Robert Rauschenberg:
Night Shades and Phantoms, 1991

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Edited by Julia Blaut and Emily Braun

Hollyhock Party (Night Shade), 1991.

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Robert Rauschenberg, *Postcard Self-Portrait, Black Mountain (I)*, 1952.
Gelatin silver print, 5 ⅝ × 3 ¼ inches (14.3 × 8.3 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Foreword

Made in 1991, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* exemplify Robert Rauschenberg's career-long ambition: make the viewer look and look again. These metal paintings at once resist legibility and beguile the beholder, whose gaze is reflected and deflected by the alternating mirrored and opaque surfaces. From the smoky chiaroscuro of the *Night Shades* to the ethereal translucency of the *Phantoms*, Rauschenberg extends an invitation to spend time and to sift through the mysterious layers of images, words, and gestures. With the frequent inclusion in his work of arrows or words, such as "look" and "see," Rauschenberg tells the viewer, time and again, to pay attention. As he said, looking cannot happen in "one glance" but rather has "to happen in time."[1]

The *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* do not reveal themselves easily, one of the reasons that an exhibition dedicated to them had been long overdue. It was not until the spring of 2019 that Professor Emily Braun, and her outstanding graduate students in the Hunter College Curatorial Practicum mounted an installation of the two series at the Rauschenberg Foundation headquarters on Lafayette Street in New York City. They reaped the rewards that come with looking at these paintings over time—at different angles, at different times of day, with different audiences, and with different personal experiences reflected on the surfaces. Between each look, the work changes.

The essays in this catalogue elucidate different aspects of the two related series, created when Rauschenberg was in his mid-sixties and enjoying a year of major museum exhibitions dedicated to his early and later work. Addressing this moment of career recognition and his status as an artworld éminence grise, Daniela Mayer explores the autobiographic and retrospective nature of the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*. Chris Murtha convincingly draws out the parallels between the look and medium of these metal paintings—grayscale silkscreened images on mirrored and brushed aluminum panels—and Rauschenberg's photographic practice. Lucy Riley argues for the singularity of the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* within the fifteen series of metal paintings that occupied Rauschenberg between 1985 and 1996. Joseph Shaikewitz offers a queer reading of the *Night Shades*, contextualizing them in the cultural milieu in which they were made—a period dominated by the HIV/AIDS crisis. And finally, Melissa Waldvogel illustrates the importance of Rauschenberg's titles—rife with pictorial puns and wordplay—eliciting numerous associations and providing the linguistic key for interpreting the works.

In the academic year 2018–2019, this Curatorial Practicum was one of two classes taught by Prof. Braun in partnership with the Rauschenberg Foundation. It is not only the students who benefited from Prof. Braun's intellectual rigor and insistence on excellence, but also Rauschenberg's legacy. It has been an honor to work with such a dedicated group and to provide an object-based component to their learning. Their extensive research in the Foundation archives and their contemporary point of view have significantly enhanced our understanding of his metal paintings. The success of our joint venture has inspired other classes and, happily for us, represents the first of many collaborations between the Foundation and the MA Program in the History of Art at Hunter College. Rauschenberg aimed to make his work ever current and of the moment. Collaborating with graduate students and future curators does just that.

JULIA BLAUT

Director of Curatorial Affairs, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

1 Gene R. Swenson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture." *ARTnews* (New York) 62, no. 2 (April 1963), p. 45.

Introduction

Organized by the Hunter College MA Program Curatorial Practicum in collaboration with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, *Night Shades and Phantoms: An Exhibition of Works by Robert Rauschenberg* was the first exhibition devoted to these two series and the close relationship between them. These "metal paintings," as the artist called them, consist of one or more photographic images transferred by silkscreen onto brushed or mirrored aluminum supports; the *Phantom*s were made exclusively with the latter. Painting in the traditional sense does not exist in these works, but they nonetheless deliberately include, evoke, and subvert key pictorial conventions: the flat picture plane and support; gestural mark making and chiaroscuro modeling; installation on a wall and a frame around "the canvas." In total, Rauschenberg produced forty-five *Night Shades* and eighteen *Phantoms*. He completed both series in 1991 in his Captiva, Florida studio. All the artworks selected for this exhibition are from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation holdings.

The *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* are based exclusively on Rauschenberg's own photographs made during his various trips through the United States and abroad between 1979 and 1991, including his travels for the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange project (ROCI; 1984–91). These photographs frequently capture reflections, grids, and pictures within pictures (mainly commercial billboards and signage), which add to their visual complexity. Between 1985 and 1995, the artist created fifteen series of metal paintings based on this imagery, which he silkscreened onto a variety of supports, including aluminum, brass, bronze, copper, and steel. Rauschenberg experimented with corrosive tarnishes to produce different textural and tonal effects and, conversely, often used clear synthetic varnishes to protect selected areas of the surface from these same chemical reactions (or to "resist" them). He frequently reused the same screens within and across different metal paintings, playing with positive/negative reversals and adding to the visual intricacies within the compositions. Furthermore, exposed areas of the mirrored panels bring the outside world of phenomenal reality into the space of the static picture, choreographing a visual dance between ephemerality and permanence.

The grayscale palette of the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*—from pitch-black shadows to quicksilver highlights—distinguishes them from the other metal paintings, such as the *Borealis* (1988–92), *Urban Bourbons* (1988–96), and *Spartans* (1991). The others all revel in color, be it subdued or garish, mono- or polychromatic. Despite touches of humor, their overall mood likewise differs—ranging from lyrical and elegiac to threatening—as the meaning of the words "nightshade" and "phantom" underscore. The emphasis on black and white also connects these two most directly to Rauschenberg's photographic sources. That relationship determined our decision to present a selection of the artist's photographs in the exhibition, including several that served as source images for specific *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*. Yet the metal panels allowed the artist to play with light in real time, in ways that mere photographic reproductions on paper or canvas cannot. The absence of local color and color contrasts, in tandem with fluctuating ambient light and volatile reflections, engage the viewer's perceptions and challenge the ability to "fix" an image. The *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* series fulfill Rauschenberg's long-stated goal "to make a surface which invited a constant change of focus and an examination of detail"—

in short, to make art that is difficult to see.[1] The highly reflective *Phantoms*, in particular, make viewers aware of shifting perspectives and shifting things, as they concurrently observe their bodies moving in space across the surface of the picture and in and out of its depths.

The artist's materials and technical procedures were critical to our interpretation of the images. Rauschenberg produced his *Night Shades* on mill-finished aluminum, after first removing the oily wax coating that had been added in the factory. He frequently used a translucent polyurethane varnish (the resist), thickened with silica powder as the silkscreen medium for printing the chosen photographic imagery. He employed this varnish alone, or under or over other screened images applied with traditional silkscreen ink (in black and, rarely, in white) made by Golden Artists Colors. Rauschenberg then selectively applied a commercial corrosive agent, or tarnish, called Aluma Black in order to obscure parts of the imagery. It immediately started to darken the exposed areas of the aluminum support (i.e., those areas not covered by the resist). Depending on the desired saturation of black and painterly effects, he diluted the tarnish with water to achieve nuances of tone in a wet-on-wet process, brushing it on with rags or mops in sweeping strokes or letting it drip and splatter. Then the surfaces were hosed off to arrest the tarnishing process, and heat lamps were subsequently used to dry and fix the images. In some instances, he applied the Aluma Black first and then silk-screened the imagery on top. Moreover, on certain panels, one can observe that Rauschenberg used the resist—clear or tinted with pigment—as a painterly medium, like the tarnish. He spread it broadly to create gestural, luminous passages in stark contrast to the deep shadows. All told, the process varied from work to work. When it came to technique, Rauschenberg thrived on exceptions rather than rules.

A crucial difference exists between *Night Shades* and the *Phantoms*. The former were made on mirrored or brushed aluminum, which the Aluma Black tarnish could penetrate, except for those areas where the artist had previously applied the polyurethane varnish resist. By contrast, he produced *Phantoms* on mirrored anodized aluminum, a factory finish that repelled the tarnish. Hence no Aluma Black appears in them, and their effect is startlingly ethereal by comparison to the *Night Shades*, almost like a ghostly twin. The origin of the *Phantoms* was recounted by his studio assistant Lawrence Voytek:

> One day I came to work and Bob had taken some of our mirrored, anodized aluminum sheet and printed with the pure polyurethane varnish on this mirrored aluminum sheet. Bob wanted to blacken it. I said, "It's not going to work, Bob. It's anodized, the anodizing seals the aluminum." He said, "Well, I kind of like the way you can't really see it." So he started the *Phantoms*.[2]

This initiative marked the first time that the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation invited outside curators to organize an exhibition in the gallery spaces located at their headquarters at 381 Lafayette Street, the site of the artist's former home and studio. It was also the first time that a Hunter College class organized an exhibition that took place outside one of its own campus galleries. The collaboration grew out of the respective missions of both institutions to educate the next generation in the scholarly research and connoisseurship that are critical to the history of art and to museum practices of object interpretation, care, and conservation. The Hunter College Department of Art and Art History extends its appreciation to Kathy Halbreich, Executive Director of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation and to Jennifer Raab, President of Hunter College, both of whom supported this initiative from its beginnings and insured that the students' research work would appear in published form.

I am pleased to have curated this exhibition with my Hunter College MA students Daniela Mayer, Chris Murtha, Lucy Riley, Joseph Shaikewitz, and Melissa Waldvogel. We were guided every step of the way by the Rauschenberg Foundation's in-house experts, David White, Senior Curator and Julia Blaut, Director of Curatorial Affairs.

Working alongside this shadow team was one of the highlights of the Curatorial Practicum: we relied upon their extensive knowledge about the artist and his art and their own experiences in installing exhibitions. White and Blaut originated the idea of a show around these two series because they knew much research needed to be done and we are grateful that they entrusted us to the task. They put the resources of the Foundation at our disposal, including the Robert Rauschenberg Archives, directed by Francine Snyder, whose unparalleled knowledge of the artist's papers and scholarly generosity is reflected in all of the essays published in this catalogue. The exhibition could not have been realized without the following staff at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation: Thomas Roach, Head of Art Services, Helen Hsu, Assistant Curator, and Brittany Richmond, Research Assistant. Curatorial Assistant Kristen Clevenson provided invaluable support in the editorial stages of the catalogue. We are further grateful to the Foundation for organizing special viewings and tours of the exhibition. These events offered our student curators the opportunity to hone their public-speaking skills, lecture in front of actual works of art instead of reproductions, and to meet other art historians, museum directors, and curators.

For their essential contributions to the project, we acknowledge conservators Reinhard Bek and Christine Frohnert, as well as Natalya Swanson, the Rauschenberg Conservation Fellow, from the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. Several study days were devoted to detailed examination of individual *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* and the students benefited enormously from this immersion into conservation practices. They learned new technical vocabulary, protocols of handling precious material objects, and a different kind of visual scrutiny. The Curatorial Practicum classes held at Hunter College during the planning stages also included guest lectures by Rauschenberg experts Charles Stuckey and Susan Davidson, who gave generously of their time. We depended on the steadfast support of Howard Singerman, Phyllis and Joseph Caroff Chair of the Department of Art and Art History at Hunter College. Tim Laun, Director of Operations at Hunter College 205 Hudson Street, designed and produced the exhibition didactics. Our sincere thanks as well to the catalogue designer, Natalie Wedeking, and to Sarah S. King, Editor-in-Chief, and the team at SNAP Editions for their work on the catalogue texts. The Hunter College Curatorial Certificate would not be possible without the generous and ongoing support of David Bershad, Susan Bershad, Carol Goldberg, Joan Lazarus, and the James Howell Foundation. Additional program support for the Curatorial Certificate has been provided by the Paula Cooper Gallery, Gagosian Gallery, the Marian Goodman Gallery, and David Zwirner.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation provided our students with a model of dedication to an artist's legacy as well as to scholarly rigor, mentorship, teamwork, good humor, and professionalism: essential lessons for a future career in curating and in education. It is said that Rauschenberg's protean creativity depended on the court and spark of collaborations. For that reason too, he served as an inspiration.

EMILY BRAUN

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1 Gene R. Swenson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture." *ARTnews* (New York) 62, no. 2 (April 1963), p. 45.

2 The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, May 1, 2016. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 201.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Time Scan (Phantom)*, 1991 (detail).

Looking Also Happens in Time: Memory Traces in Robert Rauschenberg's *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*

DANIELA MAYER

> For shadows there is no time save this time, no space save this space, no motion save this motion. It is abstracted from all truth, yet it is not without it. But, it's also not impossible to think (if this is an Ideal shadow) that the opposite or something else is also true, since it is all one. With shadows, there is no opposite, neither darkness nor light.
>
> Giordano Bruno[1]

In a 1997 interview with Robert Rauschenberg, Charlie Rose quoted the art historian John Richardson: "Rauschenberg is a painter of history—the history of now rather than then," and affirmed, "I mean, you have always been that, now."[2] Dressed in a light gray suit with a yellow tie, the then seventy-two-year-old artist replied without hesitation, "That's my major influence." Rauschenberg's preoccupation with depicting the "now" had long been understood as the impetus for his imagery and experimental techniques. Yet, two series that he created later in life, the *Phantoms* and *Night Shades*, challenge that notion. They are indelibly marked by remembrances of things past.

Created in 1991, when at the age of sixty-six Rauschenberg was entering what has been called "life's third act," these two series of so-called "metal paintings" intermix somberness and whimsy to convey a retrospective aura.[3] The black, white, and grayscale screenprints, on silvery aluminum supports, integrate photographs taken by the artist during his travels, often organized in collaged or scrapbook-like arrangements. The compositions repeat motifs reiterated throughout Rauschenberg's oeuvre, such as commercial signage, drapes and other hanging fabrics, window frames, reflections, and animals. These images are obscured, either by the faintness of their imprint or through the gestural application of corrosive dark tarnishes. In many instances, the viewer cannot fully grasp what appears and disappears on the surface, even after prolonged examination. The series' titles allude to these foggy, enveloping effects. *Night Shade* suggests twilight or a curtain falling, both metaphors for the latter stages of life and impending death, provocatively underscored by the word's affiliation with the deadly nightshade (*atropa belladonna*) plant. *Phantom*, in turn, connotes haunting, fleeting, and insubstantial figments of the imagination.

In the *Phantoms* and *Night Shades*, Rauschenberg composed a meta-representation of memory that embodies its elusive and intangible qualities. The photographic sources do not function as snapshots from the past "frozen" for eternity; instead, the artist manipulates them through pictorial effects such as chiaroscuro. In this way, he visualizes the blurring in the mind's eye that occurs over the years, when detail and clarity are lost and nostalgia takes hold. Much like a corroded or faded photograph, Rauschenberg's memory images do not register the truth

or "proof" of a past event or existence, but instead make manifest the irrevocability of time's passage—their appearance barely perceivable after being absent from view or direct experience for many years.

Rauschenberg's work had been compared to psychological structures and processes of the mind long before the production of the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*.[4] Writing on the Combines in 1972, Leo Steinberg observed:

> It seemed at times that Rauschenberg's work surface stood for the mind itself—dump, reservoir, switching center, abundant with concrete references freely associated as in an internal dialogue—the outward symbol of the mind as a running transformer of the external world, constantly ingesting incoming unprocessed data to be mapped in an overcharged field.[5]

Rosalind Krauss also commented on Rauschenberg's ability to transform a private experience into a communal one, in 1974, when she wrote how the use of found imagery creates a mind-meld sensation between the artist and the viewer:

> For it is exactly the notion of memory, or of any other private experience which paintings might have formerly expressed, that is redefined by these pictures [the Combines]. The field of memory itself is changed from something that is internal to something external; from something that is private to something that is collective insofar as it arises from the shared communality of culture. This is not culture with a capital C but rather a profusion of facts, some exalted but most banal, each of which leaves its imprint as it burrows into and forms experience.[6]

With that said, when it came to autobiographical subjects, Rauschenberg ensured that his art withheld as much as it shared. Autobiographical traces—memory fragments—permeate Rauschenberg's compositions, effectively placing them in the gap between art and life that the artist famously strived to work in.[7] As noted by art historian and curator Julia Blaut, "When asked in a 1979 interview how much of his work was autobiographical, [Rauschenberg] replied: 'Probably all of it.'"[8] Personal references appeared in his Combines, notably in Untitled (ca. 1954/1958; fig. 1), sometimes referred to as *Man with White Shoes*, which includes photographs of his family and newspaper clippings about them, a handwritten letter from his son, a drawing by Cy Twombly (his former partner), and a photograph of Jasper Johns (his then partner), as well as a pair of Rauschenberg's white, leather shoes.[9] The romantic significance of the inclusion of Twombly and Johns was not necessarily evident to audiences in the 1950s, although their artistic collaborations with Rauschenberg were known.[10] Such oblique references allowed Rauschenberg to share an intimate history while preventing outsiders from seeing the full picture, so to speak.

Conceived more than three-and-a-half decades later, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* still utilize collage composition, but lessen the distance between Rauschenberg and the viewer. Rather than the found objects of the Combines or the appropriated mass-media sources of the silkscreen paintings—images that maintain their autonomous origins and "lives"—the fifteen later metal painting series created by the artist between 1985 and 1996 depend exclusively

fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, Untitled, ca. 1954/1958. Combine: oil, pencil, crayon, paper, canvas, fabric, newspaper, photographs, wood, glass, mirror, tin, cork, and found painting with pair of painted leather shoes, dried grass, and Dominique hen on wood structure mounted on five casters, 86 ½ × 37 × 26 ¼ inches (219.7 × 94 × 66.7 cm). The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. The Panza Collection.

on photographs taken by Rauschenberg around his home in Captiva, Florida, and during his travels from 1979 to 1991.[11] These works are therefore inherently retrospective, as they comment upon direct experiences from Rauschenberg's past through his own eyes. The sense of retracing life's journey through personal recollection is furthered in the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* by the nostalgic, grayscale palette—akin to the original black-and-white photographs—versus the colors used in the other metal painting series. Even though many of the metal paintings depict everyday objects and scenes that still give viewers a mind-meld sensation, the poignancy of the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* is linked to Rauschenberg's perspective on his own individual journey, as captured and reassembled through his lens.

The self-focused and introspective subject matter may seem out of character for an artist who famously disparaged the psychological and subjective content attributed to the Abstract Expressionists. As Rauschenberg once remarked: "I used to think of that line in Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* [published in 1956], about 'the sad cup of coffee.' I've had cold coffee and hot coffee, good coffee and lousy coffee, but I've never had a sad cup of coffee."[12] The artist made it clear that he did not want to impose an emotional reading onto the objects he placed into his art. Nonetheless, Rosalind Krauss queried Rauschenberg's ability to deny the associative or symbolic power of real and represented things. Noting how his use of screenprinted imagery in the early 1960s coincided in time with literary theorist Roland Barthes's important texts on photographic theory, she wrote:

> And yet what interests me is both the way these parallel practices [Rauschenberg's and Barthes's] turn on the index's muteness, what Barthes characterized as the scandal of its constituting a "message without a code," and the growing realization that in its photographic form this muteness is nonetheless abuzz with connotations, so that, yes, Virginia, there is always and everywhere (and especially once photographed) a potentially "sad cup of coffee."[13]

The personal photographs that Rauschenberg chose to incorporate into his works could not be without autobiographical tenor, even if he desired it—although it is unclear how much he truly adhered to his avowed emotional neutrality. Rauschenberg's longtime studio assistant Lawrence Voytek—who worked with him during the production of the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*—revealed quite the contrary in describing the artist's photo-selection process:

> Bob [Rauschenberg] had visions and feelings. And so when he'd look through pictures, he would have feelings. A picture is worth a thousand words and his editing of or combining of images was intoxicating to him in some ways. And if you talked to him, he would give you this movie trailer of how he was explaining what he was talking about. The tangents were like his artwork, where the connections were so hard to follow where it's coming from and where it was going.[14]

The faint, screenprinted technique Rauschenberg employed for the *Phantoms* imparts the sense of faded images rising up to the surface, as if from the past, hovering momentarily but impossible to seize. The silvery and blanched tones grace the surface in a manner both playful and pensive. Nostalgia comes to the fore in works such as *Time Scan (Phantom)*, which, from title to content, is visibly concerned with the passage of time (plate 18). Rauschenberg juxtaposes cloudy, green-tinged white screenprints derived from his own 1989 photograph of the famous

clock on the facade of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris with one of a discarded baby carriage shot in New York City the year before. The photograph of the clock was taken from inside the museum, so that the face reads in reverse and time "runs backwards."[15] Lightly printed onto the joint between these two images is a screenprint based on a photo from 1989 in Cuba of a child, visible from the waist down, leaning onto a wooden scooter with a stenciled "thumbs-up" symbol. The imagery of the reversed clock face combined with that of the abandoned stroller and the child at play is undeniably wistful—a perhaps undisguised commentary on innocence lost and a desire to return to simpler times. A "painted" expressive splash across the bottom of this *Phantom* and gestural brushstroke near the clock face further inserts the artist and his psyche directly into the work, contrasting with the mechanical precision of the silkscreen transfer.[16] Avoiding vibrant, colorful hues that one would associate with unabashed joy, the delicate, washed-out tints veil *Time Scan* (a pun on time span) in melancholy. *Time Scan*'s elusive appearance accentuates the perception of temporal distance between the past and the present, soberly asserting that one cannot turn back the clock.

Part of what makes the *Phantoms* challenging to see, yet simultaneously actualizes their role as surfaces of cognitive reflection, are their glossy, mirrored-aluminum supports. These backdrops are even more receptive to the world around them than Rauschenberg's 1951 series of *White Paintings* (fig. 2), which the composer John Cage described as indexical surfaces, "airports for lights, shadows, and particles."[17] These polished surfaces reflect not only shadows, but also the colors and architecture of the room in which they hang, as well as the passersby who may stop and ponder them. Depending on the hour of day, where they are installed, and who is in the room—the appearances of the *Phantoms* are in perpetual flux. As pointed out earlier, Rauschenberg deliberately worked against the received wisdom that a photograph freezes a moment in time.[18] His intentions also account for why this series is notoriously difficult to photograph: the *Phantoms* deny the archivist's desire for an aide-mémoire or a reliable visual record. As noted by the cognitive psychologist Elizabeth Loftus:

> Many people believe that memory works like a recording device. You just record the information, then you call it up and play it back when you want to answer questions or identify images. But decades of work in psychology has shown that this just isn't true. Our memories are constructive. They're reconstructive. Memory works a little bit more like a Wikipedia page: You can go in there and change it, but so can other people.[19]

Memories are not stagnant, but rather recreated each time they are called upon, rising to the surface and dissipating again like phantom traces. Similarly, the imprints of times past left on Rauschenberg's *Phantoms* are altered by present emotions, viewing situations, and new impressions of light and shadow, illusion and reality, that flood one's imagination. This experience of temporal overlay and fugitive "seeing" is manifested in *Bounders (Phantom)* (plate 22), a photo-painting where the viewers' reflections are inserted into past scenes of a street with drapery in Charleston, South Carolina (plate 28), and hanging fabric in Naples, Italy. The muted, silvery screenprinted images become even more difficult to decipher when one or more viewers suddenly enter into the picture. The act of perceiving a *Phantom* thus occurs over time and space: one essentially dances with the past—moving up-and-down and from side-to-side to take it all in.

Such movement activates Rauschenberg's still photos—the ephemeral colors of the "now" contrasting vividly with the faint imagery. As a result, the viewer becomes aware of how the present determines how one sees the past, as both themselves and their surroundings contrast

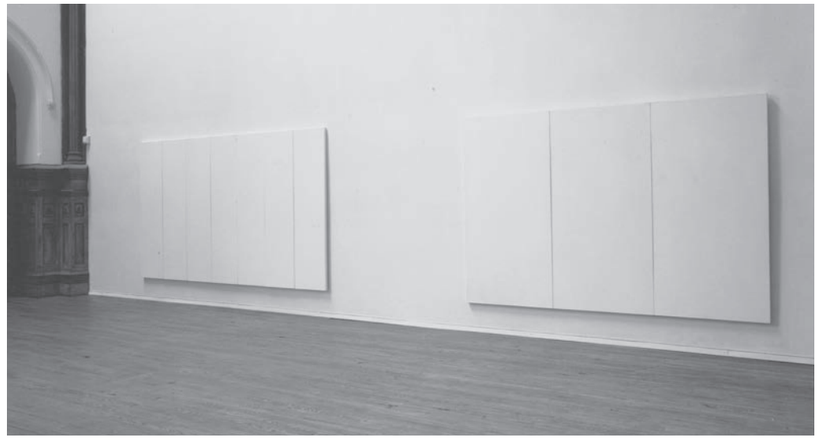


fig. 2

Installation view of Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting [seven panel]* (1951) and *White Painting [three panel]* (1951) in the Chapel at 381 Lafayette Street, 1991. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

against the ghostly forms of the Charleston and Naples of yesteryear. However, these works also capture the synergetic nature of the "then" and "now," the static and the mobile, as it is also nearly impossible for viewers to see themselves in the *Phantoms* without also acknowledging the impression of the past on them—both literally and figuratively. Their reflections infiltrate and merge with the silkscreened images, leading to the contemplation of Rauschenberg's photographs and their distant places and moments. Though highly personal, the meditative tone reinforces the idea that memory—individual and collective—form the basis of one's identity; in the *Phantoms*, the past is inseverable from the present.[20]

While the various colors of the surrounding space contrast with the muted screenprints of the *Phantoms*, many of the seemingly achromatic images are actually tinted with pale blue, green, pink, tan, and gray-mauve—sometimes with more than one color on the same support, as in *Botanical Vaudeville* (plate 17). This large, horizontal *Phantom* features four different images based on photographs taken between 1987 and 1989. It includes, from left to right: a green-tinged tree, which the artist flipped and printed thrice on the left side of the work; a Cuban boy looking off into the distance with a large structure in the background, which the artist rotated 90 degrees to the right and overlaid with a separate blue image of stripes; and a dark-mauve construction site from Naples, draped in a fabric covering.

The subjective nature of color imbues the originally black-and-white photographs with subtle emotive layers. As a student of the famous Bauhaus artist and educator Josef Albers, author of *Interaction of Color* (1963), Rauschenberg would have been aware of the impact of color, be it bold or barely perceptible. As Albers claimed: "In visual perception a color is almost never seen as it really is—as it physically is. This fact makes color the most relative medium in art."[21] The discrete presence of color in the *Phantoms* accentuates this relativity: not only will the same pale shade of blue appear noticeably different paired next to a pale green, but the colors mutate with the changing light. As such, the subtle shades of *Botanical Vaudeville* and the other *Phantoms* make the imagery even harder to see, as the colors alter drastically within a gallery as light naturally changes from dawn to dusk.[22] The transitory element of hue speaks, once more, to the ever-shifting terrain of recollection. As noted by Albers, visual memory is very poor, and so, "It is hard, if not impossible, to remember distinct colors."[23] Although the original colors of the depicted screenprinted photos are muted and "misremembered," the pale shades seem to communicate a sense of what emotions these images stirred in Rauschenberg. In this sense, the inclusion of tints in the *Phantoms* is another way that the present can be seen to impose its

perception onto the past, as the colors reflect the artist's intentions at the time of the metal paintings' creation rather than at the time of snapping the image.

In contrast to the ethereal *Phantoms*, Rauschenberg depicted the *Night Shades* in roiled, somber grays and blacks. Moreover, he printed many of the *Night Shades* on brushed, rather than mirrored, aluminum ground. The cloudy gray surface captures and adumbrates the shadowy passages, which are actually formed by a corrosive tarnish, Aluma Black, that bites into the metal with velvety and sobering effect. In their play with obscuring darkness, the *Night Shades* present themselves as a fraternal twin series to the fugitive luminosity of the *Phantoms*.

For the *Night Shades*, Rauschenberg often screenprinted the images with a clear varnish "resist": the transferred areas repelled the wash of black tarnish that he applied with sweeping strokes.[24] Different amounts of tarnish, whether applied thickly, diluted with water, or erased with rags, created distinct tonal effects and degrees of blurring and disguising. Areas of the resist-covered aluminum reveal legible silkscreened imagery (and some reflection), while swaths of dark, matte surfaces obliterate what lies beneath; still other passages hover between the visible and invisible. Either way, the oscillation—at times dramatic and at other times subtle—between absence and presence, dim light and deep shadow, can be read as representative of the reality of memory: recall is imperfect, beset by gaps, slippages, and overlays of competing images.

The sense of a curtain or shade that obscures vision is exemplified in *Dog-On (Night Shade)*, which features a mutt named Rudy with sad eyes and a severely dislocated lower jaw whom Rauschenberg encountered in Venezuela in 1985 (fig. 3).[25] Rudy's imposing body dominates this *Night Shade*, dwarfing the image below him of two dogs on a beach in North Carolina in 1980. Black tarnish infiltrates much of the image, the dark application proving visually impenetrable. A gray coating streaks across Rudy's form, the diagonal marks leaving random stains behind that highlight his mournful expression. Although the facial expression of Rudy in *Dog-On* is itself poignant, the emotional effects in the *Night Shades* result from the gestural applications of dark tones that Rauschenberg employed to cover his images.

Although, the application of the tarnishes is an additive process, Rauschenberg's frenzied streaks often appear subtractive, as if they are attempting to excavate shrouded images. In this sense too, the *Night Shades* depict remembering and forgetting; they seem to enact efforts by the artist to reconstruct the

fig. 3

Robert Rauschenberg, *Dog-On (Night Shade)*, 1991. Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 49 × 41 inches (124.5 × 104.1 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

fig. 4

Black-and-white contact sheet, Texas, February 1991 (detail). Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

process of culling memories to the surface from the mind's depths. While some motifs emerge wholly or partially from the inky or silvery surfaces, others remain clouded or submerged under too many layers to visually recover—effectively erasing them from memory. The rapidity of the artist's gestures adds a fretful urgency to the otherwise still photographic imprints—expressing a striking desire to fix an image before it becomes permanently swallowed by the void of time. This frustration with the limits of the mind and the traces of memory is, in turn, passed onto the viewers who must labor to see any imagery within the *Night Shades*. This is the genius of the series—the viewer struggles to see what has been deliberately obscured, and by analogy, reenacts the artist's struggle to remember.

In 1689, John Locke wrote, "Our ideas are said to be in our memories, when indeed, they are actually nowhere, but only there is an ability in the mind, when it will, to revive them again; and as it were paint them anew on itself."[26] In Locke's view, memory is a repository for ideas that have ceased to be anything; a storehouse whose contents are stored nowhere until they are revived. This cycle of dormancy and retrieval, emergence and disappearance, informs the making and the viewing of the *Phantoms*, and more so, the *Night Shades*, as the gaps between the images represent precisely what is lost between remembrances. Much like Steinberg suggested of the Combines, the disjointed quality of these works appear to "stand for the mind itself."[27]

In *Driveway Detour (Night Shade)*, three seemingly separate source images speak to this patchwork effect of memory, but the arrangement is far from a chance operation (plate 13). Despite the isolated appearance of each object, this unique *Night Shade* is in fact made up of only two source images. The black tarnish acts as a developing agent, both highlighting the details in the imagery as well as calling attention to the gaps between them, creating breaks in the composition that do not exist in the original photographs. The image to the left features a post with a flipped sign that reads "no outlet," which was taken in Miami, Florida, in 1987 (Rauschenberg moved his main residence and studio to Captiva, Florida, in 1970). The source photograph to the right, from 1991, depicts a house in Texas, the artist's home state (fig. 4). The signage on the street includes contradictory "out" and "in" directions, as well as the name "Lafayette St" on a small white post—coincidentally, the same street name as the artist's longtime New York City residence and studio.[28] ("Lafayette" was also the Louisiana town where Rauschenberg's family relocated to in 1945.) The references to the artist's life "detours" add an unexpected autobiographical depth to *Driveway Detour*. Yet, without the identification of the original source photography, the viewer would not be aware of the connections. Significantly, while much of the picture surface is blank or obscured, what Rauschenberg allows to emerge, or "remembers," are the unforgettable facts of where he lived along his journey.

fig. 5

Robert Rauschenberg, *Portal (Night Shade)*, 1991. Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 41 × 49 inches (104.1 × 124.5 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Rauschenberg may well have understood that future viewers would bring to bear their own memories in their experience of these works. The brooding *Portal (Nightshade)* contains a nearly full-frame image of a seaport near Manhattan's

financial district with a partial view of the Twin Towers in the center (fig. 5).[29] The source photograph was taken in 1981—one year after what John J. Phelan Jr., then president of the New York Stock Exchange, called "probably the most profitable year in the history of Wall Street."[30] Yet, Rauschenberg's swift repetitive strokes with the tarnish render a sense of impending catastrophe—the upper peaks of the artist's diagonal gestures appear flamelike. These furious gestures and blackened skies are seen throughout the darker *Night Shades*, yet in *Portal* they appear far more ominous, a perception that is inevitably imbued by our knowledge of the Towers' destruction. The artist could never have foreseen how this image and his obliterating strokes would be filtered through collective memories after September 11, 2001, when terrorist attacks took nearly 3,000 lives and destroyed the World Trade Center. Thus, it acts as a poignant visualization of hindsight.

If photography is an imprint of light onto a photosensitive ground, seizing the past in order to carry it into the present day, then memories, by analogy, are like images imprinted on the mind. Both are imperfect indexes, subject to the physical ravages of time as well as the inherent nostalgia that comes with temporal distance, and so both are a form of shadow. In the words of the Italian Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno, shadow is "abstracted from all truth, yet it is not without it."[31] This inherent paradox of shadow—real, yet insubstantial, an evidentiary sign of both presence and absence—plays out in the *Phantoms* and *Night Shades*, which, in turn, give a metaphysical dimension to Rauschenberg's often quoted phrase "looking also happens in time."[32]

ENDNOTES

1 Born in 1548, Giordano Bruno was an Italian philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician who developed and taught his own method of the "Memory of Loci" or "Memory Palace" memorization system.

Within *De Umbris Idearum*, Bruno describes earthly objects and memories as "shadows" of eternal, Ideal objects. Thus, memories based on earthly objects fade, while those close to Ideal forms last. See Giordano Bruno, *De Umbris Idearum & Ars Memoriae: On the Shadows of Ideas & The Art of Memory*, trans. Scott Gosnell (Port Townsend: Huginn, Munnin & Co. , 2013), p. 37.

2 This episode was recorded in 1997, but aired on February, 27, 1998. Charlie Rose paraphrased this quote in the interview, stating instead, "... that you were the painter of history and the history of now." Charlie Rose, prod., "Robert Rauschenberg," in *Charlie Rose*, PBS, February 27, 1998, accessed October 29, 2018, https://charlierose.com/videos/18836.

John Richardson, "Rauschenberg's Epic Vision," *Vanity Fair*, September 1997, accessed October 29, 2018, https://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/1997/09/rauschenberg199709.

3 Jane Fonda, "Life's Third Act," TED Conference, December 2011, accessed November 7, 2018, https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_fonda_life_s_third_act?language=en.

4 Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 88.

5 Ibid., 88.

6 Rosalind Krauss, "Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image," *Artforum*, December 1974, p. 52.

7 Rauschenberg's statement on the matter is as follows: "Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in that gap between the two)." Robert Rauschenberg, "Untitled Statement," in *Sixteen Americans*, ed. Dorothy C. Miller, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1959), p. 58.

8 Julia Blaut, "L'autobiografia e la città: Rauschenberg e il collage," in Susan Davidson and David White, *Rauschenberg* (Ferrara: Palazzo dei Diamanti, 2004), p. 52. Quoted from the original English text provided by the author: "Autobiography and the City: Robert Rauschenberg and Collage," p. 3.

9 Olivia Laing, "Robert Rauschenberg and the Subversive Language of Junk," *The Guardian*, November 25, 2016, accessed January 9, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/nov/25/robert-rauschenberg-and-the-subversive-language-of-junk-tate.

10 Jonathan Katz, "The Art of Code: Jasper Johns & Robert Rauschenberg," in *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnership* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p. 189.

11 It is worth noting that many of the images seen in *Phantoms* and *Night Shades* also appeared in Rauschenberg's other series from 1985 to 1996, including the *ROCI CHILE*, *ROCI CUBA*, *Borealis*, and *Urban Bourbons*.

12 Rauschenberg quoted in Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory," p. 98.

13 Ibid., p. 98.

14 The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, January 9, 2016. Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 26.

15 Ibid., p. 90.

16 Rauschenberg died on May 12, 2008 at the age of 82—more than a decade before I began my research. My descriptions of the artworks are based on examination of the works themselves, and not a psychological evaluation of the artist. As such, interpretations about the works discussed and their relationship to the artist's psyche are just that—interpretations.

17 John Cage, "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work [1961]," in *Silence: Lectures and Writings. 50th Anniversary Edition* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), p. 102.

18 As noted by scholar Frances Guerin, "As it was theorized by its earliest critics, and reflected in early modernist painting, photography offered the opportunity to freeze the world in a moment in time, and consequently, the possibility of placing the human eye as all-seeing and omnipotent, looking down on and in command of the world below." Frances Guerin, *The Truth Is Always Grey: A History of Modernist Painting* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), p. 91.

19 Elizabeth Loftus, "How Reliable Is Your Memory?" TEDGlobal 2013, June 11, 2013, accessed October 29, 2018, https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_loftus_the_fiction_of_memory/transcript?language=en#t-298659.

20 Guy Raz, prod., "Elizabeth Loftus: How Can Our Memories Be Manipulated?" in *TED Radio Hour*, NPR, October 13, 2017, accessed October 29, 2018, https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=557424726.

21 Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 1.

22 For the installation of the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* exhibition at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, the *Phantoms* were hung in the "Chapel"—the artist's former New York studio—in order to utilize the room's large windows and natural light, which, in turn, emphasized the transitory nature of these metal paintings. It is worth mentioning that these works are not always hung in natural light, and so the perceived temporal effects of light may vary.

23 Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 5.

24 This description is based on my own notes from a conversation with the conservators at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation on November 29, 2018.

25 The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, p. 89.

26 Quoted in Anne Whitehead, *Memory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 51.

27 Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, p. 88.

28 This building also currently houses the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

29 The image derived from the source photo for *Portal* was also included in another *Night Shade* called *City Stretch*.

30 Steve Lohr, "1980 a Very Good Wall St. Year," *New York Times*, January 1, 1981, accessed January 9, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/01/01/business/1980-a-very-good-wall-st-year.html

31 Bruno, p. 37.

32 Gene R. Swenson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture," *ARTnews*, April 1963, May 26, 2017, accessed October 1, 2018, http://www.artnews.com/2017/05/26/from-the-archives-robert-rauschenberg-paints-a-picture-in-1963/.

Robert Rauschenberg, Untitled, ca. 1953. Combine: oil, fabric, newspaper, and camera bellows on wood. 11 ½ × 8 × 3 inches; depth approximate (29.2 × 20.3 × 7.6 cm). Private collection.

Photosensitive Rauschenberg: Developing Images in the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*

CHRIS MURTHA

In 1991, three major exhibitions and publications on Robert Rauschenberg emphasized the centrality of photography in the artist's work.[1] Later that same year, on the heels of these retrospective projects, Rauschenberg produced the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*—two uncharacteristically austere series of silkscreened images on aluminum panels. Exclusively composed of the artist's own matter-of-fact photographs, the two grayscale series were produced as part of more than a decade-long engagement with various metal supports, though their muted, ethereal quality sets them apart. As he did with the *Borealis* series (1988–92)—"corrosions" on copper, brass, and bronze—Rauschenberg "painted" the *Night Shades* with a tarnishing agent, chemically producing veiled and dreamlike images that often appear to develop directly from the silvery surfaces. For the *Phantoms*, produced on mirrored, anodized aluminum, Rauschenberg omitted the tarnish, leaving only the spectral traces of images that become lost among reflections. In content, color scheme, technique, and effect, these two series bring to the fore Rauschenberg's career-long preoccupation with photography as a tool for seeing, framing, recording, and reproducing the world.

Rauschenberg's late paintings on reflective panels relate to the evanescent and receptive surfaces of the *White Paintings* (1951), one of his earliest series, but as images composed of other images, their origins lie as crucially in the photographic techniques of his silkscreens on canvas from 1962 to 1964. Those silkscreen paintings exemplified Rauschenberg's intermedia approach to art, fusing—or confusing—photography, printmaking, painting, and sometimes sculpture to create composite images that often obscure more than they reveal. Yet, they are fundamentally photographic: the artist transferred pictures and other reproductions to canvas using screens coated with light-sensitive emulsion. Though rarely discussed, Rauschenberg saw the initial silkscreen paintings as an early attempt to create the effect of "photosensitized" canvases in order to more seamlessly merge photographic imagery with painterly surfaces.[2] As he pursued and developed this concept, it became increasingly related to, and even integrated into, his broader efforts to "get the room into the picture"—to create artworks that were responsive to their surroundings.[3] The *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* represent the artist's fullest achievement of these two distinct yet related concepts. The works in both series simultaneously retain images and reflect their environment, momentarily enmeshing the viewer in a world of images in a way that those printed on a linen support could not. They "get the room into the picture," endowing the metal "canvas" with an additional layer of indexicality made possible by "photosensitive" surfaces.

As painterly images on metal panels, the *Night Shades* especially recall early photographs printed on metal plates, such as daguerreotypes and tintypes. Rauschenberg's *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* contain traces of each process, both of which resulted in unique impressions. In certain *Night Shades*, the artist used the tarnish to "develop" rather than obscure the image, evoking/calling to mind the light-sensitive emulsion that was applied to lacquered iron plates ("tintype" was a misnomer), allowing them to receive a direct positive image. The reflective surfaces of Rauschenberg's metal paintings resemble the highly polished, silver-plated copper of daguerreotypes, which were produced in a box camera modeled after a camera obscura.[4] Fittingly, the first camera to produce a daguerreotype in the United States was outfitted with a concave mirror instead of a lens.[5]

Of all the metal painting series, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* engage most directly with Rauschenberg's photography practice and the medium's conditions in general. At a minimum, this engagement begins with the fact that—like much of his photography and unlike the rest of the metal paintings series—they are largely black and white. With these two series, Rauschenberg addresses the medium of photography itself in imagery and facture—how pictures develop, multiply, and even deteriorate, but also how we view, assemble, and manipulate them. To varying degrees, Rauschenberg addressed such concerns throughout his career, making photographs a fundamental material in his toolbox.

Rauschenberg was drawn to photography from the beginning, pursuing it during his studies at Black Mountain College in 1949.[6] The photographs he incorporated into the metal paintings were taken across various cities at home and abroad between 1979 and 1991, and recall the artist's early ambition to photograph America "inch by inch" at "actual size."[7] Rauschenberg did not publicly discuss this documentary project, conceived at Black Mountain in 1951, until after his first major exhibition of photography in 1981, three decades later. On that occasion he went

fig. 1

Walker Evans, *Roadside Stand Near Birmingham*, 1936. Gelatin silver print, 8 × 10 inches (20.3 × 25.4 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

fig. 2

Robert Frank, *Parade, Hoboken, New Jersey*, from "The Americans," 1955–56. Gelatin silver print, 9 × 13 ¾ inches (23 × 34.9 cm). Courtesy The Andrea Frank Foundation and Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

as far as to say that his work has "always been journalistic, even the most abstract paintings."[8] Two years later he affirmed, "I'm more interested in being a reporter than in being an aesthete."[9] Though hyperbolic, this statement reflects Rauschenberg's broader tendency to infuse his art with the contemporary moment, usually by incorporating images appropriated from current newspapers and magazines.

Rauschenberg's grandiose, if earnest, aspiration to photograph the entire country did not emerge from a vacuum. It can be understood within a long tradition of photographic expeditions, particularly the private and government-funded surveys of the American West in the 1860s and 1870s, and later the Farm Security Administration's efforts to enlist photographers to document the lives of ordinary Americans during the Great Depression (fig. 1).[10] From 1955 to 1956, only a few years after Rauschenberg conceived and abandoned his idea, the Swiss-born, American photographer Robert Frank traveled across the United States compiling pictures for his book, *The Americans* (fig. 2). Branden Joseph has noted the concept's similarity to a project Harry Callahan undertook in the late 1940s—"[Callahan's] series of photographs of the ground documented inch by inch taken in Chicago."[11]

Callahan, along with Aaron Siskind, was invited to teach at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1951 by the school's photography instructor, Hazel Larsen Archer.[12] According to Mary Lynn Kotz, Rauschenberg first shared his "inch by inch" idea with Archer, an important mentor whose early influence is often overshadowed by that of the more famous Josef Albers.[13] Though Anni and Josef Albers described him as being "undisciplined," "sloppy," and an "erratic worker," Rauschenberg was also recognized as an eager and dedicated learner.[14] In his report card for the fall 1951 photography course, Archer listed his laboratory hours as "many - indefinite," and she remembered spending considerable "one-on-one" time with the young artist.[15] It was Archer, in fact, who encouraged her students to crop within the camera, by framing the image in the viewfinder before taking the picture, and to print the "full negative," an approach Rauschenberg faithfully employed.[16] He once declared: "I don't crop. Photography is like diamond cutting. If you miss you miss."[17] Emphasizing this aspect of his photographic practice, Rauschenberg typically printed images with the black borders of the negative frame.

Rauschenberg often affirmed the importance of his foundational education in photography. Even though he had decided to pursue painting, as he stated, "the paintings started using photographs. I've never stopped being a photographer."[18] What may have been the artist's first Combine, Untitled (ca. 1953; detail page 20) aptly features an actual camera bellows.[19] From the mid-1960s on, Rauschenberg took pictures only intermittently, but he enthusiastically returned to photography in 1979 to create a set for Trisha Brown's *Glacial Decoy*, her first dance for the proscenium.[20] Brown's choreography directed four women to continuously "slide" across the stage—in sheer white dresses, also designed by Rauschenberg—creating the effect of a never-ending cycle of dancers. Not wanting to "get caught with a static set," Rauschenberg designed one that is as active as the dancers and suggests a similar sense of progression and continuity.[21] For this commission, he took "about three thousand photographs" in and around Fort Myers, Florida, from which he culled 161 black-and-white images to create an ever-shifting backdrop.[22] Projected onto four large screens that spanned the back of the stage, the images advanced at four-second intervals from stage right to left, following the paths of the dancers (fig. 3). The whirring and clicking slide projectors provided the only soundtrack.

Setting the path for much of his later work, this pivotal collaboration reinvigorated Rauschenberg's interest in photography: "I became addicted again. It has heightened my desire to look."[23] Forgoing the broad view for the detail, Rauschenberg trained his camera on the overlooked, what was hidden in plain sight and often fleeting, paying particular attention to the abstract play of light and shadow. Largely void of people, the photographs instead document facades, signs, window displays, and murals, along with other subjects favored by the artist, including livestock, vehicles, textiles, and a miscellany of discarded consumer objects. More than stand-alone images, these photographs provided Rauschenberg with a personal archive to build upon and use in future works—what he referred to as a "repertoire of possible images" and more wryly called "fertilizer."[24] Images associated with this fruitful project are found throughout the metal paintings, including *Monday (Night Shade)* and *Litercy (Phantom)* (plates 14 and 23).[25] In subsequent years, Rauschenberg's photographs replaced those previously appropriated from mass-media print sources, shifting the frame of reference in his paintings from the public realm of shared culture to one more defined by the artist's personal experiences.

fig. 3

Trisha Brown Dance Company's Glacial Decoy (1979) with set, costumes, and lighting by Robert Rauschenberg. Photo: Babette Mangolte. Pictured left to right: Trisha Brown, Nina Lundborg, and Lisa Kraus.

The photographs taken for *Glacial Decoy* also marked the beginning of a new project, *In + Out City Limits*, for which the artist revisited his earlier intention to document America, but this time city by city instead of inch by inch. From 1979 to 1981, Rauschenberg traveled to various locales, producing photographic surveys that were part travelogue and part enigmatic portraits of urban and suburban environs. In 1982–83, this project unofficially expanded to include international locations when he made trips to China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Japan, which yielded a wealth of images and would in turn form the basis of his seven-year Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) tour.[26] The *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* are entirely composed of pictures taken under the auspices of *Glacial Decoy*, *In + Out City Limits*, and ROCI; they would not exist without these projects and the associated travels.

The metal paintings were by no means the first in which Rauschenberg incorporated his own imagery. Though Rauschenberg took photographs from the outset of his career, it was not until the silkscreen paintings of 1962–64 that his own images became a consistent and integral element in his work.[27] Around the same time as Andy Warhol, Rauschenberg realized the artistic potential of the silkscreen technique, a photo-reproduction process that was most commonly employed in the commercial and graphic arts.[28] Fabricators produced screens by stretching finely woven silk onto a rectangular frame, coating it with a light-sensitive emulsion, and developing a photographic transparency onto that surface.[29] Pushing viscous ink through the open weave of the silk with a squeegee creates a reverse image of the screen, a positive reproduction of the original photograph. Since silkscreens can be reused, like photographic negatives, the technique allowed Rauschenberg to repeat images within and between canvases. This process embodied Rauschenberg's concept of a photosensitized canvas, but, notably, it is the screen and not the canvas that is photosensitive.[30]

Rauschenberg began his silkscreen paintings in October 1962, initially restricting himself to a grayscale palette as he learned the intricacies of a new method.[31] Though these works merged elements of painting, photography, and printmaking, it can be argued that they were primarily concerned with the photographic.[32] This is especially evident with the black-and-white silkscreen paintings, since their tonality alone brings to mind photography, particularly the images distributed via television and newspaper at the time.[33] In this sense, paint and silkscreen ink were applied to achieve a photographic aesthetic. In a 1964 review, Max Kozloff wrote that in *Crocus* (1962), "paint apes the photographic process, and richly 'pictorializes' it."[34] Rauschenberg learned to command the silkscreen technique very quickly, and his confidence enabled him to exploit various technical elements of the process to accentuate the act of picture making itself, experimenting with scale, repetition, reversals, erasure, and printing effects.[35]

Rauschenberg's most monumental silkscreen painting, *Barge* (1962–63; fig. 4), illustrates his employment of repetition and seriality, as well as his broader concern with the photographic.[36] Over thirty feet wide, this panoramic canvas is so vast and densely composed that every image in this epic work, including an American rocket, football players, and the knotted off-ramps of an expressway, can be found in at least one other silkscreen painting.[37] *Barge* also includes duplicated imagery within its composition: a satellite antenna and a birdcage appear twice, while a General Electric flood lamp is screened four times across the top. The painting's iconography also underscores Rauschenberg's sensitivity to picture making. In addition to the flood lamp, which would have been used in photography studios, *Barge* prominently features a light-reflecting umbrella and an image of the New York Hilton Hotel under construction, which strongly resembles a contact sheet of negatives.[38] Rauschenberg further

fig. 4

Robert Rauschenberg, *Barge*, 1962–63. Oil and silkscreen ink on canvas, 79 ⅞ × 386 inches (202.9 × 980.4 cm). Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, Spain, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

cements the thematic connection between these images by screening them onto other small, tightly focused paintings, including Untitled (1963; fig. 5).

In *Express* (1963; fig. 6), a composition animated by allusions to motion, a time-lapse photograph of a nude woman descending a staircase pays homage to the chronophotography of Étienne-Jules Marey (and more overtly to Marcel Duchamp's famous 1912 painting, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*), while a series of racehorses evoke Eadweard Muybridge's stop-motion photographs. But the horse and rider sequence only suggests motion and temporal progression: in fact, Rauschenberg simply repeated the same image four times along the left-hand edge of the canvas. He was well aware that even though the camera was able to capture reality, it could also deceive. *Express* features other still images of dynamic subjects—a sailboat, tires, rappelling soldiers, and the artist's own picture of dancers from the Merce Cunningham Dance Company—emphasizing another contradiction: photography's ability to portray movement by arresting time.[39]

Though Rauschenberg composed his black-and-white silkscreen paintings with images culled primarily from magazines and newspapers, he also incorporated those taken with his own camera. A Polaroid Rauschenberg took from his studio roof—a skyline of silhouetted water towers—is a constant presence in these paintings and a subtle autobiographical reference (fig. 7). He also produced screens from quotidian pictures: a potted plant, a drinking glass, stairs, and the front end of a freight truck.[40] As the artist later recalled, he intentionally took photographs of generic subjects to counterbalance the loaded content of the more predominant popular imagery:

> When I lived on Broadway, I would go out to the middle of Union Square and take Polaroids to have made into silkscreens. I needed some very simple images, like perhaps a glass of water, or a piece of string, or the bathroom floor with a roll of toilet paper on it. They didn't need to have any immediate emotional content. I needed them to dull the social implications, to neutralize the calamities that were going on in the outside world.[41]

At the same time, Rauschenberg acknowledged that these "simple images" were not so passive, admitting that even a glass of water came preloaded with associations and "psychological implications."[42] Clearly, the artist's picture of a glass of water, which appears in over a dozen silkscreen paintings, wasn't a

fig. 5

Robert Rauschenberg, Untitled, 1963. Oil and silkscreen ink on canvas, 36 × 25 inches (91.4 × 63.5 cm). The Sonnabend Collection and Antonio Homem.

fig. 6

Robert Rauschenberg, *Express*, 1963. Oil and silkscreen ink on canvas, 72 × 120 inches (182.9 × 304.8 cm). Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

snapshot taken in passing but instead a well-composed and professionally staged photograph that played an integral, if understated, role in the silkscreen paintings series.

Combining his own images with those sourced from current events, popular culture, and art history, Rauschenberg's silkscreen paintings presciently captured the effect of what was at the time a relatively new way of seeing the world—as if filtered primarily through images. He elaborated on this perceptual condition in "Random Order," a photo-essay published in 1963 in the short-lived *Location* magazine.[43] The handwritten text the artist scrawled across a central photomontage of his recent Polaroids articulated the photographic themes he concurrently explored in the silkscreen paintings: mainly vision, depth, and illusion.[44] Next to an image of his partially opened studio window, Rauschenberg wrote: "A dirty or foggy window makes what is outside appear to be projected on to [*sic*] the window plane."[45] The photograph juxtaposes the flattening opacity of a dirty window with the perceptual depth made visible by opening that same window (fig. 8). To the right of this image, the artist wrote of such depth as "an air filled sense of volume" that "can be compressed and flattened to the extent that a brush load of paint can hold it to a picture surface."[46] These statements and the accompanying photographs represented Rauschenberg's emerging thoughts on how photography—a tool used to flatten actual depth—could merge with painting—a medium traditionally used to create the illusion of depth from actual flatness.

fig. 7

Polaroid of water towers used as source material, ca.1963. Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

With the silkscreen paintings, Rauschenberg successfully conflated these seemingly contradictory mediums through a third—printmaking—providing a foundation for much of his later work. Though this synthesis—the apparent integration of the photographic image into the painterly surface—would become a core element of his photosensitization project, he soon recognized the limitations of the static canvas support. Influenced by his work in dance and performance, he increasingly opted to screen images onto translucent and reflective surfaces that changed with time and were responsive to viewers and environmental conditions.[47] Previously, with select Combines, Rauschenberg employed mirrors to "get the room into the picture" and counteract the "fixedness of a painting."[48] He further pursued this phenomenological reality with various silkscreen projects: initially with mirrored Plexiglas in *Soundings* (1968) and *Carnal Clocks* (1969), and later with reflective metal panels.[49]

In 1985, with the *Copperheads* from *ROCI CHILE*, Rauschenberg began producing silkscreen paintings on copper, and later on, aluminum, brass, bronze, and steel as well. These "metal paintings," as the artist called them, expanded the photosensitized surface to include reflectivity, adding an additional layer of indexicality. Discussing the highly reflective *Shiners* (1986–93) in a 1987 interview with Barbara Rose, he said, "I don't want the piece to stop on the wall. And it has to somehow *document* what's going on in the room and be flexible enough to *respond*. At the point when it becomes static, it doesn't work any longer."[50] In the same interview, Rauschenberg talked about his desire to expand the purview of a photosensitized canvas to an entire room: "There's still a project that I have in mind where the walls will *absorb* whatever images appear in that room."[51] In other words, the surfaces—and spaces—themselves were meant to absorb, document, and respond. Rauschenberg intended these works to be as sensitive to the room as photographic paper is to light.

First and foremost, the metal panels were surfaces for images, whether fixed or transient, and the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* are unique among the metal paintings for their parallels with the artist's initial silkscreen paintings on canvas. Produced in the spring and summer of 1991, shortly after the Whitney Museum's comprehensive exhibition, *The Silkscreen Paintings, 1962–64*, perhaps it is no coincidence that the two series mark both a return to the limited grayscale palette Rauschenberg employed in his earliest silkscreen paintings as well as a pronounced departure from the colorful chaos of his other metal paintings. Like his silkscreen paintings on canvas, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* are "images compiled of images" that engage even more acutely with the photographic in both iconography and facture.[52] Crucially, they are also composed solely of Rauschenberg's own pictures, closely tying them to his photographic eye.

Though works like *Holiday Ruse* and *Heroes/Sheroes* (both *Night Shades*) feature compositions as dense as *Barge*, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* frequently present suggestively sparse compositions with just two or

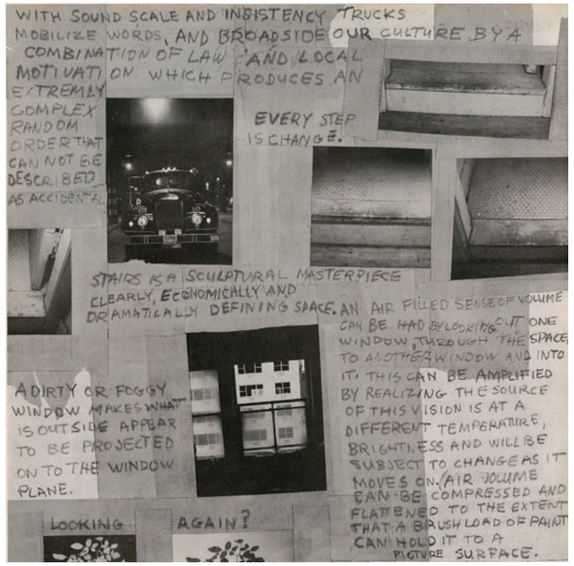


fig. 8

Detail of Robert Rauschenberg's *Random Order* (1963) reproduced in *Location* magazine, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1963). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

three images apiece. *Night Shades* such as *Pins*, *Portal* (see page 17, fig. 5), and *Palm Sunday* (plate 4) are single-image works, rarities in Rauschenberg's oeuvre. On the one hand, the sparseness forcefully directs the viewer to zoom in on the images, as with *Time Scan (Phantom)* (plate 18); on the other, it reserves space for reflected objects to enter the work, as in *Litercy (Phantom)* and *Driveway Detour (Night Shade)* (plates 23 and 13). In the most minimal *Phantoms*, which include *Litercy*, the porous images confound clear demarcations between positive and negative space, while in *Night Shades* like *Southern Hemisphere* and *Vanities* (plate 3), the artist's gestural application of corrosive tarnish activates the gaps between screened images. In many cases, Rauschenberg used images that frame other images—advertisements, signage, windows, and displays of art—to create the effect of a more densely composed collage. At the bottom register of *Path (Night Shade)*, blinds printed with two pictures partially shutter a storefront, dividing the source image into three sections; what first appears to be a patchwork of several photographs is revealed to be one containing multiple frames (plate 7).

This strategy of enclosing images within images, which echoes an effect of Rauschenberg's earlier silkscreens on canvas, is similarly evident in the "fine art photographs" he produced between 1979 and 1991: a decorative statuette of Botticelli's windswept Venus set against thrift store paintings (fig. 9); the window display of a photography studio (plate 38); and paintings stacked up for sale by a street vendor.[53] With his camera, Rauschenberg also honed in on the ways in which reflections distort, refract, and complicate vision, effects that were made actual in the *Phantoms* and select *Night Shades*. In *Boston, Massachusetts* (1980), two curved mirrors obstruct the view through a storefront window, instead providing a warped funhouse reflection of the surrounding city block (plate 31). Other examples include: the ornate mirror in *Vanities (Night Shade)*, which hovers ghostlike in a washed-out Odessa interior (plate 3); a photograph of a darkened New York bedroom partially illuminated by reflected light (plate 37); and a distant reflection of the artist and his assistant, Terry Van Brunt, hidden within a multilayered view through a barbershop window (fig. 10).

In these two series, Rauschenberg also employed photographic techniques originally explored in his 1960s silkscreens, mainly mirroring, reversals, doubling, repetition, and obfuscation. In

fig. 9

Robert Rauschenberg, *New York City*, from *In + Out City Limits: New York City*, 1981. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

fig. 10

Robert Rauschenberg, *Boston, Massachusetts*, from *In + Out City Limits: Boston*, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Botanical Vaudeville (Phantom), Rauschenberg repeatedly screened an image of a single tree: two are flipped on a horizontal axis to create a mirroring effect; a third image is screened across that horizon, adding to the optical confusion (plate 17). *Monday (Night Shade)* makes prominent use of a photograph from *Glacial Decoy*: an image of a white towel hanging against the night sky (plate 26). In the painting, the photograph appears three times at two different scales: first, Rauschenberg screened it in clear resist, then he made a partial impression with white silkscreen ink and then printed a smaller screen in black ink on top, creating the solarized effect of a black towel that "casts" a white shadow (plate 14). A comparison of Rauschenberg's original photograph with his later painting reveals the complex transformations the artist performed when transferring his matter-of-fact pictures into the evocative realm of painting.

With his silkscreen paintings on canvas, Rauschenberg veiled images in a variety of ways: by layering screens and intentionally printing them poorly; through erasure and by smearing paint and ink with a turpentine-soaked rag; and by painting over them with washes, splatters, and scribbled brushstrokes. He employed some of these tactics in the *Night Shades* and, to a lesser extent, the *Phantoms*, but here Rauschenberg primarily used chemical corrosion and reflectivity to visually obfuscate his own imagery.

Rauschenberg's process with these metal paintings was varied and experimental but he largely produced the *Night Shades* by "painting" with an oxidizing tarnish—a selenious acid marketed as Aluma Black.[54] To produce the more brooding paintings, Rauschenberg used the corrosive tarnish to create a darkened ground, over which he silkscreened his photographs with black acrylic medium. In those more pertinent to this discussion, Rauschenberg applied the tarnish over images that had already been silkscreened with a clear synthetic varnish onto brushed or mirrored aluminum.[55] The varnish acted as a "resist" layer, protecting the screened areas of aluminum from the blackening effects of the acid and producing an image in negative. According to Lawrence Voytek, one of Rauschenberg's assistants at the time, Aluma Black immediately darkened the surface when applied at full strength.[56] To create tonal shades of gray, Rauschenberg diluted the tarnish with water and applied it loosely with rags or mops, which accounts for the paint-like drips and splatters that appear throughout the series. In this way, Rauschenberg was able to paint with acid. Once satisfied with the piece, and the degree of patination achieved, Rauschenberg hosed the paintings down with water to stop the chemical process and "fix" the images.

This wet-on-wet process evokes photographic production, specifically the development of negatives and prints in chemical baths. The fluid quality of Rauschenberg's method materializes in the apparent liquidity of works like *Hollyhock Party* and *Hydro* (plates 2 and 6). Because screened images only became visible where tarnish was applied, the chemical reaction created the effect of images developed directly from the artist's gestural marks on the aluminum surface. Voytek described the production of the similarly tarnished *Borealis* paintings as akin to "watching a photograph develop in a darkroom."[57] Art historian Armin Zweite responded similarly to the *Night Shades*: "We get the impression that we are looking at a photographic image which not only underwent multiple exposures but also suffered additional damage during its development."[58] The effect of the image being "developed" by the artist's marks is most evident in the emphatically gestural *Driveway Detour* and *Party-Bird* (plates 13 and 1). Close inspection of the winding curve that cuts through the latter, one of the more picturesque *Night Shades*, reveals the faint traces of the screened photograph (plate 40), evidence of how Rauschenberg selectively applied the tarnish, often leaving sections of a screened image untouched or "undeveloped." Nearly invisible, such passages anticipate the ghostly effect of the *Phantoms*.

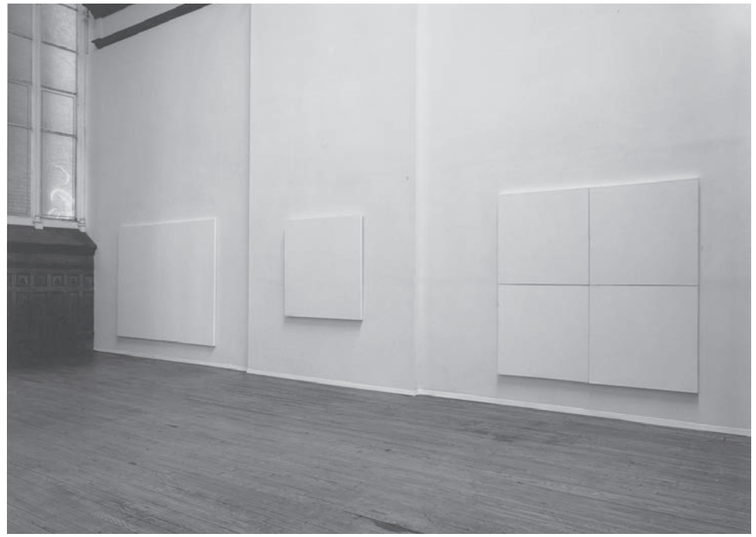


fig. 11

Installation view of Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting [two panel]* (1951), *White Painting* (1951), and *White Painting [four panel]* (1951) in the Chapel, 381 Lafayette Street, 1991. Photo: Dorothy Zeidman. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

A more limited series of eighteen silkscreens on anodized mirrored aluminum, the *Phantoms* began by chance.[59] Such creative happenstance was not unusual for an artist who "collaborated" with his materials and often pushed the limits of their intended use. In a typically fortuitous moment of experimentation, Rauschenberg attempted to apply tarnish to anodized aluminum, unaware that the pretreated metal was resistant to chemical reactions. The result was a spectral image that barely registered, which naturally appealed to the artist's interest in veiling and obfuscation—he liked how difficult they were to see.[60] Though the *Phantoms* appear monochromatic, one can discern subtle tints of color from certain angles and depending on the light, which Rauschenberg achieved by dyeing the varnish. For *Stone Lady Radial*, he imbued each of the three impressions with a different pale tone, while *Marsh Haven* was tinted so strongly that it more closely resembles a *Night Shade* (plate 24). Occasionally, Rauschenberg applied gestural passages of the dyed varnish in the margins of a *Phantom*, effectively "framing" his screened images. Regardless of the subtle touches, the images are overpowered by what the surface itself reflects. As with the tarnished panels, the support plays as integral a role as the imagery printed upon it.

With their restrained aesthetic and unabashed reflectivity, the *Phantoms* momentarily register their changing environment, operating similarly to Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (fig. 11).[61] When John Cage famously referred to those pristine monochromes as "airports for the lights, shadows, and particles," he also cited the artist's early incorporation of reflective surfaces as another tactic used to introduce transience and contingency into his work: "Changing what is seen by means of what is happening."[62] What happens in the *Phantoms*, as well as the mirrored *Night Shades*, is that the artist makes viewers aware of the physical and temporal aspects of looking: straining to remove their own reflection from the picture; moving around a work, as if a sculpture, to discover hidden images and subtle tints of color; getting close to distinguish between screens; and taking time to witness their transformation under changing light. Rauschenberg often encouraged his audience to become active participants and here, in front

of these mirrored images, viewers perform the act of looking while becoming part of the image itself. Moreover, analogous to the experience of having one's picture taken, these reflective paintings make one aware of the knowing gaze, the awareness of looking while being looked at.

Composed of photographs and informed by the medium's aesthetics and conditions, these mercurial paintings nevertheless draw attention to something that is not photographable: our embodied perception as spectators. Rauschenberg's conception of responsive photographic environments drew a parallel between the reflective and the photosensitive. Yet, in these metal paintings there is an implicit tension between the transient quality of the reflected imagery and the photographic stills affixed to the surface. The reflectivity of these works enables them to transcend their status as static objects, changing their appearance according to the contingencies of the viewer and the surrounding space. Rauschenberg's photographs, on the other hand, firmly root the imagery in his own experiences and photographic sensibility.

The indexical aspects of both series, along with the chemical "development" of imagery perceived in the *Night Shades*, exemplify Rauschenberg's career-long exploration of the photographic. As reflective paintings that evoke photosensitive surfaces, they bring the room into the picture, both literally and figuratively. An installation of these metal paintings begins to resemble the project Rauschenberg envisioned in 1987 but never executed: a room of images that absorb, document, and respond.[63] Such a room is an environment in constant flux, making manifest Rauschenberg's adage that "looking also had to happen in time."[64] What we see when looking at a *Night Shade* or *Phantom* is only one of many possible images, and it will never be the same image twice.

ENDNOTES

1 *The Silkscreen Paintings, 1962–64* was on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, from December 7, 1990 to March 17, 1991; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., presented *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange* (*ROCI*) from May 12 to September 2, 1991; and *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s* opened at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., on June 15, 1991, before traveling to several venues.

2 Although Rauschenberg first experimented with photosensitized surfaces when he began producing cyanotypes with Susan Weil in 1949, those photograms lacked the concrete referents of pictures. Later, Rauschenberg attempted to create the effect of photosensitization with screenprinted works, such as *Soundings* and *Solstice* (both 1968), that respond to their surroundings and directly engage spectators.

3 Rauschenberg interviewed by Billy Klüver in March 1963, in *On Record* (New York: Experiments in Art and Technology, 1981), p. 45. See also Barbara Rose, *Rauschenberg* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), pp. 56, 77, and 110.

4 While he primarily used a Rolleiflex camera at Black Mountain College, Rauschenberg experimented with a pinhole camera: a scaled down, makeshift model of a camera obscura. Susan Davidson and David White, preface, to *Robert Rauschenberg: Photographs, 1949–1962* (New York: D.A.P., 2011), p. 10.

5 Alexander Wolcott and John Johnson produced a daguerreotype portrait with their patented "mirror-camera" in New York on October 7, 1839. Later, in their portrait studio, they used a system of mirrors, which were installed on the exterior of the building and within their portrait studio, to maximize the available light and reduce exposure time. Sarah Kate Gillespie, *The Early American Daguerreotype* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), pp. 17, 31, 102.

6 For Rauschenberg's early photography, see Walter Hopps, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s*, exh. cat. (Houston: Menil Collection, 1991); and Davidson and White, eds., *Photographs, 1949–1962*.

7 Rauschenberg quoted in Alain Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg," January 9, 1981, in *Robert Rauschenberg, Photographs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), np; and in Rose, *Rauschenberg*, p. 75.

8 Rauschenberg quoted in Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg," np.

9 Rauschenberg quoted in Paul Raedeke, "Interview with Rauschenberg," *Photo Metro* 2, no. 13 (October 1983): p. 17.

10 Walker Evans's photographs of regional architecture, roadside billboards, signage, and storefront displays are particularly evocative of the vernacular images Rauschenberg took on his own documentary travels.

11 Branden W. Joseph, "The Gap and the Frame," *October* 117 (Summer 2006): p. 62n39.

12 Née Hazel-Frieda Larsen.

13 Mary Lynn Kotz, *Rauschenberg, Art and Life* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004): p. 74. Walter Hopps noted Archer's influence: "Rauschenberg acknowledges a particular debt to the photographer and teacher Hazel-Frieda Larsen. She was a rigorous but nurturing teacher with whom he developed an empathetic relationship, as opposed to the abrasive one with Albers." Hopps, *The Early 1950s*, p. 24.

14 Rauschenberg's report cards, 1948–49 and 1951–52, Black Mountain College 1933–56, Original Records of the School, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

15 Ibid.; David Vaughan, "Motion Studies: Hazel Larsen Archer at Black Mountain College," *Aperture* 179 (Summer 2005): p. 28. Though Archer began teaching at Black Mountain in 1949, Rauschenberg did not enroll in her two-term course on photography until September 1951, after Anni and Josef Albers had left the College.

16 Vaughan, "Motion Studies," p. 25. Andrew Oates, a former student of Archer's, recalled that she "always wanted us to use the full negative when printing a photograph, and encouraged us to *design* an image when looking through the camera lens."

17 Rauschenberg quoted in Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg," np. Two years later he stated, "My risk at being traditional in taking pictures is the gamble of hitting on that precise moment without cropping, without collage, without any tricks." Rauschenberg quoted in Raedeke, "Interview with Rauschenberg," p. 16.

18 Rauschenberg quoted in Rose, *Rauschenberg*, p. 75.

19 Joseph, "The Gap and the Frame," p. 57; Nicholas Cullinan, "To Exist in Passing Time," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Photographs, 1949–1962* (New York: D.A.P., 2011), p. 14.

20 Rauschenberg used his own photographs in several projects around the late 1960s: *Revolver* (1967), *Solstice* (1968), *Soundings* (1968), *Carnal Clocks* (1969), *Stoned Moon Book* (1970), and *Syn-Tex* (1970). Conceived expressly for the theatrical stage, as opposed to her earlier site-specific performances, *Glacial Decoy* had its world premiere at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, on May 7, 1979. It was first performed in New York at the Marymount Manhattan Theatre on June 20, 1979.

21 Rauschenberg quoted in Don Shewey, "We Collaborated by Postcards," *Theatre Crafts* 18, no. 4 (1984).

22 Trisha Brown, "Collaboration: Life and Death in the Aesthetic Zone," in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, eds. Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), p. 269. Brown writes that 620 *slides* were used, but an inventory in the artist's archives lists 161 *images*. If something around 150 to 160 images were used across four projectors that would have resulted in a total of over 600 slides.

23 Rauschenberg quoted in Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg," np. Rauschenberg's return to photography might also have been influenced by a lawsuit filed against him for copyright infringement in this period. Gay Morris, "When Artists Use Photographs," *ARTnews* 80, no. 1 (Jan. 1981): pp. 102–06.

24 Rauschenberg quoted in Brown, "Collaboration," p. 274n3, and Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg," np.

25 Rauschenberg more immediately mined his *Glacial Decoy* photographs to create two related series of prints with Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), the *Glacial Decoy Series* (1979–80), which included five etchings and four lithographs, and *The Razorback Bunch* (1980–82) photoetchings. Esther Sparks, *Universal Limited Art Editions—A History and Catalogue: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1989), pp. 462–66.

26 Rauschenberg discusses the development of ROCI from *In + Out* in Raedeke, "Interview with Rauschenberg," p. 17. Rauschenberg later returned to the host cities to mount an exhibition of the associated *In + Out City Limits* photographs. Similarly, his ROCI exhibitions featured installations of the photographs captured in that country, as well as those from visits to other countries on the ROCI tour.

27 Rauschenberg created his first photolithographs in the spring of 1962—an important precedent for merging painting, photography, and printmaking—but he did not include his own photography in his prints

until after he started the silkscreen paintings. Their "[b]ig influence on paintings" was acknowledged by the artist in his whorl of text featured on the central panel of the large-scale, three-panel lithograph *Autobiography* (1968). The text was reprinted in Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 304–05.

28 Andy Warhol, who would have been familiar with the technique from his work as a commercial illustrator, started painting with silkscreens around August 1962. After inquiring about the process and visiting Warhol's studio on September 18, 1962, Rauschenberg quickly took up the technique himself. Richard Meyer, "'An Invitation, Not a Command': Silk-screen Paintings," in *Robert Rauschenberg*, eds. Leah Dickerman and Achim Borchardt-Hume, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2017), p. 193.

29 Roni Feinstein details the silkscreen process in Feinstein, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Silkscreen Paintings, 1962–64*, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990), p. 41.

30 Editorial comments made to Rosalind Krauss in 1997 suggest that Rauschenberg considered his transfer drawings—referred to here as "photo drawings"—an unsatisfactory attempt to "photosensitize grounds" because they were "limited in scale and color" by their technical process. Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory," in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, eds. Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), p. 212.

31 Between 1962 and 1963, Rauschenberg created approximately forty, largely black-and-white, silkscreen paintings (some transitional works had patches of color). In June of 1963, he switched to working exclusively in color, creating forty more paintings.

32 Nicholas Cullinan frames Rauschenberg's entire artistic output as photographic. See Cullinan, "To Exist in Passing Time," pp. 13–40. Rosalind Krauss and Branden Joseph pursue similar concerns in their own writing.

33 Roni Feinstein, "Random Order: The First Fifteen Years of Robert Rauschenberg's Art, 1949–1964" (Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1990), p. 390. Feinstein also notes that Rauschenberg has long preferred black-and-white photography as well.

34 Max Kozloff, "The Many Colorations of Black and White," *Artforum* 2, no. 8 (Feb 1964), p. 24.

35 It was largely the ability to achieve such photographic effects that led Rauschenberg to exchange the solvent transfer process used in the Dante drawings (1958–60) for the silkscreen technique.

36 For an informative and detailed essay on *Barge*, see Susan Davidson, "Robert Rauschenberg," *Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection* (Bilbao, Spain: Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, 2009), pp. 90–97.

37 The rocket, for example, appears in *Glider*, *Payload*, and *Overcast I* (all 1962). Rauschenberg worked on as many as eight silkscreen paintings at a time, enabling him to easily print one image onto several canvases. Rauschenberg, interviewed by David Sylvester, August 1964, published in Sylvester, *Interviews with American Artists* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 140–41.

38 The forty-seven-floor Hilton opened in midtown on June 1963. A year earlier Rauschenberg created his first lithograph, *Abby's Bird* (1962) for the hotel. Even Mariner 2—the Venus probe, which was launched in 1962 and appears in the painting next to Diego Velázquez's "Rokeby Venus"—was a recording device, a kind of infrared camera.

39 The photograph of the Cunningham dancers also appears in *Scanning*, *Round Trip I*, and Untitled (all 1963). Another image of a dancer is included just to the right of that picture. It has been described as an image of Merce Cunningham but it may more likely be an image of Robert Morris, performing his *Arizona* piece at the Judson Memorial Church in 1963. Not only does the figure resemble Morris more closely than Cunningham, a proof print from the screen of this image was later included in Rauschenberg's *Fossil for Bob Morris* (1965).

40 All but the image of the drinking glass were included in *Random Order* (1963). In a typical act of doubling, Rauschenberg actually used two different photos of glasses in the silkscreen paintings: the one referenced here—which was used in the black-and-white paintings—and another that was taken against wooden floorboards and used in the color paintings.

41 Rauschenberg quoted in Rose, *Rauschenberg*, p. 74.

42 Rauschenberg quoted in Sylvester, *Interviews with American Artists*, p. 134.

43 Robert Rauschenberg, "Random Order," *Location* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1963): pp. 27–31.

44 In addition to the tape-mounted Polaroids, four of which were used throughout the silkscreen painting series (1962–64), Rauschenberg's contribution included reproductions of *Sun Dog* and *Renascence* (both 1962), and a photograph captioned "View from the artist's studio."

45 Rauschenberg, "Random Order," p. 28.

46 Ibid.

47 In 1966, three years after Rauschenberg began choreographing his own dances, he told John Gruen, "My relationship to dance is … directly responsible for my new interest in the spectator's active role." Quoted in Nancy Spector, "Rauschenberg and Performance, 1963–67," in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, eds. Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), p. 233. He later told Don Shewey, "I've always attempted to bring art into real time—like performance—where it will change because of someone's presence." Shewey, "We Collaborated by Postcards."

48 Rauschenberg quoted in Klüver, *On Record*, p. 45. He later told Barbara Rose, "I used mirrors so that the room would become part of the painting." Rose, *Rauschenberg*, p. 56. Combines that feature reflective surfaces include *Charlene* and *Minutae* (both 1954), but Rauschenberg embedded mirrors into paintings such as *Stone, Stone, Stone* and *Untitled* (both ca. 1951) as early as his debut show at Betty Parsons Gallery.

49 Around the same time, Rauschenberg also silkscreened images onto transparent Plexiglas with the *Revolver* series (1966) and *Solstice* (1968). In fact, two works from his initial series of silkscreen paintings featured images printed onto transparent plastic panels: *Overcast III* and *Dry Cell* (both 1963).

50 Rauschenberg quoted in Rose, *Rauschenberg*, p. 110 (emphasis added).

51 Ibid., p. 77 (emphasis added).

52 Charles F. Stuckey, "Rauschenberg's Everything, Everywhere Era," in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, eds. Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, exh, cat, (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), p. 36.

53 During his lifetime, Rauschenberg designated certain images as "fine art photographs"—those that were to be exhibited as stand-alone artworks—as opposed to those used as source material for his work in other media. It was these images that were exhibited as part of *In + Out City Limits* and ROCI. The distinction did not prevent the artist from using some fine art photographs, or sometimes similar exposures, as source imagery as well.

54 At the time, Aluma Black was manufactured by Birchwood Casey; today it is primarily used to turn guns black.

55 Often, as with *Party Bird (Night Shade)*, the tarnish occupies the areas not covered by the varnish resist; in other words, the negative shapes within the image are colored black.

56 The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, April 29, 30, and May 1, 2016. Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 80.

57 Ibid., p. 201.

58 Armin Zweite, "Phantoms und Nightshades," in *Robert Rauschenberg* (Dusseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, 1994), p. 179.

59 In comparison, Rauschenberg created forty-five *Night Shades*.

60 Voytek recounts the origins of the *Phantoms* in the The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, p. 201.

61 Photographs in the artist's archives document an installation of the *White Paintings* in the Chapel, the artist's former studio at 381 Lafayette Street, in 1991, the same year he made the *Phantoms* and *Night Shades*.

62 John Cage, "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work [1961]," in *Silence: Lectures and Writings, 50th Anniversary Edition* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), p. 102.

63 As discussed on p. 28, and described by Rauschenberg in Rose, *Rauschenberg*, pp. 77, 110.

64 Gene R. Swenson, "Robert Rauschenberg Paints a Picture," *ARTnews* 62, no. 2 (April 1963), p. 45.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Manhole House (Night Shade)*, 1991 (detail).

Night Shades and *Phantoms*: Shades of Difference in Robert Rauschenberg's Metal Paintings

LUCY RILEY

Between 1985 and 1996, Robert Rauschenberg made fifteen series of works consisting of photographic imagery silkscreened onto prefabricated metal panels.[1] These so-called "metal paintings" involve key themes that engaged the artist throughout his career: unbridled experimentation with materials; word and image associations made through collage juxtapositions; and the incorporation of mirrored surfaces to bring the surrounding spaces and objects, including the viewer, into the static work of art. There are pronounced differences among the fifteen series, due to the various types of metal supports that Rauschenberg systematically employed—copper, steel, aluminum, bronze, and brass—as well as the silkscreen ink, acrylic, tarnish, and varnish he utilized for coloristic and painterly effects.[2] These techniques enrich the inherently flat compositions, layering them in veils of color, light, and shadow that compromise legibility, while beguiling the eye.

Arguably, the most distinctive among the series are the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* of 1991, with their monochromatic, grayscale palette.[3] They overlap in date with several of Rauschenberg's other metal paintings, which, conversely, all contain colors in small or prodigious amounts.[4] In the *Phantoms*, Rauschenberg used clear polyurethane varnish on silvery white anodized mirrored aluminum to create their barely perceptible imagery. The *Night Shades*, on the other hand, take their title from the black-and-white layers of silkscreened ink and Aluma Black tarnish that blankets those very same layers in a fog. A comparison of these two series with his other metal paintings illuminates the richness and diversity of this body of work, which comprises much of Rauschenberg's later output.

Rauschenberg chose his own photographs almost entirely as the source imagery, specifically those taken during his international travels for Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) in the years 1984 to 1991, and his concurrent tours of several cities in the United States.[5] These images show the artist's preference for advertising signage, store windows, building facades, and certain species of flora and fauna. The artist often repeated the use of an image with variations in size and/or color within a single metal painting, or across one or more series. Some of his favorite motifs included a strolling chicken from Chile, a cast-off stroller on a New York City sidewalk, scaffolding in Italy, a mirror from Odessa, and a towel hung on a clothesline in Fort Myers. These silkscreened images were rotated, layered, and/or reversed, adding to the degree of visual complexity that constitutes the overarching theme of the metal paintings.

fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Copperhead-Bite I / ROCI CHILE*, 1985. Silkscreen ink, acrylic, and tarnish on copper, 96 ⅞ × 51 ¼ inches (246.1 × 130.2 cm). Private collection.

fig. 2

Robert Rauschenberg, *Lime Climb (Shiner)*, 1987. Silkscreen ink, acrylic and object on stainless steel, 84 ¾ × 48 ¾ × 5 ¾ inches (215.3 × 123.8 × 14.6 cm). Private collection.

The term "metal painting" is deliberately provocative. These works contain few, if any, traditional painterly mediums, even though most of the works are framed (in metal), installed like paintings on a wall, and often flaunt gestural marks and splatters on their surfaces, as if to refer to Abstract Expressionist brushwork. Yet their imagery is photographic, not illusionistic. (See the essay by Chris Murtha in this catalogue.) Throughout his career, Rauschenberg challenged medium specificity with hybrids of painting and sculpture, starting with the Combines (1954–64). He went on to meld drawing and printmaking (his so-called transfer drawings, most famously his illustrations of Dante's *Inferno*, 1958–60, were a form of monoprint), painting and photography (the silkscreen paintings, 1962–64), and printmaking with textile art (the *Hoarfrosts*, 1974–76). The metal paintings continue this practice of category blurring, notably with the *Night Shades*, where he applied corrosive tarnishes that ate into the surface, recalling intaglio printmaking (etching and aquatint), by contrast to the additive silkscreen method. Nonetheless, Rauschenberg "painted" with the luminosity inherent in his various metal supports, with different color silkscreen inks, and with the tonal values created by tarnishes, varnishes, and/or acrylic on the surfaces.

Rauschenberg's first metal paintings date from just after his 1984 trip to Chile as part of his ROCI project. Artist Benito Rojo introduced him to the use of copper and tarnishing agents during a visit to the Universidad de Chile.[6] Upon returning to his Captiva, Florida studio, Rauschenberg used these techniques to corrode copper panels, which he then combined with his screen-printed photographs. Two related series came out of this development: *Copperhead* (1985/89; fig. 1) and *Coppertone* (1985–88). He constructed the appropriately named *Shiners* (1986–1993) with panels of reflective stainless steel and anodized, mirrored aluminum,

fig. 3

Robert Rauschenberg, *Shady Love (Borealis)*, 1989. Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brass, 36 ¾ × 96 ¾ inches (93.3 × 245.7 cm). Private collection.

attaching found metal objects to their surfaces (fig. 2). The assembled elements of the *Shiners* led to the *Gluts* (1986–89/1991–94), made of scrap metal, a sculptural series distinct from the metal paintings.[7]

The metal paintings continued in 1988, with four series: *Borealis* (1988–92), characterized by warm-toned bronze, brass, and copper supports (fig. 3); *ROCI CUBA* (1988), made on colored aluminum and steel panels; and the *Urban Bourbons* (1988–96), the largest series made over the longest period of time, consisting mainly of anodized, enameled, and mirrored aluminum supports (fig. 4). For the *Galvanic Suite* (1988–91) Rauschenberg favored shiny stainless and galvanized steel and occasionally aluminum, and the overall more subdued colors of these works directly preceded his turn to a narrow-range or single-color palette.[8] In 1991, Rauschenberg created three monochrome series, all on aluminum, with different types of finishes: *Night Shades*, *Phantoms*, and *Spartans* (fig. 5). The artist concluded the metal paintings with the *Vydock* series (1995), which was made on white-surfaced, bonded aluminum, with added silkscreen prints, graphite lines, and hand painted, rainbow-colored vertical bands that run the entire height of the panels.

Painting on metal has a long history. Art historian Julia Sasse explains that artists have been attracted to metal supports because of "the qualities of light inherent in the material; the stable, smooth surface upon which to apply paint; and the ability of the material to be manipulated into a number of forms."[9] Copper supports were widely favored in late sixteenth-century

fig. 4

Robert Rauschenberg, *Anystore Rumble (Urban Bourbon)*, 1988. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on enameled and mirrored aluminum, 48 ¾ × 109 ¼ inches (123.8 × 277.5 cm). Private collection.

European workshops, with artists collaborating and sharing techniques.[10] By the twentieth century, technological developments made certain metals less precious and more accessible for artists, notably aluminum. The United States, for example, saw a surge in the aluminum production from its beginnings in electrical wiring and transportation during the early 1900s, to its widespread use in consumer products in the 1950s.[11] Already by the 1920s, American artist Arthur Dove was incorporating painted aluminum into his collages and as a support for oil painting, because he was "tired of putting brush to canvas."[12] During the 1960s, Alex Katz chose aluminum for its rigidity in order to create his free-standing shaped paintings or *Cut Outs.*[13]

Rauschenberg, by contrast, explored the reflective properties of factory-produced metal panels onto which his imagery was printed, not painted or used as a support for collage elements. He took advantage of the different finishes that made the surfaces more or less lustrous or dull, absorbent or resistant. In some cases, he constructed a single work out of two or more panels different in material and/or finish to create what Elizabeth Carpenter describes as "assembled-metal collage."[14] The side-by-side juxtaposition allowed for abrupt shifts in light and reflection.[15] In pictures composed of a single panel and type of metal, Rauschenberg achieved similar shifts by leaving areas void of silkscreen imagery or gestural strokes and splashes. These "negative" spaces play an active role in the compositions, nonetheless, by virtue of the reflected colors and objects they display.

All of the metal paintings depend on varying degrees of reflectivity to engage the viewer in an active form of seeing.[16] The *Copperheads* and *Borealis* series tinge everything reflected in their compositions with their warm hues. The mirrored surfaces of the *Shiners* and *Urban Bourbons* emerge from the abundant and colorful gestural marks, splatters, and silkscreened imagery. The mirrored supports of the *Phantoms* make them the most overwhelmingly reflective of the metal paintings. Screened with a clear or slightly tinted varnish to produce the faintest of impressions, they depend largely on the light, shapes, and colors of the surrounding environment, which inevitably become part of their compositions.

Rauschenberg experimented with corrosive agents as painterly facture and coloristic devices from the beginning of his excursions into metal painting, as seen in the *Copperheads* and *Borealis* series. The tarnishes added black, brown, and even green hues to the inherent warm and luminous glow of these copper, brass, or bronze panels. The factory finishes on the surfaces determined whether or not tarnishes could be applied. Whereas Aluma Black bit into the mirror and brushed aluminum surfaces of the *Night Shades* to create powerful chiaroscuro effects, it could not penetrate anodized aluminum. As famously recounted by Rauschenberg's studio assistant Lawrence Voytek:

> One day I came to work and Bob had taken some of our mirrored, anodized aluminum sheet and printed with the pure polyurethane varnish on this mirrored aluminum sheet. Bob wanted to blacken it. I said, "It's not going to work, Bob. It's anodized, the anodizing seals the aluminum." He said, "Well, I kind of like the way you can't really see it." So he started the *Phantoms*.[17]

In the metal paintings, Emily Liebert observes, "imagery and support come together in a translucent layering of pictures and abstract marks that flicker between visibility and invisibility."[18] Many *Urban Bourbons* feature rapid swipes of brilliant yellow, red, blue, or purple with obvious allusions to graffiti scrawls. The gestures and splatters made with diluted tarnish, varnish, or acrylic paint appear in all the series except *ROCI CUBA* and the two works that make up the *Transom* series (1989)—outliers in this regard, making their imagery relatively decipherable. The *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* represent the other extreme, and present distinct obstacles for the viewer. Most of Rauschenberg's *Night Shades* feature murky layers of the tarnishing agent, Aluma Black, writes Mikael Wivel,"where his familiar iconography lies like puzzle pictures under dark, obscuring twists of the brush."[19] In other instances, Rauschenberg used the clear varnish resist to apply his gestural strokes, exploiting the "translucent layering" of its nuanced grayscale palette. From the shadowy strokes of tarnish to reflected highlights, the *Night Shades* create a range of tonal modulations akin to painterly chiaroscuro. Gestures and splatters appear only rarely in the *Phantoms*, and with a careful placement different from the seemingly haphazard overlays in the other series. Instead, the ghostly marks and minimal tonal contrast in the *Phantoms*, along with their high reflectivity, renders them the most difficult to see, as the artist intended.

Color plays a critical role in the metal paintings, determining relative clarity and obscurity and adding optical vibrancy to the flat silkscreened imagery. At Black Mountain College, he studied with Josef Albers, a leading color theorist, whom he considered "his most important teacher." According to Rauschenberg, Albers taught him the "complex relationships that color [sic] have with one another." Typical of his reliance on chance, however Rauschenberg rebelled against the science of color, the "idea of selecting colors that would achieve some predetermined result."[20] Notably, when he began the new technique of silkscreen paintings in the 1960s, he chose to eliminate all color, in order to understand its effects.[21] In a much later 2000 interview, when asked about the value of making works without much color, Rauschenberg answered that it resulted in "one step you don't have to consider."[22]

The metal paintings demonstrate just how deeply Rauschenberg engaged with color at this stage of his career. His repetition of the same source image across different series provides a means of analyzing how the profusion of color, its absence, or its restriction to a single hue, affect perceptions and mood. For example, the patchwork of color-block silkscreen prints in the *Urban Bourbons* allows for a greater degree of visual discrimination, since each image is defined by a different color. By contrast, the application of a single bold color across the entire

fig. 5

Robert Rauschenberg, *Solid Commitment (Spartan)*, 1991. Silkscreen ink on enameled aluminum, 49 × 85 inches (124.5 × 215.9 cm). Private collection.

fig. 6

Robert Rauschenberg, *Carnival Wall (Urban Bourbon)*, 1988. Silkscreen ink, acrylic, and enamel on mirrored and anodized aluminum, 48 ¾ × 72 ¾ inches (123.8 × 184.8 cm). Private collection.

fig. 7

Robert Rauschenberg, *Devine (Phantom)*, 1991. Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 49 ½ × 37 inches (125.7 × 94 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

surface of a panel, with a lack of contrasts in hue and tone, as is the case with the *Spartans*, compromises clarity. Similarly, the lack of color in both the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* affects the viewer's ability to discern spatial relationships and identify objects. A case in point is the picture of a dock seen at the upper left of the 1988 *Carnival Wall (Urban Bourbon)*, silkscreened in green, which also appears in *Devine (Phantom)* from 1991, but devoid of color (figs. 6 and 7). Though the dock is rotated on its side in *Carnival Wall*, it is far more visible than in *Devine*, where it is oriented correctly. The ambient reflections in the *Phantom* obscure the ghostly imprint, which is already barely distinct from the silvery, mirror support.

fig. 8

Robert Rauschenberg, *Lace Pound (Urban Bourbon)*, 1988. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on enameled aluminum, 48 ¾ × 73 ½ inches (123.8 × 186.7 cm). Private collection.

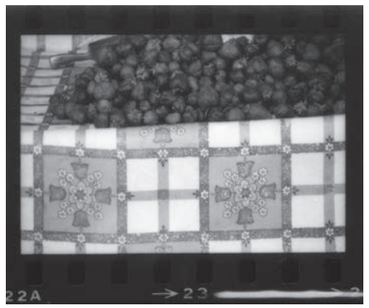


fig. 9

Black-and-white contact sheet, Chile, November 1984 (detail). Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Then there is the relationship of color to emotional tenor, which is underscored by Rauschenberg's choice of titles for the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*. Their achromatic tints obviate the cultural or personal associations summoned by particular colors, but certainly the neutral grays and engulfing blackness of the *Night Shades* induce a sense of somberness, even melancholy or threat, despite their often-humorous titles.[23] *Manhole House (Night Shade)* (plate 12) and *Lace Pound (Urban Bourbon)* (1988; fig. 8) share a screen based on a photograph, taken in Chile, of a checked and floral tablecloth heaped with vegetables (fig. 9). Screened in gray and in deep black, it dominates the vertical composition of *Manhole House* like a shroud; in *Lace Pound*, by contrast, the tablecloth is screened in bright pink alongside exuberant reds and yellows, giving it a festive appearance. The ghostly quality of the *Phantoms* render them dream-like or nostalgic. The same image of an abandoned stroller appears in *Avenue (Night Shade)* and *Time Scan (Phantom)* (plates 11 and 18). Surrounded by black and furious gestures in the former, it implies some kind of violence done; fading into gentle oblivion in the latter, it gives rise to a poignant memory of childhood past.

The black-and-white scheme of these two series renders them closest to the original photographs on which all of the metal series are based. As Rauschenberg stated to Donald Saff, "I use photography—use everything that I can find—but photography is a way for me to stay in touch with all the shadows and highlights that are around me. It's an exercise that keeps my feet on the ground but moving, the realization that every corner of the room is never going to be the same again."[24] With their evocative link between photography, shadows, and the passage of time, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* emanate a retrospective and introspective—even haunted—mood, different from all the other metal painting series (see the essays by Daniela Mayer and Joseph Shaikewitz in this catalogue). They anticipate the nostalgic *Ruminations* (1999–2000) a series of monochromatic intaglio prints (published by Universal Limited Art Editions) using vintage and his own photographs of his family and friends.

fig. 10

Robert Rauschenberg, *Guest (Vydock)*, 1995. Silkscreen ink, acrylic and graphite on bonded aluminum, 96 ⅛ × 59 ¾ inches (244 × 151.7 cm). Private collection.

Rauschenberg did not dwell long in what was for him uncharacteristically gloomy (*Night Shades*) and ethereal (*Phantoms*) states of mind. He put joyful color in the center of his last metal painting series, *Vydock*, from 1995, though in a contained and strategic way that showed the lessons learned from his experiments in monochrome (fig. 10). Given the artist's propensity for homophonic word play (see the essay by Melissa Waldvogel in this catalogue) the title may well be a pun on viaduct, a kind of bridge or overpass, which is actually how the bands of rainbow colors function in these works, spanning the panel from top to bottom of the canvas and traversing a spare arrangement of images, none of which

overlap. He printed each of these in subdued tints of grey and sepia or, occasionally, soft blue-gray or light red, and the tonal contrasts captured in the original photographs emerge with unprecedented clarity on the white matte aluminum supports. Absent are the gestural marks made with a rag or mop; instead the brushstrokes are orderly and contained entirely within the color gradients. As a conclusion to the metal paintings, the *Vydocks* also bridge Rauschenberg's next unconventional foray into new artistic mediums and techniques announced by *Waterworks* (1992–95) and *Anagrams* (1995–1997). For these painting series, Rauschenberg's transferred digital images of his own photographs—printed in color inkjet dyes or pigments—onto paper supports. They recall and upend another fine art tradition—the soft and transparent washes of watercolor. Rauschenberg never stopped exploring or ceased to surprise.

ENDNOTES

1 The series are as follows: *Copperhead* (1985/89), *Coppertone* (1985–86), *Shiner* (1986–93), *ROCI CUBA* (1988), *Beamer* (1988), *Urban Bourbon* (1988–96), *Borealis* (1988–92), *Galvanic Suite* (1988–91), *Wax Fire Works* (1990–91), *Night Shade* (1991), *Phantom* (1991), *Spartan* (1991), *Transom* (1989), *Off Kilter Keys* (1993–94), and *Vydock* (1995). The titles of the individual works and overall series refer to subject matter, pictorial effects, or places and are often humorous. The majority of the series contain works that vary in size, and the number of works in each series fluctuates. *Coppertone* contains only four, while *Transom* contains only two, as compared to over a hundred works in *Urban Bourbon*. Each series within the metal paintings has specific, overall characteristics, though exceptions occur.

2 Due to the large number of works, this paper focuses only on the series that depend on the flat support, silkscreened imagery, and the series that deal mainly with Rauschenberg's own source imagery. It excludes the *Beamer* series because the majority of the works in that series combine Rauschenberg's photographs with images of Old Masters paintings. See Emily Florido and Ealan Wingate, *Robert Rauschenberg*, exh. cat. (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2010), p. 290. Also omitted is *Wax Fire Works*, a collaboration with Saff Tech Arts where the artist explored a new process of painting with wax onto polished aluminum with added collage elements and acrylic. *Off Kilter Keys* is also excluded.

3 The *Phantom* series is not entirely monochromatic. In some works, the gestural markings and silkscreened images are very faintly colored in light blue, green, purple, or pink. In a number of *Night Shades*, brown coloring appears seemingly at random, not within the silkscreen itself, but in the gestural strokes. (Perhaps this is a reaction to the corrosion process or the addition of water to the metal supports.) Despite the effect that these instances of color have within the individual works, they are not strong enough to detract from the encompassing gray tonality of these two series overall.

4 Select works within other series feature black-and-white monochrome silkscreened images. However, none of them focus on a restrained palette as consistently as *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*.

5 Hiroko Ikegami, *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), p. 209. Rauschenberg's ROCI travels took him to the following countries: Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, China, Tibet, Japan, Cuba, the U.S.S.R., Germany, and Malaysia. Many photographs also come from the *In + Out City Limits* series (1979–81), taken in the following US cities: Fort Myers, Florida; Baltimore; Boston; Charleston, South Carolina; Los Angeles; and New York.

6 Robert Mattison, *Robert Rauschenberg: Breaking Boundaries*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) p. 237. On *ROCI CHILE* see also the essay by Vitoria Hadba, "Yankee Go Home" Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, https://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Hadba_YankeeGoHome.pdf.

7 Joachim Pissarro, "Heavy Metal," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Works on Metal*, exh. cat. (Beverly Hills: Gagosian Gallery, 2014), pp. 31–42. *Gluts* were made from found metal objects. During this period, however, Rauschenberg made other sculptural metal works that incorporated silkscreened images. Between 1992 and 1993 Rauschenberg collaborated with Donald Saff to create the *Eco-Echo* series, motion-sensor aluminum and motion-activated Lexan fans. Rauschenberg also created *Borealis Shares* (1990), a series of editioned sculptures related to the *Borealis* metal paintings.

8 Elizabeth Carpenter, "Sculpture and Paintings on Metal, 1986–1995," in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, ed. Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1997), p. 470.

9 Julia Sasse, *Paint on Metal: Modern and Contemporary Explorations and Discoveries*, (Tucson: Tucson Museum of Art: 2005), p. 5.

10 Edgar Peters Bowron, "A Brief History of European Oil Paintings on Copper, 1560–1775," in Michael K. Komanecky, ed., *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575–1775* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 10–12.

11 The Aluminum Association. "History of Aluminum." Accessed March 2019, https://www.aluminum.org/aluminum-advantage/history-aluminum.

12 Sasse, *Paint on Metal*, p. 8.

13 Sasse, p. 9.

14 Carpenter, "Sculpture and Paintings on Metal, 1986–1995," p. 470. This approach was used in certain works found in the *Borealis*, *ROCI CUBA*, *Shiner*, *Galvanic Suite*, and *Urban Bourbon* series, though never in the *Night Shade*, *Phantom*, *Spartan*, or *Vydock* series.

15 The degree to which Rauschenberg covered the surface or left it relatively bare varies from work to work, and series to series. Significantly, the monochromatic works represent the extremes: the surfaces of the *Spartans* are the most consistently covered, whereas the *Phantoms* are the most consistently exposed. See, for example, *Solid Commitment (Spartan)* and *Litercy (Phantom)*.

16 Emily Liebert writes of the metal paintings saying that they "counter stasis through the mode of spectatorship they invite." Liebert, "'Looking Also Had to Happen in Time': The Printed Trace," in *Robert Rauschenberg*, Leah Dickerman and Achim Borchardt-Hume, eds. (New York and London: The Museum of Modern Art and Tate Publishing, 2016), p. 367.

17 The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, May 1, 2016. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 201.

18 Liebert, "'Looking Also Had to Happen in Time': The Printed Trace," p. 366. Liebert connects *Shiners*, *Beamers*, *Urban Bourbons*, *Borealis*, *Spartans*, and *Night Shades* to *Glacial Decoy* (1979) and *Set and Reset* (1983), performances choreographed by Trisha Brown for which Rauschenberg designed the sets and costumes.

19 Mikael Wivel, *Robert Rauschenberg: Night Shades & Urban Bourbons*, (Charlottenlund: Ordrupgaard, 1995), p. 14.

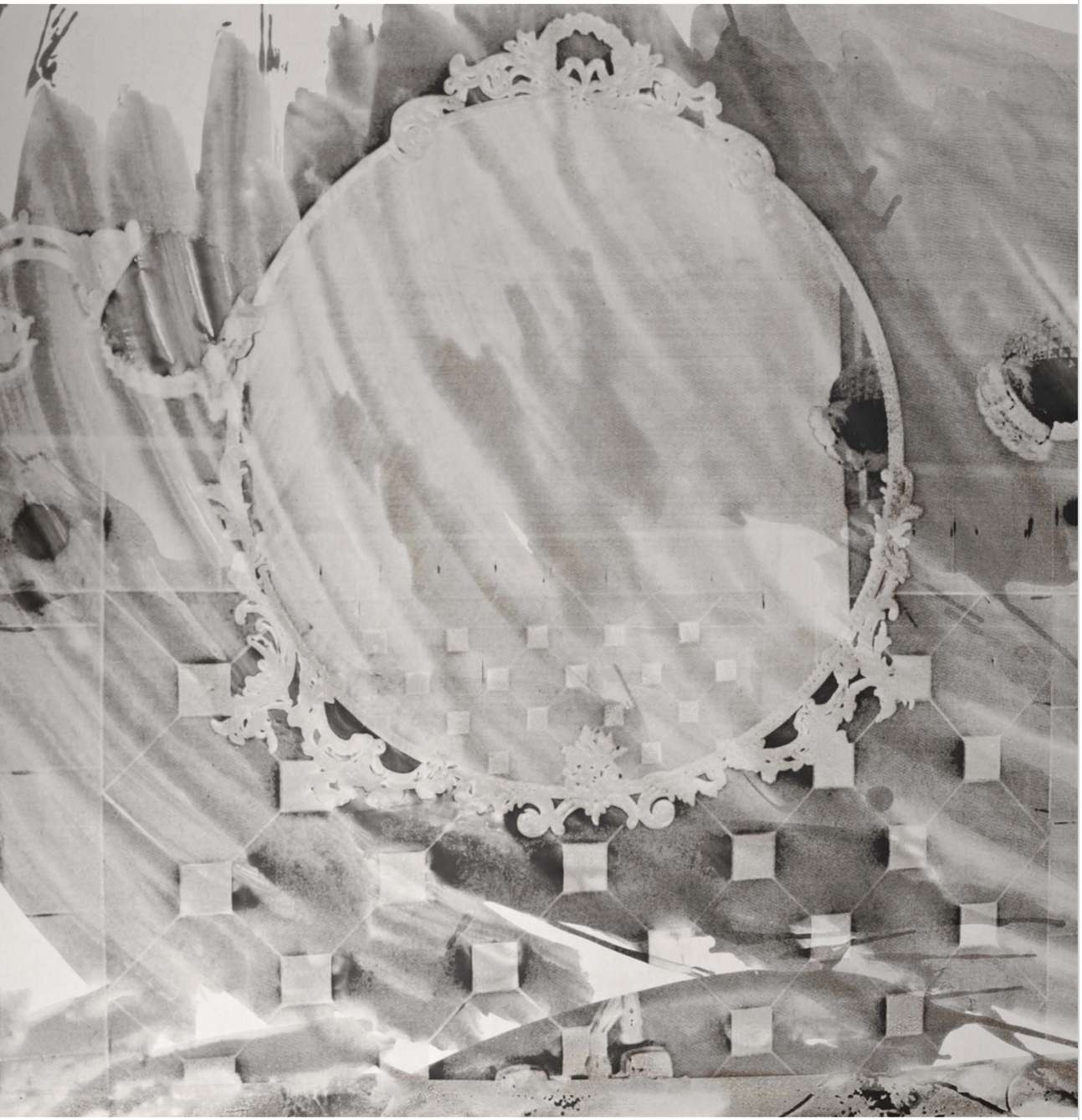
20 Robert Rauschenberg, Statement on Josef Albers, n.d., Robert Rauschenberg papers, RRFA 01, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives. See also Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color*, rev. pocket ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1975.

21 Thomas H. Garver, *Robert Rauschenberg in Black and White: Paintings 1962–1963*, *Lithographs 1962–1967*, exh. cat. (Balboa, California: Newport Harbor Art Museum), 1969.

22 Robert Rauschenberg and Walter Hopps Dialogue, 2000, Robert Rauschenberg papers, RRFA 01, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

23 Wivel, *Robert Rauschenberg: Night Shades & Urban Bourbons*, p. 14. Wivel describes the *Night Shades* as "disquietingly gloomy."

24 Robert Rauschenberg quoted in Donald Saff, "Conservation of Matter: Robert Rauschenberg's Art of Acceptance," *Aperture* no. 125 (Autumn 1991) pp. 24–31. Cited in John Yau, "Robert Rauschenberg as Flâneur," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Vydocks*, exh. cat. (Hong Kong: Pace Gallery, 2018), p. 9, 18n5.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Vanities (Night Shade)*, 1991 (detail).

Queer Reflections: Robert Rauschenberg's *Night Shades* and Photography in the 1990s

JOSEPH SHAIKEWITZ

Robert Rauschenberg's 1991 series *Night Shades* thematizes the act and conditions of looking, in which the viewer's gaze is frustrated or deflected. Through the transfer of his own photographs onto aluminum supports that capture the space around them, the artist troubled conventionally straightforward encounters of mirrored reflection and, in turn, of self-affirmation. His application of imagery onto these metallic surfaces in layers of light and dark, over and under broad gestural swaths of light and shadow, invoked notions of revealing and obscuring. These strategies allowed Rauschenberg to register viewers' reflections, yet simultaneously interrupt their presence and downplay the power of their gaze. This essay proposes a queer reading of the *Night Shades* and their embodiment of a vexed mode of spectatorship through the framework of the artistic, social, and cultural history of the early 1990s. A discussion of this series alongside work from that same decade by queer photographers Zoe Leonard, Lyle Ashton Harris, and Nan Goldin enables an understanding of how artists, including Rauschenberg, approached ideas of representation and (in)visibility toward the end of the twentieth century.

Early on in Rauschenberg's practice, images of covertly expressed homoeroticism hinted at a queer dimension in the artist's work, notably in his Dante drawings (1958–60). Among the source material for these drawings are many taken from male fitness magazines, as art historian Laura Auricchio has demonstrated, and their transmission through his transfer drawing technique veiled the clarity of his desires.[1] Such images constitute an early form of concealment, applied in this instance to forms of mythology and masculine tradition. However, with the *Night Shades*, produced some three decades later, the artist's engagement with sexual difference assumes a different set of concerns. Notably, the series rehearses notions of vision and visibility that similarly surfaced during the 1990s in photography by Leonard, Harris, and Goldin. While Rauschenberg, unlike many of his peers at the time, never fully embraced a non-assimilatory stance within mainstream culture, positioning his *Night Shades* within a queer lexicon of subjectivity offers an alternative vantage point through which to reconsider the function of the gaze in his work.[2]

Mirrors and reflection long played into Rauschenberg's artistic practice, beginning with the Combine series from the 1950s. In *Charlene* (1954)—to take an early example—Rauschenberg inserted a mirror into the work at the height of an approaching viewer (fig. 1). The reflective plane does not immediately catch the viewer's eye as it competes with a raucous composition including collaged and crumpled newspaper, textiles, a plain t-shirt, drips of oil paint, an

fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Charlene*, 1954. Combine: oil, charcoal, paper, fabric, newspaper, wood, plastic, mirror, and metal on four Homasote panels, mounted on wood with electric light, 89 × 112 × 3 ½ inches (226.1 × 284.5 × 8.9 cm). Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

illuminated light, wooden frames, and the unfolded panels of an umbrella. Several elements in *Charlene* make reference to the human body. The shirt strewn with oil paint, as art historian Graham Bader notes, serves as a sign of both corporeal presence and absence and corresponds to the aforementioned "distorting mirror […], positioned so as to confront viewers with their own dimensionally skewed image."[3] While the shirt, with "its stains, its marks of wear, [and] its position of direct address," solicits a representational reading, and thus can be understood as a material allusion to the body, the mirror—perhaps the most direct representation of the human body—warps and deforms all that comes before it.[4] The surface resembles a fun-house mirror, undermining mimesis and transforming one's reflected image into an otherworldly refraction of light and color. As *Charlene* demonstrates, mirrored reflection in Rauschenberg's work regularly cues visitors into a metanarrative about distortion, sight, and self.

When Rauschenberg began to silkscreen found imagery onto canvases in the 1960s, he continued to invoke the capacious metaphoric function of reflections. In a number of the silkscreened paintings, such as *Exile* (1962), *Tracer* (1963), and *Persimmon* (1964), Rauschenberg introduced representations of mirrors through the traditional narrative of self-regard, and with an underlying allegory of *vanitas*—incorporating reproductions of seventeenth-century paintings of Venus in Peter Paul Rubens's *Venus in Front of the Mirror* (1614–15; fig. 2) and Diego Velázquez's *The Toilet of Venus*, also known as "*The Rokeby Venus*" (1647–51; fig. 3). Both source images show the titular muse gazing into a mirror held by an attendant Cupid. The art historian Rosalind Krauss offers a reading of these mirrors as framing devices that "organize an image of the mental, or of thought, meditation, or reflection."[5] While a precise meaning for this recurrent motif remains elusive, their frequent appearance shows Rauschenberg using the mirror to signify a formative site of cogitation and recognition.

When Rauschenberg first began his paintings on metal in the mid-1980s, his use of surfaces like brass, bronze, and copper filtered and called forth, to varying degrees of clarity, the space and movements before them in a range of metallic shades. These tinged reflections color one's encounter—a strategy that contrasts with his later use of brushed and mirrored aluminum

fig. 2

Peter Paul Rubens, *Venus in Front of the Mirror*, 1614–15. Oil on panel, 48 ½ × 38 ½ inches (123 × 98 cm). Liechtenstein: The Princely Collection, Vienna.

fig. 3

Diego Velázquez, *La Venus del espejo (The Toilet of Venus)* ("*The Rokeby Venus*"), 1647–51. Oil on canvas, 48 ¼ × 69 ½ inches (122.5 × 177 cm). The National Gallery, London.

sheets for his *Night Shades*. Taking mirror-like surfaces as a point of departure, this series more directly engages viewers and their surroundings through their literal approximation of a standard mirror. The reflection blurs the distinction between reality and pictorial illusion, as the two- and three-dimensional fields coexist on an equal plane. Yet even in this mode, Rauschenberg situated spectatorship within a peculiar paradox: the simultaneous invitation and refusal of the gaze, activated by a real, yet vexed, rebound. The reflective aluminum prompts viewers' awareness of themselves and of being seen, while the tarnished surfaces disturb any clear view. As art historian Eileen R. Doyle observes, "the viewer is invited into a space which she cannot enter but on which she does have a visible effect."[6] The works forge an image of the self that is blocked from coming fully into being.

Rauschenberg clearly envisioned the *Night Shades* as fraught visual spaces. As opposed to the mirrored supports used by an artist like Michelangelo Pistoletto, Rauschenberg's surfaces undermine the ease of affirming one's place in the world, as both a subject and author of experience. Through reflection and scattered visual interferences, he troubles the act of locating oneself both in and before his work and opens up a host of associations related to marginal subjecthood. Several of the *Night Shades* embody this veiling and dislocation through the imagery that Rauschenberg selected from his repertoire of photographs, which dated from a twelve-year span between 1979 and 1991. The common motifs of windows, thresholds, frames, and mirrors in this series provide a self-reflexive iconography of vision and viewing. In *Rudy's Time*, Rauschenberg includes a single still of two neighboring windows in the bottom-right corner (fig. 4). In one, the double-hung frame is propped partly open, though the flat darkness of the interior reveals little about what lies behind; in the other, a make-do curtain folds along the pane, blocking visual entry from the outside. Rauschenberg deconstructs the metaphor of the Albertian window by working against planar recession, focusing instead on the shadows and planes that obstruct visual entry. *Fan Club* likewise collapses space by including an ambiguous square at the base of the composition (fig. 5). At once empty frame, vacant mirror, and shuttered window, the whitish square suggests a flat reflective area—though one made impossible by the tarnish atop the aluminum surface.

fig. 4

Robert Rauschenberg, *Rudy's Time (Night Shade)*, 1991. Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 85 × 97 inches (215.9 × 246.4 cm). Private collection.

Rauschenberg represents this condition of frustrated viewing to great effect in *Vanities* (plate 3). An ornate, circular mirror features prominently in the upper register, flanked by a pair of wall sconces. Just below, two rows of placid men line the top and interior of a makeshift structure. Both images are represented in negative, the highlights rendered through the deep black of gestural swipes of tarnish. A broad, checkered pattern behind the mirror is doubled in the space outlined within its reflection, offering a glimpse of the enclosed interior. Despite the photograph of a mirror straight on, Rauschenberg, armed with the camera, remains entirely out-of-sight. One might imagine the physical contortion required in order to avoid his reflection when capturing this angle, but it disconcerts nonetheless.[7] This depiction of a mirror atop the reflective aluminum surface of this *Night Shade* becomes a contradiction as it stages what it in fact cannot do: reflect. Because the image of the mirror is achieved through swipes of corrosive tarnish, its presence negates—even as it denotes—the possibility of reflection. Fittingly, the title of the work cleverly reverses the myth of Narcissus, who succumbs to vanity only to find a spellbound and immobile self-reflection that closes off the outside world. *Vanities*, by comparison, works against its title to explore the effects of double erasure, where the actual mirrored surface and its photographed cameo both cease to reflect as one might typically expect.

Rauschenberg's signaling and subsequent refusal of reflection stages for the viewer a subjectivity understood through difference, disembodiment, and the periphery. For the artist, a large degree of this social difference stemmed from his closeted, and successively more open, queer identity during decades of virile artistic environs, rigid sexual binaries, and LGBTQ oppression and violence. The growing visibility of non-normative sexual orientations across the second-half of the twentieth century correlates with Rauschenberg's biography, which itself benefits from the expansive frameworks ushered in by queer theory of the early 1990s. However, scholarship that addresses Rauschenberg's sexuality tends to paint him as a gay artist whose early, closeted identity continuously manifests in his strategies of veiling and homoerotic codes. For Katz, such cryptic signs "constitute a 'coming out' legible only to those who are 'in.'"[8] Though well-reasoned, these readings become limited when they subscribe only to gay and lesbian studies, which oftentimes reduces sexuality to a series of binaries (e.g. homosexual/heterosexual, out/closeted), which are circumscribed by heteronormative logic.

Given that the *Night Shades* date to 1991, approaching the subjects of self-encounter and the gaze in Rauschenberg's work through the porous and fluid boundaries of then-emergent queer theory more aptly contextualizes his personal preoccupations and their manifestation in his work. I use the term "queer" to denote both a non-assimilatory sexual identity and a discursive mode that cuts through and across commonplace cultural signifiers. Art historian David Getsy describes queerness as not only an orientation, but also "a strategic undercutting to the stability of identity and of the dispensation of power that shadows the assignment of categories and taxonomies."[9] Curator Thomas J. Lax builds upon this idea in his writing on the artist Ronald Lockett, suggesting an understanding of queerness "not as an identification or even as a set of sexual practices but, rather, as a buffer against stable narratives of identity and cultural representation."[10] Indeed, Rauschenberg's aesthetic and conceptual strategies concern themselves with this broader application as they blur and bridge visual, semiotic, and interpretive models.

fig. 5

Robert Rauschenberg, *Fan Club (Night Shade)*, 1991. Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 61 × 49 inches (154.9 × 124.5 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal text *Epistemology of the Closet*, originally published in 1990, established the central framework through which sexual identification could exist between, and in opposition to, linguistic dichotomies. Sedgwick refers to the closet as "the defining structure for gay oppression in [the twentieth] century," and argues that its perpetuation through comparison to the act of "coming out" creates the delimited boundaries of other binary "sites for the contestation of meaning."[11] She continues:

> Among those sites are … the pairings secrecy/disclosure and private/public. Along with and sometimes through these epistemologically charged pairings, condensed in the figures of "the closet" and "coming out," this very specific crisis of definition has then ineffaceably marked other pairings as basic to modern cultural organization as masculine/feminine, majority/minority, innocence/initiation, natural/artificial, new/old, growth/decadence, urbane/provincial, health/illness, same/different … So permeative has the suffusing stain of homo/heterosexual crisis been that to discuss any of these indices in any context, in the absence of an antihomophobic analysis, must perhaps be to perpetuate unknowingly compulsions implicit in each.[12]

As Sedgwick suggests, not only do these binaries limit language to categorical pairs, but so too do they hinder self-expression and complex means of identification. *Epistemology of the Closet* posits queer theory as a way to move past simplistic, structuralist thought in favor of nuance and contradiction, opening non-normative identity to exist loosely and ambiguously within pervasive heteronormative practices.

How, then, might we make sense of Rauschenberg's work through the broader set of tools that queer theory makes available? And what might we make of the convergence of the *Night Shades* and the proliferation of mirror imagery in the contemporaneous work of Leonard, Harris, and Goldin? Using the camera's eye, these artists articulate perceptions of social marginalization and, in particular, take up the mirror as a site for recording the full spectrum of a lived, queer experience. As a whole, they stage for the viewer experiences of subversive, sexual difference through the language of the body, the deflected gaze, a dislocated self-image, and the difficulties of visibility.

fig. 6

Zoe Leonard, *Mirror no. 1 (Metropolitan Museum)*, 1990. Gelatin silver print, 41 ½ × 28 ¼ inches (105.4 × 71.8 cm). Courtesy the artist, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, and Hauser & Wirth.

fig. 7

Zoe Leonard, *Mirror no. 2 (Metropolitan Museum)*, 1990. Gelatin silver print, 41 ½ × 28 ¼ inches (105.4 × 71.8 cm). Courtesy the artist, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, and Hauser & Wirth.

Produced in 1990, Zoe Leonard's series of photographs of mirrors in the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art strikingly captures this sense of displacement and othering through reflection and refusal. Across both *Mirror no. 1 (Metropolitan Museum)* and *Mirror no. 2 (Metropolitan Museum)*, Leonard captured two different views of a gallery containing a recreation of an eighteenth-century bedroom from the Sagredo Palace in Venice (figs. 6 and 7). The mirror depicted in *Mirror no. 1* features a simple, rectangular frame crowned by gilded ornamentation that drips onto both sides; in *Mirror no. 2*, an elaborate cartouche mirror is embellished by spiraling motifs, which emulate the appearance of twisting vines. Though the two mirrors assume the unequivocal role of subject, reflection itself finds slippery footing as Leonard's body evades the realm of rebound. In his description of these photographs, art historian Douglas Crimp discusses how Leonard positioned herself "at an oblique angle," and "not quite straight on."[13] "We can surmise," Crimp concludes, "that it is the angle of vision that accounts for the absence of a subject in these mirrors, but that doesn't alter the uncanny effect of their reflecting nothing."[14] The positioning of Leonard's body beyond their zones of reflection suggests a sense of alienation. By refusing to register her own image before the mirror, she both implies her presence and invokes a peripheral point of view. Though she frames and composes the image, she does not acknowledge herself as part of it. Thus, the empty mirror stands as a metaphor for an alternative sense of belonging in a world—be it eighteenth-century Italy or, more likely, the United States in the late-twentieth-century—that assumes a default heterosexual position.

In her photographs of bricked-over windows from the following decade, Leonard continued to visualize the challenges of finding herself negated in the surrounding environment. *Red Wall* (2001/2003), *Wall* (2002), and *Two Windows* (2005/2010) show the remnants of openings that once adorned the facades of various buildings; each window has been boarded up, and thus

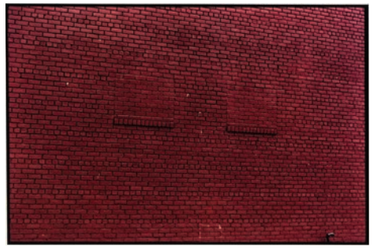


fig. 8

Zoe Leonard, *Red Wall*, 2001/2003. Dye-transfer print, 29 ¾ × 20 ½ inches (75.6 × 52.1 cm). Courtesy the artist, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, and Hauser & Wirth.

fig. 9

Zoe Leonard, *Wall*, 2002. Gelatin silver print, 41 ¾ × 29 ¾ inches (106 × 75.6 cm). Courtesy the artist, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, and Hauser & Wirth.

fig. 10

Zoe Leonard, *Two Windows*, 2005/2010. Dye-transfer print, 20 ¾ × 30 inches (52.7 × 76.2 cm). Courtesy the artist, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, and Hauser & Wirth.

fig. 11

Lyle Ashton Harris, *Self Portrait, Rome, 1992*, 2015. C-print, 16 ½ × 12 inches (41.9 × 30.5 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York.

erased, by masonry or concrete (figs. 8–10). The images thwart the full possibilities of vision: the silhouettes of window frames outline the glass panes that would have originally offered visual access to an interior space and slight reflections of their surroundings. Because the possibility of transparency or mirroring has been removed, these images mimic the rejection and refusal of the photographer as a heteronormative subject. Nevertheless, curator Bennett Simpson insists, "Her photography is resolutely first person. Leonard has always maintained the position that her camera should be considered an extension of her subjective self—her body, her presence, her looking."[15] Accordingly, Leonard gazes upon the walls and windows as sealed portals, motifs that for others may not hold the same significance—that of exclusion.

An artist of the same generation as Leonard, Lyle Ashton Harris isolated the mirror as a way to redirect the gaze in his *Self Portrait, Rome, 1992* (2015; fig. 11). Much like Rauschenberg, in 2015 Harris returned to an earlier collection of photographs for his ongoing project, *The Ektachrome Archives*. By exhibiting images taken between 1986 and 1996, Harris deploys memory and nostalgia as strategies for opening the past onto the present. The photographer printed *Self Portrait, Rome, 1992* at the onset of this project, summoning a fragmented portrait from his late twenties. Through the murky reflection of a centrally framed mirror, Harris's nude torso emerges. He stands with a slight curve in his posture, his arms reaching up and outwards to presumably center the unseen camera on his image. Like Leonard's mirrors from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris's bears dramatic carvings and an aged and tarnished surface. However, Harris presents the viewer with the reflection of his own, cropped figure, muted and blurred as it may be. His decision to depict himself through layers of smudges and streaks abstracts his presence before the mirror, and conveys the difficulties of seeing himself through the haze of time and social categories of identity. The blemishes in the mirrored surface overlay Harris's figure with predetermined signs of wear that speak to the complexities of queer Black subjectivity.

The mirror also appears frequently in Harris's snapshots of close friends and acquaintances from the same series. In *M. Lamar, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, 1993*, Harris accentuates the tension between perceptions from the outside and from within (2015; fig. 12). In the photograph of Reginald Lamar, the performer is seen surveying himself in drag in a public restroom mirror, an unperturbed expression extending across his face. To the side, an older, well-dressed man hurries to wash his hands in the sink. He is decidedly in action—blurred as he races to escape the frame—while his gleaming watch catches the fluorescent lighting overhead. His buttoned-up appearance takes on the symbolic burden of a conventional, heteronormative social order. Lamar, on the other hand, appears as a bastion of self-assuredness, unfazed by the pressures that may try to smooth out any supposedly rough edges in his identity. This dynamic, as played out through reflection, positions the mirror as a stage of difference where the fullness of one's character is routinely realized vis-à-vis dominant social norms.

Harris also photographed the artist Nan Goldin applying makeup before a mirror in 1992 (fig. 13). While the captured reflection shows Goldin in a state of focus, the full image reveals the clutter of her immediate surroundings: jewelry, cosmetics, a Polaroid portrait of the artist

fig. 12

Lyle Ashton Harris, *M. Lamar, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, 1993*, 2015. C-print, 16 ½ × 12 inches (41.9 × 30.5 cm). Courtesy of the artest and Salon 94, New York.

fig. 13

Lyle Ashton Harris, *Nan, Berlin, 1992*, 2015. C-print, 16 ½ × 12 inches (41.9 × 30.5 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York.

herself, and a print of a female nude torso lodged into the right corner of the frame. In realizing this image, Harris invoked the style of intimacy and reflection for which Goldin became known in her own photographic work. He repeats the central role of the mirror in her intense scrutiny of subjectivity.

Perhaps best known for her 1986 series "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency," comprised of photographs taken throughout the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, Goldin's portraits of friends and of herself expose a more somber and at times tragic tone. The artist's *Self-Portrait in My Blue Bathroom, Berlin*, shot in the same city where Harris photographed her the year prior, shows Goldin's fragmented portrait in the central corner of a folding bathroom mirror (1991; fig. 14). Goldin went to great lengths to show only her head and piercing gaze, and to conceal the camera entirely; only a towel and showerhead interrupt the sea of blue tiles that fill the image. Though the title discloses the location of this portrait, the composition nevertheless contributes to a sense of placelessness—the monochromatic grid of her surroundings and the cropping of her body reduce her image to a shallow bust swallowed by its environment. The closeness—both physical and emotional—that Goldin conveys through this image contrasts with the earlier *Self-Portrait in Blue Bathroom, London* from "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency," where the artist's reflection can only be seen from an isolating distance (1980; fig. 15). Were it not for a ripple of light through an adjacent window, her image would rest in the obscurity of the shadows. Goldin's self-portrait is one of estrangement: a bathtub blocks her from gaining proximity to the mirror, and only her head is visible in the image (a composition that she repeats in 1991). Thus, Goldin stages her own alienation and the difficulty of recognizing and validating her whole self. Across these

fig. 14

Nan Goldin, *Self-Portrait in My Blue Bathroom, Berlin*, 1991. Silver-dye bleach print, 20 × 24 inches (50.8 × 60.9 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Fund for Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

fig. 15

Nan Goldin, *Self-Portrait in Blue Bathroom, London (The Ballad of Sexual Dependency)*, 1980. Silver dye bleach print, 27 ¾ × 40 ¼ inches (70.5 × 102.2 cm). The Jewish Museum, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Fund. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

two portraits, which are just over a decade apart, Goldin imbues the mirroring of her own image with a sense of inherent otherness.

The larger historical context of the 1990s offers a ready backdrop for the themes addressed in Leonard, Harris, and Goldin's bodies of work. Indeed, alienation, marginalization, and peripheral conceptions of the self can be understood, if only partly, through the ways in which the queer identities of these three artists were regulated and forced to perform in the wake of the Reagan Era's spread of conservative ideals and masculinized patriotism. In mainstream culture, homosexuality and other non-assimilatory orientations were regularly treated as lifestyle choices or perversions, and the false conflation of same-sex relations, sexual promiscuity, and the toll of the HIV/AIDS epidemic dominated the cultural consciousness. The rise in public expressions of homophobia forced many LGBTQ individuals to maneuver the open display of their sexualities with caution, while countless others combated marginalization through advocacy and activism in light of scant government care and support. Thus, the sense of outsiderness expressed in the images by the aforementioned group of photographers can be understood as a symptom of LGBTQ oppression and a reaction to the prevailing influence of heteronormativity. Representation from the margins resulted in the visual displacement, decentralization, and disappearance of the artist—a withdrawal enacted to poignant ends before mirrors and reflections. As Getsy would aptly propose decades later, a great extent of queer visual expression represents "an attitude of defiance … in response to the operations of power that police difference and that exile the otherwise."[16]

This history brings us to Rauschenberg's photography anew, providing a framework and point of comparison for the images that made their way into his *Night Shades*. Once again, *Vanities* provides a useful entry. The topmost photograph of a mirror and its vacancy solicits a reading as a kind of self-portrait through Rauschenberg's refusal of self-representation. By removing himself from the reflected view by standing askew, ultimately concealing both himself and his camera, Rauschenberg conveys the emotional burden of otherness. Identification of this photograph in the artist's original contact sheets housed in the archives of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation offers valuable insight into its origins (fig. 16). Rauschenberg photographed the mirror in April 1988, while traveling through the Soviet Union to Odessa (located in present-day Ukraine) as part of his Rauschenberg Overseas Culture

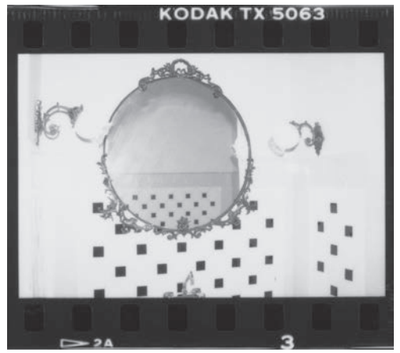


fig. 16

Black-and-white contact sheet, Odessa, Ukraine (former USSR), April 1988 (detail). Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Interchange project (ROCI; 1984–91). Months later, a survey conducted in Soviet Russia showed that "30% of those questioned said gays should be physically exterminated."[17] It is likely that the harsh political climate of Odessa and other Soviet regions under Communist rule would have heightened Rauschenberg's sense of alienation and the necessity of concealing aspects of his personal life. In this context, the original negative from those travels, which reveals Rauschenberg in the setting of a hotel or well-decorated lobby, conveys a greater feeling of unease. If we are to imagine the mirror as a site of self-realization and affirmation, Rauschenberg's absence visualizes the estrangement that accompanied not only his presence in a country that criminalized homosexuality, but also his identification with a sexuality that contradicted heteronormative conventions.

Rauschenberg photographed vacant mirrors on several occasions throughout his life; the resulting images that he deemed suitable for exhibition subscribe to the same language of marginality and invisibility that his *Night Shades* employed (plate 29 and figs. 17–19). In a handwritten statement from 1981, Rauschenberg explained: "My preoccupation with photography … was first supported by a personal conflict between shyness and curiosity. The camera functioned as a social shield."[18] Through this tension of "shyness and curiosity," Rauschenberg reveals a desire for truth and belonging, but also a reflex to keep certain qualities hidden from view, or just outside the frame of the viewfinder. Photography allowed him to interrogate his identity and all it entails with the aid of his camera, though he made sure to keep his own image separate from the scope of his inquiry.

The hesitancy Rauschenberg demonstrates in his work toward the wholeness of his own image bears comparison to a group of strategies taken up by other queer photographers in the 1990s. Their collective practices reveal the difficulty of seeing oneself in full view when heteronormative standards shape social and moral values. The *Night Shades* perform this frustration, their unfulfilled promise of being able to see oneself embodying the complex negotiations inherent to queer subjectivity. The effect, much like Rauschenberg's career-long efforts to precariously embed the beholder in his works, was not a neutral choice; rather, it produces a vexed, melancholic, or marginalized view that replicates, by virtue of analogy, Rauschenberg's experiences as a queer artist and individual.

fig. 17

Robert Rauschenberg, *Berlin*, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

fig. 18

Robert Rauschenberg, *Los Angeles, California*, 1981. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

fig. 19

Black-and-white contact sheet, Moscow, Russia (former USSR), July 1988 (detail). Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

ENDNOTES

1 Laura Auricchio, "Lifting the View: Robert Rauschenberg's *Thirty-Four Drawings for Dante's Inferno* and the Commercial Homoerotic Imagery of 1950s America," in *The Gay 90s: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Formations in Queer Studies*, eds. Thomas Foster, Carol Siegel, and Ellen E. Berry (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 141–42. Auricchio layers the question of homoeroticism with the fact that magazines like *Tomorrow's Man*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Art and Physique*, while forging an important site for homoerotic fantasy in the 1950s, "did not openly address their homosexual readership in this period."

2 For a discussion of distinctions in terms of how queer artists from this period embraced or attenuated the non-assimilatory connotations of their sexuality, see Kenneth Silver's comparison of Andy Warhol versus Rauschenberg and Johns in Kenneth E. Silver, "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art," in *Hand-Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955–62*, ed. Russell Ferguson, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1992), pp. 193–95.

3 Graham Bader, "Rauschenberg's Skin," *Grey Room* 27 (Spring 2007): pp. 108–09.

4 Ibid., p. 109.

5 Rosalind Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): p. 106.

6 Eileen R. Doyle, "Art in the Mirror: Reflection in the Work of Rauschenberg, Richter, Graham and Smithson" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2004), p. 39.

7 English photographer Charles Thurston Thompson's documentary images of Venetian mirrors from the mid-nineteenth century offer a fruitful comparison to Rauschenberg's, as they testify to the difficulties of photographing a mirror devoid of apparatus or camera operator.

8 Ibid., p. 201.

9 David Getsy, "Introduction: Queer Intolerability and Its Attachments," in *Queer* (London: Whitechapel Documents of Contemporary Art, 2016), p. 15.

10 Katherine L. Jentleson and Thomas J. Lax, "Curating Lockett: An Exhibition History in Two Acts," in *Fever Within: The Art of Ronald Lockett*, ed. Bernard L. Herman (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), p. 50.

11 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 71, 77.

12 Ibid., p. 77.

13 Douglas Crimp, "Zoe's New York," in *Zoe Leonard: Survey*, ed. Bennett Simpson, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2018), p. 204.

14 Ibid.

15 Bennett Simpson, "Zoe Leonard: Interior Outside," in *Zoe Leonard: Survey*, ed. Bennett Simpson, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2018), p. 51.

16 Getsy, "Introduction," p. 12.

17 Fiona Fleck, "Russia's 'Legalized' Gays Say Some Still Jailed," *Reuter*, August 16, 1993.

18 Robert Rauschenberg, "My preoccupation with photography ..." statement, 1981, Robert Rauschenberg papers, RRFA 01, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Litercy (Phantom)*, 1991 (detail).

Reading Rauschenberg

MELISSA WALDVOGEL

> Nobody could come up with a title better than Bob could.
> He loved doing that. He loved titling his work.[1]
>
> Donald Saff

Titles carry significant power. Enormously potent, a cleverly conceived title may facilitate or deflect visual interpretation, thereby offering the artist some degree of control over the reception of an artwork once it leaves the studio. For Robert Rauschenberg, titles played an important role well beyond the mere naming of subject matter and, evidently, their invention gave him no small amount of pleasure. They aided and abetted his stated goal of engaging the viewer, a prod to cultivate multiple associations in his work. His titles include references to mythology and autobiography, often involving associative wordplay cued by one or more aspects of the respective artworks' imagery. He exploited verbal ambiguity for its own humorous and confounding rewards, such as homonymic and homographic puns and syllepsis (the collision of literal and figurative meanings). The frequency with which Rauschenberg generated puns undoubtedly pays homage to Marcel Duchamp's *jeu de mots*; yet more profoundly—and curiously, given his undiagnosed but perceptible dyslexia—they provided him with a whole other vehicle for nonvisual creativity: namely, wordplay.

Rauschenberg's experimentation with different techniques produced such a large body of work that the choice of titles could easily have been a mere matter of categorization, but even the names of his various series can carry multiple connotations. Overall, a hierarchy prevails between his series' titles and the individual works within them. For the first part of his career, the series' titles referred to color, process, and/or materials: *White Paintings* (1951), Combines (1954–64), or *Cardboards* (1971–72), for example. Not long after his move to Captiva, Florida, his choices evoked visual effects or associations of place: *Venetians* (1972–73), *Early Egyptians* (1973–74), *Made in Israel* (1974), *Hoarfrosts* (1974–76). The later metal works contained double entendres with sociopolitical allusions, such as the *Gluts* (1986–89/1991–94) and *Copperheads* (1985/1989). Though the designation "untitled" appears not infrequently, the names of individual works within series—subtitles, if you will—seem to relinquish any pure denominative function. Here, Rauschenberg indulged in schisms or concordances between word and image, with titles at times oblique, humorous, or semiotically loaded—especially given the multiple and overlaid images of his collage-based compositions.

Produced in the latter third of his career after years of experimenting with silkscreens on metal supports, Rauschenberg's *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* (both series from 1991) bear some of the most evocative titles of all. On a most basic level, his word choices relate to the effects of their restricted grayscale palette, reflective and corroded surfaces, and ghostly imprints of the screened photographs. The titles of the individual works include the witty, poignant, and ominous taking cues from the imagery within: the more one engages and interacts with the works, the more the wordplay reverberates. Ultimately, the series' titles, *Night Shade* and *Phantom*, reinforce both their retrospective mood and their subtle metanarrative on the nature of seeing.

In exploring the literal nature of Rauschenberg's titles, one might begin by consulting his personal copy of *Webster's New World Dictionary*, held in the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.[2] The first definition given for "nightshade" denotes a large genus of poisonous and nonpoisonous plants, chiefly of warm regions. While common vegetables and flowers such as red peppers, tomatoes, and petunias belong to the nightshade family, so do the more infamous (and toxic) belladonna and jimsonweed. Utilized in rituals and medicines, nightshade plants of the poisonous *Datura* genus have been used as sedatives, stimulants, and hallucinogens since the time of the Aztec empire. Native to the southwestern United States and areas of Central and South America, the *Datura* plant is an invasive and highly toxic flowering bush significant in the oral and sacred traditions of many native cultures in the Southern hemisphere.[3] An avid plant lover, Rauschenberg kept both a sacred datura plant (or moonflower, whose flowers open late in the day) and a night-blooming cereus, a flowering cactus famous for blooming once a year for a single night.[4] Like nightshade, these plant names refer to the evening hour. The artist would have often come across both these flowering species as a child in rural Texas, and again over the course of his travels to Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Cuba, and Malaysia for his ROCI project.[5]

For his series' title, Rauschenberg separated the plant name in two: *Night Shade*, which retains the familiar flora reference while at the same time creates a distinct noun and modifying adjective. Webster's supplies numerous meanings for "shade," all of which are adumbrated by "night." The primary definition refers to an area sheltered from direct light, such as by a window blind; in this sense a shade obstructs or veils, bringing to mind the dark gestural tarnishes and brushstrokes that obscure images in the *Night Shades*. "Shade" also has particular currency as both a noun and a verb in visual art: the relative tone of a color, the darker part of a picture, a means of rendering depth. In these particular metal paintings, deep, brooding, shadows emerge from the brushed aluminum surfaces, tempering their tonal quality, mood, and titles.

Additionally, "shade" is a popular term in English translations of Greek myths: shades refer to the spirits of the dead inhabiting Hades. Taking into account Rauschenberg's penchant for Greek mythology,[6] he was undoubtedly aware of this reference. Moreover, his series *Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's* Inferno (1958–60; fig. 1) presents both shades (spirits) and shades (*ombra*) in abundance. The transfer drawing technique Rauschenberg applied here is particularly suitable in the depiction of "shades," rendering figures that mirror the original

fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Canto XX: Circle Eight, Bolgia 4, The Fortune Tellers and Diviners*, from the series *Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's* Inferno, 1959–60. Solvent transfer with gouache and pencil on paper, 14 ½ × 11 ½ inches (36.8 × 29.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Given anonymously.

image but are leached of color and substance. In Greek mythology, shades are mere shadows of the deceased, retaining a visual memory of their living self but lacking the vigor and corporeality that lent them individuality. Given the folkloric pairing of "night" with metaphors of sleep, death, and the underworld (nightshades are infamous for their hallucinogenic and fatal effects), this meaning casts a pall over Rauschenberg's series. As the artist was in his mid-sixties when he created his *Night Shades*, he may also be alluding to the inevitability of his own death, the shade of night slowly being pulled down on life.

Webster's definitions for "phantom" are also distinctly somber, if not uncanny: an apparition without physical substance; an illusion that exists only in the mind; something foreboding; or a mental image or representation of things past.[7] The high polish and reflectivity of Rauschenberg's *Phantom* series manage to both capture and emanate a sense of the ephemeral, as silvery impressions of objects, facades, and figures hover on the edge of visibility. The mirrored aluminum supports become receptive surfaces for competing apparitions: as viewers step forward for a closer look, their reflections momentarily meld with the faint shapes and subjects. Changing light and angles of view offer ever new, if fleeting and spectral, compositions. "Shade" and "Phantom" also share a semantic connection—the ghostly or insubstantial. Made over a period of months in 1991, the two bodies of work can be seen as the inverse of each other—darkness and light—in a binary relationship likely intended by the artist.

That Rauschenberg possessed a flowering nightshade may have inspired one of his titles, but what of the origin of "Phantom"? The inspiration may well have been Allen Ginsberg's book, *White Shroud*: a celebrated collection of forty-seven poems, published in 1986.[8] Along with the titular poem, the volume includes "Black Shroud," "Fighting Phantoms Fighting Phantoms," and "They're All Phantoms of My Imagining." "Shroud" and "shade" both connote veiling and obscuring, be it of the truth or visual clarity. Rauschenberg's personal copy of *White Shroud*, preserved in his Foundation's library, is inscribed on the title page, "For Robert Rauschenberg, from Allen Ginsberg. February 3, 1987."[9] Ginsberg follows with an intriguing expostulation (or perhaps an inside joke?): "More Vitamins!" facing a small doodle of a snake merging with a flower.[10] Rauschenberg's personal library also includes an inscribed copy of Ginsberg's *Collected Poems: 1947–1980*: "For Robert Rauschenberg, with old respects from the author, Allen Ginsberg. New York January 18, 1985." [11] Ginsberg adorned this page with four, square, red stamps, at least one of which appears to be a hanko seal of the artist's name.[12]

"Fighting Phantoms Fighting Phantoms" is overtly political and rebellious, while "They're all Phantoms of My Imagining" and "White Shroud" are intensely personal (the latter was inspired by a dream Ginsberg had of his deceased mother, which was in turn fueled by an evening spent reading the melancholy poetry of Edgar Allan Poe).[13] While Rauschenberg rarely read for pleasure (multiple sources confirm that the artist's dyslexia restricted both his ability and proclivity for consuming the written word), the cadence and lyricism of "Fighting Phantoms Fighting Phantoms" resonates with the visual effects of Rauschenberg's series.

While documented interactions between Rauschenberg and Ginsberg are scarce,[14] their approaches to art and its potential to effect real change share striking overlaps. Both belonged to inclusive communities of gay creative minds in New York City and made reference to their sexuality in their art. Rauschenberg's often ritualistic approach to art making and interest in Native American chants and nature imagery may find a parallel in Ginsberg's conversion to Buddhism and extensive studies of Eastern religions. Certainly differing degrees of dedication, but there remains a shared interest in and propensity for spiritual connection to the world in

which they were living and creating.[15] Both men were actively engaged in politics and traveled extensively to bring attention to the lives of oppressed populations at home and abroad.[16] Rauschenberg saw himself as a "global Peter Paul Rubens," actively engaged in humanitarian pursuits through the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI; 1984–91).[17] One of the leading figures of the Beat Generation, Ginsberg took part in numerous nonviolent political protests and published extensive poetic protests against "military politics and persecution of the powerless."[18] Perhaps most pertinent to the discussion at hand: in the summer of 1987, Ginsberg gave a lecture under the sponsorship of the Jan and Henri Bromberg Endowment Fund at the Dallas Museum of Art during the run of an exhibition of works by Rauschenberg.[19] A photograph documents the two shaking hands at this event, solidifying their awareness of and seeming mutual respect for each other and their respective oeuvre.

Rauschenberg's extant writings by hand are mostly limited to scraps of notebook paper, short expostulations, and lists littered with misspellings and assistants' corrections. This makes the considerations behind his titles even more revealing. When authoring official correspondence or answering queries, Rauschenberg would draft his reply in penciled, uppercase letters and then his assistant corrected the spelling and syntax in typed form. Rauschenberg, however, never perceived of his disability as a disadvantage: In a response to the Los Angeles Branch of the International Dyslexia Association dated 2000, the artist's "Statement of Inspiration for Success" reads, "I paint the what and way I see; I write the way it sounds. Curiosity and humor [are] free, I have a good life."[20] Succinct, direct, and self-assured, Rauschenberg calmly acknowledges his success in living with what most would term a learning disability. Dyslexia did not obstruct sensorial engagement with his surroundings, nor did it interfere with his creative impulses; why should he, an artist, feel handicapped? Evidence that Rauschenberg even embraced his dyslexia can be found in a number of his chosen titles, where misspelled words or grammatically incorrect sentences are intentionally employed as vehicles for clever puns. One of the most striking examples of these resides in the *Phantom* titled *Litercy* (plate 23).

While the two images found in *Litercy* appear in other works, their pairing here typifies Rauschenberg's proclivity for photographing signs and billboard advertising in a way that exploits multiple meanings.[21] Undoubtedly, the visual/verbal "shorthand" of street signs, and the communicative efficiency of word fragments and declarative modes of speech found in posters and placards appealed to the artist. The example of advertising allowed him to turn his difficult relationship with words into yet another creative outlet. The two words, "Bob's" and "Hand," in combination with the title, makes the autobiographical content of the work undeniable. "Literacy" not only refers to the ability to read or write, but also to a person's proficiency in a certain field. Here, Rauschenberg touts his literacy in the field of the visual. Indeed, his brilliant misspelling of the word draws attention to the homonymic intrusion of the visual: liter[*see*]. Moreover, by representing the noun "hand" in written English as well as by a pictograph, Rauschenberg points to the fact that the latter is the more universally recognizable symbol.

Less overtly autobiographical, *Time Scan (Phantom)* takes a more nostalgic approach (plate 18). It combines three photographs: at left, a discarded baby carriage in New York City; at right, an interior view of the clock at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris; and, sandwiched between them, a barely discernible image of a child leaning on a wooden scooter taken in Cuba. To "scan" means to scrutinize, but also to traverse a surface. Changing light on the surface of the *Phantoms* clocks the hours of the day, while the sequence of images refers to childhood and time passing —in other words, *Time Scan* puns on time *span*.

Word and image play abounds in the *Night Shades*. The meaning of *Palm Sunday (Night Shade)* delves deeply into Rauschenberg's psyche, given the rejection of his Christian fundamentalist upbringing (plate 4).[22] It is composed of a single photograph of a clapboard church in Charleston, South Carolina, surrounded by palm trees. The presence of the latter redoubles the allusion to "Palm Sunday," the Sunday before Easter, which commemorates the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem with a procession of worshippers carrying palm fronds. Yet Rauschenberg complicates the eschatological associations with the slogan blazoned on the church's facade: His brooding brushstrokes envelop the proclamation "Jesus Saves" with darkness rather than light. By contrast, the intended levity of the title *Monday (Night Shade)* given to the image of a towel on a clothesline may go over the head of most viewers, unless they know that for persons of Rauschenberg's generation, Monday was laundry day (plate 14).

A study of Rauschenberg's titles would not be complete without a section devoted to the artist's imaginative sense of humor and witty use of tongue-in-cheek puns. *Bounders (Phantom)* could refer to those who disregard the warning of the "Do Not Enter" signs, but it has a hidden jibe: "bounder" is another word for "a man whose behavior is ungentlemanly; a cad" (plate 22).[23] *Dog-On (Night Shade)* features photographs of three dogs (see page 16, fig. 3). The title's spelling obliquely refers to more than one (dog "on and on"), while the pronunciation is that of the colloquial "doggone it," an expression for surprise, irritation, or anger (and a euphemism for "goddamnit"). Given the mangled jaw and soulful eyes of veteran fight dog, Rudy, pictured in the foreground, one cannot help but interpret the animal as almost spent or "gone."[24] In *Office Break (Phantom)*, Rauschenberg silkscreened a picture of an office chair in the upper register of the artwork, while placing an image of a charging water buffalo in the lower register, breaking loose, it seems, from being hemmed in—a not-so-subtle comment on the confines and drudgery of clerical work (plate 25).

Composed of a single photograph of a spray-painted cartoon pig in evening dress over two directional arrows, the aptly titled *Ms. P Goes to Town (Night Shade)* engages with both childhood and popular culture references: the English nursery rhyme, "This little piggy went to market…" and Jim Henson's celebrated Muppet character, "Miss Piggy" (fig. 6). The signs in *Driveway Detour (Night Shade)* are backwards and upside down, presenting roadblocks for the eye in an otherwise empty space (plate 13). The centrally placed hydrant in *Florida Reservoir (Phantom)* links the image of gushing water to Rauschenberg's experimental wet-on-wet silkscreening process, so apparent in this work (fig. 7). For the latter, the source photographs appear to have been taken in New York City and Charleston, intimating that while Rauschenberg was globally inspired, the artist's Captiva studio remained for him the most productive site for the culmination of his art, his creative reservoir.

fig. 6

Robert Rauschenberg, *Ms. P Goes to Town (Night Shade)*, 1991. Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 41 × 49 inches (104.1 × 124.5 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Other titles such as *Off the Walls (Night Shade)* and *Drums (Night Shade)* reveal the artist's engagement in current, history-changing events (plates 9 and 15).[25] Composed of two vertical building blocks, *Off the Walls* positions

fig. 7

Robert Rauschenberg, *Florida Reservoir (Phantom)*, 1991. Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 49 ½ × 121 ⅛ inches (125.7 × 307.7 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Rauschenberg's photographs of a Louisiana glass shop atop his shots of graffiti-layered sections of the Berlin Wall. The deep blacks lend additional pathos to these emotionally charged photographs, especially given the dates involved. His *ROCI BERLIN* photos were taken in November of 1989, the same month that demolition of the wall began; Rauschenberg completed *Off the Walls* in 1991, mere months after reunification formally concluded the previous October. Pairing the graffitied wall with a blurred image of a New Orleans shop advertisement makes a striking composition; but more to the point, Rauschenberg challenges the viewer to make connections between the United States and Germany, between seemingly innocuous advertising and the aftershocks of a globally resonant trauma. Reading from the top and descending down the walls, certain words rise out from under the overlay of dark, gestural brushstrokes: "glass," "repair," "1945," and "freedom." A chain of associations likewise emerges: Kristallnacht, the infamous "Night of Broken Glass," or the pogrom against the Jews in Nazi Germany and its territories; 1945, the year World War II officially ended; and liberation (then and now, with the fall of the Berlin wall). All told, "off the walls" becomes a rallying cry against fascism and communism, a call to break down barriers while attempting to repair the damage done by willful intolerance.[26]

Another vertical composition of moments captured at home and abroad, *Drums (Night Shade)* pairs a 1987 photo of a rooftop clothesline taken in Cuba with an image of three bound oil barrels in a train yard in Miami. Beyond the clear visual reference to the cylindrical drums in the painting's lower register, the phrase "to beat the drum" refers to a call to action, signal of support, or promotion of an idea. Again politically prescient, Rauschenberg completed *Drums* at the start of Cuba's "Special Period in Peacetime": an economic depression that began in 1991, triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the demise of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), the Soviet-bloc trade organization. The largest and most immediate impact was the loss of nearly all petroleum imports from the USSR: To this point, operation of Cuba's transport, industrial, and agricultural systems had been entirely dependent on fossil fuels.[27] While the ensuing years of famine and social and political upheaval have since been hailed for the born-from-necessity transformations in sustainable agriculture, overhauled industry, and health habits they initiated, the immediate effects were devastating.[28] Here, Rauschenberg "beats the [oil] drums" in a thinly veiled political statement: calling attention to a globally resonant crisis, crying for justice and aid for present-day victims of political turmoil.

Rauschenberg's studio assistant at the time, Lawrence Voytek, attested that, in addition to image making, Rauschenberg "was also into what wasn't retinal, what wasn't seen, where it would make the jump into something more important than just an object."[29] In this regard, titles played a critical role, embodying ideas that related to the artworks but also extended beyond them. Titles provided another way of engaging viewers—of pulling them into the work—or even making connections that the artist may not have intended. In the words of his long-time collaborator and friend, Donald Saff:

> [Rauschenberg] was unpredictable in the way in which the art went technically … and in the selection of the subject matter. The only thing that was predictable was that everything was open-ended. That he liked questions, he didn't like answers. That he had a dialogue, he didn't offer a monologue. And that even titles were just a continuation of the art, as it began to extend out to the people and the people had to participate.[30]

His titles, "the last color or brushstroke he used," were finishing touches of consolidation—even if many of them occurred to him only during or after the process of making a work.[31] They were not meant as a roadmap for a lazy or indifferent viewer, nor as a strict directive from the artist; rather, Rauschenberg declared, "I don't explain my art. The work and its intentions are as different as people, times, and lives. Invite yourself."[32] In creating art that made a difference to the "now," Rauschenberg chose titles that could stand the test of time; relevant to him in the moment of creation but still able to enliven the work and spark the imagination of a viewer decades later. His delight in assigning them is unmistakable, especially as it demonstrates the inner workings of his mind, his natural eloquence—to wit, his literacy.

ENDNOTES

1 The Reminiscences of Donald Saff, August 15–16, 2013. Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 172.

2 The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, located at 381 Lafayette Street, is housed in Rauschenberg's erstwhile New York City home and continues to hold the public archives of the artist's personal library and writings on art, life, and the subjects in between.

3 David B. Guralnik, ed., "Nightshade," in *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 2nd College ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974). This dictionary belonging to the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Library, special collections, is one of a number of volumes original to the artist's personal library. While Rauschenberg's personal use of the dictionary is unconfirmed (there are no annotations), it is evident that someone in the artist's studio consulted it on more than one occasion: the cover is worn, and several pages are flagged and paint splattered.

4 The author in conversation with Senior Curator David White, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, November 2018, and The Reminiscences of Donald Saff, 2013, p. 175.

5 The *Night Shade* and *Phantom* works utilize photographs from multiple countries visited during the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) Project. *Hollyhock Party (Night Shade)* shows a photograph of a Venezuelan hollyhock plant, a vine with blooms very similar to those of the bushier nightshade plants (plate 2).

6 As evidenced by the title of his sculpture *Three Traps for Medea* (1959) and allusions to Zeus's abduction of Ganymede in *Canyon* (1959) and *Pail for Ganymede* (1959), etc.

7 Guralnik, ed., "Phantom," *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*.

8 Allen Ginsberg, *White Shroud: Poems 1980–1985* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

9 Housed in the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Library, Special Collections, New York.

10 Ginsberg's drawing appears to be an abstracted version of the Endless Knot combined with an eight-petaled Lotus, two of the Eight Auspicious Symbols of Buddhism. Originally comprised of two intertwined snakes, the infinite knot traditionally symbolizes the interconnectedness of all things, and the lotus the potential of all beings to attain mental purity. Meher McArthur, *Reading Buddhist Art: An Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs and Symbols* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2002).

11 Robert Rauschenebrg's copy of Allen Ginsberg, *Collected Poems: 1947-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Library, Special Collections, New York.

12 Traditional Japanese hanko name seals are synonymous with Western signatures. Positive square seals (characters defined by red ink) are traditionally used to represent an organization or studio, while negative square seals (white letters on a red ground) are for artist names: personal names, Buddhist names, or Japanese character translation of Western names. I have found two copies of Ginsberg's *Collected Poems: 1947–1980* where the poet signed with both his signature and these hanko stamps; in Rauschenberg's copy, Ginsberg drew a line connecting one of the seals with his printed name. Halloran, Richard. "In Japan, It's a Person's Seal, Not the Signature, That Gives Authenticity." *New York Times*, November 2, 1975, p. 10.

13 Bill Morgan, *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 569.

14 Rauschenberg did read and comment on one of Ginsberg's most critically acclaimed poems, "Howl," from 1955. While Rauschenberg's reaction to this particular poem is couched in sarcasm, it proves knowledge and engagement with Ginsberg's work. Rauschenberg: "I used to think of that line in Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl,' about 'the sad cup of coffee.' I've had cold coffee and hot coffee, good coffee and lousy coffee, but I've never had a sad cup of coffee." Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art world of Our Time* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 89.

15 Rauschenberg believed his maternal grandmother was Cherokee and he often credited his engagement with this part of his heritage and his love for animals as her influence. Numerous critics remark on the symbolic form of ceremonial and ritualistic aspects present in his art as residuum from his religious upbringing. Ginsberg converted to Buddhism in 1972, a path taken by other Beat generation artists and poets of the decade. His adoption of Zen meditation and efforts to establish a relationship between Buddhism and poetry are explored in *White Shroud*, and he continued to practice the religion until his death in 1997. Elizabeth Richards, "Rauschenberg's Religion: Autobiography and Spiritual Reference in Rauschenberg's Use of Textiles," *SECAC Review* 16, no. 1 (2011): p. 43.; Sean Negus, "The Intersection of Buddhism and the Beat Generation," *Empty Mirror*, last updated October 20, 2017.

16 Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Ginsberg took multiple trips overseas (Cuba, Nicaragua, China, Italy, the Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia), Korea, etc.) for poetry readings or as part of U.S. delegations to universities and poetry festivals. Ginsberg took advantage of these subsidized trips to take in local culture and arts, but also to gauge and critique U.S. military and social involvement. His trips often culminated in continued correspondence with foreign artists as well as letters to U.S. politicians (including a few to select presidents). A few examples are a 1986 statement to the PEN Center demanding that America "put a stop to funding the rebel forces and end U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua's internal affairs," and a 1979 letter to President Jimmy Carter presenting a case for expanding the National Endowment for the Arts' Literature endowment. Bill Morgan, *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 591–92; Bill Morgan, *The Letters of Allen Ginsberg* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008), pp. 401–02.

17 Speaking to Rauschenberg's desire to engage personally with other artists through an understanding of their specific life experiences, Donald Saff remarks, "He [Rauschenberg] was fascinated by the likes of [Peter Paul] Rubens and Rubens's activity in his studio, the group of people he had working around him, and his involvement in politics across Europe. I think Bob always saw himself as an extension of that on a more global basis than Rubens." The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, April 29–May 1, 2016. Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 20.

18 Helen Vendler, "Books: A Lifelong Poem Including History," *The New Yorker*, January 13, 1986, p. 81.

19 Anne R. Bromberg, "The Growth of the Education Department, 1975–1987," *Dallas Museum of Art Bulletin* (Summer 1987): p. 24; *Robert Rauschenberg, Work from Four Series: A Sesquicentennial Exhibition*, traveled to Dallas Museum of Art, Dec. 21, 1986–Feb. 8, 1987.

20 Robert Rauschenberg, Statement for the Los Angeles Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, 2000, Robert Rauschenberg papers, RRFA 01, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

21 The Fort Myers, Florida, photo of a sign painter paused adding the final letter to a "Water" billboard is also used in *Afloat (Night Shade)* and *Photem Series I (28)*, 1981. A photo of the sign painter in a different position was part of the set design in *Glacial Decoy (Carousel 2)*, 1979, a collaborative performance piece with choreographer Trisha Brown. The right-hand image of two New Jersey storefront signs ("Bob's" and a second sign beginning with "Hand") is used in *Catch (Urban Bourbon I)*, 1993, and *Shuttle Buttle / ROCI USA (Wax Fire Works)*, 1990.

22 The Rauschenberg family belonged to a fundamentalist sect of the Church of Christ; Rauschenberg's aspirations to become a preacher were cut short at age thirteen when he discovered the Church forbade dancing. He continued to attend services into his twenties, but later described his decision to leave the church as "a major change in [his] life." John Richardson, "Rauschenberg's Epic Vision," *Vanity Fair*, April 30, 2008.

23 Guralnik, ed., "Bounder," *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*.

24 Rauschenberg spent many of his formative years in rural Texas, and continued to keep various animals as pets in each subsequent move around the country, from the Midwest to the East coast. His affinity towards creatures great and small is apparent in their concentrated and diverse presence in his art making, both in his photography and collages. After photographing Rudy in Venezuela in 1985, Rauschenberg clearly kept the animal present in his mind by including his portrait in at least two other screenprinted pieces: *Rudy's House / ROCI VENEZUELA*, 1985, and *Rudy's Time (Night Shade)*, 1991.

25 Rauschenberg was drafted in 1944 and served at the Navy Hospital Corps at Camp Pendleton, San Diego, for a year. His experiences caring for traumatized sailors strengthened the anti-war convictions which, decades later, informed works like *Off the Walls*. Joan Young, Susan Davidson, Amanda Sroka, "Chronology," Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, accessed March 7, 2019, https://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/artist/chronology-new.

26 Perhaps somewhat ironically, Rauschenberg himself would have severely opposed such a strong reading of *Off the Walls*. The images in the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* seem to be intentionally timeless. Discovering the place and year of the source photographs affords invaluable insight into Rauschenberg's creative impetus and selective process.

27 Carmen D. Deere, "Cuba's struggle for self-sufficiency: Aftermath of the collapse of Cuba's special economic relations with Eastern Europe," *Monthly Review* (July–August, 1991), n.p.

28 Thousands died of malnourishment or attempted to emigrate before Cuba accepted U.S. donations of food, medicines, and cash in 1993; exact statistics of are still unknown. Anonymous, "Health Consequences of Cuba's Special Period," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 179, no. 3 (2008): p. 257. An editor's note accompanied this article, which read: "The author's name has been withheld in order to safeguard her or his right to free communication."

29 The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, 2016, p. 122.

30 The Reminiscences of Donald Saff, 2013, p. 142.

31 The author in conversation with Senior Curator David White, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, November 2018.

32 Robert Rauschenberg, "I don't explain my art ..." statement, 1998, Robert Rauschenberg papers, RRFA 01, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York.

PLATES

Night Shades, 1991

PLATE 1

Party-Bird (Night Shade)

PLATE 2

Hollyhock Party (Night Shade)

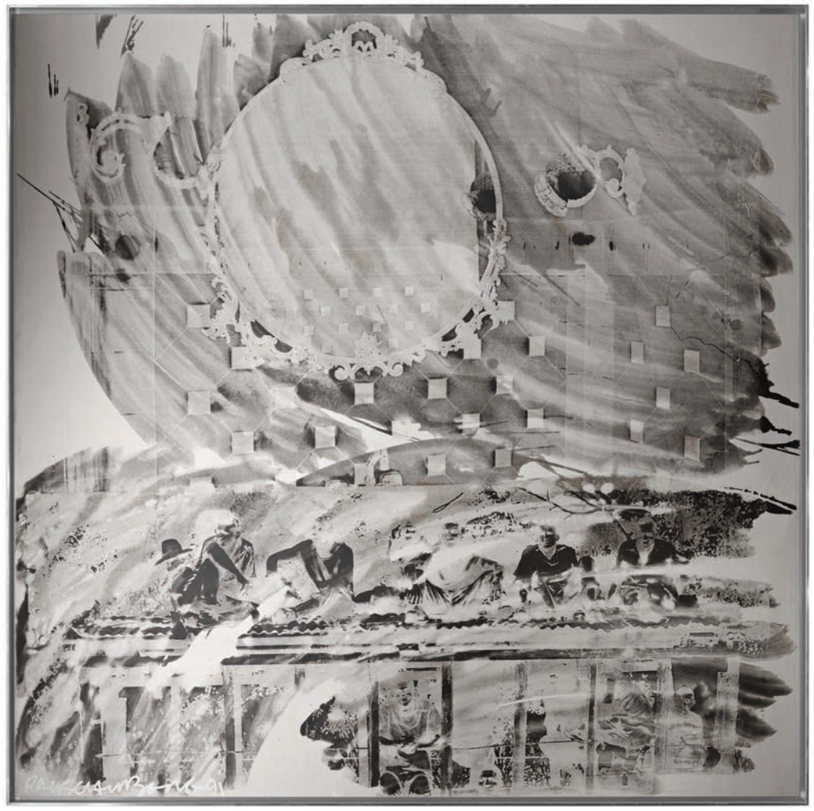


PLATE 3

Vanities (Night Shade)

PLATE 4

Palm Sunday (Night Shade)

PLATE 5

Radiator Stop (Night Shade)

PLATE 6

Hydro (Night Shade)

PLATE 7

Path (Night Shade)

PLATE 8

Motor Range (Night Shade)

PLATE 9

Off the Walls (Night Shade)

PLATE 10

Neapolitan Excavation (Night Shade)

PLATE 11

Avenue (Night Shade)

PLATE 12

Manhole House (Night Shade)

PLATE 13

Driveway Detour (Night Shade)

PLATE 14

Monday (Night Shade)

PLATE 15

Drums (Night Shade)

PLATES

Phantoms, 1991

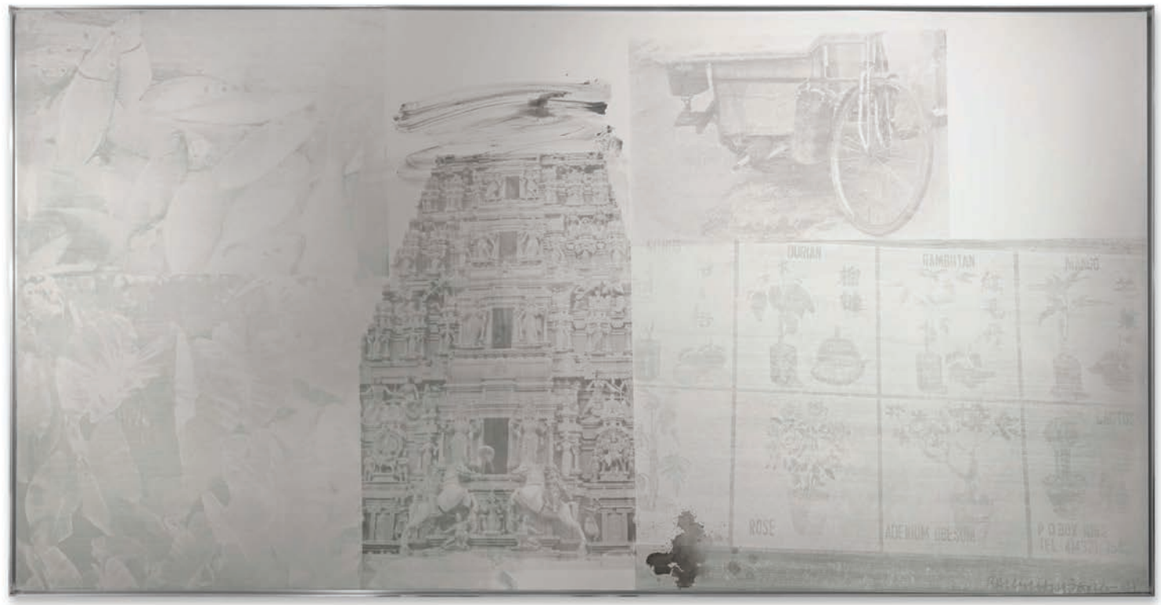


PLATE 16

Hindu Hoopla (Phantom)

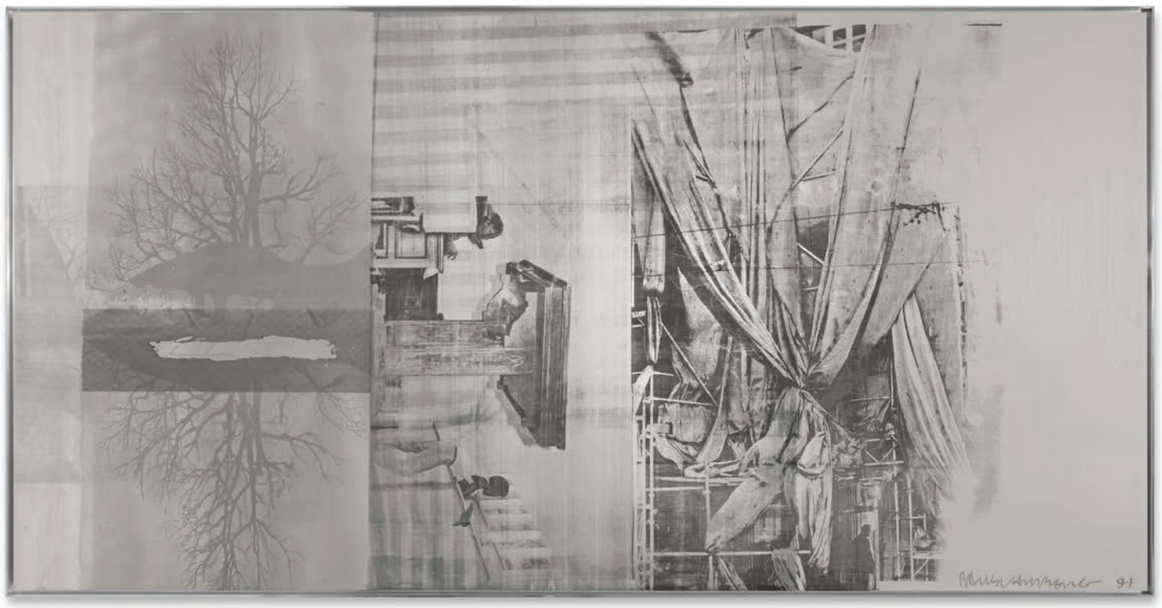


PLATE 17

Botanical Vaudeville (Phantom)

PLATE 18

Time Scan (Phantom)

PLATE 19

Alley Wise (Phantom)

PLATE 20

House Call (Phantom)

PLATE 21

Holy Molley (Phantom)

PLATE 22

Bounders (Phantom)

PLATE 23

Litercy (Phantom)

PLATE 24

Marsh Haven (Phantom)

PLATE 25

Office Break (Phantom)

PLATES

Photographs, 1979–87

PLATE 26

Fort Myers, Florida, 1979

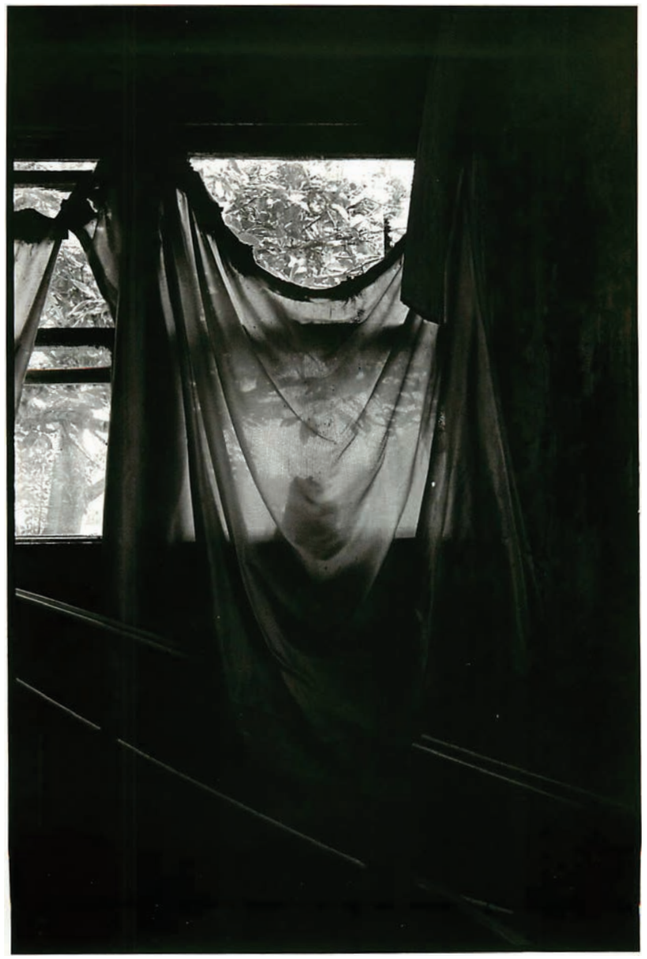


PLATE 27

Fort Myers, Florida, 1979

PLATE 28

Charleston, South Carolina, 1980

PLATE 29

Charleston, South Carolina, 1980

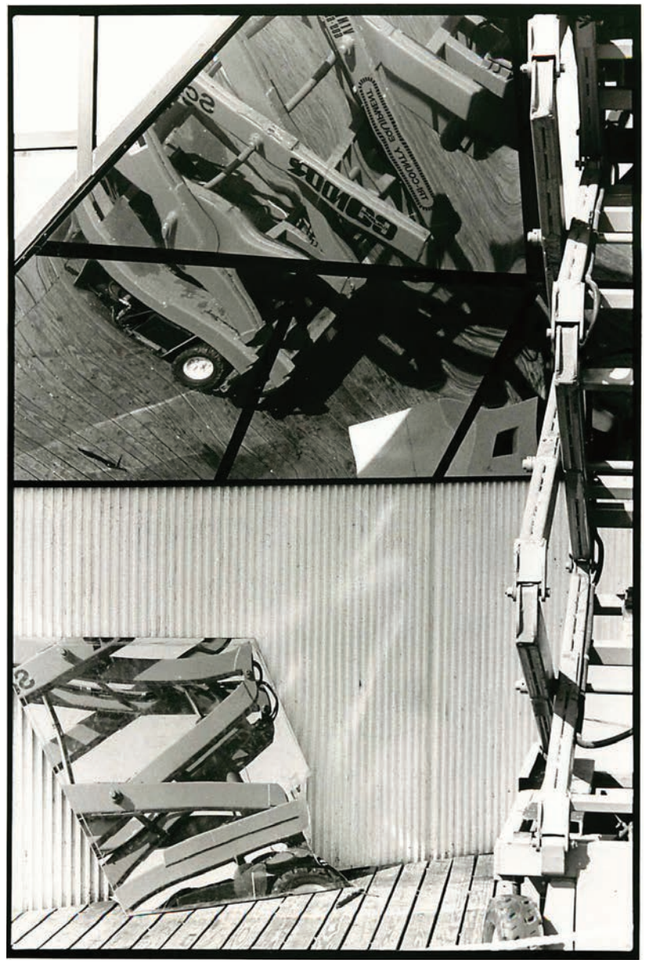


PLATE 30

Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1980

PLATE 31

Boston, Massachusetts, 1980

PLATE 32

New York City, 1980

PLATE 33

New Jersey, 1980

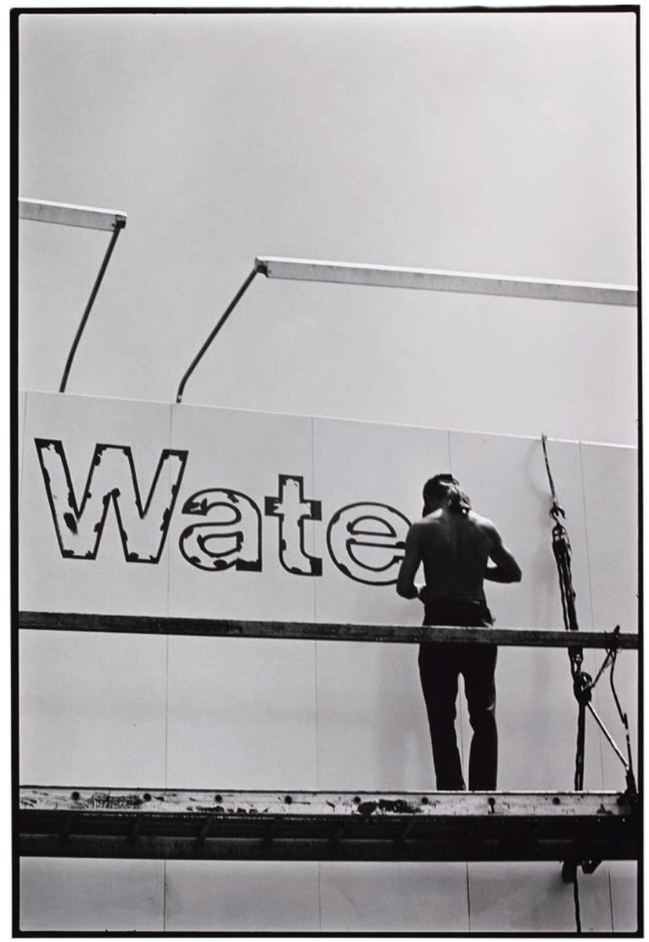


PLATE 34

Fort Myers, Florida, 1980

PLATE 35

Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1980

PLATE 36

New York City, 1981

PLATE 37

New York City, 1981

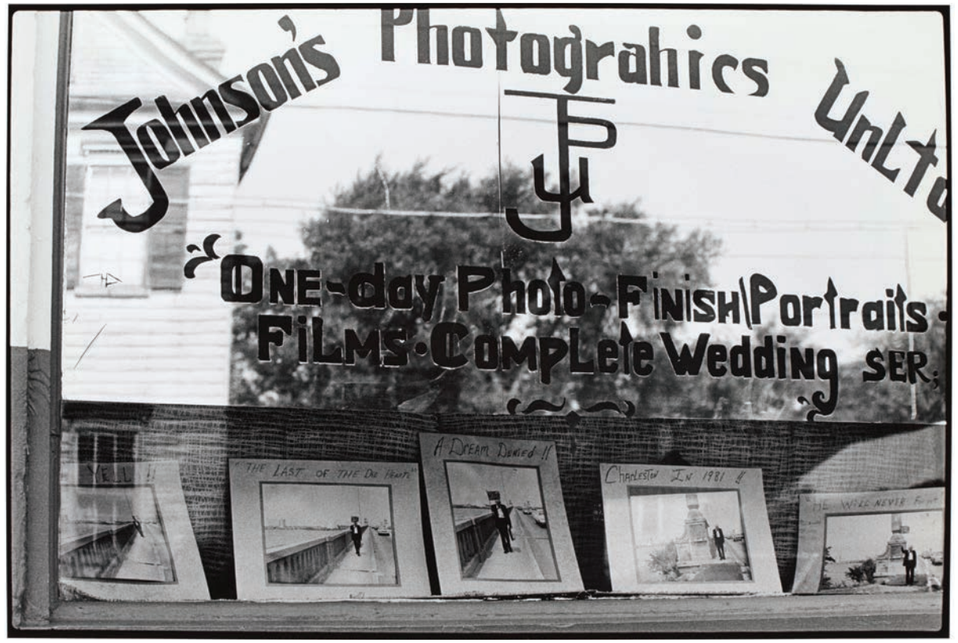


PLATE 38

Charleston, South Carolina, 1981

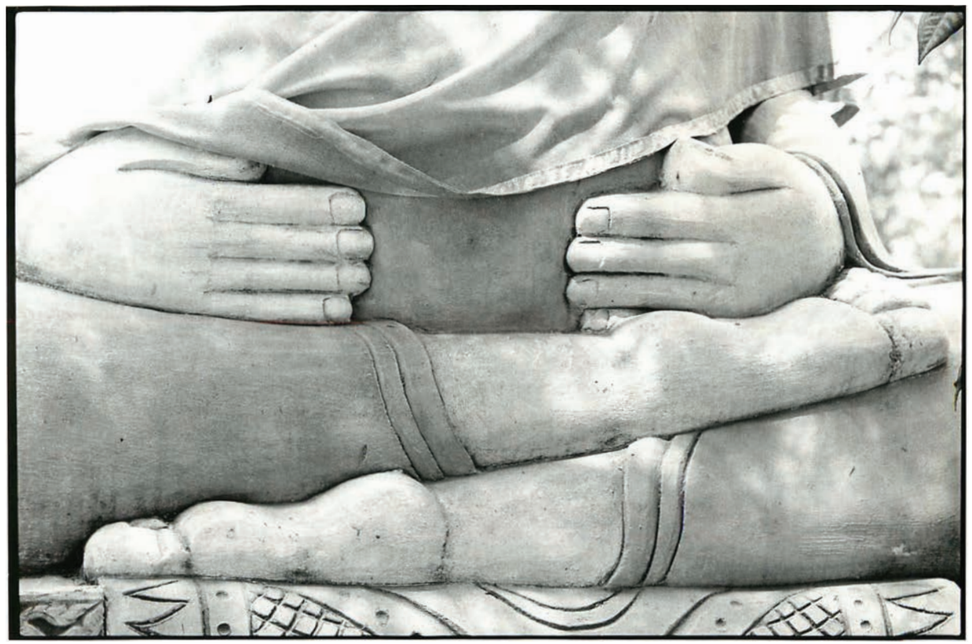


PLATE 39

Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1983

PLATE 40

Venezuela, 1985

PLATE 41

Venezuela, 1985

PLATE 42

Cuba, 1987

Night Shades and Phantoms: An Exhibition of Works by Robert Rauschenberg was held at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York, March 18–July 19, 2019.

Night Shades

The title *Night Shade* brings to mind the potentially deadly plant, but in this series of forty-five metal paintings, Rauschenberg connects the words to shadows, both in the pictorial and nether realms. Countering the innate flatness of the silkscreened imagery, he modeled the surfaces with deep blacks, swaths of silvery grays, and highlights from partly reflective areas that remain exposed on the brushed and mirrored aluminum substrates. Painting with the appropriately named "Aluma Black" tarnishing agent, he shrouded the pictures in a cover of darkness. Each gestural swipe of the medium across the surface, whether applied at full strength or diluted with water, draws a curtain between the image and the viewer.

Over the course of his career, Rauschenberg regularly blurred the boundaries of artistic categories, and his *Night Shades* extended this practice in subtle ways. He made them with silkscreens, yet the corrosive Aluma Black burns into the plate with painterly tonal effect, akin to the intaglio printmaking process of aquatint. Using photographs as source material, they also evoke the origins of the medium itself—images are "developed" and "fixed" through a chemical process. The tarnished grounds recall the early photographs produced on light-sensitive metal plates, such as daguerreotypes and tintypes.

As much as the *Night Shades* aim to frustrate the viewer's gaze, they also generate a melancholic mood, even when the artist added a note of levity with verbal punning in his titles. Their elegiac tone and palette may well owe to the moment of their making, 1991, during the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The series was conceived as Rauschenberg entered the final quarter of his life. Derived exclusively from his own photographs, and, hence, reflecting his view of the world, these works are undeniably retrospective. Analogous to distant memories, the foggy, blurred, and partially erased imagery of the *Night Shades* may well allude to the challenges of recall and coming to terms with the passage of time.

Plate 1
Party-Bird (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 48 × 36 inches (122 × 91.5 cm)

The delicate tracery of tree branches and leaves in *Party-Bird*—one of the more picturesque *Night Shades*, along with *Hollyhock Party (Night Shade)*—draws yet another kind of screen across our vision. At the lower left is a peacock perched in a tree, though it seems poised to traverse the curved path in the landscape that lies before it—a negative space seemingly formed by erasure. Close inspection of the source photograph (plate 40), however, reveals that part of the image remained "undeveloped." It shows how Rauschenberg selectively applied an area of clear resist that was left untouched by the subsequent application of the darkening tarnish. Barely visible, it anticipates the ghostly traces of the *Phantoms*.

Plate 2
Hollyhock Party (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on mirrored aluminum, 36 × 48 ⅛ inches (91.5 × 122.1 cm)

The image on the left side of *Hollyhock Party* comes from a photograph of an elaborate fountain in Caracas, taken during a trip in 1985 in preparation for *ROCI VENEZUELA*, and features two statues separated by a tall stem of the

eponymous flower. A delicate web of textured foliage covers the right side of the piece, with effects similar to those found in *Party-Bird (Night Shade)*. The gentle brown tints used in a few of the *Night Shades*, like this one, are the result of a perhaps unforeseen chemical reaction. Such visual changes would have undoubtedly delighted Rauschenberg, given his embrace of unpredictable processes.

Plate 3
Vanities (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 48 × 48 inches (122 × 121.9 cm)

The main motif of *Vanities* is derived from a photograph of a baroque mirror on a tiled wall, frustrates expectations. Instead of allowing the actual reflective surface of the aluminum panel to return our own image or mirror the space in which we stand, the artist rigorously obscured the looking glass with sweeping, dark-gray strokes. Rauschenberg's mirror hovers suggestively over a second image that silhouettes rows of men atop and inside of a makeshift structure. In the same decade that Rauschenberg made the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*, photographers like Zoe Leonard, Nan Goldin, and Lyle Ashton Harris featured empty or off-kilter mirrors as metaphors for the feelings of difference inherent to their queer identity. Thwarted reflection became an emblem for otherness or, in the case of then-current Postmodernist theory, decentered subjectivity. Regardless of his own sexual identity or sexual politics, Rauschenberg denies any viewer of this picture a clear image of the self.

Plate 4
Palm Sunday (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 36 × 47 ¾ inches (91.5 × 121.4 cm)

The pairing of tropical fronds and a church exterior produced the droll title, *Palm Sunday*. This *Night Shade* is one of the few instances where Rauschenberg silkscreened only one image, which he then cropped, positioned, and selectively tarnished to adumbrate certain qualities of his chosen subject. Here, the off-center composition reveals a brooding upper register that turns the ostensibly heavenly domain into a sinister stretch of sky. Raised in a religious household in Port Arthur, Texas, the artist had early ambitions of becoming a preacher, but grew disillusioned with the fundamentalist Church of Christ, in part because it forbade dancing. Indeed, the pronouncement "Jesus Saves" on the church's facade seems a fickle promise, swept up in a tornado of inky gestural swipes.

Plate 5
Radiator Stop (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on mirrored aluminum, 36 ⅞ × 47 inches (93.7 × 119.5 cm)

The clearest part of this murky image turns out to be the most deceptive. A truck with a flatbed trailer is parked in front of what appears to be a tree-dotted landscape, stretching into the distance, but the background is, in fact, a painted mural. Upon closer scrutiny, one notes the naive depiction of the foliage and the rows of clouds in the sky. In this picture within a picture, Rauschenberg momentarily fools us (or may successfully trick the less attentive observer), showing his hand at classic trompe l'oeil.

Plate 6
Hydro (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on mirrored aluminum, 48 × 83 ⅞ inches (122 × 213.2 cm)

This aqueous painting displays thematic unity across image, title, and facture. The punning title alludes not only to the fire hydrant, but also to the liquidity of Rauschenberg's gestural marks, which hydroplane across the surface—the result of the wet-on-wet process employed throughout the *Night Shades*. Rauschenberg reduced the blackening effects of the corrosive tarnish by using water-soaked rags to wipe away the Aluma Black while it was still wet. As in much of his work, the artist's hand defers to the nature of the materials: even as he directed the tarnish and water to specific areas, they bubbled, pooled together, dripped, and splashed with painterly autonomy. Water is nature's mirror, and *Hydro*'s reflective surface turns Rauschenberg's fluid strokes into distorting ripples and the viewer into an unwitting Narcissus.

Plate 7
Path (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 48 × 36 inches (122 × 91.4 cm)

Plate 8
Motor Range (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 48 × 36 ⅛ inches (122 × 91.6 cm)

Path and *Motor Range* display a number of motifs ubiquitous in Rauschenberg's oeuvre—such as wheels, windows, animals, and chickens—underscoring the self-referential content of these metal paintings. In Combines such as *Monogram* (1955–59), or his first choreographed dance, *Pelican* (1963), Rauschenberg used wheels to evoke or provide mobility, while also alluding to life cycles and temporality. Both these *Night Shades* include modes of transportation suggestively placed at the bottom of their respective compositions, as if to picture metonymically the terrain to be traveled by the viewer's eye: a bicycle in *Path* and the truck wheels in *Motor Range*. The spectral images of the latter could easily be mistaken for metal sink stoppers, in another example of Rauschenberg's penchant for uncanny doubling. In *Path*, the squarely planted feet—a pictograph from an acupuncturist's chart—recall the artist's own traced feet in the drawing *Lawn Combed* (1954), and his illustration for *Canto XIV* (1959–60), from the series *Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's* Inferno.

Plate 9
Off the Walls (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 48 × 48 inches (122 × 121.8 cm)

While Rauschenberg's artwork rarely makes overt political statements, *Off the Walls* attests to his engagement in international politics. The sweeping black strokes dramatically altered his photographs of the palimpsest of anonymous graffiti on the Berlin Wall, taken in November 1989, the same month that it came down. "FREEDOM," scrawled in white letters across the base of the composition, heralds the liberation of East Germany. He completed this painting in 1991, shortly after the country's reunification. Not by chance, Rauschenberg topped the images of the wall with one of a billboard in New Orleans. The advertisement for "GLASS" evokes the broken shards of Kristallnacht, while "1945" (part of the company's telephone number) corresponds to the year World War II ended. All told, *Off the Walls* is a rallying cry against fascism and communism, a call to break down barriers erected by willful intolerance.

Plate 10
Neapolitan Excavation (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on mirrored aluminum, 84 × 48 inches (213.4 × 122 cm)

Neapolitan Excavation is both highly reflective and cast deep in shadow. Emphasizing the vertical format of this *Night Shade*, Rauschenberg stacked and overlapped images one on top of the other, a common compositional approach for him, but in this case, one that dovetailed with the "excavation" theme cued by the title. The dominant motif of the shovel appears to be caught in motion, an effect of the swishing strokes. It digs down to the image embedded below, a photograph of Naples's largest city square, the Piazza del Plebiscito, with its two bronze equestrian statues encircled by parked cars. A screenprint of stones forms the bedrock of the composition, completing Rauschenberg's archeological allusions.

Plate 11
Avenue (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on mirrored aluminum, 83 ¼ × 47 ⅞ inches (211.5 × 121.5 cm)

Plate 12
Manhole House (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 83 ⅞ × 48 inches (213 × 122 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Purchase, with funds from Leonard and Judy Lauder 2019.414

These large, commanding vertical panels are two of the most macabre and unsettling compositions within the series, their contents all but covered in a blanket of night, and they are worthy of the darker connotations of the series title. Little light enters into the pictorial space, where Rauschenberg obscured the reflective metal surface with swaths of inky chiaroscuro that range from somber grays to opaque black. Rauschenberg frequently shared source imagery across his different series. In *Manhole House*, the ominous-looking milk can that appears twice suspended on the right was used in a sculpture titled *Classic Cattleman Counter Column (Kabal American Zephyr)* of 1983. An iteration of the distressing image of an abandoned child's stroller at the top of *Avenue* can also be found in *Time Scan (Phantom)* (plate 18). In all these works, however, Rauschenberg transformed everyday things into disembodied, barely recognizable shapes.

Plate 13
Driveway Detour (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 48 ⅛ × 60 inches (122.2 cm × 152.3 cm)

Rauschenberg screenprinted only two, not three, photographs for *Driveway Detour*, though the patches of dark tarnish and shiny areas of the metal ground left in reserve suggest an absent third one. The image at left, with the sign "NO OUTLET" placed upside down, was taken in Miami in 1987. He snapped the other photograph of a house and driveway (with directions "IN" and "OUT") during a 1991 visit to his home state of Texas (fig. 4, p. 16). Always on the lookout for coincidence, Rauschenberg noted a signpost indicating "Lafayette St.," the same street address as his New York City home and studio. Lafayette is also the name of the Louisiana town that Rauschenberg's family moved to in 1945. The title thus refers to the roundabout visual excursions in Rauschenberg's metal paintings and to the life-changing detours that led him from Texas to New York, and eventually to Florida, adding additional layers of depth to this particular *Night Shade*.

Plate 14
Monday (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on mirrored aluminum, 48 × 60 inches (121.9 × 152.3 cm)

Monday is composed of two images: a single towel hanging from a clothesline on the left and an unidentified cruciform object on the right. In the original photograph of the clothesline (plate 26), a white towel is set against the night sky. At least four different steps were involved in the making of *Monday* (whose title refers to laundry day). First Rauschenberg screenprinted both images with clear resist and then he applied the Aluma Black with sweeping strokes over much of the panel. Lastly, he made two, different-sized impressions of the towels using two layers of silkscreen ink: the first, larger image in white, over which he printed the second, smaller one in black, where the clothesline appears prominently. The end result appears to be a solarized image of a black towel that "casts" a white shadow. The before- and-after comparison allows one to see—if not fully understand—the complex techniques used by the artist to bring his matter-of-fact photographs into the evocative realm of the painterly.

Plate 15
Drums (Night Shade), 1991
Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 48 × 35 ⅞ inches (121.9 × 91.2 cm)

Rauschenberg composed *Drums* with two separate photographic images of roughly equal dimensions, but applied passages of dramatic chiaroscuro so that they appear as one. The upper photograph of a rooftop in Cuba captures the silhouetted figure of a boy standing next to a clothesline (plate 42). The one below, featuring a stack of oil drums, was taken in Miami. Together they might bring to mind the image of Huckleberry Finn posed defiantly on his raft, with the post of the laundry-line simulating a mast.

Phantoms

The ghost-like appearance of the *Phantoms* emerged by chance. This creative method was not unusual for Rauschenberg, an artist who "collaborated" with his materials and often pushed the limits of their intended use. In a typically fortuitous moment, he intended to apply the tarnishing process he was then using in his *Night Shades* to anodized mirrored aluminum, unaware that the oxidizing agent, Aluma Black, would not chemically react with the pre-treated metal. The result was a spectral image that barely registered, immediately appealing to Rauschenberg's interest in veiling and obfuscation. Among all the metal painting series, the imagery in the *Phantoms* is the most difficult to discern.

Reductive in composition, the *Phantoms*, which number eighteen in total, contain few of the painterly splatters and sweeping gestures used aggressively in the other metal paintings, including the *Night Shades*. The apparitional quality of the *Phantoms* is intensified when they are exhibited in natural light. Each panel changes in appearance depending on the degree of ambient illumination, the reflections of external objects, and the angle of view. The ways in which the *Phantoms* register their environment recall Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951): both series function as "clocks of the room." John Cage famously referred to those pristine monochromes as "airports for lights, shadows, and particles," underscoring the role of transience and contingency, or "changing what is seen by means of what is happening." In the *Phantoms* Rauschenberg makes the viewer aware of the physical act of looking over time and through space: discerning the overlay of screens; making sense of intrusive reflections, including one's own; moving to and fro to discover hidden tints of pale color; and grasping at forms that momentarily linger, coalesce, or dissipate. Activated by light, Rauschenberg's *Phantoms* turn dormant by the end of the day, as night-fall slowly blankets them in shadow.

Plate 16
Hindu Hoopla (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 ½ × 96 inches (123.2 × 243.8 cm)
Private collection

The five separate images in *Hindu Hoopla*—an unusually high number for the *Phantoms*—all come from Rauschenberg's trip to Malaysia in 1989, one of ten countries he visited during his ROCI tour (1984–91). This panoply documents some of what captured his interest during his travels at home and abroad, notably architectural facades, different types of signage, flora and fauna, and wheels. Above the central image of an intricately carved temple, Rauschenberg added a seemingly gratuitous painterly flourish, which deliberately draws attention to the high reflectivity of the surface. The artist placed such discrete strokes or splatters exactingly in his *Phantoms*, respecting the integrity of the already tenuous image and contributing to the overall compositional balance, in contrast to the expansive and obscuring gestural fields of the *Night Shades*.

Plate 17
Botanical Vaudeville (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 ½ × 96 inches (123.1 × 243.7 cm)

Though visible only to a mobile and discerning eye, several works in the *Phantom* series contain delicate traces of one or more pastel hues, as with *Botanical Vaudeville*. This tripartite composition features a green-tinged image of a tree (rotated at far left) and a pattern of faint blue stripes at center. Depending on the lighting, the far-right section, depicting a construction site, can take on a mauve-gray tint. In 1948–49, while at Black Mountain College, Rauschenberg studied with the Bauhaus artist and educator Josef Albers. In his seminal volume, the *Interaction of Color* (1963), Albers writes, "In visual perception a color is almost never seen as it really is—as it physically is. This fact makes color the most relative medium in art." Undoubtedly, Rauschenberg would have been innately aware of the fugitive effects of color in the *Phantoms*, given his subtle additions to the already muted silkscreen palette, and the vivid hues reflected into the pictorial space from the surroundings. Note the painterly dollop of silkscreen ink, the same tint as the tree, that rests on the surface at lower center.

Plate 18
Time Scan (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 ½ × 60 ⅛ inches (123.3 × 152.7 cm)
Private collection

Nostalgia permeates this metal painting, whose title and content refer to the passage of time ("scan" meaning a form of looking, but also making a rhyming pun on "span"). Rauschenberg paired images of a discarded baby carriage in New York and the clock at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. The latter photograph was taken inside the museum through the window, so that the hands appear to run backward. Between them he screenprinted a snapshot of a child, visible from the waist down, leaning onto a wooden scooter stenciled with a "thumbs-up" symbol. The combination of images is undeniably wistful—perhaps a commentary by the then sixty-six-year-old Rauschenberg on innocence lost and a desire to turn back the clock. Such sentiments may seem odd from an artist who disparaged psychological interpretations and claimed never to have seen "a sad cup of coffee." Autobiographical elements, however, often leave their phantom traces in Rauschenberg's works.

Plate 19
Alley Wise (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 × 47 inches (122 × 119.4 cm)

Plate 20
House Call (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 × 48 ½ inches (122 × 123.1 cm)

Although Rauschenberg frequently repeated the same source image within a single work and across his silkscreened metal painting series, he nearly always transformed the allusions and appearance through collage juxtapositions and different color applications. In *House Call* and *Alley Wise*, he faintly imprinted identical silkscreens of a photograph of a pair of windows from adjacent New York buildings, disguised by subtle variations in tint and positive/negative reversals (plate 36). These compositions epitomize Rauschenberg's interest in split screens, framing devices, and finding difference in repetition. The two windows—one open, the other shuttered with a makeshift cardboard curtain—represent a tension common to the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*: a push-and-pull between visual access and denial of the viewer's gaze.

Plate 21
Holy Molley (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 ⅛ × 59 inches (123.4 × 149.8 cm)

Holy Molley is a study in contrasts. Rauschenberg juxtaposed images of a hen and a roast chicken with a close-up detail of two carved statues, so that the two- and three-dimensional forms respectively resist and create perspectival depth. The divided spatial composition underscores a contrast that Rauschenberg staged between the prosaic and poetic. The stone drapery's ethereal light and shadow modulations, caught by his camera, heighten the evocative gesture of the sculpted hands, which recall Christ's open palms bearing the stigmata after his resurrection. The flat outline drawing of the chickens is lighter in mood. Barnyard fowl appear as a leitmotif throughout Rauschenberg's career, beginning with the Combines (1954–64), though here the animal amusingly exists as both a cartoon and a rotisserie dinner.

Plate 22
Bounders (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 ½ × 59 ⅞ inches (123.1 cm × 152.2 cm)

Bounders brings together two of Rauschenberg signature leitmotifs: curtains and building facades. The bountiful fabric in the upper register drapes over a house, where laundry has been hung to dry from a second-story balcony (plate 28), in a sequence of overlays that block our view into space. Rauschenberg adds to the visual screening with a latticework of clapboard siding, lines, railing, stairs, and window frames. The traffic sign "DO NOT ENTER" acknowledges the artist's intent. He only provides access at the margins, through the strips of mirrored surface left bare on either side of the composition. Yet, viewer beware of the reflections that gain ground within the pictorial space, for these can only be a mirage.

Plate 23
Litercy (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 49 ½ × 85 inches (125.7 × 215.9 cm)

Litercy epitomizes Rauschenberg's play with word and image in a composition dominated by signage. "Literacy" refers not only to the ability to read or write but also to a person's proficiency in a specific field. Rauschenberg represents his own creativity or "hand" in written and pictographic forms. His deliberate misspelling of "literacy" draws attention to the homonymic intrusion of the visual: liter[see]. "Bob's Hand" points beyond the frame (plate 33), claiming authorship of this work. Donald Saff, the experimental printmaker and artistic director of ROCI, once remarked that Rauschenberg's titles were "just a continuation of the art," that "extended out to the people" and compelled them to "participate."

Plate 24
Marsh Haven (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 60 × 48 ½ inches (152.5 × 123.2 cm)

Inhabiting the gray zone between the two series, *Marsh Haven* is technically a *Phantom*, but is closer in tonality to *Night Shades* such as *Driveway Detour* (plate 13). The contained area of spontaneous brushwork at lower left and the lack of deep, enveloping shadows reaffirm its phantom presence. Nonetheless, the in-between status of *Marsh Haven* confirms that in Rauschenberg's art and creative approach nothing was ever black or white or strictly defined. Only the rule of the unpredictable is certain.

Plate 25
Office Break (Phantom), 1991
Silkscreen ink on anodized mirrored aluminum, 48 ½ × 24 inches (123.2 × 61.1 cm)

One of the smallest works in either series, *Office Break* delivers a large laugh with its corny title, indicative of Rauschenberg's penchant for verbal/visual puns. A building facade houses an overlaid screenprint of an office chair, and both hover over a charging water buffalo. The conflation of images captures the feeling of being let loose from the confines of work, routine, and constricted spaces into the freedom of the open streets. The placement of the artist's clearly visible signature confirms his self-identification with the adventure-seeking, wide-roaming animal, although the title offers a humorous respite for every worker to enjoy.

Photographs, 1979–87

In his metal paintings from the 1980s and 1990s, Rauschenberg replaced the appropriated print media that defined his earlier silkscreen series (1962–64) with his own black-and-white photographs, marking a shift from the public world of popular culture to the private realm of autobiography. The examples chosen for this exhibition reveal the dominant subject of Rauschenberg's camera eye, namely vision itself, which he explored through mirroring, layered spatial planes, and abstract patterns of light and shadow. Of all the metal paintings, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*—with their reflective surfaces and grayscale palette—are most strongly linked to the artist's photographic practice. The selection of photographs also includes certain source images used in these two series, revealing how Rauschenberg intensified the act of visual veiling and discernment through the silkscreen process.

Rauschenberg's career-long engagement with photography began at Black Mountain College near Asheville, North Carolina, where his instructor, Hazel Larsen Archer, encouraged him to crop the field of view within the camera and print his negatives "full frame." After photographing steadily through the early 1960s, Rauschenberg largely put his cameras aside until 1979, when he took hundreds of pictures in and around Fort Myers, Florida, to be included in the stage design for Trisha Brown's *Glacial Decoy*, which premiered in 1979. This photographic campaign was followed by others: *In + Out City Limits* (1979–81) and the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI; 1984–91). These three projects provided the artist with a personal archive—what Rauschenberg called a "repertoire of possible images"—to use in his metal paintings. Rauschenberg trained his camera on the overlooked, forgoing the vista for details hidden in plain sight. Generally void of people (though human simulacra and referents abound), his photographs document facades, signs, window displays, murals, draped cloth, and such other favored motifs as animals, wheels, and a miscellany of discarded consumer objects. In 1981, Rauschenberg explained, "You wait until life is in the frame, then you have the permission to click," noting, "Photography is like diamond cutting. If you miss you miss." Even more than the photographs themselves, the *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* capture the dual sensation of precision and ephemerality.

Plate 26
Fort Myers, Florida, 1979. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm)

Plate 27
Fort Myers, Florida, 1979. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm)

Plate 28
Charleston, South Carolina, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 29
Charleston, South Carolina, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 30
Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm)

Plate 31
Boston, Massachusetts, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm)

Plate 32
New York City, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 33
New Jersey, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 34
Fort Myers, Florida, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm)

Plate 35
Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 36
New York City, 1981. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 37
New York City, 1981. Gelatin silver print, 12 ⅞ × 19 ⅛ inches (32.7 × 48.6 cm)

Plate 38
Charleston, South Carolina, 1981. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 39
Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1983. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 40
Venezuela, 1985. Gelatin silver print, 19 × 13 inches (48.3 × 33 cm)

Plate 41
Venezuela, 1985. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Plate 42
Cuba, 1987. Gelatin silver print, 13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)

Didactic texts and object labels by Emily Braun, Daniela Mayer, Chris Murtha, Lucy Riley, Joseph Shaikewitz, and Melissa Waldvogel. Unless otherwise noted, all works from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation holdings.

Installation view, *Night Shades and Phantoms: An Exhibition of Works by Robert Rauschenberg*, March 18–July 19, 2019, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York. Left to right: *Party Bird*, *Hollyhock Party*, *Vanities*, *Palm Sunday*, *Radiator Stop*, and *Hydro* (all *Night Shades* series, 1991).

Installation view, *Night Shades and Phantoms: An Exhibition of Works by Robert Rauschenberg*, March 18–July 19, 2019, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York. Left to right: *Hindu Hoopla* and *Botanical Vaudeville* (both *Phantom* series, 1991).

Installation view, *Night Shades and Phantoms: An Exhibition of Works by Robert Rauschenberg*, March 18–July 19, 2019, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York. Left to right: *Time Scan*, *Alley Wise* (top), *House Call* (bottom), and *Holy Molley* (all *Phantom* series, 1991).

Installation view, *Night Shades and Phantoms: An Exhibition of Works by Robert Rauschenberg*, March 18–July 19, 2019, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York. Left to right: *Path*, *Motor Range*, and *Off the Walls* (all *Night Shades* series, 1991).

Installation view, *Night Shades and Phantoms: An Exhibition of Works by Robert Rauschenberg*, March 18–July 19, 2019, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York. Left to right: *Neapolitan Excavation*, *Avenue*, and *Manhole House* (all *Night Shades* series, 1991).

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