
RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: McClintic, Miranda / Questions on Duchamp and the Found Object /
Recycling Reality, 1991

4. How well did you know Yves Klein, Arman, Tinguely, and Niki de Saint Phalle from your shared participation in two early exhibitions: Le Nouveau Realisme a Paris et a New York; and 1960 Martha Jackson's "New Forms New Media" June-July 1961 at the exhibition Le Nouveau Realisme a Paris et a New York organized at the galerie Rive Droit by Pierre Restany and Jean Larcade? This exhibition, according to Restany's preface, showed that there existed a common sensibility in the United States and Europe which shared an underlying assumption that "L'appropriation directe du reel est las loi de notre present." Was there a common sensibility? Did attitudes toward ordinary objects differ relative to nationality, as well as personality?
5. What were the general differences between New York and European artists, particularly in attitudes toward ordinary objects?
6. When Black Market was first presented, did people ever follow properly your instructions for exchanging objects? Now, as I'm sure you know, the Ludwig Museum in Koln keeps the suitcase tightly shut. What ended the participatory aspect of the work? How does that change meaning of Black Market from your original idea? Can you tell me what that title suggested to you?
7. What are your favorite -- or most frequently used -- objects? Do they mean different things in different works?
8. How important were ordinary objects in your dance and theater pieces? Which works are the most interesting in this regard? Do you remember saying something about "happenings have to do with the animation of objects"? How did the use of objects in happenings relate to their role in your performances? Can you talk about your set for The Construction of Boston 1961? I know it's a long time ago, but it is a work that has not been much discussed.
9. Would you elaborate on your statement about operating in the gap between art and life and how that has related to your consistent use of ordinary objects? What did you mean by the statement? How did it relate to John Cage, and or/Duchamp. That quote has been interpreted by many critics and adapted by other artists. Is the idea that a work of art is a bridge or intersection between the two worlds of art and life? Is an ordinary object that is re-used in art a point of intersection?
10. Calvin Thompkins quoted you in 1968 as saying "I think a picture is more like the real world when it's made out of the real world" Is that still your conviction? How do you compare the realism of photography as compared to the realism of objects?

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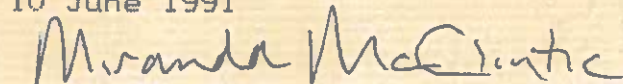
You are one of the major "found object artists" of the twentieth century. I would be most grateful for an opportunity to learn your answers to any of these questions, in whatever form is easiest for you. Would a telephone interview be possible?

Is there any chance we might be able to meet for an hour in Washington? I will be there the 13th and 14th to see your two exhibitions. I am going to the Corcoran opening Friday night and also plan to attend the press conference at the Corcoran with you and Walter Hopps.

Thank you for your time and consideration. My fax # is (212)427-7781.

Sincerely,

Miranda McClintic
10 June 1991



cc: Ritz Hotel
Corcoran Gallery of Art

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RR Interview 7/91 for MIRANDA McCLINTIC book
Recycling Reality: The Found Object in 20th C. Art

Robert Rauschenberg

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Q. WOULD YOU TELL ME THE STORY BEHIND YOUR BOTTLE RACK BY DUCHAMP?

RR. MARCEL, JASPER AND I WERE IN AN EXHIBITION OF "OBJECTS AND ART" IN THE TIME/LIFE BUILDING. MARCEL HAD CONTACTED MAN RAY TO GET SOME BOTTLE RACKS IN PARIS. MAN RAY DIDN'T KNOW WHICH ONE WAS THE CLASSIC, SO HE SENT SIX VARIATIONS. EITHER MARCEL OR MOYER PICKED THE "CLASSIC" ONE AND IT WAS IN THE EXHIBITION.

I WAS HAVING DINNER WITH MOYER, WHO TOLD ME "EVERYTHING IN THE EXHIBITION IS FOR SALE." I ASKED, "HOW MUCH FOR THE BOTTLE RACK?" AND HE REPLIED "ABOUT THREE DOLLARS." I BOUGHT IT.

YEARS LATER, WHEN JASPER LIVED ON THE FLOOR ABOVE ME, HE BOUGHT THE GREEN BOX BY DUCHAMP. I ALWAYS SUPPOSED IT WAS AGAINST THE CONSCIENCE OF THE READY-MADES FOR DUCHAMP TO SIGN THEM, BUT WHEN JASPER ASKED HIM TO SIGN THAT PIECE, I THOUGHT WHAT THE HELL AND ASKED TEENY IF HE WOULD SIGN MY PIECE. "OH, BOB," SHE SAID, "DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, MARCEL WILL SIGN ANYTHING." WHEN HE SIGNED IT HE SAID, IN FRENCH, "IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO REMEMBER THE TITLE."

MEANWHILE, TEENY HAD ONE OF THE BOTTLE RACKS IN HER FIREPLACE. I TOLD HER SHE DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT ONE, SO SHE ASKED ME TO DRAW IT. TURNS OUT I HAD THE ORIGINAL AND TEENY WASN'T PLEASED THAT SHE HAD THE WRONG ONE.

THE FIRST BOTTLE RACK WAS THROWN OUT OF DUCHAMP'S HOUSE BY HIS SISTER, SUZANNE VALDON. (NOTE: CHECK SPELLING OF LAST NAME.)

Q. YOU ONCE SAID THAT DUCHAMP'S LIFE AND WORK WERE A CONSTANT INSPIRATION. HOW DO DUCHAMP'S READY-MADES RELATE TO YOUR USE OF FOUND OBJECTS?

RR. DUCHAMP'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE FACT THAT ANY FACT OR OBJECT COULD BE A WORK OF ART. IT WAS SIMPLY A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE AND ATTITUDE.

Q. HOW WELL DID YOU KNOW YVES KLEIN, TINGUELY...?

RR. THE FIRST TIME I MET YVES KLEIN WAS WITH TINGUELY AT DUCHAMP'S HOUSE IN NEW YORK. KLEIN WAS AGGRESSIVELY DEFENSIVE BECAUSE TINGUELY HAD TOLD HIM ABOUT THE ALL WHITE PAINTINGS, DONE THREE YEARS BEFORE KLEIN'S ALL BLUE.

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Q. WHAT WERE THE GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NEW YORK AND EUROPEAN ARTISTS, PARTICULARLY IN ATTITUDES TOWARD ORDINARY OBJECTS?

RR. THAT WAS THE PRIME TIME THAT AMERICAN ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS WERE STILL FIGHTING THEIR COMPETITION IN EUROPE. ANY AFFECTION WITH THE ORDINARY SEEMED TO BE ABUSIVE AND NO MORE THAN HUMOR.

Q. WHEN **BLACK MARKET** WAS FIRST PRESENTED, DID PEOPLE EVER FOLLOW PROPERLY YOUR INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXCHANGING OBJECTS? ...WHAT ENDED THE PARTICIPATORY ASPECT OF THE WORK? HOW DOES THAT CHANGE THE MEANING OF **BLACK MARKET** FROM YOUR ORIGINAL IDEA? CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT THAT TITLE SUGGESTED TO YOU?

RR. **BLACK MARKET** WAS CREATED TO ENFORCE AN OPTIMISTIC ATTITUDE ABOUT SOCIETY AND IN PERFORMANCE WAS NEVER TRULY REALIZED. THE FIRST TIME IT WAS EXHIBITED WAS IN WASHINGTON, D.C. WITH THE ALICE DENNY GALLERY. A LOT OF IMPORTANT AVANT GARDE ARTISTS SHOWED UP AND PARTICIPATED. THE PUBLIC STOLE THEIR DRAWINGS OF THE EXCHANGES THEY MADE WITHOUT CONTRIBUTING PERSONALLY THEMSELVES.

THE CONCEPT OF THE PIECE WAS THAT ANYONE COULD HAVE A RAUSCHENBERG FOR NOTHING. AND THAT WAS ABUSED. THE DIRECTIONS WERE IN FIVE LANGUAGES. THERE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANY CONFRONTATION DIRECTIONALLY, EXCEPT FOR THE IMPULSE OF GREED. THEREFORE IT PROBABLY WAS WELL TITLED.

Q. WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE, OR MOST FREQUENTLY USED, OBJECTS? DO THEY MEAN DIFFERENT THINGS IN DIFFERENT WORKS?

RR. BECAUSE OF THE LOGISTICS OF MATERIALS AVAILABLE, I FOUND THAT THE WORLD TENDS TO LEAN TOWARD VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL, WHICH IMPOSES A RESTRICTION OF SQUARES. SO, LOOKING INTO NATURAL LIFE TO COUNTERACT THIS, I FOUND UMBRELLAS AND NECKTIES AS A RELIEF...AND BICYCLES. I'M NOT PROUD OF THE REPETITION OF THESE IMAGES, BUT THEY PERSIST.

Q. HOW IMPORTANT WERE ORDINARY OBJECTS IN YOUR DANCE AND THEATER PIECES? WHICH WORKS ARE THE MOST INTERESTING IN THIS REGARD? DO YOU REMEMBER SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT "HAPPENINGS HAVE TO DO WITH THE ANIMATION OF OBJECTS"? HOW DID THE USE OF OBJECTS IN HAPPENINGS RELATE TO THEIR ROLE IN YOUR PERFORMANCES? CAN YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR SET FOR **THE CONSTRUCTION OF BOSTON, 1961**?

RR. I NEVER MADE HAPPENINGS. THAT WAS KAPROW, DINE AND OLDENBURG. I MADE THEATER EVENTS.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF BOSTON WAS WITH THE POET KENNETH KOCH. FOUR ARTISTS--JEAN TINGUELY, NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE, OYVIND FAHLSTROM AND MYSELF--WERE GIVEN CATEGORIES. I CHOSE "PEOPLE" AND "WEATHER" FROM FOUR CATEGORIES ESTABLISHED BY THE POET. I HAD VIOLA FARBER AND STEVE PAXTON TO BE THE PEOPLE. ON STAGE THEY HAD TO GO THROUGH A MOCK "FROM MORNING TO NIGHT."

I HAD A WEATHER HOSE AND 20 GALLONS OF WATER TO EVOKE RAIN. BUT JUST BEFORE THE EVENT, BILLY KLUVER ASKED WHAT THE HANGING ROPE WAS FOR AND PULLED IT, WHICH SET OFF THE BARRELS OF RAIN THAT WERE FOR THE PERFORMANCE. THE AUDIENCE WAS ANGRY AGAIN BECAUSE WE HAD TO MOP THE STAGE.

I WAS SHY ENOUGH THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO DELIVER MY OWN LINES OF POETRY, EVEN THOUGH I WAS TOTALLY DISGUISED. FRANK STELLA DELIVERED MY LINES AS MY PERSONA AND DEvised AN APPARATUS--BECAUSE HE WAS AS SHY AS I--THAT PROJECTED WHAT HE WAS SUPPOSED TO SAY. THE LINES WERE FLASHED ON A SCREEN HE WAS CARRYING. SO IT WAS A TRIPLE INCOGNITO.

Q. WOULD YOU ELABORATE ON YOUR STATEMENT ABOUT OPERATING IN THE GAP BETWEEN ART AND LIFE AND HOW THAT HAS RELATED TO YOUR CONSISTENT USE OF ORDINARY OBJECTS?.....

RR. THE FULL MEANING IS WITHIN THE MESSAGE, AND STILL EXISTS.

Q. CALVIN TOMKINS QUOTED YOU IN 1968 AS SAYING "I THINK A PICTURE IS MORE LIKE THE REAL WORLD WHEN IT'S MADE OUT OF THE REAL WORLD." IS THAT STILL YOUR CONVICTION? HOW DO YOU COMPARE THE REALISM OF PHOTOGRAPHY AS COMPARED TO THE REALISM OF OBJECTS?

RR. ART BUILDS ITS OWN FENCE. WHETHER IT IS A THREE-DIMENSIONAL OBJECT OF FAMILIARITY OR A REPRESENTATION OF IT, THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BECAUSE IN THE VIEWER'S PERCEPTION IT ONLY CAN EVOKE THEIR OWN STIMULATION AND HISTORY.

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