

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Bound Compilation of Robert Rauschenberg Interviews, 1985-1987 /
Unidentified / Interview with Robert Rauschenberg in Naples, 1987

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Naples 87. TBC

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NAPLES, ITALY it's really garbage. Digested and digested and
JANUARY 2, 1987

RR: It's a city therefore where it's difficult to express. Each
art

RR: The work that you did here in the Theater came out of an accident. It seems that it's very interesting to him to understand how your work starts.

RR: Well, first of all, I came over here to see, historically I came over here to see Trisha Brown as Carmen. While...before she finished Carmen, we found out that the ship was still at sea. I actually had only one piece on the program but it had projectors, five collage movies that I had made, there are seven but we only used five, and costumes, all lost, and we started...at one point it looked as though it was hopeless. Up until yesterday we had problems that we had to involved the Ambassador, in Rome, with. To get the set, Shiner, out of customs. Ten minutes before the Customs closed for New Years. So the holidays has been working against us. Nearly everything has been closed since we have come here. Including the unions. But we started improvising and turned the whole disaster into a new adventure. The choreography has been rearranged to take advantage of the great stage at the San Carlo and all the junkyards in Naples are much richer.

RR: Is there a difference between the junk elements you are using in America and New York and here?

RR: In New York if you walk around the block you can furnish a three room apartment including a refrigerator. And on the streets here it's really garbage. Digested and digested and digested.

** : It's a city therefore where it's difficult to express Dada art.

RR: It has nothing to do with Dada. Dada was...had a purpose. It had a political intention whereas when I go to any place looking for materials, it's to excite in my aesthetic, something that I don't know about...an unknown. It's certainly not to meet the people.

** : When we speak about political intention, or social intention, it seems to him that only the fact that you are looking for leftovers of the consuming society is a political intention, that in a more wide sense, you are looking at this society as a consuming society.

RR: No. The works would be much more political if I meant that. I go there because it's a garden of refuse. It's an urban jungle. But it's a garden.

** : If you say it's a garden, you mean it's a pleasure for you to look at this?

RR: Yes. It's a garden of refuse.

##: If you put a quality to this garden, it is not only a contemplation, but an intention that you give to this garden of refuse.

RR: An intention?

##: He means, only the fact that you look at this garden of refuse, it's an attitude, it's not contemplation.

RR: It has no critical look.

##: Are you sure?

RR: Yes. That's too cheap. That's too easy, to criticize. To make art that criticizes is limited. And it also is temporary because politics changes whereas nobility in color and forms have been forever.

RR: Much better than London or Amsterdam.

##: How would you define these leftovers or fragments?

##: What about New York?

RR: Of their continuation?

RR: I already said that New York is fabulous. There is a

##: If you could find a definition for this kind of work, what would it be? To make it clearer.

RR: Availability has always been...my work has always been anti-elitist. My appetite has always been common. To search for the exclusive has always been the enemy. So my aesthetic is always in...deals with the availability of the material. So that art starts on zero. Because the parts have no value.

**: It's not clear for us when you say the parts of the art have no value.

RR: The pieces. The material. In English it sounds better.

**: No symbolic meaning?

RR: No. I explained that. That's too limited.

**: Availability of material is used as the starting point of your art, then. Naples should be probably an ideal place for you.

RR: Much better than London or Amsterdam.

**: What about New York?

RR: I already said that New York is fabulous. There is a similarity, except you have to drive farther to find it in Naples. I'm from the South in America, so I relate to Naples.

##: But you are Indian, is that true?

RR: One quarter.

##: Do you like this quarter?

RR: I don't have a choice. Some days I hate it and some days it's fine. How can you choose. You can't choose from the past. Twelve years ago I had my first show in Naples with Lucio Amelio and we had a wonderful time. Now, this time, in spite of all the disasters, we're having another adventure. And I'm coming back in March, or April.

##: To do what?

RR: To make an exhibition of the new Gluts series. It's slang for gluten...from greed...like the oil gluts...like gluten. There were oil gluts, when there was too much oil. And so then the prices went down. It's a slang word that's used in newspapers. Like the oil gluts, the fish gluts...

##: It's more metaphoric when related to your art. I thought you meant an object.

RR: It's also has a good fast sound.

##: And why do you use this "gluts" for these worksA?

RR: The first Gluts that I made were from old filling station signs. Where the prices were changing. Everyday. And then I moved out into the streets and then I did traffic as part of the Gluts. And then, once it was on the streets, it could go anywhere.

**: What do you mean?

RR: We moved from the filling station to traffic signs, and then once you have those two, well then you can move anywhere.

**: For instance?

RR: Well, on the stage you have the kitchen sink! I have some new signs that I picked up after the New Years accidents. There's a circle, meaning stop...the sign was completely bent over and the information was on the other side of the street. And there is the other one, which Flavio has to pick up...the arrow.

**: What about the numbers of the artists, is it... with the

RR: It's part of the information. Living on the road. In the newspaper article did they say that we gathered the material and made the piece in one day? We started with nothing.

**: Is it normal for you to work this way?

RR: It drives other people crazy, but yes.

**: Which means that speed is important in this kind of work.

RR: It isn't the speed, well, for theater it is important to speed, but for me, I have no ideas if I'm not working. My thinking comes out of my hands, so I have to be touching something.

**: In that sense you seem to be like an alchemist, the formula comes out of the experiment.

RR: Yes, that's good. The magic is the same as the activity.

**: Which means in that sense you are very similar to Beuys when he said that the word action means to put into movement the body into creativity.

RR: There is nothing else.

**: Your aesthetic behavior has nothing to do with the conception, however.

RR: There is no concept. They are works. It is the opposite of conceptualism. That's no even art. Didn't you have fun, Flavio? Even though it was the result of disaster, we had fun. And we still may have a disaster because we haven't had a rehearsal.

You might note that down. No one is sure tonight and this is one of the most important nights probably, for the San Carlo Opera, the theater, for me, for the Trisha Brown Dance Company, and for the audience. It's an enormous gamble. can only get better.

** : There is a risk... a continuous risk. one?

RR : Yes. When that risk goes out of art, then it's not art. You have quality work from all over, and if you keep collecting, then

** : Don't you think that it's probably what we try to do with the ****, the collection that was put on for the earthquake. That demonstrated...

RR : In what sense?

RR : How is it like that?

RR : In all senses. And that's what we have here. I mean, when

** : We based the idea of the exhibition on the risk that was the disaster of the earthquake. This was the reason of the collection... what an ego! It's terrible. I'd rather be in front of the toilet. Try it! Come sit down. It's terrible.

RR : This is more like an earthquake, not like after the earthquake.

** : But this is the same sense we gave the collection. We didn't give the collection in the sense of after...

NAPLES, ITALY

RR : I know, but you're giving... it was saying, and there was time to collect, and there was information... we don't know if

RR : Nearly everything that we needed for the performance tonight.

anything is going to work...the film isn't here. What time is it? No rehearsal. So that's not like the collection. The collection was cool and calculated and it's still continuing. The quality is already established. It can only get better.

RR: I didn't make these works a second time. I made a "proxy"

##: You mean that there is no risk any more? original set. She is a well known American artist. The set I made was made as a

RR: In your collection? I don't see how there can be. How? You have quality work from all over, and if you keep collecting, then you'll just get more. That's not called risk. The risk was in the earthquake.

##: In what sense? what I'm disturbing you.

RR: I don't know who that was.
In all senses. And that's what we have here. I mean, when the curtain...the curtain is going to be our earthquake. I don't know how anybody ever works sitting in front of a mirror that distorts. What an ego! It's terrible. I'd rather be in front of the toilet. Try it! Come sit down. It's terrible.

END OF INTERVIEW

BACKSTAGE AT CARMEN

NAPLES, ITALY

RR: I think you've got to be very consson. Just be consson.
RR: Nearly everything that we needed for the performance tonight

had to be rebuilt. Which is not easy. I really think that when the ship comes in we ought to sink it.

##: When you made this work the second time... you, to work for balance. I elect to ask you the same thing. What's the emotion

RR: I didn't make these works a second time. I made a "proxy" set in another piece. Nancy Graves made the original set. She is a well known American artist. The set I made was made as a "naples" set as a replacement for the Nancy Graves set which was delayed at sea.

##: In what sense.

##: I don't want to disturb you, but can you tell me...

RR: In the sense that I'm envious of what she has. She needs

RR: You must mean that I'm disturbing you. respect and awe

I don't know who that was...

##: That's a complete answer. I have nothing more to add.

##: Rauschenberg's formula for making art from every material, tell me. It has to do with several expertises. Complimenting each other to engrandise both.

RR: I guess it's that I battle against the elite. If I can show anyone any point of their life that they are surrounded by something that they all should just look at, that they're drowned in beauty.

##: Because I think you are sailing the way Popeye does. Maybe

##: And you've got to be a wizard to do this? he likes spinach?

RR: I think you've got to be very common. Just be common.

RR: I prefer spinach. That was sort of fun.

Preferably without ambitions or preconceptions.

**:

What's the emotion for an artist as you, to work for balance. I elect to ask you the same thing, what's the emotion for someone who is working on dance to work with an artist, with another kind of, I don't know how to speak English very well...

RR: I think it's sort of like working with a neighbor.

**:

In what sense.

RR: In the sense that I'm envious of what she has. She needs something of me. And they're coupled with respect and awe.

TB: That's a complete answer. I have nothing more to add.

RR: It has to do with several expertises. Complimenting each other to engrandise both.

**:

Do you like Popeye?

RR: The Spanish artist? Sure.

**:

Because I think you are smiling the way Popeye does. Maybe he likes spinach?

RR: I prefer spinach. That was sort of fun.