

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Planca, Elisabetta / Questions for a Written Interview / Arte, 1997

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BRADLEY JEFFRIES
Robert Rauschenberg Studio
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Milano, December 17th, 1997

Dear Mr Jeffries,
following a suggestion from the Rubin Gallery in Milan, I am sending you a short list of questions for a written interview with Mr Robert Rauschenberg. As James Rubin may have anticipated, *Arte* magazine, the leading Italian illustrated monthly devoted to contemporary art, is publishing an extensive profile of Mr Rauschenberg, covering the scope of his career but focusing in particular on the huge Guggenheim exhibition which has set his status of contemporary master. We would like to ask him the following questions regarding his life and recent work:

- ① - Can he give a short explanation of the theme and contents of his most recent work, the *Anagrams* which will be shown in Milan?
- ② - What is – and what has been in the course of his career – his relationship with photography? Are there any American photographers he has drawn inspiration from? Does he sell and/or exhibit his photographs? Does he feel he has somehow opened the way for the many contemporary artists who mix painting and photographic techniques? Is he interested in the work of any young artists who use both photo and traditional media?
- ③ - Does photography have a preminent place in the work he is making now? Can he anticipate what his future works will be like?
- ④ - Jimmy Rubin said that Mr Rauschenberg would not agree to exhibit his works in Zürich, but he was willing to take them to Milan. Is Italy today such an interesting place for a world-renowned artist such as Robert Rauschenberg? Why? Can he briefly recall his relationship with Italy (participation in Venice Biennials, various solo exhibitions, personal trips, etc.)? Are there any major collectors of his works in Italy?
- ⑤ - Does he still keep in touch with what goes on in New York? Which galleries represent him today? What does he think of the present New York art scene?

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are there fresh energies around, any interesting artists, new enterprises/ a new generation of art collectors, curators, dealers...?

- When did he move to Florida? Why?

~~1977~~ Early 70's

- How much time in the day does he devote to painting today? How is his daily routine organized? How is the work divided between him and his assistant(s)?

FOR RAUSCHENBERG (S)

Concise answers will do excellently: I only want to be able to quote something from Mr Rauschenberg himself, since it would be very important for us to offer our readers direct news about the artist.

It is essential that I have the answers within Friday, December 19th. I greatly apologize for the relatively short notice, but the deadline for February is set on December, 22nd.

Thank you for your cooperation: please feel free to contact me at any time for any doubts or queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,

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To: Elisabetta Planca Fax: 39-2-89 125 960

Robert Rauschenberg
December 18, 1997

Answers to numbered paragraphs.

1. The new works to be exhibited at Larry Rubin's new gallery in Milan are called "Anagram (A Pun)". They incorporate a selection of my photographic imagery executed with non-toxic organic, water soluble inks and dyes.

The theme of the works is, as in all my work, a celebration of the visual richness that constantly surrounds us.

2. I began doing photographs at Black Mountain College in 1949, with Hazel Larson as my instructor and have been addicted ever since. I'm attracted to its portability, its economic accuracy as fact, and its spur to memory. the photography continues even when it is not literally consumed in my work.

I have been inspired by Matthew Brady, Robert Frank, Walker Evans, and Aaron Siskind. Photographs were the first art I sold to the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1949, purchased by Edward Steichen. I continue to exhibit and sell photographs today.

The younger artists using photographic techniques that interest me are Doug and Mike Starn, Jun Jing Lee, and Darryl Pottorf.

3. I never know what I'm going to do next or, I would not need to do it.

4. I have a long amicable relationship with Italy and the Italians. Beginning in Rome in the early 50s, my earliest shows were with Del Corso (Rome), Beatrice Monte (Milan) and Contemporary Art Gallery (Florence). Later I showed with Bienalles (Venice), Fort Belvedere (Florence), Sandro Manzo Gallery (Rome) and Lucio Amelio Gallery (Naples).

I've done theater work with Merce Cunningham at the Fenice in Venice and Trisha Brown at the Opera House in Naples.

I've lived and traveled happily in Italy for over 45 years.

5. I paint every day that I'm not in airports. I do business early in the day and I work at night after most everyone has left. My assistants included a welder, a carpenter, a computer specialist, a curator, an administrative assistant, etc. There are technical aspects that require assistants, but the painting is done by me.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG