

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Klüver, Billy / "Record Interviews with Artists Participating in the Popular Image Exhibition," Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1963



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For Bob!

love

Billy

ON RECORD:
11 ARTISTS 1963

Interviews by Billy Klüver

EXPERIMENTS IN ART AND TECHNOLOGY

NEW YORK

Record Cover *Giant Size 157* ©1963/1981 Andy Warhol

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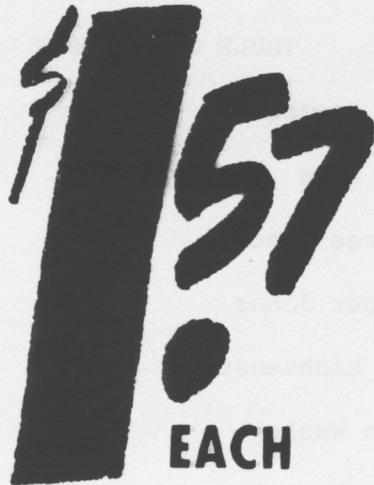
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GIANT SIZE



EACH

THE RECORD

During March 1963 I produced an hour-long record of interviews with eleven artists in the 'Popular Image Exhibition' at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D.C., organized by Alice Denney, April 18 - June 2, 1963.

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This was the fourth exhibition of 'pop artists' held in the six months since 'Art 1963: A New Vocabulary' opened October 25, 1962, in Philadelphia, followed by shows at Sidney Janis Gallery in New York and Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles.

I used an old reel-to-reel tape recorder to record long conversations with the artists in their natural environments. Henry Geldzahler helped out at a party. The interviews were extensively edited to fit the record format and to bring out what I thought was most interesting.

Andy Warhol silk-screened the record covers, shown on the opposite page.

A cassette version of the record is available from Experiments in Art and Technology, New York City.

Billy Klüver
September, 1981

and we were scrubbing red paint off white and it was a beautiful mess. And, finally, after getting most of it off I could lower the whole thing two feet.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Rauschenberg: I think the white paintings and the black paintings happened simultaneously and they were the results of a lot of indoctrination about function of color and of form and which--a lot of that's scientific fact, like whether red makes a green look greener if it's close to it. I was so involved in the materials separately that I didn't feel as though...Oh I didn't want painting to be simply an act of employing one color to do something to another color when my response was much more direct than that. The reds I liked were the reds I looked at and they just looked red. The same thing was true about a blue or a green; but all

of these materials in--isolated--and so I was very hesitant to just arbitrarily design forms and select colors that would achieve some preconceived result, because it seemed to me that I did not have any ideas that would support that. I had nothing for them to do, so I wasn't going to hide them. I was more interested in working with them than I was in their working for me. And I always thought about materials as though whatever I use, whatever the results are, however I use them, that the method was closer to a collaboration than these materials being in the service of art. From the beginning I have indulged in the ordinary fact that whatever you choose to do is what people have to deal with so that whatever I made as a painting would either have to be accepted as a painting or rejected as a painting; and that's the fate that any picture has.

In the white paintings I always thought of them as being not passive but very--like hypersensitive, so that any situation that they were in one could almost look at the painting and see how many people were in the room by the number of shadows cast or what time of day it was--like a very limited kind of clock. And with the black ones, I was interested in the complexity without their revealing anything. The fact that there was lots to see but not much showing and it wasn't--they didn't have the familiar aggressiveness of art that says: 'Here it is whether you like it or not.

And then I became disturbed with the fact that the outside assumptions, the prejudices about the colors being black or white, and being monochrome; the people thought the black was about old and burned and tarred; and they thought the white was about negation, and nothing--some philosophy of nothing. So they were mis-

representing themselves, and I had already had the experience, so the next move was obvious, to try some other color. I picked the hardest color I'd found to work with, which was red, and then I became conscious of the gaudiness of red.

The idea was not that gaudiness is a particular viewpoint, so I tried to find a way that...a kind of color that wouldn't have any of these local interpretations. I began to notice that the experience of walking on the street or being in the theatre or around any group of people--that the mass, no matter how colorful it was, didn't...never looked tonal, and nothing was particularly outstanding. Someone might be wearing a very bright tie or green shoes, but somehow it was absorbed because all of these things, even though they were individually brilliant, were accepted in a content that made them both independent and neutral. So I tried to

get some feeling of pedestrian color into the paintings then. I think after a while, I began to relax about that and I didn't have to be conscious of it, that my habit was... I had lost the habit that I had been educated to. Then it was other materials that began to interest me.

Well in the red paintings I had already used light bulbs. That was after observing that paintings look very different in different kinds of light and that if you did a painting with mostly enamel paint and sent it to a gallery, or someone took it and hung it in their home, they would try and hang it so that there was no glare on the surface which is unrealistic because that is a shiny surface and it was lying about what the picture was made of. So I thought that if I incorporated light bulbs in it then--that the painting had its own source of light too--that it would be more related to the room

that it was in, using its light. And getting the room into the picture was important because I've always felt a little strange about the fixedness of a painting, like that after the paint has stopped running, and the canvas is dry, that the only changes are really very subtle and they are not perceptible unless you have known the picture before. That's anything short of some kind of molesting or destruction, and so the use of mirrors and putting open areas in the painting for the wall, which would change from time to time and place to place, to come through and be part of the active image was a way of counteracting that kind of stillness that I found most...I didn't find anything in life to relate to that.

RECORD

OF INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS PARTICIPATING
IN THE
POPULAR IMAGE EXHIBITION
THE WASHINGTON GALLERY OF MODERN ART
April 18 - June 2, 1963

Side 2
33 1/3 RPM

PB-475

1. TOM WESSELMANN
2. ANDY WARHOL
3. CLAES OLDENBURG
4. JIM ROSENQUIST
5. ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Recorded and Edited by
BILLY KLÜVER

March, 1963

RECORD

OF INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS PARTICIPATING
IN THE
POPULAR IMAGE EXHIBITION
THE WASHINGTON GALLERY OF MODERN ART
April 18 - June 2, 1963

Side 1
33 1/3 RPM

PB-474

1. JIM DINE
2. GEORGE BRECHT
3. JASPER JOHNS
4. ROY LICHTENSTEIN
5. JOHN WESLEY
6. ROBERT WATTS

Recorded and Edited by
BILLY KLÜVER

March, 1963