

Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925-2008) – Artist Resources



Rauschenberg in NYC studio, 1958
Photograph: Jasper Johns

[Robert Rauschenberg Foundation](#): biography, artwork, publications, and archives; grants and residencies

[New York Times obituary](#)

Rauschenberg discusses his beginnings in New York in the 1950s in an [oral history](#) conducted by the Archives of American Art in 1965: “The people who gave me encouragement in my work, it was not so much the painters, even my contemporaries, but it was a group of musicians that were working...and the dancers that were around this group. And I felt very natural with them.”

“I think curiosity is the probably the most important energy that any creative person can have,” Rauschenberg tells Charlie Rose in [1998 television interview](#) followed by guided tour of his exhibition at the Guggenheim.

In 2005, the Metropolitan Museum of Art brought together 65 three-dimensional works for the first concentrated survey on Rauschenberg’s seminal [Combines](#). In conjunction with the exhibition, Rauschenberg appeared for [one of his final interviews](#) with art critic Calvin Tomkins (scroll down for the video).

The [Tate Modern](#) collaborated with [MoMA](#) in 2017 to produce the most comprehensive retrospective of Rauschenberg’s career since his death, *Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends*. Within the celebration of the towering masterpieces and key phases of the artist’s career, the exhibition highlight’s the role of technology and the influential collaborations and relationships that drove his career, including his engagement with dance and performance.

MoMA Director Glenn Lowry and exhibition curator Leah Dickerman celebrate the opening of the 2017 retrospective in London, discussing the creative power of and nuance of collaboration in [a video interview](#).

SFMoMA celebrated Rauschenberg’s humor, social critique, and constant experimentation with materials and process in the 2018 retrospective [Erasing the Rules](#).

[The Robert Rauschenberg Research Project](#): a collection of scholarship and archival documents related to works in SFMoMA’s permanent collection of the artist’s work.



Rauschenberg, 1980 Photograph: Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives



Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925-2008)

Minutiae, 1954

Combine: oil, paper, fabric, newsprint, wood, metal and plastic with mirror and string, on wood construction

Private Collection; L2022:75.6

Robert Rauschenberg's work had a seismic impact on 20th century art, encompassing painting, printmaking, sculpture, performance art, photography, and most of all the large, three-dimensional collages of the 1950s that came to be called "combine" paintings. After beginning his career as a young artist in New York, he attended Black Mountain College in the late 1940s, a visionary liberal arts school in North Carolina that was a center for emerging interdisciplinary artists. There, Rauschenberg met and began collaborating with choreographer Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) and composer John Cage (1912-1992). **Minutiae** was created for a performance designed by the three artists after all were back in New York City. Cunningham did not want a backdrop for his dancers, but a freestanding set that would encourage interaction as they interpreted Cage's score through movement. **Minutiae** became one of Rauschenberg's first "combines," a series of work that place everyday materials in new contexts and blur the line between painting and sculpture. As Rauschenberg once said: "You begin with the possibilities of the material."

On view February 1 – May 7, 2023

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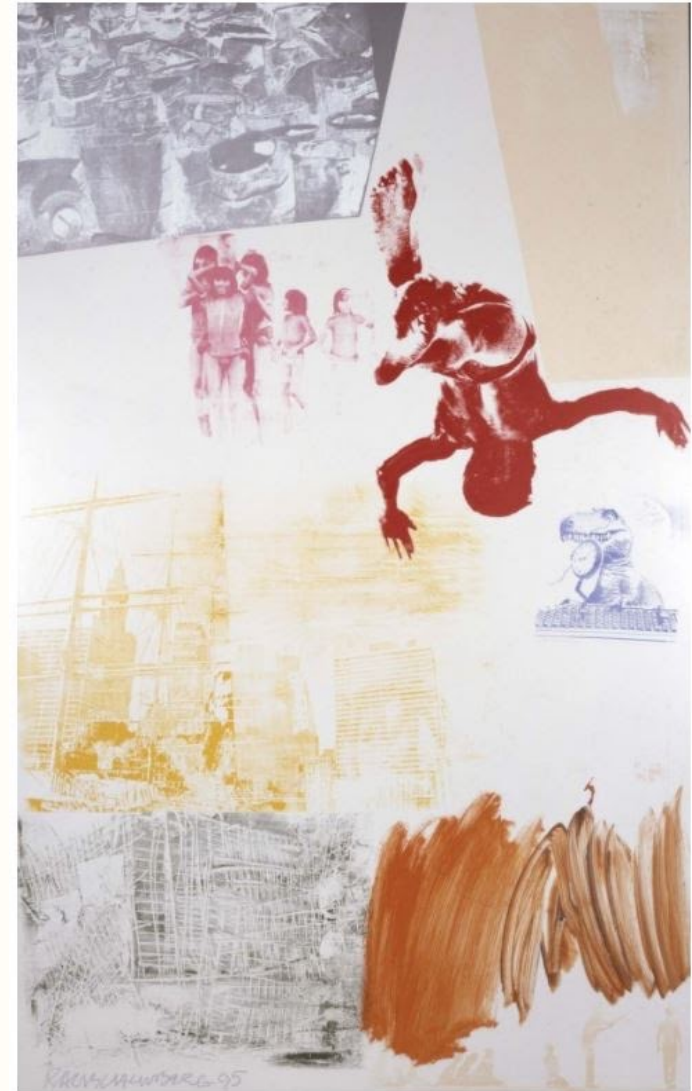
Bleach (Urban Bourbon), 1995

Acrylic on bonded aluminum

Private Collection; L2021:73.3

A pivotal figure of 20th century American art, Robert Rauschenberg is known for his Neo-Dada explorations of three-dimensional “combine” paintings and other graphic art. Poster design was an integral part of the artist’s oeuvre; Rauschenberg created over one hundred posters across thirty-five years, often commemorating historical moments such as the moon landing in 1969 and the first Earth Day in 1970. **Bleach (Urban Bourbon)** demonstrates Rauschenberg’s characteristic style of layered images, text, and paint. The poster is part of a larger *Urban Bourbon* series (1988-1996), which used silkscreened images from the artist’s own collection of photographs. In this example, the diver image on the right was taken by photographer Aaron Siskind (1903-1991), Rauschenberg’s friend and collaborator from their time at Black Mountain College in the 1950s.

On view October 27, 2021 – January 30, 2022





Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925-2008)

Untitled, 1953

Oil, wood, tissue paper, fabric, lace, camera bellow and newsprint collage on paper

Private Collection; L2019:156.3

The restless, improvisational innovator Robert Rauschenberg ranks among the pivotal artists of the latter half of the 20th century. In 1948, during a transformational stay at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, he studied – and often combined – painting, photography, drawing, printmaking, and sculpture. In New York and on a trip to Italy in the early 1950s, he created his first *assemblages*, which incorporated disparate imagery and subjects, multiple mediums, scraps of ephemera, and three-dimensional objects. In 1954, Rauschenberg began calling these radical and often controversial works “Combines” or “Combine paintings” to highlight their material diversity and formal construction as both sculptures and paintings. **Untitled** demonstrates an early working through of this material and conceptual process as the artist moved away from experiments in monochromatic painting. Ordinary objects such as a camera bellows – an expandable sleeve that enables the lens to be moved for focusing – fabric, and tissue paper merge with wood and paint. Rauschenberg intended the visually compelling disorder of materials to defy easy interpretations and challenge viewers. Speaking of such works in 1959, he famously said, “Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act the gap between the two).”

On view February 26 – May 31, 2020