

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Diamonstein, Barbaralee / Personal Interviews (excerpts only), 1977-1978

Robert Rauschenberg, statements in an video-taped interview with
Barbaralee Diamonstein Inside New York's Art World: Robert Rauschenberg
and Leo Castelli, ed., Brian Connell and recorded in cooperation with
The New School For Social Research, New York, 1977.

Barbaralee Diamonstein: How do you achieve the immediacy in your work?

Robert Rauschenberg: By not making up your mind before you're going to do
it. It has to be immediate if you don't know what you're doing. And you
take that chance and its very embarrassing. Sometimes you succeed.
Sometimes you don't. You don't have security.

B.D.: Do you plan your pieces?

R.R.: No I have discipline. I work everyday and I never know what I'm
doing...If you know something you have a responsibility.... I don't
think any honest artist sets out to make art. You love art. You live
art. You are art. You do art. But you're just doing something.
You're doing what no one can stop you from doing. And so, it doesn't
have to be art and that is your life. But you also can't make life and
so there's something in between there because you flirt with the idea
that it is art. The definition of art would have to be about how much
use you can make of it. Because if you try to separate the two, art can
be very self-conscious, a blinding fact. But life doesn't really need
it so its also another blinding fact.

Amidon 303

RR:

THE TROUBLE WITH SUCCESS IS THAT A SINGLE LIFE GETS CELEBRATED. THAT CELEBRATION ECLIPSES THE COLLABORATION THAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WORK. THIS REALLY CHANGES THE IMAGE OF HOW WORK IS MADE. I WON'T SAY THAT I HAVE TO LOVE SOMEBODY IN ORDER TO WORK WITH THEM, BUT IT'S REALLY CLOSE. I THINK ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS THINGS ABOUT AN ARTIST IS THAT HE IS CONSIDERED SUCH A SPECIAL PERSON THAT HE CAN BE DENIED ANY CONVENTIONAL RIGHTS, BECAUSE HE IS GIFTED. WORKS AREN'T BUILT ON PEDESTALS AND THE WORKS' VALUE HAS TO BE ESTABLISHED ECONOMICALLY IN THE SAME WORLD THAT SUPPORTS HIS EXCEPTION.

PETER WIRTH:

IT'S TRUE. IT'S HIS WORK, THERE'S JUST ANOTHER HAND IN IT. THE BASIC THING ABOUT COLLABORATION IS THAT REGARDLESS OF WHO THE ARTIST IS, THERE ARE INTUITIVE DECISIONS MADE BY THE PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER. SO IT BECOMES THE ARTIST'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ACCEPT OR MODIFY WHAT IS HAPPENING. BUT IN THE END, THE ARTIST MAINTAINS THE CONCLUSIVE, DECISIVE CONTROL.

CONVERSATION WITH BARBARA LEE

MAY 12, 1978

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