

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART WILL PRESENT A FULL RETROSPECTIVE OF ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG IN MAY 2017

Artist Charles Atlas to Collaborate on Exhibition Design

NEW YORK, December 1, 2016 (Updated January 11, 2017)—*Robert Rauschenberg:*

Among Friends, a retrospective spanning the six-decade career of this defining figure of contemporary art, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from May 21 until September 17, 2017. Organized in collaboration with Tate Modern in London, this exhibition brings together over 250 works, integrating Rauschenberg's astonishing range of production across mediums including painting, sculpture, drawing, prints, photography, sound works, and performance footage. *Robert Rauschenberg* is organized by Leah Dickerman, The Marlene Hess Curator of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, and Achim Borchardt-Hume, Director of Exhibitions at Tate Modern, with Emily Liebert and Jenny Harris, Curatorial Assistants, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition's design at MoMA is created in collaboration with acclaimed artist and filmmaker Charles Atlas. In addition to its presentation in New York this spring, *Robert Rauschenberg* will be shown at Tate Modern (December 1, 2016–April 2, 2017) and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) (November 4, 2017–March 25, 2018).

In 1959, Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925–2008) wrote, "Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in that gap between the two.)" His work in this gap shaped artistic practice for the years to come. The early 1950s, when Rauschenberg launched his career, was the heyday of heroic gestural painting of Abstract Expressionism. Rauschenberg challenged this painterly tradition with an egalitarian approach to materials, bringing the stuff of the everyday world into his art. Working alone and in collaboration with artists, dancers, musicians, and writers, Rauschenberg invented new interdisciplinary forms of artistic practice that set the course for art of the present day. He created works that merged traditional art materials with ordinary objects, found imagery, and the cutting-edge technology of an emergent digital age; developed new modes of performance and performative work; and organized collaborative projects that crossed the boundaries between mediums and nations.

"The ethos that permeates Rauschenberg's work—an openness, commitment to dialogue and collaboration, and global curiosity—makes him, now more than ever, a touchstone for our troubled times," says exhibition curator Leah Dickerman.

Among the many highlights of the exhibition, *Robert Rauschenberg* will present the artist's widely celebrated Combines (1954–64) and silkscreen paintings (1962–64) in fresh ways, including two rarely lent works: *Charlene* (1954, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam), one of the largest from the artist's series of Red Paintings, which incorporates mirrors, part of a man's

undershirt, an umbrella, comic strips, and a light that flashes on and off; and *Monogram* (1955–59, Moderna Museet, Stockholm), Rauschenberg's famous Combine assembled from a taxidermied angora goat and tire, positioned on a painted and collaged wooden platform. At the same time, the exhibition will illuminate lesser-known periods within his career, including his work of the early 1950s and the late 1960s, which is increasingly compelling and prescient to contemporary eyes. Among Rauschenberg's early landmarks are his *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953) and *Automobile Tire Print* (1953), both in the collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The latter work was made when the artist instructed composer John Cage to drive his Model A Ford through a pool of paint and then across 20 sheets of paper. Later galleries will present two of his most ambitious technological experiments, both made in collaboration with engineers: *Oracle* (with Billy Klüver, Harold Hodges, Per Biorn, Toby Fitch, Robert K. Moore, 1962–65, Centre Pompidou, Paris), a five-part sculpture that combines salvaged metal junkyard treasures with the most advanced wireless transistor circuitry, and *Mud Muse* (with Frank LaHaye, Lewis Ellmore, George Carr, Jim Wilkinson, Carl Adams and Petrie Mason Robie, 1968–71, Moderna Museet, Stockholm), a vat of 8,000 pounds of drillers' mud, which burbles like a primeval tar pit in syncopation with sound-activated air compressors.

To focus attention on the importance of creative dialogue and collaboration to Rauschenberg's work, MoMA's presentation is structured as an "open monograph": as other artists, dancers, musicians, and writers came into Rauschenberg's creative life, their work will enter the exhibition, mapping the exchange of ideas. These figures, among the most influential in American postwar culture, include John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Sari Dienes, Jasper Johns, Billy Klüver, Yvonne Rainer, Paul Taylor, Jean Tinguely, David Tudor, Cy Twombly, Susan Weil, and many others. The exhibition galleries will group work across mediums from particular moments and places in which Rauschenberg and his collaborators and interlocutors came together, making art and often presenting it in association, starting with Black Mountain College near Asheville, North Carolina, then moving to Rauschenberg's Fulton Street and Pearl Street studios in New York City, and finally to Captiva Island, Florida, where the artist concluded his prolific career.

MoMA curator Leah Dickerman has invited pioneering video artist and filmmaker Charles Atlas to collaborate on the exhibition's presentation in New York. An artist with 14 works in the Museum's collection, Atlas worked with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from the early 1970s to 1983 as stage manager, lighting designer, and in-house filmmaker, and maintained a close working relationship with Cunningham until his death in 2009. Atlas recounts that Rauschenberg, who collaborated with Cunningham on more than 20 performances from 1954 to 1964, was the reason for the young artist's first association with the company: "I went to see Rauschenberg's work—that was my introduction to Merce.... [Rauschenberg] has been my main inspiration all my artistic life." Atlas's work with the Museum's curatorial and exhibition-design teams will foreground Rauschenberg's deep engagement with dance and performance, underscoring the ways these disciplines fundamentally shaped his approach to art making.

Robert Rauschenberg is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue that examines the artist's entire career across a full range of mediums. Edited by Leah Dickerman and Achim Borchardt-Hume, the book features 16 commissioned essays by eminent scholars and emerging new writers, including Yve-Alain Bois, Andrianna Campbell, Hal Foster, Mark Godfrey, Hiroko Ikegami, Branden W. Joseph, Ed Krčma, Michelle Kuo, Pamela M. Lee, Emily Liebert, Richard Meyer, Helen Molesworth, Kate Nesin, Sarah Roberts, and Catherine Wood. Each essay focuses on a specific moment in Rauschenberg's career, exploring his creative production across disciplines. Integrating new scholarship, documentary imagery, and archival materials, this is the first comprehensive catalogue of Rauschenberg's career in 20 years.

SPONSORSHIP:

Bank of America is the Global Sponsor of *Robert Rauschenberg*.

The exhibition is supported at Tate Modern and The Museum of Modern Art by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Major support for the New York presentation is provided by Glenn and Eva Dubin, Monique M. Schoen Warshaw, Mrs. Ronnie F. Heyman, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, and by Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III in honor of Jerry I. Speyer.

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Additional support is provided by the Annual Exhibition Fund.

SPONSOR STATEMENT:

"It is a pleasure to work with The Museum of Modern Art on this exhibition, as well as with Tate Modern in London and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, in order to bring Robert Rauschenberg's important work to millions of people around the world," said Rena Desisto global arts and culture executive, Bank of America. "Bank of America has enjoyed working with each of these fine institutions numerous times on several outstanding shows that have illuminated the work of artists such as Henri Matisse, Roy Lichtenstein, Rene Magritte, Gerhard Richter, and Andy Warhol. *Robert Rauschenberg* promises to be just as exciting – and groundbreaking – as each of these."

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