

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**The Museum of Modern Art****THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ACQUIRES *FACTUM II* AND OTHER IMPORTANT WORKS BY ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG**

The Museum of Modern Art has greatly enriched its representation of the work of Robert Rauschenberg with the acquisition of the key combine painting *Factum II* (1957), two other major pieces from the 1950s, and one of the artist's most recent works, MoMA Director Glenn Lowry announced today.

The three works of the 1950s will be the focus of an installation of MoMA's holdings of Rauschenberg's early works in all media, from July 1 to October 5, in the third floor Painting and Sculpture Galleries. For this special display, *Factum I*, the painting conceived as the direct companion to *Factum II*, will be on loan from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, allowing these "twins" to be reunited and shown together for the first time in decades.

Mr. Lowry said, "Our commitment to the art of Robert Rauschenberg continues a tradition begun in 1952, when The Museum of Modern Art was the first institution to acquire work by the artist—two photographs that caught the eye of Edward Steichen. A comprehensive collection of his work is essential to understanding the development of contemporary art. Today's landscape would indeed be a duller and less diverse place if not for Rauschenberg's endless inventiveness, which inspired, and gave permission to, so many who followed."

In the *Factum* paintings, Rauschenberg applied newspaper photos, found scraps of writing, and other paper and cloth elements to the canvas, and overlaid them with slathered strokes and apparently reckless drips of paint. Seen separately, each picture might appear as an improvised marriage between the random scrap of daily life (including the face of then President Dwight Eisenhower) and the "action" painting of Abstract Expressionism. However, each canvas also involves a theme of doubling: two identical faces of Ike, an image of paired trees, and side-by-side stop-action photos of two moments in the burning of a building. Then, more importantly, each *Factum* painting appears to be the exact double of the other, with the same composition of the same found imagery, and even a replication of the same overlaid drips and brush gestures. When Rauschenberg presented *Factum I* and *Factum II* at his first exhibition with Leo Castelli in 1958, the pair made a conceptual statement that countered notions of the artist as a reckless improviser, and also subverted the ideal—so important to the generation that preceded his—of the unique work of art as the site of spontaneous invention. The twinned paintings looked forward to the serial imagery and structures of image repetition that would so strongly mark the work of Pop artists in the 1960s.

Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, who will organize the special new display, commented: "We may think of Rauschenberg primarily as a freewheeling crosser of boundaries, a restless experimenter with an omnivore's appetite for exuberant physicality and imagery impetuously seized from life. Yet, at the roots of his art in the

1950s, he also showed himself a deft, even surgical practitioner of what came to be called conceptual art. *Factum II* fuses both aspects of his achievement."

Two of the other newly acquired works stem from an earlier period. *Untitled (Asheville Citizen)* (1952) was made at the time Rauschenberg attended the fabled Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina. He studied there with such diverse talents as Josef Albers and Franz Kline, and also worked with crucial contemporaries such as the choreographer Merce Cunningham and the composer John Cage. At Black Mountain he made a series of all-white paintings, and a parallel group of black abstractions. The Museum's new two-panel painting, acquired directly from the artist, is one of the most austere of these, dominated by a matte black surface; yet it is also intersected by an open two-page spread of advertisements from the local newspaper, the *Asheville Citizen*.

The following year, after a trip to Europe and North Africa with the painter Cy Twombly, Rauschenberg made a series of "elemental sculptures," crudely fabricated from rocks and used lumber. Some were shown in a joint exhibition with Twombly at the Stable Gallery in the autumn of 1953. One of the most poetic of these works is the *Untitled* (1953) just acquired by the Museum. It consists of a cubic box (7 1/8 inches on each side), roughly constructed from thick used boards, which (when its lid is lifted) contains within it a slightly smaller cube of fine, transparent silk, stretched on a delicately fashioned frame of fragile balsa. Beyond the poetry with which it opposes a rustic, clunky exterior to a gossamer interior purity, the piece speaks volumes about the artist's lifelong engagement with fabrics and with veiling, and about the collisions of rough detritus and refined sophistication that abound throughout his aesthetic. For this exhibition, the silk cube will be displayed beside the wooden box.

The Museum also acquired *Bookworms Harvest* (1998) from the artist's recent exhibition of his series *Anagrams (A Pun)*. This painting, a fractional and promised gift of MoMA Trustee Jerry I. Speyer, exemplifies Rauschenberg's new painterly processes of transferring computer-manipulated photographs onto paper, and features the rich, vibrant color and exuberantly complex compositional inventions that have marked a seeming rejuvenation within the exceptional career of this crucial progenitor of contemporary art.

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