

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Bound Compilation of Robert Rauschenberg Interviews, 1985-1987 /
Unidentified / Interview with Robert Rauschenberg / Setagaya Museum, 1986

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SETAGAYA, ONE

RR: I really don't know what I can say.

The idea of ROCI is both too simple and too complicated to explain quickly. Not even optimistically, but realistically, I believe that art can make a great difference in the world. I don't believe that there is any culture that doesn't have some expression of its own, and I believe that all of these cultures can understand each other through art. So ROCI was founded on...dedicates itself to taking information from one place to another and to another and collecting masses of information including: social habits, environmental distinctions, cultural, religious and political possibilities.

Twice now, I have worked in China. The first time that I worked in China, which was probably about seven years ago, the most frightening aspect of being there was the fact that from one person to another, they didn't know what the other person was doing. It wasn't the censorship, or the politics, or the social aspects of their lives...it was the fact that there was no more curiosity. That was the worst kind of life that I thought anyone could live. I worked harder on making ROCI a possibility after that. I think it would be terrible to live in a world with all of these other cultures--some much older than any of us--without having any sense of what they worship, what they drink, what they drink--you know, what does chili taste like--would you like a margarita? With our technology, it can be open, instant information. And we're now taking it to Africa and a few other places that don't have immediate access, but it's easy for us to bring it there--the information and the exhibition. And it's

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also, in reverse, it's very interesting for the more sophisticated cultures, to look at some of the more sensitive areas that they don't have access too. Terry and I went down the Amazon and we met no fewer than ten tribes there that hadn't been really viewed. And talked to them. All this comes out in the art work and it comes out in the video. That's the idea...that somehow we can make some kind of peace by destroying the anger that is selfish and stupid, by information that allows us all to realize that we already are in a very troubled environment all around the world...not just environmentally, but in all ways. And that it is ours.

I'd like to lighten the situation up a little bit, because it gets depressing if I think too much about it. I just want to say that I have a lot to thank Japan for in my own personal artistic aesthetic and physical development. All the way back to 1965 when I collaborated with four of us from the Merce Cunningham Dance Company put on a special performance at the Shogetsu Theater, which was nothing like what it is now. And we performed, I think it was considered in competition with twenty Japanese dancers. We were outnumbered, but I don't know if anybody could keep score. Also, with Iono. He tricked me. We were going to do a lecture together. He had the newspaper run the competition for the one hundred best questions to ask Robert Rauschenberg. So I got here, from some other part of the world, and I found out that he had done that. I said, un-huh, now let's see what I do. And, I don't know, we had a lot of playfulness. He had a staff of the top critics from Japan who were to address

the questions to me. I had only one answer and that was that the work was the answer to all questions. But there was a lot of frustration that happened by the time that he found out that that was what I was doing. Making the work from scratch from a golden screen. I was traveling with a dance company. What's his name, that headed... So-fu Tessigahada... had given me a gold screen and I'm traveling around the world. It was an unnecessary piece of luggage, but I recognized the cultural event. So that's where the drama starts.

RR: The work is on display at the Soviet...

RR: It's at the Soviets right now actually. To follow through with Japanese collaborations... working with the ceramics has been a very big thing in my life, with Otsuka. I was living in Shigaraki, I think when I was starting to pack to come back to Japan and the weather couldn't be very bad at this time, I remembered, but it's gorgeous right now, and so I didn't know, is it long underwear or is it short sleeved shirts... and I realized that I felt like I had spent the last two years, about half of my life over here because Shigaraki is such a localized place. I mean, two restaurants, no movies, rain all the time, but great mud.

If you have some questions that you'd like to ask...

RR: For three years the American Embassy has been sponsoring what we call Interlink Festival. Last year we held a symposium

with the architect and Susan Sontag and this year we wanted to have an exhibition as a part of the program. When you think about who the greatest American artist would be...Mr. Rauschenberg's name would be first in your mind. Very fortunately for us, Mr. Rauschenberg decided to cooperate and visit us when he heard that this was going to be held at the Sovietsyn Hall. He sent us the work Hiccups. We will open the first of December and will run through the sixth. On the seventh floor gallery of the Sovietsyn Hall. Admission is free. It is a very small scale Rauschenberg exhibition and I hope all of you will come.

RR: I would like to...I have some posters from the China ROCI show, which was the last one...this is the next one. I'd like to sign them for all our guests.

**: Mr. Tono told me to ask this question. This started in Mexico, ROCI? Why are you specifically picking the countries that belong to what we call the Third World?

RR: We're not particularly choosing countries that...I mean you certainly cannot call Japan the Third World! But it's the opposite...in the first place, we don't call the other countries the Third World, we call them sensitive areas. Japan was chosen because it has such a broad outlook on all cultures, so that...it's like public relations that we be here in order to be important with the rest of the world.

different, well, totally different situation, where people hadn't

MM: Are you planning to go to Paris or other European countries?

RR: No. It might happen, if between two stops...but it's not in the plans. We want to go to Kenya. To Morocco and Egypt and to Russia. And then...these still have to be negotiated. Sri Lanka is still on our list for right after Japan. I'm so pleased that they're going to stop some of the trouble. Because when we were in Chile, we had not only earthquakes, we had a revolution that was hopeless. And a dictatorship that's permanent, and people shooting randomly across the street, and curfews all over the place. We're also going to Israel. I think this sounds pompous, but it's wherever I feel it's needed. I have taken so much from Japan and this is my chance to give some of it back.

MM: Two questions, first; what was the public response like in Tibet and China?

RR: We exhibited in China first. The attendance was overwhelming. We occupied nearly the entire National Museum in Beijing. It nearly made me totally bankrupt because they kept giving us more and more space. They got excited about the idea. More space means more work. More work means more transportation, more insurance and more crates. But we couldn't let it down. We finally occupied all but one wing of the entire museum and I think it was at the end of the second week, either 70 or 700 thousand people have...when you count in billions, well, who counts? And then we went to Tibet. There we, at a completely

different, well, totally different situation, where people hadn't missed art because they hadn't seen it. And so there was no preestablished art culture.

The people were for the most part very open in their society. Generally friendly, and always curious. They have a very good drink that they carry around with them that they make at home, called shung. They carry it around in gasoline cans. Anybody will stop you on the street if they like your looks and give you a drink.

##; How did they react specifically to your work?

RR: I found out through... someone wrote me in the United States
RR: They studied it like scholars... each piece. The pieces that I tried to make for them were things that they could either search visually or actually touch and manipulate. Actually, I had thought, well, I was afraid that I would be so inhibited making works for Tibet because I felt, not through facts, but through intuition and information, that we had so much in common already. Which is the celebration of the most common object. Where there is spirit in garbage. Where a bone found in the street is in the same family as a brick of gold. Also, they paint very beautifully on their shrines. Lots of drips. Any place can be a shrine. Any crack in the wall is a shrine. One of our greatest fears...they call every place that they go a pilgrimage...on these pilgrimages they come to town and do their shopping and buy their jerky and some new materials to make tomorrows rags and they carry a little jar of yak butter, which

smells very rancid, and if they see something that inspires them, or something that puzzles them, something that they don't understand, or something that they are in awe of, or something that they just like, they take out the jar and rub the yak butter on it. That was the biggest trouble in the museum was how to keep the yak butter off of the art work.

##: You talked about ceramic being a very important part of your artistic life and could you tell us how you came upon that style of work and what led you to it?

RR: I found out through...someone wrote me in the United States from Los Angeles. They told me about Otsuka and the extreme sizes that they could do. So far, at the point, they were just doing reproductions of work, and that wasn't working so well. And then they thought that they should do original works and they let me come and work there. It's still the only place in the world that can work in that scale and with that technology that they have.

##: One part of the exhibition will be works created at Otsuka including really big pieces. They will be displayed in the sunken garden at the museum. I hope...and Otsuka has contributed money for the exhibition and I forgot to mention that.

: The second question is what was your reaction to Tibet and China?

RR: I must say, I felt personally a greater affinity with the Tibetans. My life is more or less living as a gypsy. That seems to be their lifestyle too.

##: Part of your basic concept is to let the world know itself through art and I'm quite interested in that. And you have transcended national boundaries and I hear that you will be traveling to other parts of the world. I think that the world finds itself in such a desperate situation, and do you ever feel despair about the situation of the world? Great though you may be.

RR: I think my energies are focused so completely on this problem...to erase it...that as long as I'm working for it, then I can't sink into despair. Because despair is a negative energy. I wrote some time ago that peace could break out everywhere if people thought of it as aggressively as they did war.

##: Thank you.

RR: Most of it is fairly artificial and contrived. I don't think that you can choose to be...it's the same problem that I had with the surrealists. They said that they were painting out of their subconscious. Well, one's always working in the subconscious but you can't turn your conscious off. So I don't think the very successful, rich artists, whether they are Italian or German or American, can successfully do this psychotic work. I mean, what happens from the breakfast table to the studio...they go crazy on the way?

RR: I felt like maybe I should tell them something that they might want to know, and then one thing led to another. I would have liked to have heard all of that.

RR: As a professional painter for forty years or so. My ideas have changed many times because I'm terrified that I might discover the "right" way. I'm not interested in the "right" way. I want all the other ways. That's where I think the freshness is...is in the changes. And that's where the energy is...in the difficulty in making the changes. Once you've made the change and you have succeeded, well, then you can fall asleep. Sleep is my enemy.

RR: What do you do now?

##: I'm leaving here now. I am doing commercial and editorial.

##: A great photographer.

RR: Good.

##: I'll send you my photography book. I photograph Yoko Ono and all sorts of artists.

RR: ...And everybody kept saying "It's all for peace!"

##: How long will you be here?

RR: I think we leave on Sunday, but the exhibition might move to Osaka and then I'll come back. I come back all the time here. I work with Otsuka. I think I do more work in Japan than the Japanese artists do.

##: Tono introduced me to ###.

RR: He keeps pretending he's European.

##: You don't remember me. I was a student a long time ago.

RR: That's okay. I think that was one of Hisatschka's bad

jokes.

How do you do? You are a professor of what? this guy had

But I can't take them all. The guy. I shared something with him

**: Japanese art. reporter. He did these drawings for a train

wreck or something... ferryboat disaster, but in the meantime he

RR: Ancient or modern? mess witches and sorcerers.

**: Modern. MADE TO CLE YOSHITOSHI COLLECTION

RR: You mean Korean? Why do Japanese artists get off on such a
wrong direction? There's all sort of imitating Gauguin and
things like that. lot all over the world. Which country to you

feel is your home country? Which country makes you feel at ease?

**: We have too much history.

RR: that's why I keep moving. I don't know the answer. I like

RR: But you didn't use it. Now it's gorgeous and you're still
not using it. Actually, what I'm thinking is that the world is

much too small for all of us so we have to find out what we're

**: We don't need to use history.

RR: Yes you do. You need your own past. Like the chicken
walking on the print. I have made many pieces based on Japanese
inspirations. My understanding of the Japanese inspiration. The
Japanese are looking somewhere else, past their own inspiration.
I mentioned earlier that there was this reporter, in 1890, and he
was a printmaker. He also was interested in ghosts, spooks. I
couldn't remember his name. I'm still working on a whole series

of crazy pieces dealing with the insanities that this guy had. But I can't take them all. The guy...I shared something with him because he was a reporter. He did these drawings for a train wreck or something...ferryboat disaster, but in the meantime he was visited by all of these witches and sorcerors.

ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO SEE YOSHITOSHI COLLECTION

FAMILY PORTRAIT OF TAKAHASHI FAMILY

##: You travel a lot all over the world. Which country do you feel is your home country? Which country makes you feel at ease?

RR: That's why I keep moving. I don't know the answer. I like Sri Lanka. I like Japan. I like Morocco. But I don't have a particular fix. Actually, what I'm thinking is that the world is much too small for all of us so we have to find out what we're doing.

##: So the difference in cultures is not so important for you?

RR: Inspiring, yes.

SIGNING POSTERS AND KISSING.

POOR AUDIO ON SIDE B OF TAPE 1

RR: The thing that's been a constant over all these years is that I believe that art is communication so that the message has to change with the time. Something that I did in 1950 would not be necessary to do today. If I can possibly show to anyone that the world belongs to them, to each person, then the work is successful. And if I succeed in being a great artist, then there won't be any need for artists any more.

POOR AUDIO AGAIN.

Fortunately at a very early year, I decided that there were so many ways to work that no one had to work LIKE someone else. You just had to be better with the same idea. There's enough room that I don't have to step on your feet and there are enough ideas that have not been discovered, so that if I work like you, then you're going to be in my way. It was very tempting, because I grew up at a time when Pollock, Rothko, deKooning, Barney Newman, were in America and very accessible. I would love to have painted like them, but out of respect, I couldn't. So there had to be another way. And since then there have been many other ways.

One of the reasons that I am so thankful that I'm an artist is that the language of being an artist works anywhere. There is no country that is so rich or so poor that they don't have an artistic culture. Artists always understand each other.

I even feel restricted with the world as small as it is already. I'm trying to take advantage of as much of it as possible. But I'm old enough that I probably won't run out of land, but I would like to go to the Moon.

NOVEMBER 1985

CW: The Vice President of Sony is here.

POOR AUDIO AGAIN.

NOT MUCH GOING ON

SETAGAYA, TWO

TRANSCRIPTION OF DIALOG

SETAGAYA MUSEUM
NOVEMBER 1986

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#: How many of you don't understand Japanese? If there are enough, then the translator will...she is now interpreting simultaneously but the simultaneous translation we can use very economically. If there are many of you who don't understand MY Japanese, we should ask her to do a consecutive translation.

CW: If there are many of you who don't understand Japanese, then I will do consecutive translation. Okay.

RR: Let's do two conversations...one in English and one in Japanese...with different facts.

#: I will speak very quickly to save time. First of all, about this ROCI exhibition. There is some information in the catalog, and some information provided by the Museum itself, but while we have Mr. Rauschenberg here himself, let's have him to explain something about the exhibition itself and also about your impressions of Japan.

RR: I think that I probably was working in art in Japan before you were born. Japanese philosophy has been a great influence on my work. Fujiko, you know the name of the printer? Yoshitoshi has the spirit of my latest works. I haven't had an exhibition

in Japan. Jasper Johns, Cy Twombly, Bill deKooning...they all had exhibitions, but I have not had an exhibition. And I've lived in Japan almost half of my life, it feels like, working on the ceramics. This exhibition is my way, if you can take it, to say thank you. It's almost like when I go back to Texas and nobody recognizes me...and I say, I'm home.

RR: Before this exhibition opened, two people came from the United States, sort of an advance party, to install the exhibition. While they were installing the works, I witnessed some important things...important in the sense of understanding the nature of Mr. Rauschenberg's work. First of all, now, this is when Mr. Rauschenberg arrived at the Airport. It was rather late in the evening and we expected him to want to go to the hotel at once. Rather, he insisted on coming to the museum to see how the work was being carried on. I felt at first that this told us something about how he approached his work or his exhibition. The next day, rather early in the morning, in spite of what we expected which was fatigue from his travel, he came to the museum carrying a small bunch of yellow flowers. He selected sort of a whiskey glass and he took it around the exhibition space placing it here and there, trying to see what it looked like...

RR: How it looked with the mops!

RR: ...the exhibition hall, as you know, has a wooden floor, and he once placed it beside a mop...an orangey-yellow mop. The

yellow flower and the floor look quite beautiful. And then he took it around to some other places and placed it near where the mop was leaning against the wall. There was a small wooden table, and with the white wall and the small wooden table and the handle, it looked just like a Combine, a work by Mr. Rauschenberg, and I was quite surprised. There were many other interesting episodes of that kind. Let me tell you one more, and if you have a catalog, I'm referring to Number 2, page 37, titled Castelli a big cardboard work. At one time when we were unpacking the exhibit, that piece of work that you just saw was lying on the floor. There were other packing materials lying around also. At one time one of the people from the transport company was about to walk over the work and we had to stop him.

exhibition you've been to Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Beijing, and RR: What kind of shoes?!? You would think that there would be a

great distance between those countries and what we consider avant
**: It shows that he is breaking the boundary between works of art and real life. With scenes that we witness in everyday life and things that we feel in everyday life.

RR: There is no such thing as unreal life. It either has to touch you or it doesn't touch you.

RDCI started with my middle aged attitude that I have to give more to the world. I decided that if everyone had as much respect for themselves as they did for...if they could have...for everyone else, then there would be no use for war. Then peace could be a new sport. And what's missing is information...pure

information through communication through the artist.
Unpolitical...no bullshit. Lies don't work in art. Eyes work in art.

##: You said you were influenced by Japan or Japanese philosophy. Was it after you had been to Japan, or before?

RR: Before, also. From woodcuts and printmaking mostly. Just like the ones that screwed the Europeans up...Gauguin, Van Gogh...they went crazy over Japanese art.

##: Our specialists tend to think of you as the foremost artist of American and European avant garde art. But with this ROCI exhibition you've been to Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Beijing, and Lhasa Tibet just recently. You would think that there would be a great distance between those countries and what we consider avant garde art. Could you comment on that?

RR: There is a great distance in money!

One of the uses for ROCI, one of its functions, is to communicate between different cultures. I mean, you don't know how the people live in Chile. You don't understand their politics. I'm trying to make a nice lunch, so that everybody can digest what everybody else is doing as close as possible without hurting anyone. For me, Japan is like a Valentine. Giving a Present to Japan, if you take it. In Chile they were shooting. This is much better. In Chile we had earthquakes. Yesterday I

thought Terry-san was shaking the bed! No, it was real! At least, in Chile...thank God this is a new museum, but in Chile we had to rebuild the museum. It was built by Eiffel...like Eiffel Tower. We had to push the pieces that wouldn't be hurt by rain, out into the middle of the room, and put the paintings over in the corner. The political people couldn't understand why we would exhibit in a State museum, even though we were repairing the building and giving it back to the people. They wanted us to show in churches. And in this country too, have you ever seen a Church that has room for even one more painting? Maybe they need a few less paintings. In the early days, they left room for the painters. Have you seen an empty church lately? Always room for more sinners.

RR: Here's another question. Now that I've come to know you, I can predict the answer, but it would be nice for the audience to hear this come from you in person. You are always regarded as the forefront of contemporary art, but now that we look at your recent works, you seem to be getting closer to the culture in Tibet, India, which we may describe as primitive and undeveloped. Is our impression correct or is there any special intention behind it?

RR: I have an enormous appetite. I don't want ever to be stylized in such a way that you can say, "Hey, that's a Rauschenberg!" I'd rather you see that on the street with your own eyes. If I am a successful artist, then I think you don't

need art. So art is an appreciation of your own life. No friends.

##: Please give me a chance to give a short lecture on behalf of the museum. This is not a question, but a lecture.

Now this lecture may sound like preaching to the Buddha to some of you because many of you know of him.

RR: Buddhist smiles though. I noticed that not too many people were smiling before you started talking.

##: In early days, Mr. Rauschenberg worked with people like John Cage and Merce Cunningham. They toured the world together. They came to Japan in 1964 and performed at the Shogetsu Art Center.

RR: We went to Osaka, we went everywhere. Kyoto. A new set every night. Drove me crazy because nobody in Japan ever throws anything away and I made the sets out of things that I could collect.

##: You were sort of representative of various fields of contemporary art. Mr. Cage from the field of music, Mr. Cunningham from dance, and you from painting and art.

RR: I do photography. I do dance. I do printing.

##: Mr. Rauschenberg is not confining himself to one field. He

is taking away the barriers between various types of art, like sculpture, design, film, video work. His works are results of his efforts in trying to take away these barriers.

RR: I have a fear that I would like to share with all the other artists here. That is that if you are absolutely certain about what you are doing...don't do it. Probably already been done.

##: All those episodes that I told you at the very beginning, illustrate that what he is doing is not what we would call "art" but real art. Sometimes he is classified as a "Pop" artist but that is not correct. When you look at his work, you get the feeling that "I could do that. I can make something like that." But the difference is...

RR: Nobody else knows when to stop.

##: What Mr. Rauschenberg is doing shows that there doesn't seem to be any line between you yourself, what you are doing, and the surrounding world. You are becoming one with the world. The fact that what seems so easy and is not quite the same...

RR: It's the same air.

##: The result, if I tried to make something like Mr. Rauschenberg's work, the result would be quite different and that's because he's a genius and I'm not. Talking about

geniuses...

RR: Let's not. I have enough problems.

**: When we were installing his exhibition we were running out of time and we were supposed to open the exhibition at 4:00 and give a preview, but we were getting pressed for time. I was really afraid. I said to Mr. Rauschenberg that we might be running out of time. He said that this was better because in the last fifteen minutes another Rauschenberg arrived and that probably makes him a genius.

RR: The other one is. And he's late. I think that's enough isn't it?

**: You said that you repaired the museum in Chile. Looking at this new Setagaya Museum, is there any part that you would like to remodel or change?

RR: The kitchen. It should be bigger so that we can make barbeque. I'll cook.

**: You've been to various places with your exhibition. There must have been different audiences in each place. Have you noticed any difference in the reaction of the audiences?

RR: Political. In Chile, that's why I mentioned that...they were very upset about showing in the State museum. More than

that I don't know. Terry and myself went down the Amazon and we met Indians and we exchanged artworks from different tribes. No problem. And I like to think that this can continue. That's the purpose of ROCI. That we can go to the Middle East and Kenya and someplace in Russia, unnamed, and hope that we can...I mean, I feel very friendly to you and I hope that you feel the same way. I think that our arts can come together without being religious. But can come together and say the same things that you do not want to destroy the world. I don't want to destroy the world, but somehow the world is being destroyed. That's my lecture.

RR: I had the feeling that the boy was communicating better with
**:

Are there any (too faint to hear)
And by the way, the boy's shoes were tiny and cute so you

RR: We invite writers from each country that we visit. Tono is writing from here. Actually, he was very embarrassed because he doesn't have a Nobel Prize yet and all the other writers have Nobel Prizes. We must get him one. He's still a virgin.

from Mr. Rauschenberg's team who was absolutely against the idea
**:

Lét me add that Mr. Tono's piece of writing is published in our catalog. When Mr. Rauschenberg came to Japan in 1983 and did the works at Shigaraki, the works that you see in our sunken garden, at that time Mr. Tono had a chat with him and it was published in a book by **** company. We reproduced that conversation in our catalog because it touches on ROCI.

Before coming to this lecture, I went into the exhibition hall and was looking around. There was, in one room, sort of an aluminum box with a half open door with glass inside, Eye Test,

with the pieces. Shutter, Nighttime, Slingshots, so that you
RR: It was based on Japanese art. You should be able to change

it, but I know that I am just one person and I have a particular
##: I noticed a little boy touching the work. He was kicking it
and he was trying to pull the wheel and move the whole thing.
Then the security guard saw him and ran and scolded him. I had
the feeling... about any work of mine... one of them is lying

RR: That's not my problem. I put wheels on them so they can
move. that when they take a fancy to something they will put

rather rancid yak butler on it. Is that really true?
##: I had the feeling that the boy was communicating better with

the work than we are ourselves just standing around and watching
it. And by the way, the boy's shoes were tiny and cute so you
have no problem with the shoes. True.

##: I must make it clear here, although Mr. Rauschenberg said
it's the museum's problem and not his, actually, it was people
from Mr. Rauschenberg's team who was absolutely against the idea
of people touching it.

RR: I just knew that he was shaking my bed. I didn't want to

RR: It was the insurance. This is a problem I've always had
with my work. I always want to make one-to-one work. Just like
I'm looking at you right now. I'll never forget what you look
like and you won't either. But museums and institutions can't
let anybody touch anything so I like to make things that are
wrapped up and you have to open them. I make presents. Like

##: I decided this was serious. I better get up and put some

clothes on and take a shower or something devastating like that.
with the pieces, Shutter, Nighttime, Slingshots, so that you
you know. Did you
change it. Museums hate that, that you should be able to change
it, but I know that I am just one person and I have a particular
taste. You are another person and you have a particular taste
and you are another person and you have a particular taste, so I
am trying to cook for you. If any two people here agree, think
the same thing about any work of mine...one of them is lying.

**: The other day you told us about the Tibetan people. You
said that when they take a fancy to something they will put
rather rancid yak butter on it. Is that really true?

RR: Would I lie to you? My translator? Not a bad idea!

**: It sounded too good to be true.

RR: It doesn't smell so good.

RR: I just knew that he was shaking my bed. I didn't want to
get up because I didn't know what was going to happen. I mean,
and so I thought that if I just lay there a few more minutes,
something else would happen. Well, obviously nothing happened.
Anyway, the bed started moving. And I said to myself, okay
Terry, that's enough. Or is that Hisatschka doing that? Then I
looked over and in the hotel the curtains were going back and
forth. I decided this was serious. I better get up and put some

clothes on and take a shower or something devastating like that,
you know. Did you feel it?

**:

TVB: No, I was on a train.

TVB: On a train you can't feel it till it's too late.

**:

**:

RR: Would you write my mother?

**:

**:

RR: I don't think so. Who would know.

**:

**:

RR: It's very expensive too. It's not so much physical as it is
financial. It's devastating. And somehow or another, if we
can't work out some kind of financial arrangement for the future,
we're going to have to simplify the whole process without losing
the concept. It's sort of difficult because it's totally against
the grain of what's happening. Because we're gathering
information and works to take to other places. Every time we go
to another place we've got more stuff. So how can we simplify
that? Every country we take to another country.

##: He makes works in each country.

##: So when you come out of here you'll have a whole shitload of stuff from Japan to take. So the people at the end will have a mint. Where is next after Japan?

RR: It's all so hard to talk being so guarded. Because the best

RR: And we keep running out of money. started talking Japanese in

the interview in the office.

##: You're not discarding as you go along?

##: And what would have happened then?

RR: No. But we make selections. We don't take everything. It will probably be two pieces from Japan and some of the drawings or something. Probably the next stop will be Sri Lanka and Australia. And then I think we're heading for Africa. couldn't

understand what he was saying, was a lot more interesting than

##: Whereabouts? talked to be. he would talk for twenty minutes

and she would say, he says "yes"

RR: Kenya, Morocco, Egypt. I'm sure we could have the museum there. In Cairo. We'd just have to hide the mummies or something. Did you ever see the King Tut show? It was incredible. In America, I saw it in three different places...Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. Then I was in Egypt and Tut was home again. His glass case was held together with scotch tape. We had at least a million dollars worth of guards around him in America but there, it's okay. He was all dirty and scotch taped up. It was so exquisitely presented everywhere I saw it. Just to bring out the best glow in the gold. Little

regulations but I wasn't they. It wasn't my fault. And so I
pink filters. in. And I didn't know why. But I needed those
shots.

##: I missed that. I'm from Vancouver and I didn't get down to
Seattle. Impression when I saw the Chilean pieces. I walked up
there yesterday. And there is the Gila Cliff, the cross, and I

RR: It's all so hard to talk being so guarded. Because the best
things don't come out then. I almost started talking Japanese in
the interview in the office. And then I realized that it was
coming from inside. What I wanted to ask you was... was it

##: And what would have happened then? of the situation given the
politics of the country. I had a really disturbing feel from the

RR: I don't know. He was speaking English and I thought, fuck,
I can talk Japanese. I don't know what would happen then. I
thought that what I thought he was saying, while I couldn't
understand what he was saying, was a lot more interesting than
what it was translated to be. He would talk for twenty minutes
and she would say, he says "yes". Just lying out in the desert
Incredible. It's so rich. Good fish. They have beaches. They

##: The Chilean pieces... did you choose copper because of it
being Chile? My gut reaction...

RR: I went to the mines. I had a nosebleed from the heat and
the height and I had like... I mean I had to use copper after
that. I had two rolls of toilet paper stuffed up my nose all the
way to my sinuses. It took a day and a half to get permission to
even take photographs. It seems that some American photographer
came in and pointed out that they didn't have the proper safety

regulations but I wasn't they. It wasn't my fault. And so I couldn't get in. And I didn't know why. But I needed those shots.

##: My impression when I saw the Chilean pieces, I walked up there yesterday...and there is the Altar Peace, the cross, and I was trying to figure out where the hum was coming from and I thought oh it's the heating system. And it was classic because I just walked up to the piece and then I realized that it was coming from inside. What I wanted to ask you was...was it intentional...or is it just my reading of the situation given the politics of the country...I had a really disturbing feel from the cross and the sort of latinate morbidity and the copper...it was very frightening.

RR: It's scary down there. It's gorgeous though. I walked off into the desert and just a few maybe two hundred yards and found pieces of turquoise this big, just lying out in the desert. Incredible. It's so rich. Good fish. They have beaches. They have mountains. They have snow. Desert.

##: Did you show those pieces in Chile? How did they go over there?

RR: Yeah. Great.

##: The opening was a lot of fun. The museum is a great atrium space where you first walk in.

RR: And Bob is paying for it all himself. It's not sponsored and there's no connection with any government. Talking about how we rebuilt the museum by the way...another earthquake.

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RR: The atrium was designed by Eiffel. He was there getting a cure for syphilis. He did a couple of things while he was there. This was one of them. Forty foot ceilings. They had spent ten years repairing the place from the really severe earthquake before and they had all these rooms on the second floor that were all fixed up. Sort of baroque with a lot of stucco and carved plaster stuff. We opened in June I think, and in the March before that they had another earthquake that cracked the museum in half. When you walked in the atrium on the far side there was a crack right from the ceiling to the floor and all the rooms that they had fixed, the stucco had fallen and those rooms were condemned. We had to make do with the first floor and the atrium. It looked good. Chile, you know, the political situation is so sour that they haven't had any outside art come in so they were pleased. They blew up a car bomb in front of the American Embassy two days after we opened. The embassy was like three hundred yards from the museum. I was in a hotel with Thomas five miles away and I heard the explosion. They had a couple of alerts while we were there...soldiers with some of the largest machine guns you've ever seen on all the bridges. Even the foot bridges. It was really different. Plus the earthquakes and there are a lot of homeless.

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RR: But this is a really apolitical exhibition.

##: And Bob is paying for it all himself. It's not sponsored and there's no connection with any government. Talking about how ROCI is apolitical.

RR: Not that they offered me any money. We could make a deal. If they gave us another nine million dollars I guess it would take us through the next year.

I had such a strong affinity with Japanese philosophy and religions for such a long time that it bothered me that I wasn't able to return any of that. This is my payment. Maybe, I don't know how to measure like that. Anyway, for a culture that inspired me as much as the Japanese have, it was...I felt frustrated that I hadn't given them anything. Isn't that funny, to think that you owe the Japanese something? They are the most affluent...the culture. The printmaking. The philosophy. Abandoned attitudes socially. The ability to overnight change your whole concept about what life is. I don't know if that's complimentary but it's important to art to be able to be vulnerable. I mean, they do...I don't want to go into it...but like, there is something to admire about the eclecticism of the Japanese culture. That takes a certain kind of muscle that has got to be always on the go.

##: You look at the Japanese aesthetic. As most people understand it is supposedly one of restraint and saying more with less. That's the classic feel of it. I look at your pieces and

they obviously come from a different tradition. Is there an underlying connection? Perhaps something...

something like gillow or blind man

RR: Like the Bauhaus, they said that less is more? I think more is more. You can quote me with that one. And less is less.

that comes up with the prettiest one... gets the gallon of sake.

##: And with you, too much is not enough.

##: Or with my luck, the least defamatory. You have enough.

RR: Always.

##: Have you ever used "washee" the Japanese paper, in your work?

RR: I must have. I use all sorts of paper. I even make paper.

##: A friend of mine is going to import it to the States. It's the big thing on the west coast. EVERYbody wants "washee".

RR: Most Japanese paper is a little too thin for me, for what I want.

##: You had your name "Kungti-ized", made into Japanese characters? Interesting.

RR: It means something about how the silk purple, the purple silk flies in the wind. Catchy. What's yours?

##: I'm working on mine but right now it comes out sounding

something like pillow or blind man.

RR: Offer a gallon of sake as a competition, so that the one that comes up with the prettiest one...gets the gallon of sake.

##: Or with my luck, the least defamatory. You have enough trouble with