

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Adler, Ed / Personal Interview, 1983

ED ADLER Interview, writing a book about the 60's;

he's interviewed Rosenquist, Lichtenstein. January 5, 1983.

(starts at end of tape #4)

RR: ... and I thought, wow, better get her out of here.

... no, through art it worked, antiquities and art, **
were both on her side.

EA: But I've never seen one that seems to be giving in from age,
like ...

RR: It's almost like papier mache, that they used you see. It's
linen, and then Jesso, but I think the painting is so gorgeous
too, you know. And I like her being here so much better than
that dusty old antique store. I mean, I'm sure it wasn't her
fault personally about the Jews. She goes nicely with the
hoar-frost there too. I had somebody, a German woman from the
M do a reading, and Tanya Grossman, the late Tanya
Grossman, from Universal Limited Editions, was in charge of that
whole project, and as those historians go, they just spend years
on one character. I just meant something roughly, you know,
because the history of this whole person is right there.
Everything they did in life, everything that anybody found out
about, is right there. And I think we got as far, at least in
rumor, that she was a minor royalty, and had to work, so she
was a working, so that she had the combination.

EA: Well, they didn't mummify just anybody

RR: But I think that's why she got such a loose job too. (laugh)

EA: And how she probably ends up in Jerusalem. (laugh)

EA: ... lower classes, I mean if they could save money all their
lives, they did it, they were able to be mummified. Or their

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children felt responsible. But we know there were people who couldn't afford it, so I guess they just in the ground like everybody ...

RR: A really big ego - you wrap yourself first! (laugh)

EA: I have a book on mummification, and the title is Wrapped for Eternity (laughter)

End, Tape #4

Tape #5, Side A

RR: ... and as soon as he left, the next day, ours would just follow him up with all his classes and explain to the students why he was wrong, you know, just to keep the control.

EA: That's interesting. Well, I've heard stories about Albers and you even (laugh). I would imagine in retrospect.

RR: One of the things is that it was hard for me to understand was that one of the things he taught me was that like really the sensibility of looking around you, and considering yourself a part of everything. Now how he resolved that with his denial of everything was very strange, but I really did get his message.

EA: I could see his work in a very Zen sort of way because, you know, you could compact the perfect square and bring it down to one color or two colors.

RR: He wasn't really suited for it. I mean, with one color, how can you be the world's greatest colorist, right? (laugh) Actually you could, you see, but then he didn't go that far. He wasn't going to chance it, I mean there was no gambling instinct in him.

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That's one of the good things about my upbringing. One of the things that I wasn't supposed to learn just happened to be a comfort and the truth is, I had nothing to lose. So I'm just the richest person in the world. I mean I don't like losing my dog last summer either, but you know, there are some things that I wouldn't want to lose.

EA: I noticed that the hoar-frost series which (back to the old notebook), well, you know, I want to get through some of the questions. They started in 1974, I'm about Mike Wallace (can't hear - everybody talking). Let's see if I can word this correctly. I couldn't help noticing that it coincided with the de-escalation of the Vietnam War, with kind of the tapering off of protest part of the 60s, and the coming into which, as it turned out, were not better times, but more relaxed times in any event. And the tension in your paintings with the hoar-frost seems to go right along, so they relax on the wall, and the colors become pastel, and softer, and even the images that they hold seem to be kind of memories that are fading, and I just wondered if this was something that I was reading it or something that you had perhaps intended.

RR: If it was an intention, it was unintentional. The physicality of those pieces actually came from my trip to India, where I had seen the coexistence of very sparse luxury and constructive poverty. And somehow it had no framework, I mean those pieces were inspired by old rags being dragged around in the mud, you know, as much as they were like palaces or any political situation.

EA: I almost hate to ask the questions. They sort of go with the
, but I mentioned earlier ...

RR: I do have a really world-wide idea about things, you know, like
right now while I'm just sitting here, like one of the things
I'm not doing is photographing the ^{entire} ~~whole~~ United States like
I had planned to when I gave up from Black Mountain College.
And, you know, I'm going back to it, but I'm not near through.
I have about 10 cities. Just not spending so much time in the
ditch, as I had intended when I was being taught to be a purist
at Black Mountain College.

EA: Was that within the teaching ? I didn't realize that.

RR: Every blade of grass. Well, that's what I was learning. Who
knows what they're teaching now. As usual, don't do
what you're learning.

EA: A formal question: Dada was born out of the anger and
frustration out of World War I by the arts, and I wondered
whether you felt that it was Dada's influence on the work that
you were doing, and Jasper Johns was doing, ...
Or, was kind of a neo-Dada type of protest, perhaps to the
Vietnam War.

RR: My constant companion and manager in Japan kept saying, I
don't think so! (laugh) They couldn't understand ...
but maybe 1/16th of anything you say, but he's a high executive
with the company, you know, and he's such a good cover, so I had
a conversation with , and I knew that I mean, I lost my
, one of them, and I knew that his family was
a little , we were talking about like get another dog
and all this, and okay, so Terry drove him home - he lives out

in Connecticut very close to where Terry lives - Terry had the car here, and he wanted to take the truck out to pick up some records and stuff, and so Terry drove him home. And

went in and visited, and there was this dog that we'd seen photographs of, that was supposed to be dead, and he said, I thought the dog died, and he said, Got a new one. And he said, Oh, what's his name? Looked exactly like the photograph, same name, identical. Okay, so I see him two days later, and so I say John, I hear you got a new dog. He said, I tink so. I said, No, you've got a new dog. He said, You don't have dog? And this is one of the high executives, my translator the whole time out in Japan. Sometimes I wonder how I got out of there! (laugh) And he said, You or me? And I said, You. And he said Oh yes, and I had no idea, you know, whether he didn't know the word for dog, or you, or me, or you know. What madness! This whole trauma about getting the new dog, you know. And that was my major translator. So no wonder we didn't get the \$1 million for Rocky, right? You or me? (laugh) No, I don't need the money, I make .5 a year, but thank you. Listen, if I could help stop the war for \$5 million, it would save everybody a lot of trouble.

EA: Well, I guess what you can probably help more than anything, is I think though that the work you did, I think did contribute ... (much laughter) Looking back, I've been working on this for 2 years now (the book, on the 60s on the protests, on the arts and the involvement - there were a tremendous amount of art activities, a lot of them I know you were involved with, like the Peace Tower in Los Angeles, which I understand you were directly

involved with, referring to space. And there was the Week of the Angry Artist in New York, and there was a collage of indignation at NYU, but what I'm really looking at is the actual effects of the Vietnam War on American painting, you know, where does it really reach into the work, like it certainly is in your work.

RR: Not too obvious.

EA: That's right. That's more subtle. Like Calvin Tomkins had pointed out that he thought that juxtaposition of unrelated objects in an artwork was in a sense, or could be a reflection of lack of logic in society at the time.

RR: Logic is blindness. Logic has always been an enemy of mine. Logic is also control, and it's very anti-sensual.

EA: Your involvement with EAT was a really great and interesting thing in that time also, because the EAT situation was theocracy.

RR: I know that you had invasion of the artists, doing exactly the kind of thing that we were talking about, going on. Technology is isolated from life, and the artist who also has an inquisitive mind and a curiosity, were very good partners to the research departments in all of these places. And in some cases there were things that actually worked. I think there was something like maybe, I don't know, either 7 or 15 patrons that came out of just 9 evenings, which only recently has become like one of the most important things credentials, esthetically, to have attended. But at the time,

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we heard nothing but protest. And rightly so, because things weren't working, but they weren't working in a very interesting way. They weren't working because we were trying things that never tried to work, so while a thousand people were standing outside the armory, doesn't mean that things weren't going on, and now a lot of those people who hated every minute that they were there, are writing about being some of the lucky few who attended that.

EA: There was one interesting piece that you did there called Mud Muse, in 1968 - 71, around there. That was the same period that Pete

RR: That's from Los Angeles, right?

EA: Well, it was part of the EAT project.

RR: It wasn't EAT. No, that was Art and Technology from Los Angeles. and that might have been later.

EA: I wondered if it had anything to do with Pete Seeger's song Knee Deep in the Big Muddy, which was the one that described LBJ up to, you know, his knees and unable to back down on the war.

RR: Nope.

EA: I was just reaching on that one, I guess.

RR: Let's see, maybe I'll reconsider. (laughter) Well, you can say that you~~xx~~ wondered, and with things coinciding and things, don't let me ruin your poetry.

EA: Okay. Tom L said that! He said it was all poetry.

RR: Does the book come out with a record?

EA: No, I hadn't thought about it, but it's not a bad idea. The music of the 60s, yeah. There is, Maurice Lichstein did do a fine book which goes into the 60s as far as music and literature, the kind of lack humor of the time, you know, Kurt Vonnegut, that whole thing that was somehow directly influenced by the environment. It all goes back to this

Chris, this fellow who is involved with psychoanalysis and art, he talks about the effects of interpsychic and environmental stress on the genesis of artistic creativity.

RR: That was also

EA: Very good - I hadn't thought ... (laughter)

RR: It was a misspelling, what he really meant to say was ... (laugh)

EA: Okay, I have only four more serious questions to ruin the really indirection of the interview (laugh). One is that in the catalogue, this catalogue, there was a description of a Castelli work that was called "Small Turtle Bowl" and it says, "the following is increasing involvement throughout the late 60s with social and political issues, and with works that employed sophisticated and technological devices. Rauschenberg returned to the more basic materials and enterprises on which he could more directly and largely by himself."

RR: Okay, that was because I moved to Florida, and was living on a small island, and the amount of energy it took to work as though I was in New York, which would have been a lie, you know, was just impossible, so I just turned to cardboard because I, that was one of the really only arbitrary times I sat down and had

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a practical conversation with me and my esthetics. And that was I needed to discover or recognize a material that would be anywhere today, no matter where I was. And I certainly was not interested in driftwood, you know, and I'm too old for shells, and so cardboard boxes are everywhere! I did cardboard structures in China, Japan, India, you know, I get the right medium there, so it came out of a very serious practical consideration, not to destroy my sense of values. I mean, I wouldn't be sitting here with you if I turned to driftwood, would I? That's right, you have your own life, right? (laugh)

EA: You'd be selling in those little shops in town. (laugh)

RR: How about a coffee table? (laugh)

EA: Well, do you think this might have been a reaction to the frustration and failure of the protest actions to bring about any change? The sixties didn't really work. Therefore, you retire, go down to Florida, went onto your island, and decided to just do your work.

RR: Nope. (laugh) I'll tell you one of the things was, I mean, that drove me there was that by that time I was getting maybe 250 telephone calls a day, asking me to do, so it does relate a little bit, asking me to do things that people thought were, you know, I mean somehow, all those, you know how you send off for something in a catalogue, the next day you go to the post office, and there's 50 catalogues waiting for you! You may have been a virgin. It may have been the first time you ordered anything from a catalogue, but the next day there's 50 catalogues

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there, covering the whole ... and so it really had something to do with that. They could have called anybody else, and so I usually just respond to sort of a second telephone call instead, because if you can call, I mean I care, you know, and if it's the kind of project that you could call anybody else and it wouldn't make any difference, well then I'll use that energy on something else. I mean, whether it's like animals or nuclear bombs or starvation, or any kind of abuse--privately, socially, you know, I mean, so that left me more time to develop, and they did call other people. About that time, though, you might find it interesting to think about the number of other artists who moved out of the city, and they didn't go to East Hampton to live with other artists. Remember that movement; that was in the fifties, right? Where everybody moved to East Hampton? And that was to keep an eye on the art world. I think that [redacted] and Alfonso Asorio and [redacted] and I think that a lot of artists moved out of the city at that time to keep a better eye on the world.

EA: Yeah, you're right; it was getting crowded. Calvin Tomkins [redacted] mentioned, I guess it was in *Off the Wall*, that you had collaborated on a book with Norman Mailer, what he referred to as a large format book [redacted] work an image on the Vietnam War. Was that ever published?

RR: No, I didn't.

EA: Isn't that funny! I even wrote the page down. He mentioned it on page 266 of his book, that in 1965 you collaborated with Norman Mailer on a large format words and image book on the war

in Vietnam. I never heard of it.

RR: Well, they got a bunch of things wrong in that book! Not always
are
for the better. I don't mind it when you/totally misquoted and
sound a lot brighter than you really are, you know, but when
they get you in trouble, that's not nice.

EA: It's interesting how many artists absolutely refuse to admit that
politics in any way affects their work.

RR: Isn't that something? Everybody's surprised.

EA: Actually, you know, you've got to really dig and search, and
your comment about working in the gap between art and life ...

RR: Is already about that.

EA: You hear so many misquotes. I was to a lecture in Venice a few
years ago (Italy) and there was someone, some Italian art
professor was talking about you, and he said that you had said
that, you know, the world stays outside work;
anything that comes into your studio from the outside world you
throw right out the window. And it didn't make sense at all.

RR: Jesus Christ. object. The next line in that
quote is, the gap is art and life, and you can't manufacture
either of them. Something either becomes art or it doesn't.

EA: That's beautiful, I never heard that part of it.

RR: It's a longer quote, that anybody uses.

EA: That is, the second part is great.

RR: You see, you can't make life, and you can't make art, so I mean
it's

EA: I noticed when you mentioned about the cardboard, that reminded
or
me of when you worked, I guess it was right here/in the city .

RR: What I discovered there, you see, I didn't have to invent it. I don't have a good factory. Because I discovered the international material. If I was stranded in Africa, I mean you know, I'm giving you a better answer than your question is. Because I am still like moving with as much, I don't know, sensibility and compassion into the world. That bugs me so much about most of the artists saying you know, like art's not political. Communication is.

EA: Many of the artists are positively angry if you try to point out a certain possible political connection with any of their work.

RR: So they should be painting for blind people. (laugh)

EA: I just had a little question about whether your work was also autobiographical?

RR: How big were the other ones? (laugh) You want me to stoop down?

EA: Well, I think the Roy Lichenstein's were, for example. Not that's how I could find ... (many talking, can't hear) But I wasn't able to do a whole relationship there between advertising art and advertising being in a sense the handmaiden of the military-industrial complex, and he doing a satire on advertising. He was polite about it and open to the possibility that it could have existed, but only unconsciously. And he was not consciously patterning anything, he wasn't very happy about the war and in fact contributed money and time to, you know, he didn't go out and march, so went to a few meetings

RR: He's really quite conservative. He's right on the verge of being on the other side! He's one of my best friend, but he's almost, he is so terrified. Not terrified, just conservative.

TAPE #5, SIDE A Ed Adler talks about the 60s with Robert Rauschenberg

RR: He's quite conservative. He's right on the verge of being on the other side (laughs). He's one of my best friends. He is so terrified. I don't know terrified. Just conservative. Not terrified.

EA: Well, he even said he wanted to be a fighter pilot at one time so that his war series was actually in many ways pro-war. Not pro war, but pro-glory.

RR: (raucous laughter) He's almost on the other side! I have to be very careful.

EA: Well he thought _____ he didn't really see your relationship _____.

RR: Well a sexist attitude. Well it already tells you something too.

EA: Well he didn't see your relationship between his discarded bra series and the feminist movement. It's just simply a bra--

RR: Nipples! . (laughs). His was just nipples in art! You want me to _____ co-sponsor? What other artist do you want to talk about? (laughs) No, but I really can't-- I mean someone that's a real sexist, they can't be very sensitive about the conditions of the world, you think?

No I don't think so.

RR: I really don't. It just doesn't work. But you can't think that the thing that the richest man in the country or most macho-- I mean none of that has anything to do-- in fact, all that has to be abandoned.

EA: That's exactly what we have to get rid of if we're going

Female
Voice 71

to straighten it all out.

RR: Right. Right. All of our glasses get fuzzy. But we can always wipe them off. I mean this is not where they put the angels. We know about it, right? (laughter) So guess what else, right?

EA: We've got to live with the alternatives.

Just as a final question I have here.

RR: Is it a little bitty one...?

EA: In addition to the removal of your work from the 1968 _____, and the peace tower, and the peace portfolio; I was wondering if you recalled any particular activities that artists were involved in. Particularly in the Vietnam War protest.

RR: Nothing outstanding on my mind.

EA: There were a few things at the filmmaker's cinematech that I recall that went on.

RR: You probably know them all. I just really don't have a very good memory. I told you about my kaleidoscopic, you know...

EA: That's why I thought I would just ask, you know it would _____.

RR: You only hit me on collision (laughs). That was good? Head on.

EA: I was looking forward to questioning you on this because I thought from the very beginning when I had the idea for this that yours would be the outstanding interview. Merrill Karp is a good friend of mine and she immediately, when I mentioned it to her, she said, "Bob Rauschenberg.

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the others are all going to tell you that they weren't influenced, they're all going to tell you they're a-political and their work is absolutely pure.

RR: _____defended....

Background
voice :

Hello, hello, hello?

RR: Geez, I just had a block. I was interested in what was happening there. _____ most important painting.

EA: Major? Oh, the one with the sled--

RR: And the head. _____lights.

EA: The sled and the grease fat.

RR: Yeah, you can't think of it?

EA: I have the same block.

RR: Yeah, Boyce or something. Now what you have to do is turn to somebody and say, "What's--" And you say, "so and so's sleigh."

EA: Sled and fat and he had a big show at the Guggenheim.

RR: I defended him in Germany, saying that--

EA: Boyce. Joseph Boyce.

RR: I got the Brett. That's another meeting though. It's about all art's political, you know, so lay off of him. Because he's got all these incredible philosophies about what his work means and symbolism. It's too bad he's not an American artist instead of an ex-Nazi fighter.

EA: Yeah, right... (laughter)

RR: I bet he didn't kill--

EA: Probably not, he's a pretty sensitive guy. Well, he was shot down pretty early in the thing, I think. So that's what his work is about, I understand.

RR: Well, that's what all that fat is, you know.

EA: Yeah, they wrapped him in fat to keep him warm.

RR: They wrapped him in fat to save his life. His head was shot up. So everybody else says, "Oh grease! Oh that's gross." (laughter) Well, the tallow is what saved his life.

EA: But I would really love to see some of the work, if I could go in there, is there any convenient time when I could call someone?

RR: Yeah, David is the one but David's got a sore throat the last two days. I nearly killed everybody getting my show together. All the galleries, people went on vacation.

EVERYBODY IS TALKING AT ONCE HERE.

RR: _____ missed the show too. Come back and spent the bonus and they didn't get the punch (laughs).

EA: Right. The champagne was really flowing. I love it!

RR: There were people in the street. Like we _____. It was a very optimistic point in my life because I'm having trouble with the communist government (laughter).

EA: Yeah, I heard about that (laughs).

RR: You know, Russia won't have me until Reagan's out. We've got big problems. Real big problems, you know (laughs). Just to look in some of the people's faces as they pass each other. Not just passing me, because they passed each

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other. It just killed that whole idea of competitive art. The dancers were there, the musicians. Not a lot of the painters showed up.

EA: _____
and Roy Lichtenstein. So Vance Cunningham was there and John Cage was there.

RR: It was an incredible list. At one point I had one arm around Talking Heads and the other around John Cage. Then I say "I want this one!" Magazines photograph. Anybody's _____ . And the photographer editor may or may not _____ .

EA: Who is the woman in the short tu-tu--?

RR: Rainer. We had Betty von Rainer. We had Cunningham, his dancers. Thorp. Tricia Brown. Carmen. Anyway these people never appear in the same place. It was fantastic.

EA: New Year's Eve is not the easiest time to find people in New York.

RR: If you're going to bomb, this is going to be it.

EA: You could have missed a lot of it--

RR: I could have missed the whole thing. It was coming on strong, like the New York Times ad.

EA: Yeah, that was really something.

RR: Nobody _____ .

Absolutely. I says, okay, Bob, go for it. There is no such thing as nearly going for it. So I did it. Just go for it.

EA: I couldn't believe it. It was right opposite a bourbon ad or something like that. It was so great. You know, art was

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finally moving into it.

RR: We still have to pay the bills, but that's okay.

EA: _____

RR: Right, exactly.

EA: Conceivable _____.

RR: _____ a multi-million dollar business

_____.

EA: No, it was great.

RR: It's fun. It was at that energy level. You know, you do it in the 60s there. A lot of people said, "this is just like the 60s."

EA: Yeah. It looked like it. People could dress for it. They could wear, like Jim Rose wears a tuxedo with a red shirt. You could do things--

RR: _____ gold shoes. Leather jacket, leather pants.

I had a leather tuxedo with golden shoes. Maybe _____ gold paratrooper boots. Just had them goldleafed (much laughter).

EA: You're right though, this is the way to do it. To move right in among-- To move into the New York Times Magazine section.

RR: But in the 70s. I really got very bored with the lack of energy. You know, there. There really wasn't much.

EA: How do you feel about the art _____. This new wave art that's around?

RR: The expressionists?

EA: Yeah.

RR: I don't know. I think, I think.. they are boring out of a kind of frenzy of wanting activity and there being no stimuli

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around. So, we had a lot of things that were very interesting to bounce off of for inspiration, I don't know... ideas? Everything was a lot clearer. And now they act like they're the big Republican, you know. I don't know about..believe this or not, but I almost prefer Watergate to Reagan. I'm really ashamed of myself for thinking that. But somehow (chuckles) it did occur to me. So it must be there, right? (laughs).

EA: There was something happening with a direction. Today it seems, I don't know, the world seems to be rolling along on its own. It's the old Tolstoy kings and/puppets in history sitting back and letting it all be done to him. Getting screwed over by the world.

RR: That's going to be his story.

: That's going to be his story, right. Reagan _____
_____ ah hah!

RR: He's doing a lot.

: Right. Cutting all the social programs, anything that--

EA: Going the other way. He's retreating. He's retreating from it.

RR: We're getting stuck with the country though. He can retreat as much as he wants to but this is our place.

EA: He's leaving it all in a sense to a headless government is almost what I feel we've got. No leader. No leadership. Everyone floundering. Trying--

: He is in more control that people realize. He is doing these things.

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RR: He is doing these things. That's what I'm saying too.

EA: That's the political scientist in the _____.

RR: Well okay, I'm saying that it's-- This is not an innocent act.

: _____ but he's doing it.

RR: It's not an innocent act.

: It's malicious almost.

RR: Yeah, right.

: He's doing it to women, and all the social programs. I see--

RR: Blacks.

: Right. I see my position in it but that's right, Blacks, women, any minority, artists if you want to take them as a minority.

RR: Women is the big setback.

: Yeah, I know.

RR: Because it has to do with abortion and--

We almost had Christianity licked there for a minute even with Carter (laughs).

: _____ that they would separate the two politics and then _____ but it hasn't seemed to happens for hundreds of years.

EA: Church and state. That's where Herbert Reed goes back to. That's the basis for his whole thesis is the--

RR: Well, the church has been so rich before but the church is quite poor now. So we might have a better chance now. If we had the right leader.

: Hope so.

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RR: A left leader.

EA: It's the right/left leader (laughter).

EA: So Tom called David Weiss?

RR: Yep. And asked him about _____.

EA: Are you staying in the New York hotel?

RR: No. I'll probably move out by Friday or something. I find it so sad to work without Terry, and Terry's going on vacation. And I'm in a very funny position because he'll stay in the opening because I need help but I want his vacation to be over, you know, (chuckles) so please, I want everything. Both those things. I mean I know he deserves it and I do too except see _____, my vacation is to get back to _____ and work. And just, like not on a project, not on this form, you know, to finish this in 30 days. Had to leave town in five weeks. Had to do this and get everything done. Yeah, I like walking through the jungle, you know, thinking "God, I don't have an idea in my head!" (laughter) That's my vacation. And then work though. Then do something when I get there, you know. I miss Walter Cronkite because it used to be sort of my _____. He used to get me always my uh...uh.... disguise. Because everybody sort of stopped. And I'd start looking around and see what there was there to work with while they were all watching Walter Cronkite. And then it would look as though of course, /I must be an inspired artist. Because already I know what to do (everyone laughs). But it's very hard now. Working with Dan Rather standing-- No, No! Can't do it. (laughter).

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I do things all day but I mostly start work, you know, around news time and I don't know whether that's simply because most offices stop calling or whether it's also can be _____ about whether it's getting dark and sounds change or something. I mean I don't have deny anything, you know, it could be all of those things.

END OF SIDE A

SIDE B

RR: ...and I can't imagine. I wanted to ask him a few questions but I was afraid that his answers might not be up to his standard of his presentation because he was coming on very well. You know, new-- specific ceramics. It was mostly about the ceramics. He wanted to talk about any particular new culture and what they did and things like that.

EA: He didn't seem like your typical UPI reporter at all.
But

RR: /he's lived in China, Burma, Japan, I don't know, he just kept mentioning all these other places. He made me feel as though I was just um... a New York housewife or something, you know? (laughter) But the number of places I hadn't lived in. He didn't say _____.
so that's--

And he obviously survived, right? He was here today. Yesterday, he was coming over and I guess he mostly--

EA: I think that Tanaka, the ceramic people, probably set him up and informed him and stuff like that.

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RR: But just in their office, with the other ceramics, and because yesterday, he wanted to come over and he hadn't seen the exhibition and I don't let that go on anymore. I've learned too many times. It's like his question, is it true that you were born in Port Arthur, Texas? (laughs). So if you had that in mind, don't ask it.

EA No, not at all (more laughter). You know who did that though, and I didn't ask it, but last week I was with Jim Rosenquist. Now Jim insisted on starting from the beginning. I _____ it was wonderful _____.

RR: Oh, he's fantastic.

EA: Oh, it was great. We were there about 7 hours. So I got the story of his life from Jr. High School (laughs).

RR: That day's a version of it, though.

EA: hopefully

RR: Well, /you just got that day's version of it. No, but we're not going to go back that far.

BACKGROUND TALKING HERE, CAN'T DECIPHER.

: Let's move Christopher and Debra gets cooler. And I can't hang him there in between me and my son. I can. That's called life itself. (laughs) I don't have to hang him.

RR: And my job is to hang onto it.

Y : Right.

: Right there?

RR: Yeah, put on the bottoms. Like put it up to here. You can tell. Beautiful. Are you aware of her?

Y : Not terribly.

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RR: Actually we can raise this. We shouldn't be getting into Tanya's territory either. Okay, try that.

EA: And that's why you haven't _____ art?

RR: That's right (laughs). Well, the abstractionists, you see, discovered all those dreadful colors for houses. That covered all the cracked plaster like I remember Mulberry was one of those right colors and they had all kinds of tacky greys and greens and dark dove, I think.

EA:

RR: Or maybe it was pearl dove.

MORE BACKGROUND TALKING, AND NOISES.

RR: Actually the _____ is very good.

EA: I've seen his work.

RR: He does a lot of books.

NEW VOICE COMES ON AND SAYS, "January 5th, 1983, interview with Ed Adler."

EA: Before I turn it on, I'll tell you a little bit about what I'm doing. It's a book about the 60s. Essentially about the effects of the, I guess we could call it, the social trauma and the _____ of the period. Particularly the protest element which I think was a major part of that time. And there have been a number of books like the Gates of Eden. _____ Morris gets going and deals with the music of the 60s and the--

RR: What do you consider the music of the 60s?

EA: Oh, I guess-- He's who's. the authority considers it the rock music. And the folk rock. The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan. To me--

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- RR: _____
- EA: Yeah right. (laughs).
- RR: Call it anything.
- EA: And people are writing books about the films that are coming out of the 60s. Coming Home, Apocalypse Now and so forth. About the 60s. Things that are happening from that era. So I've been moving in the direction of the art of the 60s. And not just the art of the 60s because that gets to be a little easy but the effects of all that social trauma on the art of the 60s.
- RR: Because there wasn't a lot of open protest _____.
You don't have to use every word, you know.
- EA: No, no.
- RR: I think
You said in the 60s that/the music probably really got onto it and the writers got into it but the-- And the painting seems to me that the artists, you know, were sensationalizing the art world. But in most cases, it wasn't being done literally one for one representing the subject. But I think the results was very shocking.
- EA: Well, in that 60s period, particularly the late 60s, I know that you were involved with--very cooperative with--Jane Fonda's works and I know I saw you at happenings at the Filmmaker's Cinematech. I don't know if you knew Barbara and Dave Stone?
- RR: Sure.
- EA: You know, there very good friends of mine and I wondered though with all of that. Also there was the peace portfolio which you had printed.

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RR: Oh, we've always done that. I think we've been able to afford to do that by-- Actually still, I mean, you know, I've got one for Africa on the press right now. They have a headquarters in that the UN gave them in Paris. And Jim Rosenquist has always been doing that and we've been voting for artists' rights and against nuclear war, and we're still just as busy. I think that it almost seems like the rest of the world doesn't care as much. As some of the artists from the 60s were just beginning to grow in prestige which is the only thing that would give them any power, so that anybody would pay any attention, and so both of those things were going on. And I think that the Jettson group, good answers, certainly important there. A movement to make people not use any particular aesthetic as a cocoon or something --to protect themselves. That all the arts that I know that was going on related directly to exposure and to reality, moving back out into the world as opposed to uh, say it happened then about one or ten years that anybody even thought that there might be an American culture in pain. And then some people tried to slow it down by pointing out that Hans Hoffman and Bill DeCoonen and Mark Rothko and Jack Twerkoff were all foreigners. So there still wasn't one but then so in my generation was sort of the beginning of now what are you going to do about it? Here we are. This is American art. And you've got it babe. So in that way, /it may have affected, done a lot to precipitate activity that was political with--

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EA:

Do you do any work at that time that--

RR:

Also in the dance. In the dance the same thing. That's when Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Bruce Brown got involved with, I don't know whether it was Jill Johnston or Yvonne Rainer called task movements. And Bob Morris too, the artist. And Lucinda Childs. And there was all of a sudden a non-professional dancers and musicians, you know, became stars in a dance concept. And I think probably _____ Oldenberg's happenings were always political. Because they mostly related to atrocities he felt about the Swedes (laughs) but still that's sort of international and Jim Donning did things in _____. And _____. Jack Brown, I'm not sure.

EA:

Well, he started the happenings.

RR:

It was his work.

EA:

And that's where _____.

RR:

And now it's in every art book from third grade up. (laughs) but nobody really knows what it was exactly. I knew that I wasn't happening because I was working too desperately with Cunningham and Paul Taylor and Viola Florberg and theater totally being intimidated by the austerity of that concept. So I called my pieces just theater pieces. Also I wasn't political. I mean I was political but I wasn't part of the expressionists. You see, most of those other happenings had to do _____ they had to deal with, the expressionism. And they may have even be want to, um, like German cabaret type _____. Ask me a question.

EA:

Would you describe your work of the period.

RR:

It's very hard because I have a kaleidoscopic mind

and at the same time I'm saying these things, I'm feeling all the sort of hurts and disappointments. I mean really personally. Friends that did this and all of that.

So, as we turn that thing, as I talk, the wheel turns (laughs). And every now and then, I feel Owww!

EA: I'll try to focus in every once in a while.

RR: Go ahead, that's what I said, you take it.

EA: Do you recall any works that were intended as documents of the political climate at that time? That you deliberately did with that in mind? No protest type pieces or didn't your feelings go directly into the work?

RR: No there were _____ I did. I think it was Newsweek that was rejected because it was too abstract which covered, well, actually Janis was still alive then, but it included Martin Luther King, the assassination, the Kennedys, that's why I felt--

EA: Catalog out here.

RR: The report I got was that it was too abstract.

EA: Here's earth day.

RR: But that's not in the 60s.

EA: Here's Currents. Is that in the 60s?

RR: That was 1970 which is in the 60s. That was a whole series. I went out to Los Angeles, Malibu. I had to put my dog down someplace. She was about to have 13 more puppies. And so I went out to a place in Malibu, what I wanted to do, what I thought the world really needed is some beauty.

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And I was going to do the most, largest, most beautiful water color in the world. And Currents came out of it. Black and white and grey. And it's about the trials in Chicago. It's about mugging in the subways. It's about-- I mean I can't collect any sources to make this gorgeous drawing. And everything is going the other way. So I made a 50-foot silkscreen print, and I don't know...Hi, Rick! I just met you from Louisiana. Just got in?

Rick: How are you doing? Hello, I'm Rick.

EA: Hello.

Rick: Pleased to meet you. I might grab a beer.

RR: Help yourself. My favorite relative (laughing). Second to none. Just came up to see the show. He has to be my favorite. None of the others would come (laughing). You don't know which came first, though.

EA: Well, I was glad to hear that because I thought Currents I've noticed several works that had that type of--

RR: Currents is really strong. My whole philosophy about that was. You know, fuck em. They're not just going to shit on their asses in the subway on this news. And they're not going to-- If you pay for it, more than the newspaper, you're not going to wrap fish in it, you know, or you're not going to take one of these prints and use it for kitty litter. Like you're going to confront it. And in that sense, let the whole, all my decisions artistically, were just as bare and austere as I could make them. Like nearly no color, nearly no interest and it just-- There it is.

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And here it is again. And here it is again. Most unpopular series I've ever done. I still have most of it (laughs).

EA: Are they here or--

RR: Yep. A lot of them are here. Some people got really onto it. And realized that was--

EA: Would it be possible for me to photograph a few of them?

RR: Oh, sure. Or even have _____.

EA: Wonderful.

RR: You can see that the stuff is there.

EA: Now you see these are posters for the shows. I didn't know what the actual show looked like.

RR: There's a poster for Javitz. That's in '68.

EA: Kite. There's a painting named Kite that was done in 1963. An eagle and helicopter, military parade and the commentary show on the work in the Smithsonian/catalogue reads that you specifically addressed yourself to the troubling issue of military involvement by the U.S. in the affairs of other nations. I suppose that would be a really classic example also that--

MUCH BACKGROUND ACTIVITY

RR: Here's that sign. So after it had been rejected by-- This was supposed to be the end of the last ten years. It was supposed to be the decade, cover the decade and we'd done the moon stuff then, and all of that. I would think that that might really be a nice one to use. There's another Currents there.

EA: 159 in the Catalogue. Right.

RR: Are you going into color in anything?

- EA: Very likely. There will be some.
- RR: And this is not a-political. During the Stone-Moon series,
- EA: Yeah, I have questions about that.
- RR: That was part of the very serious involvement of mine was that one of the only activities that seem to me to be aggressively peaceful was--now since then I think it's all been reverted back to war energy--but at that time was a sort of overall interest in technology itself for its own sake. And what might evolve out of it. Now, all the information that you-- I'm still working with them. I just finished a farce-shuttle trip, but now most of the things I read about protection and like the governments taken over again.
- EA: Yeah. Well the question I was going to ask you about, about that was even though the Apollo landing on the moon was a celebrated as a national triumph, it occurred in 1969 which was pretty much the peak year of the 60s protest, and protest over money being spent on things like that. I noticed that in the work--
- RR: It had its_____.
- EA: Yeah, right. Because they felt they were spending billions where people were starving. And the series that reflected the event which you titled Stone/Moon, I thought it may have had some Dada-like humor in it, in the connotation of the word "stone." I know you refer to a lithographic stone obviously. But stone in the 60s had a whole different

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meaning. And I wondered / ^{whether} you weren't very subtly kind of putting down the whole thing. And really saying we've got to realize all this. Because they knew that you were brought there to watch the event as a person who was going to celebrate with them. I thought maybe you were working-- getting them from within.

RR: That one has about three sides to it. I mean those who refer to the drugs too.

EA: In fact as I recall one of the images that you did from it was the astronaut who had a really twisted expression on his face. It was a wonderful pose. You think winking or something like that.

RR: He died.

EA: Did he?

RR: Yeah, that was the one who died. And his wife. He was my favorite. He was the one that asked his partner if you were on earth now and what would you--

EA: He was also the one that wouldn't come back in.
Remember

RR: /when they held up the whole project for an extra 17½ minutes and Washington and everybody was going crazy (laughing). And he said "Go off without me."

But he also was the one _____ and said that if there is anything, you know, if you could have your choice of ^{to eat} anything, what would it be? And the person he was with, he knew well, said pastrami sandwich, and he got hell again. He reached in his pocket and pulled out _____ sandwich which started disintegrating (laughs). I really felt for that guy. And then that time

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and they didn't take off. And the whole capsule blew up, and stuff.

EA: Bad vibes.

RR: And the next year _____.

EA: Another painting that's-

RR: I wanted to get something, just a souvenir, I mean just something. I never could say _____ and ask his wife, send me one of his old ties or something. _____ and I'll give you the drawing, I don't care, but something to touch because it's so rare that there are real heroes.

EA: Yes. Well, another paint/^{ing} that was done in 1964 which I thought might be historically related.

RR: I like his questions. He has all the answers for his (laughs). He asks them, then he answers them, and then we talk about something else (laughter).

EA: Well, I could just say does Persimmon have any meaning? In that it kind of reminded me a little bit of some of the pre-French revolution paintings where it could light the venus at her toilet type of imagery was the type that Bouchet was doing-- I heard everything fell apart over there--and I wondered whether this was just at that _____ point in the sixties when things were about to go, if something like that could be a warning _____.

RR: I don't think so. I think my involvement there was just another tangle with bringing the old masters up to date. She had to wash dishes in that piece.

EA: This is why I had wondered if it had some sort of an

overtone. Times are about subconscious--

RR: It could. I mean I don't rule that out because I very rarely start on a project unless it's really addressed to a specific group of people or a specific problem within a _____. But certainly most of my attention is outside the studio. It always has been. I mean I got into _____ Los Angeles protest group and I quit the group because one of the writers who was in charge of the whole thing said, "Even as the blood seeps under the artist's studio door, such and such, such and such." And I said I quit. What the fuck was his door closed for? (laughter)

EA: Well, there were comments like that during the Chicago riots and the end of that. Someone in artists said ban Chicago for two years. Boycot Chicago for over two years. And there proclamation said that the artists cannot shut the studio door against the napalming of villages and the killing of children. That the term would be _____.

There was in--also 1965--there was a painting on the semblage oracle that was made with sheet metal, and iron and rubber tires and glass, and fragments: batteries, wire, electrical and electrical components. Part of Billy Hoover's show, the machine at the end of _____.

RR: It was a _____.

EA: Yes. And it was called the machine at the end of the machine age, was the show. I wondered if that was supposed

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to have a feeling of after the bomb?

RR: Not really. I'm for during, not for after. I'm basically very optimistic. Like I thought my opening the other night was one of the strongest optimistic-- Not because it was mine, but the whole activity socially was one of the strongest optimistic reaffirmations that I sensed in a very long time and I haven't sensed it since. I was working in China this summer and if you got to the person. If you were actually talking to the person, even through a translator, you knew that there was no excuse for the world as screwed up as it is. Or there is a very good line. And it has to be the organizations and the control and the governments and the industries that have insisted on this storing of every piece of information before it becomes--before it not only becomes known, before it becomes alive. And so that's why my around the world tour is in these odd places. It's so important to me and I think that it doesn't matter how many nuclear weapons you either build or you stop, they're all heading toward an eventual total destruction. And art can't because art is about life. You know, you can't have art without the world. And so I think just as one possible communication after another has been eliminated, art is the last one that remains pure, clear and uncompromising. It used to be arts and sports. But now sports have been used. And I think that's just terrible. So now I do think it really is up to the arts and I intend to everything I can about it.

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- EA: That's wonderful. Your answers are so much better than my questions. It's almost hard to follow them (both laugh). You know, I have little mundane issues like specific paintings like Revolvers which was made of the five revolving plexi-glass--
- RR: That was also upstaged then because the Beatles record came out I think the week before my opening (laughs). Who would believe me, right? I mean, geez, there was the five of them (laughs) and the queen.
- EA: Right. And you had five revolving discs. But I wondered--
- RR: Back to my analysis...
- EA: Yeah, right. In a sense I guess these are in a way an analyses of the paintings, looking for metaphors of the 60s. What was going on in society. But I wondered if you were deliberately trying to show say societal instability in that time.
- RR: I'm still trying just insist on individual participation and taste and construction and that's exactly what my around-the-world tour is. I'm not interested in everybody being crazy about American art or even abstract art, but I do think, just built into because of my interest, built into my own particular work is an invitation. I mean they can hate it and my work will be a success. Because of what they're hating and the fact that I created this-- I aroused this response in them because they have to dislike a lot of things in order to dislike one of my pieces. I was

always pleased when somebody would say but they never really meant it, that like, you know, anybody can do that. You've got it, you've got it.

EA: Yeah, right. You've touched me in the section zone. Did you ever see any of the things that Herbert Reed has written about that? He's an aesthetician.

RR: I know who he is.

EA: And he says that art can save the world. He goes into it a bit more, the psycho, the psychological area, but he feels that education since the Renaissance has been too limited toward educating our, the scientific side of our personality: the linguistic, the mathematical whatever and that--

RR: You go down there and open an application.

EA: Right. So that this ultimately breeds technology, a-technocracy; technocracy is when they clash-breed war and if the sensuous side of the personality which can only develop from art education. That doesn't mean you have to learn how to draw, but you have to learn to learn how to look and you do this by looking at paintings and educating the sensuous part of our nature--

RR: Which is teaching you how to look at art.

EA: Right. In a way that is non-technological.

RR: Right. That's why you have these big monstrous, controlling corporations because they have all these people who are smarter than hell locked up in little cells, you know, just inventing like crazy. With no use, with no use. And so you may have five years of Bell Laboratories most important

investigation and it might end up a little pink telephone next to your bed called the Princess (laughs). And it's just money. And the technology doesn't move on it.

EA: It's a big problem in society and it's getting worse because as money is running in hard economic times what they drop again is the art education, the music and the art falls to the side. And reading, and writing and arithmetic--

RR: It's like a self-imposed revolution. It's like what happened to China. You put all the artists and the scientists and the teachers work on a farm because they can't get a job teaching. So it's a soft... a soft-ware idea of what happened in China.

EA: Yeah. That's right.

RR: And even China is sobering up to it and they just had everybody reinlist so that, and this doesn't sound too good, I mean it's not the whole country but an awful lot, a great percentage, a majority of the controlling powers in China were totally illiterate and they got the job because they were. You know, it was one of the qualifications that made you more acceptable that somebody who could read. Up until now there's been no initiative taken to change that. And they're doing really fine about making these changes but they're going to get in a hell of a lot more trouble. They've got to reinstalled curiosity and imagination, but the big problem is like, okay they could probably do that in an arc of time but on the straight line, you've got to have three meals a day. You know, so arc is larger.

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- EA: Even if most of them have rice.
- RR: The basis is three meals a day down here, and you're out of rice. They don't even have enough rice.
- EA: Yeah, they committed some sort of aesthetic and intellectual genocide back there not that many years ago. Now they're suffering as a result of it. Maybe the personnel who can reawaken the country to--they need a Renaissance. They're going to have to have that and if they don't, it may not work.
- RR: I read in the New York Times, I think it's really dangerous but god, I really would like to start my show up there.
- EA: Yeah, that would be great.
- RR: I really think it would help them. I really think they should see something, when you look at the work I was going to show them. I sold 150 pieces and it could be like an instant overnight sensual education because it's not done by one of them so they don't have to do critical judgment about whether it's good or whether he shouldn't do it or he should do it or anything. I'm a foreigner, you know so they can just look at it and be pure.
- EA: The start of _____.
- I know art students there _____ in Sheehan and areas like that and they wanted to learn so much about what was going on. I _____ hard news though but I don't know if they ever got it. I doubt it. Beyond Picasso, they knew almost nothing.

- RR: You know what they did-- I don't teach. And they-- Well I did once in Carmel and that was really just a few weeks. And I it just didn't work. I got so depressed about--not about the students. The faculty. Really (chuckles) it was just terrible. I couldn't get rid of them, you know. And I just hated what they were doing to everybody around.
- EA: Yeah, there are very few / ^{really} good teachers. I toured _____.
- RR: They're real schmucks. They're subversive. They really want to keep the mind right where they know how to be better than it or something.
- EA: They have to maintain it at a level which is just a little beneath them.
- RR: Controllable. Just a little bit.
- EA: So they maintain the heroic aspects on the campus which is where they live.
- RR: So they'll qualify for all their pensions, but anyway in China they didn't censor me. They didn't ask me what I was going to talk about or anything. This was the major art school, national, and some of their old master artists showed up for it. I was terrified but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I mean I can't tell people things that I don't know or feel. I mean I can't go into an academic harangue, you know, and cover my field. So I mostly just have to hang out (laughs). It's just that I don't have any other place to go. It's not that I do really enjoy being so odd because most often its very painful and gets you into a hell of a lot of trouble.

It's just that I don't have a cover. I collected from Gemini Publishing a few slides of things and I threw out about half of them because I didn't understand what the artists were doing and as I was showing the slides-- Slides might have been almost insignificant. I would tell something about that artist's life. Sort of like what you're doing, I guess, with your book or something.

Like if you tell them what Jim Rosenquist really thinks.
through

And so I went / about 15 of these people and stuff like that but that finished up. There was some-- Then there was questions and answers and then this was the last day of the summer and they were going to recess and it also was noon, and even the Chinese have the expression that anybody could take this country over at noon. Because everybody goes to lunch exactly at the same time--noon. And then they have a little nap afterwards. And then everything starts picking up around 2:30. So my talking with them, the exchange, lasted past noon. So the president of the school got up and said, "It's time, Mr. Rauschenberg, for lunch. If the students stay any longer, they'll miss lunch." Whereupon the entire audience got up and screamed at him to sit down (laughs).

EA: Really? That's great!

RR: It's probably the most unanimous, anti-Chinese gesture in a long time and so I said okay, the next thing I want to show you-- I said I don't want anybody getting up and

explaining anything. I don't want you to even ask questions to each other. I'm just going to show you some photographs, color slides, that I brought with me for various projects and I just want you to look. And if you know or you don't know or anything, don't mention it. And these were Hasselblot and Rolly so with the projector we had, it just like (sound effect) covered the wall. It looked so grand. It was like radio city or something. And in that situation. I tell you they really thought it glamorous. And I just had details to say. A car bumper. Or ramble-shackle house, you know, on the side of a highway. It was just one thing after another and it was just-- I knew, you see, with the timing that-- I mean I didn't plan this, it was just lucky. If they had gone back, then somebody could have corrected, explained, killed the whole experience as a live experience. I remember hearing when Jack Twerkoff first when to _____ was teaching, He was _____ the art department at Yale, after Black Mountain. And Jack Twerkoff was quoted as a noted teacher

END OF SIDE B