



Robert Rauschenberg

Born:

Port Arthur, Texas, 1925

After briefly attending the University of Texas to study pharmacology, and serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II, Robert Rauschenberg decided to study art. He attended Kansas City Art Institute (1947-48), the Académie Julian in Paris (1947), and Black Mountain College in North Carolina (1948-49), where he sought the discipline instilled by Josef Albers. At Black Mountain, Rauschenberg formed a lasting friendship with Merce Cunningham, John Cage, and David Tudor. Moving to New York in 1949, he attended the Art Students League, where he worked with Morris Kantor and Vaclav Vytacil until 1952.

While painting and experimenting with blueprints during the 1950s, Rauschenberg also designed window displays for department stores. His first one-man show at Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, took place in 1951. The artist's early works included white paintings, black paintings, and sculptures in wood, rocks and rope. In 1953 he produced his first "combines," works that incorporated painting with various found objects.

In 1962 Rauschenberg made his first lithographs and silkscreens, and had been involved with innovative printmaking as well as with creating editions of three-dimensional objects. He has collaborated at many workshops, including ULAE, Pyramid Arts, Ltd., and Graphicstudio. In 1971, with Robert Petersen, he established the Untitled Press on Captiva Island. Rauschenberg frequently noted the great influence that making prints has on his art. The interplay of activity in different media is at the core of his work, which has been marked throughout his career by a sense of experiment and play.

Rauschenberg was involved with theater and dance, designing sets and costumes for Merce Cunningham and Trisha Brown, among others. He engaged in experiments incorporating electronics in art and, in 1966, with electronics engineer Billy Kluver, co-founded Experiments in Art and Technology, Inc.

Among Rauschenberg's major exhibitions are those organized by the Whitechapel Gallery, London (1964); the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1965); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1966, 69); the Newport Harbor Art Museum, Balboa (1969); the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (1974); the National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington (1975); and Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris (1981). A retrospective organized by the National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C., traveled throughout the United States in 1976–78. Rauschenberg traveled widely, embarking on a number of collaborations with artisans and workshops abroad, which culminated in the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project from 1985 to 1991. In 1997, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, exhibited the largest retrospective of Rauschenberg's work to date, which traveled to Houston and to Europe in 1998. Robert Rauschenberg passed away in the Spring of 2008.