

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Rosenquist, James / Personal Interview, 1987

3

Chat w/ Jim Rosenquist 2/21

JR: When you look for some kind of inventive, exciting threat to one's own... like being a contender in life...then he disappears and you really can't think of him any longer. It's really terrible. It's like there he was and then he's no longer a match. I feel so terrible that he...

RR: The loss is incredible isn't it.

JR: The thing is that I wish, God damn it, I'm mad because I wish he went on for his whole life, seventy or eighty years, so then you and I and we all could say, this is what he did...but now you never know. That's the sorry part. Outside of liking him, the professional thing is like a fighter who dies.

RR: He didn't mean to.

JR: It's the same as Irvin Fallstrum. He had like six forays into the dark there that he never continued with. I saw those individual investigations and he wasn't able to continue them... I saw Andy around Christmas at John Bruin's place...it just makes me wonder how he can go for a gall bladder operation and get a damn blood clot...

RR: And he had to be in one of the best hospitals, and everybody knows who he is...it almost sounds like murder.

JR: Exactly, it scares the daylights out of me. Andy always went to Brownies Health food places and everything and for him to get a blood clot, I just don't get it.

RR: Supposedly he said that he didn't want to go to the hospital and I don't know who it was said he HAD to. It wasn't Vechsler, my doctor. My doctor would just tell you, if you had quit smoking, go ahead and have a cigarette...

JR: When a person comes up as an artist, makes some money, has done some things that titillates...why should that person get bad care? It shouldn't happen in any case...It is really upsetting and offputting...I'm really upset that he's no longer there as a mental threat...it's terrible!

RR: I did a USA interview, like splashing around between tears...and there wasn't anything that I could say that couldn't be misinterpreted, like his work...that's good, but...

JR: You just couldn't understand, with what he had, maybe he didn't have anybody to help him.

RR: I think that is one of the main things...neither Terry nor I could figure out who could be the next of kin, because he didn't have any kids and as far as I knew he wasn't married...and his mother died...Eleanor Ward is dead...I wouldn't want Leo caring about me too much...and the Time Magazine guy, Bob Hughes, hates him...but they were all business people. They were all just interested in...I think he wanted that, he really...something about his asexuality that he didn't want anybody too close to him...and that's what he ended up with.

JR: I saw him around Christmas and he was saying "oh, you're the greatest, you're the greatest artist", and I said "oh no, you're the greatest" and he was there with Keith Herring and some other guys at this party...

RR: That's the latest news? Those aren't like his old friends or friends from today...I was always envious because he was always surrounded by the most active, the most attractive, eccentric people, in the world...

JR: I met him back in '61 and he always wanted to be around

famous people, yet he was really soft and quiet...really strange.

I just lament the idea that he is not there. I love his wit and his threat.

RR: And the challenging and questioning about what art is and what it should be. Even if he's wrong it didn't matter. In fact that is one of the things I said in the interview today...I remembered trying to tell Bob Hughes that if you ever see a Warhol that you really like, it's probably a bad Warhol or a fake. And that's of course not necessarily true, but you know what I mean...there wasn't supposed to be any such thing as a good Warhol.

JR: I talked to Leo and he said there goes one of the Musketeers.

ASCII	TOL	640	8-27-85	5:01p
ASSIGN	EXE	11264	8-27-85	5:02p
ROLDEX	BAK	8128	7-26-86	12:56a

AU
Write fault error writing device PRN
Abort, Retry, Ignore? a

A)

RR: It's terrible, and I think it's going to be some time before anybody realizes how bad it actually is, I mean, there's the immediate shock. But I think because of Andy's mixed media concerns that he's going to, his lack, is going to be more severe than possibly even Picasso's. Everybody knew what Picasso was about and a friend said, and I didn't agree, that Picasso was old enough to die. Andy, in all of his bewilderment, was an inspiration for everyone who had a creative mind, like all the students. I mean, if you didn't know what you were doing, you already had a God figure.

The fact that he did Interview meant that he was communicating with the people that either were so obvious that they weren't talked to or so obscure that they were almost forgotten. I mean actors, actresses and writers.

I've been trying to think ever since I heard of his death, of who his closest friends are...because he was very much a celibate, a celebrity celibate. It wouldn't surprise me at all if the next of kin could be someone like Paulette Goddard or somebody or Marlene Dietrich. Do you know if his mother is still alive? Well, you never see them together anyway.

His absence is going to be, God forbid that ^{be} it happens to anybody else, but I think his absence is going to dynamically oppressive as a change. One would like, ideally, for their presence to be the best part of their life, but I think in this case that people are going to, for years and years, miss him.

He gave a freedom...I once made the remark that I was not ashamed of...that if you like a Warhol, it might not be a good one because that wasn't his job. His job was to change and upset.

I think that the inspiration and ^{his} the lack of fear of failure might inspire others.

He was not greedy about inspiring others. He was completely unselfish. He spent his money and his fame back into the art world.

I was one of the people, along with Emile D'Antonio, to take his own work seriously and show at the Stable gallery, where I was both a janitor and artist. It was run by Eleanor Ward. She was a great lookalike for Joan Crawford.

(One Saturday I showed up for an opening and she took me in the office and said, I really have to talk to you. I thought she was firing me as a janitor but she was keeping me on as a janitor and firing me as an artist. So what's \$15 a week? What was really great was that I had free heat, so I would only work at night.)

I knew him before he had more than three things to say...one was, "oh, you really think so?" another was "do you think so?"

I think he has been exaggeratively shy. That's why I think

1

nobody knows who his best friend is and/or if. That's a weird way to be a great personality. That kind of shyness has been totally consistent in his life.

He rarely did any of the conversation. If you are confronted with somebody who is dynamic in attitude but who won't say anything, then you do most of the talking. And so people volunteered...I'm sure that has a lot to do with the success of Interview. That's also what I meant by his lack of selfishness.

I've always followed his activities. He had an exhibition, I had to sell a work of his...it was the Popeye. He had a show connected with the DIA association of black and white early cartoon works. In order to raise funds for the ROCI Tibet excursion I had to sell that piece.

✓ ~~Let it be said, I am sad. I believe that even those that~~
disapproved of his creative concepts are going to find that they
have lost something really special.

✗ It's awfully difficult to be articulate and clear when you are
confronting something, like death, which you have never
understood anyway.

✓ If I can do anything to make people miss him, I will.

dir
Volume in drive A has no label

It's terrible, and I think it's going to be some time before anybody realizes how bad it actually is, I mean, there's the immediate shock. But I think because of Andy's mixed media concerns that he's going to, his lack, is going to be more severe than possibly even Picasso's. Everybody knew what Picasso was about and a friend said, and I didn't agree, that Picasso was old enough to die.

Andy, in all of his bewilderment, was an inspiration for everyone who had a creative mind, like all the students. I mean, if you didn't know what you were doing, you already had a God figure.

The fact that he did Interview meant that he was communicating with the people that either were so obvious that they weren't talked to or so obscure that they were almost forgotten. I mean actors, actresses and writers.

I've been trying to think ever since I heard of his death, of who his closest friends are...because he was very much a celibate, a

celebrity celibate. It wouldn't surprise me at all if the next of kin could be someone like Paulette Goddard or somebody or Marlene Dietrich. Do you know if his mother is still alive? Well, you never see them together anyway.

His absence is going to be, God forbid that it happens to anybody else, but I think his absence is going to dynamically oppressive as a change. One would like, ideally, for their presence to be the best part of their life, but I think in this case that people are going to miss him for years and years.

1

Copyright restrictions apply.
FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY. DO NOT DUPLICATE OR PUBLISH WITHOUT PERMISSION.
Contact archives@rauschenbergfoundation.org for reproduction requests

He gave a freedom... I once made the remark that I was not ashamed of... that if you like a Warhol, it might not be a good one because that wasn't his job. His job was to change and upset.

I think that the inspiration and ^{his} ~~the~~ lack of fear of failure might inspire others.

He was not greedy about inspiring others. He was completely unselfish. He spent his money and his fame back into the art world.

I was one of the people, along with Emile D'Antonio, to take his own work seriously and show at the Stable gallery, where I was both a janitor and artist. It was run by Eleanor Ward. She was a great lookalike for Joan Crawford.

(One Saturday I showed up for an opening and she took me in the office and said, I really have to talk to you. I thought she was firing me as a janitor but she was keeping me on as a janitor and firing me as an artist. So what's \$15 a week? What was really great was that I had free heat, so I would only work at night.)

I knew him before he had more than three things to say...one was,

"oh, you really think so?" another was "do you think so?"

I think he has been exaggeratively shy. That's why I think nobody knows who his best friend is and/or if. That's a weird way to be a great personality. That kind of shyness has been totally consistent in his life.

He rarely did any of the conversation. If you are confronted with somebody who is dynamic in attitude but who won't say anything, then you do most of the talking. And so people

2

Copyright restrictions apply.
FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY. DO NOT DUPLICATE OR PUBLISH WITHOUT PERMISSION.
Contact archives@rauschenbergfoundation.org for reproduction requests

volunteered...I'm sure that has a lot to do with the success of interview. That's also what I meant by his lack of selfishness.

I've always followed his activities. He had an exhibition, I had to sell a work of his...it was the Popeye. He had a show connected with the DIA association of black and white early cartoon works. In order to raise funds for the ROCI-Tibet excursion I had to sell that piece.

Let it be said, I am sad. I believe that even those that disapproved of his creative concepts are going to find that they have lost something really special.

It's awfully difficult to be articulate and clear when you are confronting something, like death, which you have never understood anyway.

If I can do anything to make people miss him, I will.