

# The Museum of Modern Art

## MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG FOREGROUNDS THE ARTIST'S COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

### Acclaimed Artist and Rauschenberg Collaborator Charles Atlas Worked with MoMA on the Exhibition's Design to Highlight Dance and Performance

#### ***Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends***

May 21, 2017–September 17, 2017  
Floor Four, Collection Galleries

NEW YORK, April 26, 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 through 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. To focus attention on the importance of creative dialogue and collaboration in 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 enters the exhibition, mapping the exchange of ideas. These figures, among the most influential in American postwar culture, include Trisha Brown, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Sari Dienes, Morton Feldman, Jasper Johns, Billy Klüver, Paul Taylor, Jean Tinguely, David Tudor, Cy Twombly, Susan Weil, and many others. *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 this retrospective's presentation in New York, *Robert Rauschenberg* was on view in a different iteration at Tate Modern (December 1, 2016–April 2, 2017) and will be shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) (November 18, 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 played a key role in defining the possibilities for artmaking in the years to come. The early 1950s, when Rauschenberg launched his career, was the heyday of the 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 others, Rauschenberg invented new, interdisciplinary forms of artistic practice that helped 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.

The exhibition galleries group work across mediums from particular moments and places in which Rauschenberg and his friends and collaborators 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.

Among its many highlights, *Robert Rauschenberg* presents the artist’s widely celebrated Combines (1954–64) and silkscreen paintings (1962–64) in fresh ways, including two rarely lent works: *Charlene* (1954), the last and 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), Rauschenberg’s famous Combine assembled from a taxidermied angora goat and a tire, positioned on a painted and collaged wooden platform. At the same time, the exhibition explores 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). 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 typewriter paper. Later galleries present two of his most ambitious technological experiments, both made in collaboration with engineers: *Oracle* (with Billy Klüver, Harold Hodges, Per Biorn, Toby Fitch, and Robert K. Moore, 1962–65), 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), a vat of 8,000 pounds of drillers’ mud, which burbles like a primeval tar pit in syncopation with sound-activated air compressors.

The exhibition represents the richness of Rauschenberg’s late career through the Gluts series (1986–89, 1991–94), metal sculptures inspired by the contemporary economy of the artist’s native Texas. The final gallery also features such works as *Holiday Ruse (Night Shade)* (1991) and *Mirthday Man (Anagram [A Pun])* (1997), which show Rauschenberg developing new printing techniques to reproduce his own photographs at the grand scale of painting, refusing through his very last works to segregate artistic mediums from one another.

The pioneering video artist and filmmaker Charles Atlas collaborated 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 foregrounds Rauschenberg's deep engagement with dance and performance, underscoring the ways these disciplines fundamentally shaped his approach to art making. One of the exhibition's centerpieces is a new installation that Atlas has created around footage from the historic multimedia performance series *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering* (1966), which featured works conceived by artists, including Rauschenberg, in collaboration with engineers from Bell Laboratories. From June 3 through July 30, visitors will also have the chance to see Atlas's *The Illusion of Democracy*—a trilogy of video installations comprising *Plato's Alley* (2008), *Painting by Numbers* (2011), and *143652* (2012)—in the Museum's second-floor exhibition galleries as part of *Inbox*, an ongoing series of installations that showcase recent additions to MoMA's collection.

*Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends* also presents video documentation from Rauschenberg's own performances *Pelican* (1963) and *Map Room II* (1965). Selected film footage, photographs, and archives document his contributions to dances by Cunningham and Taylor. The final gallery highlights and celebrates his 16-year collaboration with Trisha Brown (1979–1995). When Brown invited Rauschenberg to design the costume and sets for *Glacial Decoy* (1979), her first work on a proscenium stage, a "quartet that 'slides' back and forth," Rauschenberg created a backdrop of 620 photographic slides showing sites in and around Fort Myers, Florida, near his home base of Captiva Island. The slides were made to be projected on four large screens lining the back of the stage, migrating from one screen to the next. These projections, which Brown would later describe as a "luminous continuum," are featured along with documentary footage from the dance's performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2009. Footage from *Set and Reset* (1983), the second collaboration between Rauschenberg and Brown with Laurie Anderson, are featured in this gallery as well. In addition to his work in dance, Rauschenberg's exchanges and collaborations with composers Cage, Feldman, and Tudor are represented throughout the exhibition with scores and sound recordings.

## **PUBLICATIONS:**

*Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends* is accompanied by two publications: an exhibition catalogue and a new volume devoted to Rauschenberg's 34 drawings for Dante's *Inferno*.

The richly illustrated exhibition catalogue examines the artist's entire career across a full range of mediums. Edited by Leah Dickerman and Achim Borchardt-Hume, the book features 16 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. 414 pages, 436 illustrations. Hardcover, \$75. ISBN: 978-1-63345-020-2. Paperback, \$55. ISBN: 978-1-63345-021-9. Published in the United States and Canada by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and available at MoMA stores and online at [store.moma.org](http://store.moma.org). Distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada. Published and distributed outside the United States and Canada by Tate Publishing.

MoMA is also publishing ***Robert Rauschenberg: Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's "Inferno,"*** a new volume devoted to this treasured icon in the Museum's collection. Between 1958 and 1960, Rauschenberg made drawings for each of the 34 cantos of Dante Alighieri's 13th-century poem *Inferno* by using a novel technique to transfer photographic reproductions from magazines or newspapers onto paper, and then working further with other materials. A testament to Rauschenberg's desire to have art reflect contemporary experience, the resulting drawings weave together meditations on public and private spheres, politics and inner life. Above all, they pay homage to creativity in dialogue: each drawing is a conversation with Dante across the centuries.

For this volume, MoMA has invited two acclaimed poets of our own time—Kevin Young and Robin Coste Lewis—to offer their responses, in conversation with each other, to Rauschenberg's celebrated series in a poem for each drawing. Coste Lewis is a provost's fellow in poetry and visual studies at the University of Southern California, and the author of *Voyage of the Sable Venus* (2015), the winner of the National Book Award for Poetry. Young is the poetry editor at *The New Yorker*, the director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the author of 11 books of poetry and prose, most recently *Blue Laws: Selected & Uncollected Poems 1995–2015* (2016), which was longlisted for the National Book Award. An essay by curator Leah Dickerman explores Rauschenberg's making of the Dante drawings in depth.

*Robert Rauschenberg: Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's "Inferno"* will be published as a paperback and as a limited-edition portfolio of 500 copies that contains facsimiles of each of Rauschenberg's drawings; this will be the first time the series has been made available as a printed set since 1964. Paperback, \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-63345-029-5. 104 pages; 50 illustrations. Limited edition, \$500. ISBN 978-0-87070-857-9. 76-page illustrated booklet and 34 individual sheets encased in a clothbound clamshell box. Both editions published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and available at MoMA stores and online at [store.moma.org](http://store.moma.org). Distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada. Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames & Hudson.

*Robert Rauschenberg: Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's "Inferno"* is made possible through a grant from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. Major support is provided by the Riva Castleman Fund for Publications in the Department of Drawings and Prints, established by The Derald H. Ruttenberg Foundation.

## **AUDIO TOUR:**

Bringing together the voices of Rauschenberg's many collaborators and friends, including Charles Atlas, Trisha Brown, Alex Hay, Harold Hodges, Brice Marden, Julie Martin, Yvonne Rainer, Christopher Rauschenberg, Donald Saff, Calvin Tomkins, Lawrence Voytek, and others, with commentary by Leah Dickerman, The Marlene Hess Curator of Painting and Sculpture, MoMA; Ellen Davis, Conservation Fellow, MoMA; and Gunnar Marklund, Electrician, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and archival interviews with the artist himself, the audio tour accompanying the exhibition explores Rauschenberg's deep commitment to collaboration and experimentation across disciplines during the course of his six-decade career.

MoMA Audio+ is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS:**

### **Bang on a Can: Music Among Friends**

May 23 and 24, 2017

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1, 7:00 p.m.

Throughout Robert Rauschenberg's six-decade career, he moved freely between the worlds of visual art and avant-garde music. Beginning in the early 1950s, Rauschenberg worked closely with the composers and performers associated with the New York School, including such pioneering experimental figures as Earle Brown, John Cage, Morton Feldman, David Tudor, and Christian Wolff. This rich dialogue shaped Rauschenberg's approach to art making as well as that of his musical collaborators. In conjunction with the exhibition *Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends*, Pulitzer prize-winning composer David Lang and the celebrated music collective Bang on a Can present a pair of concerts featuring commentary exploring these artistic exchanges and their legacy for contemporary music.

#### **May 23**

**Part I** explores Rauschenberg's idea of the Combine, his term for works that incorporate ordinary objects and materials into painting, through recent musical compositions that use everyday sounds and images. Longtime Rauschenberg collaborator Christian Wolff will explore these ideas in conversation with David Lang. New York's electric Bang on a Can All-Stars and alumni of the Bang on a Can Summer Festival perform featured works including Morton Feldman's *Ixion* (1958, rev. 1962); Bryce Dessner's *Letter 27 with Film* featuring Charles Olson (2013); Christian Marclay's *Fade to Slide with Film by Christian Marclay* (2012); Anna Clyne's *A Wonderful Day* (2013); and Christian Wolff's *Suite (I) for Prepared Piano* (1954) and *Exercises 29 and 30* (2011).

#### **May 24**

**Part II** celebrates Rauschenberg's collaborations with John Cage and David Tudor through immersive works by both composers, reimagined for today by David Lang, Jody Elff, and Todd Reynolds. Featured works are John Cage's *4'33"* (1952) performed by Todd Reynolds; John Cage's *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1961) performed by The New School's Ensemble *4'33"* and directed by Todd Reynolds; and *After David Tudor (Homage to Fluorescent Sound)* (2017) performed by Jody Elff and David Lang.

Tickets (\$15; \$10 members and corporate members; \$5 students, seniors, and staff of other museums) can be purchased online or at the information desk, at the Film desk after 4:00 p.m. or on the day of the program.

Tickets are available at <https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/3093>.

Select programs in conjunction with Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends at The Museum of Modern Art are made possible in part through a grant from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

**MoMA CLASSES:****Robert Rauschenberg and the Art of Collaboration**

Three Thursdays: 5/25, 6/8, 6/15 (no class on 6/1); 6:00–7:50 p.m.

This course delves into works on view in the exhibition and considers the ways in which Rauschenberg's career laid the groundwork for art making today. In particular, we will examine the cross-disciplinary nature of Rauschenberg's practice, looking closely at his collaborations with poets, musicians, dancers, writers, and scientists and their sites of creative exchange. The course instructor is Jenny Harris (BA, Wellesley College), who has worked at The Museum of Modern Art in the Department of Painting and Sculpture since 2013, and has been a curatorial assistant since 2015.

Nonmembers \$270; MoMA members and Corporate Member employees \$245; students/educators \$190. Space is limited; to register for classes, visit [moma.org/courses](http://moma.org/courses).

**EXHIBITION HASHTAG:**

**#RauschenbergAmongFriends**

**SPONSORSHIP:**

Bank of America is the Global Sponsor of Robert Rauschenberg.

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For downloadable high-resolution images, register at [moma.org/press](http://moma.org/press).

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**Public Information:**

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, [moma.org](http://moma.org). Hours: Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00–8:00 p.m. [moma.org](http://moma.org): No service charge for tickets ordered on [moma.org](http://moma.org). Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current ID. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA membership within 30 days.