

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Unidentified / Interview with Robert Rauschenberg /
 "Robert Rauschenberg in Israel" Exhibition, 1975 [1974]

1975 ISRAEL

I have been asked to introduce Robert R. and will keep it as brief as possible. R. is probably known to a great many of you as an artist who was one of the ~~not to be~~ of what is called pop art. Whether or not he belongs to pop art is another problem. One of the first people to work in new fields; in new styles. Something he started on in the 50's especially and is continued today, with works such as he has done upstairs, happenings, and various other things of that sort that I would like to ~~to have~~ him to explain as he goes along this evening.

This evening is not going to be a lecture by Mr. R. ; rather you are requested to ask questions and he ~~is~~ is supposed to answer. And I am going to lead off with one, let us break the ice.

Q. You once said that you wanted to work between the gap of art and life.

R. I also said at the ~~same~~ same time that you cannot make art, something becomes art, and you cannot make life (God ?? said that) but someplace in between there is room (??) so think of two mirrors, on one side is art and the other side is life and they just keep reflecting back at each other. Does that answer it?

Q. It sounds good in theory but how do you put it into practice.

R. A lot of work. Do I have a question from the balcony? When I left the hotel and I am really very self conscious about this sort of thing and I told the girl at the desk, "I am going to give a lecture." She said, "Good luck." "Oh, it is not that kind of lecture; people will ask questions." She ~~says~~ says, "Jews never ask questions." So I guess this is the end of the lecture.

Q. A number of people who had been last night for the opening had the feeling that they were taken for a ride.

R. They didn't have to come so far.

Q. I am serious. I am not trying to be aggressive about it. This is a reaction that you have ~~probably~~ probably come across every ~~now~~ and again. It can be brushed off by saying that people are peasants and all sorts of things...

X- One of my friends quit Bell Laboratories when he found out all the sophisticated information they were feeding him was the Princess telephone

R. I ~~come~~ come across it all the time and I am grateful when I do because it means that I think my whole direction has been to confront people with something that might remind them of their own lives, in some way that they might look at it differently. 54

TAPE TWO

As opposed to showing a kind of polished sureness. One of the reasons that I changed mediums and focuses is because when I know that I can do something, well then it is dead for me. It becomes a packaged product for someone else. I could have done beautiful Rauschenbergs but I cannot afford it within my own conscience of what I think art is supposed to be about.

Q. Then you are making art into preaching?

R. Well, communication is part of that, isnt it? It needs to be exposed, an artist does not paint for no one to see it. So then there has to be someone who does look.

Q. You are painting to make other people get impetuous (??) like you just said? So I dont see much difference between that and what a preacher does. He also tries to make people see things in another light.

69

R. I think I will have to agree.

Q. But there are other theories, that art should be just...to enjoy.

~~R. There are a lot of static ideas...about art forms (??)...I think my ideas are~~
~~asdfkjlkjghdfkj~~ (Unintelligible) ...not being honest at all. But I am glad that it is close.

Q. What I would say about you is that you were so good that you know you can have all the theories in the world and what comes out is all right.

R. You are calling me a cheat.

Q. To come back to what we saw last night, I am certainly not qualified to ask questions, I do not understand anything about art or pop art but I should like to understand if what we saw last night was our environment in Israel, it is a rather sad impression which you got.....You saw here..these terrible water tanks on the roof, it is awful, we have to admit and this is reality

90

~~R. What would you think, one of the last things when I went to sleep last night was I remembered someone coming over to me and saying why do you use just building refuse. I wasnt aware that I had but caught feeling happy, I just had to say something and I said that there is more building going on here than any other city that I have~~

TAPE THREE

~~every been in in my life ~~xxxx~~ - but that is not the answer~~

The answer was there are pieces of string, there are whites (??) that are very much like the glare in the light here now ~~xxxx~~ which I hear that you have about eight months. There is no visual perspective because the light is so bright. There are all these things that I try to take in plus doing the show which means that most of the time was spent in the Museum in one week, so I am not being pretentious and saying that ~~xxxx~~ is Israel but I would be interested in what material you think an artist working in the way I did would have selected which would have better represented Israel.

(unintelligible)

X Q. I mean there are a lot of ~~xxx~~ other things you can see in this country if you go around...

R

X R. I had to look for things that I can just pick up, that is part of my esthetic, the availability is part of the richness of the country.

X Q. The poorness.

X R. No a piece of paper, then the artist uses it. I mean I am not looking for diamonds.

X Q. I mean you have been here only a week..

X R. Three weeks.

Q. I admit we have to look away from things, we must make efforts if we want to see something ~~xxx~~ beautiful to look in a certain way in order not to see the ugly things next to it. Now I dont know. My question is if you put this water tank on show, is it in order to show us how ugly our surroundings are and that we should change it?

R. I hope not. (Who says a water tank is ugly?)

That is why I am as interested in what you thought was beautiful because it is in the most common things. I mean one piece of string is so different from another ~~xxx~~ piece of string and these are available to us. ~~I mean~~

TAPE FOUR

~~I mean~~ the water tank (I hope this is not ^{INSULTING}), I mean like in one of the silver ~~xxx~~ pieces in the adjoining gallery, I see just as much humanity in that water tank, in fact now here I go, I see more humanity in that water tank than ~~I did~~ in the silver in the next room, and I dont see less beauty.

Q. Do you see any beauty in that water ~~xxx~~ tank? I think it is the most awful thing we have in this country, all these tanks on the roof, next to the antennas.
Rjk

R. the antennas we will talk about later. Do you ~~xxx~~ know that a non-used antenna makes a fantastic trellis for flowers? But I do see beauty in that water tank. I see humanity there.

Q. Humanity yes of course in its ugliest way.

Q. ~~Bjtjkjatkjkjbeakjk~~ What is beautiful? But I try to understand because I certainly dont understand anything about art, certainly not about pop art, but since I try to understand the younger generation and since I have a daughter who likes pop art and admires your work, ~~kjkakjk~~ so I try to understand all this. 161

R. I think one has to give up the idea of what exactly is ugly and then in order to be able to give that up you have to think about what is really beautiful and then you really get quickly back to the fact that nothing is ugly.

.....I think one of the reasons that I am mistakenly identified with pop art is because I did not want to be ashamed of things simply because they were familiar, ~~I had very little~~ ~~for something else and like Art in America~~ I am called white trash. I mean according to education ~~xxx~~ and all that, so, it is sort of a celebration of the commonest of elements and their beauty because nothing has beauty built into it, it has to be ~~kjhokj~~ through your response that anything has ~~xxx~~ any value whatsoever. I mean I am sure there are times that a piece of string saved a man's life, that is beautiful. There are times people ~~xxxx~~ drowned carrying trunks of gold.

Q.

XXXXX TAPE FIVE

Q. If I understand you correctly, you are not a preacher at all, you steal (?) facts, you dont want to preach them.....

R. I think all artists have the responsibility to somehow reflect the conscious, the conscience of the particular time. Now if you want to call that the artist is a reporter or a preacher or.....

Q. No, I would not like to stick a name ~~hjkjtk~~ to it. But if you could make me see anything beautiful in that water tank, I might become happier. I have been here for forty years.

R. Just consider it one more invitation to look at a water tank.

~~Q. If I can continue the line of the gentleman who asked before, would you say that May 1974 was Israeli? I mean if I think that you suggest in a sense some locality ~~xxxx~~ by using sands from different locations in the exhibition, would you say that there is any reaction to either Israeli mentality, Israeli landscape, Israeli political atmosphere or social atmosphere or anything of that sort or to put it in a different question, could it be May 1974 in Tokyo, the very same exhibition, taking for granted that the sand would not be from the construction of the Museum.~~

~~R. I dont know. I would have to go to Tokyo to find out. This is different from what I was doing before I came here if that is the answer to your question.~~

~~Q. And in this respect, presumably any junkdifferent ~~xxxx~~ result in the end, so given another three weeks, the exhibition will be different again. Would you say something more specific about the location than you have?~~

~~R. It is an extremely unique place. I have already said that I have not ~~xxxx~~ spent enough time here. I had to trust my responses given as much time as I had to work and the work was certainly not meant as, not pretentious, not supposed to represent Israel, but given a week's time to ~~xxxx~~ work and make a show for that space, and being as open as ~~xxx~~ I possibly could, we were open for~~

TAPE SIX

about twenty four hours a day by the way, it is about as much as I could think about it. But I didnt come here with any preconceptions, naturally as an artist I have my own compositional bad habits, and as a human being, I have my own bad taste. But I think it is a good show.

Q. Could I ask you a couple of other questions? (R. You seem to have most of the answers there...why dont you just....I am sorry I was being rude.)

Q. I just read today, now before this evening, the catalogue of your first one man show at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1963, written by the late Solomon who was then director of the Museum and he said at the time what was probably true that what you were doing then had no political reaction, nothing of that sort.

R. I think all art is political.

Q. Could I just ask the question to the end? Then in 1970, you had this show at the Automation House in which was a political reaction. You had a traveling show which I ~~xxx~~ managed to see also in where you called it Previous unscheduled exhibition, protest, attempting to shame and communicate my response to and concern with our time, place.....

individual conscience, everyone's independent devotion
can nourish the seed of sanity that is essential in the construction
and change makes only all the difference in the world...

I understand a lot had to do with the Vietnam war if I am not mistaken. What was the reason? What I am interested in....

R. The condition that America is in. This is going to sound sentimental. ~~[jwjk]~~ start all the way back then. My dog was going to have puppies and I had been working very hard and I had to be in Los Angeles for a shorter project but she was going to have puppies so I didnt ~~take~~ ^{leave} her so I had to find a nice place for her. While I was out there, I thought that I would really now, I had been working with technology and there are lots of problems for the artist working in technology and I am sure for the scientists and engineers there are lots of problems working with the artists but they usually x have the easier side of it, it just means ~~xx~~ leaving their wives and quitting their jobs because they think being an artist is so much fun but I had lots of problems with that and I thought all I am going to do is a big beautiful drawing, a 50 foot drawing, so I started getting my material together, this is the current thing you are referred to, and I couldnt use

tape 7

COLOR AND I couldn't ~~work~~ make the composition too interesting because that was a distraction. I have seen lots of paintings that should be, that are considered political paintings and the problem is, if something gets to be beautiful, how can you have a beautiful atrocity?

So there is no color, no composition, except that of course anytime you put something down, but anyway so it's a compromise and that is what that series was about. That thing of Picasso's, Guernica, it is almost silly, I mean you could call it, it's a beautiful painting and I am sure his passion was there, but when you look at it, if you told a child that it was hobby horses, he would say oh yes daddy I see the horses. So you can't have both.

Q. I think your comparison with Guernica is interesting because in this case, ~~the~~ in both cases, it is fusing gray, and ~~the~~ black and white, and ~~both~~ in both cases it is a big thing and in both cases it is a political reaction, a declared political reaction. But otherwise there is a gap from ~~the~~ '37 to 1970, because of our exposure to photographs and to photographs of terrible things, of course Guernica looks different to our eyes now than it looked in '37.

314

R. And another thing about the Vietnam War. Life Magazine would have at least four pages of beautiful color photographs of bombings and burnings ~~the~~ and you look at it and it is incredible yellows and reds. That sort of thing stops the horror.

Q. Still before 1970...

R. Also about doing that one with the newspapers and getting all the information, I was a little bit angry, well it occurred to me that people can take information very unseriously and just the ceremony of paying 10¢ and ~~the~~ buying the world's news, then you can sit on it you can wrap your garbage in it and you are a ~~the~~ responsible person and I think, don't think it is that cheap

(O. Information is not the paper)

Q. Question is, sorry that I am still I am interested why in 1970 you made something clearly political which you didn't do before, perhaps ~~that~~ there was some political intention

R. I think all ~~the~~ artists (?) are political. I think the fact that you are an artist ~~is~~ is already political

TAPE EIGHT

We are a minimal group in nearly every country (?).

Q. So to make it clear, what was the reason in 1970 you did that kind of thing?
Was there any external reason or internal

34

R. It wasn't my idea. ~~x~~ I was going to do a beautiful drawing of rainbows.
I just ~~xxxxxxx~~ couldn't find the material.

Q. A few moments ago you dropped a lead brick on my toe and I would like to say ouch.
You suggest that a number of ~~x~~ your ~~d~~ scientist friends moved into art
because they thought it was more fun.

R. We had to hogtie ~~them to get them into it~~ them to get them into it,
but once we did...

Q. But I would really like to ask, really do you think that the ~~joy~~ joy of
scientific creation really is fundamentally let us say different, if not inferior?

R. I don't think it's different at all, it's not inferior, and it may be the
contrary.

Q. But is it different fundamentally in some ~~qualitative~~ qualitative sense?

R. Very little difference, a lot of my friends who are scientists understand art
better than I do.

Q. I am not talking of understanding. I am talking of the joy of scientific creation.

R. Process

(Audience: He has never been a scientist; you have never been an artist...

Q. That is why we are asking.

R. Useless part, investigation for its own sake. I think an artist has to
have that.

Q. Do you think that that is as major a component in the drive towards...

R. It should be in artists but it isn't always.

Q. Behind good art, let us say.

R. Or let us say art that we are interested in. I think curiosity is most important

TAPE NINE

element and that is nothing you can teach.

Q. How does curiosity manifest itself to an artist? What are you curious about? You want to see the effects of doing something? Is ~~that~~ curiosity a of art an intention, a desire to understand better your environment? You mentioned two mirrors at the beginning of the evening, this cannot simply be mirrors, art is not just an extension of life, it must enrich life. How do you see this enrichment? What kind of distortion does this mirror introduce? Coloring? How does it enhance life rather than simply add to it?

R. I would avoid all that enhancing, enriching because I don't think the world is like standing in a bread line, waiting for little pieces of art. I mean art should be part of your natural atmosphere, if I were completely successful in the way I feel, there would be no need for art.

Q. And none for science?

R. *And none for science.*

R. It is a dangerous position to take and it is difficult, ^{that} we will never realize it.

Q. Later on you said something, you used words, what art is all about. And now I heard you say there would be no ~~words~~ ^{need} for art. I just don't understand.

R. I am not talking for all artists, I mean actually, ^{an awful lot of} I am also ~~not~~ an artist who would consider this anti art talk -- I think the function of art is, and I think this is true in music and dance and everything that's considered art -- just to make one aware and happy about their own lives and movements. So it's like a doctor in the Orient. You pay your physician until you're sick and so that it costs you nothing to be sick -- cause it's his job to keep you well. And I think the visual art -- it's the artist's job to keep everybody looking well.

Q. The artists job to cure you of what science does to you

R. Don't be any more apologetic than I am, please

Q. If you say art is more or less to make you happy with your own life..

R. Or to show you why you aren't ..

Q. I can understand how making you happy with an object that you thought was ugly before might work if you

TAPE TEN

R. I think that's a ridiculous exercise to go through -- whether something is or isn't beautiful is based on historic prejudice that's going to make the world more rotten day after day -- and that's exactly what we ought to be getting rid of

Q. I agree with you. What I wanted to know is what you did with the beds which was not presenting an object which made you more happy -- it definitely didn't make me happier about beds

Audience: Does poetry make you more happy always?

Q. Well, he said it's going to make me happier

R. ...more aware of yourself ... you don't get your money back

Q. Mr. Rauschenberg, isn't a lot of your work concerned with alienation?

R. I think to the contrary. One of the reasons I use such general materials is that there's no speciality there. Anyone has seen a cardboard box; anyone has seen sand, when I go back now .. science: this is art; it was science. The fact that the materials are so common has something to do with your criticism too, and I got 484 a lot of it last night, but I think that's a fine place to start. It's sort of anti-dualism: good/bad, rich/poor -- going on in my work because nothing is any different because it compares well to something else. Did I answer your question?

Q. In the process of your work, do you ever discard anything -- throw it away -- say "It doesn't represent my work?"

R. I throw it away because of different reasons. If I discard anything, it doesn't represent my work. I'm not satisfied with it. I was indulging too much or something. 495

Q. Isn't as criticism anyway?

R. No, affirmation in any way. I hope that my work gives permission for any of us to do what we, feeling our own integrity, do. Now that's on the edge of chaos, but if you add a little bit of integrity and contents, you have a nice dish.

Q. I would come to the consequences of what you said, I would say we should do 500 away with these water tanks.

R. Are they polluting? In New York, I really like those (towers?) which have wooden ones like that and their function is so refreshing cause New York is story after story of uselessness and confusion and crime and ambition and you can just see the skyline

TAPE ELEVEN

and see those wooden tanks and you know what they're doing. It means when the water isn't being used, it can go up there and then you don't have to pump it down; it just runs down.

Q. Does the reaction to your work differ in different places and different age groups and different countries? How do you find that?

R. Yes, because local prejudices about the same materials...

Q. So you get the same reaction here or there?

R. This is pretty normal so far; I'm hoping it's going to get better, but...

Q. Do you want the work that you've done here to last?

R. Only as long as it does. The nature of materials we've used -- (mat-medium?) 538 which is acrylic, which has a fantastic glow and also preserves paper.. The paper that the drawings are one is 100% rag and with linen backing. I have worked with (Who mentioned the bed?) striped toothpaste. Striped toothpaste came out then, and I was out of green, and it was green stripes, so I mixed the stripes and it still exists in that work. This is an art story. One of the famous stories of Picasso is with the bull that he made with the bicycle seat and the handlebars. He probably thought nobody was listening when he said it, but anyway, he said : "Someday, someone will find this, I hope; some archaeologist will find this and dig it up and say, 'Boy, that would make a fantastic handlebar for a bicycle!'"

Q. Does this all mean that the process of creating or working is more important to you than the result?

R. I think working is much more important than the results.

Q. What are your bad habits?

R. I'll see you later. I can see it, and I always try to change then. I try to arbitrarily just move out of it. I see things leaning a little bit too much to the right, or everything is going up or the way you use your angles, because you have to

TAPE TWELVE

put something down. I'm really very much against ~~fixness~~ -- where you put something and it has to stay that way, and I've had my bout with technology because only in technology can you do that successfully. Where every time you look at something, it is different. That's what I meant about art; I mean art is fixed and life isn't.

Q. What do you try to convey by your art, by what you have done, if you say that the process of creating is more important than the piece that you have created?

R. It is the evidence of an activity.

Q. Is ^{it} the final piece of art ^{that} moves you, and do you enjoy it? Do you think of it? 592
Or does only the process of doing it move you?

R. Both do. Being an artist, everytime I see a work of art, if I can see it, one remakes the work so you can see how it's made.

Q. When you are working, do you convey this feeling to the person who looks at it?

R. I hope so. That's why I like the video being set up in the gallery, too, because you can see how much insanity goes into actually making something. Another reason I like art is because it's one of the last peaceful mediums in the world. Actually it's really quite dangerous because artists are the only people who haven't been bought by somebody else.

Audience: Not all of them...

R. OK, how much?

Q. Last night, speaking of the process of work as you are, a number of people commented on the fact that you were working with a group of ~~your~~ associates and colleagues who joined you on this trip, and ^{you} mentioned the word ambition before, and of course, the whole question of the ego of artists, and the individuality of artists, the uniqueness of the artist enters into this question of how it is possible for a group of artists who are very obviously individual in their own right and have their own creative ego -- how they can work apparently so well and so closely together?

TAPE THIRTEEN

R. Talking about materials, anonymity is like going out and trying to chose ugly materials which I can't see. The anonymous aspects of materials themselves, that they do not represent a class or a value hierarchy is the way we work together ourselves and we arent the only ones. I like theatre because of the fact that you can't ... you were talking about permanence ... how long something should last. If it lasts just for a split second, it might be a revelation, and in the theatre nobody is responsible for the entire act. So just in the process of making the pieces, we have an example of what the work represents itself. I'm deadly against the individual ego because you can only recognize an ego by what it stops.

Q. What made you come to Israel?

R. It wasn't something I was thinking about, but it came up once, and I thought 670 it was a ridiculous idea, and the more I thought about it, the more interesting and ridiculous it got, and the reason I came now was that I felt that maybe you needed a few fools.

Q: Don't you think Israel is an awful backwater in art?

R. I haven't seen that much art here. I understand the problem, though, about being an artist here. There are very few art magazines around -- very little contact outside. I hope that my coming here (whether you throw me out or I leave willingly) is the beginning of some kind of real communication. I almost live by the same kind of energy that the people in Israel have to defend Israel with in order to defend art, so that's not so far away. It's like your science, and I know that everybody who is here has chosen to be here for particular reasons, and there are not too many places in the world that have that kind of energy anymore. So the young people have to go 715 off to war or to peace, and it's a small country. I didn't finish that, did I? I'm getting sentimental. My mind was drifting.

Q. If I take the wheelbarrow upstairs, with the rails, how would you say that the wheelbarrow up there would be different from something Dadaistic?

R. It's not a gesture. It's a fact. The Dadaists were making a point, like the Surrealists were juxtaposing to extreme. In art school, you moved from place to

ART SCHOOLS ARE ALL OVER THE WORLD, YOU KNOW, THIS IS MY LITTLE CORNER, AND YOU MESS it up; it's your's; you stay there, and keep messing it up. You can't get out of it. 742 One guy doing something nearly like (Picuny?) , somebody else doing something nearly like somebody else. One of the things about New York, is you walk down the street and you actually see these people and they come up, and have a drink, and you talk and argue, and you just keep going. Here, you just see people with the same problem -- the problem is not art. One of the times I was going to come I didn't come because I said (this was just a few months ago) that I would rather you be thinking about 750 what you're thinking about rather than distracting and then I thought, well, maybe you need a clown too -- after reading your newspaper, you really do need a clown.

Q. In the lecture some time ago, somebody said today there is no need for artists to learn to draw; it would be a waste of time. Do you think that's true?

R. That's very personal. I think everybody should learn to draw. I mean, that's ridiculous -- that you don't have to learn to draw. But you can be a great artist if you can't draw, I'm sure. One of the things that maybe we should be able to provide is enough choices and exposure -- it's very embarrassing to be an artist. It's almost contagious; bad pain^{TIVE} is contagious.

Q. What do you need to be an artist?

R. The curiosity we were talking about and keep it fresh because it doesn't last a day.

Q. And that's all? Boy, I think I'm one of the greatest...

785

R. What are you curious about?

R. Anybody can make compositions and mix colors; styles have all already been developed. Anything you do is a little bit like somebody else, and you never heard of him so being an artist is a very personal thing, and you have to be lucky to be able to share it with people.

Q. How do you share it? Do you think the Museum is the way to share it?

TAPE FIFTEEN

R. It's not ideal, but we haven't thought of anything else.

Q. I see a contradiction between what you say about art and the paucity of art magazines in Israel. It's important to have art magazines...

R. Yes, well what happens with art magazines is that the critics take over and from magazine to magazine, there's the argument about whether you are or aren't or was or wasn't back and forth just between the critics, and the classification 809 of different things. Like take the example of pop art. I'm accused of being pop art because works I did 10 years before anybody thought of the idea of pop art...

Q. This question has been bothering me for the last half hour or so. You said two things, one which caught me right; I don't know what other people's reaction was. You said that art or doing art is recreating the world or a part of it in a way, which I thought was wonderful, and then you said that art is ^{the} only peaceful thing. Now creation -- I can't think of it as peaceful. I think you have to use so much judgment -- so much thought. Surely that is not a peaceful act.

R. But it's toward a non-aggressive end..

Q. But you need a hell of a lot of energy

R. That's true

Q. A hell of a lot of thought. Is that peaceful? You don't think these are contradictory?

R. No.

Q. Creation and peaceful activity?

R. Peace can be very energetic. I mean you can live intensely

Q. Peacefully?

R. Peacefully.

Q. I've been asked to ask against my better knowledge, can any government do for you and art? Can it do anything? Should it do anything?

R. This is about my lobbying in the States for (Can I tell it all?)

Q. It doesn't matter

R. ... for artist's royalties when art works are resold. Everybody else has unions and artists, I think, can't really have unions. Musicians have unions.

Q. Royalties on resale? It's a marvelous idea.

R. After having been shocked at a big (Park Grenet?) auction -- something that had been bought for \$500 goes for \$68,000, \$168,000 just in a matter of 5 years later, 10 years later

Q. So?

R. That should be changed. So we are working with the government now trying to make some legislation. One of the first ideas is to work it through the insurance companies to make it required that everybody insured their art or they couldn't resell it unless it has insurance -- like owning an automobile. And so, that's one of our second ideas. Our first idea is still to somehow do it through the taxes. The government loves the idea

Audience: For once, we're on the wrong side.

R. The danger in getting the government involved is taste. You always come back 892 to that definition of what is art and what isn't. You know, like Nixon's papers were not art.

Audience: They were beautifully touched up, though.

R. Those were his tapes. His tapes were not music.

With your functional theory of art, how about thinking of art as something that makes people feel better and takes their minds off of gloomy and dire events?

R. It depends on your period as an artist. Like you were talking about currents. I just got so depressed and exhausted from the idea that people could ignore that much bad news every day, and so that was an act of aggression because having a 914 reputation and some facility, I wanted to confront them with something that was not their newspaper but had all of their news in it, and that's where it gets interesting and goes into the Museum because that's where the people go who may or may not have taken the news seriously.

Q. May I ask if, in one of your walks to pick up material, you picked up a Nixon tape?

R. No, but we did pick up boxes from the Swedish design collection in the Museum. WE unburied them, and they were stolen back from us -- after we did all the dirty work. Well, I think we could do a better job with those tapes than Nixon is doing. Good Lord, when is he coming? I want to take Golda Meir home with us, so maybe if we time it just right, we can get Golda, and you can keep Nixon, OK?

Q. No.

Q. Artists who communicate, when you are communicating, are you not frustrated by the idea that you need so much explaining?

R. You have no idea how much I didn't want to be here tonight.

Q. Still, an artist wants to be understood.

R. That might be the invitation to an artist to work a little harder so he could be understood through his works and not through his mouth.

Q. When you put to this thing there, a long border, (how do you say it in English?) the wheelbarrow, you attached a border in plastic, did you mean to beautify the line of it?

R. I think I'll just say yes to you.

Q. I thought it was a beautiful line.

R. Yes, I thought so, too.

Q. Coming back to that problem of communication, we buy the newspaper and read about you, how great you are, how nice is your exhibition and so on. Then it's a must, even a social must to come and see it. Then you come, and you don't understand, but we come to your lecture and we understand. But other people, we're told by the newspaper they are bad -- but we go, and we like it. It happens to you, too. You read the newspaper, and hear such and such artist is very good, and go up and don't like it -- so how do you look at these problems of communication -- the artist, the public, the critic, the newspaper, and so on.

R. I don't think it's important to have the same taste; it's very important that we have our own taste. The individuality of judgement and decision is what I would like my work to keep exercising in anyone. 1024

Q. If communication is important, why doesn't the artist transfer his work? Why does he sell it; why does it become a commodity instead of keeping it or tearing it up?

R. I much prefer the old barter system myself, and I think every year I give at least 5 times as much away. But OK, the Chilean Revolution -- and many people are homeless, many people have to get out of the country, families of the people who were killed. The positive side of this contradiction is that because I can do an edition of prints and give them \$50,000 for families -- it's a compromise.

Audience: Have you been approached by the United Jewish Appeal?

R. As a matter of fact, I think I'm a tax deduction for being here for somebody or other. They just gave me the job. So there is that side of it. I mean you have to be realistic. I think it's absurd. The reason I call the pieces or paintings "drawings", which they're not -- I mean that's canvas -- is because in commercial hierarchy, if that's a painting, well, then it starts at \$45,000. How can you communicate with millionaires only, when -- I mean, the folly of millionaires.

Q. What happens when you look at things you did a year or two ago -- do they retain the freshness, the impact?

IT USUALLY TAKES ~~THE~~ LONGER

R. So far, luckily, yes. I've had the good fortune of doing a lot of things I didn't know about and living long enough to look back on them and say, "Oh, I wish I'd done it" so that means I'm pretty close to whoever he is. You were saying about your curiosity. It takes some nerve also to be truly curious and leave evidence. 1115

Q. Um, yes.

R. I think that's what -- is it Yiddish? Chutzpah?

Q. Hebrew.

R. That's Hebrew? It doesn't have the same meaning, does it? It does? Let it all hang out?

Q. Chutzpah is another element.

R. Curiosity, chutzpah, and you're still winning? They're going to stone you when you walk out of here. This is the funniest lecture I've ever seen.

Q. Why do you use used materials, thrown away things?

R. It's a head start. It already has some history. I guess it's an anti-ego adjustment.

Q. But here, for instance, in this country, nearly every stone has a meaning. Doesn't that mean anything to you? You asked before, when I spoke about the water tank -- so after I thought about it meanwhile -- that any stone to me is more interesting than all this used rubbish. There's enough of it for all of us.

Q. Do you find that artistic activity becomes more or less strenuous as the years pass? I think it must be very strenuous activity being an artist.

R. The biggest danger is in myself to.. it's very difficult to be a successful artist and get older because as you get older, you might like to feel a little better as you're feeling worse. And you might pick up one of your accomplishments and fall asleep on it. Now I have to examine myself twice. In the beginning I just did things. Now I have to make sure I'm not doing them for some other reason. Everybody likes praise, right? Somebody says: "Listen, you're really very good at this," and we've lost a lot of great artists through success because they've said: "You're right -- I'll do it."

Q. Can you work harder on the pieces (on the side of the wall?), or on paper?

R. It's hard to tell; the space is so big. You're talking about this show, right? (The plan was?) to use the far room for sculpture because that was dramatic, and I said, "No, you don't" and so just reverse that, and I think I really would have loved to have had another 2 or 3

1248

Q. What happens to this exhibition if it's moved?

R. I guess it goes to Paris, to some

Q. Are you looking for some room (?)

R. No, the pieces just go there. I want the wheelbarrow. It's funny. You sometimes feel you're asking if you could have one of your own works. I need a car.

Q. What will you call the show in Paris?

R. Works Made in Israel.

Audience: And then when it goes to Tokyo, it will be "Works Made in Israel, Shown In Paris."

Q. What you saw, did it matter where you lived? Because, we, living in town, know that each little bit of town is different. Where did you live?

R. Mishk...uh..uh..... One day, we were waiting for the material to come from

(costop?) , and it was a complicated business. Christine and Peterson and myself sat from 6 - 8 hours in the upstairs gallery waiting for the materials to come so we could start working because we were really running out of time. So I said to Christine, If we were at home, and you're expecting guests, all you have to do is go to the bathroom or shave and the doorbell rings, the telephone rings, everything happens. But we can't do any of those things here. We're simply waiting and Christine said, I could go and wash my hair. That always happens with her. And we decided to go downstairs. We were leaving, and not waiting any longer, and we had to ask the guard... I said: "Christine, you ask, it's too embarrassing." So Christine asked the guard: "Do you know where we live? We want to go home." And you know how they figured out what place it was? It seems the restaurant is good down the hill. Nevermind all the history we pointed out about the place -- the first building outside the wall -- none of that -- Oh, the restaurant?

Q. Some people called yesterday's show a "happening." I couldn't feel that.

R. No, happenings are theatre events.

Q. Something happens on the scene -- but you can't call this a happening.

Q. Do you have a favorite artist?

R. One that I can't stand.

Q. I don't know if I know exactly how to phrase it, but suppose some young person or one of any age actually came to your exhibitions, and said: "Mr. Rauschenberg, what am I looking for? What am I looking at? How am I to look at it?" What would you say?

R. They are asking that of someone else?

Q. Of you -- not of someone else. What would you tell them? Nothing?

R. I think that kind of question can be answered only if that person is really asking.

TAPE TWENTY-TWO

Q. I mean that -- asking very seriously because they want to know. I don't mean criticism. A clean page. Someone who really wants to know how to approach the work. 1400

R. You'd have to know them. That's why I don't like lectures. You'd have to know the person in order to answer the question because you have to give answers specifically you can't give answers generally.

Q. You could not direct him somehow -- through your own experience of the work -- of what you tried to do?

R. Not unless I knew him, or her, or it.

Q. Does that mean your answer is different for every person?

R. Has to be, and that's why we need each other. There isn't any particular way -- Where's my translator? Yona, what's the name of the artist I liked so much, and he was promptly thrown out of the kibbutz because they were so ashamed of his work? And he had a show and the whole kibbutz came, and they were ashamed of him?

Yona. (Name? Nahum Tevet)

Q. You mean the show is still there?

R. No, but Peterson and I (Peterson has a show now in Israel, too), we liked his work so much, we bought everything we could.

Q. You mean the show is now on the road?

R. The show is now on our road, but... He had a remarkable personal sensibility that is going unnoticed. So what one has to do is within the community, and you not only just have a community -- you just barely have a country. That you have to keep aware of insight and growth.

TAPE TWENTY-THREE

Q. Could you be more specific about what you liked about (Nahum ^{Tevet} ~~Kedat~~?)

R. His work showed that he could see. It's small white on white, almost like accidents, and he wasn't ashamed of the way that something was put together. That was almost beside the point. So that at the same time, it was very raw, and as sensitive as your breath.

Lady: One more question?

R. OK. You ask for one more question, and you answer it.

Lady. Could we have one more question? As one question, not a stream of questions.

Q. How are you?

R. I have a problem.....with water tanks. I want to say that I've been to lots of nice homes here and nearly everybody's a good cook. The water tanks, I'm tired of already.....