

RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Bound Compilation of Robert Rauschenberg Interviews, 1985-1987 /
Corpus Christi Students / Interview with Robert Rauschenberg, 1987

JAN 7 '89 22:12 RAUSCHENBERG:N.Y.C.

PAGE.02

CORPUS. ONE

TRANSCRIBING FROM TAPE OF CORPUS CHRISTI STUDENT GATHERING

ID: CORPUS.ONE Side A

TVB: Speaking about the Kabal American Zephyr series and Philip Johnson is saying there's animals and he wants to see them.

RR: These frames are put together, and even the individual parts of them all have separate histories.

TVB: So here's where a brand new panel flew off the truck because I forgot it was on the roof and somebody drove over it. And I came in the shop and I was just about to die and I said, "Bob, somebody ran over the brand new panel". Bob looked at it and a day later he looked at it and said, "This is what we're going to do..."

** : In the morning, if it wasn't so hard to be up at six o'clock, when the sun comes through that window, it lights that orange square right there. And I haven't seen it now because the other day when the piece was over here and cocked a little bit there would be an orange stripe that would go across and hit that wall and it lined up perfectly with the edge of that piece so you just see a little arc.

RR: I live in a house. I use everything for experimenting and trying to like test out problem pieces so that you will be able to see it in such explicit...isolate...you know, I'm not feeding the dogs when I'm looking at it...I miss the dogs.

** : Well, this has been my highlight!

RR: I saw your office.

** : My office, hah! I grew up looking at pictures of your work. My first installation was with...

RR: I didn't...I had to make them...

** : I was telling somebody on the staff the other day that the first installation that I ever did was as a college student with Ed Keinhold.

RR: Oh, really, so you picked right up on that.

** : And so I ended up having to sand the walls for all the tableau pieces and then having installed State Hospital. It was the most wonderful experience for about a week...for a kid that was eighteen years old. It was just great.

RR: You only have one son?

** : I have two. The other one wanted to come but he was sick. I said, well, there's a guy you should really meet.

Copyright restrictions apply.

FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY. DO NOT DUPLICATE OR PUBLISH WITHOUT PERMISSION.

Contact archives@rauschenbergfoundation.org for reproduction requests

RR: What's wrong?

#: He has a really bad cold...playing soccer. He came home yesterday and had shaved his head right back here!...

March 11, 1987 Corpus Christi students with RR

If I could have your attention...as I told Robert Rauschenberg last night, probably the height for me, in terms of fifteen years of museum work, was doing this exhibition, working with his work and having Robert Rauschenberg in the vicinity for the last three days. I think for any of you who are here it is a rare opportunity not only to meet in person and hear in person somebody you see in all of your texts but also to realize that the artist that is here is the same as you and I. Has the same sort of passion and feel and the same kinds of concerns that we all do. And it goes far beyond just the art that is in this room. To the Art Club at CCSU I have to congratulate the person that wrote the letter to Mr. Rauschenberg asking if he would in fact be interested in talking to some of you. We expanded it last night and I am glad to see the turnout. At this point I would turn it over to Robert Rauschenberg. Unfortunately he is leaving right after this. I am going to miss him as I am sure most of you will after this interchange.

RR: Make me a deal...

I haven't heard any outstanding offers yet...there's a lot of places I could live in right here in the museum and be the resident artist. I happen to think that this is one of the most beautiful museums, not only because of the view, which I like very much and which makes all the work really be challenged. I think one of the reasons that my work looks good here is that it is, happens to be more or less architectural. I used to have a real big platform out there, there are some of you who remember it. And it was commissioned by Philip Johnson, the architect that built this museum and I had it laminated so permanently, because it had to be outside for two years, through, in New York City. It wasn't just the natural air corrosion that it had to be protected from. It was freezing and all kinds of things that curators couldn't give me any advise on because anything that was worth anything wasn't supposed to have to go through all that. But it was mounted on a slight curr and I kept thinking, if Philip likes this picture so much, why does he...he's got the mortar, why doesn't he build my wall so that I can get rid of it. Because it was too big and I had to have it in storage when I couldn't afford it. I couldn't make it smaller. It was like twenty feet by nineteen feet, which is not an unusually large size, but usually you can put things on a collapsible frame or unstretch it and roll it. And finally he made the wall and then one of the...at some point a Corpus Christi "power" which Rick is still investigating because he is totally innocent of it, that said, okay I'll take over the museum but the first thing I want

out of it is THAT. And so it's now, it didn't have to go too far...it is now in Dallas in the Barnes Museum. But, if you think that wall is a little slightly bowed, it is partially my fault.

Nearly all these pieces really work. They don't accomplish much but they work. Like art.

The Kabal Series started as a kind of reactionary exaggeration of mine because I kept reading in the art magazines, some of my colleagues reconstructing art history qualitatively...giving certain values to...so and so was any good and so and so wasn't...which I think is no business of any live working artist because the focus really ought to be making room for everybody and everything. You just happen to be another one...instead of it's being attitudes being treated as real estate and who is the best. If you happen to write one of these articles, all you have to do is not include yourself and everybody assumes that you are the first. If you know that much about the rest, then you must be number one. And I think that's the popularity of this kind of article. But, it seemed to me that a great deal of joy was going down the drain by this kind of super-inhumane thinking. Which did not include the public at all. The art world was just tying knots in itself. Rewrapping and rewrapping, both kinds of (w)rap. And it depressed me because I work happily and I don't see anything unserious about enjoying working. In fact, it's very hard for me to work when I am depressed. I was in San Francisco at somebody else's exhibition and in the book room I found this book on Yoshitoshi, no wonder you can't remember it...I can only remember saki and sushi...and he was in the late eighteen hundreds both a printmaker artist and a journalist. I think that must be a gorgeous combination...a one-man band. He would cover disasters and things and make the drawings and the prints, because you had to do it that way in those days because you couldn't just print a photograph, and he also was an expert on ghosts and spirits. He did those very well too. The combination of his reportage and his hangup with the supernatural fascinated me. His titles did too. One of the pieces, a couple of the pieces are named exactly like the titles that he used. One of them is The Double Suicides of the Foreign Agents are the Moving Fever. And I like language very much too. I can't read but I love to write. So I started the beginning works from a title which I rarely do because usually what happens is that the title is the last color or the last brushstroke put on...the period or something at the end of a painting. It is only been about fifteen cases outside of the Kabal series that the title has ever helped the work while the work was being made. I think that The Brutal Taming of the Ways by Moonlight is also a literal title of his. Anyway, I got into this and I had a wonderful time because I was being so depressed by the whole art scene which was, like I said, just dealing with what I consider almost a religious experience, making art, by turning it into a competitive business. So that's how that series got started.

The Hoarfrost, gee, that's such a long time ago that I don't

remember. That's a Hoarfrost right there...those gauzy ones. It was layer on layer of images. That seems to be just one layer, but it certainly is, excuse the expression, beautiful there. I was tempted to try to figure out how I could make a rubbing on the wall and take it home and make an etching of that and print it on the back because those freckles are just perfect. When you go around you just see that.

#: When you do a solvent transfer, how do you get multiple images of the same picture?

RR: By more magazines and newspapers. When I stopped working with that it was just a disaster because I already had a subscription to nearly every magazine and newspaper, including Soviet...and then I stopped. The house, every day, gets filled with my subscriptions. And you can't stop those things either, they go ahead and sending them even if you don't pay the bill. Like for the...at a certain point all the magazines were going out of business and so the first thing they did was reduce the scale, which was not good for my business. Because, even Life magazine got this short...everything just shrunk. Look, which was the same size of the former Life, I think is gone completely...and so one of the only magazines that has the scale and double page, which gives you something else...well, two that I know of...one of them is the children's National Geographic, and how many pandas can you use in the lifetime of an artist...and the other one is called Soviet Life which I now think I have five subscriptions to, but it's big. Can't always use it but I feel that I am pretty safe doing things...this is a question you should have asked too...how much libel am I in by using it...and in most states the law is that if you don't use it in an edition then you are safe to make the transfer if it is a unique piece. Recently I have decided not to risk that at all, even in uniques, because then I can use the same images in a print and so I just use my own photographs and make my own screens. And that can be transferred once you have the photograph. You can use that as an etching or plain silkscreen or part of a drawing or painting.

#: Well then noone could claim that producing three images would be an edition.

RR: Oh, no. Because it is a single work.

#: Could you talk about this piece?

RR: No much. Not because I don't know anything about it but because what I know about it I don't want to give you. The notion of all my works, and has been from the very beginning, is that I am making a vehicle for your uniqueness and your responses and if any two of you agree on what any one of these works mean, then it must be weak work. It is not about that...it is an invitation to...like a mirror for your own individual differences. If I see, while I am making something, a logical relationship between an object and an image or vice versa or two

objects and two images, I do something else. So I am fighting that all the time. It sounds more difficult, but it is more fun. I was telling Rick the other day that the way I feel, when I know that I am really working, I feel invisible, but I want to be the first one to see the work. So I am the first spectator, but as an artist I am invisible, thus I am not applying all those wonderful values that I learned so seriously with Josef Albers who claimed "Art is a ****Schvendel****" and was proud of it. It may be, but you don't have to say it do you? I would rather think that art is an invitation to exercise your own imagination. But that is my own point of view. There are lots of artists who insist that you feel exactly the way they do or the way they did when they did the work. I knew John Cage very well at the time when we were touring together. I learned from him that there has to be room for everything. He claimed that it was a Zen idea. But I think it is not Zen, but Christian as well, or anything. That one idea does not get in the way of another. I always chew my lips when I get nervous. It's horrible. If you every see me at a show and I am not bleeding, you know that I haven't put everything into it. And I said that if there's room for everyone no matter how differently they think or work or see, but my responsibility as an artist is that there is enough room that I don't have to step on somebody else's foot, but if I stand still too long I might get in their way. But I don't really have to worry about that too much because my interest in both life and esthetics and materials is so anxious that I my curiosity is restless, plus the fact that I don't want to be one of those artists that does what they do well...I want to do it well, but at the point that I really know what I am doing and that edge of danger is off, that I don't feel frightened when I go to work...which is a dreadful thing to put yourself through everytime you go to work...but I feel dishonest when I don't feel as though I don't know what I am doing...and then you go ahead and do it.

RR: Two years ago we had a show of your photogravures and Sagimoto visited with us. I wondered if you could make a few comments about the notion of collaboration and maybe a remark or two about a collaboration that you particularly enjoyed and a collaboration that you found unenjoyable

RR: Right down the line of what I was just saying...one has to...if you are not interested in not being a really good egomaniac, inspite of fame, you have to keep looking for outlets, ways of avoiding a single-mindedness and collaboration is certainly a good one. The positive side of collaboration is that two people working together on a single idea gets to be more than two. And so the work has a chance of turning out to be much more than one and one. That's why I still work...that was one of these collaborations...it also leads to inventing new techniques because the artist and the technician, no matter what the medium is, have different points of view. But an interaction, and by the time you have switched say three steps, you have something that is unique, if both people are being responsive and nobody is being egotistic. It is another reason that I like working in

theater. Theater is a horrible medium. I mean, with the unions and the unnecessary expenses. The Resistance that they don't really have. In most cases an audience is not oriented to avant garde theater or new ideas. That hasn't changed as much as it has in paintings or sculpture. And I think that's because painting and sculpture are more like furniture and you can invest in it. You own it and you have to protect it. And Farke Bernet or Sotheby's comes along and proves you are right or wrong. It is like betting on horses. Theater is something that lasts live, or just one night or day and is gone. It can't be traded like horses and things. So I think that the audience there is still a little bit behind. The last formal collaboration that I did was with Trisha Brown Dance Company, who I absolutely love, and Laurie Anderson, who I think is wonderful. There were many kinds of ugly comings and goings there. I did the sets and costumes. I made six movies that were collaged together...the longest piece of footage was like this and you know how long that lasts... and then bought some surplus fabric from NASA and made this sort of pyramidal and trapezoidal with an inside form to, to break up the images even though the images were already broken up in film, to have this sort of informational glowing crystal. First of all it was on the stage and filled the stage completely. Comes in two sizes by the way...small stage and big stage...with five projectors or seven projectors. It sits there on the stage and just at the point where you think that where in the hell are the dancers going to go? it rises and so do the projectors and so the same shimmer of information (it is all black and white) hangs above the dancers throughout the whole piece. Trisha has been criticized, they always excuse her because her dancing is exquisite, but they think my set might be too lively. Trisha and I agree that it is an interesting experience to keep wondering if you should be looking at the set or at the dancing. And I did another one for her that was computer controlled, because you have to put the mind in somebody, shifts of rear projected screens twelve feet by thirty-five millimeter scale, eight feet maybe. One image just shifts after another, like ripples. She also got, I got criticized for that too you know, I didn't know which to watch. Well, what's wrong with that? You couldn't fall asleep. I think that's important.

The other one was, Trisha's last piece was a Nancy Graves piece and she got all kinds of awards for that and ...Nancy Graves is an artist in New York and she did the set... Terry and I went over...Trisha was doing the Alter Ego and the Prophetess in Carmen...the Bizet one? Very Bizet. And Lena Wurtmuller was doing the score for it and I just assumed that this would have to develop into a movie or at least a TV show and then I found out from Trisha that it wasn't going to be. Rather there were going to be nine live performances and so I thought, Christmas is coming and that's not really one of my better times, isn't that great...let's go to the theater for Christmas, in Naples Italy. And so Terry and I did that. While we were there Trisha had a week's performances coming after she finished Carmen. (By the way, Carmen was sensational. It was incredible. None of the dancers would, because they were all on some kind of union

relationship so there wasn't any personal involvement. So everybody was like, whenever Trisha could find a body that she could try to teach to do something, they wouldn't show up for three days because they had to work too hard. They were using up their sick leave...their unionized sick leave. She finally had to almost try to hide the Monte Carlo ballet company while six of her dancers just took over the stage. She can choreograph dynamically enough so that can happen. She was going to have the next week after she finished Carmen. This was the most beautiful theater that I have ever seen in Europe. But her manager had somehow managed to get all of her sets, costumes and equipment on the wrong boat, and besides that this boat was missing at sea. I was there hiding from Santa Claus and ended up in a nightmare situation of having to do all new costumes, sets etc. overnight. It was fun, I guess. It didn't feel like it because I also had tourista at the same time, and that doesn't go with anything no matter how much fun you are having. But we did it. Thank God that I was there because we really did fill that Opera House with some brand new work. Those are the kinds of stories that I have about collaboration. That's real collaboration. Hanging around Italian junkyards and then going to the finest Opera House a half an hour later and not even time to wash the crap off your hands and get busy with your rivit gun.

##: What got you into theater?

RR: The collaboration thing really. I first worked with Merce Cunningham and John Cage. I met them at Black Mountain College. I don't know, being an artist I have always had a response to materials...fabrics is one of those. I have a sense of color. We did some theater at Black Mountain College. In fact the only compliment I ever got from Josef Albers was when I designed and directed a Japanese NO play at Black Mountain. And then I worked for Paul Taylor and Viola Farber and Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer. By the time that I was working...that was called the Judson Group, we worked at the Judson Church right off that square in downtown New York...Lucinda Childs, Trisha and Judith Dunn...a lot of really great people came out of there. That was organized and probably the most successful democratic situation that I have ever been in. The dancers had no income. I mean, even Martha Graham is not rich yet...she may be nearly dead but she is not rich and she has been successful for the major portion of her life. There is no such thing as a rich dancer. You need space, you can't afford any rent and we started off in this church gymnasium and then moved upstairs when we had corrupted the Christians enough and we had the whole church to work in. We had a rule, and that was that we were there to experiment, which is usually a nasty word meaning nearly nothing, but in the case of the dance it did, because people would choreograph something and then they would need people and nobody could hire anybody. So anybody that showed up had to agree that whether they wanted to do what was asked of them or not it was none of their business and they would just have to do it. It forced a lot of changes in a lot of people that was very healthy. It stopped them from stereotyping themselves which is also anti-ego. It got a lot of

work done. The whole thing broke up when a different group of people became so good at what they were doing that they started getting outside fame and then started, not taking themselves too seriously because it was just seriously enough, but it broke that innocence of sharing because they started being protective of their own reputations. That was more collaboration. Since then I started doing my own choreography. I was too intimidated when I was working with Merce and John. I also did sound, which I wouldn't dare call music, and I didn't call my choreography dance either. It was called theater events.

#: When you were working with the Judson group, with a combination of dance and visuals, were you working from a premise where all those different elements were as important as one another, or were the sets supposed to be subordinate to the dances?

RR: Everything was up front. In the group was invented a word that we used to get away from the idea of dance. It was "task-movements" which means you have a job to do. We had musicians, sculptors, painters and dancers. And all in various degrees of maturity. But all having in common a curiosity and a desire to grow. That was your crew that you had to work with plus also extremely limited financial means. We performed in parking lots, rooftops...just any space that wouldn't run in...if you could move maybe four feet or so without running into something else, was a good spot.

#: You mentioned earlier that you couldn't work very well when you are depressed. What about when you are exhilarated?

RR: I think I only have two states. Some of my friends hate that.

#: Regarding your statement concerning responding to physical materials that you use in your work...what are, or are there, particular characteristics that you look for when you choose materials for this work...this piece of wood over that one?

RR: I really don't know. I'll have to make up something. I don't know whether...When I was in New York and I'd go around the block

END OF TAPED

CORPUS TWO

Copyright restrictions apply.

FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY. DO NOT DUPLICATE OR PUBLISH WITHOUT PERMISSION.

Contact archives@rauschenbergfoundation.org for reproduction requests

TRANSCRIBING FROM SIDE A CORPUS CHRISTI CASSETTE

ID: CORPUS.TWO

RR Interview with David Pickering - JC Caller (Times Newspaper)

##: I have been looking and looking trying to figure out what in the world the Kabal American Zephyr means.

RR: It's more or less a poetic humorous fictional name. I guess I was in need of some inspiration, it was in San Francisco when I saw this book on a Japanese reporter who was a reporter and an illustrator and was interested also in the occult. Some of his titles fascinated me. A couple of the titles are literally named after works of his. Double Suicide of the Two Foreign Clerks or the Moving Fever. You're a man of words, I mean, don't words turn you on too?

##: Some of these titles...my favorite out there is The Brutal Calming of the Waves By Moonlight. Is that from him?

RR: That's mine. It's...I had so much fun doing it because I like writing also which is strange because I have dyslexia and I find reading very difficult, but I don't find writing hard. Spelling takes a brutal beating and it takes more than moonlight to calm my spelling. I got into this and sometimes, but rarely, the title dictated the activity because usually the way I work, the titling is like the last brushstroke. It very rarely collaborates with the action that puts the objects together. It's the last color and puts the finishing touch. And I enjoy doing that part. It is almost like a ceremony and you know that you are officially finished. That piece is closed. But, also the Kabal series was...came about, I guess that was why I was so moved by the tragedy and the humor in this Japanese printmaker/reporter's works. I had really had...was really fed up with a lot of my contemporaries taking themselves so deadly seriously. Not that I don't take my artwork seriously but this was so seriously in like underline or in italics, meaning no humanity, no humor, no outside related communication. Self-conscious, art for art's sake and art only and I think that that plethora of that kind of purity really inspired as a protest this work. To open the associations and communications back up. It was a time when the artists themselves, with all those art magazines which God forbid that you should be so bored that you have to read them, were hiring, and they don't pay anything so it couldn't have been for financial gain it had to be ego only, different artists to reestablish the value, like reconstruct art history and assign priorities and preferences to it. That I think should be the last thing on an artist's mind. And if it is the last thing on your mind then you don't even have to do what I do which is I will not judge a show and I won't discuss relative values between artists. With John Cage a long time ago, we decided that there has to be room for everybody and the only problem is if you stand still too long you not only might step on somebody else's toe but you might get in their way. That's one

of the things which is easy for me to say and do because my curiosity is so restless anyway. Another thing that I wouldn't want to do is what I do well. That's another kind of artist, one who spends his philosophical life in search of what he does the best and then you might as well be in the real estate business. I am more interested...I feel like if I have some weaknesses, that is really my strength. I'm not trying to be cute about it but it is just that that means I haven't indulged in whatever area could be described as a weak spot. I haven't exercised that enough to have grown out of it. Fortunately, so far, I have been able to keep cultivating weak spots too.

**: You are talking about exploring weak spots?

RR: Yes. I quit doing these when I could do them so well. When I had the Kabals down. It no longer was a threat to me. Once...like, I knew the recipe. It wasn't...it didn't frighten me to do another one. And that was the end of the series. And I think that if I can't go to the studio and try to do something filled with doubt, then I'm not trying anything. That's what I mean about the weaknesses. But it's no easy job to be able to pinpoint what frightens you. For me, the way I work, I'm in trouble if I can't. Because it's that edge of danger that forces you, or invites you, to do things that you either haven't seen or you haven't done.

**: I notice you seem to be in theater, photography and politics and this and that. I think possibly the last thing in this show is '85 or around there. Are you doing anything describable right now?

RR: Well, traveling a lot. To really some pretty exotic places. The day before yesterday...yesterday was more fun...because yesterday I could say, "You'll never guess where I was yesterday". And nobody could...it was Helsinki. Direct. Here comes Bob Rauschenberg direct from Helsinki. Something sort of loses its power when it's the day after. Tonight I won't be able to say you can't guess where I was two days ago because anybody can be anywhere two days ago. And before that it was Stockholm and we came...from Helsinki we came to Corpus Christi and when we leave here we go to the National where up until a few minutes ago, the Japanese Embassy was hosting the party at the National because its celebrating my big show in Japan. It seems that, what's his name, the president, Mikisooni?, is making a surprise call to Washington and so the Embassy is so busy cleaning up its act that they have forgotten all about the little show at the National. So we might have to buy our own saki. And then, to New York and another exhibition and then back to Captiva.

**: Do you ever go back to Port Arthur?

RR: The last time I went back I had an exhibition in the memorial library there which my mother still to this day thinks is the greatest thing that I have ever done in my life..

** : Does she live in Port Arthur?

RR: No, but she was born there...no, she was born in Galveston and went to...I don't know when she went to Port Arthur, but anyway, my father--they lived there most of their life. They lived there when I went to the Navy, I was eighteen years old, so I guess they'd been around there a long time. We have a big family there, getting smaller though as they get older. They moved to...my father was promoted and they were sent to Lafayette Louisiana, so I grew up in Port Arthur but my sister more or less grew up in Lafayette. Lafayette is my home town now.

** : I have read some of your comments about Port Arthur.

RR: Well, okay. From the Houston show I waited til all my relatives went home and then I slipped down to Port Arthur romantically thinking that I could find some roots there that I might be able to adjust to so that I wouldn't think of it as just a great place to be away from. I was going to do that with a film. But Jesus, it was dreadful. In the first place I couldn't find anything that I remembered with any sweetness. It had been totally wiped out. And what had been put in its place was not that inviting. My dog died and it rained every day. So I'd say everything was back to normal. I did find one what I remembered Fort Arthur for. It was normal Port Arthur. We went, during that exhibition, one of the ladies from the museum took me to Pleasure Pier. I don't know if it is even still called that but it is across from the bridge. The bridge used to go direct from the court house out. There was a drawbridge and out to Pleasure pier where there was a roller coaster and a swimming pool and a dance hall. I was probably, maybe still in history the first non-swimming lifeguard anybody ever hired. I should have worn a button...if you can swim...swim...I can't. I just tan here.

** : Are those ostrich skin boots?

RR: There are from...they are cobra and I had them made in Thailand. The woman that drove us to dinner over there, it was a brand new first-class French restaurant where the swimming pool used to be. It was scary because she drove with a gun openly on the seat next to her. And she told me in no uncertain terms that she was ready to kill. You are the victim if somebody has that attitude. I mean, it's scary. Who knows what's going on in her head...what could trigger the trigger. If she's that scared already, she's not thinking clearly.

** : I almost brought you a bag of junk. I walk a lot and I pick up junk. I found a Book of Mormon laying in the middle of Chapparall Street the other day and I have a wonderful bag of stuff which I like.

RR: Well, you have a nice museum here...just get busy. Well, if you like seeing things...don't you like seeing things?...doesn't it make you think about things you weren't going to think about? Otherwise you just go through life half asleep. If you can't use

even changing the weather as something that you can move out on, to someplace that you've never been, well then what in the hell are you doing...sleep walking?

##: Are there some mediums that you would...when you were talking about not wanting to perfect your imperfections or your weaknesses, I am curious about the weaknesses you would like to go after.

RR: I have been thinking about glass lately. But it's so awkward. You have...you just don't do that in your lap, without getting burned. I always have to think of that particularly if I am going to indulge in the luxury of living on an island where nearly all the facilities that I encounter I have to create. I have three printing presses, a dark room, a silkscreen room, and my regular studio. I have a sculpture garden, of course, which probably looks like your paper bag. Except it's just bigger.

##: I heard about your collection.

RR: It is like I am raising the world's supply of lizards back there.

##: Where do you get this stuff...do people bring it to you?

RR: No, I just go after it. That's part of the beginning of the piece. Seeing something that...well, there's two kinds of things...something that I am already familiar with which is always somehow comforting to pick up. That's usually because of its availability. I don't know how many times I've said I'm never going to use a tire again but they are all over the place. All over the side of the road...looking like snakeskins. They need my first aid badly. Something about cardboard boxes, which I like to read. Some of them are really some of the best literature in any language. I did a part of the 1/4 Mile series, was I bought a bunch of books, talking about poetry, I bought a bunch of books that were... the next day they would have been in the garbage... I don't know how many, but it's five columns of them...like a Brancuzzi? or a Bernini? but they're just books. And I put them together more or less randomly, on a steel rod so they wouldn't be dangerous and wouldn't tip over. I wanted to do a keystone, an arch, with them and no way could I figure out how...I tried nearly every way I could to make that work and it just wouldn't...the books were too flexible or something...it wasn't like working with rocks. So then I got the very simple idea of just making columns. The poetry there is like how...like the titles of all the books...I think you get a serious idea about the variety of concerns from all parts of our imagination that exist. But mostly I get criticized for the fact that I have destroyed the books by boring a hole in them. But what I did was I gave the library...they took the books out, I didn't...on the grounds that anything that hadn't been checked out in fifteen years, they should just remove from the shelves so that they would have room for the new books. You can't build a new library every day. But I was criticized for that. I gave them enough

money to buy twice the number of books.

TVE: These are also the books that noone bought at the annual booksale where they cost a nickel a piece.

#: So there are the familiar objects, and then the not so familiar?

RR: I only pulled a couple out. One was the life story of Margot Fonteyn who is an old friend of mine and somehow I just wanted that myself. Another book was on sailing which I thought Terry might like because he does windsurfing and gliding and all those things and otherwise everything just went right along. There was a book on Will Rogers that I almost saved until I read too much of it and I found out that he was really too much of a reactionary bastard. Funnier than hell! In many cases he was on the wrong side...or not on my liberal side.

RR: Almost unfortunately, but that's another weakness there, and I am excusing myself for it because of the availability of it. It is a common object. It is not necessarily my fetish so much as that everybody is exposed to it. Speaking about cardboard...when I first moved to Florida I had been living in New York, which is of course extremely urban, for probably about twenty-five years. Having the treasures of the street, which are just incredible, there. If I wanted to do a whole new series of works I never had to walk more than around two blocks and usually it was around one block. To have a whole new palette. But if you move onto an island and you're too old for seashells and sandcastles and driftwood sculpture well then what in the hell do you do? It was then...usually I don't figure out answers to my problems. I usually just wait til they come up but this was forced on my with the move. I thought, what I really have to figure out now is something that I could do not just on an island, but something that I could do anywhere. What is it in the world that is everywhere? It was cardboard boxes. In the most remote part of China that I have been in there were still cardboard boxes. And I started the ROCI show with the cardboards to show people in remote parts of the world that you could make art even out of a cardboard box. Now the other kind of junk is something that forces you to do something that you've never done before. Get advise. A new challenge or encounter. I mean, if I look at something and I say "I could never use that" but it is something that has its own character, I'm not talking about the coffee pot there or something because I would probably not use that, and now that I've said that I will probably use it...but, I use the object...when I go to work successfully I go without a notion and I just look around. That's why I have to have things around. I just look around and as soon as I focus on something which I have not predicted...if I get it into my hands, well then the next step usually just follows subconsciously. And subconsciously doesn't mean that I am not paying attention, but I'd like to feel invisible while I am working and I like to be the first spectator.

KK: You don't spend a lot of time drawing?

RR: No. The only times I have to make drawings is when I have a mechanical problem. If something has to be put together and I have to illustrate how to do it because somebody else is going to be working on that...then I draw. But what I call drawings just come out of the same thing. You pick up a newspaper or some magazines or whatever you have...a piece of fabric and an old ribbon, and just start putting them together.

KK: You pick up stuff as you travel...stuff that you see?

RR: Yes, I do indeed.

KK: In cars, walking...

RR: I usually take photographs. I take my camera with me. I find that if I am photographing that is another way of getting into the specific subjects that I am surrounded by. It gives me an excuse. If I didn't have the camera I might not look at every shadow or crack in the sidewalk. I tend to do that anyway, but if I have the additional responsibility of recording it well then I have to. It keeps my mind off of important things. That's facetious, because I am actually thinking that those are the most important things. Knowing where you are I think solves so many...inventing a way to enjoy it would solve at least fifty percent of the world's problems and I think maybe that's a low estimate.

Terry does all these recording things. That's because the National wants my archives...I have lots of little strips of paper with lots of misspelled words on them and ideas that come to you...very abstract...about this marvelous moment of insanity just before...you are so tired you can't stay awake but you are not asleep yet? I love those by the way...everybody else has passed out one place or another and you're still not in bed and you have these things that half the time you don't know the next morning the slightest idea what it meant but it gives you something to think about to start the day. It's better than coffee. Terry sometimes picks up the scraps like that too. I have to make up some bullshit so he doesn't think that you're totally insane.

KK: I feel like I am trying, but can you tell us what you took photographs of today?

RR: The workmen right outside off the balcony. Because I think they's make good...a new office spot right outside. The way they were moving the materials around and the rearrangement of the people was like looking over some Egyptian workmen. There was a fantastic starstudded cement truck that I almost missed because I kept thinking about it and when I got the camera out and stuff it was gone. But it came back. So that's when I really got to work. Just the workmen moving around was like composing with big rods of steel, cranes, trucks and each time it was...those

figures were not unlike Giacommetti's and they were like punctuation in the sentence of construction. I thought it might make a nice...it looked very heroic. And timeless. What I really was supposed to do was go shopping for...which I don't really enjoy all that much. I like to do mail order shopping...more risk in that...because I don't like trying on things...for that Japanese party, but if what's his name, Nakasoni isn't going to show up why should I buy a new suit? I might just wear my Chinese one. I have this gorgeous Japanese tie and nothing is cheap in Japan anyway, but this was just a last minute, you know, having some more yen in my pocket, and I hadn't had a chance to go shopping and was trying to avoid it...we left Japan early because it was so expensive, we couldn't afford to stay another day, but anyway. I thought, well I'll buy something. I got this really gorgeous knockout tie, with beautiful Japanese classic waves in it and so I was trying to dress around that. The tie is so outlandish that I have to dress down for it in order just to stay on the same plane. And so I thought a black suit would work. Plus the Japanese wear black all the time anyway. They wear white or black. They're very stylish.

(SOMETHING I CAN'T FOLLOW...TWO INTERVIEWERS TALKING AT ONCE ABOUT VARIOUS DIFFERENT PLACES TO GET GOOD JUNK, LACK OF GOOD JUNK IN ALASKA, AND SOMETHING ABOUT SOMETHING BURIED)

Did he get sued? Because that guy who buried the Cadillacs is sued the Hard Rock Cafe in Los Angeles.

I'm sorry I rambled along but that's the way I work.

TRANSCRIBING FROM SIDE B OF CORPUS CASSETTE

Catherine Childers KIII-TV

RR: You don't need them as much as they need **** on Captiva. And it's an old family and I don't know, they said there were twenty heads, not counting the kids, and so one day, Buddy wanted to, needed some new tires or a new truck or something and he had to borrow two hundred dollars and so I said Okay Buddy, under one condition only..."what's that Mr. Bob" ...okay, I'll give you the two hundred dollars and you don't have to pay me back, what you have to do is never call me "Mr. Bob" again. He makes me sound like some kind of racist plantation owner and that's in front of everybody. And so he said, "Okay, Mr. Bob". And so I never tried it again.

**! Joining us here at the Art Museum of South Texas today is Robert Rauschenberg who is here for the opening of the exhibit of his work here at the museum. Bob, you are from Port Arthur Texas, how do you feel your Texas childhood has influenced your work?

RR: I think it has made me more ambitious in the sense of finding new ways every day not to have to go back to Port Arthur. I mean, it's a wonderful place but I wouldn't want to visit there.

**: When did you first decide to become an artist, or that you were interested in art?

RR: It was after I was in the Navy. It wasn't exactly that I was such a late bloomer, but growing up in Port Arthur, there was never any kind of concept, I mean, there wasn't a possibility of being an artist. What was an artist? I was a very slow learner and I could see that some things were not photographs but I never figured out that they were paintings. And so I was in the Navy and I was visiting out in California, and I was visiting the Hunting Hartford collection...actually I went there to see the cactuses, because I am interested in plants...and they had a museum on the grounds. It sounds very naive, but it truly happened this way...they had the Blue Boy and Pinkie and I thought, my God, I know those pictures...they are on playing cards. And afterwards I started thinking through it and maybe that's why I like to draw. In the first place I am dyslexic which makes it very difficult for me to read. I kept getting further and further behind in my studies but my books kept getting more interesting because as I got to draw better that is what I would do...when I was not reading I would draw on the books...but I still did not know that that meant that I could be an artist.

**: Who influenced you the most in your early career?

RR: You mean like other artists? My mother still says, "I don't know from where he gets it...certainly not from me and certainly not from his father"...so everybody is willing to claim fame for being my influence. I don't know. I think that somehow being, having a handicap about reading and the dyslexia thing goes beyond that. It gives you no sense of organized time.

**: In the artwork that you have on exhibit here is there any particular kind of theme or interest that you would like people to notice about the work or to get out of the work specifically?

RR: Most...well, the Kabal series which is most of the objects, this is Hoarfrost, that's something else...had a motive. It started as a reactionary response that I had to an awful lot of my artist friends who had reached acclaim, taking themselves so deadly seriously. And I am more attracted to pleasure than I am to being right or wrong. I once said that there are so many more interesting things to be than right.

**: So there is a real playful quality in the work?

RR: Yes, because they were spirited by, as I was telling Rick earlier, that I was in San Francisco and they were having a show of oriental works and there was a newspaper reporter who was also

a printmaker and an expert on ghosts. The combination of putting facts with phantoms all in one...one of the pieces here is The Double Suicide of the Two Foreign Agents or The Moving Fever. And so the titles were so fantastic. And usually I title at the very end.

**: We will have to stop now. Thank you so much for joining us and please come down to the Art Museum of South Texas for this important exhibit...Robert Rauschenberg. Work from Four Series. Will be on exhibit until June 7th.

Diane Finlayson KKED-PBS Radio

RR: Terry likes to hire the handicapped. We didn't want you to think we were prejudiced or something.

**: The program is called State of the Art and is a half-hour program. If you could talk for maybe fifteen or twenty minutes about some of the things you have done or where you have been. You studied with Josef Albers at Black Mountain College...why did you choose to go out to North Carolina? Your family had been in El Paso weren't they? Somewhere in Texas?

RR: No, at that time they were in Lafayette Louisiana. But, we were from Port Arthur Texas and I was over in Paris as an art student and it was the first time...I had gone to the Kansas City Art Institute and had not gotten deep enough into taking art courses because you had to...well, I was taking art courses, like anatomy and the skeleton was like preparing to like pick up a greasy brush filled with juicy colors. So when I went to Paris, because I thought, I believed this sort of misunderstood overheard stories that an artist HAD to go to Paris to BE an artist. I thought that was where artists CAME from. But the only thing that happened was that I was about twenty-five years too late. I was like the students there, my contemporaries, were like a bunch of rotten acorns. The trees, the giants, the Picassos, the Matisses, the LeChaise, had crowded out several generations of artists by their greatness. So I started painting on the streets, not the streets themselves, I still used canvas but it was my first time, and I got so excited about using color and the texture of paint and all that, because it was the first time, that I wouldn't even let a brush come between me and the color and my models. I was painting with my hands. I had the sense, I don't know where it came from, to realize that if I didn't get some discipline, that I not only wouldn't have any clean clothes to wear anymore, but I was not going to develop into anything. Time Magazine had an article saying that Josef Albers, talking at Black Mountain College, was the world's greatest disciplinarian. I somehow had the sense to know that that was what I needed and that is why I went there. He had a very strange fixation on disliking me. Because I think that he already understood, even though I hadn't done any "Rauschenbergs"

that my feeling for pleasure and excesses was maybe something that he had been frustrated with all of his life. Putting it into some German squares. I think that he really did like me but he was extraordinarily cruel and intimidating. I was certainly a good marker for it because I was very modest, meek. Even though I had an enormous appetite and curiosity it was all unexplored and he taught me through fear. Which is was not unused to actually. Like I said, I was a good boy the whole time I was growing up...I went to school and to church---I was going to be a preacher...then when I found out that you couldn't dance in our church I just gave it up...I asked the preacher, why can't I dance? He said yes, but other people seeing you dance might be misled. I thought well what CAN you do that wouldn't mislead somebody? I decided that I wasn't going to be a preacher.

** : Speaking of dance, did you meet Merce Cunningham and John Cage while you were at Black Mountain?

RR: Yes. I met them both at Black Mountain. I also met Buckminster Fuller and some outstanding scientists and physicists. It was an incredible place.

** : You have done some sort of collaboration with Cunningham and Cage. What did you do?

RR: Actually, that went on for a lot of years. So long that I have also...we had a reunion and I did another collaboration with them after ten years of absence. I toured around the world with them. I did the costumes and sets and lights and the janitor work. If you do the costumes, you better be sure that there are no splinters on the stage and no two hundred year old pin sticking out if you are not traveling with your magic kettles to dye another fabric. I've worked also with other dancers...Paul Taylor and I am now Chairman of the Trisha Brown Dance Company. I guess our last work was a collaboration with Laurie Anderson...Trisha and myself.

** : What did you do with that then?

RR: I did a fabric covered set probably twenty-five feet high and thirty feet wide...which were like stretched fabric pyramidal crystals inverted in the middle...something to break up projected images. I made collaged movies to be projected onto this unit and Laurie and myself were all well aware of what each other were doing and we indulged in the changes and we were all very severe critics of each other's works and I think it turned out very well. I also went all over New York and did photographs of architectural details of New York buildings and made silkscreens of those and printed them on transparent fabric and then I had the big problem of convincing the dancers that they didn't have to worry about being exposed that the dance was too interesting for anybody to just sit and stare through their costumes.

** : That could be very interesting. Is there a title for it?

RR: Yes, Set and Reset.

#: Is it being toured with the dance company?

RR: Yes, right now. Trisha travels with it.

#: You have an interest in travel and you mentioned that you traveled around the world with Cage and Cunningham. Also something that I came upon is the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange. What is that?

RR: I also am political...another vice. I just think that people are going about the business of peace in completely the wrong way. You don't divide weapons that could wipe out the world and call that peace. Peace is another animal. You have to first think about what causes war. Fear causes war. Insecurity and lack of trust. The other way that you could get rid of the germs that make the war is by communicating with the different people. Let everybody know what each other are really thinking or what they are made of. And the politicians make and break their fame from obscuring all these things. So that nearly everybody is elected not because of what they might accomplish but out of fear if you don't vote for them. If you could spend just a small portion of the military budget on educating people and communicating from country to country I think that we would get rid of this whole problem. I know that sounds a little bit naive but in a very small one-man attack...because I think you have to think of peace as something much harder to accomplish than war...most people think of peace as a kind of lack of war and it's not that...lack of war is just a pause between wars...it doesn't make peace. Peace is a live energy that has to be cultivated and worked on even harder than war. War is simple. Peace is difficult. ROCI is a one-man attempt to show different, disparate parts of the world how other people live. When I was working in China, eight years ago, I didn't find that the oppression, the censorship and the lack of individuality to be the most depressing thing...the most depressing thing was that generation after generation has grown up having no idea what the rest of the world is doing or thinking or eating or drinking. What they worship? What do they look like? Are they light, dark, tall, fat...how do they dance? I had already had the idea but I couldn't implement it. I was moved enough to insist that I carry it through. So far officially I've only been to Mexico City, Chile (we call these "sensitive" areas, we don't call them Third World because they are not necessarily Third World...just sort of people in trouble and people who for one reason or another have been cut out of contact) In Chile we had revolution, two earthquakes. We had to repair the museum that was built by Eiffel. We went to Caracas (VENEZ) and Terry and I went up and down the Amazon and we did bush hopping in a plane and visited tribes that in some cases had never even seen a white man (or whatever we are...I call myself an alien...I call them the people) and then we went to an enormous show in Beijing, China which was certainly unheard of. We had the entire museum, the National Museum, which is acres and acres of space. I

financed this all myself so far. I am looking for a sponsor. Because I thought if I can get through this...I had to sell a Warhol and a Twombly and spend all the money that I could make selling my own work in order to get through this because it's about a half a million dollars per country for the insurance and the travel. Then we went to Tibet. It was totally unheard of. It was the first art show that the Tibetans had ever seen.

#: And what an art show it must have been for them too!

RR: I made special sculptures. I was frightened about working for and doing the Tibetan show. I couldn't afford to go there. It is so difficult to get in and I couldn't afford to go there and do the usual investigatory work...and pick up materials and then go back and then work and then come back...it is just not that accessible. I had to figure out what would really turn the Tibetans on. I made a lot of sculpture. I think that I hit it right on. I always thought that if I had been reincarnated or something one of my places would have been Tibet because I don't know any artist in the world that worships old rags and bones and rocks any more than I do and have from the very beginning without any academic justification for it. I wanted to tell you the other story. If we hit those spots then our credibility would be built up so that some beer company or Canon camera, because we use an awful lot of photography and I do photograph and Terry does video...

Oh, I didn't finish telling you about what ROCI was about...

We had video from Sri Lanka, places that we had been, from Thailand, Mexico, all the real spots that we have had the big shows and we would do some American collage cartoons and the show is totally multimedia and is dedicated to ...the whole endeavor is dedicated to world peace by sharing information. And everywhere we go we take part of that work and show it to the next place. We want to go through Africa now, including Egypt and Morocco and hopefully to Russia. I think we have...I don't have any more money, and that's another problem...I didn't have that much before anyway. When we were in Chile, and I didn't have...because I thought politically to have a big show in China and possibly in Tibet at that time that that would be a much more interesting way to wind up my bankruptcy. To begin bankruptcy...I don't know what you do with bankruptcy. We were going to have to skip Venezuela. What happened was the Venezuelan airforce...I said I can't afford the transportation...because China from Chile, you know, that's a long way...the Venezuelan Air Force volunteered to fly down to Chile, who has been their enemy since the dictatorship...and I said, like, call first. Make sure you call. The Air Force flew down and picked up nine tons of artwork and flew it back to Venezuela. At that time I thought, wow, that's another way to stop wars, if we just kept all the battleships and the planes busy transporting art...I am sure all the artists would cooperate. Then they would not have time for all those dirty ideas about killing.

##: Is this then one of the nine additional sets, is your ROCI project a set of works like the sets of works that are being displayed here? Or are there nine fully separate ones besides these...

RR: This is completely separate. There are sculptures from...there are some Hoarfrosts which is one of the series here...I don't know if there is any cardboard here...okay, there is cardboard. Actually, I started the cardboard...those are my earliest works. I didn't want to make it a retrospective because it's too tedious. It misses the point. I started arbitrarily or deliberately with the cardboard pieces because at one point in my life when I moved to an island in Florida I was out of reach of all the urban refuse...as I said earlier to a reporter...I was too old for sandcastles, I had never been interested in driftwood sculpture and shells bore me...so I had to figure out what in the hell I was going to work with. This was a real problem. A dilemma. I figured out what they had everywhere was cardboard boxes. It was a shell. If people can see that they too can make art with the most common things surrounding them, well then that's one lesson to have encouraged some creative thinking.

##: What else would you hope that people from the area would see in the work that you have here? It is not a typical art exhibition that we are seeing. What would you hope someone coming in could get from it?

RR: I have to go back one step. People are always asking me what I mean by this particular thing. What I try to do is to put things together in such a way, hopefully provocative, as an invitation to mirror another person's unique responses. So that if any two people can explain a single work the same way, then I have failed. They are just invitations for unique fantasizing.

##: It is so nice hearing you say that you have worked with Laurie Anderson because I really admire her...

RR: She does great visual works too. In fact, when I was showing this same show in Houston, she had an exhibition of her visual works and they were every bit as provocative as her musical works.

RR: I broke my arm on my first attempt, no my second attempt at skiing. The first one I was terrific. I was so good. I had this instructor that was just a maniac...just a German devil. He took me directly to the top of the hill...even Terry had trouble getting down and he's a professional practically...and it's my second day and I am so sore from the first day...I don't know if you've ever had ski boots on but they are not the most comfortable things anyway...this one...I rented these and said, boy these really hurt...they're supposed to hurt...but this much?...and I realized somebody outside the boots wouldn't have the slightest idea what I meant by "this much?". I lost two toenails from two days of skiing. The big things turned black

and fell off. The shin muscles that you normally don't use...it's a wonderful sport isn't it? I broke my wrist and I couldn't wait to get that cast off. But after I got the cast off then I was really helpless! As long as it was on I could still write and paint and I didn't stop working and this "thing" came out. It was like a dead eel or something that couldn't function.