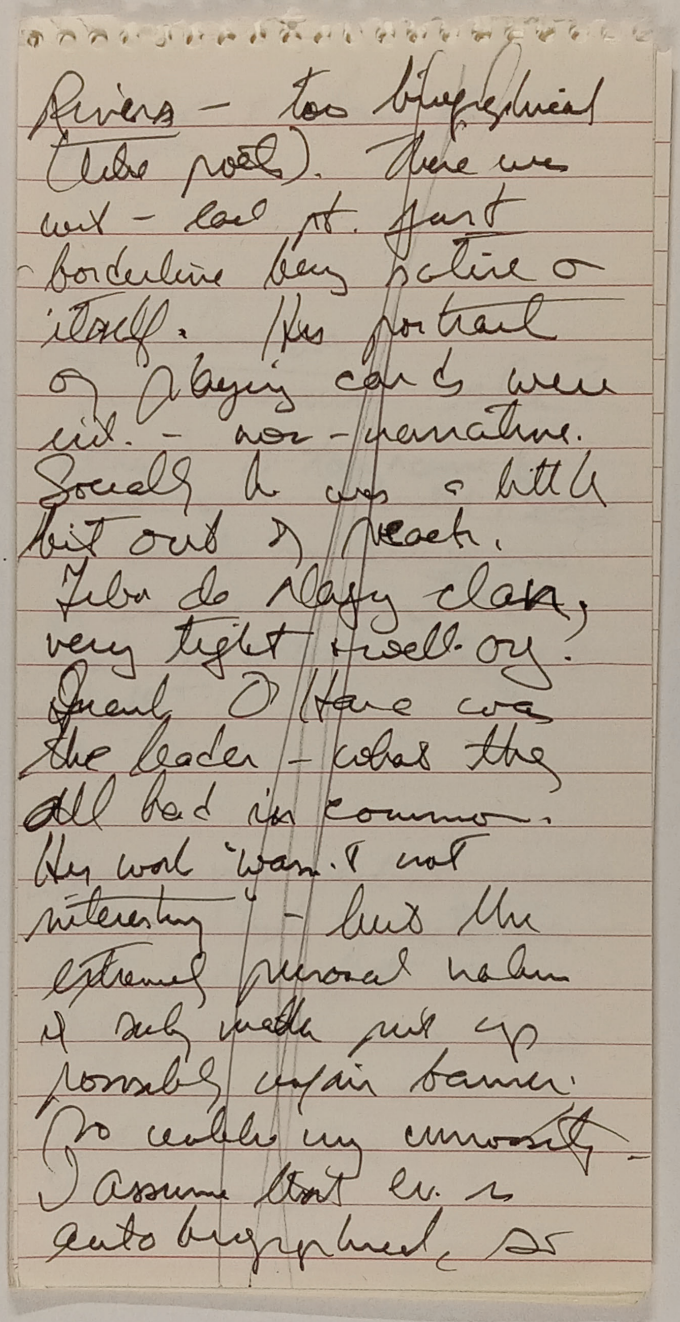
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Pollock - did meet him -
"What was yr name again?" -
I was closer to de Le's
work, I related to that
excess in de Le. Pollock
more of a mystery. Turns
in Springs. Come in
get drunk tear few doors
off hinges & go home.
Maybe it was the linear
accumulation rather than
the mass acc (in his work).
Pollocks work - appeared
it cld have been painted
on an just as easily;
lacked the solid material
look that de Les always
had. My interest from V.
beginning was in enlarging
the self-regard of material
as opp to illusion.

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Rivers – too Wagnerian
(like poets). Pure music
not – can at least
borderline very close to
itself. Has portrait
of Bayes cards were
vid. – non-narrative.
Socially he was a little
bit out of reach.
Tibor de Nagy class,
very tight + well-org.
Grand O'Hara was
the leader – what they
all had in common.
Hey work "warm + not
interesting" – but the
extreme personal nature
of each media put up
possibly emotional barrier.
So unlike my university –
I assume that ev. is
auto biographical, as

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if decide to come to see that.

Alan Solomon
first museum sale?
Retro? I too naive to be nervous. Painted Bags so would be something new. He was very close to what the artist thought + felt.

Play - non verbal, nervous tone. Chart of activities - like Jackson but 1950. Only one had voice - two story stage w/ 10 or 12 Cunningham, action in process of a round.

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Oldenburg happenings -
Saw nearly all. For my
own appetite - the
first temple, but for my
own appetite too expres-
sionistic. I missed
something either more
formal or dryer. I
related to Whitman more
than to any other Happ
people - he had a
abstract quality, & an
incompetence that was
reassuring. And his
ideas always began
with[illegible] very literal
or rational.

I really liked Claes'
drawing and piece -
lively - he changed what

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Thing ev 15 min.- what better rebuild than water.

Tenguely - want [illegible] anything - an [illegible] world who cared so much abt rebuilt of objects. Comb of [illegible] & themes that made unbearable things explicit - meditated upon for working. Idea of necessity of moving away from exhibitions of studio.

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J.F.K.

Had lunch at Univ of Texas (Austin) day before – were in L.A. w/ Cunningham Co ~~Tour~~.
In order to ~~keep up~~ travel w/ co + keep up w/ our sch I wd always check lunch caucus, order new mess of SS's before I left – or ~~they~~ they ran out of mayo I had on 6' screen of lemons, not being used as lemons but as 'a President', as a fact rather the personality when we finished taking a couple of days ~~that~~ parts may seemed weight of emotions I had conserved. Had

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To decide whether reject image because of Duchamp's work. Commodore, or continue with theory ignoring the fact: had to make one impure decision or another; did. & but night & after came. Court of SS decided. After 10 yrs. . .

My awareness of him— his att. abt being fréndant, which turned her into an ingrasume object. He thus pendency merged to become a fount, just as a bird or a woman, tower or a shoe. (Natural fréndant)

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to re-establish what
a hero is supposed to
be - somebody special,
not somebody you're
really comfortable with.

Death - what was shocking
was that it was believable
It wasn't out of the realm
with what he was th
hero - just as a story
taking a condition as
all things had come to
office.

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Elgin Tee – David's
makes attn. to Rembrandt
& light – like
summer storm.

Ruben & Velazquez –
– the edge of the
grotto & all history
that I saw the
images loaded with –
ya can't get that
out a Gallo II
The farmhouse &
take an est. image
& put it in a
completely new
context would
change the read &
what you have at
– and might
eventually change

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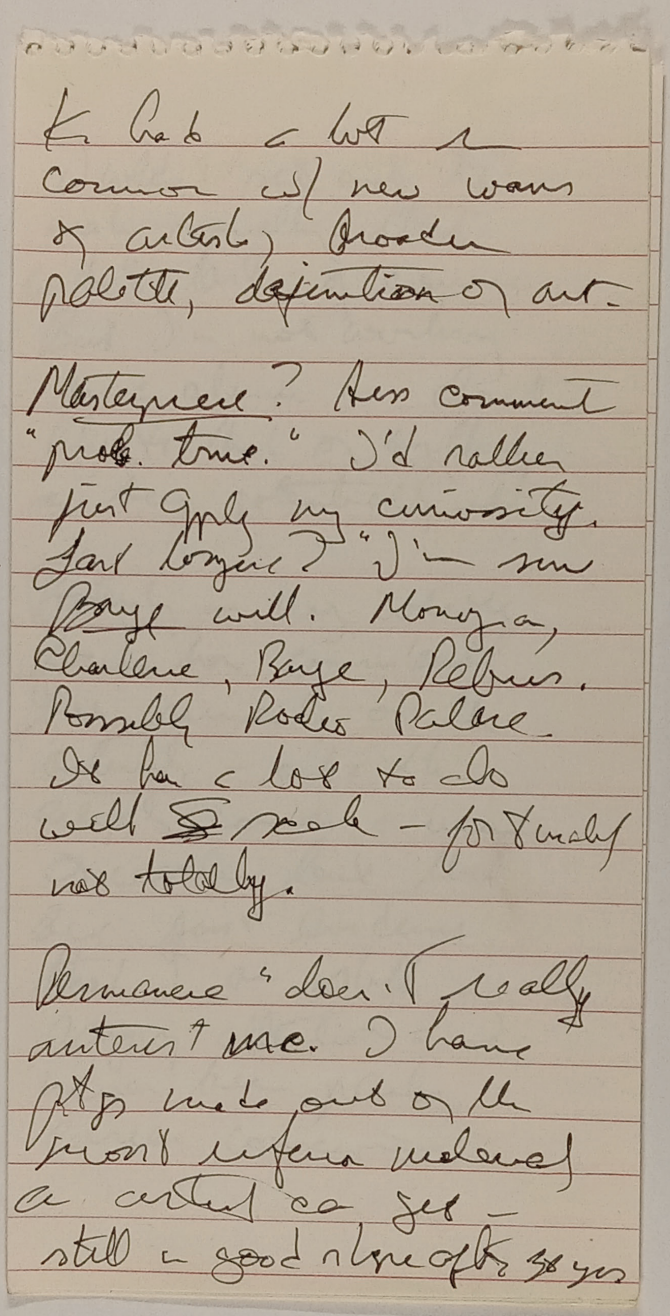
them (I mean, they don't belong in the Louvre any more).

R+V - "I like them robustness — Zurbaran I like for his restraint — I think that has to do w/ my sense of how to get from one place to another, relied on by tracking.

Time Cover (World Fair)
Even tho they said it wasn't necessary to use Moses, I think they thought I would. Mine was rejected — no clear reason

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K had a lot in common w/ new wave & artists, broaden palette, definition of art.

Masterpiece? Ass comment "prob. true." I'd rather just apply my curiosity. Last longer? "I'm sure Barge will. Monory, Charlene, Barge, Rebus. Possibly Rodes Palace. It has a lot to do with scale - for & really was totally.

Permanence "does" really interest me. I have stopped made out of the most inferior materials a artist can get - still a good chance of 50 yrs

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I wld. like to set out to make something that could last, of course. But I'm not working for a climate — don't like to think of anything as being potentially ill.

Posterity — my whole focus has consistently been primarily on the artwork — and the artwork comes a man of works, but they are first & foremost that I am able to pay attention. I never like to make conscious.

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I don't know whether
— responsibly
I don't expect you
to work & do this,
because you're a
man of fame & notoriety,
that makes it open for
you to assert a
certain degree of
sanity. But if
someone else were
given it, I'd rest
assured he would behave
responsibly. It's
like an inheritance.

Future? I've been
until so rebelled
I never ask. — My
future is work.
God bless us all.

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New York? – Oh sure –
a working essential.
The kind of sensibility
that keeps us not
regrets enables
us to enjoy Thos
island life. Not by
contrast – it is the
similarity. An ability
to agree otherwise
without antagonism.
On the island it's a
skill. for or the
unpredictable. But
for the familiarity &
agr. of just that
the unpredictable is
a constant factor
in yr life, that
enables me to be
in NY or here.

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None of my changes have been arbitrary. I'm not in a search for novelty new — or old either!

I used to think about what I'd be if I weren't a artist. I like that remark that Duchamp made so much —

From Smithsonian film:

" I'm paying my rent in living by paying attention to what's going on around me."

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

1970 Founded Changes, Inc.
Currents shown at Dayton's 12, Castelli, Corcoran, Houston, Pasadena
Pepsi Pav. at Osaka Expo – Women artists protest Whitney
Rothko dies; Newman dies – Earth Day

1971 Began spending much time on Captiva – est. Untitled Press
Cardboards shown Dayton's 12, Castelli.
Senate rejects SST – Calley convicted – Attica – Pentagon
Papers – Death of Chruschev

1972. Nixon landslide – Kissinger's "Peace is at hand" followed by heaviest bombings in hist. of warfare – Watergate

1973 "Rags and Roses" at Moulin à Poivre Richard & Bess, Amberg
~~Venetian~~ Venetian Series
Scull auction – Pollocks (91) – Pollocks Blue Poles sold to Australian Govt

1974 Began collaboration with Alain Robbe-Grillet
Israel Museum ("Rauschenberg in Israel")
Shown Hoarfrosts at Castelli + Sonnabend (Dec.)
Guernica defaced – Nixon resigns

1975 In China with Gemini – Chandi Ashram (multiple)
Calder designs Braniff flagship – di Suvero retrospective

1976 Jammers at Castelli (Feb.)
Lobbies in DC with Rosenquist & Goings, to reinstate tax law
Smithsonian show (Oct – Jan. '77 in DC)

1977.

1978. "Rebicons"

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I - THE EUROPEAN TRANSPLANT

The situation in American art before the Second World War - stubborn resistance to modernism - Stieglitz, the Armory Show, and Alfred Barr's great exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art in the thirties had brought an awareness of Cubism and the other new movements, but American artists were still stuck in the backwaters of regionalism and social realism - Federal Arts Project supported many artists, giving mural commissions to deKooning, Gorky, Guston and others - some European artist-teachers, here since early thirties, were influencing the younger generation: Helion, Ozenfant, Moholy-Nagy, Albers, Hofmann - with outbreak of the war, the influx of refugee artists began: Leger, Ernst, Miro, Masson, Dali, Mondrian, Tanguy, Matta et al - Surrealism and its antecedents (Dada; Freud; Marx) - beginnings of "publicity art" in Paris - Andre Bretonis idea of art as substitute religion - Marcel Duchamp in New York - how the Europeans reacted to the U.S. - a climate of change.

II - ART OF THIS CENTURY

Peggy Guggenheim among the artists (Duchamp, Ernst, Kiesler) - her Art of This Century Gallery becomes center for European artists and some younger Americans - Matta the catylist between the two groups - John Graham and his influence - Max Ernst's drip paintings -

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John Cage arrives in New York - Pollock, Kline shows at Art of This Century - isolation of the American artist - Gorky's tragedy: his wife leaves him for Matta, he commits suicide - The Surrealists return to Europe - Peggy Guggenheim closes her gallery and goes to Venice - the Europeans's legacy.

III - JACKSON POLLOCK

Early work with Thomas Hart Benton - influence of Piccaso and Surrealism - the New York School - heavy drinking a syndrome among artists then - The Club and the Cedar Bar - Clement Greenberg's critical role - forging a personal style ("Jackson broke the ice") - deKooning's underground reputation - Franz Kline - Mark Rothko - Clyfford Still - David Smith - secondary figures - three new dealers, Betty Parsons, Charles Egan, and Sam Kootz, pick up where Peggy G. left off - Leo Castelli and the 9th Street Show in 1951 - Dorothy Miller's "New American Painting" show marks MOMA's acceptance of Abstract Expressionism - Sidney Janis takes on Pollock and others - public recognition and rising prices - LIFE does spread on Pollock (after years of diatribes against modern art) - Metropolitan Museum retreats from its anti-modern bias under Francis Taylor - The Abstract Expressionists' "stockade mentality" abates - the summer scene in East Hampton - Pollock's last years in The Springs - effects of his death in 1956.

IV - BARNETT NEWMAN

The second main direction of New York painting, color-field

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abstraction - Newman's theories and his career - painting as "presence" - how this differs from European abstraction - early shows at Betty Parsons - the Parsons group: Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, Tony Smith, Clyfford Still - how "it all went from love to hate in one year" - feuds and enmities destroy the artists's solidarity - trying for the sublime - Newman's final synthesis - Rothko's Houston chapel - painting as religion (Duchamp: "It's not even as good as God")/ -international triumph of New York School.

V - RAUSCHENBERG AND JOHNS

Breaking out of the Abstract Expressionist net - where they came from and how they got there - the homosexual artist (contrast to machismo of the Abstract Expressionists) - looking out at the world instead of inward on the emotions - art from found objects and popular ikons - Rauschenberg's two Americas, one of big-time sports, technology, and commercial hard sell, the other of waste and detritus, animal nature, nostalgia for the past - hostile response to Rauschenberg's first four shows - immediate acceptance of Johns by Alfred Barr - Castelli's role as dealer - re-emergence of Duchamp as most influential artist of the century - Duchamp's influence filtered through John Cage and his aesthetic of chance - Merce Cunningham's revolution in dance and its effect on the visual artists - idea of collaboration with materials as a means to go beyond self-expression (End of the Renaissance?) - Jewish Museum retrospectives of Rauschenberg and Johns in 1963 and 1964 - Rauschenberg wins 1964 Venice Biennale - Rauschenberg and others collaborate on group projects in Stockholm and Amsterdam - New York replaces Paris as energy center of modern art.

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VI - TOWARD THEATER

Cage-Cunningham "event" at Black Mountain College - Jean Tinguely's "Hommage à New York" at MOMA - The Happenings, in New York and Japan - painter's theater (logical step out of "action painting") - Kaprow - Oldenburg - Dine - Whitman - "against interpretation" (Susan Sontag) - the new dance at Judson Church - Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris - new directions in off-off Broadway: The Becks, LaMama, Joseph Chaikin - the underground film - why painting and sculpture began to appear inadequate - effects of Vietnam, Berkeley free speech movement, drug culture and experiments in consciousness - Marshal McLuhan and Herbert Marcuse - the theater of Robert Wilson.

VII - THE EXPLODING PLASTIC INEVITABLE (POP ART)

Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, Oldenburg all emerge in same season (1962) - Castelli and Ivan Karp - Richard Bellamy's Green Gallery - Robert Scull as Pop collector - other important buyers: Emily Tremaine, Philip Johnson, Ben Heller - Warhol nearly misses out - Sidney Janis embraces Pop (and loses the Abstract Expressionists) - Henry Geldzahler at the Met - Seitz and Selz at MOMA - the new spirit in art, politics, society at large during the Kennedy era - the artist as culture hero - merging of art and fashion and jet set worlds - merging of art and rock music through Warhol's "Exploding Plastic Inevitable" discotheque - excitement of the mid-sixties - art openings as social highlights, with everyone in costume (toward theater) - anger of the Abstract Expressionists, some of whose prices show sharp decline - Pop's subject matter vs.

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25 West 43rd Street
New York, N. Y. 10036

March 13, 1976

Mr. Robert Lescher
151 East 71st Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Bob:

I'm enclosing, not an outline exactly, but a very preliminary checklist of events, personalities, and ideas that will be covered in the book on the development of American art since 1945. It obviously reflects the work I've done in this area over the last ten years, and of course there is a lot left out of it. I don't suppose that any of the suggested chapter headings will survive intact. Most of them will probably divide into several chapters -- for example, a chapter on the Artist's Club in the fifties, or a chapter on the attempt to make Los Angeles an art center rivalling New York.

The book's structure will be governed by what turns up in my research, which will be extensive and broadly based - not limited, that is, to the art world. Although the story of the American art world since 1945 makes a strong and dramatic narrative in itself, I would like to try for a bigger canvas, and throughout the text to make connections with developments in the other arts (theater, movies, dance, music, etc), to politics (JFK and Johnson and Nixon, Vietnam, the civil rights movement), to social trends (youth protests, the drug culture, big-time sports, the effects of television), and to the thinking of certain influential writers such as Marshal McLuhan, Herbert Marcuse, and Buckminster Fuller.

As I now see it, the research will take about a year, and the writing another. I have a considerable head start, of course, having already published profiles of Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, Betty Parsons, Henry Geldzahler, Leo Castelli and other personalities and aspects of the era. But there is a great deal more work to be done -- voluminous reading, and in-depth interviewing. My bent is biographical, and I want as much as possible to bring the events and the personalities alive and to see the period through the eyes of its major participants. The book will be as much social history as art history. It will not attempt critical judgements on aesthetic grounds.

As to the question of illustration, I am open-minded. In some ways it would seem essential to show the work being talked about, but to do so only in black-and-white would be meaningless, and to do it extensively in color would make for a

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more expensive book than the one I have in mind. I want this to be a narrative, a reading book on a fairly popular level. The art has of course been reproduced in dozens of books already, and it would not distress me if there were no illustrations in mine. But as I say, I'm open to suggestions here.

I would like very much to start immediately on this project provided we can get a suitable contract. Otherwise, I will have to get into another New Yorker profile without delay. I'm giving some thought to the advance I'd need, and will talk this over with you in a day or so. Meanwhile all best wishes,

Sincerely,

Calvin Tomkins

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its formal values - changing perspectives on the new art - Warhol as king of the revels - Geldzahler's Centennial show of "New York Painting and Sculpture."

VIII - NEGATIONS

Twentieth century art as a sum of negations (Duchamp again) - second wave of color-field painters: Noland, Louis, Kelly, Stella - the new austerity in painting - Clem Greenberg's counterattack on Pop - the "primary structures" of Judd, Morris, Andre, Flavin - the aesthetics of Minimalism - exhaustion of a trend - getting rid of the art object altogether: Conceptual Art - art as pure communication - what is being communicated? - Art and Technology movement

IX - CURRENT SCENE

The process of decentralization - emergence of Soho as new art center - art becomes international; no more Paris-New York rivalry - European collectors Panza and Ludwig become principal buyers of new American art - diffusion of energies - no dominant school or style - Body art - Process art - Earth art and its major monuments: Smithson's Spiral Jetty, Heizer's Double Negative - effects on the art market and the New York art scene - a loss of nerve - conclusions on period.

- Calvin Tomkins

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Robert Rauschenberg

1925 Born Port Arthur, Oct.; home + family; pets - duck to school; drawings, but no notion of art

1943-6 Navy; drawing back to Huntington; return home to find family moved; abortive try at mod. school; back to LA

1946-7 Kansas City Art Inst. - name change; odd jobs; sails for Paris in fall (Newark - NY)

1948 Paris - Acad. Julian; Sue Weil; painting with hands - need for discipline; returns home to enter Black Mtn. in Oct.

1949 Black Mtn. to summer - Albers; NY. - summer on Outer Island; ASL in fall - Kantor - 'White Painting' with numbers

1950 ASL; Summer on Outer Island - blueprint; marriage in June

1951 NY, working on his own; visits Betty Parsons in Jan.; has show there in May; 9th Street show in May

1952 Return to Black Mtn; 'Concerted event' with Cage, etc.; Black paintings + White paintings; breaks with Sue, goes to Europe (Rome) with Twombly; N. Africa wanderings

1953 Shows in Rome + Florence; throws work in Arno; return to NY, Fulton St.; budget of 15¢ a day; freezing in cold weather, goes to Staten Island during hot; helped by Cage-Cunningham; Stable Show Sept-Oct; gets Motto from Cage; The Club; erases de Kooning (hostility of other artists)

1954 Red paintings, culminating in Charlene; Egan show Dec '54 - Jan. '55; "Garden" in Stable Annual; Paul Taylor recital at Hunter

1955 Pearl St. - J Johns; Display work - De Antonio; gold paintings; post-red paintings, culminating in Rebus; (buys cans without labels) Accumes Goat; does Bed; Stable Annual - piece with Johns + Weil incorporated

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1956 Starting to use larger objects: Odalisk, Monogram etc; new name: Combine-paintings

1957 Castelli comes down, discovers Johns; group show at Castelli in spring ("Gloria"); move to Front Street (Cage quote).

1958 One-man show at Castelli - woman buys picture, puts in closet, Castelli buys it back; Town Hall Concert for Cage (May 15); Spoleto incident

1959 Starts Dante; AFA show, from which he gets Duchamp; Guggenheim rejects bid; MMA "16 Americans" - Double Feature collect coins (use defacing dr. here?); Castelli shows Monogram; pictures: Trophy I (Merce), Broadcast

1960 Finishes Dante in Florida; Trophy II (Duchamp)

1961 Sculpture (Empire I + II); Coexistence; Pantommie (Jasper); Paris show at Cordier; 'event' at Am. Embassy with Tinguely; Arts and Letters; Movement show in Stockholm (Black Market); Castelli shows Dante; R. starts touring with Merce ("J. in never not working")

1962 "4 American" in Europe; Ace at Castelli; April; "Construction of Boston" in May; Sylvia (Amsterdam) in Sept.; R. abandons collage, starts Silk screens: Barge

1963 Double show at Sonnabend, Paris; teaching at Dartmouth; [MMA acquires Dante] touring with Merce; Castelli shows new work (no formal opening); Jewish Museum retrospective in April; new color screens; Victor Gang; Pop Festival in Wash D.C., R. choreographs for roller skate.

1964 MMA acquires First Landing Jump

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1949 Black Mountain – RR + Sue, fresh from Paris. Albers' last year. Merce + John. Some RR bio.

1949 → The Club – "The Irascible Eighteen" (1950)

1950 ~~Betty Parsons~~ – Ab-Ex. emergence after WW II – Peggy G. – Betty's life – funds – RR show offered – blueprints – marriage

1950 Newman – first show at Parsons

1951 Ninth Street Show – Leo – Tenth St. art scene – Barr + MoMA – Triumph

1951 Cage – Acts Sire print – shows at Parsons + after mush – Cage's career to date – ~~mentor~~ "understanding at first sight"

1952 Black Mountain – Merce's career to date – the 'Event' ("15 Americans" at MoMA – Pollock's Blue Poles – deK's "Woman" series (1953)

→ ~~Stable Shows (White + Black) – erased de Kooning (1953)~~

1952-3 Cy Twombly – breakup with Sue – Europe + N. Africa – the Arno incident

1953 Stable Shows – ~~Sam~~ l'enfant terrible – Newman remarks abt White + Black Paintings. Erased de Kooning

1953- Fulton Street Studio – living on 15¢ a day – Club + Cedar?

1954 Paul Taylor – early work for Merce

1954 Chas. Egan – the Red show – Ab-Ex. scene – ~~Club + Cedar~~?

1954 Jasper – bio – bookstore – Sari Dienes – ~~d'Eaton~~ and Gene Moore + window displays

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1955 Rachel Rosenthal - social life - Pearl Street studio - thy rd. with Jasper (thru 1960). White Jaguar - Hamptons.

1956 Pollock's death - AB-Ex. scene

1958 Front Street studio - visit of Castelli - Leo's career - ?

1958 Jasper's + RR's first Castelli shows. Bed, Monogram(?) - differing reactions

1958 Cage retrospective concert - RR's work with Merce -

1958 → Kaprow's "Legacy of Jackson Pollock" - Oldenburg writes art. - first happening at Segal's chicken farm.

1959 Sixteen Americans - Stella

1959 Judson Church - early happenings - Hulten + Ichiyanagi

1959-60 Dante drawings

~~1959 Henry's show at Art~~

1960 RR meets Duchamp - D's career + influence

1960 Tinguely's Hommage à New York

~~1961? Rosenquist, Rauschenberg, Klein et al~~

1961? Break with Jasper - move to Bway studio - becomes lighting designer + stage mgr for Merce

1961 → Green Gallery - Bellamy + Segal - emergence of Pop

1961 Oldenbury's "Store" - emergence of Pop - Castelli, Lichtenstein - Rosenquist - Warhol

1961 Paris - first theater event - Tinguely - Art of Assemblage at MOMA

1962 Janis' "New Realists" - (also) European Pop - AB-Ex reaction

1962 Construction of Boston (May)

Robt Scull + new Pop collectors - Oldenburg's 1st show at Green (Sept).

1962 Dylaby - Hulten - Surrealists in Paris

1963 Alan Solomon - Jewish Mus. retrospective (April) - teaching at Dartmouth

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Faculty of Ab-Ex – Seattle & Cal

1963 "Pop Festival" in D.C. – "Pelican" – first silkscreens
1963– Rauschenberg – Pasadena retrospective (Oct–Dec) – Hopps
1963 Warhol
1963? ~~Allan Kaprow~~ & post-painterly abstraction
1963 The Judson – ~~Alex + Debbie et al~~ –
1964 Tanya Grossman & ULAE
1964 Venice Biennale
1964 World Tour – Cunningham with Merce & John
1965– "Responsive Eye" at MoMA – Rosenfeld
1966 ~~Billy Klüver – Nine Evenings – Lafayette St. studio~~
1965 Steve Paxton – "First NY Theatre Rally" – RR's
dance works – Yvonne R. – RR's Grooms
1966 "Primary Structures" – Jewish : Minimal art
~~Castelli Warehouse at MoMA~~
1966 (Oct) E.A.T. pub on "Nine Evenings" – Klüver – RR moves to Lafayette St.
1967 "Anti-Art" – politics, Vietnam – march on Pentagon, Be-In in S.F.
1967 Gemini
1968 ~~Primary Structures – Emergence of Minimal Art~~ Frank Stella
1969 Dada period ↓ celebrity-fucking – Soundings – Mud Muse –
1962 ~~Reading White Newspaper~~ – death of Duchamp
Warhol shot (just after RR etc)
1969 Stoned Moon – Peterson – Canal Clocks
1969→ Accumulations, Environments, retrospectives, "Herms" show at MoMA
1970 Currents – art as reportage – Cristina Gs. –
1970 Leo C. – new trends – Soho ↑ satellite galleries – video – earth art etc.
1970 Kasten Conover – Change, Inc. – lobbying for artists
1972 Bruce Marden – Cardboards
1973 Scull auction – earthworks – "Blue Poles" sold for $2 m.
1973 Sachika – Venice – Helen Marden
1974 Israel – working in situ – alternative spaces
movement – ~~Hoarfrosts~~
1974– Hoarfrosts – Jammers – India – recent work
1975 Walter Hopps – Southwestern show –

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Entretien avec Robert Rauschenberg

Le Musée Municipal d'Art Moderne de Paris présente une rétrospective des œuvres du peintre américain Robert Rauschenberg, échelonnées entre 1949 et 1968. L'exposition permet de mesurer la place qu'occupe désormais dans l'art contemporain celui qui, en montrant qu'une bouteille de coca-cola valait une reproduction de la Vénus de Rubens, fit la coupure esthétique entre la génération de l'expressionnisme abstrait et celle du pop'art. Des toiles anciennes, encombrées de déchets lyriques, à la pièce toute récente en plexiglass et aluminium, traités industriellement, on peut suivre une démarche dont Robert Rauschenberg fait lui-même ici le commentaire.

— ce merveilleux matériau, léger, neigeux, facile à travailler, qui a permis à Dubuffet de réaliser ses « ustensiles » et personnages, ses prodigieux « murs » et « édifices » des dernières années (... et à César de faire quelques « crottes» attristantes) — que Singer découvre des possibilités nouvelles et pratiquement illimitées. Sculpté en creux selon les formes désirées, le polystyrène peut servir de moule, soit à du béton (mural à Orthez — 1963), soit à cette belle résine de polyester, couleur d'outremer : l'epoxy, dans laquelle est réalisé son *Ambulomire* qui occupe presque toute la surface de la Galerie Jeanne Bûcher.

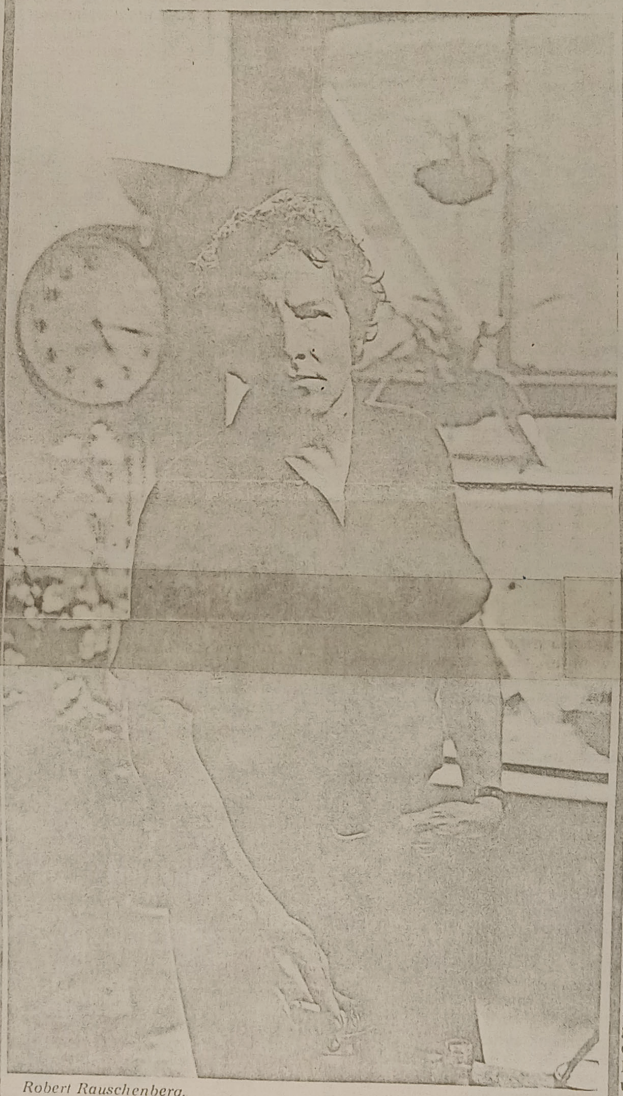
Mi-lunaire, mi-martien

Curieux « relief » qui ne s'accroche pas au mur mais s'élève à partir du sol, évoquant quelque étrange paysage mi-lunaire, mi-martien — à cause des totems-personnages du fond, avec leurs protubérances et lucarnes étranges, a cause de ces grosses ou moyennes masses déchiquetées, en équilibre comme des rocs tombés d'autres planètes, à cause aussi de ce mamelon central construit en cercles concentriques, montagne arrondie psychiquement vénusienne. Dans ce « milieu » qui n'est pas un « environnement » passif et statique, on se promène, on s'y assied, on marche et on se mire (comme son nom l'indique). On est ravi de découvrir qu'il existe encore quelques individus chez qui l'imagination n'est pas totalement atrophiée, et qui peuvent créer tout à coup un fragment d'univers inconnu au lieu de photographier et reproduire platement celui, si médiocre, qui nous entoure.

Invention, imagination aussi chez Appel à qui le CNAC (2) pour sa réouverture, consacre une très vivante exposition. Nous sommes plus près ici de choses connues, plus humaines, plus chaudes mais, partant, moins surprenantes que celles de Singer. Et l'on pense à nouveau à Dubuffet, bien sûr, plus loin aussi à Chaissac, à certaines productions de l'Art Brut, à des céramiques de Miro. Mais loin de références « culturelles», ces Appel sont bien à lui, avec leurs formes baroques et boursouflées, leurs couleurs virulentes, leur truculente vitalité. Ce sont bien ses personnages, sortis de la toile et s'ébattant en liberté. D'abord commencés en contreplaqué — et encore un peu figés — puis poursuivis, eux aussi, dans l'irremplaçable polystyrène, directement ici collé et peint, ils atteignent dans les dernières compositions, *Oiseau et Fleur* ou *Homme et Oiseau*, à un remarquable accord des formes, du rythme et de la couleur. C'est une fête joyeuse et l'on en sort tout ragaillardi.

Geneviève Bonnefoi

1. J'apprends que le troisième le serait aussi (impropre) et que Sugai, né au Japon serait de nationalité américaine.
2. Centre National d'Art Contemporain, 11, rue Berryer.



Robert Rauschenberg.

Vous avez intégré dans vos tableaux des objets et des images empruntés à la vie quotidienne et aux journaux. Votre utilisation d'une cravate ou d'une photographie de Kennedy fait penser aux épiphanies de Joyce, simples morceaux de conversation devenus intemporels dans l'espace du livre qui les reçoit. Mais n'éprouvez-vous pas quand même un peu de mélancolie en voyant réunies des œuvres qui racontent vingt ans de votre vie ?

R.R. En 1960, j'ai intitulé un de mes dessins *Autobiographie* : récemment j'ai réuni sur une immense lithographie un portrait de moi enfant, le nom de mes amis, une image évoquant l'époque où je travaillais avec les ballets de Merce Cunningham. Mon œuvre est donc bien une sorte de journal intime où je note tout ce qui m'arrive. J'ai même commencé par représenter ma mémoire vierge de tout souvenir dans mes premières toiles, entièrement blanches. Je fais allusion à cela dans *Autobiographie*. Mais je ne vois pas mes tableaux échelonnés dans le temps, sur une ligne qui monte du passé pour se perdre dans l'avenir. Je pense plutôt que les faits me parviennent simultanément. C'est ce que montre ma peinture. Quand j'exécute une série de dessins je constate bien que chacun est le fidèle reflet de ce qui m'est arrivé dans la journée. Il ressemble à une page de quotidiens, avec ses illustrations, des titres plus ou moins gros, et le nom du journal. Au bout d'un certain temps, je ne me souviens plus de l'ordre dans lequel j'ai fait mes dessins et j'ai l'impression qu'ils décrivent une seule journée, qui continue en ce moment même. Bien sûr, certains tableaux sont faciles à replacer dans le temps et je me souviens avec exactitude des circonstances au cours desquelles ils furent composés. *Trophy III* dédié à Jean Tinguely a été construit en 1961 avec ce que j'avais trouvé dans une cour, un encadrement de porte, un drap noué, une échelle en fer, et des ressorts.

Depuis la fondation de E.A.T. (1) association dont vous êtes un des principaux membres, vous n'employez plus que des matériaux industriels. La collaboration des artistes et des hommes d'affaires que vous prônez a suscité bien des critiques. Dore Ashton (2) a accusé les artistes qui se servent de la technologie de se mettre en réalité à son service et de devenir des « agents de publicité » pour les fabricants de napalm. Qu'avez-vous à répondre à ce genre d'accusations ?

RR. Quand Dore Ashton m'accuse de servir les intérêts de la compagnie Bell du téléphone, elle oublie qu'elle utilise tout le temps le téléphone. Ceux qui se contentent de contester ne se rendent pas compte qu'ils ne peuvent rien changer au système qu'ils critiquent parce que le système a besoin d'eux, qu'il ne peut pas fonctionner sans leurs critiques. S'ils renoncent à participer, ils peuvent aussi bien aller vivre dans les bois, loin du monde technologique qu'ils refusent. Tout peut être changé par chacun de nous. Il faut accepter les choses comme un continuum qui peut être changé et qui le sera quand on aura des moyens techniques suffisants, quand chacun sera informé de tout ce qui se passe dans le monde. Nous sommes au milieu de la politique et nous devons voir que tout est politique. Celui qui injurie les politiciens est lui-même un politicien.

Les artistes ont besoin des industriels comme les industriels ont besoin d'eux. Notre tâche consiste à montrer à ceux qui ont de l'argent qu'ils ont une respon-

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

▶ Entretien avec Robert Rauschenberg

sabilité envers la société. Auparavant l'artiste portait tout seul le poids des misères sociales, nous pouvons, si nous en obtenons les moyens, réaliser des spectacles gigantesques qui réjouiront toute une ville. E.A.T. a en préparation le projet d'illuminer les grands immeubles en verre de la pointe de Manhattan. Pendant la nuit des jeux de lumière de couleur éclaireront les bureaux des banques et des grandes compagnies. Les gens viendront de tous les points de la ville pour voir le spectacle.

Vous avez dit un jour que vous vous serviez de trois « palettes », les journaux collés sur la toile, les couleurs et les objets. Les matériaux industriels sont votre quatrième palette. Mais vous en avez une cinquième, les mots. Comment choisissez-vous les titres de vos tableaux ?

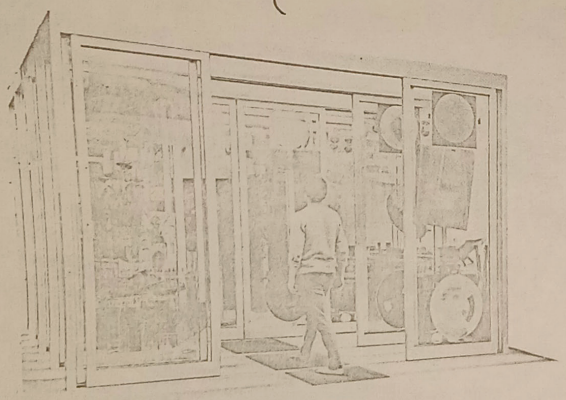
R.R. En choisissant le titre, je donne comme un dernier coup de pinceau au tableau, le plus important. Je ne procède pas de façon délibérée. Les frottages que j'ai exposés en octobre chez Ileana Sonnabend n'avaient pas de titre. J'ai dû leur en trouver au dernier moment. En les considérant ensemble on voit qu'ils forment une sorte de texte : *Soft Focus, Trap, Wet Back, Play Off*, etc. Ils correspondent à ce que j'éprouvais ce jour-là, mais leur unité vient aussi de ce que les gouaches ont été peintes l'une après l'autre, en quelques jours. C'est en comparant mes titres avec les tableaux que je leur trouve un sens et que j'ai le sentiment de ne pas m'être trompé. Inversement quand je regarde mes tableaux, je découvre que le titre leur communique quelque chose. Il y a un échange entre le mot et l'image. On peut aller de l'un à l'autre. Par exemple dans *Solstice*, une œuvre récente en plexiglas et aluminium, je retrouve l'idée du jour le plus long et le plus chaud de l'année, opposé au jour le plus court et le plus froid. Quand je vois un film, je m'intéresse moins au déroulement de l'histoire qu'au rapport des sons et des images.

Avez-vous l'intention de tourner vous-même des films ?

R.R. Je possède une caméra magnifique, très perfectionnée, mais je ne m'en suis jamais servi. Je la prête à mes amis. Ma seule tentative a consisté à faire un film à partir d'un vieux documentaire. Ce qui me gêne dans le cinéma c'est l'idée que je vais filmer des gens ou des paysages, attendre plusieurs jours et voir enfin ce que la caméra a enregistré. Il y a une distance entre ce qui a été filmé et ce que vous regardez à la projection. Je devrais peut-être travailler sérieusement dans cet écart qui se creuse entre la vie et l'art. Je crains aussi de passer à côté de ce qu'il y a d'intéressant à conserver, de manquer quelque chose sans m'en rendre compte. Comment choisir ? Je crois que la télévision m'offrirait plus de possibilités. Avec elle on peut contrôler tout ce que l'on fait au fur et à mesure, utiliser facilement les surimpressions, voir à la fois l'image et la réalité. (3).

David Whitney a écrit que la façon dont vous avez réalisé votre suite de six lithographies inspirées du film Bonnie and Clyde *rappelle un tournage de cinéma.*

R.R. Ces lithographies ont été créées d'un seul coup, en soixante-quatre heures de travail. J'ai passé mon enfance dans la région où se déroule toute l'action de *Bonnie and Clyde* et, si le sentimentalisme de l'intrigue ne m'a pas beaucoup touché, j'ai été très sensible à ce qu'il y avait autour de l'action, à tous les détails fidèlement reproduits. On m'a donné des chutes et avec ça j'ai monté ma propre version du film. On n'y retrouve plus grand-chose des poncifs de Hollywood. Les héros meurent sur chaque lithographie au milieu d'éclaboussures de couleurs phosphorescentes.



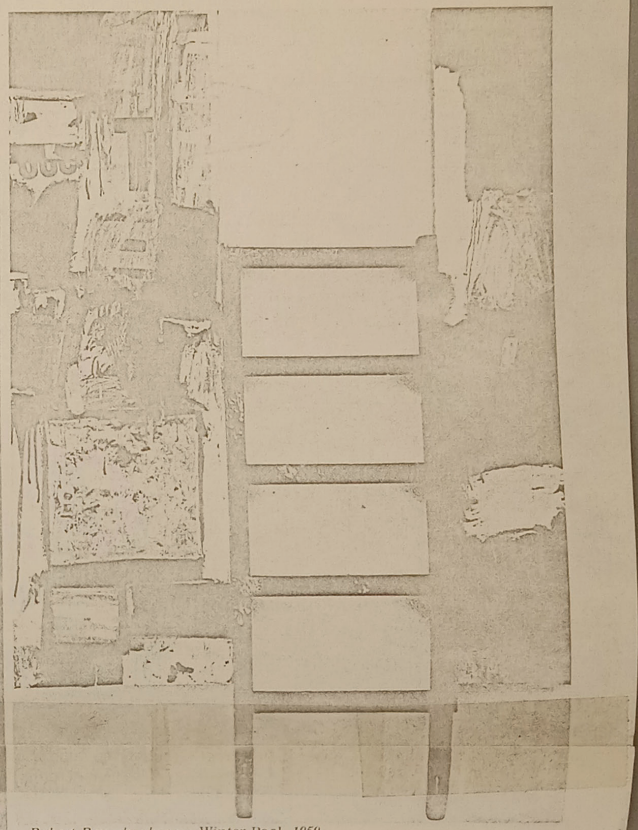
Robert Rauschenberg : Solstice, *1968.*

Vous établissez un va-et-vient perpétuel entre l'art et la vie. Solstice, *qui correspond au dernier moment de votre travail, peut passer pour une métaphore réussie où le spectateur va effectivement du monde réel au monde des images.*

Celui qui pénètre dans Solstice *une fois que les portes de plexiglas se sont refermées derrière lui, est environné d'images rouges, bleues, ou vertes qui ont l'air de flotter. Et bientôt c'est lui-même qui a l'impression de flotter. Les images transparentes de Manhattan, d'une voiture ou d'une chaise se présentent à lui en même temps, et se superposent.*

R.R. Avec *Solstice*, je veux que le spectateur passe de l'autre côté du miroir. Autour de *Solstice*, la vie continue, et le spectateur peut voir à travers les parois transparentes les gens qui passent, ceux qui s'arrêtent pour regarder. Les gens font partie de l'œuvre. Sans eux, elle ne s'anime pas puisque ce sont leurs mouvements qui déclenchent l'ouverture automatique des portes. Et leurs silhouettes viennent s'inscrire dans la composition.

J'ai laissé entrer la lumière parce que je ne veux pas placer le spectateur dans un environnement. Si la lumière n'entre pas, on est comme au fond d'une tombe. C'est étouffant. Je pense qu'il faut toujours laisser une brèche pour que l'air puisse s'y engouffrer, avec la lumière et la couleur, cela forme un tout que je veux capter et diriger sur mes images pour les faire danser. Je crois de plus en plus en la transparence et en la légèreté. Mes derniers frottages sont aussi comme des écrans où des ombres viennent se projeter. Je n'égratigne pas le papier.



Robert Rauschenberg : Winter Pool, *1959.*

John Cage a dit que le peintre n'a qu'à ouvrir sa fenêtre et laisser entrer le tableau.

R.R. John Cage est compositeur. Le peintre doit aller chercher son tableau lui-même. On attrape tout ce que l'on peut selon les dispositions du moment. Il faut prendre les choses avec soin de peur de les abîmer, car elles sont fragiles. Si tout se passe bien, on va les replanter ailleurs. Et c'est un travail qui n'en finit pas.

Raphaël Sorin

1. Experiments in Art and Technology, Inc.
2. L'expérience américaine. « Les arts ne doivent jamais servir la technologie ». *Opus International*. N° 5 février 1968.
3. Leur commune idéologie du vécu rapproche Rauschenberg de Jean-Luc Godard qui écrit à propos de son film *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* : « *Au cours d'un film — dans son discours, c'est-à-dire son cours discontinu — j'ai envie de tout faire, à propos du sport, de la politique et même de l'épicerie... On doit tout mettre dans un film. Quand on me demande pourquoi je parle ou je fais parler du Vietnam, de Jacques Anquetil, d'une dame qui trompe son mari, je renvoie la personne qui me pose cette question à son quotidien habituel. Et tout y est juxtaposé. C'est pourquoi je suis tellement attiré par la télévision. On doit tout mettre dans un film.* » *Avant-scène du cinéma*. N° 70, mai 1967.

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ROSENTHAL
The Dial Press 1968

4

It's almost as if art,
in painting and music and stuff,
is the leftovers of some activity.
The activity is the thing that I'm most
interested in. Nearly everything
that I've done was to see what would happen
if I did this instead of that.

—Robert Rauschenberg

Although Robert Rauschenberg participated in John Cage's [illegible] historic mixed-means performance at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1952, he did not become the author of his own theatre pieces until a decade later. Instead, it was as a painter that he originally attracted critical notice and, eventually, international fame. Rauschenberg's objects have been displayed all over the Western world; and as the recipient of the First Prize in Painting at the 1964 Venice Biennale, he is generally considered among the most important painters of the post-World War II period. His [illegible] were collages that exhibited a preference for the elegant found materials and an ability to integrate disparate elements. Toward the end of the 1950's he created his first combines—[illegible] collages or "paintings" that stand up away from the wall [illegible]

sixties, he adapted silk screening processes [illegible] compositions and worked with [illegible]

of which contains a radio loudspeaker.

Although painting was his dominant interest during the fifties and early sixties, throughout his career he has maintained some connection with theatre. From 1955 to 1965, he designed sets, costumes, and controlled the lighting for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and also collaborated in theatre pieces by Yvonne Rainer and Kenneth Koch. In *Pelican* (1963) he authored his own piece for the first time; and after he all but abandoned painting in 1965, he created a series of theatrical works—*Spring Training* (1965), *Map Room I* (1965), *Map Room II* (1965), *Linoleum* (1966), and *Open Score* (1966, for the New York Theatre and Engineering Festival). These theatre pieces, like his painting, reveal a particularly acute genius for stunningly original images and interesting visual composition as well as for the exploration of the possibilities of unusual materials and particular spaces.

Born in 1925, in Port Arthur, Texas, Rauschenberg looks considerably younger than his years. He talks willingly, though rather slowly, frequently pausing to find the most accurate word. His modesty causes him to speak about his work and his artistic purposes rather obliquely. As he has never taught and resists the invitation to lecture, his comments are somewhat disorganized and plagued by a tendency to wander; yet flashes of high insight and almost aphoristic articulateness inform whatever he says. Perhaps because his formal education was meager and, as he remembers it, uncongenial, he exhibits an unusual intelligence that is at once innocent and sophisticated, extremely imaginative and yet passionately pragmatic, highly original yet insistently empirical.

The initial interview took place in the kitchen on the [illegible] floor of his new multi-storied house, a converted orphanage, on New York's Lower East Side, just after a dinner of lamb chops and [illegible] he had cooked for his guests. Later sessions took place in the recent workroom. Each time we met, he exhibited extraordinarily tenacious powers of concentration amid a plethora of distractions.

ROSENTHAL — How did you become involved with theatre?

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

RAUSCHENBERG — I've always been interested, even [illegible] in high school. I like the liveness of it—that awful feeling of being on the spot, having to assume the responsibility for that moment for those actions that happen at that particular time.

KOSTELANETZ — Was your first professional involvement with Merce Cunningham and his Dance Company?

RAUSCHENBERG — With him, and with Paul Taylor. At first I did just costumes and props. Then, at a certain point, it became clear that the lighting and the whole staging were just as essential to the way a piece looked as what the dancers were wearing. Merce lost his lighting man, and although I didn't know anything about lighting, John Cage and Merce convinced me that I could learn it for the next concert, which would be, like, in two weeks. There were three new pieces, and I didn't know one thing from another. I thought personally, "I know I can't, but I certainly do like it that they think I can. I'll try to do it their way."

At the same time I was getting interested in what the dancers at Judson Church were doing. Before I did any real theatre of my own, Jean Tinguely and Jasper Johns and myself collaborated with David Tudor to do a concert in Paris in 1961, and we also worked on Kenneth Koch's *The Construction of Boston* [1962]. I don't find theatre that different from painting, and it's not that I think of painting as theatre or vice versa. I tend to think of working as a kind of involvement with materials, as well as a rather focused interest which changes.

KOSTELANETZ — Even though your involvement with theatre may not be too different from your involvement with painting, surely painting is different from theatre on the outside.

RAUSCHENBERG — Well, in my paintings, almost from the very beginning, I observed that painting changed from one kind of light to another. Then I started incorporating lights into my painting, and theatre is a continuation of that. I wasn't proving that a light bulb was paint or that paintings ought to have light bulbs. It was an organic evolution of the use of those materials.

KOSTELANETZ — How did you become the author of your own theatre pieces?

RAUSCHENBERG — That skating piece, *Pelican* [1963], was my first piece. The more I was around Merce's group and that kind of activity

[illegible] that part [illegible] the same way, so at a certain point I had to do theatre myself.

When I did the lights, my lighting cues were not programmed [illegible] played the lightboard from performance to performance [illegible] were different. In a work of Merce's called *Story*, I never repeated the set. A new one was made for each performance from materials gathered from different places. The costumes, actually, stayed more or less the same; but from time to time, stuff was thrown out and anything you could cover yourself with was brought in. The dancers could decide which, or any of these things, or none, they were going to wear when. I never knew where anyone was going to be; the space was not defined. The set had to be made out of what you could find, given the amount of time that you had in a particular locale, out of stuff that was there.

KOSTELANETZ — In the auditorium itself?

RAUSCHENBERG — No, out in the alley or any place you could get it. We didn't travel with a set.

KOSTELANETZ — What you had then was a set of ground rules for how this game should be played, rather than a piece with a closely composed score, and the game started as soon as you came into town.

RAUSCHENBERG — That was an exciting thing to do. In some places, like London, where [in 1964] we did the piece three or four times a week for six to eight weeks, it was very difficult to do a completely different thing every night. A couple of times we were in such sterile situations that Alex Hay, my assistant, and I would actually have to be part of the set. The first time it happened was in Dartington, the school in Devon. That place was inhabited by people with a very familiar look—that Black Mountain beatnik kind of look—but they occupied the most fantastic and beautiful old English building, all of whose shrubs were trimmed. There was nothing rural or rustic or unfinished anywhere. For the first time, there was absolutely nothing to use. There was a track at the very back of the stage that had lights in it, so the dancers couldn't use that space. About an hour before the performance, I asked Alex whether he had any shirts that needed ironing, which was a nice question to ask Alex because he always did and he always ironed his own shirts. So we got two ironing boards and put them up over some blue lights that were back there. When the curtain opened, there were the dancers and these two people ironing

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shirts. It must have looked quite beautiful but we [illegible] sure absolutely. But from what I could feel about the way it looked and the lights coming up through the shirts, it was like a live passive set, like live decor. It didn't occur to me then but it does now that it might have been difficult to tell whether we were choreography or set. I knew and I assumed it would be perfectly clear. Knowing that my job was to do decor, it might have been in bad taste, but I did it in all innocence.

KOSTELANETZ — Would you do it again?

RAUSCHENBERG — I won't do that. You see, there is little difference between the action of paint and the action of people, except that paint is a nuisance because it keeps drying and setting.

KOSTELANETZ — However, there is, I think, a great difference between doing decor and being the author of an entire piece.

RAUSCHENBERG — Well, you do a bit more. When you make sure that all the cables are taped down and that the curtains are working and that the stage is locked, you've already done everything except get up the nerve to go out there . . .

KOSTELANETZ — . . . and put your name on it.

RAUSCHENBERG — It wasn't so hard to put your name on it as it was to actually be there on the stage yourself. The first piece I did, *Pelican*, I had no intention of being in; but since I didn't know much about actually making a dance, I used roller skates as a means to freedom from any kind of inhibitions that I would have. That already gives you limitations—puts you in a certain area that you must deal with.

KOSTELANETZ — This is an example of how your choice of physical ideas determines your possibilities.

RAUSCHENBERG — It was a using of the limitations of the material as a freedom that would eventually establish the form. I auditioned dancers for the piece; and to my surprise, I found that dancers who had skated when they were children, and some of them quite well, couldn't roller skate now because of their dance training. They froze, and it was very awkward. They needed a kind of abandon to actually do it. You see, in their thinking, dancers have a going dialogue between themselves and the floor, and I had put wheels between them and the floor. They couldn't hear the floor any more, and their muscles didn't know where they were.

KOSTELANETZ — [illegible] the piece or a unifying image?

RAUSCHENBERG — No, it was just a form of locomotion. There were other wheels in the dance too. It was just that once I established the fact that I was going to call the piece a dance and didn't want it to be a skating act, then somehow the other ingredients had to adjust to that; so that Carolyn Brown, who was not on skates, was dancing on points, which is just as arbitrary a way of moving. It would not have occurred to me—well, once I say it, it occurs to me and I think it could be done—that someone could have possibly *walked* in that piece. Like when you do a black-and-white painting, you just give up the idea of different colors, even though you could put colors in. But if your focus is on the black and white, then that's where you are.

KOSTELANETZ — Would you describe in detail, from start to finish, the piece I saw several times and am, therefore, most familiar with, *Map Room II* [1965].

RAUSCHENBERG — I began that piece by getting some materials to work with—again we have that business of limitations and possibilities. I just got a bunch of tires, not because I'm crazy about tires but because they are so available around here in New York, even on the street. I could be back here in fifteen minutes with five tires. If I were working in Europe, that wouldn't be the material. Very often people ask me about certain repeated images in both my painting and theatre. Now I may be fooling myself, but I think it can be traced to their availability. Take the umbrella . . .

KOSTELANETZ — . . . which appeared in your painting *Charlene* [1954] and elsewhere.

RAUSCHENBERG — After any rainy day, it is hard to walk by a garbage can that doesn't have a broken umbrella in it, and they are quite interesting. I found some springs around the corner. I was just putting stuff together—that's the way I work—to see what I could get out of it. I don't start off with any preconceived notion about content of the piece. If there is any thinking, it is more along the line of something happening which suggests something else. If I'm lucky, then the piece builds its own integrity.

KOSTELANETZ — Once you collect the stuff, what happens?

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RAUSCHENBERG — You just mess around. The springs, for example, made an interesting noise so I decided to amplify that.

KOSTELANETZ — And the tires?

RAUSCHENBERG — They can be walked in, they can be rolled in, you can roll over them, you can crawl through them. All these things are perfectly obvious. Perhaps tires even have uses that you haven't seen before. What I'm trying to avoid is the academic way of making a dance of theme and variation. I'm interested in exploring all the possibilities inherent in any particular object. If you don't have any preconceptions about moving, you've got to start somewhere. This is my way.

The reason that the piece is called *Map Room II* is because there was a *Map Room I* [1965] which was done at Goddard College. There was an old sofa on the stage there. I think I make theatre pieces very much the way I make a painting, which is that I simply have to put something into the space. The sofa already occupying part of the space gets to be a member of the cast.

KOSTELANETZ — What about the shaping of the other major theatrical element, which is time? How do you fill that?

RAUSCHENBERG — Most often my pieces are as long as they just naturally get to be from having worked on them that long. It's a funny thing, but I almost know my size right now and I really ought to do something about it. My pieces are about a half an hour, no matter what my attitude is. I should do a very long piece and a very short piece.

I tend to think of time, as we traditionally know it, as my weakest point, because I've had the least experience in considering it.

KOSTELANETZ — Certainly the most frequently heard criticism of *Map Room II* was that it was too slow.

RAUSCHENBERG — I don't mind that. I don't mind something being boring, because there are certain activities that can be interesting if they are done only so much. Take that business with the tires in *Map Room*, which I find interesting if it is done for about five minutes. But something else happens if it goes on for ten more minutes. It's a little like La Monte Young's thing [*The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*]. At some point, you admit that it isn't interesting any more, but you're still confronted by it. So what are you going to make out of it?

KOSTELANETZ — However, there is a difference between intentional boredom and inadvertent boredom. The first, if an artist does it, reveals that he knows precisely what kind of effect the boredom he creates will have upon people. La Monte is intentionally boring, because by playing the same chord at that amplitude he wants you to hear certain previously inaudible gradations.

RAUSCHENBERG — I'd like it if, even at the risk of being boring, there were an area of uninteresting activity where the spectator might behave uniquely. You see, I'm against the prepared consistent entertainment. Theatre does not have to be entertaining, just as pictures don't have to be beautiful.

KOSTELANETZ — Must theatre be interesting?

RAUSCHENBERG — Involving. Now, boredom is restlessness; your audience is not a familiar thing. It is made up of individual people who have all led different lives.

KOSTELANETZ — If I were to sit here and talk at, say, one-quarter of my normal speed, it would be inadvertently boring.

RAUSCHENBERG — Not necessarily.

KOSTELANETZ — Would you find it interesting?

RAUSCHENBERG — I might. I'd have to hear it. I've been with people who have speech problems. At first it made me quite nervous, later I found myself listening to it and being quite interested in just the physical contact; it can be a very dramatic thing. I've never deliberately thought about boring anyone; but I'm also interested in that kind of theatre activity that provides a minimum of guarantees. I have often been more interested in works I have found very boring than in other works that seem to be brilliantly done.

Some of Bob Morris' theatre pieces have had very little activity that goes on for a very long time. They were usually presented in mixed concerts; and I would find myself at the end of the evening being more moved by Bob's inactivity than I was by things that I was at the time more in awe of—skillful executions of extremely difficult movements.

KOSTELANETZ — What was it that made Morris' piece more memorable to you?

RAUSCHENBERG — I don't like the traditional idea of the audience — that they shouldn't assume as much responsibility as the entertainer does for making the evening interesting. I'm really quite unfriendly

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: Tomkins	Series.Folder: IV.C.59

about the artist having to assume the total responsibility for the function of the evening. I would like people to come home from work, wash up, and go to the theatre as an evening of taking their chances. I think it is more interesting for them. What I was doing at Morris' thing was just that.

KOSTELANETZ — I'm bothered about this juxtaposition of interesting and boring.

RAUSCHENBERG — Does it help you to think about a painting that isn't beautiful?

KOSTELANETZ — No, because that isn't necessarily contradictory. What you're doing, I think, is setting up an opposition to entertainment.

RAUSCHENBERG — I think that's it. I used the word *bored* to refer to someone who might look at a Barney Newman and say there ought to be more image there than a single vertical or two single verticals. If someone said that that was a boring picture, he was using the word in relation to a preconceived idea of what interesting might be. What I am saying is that I suspect there is a lot of work right now in theatre described as boring which is simply the awkward reorientation of the function of theatre and even the purpose of the audience. Just in the last few years we have made some drastic changes. Continuity in the works that I am talking about has been completely eliminated. It is usually different from performance to performance. There is no real dramatic continuity; the interaction tends to be a coincidence or an innovation for that particular moment.

KOSTELANETZ — What else is characteristic of mixed-means theatre?

RAUSCHENBERG — An absence of hierarchy—the fact that in a single piece by Yvonne Rainer you can hear both Rachmaninoff and sticks being pitched from the balcony without those two things making a comment on each other. In my pieces, for instance, there is nothing that everything is subservient to. I am trusting each element to sustain a work in time.

KOSTELANETZ — What meanings do these changes imply?

RAUSCHENBERG — All these ideas tend to point up the thought that it would be better for theatre if on the second night you went you found a different work there, even though it might be in the same place and have the same performers and deal with the same material.

I think all this is creating an extraordinary situation that is very new in theatre; so both the audience and the artist are still quite self-conscious about the state of things.

KOSTELANETZ — How do these attitudes relate to the composition of *Map Room II*?

RAUSCHENBERG — In beginning a theatre piece, the first information I need is where it is to be done and when. Where it is to be done has a lot to do with the shape it takes, with the kinds of activity. *Pelican* was done in a skating rink; if it were not to have been performed in a skating rink, I'm sure that it would not have been done on skates.

KOSTELANETZ — Once you heard it would be in a rink, you said, "Why not use roller skates?" That's the kind of association you make.

RAUSCHENBERG — Exactly. Then I will often use isolated things I just happen to think of, like putting flashlights on the back of a turtle in *Spring Training* [1965]—liking that for the idea of light being controlled by something literally live and the incongruity of having an animal actually assume that responsibility. That's a separate idea, and that is one way of working.

KOSTELANETZ — Wasn't there a piece that involved a dog coming out on the stage for a similar possibility of uncontrolled activity?

RAUSCHENBERG — Yes, I used a dog in a piece of Paul Taylor's. The presence of any kind of animal other than people draws one's attention to the fact that people are simply a different kind of creature.

KOSTELANETZ — Or the fact that a theatrical situation could contain other creatures aside from people. Hasn't Lassie always been heroic?

RAUSCHENBERG — That's because of Lassie's people-quality. I wouldn't be interested in using an animal that communicated with human beings on the level that human beings have taught them to communicate. Lassie is actually a human hero. She puts out fires, saves children, does her work on the farm. That's not my interest in using other kinds of animals. It is very hard to empathize with a turtle. Once you accept it as a turtle, it doesn't become a surrogate human being.

Separate kinds of images like the turtle with the flashlights more or less occur to me divorced from any particular program or piece, like the shoes in *Map Room II* that are cast in twelve inches of plastic. That was a completely separate image that came to me apparently out of the blue. I had Arman build those shoes, because he works in plastic. I simply told him what the idea was, and he made them for

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

me. That sort of involvement can happen at any time and then can simply be used in the next piece

KOSTELANETZ — If it occurred before you had to do the piece, it would be an image in your storehouse.

RAUSCHENBERG — The neon that I used in *Map Room II* came from a desire to use neon. I tend to work on such a short deadline that I can't do anything special, as I can when I'm working just for myself. Availability and expediency get to be determining elements in my theatre work.

KOSTELANETZ — Let me go back for a moment. A piece starts in your mind, once you are asked to do it. . . .

RAUSCHENBERG — What I want to know first is where. I carefully check all the architecture of the space. What permissions are granted physically because of where the audience sits, how many doors there are, where the doors are, if there are any windows. In *Map Room I*, there was a window on one side of the audience; I used it as a small stage. The piece, instead of beginning on the stage, began outside that window. It actually turned out quite beautifully, because it was pouring rain. A God-sent activity was actually working for the piece. It was a simple activity that was happening outside—a girl braiding her hair; by the time she finished, she was soaking wet. Then the rain picked up the light very beautifully, so that she was illuminated and it also put a particular stain on an otherwise perfectly natural and obvious activity.

KOSTELANETZ — Although you weren't in full control of the situation, you didn't mind the accident.

RAUSCHENBERG — I don't want to be in full control. In fact, a lot of the obstacles I bring in function to make sure that I'm not in full control I very rarely tell my people exactly what to do. What my pieces tend to be are vehicles for events of a particular nature that can embody and use the personalities and abilities of the performers. Still, I have never been particularly interested in improvisation, because trusted to improvise, people very rarely move out of their own particular clichés and habits. Or, if they do, they are using their own pre-manufactured disguises of those habits.

KOSTELANETZ — Then what you are doing is writing a program, almost, for your materials, which include your props, your people, and your space. How specific is your program?

RAUSCHENBERG — In *Map Room II*, the first thing I thought of was the use of a confined small stage within a traditional stage. I turned it down and used the area in front of the curtain as something different from behind the curtain, so that I created two different architectural space situations within one piece, although the entire stage was small. Also, the space of the piece went out into the audience; for while we were onstage with the words making sentences at random, Trisha Brown was down below passing out large white cards to the audience for them to put on their backs. Part of the audience would later become a movie screen.

KOSTELANETZ — How carefully did you program Trisha Brown's activity—that she would come before the audience and pass out cards?

RAUSCHENBERG — My instructions to her didn't go any further than telling her exactly what her job was. I gave her a task and an attitude.

KOSTELANETZ — Did you give her a time?

RAUSCHENBERG — No, however long she needed. I said that she should wait until the lights came up on us and we were settled. Any time after that she felt ready to go, she should just start, trusting her own sense of timing to accomplish the most natural organic relationship to "time." She actually cued us, for when she was through we were through.

KOSTELANETZ — So she improvised the dimension of time . . .

RAUSCHENBERG — . . . using only practical considerations, rather than aesthetic ones. It would have been out of the question for her to prolong her scene. Somehow her activity had to relate to accomplishing a particular job. I gave her an attitude, asking her to be gracious but not patronizing, possibly using the attitude of, say, a nurse's aide or an airline hostess.

KOSTELANETZ — How specific was your programing of the sequences?

RAUSCHENBERG — The sequences were determined by a very practical consideration. I had only five people to work with; if I had picked three, say, then it would have been different. But it turned out I had five. The people in the front passing cards had to get offstage, and there was a costume change involved for Deborah Hay. There had to be an activity there to allow Deborah to get into the costume that had the live birds. I didn't have to change clothes as quickly; so I would

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

have to be the one to bridge that time lapse there. So I figured out the activity I would do— that would be the wiping of the mirror-screen that had images projected on it. Since the screen was dirty, it at first seemed to have no image, but as I wiped it one began to appear—Mount Rushmore tilted vertically. I liked the paradox that the more you wiped, the clearer the image got; whereas in painting the reverse tends to be true. That was for my own personal entertainment. I continued my activity until Deborah was ready.

KOSTELANETZ — Which then became the cue for you to stop. Why did you tilt that image of Mount Rushmore sideways?

RAUSCHENBERG — That's the way it fit on the mirror. Also it postponed the legibility a few moments longer. If that had been a totem pole it would have been right side up.

KOSTELANETZ — So then your script consists of tasks and cues. That's the way you outline your sequences, so to speak.

RAUSCHENBERG — My main problem in constructing a program of a piece is how to get something started and how to get it stopped without drawing particular attention to one event over another.

KOSTELANETZ — However, isn't this an aesthetic bias, as is your preference that the piece should have no climax?

RAUSCHENBERG — The shape that it takes should simply be one of duration.

KOSTELANETZ — And space.

RAUSCHENBERG — Space is a necessary consideration and one of the contributing factors to actually determining the content. If I took any one of my pieces and did it again someplace else, then I'd have to decide what to adjust to the new environment and what to build.

KOSTELANETZ — If presented in a new environment, does a theatre piece of yours radically change?

RAUSCHENBERG — It can be. New elements come in. In *Map Room I*, there was a trap door on the stage, and it was a very small stage. The space was filled horizontally very quickly; so I started working vertically. I defined another space, from the trapdoor to the roof. Now, when I re-did the piece, there was no trapdoor on the new stage, so that whole area of activity had to be eliminated from *Map Room II*.

KOSTELANETZ — Did the piece lose or gain?

RAUSCHENBERG — It changed only. Gaining or losing is a critical evaluation, and I stay out of that area.

KOSTELANETZ — Was its old form recognizable in the new setting?

RAUSCHENBERG — It might have looked more like a different piece than the same piece. Probably the tone of the piece would still be there; but from *Map Room I* to *Map Room II*, which are the same piece, there was such change that I thought the latter warranted being called number two—only two elements out of, say, ten were in both.

KOSTELANETZ — In *Map Room II*, your activity of wiping the mirror ended once Deborah Hay had her costume on; then she came onstage with a cage around her waist, almost like a tire. In that cage were three doves.

RAUSCHENBERG — I used doves not for any symbolic reason but because that's about the biggest bird that the amount of space would permit. It was going to be pigeons, but pigeons are bigger than doves. I was toying with a whole other kind of image that turned up in *Linoleum*, a piece I made after that, where I used chickens, which are big available birds.

In each case, I wanted the actual object of the bird, rather than just bird-like activity. I liked the combination of two independent elements being forced to operate as a single image. Actually, in *Map Room II*, the first idea was that Deborah's costume should be something edible for the birds, such as corn or bread, but that turned out to be an impractical way to think, since birds that are put temporarily into a new environment aren't going to eat.

KOSTELANETZ — Was the idea to combine two images in one figure so that neither one could dominate the other?

RAUSCHENBERG — Yes. It was a kind of combined coexistence to make a single image.

The new element became Trisha moving across the stage inside the tire with her bottom side showing. In fact, her body was as abstract a form as the tire. She was actually sitting in the tire and protruding, so that her outside shape remained the tire (or a black circle) obscured by some enormous tongue. The tire actually shielded her method of moving. I have photographs of it, and I find it hard to recognize it as a human body. Her method of moving was actually determined by her position—how you can move and what sorts of things you can do. I didn't want the audience to be involved with who it was that was in

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: Tomkins	Series.Folder: IV.C.59

the tire and what the person looked like. What I wanted was the most abstract image at that particular moment.

That was followed by the two men with their feet in the tires, Steve Paxton and Alex Hay, who were somehow moving with the attitude that feet had the ability to roll.

KOSTELANETZ — However, at first they walked in a more or less normal fashion, as though they had on shoes with curved bottoms.

RAUSCHENBERG — But later they did actual forward rolls, letting the tire be their major contact with the ground as they rolled forward. Then they put both feet in the hole of the same tire and walked, turning the tire as they went.

KOSTELANETZ — Then they put four tires in a row, slid into the casket perpendicular to the tires, and rolled like a truck axle across the floor. Were these images intended as a series of variations on the theme of man and his tires?

RAUSCHENBERG — Not necessarily. They are variations in the sense that different uses are put to the same material, but not variations in the sense of establishing a theme. Tires were not the theme. Actually, movement was the theme, with the restriction of tires.

At the same time that this was going on, a flesh-colored sofa was moved onstage. It had its own light which made it an independent entity. Deborah Hay, dressed in a flesh-colored leotard, had the following simple direction: Move from position to position on the couch, always considering the couch as part of your image. Never once did she just stand up and be a person standing on a couch.

KOSTELANETZ — She always blended into the lines of the couch.

RAUSCHENBERG — The image wasn't couch and wasn't person.

It is very difficult for me to describe these things this way and to describe the working process, because I just try things. I actually work by eye.

KOSTELANETZ — You do have a method, though, and you are conscious of it, although you may not be conscious of it at the time you are working.

RAUSCHENBERG — Actually, anything I tell you about it you could probably get out of the work, if you had seen a number of pieces.

KOSTELANETZ — I think you will find, as I have, that the creators of mixed-means theatre are better able to talk about their work than the people who see it, regardless of how experienced they are, because the authors are more precisely aware of the new language of the new theatre. Take the sequence you have just described to me — Deborah Hay on the couch. I have seen it several times, and I could not have described it as satisfactorily as you did. Now that I've heard your interpretation I do not think I would want to describe it any other way. This may stem from my own inability to perceive your kind of preoccupations, and I doubt if I'm alone in this respect. We all lack an education in the new theatre. If you asked a drama critic what happened here, he might say it was a boring scene in which a girl did a series of headstands on a couch, because that is all his intellectual and perceptual equipment prepared him to see.

RAUSCHENBERG — His secondary interest might be whether she was a pretty girl or not and how much or how little she was wearing. My interest was that she was costumed in a color that most closely matched the couch so that integration would happen as easily as possible—so that there would be as little separation as possible between her activity and the natural construction of the couch.

KOSTELANETZ — While she was performing on the couch, the film came on, a travelogue which was projected upon the large white cards which Trisha Brown had asked the audience to hang from the back of their necks . . .

RAUSCHENBERG — . . . using the audience as a screen so that at that point it was divided. The audience had two functions: Part of it had an active role in the production, as opposed to being separated from the activity we had on the stage, while the rest were the observers of the movie.

KOSTELANETZ — It also further split our focus, because we weren't quite sure where we were supposed to look.

RAUSCHENBERG — In most cases, my interest is in acknowledging the fact that man is able to function on many different levels simultaneously. I think our minds are designed for that, and our senses certainly are. We can be sitting here, and our noses can tell us that something is burning in the kitchen; yet intellectually for hundreds of years the idea of uninterrupted concentration has been considered the most serious attitude to have in order to use our intelligence.

I think when we are relaxed, all these things happen naturally. But there's a prejudice that has been built up around the ideas of seriousness and specialization. That's why I'm no more interested in giving

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

up painting than continuing painting or vice versa. I don't find these things in competition with each other. If we are to get the most out of any given time, it is because we have applied ourselves as broadly as possible, I think, not because we have applied ourselves as single-mindedly as possible.

KOSTELANETZ — Do you have a moral objection, then, to those dimensions of life that force us to be more specialized than we should be?

RAUSCHENBERG — Probably. If we can observe the way things happen in nature, we see that nearly nothing in our lives turns out the way that, if it were up to us to plan it, it should. There is always the business, for instance, that if you're going on a picnic, it is just as apt to rain as not. Or the weather turns cold when you want to go swimming.

KOSTELANETZ — So then you find a direct formal equation between your theatre and your life?

RAUSCHENBERG — I hope so, between working and living, because those are our media.

KOSTELANETZ — You would believe, then, that if we became accustomed to this chancier kind of theatre, we would become accustomed to the chancier nature of our own life.

RAUSCHENBERG — I think we are most accustomed to it in life. Why should art be the exception to this? You asked if I had a moral objection. I do, because I think we have this capacity I'm talking about. You find, for example, that an extremely squeamish person can perform fantastic deeds in an emergency. If the laws have a positive function, if they could have, it might be just that—to force someone to behave in a way they have not behaved before, using the faculties he was actually born with. Growing up in a world where multiple distractions are the only constant, he would be able to cope with new situations. But, what I found happening to people in the Navy was that once they were out of service and out of these extraordinary situations, they reverted to the same kind of thinking as before. I think it is an exceptional person who uses that experience. That's because, in most cases, the service is not a chosen environment; it is somebody else's life that they're functioning in, instead of recognizing the fact that it is still just them and the things they are surrounded by. The Navy is a continuation of extraordinary situations. We begin by not having any say over who our parents are; our parents have no control over the particular peculiar mixture of the genes.

KOSTELANETZ — Let us return to the scenes of the piece. The film is going, and Deborah Hay is visually fused to the couch. . . .

RAUSCHENBERG — Then there is the neon. When I went to get several pieces of neon, I discovered a Tessler Coil that is used to make sure there is no leakage in a neon tube and that it is the right color. When you touch the coil to any place on the tube, it activates the gases inside. I asked what would happen if instead of touching the coil directly to the tube I used my body as a conductor, by holding the coil in one hand, the tube in the other. I was told that I could if I grabbed it very quickly, but it would knock the hell out of me if I hesitated. It took a little doing always to grab it firmly, because one has fear in control of his muscles too. It's like being on a high diving board, you know—though you want to dive off so much, you don't do it. It's that kind of thing. .

KOSTELANETZ — It was easier when we were younger.

RAUSCHENBERG — Because we didn't have so much fear; we hadn't heard so many stories about what could happen. It's like the caution that happened to the trained dancer's body on the roller skates. Skating is the most natural thing a child can do; but to do it seriously as an adult is very hard.

KOSTELANETZ — At this point, you took the plastic glass shoes out of your storehouse.

RAUSCHENBERG — I had them anyway, knowing that I would use them someplace in a piece. The clear plastic with the neon showing through it must have been interesting because you could see between the foot and floor, even though I was just walking.

KOSTELANETZ — It was a very beautiful image; and because of its beauty and originality, it tended to dominate—to be the most memorable image or the pinnacle of the hierarchy. Was its dominance a defect?

RAUSCHENBERG — It was more a defect to have that activity happen at the end of the piece; but before that point in the piece, I had been very busy. If I did that piece again, the order would be rearranged. At the time the audience first saw it, that piece had never been performed in its entirety, not even in a rehearsal. We had some idea of what to do. I'm not against a rehearsal, but I have a tendency to keep making

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

changes up to the last minute and I tend to work with people I can trust enough. We all knew that evening that [illegible] thing for the first time; I like that psychologically.

KOSTELANETZ — Were all subsequent performances exactly the same?

RAUSCHENBERG — The first evening it felt just a little too rough. Everyone had trouble getting in and getting out—functional problems. Even then I had a slip of paper with me; and I would go offstage to see what happened next. As I'm the author, you could imagine how the cast felt. That second evening I sensed that the whole thing just sort of died right in front of everybody. So, the third evening I said let's speed the whole thing up; I don't care if we finish in fifteen minutes. Let's get on, do what we have to do, and get out. That would, I thought, tighten things up. My idea of the sequential arrangement is not just to string some activities along, like you're making beads or taking a trip; but when you have three things happen, you should convey the individuality of each of these events separately plus the interaction which happens because of their coexistence. What had happened was that everything had been stretched so that it became a linear piece as opposed to . . .

KOSTELANETZ — . . . an overlapping line, like a "Slinky" or a chain with interlocking loops.

RAUSCHENBERG — Right.

KOSTELANETZ — Looking back over your involvement with theatre, do you see any kind of development, aside from the obvious development that you have now become the author of your own theatre pieces, rather than a contributor to somebody else's? Also, do you see any development in your company of more or less regular performers?

RAUSCHENBERG — Well, that last is mostly a social thing of people with a common interest, and we have tended to make ourselves available as material to each other. It is in no way an organized company, and it changes from time to time—people move in and out. However, where a play could be cast with different actors and you would still get the same play, if I was not in constant touch with these people, I could not do these pieces. The whole concept would have to be changed if I had new performers—if I let Doris Day take Mary Martin's part in a musical or used the Cincinnati Philharmonic rather than the New York Philharmonic.

KOSTELANETZ — You write for these performers, and they have learned to respond to the particular language of your instructions.

RAUSCHENBERG — It goes beyond interpretation or following directions. From the outset, their responsibility, in the sense of collaboration, is part of the actual form and content and appearance of the piece. It makes them stockholders in the event itself, rather than simply performers.

KOSTELANETZ — This company includes, roughly, Alex and Deborah Hay, respectively a painter and a dancer; Lucinda Childs, a dancer; Steve Paxton, a dancer. . . .

RAUSCHENBERG — We have worked a lot with Yvonne Rainer and Bob Morris and Trisha Brown. In my new piece [*Linoleum*] I used Bob Breer's sculptures. At the time that I premiered the piece in Washington, I used the son and daughter of the people I was staying with. When I did the piece for Educational Television, Bob Breer delivered the sculptures to the studio; and since I needed another person, Bob Breer immediately became part of the performing group. It's not a company or a group in the sense of the dancers who work with Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, or José Limón; it's informal.

KOSTELANETZ — Let's return to that question of development.

RAUSCHENBERG — In *Map Room II*, a couple of the people involved said that they had now gotten some kind of feeling about what I was after. Because this is my fourth or fifth piece and these people, if they weren't in them, had seen them all, then I think there is a body of work. If someone is working with an unfamiliar kind of image and if you see only one piece, it looks like a lot of things that it isn't and a lot of things that it is; but you don't really understand the direction. If you see five of his pieces you're more apt to see what he's doing. It's like signposts: You need a few to know that you are really on the right road.

KOSTELANETZ — Do you feel stronger and more confident now in approaching a theatre piece?

RAUSCHENBERG — Confidence is something that I don't feel very often, because I tend to eliminate the things I was sure about. I cannot help but wonder what would happen if you didn't do that and if you did this. You recognize the weaknesses in *Map Room II*, for instance, that weakness of the neon thing coming last. *Linoleum* is probably

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: Tomkins	Series.Folder: IV.C.59

one of the most tedious works I've ever done, the most unclimactic [illegible] you simply move from it with [illegible] and live through it. At a certain point it's over.

KOSTELANETZ — One of the myths of modern culture—I associate it particularly with Lewis Mumford's *Art and Technics* [1952]— is that art and technology are eternally opposed to each other and that one succeeds only at the decline of the other.

RAUSCHENBERG — I think that's a dated concept. We now are living in a culture that won't operate and grow that way. Science and art — these things do clearly exist at the same time, and both are very valuable. We are just realizing that we have lost a lot of energy in always insisting on the conflict—in posing one of these things against the other.

KOSTELANETZ — It seems to me that technology has had a huge impact upon modern art—the creation of new paints, the impact of media—all of which has never been fully explored.

RAUSCHENBERG — You can't move without encountering technology. Just think of what it would be like to go out into the field and pick your supper; now we have it deep-frozen in our kitchen after it was gathered from all over the world. It is only habits in thinking that have tended to make us callous to our actual surroundings.

KOSTELANETZ — How do you look upon working with technicians — as a division of labor, as a division of mentality?

RAUSCHENBERG — I've never questioned paints, since I've never ground my own pigments or mined for the chemicals that made them. I assume a certain amount of information in a tube of red paint. I think that one works with information as though it were a material. I think that somehow it is richer if you are in a live collaboration with the material; that's our relationship to the engineers.

KOSTELANETZ — In contrast to nearly all contemporary artists, you did not need to find your own style by first painting through several established styles—by taking them as your transient models. From the start, you were, as we say, an original.

RAUSCHENBERG — I always had enormous respect for other people's work, but I deliberately avoided using other people's styles, even though I know that no one owns any particular technique or attitude. It seemed to me that it was more valuable to think that the world was big enough so that everyone doesn't have to be on everyone else's feet.

When you go to make something, nothing should be clearer than the fact that not only do you not have to make it but that it could [illegible] and then you get involved with your own limitations.

KOSTELANETZ — As an artist, do you feel in any sense alienated from America today or do you feel that you are part of a whole world in which you are living.

RAUSCHENBERG — I feel a conscious attempt to be more and more related to society. That's what's important to me as a person. I'm not going to let other people make all the changes; and if you do that, you can't cut yourself off.

This very quickly gets to sound patriotic and pompous and pious; but I really mean it very personally. I'm only against the most obvious things, like wars and stuff like that. I don't have any particular concept about a utopian way things should be. If I have a prejudice or a bias, it is that there shouldn't be any particular way. Being a complex human organ, we are capable of many different things; we can do so much. The big fear is that we don't do enough with our senses, with our activities, with our areas of consideration; and these have got to get bigger year after year.

KOSTELANETZ — Could that be what the new theatre is about? Is there a kind of educational purpose now—to make us more responsive to our environment?

RAUSCHENBERG — I can only speak for myself. Today there may be eleven artists; yesterday there were ten; two days ago there were nine. Everybody has their own reason for being involved in it, but I must say that this is one of the things that interests me the most. I think that one of my chief struggles now is to make something that can be as changeable and varied and alive as the audience. I don't want to do works where one has to impose liveliness or plastic flexibility or change, but a work where change would be dealt with literally. It's very possible that my interest in theatre, which now is so consuming, may be the most primitive way of accomplishing this, and I may just be working already with what I would like to make.

KOSTELANETZ — How will our lives—our ideas and our responses—be different after continued exposure to the new theatre?

RAUSCHENBERG — What's exciting is that we don't know. There is no anticipated result; but we will be changed.

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

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Richard Kostelanetz

A CONVERSATION WITH ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

INTERVIEWER: In high school you had a reputation as a person who could draw or at least do certain kinds of drawings.

RAUSCHENBERG: I never thought of it as much of an ability. I thought everybody could do it a little bit. Some people could draw a little better than other people, but I never took drawing or painting any more seriously than that.

Later, [Josef] Albers told me I couldn't draw — that my whole childhood was wasted. I had an awful time pleasing him. I was too messy for collage, and I was too heavy-handed in my drawings.

INTERVIEWER: He would like open spaces and thin lines.

RAUSCHENBERG: The Matisse kind of thing.

He would teach a course in form, which he gives year after year, refining it more and more, and a course in the performances of color — a really clinical method. We worked in drawing from the same model week after week. Once a week or once every two weeks, someone in the class at Black Mountain would pose for us. Then, he would talk about the valleys and the mountains and things like that about the figure. Other than that, it was an aluminum pitcher — a shiny volume without a straight line and you couldn't do any shading. It is really the outside and inside that you got to say. You do it with

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: Although painting is Robert Rauschenberg's dominant interest, throughout his career he has kept an informal connection with theater. Back in the summer of 1952, at Black Mountain College, he participated in John Cage's "prehistoric" happening, an untitled event that established an American precedent for subsequent theater of mixed means. From 1955 to 1965 he designed sets and costumes, as well as controlling the lighting, for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company; and in the early sixties he collaborated in theater pieces by Yvonne Rainer and Kenneth Koch. *Pelican* (1963) was his own first piece; and when he all but abandoned painting in 1965, he initiated a series of mixed-means theatrical works—among them *Spring Training* (1965), *Map Room I* (1965), *Map Room II* (1965), *Linoleum* (1966) and *Open Score* (1966) for the New York Theater and Engineering Festival.

Mr. Rauschenberg was born in 1925, in Port Arthur, Texas.

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

one line, and you can't do any erasing. You feel that there is air on this side of the line and on the other side of the line is the form. In watercolor, we had it again — one model we used month after month; and it was a terra-cotta flowerpot.

I figured out, at least in the watercoloring classes, that what he really had in mind was something like Cézanne. I found Albers so intimidating that after six months of this, during the first year, my whole focus was simply to try to do something that would please him. I didn't care what I got out of class. All I wanted to do was one day walk in there and show him something and hear him say, "That's pretty good."

INTERVIEWER: I have noticed that you wish to avoid historical interpretations of yourself. In general would you prefer not to say that someone influenced you?

RAUSCHENBERG: No, I've been influenced by painting, very much; but if I have avoided saying that, it was because of the general inclination, until very recently, to believe that art exists in art. At every opportunity, I've tried to correct that idea, suggesting that art is only a part — one of the elements that we live with. I think that a person like Leonardo da Vinci had not a technique or a style in common with other artists but a kind of curiosity about life that enabled him to change his medium so easily and so successfully. I really think he was concerned with the human body when he did his anatomical work. His personal curiosity, apart from any art idea, led him to investigate how a horse's leg works so that he could do a sculpture of it.

Being a painter, I probably take painting more seriously than someone who drives a truck or something. Being a painter, I probably also take his truck more seriously.

INTERVIEWER: In what sense?

RAUSCHENBERG: In the senses of looking at it and listening to it and comparing it to other trucks and having a sense of its relationship to the road and the sidewalk and the things around it and the driver himself. Observation and measure are my business.

I think historians have tended to draw too heavily upon the idea that in art there is development. I think you can see similarities in anything and anything by generalities and warp.

INTERVIEWER: They are concerned with identifying influence and, thereby, continuities.

RAUSCHENBERG: There's another thing. Now we have so much information. A painter a hundred or two hundred years ago knew very little about what was going on in painting in any other place except with his immediate friends or some outstanding event. It wasn't natural

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

for him also to take into consideration cave painting and fold it into his own sense of the present.

I think, if you want to make a generalization, there are probably two kinds of artists. One kind works independently, following his own drives and instincts; the work becomes a product, or the witness, or the evidence of his own personal involvement and curiosity. It's almost as if art, in painting and music and stuff, is the leftover of some activity. The activity is the thing that I'm most interested in. Nearly everything that I've done was to see what would happen if I did this instead of that.

INTERVIEWER: You would believe then that art is not a temple to which you apprentice yourself for future success.

RAUSCHENBERG: It's like outside focus and inside focus. A lot of painters use a studio to isolate themselves; I prefer to free and expose myself. If I painted in this room — the stove is here and all those dishes are there — my sensitivity would always take into consideration that the woodwork is brown, that the dishes are this size, that the stove is here. I've tended always to have a studio that was either too big to be influenced by detail or neutral enough so that there wasn't an overwhelming specific influence, because I work very hard to be acted on by as many things as I can. That's what I call being awake.

INTERVIEWER: People are enormously impressed by the variety of your work. How do you look upon your past work as a painter — as an evolution, or merely a succession of islands upon which you've put your foot?

RAUSCHENBERG: Looking back, I can see certain things growing, as well as a slackening of interest in another area because I am familiar enough with it. So far, I've been lucky enough always to discover that there's always been a new curiosity that is also feeding and building while I'm doing something else. I can figure out some logical reasons when I look back far enough, but I never do when I'm making the work.

INTERVIEWER: Let me take a particular example that interests me — say, the White Paintings [1952]. Here you have created what, if you believe in linear notions of art history, is a dead end. Did you look upon it as a gesture toward a dead end?

RAUSCHENBERG: No. It just seemed like something interesting to do. I was aware of the fact that it was an extreme position; but I really wanted to see for myself whether there would be anything to look at. I did not do it as an extreme logical gesture.

INTERVIEWER: But wasn't there an idea there — not a notion derived from art history but of a simple experiment, which was to see if a painting could incorporate transient images from outside itself? There-

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

fore, once you discovered the result of that idea, then you could go on to another.

RAUSCHENBERG: You could speculate whether it would be interesting or not; but you could waste years arguing. All I had to do was make one and ask, "Do I like that?" "Is there anything to say there?" "Does that thing have any presence?" "Does it really matter that it looks bluer now, because it is late afternoon? Earlier this morning it looked quite white." "Is that an interesting experience to have?" To me, the answer was yes. No one has ever bought one; but those paintings are still very full to me. I think of them as anything but a way-out gesture. A gesture implies the denial of the existence of the actual object. If it had been that, I wouldn't have had to have done them. Otherwise it would only be an idea.

INTERVIEWER: Claes Oldenburg said that he has a dream that someday he would call all his things back, that they had not really gone away.

RAUSCHENBERG: I have another funny feeling that in working with a canvas, say, and with something you picked up off the street and you work on it for three or four days or maybe a couple of weeks and then, all of a sudden, it is in another situation. Much later, you go to see somebody in California, and there it is. You know that you know everything about that painting, so much more than anybody else in that room. You know where you ran out of nails.

INTERVIEWER: You can look at it then as a kind of personal history.

RAUSCHENBERG: It's not like publishing, for each one is an extremely unique piece, even if it is in a series. I like to look at an old work and discover that is where I first did a certain thing, which may be something I may just happen to be doing now. At the time I did that earlier piece, I didn't know it was the lower right-hand corner that had the new element — that that part would grow and that other parts would relate more to the past.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever started something that you couldn't finish?

RAUSCHENBERG: Yes, but I really try hard not to. I work very hard to finish everything. One of the most problematic pictures I ever made was something I was doing for a painters' picture series in a magazine. I had started the radio sculpture thing, which became *Oracle* [1965]. My mind was more in sculpture or objects free of the wall. I found I was uncomfortable from the new difficulties metal afforded, because I really didn't know what to do with it. So I figured that if I was to be scrutinized, I'd do a painting instead. I said I'd do it, and I try to do what I say I will do. That painting went through so many awkward changes, unnecessarily. It was large, it was free-standing. Then I put

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

it against the wall, then I finally sawed it in half and made two paintings out of it. I wrecked one of them.

I didn't know what to do when Rudy Burckhardt came up and said, "How far did you get today? Can I take the picture tomorrow? Why did you do that? What do you have on your mind?" It just didn't work out. I knew I was compromising at the time; and when the article went in, I insisted that they photograph what I was not doing too. If those things are going to mean anything, they somehow ought to be the truth. In those days, it seemed like that would be your only chance for the next twenty years to get your picture reproduced in color. Now I have this lousy painting.

INTERVIEWER: In looking at your career, critics customarily tote up all the forms you have used: blueprint paper, white painting, black painting, collage, assemblage . . .

RAUSCHENBERG: I call those things "combines," because it was before the museum show of assemblages. Earlier I had this problem with the paintings that would be free-standing — not against the wall. I didn't think of them as sculpture. I actually made them as a realistic objection; it was unnatural for these to be hung on a wall. So when the sculptural or collage elements got so three-dimensional, then the most natural thing in the world was to put wheels on it and put it out into the middle of the room. That gave two more sets of surfaces to work on. It was an economical thing. I think I've been very practical. Sometimes the underneath surface is also a painting surface, because that would be viewed. In that one there is a mirror on the side so that you can see what is underneath there without bending down, or you're invited to.

I thought of them as paintings, but what to call them — painting or sculpture — got for some people to be a very interesting point, which I did not find interesting at all. Almost as a joke I thought I'd call them something, as Calder was supposed to have done with "mobiles," and it worked beautifully. Once I called them "combines," people were confronted with the work itself, not what it wasn't. Sometimes you can choke on these things; people have called my drawings "combine drawings." The word does really have a use — it's a free-standing picture.

INTERVIEWER: Just in passing, let me say there is one work of yours I can't deduce. That is the set *Factum I* and *II* [1957].

RAUSCHENBERG: There I was interested in the role that accident played in my work; so I did two paintings as much alike as they could be alike, using identical materials — as much as they could be alike without getting scientific about it. Although I was imitating on one paint-

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

ing what I had on the other, neither one of these paintings was an imitation of the other, because I would work as long as I could on one painting and then, not knowing what to do next, move over to the other. I wanted to see how different, and in what way, would be two paintings that looked that much alike.

INTERVIEWER: How, then, did some critics consider this a comment on action painting?

RAUSCHENBERG: I think Tom Hess said that. Again, you see, if you do anything where an idea shows up, particularly in those years when an act of painting was considered pure self-expression, then it was assumed that the painting was a personal expressionistic extension of the man. The climate isn't like that now. We've had a history of painting here now, and I think it's unfortunately getting to be a lot like Europe. We have enough reserve work so that it is very easy for a tradition to exist here which also includes any new ideas, which are immediately tacked onto where we were yesterday.

INTERVIEWER: A painting is pushed into historical perspective before it has become history, as well as critically classified before it is perceived.

RAUSCHENBERG: I would like to see a lot more stuff that I didn't know what to do with.

INTERVIEWER: In several earlier statements, you said that your paintings were not the result of ideas. What you've said now, however, suggests that they stem from a certain kind of idea.

RAUSCHENBERG: I think the ideas are based upon very obvious physical facts — notions that are also simpleminded, such as, in the White Paintings, wanting to know if that was a thing to do or not, or in *Factum*, wondering about what the role of accident is. Those aren't really very involved ideas.

INTERVIEWER: That is different from the idea, say, of doing a painting about war, or the idea of realizing a premeditated form.

RAUSCHENBERG: They are more physical than aesthetic.

INTERVIEWER: Rather than posing a thesis, you are asking a question and then doing some artistic experiment to answer it or to contribute to an answer.

RAUSCHENBERG: But I do it selfishly. I want to know.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of idea, if you can remember, was present in, say, *Monogram* [1959], which contains a stuffed Angora goat?

RAUSCHENBERG: I have always worked with stuffed animals, and before that, stuffed baseballs — and other objects. But a goat was special in the way that a stuffed goat is special, and I wanted to see if I could integrate an animal or an object as exotic as that. I've always been more attracted to familiar or ordinary things, because I find them a

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

lot more mysterious. The exotic has a tendency to be immediately strange. With common or familiar objects, you are a lot freer; they take my thoughts a lot further. Not only for content was the goat a difficult object to work with, but also because Angora goats are beautiful animals anyway. I did three versions of that painting. For the first one, it was still on the wall; I got him up there safely attached to the flat surface. To make him appear light — and this is the way my mind tends to work — I put light-bulbs under him, which erased the shadow of the enormous shelf that supported him. When I finished it, I was happy with it for about four days; but it kept bothering me that the goat's other side was not exposed; that it was wasted. I was abusing the material. So, I did a piece where he was free-standing on a narrow seven-foot canvas that was attached to the base that he was on. I couldn't have him facing the canvas, because it looked like some kind of still life, like oranges in the bowl. So I had him turned around, which gave me another image which didn't occur to me until, this time, only two days after I had finished it — a kind of beast and vehicle. It looked as though he had some responsibility for supporting the upright canvas or that pulling a canvas or cart was his job. So, the last solution stuck, which was simply to put him right in the middle — to make an environment with him simply being present in it.

INTERVIEWER: How dominant is he?

RAUSCHENBERG: He is dominant but I wouldn't worry about that as much as how dependent is everything else on him. I think that the painted surface and the other objects were equally interesting, once you see what the goat is doing there.

INTERVIEWER: But doesn't this presume that you forget about the goat to a certain extent?

RAUSCHENBERG: You forget about how arbitrary a goat is in the picture; that was never the point. It was one of many challenges, but it wasn't a function of the work to exhibit an exotic animal interestingly. Also, the tire around the goat brings him back into the canvas and keeps him from being an object in himself. You don't say, "What is that goat doing in that painting?" but "Why the tire around the goat?" And you're already involved.

INTERVIEWER: This, like so much of your other work, reflects a decided interest in working with unusual and challenging materials. What was your painting *Pantomime* [1961] about?

RAUSCHENBERG: I thought of it as making a surface which would invite one to move in closer; and when you move in closer, you discover it has two electric fans which then join you. I thought of it as kind of an air relief. Any physical situation is an influence on not only how

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

you see and if you look but also what you think when you see it. I just knew that if you were standing in a strong breeze, which was part of the painting, that something different would happen. If I did make a point, it is that even the air around you is an influence.

INTERVIEWER: It's a way of saying to the spectator that the Metropolitan Museum right now, with all the pollen in the air, is a lot different from midwinter.

RAUSCHENBERG: Also, looking at pictures from one place to another, and also from one season to another, makes them different. That's why, then, the business about masterpieces and standards is all archaic.

INTERVIEWER: The notion of masterpieces presumes that if someone puts the *Mona Lisa* in a stuffy New York museum and you have to push your way through a large obnoxious crowd to see it, you should still be greatly impressed.

RAUSCHENBERG: Put it in the Greenwich Village outdoor show and see what happens. Put it in the Louvre and send it in with an armed guard, and people will see it. I like the idea of that kind of dramatic carrying-on, for that's part of our time too.

INTERVIEWER: Now that you have become so involved with theater, have you given up painting?

RAUSCHENBERG: No. That was a mistaken rumor. Giving up painting is all part of that historical thing.

INTERVIEWER: Will you be able to work on a painting while you are doing theater work?

RAUSCHENBERG: Absolutely, I always did that. You see, it sounds interesting for the painter to give up painting.

INTERVIEWER: It's the myth of Duchamp. Actually, I was thinking more of Claes Oldenburg's statement that when he did a theater piece he temporarily gave up painting.

RAUSCHENBERG: The last year before I went away with Merce [Cunningham] when I was doing a lot of theater [1963-64], I did more painting than I ever had before. If you're working on something, it seems to me that the more you work the more you see, the more you think; it just builds up.

INTERVIEWER: You would prefer, then, a more varied regime than a single setup.

RAUSCHENBERG: Absolutely. I find that when I'm working on paintings, I can do drawings I like very much, although I am forced to adjust to flat surface and a different scale.

INTERVIEWER: How did you become involved with theater?

RAUSCHENBERG: I've always been interested, even back in high school. I like the liveness of it — that awful feeling of being on the spot. I

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

must assume the responsibility for that moment, for those actions that happen at that particular time.

I don't find theater that different from painting, and it's not that I think of painting as theater or vice versa. I tend to think of working as a kind of involvement with materials, as well as a rather focused interest which changes.

INTERVIEWER: How did you become the author of your own theater pieces?

RAUSCHENBERG: That skating piece, *Pelican* [1963], was my first piece. The more I was around Merce's group and that kind of activity, I realized that painting didn't put me on the spot as much, or not in the same way, so at a certain point I had to do it.

In some places, like London where [in 1964] the group was held over for six to eight weeks, and we did the piece of Merce's called *Story* three or four times a week, well then it was very difficult to do a completely different thing every night. A couple of times we were in such sterile situations that Alex Hay, my assistant, and I would actually have to be part of the set. The first time it happened was in Dartington, that school in Devon. The place was inhabited by a very familiar look — that Black Mountain beatnik kind of look about everybody; but they occupied the most fantastic and beautiful old English building, all of whose shrubs were trimmed. There was nothing rural or rustic or unfinished about it. For the first time, there was absolutely nothing to use; you can't make it every time. There was a track at the very back of the stage that had lights in it; so the dancers couldn't use that space. About an hour before the performance, I asked Alex whether he had any shirts that needed ironing, which is a nice question to ask Alex because he always did and he always ironed his own shirts. So, we got two ironing boards, and we put them up over these blue lights that were back there. When the curtain opened, there were the dancers and these two people ironing shirts. It must have looked quite beautiful, but we can't be sure absolutely. But from what I could feel about the way it looked and the lights coming up through the shirts, it was like a live passive set, like live decor.

INTERVIEWER: Would you do it again?

RAUSCHENBERG: I won't do that. You see, there is little difference between the action of paint and the action of people, except that paint is a nuisance because it keeps drying and setting.

INTERVIEWER: The most frequently heard criticism of *Map Room Two* [1965] is that it was too slow.

RAUSCHENBERG: I don't mind that. I don't mind something being boring, because there are certain activities that can be interesting if they are

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Tomkins	IV.C.59

done only so much. Take that business with the tires in *Map Room*, which I found interesting if it is done for about five minutes. But something else happens if it goes on for ten more minutes. It's a little like La Monte Young's thing, [*The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*]. At some point, you admit that it isn't interesting any more, but you're still confronted by it. So what are you going to make out of it?

INTERVIEWER: However, there is a difference between intentional boredom and inadvertent boredom.

RAUSCHENBERG: I'd like it if even at the risk of boring someone, there is an area of uninteresting activity where the spectator may behave uniquely. You see, I'm against the prepared consistent entertainment. Theater does not have to be entertaining, just like pictures don't have to be beautiful.

INTERVIEWER: Must theater be interesting?

RAUSCHENBERG: Involving. Now boredom is restlessness; your audience is not a familiar thing. It is made up of individual people who have all led different lives.

I've been with people who have speech problems. At first it made me quite nervous, later I found myself listening to it and being quite interested in just the physical contact; it can be a very dramatic thing. I've never deliberately thought about boring anyone; but I'm also interested in that kind of theater activity that provides a minimum of guarantees. I have often been more interested in works I have found very boring than in other works that seem to be brilliantly done.

INTERVIEWER: What was it that made them more memorable to you?

RAUSCHENBERG: It may be that that kind of pacing is more unique to theater-going. The role of the audience, traditionally, I don't find very interesting. I don't like the idea that they shouldn't assume as much responsibility as the entertainer does for making the evening interesting. I'm really quite unfriendly and unrealistic about the artist having to assume the total responsibility for the function of the evening. I would like people to come home from work, wash up, and go to the theater as an evening of taking their chances. I think it is more interesting for them.

INTERVIEWER: I'm bothered about this juxtaposition of interesting and boring. What you're doing, I think, is setting up an opposition to entertainment.

RAUSCHENBERG: I think that's it. I used the word bored to refer to someone who might look at a Barnett Newman and say there ought to be more image there than a single vertical or two single verticals. If someone said that that was a boring picture, he was using the word in relation to a preconceived idea of what interesting might be. What

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

I am saying is I suspect that right now in theater there is a lot of work described as boring, which is simply the awkward reorientation of the function of theater and even the purpose of the audience. Just in the last few years we have made some extremely drastic changes. Continuity in the works that I am talking about has been completely eliminated. It is usually different from performance to performance. There is no dramatic continuity; the interaction tends to be a coincidence or an innovation for that particular moment.

INTERVIEWER: What else do you think is characteristic of mixed-means theater?

RAUSCHENBERG: An absence of hierarchy. The fact is that in a single piece of Yvonne Rainer you can hear both Rachmaninoff and sticks being pitched from the balcony without those two things making a comment on each other. In my pieces, for instance, there is nothing that everything is subservient to. I am trusting each element to sustain itself in time.

INTERVIEWER: What do these changes imply?

RAUSCHENBERG: All those ideas tend to point up the thought that it would be better for theater that, if you went a second night, you found a different work there, even though it might be in the same place and have the same performers and deal with the same material. I think all this is creating an extraordinary situation that is very new in theater; so both the audience and the artist are still quite self-conscious about the state of things.

INTERVIEWER: You would agree with John Cage, then, that one of the purposes of the new movement is to make us more omniattentive.

RAUSCHENBERG: I think we do it when we are relaxed; all these things happen naturally. But there's a prejudice that has been built up around the ideas of seriousness and specializing. That's why I'm no more interested in giving up painting than continuing painting or vice versa. I don't find these things in competition with each other. If we are to get the most out of any given time, it is because we have applied ourselves as broadly as possible, I think, not because we have applied ourselves as singlemindedly as possible.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have then a moral objection to those dimensions of life that force us to be more specialized than we should be?

RAUSCHENBERG: Probably. If we can observe the way things happen in nature, we see that nearly nothing in my life turned out the way that, if it were up to me to plan it, it should. There is always the business, for instance, if you're going on a picnic, it is just as apt to rain as not. Or the weather might turn cold when you want to go swimming.

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

INTERVIEWER: So then you find a direct formal equation between your theater and your life?

RAUSCHENBERG: I hope so, between working and living, because those are our media.

INTERVIEWER: You would believe, then, that if we became accustomed to this chancier kind of theater, we would become accustomed, then, to the chancier nature of our own life.

RAUSCHENBERG: I think we are most accustomed to it in life. Why should art be the exception to this? You asked if I had a moral objection. I do, because I think we do have this capacity I'm talking about. You find that an extremely squeamish person can perform fantastic deeds because it is an emergency. If the laws have a positive function, if they could have, it might be just that—to force someone to behave in a way he has not behaved before, using the facilities he was actually born with. Growing up in a world where multiple distractions are the only constant, he would be able to cope with new situations. But, what I found happening to people in the Navy was that once they were out of service and out of these extraordinary situations, they reverted to the same kind of thinking as before. I think it is an exceptional person who utilizes that experience. That's because in most cases the service is not a chosen environment; it is somebody else's life that they're functioning in, instead of recognizing the fact that it is still just them and the things they are surrounded by.

INTERVIEWER: So you would object to anyone who finds the Navy an unnatural life.

RAUSCHENBERG: It is a continuation of extraordinary situations. We begin by not having any say over who our parents are; our parents have no control over the particular peculiar mixture of the genes.

INTERVIEWER: Looking back over your involvement with theater, do you see any kind of development, aside from the obvious development that you have now become the author of your own theater pieces, rather than a contributor to somebody else's? Also, do you see any development in your company of more or less regular performers?

RAUSCHENBERG: Well, that last is mostly a social thing of people with a common interest, and we have tended to make ourselves available as material to each other. It is in no way an organized company, and it changes from time to time—people move in and out. However, where a play could be cast with different actors and you would still get the same play, if I was not in constant touch with these people, I could not do those pieces. The whole concept would have to be changed, if I had new performers—if I let Doris Day take Mary

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

Martin's part in a musical or used the Cincinnati Philharmonic rather than the New York Philharmonic.

INTERVIEWER: You write for these performers, and they have learned to respond to the particular language of your instructions.

RAUSCHENBERG: It goes beyond interpretation of following directions. From the outset, their responsibility, in a sense of collaboration, is part of the actual form and content and appearance of the piece. It makes them stockholders in the event itself, rather than simply performers.

In *Map Room Two,* a couple of the people involved said that they had now gotten some kind of feeling about what I was after. Because this is my fourth or fifth piece and these people, if they weren't in them, had seen them all, then I think there is a body of work. If someone is working with an unfamiliar kind of image and if you see only one, it looks like a lot of things that it isn't and a lot of things that it is; but you don't really understand the direction. In five of those new things you're more apt to see what they are doing. It's like signposts; you need a few to know that you are really on the right road.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel stronger and more confident now in approaching a theater piece?

RAUSCHENBERG: Confidence is something that I don't feel very often, because I tend to eliminate the things I was sure about. I cannot help but wonder what would happen if you didn't do that and if you did this. You recognize the weaknesses in *Map Room Two,* for instance, that weakness of the neon thing coming last. *Linoleum* is probably one of the most tedious works I've ever done, the most unclimactic. If you're in the audience, you simply move into it with your attention and live through this thing. At a certain point it's over.

INTERVIEWER: How did you conceive *Oracle* [1965], your environmental sculpture?

RAUSCHENBERG: I finished it after I got back from Europe, after touring with Merce Cunningham. Technically, it had to be completely rebuilt, because ideas which had been impossible when I started in 1962, later became possible.

INTERVIEWER: In the technological sense?

RAUSCHENBERG: Yes. It is a single work with five pieces of sculpture. Each piece has its own voice. The controls are a console unit which is embedded in one of the pieces; and all five have a sound source. Each piece can be played independently, because the console has five volume controls, one for each piece. A scanning mechanism goes across the radio dials and provides a constant movement, so that what you control is the speed of scanning. All this gives you the maximum

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

possibilities of varied sound, from music to purely abstract noise and any degree in between. Each piece can be adjusted accordingly. One of the ideas was to make it so simple that you would not have to be educated to do it — so that the thing would just respond to touch.

INTERVIEWER: When this sculpture is displayed, is someone working the dials or are they merely present?

RAUSCHENBERG: Anyone around it can change it; and it can also be set up so that the sound is constantly changing, independently of anyone's control.

One of the pieces, a cement-mixing tub, is also a fountain, because I wanted another source of sound too in running water. I didn't want to imply that these sounds all had to be electronic.

INTERVIEWER: Do you consider this an "environment" or a "combine"?

RAUSCHENBERG: Sound is part of the piece; it is not a decoration. It is a part of the climate that piece insists on. You really do get a sense of moving from one place to another, as you shift from the proximity of one piece to another piece.

INTERVIEWER: Because the field of sound is constantly changing. Several questions come to mind: Why the field of sound? How does the sound relate to the visual elements?

RAUSCHENBERG: The sound relates to the pieces physically by the material interaction — the particular kind of distortion the sound of a voice has as it is shaped by its context. "Why sound?" because hearing is a sense that we use while looking anyway.

INTERVIEWER: One of the myths of modern culture — I associate it particularly with Lewis Mumford's *Art and Technics* [1952] — is that art and technology are eternally opposed to each other and that one succeeds only at the decline of the other.

RAUSCHENBERG: I think that's a dated concept. We now are living in a culture that won't operate and grow that way. Science and art — these things do clearly exist at the same time, and both are very valuable. We are just realizing that we have lost a lot of energy in always insisting on the conflict — in posing one of these things against the other.

INTERVIEWER: In contrast to nearly all contemporary artists, you did not need to find your own style by first painting through several established styles — by taking them as your transient models. From the start, you were, as we say, an original.

RAUSCHENBERG: I always had enormous respect for other people's work, but I deliberately avoided using other people's styles, even though I know that no one owns any particular technique or attitude. It seemed to me that it was more valuable to think that the world was big

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	Tomkins	IV.C.59

enough so that everyone doesn't have to be on each other's feet. When you go to make something, nothing should be clearer than the fact that not only do you not have to make it but that it could look like anything, and then it starts getting interesting and then you get involved with your own limitations.

INTERVIEWER: As an artist, do you feel in any sense alienated from America today or do you feel that you are part of a whole world in which you are living?

RAUSCHENBERG: I feel a conscious attempt to be more and more related to society. That's what's important to me as a person. I'm not going to let other people make all the changes; and if you do that, you can't cut yourself off.

This very quickly gets to sound patriotic and pompous and pious; but I really mean it very personally. I'm only against the most obvious things, like wars and stuff like that. I don't have any particular concept about a utopian way things should be. If I have a prejudice or a bias, it is that there shouldn't be any particular way. Being a complex human organ, we are capable of a variety; we can do so much. The big fear is that we don't do enough with our senses, with our activities, with our areas of consideration; and these have got to get bigger year after year.

INTERVIEWER: Could that be what the new theater is about? Is there a kind of educational purpose now — to make us more responsive to our environment?

RAUSCHENBERG: I can only speak for myself. Today there may be eleven artists; yesterday there were ten; two days ago there were nine. Everybody has his own reason for being involved in it, but I must say that this is one of the things that interests me the most. I think that one of my chief struggles now is to make something that can be as changeable and varied and alive as the audience. I don't want to do works where one has to impose liveliness or plastic flexibility or change but a work where change would be dealt with literally. It's very possible that my interest in theater, which now is so consuming, may be the most primitive way of accomplishing this, and I may just be working already with what I would like to make.

INTERVIEWER: How will our lives — our ideas and our responses — be different after continued exposure to the new theater?

RAUSCHENBERG: What's exciting is that we don't know. There is no anticipated result; but we will be changed.