

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation
Hunter College MA in Art History

Sugar Bags (Urban Bourbon), 1993

RE'AL CHRISTIAN



fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Sugar Bags (Urban Bourbon)*, 1993
Silkscreen ink and acrylic on enameled aluminum, 23 $\frac{7}{8}$ \times 23 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches (60.5 \times 60.5 cm)
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Sugar Bags (Urban Bourbon), 1993

Robert Rauschenberg completed his *Urban Bourbons* between 1988 and 1996. They are the longest running and largest series of his "metal paintings," which he began during the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI).¹ Coming just after his *Shiner* and *Glut* series, assemblages that initiated his fascination with metal supports and appendages, the approximately two hundred *Urban Bourbons* focused on silkscreened images of his own photographs taken mostly during his ROCI travels. Executed on enameled, mirrored, and anodized aluminum, the series is characterized by its glowing, at times garish, colors and Rauschenberg's signature planar and grid-like compositions, distributed in a manner analogous to collage. The artist also chose to mark most of the *Urban Bourbons* with a splash of acrylic paint that mimics both the drips and gestural swaths of Abstract Expressionist brushwork and unruly puddles of spilt liquid. Each piece bears its own frenetic energy, at once effusive and explosive; the title of the series itself alluding to a state of inebriation that is invigorating, albeit short-lived.

For *Sugar Bags*, completed in 1993, Rauschenberg cropped an image of a pile of burlap bags to a perfect square filling nearly the entire composition, with the exception of a thin strip at the bottom (fig. 1). There he signed his name with a black paint pen, an inscription that is difficult to see against the jet-black background. The overexposure of the source photograph is evident in the tones and textures of the final silkscreen print, with certain details in the seams and creases of the bags obliterated by the flash of the artist's camera. While Rauschenberg did not use the photographic negative for the screen, he created a solarizing effect by using bright red acrylic for the shadows of the image, leaving the black background to fill the lighter space that increases in intensity from left to right. A barely discernable trace of gestural brushwork, painted in a reddish-brown tone near the center, complements the image. Incorporating both flat, silkscreened layers and quick flourishes of paint over metal, the artist acknowledges the reality of the two-dimensional support, while simultaneously bringing the outside world—viewer included—into the picture through the subtly reflective surface.² The "painting's" appearance, with the soft, dark luster of its aluminum background, is altered by fluctuations in ambient light and the vantage point of the viewer. All told, the image wavers between figuration and abstraction. At first, it suggests a geometric or organic surface pattern; only upon closer looking do the contours and texture of a three-dimensional stack of bags emerge, piled on from left to right (figs. 2 and 3). Given the tapered edges and slightly rounded forms, one might mistake this visceral image for a close-up view of cells or reptilian skin.

HOW TO CITE THIS ESSAY

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figs. 2 and 3

Left and right: Silkscreen index image of sugar bags, printed from black-and-white negative, Cuba, August 1987. Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



In comparison to the polychromatic, collage-like compositions that comprise a majority of the *Urban Bourbon* series, *Sugar Bags* stands out for its single-image print, darker color palette, and striking dichromatic contrast of cherry-red acrylic silkscreen ink on an enameled black aluminum sheet. It appears uncommonly somber and filled with tension when juxtaposed with the exuberant celebration of city life evident in the artist's other paintings. Unlike the other *Urban Bourbons*, the errant splash and gestural swipe (like his signature) are barely discernable, subsumed by the dichromatic color scheme. Indeed, *Sugar Bags* is an outlier in this series and arguably among the metal paintings on the whole. While Rauschenberg based some other works on a single image, in those cases the lone photograph captures diverse objects, wide backgrounds, and deep spatial dimensions, much more expansive subject matter than the banal repetition of a single module—the burlap sack—foregrounded in *Sugar Bags*. For example, he composed *Portal* and *Palm Sunday* from the *Night Shade* series (1991; figs. 4 and 5) with only

fig. 4

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

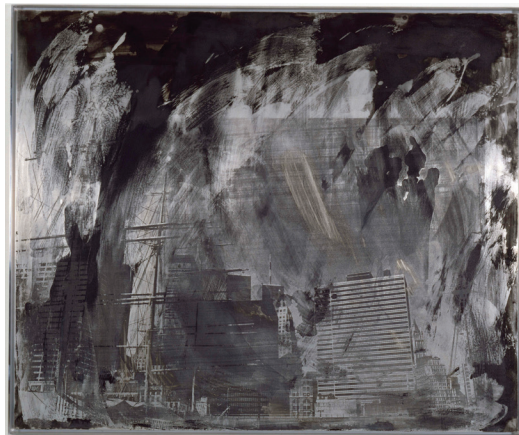


fig. 5

Robert Rauschenberg, *Palm Sunday* (*Night Shade*), 1991. Tarnish and silkscreen ink on brushed aluminum, 36 × 47 3/4 inches (91.5 × 121.4 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 6

Robert Rauschenberg, *Cuban Diary (Diario Cubano) / ROCI CUBA*, 1988. Silkscreen ink and enamel on stainless and galvanized steel. 84 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 180 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (215.3 \times 459.1 \times 3.8 cm). Long Museum, Shanghai.



one silkscreened image each, but the respective photographs feature broad shots of landscapes and cityscapes, incorporating multiple objects in a complex visual field that is further obfuscated by a matte black medium.³ In no other example does a single image occupy the entire surface area as it does in *Sugar Bags*, becoming coterminous with the dimensions of the metal support. Made toward the end of the nearly decade-long production of the *Urban Bourbons*, the work shares more with the reductive visual strategies and haunting presence of the black-and-white *Night Shades* and *Phantoms* (1991), despite its red glow. For this reason, *Sugar Bags* complicates our understanding of the *Urban Bourbons*, but it is perhaps the best example from the series showing how Rauschenberg intended to challenge and move on from his multifarious, collage-based compositions.

The artist took the photograph that forms the basis of *Sugar Bags* in August 1987, while working in Cuba on his 1988 *ROCI CUBA* exhibition. In preparation for the latter, he took black-and-white shots of the country's agriculture and architecture, which he then silkscreened in vivid hues onto aluminum and steel panels. The vibrant colors in the *ROCI CUBA* series relate to those of the American cars still present in Havana when the artist visited, remnants of a time before Castro's revolutionary rise to power in 1959.⁴ Rauschenberg spent August traveling around various parts of the country to gather images for *ROCI CUBA*, but the location of *Sugar Bags* was likely in Havana; other photographs taken the same day—August 19, 1987—capture well-known monuments in the city, such as the statue of José Martí in the Parque Central and the National Theatre of Cuba.

Rauschenberg used two different photographs of the bags—one straight on, the other from the side—in several of the *ROCI CUBA* metal paintings. Unlike the single image he used in *Sugar Bags*, the *ROCI* paintings incorporate the photographs into larger, vibrantly colored, collaged compositions, including *Cuban Diary (Diario Cubano)*; *Sugar Night (Noche de Azucar)*; *Hibiscus*

fig. 7

Robert Rauschenberg, *Sugar Night (Noche de Azucar)* / *ROCI CUBA*, 1988. Silkscreen ink and enamel on galvanized steel, 36 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 48 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (93.3 \times 123.8 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

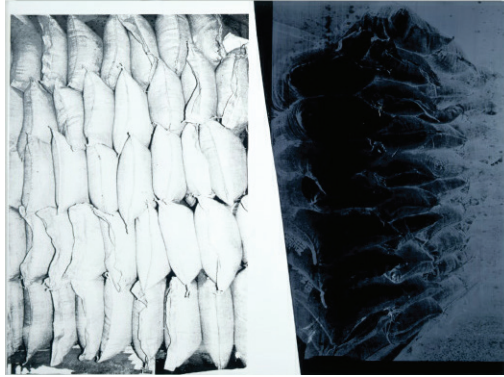
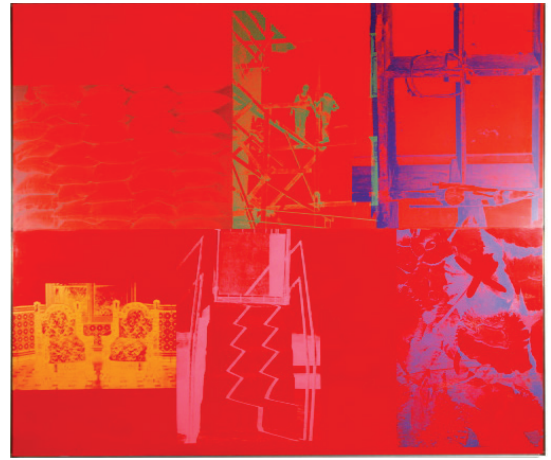


fig. 8

Robert Rauschenberg, *Hibiscus Fever (Fiebre de Hibiscus)* / *ROCI CUBA*, 1988. Silkscreen ink and enamel on galvanized steel, 72 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 84 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (184.8 \times 215.3 cm). Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Gift of the Artist to the People of Cuba.



Fever (Fiebre de Hibiscus), and *Cuban Acre*, all created in 1988 (figs. 6, 7, 8, and 9). Like other works in the *ROCI* group, *Cuban Diary* features photographs silkscreened with acrylic onto metal panels; in this piece, Rauschenberg's studio assistants painted the third and fourth panels blue and red respectively before silkscreening the images.⁵ Both images of the bags appear at the far left of the painting with a washed-out quality characteristic of an overexposed photograph. Most of the imagery is rendered in black and white, while the two panels of red and blue enamel punctuate the painting, mirroring both the colors and linearity of the Cuban flag.⁶ As with many *ROCI* paintings, he incorporated motifs that had already come to be associated with his oeuvre, ranging from animals to swimmers and male figures with their backs turned, recalling the headless athletes from his earlier Dante drawings (1958–60).⁷ *Sugar Night* also presents the two views of the stacked bags, but here the artist rotated the straight-on image clockwise, rendered the other image in negative, and juxtaposed them side-by-side, taking up a majority of the aluminum panel. The allover composition is comparable to that of *Sugar Bags*, and might have served as a precursor for the later painting.

fig. 9

Robert Rauschenberg, *Cuban Acre* / *ROCI CUBA*, 1988. Silkscreen ink and enamel on galvanized steel, 84 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 216 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (215.3 \times 550.5 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



While the *Urban Bourbons* bear a striking resemblance to the metal paintings shown at *ROCI CUBA*, the later series strays from the visual readability of its predecessor. Rauschenberg once remarked, "I think collage itself, and the activity of making collage, is the most direct way that you can relate diverse elements rather than their going through the transition of a translation ... I like the directness, and the fact that it is not being soiled or diluted by my interpretation of it."⁸ This sentiment can clearly be seen in the artist's approach to the image-dense *ROCI* paintings overall, as he continually sought to highlight the idiosyncratic beauty of each country he visited. As such, these paintings involve very little, if any, painterly intervention and feature clear and detailed images of their respective locales. For the *Urban Bourbons*, Rauschenberg took a less systematic approach, reincorporating freehand brushwork and collaging images in a way that at times resists legibility.

The areas of deliberate visual obfuscation omnipresent in the other *Urban Bourbons* is an inherent result of the artist's process in creating them, as Lawrence Voytek, one of Rauschenberg's main studio assistants, has recounted. Having started in the artist's Captiva Island studio in 1982 as the fine art fabricator, Voytek collaborated on all the metal series, beginning with the *Copperheads* for *ROCI CHILE* in 1985. Voytek's oral history interview from 2016 documents the artist's processes, and how he achieved his complicated overlapping of imagery and gestural mark-making. For the *Urban Bourbons*, Rauschenberg began with random splashes of paint followed by direct manipulation of the wet pigment on the metal surface, culminating with the application of the silkscreens and possibly some overpainting:

He'd have panels on the table and he had Golden [acrylic paint] in quarts, in the liquid form. What he would do often in these splashes—he would shake up a full quart ... he would wait for somebody to go walking across the room because many times, all of a sudden, swack! You would have paint go across your back or on your side. It'd be on the wall and it could hit a painting that was hanging on the wall ... Then he would do mess-around stuff. Sometimes he would have the liquid pools, he would throw heavy-bodied blobs, he would take things and move the paint around, he would take rags and rub off stuff, he would drop things on the paint and pull it off. He would f-around with this little cosmos of colors. When he wanted it, he would take a heat light—acrylic paint dried too slow for him so he had me make these heat lamps, which were drying bulbs ... He would roll it right over the painting, drop it down low, and you would see the paint steaming from the heat drying them because everything happened too slow for Bob. He wanted it dried as fast as he could.⁹

Evidence of this technique is clearly present in *Sugar Bags*. A quick gestural swipe of diluted pigment fills up most of the lower register of the painting. The controlled splash of paint toward the center suggests that the artist used a heat lamp, as the pigmented tendrils seen extending from the splash would have likely evaporated if the drying process had not been sped up and the pigment was not able to adhere to the surface.¹⁰ This effect can also be seen in the splash of ultramarine-colored paint that underlays the yellow ornate imagery in *Luxer (Urban Bourbon)*

fig. 10

Robert Rauschenberg, *Luxer* (*Urban Bourbon*), 1988. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on mirrored aluminum, 48 7/8 × 48 7/8 inches (124.1 × 124.1 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



fig. 11

Robert Rauschenberg, *Half Dime* (*Urban Bourbon*), 1989. Silkscreen ink, acrylic, and enamel on mirrored and anodized aluminum, in two parts, 97 × 97 3/4 inches (246.4 × 248.3 cm). Private collection.



from 1988 (fig. 10), as well as the bright red splash—used as an overpainting—in *Half Dime* (*Urban Bourbon*), 1989 (fig. 11). In these paintings, however, the freehand applications of paint are more apparent, or even obstructing, than the light layer of pigment that sits atop the dark background of *Sugar Bags*.

Unlike Rauschenberg's previous metal series, most of the *Urban Bourbons* were created on factory-enameled aluminum sheets, an innovative turn that was inspired by his work on the *Gluts* (1986–89/1991–94). During a visit to Houston on the occasion of the exhibition *Robert Rauschenberg: Work from Four Series* (1986) at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Rauschenberg reflected on the recent oil glut in Texas and its negative impact on the state's economy. When he returned to his studio in Florida, he began salvaging scrap metal from gas station signs and automobile parts to create large, assemblage-based sculptures and reliefs, beginning with

Yellow Moby Glut, 1986 (fig. 12). Regarding the *Gluts*, Rauschenberg remarked, "It's a time of glut. Greed is rampant. I'm just exposing it, trying to wake people up. I simply want to present people with their ruins ... I think of the *Gluts* as souvenirs without nostalgia. What they are really meant to do is give people an experience of looking at everything in terms of what its many possibilities might be."¹¹ Rauschenberg was drawn to the twisted, enamel-coated metals that comprised the *Gluts* because they allowed him to reuse ordinary detritus for creative means, transforming the quotidian into art. They also piqued his interest in the materiality of metal in both its factory-finished and weathered or timeworn state.

fig. 12

Robert Rauschenberg, *Yellow Moby Glut*, 1986. Riveted metal parts, 126 × 114 × 24 inches (320 × 289.6 × 61 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



Voytek ordered the pre-enameled panels for the *Urban Bourbons* from a company advertising in *Signs of the Times*, a popular trade magazine for signage makers and graphic artists.¹² He has described Rauschenberg's fascination with the process behind the factory-treated metals and his attraction to the sleek, brightly colored panels, saying, "the colors were things like Coca-Cola red, Pepsi blue, canary yellow. Bob looked at all these colors. He loved the names of them."¹³ Though he did not use the "Coca-Cola red" aluminum to create *Sugar Bags*, the vivid red acrylic against the onyx-colored background subtly recalls a bottle of Coke. Rauschenberg delighted in blurring the boundaries between art and commercial objects, once remarking, "I feel really sorry for people who think things like soap dishes or mirrors or Coke bottles are ugly, because they're surrounded by things like that all day long, and it must make them miserable."¹⁴ There is also an apparent connection between Cuba, Coke, and the reference to drinking (a particular vice of Rauschenberg's) embedded in the *Urban Bourbon* series. Thomas Buehler worked with Rauschenberg's team on the logistical organization of the ROCI world tour, and for *ROCI CUBA* he was required to travel by boat to deliver the artwork to the country due to U.S. embargos. He recalled how he was advised by a customs agent to take Coca-Cola to Cuba to make rum and Coke:

Before I went on the ship, the agent said, "Well I can advise you to take some fruit with you. Take a crate of apples or pears or whatever is available and take a case of Coca-Cola with you." ... They had a big tank of Cuban rum on this ship and they said you could trade Coca-Cola because they can make Cuba Libres in mass quantities but they don't have Coca-Cola. I had two cases, small bottles of Coke. So that came in handy. We became friends. There were forty-five in the crew, three shifts.¹⁵

With its reference to sugar—both an important export in Cuba and a major component in Coca-Cola—Rauschenberg's *Sugar Bags* effectively connected the crop to the cultures and economies of both America and Cuba. It is only through the use of a single, discernible image that such an interpretation is possible. Other works within the *Urban Bourbon* series resist such readings, instead bringing together dissonant subject matter.



fig. 13

Robert Rauschenberg, *Master Pasture (Urban Bourbon)*, 1989. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on mirrored and enameled aluminum, 96 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 120 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (245.8 \times 306.7 cm). Private collection.

The compositions of the *Urban Bourbons*—simultaneously free-wheeling and tightly knit—and the process behind their creation relates to Rauschenberg's longstanding preoccupation with "random order."¹⁶ Not only a governing formal principle, this concept of juxtaposing disparate objects and images allowed for unexpected and new associations to be conjured in the mind of the viewer. As Roni Feinstein has discussed in her analysis of *Master Pasture* from the *Urban Bourbon* series (1989; fig. 13):

fig. 14

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



fig. 15

Robert Rauschenberg, *Copperhead-Bite VI / ROCI CHILE*, 1985. Silkscreen ink, acrylic and tarnish on copper, 96 7/8 x 51 1/4 inches (246.1 x 130.2 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



To demonstrate the continuity of "Random Order" as a guiding principle in his art and as a distinctive quality of his thought and vision, one can look ... to such works as *Master Pasture (Urban Bourbon)*, 1989, exhibited at the Guggenheim SoHo. Executed in acrylic on mirrored and enameled aluminum, the work features a seemingly disjunctive collection of marks and images which fuse upon close inspection ... while the reflection of our own heads in the shiny mirrored section below further complicates the dialogue.¹⁷

Feinstein goes on to note that Rauschenberg took the photograph of the child's drawing of a person, seen in the right-center of the composition, in Chile (fig. 14).¹⁸ Consequently, the drawing appears in works from *ROCI CHILE* (1985), including *Copperhead-Bite VI / ROCI CHILE*, in the bottom-right corner of the copper panel (fig. 15). As Feinstein observes, the concept of an apparently randomized, but subjectively structured order began with his earlier Combines (1954–64) and never disappeared from the artist's output; in the context of the *Urban Bourbons*, this random order allowed Rauschenberg to revisit his own preexisting images and stylistic conceits to bring new meaning to familiar subjects. *Sugar Bags*, by contrast, reasserts itself as an outlier with its focus on a single image.

One of Rauschenberg's reasons for reconsidering the ROCI photographs in the *Urban Bourbons* might have been the backlash he received in some of the countries he visited. In October of 1984, Rauschenberg penned his "Tobago Statement," which would become the de facto mission statement of ROCI. In an ostensible effort to celebrate cultural diversity, he wrote, "I feel strong in my beliefs, based on my varied and widely traveled collaborations, that a one-to-one contact through art contains potent peaceful powers, and is the most non-elitist way to share exotic and common information, seducing us into creative mutual understandings for the benefit of all."¹⁹ Donald Saff served as artistic director for ROCI, having begun working with Rauschenberg in the early 1970s at Graphicstudio, part of the University of South Florida's Institute for Research in Art. Regarding Rauschenberg's process, Saff recalled:

I think the plan was that Bob would go there and work with the artists in each country. That's the way it was promoted. It didn't happen that way. The way it worked was that Bob would go and travel and get material, and he'd find everything—from feed bags, to tin cans, to whatever—and bring all this material back with him or have it shipped back. He would then go to his studio and make these works and return to the country with their imagery. That was the game plan. "We'll use your images, things that you're familiar with, and show you how it can be used in ways that you never conceived of using it." And that was the way he worked.²⁰

Rauschenberg's correspondence and public statements indicate that the artist had good intentions for the ROCI franchise, but because of his myopic focus on aesthetic beauty over cultural collaboration or politesse, the initiative was met with mixed reactions. While the project was deemed successful in some countries, artists in other countries, like Cuba, felt that the project was "an obvious act of cultural colonization," one that did not represent the social or political concerns of the people it claimed to benefit.²¹ *ROCI CUBA* was exhibited in three locations in Havana from February 10 to April 3, 1988: the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Castillo de la Fuerza, and Casa de las Américas.²² Despite the controversy, Rauschenberg was steadfast in his belief in the project: "To break down barriers, I think you need to see as an alien does—to get lost in the city, or in the country, to see things in Cuba that maybe you are blind to."²³ Rauschenberg had a clear interest in the country's culture, which perhaps strengthens a sociopolitical reading of *Sugar Bags* as a reference to the Cuban economy. While he resisted explicitly political narratives in his art, he was vocal about his opposition to sociopolitical conflicts and the effects of globalization. In an interview with Paul Taylor in 1990, Rauschenberg, when asked about the resurgence of arts activism, stated: "All kinds of activists are aggressive in spite of our present state of politics; it might tone up some of the muscles artists used to have. The Vietnam War seems so long ago. Still, I remember how passionately I was against it. Most of my life has been politically oriented."²⁴ However, unlike the sugar images incorporated into the *ROCI CUBA* paintings, the geographical origin of the titular subject matter of *Sugar Bags* is not explicitly stated. Consequently, this lack of cultural specificity complicates polemical interpretations of the work.



fig. 16

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

Rauschenberg began working on the *Urban Bourbons* in February 1988, the same month that *ROCI CUBA* opened to the public.²⁵ Most of the works exhibit the same brilliant colors as those found in the *ROCI* series, but are distinguished by broad gestural marks that interrupt compositional lattices. While there has not been extensive scholarship on the *Urban Bourbons*, Mikael Wivel gave perhaps the most pervasive interpretation of the series:

They are quick, elegant compositions about as starkly emphasized in colour as you can get, teetering up there on the edge of garish ... There is an undercurrent of desperation in them, something wild or aggressive that sometimes explode like a kind of visual equivalent or line noise: the noise of the city, particularly audible of course in the New York that has been Rauschenberg's paramount frame of reference since he moved there at the beginning of the fifties.²⁶

Contrary to this statement, however, the *Urban Bourbons* do not simply reflect New York—given most of the source imagery was taken during Rauschenberg's many trips abroad—nor do they solely focus on "urban" environments. In one of the earliest works in the series, *Carnival Wall*, from 1988 (fig. 16), he again made use of the photograph of the Chilean drawing seen in *Copperhead-Bite VI / ROCI CHILE* and *Master Pasture (Urban Bourbon)*, but here the drawing dominates the candy-colored composition, endowing the piece with a childlike quality that seems both innocently sweet and excessively saccharine. Though a child created the original drawing, *Carnival Wall* is the only piece in which it seems innocent and whimsical. As with other *Urban Bourbons*, Rauschenberg recontextualized a familiar subject to create new psychological associations. In borrowing many of the images he produced during *ROCI*, and utilizing similar techniques and colors, but with a seemingly uncontrolled approach, the *Urban*

Bourbons could be seen as a mere redux of the former series. Rather than portraying a national ethos through culturally specific images—in the manner of *ROCI*—the works emphasize much freer associations.

Rauschenberg concluded the *Urban Bourbons* in 1996 and three years later began working on the *Apogamy Pods* (1999–2000), a series that demonstrates the artist's continued recontextualization of his old work to explore anti-narrativity. Using apogamy, a form of asexual reproduction, as the thematic basis for the series, he wrote that he wanted the paintings:

... to grow out of themselves, to contain their own contradictions and get rid of narrative, which is the sex of picture-making ... I was really trying not to make narratives, to keep the images apart and have them relate the way real memories relate to one another, by their look, by their shape or their transparency, by their colors and their atmospheres. It was very hard to do. The hardest thing since I erased Bill's drawing [*Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953)].²⁷

Like the *Apogamy Pods*, the *Urban Bourbons* "self-evolved" so to speak within the artist's oeuvre. Many, like *Master Pasture* and *Carnival Wall*, use *ROCI* as their jumping off point, incorporating imagery and colors from that series into markedly different compositions. Other *Urban Bourbons*, like *Sugar Bags*, take on the reductive, enigmatic quality of the preceding *Night Shades* and *Phantoms*, though with a distinctively brilliant colored flourish. With its visual and contextual idiosyncrasy, *Sugar Bags* holds a unique place within the *Urban Bourbons*. It at once negates the celebratory tone of the vivid body of work to which it belongs, while simultaneously opening itself up to multiple associations—whether they be political, pop cultural, or viscerally somatic—relating it back to the random order present throughout the series. Moreover, the *Urban Bourbons* show how Rauschenberg sought to comment on the fluid nature of conscious and subconscious associations, altered perhaps by time and lucidity. In doing so, he essentially mimics the act of remembering or misremembering particular moments. By revisiting and decontextualizing his old work, Rauschenberg subverts the linear narratives he had already constructed, while simultaneously critiquing the notion that these narratives inherently exist.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) was an artistic project for which Rauschenberg traveled to countries around the world between 1984 and 1991, producing works of art inspired by each country. He visited ten countries total in the following order: Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, China, Tibet, Japan, Cuba, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Germany, and Malaysia. The final *ROCI* exhibition was held in 1991 at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. In addition to the metal paintings he completed during *ROCI*, Rauschenberg's metal series include: *Copperhead* (1985 [part of *ROCI CHILE*] and 1989), *Shiner* (1986–93), *Glut* (1986–89/1991–94), *Beamer* (1988), *Urban Bourbon* (1988–96), *Borealis* (1988–92), *Galvanic Suite* (1988–91), *Bleacher Series* (1988–91), *Wax Fire Works* (1990–91 [part of *ROCI USA*]), *Spartan* (1991), *Night Shade* (1991), and *Phantom* (1991).

- 2 In her doctoral dissertation, Eileen Doyle considers Rauschenberg's work from the early 1960s when he began experimenting with spatial perception in his silkscreen printing, and comments on how collaging multiple images with different perspectives and scales diminishes the flatness of the picture plane. This effect continued in his later works on metal, but, as Doyle discusses, the use of reflective surfaces that incorporate the viewer effect our physical and psychological engagement with the work by inserting the viewer into the composition. See Eileen R. Doyle, "Robert Rauschenberg: Mirrors of Art and Life," in "Art in the Mirror: Reflection in the Work of Rauschenberg, Richter, Graham and Smithson," (PhD diss., Ohio State University, Columbus, 2004).
- 3 Rauschenberg used Aluma Black, a selenious acid used to turn aluminum black, to achieve the areas of dark patination in the *Night Shades*. See the Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, April 30, 2016. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 90.
- 4 "Chronology," Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, accessed November 1, 2018.
- 5 According to Lawrence Voytek, 1-Shot sign painter's enamel was used to paint the galvanized and stainless sheets of aluminum for *ROCI CUBA*. For the *Urban Bourbons*, Voytek ordered pre-enamelled sheets that were advertised in *Signs of the Times*—a sign industry trade magazine—from the company Wrisco Industries. See the Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, p. 78.
- 6 In addition to those executed in black and white, there are also silkscreened images in violet, orange, and yellow paint laid over the red and blue enameled panels situated in the middle of the painting. While other colors are present, the red, blue, and white are the most predominant, which draws a comparison to the Cuban flag.
- 7 The Dante drawings (1958–60) are a series of transfer drawings inspired by the thirty-four cantos of Dante's *Inferno*. The transfers incorporate the artist's own drawings and watercolor paintings with images of athletes and public figures taken from popular magazines. "Dante Drawings (1958–60)," Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, accessed November 10, 2018.
- 8 Jason Edward Kaufman, "Interview: Robert Rauschenberg," *The Art Newspaper*, no. 73, September 1997, p. 17.
- 9 The Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, pp. 188–89.
- 10 Conservation meeting with Thomas Roach, Head of Art Services, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, and Christine Frohnert, Bek & Frohnert LLC, September 28, 2018.
- 11 "Robert Rauschenberg: Gluts," Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, accessed November 20, 2018.
- 12 Voytek notes that the company was Wrisco Industries. See the Reminiscences of Lawrence Voytek, p. 186.
- 13 Ibid., p. 153.
- 14 Sarah Lowndes, *Robert Rauschenberg: Botanical Vaudeville*, exh. cat. (London: Gagosian Gallery, 2011), pp. 21–30.
- 15 The Reminiscences of Thomas Buehler, April 2, 2015, and May 26, 2015. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, p. 48.
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