

# *Snowpool (Jammer)*, 1976

EVAN BELLANTONE



fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Snowpool (Jammer)*, 1976

Sewn fabric and fabric-covered rattan pole, 76 1/2 x 88 3/4 x 2 1/8 inches (194.4 x 225.5 x 5.4 cm)

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

## *Snowpool (Jammer), 1976*

Constructed between 1975 and 1976 in his Captiva Island, Florida, residence and studio, Robert Rauschenberg's *Jammers* are one of the most idiosyncratic and singular series he developed over his long and varied career. Most of the works in this series are fashioned from little more than fine Indian silks and rattan poles, though some also incorporate in their construction tin cans, string, and, in one example, even a pillow.<sup>1</sup> Rauschenberg's sparse use of materials and reductive compositions, epitomized by the ethereal *Snowpool* (1976; fig. 1), might be described as almost Minimalist in style. That *Snowpool* was constructed decades *after* Rauschenberg's creativity evolved beyond the Minimal aesthetic espoused by his earlier series—namely the monochrome *White Paintings* and black paintings from the early 1950s—heightens the sense that the diaphanous and elegant *Jammers* punctuate a particular moment of the artist's career in which he simultaneously took stock of his past accomplishments, as well as engaged in a dialogue with the aesthetics of the younger generation of Minimalist and Post-Minimalist artists. These artists, who began working in the mid-1960s had, by the mid-1970s, firmly established themselves as a movement, and their work, often defined by spare construction, monochromatic palettes, and unconventional materials were, in turn, indebted to Rauschenberg's early efforts which espoused similar concerns.

All told, however, *Snowpool* and the rest of the *Jammers* demonstrate Rauschenberg's remarkably acute eye as he absorbed the lessons of the younger generation of Post-Minimalist or anti-form artists and made their language his own.<sup>2</sup> In his essay "Specific Objects" (1965), Donald Judd described this new aesthetic as pure forms inherited from Minimalism, but now with an embrace of softer materials, anti-literal forms, anthropomorphic allusions, and a tendency to blur the lines between painting and sculpture with works that occupied both wall and floor.<sup>3</sup> Produced in 1976, toward the tail end of this conceptual sea change, *Snowpool* is a graceful, restrained, and sensual construction composed from cut, stitched, and draped elements, enriched by Rauschenberg's deep familiarity with fabric and cloth stemming from his vast experience as a costume and stage designer.<sup>4</sup> The historical irony is that the younger artists to whom he now turned had been directly inspired by Rauschenberg's heterogeneous mix of materials, additive compositions, autobiographical referents, and uninhibited flow of creative process.<sup>5</sup>

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### HOW TO CITE THIS ESSAY

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Though the *Jammers*' refined aesthetic and playful engagement with wall-based installation was in league with the contemporaneous anti-form artists, the series marks a radical departure from Rauschenberg's image-based works that succeeded the early monochromes, such as the *Combines* (1954–64) and silkscreen paintings (1962–64), as well as from free-standing sculptural work, such as the *Venetians* (1972–73). Rauschenberg's choice to leave the *Jammers* uninflected by brushstrokes, factory labels, or other forms of expressive gestures is at odds with these and other series, which often include passages of painting, printmaking, collage elements, and found objects. Writing on the *Jammers* in 2016, Yve-Alain Bois notes that they "are the most atypical group of his entire oeuvre," and that "much of the critical vocabulary that has been used [to describe Rauschenberg's] work does not apply: no indexicality, no rescuing of refuse material, almost no imagery, and as little assemblage as possible."<sup>6</sup> It is precisely the lack of indexicality between the *Jammers* and the remainder of Rauschenberg's works that makes them curiously unique.

*Snowpool* possesses various sewn silk fabrics as well as a cloth-covered rattan pole, and is suspended from reinforced holes in the top-left and top-right corners of the piece that rest on pushpins in the wall, causing the top edge of the artwork to droop due to the slackness of the silk. Measuring 194.4 by 225.5 by 5.4 centimeters, the artwork's expansive cloths create commanding planes of pale color on the wall while physically taking up little volume. This relative flatness encourages frontal viewing by resembling the picture plane of a painting, but if *Snowpool* is a painting, then it is one that has been pared down *reductio ad absurdum*: it has no paint used to depict an image; it hangs loose in the absence of stretchers bars; and its canvas, as it were, has been replaced by fine silks reactive to even the slightest of air currents.

Rauschenberg laterally bisected *Snowpool*'s midpoint with a distinct top and bottom half made of different fabrics. The top half of the piece is a sheer white silk that is cinched in the artwork's midpoint and sewn to produce a horizontal sleeve into which a rattan pole is inserted, itself covered in fabric. Descending beneath the pole, the lower half of *Snowpool* is composed of a separate piece of fabric that has a pattern of multicolored vertical stripes of irregular width, which has been sewn into the cinched sleeve that holds the rattan pole. The silk used for the top half of the artwork drapes over the colorful fabric on the lower half, creating a sheer shroud above the stripes on the bottom. Unlike the top half of *Snowpool*, which is secured to the wall by pushpins in its top corners, the bottom half hangs suspended from the rattan pole and unanchored at its lowest corners, allowing for slight movement of the thin fabrics.



fig. 2

Robert Rauschenberg, *Mirage (Jammer)*, 1975. Sewn fabric, 82 1/2 x 70 1/8 inches (209.5 x 178 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 3

Robert Rauschenberg, *Caliper (Jammer)*, 1976. Rattan poles with fabric, 93 × 65 × 24 inches (236.2 × 165.1 × 61 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 4

Robert Rauschenberg, *Sextant (Jammer)*, 1976. Fabric-covered rattan poles, water-filled plastic glass, and wire, 96 × 42 × 14 inches (243.8 × 106.7 × 35.6 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Most of the *Jammers* share at least one cloth element and a pole of bamboo-like rattan, which often serves as a support for the fabric. The artworks in the series are not quite ready-made; the materials were manipulated only by sewing and cutting to result in the cloth and rattan compositions. Still, variations within the *Jammers* exist in the form of slight additions and subtractions of materials. *Mirage (Jammer)* from 1975 (fig. 2), for example, does not incorporate a rattan pole in its construction but, like *Snowpool*, is attached to the wall along its top edge by pushpins inserted through sewn grommets. Also, like the lower half of *Snowpool*, *Mirage* has a sheer layer of white fabric that drapes over the left side of the colorful silk, softening its vibrancy. The sheer overlay has the effect of muting *Mirage's* intense goldenrod and crimson color in much the same way that an actual mirage simultaneously reveals and obscures an illusory faraway image. Even in the absence of explicit imagery, however, *Snowpool's* icy veil and bipartite structure resembles a landscape, its "sky" whited out and its frosted "ground" covered by a translucent gossamer.

Others in the series, however, have no draped-cloth element at all. One called *Caliper (Jammer)* from 1976 (fig. 3), for example, is composed only of four rattan poles that are notched such that they can be arranged like a tick-tack-toe hash mark leaning against the wall. Eagle-eyed observers will notice that small fabric swatches are inset into the notches of *Caliper's* vertical poles, offering slight glimmers of solid primary colors and patterns that are similar to the cloths found in other *Jammers*. Like *Caliper*, the 1976 piece *Sextant (Jammer)*, leans against the wall and is made of just two cloth-covered rattan poles (as the pole found in *Snowpool*) and a wire that connects them, which secures a water-filled plastic cup (fig. 4). Though *Caliper* and *Sextant* are among the most materially spare works in the series, the convention of leaning the *Jammers'* rattan poles against the wall is born out in several other pieces. *Gull (Jammer)* from 1976 (fig. 5), is one such work that continues to explore the ways in which the rattan poles

fig. 5

Robert Rauschenberg, *Gull (Jammer)*, 1976. Sewn fabric, rattan poles, and twine, 103 × 200 × 19 inches (261.6 × 508 × 48.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art New York; Gift of Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, and gift of Virginia C. Field, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Nelson Pharr, Anonymous, and Ruth Vollmer (all by exchange).



give passing form to the hanging cloth element by leaning against the wall.<sup>7</sup> *Gull's* expansive spread of sewn cloth hangs from short lengths of twine attached to the tops of four rattan poles, evoking the drape of a sail tethered to a mast or a flag tied to a pole.

These works, *Caliper*, *Sextant*, and *Gull*, share in their names a nautical leitmotif that runs throughout the series, even if *Snowpool* conjures other themes. Still, the suggestive relationships between the *Jammers'* titles, colors, and compositions extend to the name of the series itself. Lawrence Alloway notes that there is no entry for the word *Jammer* in the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, "but its associations are rich. One who jams (thrusts, improvises, as in jazz); to jam (head a sailing vessel into the wind); windjammer (sailing boat). The maritime allusions are there: individual *Jammers* are called *Sea Dog* (1975), *Gear* (1976), *Frigate* (1975), *Pilot* (1976), *Reef* (1976) and certainly, in the sense of improvisation, Rauschenberg is one who jams."<sup>8</sup>

Add the aforementioned *Caliper*, *Sextant*, and *Gull* to Alloway's list, and the unmistakable nautical association becomes integral to the series as a whole, and can be traced to Rauschenberg's relationship with his studio compound on Captiva Island. The artist's move to Captiva in the early 1970s provided a kind of refuge from New York City, and the island afforded sailing and even windsurfing as favored activities.<sup>9</sup>

While Captiva's placid seaside environment strikes a sympathetic chord with the tranquil *Jammers*, their new sensibility can be attributed to many factors. Foremost among these was a seminal trip to India taken by Rauschenberg in the summer of 1975 at the invitation of Anand Sarabhai of the Sarabhai family, well-known textile producers with around twenty-three thousand employees working in their mills.<sup>10</sup> The trip was planned as a residency in which the Sarabhais allocated resources for the artist to create works on-site. For three weeks,

fig. 6

Robert Rauschenberg, *Little Joe (Bones)*, 1975. Handmade paper with bamboo and fabric, 24 × 28 ½ × 3 ½ inches (61 × 72.4 × 8.9 cm). From an edition of 34, published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles.



fig. 7

Robert Rauschenberg, *Quorum (Unions)*, 1975. Rag-mud, rope, bamboo, and mud, 64 × 45 × 4 ½ inches (162.6 × 114.3 × 11.4 cm), dimensions variable. From an edition of 13, published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles.



Rauschenberg and his crew, along with employees of the Sarabhais as well as several members of the Sarabhai family themselves, worked together on the creation of two projects: the *Bones* (1975; fig. 6) and the *Unions* (1975; fig. 7). Rauschenberg and his small team of assistants were hosted in the Sarabhais' sumptuous private home, the Villa de Madame Manorama Sarabhai, designed by Le Corbusier and built in 1951 (fig. 8). The Villa's garden served as the location of production for the mud-based *Unions*,<sup>11</sup> while the paper-based *Bones* were made in a paper mill located at the nearby Kalam Khush (Gandhi) Ashram (figs. 9 and 10).

Rauschenberg's main contact for organizing the trip was Anand.<sup>12</sup> Rauschenberg would first visit Ahmedabad during the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's 1964 World Tour, for which he worked as a costume and lighting designer (fig. 11). Anand at this time extended an open invitation to Rauschenberg to revisit the family in Ahmedabad, which ultimately came to fruition eleven years later in the form of the residency in May of 1975.

fig. 8

View of Villa de Madame Manorama Sarabhai, Ahmedabad. Photo: Fondation Le Corbusier. © FLC-ADAGP



fig. 9

Robert Rauschenberg and Asha Sarabhai working on the *Unions* series, 1975. Photo: Sidney B. Felsen. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 10

Workers with stacks of handmade paper at the Gandhi Ashram paper mill where Robert Rauschenberg's *Bones* editions were created, 1975. Photo: Sidney B. Felsen. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 11

Merce Cunningham Dance Company world tour, Cologne, 1964. Pictured in helicopter from left to right: Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Doris Stockhausen, David Tudor, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Pictured below: Steve Paxton, Michael von Biel, and Robert Rauschenberg. Photo: Unattributed. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



The trip to India took shape suddenly after a planned trip to a Japanese paper mill fell through. Sidney Felsen, a cofounder of the Gemini G.E.L. press in Los Angeles, who accompanied the artist to India, later recalled, " ... probably about two months before we were going to go, [Rauschenberg] calls me one day, and says, 'We're not going to go to Japan. We're going to go to India. I decided I want to go to India.'" <sup>13</sup> The artist might have been prompted by a gift from the family matriarch Manorama Sarabhai, a piece of "Indian awning fabric" that she had sent from Ahmedabad to his New York studio the year before. David Tudor acknowledged receipt of this fabric and noted its exceptional beauty, though it is unclear if it was one of the khadi fabrics that would eventually be used in *Snowpool*. <sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that two years prior to the trip to India, Rauschenberg made a trip to France with Kenneth Tyler, another founder of the Gemini G.E.L. press, to make paper pulp-based artworks at Le Moulin Richard de Bas—a paper mill based in Ambert. While in France they produced the prototypes for the *Fuses* (1974; fig. 12) and *Pages* (1974; fig. 13) series that were later editioned back in Gemini's studios. The *Fuses* and *Pages* are aesthetically in league with the chromatically pale and image-spare work the artist made in the early seventies, and the trip to Ahmedabad was meant to repeat this model of in situ production of artworks made in collaboration with local artisans in a foreign location.

fig. 12

Robert Rauschenberg, *Link* (*Fuses*), 1974. Pigmented handmade paper and screenprinted tissue, 25 × 20 inches (63.5 × 50.8 cm). From an edition of 29 unique variants, published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles.



fig. 13

Robert Rauschenberg, *Page 2* (*Pages*), 1974. Handmade paper, 22 inches (55.9 cm) diameter. From an edition of 11 unique variants, published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles.



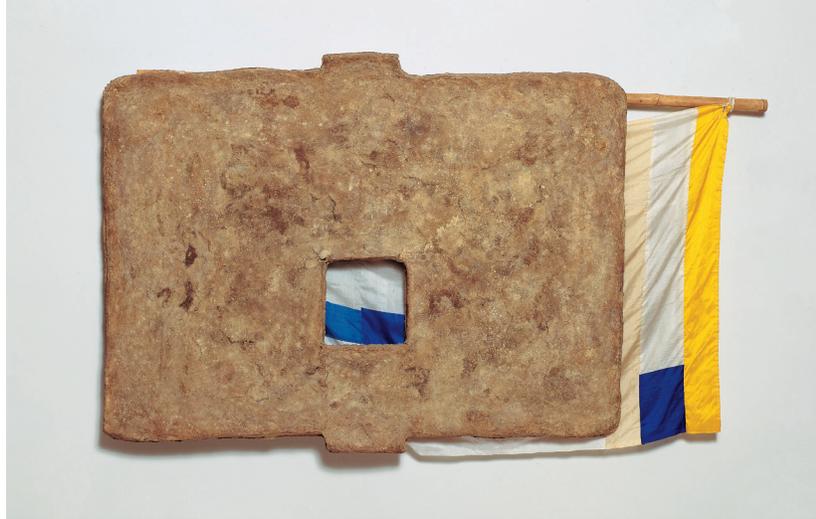


fig. 14

Robert Rauschenberg, *Capitol (Unions)*, 1975. Rag-mud, bamboo, silk, string, glass, and teakwood, 34 × 53 ½ × 4 inches (86.4 × 135.9 × 10.2 cm); dimensions variable. From an edition of 10, published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles.

The *Unions* were made predominantly from mud along with materials that were featured later in the *Jammers*, such as rope, string, bamboo, and silk. The *Unions* were inspired by the adobe-like structures Rauschenberg observed in both Ahmedabad and the Villa, made from the same mud, which was a common building material in India.<sup>15</sup> That the Villa, in its splendid, modernist Le Corbusier design, retained within its walls this traditional building material would have served as a poignant counterpoint to the beauty Rauschenberg observed amidst the poverty he witnessed in and around Ahmedabad. *Capitol (Unions)* of 1975, for example, explored this dichotomy by combining rag-mud with silk, producing an artwork made with local materials laden with economic significance (fig. 14).

*Capitol* is composed by a rectangular mud slab with a square window cut out in its middle, behind which a piece of stitched silk cloth attached to a bamboo pole juts out to one side. The colorful silk can be seen through the window and, depending on the piece's installation, peeking out from behind the left or right side of the mud in a way that pairs references to the architecture of the local environment with the customs of local dress. Asha Sarabhai, who assisted in the construction of the *Unions*, recalled Rauschenberg's alarm at witnessing the hem of her fine cotton sari trailing through the mud in the garden of the Villa. "He'd say, 'You're walking through the mud and the gold is trailing in it.' And I'd say, 'Yes, but it's okay.' We used to talk about concepts of what real luxury is about." In contrast, Asha described the local custom of, despite dire poverty, pairing printed and plain fabrics in the radiant style of the Bengali saris, which were the customary dress. She recalled, "[A] lot of the things ... that went into *Jammers* came from the Bengali saris, which had a main body of one color and often a border of another."<sup>16</sup> *Snowpool* itself can be described in similar terms.

Though none of the *Jammers* possess the rag-mud used in the construction of *Capitol*, many, including *Snowpool*, utilize rattan poles in their construction. Though not the same species of plant, rattan can look similar to bamboo, which was prevalent on the Sarabhai compound and is also a common scaffolding material. The *Jammers'* use of rattan retains a connection to architectural construction while leaving the mud and its attendant associations behind.

fig. 15

Left to right: two workers, Anand Sarabhai, Suhrid Sarabhai, and Robert Rauschenberg working on *Box Cars (Bones)* (1975) at the Gandhi Ashram paper mill, 1975. Photo: Gianfranco Gorgoni. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 16

Robert Rauschenberg, *Box Cars (Bones)*, 1975. Handmade paper, bamboo, and fabric, 34 × 26 ½ × 3 inches (86.4 × 67.3 × 7.6 cm), dimensions variable. From an edition of 31, published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles.



With the *Bones*, Rauschenberg was able to experiment with the locally produced handmade papers, in much the same way he did in France, through access granted to the paper mill at the Gandhi Ashram (fig. 15). With the assistance of the local artisanal papermakers, he molded paper and while it was still wet inserted pieces of bamboo and cloth into the pulp before letting the paper dry. Like the *Unions*, the *Bones* herald aspects of the *Jammers* in miniature. Their pale natural papers, devoid of imagery, serve as a predecessor for the *Jammers'* uninflected fine silks while the bamboo shoots that give the *Bones* their structure also function much like the rattan poles that serve a similar purpose in many of the *Jammers*. The *Bones*, too, feature locally sourced fabrics embedded in the pulp in such a way that the transparency of the papers simultaneously reveals and conceals their bright colors. *Box Cars (Bones)* from 1975 (fig. 16), for example, obscures its fabric element through a veil of white paper like the lower half of *Snowpool* or the left side of *Mirage*. Indeed, Felsen claims that Rauschenberg began producing the *Jammers* while still in India, though the development of the *Bones* and *Unions* were his main focus in Ahmedabad.<sup>17</sup>

Rauschenberg was enamored by the fabrics he found in India and stirred by the way their chromatic beauty contrasted with their surroundings. "The ashram showed me something new about the fabrics there," Rauschenberg said, "because you have this really cruel combination of disease and starvation and poverty and mud and sand and yet it was all punctuated with maybe that one piece of silk that somebody had ... That's what gave me permission to give up my prejudices about luxurious materials and sumptuous colors."<sup>18</sup>

To source fabrics that interested him, Rauschenberg would make day trips to the local khadi, or hand-spun fabric, shops in Ahmedabad (fig. 17). The Sarabhais also played host to local khadi merchants who would come weekly

fig. 17

Fabric merchants displaying their goods, Ahmedabad, 1975.



to the estate and present beautiful silks and other fabrics for sale. Quite taken by the khadi merchants' displays, Rauschenberg purchased the fabrics that interested him, many of which ended up being used in the construction of the *Jammers* (including the fine striped silk found in *Snowpool*) when the artist returned to his studio in Captiva later in 1975.<sup>19</sup> Indebted to the trip to India, the series came to completion by 1976, and was immediately shown internationally.

In juxtaposing pristine fabrics supported by unsophisticated materials, the *Jammers* were perfectly in line with a well-trodden artistic aesthetic explored over the previous decade by the next generation of artists to come after Rauschenberg. The careers of many artists espousing Minimalist tendencies, such as Eva Hesse, Robert Smithson, Richard Tuttle, and Barry Le Va, to name but a few, began in or around 1965, and their new approaches were characterized as "anti-form" by Robert Morris—an artist who was also counted among their ranks—and Post-Minimal by the critic Robert Pincus-Witten.<sup>20</sup> The latter describes the emphasis on visualizing "the process of making" as a crucial pictorial and sculptural concern of the Post-Minimalists, stating, "the virtual content of the art became that of the spectator's intellectual re-creation of the actions used by the artist to realize the work in the first place."<sup>21</sup> Further honing his point, Pincus-Witten affirmed that the younger artists sought a "[refreshed] focus on personality and colorism, and on a highly eccentric dematerialized, or *open form*,"<sup>22</sup> in contrast with the "Calvinist" geometric constructions of Minimalism.

For Rauschenberg, the first half of the 1970s was a chance to engage in this language, and the projects he completed during this time reflect a Post-Minimal sensibility, from the elegant drape of *Snowpool* (1976), to the haunting, wispy *Hoarfrosts* (1974–76), to the Arte Povera-inspired *Early Egyptians* (1973–74), *Venetians* (1972–73), and *Cardboards* (1971–72).<sup>23</sup> These works, among others, reveal the changes in the half-decade after Rauschenberg's move to Captiva, and merge the influence the island had on the artist with his international gaze and rhizomatic interests. As the noted art critic Calvin Tomkins observes, "When he traveled, which he did fairly often, his work reflected the look and feel of the places he had been: the rotting elegance of Venice; the variously colored sands of Israel and Egypt; the mud and dust of India."<sup>24</sup> By *Snowpool*'s arrival in 1976, Rauschenberg took the lightness and reductive qualities of his work from the previous five years and distilled it to the point where the *Jammers*' weight was as visible as air and the colors of their materials left pure, as if color itself was a material.



fig. 18

Installation view of *The Art of Richard Tuttle*, displaying the artist's 1967 series of dyed cloth pieces; at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2005. © Richard Tuttle, courtesy Pace Gallery. Photo: Ian Reeves.

The primacy of the fabric elements in *Snowpool* is coequal with the prevalence of fabric in many of the works of the Post-Minimalists, which was a crucial material for creating the "open form" that those artists and Rauschenberg all sought to espouse. Richard Tuttle's early cloth pieces from 1967, for example, utilize hand-dyed canvas of one

fig. 19

Robert Rauschenberg, *Reef (Jammer)*, 1975. Sewn fabric, 91 × 252 ½ × 24 inches (231.1 × 641.4 × 61 cm). National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

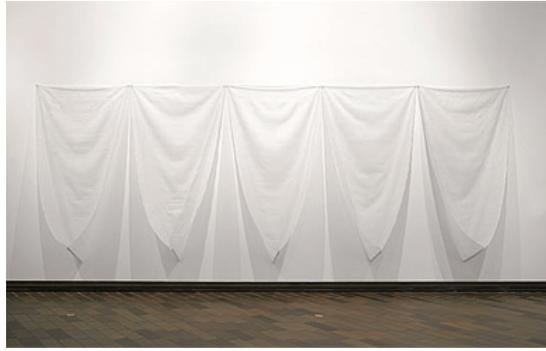


fig. 20

Eva Hesse, *Aught*, 1968. Latex and filler over canvas stuffed with polyethylene sheeting, rope, and unidentified materials, with metal grommets, 78 × 40 inches (198.12 × 101.6 cm); each unit, approximately. University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash. © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth.



solid color as the exclusive material for this highly variable and geometric series (fig. 18). These pieces could be installed on the wall, with the aid of small nails, in any direction, or presented lying flat on the floor. Tuttle's direct approach of attaching the fabric works to the wall via nails would not have been overlooked by Rauschenberg, and is in keeping with the installation of many *Jammers*, *Snowpool* included.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, although Eva Hesse's fabrics were often coated in latex and resin, there are sympathetic resonances between Hesse's exploration of seriality and sculptural forms and certain *Jammers*. In particular, *Reef (Jammer)* of 1976 and Hesse's *Aught* of 1968 both present (five and four, respectively) nearly identical wall-mounted pieces installed next to each other as a single artwork (figs. 19 and 20). Hesse's *Expanded Expansion* (1969), with its draped, latex-covered cheesecloth supported by fiberglass poles leaning against the wall formally resembles those *Jammers* that feature similarly inclined rattan poles supporting silk, such as *Gull*. Another antecedent can be found in Barry Flanagan's *June 2, '69* (1969), whose bare flax cloth and tree branch construction is much like *Gull*, if Rauschenberg had produced *Gull* on the Eastern Front, instead of in the warmth of Captiva Island. Other canny cross-generational similarities can be found in Keith Sonnier's work, whose wall-mounted cloth piece, *Untitled* (1968), bears more than a passing resemblance to *Pilot (Jammer)*, 1975, part of which makes a sudden ninety-degree excursion into the

fig. 21

Keith Sonnier, *Untitled*, 1968. Cloth and string, 72 × 60 × 48 inches (variable). Private collection. © 2019 Keith Sonnier. Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

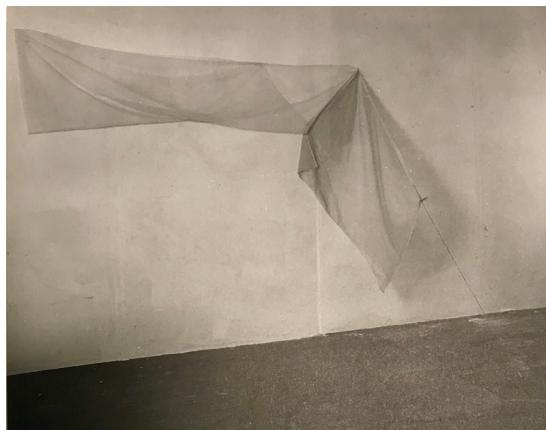


fig. 22

Robert Rauschenberg, *Pilot (Jammer)*, 1975. Sewn fabric, rattan pole, and string, 81 × 85 × 39 inches (205.7 × 215.9 × 99.1 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 23

Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Spread)*, 1983. Solvent transfer, fabric, cardboard, acrylic, and graphite, on wood panel with objects, 74 1/4 x 96 3/4 x 35 inches (188.6 x 245.7 x 88.9 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



gallery space supported by string and a rattan pole in much the same way *Untitled* juts akimbo out into space and is tethered to the floor by string (figs. 21 and 22).<sup>26</sup>

In their essays on the series, both David Anfam and Yve-Alain Bois acknowledge the relationship the *Jammers*

possess to the artists of anti-form, while noting Rauschenberg's early Post-Minimal predilections appear *avant la lettre*. (Anfam lists the tabula rasa-like surface of the *White Paintings* [1951] while Bois recalls the no longer extant *Fetacci Personali* [1952–53] as precedents.) Indeed, in her essay "Perpetual Inventory," Rosalind Krauss cites Rauschenberg's earlier work as enabling the art that emerged in the mid-1960s.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, after the *Jammers*, Rauschenberg would never quite reengage the aesthetic again.

While Rauschenberg produced a number of concurrent projects alongside the *Jammers*, it is *Snowpool's* calm poise, expansive, image-free surface, and barely-there, blink-and-you-miss-it aesthetic that denote the zenith and end to this decidedly Post-Minimal chapter in his work. It is as if by 1976 Rauschenberg was unable to reduce this sensibility any further. Subsequent projects, such as the *Spread* and *Scale* series, began to reintroduce photographic imagery as well as ready-made collage elements in their construction (fig. 23). These works, while incorporating fabrics, are redolent of previous projects and graphic languages that could be thought of as more typical of Rauschenberg. The last echoes of *Snowpool* are found in *Tantric Geography* (1977), Rauschenberg's *Jammer*-like set design for Merce Cunningham's dance performance *Travelogue* (1977; fig. 24).

Just as the move to Captiva in 1970 opened a period of exploring a new language for Rauschenberg, 1976 seemed to be the close of that chapter of his career. *Snowpool* is a deep meditation on the Sarabhai Villa and Captiva Island, as well as the fantasy of breezy ease offered by a Post-Minimalist sensibility inspired by those locations. As the artist's interests shifted, so too did the locations of his projects. And while *Snowpool's* aesthetic might have never resurfaced in his work, Rauschenberg took many of the collaborative lessons learned from his trip to India, and expanded his vision to an even more global scale in the form of the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project, announced in December 1984, which brought his peripatetic eye and ebullient spirit to many more countries.



fig. 24

Costumes and set, entitled *Tantric Geography*, designed by Robert Rauschenberg for Merce Cunningham Dance Company's *Travelogue*, 1977. © Charles Atlas; Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Like *Hibiscus (Jammer)* of 1976, pillows were visibly used in the *Combines Bed* (1955), *Odalisque* (1955–58), and *Canyon* (1959).
- 2 "Anti-form" is a term that was coined by Robert Morris in 1968. Robert Morris, "Anti Form," *Artforum* 6, no. 8, April 1968, pp. 33–35.
- 3 Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8, 1965. See also Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism into Maximalism: American Art, 1966–1986* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1987).
- 4 For more discussion of Rauschenberg's costumes and sets, see Nina Sundell, *Rauschenberg/Performance, 1954–1984*, exh. cat. (Cleveland: Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, 1984).
- 5 Rosalind Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): pp. 86–116.
- 6 Yve-Alain Bois, "A New Grammar with Jammers," in *Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Leah Dickerman and Achim Borchardt-Hume, exh. cat. (New York and London: The Museum of Modern Art and Tate Publishing, 2016), p. 304.
- 7 In describing the anti-form aesthetic, Morris says, "The focus on matter and gravity as means results in forms which were not projected in advance. Considerations of ordering are necessarily casual and imprecise and unemphasized [*sic*]. Random piling, loose stacking, hanging, give passing form to the material." Morris, "Anti Form," p. 35. Indeed, many of the forms in the *Jammers* series rely on piling, stacking, and hanging.
- 8 Lawrence Alloway, "Rauschenberg's Development," in *Robert Rauschenberg*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1976), p. 22.
- 9 Patricia Burstein, "In His Art and Life, Robert Rauschenberg Is a Man Who Steers His Own Daring Course," *People*, May 19, 1980. See also Calvin Tomkins, "Captiva," in *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1980).
- 10 The Reminiscences of Sidney Felsen, November 9 and December 13, 2013. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 41.

- 11 The Reminiscences of Asha and Suhrid Sarabhai, March 18, 2015. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 75.
- 12 Ibid., p. 91.
- 13 The Reminiscences of Sidney Felsen, p. 40.
- 14 Letters from Manorama Sarabhai, February 23 and May 11, 1974. Robert Rauschenberg papers. RRFA 01. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York.
- 15 The mud used in the *Unions* was locally used to build homes, and included tamarind and fenugreek as a binding agent that also gave it a distinctive smell. Rauschenberg and Felsen called this material "rag-mud." The Reminiscences of Asha and Suhrid Sarabhai, pp. 29, 103, 144–49. See also the Reminiscences of Sidney Felsen, p. 41.
- 16 The Reminiscences of Asha and Suhrid Sarabhai, p. 99.
- 17 The Reminiscences of Sidney Felsen, p. 111.
- 18 Joan Lowndes, "Rauschenberg," *The Vancouver Sun*, September 3, 1976, p. 35A. Rauschenberg split his time in Ahmedabad between the Gandhi Ashram, where the paper used in the *Bones* was produced, and the Sarabhai Villa.
- 19 The Reminiscences of Asha and Suhrid Sarabhai, p. 184.
- 20 See Morris, "Anti Form."
- 21 Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism into Maximalism: American Art, 1966–1986*, p. 11.
- 22 Ibid. Italics added.
- 23 Yve-Alain Bois, "Pause" in *Robert Rauschenberg: Cardboards and Related Pieces*, exh. cat. (Houston: The Menil Collection, 2007), p. 21.
- 24 Tomkins, *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time*, p. 295.
- 25 A major exhibition of Richard Tuttle's work was on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art from September 12 to November 16, 1975.
- 26 David Anfam notes the "kindred properties" of the work by Richard Serra, Keith Sonnier, Alan Saret, Richard Tuttle, and Eva Hesse with the *Jammers*, while Yve-Alain Bois notes the "patent" similarity between Hesse's *Expanded Expansion* (1969), Barry Flanagan's *June 2, '69* (1969), and Keith Sonnier's *Untitled* (1968) with some *Jammers*. Neither writer, however, specifically links them with an individual *Jammer*. David Anfam, "Hang Loose," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Jammers*, exh. cat. (London: Gagosian Gallery, 2013), p. 88. Bois, "A New Grammar with Jammers," p. 308.
- 27 Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory," p. 88.